

# Transnationalism, Remittances and Asymmetries

Multi-Local Family Ties of Senegambian Migrants in Finland

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<p>This Master's Thesis studies the multi-local family ties, transnational practices and social dynamics behind remittances in the context of Senegalese and Gambian migrants in Finland. Transnationalism refers to the ways migrants continue to be active in communities of origin, and thus participate in familial, social, economic, religious, political and cultural processes that span across national, geographic and cultural borders. This study focuses on transnationalism in the sphere of family life. Transnationalism is a central approach in contemporary international migration scholarship, and has gradually gained attention in the Finnish context. Migration in the West African countries of Senegal and Gambia is a common way of achieving socio-economic upward mobility and transnational practices of migrants are prevalent.</p> <p>The research questions of this Thesis are: 1) How family ties in Finland shape the transnational engagement of Senegambian migrants? and 2) How expectations of remittances shape the transnational family ties of Senegambian migrants, and how are remittances negotiated? In answering these questions the study draws from the theoretical orientation of transnationalism and the formulation of transnationalism as social spaces. In addition, concepts of relativizing and frontiering and an analytical framework of asymmetries in transnational relations are employed.</p> <p>The data of the study is gathered by conducting 12 semi-structured interviews with Senegalese and Gambian migrants residing in Finland, mapping the participants' transnational relations and practices, ties and opportunities in Finland, and representations related to migration in Senegal and Gambia. The methods of qualitative analysis employed are thematic analysis and an analysis strategy of multiple case design.</p> <p>The findings show that the participants of the study are engaged in transnational practices that mostly locate themselves in the sphere of family life. At the same time, nearly all participants have family ties with Finns, which enables mobility and transnationalism, but at the same time attaches migrants to Finland in a way that also has implications for the transnational engagement. Migrants' family and migration trajectories are shaped by different familial obligations and socio-economic opportunity structures in the different locations of the transnational social space.</p> <p>Transnational family ties are reproduced through communication and remittances, but due to high expectations of remittances, relationships are continuously negotiated. Remittances are shaped by cultural dynamics and norms associated with an 'African family' are reproduced, but also questioned. However, frustration in transnational relations can be better explained by examining spatial dynamics, and looking into the asymmetries within transnational relations.</p> <p>The study provides important sociological information on the role of transnationalism among migrant groups in Finland. It also shows the need for further study and to bridge the gap between research on transnational families and bi-cultural families.</p>			
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<p>Tämä tutkielma tarkastelee Suomessa asuvien senegalilaisten ja gambialaisten siirtolaisten monipaikkaisia perhesiteitä, transnationaalista käytäntöjä sekä sosiaalista dynamiikkaa siirtolaisten rahalähetysten taustalla. Transnationaalisuus (suomeksi myös ylijärjestyminen) viittaa tapoihin, joilla siirtolaiset ylläpitävät toimintaa ja suhteita synnyinmaahansa ja osallistuvat näin sosiaalisiin, taloudellisiin, uskonnollisiin, poliittisiin ja kulttuurisiin prosesseihin, jotka ylittävät kansallisia, maantieteellisiä ja kulttuurisia rajoja. Tässä tutkielmassa keskitytään transnationaalisuuteen perhe-elämän alueella. Transnationaalisuus on keskeinen näkökulma kansainvälisessä muuttoliikkeiden tutkimuksessa, ja on vähitellen tullut osaksi myös suomalaista tutkimusta. Länsiafrikkalaisissa Senegalissa ja Gambiassa maastamuutto on keskeinen keino paremman sosioekonomisen aseman saavuttamiseksi ja siirtolaisten transnationaaliset käytännöt ovat yleisiä.</p> <p>Tutkielman tutkimuskysymykset ovat seuraavat: 1) Miten perhesiteet Suomessa vaikuttavat senegambialaisten siirtolaisten transnationaaliseen sidonnaisuuteen?, ja 2) Miten odotukset rahalähetyksistä muokkaavat senegambialaisten siirtolaisten transnationaalista perhesuhteita, ja minkälaisia neuvotteluja rahalähetyksistä käydään? Näiden kysymysten tarkastelussa hyödynnetään määritelmää transnationaalisuudesta sosiaalisena tilana. Tämän lisäksi hyödynnetään kahta transnationaalisiin perheisiin liittyvää käsitettä (relativizing, frontiering) sekä analyttistä kehystä asymmetrioista transnationaalisisissa suhteissa.</p> <p>Tutkielman aineisto koostuu kahdestatoista Suomessa asuvan senegalilaisen ja gambialaisen maahanmuuttajan puolistrukturoidusta haastattelusta, joissa on kartoitettu tutkittavien transnationaaliset suhteet ja käytännöt, siteet ja elämännäkymät Suomessa sekä Senegalissa ja Gambiassa esiintyviä siirtolaisuuteen liitettyjä representaatioita. Kvalitatiivisen tutkimuksen analyysimetodeista on käytetty teemoittelua sekä monitapaustutkimuksen analyysistrategiaa.</p> <p>Tutkielman löydökset osoittavat, että tutkimukseen osallistuneiden transnationaaliset käytännöt paikantuvat ennen kaikkea perhe-elämän alueelle. Lähes kaikilla tutkittavilla on kuitenkin perhesiteitä myös Suomeen, jotka toisaalta ovat mahdollistaneet maastamuuton ja transnationaalisuuden, mutta samanaikaisesti kiinnittävät siirtolaiset Suomeen tavalla, jolla myös on vaikutuksia heidän transnationaaliselle sidonnaisuudelle. Siirtolaisten perhe- ja maahanmuuttopolut ovat tulosta erilaisista perhevelvollisuuksista ja mahdollisuusrakenteista transnationaalisen sosiaalisen tilan eri paikoissa.</p> <p>Transnationaalista perhesuhteita uusinnetaan kommunikaation ja rahalähetysten avulla. Suhteet ovat kuitenkin usein neuvottelujen alaisia johtuen tutkittaviin kohdistetuista korkeista odotuksista lähettää rahaa. Kulttuuriset käsitykset perhevelvollisuuksista vaikuttavat rahalähetyksiin ja normeja, jotka koskevat käsityksiä 'afrikkalaisesta perheestä' uusinnetaan, mutta myös kyseenalaistetaan. Jännitteet näissä transnationaalisisissa suhteissa johtuvat kuitenkin enemmän tilaan liittyvästä dynamiikasta, joka tekee suhteista asymmetrisia.</p> <p>Tutkielma tuottaa yhteiskunnallisesti merkittävää tietoa transnationaalisuudesta Suomessa asuvien maahanmuuttajaryhmien keskuudessa. Sen lisäksi se osoittaa tarpeen jatkotutkimukselle, jossa kaksikulttuuristen perheiden ja transnationaalisten perheiden tutkimusalat tulisi tuoda yhteen.</p>			
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## 1 Introduction

I will not forget our emigrants, these brave Senegalese, who work far away from home without forgetting their family or home country. They contribute significantly to our society and national economy. For my part, they are investors. I give you the example of an emigrant who, in addition to sending the expenditure, helps a member of his family to start his own business.

(Youssou N'Dour, presidential campaign 2012. Translated from French by the author of this study.)

The extract above is taken from a statement by the most celebrated Senegalese singer, and current minister, Youssou N'Dour, released in the launch of his campaign in the presidential election in 2012. This quote has been chosen to function as the opening lines of this thesis, as it brilliantly encapsulates the dominant public discourse on migration and migrants in the West African Senegal (see e.g. Riccio 2005). Like in many parts of South and Middle America, Southeast Asia or Eastern Europe, in Senegal migrants are often celebrated as the symbols of the contemporary society, and expected to stay loyal to their families and home country. Migrants' remittances comprise a cornerstone of the Senegalese economy (Riccio 2005, 99). In Senegal, migration is considered as a common way of achieving upward socio-economic mobility and it functions as a powerful cultural myth, as a solution to endemic economic hardship and limited opportunities, and as a means of achieving, especially masculine, adulthood (Melly 2010, 44).

The features of an exemplary migrant – laid down by N'Dour above – such as maintaining family ties, sending money for the communities and investing in businesses in the country of origin belong to a phenomenon that migration scholars refer to as transnationalism. Much of the migration research during the twentieth century was devoted on studying how migrants adapt to their new host societies, a process that has been named with various terms such as assimilation, integration, incorporation or settlement (Vertovec 2009, 77). However, during the past, soon reaching three decades, migration scholarship has undergone a significant change, often referred to as the 'transnational turn'. This resulted from a shift in attention, where scholars increasingly turned their lens to investigate the ways migrants continue to be active in their countries and communities of origin, while at the same time, becoming part of the receiving society. Social life in general, but essentially that of contemporary migrants,

increasingly takes place across borders, even if the political and cultural salience of nation-state boundaries remains strong. Transnationalism therefore refers to the ways migrants participate in familial, social, economic, religious, political and cultural processes that span across national, geographic and cultural borders. (Lewitt & Jaworsky 2007, 130.)

One aspect of social life that is fundamentally shaped by migration, spatial distance and cross border practices is of course that of family life. Indeed, transnational families are a significant field in research on transnationalism, and studies have shown different patterns and dynamics in families living cross borders. On the one hand, migration affects families as spatial distance complicates the daily interaction and proximity, while on the other hand, migration often enables a wider scope of opportunities and resources for needs-fulfillment. (Bryceson & Vuorela 2002.)

Cheap telephone calls have been seen as the glue that holds transnational communities together, as information and care are exchanged from afar (Vertovec 2009, 54). Same way, as people often migrate in search of an easier livelihood or socio-economic upward mobility, economic transfers from migrants to families and home communities – remittances – often become the central currency of contact, support and solidarity (Dreby & Atkins 2010, 680). Therefore, remittances have been recently studied also as a means to maintain family ties and a sense of belonging in the community of origin (Crentsil 2012).

As a consequence of globalization and increasing migration, also new families are increasingly formed cross borders. Facilitated by transnational linkages, migrants often marry from the country of their origin, a method of family formation often referred to as transnational marriages (e.g. Schmidt 2001b). On the increase is, however, also the families formed between migrants and members of the ethnic majority of the receiving society, i.e. unions often referred to as bi-cultural marriages (e.g. Lainiala & Säävälä 2012). However, this branch of study has been to some extent disjointed from the research field of transnational families.

In Finland, substantial immigration, as well as public debate on the topic, is a phenomenon of only last three decades. Unlike some other European countries, Finland

does not have a significant history of labor immigration, but contrary, the country was a source of labor well into the 1970s. Nevertheless, as immigration has recently increased rapidly, also the body of research on the topic has been gradually building up. However, apart from the few first studies, there is still little research addressing migrant transnationalism and therefore there is a lack of information about the growing role of transnationalism among immigrant communities in Finland (Wahlbeck 2011). So far themes such as labor market integration and ethnic identities have been central in migration research in the Finnish context, albeit questions related to transnationalism and family life, are now shifting the focus to the border crossing ties that are increasingly redefining living also in Finland (Martikainen et al. 2006, 36).

This study is contributing exactly to this body of knowledge on migrants' transnationalism and border-crossing family ties. The study examines the multi-local family ties, transnational practices and social dynamics behind remittances in the context of Senegalese and Gambian migrants residing in Finland. Initially, the research interest was set to study how Senegalese and Gambian migrants (shortly Senegambians) maintain family ties to the country of origin and how sending remittances are negotiated. However, during the data gathering it became clear that very often these migrants have family ties – spouses or children – also in Finland. Therefore, the research object was diversified and two research questions were formulated. Firstly, this study examines: *How family ties in Finland shape the transnational engagement of Senegambian migrants?* and secondly, I turn to the question of remittances and ask: *How expectations of remittances shape the transnational family ties of Senegambian migrants, and how are remittances negotiated?*

Senegalese and Gambian migrant groups of Finland are very small in numbers. However, I argue that it is fruitful to study these migrants as there is a lack of research on African migrants in Finland, excluding Somalis (e.g. Tiilikainen 2003). In addition, drawing from previous research, and as already hinted in this introduction, migration is a substantial phenomenon in Senegal and Gambia and transnational engagement has shown to be prevalent among the emigrated population (e.g. Riccio 2008, Jacques 2009). However, most of the previous studies have examined Senegambian migrants in the contexts of Southern Europe or USA, which makes it fruitful to examine how transnationalism and migration trajectories play out in the Finnish context. Finally, pre-



existing networks of the researcher among these migrant groups facilitated the access to the field and recruiting interviewees.

In approaching the research object, I am drawing from the broad theoretical orientation of transnationalism, and especially from the formulation of *transnational social spaces*, developed by Faist (2000). In addition, I employ the theorization on transnational families and the concepts of *relativizing* and *frontiering* developed by Bryceson and Vuorela (2002). Finally, in understanding dynamics of sending remittances I lean on the theoretical framework of *asymmetries* in transnational relations, developed by Carling (2008).

The data of this study is gathered by conducting 12 semi-structured interviews among Senegalese and Gambian migrants residing in Finland. The data has been analyzed by employing methods of qualitative content analysis. Mostly thematic analysis (Eskola & Suoranta 1998, 175-180) is used, but in addition, an analysis strategy of multiple case design (Haikkola 2012, 62; Yin 2003) is employed.

The structure of the thesis is as follows: In Chapter 3, I provide an overview of previous research on migration and transnationalism in Finland, before turning to the international body of literature on transnational families, and finally to the previous studies on Senegambian transnational migration. The theoretical framework is laid down in Chapter 4 before moving to Chapter 5 where the research data and methods of this study, including ethical considerations, are discussed. The analysis of the empirical data is presented in Chapters 6 and 7. In Chapter 6.1, I provide an overview of participants' transnational practices. In 6.2 the analysis of the first research question is presented, and subsequently in Chapter 7 I turn to the topic of the second research question. Finally, in Chapter 8, I draw together the findings of the study and present concluding remarks, as well as reflect on the limits of the study and the need for further research. However, I start with Chapter 2, providing necessary background information to be able to contextualize the migration trajectories, remittance expectations and multi-local family ties of Senegambian migrants in Finland.

## 2 Senegal and Gambia: Migrations, Remittances and Families

In the following, background information is presented related to the countries of Senegal and Gambia, the histories and meanings of migration, necessary knowledge on family organization in West Africa and, finally, on Senegambian migration within the context of immigration to Finland.

### 2.1 Senegal and the Gambia

Senegal and the Gambia (the official name of the state includes the article) are states located on the western coast in West Africa. The formation and location of Gambia, which is a smaller state located inside of Senegal, has connections to the colonial history. The area of Senegal was in command of French colonial powers before it gained independence in 1960, while the area today known as the Gambia was in control of the British until its independence in 1965. (CIA 2013a, 2013b.)

Both states are multiethnic and multilingual countries inhabited by mainly the same ethnic groups, although the proportions of different groups among the populations differ. 90 to 95 percent of the populations are Muslim, while 5-8 percent are Christian. (Ibid.) The Senegalese and Gambian forms of Islam are characterized by relatively significant Sufi orders. Especially in Senegal, the *Muridiyya* brotherhood is influential among the largest ethnic group, the *Wolof*, and is a distinct expression of Islam. The brotherhood's organization and networks are also tightly intertwined with migration processes (Riccio 2004, 929).

Regardless of the conflict with a separatist movement in *Casamance*, the southern region of Senegal, and recent violent riots during presidential elections, Senegal is considered as one of the most stable democracies in the African continent. The Gambia has a more recent history of profound political instability and tensions between government and opposition, as the present president Yahya Jammeh executed a military coup in 1994 and banned political activity. After implementing a new constitution Jammeh has been elected in all subsequent elections. Regardless of these political tensions, Senegal and Gambia are neither major sources of migration based on refuge. (CIA 2013a, 2013b.)

In this study, I refer to Senegalese and Gambian as Senegambian. I argue that this is justifiable as the states and populations share many sociocultural, economic and historical characteristics. This sentiment was also expressed by many of the participants of this study. The two states even agreed on a formation of a federation named Senegambia in 1982, although the plan was shortly after discarded (ibid.). The term Senegambian has also been employed by Jacques (2009) studying Senegalese and Gambian migrants in Spain. However, it must be noted that in this study the term is employed, not to take a stand on the similarity or unity of the populations, but solely as a practical solution.

Senegal and Gambia have not avoided the endemic economic crises most Sub-Saharan countries have faced since the 1970s. Within the globalized economy, Senegal has been in the state of economic crisis and as a consequence government expenditure has been under the control of the IMF. These developments have been simultaneous with population growth bringing a large share of under age population, as well as with difficulties in agriculture caused by increasing droughts. As a result, livelihood of peasants, as well as the employment among urban educated elite has been diminishing. (Riccio 2005, 101-103.) In addition, corruption, nepotism and clientelism have been suggested to be the key components in the deteriorating situation (Mbaye 2012). As a result, Rosenlew (2012, 80) suggests that for Senegalese the conditions seem more uncertain today that they were when the country gained its independence in 1960. These developments have caused increasing pressures to migrate, both, on the rural-urban axis, as well as from urban centers to other countries (Riccio 2005).

From Senegal, migration towards Europe started with France already during the colonial period and intensified because of the demand for unskilled labor in the 1950s and 1960s. However, since the economic crisis, emigration has intensified in the course of the last decades and today takes place to diversified selection of destinations in Europe, United States, Asia and the Middle East, as well as to other parts of Africa. The movements are largely motivated by the search for skilled and unskilled employment and educational opportunities. (Ibid., Melly 2010, 43.)

The population of Senegal is 12.5 million people while Gambia located inside of Senegal has a population of 1.7 million. According to the latest statistics, in 2010

Senegal's emigrant population was 636.2 thousand comprising 4.9 percent of the total population, while the corresponding numbers for Gambia are 64.9 thousands and 3.7 per cent. With these figures Senegal and Gambia are not in the top ten emigration countries from Sub-Saharan Africa, but are above the average percentage of emigrants, which for the whole area is 2.5 percent. (World Bank 2001, 121, 217.) However, in 2004 the Senegalese government estimated that of urban households of the country up to 76 percent have at least one member abroad (République du Sénégal 2004). Gambia has a very high rate of skilled emigration, a typical characteristic for small countries (World Bank 2011, *x*). In 2000, the emigration rate of tertiary-educated population was 63.3 percent, resulting in a second highest percentage in Sub-Saharan Africa. The corresponding percentage for Senegal is considerably lower, 17.7. The main countries of destination for Senegambians are the neighboring countries in Africa, as well as countries in 'post-industrial West' such as France, Italy, Spain, the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, Sweden and Norway. (Ibid., 121, 217.) In Finland, Senegalese and Gambians are small migrant groups, as will be elaborated later in this chapter.

The volume of remittances that migrants worldwide send back home is substantial and exceeds by far official aid flows. In 2010 recorded remittances to developing countries were estimated to be 325 billion US\$, and in many countries remittances constitute more than 10 percent of the gross domestic product. (Ibid., *vii*.) Sub-Saharan Africa receives less remittances than the other areas of the 'global south' (ibid., 23-33), but in 2010, recorded remittances were still 21.5 billion US\$, comprising a substantial monetary flow. Senegal received 1.2 billion US\$ which makes it fourth highest receiver in Sub-Saharan Africa after Nigeria, Sudan and Kenya. In 2009 remittances comprised 9 percent of Senegal's GDP, placing it as the 25<sup>th</sup> receiver of remittances in the world measured by the percentage of GDP (ibid., 14). The corresponding numbers for the Gambia are 61 million US\$ (2010), comprising 7.9 percent of its GDP (2009) (ibid., 37, 121). Indeed, while there is less literature on Gambia, in the case of Senegal the meanings of migration and the earnings of migrants have been important and documented, as will be shown in the following sub-chapter.

## 2.2 Representations, Ambivalences and the Culture of Migration

In the Senegalese public discourse, emerging from subjective constructions made by kin, friends, state or religious authorities, or popular culture, migrants are often celebrated as the symbols of the contemporary society. The positive discourse celebrates the solidarity and the efforts migrants undertake for the wellbeing of their families, and for staying loyal to the homeland, despite residing far from home. Beyond the immediate economic significance for thousands of families, remittances are an important symbol of migrant's loyalty. (Riccio 2005, 99.)

The economic success of migrants is visible in the public realm of Senegal in the form of private house construction, big weddings, buying cars, and other occasionally ostentatious consumption by returning or visiting migrants. Despite the economic hardship in the home country, migrants are seen as being able to answer to the fundamental aspirations of young Senegalese: economic independence, and having resources to marry and set up one's own family. (Riccio 2005.)

Scholars analyzing the representations of success and social prestige in post-colonial Senegal, note a shift in the means of achieving upward mobility, in which migration plays a central role. Until the mid-1990s success, social prestige and political legitimacy had been closely tied to knowledge and education. The signs of social distinction for the small elite were diplomas, French language and a western lifestyle. However, the hardening economic situation, failing educational system and the dissatisfaction with government have decreased the appreciation of education as a route to upward social mobility for young Senegalese. Instead, religious and social movements, and economically successful tradesmen have challenged the intellectuals as the only route to success and prestige. (Ludl 2008, 102-103.)

In this societal situation young graduates staying in Senegal increasingly found themselves unemployed, whereas the uneducated, typically rural trader migrants managed to earn enough abroad to acquire the symbols of success at home. In this shift, these previously stigmatized groups were seen as the contemporary heroes who travelled around without compromising their Senegalese identity and came back with money, "building big houses, marrying the most beautiful girls, driving big cars, opening boutiques and leaving again to do more trading abroad" (Riccio 2005, 106).

The economic success of migrants stimulates the imagination of those left behind, and pushes others to migrate as well. Regardless of a co-existing discourse of the negative and even tragic experiences of migrants, such as stories about discrimination and marginalization or news pieces about sunken boats carrying irregular migrants, “the diaspora nonetheless surfaces in contemporary Dakar as a powerful cultural myth, as a solution to current economic hardship and vanished opportunities, and as a means of achieving (especially masculine) adulthood” (Melly 2010, 44). Therefore, the meaning of migration in Senegal strongly resonates with what scholars often refer to as a *culture of migration* (e.g. Massey 1998). Migration becomes integrated into the structure of values and expectations of families and communities. Young people hold international migration as a part of normal course of events and it is deeply embedded in the repertoire of people's behaviour. (Ibid.)

Despite that the representations of migrants are usually highly positive, there exists a certain ambivalence to it. Migrants are sometimes faced with accusations of getting too European, appreciating economic success over religious values, or forgetting traditional values such as solidarity, tolerance, moderation, hospitality and dignity. Suspicion is sometimes leveled towards the ways in which migrants have been able to earn their money abroad. Finally, migrants face criticism for placing a lot of resources on luxurious houses and weddings, instead of investing resources in more entrepreneurial ways in order to produce employment for those living in the country. (Riccio 2005, 108-109.)

These critical views can be seen as rising from the bitterness of those left behind. Keeping in mind that in the face of hardening migration policies few has access to easy and authorized channels for emigration, it is understandable that social division is more and more expressed around migration, between those who are mobile and those who are not. In addition to bitterness engendered by occasional ostentation by the visiting migrants, spending behaviors sometimes result in inflation and ascending prices that cause concrete difficulties for those left behind. (Riccio 2005, 105-112.)

### **2.3 Family Organization in Post-Colonial West Africa**

When studying transnational family ties and remittance expectations and behaviours, there is a strong need to contextualize not only in terms of economic structures and

emigration histories, but also within the sphere of family life. Research on migration and families has often ignored the culturally specific institutions and norms guiding family relationships (Mazzucato & Schans 2008, 10). As the above subtitle hints, West African family values and organization can be seen as rising from African and colonial influences. In addition, the influence of Islam is central in the case of Senegal and Gambia. Crentsil (2012, 36), who has studied African migrants residing in Finland, rightly notes, that remittance behaviour, as a means of reproducing a sense of social belonging, should be analysed in the framework of, what she phrases as “the culture and ideology of sharing in Africa, and the notions of kinship, personhood and social relations”.

While an extensive anthropological elaboration on family life in West Africa is out of the scope of this study, it is crucial to note that the perception of the family in West Africa tends to be seen as encompassing a collection of extended relatives, instead of solely the nuclear group of parents and their children. This resonates strongly with the data of this study. In the interviews, the participants widely used the word ‘family’ to refer to all their relatives, instead of distinguishing nuclear family as ‘family’ and extended family as ‘kin’ or ‘relatives’.

The classical anthropological studies about African family life have underlined the holistic nature of kinship groups in which the welfare of the individual is promoted but the common good of the group is emphasized (see e.g. Radcliffe-Brown & Forde 1950). Among Akan people of Ghana, reciprocity and respect have been reported to be paramount moral values related to household and family life. The tendency to depend on others for help and similarly be depended on in return is a central feature of kinship and lineage organisation (Fortes 1969, 231). Refusing help from family members is seen as not being generous or being inconsiderate of the family’s welfare (Crentsil 2012, 36).

Crentsil (2012, 37) furthermore suggests that the perceptions and organization of family, kinship and solidarity still persist in African societies, although potentially in a lesser degree. Structural changes have facilitated the increase in more individualistic orientation, but however, the extended family system and kinship ties still is an inherent source of sense of belonging, solidarity and protection.

Coming to Senegal and to gender relations within the family, according to Rosenlew (2012, 71), studies have shown that in pre-colonial era the institutionalized rights and responsibilities of men and women were seen as parallel rather than hierarchical, but the status of women was altered in a disadvantageous way as a consequence of colonial policy (see e.g. Perry 2005). Moreover, traditionally the family structures have been based on a 'lineage-segmented' model instead of a conjugal one, which means that men and women have had access to separate financial resources and might have contributed to economic responsibilities on an equal basis (Guerin 2008). However, Islamic norms have influenced the Senegalese family structure and brought about the structure of man being the breadwinner of the family providing food and shelter. Women, instead, are ideally responsible for child and family care, and motherhood is still an important prerequisite for female adulthood generally in many parts of Africa. According to Rosenlew (2012, 70-82), literature about men's relationship for their children is scarce. However, she states that providing economic resources is clearly a norm and an obligation for men. Regardless, the tradition of lineage-based structure still persists, and men and women might often have separate resources of income and control over them. Indeed, in the face of an endemic economic crisis and widespread unemployment, Senegalese men have encountered difficulties to act as breadwinners and women are increasingly contributing to the economic subsistence in Senegalese families.

