Retirement Home?

France's migrant worker hostels and the dilemma of late-in-life return.

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Abstract

Unlike many of their North African and West African compatriots who reunified with family and settled in France in the 1970s and 80s, the decision of migrant worker hostel residents not to return definitively to places of origin at retirement is puzzling. Firstly, it calls into question the assumptions of the 'myth of return' literature, which explains non-return on the basis of family localisation. In the case of 'geographically-single' hostel residents, however, the grounds for non-return cannot be family localisation, since the men's families remain in places of origin. Secondly, older hostel residents also remain unmoved by the financial incentives of a return homewards, where their French state pensions would have far greater purchasing power. Instead of definitive return, the overwhelming preference of hostel residents is for back-and-forth migration, between the hostel in France and communities of origin. The aim of this dissertation is to resolve this puzzle, by asking: What explains the hostel residents' preference for back-and-forth mobility over definitive return at retirement?

In order to make sense of these mobility decisions, several theories of migration are presented and evaluated against qualitative data from a multi-sited research design incorporating ethnography, life story and semi-structured interviews, and archive material. This fieldwork was carried out across France, Morocco and Senegal. Although no one theory adequately accounts for all the phenomena observed, the added value of each theory becomes most apparent when levels of analysis are kept distinct: at the household level as regards remittances; at the kinship/village level as regards re-integration in the home context; at the meso-level of ethnic communities in terms of migrants' transnational ties; and at the macro-level of social systems concerning inclusion in healthcare and administrative organisations. Widening the focus beyond the puzzle/dilemma of late-in-life mobility, the thesis concludes by questioning what 'home' can mean for the retired hostel residents. An innovative way of theorising home – building on conventional conceptions of home based on territory and community – is outlined, arguing that to be 'at home' can also mean to be 'included' in different 'social systems'. With this argument the thesis aims to contribute to broader debates on what it means for immigrants to belong and achieve inclusion in society.

The candidate declares -

(a) that the thesis has been composed by the candidate alone, and

(b) that the work is the candidate's own, and

(c) that the work has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Signed (the candidate)

Alistair Hunter

Date

For my migrant grandmothers, Jean and Lorna,
and in memory of my grandfathers, Sam and Tom.

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A.H.

Edinburgh, September 2011.

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Les vieux ne bougent plus leurs gestes ont trop de rides leur monde est trop petit
Du lit à la fenêtre, puis du lit au fauteuil et puis du lit au lit
Et s'ils sortent encore bras dessus bras dessous tout habillés de raide
C'est pour suivre au soleil l'enterrement d'un plus vieux, l'enterrement d'une plus laide
Et le temps d'un sanglot, oublier toute une heure la pendule d'argent
Qui ronronne au salon, qui dit oui qui dit non, et puis qui les attend[1]

Jacques Brel, *Les Vieux* (1963)

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[1] The old ones don't move any more, their motions have too many wrinkles, their world is too small / From bed to window, then from bed to armchair and then from bed to bed / And if they go out once more, arm-in-arm, dressed all so stiffly / It is to attend in the sun the funeral of one yet older, of one yet uglier / And when the tears flow, to forget for one whole hour the silver grandfather clock / Which tick-tocks in the living room, saying yes, saying no, and awaiting them in turn [author's translation].

The Puzzle: family localisation and post-retirement mobility

For most people in most walks of life in industrialised countries, the transition to retirement means a lifting of the sedentary constraint of participation in the labour market, and thus marks an appropriate juncture to relocate if so desired. Generally, however, the normative expectation has been that retirement and later life is a time of decreasing mobility, a view encapsulated so eloquently in Jacques Brel's lyrics on the preceding page: gradually older people's physical and social worlds contract as movement becomes more taxing on the body and friends and loved ones pass away.

A second normative expectation is that younger relatives are able to assuage (to some extent at least) the physical and social isolation associated with decreasing mobility. This aspiration has led to the propagation of a widely-held image of retirement as one of repose surrounded by one's family.

In this thesis, I will seek to understand and explain a situation which does not conform to this normative image of retirement as a time of reduced mobility and familial repose. I am referring here to the experiences of a particular group of older people, namely the retired residents of France's migrant worker hostels (*foyers de travailleurs migrants*). These elders – chiefly of North and West African origin – are far from sedentary: instead they constantly travel back-and-forth between the hostel in France and their wives and children in places of origin, even in quite advanced states of frailty.

As a counter-example to the normative representation of late-in-life sedentarism, the experiences of the older hostel residents are by no means novel or unique. In recent years, diverse scholars have offered more nuanced accounts of the relationship between old age and mobility, identifying contemporary forms of late-in-life migration. These can be classed into three broad categories (Warnes 2009). 'Amenity-seeking' migration refers to (recently) retired, affluent individuals who migrate (on a short- or long-term basis) to locations where quality of life is perceived to be higher, thanks to factors such as climate or scenery (King *et al.* 2000; Longino 1992). Elders may also migrate when ill-health forces them to move closer to sources

of appropriate support, be that formal care in specialist institutions or informal care provided by younger relatives (Rogers 1992). 'Family-joining' migration refers, as the name suggests, to retirees who move to join adult children who themselves have emigrated for work and/or to raise children. There is very little systematic research on this second category (Warnes 2009). The third category, and the one focused on in this thesis, is 'retirement return migration': retirement returnees are individuals who emigrated for work earlier in adult life and choose to return to places of origin following retirement in the host country.

Despite these more nuanced approaches to late-in-life migration, a more conventional approach in social-scientific discussions linking migration with old age is that these two themes are related in quite different ways. In Europe especially, there is mounting concern about demographic ageing, perceived as a problem not only for economic growth but also for the increasing welfare burden falling on what is a smaller working-age population. One solution proposed by some policy makers and academics is for an opening of the borders to younger labour migrants, preferably well-qualified in today's global, knowledge-based economy (United Nations 2001). A second solution to the growing needs imposed by this ageing population is the immigration of younger care workers to look after the native elderly.[2] In sum, when migration and old age are linked, it is usually in terms of younger migrants who are seen as a solution for balancing out the demographic problem of ageing in developed countries (Malki 1999).

Ironically, what is less readily recognised is that an earlier generation of labour migrants to Western Europe is ageing (and dying) on European soil, namely those Southern Europeans, Turks, Yugoslavs, and former colonial 'subjects' from across Africa, South Asia and the Caribbean, who arrived during the epoch which the French like to call *les trente glorieuses*, i.e., the three decades from 1945-1975.

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[2] This phenomenon has garnered considerable attention in recent years: see for example Yeates (2009); also *Journal of Population Ageing* 3:1-2 (special issue on migrant care workers) http://springerlink.com/content/t87702277132/.

Post-war migrants to Western Europe: settling into old age

A dominant representation of the post-World War 2[3] labour migrations to Western Europe was the youth, if not agelessness, of the migrant workers. "So far as the economy of the metropolitan country is concerned, migrant workers are immortal… they do not age: they do not get tired: they do not die" (Berger and Mohr 1975: 64). This myth of agelessness can no longer be entertained. Those who were once young and gainfully employed have now reached, or are approaching, retirement age.

If one had predicted in the 1960s that the ageing of the post-war pioneer generation of migrant labour would take place in Europe, one would have been met with incredulity, so strong were the assumptions – of employers, home and host governments, and the migrants themselves – that this presence would be temporary. Yet in time it became apparent that intersecting with the fiction of agelessness of the migrant workers was a second myth, the myth of return (Anwar 1979).

The guestworkers' return dream was put on hold. Inexorably, thanks to an unexpected chain reaction of economic and family forces, immigrant communities began to form in Western Europe (Bolognani 2007; Piore 1979; Sayad 2006). Recession meant that unrealistic savings targets could not be attained, and with the looming uncertainty of continued family separation as stricter immigration controls were introduced, wives and children began to arrive in Europe while they still could (Anwar 1979; Castles *et al.* 1984; King 1986). This new community provoked a reorientation in motivations – work lost its purely instrumental role, and became a basis for identity and a means of ascribing status within the migrant collective (Piore 1979). Critical in the transition from provisional presence to permanent settlement was the schooling of young children, when "parents find their children speaking German better than Greek or Spanish or Turkish. Then they realise that their children will stay, and that if they themselves return, the family will be irrevocably broken" (Castles *et al.* 1984).

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[3] World War 2 is hereafter abbreviated to WW2.

In countless families, then, the parents' dream[4] of return was pushed further and further back, by which stage a third generation was coming into the world: postponed initially until children had finished their studies; then delayed again until retirement. Although retirement is a potential juncture for labour migrants to relocate to places of origin (White 2006), in the case of Europe's guestworkers return at retirement has not occurred *en masse*. Katy Gardner records how Bengali migrants in London initially envisaged Bangladesh as the spiritual homeland to which they would return at retirement, but with time they began to feel less 'at home' there. Healthcare issues also weigh in their decision to stay in the UK. Their children and grandchildren see the UK as 'home' (Gardner 2002).

Recent survey data from France underlines the settled nature of the elderly immigrant population in that country. Many hypotheses have circulated about the determinants of migrants' decisions to settle or return, but empirical evidence and quantitative analyses have regrettably remained limited.[5] As a response to this lack of data, as well as to better know the scale and scope of the needs of older immigrants, in 2003 the national old-age insurance fund[6] and the national statistics and economic studies institute[7] conducted a pioneering large-N survey on the 'Passage to Retirement of Immigrants' (PRI) (Attias-Donfut *et al.* 2006).[8] A significant section of the PRI survey was devoted to the mobility and residential decisions of immigrants at or near retirement.

The survey's principal findings in this latter regard confirm the settled situation of older immigrants in France. A clear majority of the sample – 60 percent – indicated a firm preference for living out their old age in France surrounded by their children and grandchildren. 25 percent indicated the intention to divide their

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[4] As several studies have shown, willingness to return is not always shared equally in first-generation migrant couples. Generally, male partners are more willing to return permanently than female partners (Balkır and Böcker 2010; Bolzman *et al.* 2006).

[5] National statistics agencies' lack of interest regarding return migration, coupled with the difficulties in collecting population data on the phenomenon, have meant that "[r]eturn migration has always been one of the more shadowy features of the migration process" (King 1986: 1).

[6] *Caisse nationale d'assurance vieillesse* (CNAV). CNAV is the agency which administers the state pension in France.

[7] *Institut national de la statistique et des études économiques* (INSEE).

[8] The PRI sample consisted of 6,221 randomly selected individuals aged between 45 and 70, born outside France, with nationality at birth other than French. Since the survey was restricted to individuals living in 'ordinary households', hostel residents and other people living in a 'community' setting (retirement homes, prisons, university halls of residence, and so on) were not included in the PRI sample.

time between France and their country of origin, living a few months of the year in each, referred to as the *va-et-vient* option. This expression is translatable in English as 'coming-and-going'. Most tellingly, only 6 percent of the sample foresaw a definitive return to their place of birth (Attias-Donfut *et al.* 2006).

It was argued by the PRI research team that their findings provide strong support for explanations based on the 'implantation' of migrants in a given setting. This theoretical approach which the PRI team integrated directly into their research design was based on the work done by Annie Mesrine and Suzanne Thave (1999) on the return decisions of elderly immigrants. Their aim was to evaluate the 'implantation' of an immigrant in France according to four variables: whether the migrant (i) had a partner/spouse who was also a migrant or was on the contrary French-born (i.e. 'mixed marriage'); (ii) had children resident in France; (iii) was an owner of property in France; or (iv) had acquired French nationality. Applying these categories to the PRI sample, it was shown that having a mixed marriage and French nationality is strongly correlated with remaining in France past retirement.

Mixed marriages and acquisition of host country nationality are not necessarily typical characteristics among migrants, as Mesrine and Thave themselves note (1999: 14). Other researchers have put greater emphasis on the localisation of the family as a determinant of residence decisions, primarily owing to the great importance that family reunification has had on the constitution of Europe's immigrant communities (Attias-Donfut *et al.* 2006; Bolzman *et al.* 2006, Bouchaud 2006; Dustmann *et al.* 1996; Rodriguez and Egea 2006; Schaeffer 2001; Warnes 2009; White 2006). For Augustin de Coulon and François-Charles Wolff, location decisions at retirement will depend not only on an appraisal of the standard of living in the home and host locations, but also on the strength of family relationships (de Coulon and Wolff 2006).

However, my early fieldwork alerted me to the presence in France of immigrants whose migration trajectories do not correspond to the family reunification narrative prioritised by the myth of return literature. I am referring here to those migrants discussed in the French migration literature as *faux célibataires* or

'geographically-single'[9], who have remained apart from their families throughout the long sojourn working abroad. Despite these long absences, these individuals remain bound to their families through an obligation to send remittances. Upon retirement, the final stage of the emigrant's pre-established plan is to return in order to benefit from the family care and prestige which is implicit in the unwritten household pact of remittance-sending (Constant and Massey 2002; Stark 1991).

The paradox of the migrant worker hostels

Emblematic of the geographically-single situation are the older men of North and West African origin living in migrant worker hostels. On the basis of the four criteria of the implantation scenario outlined above – marriage with a French-born non-migrant, presence of children in France, property ownership in France, and acquisition of French nationality – the hostel residents do not appear to be likely candidates for living out the rest of their days in the host country:

- Being resident in hostels for 'single men', clearly they have not contracted a marriage with a French-born partner. But this does not mean to say that the men in the hostels are actually single: close to two-thirds are included in the geographically-single category, and half were already married before emigrating to France (Gallou 2005: 127-8).
- Likewise, in terms of property ownership in France, this criterion clearly does not apply to individuals who reside in accommodation such as the migrant worker hostels. If they do own property, it is in the country of origin (El Moubaraki and Bitasi-Trachet 2006).
- Thirdly, their children have neither been born in France nor grown up there. But 72 percent are fathers to at least one child born in places of origin. One in

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[9] The term 'geographically-single' refers to married men whose wives and children have remained in the country of origin. It is to be noted that the geographically-single phenomenon among older immigrants in France is strictly a feature of male labour migrants' biographies. A growing number of elderly female immigrants are also living alone in France, but this is almost always following divorce from, or death of, a partner. These differences between older male and female immigrants reflect markedly different motivations for migration, either for work or for family reunification purposes. For further information, consult Gallou 2006a.

two residents has fathered four children or more, with the average being 3.8 children per resident (Gallou: 2005: 128).

- The fourth criterion, acquisition of French nationality, is a further indicator of their lack of implantation. The men in the *foyers* are much less likely to have acquired French nationality (6%) compared to their fellow migrants living in normal housing (33%) (Gallou and Rozenkier 2006: 54).

Beyond these ties to home countries in terms of marriage, property ownership, children, and nationality, there is an incontrovertible economic rationale for older hostel residents to return home definitively at retirement. I am referring here to the neo-classical economic models with which labour migration has long been analysed. Broadly told, the neo-classical approach has been to analyse migration in terms of the expected costs and benefits to an individual, or put differently, "the response of individuals to economic opportunity at a distance" (Sjaastad 1962: 80; also Harris and Todaro 1970). A "core variable" is wage differentials (Dustmann 2003: 353), attributing the individual's decision to relocate to his or her expectations of wage differentials between sending and receiving countries (Harris and Todaro 1970). This applies to first-time emigrants as well as subsequent migration decisions such as return. Regarding this latter scenario, "for a deliberate return it is necessary that the difference between the benefit and the cost of being in the host country is decreasing over the migration history, and that a point exists where costs overtake benefits" (Dustmann *et al.* 1996: 226-7).

In a situation of retirement, where employment and earnings are no longer a factor in the decision, the usual neo-classical cost-benefit calculation of wages needs to be reformulated (King *et al.* 2000). Wage differentials in such a situation are irrelevant. Instead, what is relevant is the purchasing power of one's pension (de Coulon and Wolff 2006; Klinthäll 2006). Cooperation worldwide between sending and receiving countries on social security means that in most cases pensions are exportable in their entirety, minus any currency exchange fees and deductions made by state social security agencies. For those migrants who have migrated from non-OECD countries to affluent European states, the higher purchasing power of the host

country pension in the home country can be taken as a given. Return in such scenarios is the rational choice from the neo-classical perspective.

Prima facie, hostel residents appear to be unlikely candidates for living out their days in France, both on affective grounds (family localisation) and economic grounds. And yet, despite their lack of affective ties to France, their retention of ties to the place of origin, and their financial incentives to return, the men in this situation do not return on a definitive basis.

Instead of definitive return, the overwhelming preference of the residents is for the *va-et-vient*, alternating their time between France and their place of origin. According to the management of 75 hostels surveyed by Françoise Bitatsi Trachet and Mohamed El Moubaraki, 95 percent of retired residents regularly make these short return trips (Bitatsi Trachet and El Moubaraki 2006: 101). Data provided to me by the largest hostel company, Adoma (formerly Sonacotra)[10], confirms the salience of this phenomenon for older residents, with individual hostels reporting *va-et-vient* rates of between 80 and 90 percent for residents over the age of 56.

The central research question

The two theoretical paradoxes mentioned above constitute the basis of the research question. Firstly, hostel residents' decision-making at retirement is puzzling insofar as it calls into question the assumptions of the myth of return literature, which explains non-return on the basis of family localisation. Just like their compatriots who reunified with families in France, the geographically-single retirees do not return definitively at retirement. However, the grounds for this non-return cannot be family localisation, since their families remain back home, hundreds if not thousands of miles away. Secondly, their behaviour is puzzling insofar as it is irrational from the neo-classical perspective. The men remain unmoved by the financial incentives of a return homewards, where their French state pensions would have far greater purchasing power. In the case of North and West African retirees in receipt of a

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[10] Sonacotra was re-branded as Adoma in 2007. More will be said about the company in the next chapter, section 1.1.

French pension, definitive return is the rational choice since a pension drawn in euros will clearly stretch further in Morocco or Mali that it does in Montreuil or Marseille.

Despite their lack of affective ties to France and their retention of ties to the place of origin, the men in this situation have not returned on a definitive basis.[11] As a result, the 700 hostels[12] operating in France today constitute a predominantly middle-aged, if not elderly, environment. The average age of the men in the hostels rose from 46 years to 51.7 years between the last two censuses (1990 and 1999) (Renaut 2006: 172). According to in-house statistics from Sonacotra, 49.17 percent of residents were over 56 years of age as of 2006 (Sonacotra 2006). An influential report by Bas-Theron and Michel estimates that between 2010 and 2020, 55.4 percent of Adoma residents will be over 55 years old, compared to 42.8 percent in 2001 (Bas-Theron and Michel 2002). The statistics show that, with a few notable exceptions in the Paris region, there are very few new arrivals in this type of accommodation. Most hostels opened in the 1960s and 1970s. Such was the demand for this housing that most hostels were fully occupied by the 1980s, blocking the arrival of newcomers in this type of accommodation (Gallou 2005). Hence there is a massive preponderance of long-term (especially North African) residents in the hostel population: 34 percent of residents as of the 1999 census first entered hostel living in the 1960s, with a further 36 percent entering in the 1970s (Gallou 2005). As a result, the hostel population is residentially static and ageing "within the walls" (Renaut 2006: 175).

The paradox of this non-return and ageing in hostels, already surprising from a theoretical standpoint, is yet more unexpected when one considers some contextual factors regarding the accommodation in which the men elect to grow old. The historical context to the migrant worker hostel policy will be more fully unpacked in Chapter One. In the interim, three puzzling aspects are underlined.

The decision of the French government in 1956 to begin constructing hostel accommodation uniquely for migrant workers, and initially for Algerians only,

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[11] Clearly there is an element of self-selection at work here: some have indeed returned on a definitive basis once retirement age is reached. Unfortunately, no reliable statistics have been collected on this phenomenon. Nevertheless, definitive return by hostel residents is remarkable by the very fact of its exceptionality, as the testimony of hostel residents and staff made clear to me.

[12] This figure includes those former *foyers* which have acquired the legal and administrative status of *résidence sociale* (see Chapter One for more details of this ongoing statutory change). In this thesis I will use the term 'hostel' to describe both variants, except where otherwise stated.

cannot be disassociated from the contemporaneous struggle for independence in Algeria (1954-62). The many thousands of Algerians working in metropolitan France (240,000 as of 1953 according to Viet 1998) were considered to be a security threat by the French Ministry of Interior. Hence one of the core aims of the hostel policy was to keep Algerians apart from the rest of the population, grouping them together in dreary concrete housing at the edge of towns and cities for means of surveillance (Bernardot 1997). The 'extra-territoriality' of hostels has often been remarked by scholars, who stress their ex-centricity, on the fringes of the major conurbations[13] (Desrumaux 2007; Sayad 2006). Frequently, hostels were constructed beside cemeteries, railways, and other undesirable locations, or implanted in the middle of weakly populated industrial zones (Ginesy-Galano 1984). Fifty years later the hostels tend to remain cut-off from population centres and are poorly served by local amenities and public transport, amounting to a "spatial discrimination" (Bernardot 1997: 10). The first puzzling aspect therefore is that older hostel residents prefer to remain isolated in these dreary, poorly connected localities.

Secondly, there is also a labour market dimension to the ex-centricity of hostels, which were often constructed close to local employers and industrial zones. Following the Algerian War, the demands of the labour market began to weigh more heavily than security concerns in the French authorities' approach to migrant workers. The latter were necessary only so long as industrial growth depended on their manpower. Marc Bernardot, who is among the foremost authorities on the hostels, argues that the hostel policy constituted the housing dimension of a broader "labour force policy which had as its objective the limitation of the durable installation and family unification of these workers" (Bernardot 1997: 12; see also Ginesy-Galano 1984). In one way, the hostels have been successful, insofar as they have prevented the reunification of some families on French soil. But the residents themselves are evidently well 'installed' in France. If they are not integrated, according to customary indicators, it is puzzling that they remain in France for much of the year.

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[13] The greater metropolitan areas of Paris, Lyon and Marseille in particular: as of 1999, 53 percent of hostel residents lived in Ile-de-France (Paris and region), 13 percent in Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur (Marseille and region), and 12 percent in Rhône-Alpes (Lyon and region). In other words, eight out of ten hostel residents live in one of the three most urbanised regions of France (Gallou 2005).

Thirdly, the hostels were explicitly designed as temporary accommodation for temporary workers. As such, the hostels were built quickly and cheaply, according to substandard norms of construction and using materials which were not designed to be durable. The long hours which the men worked meant that the hostel room was usually considered only ever as a place of sleep, needing only to fit a bed and precious little else (Sayad 2006: 94). Hence the miniscule rooms on offer initially, typically measuring between 4.5 and 7.5 square metres in surface area.[14] From being a temporary accommodation solution for young workers, the hostels have become permanent housing (if not 'home') for elderly retirees. The architectural layout and facilities are patently not suitable for the needs of older people who may have cause to spend long periods of time in their rooms: despite this, the men stay on in their small rooms in France.

In sum, then, the geographically-single hostel residents are not integrated in conventional reference groups of belonging in France (family, property-ownership, and nationality) and instead retain ties to homeland groups. Furthermore, the men remain unmoved by the financial incentives of a return homewards, where their pensions would have far greater purchasing power. Despite these incentives, they do not return definitively, preferring instead to circulate regularly between places of origin and their peripheral, inadequately equipped hostels. These theoretical and empirical puzzles come together in the central research question of this thesis, namely:

What explains the hostel residents' preference for back-and-forth mobility over definitive return at retirement?

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[14] The exiguity of the housing stock is improving (slowly) as more *foyers* pass to the status of *résidence sociale*. See Chapter One for more details of this ongoing statutory change.

Contributions which this thesis aims to make

At the time of the last census for which there is data (1999), the hostels housed almost 80,000 immigrant men[15], amounting to only 3.6 percent of all foreign males in France (Gallou 2005). Given this numerical insignificance, and their singular family situation (i.e., geographically-single), the hostel residents are far from being representative of all older foreign-born individuals in France (Gallou 2005). One scholar who specialises on the topic of elder migration, Tony Warnes, has made the salient criticism[16] that "[t]he attention of journalists and researchers is drawn to the more unusual forms [of migration], which are visible and available for study but unrepresentative" (Warnes 2009: 343). This critique undeniably applies to the population selected for study here. In light of this, readers would have legitimate grounds for asking: 'Why is this worthy of our attention? What contribution can this research make to the migration studies field?'

My interest in the hostels initially came about during preliminary interviews with migrants' associations in Paris. I subsequently discovered that there was very little known about these institutions outside France. A preliminary point to note before treating the history of the migrant worker hostels (see Chapter One) is the lack of literature in English on France's migrant worker hostels, despite anglophone writers' fascination for manifestations of the shadowy or inhospitable treatment which North Africans in France, and especially Algerians, were accorded by the French authorities during the 20th century.[17] In four years, I have been able to source only two references in English devoted primarily to the hostels.[18] Yet more 'shadowy' was my discovery that much of the major francophone scholarship on hostels has been conducted by former employees of Sonacotra.[19] From the outside, it

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[15] In addition, the hostels provided housing for some 25,000-30,000 French citizens (either by birth or by naturalisation), who constitute 24 percent of the total population housed in hostels (Unafo 2011).

[16] A criticism, it should be added, which he humbly applies to his own research (Warnes 2009).

[17] See among others Rosenberg (2006), and House and MacMaster (2009).

[18] See Jones (1989), and Diop and Michalak (1996).

[19] Academics who were previously employed by Sonacotra include: Jacques Barou, Marc Bernardot, Mireille Ginesy-Galano and Choukri Hmed. The latter three are responsible for the major reference works on the topic. I do not mean to suggest that these scholars' work has been compromised by their prior association with Sonacotra: indeed, in some cases it appears that this scholarship is a reaction *against* the experience of working for the company. What I would underline however is the idea that insider contacts seem to have been necessary in the past to do academic research in and on the hostels.

appeared to me as if the hostels constituted a 'dirty little secret', knowledge of which has been controlled by certain vested interests.[20]

Furthermore, other literature which in places alludes to the hostels is misleading. In their widely cited *Here for Good: Western Europe's New Ethnic Minorities*, Stephen Castles and colleagues argue that in terms of housing provision in Western Europe, "[a]part from a few restricted schemes in France and West Germany, very little in the way of housing or social amenities was provided especially for migrants" (Castles *et al.*,1984: 29). Under any circumstances, it is hard to concede that a total complement of nearly a quarter of million hostel beds for migrant workers constitutes a "restricted scheme," as was the case in the mid-1970s heyday of hostel construction (Lévy-Vroelant 2007).[21]

In addition, earlier literature on the 'returns' of migration tended to focus on the impacts of emigration and return migration *on home societies* (King 1986; Cerase 1974). This tendency has continued in contemporary analyses of what is known as the 'migration-development nexus' (Nyberg–Sørensen *et al.* 2002). In a recent special issue of *Population, Space and Place*, Jeffery and Murison direct our focus to a less discussed issue: the impacts of the return process *on the returnees themselves*. As they note, "[r]eturn and re-integration into the home country may be rife with difficulties for returnees" (Jeffery and Murison 2011: 132). While this thesis does not neglect the former concern with returnees' impacts on their places of origin (see Chapter Six particularly), above all I am concerned with hostel residents' perspectives on their own (non-)returns.

Empirical literature gaps aside, this thesis also aspires to make a substantive theoretical contribution. Arguably the lion's share of the francophone literature on the hostels has focused - not without eminent justification – on hostel residents' alarming health and welfare situation (Boyer 2001; El Moubaraki and Bitatsi-Trachet 2006; Gallou and Rozenkier 2006; Hadjiat and Fevotte 2008; Ridez *et al.* 2001; Samaoli 2007). While my focus on return does not prevent me from considering such

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[20] This impression was only reinforced when I attempted to negotiate permission to undertake research in hostels managed by Adoma. My overtures to the company's head office met with delaying tactics and, ultimately, implicit refusal. Access was eventually secured at a much more devolved, local level.
[21] Given the fluid definition of what counted as a migrant worker hostel, other estimates are somewhat lower. Patrick Simon (1998: 46) enumerates 680 hostels operating as of 1974, housing some 170,000 workers. Of course, not all hostels would have been fully occupied: the number of available beds would have been higher than this latter figure.

matters (see Chapters Four and Seven in particular), I would argue that the hostel residents also constitute a population which can generate significant new insights for migration theory, despite their numerical insignificance.

Indeed, the theoretical value of this research lies in the very fact that it takes an unusual or 'deviant' case. Of all the post-WW2 labour migrants to France, the hostel residents would appear at first sight to be the most likely candidates for return. The myth of return literature has relied on family localisation as the principal explanation for the lack of return amongst the post-WW2 immigration cohort in Western Europe, yet this explanation cannot apply here. Similarly, neo-classical economic models do not apply, raising the following question: can other explanatory models account for this paradox?

In neither the focussed literature on older hostel residents' migration behaviour nor the broader output on international retirement migration is there much attempt to draw on general theories of migration. This broader literature on retirement migration, which will be reviewed in Chapter One, is however useful insofar as it flags various empirical factors which influence post-retirement mobility decision-making. Moving from these empirical factors to theory, in the next chapter I proceed to identify four bodies of theory which could potentially be of use in accounting for the puzzle of the men's preference for the *va-et-vient* over definitive return. These four explanatory frames are: the new economics of labour migration (Stark 1991); structuralism[22] (Cerase 1974; Gmelch 1980); transnationalism (Portes *et al.* 1999); and social systems (Bommes 2000, 2005; Boswell and Ciobanu 2009).

For each theory, the relevant explanatory variables are identified and then applied to return at retirement, before concluding with an assessment of overall strengths and weaknesses. Following this *exposé* of the various theories, I will proceed in the chapters which follow to evaluate these theories on the basis of the evidence of the data I have collected and analysed. While each theory has explanatory potential at different points in the analysis, generally each chapter focuses on one or at most two theories, with the exception of the seventh and final

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[22] 'Structuralism' is not a term which Cerase or Gmelch themselves used. Instead, I have been guided in this choice of terminology by Cassarino (2004), who uses this term to categorise their contributions in his typology of return migration theories.

chapter, which touches on all four. More will be said about the structure of the thesis below.

Title and structure of the thesis

The puzzle of continued residence in hostels past retirement is what I seek to explain in this work. The title of the thesis was originally going to be: 'Retirement Home? France's migrant worker hostels and the *puzzle* of late-in-life return.' As I have tried to convey in the title and content of this Introduction, there was something initially very puzzling about hostel residents' non-definitive return at retirement, from the point of view of the family localisation thesis as well as the argument from pension purchasing power.

However, in time I came to understand various pieces of the puzzle better. Instead of a puzzle from my own perspective, I began to appreciate the issue from the perspective of the residents themselves, as a *dilemma*, given the difficult choices they have to make between unfavourable alternatives. I also feel the word 'dilemma' more appropriately conveys the emotion and drama of the question which the hostel residents face at retirement. Reducing their experiences to the level of a theoretical 'puzzle' in the title to this work might risk trivialising what is a highly charged situation.

From time to time the human drama of the hostel residents' lives is the subject of public discourse and controversy in France. Headlines like "Immigration: the forgotten hostels" (Le Figaro 1998, November 17); "The refuge of the uprooted" (Le Monde 2004, May 28); and "Forgotten, more and more immigrants are growing old alone in France" (Le Monde 1999, June 3) give an indication of the tenor of this discourse. Other articles note with alarm that the Sonacotra hostels are "transforming into retirement homes" (Libération 1999, January 11); or worse "hospices" (*mouroirs*) for the terminally ill, with one critical difference – the lack of any on-site medical facilities (Le Monde 2004, May 28; Le Figaro 1998, November 17).

Such headlines are the inspiration in part for the interrogation found in the title to this thesis, *Retirement Home?* This interrogation works on several levels. Firstly, it speaks to the difficult question the men face at retirement: to return home

definitively or not? Secondly, it speaks to the question of whether the hostels constitute an appropriate living space for older people. Thirdly, in this thesis I question what retirement means for these older migrants and find that in several ways their passage to retirement does not correspond to normative expectations of later life, be it in France or in places of origin. Finally, I conclude by asking what 'home' can mean for the hostel residents: are they 'homeless' everywhere, as the more pessimistically-minded scholars conclude, or have they found home in new and unexpected places?

The first two chapters set the scene, reviewing relevant empirical and theoretical literature, and then providing details of my multi-sited research design conducted in hostels in France and in Moroccan and Senegalese hometowns, incorporating ethnography and life history components. At this stage I underline the importance of the concept of 'biography' for this work. Thereafter, in Chapters Three and beyond, key elements of residents' biographies are characterised as suspect from the point of view of the expectations of welfare state organisations. Now that they are older and no longer working, the men's suspect biographies mediate their difficult relationship with the French state, notably in terms of welfare benefits and health care.

Accessing these two goods is a principal rationale for the retired hostel residents' preference for the *va-et-vient* over definitive return, as is elaborated in Chapters Three and Four respectively. Social systems theory is the theoretical framework most applicable to the data presented in these two chapters. Many welfare benefits are subject to minimum residence conditions. Administrators at various state agencies seek to territorially 'fix' and temporally 'timetable' the hostel residents through strategies such as passport checks, tax returns, and targeted fraud investigations. With healthcare, the better-quality, subsidised services available in France mean that it is the preferred location for most treatments. This implies that a large burden of care falls on the French welfare state, since the men have no family in France to look after them.

Instead, hostel residents' families are transnational. In Chapter Five, it is shown how fundamental these family ties are for respondents: it was the dream of family prosperity and financial security which spurred their emigration in the first

place, via the transfer of remittances. The new economics of labour migration is discussed at this stage. Unexpectedly, the families of some hostel residents remain dependent on remittances even following the emigrant's retirement, leading to prolonged stays in France in order to claim certain means-tested benefits which are subject to a minimum period of residence being observed. However, the long period of exile can lead to loss of influence within the family, especially for North African respondents. From the perspective of hostel residents, this is a threat to normative patriarchal roles. This speaks directly to structuralist theory.