Polygamy is prevalent and recognized by authorities, both in Gambia and Senegal. According to Rosenlew (2012, 75), women are frequently considered as the head of households, because a polygamous husband is counted as the head of a household only in one wife's house. On average, a household in Dakar, the capital of Senegal, comprises around nine persons, including children and adults with family bonds, usually encompassing several generations.

The practice of child fostering is also common in West African societies. Contrary to the common Western perception, where a child's transfer to a new household is seen as a rupture in the family and hence a risk to the child, in African societies a relocation of a child to a different household is seen as normal, often beneficial for the child's progress. Children are seen as belonging to the lineage of their birth throughout their life and relocating children to be fostered in a another household can be seen as reaffirming



social connections of the parents and the new, often temporary, guardians. (Bledsoe & Sow 2011, 748-749.)

## 2.4 Senegambians and Immigration to Finland

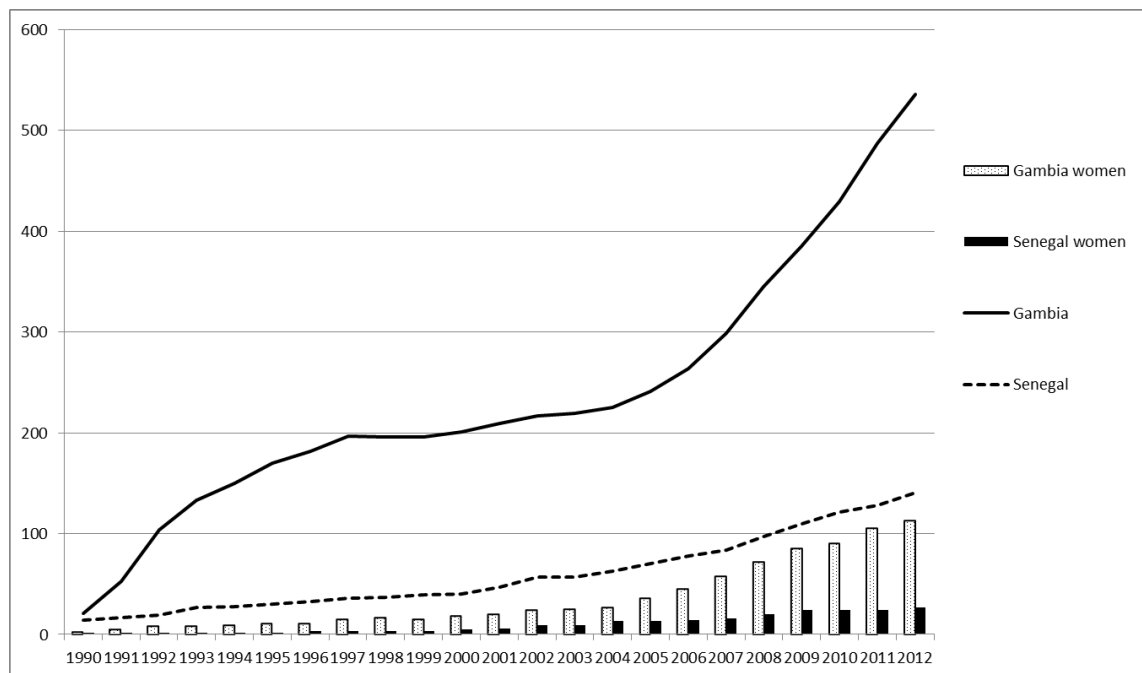
Martikainen et al. (2006) trace three migration waves in the post-Second World War Europe that have shaped and continue to shape migration flows also in Finland. First, the economic boom during the decades after the Second World War engendered a need for unskilled manual labor especially in France, Germany and United Kingdom, which was answered to by migrants from economically less developed countries in Europe, as well as from the colonies of European imperial powers. During this era Finns were mostly emigrating to fill the labor needs in the neighboring Sweden. (Forsander 2002. 16-22; Martikainen et al. 2006, 26.) Second, from the 1970s onwards immigration to Europe shifted towards increasing flows of refugees and family reunification of the settled labor migrants. Finland turned into an immigration country during this era, although, immigration started to increase only during the late 1980s. Substantial groups were for example Ingrians who were granted a returnee status and Somalian refugees since the beginning of 1990s. (Pohjanpää et al. 2003, 10-11.)

Martikainen et al. (2006, 28) state that Europe is now witnessing the third migration phase after the Second World War which is characterized by the aging population of European nations and the potential comeback of the need for labor force. This phase has also brought the feminization of migration flows as there is an increasing need of labor in the domestic and care work markets. I would add that this phase is also characterized by the integration of Europe, which manifests as the increasing freedom of movement within the European Union, and a simultaneous tightening of migration policy towards non-EU citizens.

As a result of these geopolitical-economic histories, the amount of immigrants in Finland is still very low in comparison to many other European and Nordic countries, although the increase during last decades has been rapid. In 2011, the population with a foreign mother tongue (statistical figure that includes migrants that have gained citizenship and second generation that has a foreign language registered as a mother tongue) was 266 148, which comprises 4.9 percent of the whole population. The largest language groups are Russian, Estonian, Somali, English and Arabic speaking minorities.

(Statistics Finland 2011a.) People have moved to Finland due to family reasons, for example marriage, as asylum seekers, and to lesser degree, through employment or education (Heikkilä & Pikkarainen 2008, 19, 6).

The number of African migrants in Finland is limited, apart from Somalis that form one of the largest migrant groups in Finland. In 2011 there were approximately 24 000 African born residents in Finland of which over third are Somalian born (Statistics Finland 2011b). The geographical distance, lack of historical networks and contemporary stringent migration policy are probably all contributing factors in the small size of migration flows between Finland and Sub-Saharan Africa. In 2011, there were 128 Senegalese born and 487 Gambian born residents in Finland. The vast majority of them are male, only 23 to 27 percent are female (see also Figure 1). Majority of Senegambian born residents are working age adults, 75 percent are between 25 to 50 years old. As migrants in general, Senegambians are concentrated in the capital metropolitan area, where approximately 60 percent live. (Ibid.)



**Figure 1** The number of Senegalese and Gambian born residents in Finland 1990 – 2012 (Statistics Finland).

There is not much knowledge or research about migration and life trajectories of African migrants in Finland, apart from Somalis (Rastas 2011). However, the migration

channels of Senegambian migrants can be speculated on the basis of statistics. In 2011, 138 Finnish born women were married to a Gambian and 45 with Senegalese (Statistics Finland 2011c), while Finnish born men are married to a very few Senegambian women (Statistics Finland 2011d). Between years 1987 and 2011, Finnish citizen women established 456 marriages with Gambian men and during the same years 244 marriages were dissolved. With Senegalese men the corresponding numbers are 89 and 31. (Statistics Finland 2011e, 2011f) In the light of these figures it can be interpreted that a substantial proportion of Senegambian migrants residing in Finland are, or have been, married with a Finn. During the last ten years, between 10 and 50 Gambians and 0 to 10 Senegalese have yearly claimed asylum in Finland. Of these applicants less than 10 per year have been granted a residence permit. (MIGRI 2013a.) In the light of these statistics, it seems that marriage migration might be a common migration channel.

Like most of the non-EU citizens, for an authorized entry and residence in Finland, Senegambians need a visa or a residence permit. A residence permit can be obtained on the basis of employment, family reunification, being accepted as a student in a university, or on the basis of a short term visa. Work contracts need to be signed before applying for an employment based residence permit. (MIGRI 2013b.) According to observations I have made among the participants of this study it seems that being accepted in a university in Finland is easier for Gambians, who conduct their studies in English, than to Senegalese, who mainly study in French. An entry to Finland with a short term visa is possible, but enquires substantial social and economic capital as potential visitors have to be invited by a person residing in Finland and the procedure often requires visa applicants to visit the closest Finnish embassy, that in West Africa is located in Abuja, Nigeria. (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2013.) Therefore, at the moment family reunification through marriage with a Finn is left to be one of the most prominent ways for a legal entry in Finland, as well as to other European countries.

### **3 Previous Studies**

In this chapter, I will review the relevant previous literature. I will start by mentioning the central research streams in the field of migration in Finland, and the studies focusing on African migrants and themes of transnationalism. After that I will review the international body of literature on transnational families, marriage migration and the role of remittances in transnational families. At last, I will briefly review the previous studies on Senegambian migrant transnationalism.

#### **3.1 Research on Migration in Finland**

As Finland has been an immigrant receiving country only for a little more than two decades, it is understandable that the body of research about immigrants and ethnic relations is not extensive. Nevertheless, as immigration and the level of ethnic diversity has increased with a relatively fast pace, the area of social research has also turned its attention to these topics. In the beginning of the century, migration research in Finland concentrated on immigration, refugees and ethnicity, while emigration from Finland was studied less. The most studied topics have included adaptation and acculturation of immigrants, integration and questions of identity (ETNO 2004, 11). In the same vein, Martikainen et al. (2006, 36) note that in the research field immigrants' labor market participation (e.g. Joronen 2005, 2007, 2012, Forsander 2002, Akhlaq 2005), acculturation processes and ethnic identities of migrants (e.g. Jasinskaja-Lahti et al. 2012) are themes that have established research streams in the Finnish context. The attitudes of Finns towards immigrants have also been frequently studied by Jaakkola, covering research already for two decades (see e.g. Jaakkola 2009).

Research has to some extent concentrated on few ethnic groups, such as Russians and Somalis (Puuronen 2006, 51). Also, as Finland does not have long traditions of so called guest worker migration, a substantial proportion of research concerns forced migration and refugee communities, such as Kurds and Vietnamese, in addition to previously mentioned Somalis (Wahlbeck 2013, Pentikäinen 2005, Tiilikainen 2003). However, even though refugees have raised attention in research as well as in the public debate, the majority of immigrants in Finland have moved due to family reasons (Heikkilä & Pikkarainen 2008, 19, 6).

### 3.1.1 Research on African Migrants in Finland

As immigrant groups from sub-Saharan Africa in Finland are quantitatively relatively small, apart from Somalis, it is understandable that Africans, their lives and influence on the Finnish society, has mostly been absent from the literature (Rastas 2011). Research as well as public debate has concentrated on Somalis and challenges of integration (ibid.). Rastas has studied the experiences of racism in the form of open racism as well as racializing discourses in the everyday life of children and young people with ‘transnational roots’, including children with an African descent (e.g. Rastas 2009). A co-written article with Seye (Rastas & Seye 2012) examines African immigrant musicians in Finland. Music often has a significant role among immigrant communities, but has been a stock of cultural capital especially for Africans, and offered means of self-employment, as well an interface to engage in interaction with ethnic majority Finns.

Haapajarvi (2012) has recently conducted field work among African evangelical churches in Helsinki and Paris and examines the ways in which religious communities facilitate elements of social integration, help collectively resist racial stigmatization and urban poverty of African immigrant communities. African churches in Finland have also been examined by Vähäkangas (e.g. 2009), while Korhonen (1997) has written on the meanings of religion and among Gambian Muslims in Finland.

Egharevba (2011) has studied the relations and prejudices between police and African immigrants residing in Turku, and concludes that encounters are easily heightened to tensions due to lack of language proficiency and lack of contact in other contexts. Also, unawareness about Finnish perceptions of human rights, and the experiences of violence by the police in the countries of origin contribute to the distrust towards police. The encounters with Finnish public service institutions has been also studied by Adjekughele (2003) who examines the ways linguistic and cultural issues play out in the experiences of African immigrant mothers in the Finnish maternity and child health clinics. In a recent Master’s Thesis, Osazee (2011) studies West African asylum seekers and experiences of liminality during the process to be recognized or dismissed as refugees. The experience of liminality can be reduced by participation within informal social networks, which are important in the process of re-making place and the sense of

belonging. This is important in combatting boredom, stress and social isolation, widely experienced during the asylum process.

As stated previously, Somalis form the biggest African group residing in Finland. In addition, Somalis comprise the biggest Muslim minority, as well as the biggest minority with a refugee background. Moreover, Somalis are a visible minority in Finland by racial characteristics and perceived to have a wide cultural distance from the Finns. Against this backdrop, it is understandable that Somalis are one of the most researched ethnic minorities, and by far, the most studied African group in the Finnish case. Research among Somalis has explored for example, the arrival and reception of the Somali refugees (Aallas 1991, Virtanen 1993) labor market participation (Joronen 1997, 2007, Pohjanpää et al. 2003), religious practices and its meanings in the everyday life (Tiilikainen 2003) and the constructions of gender and identities especially among young Somalis growing in the crossings of Finnish society and Somali culture (Marjeta 2001, Hautaniemi 2004).

### **3.1.2 Studies with a Transnational Optic**

If acculturation, identities and labor market integration have so far been central within the research field of ethnic relations and immigration, questions related to transnationalism and family life are now shifting the focus to the border crossing ties that are increasingly redefining living in Finland (Martikainen et al. 2006, 36). However, there is still a lack of information about the growing role of transnationalism among immigrant communities in Finland (Wahlbeck 2011).

Wahlbeck has contributed significantly to bringing the transnational approach to the migration studies in Finland, and has been the first to use the analytical concept of diaspora in the Finnish context. He has conducted a comparative study on the Kurdish refugee diasporas in Britain and Finland (Wahlbeck 1999) and examines comparatively the social organization of the communities, their integration to the host countries, but as well the ties to the country of origin. Wahlbeck (2004) has also studied the meanings of transnational ties and social capital among Turkish fast food entrepreneurs in Finland. He concludes that, even though Turkish migrant entrepreneurs have employed the social capital that their transnational ties and the ethnic community in Finland offer, social

capital gained from ties to Finland plays a crucial role, which points to the importance of the local embeddedness, instead of transnational ties.

As Somalis have been one of the most studied groups in Finland, research on Somalis in Finland has also been among the first to include aspects of diaspora and transnationalism. Tiilikainen (2007) has studied the Somali diaspora, the maintenance of personal ties to Somalia and the negotiation and recreation of cultural and religious identities in a diasporic context. In addition, her research covers the transnational practices related to illness and healing. As Somalis sometimes look for familiar herbal and religious remedies and treatments, transnational networks are utilized to have access to these treatments. (Mölsä et al. 2010.) In addition, Tiilikainen has examined the transnational practice of sending a family member to Somaliland for a period of time, often as a disciplining act. The case of the ones deported by their own families, illustrates how belonging to the extended family and its networks and values is often maintained even in the transnational arrangement and diasporic reality. Indeed, also among Somali families in Finland, transnational arrangements are common, and various family members are often scattered around the world in Western countries, but as well in the Middle East, in Somalia, or elsewhere in Africa. (Tiilikainen 2011.)

There are few other studies concerned with transnationalism of migrants residing in Finland. Huttunen (2006) studies the transnational lived space that refugees from Bosnia-Herzegovina living in Finland are engaged with. She examines the social practices that engender the transnational lived space and experience of 'betweennes'. Bosnians spend significant periods of time in both locations, work in Finland, but invest resources in restoring family homes in Bosnia. Therefore, ties are developed to Finland, but simultaneously maintained to Bosnia. Valtonen (2004), instead, has studied the significance of transnationalism and its meanings for integration among Vietnamese refugees residing in Finland. Transnational practices and experiences of reciprocity with kin members are prevalent and is the arena of transnational ties while the relationship with the state of Vietnam is often problematic, as a consequence of persecution or repression. Valtonen argues that the transnational space Vietnamese are involved with can enhance the settlement process in Finland by offering resources and opportunity, instead of being an alternative trajectory of incorporation.

Zechner (2006) has studied the transnational arrangements of elderly care among Estonian and Russian migrants. The experience of place is discussed in terms of distance, virtual space, states' migration and social policies, and two different cultures of care. Also Hyvönen (2009) studies migration between Estonia and Finland, and examines the migration of mothers of small children, in both directions between Finland and Estonia, focusing on the expectations and experiences of their new country of residence, acculturation and transnational social networks.

Finally, in a recent study, Haikkola (2012) examines the transnationalism of the immigrant background second generation youth in Helsinki. The study argues that second generation do not reproduce their parents' transnational ties and practices as such, but transnationalism should be understood with a contextual approach, as a multi-sited context that informs the identity formation of the second generation youth.

### **3.2 Research on Transnational Families**

One way of approaching the phenomena of migrant transnationalism is to distinguish different domains of human life, such as economic, political, religious and socio-cultural, and examine how transnationalism surfaces in these spheres (e.g. Vertovec 2009). One important arena of social life is of course families, and as shown in the previous sub-chapter, also many of the first studies about transnationalism in the Finnish context have included aspects of family relations (e.g. Zechner 2006, Hyvönen 2009, Tiilikainen 2011, Haikkola 2012). Indeed, *transnational families*, meaning families that live with at least one member dispersed by border crossing distance, is an important subcategory of studies examining transnationalism.

In the field of family studies, immigrant families have often been under the research agenda. However, until the last decade, studies focused to examine immigrant nuclear families, living together and bounded by a nation state. In other words, spatial proximity was emphasized as a prerequisite for interaction and exchange among families. Family arrangements crossing borders of nation states, instead, were long ignored or assumed to be temporary formations, and family reunification in the destination country of an immigrant was seen as the preferred outcome for all family members. In contrast, in the fields of migration and development studies attention was turned to examine the ways in which migrants maintain ties to their countries of origin. (Landolt & Da 2005.)



The globalization of production and labor flows combined with stringent migration policies of Western countries that make it difficult for families to migrate together, have increased the frequency of transnational family formations. As a consequence, during the past decade, scholars have started to turn their attention to the social phenomenon and the myriad forms of transnational families. The body of literature comprises mostly of qualitative case studies and there is not much quantitative large scale data available about the prevalence and effects of transnational family arrangements. (Mazzucato & Schans 2011, 705.)

The study of transnational families has examined how families adapt to the circumstances of spatial distance and are able to maintain family ties, provide emotional and financial support and reproduce an experience of 'familyhood' (Bryceson & Vuorela 2002, Burholt 2004, Mason 2004). Goulbourne and Chamberlain (2001) demonstrate how geographical distance is not a barrier for the experience of having close family relations, strong emotional bonds and experience of trust in transnational relations. Wilding (2006) examines the use of communication technology in showing how transnational families keep contact over distance. Mason (2004) studies the symbolic and practical meanings of travelling to visit family members in the process of maintenance of kinship ties in transnational contexts.

Scholars have shown that spatial distance does not mean the cessation of caring, despite it often engenders difficulties in providing emotional support and monitoring family members' needs (Zontini 2006). The last decade of studies about the functioning and practices of transnational families has created literature on transnational motherhood (Erel 2002, Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila 1997, Parreñas 2001), transnational fatherhood (Pribilsky 2004) and transnational childhood (Parreñas 2005, Schmalzbauer 2008, Mazzucato & Schans 2011). In addition, studies about transnational partnering or 'couplehood' have emerged, examining the implications of transnational arrangements for couples (Pribilsky 2004). Transnational arrangements and negotiations have also been studied in the context of elderly care (Izuhara & Shibata 2002, Huttunen 2006).

A significant proportion of transnational family studies have focused on female migrant workers' family relations. This is partly due to the structural change where the demand of labor in Western immigrant attracting countries has shifted from manufacturing work

to the service industry, especially to care work, which has led to the feminization of migration flows from the poor global south. Combined with restrictive migration policy, women increasingly migrate independently, a development that has significantly contributed to the contemporary emergence of transnational families. (Hochschild 2003.)

The studies examining how family and kinship ties are maintained in transnational contexts and how familial care is arranged, experienced or negotiated, include aspects related to power, inequalities, identities and class formations within transnational families. Studies have shown how power based on cultural norms related to gender or generation can be either reproduced or challenged in transnational contexts (Dreby & Adkins 2010), or how processes of diverging class statuses or identities affect transnational family relations (van Dijk 2002, Schalmzbauer 2008).

### **3.2.1 Transnational Families and Remittances**

Economic transfers from migrants to their families and communities, in other words remittances, are a central phenomenon among transnational families. However, until very recently, research on remittances have mostly been large scale quantitative analyses on remittance flows and the potential poverty reducing effects on remittance receiving communities or nations. Despite, lately, scholars have started to turn their attention to examine the micro-level social dynamics and processes that influence remittance behavior. This way there has been a call for moving beyond the developmentalist approach, and to examine the social meanings of remittances, in addition to the economic. (Wong 2006, 1452; Yeoh et al. forthcoming.) In doing so, there has been a quest to bridge the gap between studies on remittances and transnational families.

Thus, recent studies have departed from the simplistic analyses that have treated remittances either as altruistic acts of migrants, or contractual arrangements of repaying resources that family members have previously invested in the migrant. Crensil (2012) studies remittances in the context of African migrants residing in Finland from the perspective of migrants' maintenance of kinship ties to the country of origin. Sending remittances is a prerequisite for migrants to be considered as responsible relatives by the home communities. It is also an important source of positive self-images for migrants and a way of reproducing the sense of belonging to the home community.

Wong (2006) treats Ghanaian migrants' remittances in the same manner as Crensil, but deepens the analysis to examine the ways remittances are negotiated in terms of cultural norms related to gender and Ghanaian matrilineal kinship system. Remittances are crucial in the production and reproduction of households and families that are structured transnationally, and remittances are sent to fulfil gendered obligations, which are, at the same time however, contested and negotiated. Also Carling (2008) emphasizes the negotiations behind transnational practices, but leaves aside the negotiations related to gendered and culturally specific notions of familial obligations. Instead, Carling turns to examine, how the circumstances related to the bi-local, border crossing transnational space shape the dynamics between migrants and their communities of origin, and as a consequence, transnational practices such as sending remittances.

These aspects of transnational families, maintaining and negotiating 'familyhood', power, inequalities and negotiating remittances reviewed here shortly, will be discussed in length in the next chapter, in which the theoretical framework is laid down.

### **3.2.2 Transnational and Bi-Cultural Marriages**

As a result of present-day globalization and international migration policies, marriage is gaining new kind of importance as a means of mobility. Whereas in the 1950s and 1960s, many North and Western European countries accepted thousands of workers, both from European, as well as non-European countries, since the 1970s options for migrants of non-EU states to enter Europe have been considerably narrowed. Today, potential migrants from non-EU states are increasingly left with two options for a legal entry, asylum or marriage. (Schmidt 2011a.)

The process is enhanced by simultaneous processes of globalization and mobility. As the economic and political conditions in many regions of the world have deteriorated, many aim their hopes of socio-economic upward mobility on migration. Secondly, the imaginations of people in the poor 'global south' are increasingly fed by globalizing media as well as the flows of tourists, that enable the comparison of their position with people from Western parts of the world. At the same time, Western countries have set up increasingly restrictive policies limiting migration. As a result there is a tremendous tension between the hopes and barriers of migration. Therefore joining a family member abroad has become often the most promising pathway for migration, and as a

consequence marriage has taken historically new importance for the new generation potential migrants. (Beck-Gernsheim 2011, 60-63.)

Despite the fact that family related migration has been the dominant mode of legal entry to EU-countries during the last two decades, research on the topic has been underdeveloped theoretically, methodologically and empirically (Kofman 2004). In migration studies there has been a focus on an individual migrant and on economic aspects, whereas in policy, family migration has been treated as a secondary form of migration, subordinate and divorced from labor markets. However, in recent years family-related migrations have raised the attention of scholars especially in the North American and Asian-Pacific contexts, as network analysis and concepts of transnationalism have gained foothold in migration research (ibid., 243).

As Charsley (2012, 13) notes on a recent volume on migration, transnationalism and marriage, the field has so far lacked conceptual clarity and the concept of transnational marriage has been employed to refer to various kinds of formations of marriages. One significant area of study has been marriages formed within relatively established transnational communities, between first, or subsequent generation migrants and spouses from the country of their origin (or their parents' origin in the case of the second generation) (see e.g. Schmidt 2001b).

Another research stream related to migration and marriage has examined the unions formed by migrants and members of the ethnic majority of the destination country, that have been referred to as 'mixed', bi-national, bi-cultural or intercultural marriages (Lainiala & Säävälä 2012, 16). Even though the phenomenon has increasingly raised attention, the area remains under-researched (ibid., 19). The qualitative studies of 'mixed marriages' have examined, for example, the negotiations related to the gender roles or values transmitted in the upbringing of children in these families (Rodríguez García 2008) or the threat of stigmatization that bi-cultural marriages in some contexts suffer of (Reuter & Kyntäjä 2006).

This branch of study is relevant for the Thesis in hand, even though it must be noted that studies of bi-cultural marriages have been, to large extent, disjointed from the study of transnational marriages and the themes of transnationalism in general. Studies

mapping the phenomenon of bi-cultural marriages have mostly examined the cases in the bounds of the receiving societies (Kofman 2004, 249) and so far largely ignored the transnational ties that these couples are involved with, or negotiations that strong transnational orientation of the migrant partner might engender in these families. The first studies have, although, suggested that in bi-cultural families, partners might have different perceptions about the emotional or economic obligations their family members have towards their parents or children, and therefore for example sending remittances might engender tensions or discontent (Lainiala & Säävälä 2012). In the same vein, Rodríguez García (2006, 419-420), that has studied bi-cultural marriages of Senegambians in Spain, notes that a potential source of conflict is the difference in the independence of the Western way of life and the African family solidarity, but ends up to emphasize the space for negotiation in these relationships. All in all, it can be concluded that in the research field of transnational families there is a lack of research of the transnational arrangements and relationships in bi-cultural families where partners originate from different countries (Rodríguez Garcia 2008, 263).

### **3.3 Research on Senegambian Transnationalism**

As already described previously, in the face of population growth and deteriorating economic situation, emigration and migrant remittances play a remarkably significant societal role in Senegal and Gambia, and one can distinguish manifestations of a migration culture. Therefore, it is no surprise that studies on Senegambian migrants have widely included aspects of transnational ties and practices.

The studies on Senegambian transnationalism have to some extent concentrated on the religious and economic transnational networks built around the Islamic brotherhoods of Senegal (e.g. Kane 2008), especially the *Muridiyya* brotherhood (e.g. Riccio 2001, 2004, 2008). According to Jacques (2009, 16) research on transnational *Mourids* study the ways in which the religious organization and philosophy of the brotherhood advances migration and transnationalism, functions to maintain solidarity among followers of the brotherhood abroad, facilitates the entrepreneurial activities of Mourids abroad, and their lived experience (e.g Riccio 2004, see Jacques 2009 for a review). Many of the Mourid migrants are involved in trading, and the organizational features of the brotherhood help migrants to organize business and temporary settlement within the

receiving societies (Ricchio 2004, 929). Ties to the brotherhood's religious leaders, *marabouts*, are maintained through donations and pilgrimages to the headquarters of the brotherhood in Senegal. while respectively, *marabouts* visit the Mourid circuits abroad. In addition, transnational processes of Mourids have been examined on the familial level. Family ties are maintained through remittances, visits, marriage and home construction. (see e.g. Buggenhagen 2001.) The Mourid traders' transnational migration is a continuation for earlier rural-urban migration within Senegal (Jacques 2009, 39), as the brotherhood's economic, and religious ties have been readily reproduced now on a transnational level (Ricchio 2004, 929).

Ricchio (2004, 929), who has written extensively on African migrants in Italy, concludes that Senegalese migration to Italy is strongly male dominated, often circulatory migration, where migrants usually leave families in Senegal, where their transnational social networks are anchored. Maintaining dominant ties to Senegal is prevalent, and despite spending large parts of their time away they are "returning there at fairly frequent intervals with the overall goal of creating an economic, social and spiritual life for themselves and their families in Senegal" (Ricchio 2001, 584). Uniting family members in Italy is relatively rare, either because it can be a source of stigmatization that rises from the fear that migrants' children will lose their cultural and religious influences and identity abroad, or because of economic factors, as keeping family members, in other words, consumption, in the sending country is simply less expensive. (Ricchio 2008, 219-222.)

However, Ricchio also reminds about the multiple trajectories and strategies, internal tensions within the Senegalese migrant communities in Italy. Various factors, such as the sending context in Senegal (rural-urban), educational background, form of labor in the receiving context, organizational strategies and willingness to interact with the host society, all affect to the way of being a transnational migrant and also create negotiations and tensions within the Senegalese communities. For example, some Senegalese tend to work in the formal labor market and make efforts to organize a non-religious form of socio-political representation within Italy while others prefer to trade, identify religious circles as the most fulfilling organizational form, but benefit materially and spiritually from the life the transnational field. (Ricchio 2001.)

As Senegalese Mourids demonstrate both a distinct form and expression of Islam and a particularly good example of transnationalism (Riccio 2004, 929), the focus on Mourid diaspora in research about Senegambian transnationalism migration is understandable. A recent study by Jacques (2009), however, takes another angle on Senegambian transnational migration and examines Senegambian migrants in Catalonia, Spain and the relationship between labor market integration and transnational practices. The study shows that as transnational behaviors depend also on resources available, contrary to the findings of some previous studies, migrants with regular status, upward economic and occupational mobility in the host country actually show transnational activities greater in range and frequency than irregular migrants employed in marginal sectors of seasonal work.

However, as a more relevant aspect for this Thesis, Jacques also distinguishes life-cycle and family trajectories as factors affecting transnationalism. The majority of the participants of Jacques' study arrived in Spain as young, single males. As the migrants are able to regularize their status in Spain they often return to Senegal and marry in their country of origin. When married, some prefer to apply for family reunification in Spain, while some prefer to locate family members in the country of origin where daily consumption is less expensive. This matter also affects the degree of transnationalism, as the decision to keep wives and children in the country of origin, tends to intensify transnational practices. With family reunification, transnational activities tend to decline and resources are aimed more to the host society. Migrants who do not marry tend to make investments in land and home construction. In Jacques' study, marriages with Spanish people as a family trajectory or as a means for a legal entry in Spain do not occur. (Jacques 2009, 189.)

As the Senegalese of Italy in Riccio's studies, the Senegambians of Spain in Jacques' study share the *project of return*. Jacques holds these life-cycle practices as a proof that shows that migration is foremost a livelihood strategy for Senegambians in Spain. The active working years are spent in Spain and their retirement involves the return to their community of origin. (Jacques 2009, 189.) To conclude, according to Jacques, transnationalism is significantly dependent on the economic mobility and immigration status of migrants, but as well on family formation trajectories, especially marital status and the location of spouses and children.

## 4 Towards a Theoretical Framework on Transnational Families

In this chapter, I will lay down the theoretical framework of the study. I start by underlining the broad theoretical orientation of the transnational approach in migration studies before presenting the formulation of transnationalism as social spaces (Faist 2000). I then turn to theorizing the issue of maintaining family ties in transnational context and discuss the cultural and spatial dynamics shaping transnational family ties and practices, including remittance expectations and behaviors.

### 4.1 The Transnational Turn in Migration Scholarship

Lewitt and Jaworsky (2007, 130) see the transnational turn, meaning the shift in attention where research increasingly started to examine the ways migrants participate in various processes that span across national, geographic and cultural borders, as a sea change that transformed migration scholarship. The fact that migration research among social scientists for so long focused on the context of the receiving society can be more easily understood by reminding oneself about the history of sociology. Since its birth, sociology has been harnessed to the service of the nation-state and for example, in United States, the incorporation of newcomers was one of the first sociological discussions (Lewitt & Jaworsky 2007, 130). This explains the significance of the transnational turn in migration studies, as sociologists have tended to presume that the focus of study, the society, is geographically bounded to a nation state. Research and debate about transnational social fields has therefore been seen as a significant reminder for scholars, that social reality in itself is never geographically bounded. Even though political borders might be important in the construction and imagination of space, they cannot be taken for granted. (Wahlbeck 2004, 102.) Thus, the crucial insight that the transnational turn offers for migration studies is, as it has been phrased, the critique of the *methodological nationalism* (e.g. Levitt & Jaworsky 2007, 142).

The first theoretical formulations of transnationalism by anthropologists (Glick Schiller et al. 1992, Basch et al. 1994) were ground breaking, but simultaneously provoked a substantial amount of critique. The scholars first to develop the approach were criticized of overstating the prevalence, its consequences for migrants, and the novelty of the phenomenon. Firstly, the pioneers of transnationalism stated that migrants of today are involved with transnational social fields in such an extent that contemporary migrants



should be categorized as *transmigrants*. However, others convincingly argued that the level of migrants' transnational involvement varies to such an extent that all contemporary migrants cannot be accurately framed with such a concept. Secondly, the pioneers were criticized of treating transnational practices as an alternative to assimilation, as transnationalism was optimistically seen as a way to overcome poverty and powerlessness that tended to dominate many migrants' lives in destination countries. However, critical scholars rightly emphasized the continuing meaning of assimilation trajectories and borders of nation states in migrants' lives. (Levitt & Jaworsky 2007, 130-131.)

Finally, one of the critiques is related to the novelty of the phenomenon. Some argued that immigrants have for ages endeavored and managed to maintain links with their homelands and to overcome the geographical divide. Thus, it has been questioned whether new theoretical formulation was justified for understanding the phenomenon. However, while it has been admitted that early scholars to promote the transnational approach might have overstated the novelty of the migrants' cross-border activities, it has also been convincingly argued that there are historical differences between earlier and more recent migrations and transnationalisms. Among other factors, the intensification of international economic and labor markets, the globalization of the media, and especially the revolution in transportation and communication which have made the maintenance of transnational ties and practices much quicker, easier and affordable – a development often referred to as the *time-space compression* – have contributed to qualitative and quantitative changes in transnational fields and practices. (For a review of criticism on the transnational approach and the debate about the novelty of transnationalism, see Vertovec 2009, 13-21.)

Indeed, while transnationalism is an overlapping, but distinct concept from that of globalization, it is not a coincidence that growing interest in transnationalism parallels the growth in interest in globalization, and is related to increased global interconnectedness across a broad range of human domains. Enhanced transnational connections between various social groups represent a key manifestation of globalization, and transnationalism is today a central approach in migration scholarship. (Ibid., 2.) In this study, I follow this theoretical orientation, and I argue that to adequately understand Senegambian migrants' migration and family trajectories, it is

compulsory to examine the ways migrants are “to varying degrees, simultaneously embedded in the multiple sites and layers of the transnational social fields in which they live” (Lewitt & Jaworsky 2007, 130).

## 4.2 Transnationalism as Social Spaces

According to Kivisto (2001, 549), scholars have presented various differing and competing definitions for transnationalism, and as a result the concept has to some extent suffered from ambiguity. Differing definitions have led to varying units and levels of analysis, and scholars have had difficulties to locate the term in relation to preceding concepts such as assimilation. The first formulations by anthropologists (Glick Schiller et al. 1992, Basch et al. 1994) saw transnational migration as building border-crossing social fields. In their definition transnationalism is “processes by which immigrants build social fields that link together their country of origin and the country of settlement” (Glick Schiller et al. 1992, 1). Migrants therefore develop and maintain multiple – familial, economic, social, organizational, religious, and political – relations that cross geographic, cultural and political borders (Basch et. al 1994, 7). The processes that link together these locations include various practices, such as sending remittances and goods, investing in land and housing or small businesses, visiting the country of origin, participating in politics, home town associations or religious organizations, or marrying someone from the community of origin (e.g. Vertovec 2009).

Subsequent work on theoretical developments on transnationalism has aimed to refine the definition, and have especially sought to distinguish the different forms, levels and units of analysis. Guarnizo (1997) defines transnationalism as the interconnecting sociocultural, economic and political relationships that transcend the authority of the nation-state, including the behaviors that sustain these connections and the identities that emerge from them. Guarnizo & Smith (1998) distinguish two levels of transnationalism: “from above” and “from below”. The former refers to border-crossing social formations and activities such as global capital and corporations and political institutions, whereas the latter refers to grassroots activity of individuals and families. Portes et al. (1999), whose work on elaborating on the work of Glick Schiller, Basch et al. has been significant (see Kivisto 2001, 557-564), concludes that the appropriate level

of analysis in the field of migrant transnationalism is “transnationalism below”, individuals and their support networks.

One of the most prominent efforts to distinguish different analytical levels of migrant transnationalism is often associated to the work of Thomas Faist (2000, see also Kivisto 2001). Faist’s effort is to develop and clarify the idea of a social field, even though he recasts the concept by speaking about *transnational social spaces* (Kivisto 2001, 564). Transnational social spaces “consist of combinations of ties and their contents, positions in networks and organizations that can be found in at least two geographically and internationally distinct places” (Faist 2000, 197). Faist identifies three types of transnational social spaces, that each has a characteristic tie: 1) kinship groups, 2) transnational circuits, and 3) transnational communities. Kinship groups are predicated on culturally received ties of reciprocity. Family members sending remittances is a clear manifestation of this transnational social space. Transnational circuits, in contrast, are formed of instrumental exchange ties and therefore involve trading networks, entrepreneurs and businesses and the broader cross-border circulation of goods, people and information. Transnational communities are, instead, predicated on the solidarity derived from a shared conception of collective identity that is rising from symbolic ties based on a repertoire of collective representations, rather than narrow kinship ties. Transnational communities, therefore, fits to depict larger, established immigrant communities and diasporas. (Ibid., 202-210.)

The classification that Faist makes to distinguish different types of transnational spaces helps to set the level of analysis also for this study. The level of analysis of this study is kinships groups, which is transnationalism predicated on a culturally received ties of reciprocity. Moreover, the efforts of Faist to define the concept of transnational social space are helpful in order to understand the complex dynamics that shape transnational practices and multi-local family ties of the Senegambian migrants in Finland. In his definition of transnational social space, Faist distinguishes space from place.

Space here does not only refer to physical features, but also to larger opportunity structures, the social life and the subjective images, values, and meanings that the specific and limited place represents to migrants. Space is thus different from place in that it encompasses or spans various territorial locations. It includes two or more places. Space has a social meaning that extends beyond simple territoriality; only with concrete social or symbolic ties does it gain meaning for potential migrants. (Faist 2000, 45-46.)

Indeed, drawing from Faist, to understand transnational ties of migrants, one has to take into account this kind of understanding of a space that includes, and is constituted of, opportunity structures, physical features, but also subjective images and meanings related to two or more places, and what they represent to migrants. As scholars have reminded, even if contemporary migrants increasingly inhabit transnational spaces that involve various locations, and cross political, cultural and geographical borders, nevertheless, culture and history, existing social patterns and dynamics, in addition to political powers, still matter. (Levitt & Jaworsky 2007, 144.) For example, the salience and durability of national or state borders, the variations in state economic, military, or political power, and the continuing rhetoric of national loyalty are still strong. Migrants' ability to make political claims is still enabled or constrained by the state in various ways and this points to the state's continuing importance in shaping transnational practices. (Ibid., 134; Yeoh et al. 2003, Koopmans & Statham 2003.) In other words, transnational social spaces are not deterritorialized, but embedded and connected in specific localities and nations. (Wahlbeck 2004, 105; e.g. Portes et al. 1999.)

### **4.3 The Transnational Family**

In their eminent volume, Bryceson and Vuorela (2002, 3) define the concept of transnational family as families that live, some or most of the time, separated from each other by a physical distance that crosses national borders, but which at the same time, maintain and create a feeling of collective welfare and unity, i.e. 'familyhood'. The authors stress that transnationalism has an impact on people's family lives, and that a transnational approach is crucial when studying family lives of migrants. Migrants and their families cannot be seen as belonging to one or another state because they often have totally different ideas about networking and connecting. However, this does not mean that migrants should be seen in the framework of nostalgia and orientation only to past, to the country and community of origin. Instead, one should examine migrants' ways of living as well as "negotiations between movement and staying put, between different levels of loyalties and their orientation to past, present and future" (ibid., 6).

Bryceson and Vuorela rightly note that there are a lot of spatially dispersed families that are rarely examined as transnational families. People working in the higher positions of nation state border crossing companies, political bodies or development cooperation

organizations are often seen as leading mobile or cosmopolitan lives instead linking them to transnational migration. This way the terms migrant and transnational family tend to carry class connotations, as they are more readily applied to people moving from economically or politically deprived contexts. This observation functions as an important reminder that in examining transnational families, there is a strong need to contextualize the object of research. As transnational families are highly heterogeneous, also their attitudes to place are “highly varied, ambiguous and subject to change” (ibid., 7). However, despite the myriad forms and diversity of transnational families, there are also recognizable patterns that have emerged. (Bryceson & Vuorela 2012, 7-8.)

Uniform with all families, also transnational families are shaped by a temporal dimension. Individuals’ emotional and material needs as well as their perceptions of their families and sense of belonging change in different points of their own life-cycles. In transnational arrangements, various conventional relationships between husband and wife, parent and child or amongst siblings can be under significant revision through keeping contact and negotiation. (Bryceson & Vuorela 2012, 17-18.)

For example, studies have suggested that in many contexts men feel stronger pressure to contribute mainly economically for the well-being of the family, a feature which often accentuates in transnational arrangements (Dreby & Adkins 2010, 681). In contrast, studies have shown that transnational parenthood is especially difficult for mothers, as norms related to family life often emphasize the importance of the mother-child dyad. Therefore, mothers living separated from their children often experience feelings of guilt about leaving children behind and suffer as a consequence (Parreñas 2001). However, transnational mothers also actively struggle to reconceptualize the values and ideas associated with motherhood by emphasizing the importance of breadwinning and economic support for children (ibid., Erel 2001, Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila 1997). Studies have noted also the structural changes in family care which migration has engendered in emigration countries of workers. As women leave their families behind to do under-paid and undervalued caring jobs in Western countries, they often have to in turn employ extended family members or other non-migrant women to take care of their own family members, a process that has been referred to as *global care chains*. (Hochschild 2003, Mazzucato & Schans 2008.)

For children, separation from parents can cause suffering, but on the other hand a migrant member in the family often also means increase in material resources (Schmalzbauer 2008). Transnational families that have a female member abroad have been suggested to especially benefit economically, as mothers tend to sacrifice more in order to be able to send remittances (Abrego 2009). However, it has also been reported that children suffer more emotionally from the distance to their mother than they do for their father (Mazzucato & Schans 2011, 705).

#### 4.4 Maintaining 'Familyhood' in Transnational Distance

The central question concerning transnational families relates to maintenance of 'familyhood' in a situation where members are dispersed across distances. If in sociology the nation state has traditionally been seen as the natural unit of analysis, Bryceson and Vuorela state that in anthropology, there has been a long tradition of seeing family and nation state as natural units and parallel structures. This view has been later contested, and in contemporary literature, referring to Anderson (1985), both nation and family are today more understood as *imagined communities* rather than natural parallel units. Even though one is born into a family and a nation, the sense of a membership can be negotiated or chosen. (Bryceson & Vuorela 2002, 9-11.)

Thus, all families have to work both consciously and unconsciously in order to constitute themselves as viable social units. They are directed by shared affections, emotional inter-dependence and often an exchange of economic resources for their mutual benefit. However, as transnational families often face unpredictable or irregular physical encounters, the need to maintain the notion of 'familyhood' comes especially to the fore. In the absence of continuous day-to-day interaction, rather than taking it for granted, members of transnational families have to construct the notion of family and economic utility more deliberately, often through conscious rationalization and negotiation. Therefore, transnational families are considerably fluid and relational in nature. Despite of physical distances, they aim, like all families, at mutual support and to provide a source of identity. The fundamental function of mutual welfare, can however in transnational contexts be severely tested. (Ibid., 6-15.)

In order to better grasp the process described above, Bryceson and Vuorela (2002, 15) develop a concept useful in understanding the maintenance of 'familyhood' in

transnational family arrangements. *Relativizing* refers to, simply put, family making. It refers to the “variety of ways how individuals establish, maintain or curtail relational ties with specific family members”. It refers to the modes of materializing the family as a community, having shared feelings and mutual obligations, during time of declining contact and spatial proximity. The concept stresses the selectiveness and relativity of family ties that are affected by spatial but also temporal and need-related considerations. Drawing from this, the concept is highly useful as I examine the ways Senegambian migrants maintain, reproduce, create or neglect their family ties in a transnational context that is crucially affected by spatial distance. I understand the concept as referring to the concrete practices that migrants either maintain or give up of, to reproduce social relations. (Ibid.)

Methods and technologies of relativizing include phone calls, letters, e-mail and visits that help maintaining closeness from afar. However, as migration for many transnational families is foremost a strategy for upward socio-economic mobility, it is the economic remittances that is a crucial currency of contact among legions of transnational families (Dreby & Atkins 2010, 680). Money has a deterritorialized quality. Migrants can send money from any part of the world contributing to daily subsistence of the family, or to just express honor and respect between family members (van Dijk 2002). Therefore, remittance expectations and behaviors are a central mode of relativizing.

Having said this, it lays down the approach how remittances are being examined in this study. Both, remittance expectations by the community of origin, and remittance behaviors by migrants, are examined as manifestations of migrants’ continued membership in the community and family of origin, regardless of the spatial rupture. Remittances are examined as relativizing, a way to maintain and reproduce family ties, and are thus informed by the migrants’ sense of belonging in the community of the origin. (Crentsil 2012, Wong 2006.)

However, understanding relativizing does not yet fully grasp the negotiations and dynamics behind transnational relations. Senders and receivers negotiate remittances in mutually reinforcing or discordant ways (Wong 2006, 359). Indeed, even though transnational families often function as an arena of reciprocal welfare, mutual support,

and a source of identity, nevertheless, complex dynamics between migrants and communities of origin also often produce contradictory experiences (ibid., 361). Therefore, I follow a formulation by Wong, who conceptualizes remittances as “constituting relationships between senders and receivers that are continually being negotiated and contested in and across different places” (ibid., 355).

Attention must be paid to various factors that engender dynamics and negotiations within transnational relations. In order to analyze and grasp these processes, I distinguish two dimensions: *cultural* and *spatial dynamics* in transnational relations. With these two dimensions I point to dynamics rising from different factors, even though the dimensions are closely intertwined. In the following, I will first elaborate the approach to examining the cultural dynamics, and after that, the spatial dynamics in transnational relations and remittances expectations and behaviors.

#### **4.4.1 Cultural Dynamics Shaping Transnational Family Ties**

The cultural dynamics behind remittances point to the family norms among migrants’ families and communities in question. Remittances are shaped by processes related to culturally specific idealized norms that govern gender and generational relations, construction of femininities and masculinities, the division of labor, marriage and parenthood. As Dreby and Adkins (2010, 680) note, even though families are arenas of care and solidarity, they are as well arenas of power and conflict. All families have to mediate inequality among their members (Bryceson & Vuorela 2002, 7), and in transnational arrangements, depending on individual action, culturally specific family norms and power inequalities based on gender and generation might be challenged and melt, or alternatively, be reproduced and even accentuate (Dreby & Adkins 2010, 680). By incorporating the dimension of cultural dynamics in analyses of remittances, it can be examined how these culturally specific idealized norms governing family life are continuously enacted, renewed or contested and compromised in transnational families (Wong 2006, 358).

In examining the continuous negotiation of these culturally specific family norms, I employ another concept that Bryceson and Vuorela have suggested, *frontiering*. Yet I argue that Bryceson and Vuorela leave some space for interpretation in their definition of the concept. Gouldbourne et al. (2009, 7) have made a similar comment while trying



to distinguish the concept of fronting from the previously introduced concept of relativizing.

At first Bryceson and Vuorela (2002, 11) define the term “to denote the ways and means family members use to create familial space and network ties in terrain where affinal connections are relatively sparse”. Referring to this definition, Goulbourne et al. (2009, 7) rightly question the way the concept of fronting should be distinguished from the other concept of Bryceson and Vuorela, relativizing. Both concepts seem to point to the direction of reproducing or maintaining the sense of ‘familyhood’ in transnational arrangements. Goulbourne et al. conclude that it is possible to distinguish the two concepts by understanding fronting as referring to the relationships immigrant family has to the surrounding society where it has recently settled. Relativizing, instead, could be understood as referring to the relationships migrant or migrant family has to the community of origin (ibid., 7). As fruitful as this distinction might be in many research contexts, in this study, I depart from the interpretation and employ the concept of fronting differently. I understand both concepts relativizing and fronting, as referring to the relationships migrants have towards their family members in the country of origin.

Bryceson and Vuorela (2002, 13) elaborate that fronting refers to the agency in situations where migrants encounter two or more differing or contrasting ways of life. It relates to the crisscross or conflict of cultural values that often take place within transnational families. Often this negotiation of - and experimentation with - cultural values, manifests in confrontation between genders, generations or just individuals within the family. Therefore, whereas I understand *relativizing* as the concrete practices of reproducing and maintaining or neglecting and dissolving of family ties, instead, I employ the term *fronting* to denote the explicit discursive negotiations where migrants question and contest culturally specific norms that inform family relations and obligations, including sending remittances. In the end, also in my interpretation fronting is closely linked to the surrounding destination society of migrants. This is because the receiving context is often the source of the alternative ideas, values and norms related to family life. This is how cultural dynamics in transnational relations and sending remittances are often interlinked to space and geography, in other words, to the spatial dimension. As a good example, van Dijk (2002) has shown how the Pentecostal

church is a source of alternative values and imaginations for Ghanaian migrants in Netherlands, and therefore plays a central role as migrants distance themselves from the traditionally powerful extended family and negotiate the remarkable obligations that families pose on their emigrated members.

Cultural dynamics, in other words the negotiations of family related norms, can and do occur in families also without migration and the spatial dimension, often for example between generations. In transnational families, however, in addition to cultural dynamics, there occurs dynamics that are inseparable from the dimension of space. To these factors, I refer to as spatial dynamics, and these will be elaborated on in the following.

#### **4.4.2 Spatial Dynamics Shaping Transnational Family Ties**

Transnational relations, including remittance expectations and behaviors, are shaped by various forms of spatial dynamics. Spatial dynamics point, firstly, simply to the fact that family members are dispersed along distances, the very definitive factor of transnational families. The distance shapes the daily interaction, information that family members receive of each other's lives, as well as engenders experiences of leaving and being left behind (e.g. Carling 2008). However, spatial dynamics also comprise of economic and political structures in both, or all, localities of the particular transnational social space. Economic structures refer to the unequal characteristics of the global economy, whereas the political structures that especially shape transnational families are nation states' migration and family policies. (Dreby & Atkins 2010, 674.)

Indeed, global macro-level structural inequalities both, produce transnational families, as well as shape the everyday experiences of members of these families (Dreby & Atkins 2010, 674.). Dreby and Atkins state that "(t)he backdrop of today's transnational family arrangements is characteristics of the global economy that make it difficult for family members to engage in productive and consumptive activities in the same physical location" (ibid., 677). In the face of deteriorating economic situation and scarce labor opportunities in the global south, people with appropriate capital, such as social networks, money, or educational opportunities, often move. A common strategy among families to navigate in the world of global economic inequalities is the decoupling of production and consumption. This means to deploy family members with the best labor

potential in location where the return of labor is high, and by keeping dependents, for example children or retired parents, in locations where the cost of living is low. (Ibid.)

However, it is not always the strategy of decoupling production and consumption that make families to decide to live apart. In addition to the dynamics of the global economy, also legal structures can cause the separation in transnational families. Strict migration policies often hamper the possibilities of family members to migrate together, or it might be that the states' definitions of legitimate forms of a family are in conflict with those of migrants'. (Dreby & Adkins 2010, 678.) Therefore, people do negotiate the borders and locations of their families according to economic opportunities, but are also affected by the structures stemming from states' policies (Bryceson & Vuorela 2002, 10-11).