A further aspect of relevance to structuralism is introduced in Chapter Six, which discusses re-integration to communities of origin. Many North Africans complain that they have "lost their bearings" in their families and in the wider home community, thus rendering difficult their prospects for re-integration there. West African men are better able to re-integrate thanks to their constant demonstrations of loyalty to the village via their hometown associations (HTAs). These structures enable them to maintain a political, social, and economic presence despite their long absences: HTAs facilitate re-integration when the men come to retire. The importance of HTAs underscores the relevance of transnationalism theory.

A further function of the HTAs is to provide repatriation insurance in case of death in France. Chapter Seven documents how hostel residents approach the end of life. The *va-et-vient* can continue only so long as the men are in a fit state to travel: eventually, the onset of ill-health and dependency forces the men to choose where to live out their days. The options in France are unappealing. In terms of facilities and architectural layout, most hostels are entirely unsuitable for individuals in an advanced state of dependency. Yet to enter a dedicated geriatric care home is to renounce one's remittance sending function, given that the fees charged are so high. Hence many undertake a 'penultimate journey' homewards – returning home to die – in order to benefit from family care in their last days and also to be assured of a burial in accordance with Islamic rites. Fittingly, all four theories find a place in the final chapter's discussion.

The thesis draws to a conclusion by considering the question of 'retirement home' at the different levels previously evoked. The discussion in Chapter Seven allows us to evaluate the suitability of the hostels as a place of long-term residential

care for dependent older adults. We then proceed to evaluate the different theories posited as explanations for the preference for back-and-forth migration over definitive return. No one theory adequately accounts for all the phenomena observed: at various points in the data there is support for several theories. Nonetheless, I identify Luhmann's social systems as the theory with most potential for fruitful exploration in the future, since it offers a fresh perspective on what a rational choice in migration decision-making might be.

Widening the focus beyond the specific puzzle/dilemma of late-in-life mobility for the hostel residents, the thesis concludes by questioning what 'home' can mean for the men who took part in this study. An innovative way of theorising home – building on conventional conceptions of home based on territory and community – is outlined, arguing that to be 'at home' can also mean to be 'included' in different 'social systems'. With this argument the thesis aims to contribute to broader debates on what it means for immigrants to belong and achieve inclusion in society.

The Men, the Hostels and the Round of Life[23]

Before the main chapters begin it will be illuminating to acquaint readers with some of the principal characters who populate the narrative of this thesis. In order to illustrate some of the paradoxes on which my central research question is premised I will now present two biographical sketches. These life stories are followed by a photographic essay, which will give the reader a better idea of the living conditions which pertain in the hostels I visited.

The Men: select biographies

In what follows, the life stories of two men born in 1939 are presented[24]: one hails from south-eastern Senegal and the other from southern Morocco. Their stories have been selected for the ways in which they illuminate some of the paradoxes described above.

Issa (70, Tambacounda, Senegal)[25]

Issa was born in 1939, and was aged 70 at the time of our interview. His family were farmers in the Tambacounda region of Senegal, and farming occupied the early part of his life. He came to France in 1969, aged 30. By this time, he had already been married for five years. He has six children, the eldest aged 39 and the youngest still at school. One of his daughters is married with children, and his two eldest boys work on the farm but three are still at school and live in the family home. Issa

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[23] The inspiration for the title to this section comes from Elliot Liebow's masterful study of hostels for homeless women in the Washington DC area, *Tell Them Who I Am* (New York: Free Press 1993). I would like to thank Paul Thompson at the University of Essex for directing me to this book.

[24] Both men have been attributed pseudonyms, and other identifying features have been omitted to ensure anonymity as far as is possible. See Chapter Two (section 2.4) for a fuller account of the steps taken to safeguard respondents' anonymity.

[25] Henceforth, the age and origin of all respondents cited in the text is formulated according to the following character key: pseudonym (age, region of origin, country of origin). See Chapter Two (section 2.4) for the rationale behind marshalling biographical data in this way.

migrated alone and did not attempt to reunify with his family in France during working life. This he now regrets. His parting words to me in the interview sum up the pain of 'geographical-singlehood' very well:

> I have lost something because my children aren't there with me: I didn't manage to do a family reunification to bring over my children, my wife. The children have grown up over there, and to bring them over now would be a bit difficult. Now that I'm old, I can't work. With my pension, what I earn isn't enough to enable me to live with my children, my wife, and I lack something because of that.

Initially, Issa worked as a 'temp' for many of the big car manufacturers based in the Paris region – Renault, Chausson, Peugeot – but the contracts only ever lasted a few months. He worked as a welder and a packer of spare parts. In 1980, he got a full-time job working for a street-cleaning company, and remained in that post until 2002, when he retired. Compared to other respondents, Issa had a fairly full and uninterrupted career, with 33 years of employment in total, and only a few months of unemployment (in 1978 and 1982). His monthly pension amounts to just under €500.

A recurrent theme for Issa is his limited spending power in France: everything is more expensive nowadays. "Nowadays, you earn money but even if you don't go out to spend it, you still have problems. In the past you wouldn't earn very much, but there weren't many loans or other problems which bother you, which trap you." A pension of €500 in Senegal amounts to a tidy sum by all accounts, implying that a return home (where spending power is better) would be the rational choice in his case. However, Issa feels that he cannot leave France, in part for financial reasons, which leads to him doing the *va-et-vient*. He usually returns once a year: "It depends on my financial means: sometimes I stay in France eight months, one year, and then go back for four months."

One thing which "traps" Issa in France is the obligation to provide for the seemingly never-ending needs of his family. He has to send money back: "I send money to Africa, because (...) my children have to eat, you have to do lots of things for them." Of course, remittance sending is not a new situation for Issa: it was what provoked his decision to emigrate in the first place. But the pressure on him to do this seems to have increased in recent years. He is the only breadwinner in his

family: "there's only me who is there to take care of feeding everyone, to pay for a sick relative." He used to send money once a month, after being paid his wages. These days he is continually being solicited for money by his immediate family as well as by more distant relatives. He blames this development on easier and cheaper modes of communication for stay-at-home relatives, especially mobile phones.

To satisfy these growing needs, Issa has requested a welfare benefit for pensioners which tops up his pension income to a sum of €677 (as of 10 June 2009). However, to be eligible for this benefit one is required, among other things, to observe at least six months' residence in France. Another important issue at this stage of life for Issa, one which intervenes in the decision to do the va-et-vient, is healthcare. One reason why he likes to stay in the hostel for part of the year is the quality of the local hospital. "Well, when I'm ill they take good care of me at the hospital (...) I've taken ill many times but the healthcare is very good."

Issa has lived in different hostels in and around Paris for the past 25 years. When we met, he had just changed hostels, since his previous residence had been renovated and the rent was now more expensive. Issa complained slightly of his loneliness in his new environment; he said it was good to talk to someone, it was good to talk to me, "it's not good to stay in the room all day". Ideally, he would like to bring one or two of his sons over to France, "to replace him" and to alleviate his solitude. But the problem is that the laws for family reunification have become increasingly stringent. That was one of his main complaints. Issa is Senegalese, not French: he is considering applying for French nationality, in order to facilitate the arrival in France of one or more sons.

However, it would be a mis-representation to claim Issa is socially isolated. He is closely involved with the activities of his hometown association, which assembles each month in a Paris hostel and provides substantial material support to collective development projects in his village. The association also provides mutual aid to villagers in France (and their families back home) who suffer unemployment or work accidents. Likewise, if someone from the community dies, then the association collects money from its members in order to send the body home for burial. Burial back home was a non-negotiable for Issa, and others whom I spoke to: the rites associated with death must be observed on native soil.

Hamid (70, Taroudant, Morocco)

Hamid was born near Agadir, Morocco in 1939 and, like Issa, comes from agricultural stock. His father was a wheat farmer in a small town in Taroudant province. He first went to France in 1963 (at the age of 24), returning briefly the following year to get married. He has eight children: the youngest is 25 and the eldest is 41. He also has four grandchildren.

Like all of my respondents, emigration for Hamid was a route to providing the means of subsistence for his family, initially parents and siblings, then – in time – his own children. Beyond the vital function to fulfil subsistence needs, a major ambition and priority for the money he earned during working life concerned the education of his children. "We didn't go to school. We mustn't leave our children like that, without the chance to get an education." A good education in Morocco costs money. Although he has invested in the education of his children, not all of them have been able to get jobs. He mentioned that one of his daughters speaks several languages – French, English and Spanish. He paid for all her studies, for all her diplomas. But today she remains unemployed.

Hamid first worked in France as a coalminer, spending six years in mines near Lille, in the north of France, between 1963 and 1969. He came with a job contract in hand, having been hired on the spot in Agadir during one of the frequent recruitment drives which the major mining firms ran in southern Morocco after WW2. One of the first things he wanted to mention was that he did not really consider himself to be an immigrant, at least not an immigrant in the sense of the "clandestine" migrants who wash up on the northern shore of the Mediterranean. Hamid was rather fixated with this media cliché, as were other respondents who made a similar distinction between themselves and the "illegals" who work in Europe without papers, giving the earlier generations of migrants a bad name. The men in the *foyers* are not "immigrants", it was the French who invited them, who came looking for them ("la France est venue nous chercher!") as Hamid exclaimed.

After his time in the mines, Hamid began work at one of the big car factories in 1969. He spent the rest of his working life there, until the factory closed in the

1990s, when Hamid was in his 50s. He worked as a welder in the coach-building workshop, not on the production line. After being made redundant, Hamid was put on 'pre-retirement': while formally in receipt of contributions-based unemployment benefit, there was no requirement for him to sign on at the unemployment office or look for work after the age of 57. He took his pension in 2002.

Hamid's pension is in the €600-700 per month range, somewhat superior to Issa's monthly income. Hamid's income represents a substantial sum in Morocco, suggesting that it would make better financial sense to return at retirement. Like Issa, a major preoccupation for Hamid was that life in France is more expensive these days. Asked how life in France was at the beginning of his time in France, he replied, "It was good, life was less expensive. We didn't earn very much, but the cost of living was cheaper than today."

Despite the financial incentives, Hamid has not returned definitively since retiring in 2002, preferring to travel back-and-forth. In fact, Issa and Hamid have similar *va-et-vient* patterns at retirement, returning to their families once a year for a duration of four months on average. The time Hamid goes back is not fixed; in May 2009, when we met, he was planning to return in time for the start of Ramadan at the end of August, staying in Morocco until November, at which point he planned to embark on the pilgrimage to Mecca (this was going to be his second *hajj*). In earlier years he timed his trips to coincide with weddings and other family events. Usually, Hamid travels to Morocco by coach and ferry, which takes three days (after which he needs four days of rest to recover, he joked).

Like Issa, he has his whole family in his financial charge. He even has to support his oldest children. In fact – as he said with a twinge of pride – he gives money to his sisters and brothers, for weddings and parties. Nonetheless, unlike Issa – whose family is dependent on remittances – the obligation to look after his family financially is not the main rationale behind Hamid's preference for the *va-et-vient*. Instead, the real problem is his health. As he admits, his health is not good: he suffers from diabetes, high blood pressure, and other things which he preferred not to detail. He has a monthly check up with his doctor. It is difficult to find the medication which he takes for his diabetes and high blood pressure in more rural parts of Morocco. If he purchased it in the nearest city, Agadir, it would be expensive, since

the bilateral social security agreement between Morocco and France stipulates that he will not be refunded this expense (Algerians resident in France, on the other hand, are refunded for their healthcare outlays when they visit their homeland, a perceived injustice which is of great consternation to Hamid). The maximum amount of medication which his French GP can prescribe him is three months' worth, which naturally influences the duration of his trips. As Hamid summarised the situation:

> The annoying thing is social security. You can't get the care you need back home. With a pension of 600 or 700 euros, if ever you fall ill over there you have to pay a lot, it soon mounts up... And if your wife is ill too...

Some of my respondents were adamant in their refusal to countenance family reunification in the past, for fear that the move would have corrupted the morals of their children, turning them into 'delinquents'. Shame at the highly-mediatised delinquency of the children of immigrants was a recurring theme among many of my respondents. Among other residents whom I spoke to, however, there was less moralising bluster and more candour. Hamid would have gladly brought his family over; indeed, he confided to me his dream of one day driving his family round France in a car. What blocked him, and others, was the difficulty in finding suitable accommodation in the 1970s and 80s, a time when social housing was in very great demand. In Hamid's view, the immigrant who has reunified with his family "lives well. He has seen his kids grow up, he can have a laugh with his children. But for the man who has remained single, whose family is back home, he lives badly."

Hamid has lived in his hostel since 1971. Indeed, he was one of the building's first occupants. He likes the hostel. The only thing is that the people living there change a lot. "It's like a bus. People get on and off all the time." Friends go back home from time to time, others pass away.[26] These changes are unsettling for Hamid.

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[26] There were three deaths during my stay as a live-in resident in this hostel.

The Hostels and the Round of Life: a photographic essay

Figure 1. At the entry to the building

At the entry to the building, they told us the regulations:

It is forbidden to prepare one's food in the room (there is a kitchen at the end of the corridor);

It is forbidden to receive women (there is a brothel, *chez Maribelle*, not far from here);

It is forbidden to listen to the radio after nine o'clock;

It is forbidden to sing in the evening, especially in Arabic or Kabyle; …

… It is forbidden to repaint the walls, to touch the furniture, to break the windows, to change a light bulb, to fall ill, to have diarrhoea, to be political, to forget to go to work, to think about starting a family, to have children with French women, to chase the ladies in church, to go out in the street in your pyjamas, to complain about the objective and subjective conditions of life, to have sympathy for leftist groups, to read or write insults on the walls, to argue with one another, to fight with one another, to carry a knife, to avenge yourself;

It is forbidden to die in your room, within the perimeter of the building (go and die elsewhere; back home, for example, it is more convenient)…

(Tahar Ben Jelloun (1976) *La réclusion solitaire*, pp18-20; author's translation)

Figure 2. At the entry to the building (#2)

The 4th Floor Corridor:

The door to my room is foreground right; the bathroom door is foreground left; the kitchen door is down the corridor, on the left, after the fire extinguisher.
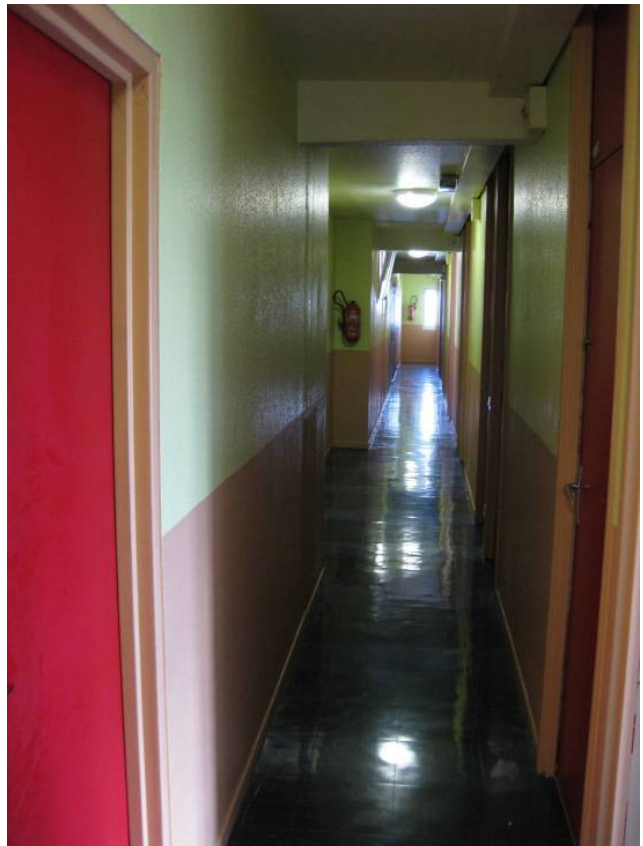
Jawad[27] describes the hostel

Jawad:

Ah the hostels, you know the hostels, the people who live there, it's like being in limbo. Like being in a barracks, or down a mine, or like prisoners in jail. It's the same thing.

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[27] Jawad (69, Taroudant, Morocco)

Jawad: Well the room, you know the room.

AH: Yes of course.

Jawad: Just 7 square metres,

AH: Not even!

Jawad: Not even. Well, 7 metres. You have the washbasin, the cupboard ...

Figure 3. Cupboard and Washbasin.

... and then you have the table, the television, and there's nowhere else to move!

Figure 4. Hostel Bed.

Jawad: If you're in bed and you're six feet tall, you touch the wardrobe.

Figure 5. Bedside lamp and shelf.

Jawad: If you want to go to the kitchen, watch out – thieves about! There are eighteen people on each corridor. There are four stoves, with eight burners, OK ...

Figure 6. The Kitchen: gas hobs and sink.

Jawad: ... also, everyone has a small cubby hole where they can put their groceries, potatoes, onions, pans, cups etc.

If you arrive late, and find all the stoves taken, you have to wait ...

Figure 7. The Dining Area (with cubby holes for storing food and utensils to rear).

Jawad: ... one hour, two hours, it depends – because some people don't eat until half ten in the evening.

AH: At least you have a nice view to look at while you're waiting.

Figure 8. The view from the kitchen (Eiffel Tower 12 km away).

Jawad: Well, the showers
are communal ...

The toilets – communal.
The kitchen – communal.
Even the bedcovers and sheets –
communal!
You don't have the right to
anything!

Figure 9. Shower block and squat toilet.

1. Historical, Empirical and Theoretical Contexts

This first chapter places the material hitherto presented in its historical, empirical and theoretical contexts. The narratives found in Issa and Hamid's biographies not only gave life to the theoretical puzzle of the inadequacy of family localisation and neo-classical models in explaining the preference for *va-et-vient* over definitive return, but also flagged up several starting points for potential alternative explanations. Avenues for future exploration range from the importance of healthcare and dependency on welfare benefits, to the impact of new communication technologies such as mobile phones, as well as the difficulties of re-integrating into home communities.

To gauge the importance of these and other potential explanatory factors regarding the research question, in section 1.2 I undertake a focused review of the small body of existing literature which has treated the question of late-in-life return and circular migration. This empirical literature, although useful insofar as it highlights the various resources which are observed to influence late-in-life mobility decisions, is found to be theoretically lacking insofar as it has not incorporated many insights from more general theories of migration and return. In section 1.3, I make an attempt to integrate the empirical and theoretical literatures, drawing upon the new economics of labour migration, structuralism, transnationalism, and social systems.

Prior to illuminating these empirical and theoretical contexts, however, it will be helpful at the outset for the reader to be aware of the historical background to the programme of migrant worker hostel construction launched by the French authorities in the 1950s, as well as knowing something of the migratory flows which provoked it.

1.1 Historical Context

This section will provide important information about the origins and evolutions of migrant worker hostel accommodation in France. Before outlining the origins of the hostel policy, I will provide some historical context to the migration episodes which

led to their construction in the first place. This necessarily requires that some words are said about the pre-departure situation of the future hostel residents. As the renowned Franco-Algerian migration scholar Abdelmalek Sayad stressed above all else: to understand immigration we must first of all understand emigration (Sayad 1999).

Contexts of emigration: 1900s to 1970s

As noted, the hostels house a population of predominantly North African and West African origins. Although developing at different times, emigrations from regions of North and West Africa to France display significant similarities. I will broadly distinguish between Algeria and Morocco as regards emigration from North Africa, whereas for West Africa the case of a single ethnic group – the Soninke, inhabiting a triangle of borderland where the frontiers of present-day Senegal, Mauritania and Mali intersect – is predominant (see Figures 10-13 below). All of my respondents hailed from one of these five sending countries.[28] The Soninke dominated flows from West Africa to France up until the 1970s (Diarra 1968; in Manchuelle 1997). Early flows in the Algerian case (ca. 1905-1945) and the Moroccan case (ca. 1914-late 1950s) are also dominated by a single ethnic group in a clearly-defined geographical region, respectively the Berbers of mountainous Kabylia (to the east of the capital Algiers) and the Chleuh (also Berber-speaking) of the Souss in southern Morocco (Lacroix 2005; Manchuelle 1997).

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[28] Tunisians are also prominent in the hostel population, but it so happened that there were very few Tunisians resident in the hostels I visited during my fieldwork.

Figure 10. Souss, Soninke and Kabylia regions in relation to France.
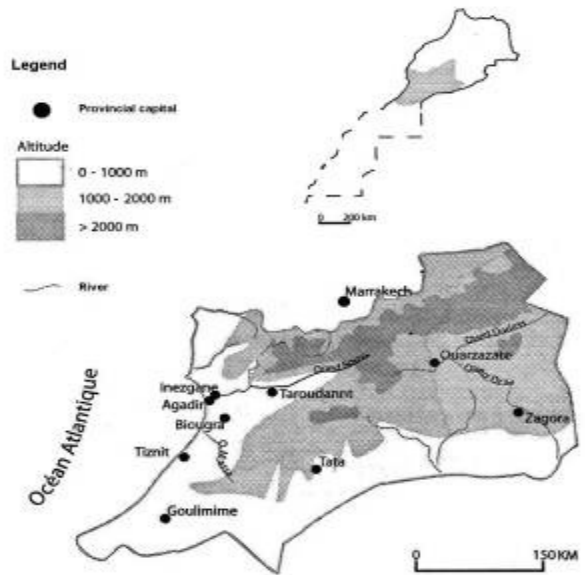
Figure 11. Map A: Souss Morocco. Adapted from Lacroix 2005.

Figure 12. Map B: Soninke Lands. Adapted from Manchuelle 1997.
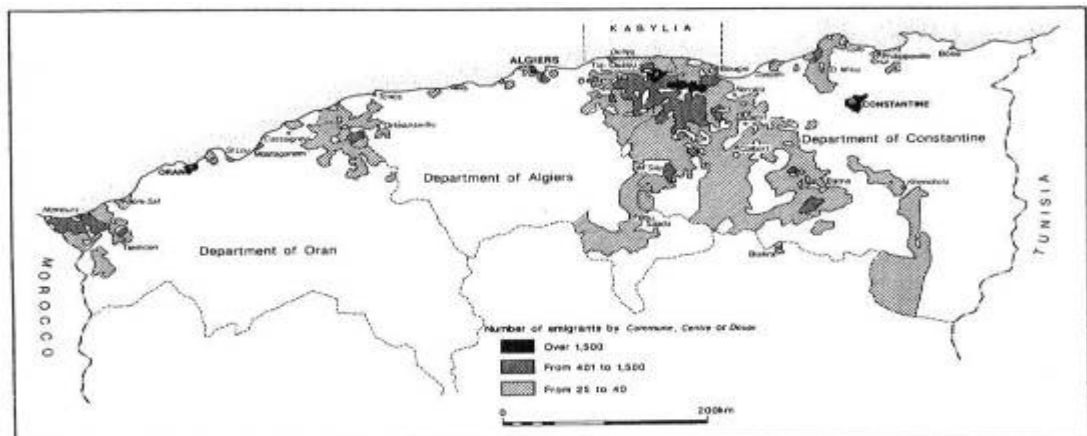
Figure 13. Map C: Kabylia, Algeria. Adapted from MacMaster 1993.

In the following historical overview I will dwell longest on the Algerian emigration, since for most of the 20th century this was numerically the most significant population movement into France. Indeed, by the 1970s, emigration from Algeria constituted the oldest and largest 'third-world' migration into Europe (MacMaster 1997; Sayad 1999, 2006). As noted in the Introduction, Algerian workers were the initial target of the migrant worker hostel policy, implemented as it was by the state-financed Sonacotral company (*Société nationale de construction de logements pour les travailleurs algériens* or National Housing Construction Company for Algerian Workers), created in 1956. It is only after 1963 that such housing provision is generalised to cater for the needs of all migrant workers. In that year, Sonacotral became Sonacotra[29], dropping the 'L' from its acronym and thereby its focus on housing only Algerian workers.

Given the heavy boot-print of French colonisation in these three sending regions, many historians and demographers have subscribed to the view that emigration to France was the response of desperate 'uprooted' native populations. In all three cases, however, contemporary scholars have been at pains to demonstrate that initially emigration was not a response to the colonial violence and economic disruption (forced imposition of a market economy) perpetrated by the colonists on local populations (Lacroix 2005; MacMaster 1997; Manchuelle 1997). Instead, migration from these regions (be it internal or international) was at the outset a consequence of climatic and topographical conditions.[30] Agriculturally, all three sending regions experienced short growing seasons, and in each case there were few non-agricultural employment opportunities locally, hence the resort to migration for work in the off-season. In the 19th century, this mobility for trade, military, and agricultural employment quickly brought these three ethnic groups into contact with the French colonists, making them privileged interlocutors, and it is no surprise that

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[29] *Société nationale de construction de logements pour les travailleurs* (National Housing Construction Company for Workers).

[30] The Soninke lands border the southern fringes of the Sahara Desert and the climate there is typical of Sahelian zones, with an annual short rainy season providing a regular if reduced source of water for cultivation purposes. The Kabyles and Chleuhs in Algeria and Morocco respectively are traditionally mountain dwellers. Soils tend to be thin but regular rainfall and sunshine permit a wide range of crops to be grown. However, the mountainous topography prevents large yields.

these ethnic groups dominate the first emigration cohorts from their respective countries.[31]

In Algeria, the long duration and noted savagery of colonisation on the fertile coastal plain to the south and west of the capital Algiers came to alter the character and causation of the emigration flows. Beginning in the aftermath of WW2, inhabitants of this region began to leave in great numbers, fleeing desperate poverty and colonial dispossession. This was a qualitatively different migratory flow compared to the Kabyle Berber emigration that had gone before: expropriated and socially-uprooted plains-dwelling Arabic speakers making a rapid transition from temporary male-breadwinner migration to permanent settlement and family reunification in France.

This built-up pressure for outward migration from the Algerian Plains coincided with a significant reduction in French immigration controls, encouraging inward migration from 1946.[32] The rationale for an open immigration policy after WW2 was firstly economic – the vast industrial and infrastructural rebuilding effort which was required after the war – and secondly demographic, as unlike other European industrialised countries, France had experienced its demographic transition to low fertility rates much earlier. Third, policy makers had great confidence in the Republican integration policy and its ability to make French citizens out of peasants and immigrants within a generation (Hollifield 2000). The French government, like other war-torn European states, had a "cultural preference" for immigrants of European origin (Viet 1998: 21-2), but labour supply (notably from Spain and Italy) could not match the demands of French industry. Solutions were soon sought in the colonial territories of North and West Africa, initially Algeria in particular. From

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[31] By 1923, a Berber-speaking Kabyle was sixteen times more likely to emigrate to France than an Arabic-speaking plains-dweller (MacMaster 1997). By 1929, of 21,000 Moroccans in France, 95 percent were Soussis (Lacroix 2005). Emigration to France from West Africa begins later, ca. 1955. As of 1968, 85 percent of West Africans in France were Soninke (Diarra 1968; in Manchuelle 1997).

[32] When an open migration regime was re-instated in 1946 following the wartime travel blockade, the built-up pressure to emigrate was immense. Net immigration of Algerians to France was 70,000 between 1946 and 1950 (MacMaster 1997), and there was a massive increase in the Algerian population in France, which doubled in four years from 120,000 in 1949 to 240,000 in 1953 (Viet 1998). The War of Independence in Algeria (1954-62) may have led to restrictions on the entry of Algerians, but military strategy – especially the brutal "resettlement" policy carried out in rebellious areas such as Kabylia (Bourdieu and Sayad 1964) – only contributed to greater uprooting and would lead to further emigration following the Evian Peace Accords of 1962, which conceded to the newly-independent Algerians the right of free movement to France (Garson 1992; Viet 1998). This open immigration regime lasted until 1973 (Castles *et al.* 1984).

1947, the entry into Metropolitan France of these *Français Musulmans d'Algérie* (FMA: Muslim French of Algeria), as they were officially designated, was relatively straightforward since in law they were considered to be French citizens, with "theoretical equality in civil and civic rights" (Viet 1998: 159-160).[33]

In Morocco, the end of WW2 signalled a quantitative rather than qualitative shift in emigration flows to France. French coal mining companies began recruiting in the Souss region of Morocco from 1946. This recruitment accelerated during the Algerian War of Independence, when controls were placed on Algerian emigration and employers began to diversify their foreign labour sources. Recruiting agents hired Chleuhs 'on the spot' in the main towns of the region.[34] The 'candidates' for emigration (including some of the participants in this study, as we saw with Hamid) were selected in the *souks* (markets) and conveyed by bus, boat and train directly to the mines of northern France. A second route into France, less official than the recruitment organised by the mining companies, was to enter as a tourist and then secure paid employment, which in turn secured a residence permit. Knowledge about job vacancies was secured through migrant networks.

In Soninke regions of West Africa in the 1970s, parallel to the trends observable in the Algerian case following WW2, Mahamet Timera (1996) sees a shift from "willing" to "uprooted" migration, firstly due to the global recession, and secondly due to successive droughts (1968-74). These two developments led to greater dependence of families and villages on remittances (Bourdieu and Sayad 1964; Fall 2005; Kuagbenou 1999; Manchuelle 1997). Manchuelle notes that "the drought may have left few other options to the Soninke apart from migration" (1997: 212). Adrian Adams also argues that from 1970, emigration was a "movement of self-defence" (1977: 97).

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[33] As Viet signals, the reality for the Algerians in France was one of marked *inequality*, given the "desperate living conditions that these under-qualified, very often illiterate and non-French speaking workers had to face" (Viet 1998: 159-160).

[34] The most famous of these agents, Félix Moura, supervised the hiring of 78,000 people between 1956 and 1977 (Lacroix 2005).

The Sonacotra era: (1956-2006)

Upon arrival in France, finding accommodation became a pressing need for the migrant workers from North and West Africa, as was the case for all the migrant workers who arrived in Western Europe in the post-WW2 era. Governments of neighbouring labour-importing countries were generally content to delegate responsibility for lodging labour migrants to either employers or the forces of the private housing market (Bernardot 1999; Castles *et al.* 1984). In France, the state felt it necessary to intervene in this sector and invested a great deal of money and administrative energy in the creation of hostel accommodation solely for labour migrants. These actions were initiated through the majority state-owned Sonacotral company (later Sonacotra), founded in 1956.

In post-war Europe, the provision of hostel accommodation for migrant workers has been portrayed as something of a French speciality (Bernardot 1997; Hmed 2006a), but this is not strictly the case. Hostel accommodation was used to house a significant proportion of the 90,000 European Voluntary Workers (EVWs) who came to the UK between 1946 and 1951 (Bülbring 1954; Phillips *et al.* 2007; Stadulis 1952), while in West Germany, employers were obliged by the Federal authorities to provide accommodation for guest workers. Such accommodation frequently took the form of communal hostel facilities (Castles and Kosack 1972; Dreyer 1961). Be this as it may, it was in France that this form of housing for migrants took its fullest expression, under the impulsion of the *dirigiste* French state. The following paragraphs will seek to understand the French policymakers' positions.

While immigration has quite a long history in France, spanning several centuries (Noiriel 1992), the issue of housing for immigrants only really came onto the policy agenda in France after WW2, with the sustained immigration of Algerian labourers (and, in time, their families). From this point on however, immigrant housing was destined to become "one of the major challenges of immigration policy" (Viet 1999: 92), and moreover one which to this day is still far from being resolved, as the recent riots in the peripheral *banlieues* (suburbs) attest (see Bazin *et al.* 2006; Dikeç 2007; Mucchielli 2009; Murray 2006).

The post-WW2 labour immigration coincided with a drastic housing shortage in French cities and towns. This shortage was due to three principal factors: war damage, substantial rural-urban migration, and insufficient production of new dwellings. Housing was not a government priority in the immediate aftermath of WW2: rebuilding France's industrial infrastructure and economic base was the imperative (Power 1993). With not enough decent housing for the native population, it is no surprise that immigrant workers could not access the housing market. Instead, foreigners (and many French citizens too) had to get by as best they could, in the form of self-constructed shantytowns (*bidonvilles*) springing up on disused ground, often near industrial sites on the edge of the major conurbations – Paris, Lyon and Marseille. The *bidonvilles* were not officially acknowledged or reported in the press until the mid-1950s (Bernardot 1997; Hmed 2006a). At that time the most advanced estimates put the total population lodging in self-constructed housing at 25,000 (Bernardot 1997). Contemporary scholars, however, put the true figure between 200,000 and 300,000 people (Power 1993; Lallaoui 1993: 44-5; in Bernardot 1997). Atouf (2002) cites sources which estimate that one third of all North Africans in France were living in slum or shantytown accommodation as of 1953.

The housing crisis of the 1950s was a major preoccupation of the government and the press, as searches at the Sciences-Po Press Archive underlined to me. A 1958 article in the newspaper *La Croix* is not unrepresentative of the moral panic which slum housing provoked:

> In the matter of housing, [France] presents the undeniable characteristics of a pre-revolutionary state. There exists now, in this country, the seeds of a revolt, sown and nurtured in the inhuman constraints of the slums. This growing number of people in sub-housing, recruited from younger and younger classes who are less and less resigned, constitutes a stick of dynamite which only needs a spark to set it off (La Croix 1958, April 15).

One such potential spark was the insurrection in Algeria beginning in 1954. The shantytowns were commonly held to provide substantial funds for the FLN independence movement (*Front de libération nationale*) (Boutaleb 2000; Dridi 2007; Petauton 2007; Viet 1999). The minutes of a government meeting in January 1956 give an inkling into the mindset of the public powers, conflating security concerns in

Algeria with the "problem" of housing North African workers in metropolitan France:

> As regards the needs of the 300,000 North Africans, working or otherwise, in this country, the required effort remains considerable and yet peace in North Africa will perhaps depend on the solution which Metropolitan France will be able to find to the problem of housing for Algerian workers (Conseil économique 1956: 57).