As Dreby and Adkins (2010) note, when transnational families are seen like this, they are often framed as 'cooperative units', as contemporary expressions of a moral economy. It is presupposed that they act as collectives that via international migration and sacrificing their spatial proximity are able to creatively tackle the global structural constraints to create and maximize welfare among family members.

However, if the structural circumstances and inequalities, described above, produce transnational families in the first place, the same dynamics also shape the everyday lives of members of these families. If many scholars have illustrated transnational families as cooperative units creatively tackling the global structural inequalities, others have, instead, emphasized the inequalities and conflicts among these families (e.g. Carling 2008). It is the same structural inequalities that in the end reflect back on these families, creating new inequalities and dynamics within them, shaping transnational relations and practices, including remittance expectations and behaviors (Dreby & Adkins 2010).

To grasp the processes and dynamics described above, I employ a theoretical framework on asymmetries in transnational relations, developed by Jorgen Carling (2008). This framework will be elaborated on in the following in detail.

#### 4.5 Carling's Asymmetries: New Inequalities in Transnational Families

Because of structural inequalities in the locations of particular transnational social space, in transnational families differences emerge in mobility and immobility, access to resources and various types of capital, or even lifestyles (Bryceson & Vuorela 2002, 7). Migrants able to move after better life prospects have the access to mobility and usually gain access to new resources that were not available in the country of origin. Family members left behind, instead, have limited access to information about the daily lives and circumstances of the migrant in the receiving society, even when families keep contact intensively. (Dreby & Atkins 2010, 683.)

These inequalities and their consequences for transnational relations and practices have been closely scrutinized by Carling (2008). Carling sets aside the cultural dynamics I have dealt with in the previous sub-chapter, and focuses on dynamics related to geographical, social, economic and political space, i.e. what I have referred to as spatial dynamics. In doing this, Carling develops an analytical framework around the notion of asymmetry, in order to shed light on how inequality is affecting transnational relations and how frustration and possible conflict are mixed and co-exist with feelings and acts of solidarity and proximity.

Carling argues that the notion of “asymmetries of long-distance closeness” is a key to the analysis of micro-level migrant transnationalism, as there are intrinsic asymmetries in transnational relations between migrants and members of their communities of origin. These asymmetries can be a source of frustration to both sides, not only to the party of transnational relations that has less resources, access or capital. In different times either side can be in a powerful situation in relation to the other, or experience vulnerability. (Ibid., 1453.) Therefore, the asymmetries in transnational relations as such, and the consequences of them for migrants and their communities of origin must be analytically distinguished from each other.

When examining transnational relations, Carling employs the concepts of a migrant and a non-migrant. The category of non-migrant refers to the members of the migrants' communities who stay behind in the country of origin (Levitt & Nyberg-Sorensen 2004, 132). It is important to keep in mind that non-migrants are also involved in transnational social spaces, as the flow of people, money, and social remittances within these spaces

is often so dense that also non-migrants' lives are transformed, even they do not move. Non-migrants should therefore be seen as being in interaction with migrants, instead of treating them as passive receivers of support (Carling 2008, 1455).

In his framework, Carling distinguishes three spheres of transnational life in which asymmetries occur: 1. *transnational moralities*, 2. *information and imagination in transnational relations*, and 3. *transnational resource inequalities*. This classification into three spheres is not an exhaustive or universally applicable list, but Carling argues, broad enough to illustrate how different asymmetries interact and reflects the core elements of micro-level transnationalism. (Ibid., 1453.) In the following I will elaborate on these spheres, although in a reversed order.

#### **4.5.1 Asymmetries in Material and Mobility Resources**

Those who move often gain access to new material and mobility resources, potentially also to educational, technological, cultural or linguistic resources, not available to non-migrants. Economic resources play a central role in transnational relations, as remittances are a fundamental currency of relativizing. Transnational communities where members have migrated from the poor global south to Western post-industrial societies regularly face a situation where migrants' purchasing power is substantially bigger than that of the non-migrants. Transnational relations are fundamentally shaped by this asymmetry and it can be a source of frustration for both sides. (Carling 2008, 1468.)

For non-migrants this asymmetry in material resources is obviously easily a source of frustration. Even though migration often benefits non-migrant family members, they can be faced with the situation of increasing dependency and powerlessness in relation to the migrant. Remittances that non-migrants are often dependent on might fluctuate and are decisively out of their control. Simultaneously, non-migrants have less possibility to take part in migrant members' lives, and dependency combined with spatial distance might lead to a situation, where non-migrants are able to influence migrants mostly in the light of their own needs. (Ibid., 1469; Dreby & Adkins 2010, 683.)

The asymmetry in material resources can, however, be also a source of frustration for migrants. Expectations of material support are often central to migrant and non-migrant relations, and expectations of remittances are shaped by non-migrants perceptions of this material inequality between them and migrants. Exaggerated assessments of the material inequality cause unrealistic expectations of remittances that subsequently cause frustration among migrants. (Carling 2008, 1468-1469, see also e.g. Riccio 2005.) In some cases, migrants might long to be reunited with their families, but also experience the obligation to provide income from afar. This way the asymmetry in material resources can bring frustration to either side of transnational relations.

In transnational resource inequalities, Carling distinguishes also what he calls *mobility resources*. Mobility resources refer to legal entitlements that enable movement and residence within the particular transnational social space: visas, residence permits or citizenship. Under the present international migration regime, which restricts movement especially from the ‘global south’ to the ‘post-industrial west’, legal entitlements in the destination country has enormous value and often substantial consequences. Asymmetry in mobility resources is very much in the heart of what makes migrants and non-migrants differently positioned. In societies where migration is a common and desired way to achieve upward mobility, but movement is at the same time restricted by policy, mobility resources can be a source of power and autonomy for migrants, and at the same time a site of risk, threat and uncertainty for non-migrants. However, this asymmetry can again engender frustration for both sides and plays out in various ways. For example, as for non-migrants one of the few methods to enter Europe is to be invited by a person with residence entitlements, migrants are therefore in a powerful position of gatekeepers and can decide whether to facilitate non-migrants movement or not. Secondly, as family reunification, for example through marriage, is the other of the few available methods to enter Europe, migrants with mobility resources gain sexual capital among the community of origin. However, this asymmetry can raise the question of trust and therefore be a source of frustration also for migrants. (Ibid., 1470-1473.)

#### **4.5.2 Asymmetries in Information and Imagination**

The second sphere of transnational relations that Carlings distinguishes in his framework of asymmetries is *information and imagination*. He states that in

transnational relations communication is also about negotiating contested representations, which means creating as well as filling information gaps. Indeed, even though technology facilitating telecommunication has advanced remarkably, in some contexts keeping contact with limited resources might still be a challenge, and therefore gaps in information occur due to spatial distance. Even when migrants keep intensively contact and visit their community of origin, they have limited information about the daily lives of the non-migrants of their community. A general anxiety among migrants is for example, if the remittances are used for the purposes they were intended to, especially when making larger investments, such as house construction or setting up businesses. This is how the gap in information makes the migrants' position vulnerable. Migrants might need to ask 'uncomfortable questions', causing mistrust and tension in these relations. Non-migrants can sometimes also take advantage of this information gap in persuading migrants to send remittances. (Ibid., 1462-1463.)

The gap in information works, indeed, also the other way around, as non-migrants face gaps in information about the daily life of migrants'. However, what is significant here, is that non-migrants' access to information and imagination about migrants lives is very limited, as they have often never visited the country where a migrant is residing. This is how asymmetry in mobility resources engenders a crucial asymmetry to the sphere of information and imagination. (Carling 2008, 1464-1465.) As an example, Schmalzbauer (2008) has documented the improved lifestyles of remittance receiving youth that are unaware of the marginal living conditions of their undocumented underclass migrant parents.

Non-migrants have to put together a challenging puzzle to form an understanding about what migrants' life abroad is like. This puzzle is put together by piecing up stories heard from relatives, neighbors and friends, visiting and returning migrants, tourists and media. Making sense of migrants' life abroad is often challenging, as stories about the destination countries are often patchy and even contradictory. As non-migrants lack the resources to verify these contradictory stories, they have to decide what to believe without seeing for themselves. Factual information blends into perceptions and social construction, as pre-existing ideas and specific imaginations are used to make information fragments comprehensible. (Carling 2008, 1464-1467.)

This asymmetry plays out as frustration on the non-migrants' side for example when non-migrant family members are not receiving remittances they expect from migrant family members, but at the same time witness the ostentatious behavior of visiting migrants. In these situations non-migrants might have difficulties to decide what to think of this: Is the migrant really struggling to make the ends meet, or is his or her loyalty for the family gone? (Carling 2008, 1465-1467.) However, as I will show in Chapter 7, non-migrants' limited access to information about the destination context of the migrant, is a substantial source of frustration also for the migrants themselves.

### 4.5.3 Asymmetries in Transnational Moralities

The third sphere that Carling distinguishes is the asymmetries in transnational moralities. The dynamics in this sphere are not that much connected to the economic and political structures of space, but simply to the condition of distance and experiences of leaving and being left behind. Carling formulates:

Transnational social fields are often bound together by value systems that may be contested, but nevertheless constitute shared frames of reference. Furthermore, there seem to be common traits to such value systems that are linked to migration itself: the experiences of leaving, being left, and (thinking about) returning, appear to have inherent moral dimensions. In other words, migrants and non-migrants are differently positioned within the moralities of transnationalism. (Carling 2008, 1457)

Referring to Hage (2002, 203), Carling argues that a central element in human life is repaying the 'gift of communality' by participating in the family, community or whichever social group is most significant to an individual. One's membership in a community creates a debt that an individual repays by small installments through a life-time participation in the very same community. Migration means a departure from the physical closeness of such a group, whose communality is generally reinforced by spatial proximity. Upon migrating, transnational practices become the way of repaying this debt. Therefore, migrants' interaction with non-migrants can be seen as motivated by a moral economy of social belonging. (Carling 2008, 1457-1458.)

The dynamics in this moral economy of social belonging are of course much shaped by the nature of relationships that are unrelated to migration, but are related to positions in life-cycle and factors of generation and gender. As an example, a grown up person would in many contexts contribute to the supporting of his or her elderly parents, or



even more probably, of his or her own children, in any case. In Carlings (2008, 1458) words, “remittances (...) can be a transnationalized form of intergenerational transfers that would have taken place regardless of migration”. However, a migrant and a non-migrant are also socially constructed categories that in many contexts evoke strong representations that play a role on a societal level. These social constructions easily take a more important role than classifications based on other demographic factors and migrants might be primarily identified on the basis of their “experience of life abroad” (ibid., 1456). Therefore, as the dynamics of transnational relations are also shaped by mobility and immobility, also horizontal ties, for example between siblings, easily acquire asymmetrical dimension as a result of new inequalities created by migration and consequently shifting balances of power. These analyses help to grasp how the “experience of migration adds to other influences on relations between individuals and between migrants and non-migrants as social groups” (ibid., 1458). This is in the core of asymmetry in transnational moralities.

Migrants are often expected to send remittances and keep contact as a way of repaying the gift of communality. If migrants fail to do so, they are seen as neglecting this repayment, and easily face a criticism of “forgetting where they came from”. (Carling 2008, 1458.) However, in the moral economy of transnational relations, reproducing ties through different modes of relativizing is not necessarily enough. This is because in transnational relations moral “currency” is not gained only through actions. Instead, because the experiences of leaving and being left have inherent moral dimensions, an asymmetry in moral currency can be built-in in the relations between migrants and non-migrants. The moral dynamics play out so that non-migrants, as the ones who are left behind, have moral currency, or capital, towards migrants (Gowricharn 2004, 618). Therefore, “[n]on-migrants hold commonly accepted, morally founded entitlements to support from their migrant relatives...” (Carling 2008, 1460). As non-migrants possess this moral capital, they are sometimes eager to judge migrants as ungrateful, if they fail to prove their loyalty through various kinds of support to those left behind. It is illustrative that the label of ingratitude is more easily attached to the migrant who fails to remit enough, instead of to the non-migrants who fail to appreciate migrants’ efforts. (Ibid., 1459-1460.)

In the end, however, it is not only the non-migrant who possesses this moral capital, or who always has the upper hand in the moralities of transnationalism. The moral dimensions of transnationalism also enable that transnational practices are a source of personal gratification, pride and social prestige for migrants. Carling is referring to a 'pro-migrant turn' in discourse, and suggests that migrants are increasingly portrayed with positive images in moral terms. Indeed, transnational practices are a source of pride, not only on an individual level, but also as associated with cultural traditions or national virtues of solidarity. (Ibid.,1460-1461.) As mentioned in previous chapters, this kind of representations of migrants as celebrated heroes, are indeed prevalent in the Senegalese context (Riccio 2005).

#### 4.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have sought to lay down the theoretical framework, which helps to answer the research questions of the study: 1) *How family ties in Finland shape the transnational engagement of Senegambian migrants?* and 2) *How expectations of remittances shape the transnational family ties of Senegambian migrants and how are remittances negotiated?*

In examining the transnational practices and multi-local family ties of Senegambian migrants, I draw from the formulation of transnationalism as a social space (Faist 2000), in which this space constituted of physical features, but also of economic and political opportunity structures, and subjective meanings places and ties represent to migrants. In examining how transnational family ties are maintained, I draw from the concept of relativizing (Bryceson & Vuorela 2002) in order to grasp the practices of maintaining 'familyhood' in spatial distance. In addition, in examining how expectations of remittances shape transnational family ties and how remittances are being negotiated, I have distinguished two domains of dynamics that occur in transnational families, cultural and spatial dynamics. To grasp the cultural dynamics I have presented the concept of frontiering (Bryceson & Vuorela 2002), while explaining the dynamics related to space, I am employing a theoretical framework of asymmetries in transnational relations (Carling 2008).

## 5 Data and Methods

In this chapter, the data gathering and analysis methods are presented and discussed. I will start by describing how data was gathered and shortly depict general information about the participants. After that I will discuss my position as a researcher, including ethical considerations, before moving to describe the analysis process and methods that were employed.

### 5.1 Gathering the Data and the Participants

The data for the study is gathered by conducting 12 *semi-structured interviews* with Senegalese and Gambian persons that currently live in Finland. In semi-structured interviews approximately the same questions are asked from all participants, but the order and exact phrasing might vary. The questions are also typically open-ended, instead of limiting answers to a multiple choice structure. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2008, 47.) Hirsjärvi & Hurme sketch a form of semi-structured interviews that they call a thematic interview. In these, participants are selected due to the knowledge that they have experienced a certain situation of which the researcher is interested and has tentatively looked into the processes and structures of this certain phenomenon. On the basis of this knowledge, some presumptions are formed, an outline for the interviews is build, and finally the interview is aimed at the subjective experiences of the participants related to the phenomenon under examination. This way of interviewing is suitable for the mapping of participant's experiences and subjective definitions of different situations. It acknowledges that participants' interpretations and meanings are important and are engendered through interaction. (Ibid., 47-48.)

In the interviews, first, participants' transnational ties and practices were mapped, including keeping contact with family, family's expectations, remittances and visiting home country. After that, life in Finland was discussed, including work, education, family, staying in Finland or returning to country of origin, as well as relations to fellow Senegambians in Finland. Thirdly, a set of questions about migration and migrants as a general phenomenon in Senegal or Gambia was asked (see Appendix: Interview outline). In addition, the interviews started with mapping background information about the participants, including the composition of their families in Africa and Finland. After

each interview, I also wrote down field notes about each of the participants as well as of the interview situation.

The participants were recruited by utilizing networks I had developed in recreational activities among the Senegambians living in Helsinki. Two of the participants were my acquaintances already before and the rest were recruited by the 'snowball method', meaning that I asked the first few participants to name more possible participants.

The interviews were conducted during spring and summer 2011. In half of the cases I was invited to participants' home, three interviews were conducted at my apartment, and the rest in café's. One of the interviews was conducted in Finnish as the participant's proficiency in the language is very strong. One of the interviews was conducted in Wolof and Finnish with a help of an interpreter that was a mutual acquaintance to me and the participant. The rest of the interviews were conducted in English. As English is the official language in Gambia, most of the Gambian participants were very fluent in English which made it the obvious choice of language for the interviews. In Senegal, the official language is French, but as my proficiency in French is limited, English was used in interviews also with Senegalese. The Senegalese participants were fluent enough in English as the education level of participants is quite high, and they are familiar to use it in Finland as French is less known among Finns.

Four of the interviews were shorter, between 40 minutes and an hour. The rest of the interviews were relatively long, between 1.5 hours and 2.5 hours, except one, which was 5 hours long. This participant was my acquaintance already from before and was very elaborate and specific in his answers and accounts. The participant also has dense family ties in both Finland and the country of origin and is very engaged in transnational practices. Therefore, this particular participant is a central informant for the study, even though the material collected is used as widely and comprehensively as possible. All the interviews were recorded with a recording device and transcribed resulting in 160 pages of material. After each interview I wrote down observations and immediate thoughts documenting the impressions and dynamics in these encounters. In addition, while working with the transcribed material I drew a simple figure of each participant's family networks to depict their simultaneous ties in the sending and

receiving context. This collection of field diaries and figures of family networks therefore are part of the data of this study.

Half of the 12 participants were Senegalese and half Gambian. The ages varied from mid-twenties to late fifties. The time that participants had spent in Finland varied from one year to more than twenty years, but in general people that had already spent in Finland close to ten years or more were selected to the interviews.

Only three of the 12 participants were female. This makes my data biased in this respect. However, Senegambian migration to Finland is male-dominated in the first place. In year 2011, only approximately 25 per cent of people born in Senegal and Gambian residing in Finland were female (Statistics Finland 2011b). In this sense, my sample is in balance with the real composition of the population. In addition, none of the three female participants of this study have children. Therefore, it is probable that if these participants would have children their family relations and expectations would be to some extent different. This also surfaces in the interviews. One of the female participants explained how her mother portrays her being equally powerful as a male is, as she is able to be a breadwinner and provide income for their extended family. Another female participant elaborates that all the remittance expectations are levelled to her, even though her sister is also a migrant. She reflects that this is due to the fact that her sister has children of her own. Therefore, I argue that the female participants of this study are positioned as independent breadwinners. As the female participants don't have children, the study does not contribute to the knowledge on transnational motherhood.

The educational backgrounds are heterogeneous, but on average the participants are quite educated. Half of the participants have studied in a university or university of applied sciences either in Finland or Africa. One has a Master's Degree, three have Bachelor's Degrees from a university of applied sciences and two have carried out studies in universities for one or two academic years. Two of the participants have a vocational training and two have finished studying after secondary school. Two of the participants have had access to formal education only for a couple of years in the elementary school. These participants, on the other hand, have had extensive informal training in performing arts. The participants' trajectories in the Finnish labor market, as

well as family ties and transnational practices are more closely presented and analyzed in Chapter 6 (see Table 1 on page 59).

When reflecting on the nature of the data that was gained, I am following Haikkola's (2012, 59) description of the data of her study, and also see that the data of this study contains both objective and subjective material. On the one hand, it contains objective knowledge about the participants' family networks and their transnational practices. At the same time, it contains subjective interpretations of those networks, one's positions within them and interpretations about norms and ideals governing family life in Finland and in West Africa, as well as representations of migration and migrants. However, it must be kept in mind that also the information of participants' family networks and transnational practices are self-reported, which means that also this material is shaped by participants' subjective interpretations. Indeed, the most severe limitation of the data is that it has only been collected among the migrants themselves, and only in the receiving context of the migration. Many scholars have rightly noted that research approaching migration with the 'transnational optic' should do multi-sited ethnography and collect data at all the sites of the transnational field that particular migrants are involved with (e.g. Levitt & Jaworsky 2007, 142-143). However, within this Master's thesis project this was out of the scope of resources.

It is also important to reflect what kind of generalizations is possible to make drawing from the data of this study. Transnational migration studies have been criticized for sampling the dependent variable, meaning that analysis has been concentrating on data where transnationalism has been found, while migrant communities where transnationalism does not exist or develop have largely been overlooked. Therefore scholars have been criticized of exaggerating the phenomenon and it has been stated that studies rarely say anything about the significance or the prevalence of the phenomenon. (Vertovec 2009, 17.) In the case of this study, the participants were not selected on the basis of the existence of transnational family ties or remittance practices. However, it must be admitted that beforehand I expected that all the participants would have dense transnational family ties and be engaged with wide transnational practices. As a surprise, the Senegambian migrants that ended up as the participants of this study displayed a set of highly diverse family arrangements and transnational engagements. Therefore, regarding the part of the analysis where I examine how remittances shape

transnational ties, I have had to some extent concentrate on the participants that do have active transnational family networks and do send remittances. However, throughout the analysis, I have endeavored to also present the alternative trajectories among the participants, to deliver a truthful picture of the diversity of their transnationalism, family networks and remittance practices. To conclude, the study explains important patterns among Senegambian migrants, but does not offer results of kind of nature that could be simply generalized to concern all Senegambian migrants in Finland.

## **5.2 The Position of the Researcher and Ethical Considerations**

There are many dimensions of my position as a researcher that call for reflection. Firstly, I and the participants are differently positioned in relation to majority and minority relations. I am a member of the ethnic majority of Finland, while the participants are members of small African migrant groups. Furthermore, due to differences in physical features, participants are members of what are often referred to as visible minorities. In addition, I and the participants are differently positioned in terms of citizenship. I am a citizen of Finland, whereas the participants are citizens of non-EU states of the ‘global south’, as only one of the participants had also a Finnish citizenship. Therefore, we are differently positioned in relation to structural inequalities, for example freedom of movement.

These aspects are relevant, as different channels and motivations to migrate and reside in Finland were discussed in the interviews, topics that are charged and politicized and debated also in the public realm. Many of the participants expressed the irritation of often hearing the questions, “Where are you from, and why are you here?” from ethnic majority Finns. Therefore, when participants’ motivations to reside in Finland were again explicitly enquired, this time by a researcher, there is a risk that the participants’ answers are shaped by the general public attitudinal climate. Keeping in mind the charged nature of this topic, I sought to be especially diligent when analyzing the accounts participants gave about their decisions on movement and residing in Finland or West Africa.

Secondly, what can be discussed is my familiarity and networks within the Senegambian communities in Finland and knowledge about the two countries in general. In most of the interviews, I felt a sense of mutual trust that might have been facilitated

by the fact that I was introduced to some of the participants by another Senegambian who knew me personally. On the other hand, this raises the question whether the participants felt an obligation to participate in the study to avoid disappointing their friends. However, my effort to compensate this was to explain in length in all interviews that participating was voluntary, and that participants could also refuse to answer particular questions, or interrupt the interview in general at any point. In addition, after the interviews I handed a written note to the participants, where the purpose of my study, as well as my contact information was once more stated. This way the principle referred to as *informed consent* is fulfilled in this study (Leinius 2011, 39).

In the beginning of the interviews I explained in length, how I had become familiar with Senegambians in Finland, and how I had also spent time in Senegal and Burkina Faso, two West African countries. This was advantageous in building a sense of mutual understanding and trust. It was important as the questions asked in interviews relate to aspects of social life and society that are both, sensitive issues related to the private sphere of people's lives, and also, issues that include significant differences between West Africa and Finland.

Therefore, as the participants knew that I had experiences and knowledge about cultural and social features of their countries of origin, I argue that it was a bit easier for them to share their perceptions on these topics. This ease to explain experiences and practices to me manifested itself for example in responses that occasionally started with the conclusion that, "As you have been there, you know how...". However, it is clear that in some cases discussing the most sensitive and private issues such as the motivations behind marriages, some participants tended to answer as they were dealing with the issue on a general level, instead of being very eager to elaborate on their own personal experiences.

In order to facilitate mutual trust, I tried to ensure that participants did not experience that I was evaluating them and the morality of their family arrangements or relations. As Davison (2007, 385) has noted, if a participant experiences that he or she is being evaluated, trust might be lost and participants are probably less open in sharing their experiences. In contrast, I searched for the common nominators, often perceived to be



universal for most of people's adulthood, such as aspirations in providing a livelihood for oneself, starting a family or maintaining ties to parents and other family members.

Furthermore, as I have taken part in recreational activities among Senegambians before conducting the study, I have been exposed to information and observations about the themes and issues under examination outside data collection. However, as much as it is possible, I have regarded it necessary to limit my analysis to the material collected in the interviews conducted for the purposes of this study, and not to treat my experiences and information gained before or after data gathering as ethnographic material.

Regarding my observations made before the data gathering, it is clear that this preliminary knowledge has steered the aspects I am interested in this study as well as the questions I asked in the interviews. However, to be able to limit my analysis to the material collected in the interviews, I sought to raise my observations and impressions to be discussed in the interviews, so I could confirm or dismiss whether my perceptions held true in the case of my participants.

On the other hand, regarding the few encounters and experiences I have had with the participants and other Senegambians after the data gathering, I consider it necessary to distinguish observations rising from these encounters from the data of this study. Even though the post-data gathering observations could have a minor contribution to the data of this study, it is ethical to distinguish the interaction that happens as data collection between a researcher and a participant from encounters as private persons. Therefore, I have sought to employ this distinction as far as it is possible, even though this is a complex methodological issue that cannot exhaustively be dealt in the scope of this study.

Another central ethical requirement in social sciences is the participants' right to privacy (Leinius 2011, 39). The anonymity of the participants is confirmed by using made up pseudonyms instead of real names. Secondly, I have limited the information that I reveal about the ages, families or educational or occupational backgrounds of the participants. In the empirical chapters I have also decided not to reveal which of the participants come from Senegal and which from Gambia, but instead, refer as a practical solution generally to Africa. I have also delimited the description of the recreational

activities among participants were recruited in order to ensure anonymity. Finally, the audio files of the interviews have been deleted.

A researcher should also follow the principle referred to as ‘protection from harm’, which implies that the study does not engender any harm to the participants or to the population in question. Also this aspect calls for reflection as my study deals with politically charged and sensitive issues such as immigration and culturally specific norms and practices related to family. Especially, this comes to the fore as I shortly deal with the practice of polygamy. Polygamy is not acknowledged by the Finnish authorities, but as the marriages in Senegal and Gambia are not officially registered, in practice, migrants are able to maintain multiple marriages in the two different locations, West Africa and Finland. I have come to a conclusion that it is ethically sustainable to deal with this phenomenon. Firstly, the multi-local polygamy is not that significant in prevalence among the participants, but is instead significant as a clear example on how migration, transnationalism, culturally specific family organization and the role of nation states manifesting in migration and family policies, are all intertwined affecting Senegambian migrants family trajectories. Therefore, examining multi-local family ties of migrants would be in this context severely inadequate if not describing the existence of transnational polygamy. Secondly, the phenomenon has been discussed also by other researchers (e.g. Jacques 2009). Thirdly, based on my observations, the practice of transnational polygamy is not hidden among the Senegambian migrant groups themselves. Finally, I argue that as I ensure the anonymity of the participants, the principal of protection of harm is not at risk. One could perhaps argue that, regardless of these aspects, dealing with this issue could lead to stigmatization of these migrant groups among the mainstream society. However, I have sought to provide adequate background information about the family organization in West Africa which helps to place these practices in context, which in my opinion will lessen the threat to stigmatization.

Finally, it can be reflected what kind of experiences or resources this study is able to ‘give back’ to the participants and population in question. While the resources that this study is contributing for the Senegambian migrants in Finland are limited, it can be however argued that for some of the participants the interview situation offered a meaningful opportunity to communicate the pressures and challenges that migration and

transnational family relations sometimes engender. Moreover, these aspects are perhaps known among the migrant groups themselves but widely unknown among the majority population of Finland. Therefore, it can be counted as a reciprocal aspect of this study that the pressures and challenges of migration and transnational family relations are dealt with in social research. Moreover, after the study is submitted, I plan to contact the participants and ask if they want to meet for discussing the findings of the study.

### 5.3 Methods of Analysis

The methods of analysis employed in this study belong to the field of qualitative content analysis. Content analysis has been seen, both, as a single distinct method of analysis, but as well as a broad theoretical frame linking together different streams and traditions of methods that are based on analyzing different written, heard or seen materials (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009, 91). The purpose of the analysis is to create a clear description, illustration or summary of the phenomenon under examination. A central function of the analysis is to organize the data that is often scattered and fragmental, so that consistent and clear information can be gained and reliable conclusions can be drawn, without losing relevant information. (Ibid., 108.)

The method of content analysis that has especially been employed in this study is thematic analysis (Eskola & Suoranta 1998, 175-180), but in addition, an analysis strategy of multiple case design (Haikkola 2012, 62; Yin 2003) has been used. According to Eskola and Suoranta (1998, 175-180) thematic analysis is a suitable method when examining a practical research problem. In thematic analysis themes that enlighten the research problem are highlighted from the data, and researcher ends up with a collection of answers or results for the questions that have been asked. In this study, thematic analysis proved to be helpful especially when searching for answers for the second research question dealing with expectations and negotiations of remittances in transnational relations.

Eskola and Suoranta note, however, that studies employing thematic analysis often fail to deepen the analysis and advance conclusions. Analysis is often reduced to organizing the material by themes and portraying a collection of extracts as results. A wide use of extracts is often interesting for the reader, but does not yet show an analysis where empirical and theoretical material connect (1998, 175-180). Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2009,

103) make a similar note and state that qualitative studies employing content analysis as an analysis strategy are often criticized of unreadiness, because conclusions are not drawn from the organized data. Therefore, a meaningful thematic analysis requires that theoretical and empirical material are employed in interaction and are tightly intertwined in the study (Eskola & Suoranta 1998, 176).

The relation between theoretical and empirical material in qualitative research takes different forms. Inductive and deductive analysis are often distinguished as two different logical approaches. Induction refers to logic where generalizations are derived from single observations, whereas deduction refers to logic where generalizations direct making observations from the data. However, the distinction is problematic and it has been questioned whether pure induction is possible, as observations are always at least unconsciously directed by previous knowledge. Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2009, 95) note that different logics and approaches to analysis can be better understood by a distinction to *data based, theory based and theory directed analysis*.

In data based analysis previous observations, knowledge or theory should not affect the analysis. Contrary, a theoretical model is being built from the research data. Previous theory is employed only in methodology as a certain analysis method is chosen to guide the process of analysis. In theory based analysis, instead, the research object under examination is defined on basis of previous knowledge. A theoretical formulation is chosen as a framework that directs the analysis. In this approach, research is often testing a theoretical model in a new empirical context. However, it has been suggested that sometimes analysis process takes a form that is something from between the two previous approaches. The third option, theory directed approach, refers to an analysis process where researcher is, to some extent, switching between the data based and theory based analysis models. Like in data based analysis, the theory directed analysis advances in terms of the data. Central themes and pattern that occur in the data are defined, without necessarily based on a theoretical formulation. However, in the abstraction process, instead of deriving solely from the data, previous knowledge about the phenomenon is employed. This way, the data based and theory based observations are combined creatively ending up sometimes in new theoretical formulations. (Ibid., 95-97, 117.)

The description of the theory directed analysis model fits the analysis process of this study. Even though previous studies and theoretical formulations were, to some extent, employed from the start of the analysis, in the beginning the thematic analysis advanced strongly in the terms of the data. This can be seen in how the coding process advanced during the analysis. In the beginning, I coded the data by labels that rose from the data and not according to theoretical concepts. However, as the analysis advanced, observations were mirrored against theoretical material and new, more analytical and theory based labels were created, such as “asymmetries” and “migrant/non-migrant relations” deriving from the theoretical framework of Carling (2008).

Especially in the case of the first research question of this study that deals with family ties in Finland and its effects on transnationalism, the analysis advanced long off with a data based approach. To begin with, this research question rose from the data. I was originally interested how integration trajectories affected transnational engagement, and only after data collection was done, it was realized that actually almost all participants have family ties in Finland. Therefore, as the research question rose from the data, the analysis advanced quite far before theoretical formulations were searched to support and deepen the understanding and advance conclusions on the topic.

In the analysis of the first research question, an additional analysis strategy besides thematic analysis was necessary. In this I followed Haikkola’s (2012) example who studies transnational ties of second generation immigrant background with a network analysis approach and employs an analysis strategy of multiple case design (*ibid.*, 62). Case study is an analysis strategy where the aim is to describe and explain a separate case comprehensively. In this study one participant is the unit, the case of analysis. A multiple case design means that the cases are being compared to each other and similarities and differences are analyzed. (Yin 2003, 50.) This strategy proved to be very useful in analyzing the first research question, where participants’ family ties are approached from a network analysis point of view. As a part of this analysis I drew a figure of each participant’s family ties to both or all localities. This way the family networks, different ties, their nature and obligations, responsibilities and rights related to these ties (Olwig 2007) of each participant could be analyzed and compared. This analysis strategy can also be seen in how the Chapter 6.2 is written, as the first research question is dealt with by presenting and comparing few cases.

As mentioned previously, the data contains information that is objective (although self-reported) and subjective. The same way, in the analysis the different nature of different part of the data has been kept in mind. Following Haikkola, the descriptions of the participants' transnational practices and compositions of families have been read as realistic, objective text. However, other parts, especially parts where participants give accounts about their family ties, obligations and norms related to family life, are read as accounts constructed in the interview context, as action where participants employ existing categories, such as "European" and "African" in order to define themselves as well as explain their familial ties and obligations. (Haikkola 2012, 61.)

The question of reliability often rises to fore in qualitative social research. Reliability refers most importantly to the aim that techniques applied in research should be reproducible, so that other researchers would end up with the same results when analyzing the same data. However, in qualitative social research there are significant difficulties ensuring this kind of understanding of reliability, especially when the material is coded only by one researcher. Therefore, to battle this challenge the research process should be disclosed as openly as possible to enable others to assess the conclusions of a study. (Leinius 2011, 33.) Therefore, I will here describe the process of the analysis and coding further.

*Atlas.ti*, an application for qualitative analysis was employed in controlling and coding the data. I started with coding the transcribed material with thematic codes, according to the general topics that were discussed in the interviews, such as "life in Finland", "keeping contact (to country of origin)" and "expectations of families (in the country of origin)". Later I added more abstract codes such as "techniques of expectations", some based on theoretical formulations that are employed in the study, such as "asymmetries" and "techniques to overcome asymmetries". At this point, I read the material with one code/theme at a time, checking to what extent codes were overlapping and whether that posed problems for the analysis. In addition, I checked if I had understood the code the same way through the material or if the meaning changed during the coding process. At this point, some themes were divided into more specific sub-categories. Throughout the coding process, also notes were written and edited as the analysis advanced.

## 6 Transnational Practices and Multi-Local Family Ties

In this chapter, I turn to the analysis of the empirical data of this study. In Chapter 6.2 I examine the multi-local family ties of Senegambian migrants residing in Finland, the simultaneity and different dimensions of obligations of family ties, and the ways family ties are intertwined with aspects of socio-economic mobility in migration trajectories. In the subsequent Chapter 7, I focus more closely on the transnational family ties that migrants maintain to the country of origin, and examine how remittance expectations and behaviors shape the nature of these family relationships. However, here in the following Chapter 6.1, I start with describing participants' lives and ties in Finland as well as providing a review on the modes of transnationalism in order to make the analysis on multi-local family ties and negotiations of transnational relations more comprehensible. An overview of participants' migration and transnational patterns is offered also in Table 1.

### 6.1 Life in Finland and Modes of Transnationalism

As mentioned in the short description of the participants of this study in the previous chapter, the participants come from Senegal and Gambia, are mainly male and generally (even though alternately) educated. Also the participants' trajectories in the Finnish labor market vary considerably. Two of the participants were unemployed at the time the data was collected. Two are working as musicians with a fluctuating level of work and income. Three are working in service sector as a nurse, taxi-driver or cleaner. Two are working as entrepreneurs, while two are studying, one in a university and other through an apprenticeship system. One has established a career in public sector institutions.

As can be seen from Table 1 and its columns *family 'here'* and *migration pattern*, almost all participants have, or have had family ties in Finland. Everyone, except one, is or has been married with a Finn. At the time of data collection, eight participants had an on-going family tie to Finland, either a spouse or a child, although all the three female participants have divorced of their Finnish husbands and have no children. One of them has remarried with a man from the country of origin in Africa after divorcing in Finland.

**Table 1 The participants of the study in order of interviews and their migration and transnational patterns.**

<i>Pseudonym</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Migration pattern</i>	<i>Years in Finland</i>	<i>Family 'here'</i>	<i>Family 'there'</i>	<i>Remittances</i>	<i>Other transnational practices</i>
<i>Sidy (m)</i>	50s	work visa → marriage	20+	wife, children	wife, children, siblings	regular	visiting, house construction, investing in small business
<i>Diene (m)</i>	50s	marriage	20+	wife, children, grand- children	siblings	occasional	visiting, house construction
<i>Fatou (f)</i>	20s	work visa → marriage	5-10	divorced	mother, siblings, husband	regular	visiting, house construction, investing in small business
<i>Amadou (m)</i>	30s	marriage / student visa	5-10	children, wife	mother, siblings, child	regular	visiting, facilitating business
<i>Foday (m)</i>	30s	student visa	ca. 5	none	mother, siblings, (wife & children residing in third country)	seldom	visiting wife and children in third country
<i>Anta (m)</i>	50s	work visa → marriage	20+	wife, child	wife, children, mother, siblings	regular	visiting, house construction, investing in small business
<i>Papis (m)</i>	20s	student visa to third country	5-10	child	parents, siblings	none	visiting
<i>Coumba (f)</i>	20s	marriage	5-10	divorced	siblings	none	visiting
<i>Bakary (m)</i>	40s	marriage	ca. 10	wife	mother, siblings (children in third country)	seldom	visiting, facilitating business
<i>Bubba (m)</i>	20s	marriage	1	wife	siblings	none	none yet
<i>Yacouba (m)</i>	20s	marriage	5-10	wife, child	child, father, siblings	regular	visiting
<i>Aminata (f)</i>	30s	reunifica- tion with relatives	15-20	divorced (sister residing in Finland)	parents, siblings	regular	visiting



The column *migration pattern* describes primarily the basis on which Senegambian migrants have been able to enter Finland and gain residence permits. This information is relevant since, as I will later show, migration policy has implications on family arrangements and trajectories. Five of the participants have met their Finnish spouses outside of Finland, often in Senegal or Gambia, gotten married and gained visa through family reunification. Two of the participants have been in Finland with a short term work visa and then married a Finn. Three of the participants have had access to a student visa to Finland or to a third country. One of the participants has been reunited with a relative, which under current migration policy would be improbable to succeed.

The compositions of participants families in the country of origin vary tremendously, which can be seen in the column *family 'there'* in Table 1. Some participants have only siblings and further relatives in the country of origin, while others have a spouse, children, parents, and so on. Five of the participants have either a spouse and/or child(ren) in the country of origin. Two of the participants are married in a transnational polygamous arrangement, which means that they have a wife in both in Finland and Africa. Two of the participants have a spouse and/or children residing in a third country. If parents are included, nine of the participants have either children or parents or both in the country of origin. Four of the participants have children in both Finland and Africa.

The family members listed in Table 1 are the ones that participants referred to most in the interviews, and often send remittances to. In addition to the family members mentioned in the column, most participants referred of having also further extended family members that they count as their family, but who on the other hand clearly are more distant relatives. In the interviews, participants used widely the term family, instead of distinguishing nuclear family and other kin with words such as relatives for example. Sometimes siblings were later distinguished by labels such as 'biological brother', 'cousin brother' or a description of a sibling who was a more distant relative, but who is considered as a brother because of being fostered in the same household.

Many of the participants of this study keep contact with their family members in the country of origin weekly or even daily, depending on the quality and quantity of their transnational family ties. Contact is kept almost exclusively by calling, mostly by mobile phones, but some are using also Skype. Keeping contact with friends on

Facebook is also popular especially among the younger participants of the study. Indeed, some of the participants refer that keeping contact is done in such an intensive way, that it is almost like one would be physically present in the community of origin, or being at the same time “here and there”.

The majority of the participants send remittances to family members. Remittances are sent for daily subsistence such as food, clothing and housing. In addition, migrants often contribute to school fees of relatives and annual or life-cycle celebrations and ceremonies. The density of sending remittances is described in Table 1 with four labels. ‘None’ means that a participant does not remit, excluding occasional presents when visiting or during annual or life-cycle celebrations, or very rare incidents of economic help in the face of an acute problem of a family member. ‘Seldom’ refers to participants who remit little and irregularly, mostly in the face of acute health problems or difficulties to pay school fees for instance. ‘Occasional’ refers to participants who remit less regularly than monthly, but are still important providers of help during difficult periods or when resources are needed for investments. ‘Regular’ instead refers to the participants who usually remit monthly, providing a central part of the daily subsistence of their family members. Remittances expectations and behaviors will be discussed in length in Chapter 7.

The vast majority also visit their country of origin more or less frequently. Many of the participants would like to visit once a year, usually for a month or two at a time. However, not all participants aspire this, and many lack the resources to realize this travel every year. The most pronounced motivation to visit the home country is, by far, spending time in the proximity with family members. In the accounts of the participants the holiday back home often appears as time when “being home”, in good weather, spending time with family and friends in a place where social interaction is high. This way visiting is often framed as an opposite for time in Finland, which is dominated by working, being in a partly strange place with bad weather and especially low social interaction. For two of the participants visiting home country is closely also related to facilitating entrepreneurial activities.

Only few of the participants have invested in small businesses in the country of origin. Two participants have acquired cars that work as taxis. Employed drivers earn a fixed

amount or percentage of the income the cars create and the rest of the income is gained by the owner. In both cases the migrants channel the income of the taxis directly for the subsistence of their family members back home, instead of acquiring the earnings themselves. One of the participants has opened a shop selling groceries that is run by his son. Also in this case, the revenue of the business is directed to the subsistence of the participant's family in the country of origin. One of the participants had also invested in a poultry farm quite quickly after residing in Finland, but this business had turned out unsuccessful. Two of the participants of this study also work as entrepreneurs in the field of retail, tourism and entertainment business and their work involves transnational networks.

Many of the participants have invested in housing in the country of origin and have either finished or are in the midst of constructing a private house for themselves and family members to inhabit. As mentioned in Chapter 2.2, the keenness for building houses among Senegalese migrants has been reported by other researchers as well, who have noted the importance of home constructions as a status symbol, even as a symbol of identity (Riccio 2005, 113; Melly 2010).

In addition, I would argue, constructing a house is in the aspirations of most migrants because it is a central step in the *project of return*. The vast majority of the participants express that they aspire to return to Senegal or Gambia to spend their elderly days, whereas staying in Finland after their working age appears as a highly unappealing life trajectory, even for the migrants that have immediate family ties, i.e. children or spouses in Finland. Many participants express their disbelief and confusion about the lack of respect for elderly people among the Finnish society, which manifests for example in the tendency to put elderly people in elderly homes, described as "*homes of exile*" by one of the participants.

Building a house where to spend one's elderly days is an important prerequisite for retiring in the country of origin, as it rather well secures housing without high running expenses. The participants count on their family ties back in the country of origin as a social and economic safety net for their elderly days. This is how the family members are hoped to repay the years of contribution that migrants have provided through remittances and enable migrants to return for their retirement days and claim their status

as respected elders. This follows the findings of previous studies that have reported that it is especially male migrants that aspire to return (Vertovec 2009, 65).

There are also transnational practices, described in previous literature on Senegambian transnationalism, which do not occur in the data this study. The participants are not involved with, what has been referred to as *home town associations*, which usually are formed of migrants, originating from the same area or village, and pool remittances to realize projects to facilitate the development of the area of origin (e.g. Kane 2002). In addition to home town association, transnational political activism is more or less absent in the data of this study, and a level of political activism is expressed only by two of the participants of this study.

As mentioned in Chapter 3.3, a dimension of transnationalism that has been closely examined in the case of Senegalese migrants is the transnational organization of the Senegalese Sufi Muslim brotherhood of Mourids. The religious association functions to maintain solidarity among followers of the brotherhood that are abroad, and facilitates migration and entrepreneurial activities of Mourid traders (e.g. Riccio 2004). In the data of this study, none of the Senegambian participants expressed that a membership in any of the Senegalese Islamic brotherhoods is a central affiliation, a form of organization, or a source of identity for them. However, as other Senegalese residing in Finland were discussed with participants in general, they often referred to persons that are part of the Mourid transnational networks and how also the religious leaders occasionally visit Finland. Thus it can be concluded that transnational organization of Mourids does spread to some extent also to Finland, but none of these individuals fell in the data of this study.

On the contrary, fascinatingly, the participants of this study often distanced themselves from being strongly committed to religious brotherhoods. Firstly, this surfaced in the accounts of the participants who emphasized sending remittances to family members instead of channeling resources for religious organizations or leaders. Furthermore, the legitimacy of the social and political power of religious leaders was often questioned. In addition, critical reflection was raised by one of the participants who framed Mourid migrants' strong maintenance and display of their lifestyle and habitus as a senseless way of acculturating into Finnish society. Interestingly, this indicates of similar tension

among Senegambian migrants that has been reported in the context of Italy. Some Senegalese migrants make efforts to organize a non-religious form of socio-political representation within the receiving context, while some identify their Mourid religious circles as the most fulfilling organizational form (Riccio 2001).

This leads us to the topic of ethnic community in Finland. Migrants originating from the same country or with a common ethnic or national background are often framed as ethnic communities directed by solidarity. However, tension and conflict among the migrants from same origin can also be emphasized (Riccio 2001). The participants of this study report a level of interaction and solidarity among the Gambians and the Senegalese. All the participants report knowing many fellow countrymen living in Finland, but at the same time, also emphasize being closer to few of them and not to all. Also critical reflections and tension in relation to fellow countrymen are expressed, as already shown in the example considering the Mourid brotherhood. Even though, Senegal and Gambia are largely habited by same ethnic groups, nationality plays a role. Both migrant groups have their own associations in Finland (Suomi-Senegal Ystävät ry and Suomi-Gambia Yhdistys), that organize gatherings to celebrate annual events in which migrants residing in Finland come together to socialize. Resources are also sometimes pooled together in cases of emergency. However, to some extent Senegalese and Gambians do also express proximity and interaction across the national borders and for example participate in events organized by each other's associations. In the end, as almost all of the participants of this study have also family ties in Finland, it is understandable that it is a source of social interaction and social capital linking migrants to the Finnish society, and therefore, for the participants of this study, the ethnic community has a meaning of a lesser degree.

To conclude, Senegambian migrants in Finland are engaged in various transnational practices. However, in the data of this study the transnationalism is mostly about maintaining family ties and sending remittances to the country of origin. In addition, the Senegambians are engaged in small scale investments, especially in the construction of private houses for themselves and extended families. Also these activities can be seen as a form of maintaining family ties and facilitating one's return in the country of origin. At the same time almost all the participants have family ties, spouses or children, in Finland. Therefore in the following, I will analyze in detail the multi-local family ties of

Senegambian migrants, and especially how family ties in Finland shape the transnational engagement.

## **6.2 Multi-Local Family Ties – Opportunities and Obligations**

As have been shown in Chapter 3 of this study, research on different forms of migrant transnationalism has to some extent concentrated on transnationalism of labor migrants or communities engendered through forced migration. Research on transnational families, examining the maintenance of familial ties, care and remittances has especially focused on the migration of working age individuals pursuing better economic prospects and maintaining their family ties from afar. At the same time, research on marriage migration and especially bi-cultural marriages has been, to some extent, disjointed from themes of transnationalism. However, in this chapter I seek to bring these two areas together.

The Senegambian migrants residing in Finland that participated in this study are involved in transnational practices and maintain various transnational family ties. However, almost all have also family ties to Finland. As Wahlbeck (2004, 115) have noted while studying Turks in Finland, transnational ties based on reciprocity do not rule out the possibility of having simultaneous reciprocal ties crossing ethnic boundaries within the society of settlement. Indeed, the focus of this chapter is the *multi-local family ties* of Senegambian migrants. I employ here the expression multi-local family ties when referring that a migrant has family ties in both places, in Senegal or Gambia and in Finland. Throughout this chapter I am seeking to find answers to following questions: How family ties in Finland shape the transnational engagement of Senegambian migrants? How participants experience their opportunities and obligations in different locations of the transnational field? And finally, what kinds of narratives of family obligations are employed? Answers to these questions are sought by comparing the migration and family trajectories of the participants and by analyzing their accounts on obligations and opportunities in different locations of the transnational space.

### **6.2.1 Family Ties in Finland Enabling and Shaping Transnationalism**

As mentioned, almost all the participants of this study are, or have been, married with a Finn. Three of the participants have divorced, three have been at least living in

separation, while four are still married and living together. Some of the participants have met their spouses in Senegal or Gambia, while some have arrived in Finland to do short term work, and have then met their Finnish spouses during the time spent in Finland.

Despite the different ways participants have met their spouses, for the majority of them, it is the marriage with a Finn that has enabled an authorized entry or residence in Finland. In other words, marriage with a Finn is a key factor enabling legal entitlements for mobility for Senegambian migrants of this study. Therefore, the participants are differently positioned and have a different dominating method of entry and regularizing their status than for example in the context of Jacques' (2009) study, in which Senegambians enter Spain with work or tourist visas or unauthorized. Whereas for Jacques' participants it is regularizing one's status with work contracts and upward occupational mobility that enables migrants to participate increasingly in transnational practices, for the participants of this study, it is the marriage with Finns that enables mobility and transnationalism in the first place. Marriage with a member of the ethnic majority and a citizen of the receiving society is a source of social capital, as relationships to people give often also access to various resources. This way Senegambian migrants' marriages with Finns can be considered from the same point of view as upward occupational mobility in Jacques' study – as enabling mobility and transnationalism.

However, family ties, meaning a spouse or children, create also a bond to the receiving society. Family ties are a bond of a distinct nature, and different from for example employment or study place. As Riccio (2008, 219-222) has noted in the case of Ghanaian migrants in Italy, the presence of children increases and diversifies interaction with institutions of the receiving society. Therefore, as I will show throughout this chapter, family ties to Finland enable transnationalism, but simultaneously shape the attachment to Finland, which has implications for participants' transnational engagement as well.

Are then Senegambian migrants in Finland and their migration and family trajectories and transnationalism decisively different from, for example, Senegalese in Italy, who engage in economic transactions across international boundaries, spend much of their

time away from Senegal but still return there more or less frequently aiming at creating an economic, social, spiritual life for themselves and their families in Senegal, where their transnational social networks are anchored (Riccio 2001, 584)? Are transnational practices of Senegambian migrants in Finland just a by-product of their family migration to Finland? Or is it the other way around: Are family ties in Finland just a by-product of a quest for migration and socio-economic mobility while aiming to maintain dominating ties to the country of origin through transnational practices?

In order to answer these questions, one needs to analyze the accounts that migrants make about their ties, obligations and opportunities in the different locations of the transnational space they are involved with. In the data of this study, the accounts concerning these topics are often hesitant, vague and even contradictory. Therefore, these must be analyzed and interpreted with caution, but at the same time, their contradictory nature also signals of negotiation that is fruitful to analyze in order to understand these topics.