The ministries of Interior, on the one hand, and Work and Social Security, on the other, clashed over what this housing solution should be: the security rationale of the former prevailed (Bernardot 1997; Viet 1998). By directing the shantytown dwellers to a different type of accommodation, the French authorities would be better able to fight against the "FLN contamination"[35] in these marginal spaces where the forces of law and order feared to tread. Given the security risk posed by this population, the type of accommodation to which the former shantytown dwellers were redirected would have to incorporate a surveillance function.

All observers of the hostels are unanimous on this point: its aims were to "group together the Algerians, to count and register them, and to put them under surveillance in order to cut the artery which furnished the FLN with money" (Boutaleb 2000: 151). Marc Bernardot describes the hostels memorably as "the Algerian War in concrete" (Bernardot 2001: 162). What the Ministry of the Interior feared above all was the appearance of a second front to this rebellion composed of Algerian workers in Metropolitan France, starting in the numerous and hard-to-police *bidonvilles*. Given the war in Algeria, the authorities decided that the colonial population working in France should be kept away from the town centres, and that a policy of strict social and political control, amounting to a carceral control (Petauton 2007; Viet 1999), should be instituted for them.

The Algerian War was critical then in the genesis of the migrant worker hostels. Viet maintains that the presence of the Algerians in France "weighed heavily in a war which also unfolded, but with different weapons, in Metropolitan France" (1998: 164). Such 'weapons' deployed by the French authorities included the Social

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[35] This phrase appears in the statutes of *Maison de l'Afrique du Nord* Association in Lyons, created in 1952, and considered to be the prototype for Sonacotral. See Hmed 2006a: 90.

Action Fund for Algerian workers and their families (*Fonds d'Action Sociale*), and Sonacotral. These two institutions would in time constitute the "principal major legacy" of the Algerian War as regards immigration and integration policy (Viet 1998: 135). It has been an enduring legacy: both institutions continue to function today.[36]

The 'contamination' in the *bidonvilles* constituted a threat not just to the French body politic: the slum-dwelling North African migrants were also depicted as a threat to French bodies in terms of public health. Firstly, migrant workers from North and West Africa were represented as transnational carriers of dangerous microbes which, once introduced on French soil, would make no distinction between foreigners and French or between the working class and the bourgeoisie. "In terms of public health, it is certain that all human migrations have contributed to propagating illnesses and epidemics. Foreigners, especially Asiatics and North Africans, have brought to France the germs of long forgotten diseases." (Agence France-Presse 1946, 23 March: 7)

Secondly, the poor hygiene conditions found in the shantytowns and slums exacerbated the public health risk already posed by these foreign bodies. An interesting government memo from 1948 remarks that "the situation of the North Africans (...) is quite alarming (...) Many of them are tainted with "infectious illnesses" and the absence of hygiene as well as their cramming together in cramped spaces, multiplies the dangers of contamination" (cited in Atouf 2002: 63).

From the 1950s, local initiatives alone could no longer respond adequately to the urgent need to combat the poor hygiene conditions confronted by the immigrant workers in the numerous shantytowns around Paris, Lyon and Marseille in particular (Bernardot 1999: 25). A primary axis of state intervention was to bring the slums and shantytowns into urban use. The Debré law of 1964 aimed at the eradication of the *bidonvilles* through a major slum clearance programme. The single migrant workers who were made homeless by slum clearance were re-housed in the hostels.[37] This

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[36] Albeit under different names, as was already discussed in the case of Sonacotral. The *Fonds d'action sociale* became ACSE (*Agence nationale pour la cohésion sociale et l'égalité des chances*) in 2006.

[37] Single foreign males were directed to the FTMs, whereas (French and foreign) families were directed to temporary family accommodation on outlying housing estates known as *cités de transit*. For an ethnographic account of life in the *cités de transit*, see Pétonnet 1973.

law initiated a major period of hostel building – between 1966 and 1976 more than 200 hostels were built by Sonacotra alone, each one housing around 300 men (Gallou and Rozenkier 2006: 60).

Lastly, in addition to the security and public health threats posed by the North African workers, there was also a labour market rationale behind the French government's decision to create hostels exclusively for male migrant workers. Once the Algerian War was over, the interests of French industry in having a plentiful, but temporary, labour supply began to dominate the policy agenda. Migrant workers were only essential to post-war national reconstruction and prosperity as long as industrial growth depended on this manpower. Marc Bernardot, as noted earlier, argues that the hostels were the housing side of a broader "labour force policy which had as its objective the limitation of the durable installation and family unification of these workers" (Bernardot 1997: 12). By keeping the rents as low as possible, the initiators of the hostel policy aimed to encourage the men to remain geographically-single and send as much money as possible homewards, thus benefiting their families more than would have been the case had the latter come to live in France, where the cost of living was more expensive (Viet 1999). In making the hostel "the normal and even definitive form of accommodation for foreign workers" (Viet 1999: 95), the authorities hoped to minimise the need to construct accommodation for their families, along with all the other welfare infrastructure which young immigrant families would require: nurseries, schools, clinics, literacy classes, and so on.

The state's need to manage the triple danger of family reunification, security risk and public health threat which the migrant workers were held to represent is now widely accepted by historians as the foundation of the migrant worker hostel policy (Bernardot 1997; Ginesy-Galano 1984; Hmed 2006a; Sayad 2006, Viet 1998).[38] In so doing, the French state marked itself out from its European neighbours, where provision of housing to immigrants was generally delegated to either employers or the market forces of the private housing sector.

What is not so readily apparent from the above is why such accommodation took the form it did. The design on which the first Sonacotral hostels were based is

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[38] Hmed (2006a) and Sayad (2006) highlight, in addition, the paternalistic 'civilising' mission of Sonacotra: to provide shelter to young, single men in need of moral guidance and education when confronted with a society which was foreign to them.

known as the F6 model: family apartments of five bedrooms plus a kitchen/dining area (hence F6) were reconfigured into living quarters for ten men. This was done by dividing each bedroom in half with a light plasterboard partition, creating in total ten tiny rooms or *chambrettes* of approximately 4.5 square metres.

On the one hand, the built form of the hostel accommodation was influenced by practical considerations. The *modus operandi* was for accommodation units to be built quickly, in large number and at low cost, in order to re-house those displaced by slum clearance as efficiently as possible. A typical hostel would be constructed within eight to ten months (Viet 1999: 95). On the other hand, Abdelmalek Sayad, a leading authority on the post-war North African immigration to France, argues that what dictated the approach of the French authorities above all was the "condition" of the immigrants as provisional workers, as a temporary "work force [*force de travail*], all their other properties being only ever impedimenta to be treated at the least cost" (Sayad 2006: 129). In Sayad's view, this goes especially for the accommodation accorded these immigrant workers, the labour migrant hostel, which he describes as -

> provisional lodging – doubly provisional because the occupants only lodge there provisionally and because the lodging itself is a response to a situation held to be provisional – for a provisional resident, as this is how the immigrant is always imagined (Sayad 2006: 82).

This short-term vision materialised in the very fabric of the dwellings, described by Ginesy-Galano variously as "sub-housing" or "travesties of housing" (*simulacres de logement*) (1984: 1, 280). The flimsiness of the partitions in the F6 units manifested itself in a lack of sound-proofing which was a major nuisance according to surveys of residents in the 1970s (Ginesy-Galano 1984). The provisional representation of the migrants' stay in France led to the idea that once they had left, the rooms could be easily converted back into social housing for French families by removing the partitions (Gallou and Rozenkier 2006: 64).

Geneviève Petauton remarks that the period from the 1960s to the early 1980s was a time when the residents of the hostels (and immigrant workers in general) were considered as *gens de passage* [just passing through], and would not be staying permanently in France. And "since they were just passing through... it was not worth worrying about their conditions of accommodation... it was enough to put them up in

barracks in the vicinity of building sites and industrial zones" (Petauton 2007: 28-9). Ginesy-Galano argues that "[t]he real function of the hostels is dual: to maintain the separation of these foreigners of swarthy complexion from the white population and especially to prevent them taking root, that is to say, prevent their installation in France with their families" (Ginesy-Galano 1984: 282). Gilles Desrumaux, of Unafo, the social housing employees' union, notes the "extraterritorial" characteristic of many hostels, being often badly integrated in the local municipality (Desrumaux 2007: 97). According to Geneviève Petauton, the hostel was both the concretisation and the symbol of this policy of separation (even banishment), conceived –

> as a model of political and social control of the immigrant workers, and constructed preferably far from any commercial or residential zone, to make it well understood to these workers that they were only there to work, temporarily, before having to leave the country, when the French economy no longer needed them (Petauton 2007: 29).

Being separated from the residential and commercial centres necessarily implied a certain invisibility for the hostels and their residents. In an interview, Gilles Desrumaux commented that the hostels were not "in the heart of the towns but in the suburban zones (...) where they wouldn't be too visible. Nothing was planned in terms of integration or inclusion." For his part, Marc Bernardot puts considerable emphasis on what he terms the "unofficial mission of 'invisibilisation' for migrants who are too 'visible'" (Bernardot 2008: 263). Bernardot argues that this mission was entrusted to Sonacotra from the outset of the hostel construction policy and continues to this day. One contemporary example is the company's role in housing asylum seekers.

Various controversies in recent decades have periodically exposed the hostels to the glare of publicity, such as the eight-year long 'rent strike' of 1973-81 (see Hmed 2007), or the issue of *communautarisme* (self-segregating communalism is the closest translation) in certain (especially West African) hostels (Cuq 1996). This is held to be antithetical to the political values of the 'one and indivisible' Republic (Bowen 2010; Hayward 1983; Murray 2006). Also associated indelibly with the hostels are regular health and safety breaches (accidents, fires) as well as occasional

high- profile security scares linked to allegations of terrorist plots (Bernardot 2008; Bowen 2010).

As a result of this discourse, the image of the hostels – and of Sonacotra above all – has been irredeemably tainted. As one hostel company employee put it to me, "The people who are anti-immigration don't like us because we provide housing for immigrants; the people who are pro-immigration don't like us because they say we lock immigrants up." In response, the larger, better-known hostel companies have pursued a strategy of re-branding, in an attempt at renewed invisibilisation (Bernardot 2008). For example, Aftam – the second largest hostel company – has altered its acronym to indicate a less specific clientele[39], and is now known as the *Association pour l'accueil et la formation des Travailleurs Migrants* (Association for Welcoming and Training Migrant Workers). Sonacotra has recently gone one step further and invented an entirely new acronym. To divert attention away from its devalued heritage and the insoluble link in the public imagination between Sonacotra and state-sanctioned labour immigration, the company undertook a radical re-branding in 2007 when it became Adoma. Hereafter in this thesis the company will be referred to by this new name.

Just as the individual hostel companies have been re-branded in an attempt to make less visible the links with their devalued past, the state too has sought to re-brand this housing: from 'migrant worker hostel' (*foyer de travailleur migrant*) to 'social residence' (*résidence sociale*). The legal and policy basis for this change began in 1994, with the FTM Transformation Plan. While the re-brandings of Adoma and Aftam could be described as merely a cosmetic change for public relations purposes, the re-assigned status of the migrant worker hostels is far-reaching in the changes it heralds, both in policy terms and demographically.

One of the aims of the FTM Transformation Plan – confirmed in my interviews with policymakers – is to integrate the social residences into the frame of action of local municipal authorities. The impulsion behind the transition to the new status is that the centralist state cedes responsibility to local councils over the hostels in their area. A further aim is to make a break with the FTM's earlier vocation of

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[39] Founded in 1962, the acronym AFTAM originally stood for *Association pour la formation technique de base des Africains et Malgaches* (Association for basic technical training of Africans and Madagascans). For more details, see Fiévet 1999.

housing immigrant workers only, diversifying the clientele to include all sorts of "precarious" categories who find it difficult to access ordinary housing – young workers and apprentices, disabled people, single-parent families, homeless people, recovering drug addicts, and so on (Lévy-Vroelant 2007; Ridez *et al.* 2001).

Notwithstanding the stated aims to welcome new residents to the hostels, progress in diversifying the hostel clientele has been slow. It is rare for the transition from *foyer* to *résidence sociale* to be accompanied by demographic change. Generally, the population housed remains the same, i.e., immigrant elders. Bernardot argues that 'the ex-Sonacotra' has not succeeded in altering its public image, despite re-branding, with the result that this housing is still shunned by all publics except elderly migrants (Bernardot 2008). The consequence, as encapsulated in our title, is that the hostels have become in many cases 'retirement homes' for foreigners.

This brings us back to the theoretical puzzle of hostel residents' preference for back-and-forth migration over definitive return at retirement, as well as the empirical gap in the literature. As noted, much of the literature has concentrated on the worrying welfare and health consequences of this preference, but has not sought to develop any explanatory or theoretical approaches to this puzzle. Given the lack of engagement with migration theory and literature on the part of previous scholars of the hostels, the following section will review the small cluster of empirical studies which exists for international retirement migration in other contexts, covering both return and circular flows. Such a comparative review is useful at this stage in the thesis, firstly from a theoretical perspective because it gives a clue as to what the important factors influencing migration decisions might be for the retired hostel residents, and secondly for the guidance existing studies can provide as regards how to proceed methodologically.

1.2 Empirical Context: international retirement migration in comparative perspective

When surveying the literature on retired migrants, it is important to distinguish analytically between (i) people who emigrate later in life and (ii) people who emigrated as young workers and who have now reached retirement age in host

countries. Both have received patchy attention from researchers, with certain phenomena garnering quite extensive treatments while others remain mostly unexplored.

As regards the first category, those who emigrate later in life, most attention has been focussed on the types and determinants of such flows, and the consequences for receiving and sending areas. Tony Warnes (2009) identifies three groups of people who emigrate later-in-life: amenity-seeking movers, family-joining movers[40], and retirement returnees.[41] Only the first group has been treated at length. A sizeable body of literature now exists on the causes and consequences of amenity migration at retirement, both internally – such as 'sunbelt' migration in the United States (Longino 1992; Rogers 1992) – and internationally, as documented in studies of affluent Northern European retirees who migrate south to warmer Mediterranean climes for some or all of the year (Gustafson 2008; Janoschka 2008; King *et al.* 2000).[42]

Turning to the other analytical category – labour migrants who have reached retirement in host countries – the lion's share of research has been justifiably directed to the often alarming health and welfare situation of minority ethnic elders. The US constitutes the principal locus of empirical research, although there research has prioritised the intersection of age and race/ethnicity over the intersection of age and migration history *per se*, notably in the literature on double jeopardy. Dowd and Bengtson (1978) proposed that "the experience of both race *and* age discrimination combines to make [ethnic elders'] relative status more problematic than that of either the aged or racial minorities considered separately" (Dowd and Bengtson 1978: 428, emphasis in original). In other words, the interaction of social stratifications (race and age) exacerbates relative inequalities between groups.[43] While the double jeopardy concept has crossed the Atlantic and fed into debates taking place in Europe

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[40] By family-joining movers, Warnes means those retirees who move to join adult children who have emigrated for work and/or to raise a family (Warnes 2009).

[41] Warnes (2009) divides the latter category into returns of natives to 'first-world' countries and 'third-world' countries.

[42] This is not an insignificant phenomenon: retirement amenity migration from the UK is predicted to grow substantially in the coming years, with over 1.5 million retired Britons – equivalent to over 11 percent of the UK's aged population – expected to be living abroad by 2015 (Warnes 2009).

[43] Overall, there has been mixed support for the double jeopardy thesis (Blakemore and Boneham 1994; Markides and Mindel 1987), due both to the difficulties in isolating the effects of ethnicity from other variables (income, socio-economic status, gender) and to the difficulties of obtaining valid measures for subjective variables such as quality of life and health.

(Blakemore and Boneham 1994; Sayad 1999), overall there has been a lack of literature on migrant workers ageing in Europe, with some notable exceptions (Ahmadi and Tornstam 1996; Attias-Donfut *et al.* 2006; Bolzman *et al.* 2006; Ganga 2006; Gardner 2002; Rodriguez and Egea 2006; Samaoli 1999, 2007; Torres 2006). Typically, as noted in the Introduction, when immigration and age are linked it is usually in terms of young migrants who are seen as the solution to the problems associated with ageing in Western nations, such as demographic imbalances and nursing workforce shortages (Malki 1999).

The relative neglect of older labour migrants in European migration studies is partly explained by the fact that in some countries the post-WW2 labour migrants arrived in the 1960s and 1970s as young men and women, and thus have only attained retirement age in the last decade or so. But in other European countries – especially those with a longer history of colonialism – the lack of academic interest in ageing labour migrants belies the maturity of the phenomenon. As was discussed in the Introduction, in the immediate aftermath of WW2 French and British governments in particular were able to draw upon a 'colonial reserve' of labour in their still-numerous colonies and protectorates (Boutaleb 2000; MacMaster 1993). The ageing of this pioneer post-WW2 generation began to be noticed from the mid-1980s (Blakemore and Boneham 1994; Noiriel 1992; Norman 1985; Samaoli 1991; Sayad 1986).

Critically, a significant gap in the literature is found at the intersection of the two analytical themes highlighted above, respectively the causes and consequences of late-in-life emigration, and the ageing of labour migrants who emigrated during working life and are now retiring in host countries. This gap is the late-in-life return migration of long-term resident labour immigrants. This phenomenon has been under-researched (Warnes and Williams 2006; Warnes 2009), if not dismissed outright for concerning "insignificant demographic cohorts" (Conway and Potter 2009: 224). In an overview of the field, Warnes (2009) references only four publications where international retirement return migration is a major focus (Byron and Condon 1996; Klinthäll 2006; Malcolm 1996; Rodríguez and Egea 2006). To this meagre list of notable works should be added Francesco Cerase's analysis of "returns of retirement" and Katy Gardner's study of Bengali elders in London

(Cerase 1974; Gardner 2002). As discussed in the Introduction, this lack of literature can be traced to the legacy of a powerful paradigm in European migration studies: the myth of return.

While retirement return has not received much scholarly attention, circular migration at retirement has garnered new interest in recent years. The *va-et-vient* at retirement is far from being a unique characteristic of the hostel residents. Indeed, it appears to be of growing prominence in the late-in-life migration literature. Similar comings-and-goings are observed among older Indian migrants in the UK (Burholt 2004). Warnes alludes to "transnational patterns of residence" by which "older people can exploit, maintain and continue to develop residential opportunities, social networks and welfare entitlements in more than one country," facilitated by low costs of travel and communications (Warnes 2009: 259-360). Likewise, Rodriguez and Egea comment that among their sample, circulatory migration "appears to be of increasing importance" (2006: 1390).

Resources influencing post-retirement mobility

The empirical work on post-retirement mobility reviewed below is useful for this study insofar as it elucidates the factors which have a bearing on retirement return decisions. Rather than undertake a descriptive review of this empirical literature by listing different case studies, I will discuss this literature thematically by drawing on the comprehensive typology of factors influencing retirement migration drawn up by Claudio Bolzman and colleagues (2006). They argue that several types of resource influence migration and mobility decisions at retirement: these resources are social, socioeconomic, health, legal, and cultural (Bolzman *et al.* 2006: 1360). I will take each of these resource types in turn.

By social resources, Bolzman and colleagues focus on the "size and importance of family and social network" (Bolzman *et al.* 2006: 1360). In this they follow numerous scholars cited in the Introduction by giving priority to the family localisation variable. Deianira Ganga, in a study of older Italian migrants in the UK, prioritises "affective links, children's well-being [and] potential need of care" (Ganga 2006: 1409). A broader perspective is afforded by looking at "relational migration,"

involving a wider set of social ties embodied in social networks (Longino 1992: 25-26). Caribbean people living in Britain can find that their participation in associations "ranging from carnival committees and island development associations to working men's clubs and church groups" outweighs their more tenuous networks back home (Byron and Condon 1996: 100). Charles Longino's analogy of 'moorings' is a most apposite encapsulation of what is meant by social resources:

> Like boats to a mooring, persons are tied to their environment by investments in their property, by the many community contexts in which they find meaning, by friends and family members whose proximity they value, by the experiences of the past, and by the lifestyles that weave these strands together into a pattern of satisfying activity (Longino 1992: 23).

For those intent on definitive return, one aspect which is frequently overlooked is the issue of adjustment to and acceptance by the 'home' community (Longino 1992). Critical here is the issue of honour. For some, return at retirement is honourable and esteem-building: "the world-wise experience and greater retirement income give the retiree a higher status than relatives who never left" (Longino 1992: 26). Yet as Byron and Condon note in the case of retired Nevis Islanders in the UK, return is difficult because it is "important to demonstrate material evidence of 'bettering oneself' (...) Return may (...) be prevented by the fear of appearing inadequate. After so many years away, migrants are expected to be wealthy" (Byron and Condon 1996: 99-100). 'Material evidence' might include a large and modern house, or a new car. This shows the overlap between social and socio-economic resources.

Personal and household wealth is an issue for most older people, given that the passage to retirement usually implies a large reduction in income. All studies reviewed here note the importance of socio-economic resources in the retirement migration decision. Schaeffer stresses that definitive return from France is impossible for older Moroccans unless they have the financial resources (2001). Lending credence to the neo-classical model outlined in the Introduction, income upon return (primarily in the form of the pension) and costs of living are viewed as critical variables when considering a return move. For many labour migrants, remittances have been the *raison d'être* for their emigration. Upon retirement, the pension itself

can be considered as a type of remittance, since in many cases pensions earned abroad are 'exportable' to home countries. In the case of French Antilleans and British West Indians returning to the Caribbean, Byron and Condon (1996) note that most of their sample only had the financial means to return *following* retirement, thanks to the income security inherent in their pensions. Foremost among the costs of relocating are the actual transport costs. A *sine qua non* of retirement migration is possessing sufficient means to make the proposed move. King *et al.* (2000: 31) note how "improved accessibility by both surface and air transport, measured in cost and time" has broadened the horizon for international amenity-seeking retirement migrants. Similarly for the Caribbean retired and pre-retirement return migrants studied by Byron and Condon, "[a]dvantage has been taken of decreasing fares" (1996: 101).

Bolzman and colleagues likewise identify health resources ("degree of autonomy") as another factor influencing retirement return. As Longino comments, the relationship between health and migration "cut[s] two ways" (Longino 1992: 27; also Findley 1988). On the one hand, good health can be a pre-condition for mobility: to move while one is still able-bodied. On the other hand, the onset of more serious health problems can prompt "changes in residential location or in living arrangements, sometimes in both" (Rogers 1992: 7; also Spear Jr. 1992), in order to be nearer to family members who can provide informal care. Katy Gardner observed that Bengali elders in London valued both the informal care provided by family and the formal services available under the National Health Service. Similarly, in a study of Chagossian onward migrants from Mauritius to the UK, Laura Jeffery finds that while many working-age Chagossians intend to return from the UK to Mauritius upon retirement, the small number of elderly Chagossians who have undertaken a late-in-life migration to the UK give priority to the healthcare they now receive in Britain (Jeffery 2010). Russell King and colleagues devote a whole chapter to healthcare in their study of retirement migration to Mediterranean countries. Hospitals in Spain were perceived as being of better quality than Britain, as were medical personnel. One third of their respondents "reported that the pace of life was healthier or more appropriate than in Britain, while 11 percent explicitly wrote that they were or felt healthier" (King *et al.* 2000: 197).

Access to healthcare is often conditional on legal resources, which Bolzman and colleagues define as one's legal status and one's "capacity to uphold" the rights one has acquired (Bolzman *et al.* 2006: 1360). Warnes notes the infrequent but alarming instances of British retirees in Mediterranean destinations who for one reason or another get into difficulties of health, neglect, or dependency, and seek help from consular staff in order to be repatriated to the UK. Upon return, such individuals may find themselves in a situation whereby they are only eligible for emergency care since they have not been 'habitually resident' in the UK.[44] Likewise, social care services provided by local authorities may be denied if there is 'no local connection' (Warnes 2009). One important difference between nationals of EU member-states and third-country nationals is the emergence in practical terms of a 'social Europe', enabling cross-border portability of social and health benefits for the former, but less so for the latter (Boudahrain 2000; Obermaier 2009). Third-country nationals' eligibility for benefits in kind such as free or subsidised healthcare is often conditional on minimum residence conditions being observed.

The issue of legal entitlement is not confined to benefits-in-kind like healthcare, but extends also to cash benefits. As Byron and Condon note with regard to the timing of returns from Britain among Nevis Islanders, retirement is a privileged juncture since the pension can provide a secure income. However, the absence of a bilateral social security agreement between the UK and Saint Kitts & Nevis means that pensions, while transferable, are not indexed. In consequence payments do not increase in line with inflation. This is a "major source of grievance for returnees (...) a deterrent for some migrants who desire to return after retiring" (Byron and Condon 1996: 99). Warnes (2009) notes that this is not confined to small Caribbean archipelagos, but includes most of the major Commonwealth countries – Australia, Canada, India, New Zealand, Pakistan, and South Africa. Lobbying organisations have been formed by non-resident pensioners to seek redress in the UK legal system.

The final resource-type identified by Bolzman and colleagues is 'cultural resources', which they define as the various types of knowledge acquired while abroad (e.g., language skills). They discuss the degree of acculturation to the host

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[44] For a discussion of what is meant by 'habitual residence' see Adler 1997.

country context as one element of cultural resources. At one end of the spectrum, one finds individuals almost exclusively oriented to the home country. Intent on return if at all feasible, such individuals are less open to cosmopolitan attitudes, and more rooted to places of origin. One indicator of such attachment is the viewing of television programmes only in the home language or broadcast via satellite TV providers from the home country. On the other hand, Lee Cuba's concept of the cosmopolitan 'mobile self' (Cuba 1989) would apply to those older Iranians in Sweden documented by Ahmadi and Tornstam (1996). As members of a liberal Iranian middle-class who fled the authoritarian regime in revolutionary Iran, they possess values similar to those of the Swedish middle class, although they tend not to have many social ties with native Swedes. Such individuals cannot envisage a definitive return. Instead they travel back-and-forth from time to time.

One facet of cultural resources is the ability to exploit new information and communication technologies (ICTs), which can facilitate transnational social ties with friends and family back home. While generally such communicative tools are depicted as the preserve of younger, technologically-savvy generations, there is some evidence that ICTs are also "manifestly changing older people's lives, not least those of relatively low income and from ethnic and cultural minorities" (Warnes 2009: 359-60).

1.3 Theories of Migration and Return

The empirical work on international retirement migration reviewed above has been very useful insofar as it elucidates and contextualises the factors – social, economic, medical, legal, and cultural – which have a bearing on retirement return decisions. However, this review showed that there were few attempts to link the empirical manifestations of retirement migration with broader theoretical frameworks in migration studies. Only the family localisation thesis and the neo-classical model in economics were (implicitly) referenced. The inadequacy of these two explanatory approaches was demonstrated in the Introduction. To rectify this lack of engagement with theory, I now propose turning to alternative theories of return migration. Four explanatory frameworks will be introduced: the new economics of labour migration

(NELM); structuralism; transnationalism; and social systems. These four theories have been selected since they hold the potential to illuminate some of the factors stressed both in section 1.2 and in Hamid and Issa's biographical sketches.

Remittances was one such factor: viewing migration as a strategy to insure against risks to household income, NELM is far better able to explain the significance of remittances than the neo-classical approach with its assumption of utility-maximising individuals. A second factor is the ability to re-integrate and gain acceptance by the home community after a long absence: the structuralist literature is useful here. Improved (and cheaper) communications and transport is a further factor of note: a burgeoning literature on 'transnational' migration has emerged in the last fifteen years grounded largely in these explanatory variables. Finally, the importance later in life of healthcare and welfare benefits was underlined above: social systems theory provides an innovative framework for theorising such factors.

For each of these four theoretical models, the relevant explanatory variables are identified below. This leads to a discussion of applicability regarding return at retirement, before concluding with an assessment of overall strengths and weaknesses.

The New Economics of Labour Migration (NELM)

In the Introduction, the neo-classical economic approach to return migration was held up as the principle alternative to theories prioritising family localisation and group ties. The neo-classical approach is often commended for its theoretical neatness and predictive potential regarding who migrates and under what circumstances. Yet often these predictions do not match the empirical evidence, most notably when people's migration behaviour does not tally with favourable wage differentials or purchasing power considerations. A further criticism is that in the neo-classical approach, to migrate is only ever an individual decision, a perspective which isolates migrants from their social context. Neo-classical accounts also find it difficult to account for the widespread practice of remittance sending. These latter two points can be more fruitfully unpacked using what has become known as the 'new economics' of labour migration.

In contrast to the neo-classical focus on the utility-maximising individual, the new economics approach places remittances and the "utility-maximizing family" (Stark 1991: 208) at the centre of analysis. Oded Stark argues that migration must be viewed as a strategy for insuring against risk to household income, with the family, rather than the individual, as the decision-making unit. Stark's analysis is built on three premises which challenged the previously dominant neo-classical 'expected income' approach: namely that "there is more to labor migration" than (i) individual utility-maximising behaviour, or (ii) wage differentials, and furthermore (iii) migration is a response to imperfectly functioning credit and insurance markets (Stark 1991: 3-4). Summarising the new economics of labour migration, Stark writes:

> The underlying idea is that for the household as a whole it may be a … superior strategy to have members migrate elsewhere, either as a means of risk sharing or as an investment in access to higher earnings streams. Remittances may then be seen as a device for redistributing gains, with relative shares determined in an implicit arrangement struck between the migrant and the remaining family. The migrant adheres to the contractual arrangement so long as it in his or her interest to do so. This interest may be either altruistic or more self-seeking, such as concern for inheritance or the right to return home ultimately in dignity (Stark 1991: 236-7).

Regarding this last point on returning home, the NELM principle of household risk-sharing means that the returning migrant can count on reciprocal support from the household in the place of origin at the end of working life when income drops. The return – long foreseen – of the geographically-single migrant to his family is thus a logical final step of the migration project. Unlike in certain versions of neo-classical theory, where return is interpreted as the *failure* of the migration project (see Cassarino 2004 for discussion), in NELM return is logical final step of a *successful* migration project.[45] "Rather than being a mistake, return migration represents the final stage of a pre-established plan" (Constant and Massey 2002: 11). Adopting the NELM approach, Amelie Constant and Douglas Massey (2002) show that remitting

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[45] While the question of whether return is the product of a successful or failed migration has been a key debate among scholars in the past (Cerase 1974; Gmelch 1980), I do not find this dichotomy particularly useful, since it reduces the issue to a blunt economic calculation, ignoring social and political factors. As King (1986) points out, what counts as success or failure is highly context-dependent.

regularly and having a spouse in the home country is strongly correlated to retirement return. Likewise, for Russell King, remittances are "an expression of the commitment to the home area and an eventual desire to return" (King 1986: 23).

In summary, NELM significantly advances our understanding of the social context in which migration takes place, most notably in the realm of remittances as household insurance. The individualistic utility-maximising neo-classical approach tends to see remittances as irrational, and can only explain this phenomenon through recourse to the thorny concept of altruism. However, two criticisms have been levelled at NELM: firstly, that motivations to migrate and return are purely economic, with returnees perceived purely in terms of monetary value back home – as "foreign-income bearers" or "financial intermediaries" (Cassarino 2004: 257). Secondly, the critique can be made that the new economics literature limits the migrants' social context to the immediate household, ignoring broader social structures in the home community.

Structuralism

In the structuralist perspective on return migration, the decision to return is not solely a utility-maximising calculation, be it at the individual or family levels. One must additionally take into account social, institutional, and contextual factors in the place to which migrants are planning to return. These factors can be summarised as "vested interests and traditional ways of thinking" (Cerase 1974: 258), and include: political structures (coalitions of local politicians); economic structures (dominant sectors and modes of production, as well as the interests of the owners of the means of production); and finally the normative values structuring social relations in a given context. The latter theme has been theorised in recent years by various scholars taking what has been labelled the 'cultural embeddedness' approach (for a discussion, see Boswell and Ciobanu 2009). Foremost among them are William Kandel and Douglas Massey (2002), who speak of a 'culture of migration' when cross-border mobility becomes so entrenched in a community's collective consciousness that it becomes normative. Among countless other phenomena

associated with migration, such a culture is likely to generate norms concerning the decision to return.

Structuralism is a perspective emerging from studies in sociology and anthropology, with Francesco Cerase's research on the return of Italians from the USA being a pioneering work here. Cerase (1974) posited four motivations or types of return: returns of failure; returns of conservatism; returns of innovation; and returns of retirement. Regarding the latter, the 'detachment' of retired emigrants stems from the fact that the individuals in this category tend not to have raised a family in the host society and therefore have "no one to whom they can bequeath the results of their efforts and aspirations. Advancing age and other dissatisfactions in the new society may cause real suffering, which can be relieved only by a return home" (Cerase 1974: 251). In Cerase's reading, those in the retirement return category, since they reinforce rather than challenge local political and economic structures, find it relatively easy to re-adapt to life in the community of origin. Returnees nevertheless may have to re-adapt their behaviour to the normative expectations of the family and the home society. In Dumon's words, "the returnee can be defined as the person who, in order to be reaccepted, has to readapt to the changed cultural and behavioural patterns of his community of origin and this is resocialisation" (Dumon 1986:122).

While the structural perspective is invaluable in that it sheds light on the process of re-integration in areas of origin which is too often ignored by researchers in host countries, two critiques can be levelled at the structuralist literature. First of all, these accounts can be critiqued for arguing that the process of return is mediated by structural conditions *only* in the home community, ignoring structural conditions in host countries. Secondly, the principal reason for the difficulties encountered following return in structuralist accounts is that homeland contextual and structural factors can only be fully evaluated once returned migrants have re-installed themselves. They are thus "ill-prepared" for their return, as they have based their decision on "incomplete information" (Gmelch 1980:143). The implication is that migrants do not have reliable information from home because they find it difficult to maintain contact with their places of origin. This latter point is challenged most directly by those working from a transnationalist perspective.