In the following, I compare the trajectories of few participants to shed light on different migration and family trajectories. In the next extract, *Amadou* gives his account about his obligations and opportunities in Finland:

Amadou: Education is one. Work is two. And then my family. Family is not number one, in here. I put education and my work, and my family. Those are the three main important things. (male, 30s)

Amadou has altogether four children. Three of them have been born in Africa and one in Finland. Through family reunification he has brought two of the African born children to Finland and one is still living in Africa. Therefore, he has one child and his mother and sisters living in Africa, while three of his children and the mother of the Finnish born child living in Finland. Throughout the interview, Amadou refers to his Finnish born child as a tie that is the primary reason keeping him in Finland. However, the previous extract also reveals that it is a crisscross of educational and employment opportunities, and family relations that make him reside in Finland. Amadou reflects that if he could, through family reunification, also bring his mother to live in Finland, then his ties would almost totally concentrate in Finland. However, he also reflects that if he would have not had a child in Finland, then he could after his graduation in



Finland perhaps move back to Africa. These reflections and representations of ties show clearly the fluidity and complexity of multi-local ties, obligations and opportunities in Amadou's case. In the end, it is clear that Amadou sees his life to happen between Finland and Africa. He has family ties in both localities and he would also prefer to work as an entrepreneur doing business that relates to both localities. He is also an important provider of income for his extended family in Africa. Therefore, a highly transnational arrangement is for Amadou an ideal one.

For *Diene*, instead, family reasons were the primary, even the only reason to settle down in Finland. Diene met his Finnish wife abroad and moved to Finland when their first child was about to be born:

Diene: There were alternatives. Either my wife and son would return back to Africa, or we stay all here. Cause I never intended anyway to leave my child in this country while I'm in Africa, and they ask him where's your father, he is in Africa, no! (...) So, it's true that if I was just a young guy who came here in Finland, I wouldn't have stayed in this country, no way! (male, 50s)

As can be seen from the extract, Diene expresses that he needed to decide with his wife where to reside to be able to live together as a nuclear family. In addition, he expresses that without this family tie he would not have settled in Finland. From here it can be interpreted that for Diene the family ties were indeed the main reason to move and stay in Finland. Diene is now, at the time the data was collected, a father of five Finnish born children and has already also Finnish born grandchildren. He maintains family ties to Africa with his siblings, provides occasional economic help for them and has invested in house construction in the home community. Therefore, even though he maintains some transnational ties, his family ties in Finland are dominant. In his case, employment or educational opportunities did not inform his decision to move to Finland. However, alike many other participants, also Diene expressed to be committed with the project of the return, meaning that he is planning to settle back in Africa for retirement.

*Bubba's* accounts, instead, are very different. At the time the data was collected, Bubba had arrived in Finland approximately a year ago and had recently got married with his Finnish wife. During the interview, he occasionally refers that the family tie that the marriage with a Finn has engendered is a primary motivation for him to stay in Finland in the future. However, at the same time, he also expresses the following:

Bubba: If there is a lot of opportunity in Africa, some people that are here would not be here. There is no place like home. If you see somebody leaving his home and come to a foreign place, obviously his home is not nice. People like me, if I have all those facilities, why should I come here. It's the question, man. (male, 20s)

As the extract shows, from Bubba's accounts it can be interpreted that in his case, employment and educational opportunities play a highly important role in the decisions where to reside.

As a last example, I describe the migration trajectory of *Fatou*. Fatou arrived in Finland with a short term work visa. During the time she was working in Finland she met her Finnish husband and as they got married she stayed in Finland. However, their marriage ended in divorce few years later and after couple of years Fatou got married with an African man that she met during her holiday trips back home. In addition to her husband, she keeps intensively contact with her mother and siblings and their families in Africa and is an important provider of subsistence for the family. Even though she now has more dominant family ties in Africa than in Finland, she continues to reside in Finland.

Fatou: Even when you go to holiday, you don't get enough, but you have to come back. It's like by force you have to come back. Sometimes I don't want to come. But I must come. (...) I cry, I cry, I say I must go, but everybody cry in the family. They want me to stay there with them. But we have to come back. If we don't come back nothing will work. We come back, we try our best, to do the work and to do what we like to do. (...) To do the work and help my family. Like that. (female, 20s)

In the extract, Fatou is describing the sentiment she goes through when about to return to Finland from visiting Africa. When she is referring to 'we', she is referring to migrants in general. Here migrants are portrayed as people who are, on the other hand, reaching out for their individual dreams, but also sacrificing themselves to live far from the rest of the family, in order to contribute to the material survival of the home community. The representation is this way in line with the broader narrative on migration in Senegal and Gambia (e.g. Riccio 2005). To conclude, in Fatou's case also, it is the employment and economic factors that deeply affect the decisions to reside in Finland.

As can be seen from the examples above, migration trajectories and the compositions of multi-local family ties and the extent of transnational engagement vary tremendously among the participants of this study. For some, family ties in Finland have played a

decisive role in their migration trajectories. In general, when enquired about the decision to reside in Finland, many participants referred to their family ties in Finland. Especially children born in Finland are seen as ties to Finnish society that motivates to continue residing here, as participants often emphasized their familial obligation to be present in the lives of their children in Finland.

However, when the accounts of the participants are analyzed more closely, it is clear that for many also the opportunities to upward socio-economic mobility play a central role in migration trajectories and family arrangements. For the vast majority, employment and educational opportunities are received to be better in Finland than in Senegal or Gambia. Therefore, I am arguing that even though almost all the participants of this study have family ties in Finland and are, or have been married in Finland, labeling these migrants simply as marriage migrants, or simply labor migrants for that matter, would be crucially misleading. Instead, not for all, but for the majority of the participants, migrating and residing in Finland is a result of a crisscross of family ties and socio-economic prospects.

This of course easily raises the question, whether Senegambian migrants "marry for papers", in other words, establish marriages solely to gain mobility entitlements. In the data of this study, few of the participants referred on a general level to the existence of this method of gaining visas and residence permits. Also in previous research, Senegambian informants have referred to the tendency of establishing these "marriages of convenience" (Rodríguez García 2006, 417-419). However, it is not an objective of this study to assess to what extent gaining mobility entitlements have motivated the formation of the marriages of the individual participants of this study, but to show the crisscross of family ties and obligations and socio-economic opportunities within the transnational space.

If the importance and weight of family ties and socio-economic opportunities vary among the participants' trajectories, also the family compositions and arrangements, and how these shape transnationalism, varies. As the extracts above show, it varies whether migrants' have dominant family ties to Senegal/Gambia or to Finland. Participants of this study have dense family ties in another, in neither, or in both localities of the transnational space. Some participants, like Fatou, have divorced in

Finland and sustained dominant transnational family ties. For these migrants, Finland often represents the source of livelihood, while the country of origin the location of family life. Some, like Diene, have dominant family ties in Finland, while transnational family ties and practices are less intensive. Some, of course, do not have many close family members in either of the localities.

However, many who have spouses or children in Finland maintain also ties to country of origin and invest there in housing and plan to retire there. In addition, as family ties do not form with the logic of a zero-sum game, it is not uncommon that Senegambian migrants end up with dense family ties in both localities of the transnational space. This is further facilitated by the fact that migration is for many a strategy for upward socio-economic mobility, and therefore migration decision might be taken even if it means leaving family members, including spouses or children, behind. At the same time, formation of family ties to Finland is one of the few methods for legal entry and residence. Moreover, the practice of polygamy enables Senegambian male migrants to establish simultaneous nuclear families in both localities. Therefore, dense multi-local family ties where migrants have children, sometimes also spouses in both localities are not uncommon. In addition, as the participants often take economic responsibility over their parents, siblings and sometimes other extended family members, the bond to the community of origin is often substantial. Thus, spouses and children in Finland do not automatically mean less intensive family ties in the country of origin, nor less intensive transnational engagement.

### **6.2.2 Decoupled Familial Obligations**

I now turn to analyze more closely the accounts of the migrants who have dense family ties in both localities. In the data of this study, multi-local family ties engender negotiations and reflections of one's familial roles especially among participant's that have immediate family members, i.e. spouse or children in both localities.

As I have stated above, when in the interviews I enquired participants' motivations to reside in Finland, participants often refer to their family ties in Finland, in other words, being married or having children in Finland. Especially, migrants refer to their role as a father to their children that is present in Finland, which is a familial obligation that continues until the children reach maturity. However, what is interesting is that many of

these participants have immediate family ties also in Senegal or Gambia. When migrants refer to their family ties as motives to reside in Finland, the familial obligation of a parent or spouse that is present often remains unmentioned in relation to the family members “left behind”. Instead, when migrants refer to their immediate family members in the country of origin they emphasize their familial obligations as providers of material resources.

For example, *Anta* has a wife and four children in Africa. In addition, he has a wife in Finland with whom he lives together. *Anta* and his family are Muslims, including his Finnish wife. The family in Africa also knows and keeps contact with his Finnish wife as well. When *Anta* talks about his decision to reside in Finland he emphasizes his family ties and work:

*Anta*: But what you can do if you have family here? If you have wife, if you have children, they are human, they need their mother but they need also their father. You have to have a human heart, a human brain, to think about them. There are two things, your work and your family. Then, until you get locked! Yeah, you are half Finnish, half African (laughing). (male, 50s)

The extract is a good example of the participants’ slightly fuzzy, even contradictory reasoning about their ties in Finland. In *Anta*’s case, he emphasizes two things, his work, but also his family ties in Finland. He refers that for him, as well as for other migrants like him, family ties are an important factor to reside in Finland. This is because a person with a ‘human heart and brain’ is expected to be present with his or her immediate family. When *Anta* is discussing his family in Africa, the expectations for a family member to be a spouse or a father in spatial proximity are understandably emphasized less. However, as many other participants do as well, *Anta* does emphasize that he misses his family members left back home:

*Anta*: When I keep contact, of course I miss them, because this life, it is hard life. You know, having your family other side of the world. Staying here, only one part is here and the biggest part is there. (male, 50s)

From the extract it can be seen, that, if family ties in Finland is an important factor to reside in Finland, at the same time, *Anta* feels that “only one part” of his family is here while actually the majority resides in the country of origin. Moreover, *Anta* continues his accounts about his role and obligations towards the family in Africa:

Anta: But of course, when I think about how I've been used to be inside my family, if that thing is missing, it's bringing sometimes really funny feeling. But as a man, I need to be strong, because also, I'm the one who is taking care of my family.(...)

My family, what they expect from me is... they have it. Because it's love. I'm a good father. I love my children. I don't treat them badly, I respect them and love them. And I share all I got. I'm here because of them.(...)

Because they eat, they drink. When they get sick I take them to hospital, to clinic, yes not even to health center, but to expensive clinic. I give them money for buying clothes. I pay their studies. My house will be soon ready, my own house. I'm paying rent. My cars are working and bring money and fix the situation. I have couple, that's enough for one. It's working, it's bringing. And also when I happen to get more money, when I get half jackpot, I give them pocket money, my daughter, I'm sending her money to have pocket money. (male, 50s)

Here Anta shifts to emphasize his role as “the one who is taking care” of his family in Africa. Whereas he has until now, referred to the familial obligations of being a family member that is in a spatial proximity, he now shifts to emphasize the familial obligation of providing material resources. He even goes as far as expressing, that he is “here because of them”, which can be interpreted as a way to express that he actually chooses to reside in Finland, far from his family in Africa, to be able to provide material resources for them. In addition, he gives an impressive litany of the expenses he covers as well as the means to achieve income for his family.

As another example, I will refer to a younger participant, *Yacouba*. Yacouba has one child in Africa and a wife and a child in Finland. In addition, he mentions that his extended family in Africa includes his elderly father and a total of 13 siblings. Yacouba refers that his motive to reside in Finland is his family ties in Finland and better educational opportunities, but especially his child in Finland. The meaning of his child as a tie to Finland can well be seen in the following extract. When I enquired that if he is planning to return permanently to Africa at some point in future, he replied:

Yacouba: That I don't have to even think about. That time when my children here have turned 18, so then they can come and visit me there, and I can come here to visit them, that time I would like to settle down again in Africa. (male, 20s.)

In the extract, Yacouba expresses a common life-cycle plan among the participants that have children in Finland. Yacouba is confident that he wants to return to Africa finally, but cannot do that before his children here have reached maturity and his responsibility as a father that is present has then mostly passed. This expresses, on the one hand, the

maintenance of transnational ties, but on other hand how a child shapes transnational engagement: It brings an obligation to be present in Finland until children grow up.

However, resembling Anta's case, also for Yacouba providing economic resources 'back home' is a central familial obligation. In the following extract Yacouba reflects his role as a migrant member of his family:

Yacouba: At the moment I am the only one from my family that is abroad. It means that I have more possibilities than the others right now, and that is why I also send money that pay rent and other expenses of the household. (male, 20s.)

Indeed, from Yacouba's accounts it can be seen that he aims all possible economic resources for family in Africa. He sends money for the subsistence of his family, but also expresses that his ambition is to save money in Finland to be able to buy land and construct a house in Senegal for him and his children. When I enquired what he would use the money for, if he could earn an extra 100€ the coming week, he replied:

Yacouba: I would send it to Senegal. (...) For example, breakfast can be a little bit better or a little bit worse. Breakfast with milk, or without milk. There is always something you can put that money into. (male, 20s)

This extract is an illustration of the tendency to aim whatever available economic resources for the well-being of the family in Africa. If even a small amount of extra resources is gained, it can be invested for example to provide a slightly more nutritious breakfast.

The accounts of Anta and Yacouba show, how Senegambian migrants that have immediate family members in both localities of the transnational field emphasize different dimensions of their familial obligations depending on whether the family ties in the country of origin or the country of residence are discussed. When participants talk about their life in Finland, they emphasize family ties and their role of a spouse or father who is present in the spatial proximity of family members. This tie is often expressed to keep them residing in Finland until children reach maturity. At the same time, participants' familial obligations for the family in Africa are mostly discussed in terms of their role as a migrant providing livelihood for the family 'left behind'.

Drawing from this, I am arguing that Senegambian migrants that have dense multi-local family ties employ a narrative of decoupled familial obligations, where the ideal of a spouse and a father that is present raising children is applied to family in Finland, and the ideal of a provider of economic resources applied for the family in Africa. This way a migrant with dense multi-local family ties is able to answer to different dimensions of the expectations that are associated with an ideal role of a father and a husband, nevertheless that these different dimensions are leveled to families in different locations.

Many of the participants that have dense multi-local family ties understandably express that for them a highly transnational life arrangement is an ideal one. They wish for the ability to be highly mobile, spending long periods in both localities. However, spending long periods in Africa also means being absent from work in Finland. Therefore, in practice, many face difficulties to finance longer periods in the country of origin. The migrants often refer that they should be able to invest in small businesses in Senegal or Gambia, to be able to secure the financing of longer periods in the country of origin. However, none of the participants of this study have yet realized this in larger scale, which forces them to spend a vast majority of their time in Finland. This configuration is expressed in the following extract by *Sidy* that has a wife and children in both, Africa and Finland. Despite the fact that *Sidy* is highly engaged in transnational practices, he has spent the vast majority of the last twenty-years in Finland and is able to visit Senegal only for a month or two approximately once in a year or few years.

*Sidy*: Even I am more here, it looks like. Because I have to work. It's difficult, the world is more difficult. But even in the future, I would like to, because I have kids now, I would like to stay half, half. But not one year, or ten years. I would like to stay 6 months or 5 months and then I go to Africa 4-6 months also. Because you lose many things, really. Because you are like a foreigner in your own country. You don't know why they are talking like that, why they are doing like this, because you miss all these things. It is very painful. You are not in. That's why I try my best to do somehow, how I can live in Africa more longer than what I am doing. It means that you have to invest something. You have to have something. (male, 50s)



## 7 Remittances and Asymmetries in Transnational Family Relations

In this chapter, I turn the focus from the interplay that multi-local family ties engender, to examine more closely the transnational family ties of Senegambian migrants. With transnational ties, I refer to the relationships that migrants maintain (or dissolve) in the country of origin. I examine how these ties are maintained in transnational space, through *relativizing* and how remittance expectations and behaviors shape these relationships. I will also examine how remittances are negotiated through *frontiering*. Finally, I will analyze the dynamics in transnational relations through the framework of asymmetries and examine the techniques that migrants employ to overcome asymmetries in transnational relations.

### 7.1 The Mixed Blessing of Migrancy

As briefly mentioned in Chapter 6.1, many of the participants of this study are important remitters for their families in Africa. Indeed, many face strong expectations of remittances from the family, relatives, or home communities, even though the degree and relations, from which these expectations rise, vary drastically among the participants. In many cases the remittance expectations and behaviors are inseparably connected to life cycle stages and generational familial relations and transfers. For example, a parent is expected to remit for his or her children, a husband is often expected to support his wife, and finally, in the absence of state run pension systems in this context, an adult is often also expected to support his or her elderly parents. However, from participants' accounts it can also be interpreted that often these migrants face expectations also from people whom they have more of a horizontal tie with, in which cases expectations of economic support are much less obvious (Carling 2008, 1458). Expectations and requests of remittances can be leveled also from siblings, neighbors, friends or distant relatives. However, as can be seen from the following, some of the participants face no remittance expectations at all:

Interviewer: Does your family have some expectations for you, what they hope from you?

Papis: No, man, you know, because my family they kind of cool, man... (...) They are fine, so they just say, make your life. (...) They don't expect nothing from me or things

like that, they are ok there, so, they just say to me: - You have your family now and, you know, behave and take care of your family there, you know. If they see me maybe once in the year, I come holidays looking for them, they see I'm alive and ok, it's cool. (male, 20s)

In this extract *Papis* emphasizes that his parents and siblings are doing economically well and therefore they expect him to aim all his resources for his daughter in Finland, instead of remitting to Africa. In the data of this study the absence of expectations for economic support is usually a result of two factors. Firstly, it's related to the structure of the family: The migrant has no spouses or children in the home community and no immediate need to support his or her parents. Secondly, it's related to the general economic situation of the family: The extended family is not in the midst of acute economic hardship.

For others instead, there are a lot of expectations of remittances:

Interviewer: Is it mostly your parents or other relatives that have these kinds of demands?

Aminata: Ah, both sides. Neighbors, friends, everybody. Everybody that really remembers you or have your contact, that's it. They demand and they expect and, yeah. (...) And when they can't get help from anywhere then they will turn to you. (...) Because they always think that, living in the West, you are financially better off than them, even though it is not always so. (female, 30s)

Therefore, if on the other end, we have migrants that do not feel any pressure to remit, on the opposite end, we have migrants that contribute to the daily subsistence of spouses, children, siblings and siblings' children and provide help at difficult times for other extended family members as well. Therefore, even though there can be found clear patterns in Senegambians' transnational ties and remittance practices, for a comprehensive and truthful picture of their transnational lives, this diversity must be kept in mind. From the above extract it can be also seen that the members of home communities sometimes readily approach migrants in the hope of economic help. In the face of economic hardship, or just wishes for gaining consumer goods, requests are often easily aimed at migrants, based on the assumption that migrants in Europe are generally wealthy. As will be shown later, these perceptions and images about migrants and Europe play a key role in dynamics in transnational family ties.

I argue that whether transnational family ties of Senegambian migrants contain a substantial expectation of remittances, decisively shapes these relations. Transnational relations, in which a migrant is an important provider of daily subsistence or is anyway contacted often for remittances are vitally different than transnational relationships where this does not occur. Migrants that do not face such a pressure to remit however keep contact intensively with their home communities. In these cases transnational relations are much more relaxed and communication is framed in positive terms. When keeping contact, migrants get a chance to use their mother tongue while news from both localities is exchanged, and moral advice is shared.

On the contrary, in those transnational relationships which contain a strong expectation of remittances, various dynamics and processes occur. Participants that perceive the expectations of home communities to be high reflect their role as a migrant more, and in these reflections the aspects of providing economic support and related expectations dominate their accounts of their transnational ties. Surely, even those migrants that express to experience fierce expectations of remittances, distinguish that at times when there is no concerns about the economic survival of the home community, they also enjoy keeping contact with their family members. However, not for all, but for many of the remitting migrants, the requests of remittances are so prevalent that they emphasize how it is a significant source of stress and malaise:

Fatou: Yeah, it gives me joy, but I have too much stress also. Sometimes I think why I come here. Because everybody is: - Fatou, Fatou, you're supposed to do this, you understand, that pressure make me too much stress. If you don't be careful, you go mad! Because there is too much in your head. (female, 20s)

Sidy: It looks like it's going together: I have joy every time they are talking and when they ask and I have what they ask, you know. And sometimes they ask and you know that you have been giving everything you can. Until you don't even eat good, you eat only bread and some very cheap things that you know that you should eat more than this, and they are still asking sometimes. And you get very frustrated. (male, 50s)

These extracts of Fatou and Sidy tell exactly of the situation, where migrants in general enjoy keeping contact with their home communities, but where expectations of remittances make these relationships stressful and cause concrete difficulties for migrants to manage their expenses. In addition to stress that rises simply from the level of expectations, frustration is derived also from the fact that the issue of sending money tends to dominate this communication made from afar. As can be seen from the next

extract, this causes frustration as migrants' wish that the interaction between them and family members would include more than just the exchange of economic resources:

Amadou: Money, money, money. Why it has to be only money. It's not nice because I have my own family here also. (...) Even when I was alone here, really, it's stressful when all my money is send to them and I'm here. (...) They only need money, money, money. Nothing else. Nobody even call me for, send me a book, I need a book for my studies or something, no, no, no. (male, 30s)

However, following Crentsil's (2012) findings, as much as many of the participants suffer from the stress engendered by fierce expectations of remittances from the home communities, for many, providing for the extended family is also often a primary source of pride, recognition and social prestige. Even when, the task of providing support for all that are asking for it, seems unrealistic, many go through significant efforts to be able to answer to them, and at best it brings strong gratification for the migrants:

Sidy: Because this relation we have, they give me respect somehow. I'm like their idol. That's why I don't want to make something that they get angry. I'm somebody for them. When they are calling me, it means that their problem will be off. (male, 50s)

Fatou: Like last month, my sister was making birthday. She say: - I want to buy clothes, I want to... I say: - Ok, how much you want? She say: - 2000 dalasi. I say: - 2000? Ok, I send you 3000! [=100€] She say: - Yeah? I 'm happy!

And she went to shopping. She was very happy. She buy the food, she buy everything they wanted to do. She was very, very happy. Praying for me: -Thank you, god bless you.

I say: - Ok, no problem. (female, 20s)

From Sidy's extract it can be interpreted how the respect that the migrant gains from the home community is rewarding and drives him to efforts in answering to the family's demands. Fatou's, instead, is a telling illustration of the satisfaction that migrants feel when they are able to realize their family members' wishes.

To conclude, the participants often express a strong ambivalence, a mixed blessing of migrancy. This ambivalence is not only about the mixed feeling of reaching towards one's interests abroad, and at the same time missing family and close friends at home, that is probably a common sentiment faced by any migrants. Instead, the ambivalence is much more profound and rises from the crisscross of the stress that expectations of

remittances casted towards a person who has made it to abroad engender, and on the other hand, of the gratification that supporting home communities gives.

## 7.2 Relativizing in Transnational Space

As transnational families are dispersed by distance and spatial proximity is scarce, the maintenance and reproduction of family relations and a collective notion of familyhood comes especially to the fore. As elaborated in Chapter 4.4., to grasp this process I am employing the concept of relativizing to refer to the modes of materializing the family as a community (Bryceson & Vuorela 2002). Sending remittances, discussed above, is indeed a central form of relativizing. However, family ties are also maintained and reproduced through different forms of communication and keeping contact. However, as I will show in the following, when expectations of remittances dominate transnational family relations it also crucially shapes the conditions of communication between participants and their family members in the country of origin.

In the following, I will give an example of a typical relativizing act. In the extract, *Sidy* illustrates a situation where he keeps contact with his family members over Skype. Sidy has built a house in his community of origin that is inhabited by his immediate and extended family members. The various extended family members often spend time in the living room of the house, and therefore, when he is calling with Skype he is often in contact with various family members that are present at that particular moment. Sidy tells the following as an example of jokes they make among family when keeping contact:

Sidy: Awa (Sidy's sister) can say: - Sidy Diallo, send me one telephone.

I say: - Yeah, I will send.

Somebody says: - Ahaa, Awa is your friend, that's why!

Because, you know, she is my young sister, but her son, she gave my name to her son. It's very big for me also. (male, 50s)

In this conversation, Sidy's sister *Awa* asks him, perhaps a little playfully, to send her a mobile phone. In the interview, Sidy presented the situation in a way that he would immediately, but also playfully, reply to Awa by agreeing on her demand. To this, a third family member would react by commenting that this interaction reveals Sidy's and Awa's close relationship. Furthermore, this example leads Sidy to reflect further on his

relationship with Awa and he immediately adds how, actually, Awa has named her son after Sidy, and how he treats this as a significant symbolic act.

The extract is a telling illustration of relativizing, of maintaining and reproducing family ties and a notion of ‘familyhood’ in a transnational context. First of all, the interaction between the migrant and rest of the family who are present at the other end over Skype creates a transnational social space. Keeping contact over this transnational space is of course a way of maintaining family ties in itself. However, in this case the content of the interaction refers to reproduction of family ties as well. In addition to money, mobile phones are an established currency of remitting among Senegambian migrants and their home communities. Therefore, this conversation manifests that there are ties and expectations between these particular persons and that in this context the migrant is expected to be the provider and the non-migrant the receiver of material resources. Also, the comment of the third person confirms that this potential exchange is a manifestation of their close relationship. Finally, this imagined situation leads the participant to further reflect on the relationship between him and his sister, and he gives his account how their relationship as a family materializes also in the fact that the sister’s son has been given his name.