Transnationalism

The term 'transnationalism' as it refers to migration describes ties that migrants in host states maintain with their homelands. Such ties can be material or symbolic, and can take economic, political or socio-cultural forms. The transnationalism literature sets out a range of necessary empirical conditions for the emergence and importantly the retention over time of cross-border ties. These conditions include ease of mobility and ease of communications, as well as the social and political contexts of sending and receiving countries (Faist 2004; Itzigsohn 2000; Kivisto 2001; Portes *et al.* 1999). While transnationalism is generally deployed to describe migrants' ties with people and places back home rather than migratory movement *per se*, clearly such movement is a necessary pre-condition for these ties:

> It is the ability to return and reemigrate – to circulate, in other words –
> that underpins transnationalism (Black and King 2004: 80).

Thus, the legally sanctioned ability to circulate becomes a valuable and coveted resource for transnational actors. Regular participation in transnational activities such as home visits, remittance sending, and keeping abreast of economic and political developments in the place of origin means that emigrants are better prepared for return. The most obvious contribution of the transnational literature regarding return is that it is able to move beyond narrow formulations that restrict the decision to a straight choice between definitive settlement and definitive return. Rather, the transnational approach shows that return no longer needs to be viewed as the end of the migration project. Such an approach is much better able to comprehend the continual comings-and-goings of the hostel residents.

Transnationalism is not without its critics however (Sheffer 2006; Waldinger & Fitzgerald 2004). Of relevance to our question is the determinism the transnational account attributes to inherited membership in ethnic and kinship groups. As Cassarino (2004: 265) notes: "[T]he transnational approach to return migration seems to encapsulate [migrants'] initiatives and projects at home in a fundamental set

of mutual obligations, opportunities and expectations stemming from common ethnicity (i.e., the diaspora) and kinship (i.e., the family, the household)." Relying on mutual kin obligations in this way, the transnationalism literature cannot explain why some people are heavily invested in cross-border activities while other compatriots are not. In summary, the transnational approach has value in explaining *how* people maintain cross-border social ties (transport, communications technology), but it cannot fully explain *why* they do so.

Social Systems

By contrast, a recently emerging approach in migration and integration studies[46] employs a theory of society in which there is no longer a place for pre-ascribed membership in kinship and ethnic groups. Instead of society being constituted of 'big groups' of individuals, Niklas Luhmann proposed an alternative theory whereby society is constituted by individuals' communication in different social realms such as the economy, law, politics, religion, the family, education, and healthcare (Luhmann 1995).

In his theory of social systems, Luhmann locates a fundamental break between pre-modern and modern societies beginning in Europe during the course of the 18th century. Up until this time, society had been structured on the basis of group membership – either in 'segmented' clans or tribes, or in hierarchically 'stratified' classes or ranks (Luhmann 1977). With the fundamentally egalitarian restructuring of society unleashed by the French Revolution, membership in groups on the basis of ascribed or inherited characteristics became less and less important. Arguably, even membership in the nation-state has in recent decades lost some of those qualities which led Rogers Brubaker to describe citizenship as the "master status" (Brubaker 1994; Soysal 1994). The organisations of society – with the exception of the national welfare state in the political system – are increasingly unconcerned by demarcations of territory and national belonging (Bommes and Geddes 2000; Halfmann 2000,

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[46] See for example Amiraux 2000; Bommes 2000, 2005; Boswell and Ciobanu 2009; Halfmann 2000, 2005.

2005). We see this for example in the economy, in science and technology, the arts, and law.

The foregoing may seem quite abstract, but the consequences are clear when one revisits the earlier discussion about integration and 'implantation' in the reference groups of family, class, and nation. If society is no longer structured along these lines, to theorise immigrant integration in this way is problematic (Bommes 2005). Rather than integrating into such groups, a social systems response to the question "integration to what?" replies that immigrants integrate into social systems, or rather the organisations of the various relevant systems.

In principle, access to these communicative systems is open to every social agent, because the differentiation of society into functions (such as politics and law) rather than social strata (such as ranks or castes) no longer permits discrimination on the basis of inherited or ascribed characteristics. In practice, inclusion in function systems cannot be assumed but instead is processed through organisations such as courts, hospitals, firms, schools, and so on, which can only discriminate on the basis of whether function-specific 'rules of access' are satisfied or not (Luhmann 1990: 35). The effect of such rules is to ask, for example, whether a candidate for a job has a certain qualification, whether one is ill or not, or whether one's legal status is recognised under such and such a jurisdiction. Since the probability of failure to achieve inclusion in a given system is quite high (e.g., unemployment), the organisations of the welfare state in the political system have evolved in the last century or so to mediate the exclusionary tendencies of modern society and equip citizens with the characteristics required to fulfil social participation, via universal social programmes in education, health, labour markets, and so on.

This is not to say that the effects of welfare state organisations are not discriminatory in their outcomes. Indeed, these outcomes may *appear* discriminatory precisely on the basis of inherited attributes such as race, religion, or other forms of cultural prejudice, as the position of immigrants amongst the most disadvantaged fractions in many European countries would indicate (in terms of income, educational attainment, access to housing and so forth). However, Michael Bommes argues convincingly that these outcomes are not grounded in nativist cultural preferences but instead are primarily a consequence of migrants' unexpected

biographies. Welfare programmes "accompany individuals from early childhood onwards, through to pension age and death" (Bommes 2008: 144). Given that most people tend not to emigrate until adulthood and thereby miss out on the biographical structuring institutionalised by the welfare state in the formative years (healthcare, education, contributions to social security and pension funds), they face higher "risk of exclusion [e.g., from the labour market] and reduced access to welfare provision" (Bommes 2008: 148).

Function systems are "indifferent" (Luhmann 1990: 30) to all attributes other than whatever the relevant expectations happen to be. In such a conception of society, it is one's "biographically accumulated" markers of inclusion which are important (Bommes 2000: 91), not inherited attributes. Hence the new significance in this day and age for proofs of identity and life history such as passports, identity cards, CVs, medical records, national insurance numbers, and social security files.

For migrants at retirement, Luhmann's theory of functional differentiation is important insofar as an individual's requirements for achieving social inclusion have a bearing on the decision to settle or return at retirement. In this, a lifecourse perspective is imperative since the relevant systems change during the lifecourse. The critical juncture of retirement means that migration is no longer primarily about employment (i.e., inclusion in economic organisations). What becomes much more important at this stage in the life course is inclusion in the organisations of the healthcare and welfare systems, in order to access goods such as pensioners' allowances and medical treatment. These points will be expanded in Chapters Three and Four respectively.

Conclusion

While noting the paradoxical presence of elderly, economically inactive, 'family men' in accommodation which was conceived 50 years ago as a temporary housing solution for a young, single and temporary labour force, the hostel literature has not systematically interrogated this paradox. Instead, most studies have been concerned primarily with the alarming social welfare situation in which these older geographically-single men find themselves, their long-term marginalisation in

society, and – most rigorously – the origins and evolutions of the migrant worker hostel policy and its implementation at the micro-level (Bernardot 1997, 2008; Hmed 2006a).

The same lack of engagement with theories of migration and settlement applied to the literature on other cases of international retirement migration reviewed in section 1.2. Given this avoidance of theory in the literature, section 1.3 attempted to fill this gap. Explanatory models from across the social sciences, in economics, anthropology and sociology, were presented and their applicability with regard to return migration at retirement was discussed.

Prima facie, some theories appear to have more potential to explain the hostel puzzle than others. Neo-classical economic theories do not seem to apply, since the hostel residents do not consume their pension back home, where they could profit from advantageous purchasing power differentials. Instead, the life-long importance of remittances which is stressed in many accounts would suggest that their decision is embedded in broader social structures such as the nuclear family and extended kinship networks. Barriers to re-integration and re-acceptance by those left behind in places of origin also seem salient, as does transnational transport and communications infrastructure, access to health and welfare resources, and the legal conditions of eligibility on which these services are accorded. These observations suggest that more emphasis be given to the four theories presented in section 1.3, respectively NELM, structuralism, transnationalism, and social systems theory.

Of course, having arrived at this insight, such a decision will necessarily have a bearing on the methodology employed to tackle the question, closing certain doors but opening others. This will be the focus of the next chapter.

2. Methods at the Margins

> A young French guy passes an old immigrant on the street, and wonders what the hell he's still doing here. But he doesn't know that it was the old immigrant who built the street, who built that very pavement. It's very important that people know what we immigrant workers did.
>
> (Habib, 65, Oran, Algeria)

In the Introduction and Chapter One, I discussed a range of theoretical approaches which can be deployed to explain return migration at retirement. In the Introduction, the premise of the central research question was unveiled by demonstrating that neo-classical economic models, as well as theories based on family location, are simply not up to the task. While the myth of return literature accounts for non-return on the basis of family localisation, this explanation cannot apply in the case of migrant worker hostel residents, since their families remain behind, hundreds if not thousands of kilometres away, in places of origin. Like family motivations, economics has likewise long been prominent in accounts of migration decision-making. Insofar as neo-classical theory is concerned, the purchasing power of the pension does not seem to motivate retired hostel residents to return. The model's lack of fit here calls into question assumptions about the positivist view of human agency based on methodological individualism, universal rationality and utility maximisation which neo-classical economists proclaim (for a discussion see Boswell and Mueser 2008).

2.1 Preliminary Choices: what research design and why?

Taken as a whole, the preceding review of theories indicates a direction of travel epistemologically and methodologically: certain doors have been closed, while others have been opened. Methodologies associated with the neo-positivist tradition in neo-classical economics – notably closed-response survey research – can be discounted. If the obvious, quantifiable but over-simplified variables of the neo-positivist epistemological stance do not have purchase on the research question, then it follows that more qualitative methods are in order.

A conventional qualitative response would be to deploy the standard methodological practice of semi-structured interviews. Given the theoretically-driven nature of the research problem, interview questions would be carefully structured to produce information pertinent to the explanatory variables of the various theories. Such variables might include: monthly household expenditure, regularity of remittance-sending and amount of money remitted (NELM); the political-economic factors and cultural norms structuring social relations in the home community, and the degree to which potential returnees seek to change these structures (structuralism); the ease and costs of cross-border transportation and communication, and policies aiming to encourage or impede maintenance of ties with homelands (transnationalism); and the relative importance of different social subsystems for respondents – welfare, healthcare, economy, politics, education and so on – as well as conditions of eligibility for social inclusion in different subsystem organisations (social systems).

Yet instead of pursuing a conventional research design based on semi-structured interviewing, I elected to take a different approach, incorporating biographical research methods and ethnography. This decision to adopt a data collection strategy normally associated with the rich descriptive work of anthropologists, grounded theorists and symbolic interactionists may seem rather unusual, given that the research question demanded quite precise and theoretically-driven information pertinent to the various explanatory variables above. The following sub-section sets out to justify this choice.

Biographical Research and Ethnography

I should clarify first of all that the choice of research design was in part taken willingly and in part obliged. The biography component of the research design was an active choice on my part, whereas the ethnography component was initially forced upon me.

Often, biographical research – writing about people's lives – is justified on the normative grounds that such an approach gives voice to people's experiences, especially those – such as the hostel residents – who have been kept "hidden from

history", or "spoken for" by others (Wengraf 2000: 140). While for me this is a clear benefit of the approach, as a methodological justification it is open to critique on the grounds of partiality. I would argue that there are also strong, and less easily refutable, theoretical and empirical grounds for deploying a life story approach.

Life story research has become a favoured methodological approach for scholars in several theories identified in section 1.3. In the social systems paradigm, societal inclusion is strongly predicated upon the career or biography which the individual can offer as proof of meeting the expectations of various organisations in society (Luhmann 1990). In such a conception of society, it is one's "biographically accumulated" markers of inclusion which are important: in other words, an observable record of the individual's past development over time (Bommes 2000: 91). There are also arguments from structuralism and transnationalism for adopting such a method. Life story interviews, because of their depth, and the repeated contacts required to generate them, allow the researcher to get closer to the insider meanings, complexity and micro-processes of late-in-life migration decisions, such as the 'culture of migration' given priority by structuralists, or some of the day-to-day details of transnational family life.

As regards empirically-grounded justifications, it is in migration studies that biographical methods were first pioneered and gained prominence (Fischer-Rosenthal 2000: 119), in particular via the early contribution of Thomas and Znaniecki in *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* (1958). As Steven Castles comments, "migration is not a single event (i.e., the crossing of a border) but a life-long process which affects all aspects of a migrant's existence, as well as the lives of non-migrants and communities in both sending and receiving countries" (Castles 2000: 15-16, in King 2002: 91-92).

From the outset of this thesis, retirement has been described as a critical juncture or rupture (Murard 2002). Likewise, migration itself entails significant ruptures and discontinuities. Biographical methods enable researchers to unpick the ruptures which any migration entails (Apitzsch and Inowlocki 2000; Breckner 2002; Schutz 1971) and which survey-based approaches tend to occlude. Conducting biographical interviews with migrants at retirement age, therefore, is doubly apposite. With explicit reference to late-in-life return migration, Warnes and

Williams note the advantages which a lifecourse focus can give to our understanding "not only (...) one or more linked migration events, but also the antecedents and long-term consequences in their temporal, geographical and socio-political contexts" (Warnes and Williams 2006: 1273). In his work about displaced people in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Stef Jansen shows how peoples' perspectives on return differ according to the stage reached in the lifecourse (Jansen 2007, 2011).

Critically, however, my early attempts during piloting to solicit longer life story interviews failed. Piloting took place over three months in three hostels in Paris' northern *banlieues* (suburbs). In these three hostels I accompanied Abdou, an outreach officer for a well-known migrants rights association.[47] Each week Abdou gives assistance on administrative, legal and welfare matters to hostel residents, spending one afternoon per week in each of his three allotted hostels. The invitation to accompany Abdou was a promising *entrée* into hostel life since I might benefit, by association, from the respect and trust which the residents had for Abdou. At this early stage in the research, I focused primarily on (i) informal discussions with residents, and (ii) piloting a technique known as the 'life grid' method.[48] This latter technique was a means to place the men's work, family, health and migratory trajectories in a chronological context, as well as a means to build rapport with individuals, since it requires an element of team-working to reconstruct respondents' experiences.

My assumption was that doing life grids would lead naturally enough to longer biographical interviews with respondents, but my invitations to "talk about their life in migration" were always met with polite decline. In my fieldnotes I recorded that respondents "felt this [request] was too vast, not specific enough. They're not going to want to be that open so early on" (Fieldnotes 17 May 2009). In time, I was able to surmise that the potentially sensitive nature of the return decision was one brake on potential participants' openness to the project, as was suspicion of

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[47] The association for which Abdou worked was one of the first organisations I contacted at the outset of the project. When I explained my project to him, he suggested that I accompany him during his outreach work.

[48] Essentially, one starts with a grid, with one chronological axis, and the other axis listing the various relevant life domains – family, work, leisure, housing, health, and so on. Where there is uncertainty over a sequence of events in one domain, cross-referencing with an event in another domain, for example the birth of a son or daughter, can aid memory for distant events. It is also a flexible tool, allowing respondents to switch to different domains, start, stop or continue at different places, and cross-reference events in different domains (Parry *et al.* 1999).

the state and the Adoma company, and by extension suspicion of research projects sanctioned by the company, such as my own.

Return decision-making at retirement may not appear on first view to be a particularly sensitive topic, but this is to forget that the one constant in the hostel residents' lives has been the promise to wives and children to return 'one day'. By remaining in France beyond retirement they bear the stigma of continued absence. Choukri Hmed encountered the same sensitivities in his doctoral research: "To ask questions about return is to violently remind the immigrant of these commonsense representations with which he is regularly confronted and which various governments have contributed to giving shape during the course of the 1970s" (Hmed 2006a: 561). With this last line, Hmed reminds us that this same expectation of the men's return was held by both home and host governments.[49]

It is important to acknowledge that reticence to discuss return was not confined to those hostel residents who had 'failed' and 'broken' their promise to return. In Dembancané, the village where I conducted fieldwork in eastern Senegal, many of my respondents had succeeded normatively and objectively in their migration projects. They had been able to return with their heads held high (Salmi 2004) and spent much of the year in the village. When they travelled to France, it was usually in order to take advantage of their entitlement to superior French healthcare. Nonetheless, despite maximising the benefits of migration in this way, I was surprised to find the same reticence to discuss return in Dembancané as I found in the hostels in France. A younger Dembancané man, Lassana, attributed this reticence to the fact that the elders are simply not used to telling their life stories to anyone who asks. He conceded that he also would have difficulty extracting such information from the village elders, even from his own relatives: it would not be respectful. As he put it, "To be told about this stuff is good, but to ask or to enquire, that might seem rude."

In other instances, reticence to discuss return was attributed to a broader suspicion of intellectual activity in general. As noted, most hostel residents have no

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[49] Among home governments, this is seen for example in restrictive laws on dual citizenship (Brand 2006). Among host governments, the expectation of return is manifest in the many and varied financial incentives aimed at encouraging migrant workers to quit European destination countries (International Organization for Migration 2004; Petek-Salom 2002).

more than a primary education. Indeed, taking the case of Dembancané, most of my respondents had not attended the local school since it was built in 1954, by which time they were in their early teens and therefore too old to start school. Thus, when I told my respondents that I was a student or a researcher (*chercheur*), it did not necessarily mean very much to them. Taking the literal meaning of the term, they would ask me, "*Mais qu'est-ce que tu* cherches *ici?*" [But what are you *looking for* here?] In some cases, such complete unfamiliarity with the idea of academia or research had a significant bearing on the degree to which I was able to secure informed consent, as will be discussed below.

Suspicion could come in other forms. On several occasions residents displayed a great deal of suspicion about my motives, alleging that I was a spy sent by one of the social security agencies to inform on them. This suspicion is understandable given the climate of distrust which reigned in certain establishments and the practices adopted by certain agencies to crack down on benefit fraud (for manifestations of this mutual distrust see Chapter Three). A number of respondents voiced concern about the confidentiality of their testimony, despite my best efforts to assuage these doubts. The following exchange with one respondent – Mehdi – is indicative of such suspicions, as my field notes record:

> I asked if it would be OK to record the interview. Mehdi said some very interesting things about this: to do a recording was "*trop grave*" (too serious). If we made a recording, then the government would listen to it and they would try to get him in front of a judge or deport him for something he had said. I said that he could remain anonymous if he wished, but he said no, the government can recognise you just by your voice. He then started talking about how he is a delegate for his *comité d'entreprise* [staff council is perhaps the nearest translation], he has been a delegate for ten years now, and every time there is a meeting the boss asks if he can record the conversation, for the minutes, but he always refuses. Again, because he is scared of the consequences: the boss could easily mess around with the recording, edit it or add words and then he would be up in front of a judge. He is very suspicious of the current government; he is sure that they are against immigrants, and are looking for any reason to deport people, including older people. "*Ils préfèrent que nous crevons là-bas*" ["they'd prefer that we snuff it back home"] – a point on which I agree actually. Again very interestingly, he said that if there was a "serious" government in charge – "if the Socialists were in charge" – then he would have no problem giving a recorded interview. I replied that I understood entirely, that it was up to

him to decide and that I respected his decision (Fieldnotes 30 May 2009).

The extent of the lack of openness to doing life story interviews which I initially encountered in the hostels during my piloting, and the grounds on which these refusals to participate were made (sensitivity of the 'return' question; collective suspicion of 'research' and motivations behind it, bordering on a siege mentality), suggested to me that the hostel accommodation itself had an institutionalising effect on the residents. Linked to the marginalising processes inherent in the hostels, research on migrant worker hostels in both France (Ginesy-Galano 1984; Hmed 2006b; Sayad 2006) and South Africa (Ramphele 1993) has made a strong case that such forms of accommodation represent a type of 'totalising institution' (Goffman 1968). I began to realise that in order to understand and break down the above barriers to participation, I would need to submit myself in some way to these institutional forces. Ethnographic participant observation is one privileged method to study the effects of such institutionalisation when working with 'marginal' groups. Indeed, some would argue that ethnography may be more or less obliged when "poverty, lack of infrastructure, illiteracy, or political violence impede [other forms of] research" (Schatz 2009: 304).

Initially then, there was an element of compulsion in my choice to engage in ethnography, following the futility of my efforts during the piloting stage. However, with time and – more importantly – practice (of ethnography), I came to agree entirely with Erving Goffman's approach to institutions, when he writes -

> It [...] is my belief that any group of persons develop a life of their own that becomes meaningful, reasonable, and normal once you get close to it, and that a good way to learn about any of these worlds is to submit oneself in the company of the members to the daily round of petty contingencies to which they are subject (Goffman 1968: 7).

For Edward Schatz, who has recently edited a book on political ethnography, ethnography has two constitutive components (Schatz 2009). The first element is participant observation as the ethnographic method: "immersion in a community, a cohort, a locale, or a cluster of related subject positions is taken to be the *sine qua non* of the approach" (Schatz 2009: 5). For fieldwork to qualify as ethnographic it

"must occur in the nearest possible locale" to the objects of the research (Schatz 2009: 9).

Participant observation became a useful (if not essential) precursory tool to generate the trust and rapport necessary before the more emotionally involved act of life story interviewing was undertaken. Participant observation soon reaped great rewards. It is doubtful whether I would have been able to generate the necessary trust and rapport to answer my narrower theoretically-driven questions well if I had employed a more conventional methodology such as semi-structured interviewing. By doing rich, descriptive ethnographic groundwork I was able to get to know the men well and, in time, to be party to the knowledge required to understand the puzzle/dilemma of the preference for *va-et-vient* over definitive return. In so doing I was also able to generate a much richer picture of their lives and, I hope, a more convincing account.

The concept of biography

The final question to be addressed in this 'what and why' section, before moving to the 'who, where and when' of the research is as follows: what do I mean by 'biography' and why is this conceptualisation used here? Again, the response is informed by my piloting. At the most basic level, a biography is any account of a life, literally 'life writing.' Drawing on the work of Tom Wengraf and Wolfram Fischer-Rosenthal, I will highlight here two principal distinctions.[50]

The first distinction is between the life story and the life history (Fischer-Rosenthal 2000; Wengraf 2000). This research design sought data in both domains. The former relates to the biographer's narration of their own life: 'the told story.' This is a self-reflective and interpretive endeavour, aiming to present a convincing account of "how we became who we are" so as to appear "both consistent *and* contingent. Even if I have gone through many contradictory phases in my life, the story I can tell presents me as myself" (Fischer-Rosenthal 2000: 115, emphasis in

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[50] While Wengraf and colleagues' sophisticated approach to biographical research is a source of inspiration, I should stress that I did not have sufficient expertise to undertake what they label the biographic-narrative interpretive method (BNIM).

original). The life story data is useful here insofar as it speaks to issues raised by the theoretical literature on structuralism and transnationalism.

One point where I depart from Wengraf and colleagues' approach concerns the differing priority we accord to the transcript of the life story. For Wengraf and colleagues, the transcript is the principle data source for analysis. For me, the life story is more than just an artefact which is (co-)produced in the interview situation, as my involvement with the hostel residents was not a one-off situation but consisted of repeated contacts, not just living side-by-side in the hostel, but also in some cases accompanying residents during their home trips. By following the men back home, I was – to paraphrase George Marcus (1998) – following the people *and* following the stories: this was an attempt to reach beyond a life story transcript, to get closer to the totality of their lived experiences.

Life history, on the other hand, is the 'lived life', incorporating harder, more verifiable facts. It does not need to be self-narrated but instead can be in the form of documents from various organisations and institutions. When scholars working in the social systems paradigm invoke the term 'biography', it is generally in terms of life history. In a social systems perspective, biography is the formal and observable account of an individual's past (his or her 'life course') oriented towards organisations in society. As noted in Chapter One, it is this biography which mediates an individual's societal inclusion and access to social goods, with organisations as gate-keepers to different functional systems (law, economy, politics, healthcare, education, and so on) (Bommes 2000).

Bodily manifestations of life history are perhaps the ultimate 'observable' record. For some men, bodies can be said to be biographically marked: their lives are writ large on their broken bodies. As such, their medical records and case notes are a type of life history. These biographical forms are discussed in Chapters Four and Seven. Similarly, administrative records such as passports, tax files and social security dossiers are all artefacts which contain a formal, observable record of an individual's life course, as I discuss in the following chapter. These latter points bring me to make a second important distinction: that between *individual* biographies and what I will call *organisational* biographies.

The pilot work revealed the importance of welfare services in structuring and timetabling the retired residents' mobility patterns. Time and again, I was struck by the fact that hostel residents felt compelled to justify their presence in France. This justification was offered without me having requested it, and often within a few minutes of meeting. Almost invariably, hostel residents would justify their presence in France on the basis of *santé* and *papiers* (i.e., healthcare needs and administrative requirements), revealing the influence of medical and bureaucratic organisations on the men's lives. This gave me pause for thought: was there a way of marrying hostel residents' biographies with the timetabling effects of these organisations? On closer inspection of the biographical methods literature, I discovered that indeed there was.

Positivist critiques of the biographic methods practised by the Chicago School claimed that the in-depth study of single, unrepresentative lives cannot tell us very much about larger populations and changes in broader social structures. Many practitioners of biographical methods reject this and argue that individual experiences and interactions with institutions and organisations can shed light on the evolution of these broader structures. Apitzsch and Inowlocki stress that "the focus of analysis is not the reconstruction of intentionality that is represented as an individual's life course, but the embeddedness of the biographical account in social macro-structures" (2000: 61). Daniel Bertaux (1981) takes a similar line in his edited volume *Biography and Society*, which signalled a re-emergence of biographical research at the international level. This work is notable for its stated aim to bridge the relationship between individual and macro-sociological change. Wolfram Fischer-Rosenthal takes these ideas one step further by arguing that the concept of biography works at both the individual level and the organisational level:

> [Biography] is a structure operating in both spheres. (...) Biography is the social structure provided by society, as it institutionalises and organises the many types of timetables one has to go through in a lifetime and it is the individual story *always in the process of being told*, which he or she can and must tell (Fischer-Rosenthal 2000: 118; emphasis in original).

The question remains however: how can these organisational biographies be accessed? Much of my data here was sourced from grey literature and archives

(company brochures, publications produced by migrant rights associations, reports, bureaucratic and legal documents). Semi-structured interviews with organisational representatives helped clarify the context to their interventions. By elucidating individual stories in their institutional context, I hoped to be better able to understand broader social changes and illuminate what King calls "the double embeddedness of migration; at the individual scale, migration must be embedded in a migrant's life course (and in some cases of the lifecourse of the family, even across generations); and at the macro scale, the study of migration must be embedded in the societies and social processes of the both the countries/places of origin and of destination" (King 2002: 101). Hence my decision to apply a biographic approach both to individuals and to organisations, in the sense that organisational biographies are the timeframes, deadlines and eligibility conditions which organisations impose on individuals in society.

2.2 Who, Where and When?

Having justified which research design to adopt and why, the following section likewise draws on the literature review in the Introduction and Chapter One to justify research design choices concerning the 'who', 'where' and 'when' of the research.

Who? Comparing North and West African hostel residents

As noted, the hostel population is constituted by two principal ethnic groups, North Africans (primarily Algerians, Moroccans and Tunisians) and West Africans (primarily Malians, Mauritanians and Senegalese): the former constitute 60 percent of the immigrants in the hostels, while the latter make up 30 percent (Gallou 2005). There are four grounds for comparing older North and West African residents, driven respectively by methodological best practice, the research question, and the theories chosen for evaluation.

The methodological basis for comparison is the elementary principle that a greater number of cases for comparison leads to greater confidence in one's findings.

Secondly, in terms of the research question, two distinct mobility patterns at retirement are identified: the norm for West African hostel residents is an extended period of residence in the home village, with only a short visit to France every year or two. For North African residents, on the other hand, the total duration spent back home is much more variable. Some residents will spend only a month or two annually in France; others will spend only a month or two back home. North Africans' trips tend to be shorter and more frequent, with many making two or three visits per year. An important clarification is required here: to reiterate, the research question does not ask what explains different mobility patterns among hostel residents, but instead seeks to explain the preference for back-and-forth migration over definitive return at retirement. In other words, North and West African residents' mobility patterns do not constitute dependent variables, since both groups have a preference for back-and-forth mobility. However, these different back-and-forth patterns are pertinent to the research question insofar as they may be symptomatic of different *motivations* for the back-and-forth preference.

There are also two theory-driven grounds for comparison. The first relates to transnationalism theory, which highlights communications and transportation as empirical conditions for cross-border ties. As regards communication, the question is whether costs and ease of communication between places of origin and France have a bearing on how well-informed hostel residents are about conditions in their homeland, and by extension how prepared they are for return. Turning to transportation, the distances between France and the respective regions of origin vary quite substantially (see Figure 10 in Chapter One), and journeys home likewise vary considerably in terms of mode of transport, comfort, journey time, and cost. Transport factors appear significant in generating particular patterns of back-and-forth migration at retirement mobility, most notably regarding duration and regularity of return trips. West Africans are obliged to travel by air, and the predominance of national carriers (and lack of low-cost alternatives) means that fares are considerable. Only the wealthiest West African pensioners are able to afford more than one (long) return trip per year. In contrast, North African elders can choose between competitively priced flights with low-cost carriers, or the equally economical (but time-consuming) coach-and-ferry combination. Frailer hostel residents may prefer

the plane over the coach, because the two-and-a-half day journey to Morocco can be physically gruelling. However, for other residents with lots of grandchildren who expect Grandpa to bring toys, new clothes, and other gifts, the coach is preferable because it is possible to transport much more luggage at no extra charge.

A further theoretical basis for comparison relates to the 'cultures of migration' literature discussed in section 1.3 under the Structuralism heading. The literature on the West African hostels highlights the importance above all of hometown associations (HTAs) linking the place of origin and expatriate villagers (Barou 2001; Daum 1998; Dia 2008; Kuagbenou 1999; Quiminal 1991; Timera 1996). HTA meetings usually take place in hostels. As we saw earlier, HTAs also featured in Issa's biographical sketch. Such institutions are far less common among North African respondents. It is sensible to suppose that the presence or absence of such organisations might have some bearing on the cultures of migration which hostel residents are implicated in and therefore on their proclivity to return. In sum, there are strong arguments from theory for comparing these two source regions. However, the pay-off which derives from the comparative element of the project only becomes fully pronounced in the latter half of the thesis: as noted in the Introduction, structuralism and transnationalism are discussed primarily in Chapters Five and Six, covering family life and re-integration processes respectively.

Where?

Hostels housing predominantly North African populations are found in great number throughout France, but West Africans have tended to congregate in hostels in the Paris region (Bernardot 2006). Given this concentration of West African hostels in the Paris region, it made practical and methodological sense to restrict the geographical sampling area to Paris and the 'inner ring' of *départements* (counties) which surrounds it, so that both North African and West African hostels could be compared.

However, there is a second geographical element to be incorporated, namely the men's geographic mobility at retirement and their affective attachments to places both in France and in countries of origin. It would self-evidently be an oversight to

ignore the multi-sited character of hostel residents' lives at retirement. Nonetheless, with one exception (Barou 2001), research has been focused within the hostel and within France, ignoring the home context which is so important to so many residents, and where some spend the larger portion of their time. Furthermore, in order to study return decision-making it is recommended by many scholars that one speaks both to people who have returned definitively and those who have not (Bovenkerk 1974; Warnes and Williams 2006), as well as to circulating migrants at different locations. The study by Rodriguez and Egea (2006), reviewed in Chapter One, incorporated an innovative multi-locational research design, interviewing retired returnees in places of origin as well as in host countries. I sought to emulate Rodriguez and Egea's efforts by conducting fieldwork in origin countries as well as in France.

Traditionally, ethnography has often been associated with the small, unique, closed, local site (for a discussion see Kubik 2009). This raises a fundamental question about the compatibility of ethnography with any topic where the object of study is not fixed but in flux. This has become more and more a concern for social scientists with the much-heralded emergence of an increasingly globalised, mobile world (Cresswell 2006; Held *et al.* 1999; Urry 2007). What then does a multi-sited ethnography look like? This has been a pre-occupation of a number of scholars who have been sensitive to the implications of globalisation for the practice of ethnography. George Marcus' contribution to this undertaking has been considerable. In *Ethnography through Thick and Thin* (1998), he enjoins several methodological strategies: 1) follow the people; 2) follow the material objects; 3) follow the metaphor; 4) follow the plot, story, or allegory; 5) follow the conflict; and 6) follow the life or biography (Marcus 1998: 89-99).

I have already given reasons for the decision to follow hostel residents' biographies. But to understand the complexity, context and meaning-making behind the *va-et-vient*, it soon became apparent to me that I should also follow Marcus' first guideline, to follow the people. I was fortunate and delighted to be invited by a few of my respondents to accompany them home during their trans-Mediterranean peregrinations. This allowed me to observe family life as a guest in the family home. But following the people did not imply a bi-locational study only. One insight of transnational literature is that times and spaces of transit between home and host

countries are privileged observation points: as Clifford advises, to study "travelling cultures" requires travelling researchers (Clifford 1992, cited in Guarnizo and Smith 1998: 26). These voyages brought home to me the gruelling nature of the va-et-vient, with my journeys to both southern Morocco and eastern Senegal lasting several days in each direction. The photos below describe the trips I made to Morocco and Senegal by various combinations of bus, boat and plane.

Figure 14. In Dakar, preparing for departure to Dembancané.

Figure 15. A bus weighed down (by family expectations).

Figure 16. Motorway, Andalusia, Spain: the Arabic script at the top says 'rest stop'.

Figure 17. The Paris-Tiznit coach, at the Port of Algeciras, Spain.

When?

The final question to be answered here is: when to research, or (more accurately) in what sequence to proceed? This is by no means an inconsequential question. Given that the focus of the research question is explaining the preference for back-and-forth mobility over definitive return, I could perfectly well propose to begin in countries of origin, speaking to former hostel residents who have returned, and those who are on a visit. Likewise, an innovative design could have been to begin fieldwork 'in transit' so to speak, seeking out older hostel residents in ports and departure lounges, on boats, planes or on the long-distance coaches which link France and Morocco. However, on reflection, these options seemed too much like searching for a needle in a haystack: there was no assurance I would stumble upon a hometown with many former and current hostel residents among the population; likewise, there was no guarantee that I would come across many hostel residents in spaces and places of transit. In contrast, beginning in the hostel held out the promise of an easy-to-reach population. Indeed, in many studies of the elderly, older people's institutions –

nursing homes, hospitals and so on – are privileged as field sites (Quine and Browning 2007).