High expectations of remittances, however, shape the conditions of communication. Participants often express a need to employ techniques of moderating the communication with their home communities. Not all, but migrants that face the fiercest levels of requests of remittances, employ two techniques: Firstly, phone numbers are changed when it is known among a broad number of people in the country of origin and migrants start to receive calls from distant relatives, neighbors, or even strangers that request for remittances. Secondly, in addition, or instead of changing a phone number, migrants often decide to answer to only few people from the community of origin. In the latter case, migrants usually limit the persons whose calls they answer to, to few closest family members, in order to avoid the overwhelming amount of requests. The need to moderate the communication with the community of origin is well illustrated in the following extract:

Amadou: You see that red phone? I call it African phone. They have that number so I put it off. This one, [shows another phone] is like my private line. Now, only my mom and my brother have this line. That line [the red phone], almost everyone have. So,

when I put it on there's coming text messages, calls, all kind of things. So if I want to take the pressure then I put in on (laughing). (male, 30s)

The participants also express that their actions to limit the communication with extended family members sometimes provoke critical perceptions of them among the home communities. The same way Riccio (2005) has noted, migrants are sometimes blamed for forgetting the traditional values of solidarity and sharing, and becoming individualistic or 'European' instead.

Sidy: When I go to Africa, often I say that, I'm sorry I can't call everybody, 'cause we are big family, and they understand, and I have been teaching them like that many years. Now everybody knows that, when I'm in Finland, I call nobody! I make this very clear to everybody. Some they take it seriously: – Sidy Diallo, he don't care about us!

But if you care a lot about many people, try to be nice of everybody sometimes, after you get very difficult life here. (male, 50s)

These accounts of relativizing, the keeping contact and reproducing family ties are important in various levels. They illustrate how contact is kept and family ties are reproduced in a transnational context, and how requests of remittances complicate the interaction between migrants and their home communities, as migrants experience a need to limit this communication. In addition, these accounts function as a window to migrants lives, as they are very concrete examples that shed light on how requests of remittances shape the daily lived realities of these migrants.

In addition to reproducing family ties from afar, relativizing acts are in the fore when spatial distance changes into temporary proximity, in other words, when migrants travel and visit their communities of origin. Migrants' visits to home are often highly charged with hopes and expectations. For migrants' it is important to meet families, and feel connected to the community, culture and customs. The participants also, however, express that families often have high expectations for these temporary periods of physical proximity. The tendency of these visits to have a mixed experience of relaxation and stress is well expressed Diene's following extract:

Diene: Visiting... Let's say, I go to Africa every second summer. (...) I have the idea that when I go there, I can a bit relax, I don't have to think about this and that, but usually it ends up in a disaster. You know the idea is to come to rest. But usually it ends up in a disaster, I don't rest at all! (male, 50s)

The reason, that Diene expresses that visits in the country of origin often end up in a disaster, is that so many come to see him to request for economic support or gifts from abroad. This stress is, again, not expressed by all participants of this study, but indeed many of those who face high expectations of remittances also when they are in Finland. Participants express that visiting the home country must be very carefully prepared because of the expectations of money and gifts that are in the hopes of the home communities. Many of the participants state, that without these expectations, they would be able visit the home country more often:

Amadou: Many times I cancel because, first, I won't tell them that I will come. But when they know that I will come, what they expect is too much. So if I see the expectation is higher, then I cancel my going. That's why it takes long time. Because any Senegalese or Gambian who's going, when family and friends know that he's coming, they will all start calling: When you come bring me mobile, I need this, I need that. So you think about that, I cannot do all this so, it's better that I stay, for some time.

Because if you go there, you spend always every day, money, money, money, until you come. That is more stress, than when I'm here. Really, trust me, when you go, he say ok, now I'm going for a holiday to see my family. The day you arrive, the stress starts from that day. Because that time you are in the middle of Gambians or Senegalese, your family, everybody will come, you know. You are here and everyone is surrounding you. You want, solve this, solve that, solve... You are in that state that you regret, why I'm here. This is reality, sometimes you have to run from your own family people because what they are coming for, help things, money things, and mobile, is really sad. (male, 30s)

Even if members of home communities are not in the need of economic help in the face of an acute problem, migrants' relativizing acts are often closely scrutinized when visiting. Visits to the home community can be charged with the hopes of confirming relationships between individuals, but also between whole families. Migrants often have to negotiate and rationalize whom to pay a visit when travelling to the home country, and this way these relativizing acts are important negotiations related to the borders of the family and the obligations that a migrant has towards it. In the following extract, Sidy is explaining that nowadays he limits the amount of relatives he visits when travelling to Africa, whereas before when his parents were still alive, he was afraid of their reactions:

Sidy: Okay, me, when my mother was living and my father, I couldn't do that. Because I respect their ideas. So, when I come, they will tell me: You have to go to visit your aunt, you have to go visit this aunt, I don't know how many aunt we have, how many uncle we have. You know, we have a lot of those guys. And you have to visit everyone. And everyone needs money. You can't visit nobody without money. So, it's difficult.



And if you don't do that, you have problem with your parents. Your holiday is not very good with your parents, because you have destroyed the law. (male, 50s)

### 7.3 Negotiating and Frontiering Remittances

How do then the participants that receive high expectations negotiate sending remittances? In the face of high expectations, there is often a need to reflect whether to agree and act according to these requests or not. Participants often refer that this decision-making is a simple process, depending only on the financial situation at that particular time. The phrase “If I can do it, I do it. If I can't, I can't”, was repeated numerous times during interviews to illustrate the simplicity of this decision-making. However, the various and diverse accounts participants gave about their remittance behavior reveal another story. Not for all, but for many, sending remittances is constantly a subject under negotiation, contemplation and rationalization. Principles and rules are laid down to guide these decisions.

The ways that migrants negotiate sending remittances in the data of this study can be distinguished to three different levels. These levels are partly overlapping but the distinction brings a richer analytical picture of this negotiation. Participants negotiate remittances on the level of purpose of remittances, the level of the people the remittance is for, and finally on the level of culturally received idealized norm of family solidarity and sharing.

Firstly, migrants negotiate remittances in terms of the purpose money is asked for. Many migrants express their commitment to contribute to daily subsistence, i.e. for food, clothing, housing and medical expenses. Also, contribution to school fees of migrants own, extended family's, or even distant relatives' children, is a cause, many migrants express to be especially committed to. In addition to these, migrants often send money to cover expenses caused by different kinds of annual events of life-cycle ceremonies. These events include, for example, annual Islamic celebrations such as *Korité* (Eid al-Fitr, the ending of Ramadan) or *Tabaski* (Eid Mubarak), or life cycle ceremonies, such as, weddings or naming ceremonies:

Fatou: The Ramadan and Tabaski, they make everything high. People must have money. (...) Because we are in Europe, we are the ones who have this pressure, because we are supposed to go and look for the money and send them, to be happy. (...) It's difficult. If

you don't have, then they are not happy, and others say that: - Ah, their sister is in Europe and they don't even have anything. (female, 20s)

As the extract shows, participants express a substantial pressure to provide for the important annual celebrations. The same applies for life cycle ceremonies, especially naming ceremonies and weddings. Organizing these events among the family, but also visiting other families' events, plays out as an important way of reproducing ties between individuals and families. Therefore, migrants often receive requests to finance both, organizing family's own events, but also to provide for monetary gifts or pieces of clothing, when visiting someone else's ceremonies.

However, much more than remittances aimed for daily subsistence or school fees, these requests for remittances to facilitate different events are contested and a subject under significant negotiations. As can be interpreted from the following extract, aiming resources for these ceremonies is sometimes considered as a way to gain superficial social status:

Diene: But I don't participate in these kind of folk stuff which is getting married and spending lots of money.(...) Because if you tell me that, well, as it is in most Africa, now we are celebrating the what and what and what, I need you to help me and this and that. This, I say no!

I don't give you my money for you to give it to somebody else. (...) So when I help, it means that it's an important matter. It's not just kind of... creating problem. I don't work with that. (male, 50s)

Diene here is highly critical on the custom of aiming substantial economic resources to different ceremonies and events. He goes as far as referring to this tendency as an activity that is 'creating problem'. Furthermore, participants who are critical of spending big sums on ceremonies, associate this behavior to be typical for migrants. Some participants regard building a social status in the eyes of the home communities as fake, because in reality, migrants' socioeconomic status in the country of destination might be very marginal. Therefore many participants of this study distant themselves from this kind consumption, which is considered to be morally dubious also because aiming resources for education and investing in housing or businesses is considered more important.

Secondly, sending remittances are negotiated in terms of the people the remittances are for. As have been already shown, many participants face expectations of economic support from such a number of persons that they need to reflect, to whose requests react on and to whose not. This evokes complex negotiations of the circle of people a migrant has responsibility over. In other words, the borders of the family or community, and different roles within it, are under negotiation. This negotiation belongs to the phenomenon of described by the concept of relativizing, as it is about maintaining, reproducing but also neglecting and dissolving familial ties.

None of the participants, that have a wife or children in the country of origin, question their role as a provider for these family members. In the same vein, in the absence of state run pension systems in the countries of origin, participants express a strong commitment to provide for their elderly parents, unless the parents are economically in a very stable position and remitting is therefore not needed. In the face of economic hardship, migrants very often receive requests also from siblings to provide support for them and their families. It is common that migrants also bend to these requests, but these relations are very prone to engender negotiations:

Amadou: Even my sisters, sometime I tell them: - Look, you have your husband so he should take care some of your problem, not me. I can help if it's really needed. (...) They are my blood sisters, but I don't have to take their responsibility one hundred percent. I can do some percent, but for my mom, then I do everything. (male, 30s)

Fatou: ...they have wives but their work is not that enough. We need to help them. They think we can help them, but we cannot help them like that way they think, but we can help them something. Also they disturb me so much, calling. (female, 20s)

In the first extract, Amadou is negotiating his responsibility over his sisters. He argues that as his sisters are married it should no longer be primarily him sustaining them, like he is sustaining their mother. In the second extract, the situation is the same, although genders have changed places. Fatou gives her account how his brothers turn to her, when their income is not enough to provide for them and their wives. In addition, she frames the requests of her brothers as *disturbing*, which hints to annoyance these requests engender.

This way migrants frame their relationships with siblings as horizontal. They question whether they have a responsibility over them, and communicate, that in a situation

where migrant is already providing for his or her own immediate family and possibly parents, it is an unbearable situation if he or she is also expected to provide for the siblings. When requests of remittances are received from more distant relatives, neighbors or friends, they are often reflected in an even more critical manner and are also under rationalization and complex negotiations.

There is one culturally specific familial norm, which participants often refer to, that is the distinct position of the firstborn. Ideally, the firstborn child of the family receives the strongest expectations to support the family. In families where the father has passed away, the oldest son is considered to inherit the position of ‘the head of the family’. However, migration affects also to this dynamics: the migration experience tends to override the distinct positions of siblings, as the migrant member often faces strong expectations, whether he or she is the firstborn or not.

In addition to ‘purposes’ and ‘persons’, remittances are negotiated also on a third level. With this third level I refer to the negotiation that relates to the questioning of the idealized notions of solidarity and sharing. When the participants explain why they feel an obligation to send remittances to extended family members or home communities, they often refer to these virtues of sharing and solidarity. In participants’ accounts, these virtues appear as a cultural norm that is a characteristic of *Africa* and an *African family*.

Papis: ...let’s say further family, like cousin or friends, maybe them can give me some stress but not my parents straight. But it’s ok, it’s ok. It’s Africa, we like to share, it’s like that. (male, 20s)

Aminata: Or then sometimes my mom call me now: - Oh our neighbor is very sick and they don’t have nothing and if you are able to help, can you please help... (...) So the neighbor became part of the family. You can’t escape that bond. It does happen. Maybe the European or the Westerner would not understand why you would have to take responsibility of people outside your family, but that’s our society. That’s how we live and that’s how we have been brought up. (female, 30s)

Indeed, in the data, notions of the virtue, or cultural norm of sharing and solidarity, occasionally surface as a characteristic of the whole African continent and African societies. However, notions of sharing and solidarity locate themselves especially in relation to family life. The importance of family relations, solidarity among the family and the extendedness of the notion of the family is emphasized. Moreover, as can be seen in the following extracts, the notions of an ‘African’ family and solidarity are

constructed in juxtaposition with perceptions of the ‘European’, ‘Western’ or ‘Finnish’ understandings of family and solidarity. In comparison with Africa, Europe is associated with individualism, as well as the understanding family as containing only the nuclear family:

Aminata: Somebody can say: - I can invite my mom or dad to come here, my sister and brothers are in the States, I have nobody in Africa to go and visit.

Even though there are grandparents or other extended family there, they don’t see that. They see the immediate family, like mom dad, sister, brother. Then we are thinking: - Is he crazy? What is he thinking? He’s thinking like a Finn! (female, 30s)

Papis: You know in Africa, is like, everybody help everybody, but after here in Europe is more like, everybody go by your own thing, and after you been living here quite long, after, you start being like that too because it’s the system, you cannot be like taking people problem. Like every time, here it’s different system, it’s not Africa. (male, 20s)

Even though the notions of ‘African’ understandings of solidarity are often framed as positive characteristics that hold communities together, the participants also communicate of being conscious of the pressure that these cultural ideals can cause particularly for them, as migrants are often the ones expected to be able to carry the economic responsibility in the family. Therefore, as the previous extract of Papis already hinted, these cultural ideals are also reflected upon in a critical manner.

Fatou: If I was born in Finland, I don’t have family in Africa, I would be very happy, because in Finland you people don’t have this kind of thing. But Africa, no, no, always you have to do everything your family tells you. Everything. But here, it’s everything for yourself, your own thing. That’s good! Nobody disturbs you (laughing). (female, 20s)

In the critical reflections of the virtue of solidarity, participants refer to changing, hardening circumstances in the world that make it difficult to always follow the ideal of solidarity, but instead push for a more individualistic attitude.

Sidy: My parents could give all their money. And tomorrow they don’t have something to eat, just because they wanted the bigger family to have this good relation. We, we are not thinking like that now. We have different... Even if I’m doing a lot with family, but they have something you can’t do. You have to change. (male, 50s)

In addition, in this extract Sidy refers to a generational change. The generation of his parents represents here the ultimate form of solidarity where scarce resources were

sacrificed in order to have good relations among the whole, large extended family. His generation, instead, represents a change in this thinking; a change that is driven by hardening conditions in the world.

Moreover, simultaneously, like as the flipside of the coin, with the narrative of solidarity, there coexists a narrative of dependency in the accounts of participants. In this narrative the expectations of remittances are framed as unjust dependency:

Bubba: I have worry about those ideas, and then I believe those are the ideas that are retarding Africa behind. Every people, try and live something for your own. (...) The world has changed. We need to change our idea and our mentality. This dependency issue is disturbing us. You cannot solve your own problem, if you want to take hundred people's problem. That brings lot of stress that you're talking about. 'Cause you want to make Modou satisfied, you want to make Bubba satisfied, Fatou also. Come on! If you want to satisfy ten poor people, there is no doubt about it that you have stress. (male, 20s)

As the extract shows, in addition to the narrative of solidarity, there is a critical narrative of dependency that migrants sometimes refer to. In the face of high expectations leveled towards the migrants, the home communities are blamed for leaning too much on the success of the migrant member of the community, instead of taking responsibility of their own material wellbeing.

Therefore, sending remittances is negotiated firstly, by relativizing, through continuous agency to reproduce or dissolve familial relations, but also through frontiering, which refers to the questioning of culturally specific norms that inform family relations and obligations (Bryceson & Vuorela 2002). The above described questioning of the idealized norms of solidarity and sharing associated to an African understanding of a family is a clear example of frontiering in transnational family relations.

#### **7.4 The Dynamics of Mismatching Expectations**

In this chapter, I have so far described and analyzed how expectations of remittances in many ways shape the experiences of the participants and their relationships with families and communities in the countries of origin. I have shown how expectations of remittances shape the communication between family members, and how family ties and remittances are negotiated through relativizing the borders of families and frontiering idealized norms informing family relations. However, these analytic efforts

do not yet adequately grasp the dynamics that occur in the transnational family relations in the data of this study. This is because there often seems to be a continuous mismatch between the expectations of remittances of home communities and the magnitude that a migrant is able to remit. The data shows that participants often have substantial difficulties to communicate the extent that their economic resources stretch to help their families. In many cases this is a source of frustration for both sides.

As elaborated in Chapter 4.4, migrants and non-migrants are differently positioned in terms of various forms of resources (Carling 2008). One of these resources is the legal entitlements to mobility, and as participants' family members often do not have resources to mobility, they have usually never visited Finland or other countries in Europe. Therefore, attention must be directed to the sources of information and imagination that non-migrant family members utilize as they build their perceptions about the conditions in different locations of the transnational space, including the extent of migrants economic resources. The data of this study is replete with participants' accounts of these processes on how non-migrants perceptions of Europe are engendered and what kind of consequences that has.

Participants that face high expectations of remittances constantly refer that their non-migrant communities have a false, unrealistic, or misinformed perception about the receiving context of the migrant, that is often referred to simply as 'Europe'. This false perception about Europe is engendered by the pieces of information and hints that non-migrants have access to. The sources of information that participants constantly referred to are migrants and tourists visiting Senegal and Gambia.

Supporting Riccio's findings (2005) participants' regularly refer to visiting or returning migrants who have a tendency for ostentatious consumption and acquiring status symbols, such as flamboyant clothing, cars and arranging big ceremonies. The participants hold this as a central source of non-migrants misinformation about the easiness of acquiring material resources in Europe. In addition to visiting migrants, the perceptions of non-migrants are fuelled by visiting tourists, whose accommodation in hotels, eating out in restaurants and other leisure activities are misinterpreted as the general living standards in Europe. This can be seen in the following extracts:

Amadou: I have seen in Africa, even before I travel, some of our friends or brothers, when they come for holiday they are driving nice cars, playing good music and they dress so nice. So you who is living there admire them. You also want to go there. (...) But think about someone in Africa they have no idea about how things are going here. They think that in Finland or in Europe the money is piled in streets, you just come and pick. That's how they think. That's stupid African mentality. (male, 30s)

Aminata: But think again, that have to do with the tourism. When they see the tourists, they live in a hotel, that luxurious. And they believe in their heads that this is the life in Europe. This is how people live. (...) And you know, you go for a week holiday, and people don't understand that you have to work the whole year to get that, the budget for that air ticket, to budget that thing. (female, 30s)

These unrealistic perceptions about the living standards and the easiness of acquiring material resources in Europe then engender unrealistic expectations of remittances. The participants express that they go sometimes through extensive efforts to rectify these perceptions of 'Europe'. They aim to give their home communities, what they consider, a more truthful picture about the living standards, employment conditions and costs of living affecting their material resources in Europe. However, participants constantly refer to the difficulties they encounter in communicating this experience for their home communities. It seems that the images and stories that migrants try to communicate for their home communities are in such a collision with the contradictory and coexisting pieces of information and images that non-migrants have access to, that it is difficult for them to build up a coherent picture about the migrants' lives at the distant country in Europe. Therefore the efforts of migrants' to give a truthful and less rosy picture about their lives in Europe, is often a source of frustration and conflict:

Sidy: No, you tell them, but they don't get it! Or they don't... It's not going... You tell them, and they say yes, yes. But they don't get it! It's like you tell them: - Finland is cold... They don't get what cold you are talking about. It's hard to imagine. (male, 50s)

The extract is a vivid illustration of the difficulty of communicating a truthful picture about migrant's life in Finland. Sidy here expresses that it is as difficult to the home community to understand living conditions, realities and difficulties migrant might encounter in Europe, as it is for them to imagine how cold the weather in Finland can be.

As can be seen from the following extract, migrants' home communities have significant difficulties to decide whether to believe the migrants accounts that are in contradiction with other pieces of information:



Foday: Most of my friends in Europe, they are in line with my beliefs, that it is not easy here. That we have wrong impression when we were in Africa, most of them believe. And most of them also share the same opinion with me that they are trying to put the same information to the people they communicate to, but the people are not getting it. And as a result, some of them are telling me that they have given up. (...) Because if you tell them the reality they say: - Ah, you don't want us to come, or you don't want us to achieve what you are achieving.

And then they are thinking that now people are kind of trying to say out that this is a bad-hearted person... he's progressing... if it's that bad in Europe, why didn't he go back? (male, 30s)

This extract captures well the non-migrants' logic and reasoning that many of the participants refer to. Firstly, when migrants communicate for their home communities that their lives in Europe are in fact difficult, the non-migrants might conclude, that if it really is hard there, the migrant would return to the home country. Secondly, when the picture of Europe migrants are communicating is in contradiction with other pieces of information that non-migrants expose to, the conclusion often made is that the migrant is only trying to preserve what he or she has achieved as his or her privilege, and does not want the others to migrate as well. This reasoning is captured also in the following extract:

Fatou: And they will say: - Ah, this girl was lying. All she's jealous for us, she don't want that we travel. That's why she's saying bad things about Europe.

They don't listen to me. They will get angry for me. Because I don't say anything good like the other person who's showing the money. (female 20s)

As already stated, visiting migrants are one of the central sources of information on which non-migrants base their perceptions about the life "on the other side" i.e. in the destination country of migrants. In the accounts of the participants, they often refer on a very general level to migrants that cause misinformed perceptions of Europe by their ostentatious consumption and behavior when visiting. However, the participants are of course a crucial source of information themselves, especially when visiting their home communities. Therefore, many participants express how they pay attention to their own behavior, discourse and appearance when visiting home communities. This is done because the perceptions of Europe straightforwardly affect the expectations of remittances.

This is why many participants employ, what I would call *the method of modesty* during a time of spatial proximity. The participants try to balance between showing themselves in a modest, but still in a respectable manner:

Amadou: When you see me in Africa, you will not believe that I'm from Europe. 'Cause I put the dress and my local shoes, slippers. I try to make myself normal. (male, 30s)

This balancing act can, however, be sometimes challenging to carry out. This is expressed in the following extract in which Fatou describes how she tries her best to tell the home community how her life in Europe is, but the non-migrants have difficulties to believe her descriptions because they admire her appearance:

Fatou: If I go on holiday, I just explain them one by one, one by one. They look at me like: - Look at her - and they tell me: - If it's difficult there, how you are big like this? (laughing.) (...) They say: - You look beautiful and you're fresh, you don't come here like somebody suffering in Europe.

And I say: - Ah, you want me to be rough and then you people know Europe, is nothing there. (...) They don't understand. Never! (female, 20s)

Participants also express that sometimes this method of modesty result in amazement or even anger among their family members. This is because a migrant is expected to show one's success, and with appearance or status symbols to distinguish oneself from non-migrants.

Aminata: When I go there, I put myself down. And they are thinking that why are you behaving abnormally. (...) Like my sister said to me: - You wearing the same jeans for three days? You should be changing three times a day!

And I'm like: - Why? It's not dirty, and don't wash it.

And the sister says: - But no, those guys from Sweden they are changing their hairstyle and they have gold chains and everything.

I say: - Don't compare me with them. You don't know how they live and what they do, to have what they have. (female, 30s)

In some participants' reflections they admit that showing oneself in a modest way is also challenging because it is tempting to appear as an important, successful person that is living a glamorous life in Europe. This is understandable as being a migrant is often a

significant source of pride. However, the participants that face high expectations of remittances still tend to judge this kind of behavior as morally wrong.

Aminata: But again, when you go from Europe, people just take you like a little god. You are like a celebrated. And if you are not careful, you misuse that. The feeling, you think that you're so important. (female, 30s)

Therefore, because of these processes and dynamics, in this context asymmetries in information and imagination engender a moral dimension within the transnational relationships. The participants very strongly express that because of the non-migrants lack of resources to visit the destination countries of the migrants, communicating a picture of their lives in Europe that is as truthful as possible, is a central moral responsibility of a migrant. This moral obligation is seen to include, firstly, to communicate a truthful picture of their lives in Europe even when the home community tends to reject these accounts, and secondly, to moderate their behavior when visiting the home country, as I have described above. The moral importance of this method of modesty is elaborated in following extracts:

Aminata: People will do everything just to have that big car for that one month holiday. Because they should give the image that they have something in their pocket. And I don't understand, I say this is the people who really make trouble for the rest of us, because when you behave like that people think that you are super rich. And if I go and put myself down, they think that she's now just playing that she doesn't have. They don't believe me and I'm like, what is wrong with you people. (female, 30s)

Amadou: And I've been to different schools, see students and like that. So there when you talk to students about life in abroad and how to become a better person, it helps those better than if I dress nice and drive nice car and play music. Then you disturb, you create more negative feeling for them than positive. (male, 30s)

Drawing from these, communicating a false and unrealistically rosy picture of Europe is held unmoral because the consequences are felt by all migrants as it straightforwardly results in unrealistic expectations of remittances (Aminata's quote), and because it provokes bitterness among non-migrants, emphasizes the social division between migrants and non-migrants, and creates a misinformed pull factor to Europe, on which non-migrants take their migration decisions (Amadou's quote).

## 7.5 Techniques to Overcome Asymmetries

As the previous sub-chapter shows, the relationships between migrants and their home communities are in many ways asymmetrical. To overcome this asymmetry, in addition to the method of modesty described above, participants of this study sometimes creatively employ techniques to overcome the gaps and asymmetries in information that the transnational context brings about.

The need to have ways of communicating the level of one's economic resources surfaces in the following extract. In the interpretation of this quote, it must be kept in mind that in Senegal construction of private houses has become an important status symbol, even a symbol of identity, and is often among the first investments migrants direct their resources to (Riccio 2005, 113):

Sidy: And they don't understand, they think that we can do many things. But I always tell them: - Look at my house, and you see what I can do."

(...)There are some people in Senegal, they have nicer house than me. (...) If you look my house, it's ok. But it can be more. If I have some money I can put in my house. (male, 50s)

Sidy expresses here that whenever his family members have unrealistic perceptions of his economic resources, he asks them to think about the house he has built in the home community, inhabited by his immediate and extended family members. The aim of this is to use the house as an indicator of the level of his income and the limits of his economic resources. This is a clear signal of the need to overcome asymmetry and gaps in information that migration and spatial distance brings about. It is also a creative way of communicating one's level of economic resources in the context where non-migrants perceptions are complicated by patchy and contradictory pieces of information about the destination of the migrant, 'the Europe'.