The broad sequence of events was as follows: begin in France; engage participants in hostels; conduct participant observation and biographical interviews; arrange to accompany one or two respondents back to places of origin in North and West Africa; share in and observe this journey home; finally, conduct participant observation and life stories once there. In addition to residents' individual life stories, I was also keen to know the perspective of the various organisations which intervene in hostel residents' daily lives. Chronologically, data collection around the two themes of individual biographies and organisational biographies was not mutually exclusive: instead, fieldwork with hostel residents and organisations proceeded conterminously. As can be seen from Table 1 below, much of my extended time in the field was spent in Paris and its suburbs. My visits to Morocco and Senegal occurred during more focused periods, corresponding to when my respondents were on vacation back home.

2.3 How? Putting it into practice

This section gives details of (i) how I approached individuals and organisations about participation in the study (*Engagement*), (ii) the tactics deployed to encourage this (*Rapport*), (iii) how I sought to maximise the representativeness of the population studied (*Sampling*), and (iv) the approach taken to analysing the resulting data (*Analysis*).

Table 1. Fieldwork Chronology 2007-2009.

FIELDWORK STAGE (LOCALE)	2007	2008				2009		
	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3
HOSTEL RESIDENTS								
SCOPING (PARIS)	Scoping Interviews; Literature Review; Negotiating access with Adoma	Negotiating access with Adoma						
PILOTING (PARIS)			Life grids; Participant Observation; Invitation to Dembancané					
VOYAGE: PARIS - DEMBANCANE (SENEGAL)						Participant Observation		
DEMBANCANE FIELDWORK (SENEGAL)						Life story interviews; Participant Observation		
RESIDENCE IN A HOSTEL (PARIS REGION)							Participant Observation; Life story interviews; Invitation to Tiznit	
VOYAGE: PARIS - TIZNIT (MOROCCO)								Participant Observation
TIZNIT FIELDWORK (MOROCCO)								Various interviews; Participant Observation
ORGANISATIONS								
SCOPING (PARIS)				Identification of relevant organisational actors; Approaches to these actors for interviews				
INTERVIEWS (PARIS REGION)				Semi-structured interviews with representatives of organisations				
GREY LITERATURE (PARIS)					Collection of grey literature from organisations			
ARCHIVES (PARIS REGION)			Sciences-Po Press Archive				Hauts-de-Seine County Archives	

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Engagement

The criterion by which organisations were selected for inclusion in the study was quite simply whether they had a bearing on the daily lives of residents in the hostels I visited. This included a great many organisations, including crisis social work teams in local hospitals, all the pertinent benefits agencies, psychiatrists, home care providers, embassies and consulates, various government agencies, NGOs, politicians, and different departments within the hostel management companies themselves. All in all I interviewed around 50 representatives of such organisations. In addition, I spoke with several researchers and specialists in the field at various points to validate my hunches and ideas. A significant proportion of interviews were recorded, but this was not always permitted or appropriate. For a list of the generic questions I asked all organisations, see Appendix 4. As can be seen from these questions, I was particularly interested in the 'timetabling' effects exerted by these different organisations.

Generally interviews with representatives of organisations were straightforward. Such individuals tended to be receptive to my request for an interview, and were comfortable talking at length about their expertise and opinions. At the beginning of my time in France I did sometimes have to be quite persistent and follow up emails with phone calls when people did not reply promptly, but this was largely down to the fact that I had not yet built up an address book of contacts to call upon for introductions. As I got to know people in academia and in the NGO sector, and after having signed up to various internet mailing lists, I began to get a better idea of what was happening on the ground and who the actors were.

In contrast to organisations, it soon became clear during my pilot work that engaging[51] hostel resident participants in my study would not be easy. This was an unwelcome surprise. I had expected, after finally gaining permission to do research in hostels from Adoma, that older hostel residents would be only too happy to share their experiences when for so long they had been ignored. I was to be disappointed:

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[51] I prefer the term 'participant engagement' to 'recruitment' given the undertones of paid employment and military life which the latter invokes.

as noted, many displayed a marked wariness to participate due to the sensitive nature of return and suspicion about my motives.

Other factors also intervened. A significant hurdle to participation was the potential for miscommunication and mutual comprehension. Later in my research, during my period of fieldwork as a live-in resident, I suggested to Denis, the hostel manager, that it could be a good idea to put posters up advertising my presence and the aims of my study. His response was doubtful - "three quarters of them don't read".[52] Illiteracy applied both to French and home languages, given that very few had undergone more than a primary education (Gallou 2005). The task of informing my potential participants about the aims of the research was thereby made more painstaking. Given that French was not my native language either, the margin for miscommunications and *malentendus* was that much higher. This will be discussed later regarding informed consent.

This language barrier to participant engagement was compounded by other "deficit[s] in social relations" (Hurley 2007: 185) which seemed enormous at first glance. Between myself and my respondents loomed a veritable chasm of differences, such as age, socio-economic class, and disparities in educational and employment histories. Furthermore, the older hostel residents were members of visible minorities in France whereas I, while still a foreigner, did not 'appear' as such. I should add that the issues I faced in reaching and engaging older hostel residents were not isolated challenges, unique to my project because of any personal ethnic, cultural or language 'deficits'. Many researchers of North and West African origin have testified to the peculiar convergence of factors which means the hostel population is withdrawn, 'hard to reach' and therefore 'hard to engage' for any non-resident. Reading Choukri Hmed's thesis, one has the impression that he faced similar struggles in engaging interviewees (Hmed 2006a).

At times I had the feeling that it would be hard for me to be more dissimilar to the men I was talking to and living amongst. There was however one critical biological factor in my favour: my gender. I do not wish to claim that it would be impossible for a woman to do the research I did, but I have no doubt that it would be

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[52] Nonetheless, I persevered with my publicity poster strategy, in the hope that those residents who could read might pass on the relevant information to those who could not. See Appendix 1 for these posters.

even more delicate a task than the already difficult situation which I faced. By the same token, while my gender was an asset in the hostels, it proved to be a barrier when observing family life back in respondents' hometowns. My gaze, by and large, was restricted to male kin.

The extant (francophone) ethnographic scholarship on the hostels and the residents has been predominantly male-authored.[53] Abdou (outreach officer, migrant rights association) recounted the difficulties facing a female student of Moroccan origin who had accompanied him during one of his drop-in sessions, despite the fact she spoke Arabic and French perfectly! Abdou described how she was "completely de-stabilised... it's a very particular population you know, especially with all the problems that they have. It's like they're people whose confidence you have to earn, there has to be rapport... so that the interviews pass naturally, as naturally as possible."

Rapport

Any strategy which aims to resolve these difficulties of participant engagement is advised to put significant emphasis on building rapport and trust with respondents. "Building trust and rapport are extremely necessary ingredients for conducting sensitive research with the 'vulnerable' and hard-to-reach populations" (Liamputtong 2007: 56). Andrea Fontana and James Frey comment that "it is paramount [for the researcher] to establish rapport with respondents and attempt to see the situation from their viewpoint rather than superimpose his or her world of academia and preconceptions on them" (Fontana and Frey 2005: 708, in Liamputtong 2007: 56-7). As noted, I soon realised the value of seeing the men's situation from a more proximate viewpoint, hence my decision to engage in participant observation as a live-in resident.

Other means at my disposal for generating rapport included referrals from trusted contacts and good-humoured persistence. As Berk and Adams recommend, researchers need to: (i) demonstrate consistent commitment to the investigation; (ii)

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[53] The work of Catherine Quiminal (1991, 2009) is a notable exception.

be sincere and honest, not motivated by morbid curiosity; and (iii) explain the research in the most flattering manner, so as to avoid reinforcing any stereotypes of deviance. "Many groups are extremely sensitive to the reasons why they are being studied: and unless the researcher can justify in non-demeaning and non-threatening terms why he wants to do the research, rapport will be difficult to achieve" (Berk and Adams 2001: 63, in Liamputtong 2007: 59).

Hence in my publicity material, primarily in the form of posters, I was very keen to present the study in the most affirming terms: for instance, the epigraph at the top of this chapter was selected as the header for all my posters.[54] At the same time however I was careful to be as candid as possible about the project's limitations (see Appendix 1 for project publicity).[55] This was an active step on my part to manage expectations of what the project was about and what it could deliver (Smith and Pitts 2007: 28). Another communicative strategy to generate rapport was to speak in Arabic with those residents hailing from North Africa, who make up a majority of the older Adoma clientele. Speaking some Arabic, and intimating that I could understand what people were saying around me, was a novel icebreaker for North African respondents, who certainly were not expecting a young Scottish student to know any colloquial Moroccan Arabic.[56] This is not to claim that I could understand everything that everyone said – far from it (hence my decision to conduct all interviews in French) – but by demonstrating that I had more than superficial knowledge of North African language and customs I automatically gained respect from the North African elders. I also drafted all my publicity material in Modern Standard Arabic in addition to French (see Appendix 1). This latter strategy cut two ways: as Muslims, both North and West Africans were impressed that I could write Arabic well, but on occasion this also contrived to create further distance, since many less educated men could not read or write Arabic as well as I could. Especially early on, I could sense people's acute embarrassment when I produced my Arabic

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[54] "A young French guy passes an old immigrant on the street, and wonders what the hell he's still doing here. But, he doesn't know that it was the old immigrant who built the street, who built that very pavement. It's very important that people know what we immigrant workers did."

[55] On the first poster, under the heading *3) Et pourquoi?* [And why?], it is written: "You might be asking: 'How is this project going to change my own situation?' It's true that I cannot promise you an improvement in your personal situation. But, who knows? Perhaps, one day, the people that you pass in the street might think differently of you" [author's translation].

[56] I would like to acknowledge the generous support for language training, both in Arabic and French, provided to me by the ESRC's 1+3 Studentship programme.

publicity material, exclaiming (perhaps too proudly) "Look what I did!" They simply were not able to read it.

On the whole however, I found more often than not that the above strategies served me well in building rapport and engaging respondents, to the point where certain individuals would seek me out for a chat rather than the other way round. It gladdens me that I was able to give something back in this way, to listen to my respondents' reminiscences and their hopes and concerns for the future, to provide advice when asked, and simply to give people an excuse to get out of their rooms for a few hours and chat in the garden.

Participant observation also helped to build rapport, and – as noted earlier – constituted a prelude to in-depth interviewing. The process of observing hostel life and becoming comfortable in the hostel space is a two-way process: I was also observed by residents, who become more at ease in my presence. In this way rapport develops. It was for this reason, during my piloting work in the company of Abdou, that I devoted more time to observation and being visibly present than I did to interviewing. Likewise, when I was first admitted as a live-in resident in the hostel, I tried to observe and be observable as much as possible. Only later, after these mutual observations and the innumerable interactions and conversations which they generated, could I begin to contemplate approaching individuals for more formal interviews. I was keen to avoid a situation known as "hit-and-run" interviewing (Booth and Booth 1994: 417). Hence my preference for repeated contacts over time, which also allowed me time to build up rapport with respondents and gain comprehensive knowledge about their experiences. Repeat interviewing tended not to be possible in my early pilot work because I was only at each site once a week. Often, despite arrangements to "talk again next week", respondents could not be found the following week. The issues of appointment-keeping as well as illness call for a certain flexibility when researching older people. "Old people are frequently ill and can reasonably change their minds about obliging interviewers. Sometimes they forget that they had agreed earlier" (Hey 1999: 106). One advantage of being on site full-time was that I could be more flexible about when and where interviews took place.

Sampling

As noted earlier, organisations were engaged in the research on the basis of whether they intervened in the daily lives of residents in the hostels I visited. As the number of organisations was quite limited, it was quite straightforward for me to achieve a fairly representative and comprehensive sample of organisations. This was in contrast to the sampling procedure for hostel residents, a far more convoluted process in which building rapport was just the preliminary stage. One of the inherent difficulties with research into return at retirement stems from the fact that building a sample of retirement returnees necessarily implies -

> identifying and recruiting sub-groups of the population distinguished by two or more lifecourse events and attributes spread over time. No official source or lists provide a 'sample frame' of labour migrants from country A that have raised children in country B and then returned to A (let alone more complex permutations) (Warnes and Williams 2006: 1273).

Such a predicament forces researchers into relying on samples of convenience and 'snowballing' out from key respondents, with associated limits to generalisability. Anxious to avoid a sample of convenience, but recognising that snowball sampling is often the only way of studying marginal populations (Lee 1993; see also Atkinson and Flint 2001), I began with a snowballing approach but actively strove to engage the most representative cases[57] within the hostel population.

A key question is where to locate the initial contact for a snowballing technique. This can be the hardest part of this method (Liamputtong 2007: 49). Many texts advise seeking referrals through personal networks and mutual acquaintances (Quine and Browning 2007: 137), as well as via recognised and respected peer leaders (Liamputtong 2007: 49). In my own work it was relatively easy to get in contact with someone occupying a leadership role, since most hostels have an elected Residents' Committee. By approaching the heads of the Residents' Committees in different hostels, I was quickly able to get other Committee members on board, and from them I received referrals to other residents.

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[57] See the following page for clarification of what is meant by 'representative' in this context.

Not all of the people I was referred to or came across were necessarily suitable candidates, and here also there is an issue of representativeness. A number of the older men in the hostel with whom I established some rapport appeared to suffer from one form or other of mental ill health which resulted in sudden changes of mood. The issue of informed consent would have been problematic in these cases. Other individuals were in a state of physical ill health that led them to decline my invitation to participate. Finally, there was also the issue of language proficiency. Some residents did not have a sufficient command of French to understand some of my more abstract questions. By making it a rule that every interview was preceded by an introductory discussion where I introduced myself and my project and solicited my interlocutor's views about it, I was quickly able to make an assessment of the ability of an individual to take part and to give informed consent.

From the foregoing, it is evident that I cannot claim that those I interviewed were representative of all older hostel residents, since those with significant issues of physical and mental ill health, or lack of proficiency in French, were excluded from the sample. Furthermore, I primarily engaged those connected to the Residents' Committees, which almost certainly biases the sample towards the more 'respectable' hostel *habitués*. I did however seek to redress this lack of representativeness by asking the hostel management about the typical trajectories found among the residents. Hostel clienteles vary from hostel to hostel, in large part due to the effects of local labour markets and the different industrial sectors found in a given area. Variations in exposure to unemployment, to work-related ill-health, or to administrative irregularities (e.g., not being declared by one's employer for tax and social security purposes) all have a bearing on a hostel's clientele. Likewise, migrant networks can have strong selection effects regarding a hostel's demographic make-up (place of origin, age, cohort effects and so on). As a result, within an *individual* hostel, one is likely to find a number of trajectories which may be assumed to be more or less typical. At the individual level, hostels are interesting biographically because "the population housed [there] presents the particularity of grouping together in one place individuals having a common migration history, in

time and in space" (Renaut 2006: 170). In an attempt to boost generalisability, I also actively sought out residents who did not conform to these trajectories.[58]

Owing to the depth of information demanded by biographical methods, there are inevitably limits to the amount of data which one researcher can collect in a given period. "Since the essence of (...) analysis all too often lies in particularised detail, and since the validity of the analysis is usually shown through the detailing of the analysis, there are inevitable constraints on the number of cases which can be presented" (Chamberlayne *et al.* 2000: 21). In total, some 25 hostel residents agreed to grant me a life story interview. Compared to the organisational representatives, a lower proportion agreed to having their interview recorded, approximately 30 percent. This is unsurprising given that hostel residents were not as experienced as organisation representatives at giving interviews, and therefore less comfortable in this situation. It tended to be those individuals with whom I had developed better rapport who permitted me to record.

Analysis

Before concluding this section, some words should be said about the 'how' of data analysis. In some respects, analysis - in the sense of searching for constituent elements of meaning – was an ongoing, iterative task, commencing from the moment I started collecting data. However, my full attention was directed to analysis once data collection had been concluded. After full transcriptions of all recorded interviews had been made (including pauses and hesitations where significant), these were uploaded as source files into QSR's N-Vivo 8 qualitative data analysis software. I also uploaded as source material the following data:

- Grey literature (i.e., not commercially published) produced by the organisations I researched, including reports, statistics, in-house studies;
- Various legal texts, such as bilateral social security conventions;
- All field logs (word-processed from my handwritten notes);

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[58] For example, Rahman (an alcoholic), Jawad (who had recently left the hostel and moved into private accommodation), and Issa (who had recently moved to a new hostel).

- Administrative data (e.g., anonymised case notes of dependent residents in Adoma hostels: see Chapter Seven);
- Material recorded during my visits to various archives (Sciences-Po Press Archive; Hauts-de-Seine county archives).

Using N-Vivo was not only a useful means of keeping the project data in one easily searchable place. Above all, I utilised N-Vivo for its coding capabilities. Text was coded according to what initially was a wide range of categories, consistent with the various lines of enquiry suggested by the research problematic and the various theories as described above. At the outset, categories were susceptible to rapid re-evaluation or rejection, but in time they became more embedded and my analysis in turn more refined (Moug 2008). N-Vivo allowed me to develop an evolving set of analytical categories, as I proceeded to break the infinitely complex data down into constituent elements of meaning before re-assembling these elements in a way which permitted some generalisation.

While N-Vivo and its forerunners have been associated rather closely with grounded theory, I should stress that this was not a grounded theory analysis, at least not according to the blueprint originally provided by Glaser and Strauss (1967). Rather than generating theory from the data, I interrogated my data for evidence which spoke to the theories outlined in Chapter One, as well as evidence which did not accord with these theories. N-Vivo encourages and facilitates such questioning and rigour. Nonetheless the codes, especially my *in vivo* codes, were developed from and remained grounded in my source data.

2.4 Status of the Findings: epistemology and ethics

Epistemology

The decision to follow a research design based on participant observation and biographical methods necessarily has implications for the scientific status of the findings. The analysis generated by qualitative research designs is frequently subject

to the following well-rehearsed critiques: suspect underpinnings in terms of causality (internal validity); difficulties of generalising to a wider population (external validity); and lack of separation of facts from values (ecological validity and partiality) (Bryman 1988, 2004). Even such a well-known exponent of biographical methods in migration studies as Abdelmalek Sayad took a less charitable view of life history research, resorting to this approach for want of a better alternative (Sayad 2006). For Sayad, himself an Algerian immigrant to France, the "reconstituted biography" is one of the few avenues available to the student of migration when confronted with a lack of more "noble" methodological options. His fear was that migrants – being an ignoble, marginal population, problematised not from lofty philosophical debates but as a problem in itself, a problem for the rest of society – received the social scientific treatment they 'deserved'. This led Sayad to wonder: "Is a science about the 'poor man', the 'little man', a poor man's science? Is it a minor science?" (Sayad 2006: 27)

I have argued earlier in this chapter why I believe a more 'prestigious' or 'noble' science is neither possible nor desirable in respect of the population under study and the methodology which is proposed. Firstly a more 'scientific' approach is impossible due to certain elements of the hostel context: lack of reliable survey datasets; high levels of illiteracy among the hostel population; and suspicion of the state and academic research. More importantly, such an approach is undesirable since neo-positivist approaches based on neo-classical economics and family location are over-simplistic and have been shown to be problematic.

However, to reject these neo-positivist models does not imply rejecting notions of objective reality out of hand. It can never hurt to reflect on timeless debates around subjectivity, interpretation and meaning-making. Rather than seeing the autobiographer-respondent and the biographer-researcher as engaged in a fact-mining exercise 'out there in objective reality', a more appropriate view, propounded by Norman Denzin is as follows: "The study of biographical research rests on a view of individuals as creators of meanings which form the basis of their everyday lives" (Denzin 1989: 13). If the individual respondent interprets events and thereby creates meaning, then the same logic applies with the researcher too, as Fischer-Rosenthal affirms: "The researcher's biographical analysis (...) is hermeneutical and

reconstructive, just as the biographical structuring itself – the biographical narration – is interpretive and constructive" (Fischer-Rosenthal 2000: 118). Likewise, Smith and Pitts comment that, "the act of data analysis is an act of interpretation. Done properly, analysis is an extremely measured and nuanced activity that goes from what the data might say to what the data might mean." (Smith and Pitts 2007: 28).

However, this opens up my analysis design to the charge of relativism, since if all interpretations are equally valid, how can I make my own re-interpretation convincing? For Richard Freeman, "[a] qualitative account (...) will convince or otherwise by virtue of its authenticity, plausibility and criticality: that is, by whether the report of what respondents say and how they say it seem realistic to readers; by the face validity of the commentary and conclusions offered, and by whether they challenge the reader to think critically and anew" (Freeman 2008: 6). In the ethnographic tradition, the principle means by which authenticity and plausibility are conveyed is via the 'thick description' generated by participant observation and depth interviewing. "The [ethnographic] purpose of learning to think and behave appropriately is that this validates that the researcher has "got it right", that his or her observations are accurate and repeatable" (Brink 1993: 238). This is achieved by getting close to actors' accounts and understanding the setting in which they are made. A significant advantage which biographical and ethnographic analysis has over more quantitative methods is the ability to stay close to the 'real-life context'.

For neo-positivists, this attention to context – and the interventions of researchers in it – are seen as a threat to ecological validity (awareness on the part of the respondent that s/he is being researched) (Bryman 1988:112). Biased responses may occur when covering topics for which certain answers are more socially desirable than others, leading to over-reporting of some behaviour and under-reporting of other behaviour (Lee 1993; Newell 2001). However, practitioners of interpretivist ethnography or life story research are adamant in their recognition that the knowledge generated by their research is always co-produced and context-dependent (see for example Christou and King 2010). It cannot be abstracted from the power-relations between researcher and researched (Schatz 2009). This brings us to the topic of ethics.

Ethics

I have earlier stressed the importance of generating rapport for gaining the confidence and respect of respondents. Respect is one ethical principle highlighted by Smith and Pitts (2007), two others of relevance here being non-malfeasance and beneficence. I will take each in turn.

Central to respect is the notion of informed consent (Smith and Pitts 2007: 34). A key deontological tenet is informing respondents about the aims of research and the purpose to which findings are put. This requires adequate communication skills in the first place, and it was noted that not all hostel residents possessed the necessary proficiency in French. Equally necessary is that respondents understand what is meant when the researcher communicates these ideas. Whenever I met a hostel resident for the first time I introduced myself by saying that I was a student doing research about the hostels. However, as noted above, saying the word 'student' or 'researcher' meant very little to residents in some instances. This was brought into focus one afternoon when, having gone through my usual protocol about the aims and objectives of the study, I took up my pen to note down something of interest which the man in question had just told me. Anxiously, the man enquired: "what are you doing that for, writing it down?" I realised then that the man had not understood what I had meant when I said "research". All rapport dissipated and the man broke off our discussion.

This was an event which provoked much self- reflection about what consent means. Subsequently I now agree entirely with Pamela Brink in this regard:

> The population cannot give fully informed consent given that many of them have no idea what research means and do not relate to the anthropologist as a researcher. They relate to the field worker as a person who is initially a stranger and then becomes either a friend or a fictive relative. Because research and researcher are not part of their worldview, they do not fully understand to what they are consenting (Brink 1993: 235).

This incident taught me to be much more patient in my approach to hostel residents and to explain more fully what I was doing. I also learned that getting consent was not a one-time event to be crossed off a checklist, but rather a task to be repeated

throughout the research stages. This is what Cutcliffe and Ramcharan (2002) mean when they use the term "ethics as process" (cited in Liamputtong 2007: 43-4). Their insight is that ethical issues evolve as research progresses and greater depth of experience and involvement is achieved. In such situations, consent needs to be re-negotiated every so often, and care must also be taken so that withdrawal from the field is not too sudden, leaving respondents with the feeling that they are now redundant and unimportant. I have sought to avoid this "hit-and-run" approach (Booth and Booth 1994: 417) by maintaining contact with key respondents by telephone, and occasional social visits to France.

Moving to non-malfeasance, two core elements of this are anonymity and confidentiality (Smith and Pitts 2007). While the terms are often conflated, they are in fact quite separate concepts. Confidentiality is to do with ensuring that the public does not have access to raw data. Thus, it is a relatively straightforward matter of restricting access to both physical and electronic copies. Keeping consent forms and all other written and recorded material in locked filing cabinets or cupboards is one simple safeguard. Likewise, ensuring that electronic files are password protected, not just on computers, but also on portable external storage, is considered best practice (Smith and Pitts 2007). Anonymity, on the other hand, "concerns ensuring that the identity of research participants can never be determined from the public research material" (Smith and Pitts 2007: 13).

Anonymity can be preserved firstly by ensuring that no reference to respondents' names appears in publications. In this thesis, all quotes and other evidence have been attributed to a pseudonym (except where otherwise stated: see below). This applies both to hostel residents and representatives of organisations. Yet the issue of anonymisation goes beyond the mere naming of names. A complication with much qualitative work is that it can be helpful to provide a biographical sketch of individual participants, as was found in the Introduction. The author of such sketches needs to be aware that even simple description of an individual's role, age or gender can lead to a rapid unmasking of identity. Likewise, just as individual characteristics can identify, so too can place names and descriptions of places. These last two points apply equally to hostel residents and organisational representatives.

For residents, given that the thesis is concerned with late-in-life migration, it was felt important to attach respondents' ages (in years) to their pseudonyms. Similarly, since there are strong grounds for comparing North and West African hostel residents, it was felt important to ascribe region and country of origin to pseudonyms. This marshalling of biographical data results in the character key which I deploy henceforth in the text, e.g., Saleem (60, Tiznit, Morocco). It should be noted that this character key only includes the name of the *province* or *region* of origin, not *town* or *village*, as the latter information would increase the risks of identification. This rule applies except in two cases: I have opted to name the two hometowns where I conducted the lion's share of 'home' fieldwork, Tiznit in Morocco and Dembancané in Senegal. In the former case, risks of identification are low given that 50,000 people live there. This is not the case with Dembancané, which is home to only 6,000 people. Thus, in addition to being attributed a pseudonym as with other respondents, all Dembancaneans participating in the study had their age and other identifying factors (e.g., number of children, occupation) disassociated from their pseudonyms. In these cases, the character key was more basic, e.g., Djimé (Dembancané).

Readers will notice in the pages which follow that I have elected not to name the hostels where I worked nor to detail where they are located. Most hostels house no more than 300 individuals, so linking a named hostel to an individual – even if given a pseudonym – risks identifying that individual if other biographical information which is important in the thesis narrative is supplied (e.g., number of children, place of origin, occupation, state of health). To minimise this risk I opted not to name my hostels.

Representatives of organisations have also been attributed pseudonyms. As with hostel respondents, I sought to minimise the risks of identifying respondents in organisations. In some ways, this was easier since identifying markers such as actual age and place of origin were not considered relevant. Instead, what is important is the role which respondents from organisations filled in terms of the interventions they make in the daily lives of hostel residents. In situations where representatives of a given organisation identify themselves implicitly from what they say, or from the roles which they perform, I have concluded that anonymisation is futile. In those

circumstances I have sought prior clearance to use actual names and roles, and/or any identifying remarks when quoting testimony. All instances of this have been flagged explicitly in footnotes.

The third and final ethical principle which I seek to uphold is beneficence, in other words giving something of benefit back to one's respondents, to be distinguished from non-malfeasance which is the more basic requirement that no harm comes to one's respondents as a result of the research. Reciprocity is at the core of beneficence (Smith and Pitts 2007). I have actively sought reciprocity in this research project in several ways. While not a scientific justification for the present research design, adopting a biographical interview method had the normative benefit of 'giving voice' to hostel residents (Roberts 2002). Nonetheless, the researcher must be careful not to inflate a respondent's expectations of the influence that his or her contribution will likely have on the democratic process, nor, just as crucially, to inflate his or her expectations regarding the influence of the researcher in these wider domains of policy making and social change. If a respondent enters into an agreement to give their side of the story believing that 'what's in it' for them is a real possibility to change their situation, bitter disappointment is likely to follow. It is for this reason that I expressly sought to manage expectations in the posters with which I publicised the project to hostel residents.[59]

In turn, respondents should be made aware that once their testimony is in the public domain, there is little they (or the researcher) can do to control how it is subsequently appropriated and employed, which may well include ends quite contrary to what is hoped for by the participants. As Roberts concedes: "in releasing the voices of the unheard into the public sphere they enter into the vagaries of political processes whose consequences cannot be judged" (Roberts 2002: 172).

Another benefit that some authors claim can be passed on to respondents is giving more control about how research is conducted, via collaborative techniques like life grids, as well as giving respondents more 'ownership' over the content and editing of their life stories. With life story interviews, wherever possible I got respondents to check over the recording at the end and if there was anything they wished to delete, edit or add then this could be undertaken at a subsequent interview.

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[59] See footnote 55 above.

Since many respondents were not very comfortable reading French, I made a CD copy of each interview and where necessary provided a portable CD player for residents to play back the recording. In the light of this, several respondents subsequently opted to change the transcript of their interview.

One can alter the dynamics of the researcher-researched relationship only so far, however. By citing individuals' personal narratives directly, it can appear as if the researcher has voluntarily and altruistically ceded control, permitting those researched to participate actively in how they are represented. While advocates of biographical methods may trumpet the claim that theirs is a method which gives voice to people who would otherwise remain mute, or who are spoken for by others, it must be stressed that nonetheless it is the author who has the final say in what is included in the narrative and what stays out. This illusion of respondent control, which Chamberlain terms the "fiction of authorial invisibility" (Chamberlain 1997: 137, in Gardner 2002: 29), needs to be exposed as an ethical issue.

Finally, readers might also ask: what are the ethical implications of writing up this project in English, not French? Does that not immediately *dispossess* respondents of their own stories and voices, if they do not read English? One possible response to this is that as social scientists, our ultimate commitment is to the greater good rather than our respondents: the more people who hear these stories and voices the better. It is worth reiterating that the near total lack of work (academic or otherwise) on the migrant worker hostels in languages other than French means that the hostels remain France's 'dirty little secret'. Certainly, generating empirical knowledge about the hostels in English is one of the contributions I sought to make from the outset. However, I also hope to publish at least one publication in French based on this thesis, and have made informal contact with an open-access online journal to this effect. This notwithstanding, however, it is far from certain how much I will be able to give back to my respondents in the hostels. It is worth reiterating that few of my respondents can read and write French, so to some extent any form of written publication based on their experiences will have this dispossessing effect. The extent to which the strategies outlined above might compensate for the dispossessing consequences of illiteracy is an open and far from resolved question.

Conclusion

At first sight, there appears to be a tension between the theoretically-driven research question posed in the Introduction and the rich, descriptive methodology devised to answer it, as outlined in this chapter. In part the choice made here was a willing one, insofar as biographical research can illuminate the individual ruptures which migration and retirement entail. The decision to incorporate ethnographic methods, however, was originally taken from force of circumstance. My early attempts to do life story interviews with hostel residents failed due to a lack of rapport when faced with the sensitive topic of return and the suspicion directed both towards me as a researcher, and to academia in general. This was a collective suspicion which amounted almost to a siege mentality, suggesting that the hostel environment itself had an institutionalising effect on the men. Hence my decision to submit myself to these institutional forces, through ethnographic participant observation, in order to better understand the situation of the hostel residents at retirement. In so doing, I gained new insights into their lives, beyond the social-scientific confines of the research question.

These insights, as and when they appear in the chapters which follow, are included on the grounds that the resulting narrative is made more convincing. But it is not to forget the theoretically guided direction given by the question at hand. The choice to undertake a biographical approach is also informed by the observation from social systems theory that it is biography – the formal, observable record of an individual's life course – which mediates an individual's inclusion in society. This idea is explored most fully in the following two chapters. Chapter Four covers healthcare but before then let us turn to the demands placed on hostel residents by bureaucratic agencies in the welfare state.

3. "Vos Papiers, Monsieur." The temporal and territorial demands of welfare state inclusion

> Si Mustapha, the manager, was well aware of the phenomenon I was interested in. The older passengers on the international routes come back for five principal reasons, in his opinion:
> 1. to get their "salary" i.e., pension;
> 2. to pay their taxes, i.e., the annual tax declaration in May;
> 3. for "reasons of paperwork";
> 4. for their health, "we even get some people in quite a serious state";
> 5. for Ramadan.

The above excerpt is taken from my field notes, written during the time of my stay in the town of Tiznit, southern Morocco, in August 2009. It summarises my conversation with the manager of one of the many trans-Mediterranean coach companies whose buses ply the route between France and Morocco. I have opened the present chapter with these field notes in view of the priority which the manager gives to paperwork and administrative motivations for doing the *va-et-vient* among his elderly clientele.

Paperwork has a bearing on the central research question in several significant ways. Valid papers are required to prove eligibility for welfare state benefits. Instead of being consumed primarily by the hostel residents themselves, such benefits are channelled to families remaining back home, some of whom remain dependent on the lone breadwinner's remittances even after retirement. More will be said about how this family situation comes about in Chapter Five. What should be retained at this stage however is the fact that most benefits require the recipient to observe a minimum period of residence in France. This in part explains the preference of many hostel residents for the *va-et-vient*, so that they can accumulate the required duration of residence in France.

These minimum residence conditions are one example of the timetabling effects of organisations in the welfare state, as first introduced in the previous chapter under 'organisational biographies'. In the present chapter I will begin by examining the practical implications of the temporal and territorial demands of welfare state inclusion. It will be acknowledged that these demands affect all those

living in advanced welfare states, citizens and non-citizens alike, but I will argue that the 'non-standard' biographies of migrant workers, some of which are documented in administrative papers and proofs of identity, result in demands emanating from the authorities which non-migrants are generally not called upon to answer. As will be discussed later, these biographical features include non-standard employment trajectories such as later entry to the French job market and non-declared work, as well as non-standard documents of personhood such as inaccurate birth certificates, erroneous or non-existent payslips, and duplicate social security numbers.

Interestingly, these non-standard trajectories and documents, although set in motion from birth and continuing into adulthood and employment, only become critical at retirement: prior to this, they do not have a major influence on life chances and outcomes. This gives credence to the argument made earlier that retirement is a critical juncture, heralding a stage of life where papers become more important, and – for the migrants – more problematic. Hostel residents are required to undergo a shift whereby *papers* replace work as the basis for their social identity.

Likewise, retirement also heralds a juncture insofar as it signals an end to the sedentary constraint of participation in the labour market. In this regard, the hostel residents' nomadic *va-et-vient* tendencies are problematic. Together, their suspect papers and nomadism rub up against the temporality and territoriality of the welfare state. As will be discussed in the final section here, this leads to enforcement strategies made against them by state bureaucrats, aiming at controlling the residents' comings-and-goings between France and countries of origin. At the same time, however, this provokes innovative tactics devised by hostel residents to counteract and resist bureaucratic control of their movements.

3.1 Territorial and Temporal Demands lead to Timetabled Trips

Early on in my fieldwork I became aware that the issue of paperwork was of central importance in the older hostel residents' decision-making about late-in-life mobility, as these short quotes highlight:

I prefer to come back from time to time, and as for papers I have no choice (Aftam 2006: 20).

And if I come here, it is for administrative reasons. These last few days, I was renewing my residence card (Ferouah, 60s, Morocco).[60]

Such quotes indicate that hostel residents are under some constraint – administratively speaking – to be regularly present *in France*, at least for a brief *time*. Territorial and temporal demands emanating from bureaucratic agencies, notably in the welfare state, encapsulate what is meant by the 'timetabling' pressures to which hostel residents are expected to conform if they wish to remain included in various administrative systems. Saulo Cwerner describes these instances of externally imposed bureaucratic timetabling of migrants as "heteronomous times" (Cwerner 2001). "Heteronomous times are to a large degree inescapable, and it is far more difficult to get rid of their grip" (ibid: 21). In particular, three empirical manifestations of timetabling are identified as crucial for the hostel residents. These are (i) the French old-age pension system; (ii) eligibility conditions of 'regular and effective residence' for cash and in-kind benefits; and (iii) the annual tax declaration form. I will take each in turn.

One clear manifestation of timetabling is the state pension system operating in many welfare states. Insofar as pension regimes set minimum retirement ages and pensions legislation is enacted to incentivise people to work longer, we can see some very obvious timetabling logics at play.

In contrast to the 'multi-pillared' pension system found in the UK (a mixture of flat-rate subsistence-level state provision and contributions-based private pension funds), the 'general regime'[61] old-age pension fund in France is based on the Bismarckian principle of 'pay-in-as-you-go' employer and employee contributions (Thompson 2008). The general regime pension is entirely state-administered, through

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[60] Source: Ville de Gennevilliers (1994) *Migrations: le temps de la retraite*

[61] Note that there are 'special' regimes for miners, farm-workers, civil servants, and those who worked for the state railway company (SNCF). In addition to these 'basic' pension regimes, there is also the complementary pension regime (*retraite complémentaire*), to which it has been obligatory to contribute since 1973. This is managed by one of two organisms: ARRCO if one is an employee in the private sector, and AGIRC if one is employed as an executive. Taken together, the basic and complementary regimes amount to a sum which on average is worth approximately 70 percent of the average wage for blue- and white-collar workers (Thompson 2008).

the national old age insurance fund (CNAV).[62] Following several waves of reforms since 1993, the general regime pension is no longer calculated on the basis of the best ten years of salary, but on the average of the twenty-five best years. To receive the maximum rate of pension (*taux plein*), one must have contributed to one's pension fund for the equivalent duration of 164 trimesters' full time employment, i.e., 41 years. If one fulfils this condition, one receives 50 percent of the average of the 25 best years' salary. A lower duration of contributions reduces the rate proportionally, with the lowest band being 25%. The youngest age at which one can "liquidate" the pension is 60 years: this minimum age limit is waived if the insured person started working early and had a long career, and also for certain disabled workers, notably those having a 'permanent incapacity' of 80 percent or more. As an incentive to work longer,[63] whatever the duration of contributions, a person who waits until the age of 65 to draw their pension automatically enjoys the full rate of 50 percent (CNAV 2011).

While pension regimes often stipulate such temporal demands, territorial requirements (i.e., place of residence) are less-and-less a feature of eligibility for drawing one's French pension, thanks to numerous bilateral social security agreements operating between France and third countries. The pension is an exportable benefit to which every insuree has the right on the same basis as if he or she were residing in France, regardless of country of residence or nationality. The only condition for foreigners is that they are in possession of a residence permit (of any duration of validity) at the time that the pension is liquidated. However, this task can be effected from abroad: one no longer needs to be physically present in France to start drawing one's pension. Other documents to be supplied in order to liquidate the pension include one's family register (*livret de famille*)[64]; any proof of civil and

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[62] CNAV = *Caisse nationale d'assurance vieillesse*.

[63] The median age of retirement in France is 58 years (Gendron 2011). A culture of early retirement has existed in France since the late 1970s, fostered in part by public officials eager to keep unemployment figures down by encouraging early disengagement from the labour market for those made redundant prior to the legal minimum retirement age (Argoud and Guillemard 1999). The employment rate for over 55s in France (38 percent as of 2009) is amongst the lowest in the EU (only Hungary and Slovakia have lower rates. This compares with rates of 69 percent for Norway and 58.5 percent for Denmark.) See Gendron (2011).

[64] The *livret de famille* is a document which a couple receives after marriage, in which are recorded partners' names and dates of birth, and thereafter the names and dates of birth of any children. It serves as an all-in-one marriage and birth certificate.

national status (passport, identity card); one's most recent tax statement; and the relevant bank account details (CNAV 2004: 24).

A second manifestation of timetabling is seen in the eligibility criteria for a means-tested old-age income benefit (Solidarity Benefit for Elderly People: ASPA), commonly known as the *minimum vieillesse*.[65] Individuals aged 65 and over in receipt of modest pensions are eligible for the *minimum vieillesse*, which tops up the general regime pension to a minimum old-age income, set at €708.95 per month in 2010.

Receiving the *minimum vieillesse* is conditional upon France being the 'principal and habitual' place of residence.[66] Here the temporal and territorial demands of the welfare state become plain to see. Up until 2007 the duration of what constituted 'principal and habitual' residence varied considerably across the different benefit agencies.[67] As a result of these variable interpretations, in the past the benefits agencies -

> basically did what they pleased, which is to say that it was enough that the person left for two months and they would say to him "you are no longer resident here, you have transferred your residence outside France so as a result we are no longer going to pay your benefits." Yet it wasn't true, the person had just gone on holiday (Sandrine, legal advisor, migrant rights association).

A prime ministerial decree[68] of 2007 has standardised some of these disparate practices and stipulates that the minimum residence requirement is now six months for most non-contributory benefits: all family benefits, social security rights (health insurance and so on), and the *minimum vieillesse*. The two principal exceptions remain housing benefit (8 months minimum) and disability allowance (9 months

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[65] ASPA = *Allocation de solidarité aux personnes âgées*. Henceforth I will use the term *minimum vieillesse* to refer to this old age income support benefit, since this is the term used in common parlance.

[66] Likewise, in the UK, one requirement is that foreign nationals satisfy the conditions of the "habitual residence test" (see Adler 1997). See also Holzmann *et al.* 2005.

[67] According to Article 43 of the General Fiscal Code, six months and one day was the definition employed; according to the Family Benefits Fund, (CCH.R.351-1), eight months' residence was required to be eligible for housing benefit, and nine months for the minimum wage (law of 1/12/88 art. 6-8); according to the National Health Insurance Fund, although not based on any text, six months' residence was necessary to receive non-contributory benefits (disability allowance, old age income support and so on).

[68] Decree n° 2007-354 of 14 March 2007. See Legifrance (2011) for the full text of this decree.

minimum). Some migrants' rights organisations have given a cautious welcome to this slightly expanded and (more importantly) standardised definition of principal residence. However, during my meeting at a Moroccan consulate, officials were under no illusions as to what the latest decree means for their elderly compatriots in France and the timetabling pressures to which they are subject: "Instead of spending time with their children, back home in the warmth, they are obliged to stay six months [in France] in precarious conditions in order to get very modest sums of money."

A third manifestation of timetabling relates to a particularity in the French tax system. Every year in May, all people whose principal residence is France are required to complete and sign their Tax Declaration (*Déclaration des Impôts*). Crucially, the form is only sent to addresses in April and must be returned by the end of May. The requirement to be at one's domicile in France at this time is an exemplary manifestation of welfare state timetabling, incorporating both temporal and territorial demands. The tax declaration is a *sine qua non* of French administrative documentation since it is used as a proof, not only of residence (i.e., residence for tax purposes), but also of income, and therefore crucial for proving eligibility for means-tested benefits. It is entirely unsurprising then that the period March-May is the peak period in terms of hostel occupancy (Unafo 2006). Many residents mentioned this as a motive for their periodic return trips, and hostel managers too were very aware of the importance of this time of year:

> The period when they all come back is when there is the tax declaration to do. They have to be here to do the declaration and sign the papers. Apart from this period then which is March-May, there is no other peak time, it keeps ticking over (Denis, hostel manager).

March-May was also a peak period in terms of work for Germain, an *écrivain public*[69] who holds a drop-in advice session on social and legal rights in the hostel where I was resident. The difference was stark from one week to the next. The weekly drop-in session which I observed in the last week of May was very well-

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[69] *Ecrivain public* is not easily translatable in English: it signifies someone who assists in the transcription of written (especially administrative) documents for people who do not read or write well.

attended, with upwards of 30 men waiting in line to be seen, almost all of them older residents. By contrast, in the following weeks, very few men passed by to see Germain and there were no queues to speak of. I asked Germain why this might be, and he answered quite simply that many residents had gone home, after completing their tax declaration.

3.2 Timetabled Lives

Older immigrants are not the only ones affected by the timetabling demands of the welfare state. Temporal and territorial conditions of inclusion impinge on all those who live and grow old in advanced welfare states, and as a consequence anyone who wishes to benefit from social security regimes is expected to conform to them. However, in the following section I will argue that there are biographical elements in the hostel residents' passage to retirement which do equate with 'systemic' discrimination. As Michael Bommes puts it, those aspects of the life course which for non-migrant national citizens are normally taken as given "can no longer be presupposed" for migrants (Bommes 2000: 95). Rather, migrants often deviate considerably from the standard assumed life course as structured by the welfare state (i.e., education and preparation for employment, followed by prompt entry to the labour market). Below I will chart some of these principal deviations, many of which are recorded in the administrative documents held by hostel residents.

The time factor

At retirement, migrants tend to have lower pension incomes than their non-migrant contemporaries. Generally not emigrating until their mid-20s or later, labour migrants of the post-WW2 cohort had shorter careers in Europe than their non-migrant co-workers, and by extension at retirement have fewer contributions to pension schemes, be they state- or privately-managed (Bommes 2000). On average, hostel residents were aged 25.5 years at the time of their first entry to France (Gallou

2005).[70] Migrant workers in France are also statistically more vulnerable to work-related accidents and ill-health (Alidra *et al.* 2003), leading to enforced absence from work which likewise diminishes their pension contributions.

While Bommes based his analysis on the German welfare system, his point about the generally shorter pension contribution times which migrants amass holds for other countries, at least in Western Europe. Dörr and Faist (1997) show that in France, Germany, the Netherlands, and the UK, "the time factor – duration of contribution to the pension funds – plays an essential role. Therefore, in all systems migrants are usually discriminated against because they tend to start contributing to the funds later than natives" (Dörr and Faist 1997: 414).[71] This 'time factor' was prominent in the testimony of my own respondents. Two particularities for migrants contributing to the French pension system are: (i) their comparatively late entry into the job market (Gallou 2005); and (ii) the guarantee of a pension at the full rate of 50 percent if retirement is deferred until 65 years, regardless of the level of prior contributions. The latter measure provides a strong incentive for many men to continue working in France until this full-rate pension is secured, as my fieldnotes record:

> The reason Saleem (60, Tiznit, Morocco) hasn't taken retirement yet is because he hasn't got enough trimesters for his pension -- now you need the equivalent of 41 years' contributions. Which clearly means you need to have started work when you were 20 or thereabouts -- something which clearly disfavours these immigrants, who arrived in their mid-20s generally.

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[70] This is explained in part by the "veritable recruitment campaigns" in places of origin which marked the immigration of the hostel dwellers in the 1960s. The recruiters selected young men in the prime of life, who would be rapidly apt for work. Adolescents and very young men were not sought (Gallou 2005: 121).

[71] In Germany, one's pension is "almost exclusively proportionate to the time period contributions are made and the income level during employment" (Dörr and Faist 1997: 413). In the Netherlands, the temporal requirements are particularly unfavourable since 50 years of continuous residence – not contributions – in the Netherlands between the ages of 15 and 65 is required in order to benefit from a flat-rate pension indexed above the minimum wage levels (Balkır and Böcker 2010; Dörr and Faist 1997). "In principle, this affects migrants only, rendering the equalising Dutch flat-rate pension discriminatory in such cases" (Dörr and Faist 1997: 413). The UK system also institutes a flat-rate system, but unlike the Dutch one, this is based on duration of contributions, not residence. However, the required contribution periods for the full rate are lengthy.

Ibrahima (59, Gorgol, Mauritania) is almost 60 years old (although he looks more like 50!) He won't take his pension for another five years in order to benefit from the full rate.

Amadou (64, Goudiri, Senegal) will be taking his pension very shortly, in February of next year. Again, the reason for delaying is in order to benefit from the full rate.

Few men saw many advantages in working beyond this age. When we met, Mehdi (64, Chlef, Algeria) was planning to retire later in the year, when he turned 65. He had heard that if one works past 65 the authorities now add a small bonus to one's pension (*surcote*), but "it's only three percent, so if I have a pension of €1000 per month that's only going to be €30 extra for one more year worked. It's not worth it. It's better to head back home at retirement."

'Sector of employment' factors

Sector of employment can also be a critical vector of systematic disadvantage. Some sectors heavily dependent on migrant labour, such as construction, are particularly exposed to recession and unemployment. On the other hand, migrants working in manufacturing and heavy industry – sectors dominated by large companies where there is more job security – are often the beneficiaries of substantial pensions. Furthermore, such companies tend to observe employment laws, such as declaring employees for tax and social security purposes. Those who work in construction, on the other hand, are at high risk of not being declared to the authorities.[72] The problem of non-declaration, and the missing contributions which this implies, is a feature of much of the grey literature I consulted, as well as interviews with administrative representatives (Acsé 2011; Unafo 2002). Since the French construction sector is characterised by smaller contractors and businesses at high risk of failure during economic downturns, many companies operating in the 1960s and 70s are now defunct. This makes getting redress for lost pension contributions difficult if not

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[72] Note that construction was a prime sector of employment for immigrant workers. One in five workers in this sector in France is an immigrant (Alidra *et al.* 2003).

impossible, because the company and its records no longer exist. Saleem, a Renault factory worker, commented:

> When one works in just one company it's OK but the guys who worked in several companies, it is more difficult because there are some firms which disappear, which don't even exist anymore, that's the thing (Saleem, 60, Tiznit, Morocco).

Certainly, most of my respondents questioned on the matter indicated that those employed in the construction sector were most at risk of not being declared by their employers, and therefore at risk of missing pension contributions. Once again, a timetabling effect operates here, since some men may feel obliged to work to 65 in order to benefit from the full-rate pension. Likewise, given that the French basic pension regime is a contributory system, those who have not always been declared will have paid less money into their pension scheme, resulting in a lower pension at retirement. This situation leads to a dependency on the *minimum vieillesse*, as a senior civil servant pointed out in an interview:

> Then there are the guys who are on the *minimum vieillesse*. It's not that their life has been structured like that, it's the type of employment, the type of employer which counts. In the steel industry, the guy who has worked 30 years in that, 40 years, he isn't on the *minimum vieillesse*. So we have situations which are financially varied and which do not depend in most cases on the working life of the individual. They have often worked for 30 years, but there are cases where they have worked 30 years but they have only been declared to the authorities for five years (...) a few months in one place, a year somewhere else. At any rate it is never clear, especially in the construction industry – there it's a catastrophe. From the point of view of the contributory pensions, the immigrants who worked in construction have often been screwed over. So there we have a particular problem (senior civil servant).

Some of my respondents were indeed missing contributions from their employers, as my fieldnotes record:

> (Kemal, 62, Algeria) Arrived in France at the age of 17 in 1963. He worked for Citroen, Chausson, and other places too. He has a basic regime pension at the full rate, but for the complementary pension,

ARRCO[73] are not accepting his five years on [unemployment benefit].
Also discounted is two years he spent working in a factory. ARRCO are
really giving him the run-around (*l'ARRCO te fait courir*), he repeated
that several times.

(Mehdi, 64, Chlef, Algeria) We talked about his pension contributions
record: there is a year working as a 'temp' which is missing. The year
1989-90, this year is missing on the record. But fortunately he has kept
all his papers, every paper dating from 1979 (the second time he came
to France). He has three bags full of papers in his wardrobe, everything
dating from 1979.

(Issa, 70, Tambacounda, Senegal) He mentioned that there had been a
problem with his longest-served employer, a street-cleaning sub-
contractor. The company has not been "honest"; they have not paid him
his redundancy payment. What complicates things further is that the
company is now bankrupt.

(Mis-) registration factors

Systemic disadvantage also operates at the level of the administrative materials
themselves, in other words the actual documents and proofs of identity which older
hostel residents are required to present in everyday life. The inaccuracies contained
in these documents stem from two sources: either (i) delayed registration of an
individual's details, leading to approximate data being recorded, or (ii) mis-
transcription of names, dates and numbers from one register to another. This has
often occurred when documents dating from the colonial period are transcribed into
Metropolitan French registers (Hamadache 2002).[74]

Both problems have been most accentuated for those who grew up in rural
areas. Generally, the authorities in urban areas under colonial rule were more
attentive in observing administrative formalities:

I was born in 1936, August 1936. At that time, the country [Morocco]
was colonised. For us towndwellers, we knew our real date of birth

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because it was recorded on the civil register. In the countryside, there are many who don't know their date of birth (Hafid, Casablanca).[75]

Turning first of all to delayed registration and approximate records, I discovered during my conversations with Senegalese elders that many men of their generation did not register for birth certificates or Senegalese identity cards (let alone passports) until they had reached the age of 18 or later. Significantly, the catalyst for registering this information came when the plan to emigrate was first envisaged. Interestingly, then, the requirements of inclusion in destination countries lead to new administrative practices in places of origin.

Given the long period which had elapsed since birth for those in this situation, many have no accurate idea of the year in which they were born, let alone the month or date. After estimating the year of birth, the date was often recorded in this way: 31 December 19(--). This has disadvantageous timetabling consequences for when one can start to draw one's pension, as Nadia Hamadache notes:[76]

> At the time of the creation of the civil registries, the French registry officers, having no document indicating the date of birth of those concerned, proceeded on the basis of a probable date of birth and therefore a necessarily approximate one. In the best of cases, they had the year of birth, but without any indication of the month or the day of birth (...) In this case, the pension fund takes into account as date of birth the 31st of December of the year of birth, and this even if the pensioner declares having been born at the start of the year. This practice leads to the loss, for the retired immigrant, of several monthly contributions. It would without doubt be more just, in these cases, to fix as the date of birth the first of July, which would balance things out (Hamadache 2002 : 22).

> I was born in 1931, but I know neither the day nor the month of my birth. There are some people who told me to put the day and month on my papers, but I didn't do it. So, they say that I'm going to lose a year from my retirement, but we didn't know at the time! (Mansour, 80, Agadir, Morocco).[77]

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[75] Source: Ville de Gennevilliers (1994) *Migrations: le temps de la retraite*

[76] It should be noted that this problem is not confined to France. Joanne Cook documents similar problems among older Somali woman who have been granted refugee status in the UK. Many of these women possess no proofs of age. The "insensitivity" of the Home Office and various benefits agencies towards the special circumstances of these women has resulted in their exclusion from the basic state pension mechanism and other old age income benefits (Cook 2010: 264).

[77] Source: Ville de Gennevilliers (1994) *Migrations: le temps de la retraite*

The consequences of these delayed registrations and approximate dates of birth in terms of inclusion in the French welfare system are exemplified in the stories of two respondents, born within a few miles and months of each other (Tiznit district, Morocco, c.1948), as my field notes record:

(...) Badr's birth certificate states that he is four years younger than his actual age! He was born sometime between 1948 and 1949 -- he knows this because his dad married his mum in 1947 and divorced her in 1949! But his father never registered him on a *livret de famille* (see footnote 64 above) or birth certificate (*acte de naissance*). To be eligible for entry into school when he was a lad, you needed a birth certificate, so what his father did was to make him younger so that he could stay at school longer – Mohammed had already had to repeat a year of primary school, and if he had left school at 16 without the leaving certificate, he wouldn't have been able to get a job. So instead, his date of birth was put as 1952.

So on paper, he is only 57, whereas in reality he is at least 60 years old, and I should add that he looks his age a little. French people, he told me, are amazed when he tells them that he doesn't have a day or a month for his birthday, but he tells them that, "it's because of the French – and colonisation – they didn't do their job correctly!"

(...) Lhoussaine arrived in France in 1971. Although his official date of birth is 1st January 1951, he was born before this, although he is less than sure in which year. Perhaps 1948. His father didn't put him on the *livret de famille* because they didn't want the French authorities to know that the children existed, otherwise they would have been liable for extra taxes and the children would have been liable for conscription.

Box 18. Uncertain dates of birth.

Mis-transcriptions

A second type of inaccuracy found in documents concerns the variations and errors of spelling when documents are transcribed, or re-transcribed. Such inaccuracies can be due to simple human errors such as spelling mistakes and inverted first and last names. They have also been caused when the bureaucratic authorities of newly independent states rectified or standardised the civil registries inherited from colonial administrations. What results is lack of congruence between an individual's pre-migration records dating from the colonial era, and the contemporary records held by

the newly independent state. Proving who one is then becomes even more difficult, and the Metropolitan French authorities – confronted with two different sets of documents, "admit serious doubts about the veracity of these documents due to a fear of fraud" (Hamadache 2002: 22). The testimony of Jacques, manager of a local branch of the national old age insurance fund (CNAV), is illuminating of the official mindset:

> They arrived in France like that – Mohammed son of Mohammed, born in 1940 – and then ten years later, he comes back to say "I'm no longer called Mohammed son of Mohammed, but I have a surname and a first name and a date of birth," and you have to start all over again, you have to modify the whole record, and re-matriculate it, and give it a new number, making a fusion of the two, the old one and the new one. So that is when we get all sorts of delays! (Jacques, branch manager, CNAV)

Sometimes, the names and dates given in one set of documents do not match with a second set of documents. One example, taken from my fieldwork in Dembancané, Senegal, would be the surname Cissoko: this could variously be spelled Sissoko, Sissokho, Cissokho, Sisoko and so on. This, along with the inexactitude of dates of birth, has historically caused major issues for Dembancaneans when dealing with the French public administration, and increasingly, it seems, the Senegalese administration. In short, these complications have been a factor in welfare state exclusion, at least temporarily (i.e., as long as it takes to sort out these mis-transcriptions). "In effect, the variations in the re-transcription of names and the changes to surnames singularly complicates the constitution of dossiers" (Acsé 2011). This complication was echoed by Djimé (Dembancané, Senegal):

> France makes things complicated, especially the consulates here, they ask for a ton of papers. Really, papers can block everything, there are many, many, many people who are blocked (...) It becomes more and more difficult, each year. As for me, my children, they haven't had these problems, they have left for France, even my daughters have gone, but there are some who have real difficulties, they have a lot of trouble to put their papers in order. You know that the Senegalese registers, in the past, well, there weren't even any surnames or first names: it's that which makes things complicated (...) They didn't pay attention when writing down the names.

Rectifying these inconsistencies and inaccuracies can be a long and costly process (Samaoli 2007), requiring no little time and money if back-and-forth travel is necessary in order to find and supply various agencies with the correct proofs of identity, or attend court judgements, and so on.

> These situations are frequent and very often require the retired immigrant to complete different tasks, in order to prove that he is really whom he pretends to be. He must notably try to obtain the "certificate of concordance" from the authorities of his country. The point of this document is to specify that an individual, who has two different names, corresponds to one single and unique person. This often results in complicated legal procedures due to the impossibility, most of the time, to find the documents dating from the period in question (Hamadache 2002: 22).

In Badr's case (see Box 18 above), he will get his administrative inaccuracy corrected at some point, but it is a long and complex administrative process: he needs to find twelve witnesses who will vouch that he was born in 1948 (this is stipulated by Moroccan law, since it is a Moroccan birth certificate). Then the case passes to a tribunal and a judge makes a decision. Of course, this is only the Moroccan side of the story, and he is well aware that it would take far longer than his once-a-year month-long holiday in Morocco to arrange, which is why he has not done it yet. It would then be necessary to change all the documentation and records held by the French authorities too.

Self-inflicted disadvantage and timetabling

Other disadvantages are more accurately portrayed as self-inflicted, generating yet more suspicion from administrative authorities. There are three scenarios to cover here: those who earlier lied about their age in order to emigrate to France; those who 'share' their unique, personalised social security number with other, un-documented workers; and those who have unwittingly discarded important proofs of employment and income.

We saw in the previous sub-section that children were not always punctually registered with the colonial authorities, leading to inaccuracies and approximations in terms of dates of birth. Others, as we saw above, became 'younger' for reasons of schooling. In addition to these uncertainties, some individuals and families had a vested interest in falsifying dates of birth, since lying about one's age could facilitate entry to France (Barou 2001).[78] "I came to France young, but there are many from my region who said they were younger than they really were in order to come to France, and now they regret it because they won't get their pension straight away." (Mansour, 80, Agadir, Morocco).[79] While on paper such an individual might be 64, and approaching the age when he can benefit from the full rate pension, in reality he may be 70 years old and still engaged in heavy manual work. Hamid (70, Taroudant, Morocco) recalled that one of his workmates at the car factory was in this category, remarking how tough it was for him towards the end of his career.

A second self-inflicted complication arises when several acquaintances, often members of the same family, use just one set of documents. This is most likely to occur when some of them do not possess valid residence papers and permits for work. To resolve this problem, they lend each other the one valid set of papers, and as a result, each one begins to contribute social security and pensions contributions to the same account. Jacques (branch manager, CNAV) claimed that this tactic was most prevalent in West African hostels where several male members belonging to an extended family from one village may reside, since the postal address always matches. As he explains:

> And we also have big problems with those who are in the hostels. Those in the hostels, they all have similar names, and they borrow the same social security card. They have the same names, they have the same social security number, so they all contribute under the same number, so there are three or four for just one social security number. So we have to find the little bits for each person and that causes enormous problems. That one over there is a case in point! [Jacques points to a large bag of papers: see Figure 19 below]. The whole thing

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[78] Jacques Barou relays the testimony of one such individual: "I came to France in 1963, I must have been 16. But on the papers I declared 26" (Barou 2001: 13).

[79] Source: Ville de Gennevilliers (1994) *Migrations: le temps de la retraite*

is made up of small salaries, a whole career and I have five different names!

Figure 19. One social security number, five different names.

That the papers in the photo are in a plastic bag is not accidental. Hostel residents place a premium on the portability of their affairs, since many have had to travel around France for work, while others have changed hostels during renovations or when rents increased (Dimier 2007). "A whole life is contained in a suitcase" (Germain, outreach officer, social rights charity), and clearly there are limits to the amount of material one can place in a suitcase. There are also clear limits to the number of documents which can be stored in one's room in the hostel, given its minimal size and insufficient storage facilities (see Figure 3 above). As a result, various documents – considered less important than others – have been jettisoned along the way:

> They have one or two suitcases which they have hauled around their whole life. Papers take up room, and they didn't see the importance of them, so they have thrown them out. Often also they said that they

would return home one day, so they haven't seen the importance of such papers (Béatrice, health advisor, migrant welfare association).

However, deciding what can be kept and what can be discarded is not always easy when one does not read French well and when the jargon used by administrative bodies is opaque. "Because of frequent illiteracy and numerous changes of address due to the need to move around for work, retired immigrants have not always kept all of their employment documents necessary for the reconstitution of their career (payslips, work certificates, employers declarations)" (Hamadache 2002: 23). Discarding papers has consequences not only for the basic pension, but also for the complementary pension, especially for those who were working in France prior to 1973. Before this date, it was not obligatory for employers to contribute to their employees' complementary pension schemes. If one has thrown away one's payslips, it is very difficult to trace one's contributions to the latter scheme.

Finally, what is most crucial to note is that these problems (mis-transcriptions, inadvertent destruction of important documents, shared social security numbers, incorrect dates of birth, untraceable former employers, and later entry into the workforce) only become apparent or important at retirement. They are rarely of importance prior to this time. These facets of the paperwork experience bring into focus the timetabling function of welfare state inclusion which I have mentioned at various points in this chapter. Once again, retirement is found to be a critical juncture in material terms, seen in the fact of lower pension incomes for the hostel residents in many cases.

Retirement is also a critical juncture psychologically, in terms of identity. "At the time he comes to compile his pension file, the old immigrant worker has to prove, among other things, his identity" (Hamadache 2002: 22). The idea of an identity switch at retirement was most eloquently expounded by Gilles Desrumaux[80], general-secretary of Unafo, the union of hostel accommodation professionals:

> Once arrived at the age of retirement, you can see that the people must undergo a period of regeneration, to say "why am I staying here, why

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[80] This is not a pseudonym. Given Mr Desrumaux's prominent role in what is a unique organisation in the field of hostel accommodation in France, it was decided that any attempt at anonymity would be futile. Explicit permission has been given by Mr Desrumaux to use this quote.

don't I go back home, what is it which makes me stay in France". Aragon[81] said that to grow older is to draw nearer to a foreign land, and this notion is very beautiful, especially for foreigners who have already once in their lives come to a foreign land. So they come to a second ... a second shore and ... well I was struck once when a migrant worker said to me during a debate "but now at retirement age, I have the impression of finding myself again at age 20 when I first came to France. I am as lost at 60 years of age with my retirement in front of me as I was when I arrived at age 20." Why? Because they have to quit this identity of 'worker' – which is an identity made of flesh and bone, an identity made from work with their body – to an identity of 'papers'. They have to become 'claimants'[82], they have to prove their presence in France, they have to prove their entitlement to a pension. So it is no longer based on the notion of work, but on the notion of pensioner, where the body is no longer the working body but the sick body, signifying loss of autonomy. Thus, it is necessary to construct a new identity of migrant worker, of new justifications for being here, for being over there, for being between here and there.

3.3 Enforcement of Timetabling: strategies and tactics

As noted earlier, retired hostel residents who travel back-and-forth between their hostels in France and their homes in countries of origins have become targets of suspicion for various bureaucratic agencies in France. A clear manifestation of this suspicion and targeting on the part of the authorities is the administrative practice of spot-check passport controls. This is a novel practice in the hostels where I did piloting in the company of Abdou:

> The means of control is the passport, and the fact of demanding passports is new, it didn't use to exist before, three or four years ago, it didn't exist. It's four years since I started [administrative advice sessions] in the hostels, and the problem of the passports has been flagrant this year, last year it started to appear a little... These administrative bodies are controlling more and more the phenomenon – the *aller-retours* (return trips) of the residents are much more controlled now (Abdou, outreach officer, migrant rights association).

The modalities of this practice are very simple. The local Tax Office sends an identical letter to around 40 or 50 named hostel residents in each hostel. The letter

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[81] Louis Aragon (1897-1982), French novelist, poet and journalist.
[82] The expression Gilles Desrumaux uses here is *ayant droits*, literally 'rights-holders.'

requests that the addressee comes to the local office within a certain time period with their passport or a photocopy of their passport. At the office, a member of staff adds up the dates of the customs stamps in the passport for the past year to verify whether the person concerned has spent six months on French territory or not. If it is less than six months, the person concerned risks having his social security suspended and his health insurance card invalidated. Likewise, domicile for the tax declaration is recorded as being outside France. The tax declaration and fiscal domicile documents are important in that they record one's income for the previous year, crucial when it comes to proving eligibility for benefits which are means-tested.

Legally, the checking of passports is regarded as a dubious practice (Hamadache 2005).[83] Currently there is no law which permits enforcement officers to demand an individual's passport. As one local politician who campaigns on the behalf of older migrants put it, "Since when has the French administration been allowed to use foreign documents as a means of control?" Similarly, Ali El Baz, national coordinator of the Association of North African Workers in France (ATMF)[84], has written that "the passport has become a weapon in the hands of the administrators to assign those concerned to a state of house arrest" (El Baz 2007: 106).

Many of the residents themselves are aware of the dubious legality of the passport checks. At a focus group which I facilitated at the Senior Citizens club run by a local branch of ATMF, there was quite a lively debate among the participants about the controls which administrative bodies conduct with the passport: one Algerian man felt that it was quite right that there were controls, "because you have to respect the laws of the country where you live", but the vast majority of the men felt that it was a blatant discrimination. This was echoed by several respondents who argued that the practice amounted to "racial discrimination" and was "completely abnormal." As one of my West African respondents, Issa (70, Tambacounda, Senegal) pointed out indignantly: "if you're a French pensioner, no one asks you for your passport!"