One of the methods of overcoming asymmetry in information is choosing a non-migrant person to have a mediating role between the migrant and the community. This mediating role often includes taking responsibility over the distribution of migrants' remittances. The mediation, however, sometimes works also the other way around. The chosen person among the home community can also be communicating the family members' wishes and needs to the migrant, instead that family members would contact

the migrant on their own. In these kinds of transnational family arrangements, ‘the mediator’ often also acts to some extent to replace the migrant by living in the proximity of the family members that the migrant has responsibility over.

In the data of this study, the participant *Sidy*, gives an elaborate picture how his younger brother *Abou* is in this kind of a position of ‘a mediator’:

Sidy: ...if they contact me I lose more. But with Abou, he can control this little bit better than me. That’s why I give it to Abou. I don’t know how Abou is handling, but I know it’s better than if everybody think that it’s me. They think I have everything. And they live together there. When one of them come to Abou to ask, and some other have problem, the other will go somewhere else. Because she knows that the other sister was there just yesterday. They are little bit afraid to come at the same time. But if it is me, everybody can call me. And now what I do, I tell Abou: -Now, I don’t take any telephone coming from Africa. (male, 50s)

When Sidy sends money to his family in Africa, it is always his younger brother Abou who holds the money. He is then distributing it to the daily subsistence of Sidy’s household that includes his wife and children but also extended family members. However, in the face of economic hardship, also other extended family members, especially their sisters turn to Abou for help, as they know that he is distributing Sidy’s remittances. In the face of acute need, Abou is then distributing the resources intended to Sidy’s household to other extended family members as well. If the money runs out before the next transfer, then it is Abou who contacts Sidy to update him on the situation among the whole family.

The advantage of this arrangement, as expressed by Sidy in the extract above, is that as Abou is present in the community, he has more accurate information of the situation among different family members and the expenditures, and how the resources should therefore be distributed. In addition, as the sisters see who is visiting Abou to ask for economic help, also they have a better overall picture of the economic situation and the expenditure of the whole family and they tend to limit their requests of help when they know that many of the siblings have asked for help during the same period of time. This is how the information gap brought by spatial distance is partly outgunned.

Sidy expresses that having a mediator present among the community distributing his resources makes his position crucially less stressful in comparison with the situation

where different family members would contact him straight via telephone. Indeed, Sidy is employing his brother Abou not only to distribute remittances, but also to mediate communication from the home community to him. Sidy limits the communication with his home community and usually answers to calls only from few closest family members. In the face of economic hardship or other acute difficulties family members have to communicate these needs to Abou first, who then, only if needed, turns to Sidy.

The second strategy to overcome asymmetries in transnational relations is related to investing in small businesses. As it is vividly elaborated on in the next extract, Anta expresses that family members' expectations are more realistic when they see for themselves the income a person is gaining. Expectations are limited correspondingly to the prevailing employment situation:

Anta: I have many friends, musicians. (...) They never travel. They work with music, but their wife are not making them tired. Because your wife, if she is seeing you every day, she is seeing you going hard to play music and coming. She knows your income. They limit it what they need. (...) They won't ask you what you don't have, because they see with their eyes, what you can and what you can't. If you have money they will know, if you don't have money they will know. When they see that you're getting income, in difficult way, they will not charge you so much. But there is one influence: When they see that you're in Europe for example, something like that, they don't see you, they take like all African people have in their head: - Oh, he is in Europe, he should have money. (male, 50s)

The participants of this study have not invested in businesses back in the country of origin very prevalently, but few have made investments in cars that work as taxis or shops selling groceries. The participant Anta has made both above mentioned investments. He has two cars working as taxis and he has recently opened a shop that is run by his oldest son:

Anta: No, me, I don't get stress, you know why? Because, I've been taking the clever way. Because, when you know that always there are people around who are asking, you have to find solution how to make things easy. I open small enterprise there, which is bringing money. And they see the money there. They will not ask from Europe. (...) Because this enterprise which is working and bringing money. When they need money, those taxis, are bringing what they need. Then they won't ask me. (male, 50s)

As can be interpreted from the extract, investing in small businesses help migrants in creating a surplus that they can direct for the subsistence or other expenditure of their home communities. However, I argue that the small businesses also help to overcome

the gaps in information and can therefore be treated as a technique to overcome asymmetry in transnational relations. The key here is Anta's short expression: "And they see the money there." Indeed, migrants refer that when their home communities' income is mostly coming from a local business that they have started, the non-migrants have a better understanding of the levels and limits of the family's overall economic situation. This is how asymmetry is, at least partly, overcome.

In addition, Anta expresses that he gives control to his family members in running the business. In his case, it is his oldest son that is running the enterprise and also controlling the surplus it creates. This gives autonomy to his non-migrant family members over their economic situation and decreases dependency on the migrant and his remittances:

Anta: I don't control how the enterprise is working. Because I give that responsibility to my son. I tell him just, don't report me anything. Do what you have to do. You can control the money. When your mama is asking for this, give, when your sisters is asking for this... (...) The most important for me is that you can be in peace. Get what you need and be in peace, be happy. (male, 50s)

Thus, this arrangement can be seen as an effort to lower asymmetry and to mediate inequality among the migrant and non-migrant family members.

In the following chapter, I will draw conclusions of the empirical material presented in the previous chapters, discuss the contribution and limitations of the study, as well as reflect on the need for further research.

## 8 Conclusions and Discussion

Bryceson and Vuorela (2002, 6) have stated that research interested in transnational families should examine the migrants' ways of living, as well as "negotiations between movement and staying put, between different levels of loyalties and their orientation to past, present and future". Even though this provides a very loosely delimited framework, it can be stated that this study seeks to provide insight exactly to these aspects, in the context of Senegambian migrants residing in Finland.

The "way of living" of the participants of this study is shaped by involvement in transnational practices such as keeping contact to the communities in the country of origin, sending remittances, visiting, constructing homes, and to some extent, investing in small businesses in the communities of origin. Transnational practices of the participants locate themselves in the sphere of family life, and are, more than anything else, manifestations of the participants' continued membership in their families, despite the spatial rupture that migration has engendered. Simultaneously, however, almost all the participants have family ties - a spouse or children - also in Finland.

These multi-local family ties, indeed engender negotiations between movement and staying put, as well as different levels of loyalties. The participants emphasize their obligation to be present in the spatial proximity of their family members in Finland, even though it is often better prospects for livelihood and educational opportunities that simultaneously inform the decisions to "stay put" in Finland. At the same time, the family obligations towards the family members "left behind" are discussed more in terms of being a breadwinner, a provider of material resources. The expectations of remittances in many cases shape these transnational family relations decisively and family ties are maintained and reproduced, but also negotiated. The relations with people in the community of origin are asymmetrical, as difference in access to mobility, resources and information occur. Because of this, solidarity and reciprocity is mixed with frustration and make these relations prone to conflict.

The "orientation to present" in the case of most participants is characterized by an aspiration to spend long periods in both locations, even though, this is hampered by the fact that livelihood is usually attached to employment in Finland. The "orientation to



future” is characterized by the project of return. Most of the participants aim to return in the communities of origin when reaching the retirement age and children in Finland have reached maturity.

The first research question of this study was phrased: 1) *How does family ties in Finland shape the transnational engagement of Senegambian migrants in Finland?* In order to answer the question, I draw from Faist and argue that one needs to look into the transnational social space, in which the participants are involved in, and the opportunity structures, social life, subjective images and meanings in the both locations within it (Faist 2000, 45-46.).

The opportunity structures that are relevant in this case are the material and employment opportunities in both locations, as well as the policies controlling migration. The dimensions of social life, relevant in this case, are culturally specific family organization and idealized norms informing family life and relations. In addition, the images and meanings associated with migration in Senegal and Gambian play a role.

The economic situation and employment opportunities in Senegal and Gambia are, not to all, but for majority of the participants, very limited, while they are received to be better in Finland. In addition, images and meanings associated with migration encourage emigration as it is a common method of achieving socio-economic upward mobility. However, political structures limit movement as migration policies controlling migration from non-EU countries to Finland are strict. In the context of Senegambians, marriages and children with Finns is one of the most prominent pathways to gain legal entitlements to mobility. Moreover, family organization plays a role as the practice of polygamy enables male migrants to marry and set up multiple nuclear families. In addition, the idealized family norms in West Africa emphasize the husband and a father as a breadwinner, providing economic resources. Also, the practice of fostering children among the extended family is common. The notions of solidarity and sharing among an ‘African’ family at the same time inform the remittance expectations and behaviors. In the destination context, Finland, on the other hand, individualism and emotional support are perceived to weigh more within family relations.

I argue that these are the socio-cultural, economic and political circumstances in the two localities of the transnational space that shape the family and migration trajectories of the participants of this study.

To conclude, for almost all the participants, it is the marriage with a Finn that has enabled legal entitlements to mobility and residence in Finland. Therefore, family ties in Finland shape transnational engagement as they enable mobility and transnational practices in the first place. At the same time, however, family ties attach migrants to Finland in a way that has implications for their transnational engagement, as participants emphasize their obligation to be fathers present in the spatial proximity of their children in Finland. Having children in the host country also increases and diversifies interaction with institutions of the receiving society (Riccio 2008, 219-222) and family ties give also social capital in the destination context of migrants.

However, from the accounts of the participants, it can be interpreted that, in addition to family ties, not for all, but for many, also economic and educational opportunities in Finland have motivated their migration and the decision to continue to reside in Finland. There is, however, a level of heterogeneity among the participants in relation to this. For some, it is the dominant family ties in Finland that are the primary reason to reside here. For these participants the transnational engagement and family ties to the country of origin are often less intensive. For some, instead, family ties in Finland do not play a decisive role, for example in situations where they have been cut off as marriages have ended in divorce. For these participants life in Finland appears more in terms of a livelihood, whereas dominant family ties are more located in the country of origin. For these participants transnational engagement is therefore also more intensive, and they are often crucial sources for income for their home communities.

Nevertheless, as for many migration and residing in Finland is also a livelihood strategy, migration decisions are often taken even though it means leaving family members, including spouses or children behind. At the same time family ties in Finland is one of the few methods for legal entry and residence. Moreover, the practice of polygamy enables Senegambian male migrants to establish simultaneous nuclear families in both localities of the transnational space. Therefore, it is not uncommon that Senegambians end up with dense family ties in both localities of the transnational field. Also this

shapes aspirations for transnational engagement as for the participants with dense multi-local family ties a highly transnational life arrangement is a preferred one. Spending long periods in both localities is in the aspirations of these participants, but as many work in Finland, financing long periods in Senegal or Gambia is a challenge. As a consequence, in reality the participants spend a vast majority of their time in Finland.

I argue that as a consequence, migrants that have immediate family ties, i.e. spouses or children in both localities, employ a narrative of decoupled familial obligations. Participants that have a spouse or children in Finland (who are all male) emphasize their familial obligation to be a husband and a father living in a spatial proximity with their families in Finland. The familial obligation of a father living in the spatial proximity of their children in Finland, until they reach maturity, is especially emphasized. At the same time, however, for their children and other family members in the country of origin, their familial obligations are discussed in terms of being the provider of material resources. In the accounts of the participants, their role as migrants sending remittances is indeed discussed in detail. I argue, that with this narrative of decoupled familial obligations migrants with dense multi-local family ties are able to answer to different expectations that are associated with an ideal role of a father, a husband and a migrant, nevertheless that these different dimensions are leveled to families in different locations.

Finally, regardless of the fact that family ties in Finland attach Senegambian migrants of this study to the Finnish society in a distinct way that also shapes their transnational engagement, the vast majority are, nevertheless, involved with the project of return. Majority of the participants hold it as self-evident that they will return to the country of origin when reaching retirement age and when children in Finland have reached maturity. Also this imagined future life trajectory shapes participants' transnational engagement, as the project of return motivates maintaining family ties and investing in private house constructions in the community of origin.

The theoretical formulation of Faist about transnational social spaces proves to be fruitful in dealing with this research question. It fruitfully reminds that transnational social spaces are not deterritorialized. Instead, even if migrants inhabit border-crossing social spaces they are still affected, or as it has been phrased, embedded, in the circumstances of all the locations that the transnational social space involves.

(Wahlbeck 2004, 105; e.g. Portes et al. 1999.) In addition, Faist's formulation of transnational social space reminds that migrants' family trajectories are intertwined with economic and political opportunity structures, dimensions that at first glance might seem unrelated to the sphere of family life.

The second research question of this study was phrased: *How expectations of remittances shape the transnational family ties of Senegambian migrants and how are remittances negotiated?* As mentioned in the introduction, with transnational family I refer to migrants' immediate and extended family members that reside in the country of migrants' origin.

As the compositions and material realities of participants' families are heterogeneous, it also varies how much and from whom migrants receive expectations of remittances. However, it can be stated that majority of the participants receive expectations and are committed to remit to their home countries. High expectations of remittances shape transnational ties substantially engendering various dynamics in these relationships. Participants that do not receive expectations of remittances describe their transnational relations as relaxed and communication with family members is framed in positive terms, as an exchange that gives strength and inspiration and reproduces their connection to the home community. Instead, participants who face high expectations of remittances depict their transnational relations as highly ambivalent. As other researchers have showed (see e.g. Riccio 2005, Crentsil 2012), answering to remittance expectations, on the one hand, brings gratification and prestige, but is, on the other hand, a substantial source of stress and malaise. Many of the participants therefore experience a strong ambivalence - a mixed blessing of migrancy.

Transnational family ties are *relativized*. They are maintained and reproduced, in addition to sending remittances, through various forms of communication and symbolic acts. However, expectations of remittances shape strongly the communication between migrants and their home communities. In the face of high remittance expectations, participants often need to control and limit the communication with family members. The same way, when migrants visit their countries of origin, they often need to limit the

circle of people they pay visits, as hopes of economic support are leveled to migrants and monetary gifts often presumed as the currency of reproducing ties. Transnational family ties are therefore also dissolved. The concept of relativizing (Bryceson & Vuorela 2002) helps to grasp exactly this continuous reproduction, rationalization, negotiation, and dissolving of family ties in a transnational context.

Sending remittances is negotiated on the level of purposes that the money is used for, but also in terms of the people that migrants send money for. In other words, participants negotiate of which family members they have economic responsibility over. Participants provide for spouses, children, and in the absence of state run pension systems, often for elderly parents. These can be seen as transnationalized forms of transfers that would have potentially taken place regardless of migration (Carling 2008, 1458). However, it is not uncommon that remittances are provided also for siblings and other extended family members, who with migrants have more of a horizontal relation. Therefore, as Carling have noted, migration shapes these relations and as a consequence horizontal ties acquire asymmetrical dimension. Sending remittances in these relations is often under a constant negotiation and rationalization. Migrants aspire to reframe these family ties as horizontal, while family members 'back home' instead often feel entitled to remittances as consequence of migrants' opportunity to migrate to Europe.

To some extent, remittances are also negotiated in terms of culturally specific idealized norms governing family life. In Chapter 4.4.1 I have referred to this negotiation as the *cultural dynamics* in transnational relations. Here I have employed another concept of Bryceson and Vuorela (2002), *frontiering*, to help to grasp the explicit discursive negotiations where migrants question and contest culturally specific norms that inform family relations and obligations. In the data of this study, participants do not strongly frontier idealized family norms based on gender or generation, and therefore do not endeavor to question family obligations associated with being a son, daughter, father, husband or wife. However, participants do explain their family obligations through a construction of an 'African' family and notions of solidarity and sharing within it. The 'African' family is constructed through a juxtapositioning with a 'European' family. In this array, the extensiveness of the 'African' family and solidarity and sharing are emphasized. While this is often seen as a virtue holding communities together, there appears a co-existing critical narrative that frames the notions of solidarity and sharing

as dependency. This way the idealized notion of ‘African family’ is continuously being reproduced but also redefined through frontiering in the process of negotiating remittances.

However, a central conclusion of this study is that frontiering does not adequately explain the frustration and conflict that occurs in the transnational family relations of participants that receive high remittances expectations. As much as research has shown that in many contexts there occurs this frontiering between migrants and their home communities in the face of differing ways of life and a crisscross of cultural values, in the context of this study, it is not the questioning of culturally specific idealized norms governing family relations that is the main source of frustration and conflict that coexist side by side with solidarity and reciprocity.

Instead of these cultural dynamics, frustration and potential conflict in transnational family relations of participants that receive high expectations of remittances are more rising from, what I have in chapter 4.4.2 referred to as *spatial dynamics*. Drawing from the theoretical framework of Carling (2008), I have sought to show that spatial distance, as well as structural economic and political inequalities within the transnational space reflect back on families (Dreby & Adkins 2010), making transnational relations in various ways asymmetrical.

Migrants and their family members ‘left behind’ are differently positioned in terms of transnational moralities, access to various forms of resources, as well as to information and imagination (Carling 2008). In the heart of these asymmetries is the fact that migrants have access to mobility whereas family members ‘left behind’ do not. As non-migrants do not have access to mobility, they often have never visited the destination context of migrants. Therefore, non-migrants have difficulties in imagining migrants’ lives and are dependent on patchy information that they receive through media, visiting migrants and tourists. Ostentatious consumption of visiting migrants and misinterpreted living standards of tourists, feed unrealistic expectations of remittances. Because of the asymmetry in information and imagination, participants of this study have constant difficulties in communicating the extent and limits of their economic resources.

Therefore, in the context of this study, it is the asymmetry in mobility resources that engenders asymmetry to the sphere of information and imagination that is the central source of frustration and potential conflict in the transnational relations. Frustration does not arise essentially from the asymmetry in economic resources between migrants and home communities, but from the non-migrants unrealistic perceptions of migrants' wealth.

Also the asymmetry in the sphere of transnational moralities surfaces in the data of this study. As leaving and being left behind have inherent moral dimensions, in transnational relations the family members left behind acquire a sort of moral currency towards those who have left. This manifests in the participants accounts as they refer that when trying to rectify the unrealistic expectations that non-migrants have, they are easily accused of lying and of trying to retain their socio-economic and upward mobility as their privilege. Therefore it seems that the burden of proof strongly lies on the migrants instead of their family members left behind.

To conclude, in the light of this study, the theoretical framework on asymmetries of Carling does prove its strength in explaining the dynamics in transnational relations, and to be more specific, how remittance expectations shape these relations. The negotiations related to cultural dynamics do not exhaustively explain the way remittances are negotiated and how in transnational family ties solidarity is mixed with frustration. Instead, one needs to look into the spatial dynamics: the asymmetries that are constituted of unequal access to mobility, resources and therefore information and imagination, and finally, not forgetting the moral dimensions of experiences leaving and being left.

Finally, to build on Carlings work, I have sought to show how some of the participants creatively tackle these asymmetries by employing techniques that help overcome asymmetry. When migrants visit their communities of origin they often employ a method of modesty, which aims in tempering unrealistic expectations of migrants economic resources and bridging the social division between participants and their non-migrant family members. Secondly, some establish distinct practices of communication with one of their family member, who acts as a mediator distributing remittances and mediating communication between the home community and the migrant, in order to

bridge information gaps. Thirdly, establishing businesses in home communities function as means to generate profit, but in addition, as a technique to give more control and understanding on the livelihood and overall financial flows of the extended family to family members in the country of origin, instead of solely sending subsistence from afar.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, the aspects of transnationalism have only recently entered the field of migration research in Finland. Therefore, this study is able to contribute to this emerging body of knowledge and provides important and relevant sociological information about the growing role of transnationalism among migrant groups in Finland. The study provides important insight on the forms of transnational practices Senegambians are involved with, as well as on the family trajectories and the nature of simultaneous orientation to Finland and Africa. It shows that family ties in Finland do not rule out intensive transnational engagement, but attach migrants to Finland in a specific way, that in the end has also implications for their transnational engagement. In addition, the study provides important insight on how remittance expectations shape transnational family ties and the daily lived realities of Senegambian migrants.

As a limitation, however, it must be stated that examining comprehensively the negotiations that migrants' multi-local family ties engender, is out of the scope of this study. I have sought to show from the migrants' point of view, how they see their family obligations, and on the other hand, socio-economic opportunities in Finland and in Africa, and how these inform their negotiations of movement and staying put. However, further study is needed on various aspects and negotiations that multi-local family ties engender. Firstly, the findings of this study point to the need to examine further the negotiations of fatherhood that having children in multiple locations seems to engender, and the differences in expectations that are leveled to fathers in different locations. The same dynamics should of course be studied also in the case of mothers and motherhood. Secondly, there is a need for further study examining the negotiations that transnational practices, such as sending remittances, spending long periods in the country of origin, or the project of the return, engender among bi-cultural families migrants establish in host societies. Thirdly, as always with studies employing the transnational optic, the negotiations that multi-local family ties engender need to be



studied by conducting multi-sited ethnography, collecting data also among the families in the country of migrants' origin.

To recap, the international body of literature on transnational families is wide, but has to some extent concentrated on families where an adult member migrates in the search of livelihood and labor, and maintains then family ties and provides resources for the family left behind. Even though this configuration is true also for many of the Senegambian migrants of this study, as they also have formed families with Finns, their family trajectories are more complex, heterogeneous and multi-local. So far, however, research on bi-cultural marriages and families has been, to some extent, disjointed from the themes of transnationalism. Therefore, I argue that there is a growing need to bridge the gap between research on transnational families and bi-cultural families and further study the multi-local family ties of migrants and transnational practices and networks in bi-cultural families.

Policy-wise, this study shows that more research is needed on how stringent migration policy that hampers migration from non-EU countries, affects the family trajectories of migrants, and the emergence of transnational families living apart, as well as the formation of bi-cultural marriages in the destination context. As marriages remains one of the few methods of entry for migrants from 'global south' to 'post-industrial West' the contemporary transnational families might be more and more about families where migrants have simultaneous local and transnational family ties.

Finally, the data of this study hints that transnational ties and expectations of remittances sometimes inform migrants' decisions between employment and education in the host country. Therefore, it should be further studied in which ways transnational practices shape integration trajectories and how transnationalism could be taken into account in integration policies. As an example, migrants that face fierce expectations of remittances might find difficult to invest time to language or other education, as well as prolonged visits in the country of origin might complicate possibilities to acquire the citizenship in the destination country.

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12 recorded interviews with Senegalese and Gambian migrants residing in Finland conducted in spring and summer 2011. Field notes after each interviews.

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## **Appendix: Interview outline**

### **Background 1**

- age, education, worklife and occupation in home country?

### **Background 2**

- migration to Finland, when and how?, education, worklife, activities in Finland?
- family in Finland: wife, children?
- family in home country: wife, children, parents, brothers and sisters, primary household, position in household, extended family?
- did one think about migrating? Know migrants? “Dream about Europe?”
- what did one expect from life “here” (= Europe/Finland?)

### **Keeping contact**

- with who one keeps contact in home country?
- how? telephone calls, skype, mail, e-mail, facebook, other? →what is used most?
- how often?, what kind of things are discussed when keeping contact?
- how does it feel to be in contact – does it bring joy or sorrow?
- contacts to friends or relatives in third countries? – what kind of things are discussed?

### **Expectations**

- what people back home hope/expect from you? - wife, parents, children, others?

### **Remittances**

- do you send money?
- to whom? nuclear family, extended family, business & investment, religious communities?
- to what purposes?, in what kind of situations remittances are especially expected?
- does one send also goods?, in what kind of situations?
- how does one send, through which channels?

### **Expectations & Remittances pt. 2**

- would expectations be different if you were male/female, younger/older, the only migrant in the family/not the only one, one has family also here/no family here?
- does one feel that he can live up to the hopes of the home community?
- what does one do when he feels that he cannot fulfill the expectations?

### **Visiting**

- do people hope that one visits?, do people expect to visit, who expect that most?, does family in Finland go too?
- in what situation you want to visit home, in what situation no?, when visiting home:
- what do you like to do? who you have to/want to meet? gifts?
- what is pleasant when going back home?, what is stressful when going back home?
- visiting people in third countries also?

### **Life in Finland**

- why did you want to come to Finland? what you wanted to do here?
- was it difficult in Senegal /Gambia that time?
- how did you first feel, that it is easy here or difficult?, what is good or difficult now?

- did you prefer studying or working?, has it been difficult to find work, does it feel good if you have work?
- what are one's objectives in Finland? or objectives in general?
- what work would one like to do here?
- did your family situation affect the things you choose to do (coming here, studying here or working here, staying here)
- do you feel that you are part of Finland? in what situations you feel home here?
- what makes one stay here?
- does one keep contact to home country when things here are good or bad?
- Finnish friends? Would one like to have, more? why, why not?
- Finnish language? Would one like to learn? why, why not?
- culture, way of life, do you find it good or bad?

### **Ethnic community in Finland?**

- with who one spends time in Finland?
- do Africans/West Africans/Senegalese/Gambians help each other?

### **Objective in home country**

- what does one want to achieve in home? (for example: build a house?)

### **How transnational ties have changed over time**

- has sending money decreased or increased, why?
- has keeping contact or visiting decreased or increased, why?

### **Return?**

- does one think about returning to home country? What conditions would have to be that one would like to return to home country? Why?
- has this changed? did one think about returning home after few years in the beginning?
- does one want to move to a third country?

### **What if...**

- you would gain extra 100€ tomorrow and you should use it this week, what you would do with it?
- you would gain extra 1000€ from work this month and you should spend it next month?
- you would be able to save 10 000€ during next six months, what would you do?
- you would get a loan of 200 000€ from bank and 20 years to pay back, what would you do?

### **Migration culture**

- what people think about migrants, migration
- what kind of person is a successful person nowadays, or before?
- why so many people want to migrate?
- has this changed in your opinion?
- what does "modou modou" mean?
- what people think in home that is the best place to live? Europe? Paris? USA? Australia? Why?
- do people want that migrant help others to migrate
- what does one think about people who get in to boats trying to go to Spain?