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[83] As one representative of a third sector organisation put it to me, "We would prefer that they carried out these checks in the normal way, but instead they simply request to see the passport."
[84] *Association des travailleurs maghrébins de France.*

Yet some French pensioners may just as easily transgress these minimum residence requirements for cash and in-kind benefits, notably those sun-seeking pensioners who spend some or most of their time in warmer Mediterranean climes. Interestingly, instead of heading for the traditional retirement destinations of the Côte d'Azur or Brittany, more and more French senior citizens are choosing to retire to Morocco: the numbers involved in this recent phenomenon are difficult to measure but some estimates put the figure at 50,000 (Burke 2008; Crumley 2006). Sizeable expatriate elder communities can be found in other francophone former colonies, such as Tunisia and Senegal. Yet in France it is only ever immigrant elders, and particularly those living in hostels, who are targeted in the passport checks. Sandrine, who works at a charity providing legal advice to retired and disabled workers, commented acerbically:

> What's funny is that the passport is only ever demanded from people of foreign nationality. We've never had a French person come to us saying "I went on holiday for three months, I used to get the *minimum vieillesse* and now they've cut my benefit." We've never had a single case of that although we're open to both French and foreigners. (...) It's just foreigners who are checked, so there is all the same a certain suspicion, a certain distrust, vis-à-vis foreigners who break the bank, and there is an aspect ... always this aspect of fraud (Sandrine, legal advisor, migrant rights association).

Despite the controversy attached to the passport controls, the representatives of various benefits agencies whom I spoke to are quite determined to maintain their "vigilance", if not ruthlessness, on this issue, as the following extract from an interview with Jacques (branch manager, CNAV) shows:

Jacques: I do many investigations, because they don't live here. They get themselves domiciled at a hostel, or at a friend's place.
AH: And how do you do these investigations?
Jacques: Well I make a request to our legal department. I send an investigation request along with the aim of the request, and I ask that they check if the person concerned is indeed resident in France as they say they are. So this investigator is going to visit that person, is going to arrange a meeting with the person, and in the meantime the investigator goes to the tax office to see if there is a tax declaration which has been made. He also goes to the health insurance fund to see if there have been any healthcare reimbursements, so he checks a certain number of things (...) And when the person concerned is in a meeting with the investigator, if he comes

with his passport of course, we look at the dates of entry and exit. So it's a fairly rigorous check all the same! And I make lots of rejections. Because they aren't there! (...) It's two years now that we have been very sensitised to fraud, and all the agencies, be it the Family Benefits Fund, the Disability Agency, the National Old Age Insurance Fund, we are all aware of fraud, and so we are very, very, very vigilant! (...) They are cunning but we are cunning too. They don't know all the tricks.

AH: And so, this fraud awareness, it's quite recent?

Jacques: Let's just say that we have always done this, we have always been sensitised to this, but it is at the level of the other agencies which were less sensitised than us.

Box 20. Excerpt from interview with Jacques (branch manager, CNAV) 20 July 2009.

'Tactics' of territoriality: official and unofficial ruses to avoid timetabling

Michel de Certeau's distinction between *strategy* and *tactics* can be readily applied to the problematic at hand. In de Certeau's vocabulary, the former implies the formal, the fixed, the bounded, the proper, the mapped, whereas the latter designates that which is illicit, informal, mobile (de Certeau 1984). This distinction is above all about power, as Tim Cresswell relates in *On the Move: mobility in the modern world*:

> the weapons of the strong are strategies – classification, mapping, delineation, division (...) The weak on the other hand, are left with furtive movement to contest the territorialization of urban space (...) The tactic is consigned to using the space of the powerful in cunning ways (...) the tactic is the ruse of the weak – the mobile drifting through the rationalized spaces of power (Cresswell 2006: 47-48).

Administrators at the various benefits agencies seek to territorially fix and temporally timetable the marginal populations in the hostels through means such as passport checks, tax declarations, and other *strategies* described above. In response, hostel residents, and, to a certain extent, the hostel companies, respond with various *tactics* which subvert the intentions of the public powers and which are difficult to control. These tactics, as will be described below, include: the shared room system instituted by Adoma; mail-box checks; sub-letting of rooms; and banking proxies.

Ironically it can be argued that the hostel companies, like their ageing clienteles, are also timetabled by social security agencies. The Family Benefits Fund

(*Caisse d'allocations familiales*), which supervises payments of housing benefit, makes it incumbent upon hostel managers to indicate any vacancy of over four months (the minimum residence requirement to receive housing benefit is eight months). Yet this is very difficult for managers, as residents do not always indicate they are leaving, and managers are not always present to witness such comings-and-goings. If the Family Benefits Fund finds that the residence conditions have not been observed, housing benefit is suspended and processes are set in motion to recuperate the sum paid in error. In practice, it is the hostel companies which are required to pay back the overpaid sums, as housing benefit is paid directly to the accommodation provider, not the tenant. This implies a major financial loss for hostel companies. According to one Adoma employee, the Family Benefits Fund is entitled to demand up to two years of arrears (which can easily be €2000).

Anxious to reduce to a minimum the recuperations for housing benefit demanded by the Family Benefits Fund, since 1997 several hostel companies (notably Adoma) have instituted an innovative system enabling residents to keep a room in a hostel without the constraint of paying for it all year round, known as the 'shared' or 'alternating' rooms system (*chambres partagées* or *chambres alternées*). Put simply, a room is reserved for the use of two to four named individuals, who each occupy it in turn for a set period. The rent they pay is proportional to the duration of residence in the hostel, thereby avoiding the need to pay a year's rent for only six or seven months of actual residence in the hostel – which was what some were forced to do in the past:

> For the room, I will pay five or six months for nothing. I know some people who do not stay, but who hold onto their room for administrative purposes, quite simply to have a postal address. It's that which leads to people being blocked. The only solution is to keep the room. Those who have the [housing benefit] pay less. Otherwise, it's very difficult. (Hafid, 70s, Casablanca, Morocco).[85]

Many people I spoke to had positive things to say about this initiative. From the perspective of the public powers, as one senior civil servant put it, "this scheme is to be encouraged." Denis, a hostel manager, commented:

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[85] Source: Ville de Gennevilliers (1994) *Migrations: le temps de la retraite*

They get a letterbox, and they can continue to receive all their mail, their address is here. And so, they stay a certain amount of time in France but on the other hand they no longer get [housing] benefits. But anyway, it at least allows them to have proof of address, to have an address if there is a problem, or anything, then they can come back.

However, while generally welcomed by charities which work with hostel populations, the scheme's implementation has not been without difficulty. Jacques Barou notes that some older residents are suspicious of the management's motives in this regard, given the alleged collusion of hostel companies with benefits agencies during passport checks (Barou 2007). A further difficulty in implementing the 'alternating rooms' mechanism lies in the very timetabling which the scheme demands, requiring considerable coordination to implement smoothly:

The *va-et-vient* presupposes a very rigorous management on the part of the hostel wardens, and constant reminders of the rules of operation are indispensable: such as advance notice of the date of departure at least a month in advance, the date of return, and the length of stay. Despite this, the movements are subject to numerous vagaries (concerning their wives, a health problem, lack of resources) (Unafo 2002: 31).

The scheme requires that participating residents give two to three weeks notice before they return to France. Hostel managers need at least two – if not more – rooms vacant and available at any one time, because people often come back to the hostel before they said they would, or the current incumbent falls ill and cannot give up his room as planned. Hostel manager Denis noted: "Sometimes there are snags, yes. All it takes is for one of them to be to here and then fall ill and the other arrives and then they find themselves together" (i.e., in the same room).

The 'shared rooms' scheme is not suitable for everyone. Some prefer their own rooms – they might like the view, or they get on well with their neighbours – and they do not like to go back to their families for a while and then find that they are in a different room upon their return to France. They are not keen on giving up their room, even though it means either 1) paying for it without using it (a waste of money and/or benefit fraud if in receipt of housing benefit), or 2) subletting it (which is

illegal). The idea of feeling at home in one's room and not wishing to give it up was stressed by Béatrice, a health advisor for a migrant welfare association:

> The room in the hostel is their house here in France, and old people, they have to have their bearings. And if we put them in a room which is not the one in which they have lived, where they have their things, it's a bit like ... not going back to one's house but rather like going back to a hotel. It's psychologically very difficult for these people. There are some places where it works (...) There are some hostels, I've been there, where it's four people who are from the same village, or from the same family. That is to say that it doesn't bother them, it doesn't trouble them to come there after a cousin has been before, or the neighbour who comes from the same village. When it is people you don't know, or people with whom you don't have a family or village tie, it's more difficult, it's like a hotel and that is difficult when you are old. Furthermore, it gets complicated – it's all the same something which is very complicated – namely that very often, when they do the back-and-forth trips, they decide to leave when the plane ticket isn't so expensive, when there is a religious holiday, or a marriage or when there is someone at home who is ill. So they don't plan it in advance.

As noted above, the particular advantage of the alternating rooms scheme is that it allows a resident practising the *va-et-vient* to keep a postal address in France. The great advantage in having a permanent postal address in one's name is that when away from France, one can ask a friend or relative to regularly check one's letterbox for mail, and if a letter looks official, get them to open it. "It's not so difficult, the paperwork, it's not too difficult, if there is someone who can let you know, then you reply straightaway, no problem." (Issa, 70, Tambacounda, Senegal) A further reason, therefore, which makes it difficult to programme the shared rooms scheme lies in this solidarity which exists between neighbours. According to Dr Ismail, an Algerian geriatric specialist who volunteers as a medical advisor in several Parisian hostels, "This solidarity [among the residents] continues, even if it is diminished in other domains." I myself was asked during my time as a live-in resident to look out for any mail which might end up in my letterbox addressed to the man who used to have my room: this individual was back in North Africa at the time. Family too can play a role here: residents can give their key to a relative – a nephew for example – who lives nearby. I also saw this in several hostels where I undertook participant observation:

youngsters and other obvious 'outsiders' would come to the hostel and open absent residents' letterboxes.

Thanks to this mail-box tactic, residents can be forewarned to return to France, in order to satisfy the requisite administrative task. It is this which has frequently frustrated benefit agencies in the past when they have attempted to do residence checks:

> The checks which the Family Benefits Fund organises to verify the occupation of housing for at least eight months out of twelve [i.e., to check for housing benefit fraud] comes up against the practice which consists, for the retired foreign residents, of returning to France by any means necessary in order to prove they really are in residence (Hamadache 2005: 11).

As mentioned, some residents do not like to give up their room: this is more likely the longer someone has occupied a given room, and I met several residents who had been in the same room for 30 years or more. Of course, one can pay for one's room all year round, but this implies paying for something which one does not use. Even if housing benefit is factored in, it never covers the entire rent: there is always something to pay from one's own pocket each month.

One solution to this waste of resources is to sub-let the room, although this tactic is not permitted by the hostel management companies. Nonetheless, it occurs, at least to a marginal extent, in most hostels (Sonacotra 2006). This was certainly the basis of an accusation made at the hostel where I stayed as a live-in resident: an anonymous letter alleging that some residents were profiting from sub-letting and claiming benefits illegally when in actual fact they were resident in North Africa most of the year was circulated at the end of 2008. Copies of this malicious letter were sent to the hostel management, the Family Benefits Fund, the police and the local tax office. Unfortunately I have not been given permission by the hostel warden to reproduce this letter: suffice it to say that its effect was to make many residents very anxious about the prospect of an imminent passport control by the authorities. As noted in Chapter Two, this meant that some residents were particularly wary of speaking to an outsider like me, especially someone who was likely to ask them questions about administrative problems and mobility patterns.

The final way to avoid timetabling discussed here – although not a 'tactic' in the strict sense of the word since it is not an informal practice – pertains to banking proxies. I heard numerous rumours during my fieldwork to the effect that if pensions were transferred, banks or other financial authorities in the place of origin would take a sizeable cut in transfer fees and taxes. There is no truth in these persistent allegations.[86] These allegations may also reflect a faith in the French banking system and a certain lack of confidence in financial institutions in home countries. Rather than closing their French bank accounts and transferring the funds to a bank in their country of origin once retired, many residents place their trust in the French banking system and prefer to travel back to France from time to time to withdraw money or for other banking operations.

One tactic to avoid the timetabling of the banks – such as when withdrawing large sums of money or arranging an overdraft – is to entrust the running of one's bank account to a proxy, such as a close friend or relative. This was a tactic practised by several older men in Dembancané. Jaabé (Dembancané, Senegal) knows many pensioners who prefer to have their French pension paid into their French bank accounts, and then have a friend or younger relative act as a proxy for them, to send them money by international mandate, arriving at the post office in Dembancané a week or so later. For example, Lassana (Dembancané, Senegal) acts as proxy for three people. These three men have not completely settled back in the village, preferring to do the *va-et-vient*, primarily for health reasons. Likewise Djimé (Dembancané, Senegal), noted that in 1999, following his retirement from France, to 2002, he entrusted a proxy on his bank account to his brother, who was still resident in France. His brother died in 2002, and in 2003, Djimé was obliged to return to France to withdraw all his money and close the account down. He then applied to have his pension transferred to a bank in Senegal, so now his pension arrives at the post office in Dembancané. This trip to France in 2003 was the one and only time Djimé has returned to France since his retirement.

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[86] It is to be underlined that the standard contributory pension is fully exportable. What is cut is the ASPA, which is part of the same payment as the standard contributory pension, i.e., it is not paid separately; it is paid at same time by the same agency (CNAV) (every month) and features on the same pension statement. The complementary pension, on the other hand is paid separately, every three months and by a different agency (ARRCO or AGIRC.).

Conclusion

Section 4.1 gave empirical examples showing how temporal and territorial demands of administrative inclusion in the welfare state lead to the timetabling of hostel residents' presence in France, giving rise to back-and-forth mobility at retirement. Three empirical manifestations were identified which affect hostel residents: the old-age pension regime, the conditions of regular and effective residence for cash and in-kind benefits, and the annual tax declaration. While such temporal and territorial requirements of inclusion are unavoidable features of life for anyone living in advanced welfare states, I argued in section 4.2 that certain problematic elements of migrant workers' formal (i.e., documented) biographies lead to systemic disadvantage vis-à-vis non-migrant citizens.

Critically, these problematic paperwork elements – which include mis-transcribed identity documents, inadvertent discarding of proofs of entitlement, shared social security numbers, incorrect dates of birth, untraceable former employers, and later entry into the workforce – only become significant at retirement, lending credence to the idea that retirement is a critical juncture in hostel residents' lives. Retirement is a juncture secondly insofar as it heralds an end to the sedentary constraint of participation in the labour market, enabling residents to spend more time with their families back home. But these nomadic tendencies at retirement are dubious in the eyes of French administrators, who suspect the residents of not observing the minimum durations of residence required to be eligible for welfare inclusion. This, together with their suspect proofs of identity and unreliable personal documents, leads to renewed attention on hostel residents' administrative situation in France. The authorities seek to enforce timetabling and control residents' comings-and-goings. In response, residents devise tactics to counteract and resist such bureaucratic control of their movements.

Referring back to the theories presented in Chapter One, two issues need to be accounted for: (i) the non-standard characteristics of hostel residents' (formal, documented) biographies, and (ii) their suspect mobility at retirement. The explanatory model which seems best equipped to account for these empirical phenomena is the social systems approach of Niklas Luhmann.

In Luhmann's conception of society, the role and logic of the national welfare state is to act as the "central moderator of relations of inclusion by producing occasions and dispositions for inclusion and by processing and ordering the consequences of exclusion" (Amiraux 2000: 246). Welfare states do this by striving to institutionalise the individual lifecourse – particularly during the formative years – in order to produce individuals with biographies which are relevant and expectable for organisations in society (especially employers in the economy). Immigrants, however, tend to have non-standard biographies, in terms of administrative records, educational qualifications, training, and so on.

Secondly, Luhmann argues that the various social systems which constitute society (e.g., the systems of law, economics, education, health and so on) are increasingly unconcerned by demarcations of territory, with the sole but critical exception of the political system, the basic organisational unit of which is the national welfare state. The national welfare state of the political system, unlike most social systems, retains a territorial, segmentary form (Halfmann 2000, 2005). What this means in practice is that the inclusion (and exclusion) of individuals in the political system is territorially marked, through the comparatively modern institution of citizenship. In this schema, the cross-border mobility of migrants and mobile citizens has to be controlled:

> From the point of view of the state, welfare policies are meant to impose a territorial criterion on the politics of inclusion in the political system and even of the moderation of inclusion in other function systems. This includes the attempts of the nation state to restrict the welfare state benefits to its citizens or to demand the consumption of the benefits on the state territory (Halfmann 2000: 41).

Very clearly in the above examples, we see that the French authorities have actively sought to restrict consumption of welfare to French territory, leading to hostel residents' 'timetabled' back-and-forth trips at retirement, in order to meet the territorial and temporal demands of welfare inclusion. The next chapter will document similar trends in regard to healthcare. Like administrative and paperwork requirements, healthcare also leads to timetabling, with trips being 'timetabled' to

coincide with various medical appointments. Similarly, hostel residents' unexpected biographies result in certain systemic disadvantages in the domain of health.

4. Home / Sick: the 'health–migration order'

> AH: You were saying before about [the recruitment process for the French mines], that there was a medical at Ain Borja [near Casablanca], and that there were nine doctors?
>
> Jawad: Oh yes, nine doctors, yes, we took all sorts of tests, weight, eyesight, teeth
>
> AH: Oh really, even teeth?
>
> Jawad: Oh yes, blood tests, x-rays – for the lungs – oh yes a full physical examination, no mistake (...) They made you take five kilos – two and a half kilos in each hand – they put you on the scales, and they position you like this [Monsieur stands up and extends his arms to the sides] . You see, the people are looking at the calibre of the applicant, to see whether he can take the strain (...) They don't take just anybody. They look at everything, everything (...) If you are in good health, they take you. And if there's something missing, they say "no, it's not worth it" and they don't take you. Oh yes, it's not like "On you go, worker! Come to France!" We entered under the Service of Immigration, we did all the tests. In good health, no illnesses, nothing (...) a worker, a good one, you know.
>
> AH: So they took the strongest ones?
>
> Jawad: Oh yes, they didn't take idlers. Someone who's ill, he's going to come? – no no no.
>
> Interview with Jawad (69, Taroudant, Morocco)

Health orders migration in three principal ways. As can be seen from the epigraph above, for Jawad and others, *good* health was a pre-condition for coming to France in the first place. Scholars have long observed such selection effects, giving rise to what is termed the 'healthy migrant' hypothesis (Abraido-Lanza *et al.* 1999; Marmot *et al.*1984; Razum *et al.* 2000).[87] Later in life, at retirement age, health again orders migration, but this time it is the fact of *poor* health which conditions their movements to France, in order to receive healthcare. Hostel residents do not differ markedly from the rest of the elderly population in France as regards health conditions (a higher incidence of type-2 diabetes excepted). What does distinguish hostel residents however is their earlier-than-average experience of health problems.

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[87] Other scholars speak of a migrant mortality paradox: in many contexts, migrants have lower mortality rates than non-migrants, despite the former belonging to the lowest socio-economic groups (Darmon and Khlat 2001; Markides and Coreil 1986).

As a consequence many hostel residents have, over the years, developed strong relationships of trust in French medical services. As with administrative requirements in the previous chapter, maintaining inclusion in the French healthcare system is an overriding concern for older hostel residents, and one which timetables their presence in France and provokes the *va-et-vient* movement which is at the heart of our research question. However, back-and-forth migration itself can have a negative impact on health: this is the third way in which health and migration interact, underlining the complex inter-relationship between migration and health. I term this inter-relationship the 'health–migration order.'

Just as was found in the previous chapter, the men's unexpected biographies have a bearing on their interactions with the relevant authorities, in this case health professionals and care organisations. Such non-standard biographical features include: premature ageing due to difficult working conditions and work accidents; language barriers in the patient-carer relationship; and lack of family entourage to provide informal care, meaning that an extra duty of care falls upon formal care providers. Finally, we saw in the previous chapter how an identity based on papers can compensate for the loss of the identity of 'worker' which occurs at retirement. In the concluding pages to this chapter, I speculate as to whether an alternative identity based on illness can play a similar 'compensatory' role, functioning as a justification for non-return, especially when justifying this decision to the family remaining back home.

4.1 Health and Mobility in Later Life

Access to healthcare is a major brake on definitive return for the older hostel residents. Very frequently hostel residents would justify their decision not to return definitively on health grounds. One Algerian hostel resident, when I told him that I was doing a study on retired people living in migrant worker hostels, hurriedly declared: "We are only here for healthcare." Hamid (70, Taroudant, Morocco) was very firm about why the older North Africans are still here: "the only thing is healthcare". If they could get healthcare free of charge back in Morocco, through

social security, then they would be back there more often. Saleem (60, Tiznit, Morocco) had this to say:

> There are people who are old, they need care, it is for this reason that each time the people do the *va-et-vient*. They want to stay [back home], if there was the advantage of social security like there is in other countries there would be nobody who comes here to France – at any rate there are people who have serious illnesses, but they come here [to France] every three months or so.

That this coming-and-going at retirement is motivated at least in part by healthcare provision in France is a narrative upon which everyone is in agreement - healthcare professionals, hostel management, union delegates, jurists, civil servants, migrants' associations, embassy officials, and of course residents themselves. I did not hear one dissenting voice during two years of fieldwork. The overarching narrative is that the men are in France when they are sick and in need of treatment, and then when they are well enough they return home to be with their families and to benefit from the emotional support that the family offers. This narrative can be summed up in the chapter's binary title – 'Home / Sick' – a formulation which tries to encapsulate this back-and-forth health strategy.

Before continuing, two disclaimers are in order. Firstly, as noted, many hostel residents were very ready to talk about general healthcare needs as a rationale in their return and residence decisions. However, there was an overall reticence to discuss specific health problems in detail. This reticence means that the balance of testimony is mildly biased towards the voices of healthcare professionals, to the slight detriment of hostel residents' voices. This applied to all health issues, but particularly mental ill health. Saleem, the president of the Residents' Committee in his hostel, put it in these words:

> As for me, I'm going to try in the future to propose to the management that from time to time – and it's not easy – to have someone who comes here, as a psychiatrist to discuss things with people. But it's not easy (...) everyone has a secret, for any person his problems are his secrets, he doesn't want everyone to know that he ... he has problems (Saleem, 60, Tiznit, Morocco).

Given that mental health is less prominent in residents' testimonies, I will not discuss this issue in detail in the main body of the chapter. Instead, the theme of mental health will be treated more speculatively in the conclusion.

Secondly, it is important to acknowledge that this *va-et-vient* for health can continue only so long as the men are in a fit state to travel. Once a certain threshold of dependency has been reached, regular coming-and-going must cease and the men are forced to make a choice about where they will see out the rest of their days. This decision clearly is related to their health needs, but I will not discuss this decision in the current chapter. Instead, I will maintain a distinction between pre- and post-dependency, postponing discussion of the latter situation until Chapter Seven. While this distinction may appear somewhat artificial in the light of conventional conceptions of health, the decision to write two discrete chapters conforms to hostel residents' own perceptions of their health.

Insofar as conventional conceptions go, for the World Health Organisation (WHO) "health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity".[88] This definition has been explicitly incorporated by the hostel management companies and external partners following the realisation that a significant fraction of the clientele is ageing *in situ*, some with substantial geriatric care needs (Adoma n.d.). The following excerpt is from an interview with Vivianne, a geriatric doctor:

> Because when people speak about health, they speak often only about illnesses. I'm a geriatric doctor; in geriatric care we have a model for taking care of the person in their entirety. And health, it's something – it's at one and the same time – well, absolutely the WHO definition, a state of complete well-being, physical, mental and social. That is to say that there is indeed taking care of illness, with the hospital, the doctor, nurses etc, but there is also indeed taking care of their, yes, mental health. And then there is also assistance in daily tasks. When one ages, one is not necessarily ill, but one can have difficulties with mobility, difficulties completing daily tasks.

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88 Preamble to the Constitution of the World Health Organization as adopted by the International Health Conference, New York 19-22 June 1946. http://www.who.int/about/definition/en/print.html [accessed 25/3/2010]

Yet the older hostel residents did not always see it this way. Health practitioners frequently mentioned the disinclination on the part of the hostel residents to be helped in everyday tasks. Asked whether it was correct to postulate a distinction between medical and geriatric care, Sonia (geriatric care coordinator, Val d'Oise) affirmed that this is valid, quite simply because in terms of medical care, the residents "will get themselves cared for, they know the way to the doctor or the hospital, they know the steps to follow." On the other hand, as regards geriatric care services, "they hardly ever make use of these".

For the older hostel residents, health means the sensation of physical pain and the presence of somatic symptoms. One older Moroccan remarked that while French pensioners are very well cared for, North Africans "don't have the same culture" of going to the doctor at the first sign of a health problem. Indeed, from my conversations with healthcare professionals, it became apparent that most older hostel residents tend to have recourse to medical care only in cases of acute ill health and pain. "They let the healthcare side of things slide, it's rather marginal with them", notes Abdou (outreach officer, migrant rights association). They wait until the last minute, when they are "really troubled" before getting checked out (Unafo 2002: 49). Béatrice (health advisor, migrant welfare association) concurred: "Why do they seek medical care at the very last moment? (...) They came for work, so as long as they were in a state to work, they worked. To be sick meant to be in one's bed with a fever and not be able to move."

Residents' state of health

The first thing to be noted regarding the health conditions of the older men living in the migrant worker hostels is the lack of reliable national level statistics (Hadjiat and Fevotte 2008: 331). A geriatric doctor at Adoma admitted that there was very little data she could draw on with confidence: "In France we are very behind when it comes to studies concerning more specific populations like this (...) There are many rumours which circulate (...) which are not based on any scientific study." This was confirmed in a telling way by her counterpart at the second-largest hostel company

Aftam, revealing the primacy of financial and administrative aspects in the hostel manager's vocation:

> It's more that we feel the tendencies (...) there is nothing on the medical aspects in the end because they are people who are at home [*chez eux*]. So we're not supposed to enter into their private life, to meddle with the health aspects. The only thing that we can have, possibly, is if ever a report is sent back by the hospital, but it is very rare. So we have few elements to go on, concerning the residents themselves. *In fact, we're more likely to have their tax file, to be honest!* (laughs) [emphasis added]

Furthermore, there are legal constraints in France on the type of data which can be collected, such as ethnic markers, meaning that it is not possible to compare hostel residents with the general population. Despite these obstacles, healthcare professionals on the ground tend to observe the same types of illness affecting residents and non-residents alike. These include: problems relating to eyesight, hearing, dental health, rheumatology, arthritis, back pain, cardio-vascular issues, gastro-enterology, urinary infections, and respiratory disease (Adoma 2007; Aftam 2006; Migrations Santé 2003; Sonacotra 2005b).

With the exception of diabetes, the older hostel residents appear to be no different from the rest of the elderly population in terms of ill health (Unafo 2002). Dr Ismail (geriatric doctor) confirmed that "it's more or less the same schema as everywhere else in the world", listing (i) cardiovascular conditions (high blood pressure, heart attacks) and (ii) "disability" linked to work accidents (especially those to do with the back and the knees).

The lack of reliable data however means that no ranking of health issues can be carried out. Instead, three important observations can be made. Firstly, what is most apparent for these actors is the general degradation in health which afflicts the hostel residents over the age of 55.[89] As Anne-Marie, a crisis social worker at a hospital in the northern Paris suburbs, put it, "they have let a whole load of things slide (...) there is a whole list of factors which brings them to hospital, generally they don't arrive for just one thing only." Residents themselves note a general degrading

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[89] This situation is termed *altération d'état général* (AEG) in French gerontological care.

in terms of health. The words of Saleem (60, Tiznit, Morocco) are characteristic in this regard:

> It's fine, I'm in good health, but each time I feel a negative side (...) I went to see the doctor, he gave me the treatment [for a prostate problem], but I don't know -- what it might become or if it is going to become another illness, you just don't know. Because we -- we're beginning to deteriorate inside, even if you feel OK like this, you don't know what life holds for you tomorrow.

A second factor to register is the prevalence of diabetes in the hostels. While there are no nationwide statistics for diabetes, in a study of residents over 60 years of age in Adoma hostels in the Rhône region, the incidence of diabetes was at 15.5%, against 8 percent in the rest of the population over 60 (Hadjiat and Fevotte 2008). The role of ethnicity in the prevalence of type-2 diabetes is important and has been widely reported in the epidemiological literature (Carulli *et al.* 2005; Riste *et al.* 2001). Dr Ismail commented that diabetes is a feature, especially for the older North Africans that he sees. Its prevalence among the hostel population is linked to diet in particular, as well as lack of exercise following retirement. Diabetes comes with the end of activity and is associated with the ingestion of fat. "From about the age of 55-58-60, they eat, sleep, eat, sleep."

The third key element to note is premature ageing. Vivianne (geriatric doctor) recounted that when she first joined Adoma she was "surprised to see that [in the company] we started speaking of old people from the age of 55." Many other professionals mentioned 55 years of age as a milestone, and numerous studies use 55 years and above as the basis for their sampling frame (e.g., Migrations Santé 2003). While not all are in agreement on the significance of the age of 55[90], what is clear is that immigrants in general experience dependency at a significantly earlier age than native-born French elders. The average age of dependency among retired people originally from North Africa is 75.3 years, versus 82 years for people born in France. For the age bracket 60 to 69 years, the proportion of dependent people born in France is 1.3%, against 4.5 percent for those born in North Africa (Hadjiat and Fevotte

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[90] Gerontologists have long realised that measuring age on a chronological basis alone is problematic, insofar as this neglects biological, cognitive and social dimensions of ageing (Bradley 1996; Markides and Mindel 1987).

2008). These differences are attributed to migrant workers' exposure to difficult working conditions and work accidents. It is important to realise that residents' premature ageing is biographically 'unexpected' from the service providers' point of view, meaning that hostels have been overlooked as a locus of healthcare interventions in the past. We will return to this point later.

This said, the phenomenon of premature ageing is not uniform amongst all older migrants in the hostels, a point stressed by Gilles Desrumaux, secretary-general of Unafo, a union for social housing professionals:

> The old migrant workers aren't all at a loss of autonomy at the age of 50 - I know people who are 90 and who are as fit as a fiddle, never been to the doctors. And there are people at 55, afflicted with a respiratory infection, who are in such a state that they look 70 instead of under 60.

What is critical for Mr Desrumaux is the particular sector of employment, not the fact of being an 'old' immigrant *per se*. "Some illnesses are quite common, notably everything which is linked to mobility, following work accidents, things like that. Also you find everything connected to respiratory illness for people who were exposed on the building sites." Thus, as was seen in the previous chapter, specific biographical features – in this case sector of employment – have a bearing on the hostel residents' situation. It is important to highlight the prevalence of work accidents among the population of hostel elders. While foreigners make up 6.8 percent of the workforce in France, they account for 13.1 percent of work accidents. More specifically in the construction industry, where around one in five workers is a foreigner, their work accident rate is 30.2 percent (Alidra *et al.* 2003). At the regional level, a survey by Migrations Santé underlines the serious risk of work accidents among this population. This survey indicates that 39 percent have already had a work accident, of which 30 percent continue to feel the after-effects. 17 percent receive an invalidity pension, and 10.6 percent are recognised as disabled workers by Cotorep, the government agency dedicated to handicapped workers (Migrations Santé 2003).

4.2 Relations of Trust with French Healthcare Services timetable the 'Va-et-Vient'

Given the earlier-than-average incidence of health problems in their medical histories, it is not surprising that many hostel residents have built up strong relationships with GPs and other health professionals over the long term. According to a study by the NGO Migrations Santé, an "immense majority" of residents are registered with a GP whom they see several times per year (El Moubaraki and Bitatsi Trachet 2006: 88). My analysis of this data shows that GP registration rates hover between 60 and 80%. This was affirmed by a geriatric consultant at Adoma: "the residents in general have a great confidence in the French healthcare system, be it their doctors, be it the hospital. They have a great confidence and a great respect." This is echoed in an article by Fanny Schaeffer:

> It is understood then that migrants, who have arrived at the age of retirement, have established a privileged relationship with their doctors, and more generally with the entire French health system. Indeed, to any elderly person who is used to certain care, certain medication, there is a risk that treatment will be rejected, if administered suddenly and under different forms and conditions. Moreover, the fear of not being correctly cared for in Morocco, linked to the generalised distrust towards the Moroccan health system and to a well-established medical relationship in France, is an equally important brake on definitive return (Schaeffer 2001: 170).

Trust in GPs is evidenced also in residents' care preferences in case of illness. 64 percent consult their GP as soon as they feel ill, with only 11 percent opting for hospital A&E care, and 10 percent making the local pharmacy their first port of call (El Moubaraki and Bitatsi Trachet 2006: 88). By contrast, Sandrine and Elvira from the crisis social work team strongly disputed these figures and were adamant that most patients they see from the hostels do not have a GP. The perspective of Sonia, a geriatric care coordinator in Val d'Oise county, was more nuanced in this regard. She identified two broad groups: a majority who are monitored following detection of some chronic illness, and then a marginal minority who "let themselves go completely". It appears to be the latter group who are seen by the crisis social work team.

For those who do benefit from regular monitoring, appointments with doctors and consultants have a strong influence on the timing and duration of their back-and-forth movements. This is the first way in which healthcare has the potential to 'timetable' hostel residents' return trips. Lassana, a native of Dembancané who works in Paris and is yet to retire, acts as banking proxy for three retired former migrants who have returned to the village. They have not completely settled back in the village just yet and are still in the *va-et-vient*, primarily for health reasons. They remain domiciled principally in France, they have their pensions paid in France, but they are often back in the village. In Lassana's words, "they prefer to not break with their doctors and their medical appointments."

Nasser, a retired hostel resident from Nador (Morocco), followed a similar strategy, spending on average nine months of the year back in Morocco. When I spoke to him, he told me that he was due to go back to Morocco very soon, but would be returning to France for a doctor's appointment on the 9th of October. Similarly, Tariq (66, Tlemcen, Algeria) explained that he was scheduling his next trip to Algeria around his next doctor's appointment, when he hoped to get the all-clear for a prostate condition for which he had recently undergone surgery. The following excerpt from my interview with Issa (70, Tambacounda, Senegal) touches upon many of the themes noted immediately above – preference for French medical infrastructure; relationships of trust with staff; and the timetabling effect of medial appointments:

AH: Ok, you mentioned earlier the necessity to come to France, for healthcare, so you have had a few health worries recently?
Issa: Yes, because, health problems – we talked about this yesterday – when I'm ill there's good healthcare in France, they care for you well, there's no problem, the hospital is good, the drugs are good, there's everything you need.
AH: Ok, and the quality of care is better here than in Senegal?
Issa: It's better, it's not the same, because [the doctors] have the means here, they know the job well, it's not like in Africa.
AH: Oh really?
Issa: No, because they have the means here, the machines are good, the right drugs, all that, they have the capacity. I find that for care, here is better.
AH: So the clinics and hospitals in Senegal, it's not very – it's not a good quality?
Issa: Good quality establishments do exist, but they lack the resources. The only thing is that they lack the resources, the drugs aren't the same, the equipment, the material isn't the same.

AH: Ok, yes, it's clear that in France, it's a very good system.
Issa: Yes, it's strong.
AH: (...) And so at this moment in time, you feel in good health?
Issa: Yes, but there's something not quite right all the same. But tomorrow, even tomorrow, I have an appointment -
AH: Tomorrow? Ah I see.
Issa: - at the Hospital [in town.]

Box 21. Issa's views on healthcare

The second way in which healthcare has the potential to 'timetable' hostel residents' return trips concerns eligibility for state-subsidised health insurance – the CMU (*Couverture de maladie universelle*). Dr Ismail again was informative on this subject. On the medical level, if the person is away from France for more than six months, he forfeits the rights he has gained under the CMU to subsidised healthcare.[91] However, provided the individual returns to France within three years[92], the person remains eligible for the CMU, but will need to request a "re-opening" of his or her rights to the CMU. If a health problem arises during the sometimes lengthy administrative processing of this request, "the person may find themselves without medical cover for two or three months, and as a result they are obliged to pay for everything", according to Dr Ismail. The calamitous situation which ensues for those foreigners who unwittingly no longer have rights to the CMU and end up in hospital[93] has prompted the staffing of crisis social workers in many hospitals in order to anticipate any potential financial problems from the outset of treatment, so that patients do not find themselves in massive debt unavoidably.

The availability in places of origin of medicines prescribed for chronic conditions also has a bearing on the frequency and regularity of residents' back-and-forth trips. This is the third element of medical timetabling. The lack of medicines and drugs available back home was a particular feature of respondents' accounts. Germain (outreach officer, social and legal rights charity) noted, "Some say that they

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91 The condition of "stable residence", one of the eligibility criteria for the CMU, is fulfilled if the individual resides at least six months and one day in France per calendar year (see Decree n° 2007-354 of 14 March 2007; see also Grandguillot 2009.

92 An absence from France exceeding three months automatically invalidates one's residence permit. This document is essential for proving the "regularity" of one's status in France, a second criteria for eligibility under the CMU. See Grandguillot 2009

93 The minimum price for a bed in an Ile-de-France hospital is €700 per day, and can rise to €2000 in specialist cardiology centres.

have all they need back there, but a larger proportion say they are obliged to return, especially for more serious conditions." One example from his caseload is an Ivorian man who requires dialysis. When asked whether he would be returning home to his family, Mehdi, a building site foreman from Algeria who is due to retire at the end of the year, replied: "It's better to head back home at retirement." I asked him if that's what he intended to do: "That depends. You never know. With health, you never know. There's a worry about health. It's better here, there's a lack of medication over there. For the immigrants, it's better to get care here." Denis, a hostel manager, echoed the sentiments of his residents concerning lack of medication: "The major thing is medicines. Back home there isn't very much to choose from. Here there's everything they could need, and furthermore it's taken care of by social security."

Among my respondents, this issue was most crucial for those who are diabetic. Kader (70s, Mostaghanem, Algeria) is diabetic, and injects himself every day. But he cannot find the type of insulin he needs in Algeria, which is why he comes back to France. In Dembancané, I spoke to a retired former migrant, who showed me his diabetes kit and his notebook for recording the four daily readings that he has to take to make sure he is within safe limits. He explained that his doctor in France had advised him to visit twice a year for a check-up, but he can only afford to go once a year as the plane tickets are expensive.

What appears crucial above all is the quantity of medication that the individual can take back home with him, dictating the length of time the individual can be absent (Barou 2007). This leads to the thorny issue of prescription renewals, as we saw in Hamid's biographical sketch at the beginning of the thesis. I asked Hamid how often he returns home now that he is retired. He replied by saying that he continues to return once a year, just as when he was working, but that the duration of his absence from France has increased from his month-long paid holidays to four months. He does not go back more than four months in a year. The real problem is with his diabetes medication. He cannot get more than three months' medication at a time; the doctor cannot sign off the prescription for six months like in the past. The current maximum is three months. But it's a cruel irony – they have contributed to social security all their lives yet "at retirement, this is the time when you need the medication, but we can only get three months' worth!"

Dr Ismail explained these changes to the system of renewing prescriptions. When the GP or specialist hands out a prescription, it is valid for one month, with the option to renew it for a period of up to three months. Before, with chronic illnesses, in order to limit the number of times the patient had to go the pharmacy, a pharmacist could sign off on a treatment of up to six months. This permitted hostel residents to spend longer periods back home, but now the maximum duration is three months.

Intriguingly, Dr Ismail outlined several ruses to bypass these administrative rules: in other words, just as with paperwork, there are various 'tactics' which are deployed by hostel residents to circumvent bureaucracy. Firstly, the patient can leave their *Carte vitale*[94] with a complicit pharmacist before going away, collect all the medication he needs prior to his trip, and then every month the pharmacist swipes the card and renews the prescription. It must be noted that this practice is illegal. A similar ruse can be effected if the holidaying patient leaves his card with a family member or a close friend. They can then collect and send the medication to the patient's address in the place of origin. I should add that none of my respondents admitted to engaging in such practices, and one can assume that they are not particularly widespread. The men I spoke to felt constrained to observe the three month prescription renewal limit.

4.3 Non-Standard Biographies impede Healthcare

From the above, it is clear that maintaining access to healthcare has a timetabling effect on hostel residents, just as inclusion in administrative systems timetabled residents' presence in France in Chapter Three. The other principal point made in that chapter was the salience of hostel residents' unexpected biographies, which complicated their relations with welfare state organisations. The same issues surrounding non-standard biographies also make relationships between hostel residents and healthcare providers more difficult. I will underline three biographical features common to many older hostel residents: premature ageing, absence of

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94 The *carte vitale* is the card which proves an individual's affiliation to one of the health insurance regimes in France. It is a chip-and-pin type card, bearing the holder's name, and anyone over the age of 16 is required to present it when undertaking the administrative procedures required to get health costs refunded (see Grandguillot 2009: 40).

family in France to provide informal care, and difficulties of communication with French medical professionals.

Premature ageing and lack of family entourage

In section 4.1, the issue of premature ageing was briefly raised. As noted, this markedly distinguishes hostel residents from their non-migrant peers. In the hostels, management and care professionals typically define the population of elderly people in the overall clientele from 55 years of age. Likewise, among the wider population of immigrant elders in general, the average age at which dependency sets in is 75 years, versus 82 years for non-migrant French citizens. Given this unusual and unexpected age profile, those who coordinate services for dependent old people in France may overlook the hostels as locales which require attentiveness on their part. Similarly, the services which these gerontological services offer tend to be aimed at a quite different demographic segment, namely the 'oldest old' (85 years and over). Given that this segment of the population also tends to be female, geriatric care providers are not accustomed to treating men in their 60s and 70s. More will be said about this in Chapter Seven.

A second way in which older hostel residents distinguish themselves from the customary clientele of geriatric services concerns family entourage. Families have an important role to play in providing informal care to older relatives. This is a key support for many elderly citizens in France, but one which is not available to hostel residents since their wives and children reside hundreds of miles away. The absence of relatives able to provide informal care when the men are in France means that a heavier care burden falls upon the (often overstretched) formal care and health services, with inevitable negative consequences on overall care for hostel residents. This is the second way in which the men's non-standard biographies impede their healthcare. Related to this is the continuing financial charge which family members back home represent for the retired breadwinners in the hostels. Again, this is an unusual situation compared to the general population of senior citizens in France.

The duty to provide financially for dependents back home often appears to trump an individual's care needs. "Prevention measures (notably taking out an

insurance policy) are considered to be an additional financial charge, acting as a brake on the amount of money sent back home" (Sonacotra 2005: 3). This was raised by staff at a geriatric care coordination centre in Val d'Oise county to the north of Paris. Paying health expenses means sacrificing revenues which otherwise would have been sent to their family, which is the aim of their way of life, according to Sonia (geriatric care coordinator, Val d'Oise). As a result, the men go without the care which is appropriate. Research by the Migrations Santé team shows the clear impact that reduced income has on the ability of older hostel residents to pay for care, with up to three-quarters of residents aged over 55 in certain hostels experiencing difficulties in paying for medical treatment (Migrations Santé 2003).

The absence of a family entourage to help with care is a crucial biographical element in the hostel residents' difficult passage to retirement, all the more so given the institutional assumptions in France and other European countries that much elder care is provided informally by family members, friends or neighbours (Walker and Maltby 1997). As Gilles Desrumaux observes, "the institutional mechanisms in place to deal with ageing are very weak in France, so it's often in this role of proximity and urgent attention where the close family is going to see the person, they are likely to alert the doctor." In a similar vein, when I asked Anne-Marie what distinguished hostel residents from other older patients who are seen by her crisis social work team at a hospital frequented by some of my respondents, she remarked that -

> It's isolation which counts because other old people be they immigrant or not, when they have family our work becomes less difficult because families are a big support for us, they can take steps to help, and especially in this case they are vigilant vis-à-vis the person, and they can warn of danger before it's too late. Whereas for the people who live in the Sonacotra hostels, generally they arrive (at hospital) when really they are not well at all (...) they have no wives or children who are going to tell them "look now, you're not ok, you better go and see the doctor." (Anne-Marie, crisis social work team)

Conscious of their impending care needs, a number of the hostel residents I met were hoping to accomplish a 'late family reunification', so that their wives or children could come to France to care for them. In most cases this aspiration is likely to be denied them given the ever-hardening legal conditions which must be satisfied to

accomplish family reunification, imposed by a government which is committed to reducing family reunification's share in the immigration statistics. Hostel residents' housing situation is a major block to family reunification. Their difficulties in acceding to normal social housing highlight the vicious circle in which they are trapped as regards family reunification. On one side of the equation, their lack of family dependents in France means they are not a priority population for in-demand social housing aimed at families. On the other side of the equation, their current accommodation in hostels is entirely insufficient to meet the minimum housing conditions required by law for family reunification (notably in terms of surface area of individual rooms).

Another legal factor which impedes late-in-life family reunification is that wives and children are now subject to French language testing prior to departure. In this way, immigration policy is tied to integration policy (Joppke 2007). Thus, under the "Hortefeux policy"[95] as one respondent put it, it is only getting more difficult to accomplish reunifications since for the administration the arrival of illiterate family dependents constitutes "a real cost" to the state (Martine, geriatric care coordinator, Val d'Oise). Residents' wives are not welcome, since they too are growing old and therefore are perceived as a burden to the welfare state.

As a result of the lack of such *aidants naturels* (a French expression signifying the family as the natural caregivers), the burden of caring for hostel residents is delegated to the welfare state and the hostel companies. Yet the hostel management and outside partners cannot accommodate the residents in their needs to the same extent. The absence of family can create a problem for healthcare professionals who do not have knowledge of the patient's prior medical- and life-history; more time is required on the part of these services to explain to the patient what their care entails (Sonacotra 2005b). More will be said in Chapter Seven about the policies and mechanisms which hostel companies have put in place to compensate for this lack of family vigilance.

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[95] Brice Hortefeux was previously the Minister for Immigration, Integration, National Identity and Cooperative Development (2007-2009).

Ill communication

The final biographical factor which I would like to stress is the difficulty of communicating in French. This is a significant issue for many hostel residents – with 54 percent of residents in a Migrations Santé survey unable to read and write French, and 73 percent judging their language abilities as poor (El Moubaraki and Bitatsi Trachet 2006: 83). Poor mastery of the host country language impacts health in two distinct ways: lack of claims-making and ignorance of social rights; and mutual incomprehension between hostel residents and medical staff.

Firstly, linguistic difficulties complicate administrative procedures and produce a situation where there is a high degree of ignorance surrounding the services and rights to which the older men are entitled, as was intimated in the previous sub-section. Saeed, who represents a migrant association in Paris, argued that the hostel residents do not know the systems and the facilities available for elderly people, they do not know their rights. To this end, his association are in the process of making a guide for elderly North African immigrants in French and Arabic. Sonia (geriatric care coordinator, Val d'Oise) was categorical when I asked about the take-up and use of services provided by the geriatric care coordination service she works for:

> AH: The hostel residents, do they come here [and make use of your services]?
> Sonia: No, because already there is a lack of awareness. They don't know. Because they are in their bubble, in their hostel, they don't know all the services which we can offer them. (...) So when they experience a loss of autonomy where an association could come and help them, they can't call them because they quite simply just don't know.

The second way in which poor language skills impact on residents' health is the mutual incomprehension which can arise during residents' interactions with medical staff. In a report for Unafo, Omar Hallouche notes:

> Certain professionals have made us aware of their difficulties of communication with this public. They recognise that they do not always have adapted responses in terms of welcome, prevention and care. The first obstacle evoked is that of language. In fact, the North

African population is in the majority illiterate and does not have good mastery of spoken French (Hallouche 2002: 16).

Obviously, hostel residents are not unique in their poor mastery of the host country language and in the outcomes that this has for their healthcare. A great deal of literature in public health and gerontology has noted the impact of communication breakdowns between older ethnic minority patients and healthcare professionals.[96] Two contexts will be examined here: the doctor's surgery, and the hospital.

In a recent Dutch study of GP interactions with ethnic minority patients, one of the principal findings was the lower incidence of solution-seeking communication between GPs and their Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) patients, with BME patients often not seeking to be involved. The authors went on to note that "previous research suggests that patients from non-Western backgrounds seem to have less need for information and decision-making than more Western-oriented patients" (Schouten *et al.* 2008: 473).

Dr Ismail, who holds drop-in medical advice sessions in several Parisian hostels, would dispute such findings. During our interview, he commented that if hostel residents do not understand a treatment or feel that it is not working, they come to him to get information in Arabic or Kabyle (the language of the indigenous Berber tribes of Kabylia in Algeria). Most typically, they want to know which kind of specialist to see. In his opinion, poor mutual comprehension between patient and GP is a significant health risk.

Other respondents underlined mutual incomprehension in the hospital environment. Recent studies have shown that the hospital can be confusing for older people in general, whose diverse pathologies, medical histories and sensory impairments are at odds with the "one-size-fits-all" service delivery culture in hospitals (Parke and Chappell 2010: 115-6). Elderly people's lack of fit is likely only to be magnified when it comes to treating migrant pensioners. This was most evident in the hospital setting where older migrant men may become highly disoriented (*dépaysé*) by their experiences in such a highly medicalised context, "parachuted into a care system which operates at high speed", as discussed in some detail by Elvira

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96 For example, research led by Joanne Cook in Sheffield, UK highlighted language as the principal barrier to inclusion in healthcare and other welfare services for older migrants of Chinese and Somali origin (Cook 2010).

and Anne-Marie, crisis social workers at a hospital frequented by some of my respondents:

Elvira: When they arrive at hospital, there is all sorts of medical jargon which is, let's say, a little bit complicated even for a French person who is quite well off. So when one doesn't speak the language well and when the people speak to you about illnesses or examinations, similarly it is a moment where they don't understand the meaning. Anne-Marie: They don't understand the meaning of the care, and furthermore the linguistic barrier means that already – well, when you see your GP, he has known you for a long time, he can take the time to chat with you (...) except that they're not going to get a GP, they're not going to get someone they know. They arrive at A&E, the doctors have fifteen patients all at the same time, they see a medical problem, they're not necessarily going to take the time to chat, and furthermore this immigrant, if he already has a few problems when it comes to speaking French, he is going to have a hard time explaining what is not right with him, and the doctor is not necessarily going to take the time to try and understand everything (...) So yes, I think that when they are – especially at A&E – there are "boxes" for the people who are most serious, and then there is a room where all the stretchers are. So you are in the room, everyone is lying on their side like this, and there are carers who are going in all directions. Staff are moving in all directions, so it's definitely a bit scary as well, and then you have the impression as well that you are being abandoned because you are there to be cared for and (...) they keep you waiting until the results are ready, and then return three hours later to see how you are.

Box 22. Language barriers to care in the hospital.

4.4 Healthcare Provision in Countries of Origin

Much of the preceding chapter has stressed the importance of healthcare needs in older residents' mobility decisions at retirement. Crucially, France is identified as the venue for healthcare, and it is on this basis that the men tend to justify their presence in France beyond retirement. Nonetheless, places of origin in North and West Africa do offer certain advantages when it comes to healthcare.

Dental care, optometry, and hearing aids are three examples where the country of origin is the preferred site of treatment. Data made available to me by Migrations Santé show that in general residents prefer to return home for dental care, where it is cheaper. A study by Paul and Berrat found that hostel residents perceived dental, visual and hearing problems as of minimal importance and would only take recourse to specialist care if the trouble became really handicapping, preferably in

the country of origin (Paul and Berrat 2005). This excerpt from an interview with Ibrahima (59, Gorgol, Mauritania), is indicative of the financial logic behind this choice:

> In Africa it is less expensive, and they say that here [in France] there are guarantees etc, but over there also it's still very good, you know. (...) Because I heard that in Dakar, for the dentist, my friend he went to see the dentist, it cost €150. €150, but here [in France] another guy I know went to the dentist, and he paid almost €1000 (...) Yes, €1000, but it's over there where it's more solid, where it is better.

Another aspect which merits attention is the possibility of following treatments back home based on traditional medicine. There can be recourse to these more traditional remedies when Western medicine is not able to deliver the desired remedy. Dr Slimane, a psychiatrist, remarked upon the "need to go and see the repairers of disorder, the wise men, the healers back home." Although healthcare professionals in France may view such practices with incomprehension, traditional medicine nonetheless exercises an attraction for some hostel residents. Once again, Ibrahima's comments are insightful:

> Last year I fell ill too, but it was because of fatigue, bad fatigue. Well it was [my GP] who sent me to hospital, at the hospital they did x-rays, other [tests]. All that, for a year, but there was nothing, they found nothing. But I knew already – I've been around, I know what life's about – it was simply fatigue. So I returned to Africa, and took treatments in Africa, medicine – African treatments, you know, it's very good (...) I'm much better now (Ibrahima, 59, Gorgol, Mauritania).

A further advantage of a return home is the more propitious climate which is found on the other side of the Mediterranean. This tallies with studies on amenity emigration which show that the attraction of climate is the primary factor in the decision to spend all or part of the year in destinations such as the Mediterranean for Northern European retirees and the "sunbelt" of the southern United States for North American pensioners (see Hogan 1987; King *et al.* 2000; Smith and House 2006). As regards return at retirement, research by Martin Klinthäll in Sweden has found a correlation between temperate climate in the place of origin and propensity to return at retirement, with relatively high return rates by retired labour migrants back to

Greece and Italy (Klinthäll 2006: 168). In the context of return migration to Jamaica, Elizabeth Thomas-Hope notes that:

> Return migrants of all types expect to obtain standards of living which are equal to, or higher than, those experienced abroad. This is usually achievable in Jamaica, and one of the more positive aspects of the migrants' experiences relate to the pleasant lifestyles which they enjoy on return. Likewise, conditions are generally conducive to good health, primarily on account of favourable climatic conditions (1999: 195).

I had expected to hear similar stories from my respondents, but the evidence was not so straightforward. In France I asked retirees in the hostels about whether climate was a factor in their return practices. No one mentioned climate as a positive reason for returning, rather the climate back home entered into their planning insofar as certain very warm or wet periods should be avoided. As Amadi (65, Matam, Senegal) commented, it is difficult to adapt to the very hot climate which is experienced in Senegal between March and August - "you're going to suffer". A Moroccan resident I spoke to intended to return to Morocco in September, avoiding August when it is too hot for him: he has been operated on recently (in the stomach and groin) and the heat is not good for his health. West African hostel residents tended to avoid the very hot and wet rainy season, preferring to return when it is cooler, starting in October. To the question "Did you use to leave in winter or in summer, or did it vary?" Djimé, speaking from Dembancané, replied:

> No, always in winter, the climate is really agreeable at that time – well, as you see, when you're used to Europe, and when you come here during the heat it's very difficult and complicated. But in winter we are at ease.

For a small selection of health needs – dental care, eyesight, and hearing – the place of origin is perceived as being a preferential source of care. In general however, for most conditions, French healthcare is preferred and in some cases obligatory, since treatment for some conditions is not – or only rarely - available in the place of origin. Examples of such illnesses include diabetes, Parkinson's and Alzheimer's (Unafo 2006), as well as conditions requiring kidney dialysis. All older hostel residents who return home periodically "live in fear of not being able to get cared for in the country

of origin in case of chronic illness" (Hallouche 2002: 19). This is especially the case for those whose families live in rural regions back home, as Jacques Barou notes "there are problems in finding medication, a GP and in particular specialists, in rural areas essentially" (Barou 2007: 1). This was further stressed by Anne-Marie (crisis social worker):

> If they have for example diabetes, and what is more with their old age, and the pathologies associated with it – how are they going to get cared for at home? Everything depends on where you live. But if you're not in a big city, if you find yourself in some village in the countryside, to have access to a doctor, to insulin, anything, it's complicated. This they are well aware of, you know.

Furthermore, in many North and West African countries, there is no social security system open to the general populace. As a result, healthcare expenses incurred back home are not reimbursed, a point forcefully made by Djimé (Dembancané, Senegal) when I asked how his health was:

> Yes I'm still in good health, yes there are some who return to France to get cared for, for health problems, yes, because (...) if you fall ill here, well, the prescription, you pay the prescription and you pay it all, because there are no reimbursements. [AH: so it's not like in France, with social security?] It's not like in France, so people if they fall ill they prefer to go and get cared for in France, with social security. Even if they pay, they pay less, they pay the balance after insurance (...) Fortunately I haven't reached that stage, for the time being I look after my health. But death will come one day! (laughs)

In summary, then, the cost of care back home and the impossibility of being reimbursed for one's health expenses when away from France are two major motivations for doing the *va-et-vient*. A third motivation stems from residents' concerns over the quality of treatment for chronic, non-emergency care back home, and the availability of medicines.

Nonetheless, this raises a burning question: can the *va-et-vient* be considered a sound healthcare strategy? I asked this question of all the healthcare professionals I interviewed, and opinions were mixed. Conflicting messages also emerge from the literature on the subject. A minority answered in the affirmative: "The regular return

trip is the best way to care for oneself. However, the medical argument often hides other forms of reticence to return" (Barou 2007: 1). The reasons given by Béatrice (health advisor, migrant welfare association) centre on optometry and dental care, traditional remedies, and climate:

> AH: So, is it a health care strategy, the fact of doing the *aller-retours*, the *va-et-vient*?
> Béatrice: Yes (emphatic), for two reasons. Some treatments cost less back home. Teeth and glasses. That costs a lot here, it costs much less back home. So they go home for these treatments. There's also the fact that they need to return home, to see the country, to see their wife, to see the children and grandchildren – that helps their morale. And then also when they go, they can see their traditional doctors. So, yes, it's easier – they return home, they can see their traditional doctor, the marabout, etc, so it is part of a health care strategy, yes, both medical and psychological.

Sonia (geriatric care coordinator, Val d'Oise) was more circumspect in her answer. The fact that treatments are supposed to be rigorously adhered to over the long term, and yet as discussed patients can take with them only a month's (or maximum three months') worth of prescription, means that the voyaging retirees "return in an even more deteriorated state then before". She continued:

> It's not really a health care strategy; I would say that for some it might be a health care strategy because it is true that the Mediterranean climate is much more favourable than here. Of course, there are some doctors who say "go to the Mediterranean, you'll feel much better", for their rheumatism, and things like that, OK. But when they take just one month of treatment and then afterwards they have no more drugs, and they stay there two or three months. So they're going to go without treatment for two or three months, and they then return in an even more catastrophic state – it's not at all a good strategy, no.

Conclusion

As we saw at the start of this chapter, for some respondents being in *good* health was a prerequisite for entry into France, given the comprehensive selection process organised by recruiters. Health orders migration, then, but the equation works in the reverse direction too: the condition of being a migrant worker also impacts

(negatively) upon health. What is particular about this population is not the type of conditions from which they suffer – being the full range of illnesses studied in orthodox gerontology. However, older hostel residents are particular insofar as these health problems manifest themselves earlier than in the population overall. A lack of family members able to provide informal care also constitutes a particular and unexpected element of their biographies which complicates care arrangements.

These long-term health needs explain their strong relationships of trust with medical professionals in France, and their confidence in the superiority of the services available in France, which are powerful rationales for back-and-forth migration. Various factors have the result of 'timetabling' this *va-et-vient*, including doctors' appointments; conditions of eligibility for state-subsidised medical insurance (CMU); and the limited amount of medication which GPs can prescribe. Thus, at retirement, health again orders migration to France, but this time it is the fact of *poor* health and the promise of subsidised – and, importantly, better quality – treatment in France which motivates these movements. Finally, in the section immediately above, we found that the *va-et-vient* for healthcare reasons also had a problematic bearing on the men's health.

As in the conclusion to the previous chapter, two particular aspects which lead to a timetabled presence in France deserve underlining, namely hostel residents' non-standard biographies, and the temporal and territorial demands of inclusion in social systems – in this case the healthcare system. As was argued in the previous chapter, social systems theory appears best placed to account for these phenomena. The findings from this chapter also speak to the new economics of labour migration. As discussed in Chapter One, various scholars have conceptualised remittance sending as a contract in which the emigrant agrees to provide insurance against risks to the household's income in return for care in old age (Constant and Massey 2002; Stark 1991). What is unfortunate about the situation in which older geographically-single hostel residents find themselves is the fact that the family's side of the remittance pact is not kept, since generally it is difficult for relatives to come to France to provide care.

This chapter has focused primarily on physical health, but to conclude some words need to be said about mental health. While physical ill health tends to be a

gradually emerging consequence of the hard working conditions that the men have known throughout their careers, the issue of mental health is more commonly associated with the abrupt and sudden switch to retirement[97]. As was discussed in Chapter Three, the transition to retirement is a critical juncture where the men need to find a replacement for what previously constituted their principal identity and reason for being in France, namely work. In that chapter, it was suggested that an identity based on 'papers' can compensate for the loss of the identity of 'worker' which occurs at retirement. More problematically, an alternative identity based on ill-health is discerned here whereby illness plays this compensatory role, functioning as a justification for non-return, especially vis-à-vis the family remaining back home. Thus, over the long run, the health-migration order becomes a health-migration 'disorder', a mental health issue.

For some residents, physical pain – from a work accident, for example – may not (or no longer) be severe, but there is a tendency on the part of the individual to focus on the trauma of the injury, which is experienced as a rupture: "an initial stage in the process of marginalisation and exclusion" in society (Ballain 1992: 23). In this way, the long term consequences of physical injury are mental and social. Although respondents, as noted, were wary of discussing mental health issues directly, the constant justifications I heard for remaining in or returning to France on health grounds can be interpreted in this way. For some hostel residents, the self-image has shifted from the ideal of the young, active worker to the old, worn-out *malade* [sick person, invalid], who is 'paralysed' in France. The process by which illness becomes an over-arching self-identification is referred to in French medical terminology as *sinistrosis* (Chaïb 2000), although there does not appear to be an equivalent in the anglophone medical lexicon. Gilles Desrumaux describes what is meant by sinistrosis as follows:

> A form of withdrawal into illness, and into the symptoms of illness, in the sense that – and this is a hypothesis which would greatly benefit from discussion – that perhaps illness becomes for some of these people the justification for the presence here, and notably in relation to their family; so, as a result there is a form of withdrawal, of brooding, which

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97 This is not to say that mental health issues were not unusual amongst this population during working life. For a discussion, see Ben Jelloun 1977.

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– to objective elements of problematic health – are added psychological elements which mean that the person can have a tendency to withdraw into a situation of "sick person" or to consider themselves above all as a sick person and with this label to construct a health of adversity [*une santé de malheur*] (...) I have observed this quite strongly and have always referred it to this problem of identity for these people. Who am I? – I am a sick person. I was a worker, so I was justified to be here; I am a sick person so I'm justified to be here.

That this justification is directed first and foremost at family members remaining behind in places of origin speaks volumes for the complex family relations which have crystallised over the long years of prolonged absence. For some respondents, the family is a source of moral support; for others the family is a source of conflicts from which they take refuge in the hostel. These ideas will be explored in the following chapter.

5. Family (Re-)Values: remittances, communication and conflict

> When I have my family on the telephone, they ask for money. What money? Am I supposed to steal it? [Interviewer: Your children, do they understand the difficulties you have, or are they not aware of the situation?] They know, they know. But they are demanding (...) I have to send them cash, buy them things, look after my own health. I don't know which way to turn.[98]

Up until now, our analysis has been oriented towards the hostel residents' lives in France. This chapter and the one which follows it break from this pattern insofar as they are oriented to social groups in the home context, respectively the family and the local community. Turning to family first, we have already noted the extent to which the biographical particularity of being geographically-single is implicated in hostel residents' difficult passage to retirement and the dilemma they face regarding return. The present chapter shows how certain unexpected changes and continuities in the lives of these families influence the mobility of the older hostel residents and their return decision-making after retirement. These developments are grouped under three themes:

- Continued dependency on remittances after the retirement of the male breadwinner in France;
- Changes in communication practices which amplify this dependency; and
- Changes and continuities in family roles which engender conflict.

Before analysing these developments, however, it will be helpful to clarify the importance of remittances for hostel residents and their families, and to provide information on how they are sent and spent.

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[98] Excerpt from the film, *Un jour, je repartirai...*, a documentary film about elderly hostel residents directed by Chantal Richard 2002 [author's translation].

5.1 Remittances as a Way of Life

Remittance sending has constituted a way of life since the older hostel residents first arrived in France: it has been the "principal finality" of the migratory project (Barou 2001). Others ascribe to remittance sending a "primordial" role (Gallou 2005: 130-1). Surveys of migrant remittances in France from the early 1970s showed that the migrant workers were poorly paid but saved hard, with hostel residents of all nationalities remitting a quarter of their income (Les Echos 1971; Ginésy-Galano 1984).

While initially a means to sustain life in material and economic terms for their families back home, remittances have in time also permitted the emigrant to 'live', socially and psychologically. Remittances do not necessarily need to be limited to the economic function of family maintenance: others point out the important psychological contribution to well-being that they represent for senders (Riak Akuei 2005). In an interview, one psychiatrist described to me how remittances, be they in monetary or non-monetary forms, are a means to "repair the absence." Modern objects (from France) are exchanged for traditional objects (from the place of origin). These are "active objects" in the psychiatrist's view: "As long as these objects circulate, the migrant lives, it's like he is fed by them, on condition that he sends back manufactured objects" and money.

Other observers speak of remittances as a means of atonement for absence (Aggoun 2006; Hmed 2006b), and this is amply demonstrated by the asceticism of the hostel residents' lives, with some men going without the healthcare which is necessary or appropriate so as to be able to continue remitting (Gallou 2005; Hmed 2006b). This ascetic existence was worn as a badge of honour by some whom I spoke to, and other scholars have noted the pride and respect associated with remittance sending (Riak Akuei 2005). One respondent, Hamid (70, Taroudant, Morocco), described how he is responsible financially for his whole family, even the oldest children. Indeed he reported – with some pride – giving money to his sisters and brothers, for weddings, feast days and festivities. "It does good. It's important to give to one's relatives." Anne-Marie (crisis social worker), noted:

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the only thing which they still have is the pride of being able to send something to their families over there and to be autonomous here in France (...) They are always very happy when we go to see them in their rooms, they are always happy to say how many children they have, how much they send each month.

Importantly, the system of hostel accommodation has facilitated and formalised the remittance-sending practices. As was argued in Chapter One, one of the state's primary aims in building low-rent hostels was to limit family reunification by facilitating high levels of remittances. This would benefit workers' families more than would have been the case had the latter come to live in France, where the cost of living was far more expensive (Viet 1999).

Of course, it was never envisaged that the hostels would continue to provide housing for the same migrants half a century later! Be this as it may, these long-term residents, now retired or approaching retirement, have internalised this founding logic of the hostels by continuing to send remittances (Mercey 2005). While many of their contemporaries have left the hostels – either to return home or to reunify in France with their families – "the people who haven't abandoned the concept of the hostel are those who have had no personal project other than to remain in a situation of sending money back home", as one senior civil servant put it to me. In other words, the older hostel residents are institutionalised in this remittance-sending logic: a veritable 'migration culture' (Kandel and Massey 2002) of remittance sending has evolved in these spaces. Choukri Hmed has written at some length on the hostel as a form of "total institution" (Goffman 1968; Hmed 2006b) and the ways in which individual residents' preferences are influenced by group dynamics. While hostel residents are "rootless" vis-à-vis wider society, within the hostel they are firmly "rooted" (Hmed 2006b: 119).

Contemporary remittance sending practices

Data for the contemporary period shows that the proportions of income remitted are not dissimilar to those found in the earlier surveys dating from the 1970s (Bitatsi Trachet and El Moubaraki 2006; Ginésy-Galano 1984; Les Echos 1971). My own

data supports this anecdotally. In some interviews I asked respondents how much they remitted. It must be borne in mind that not everyone felt comfortable disclosing this type of information given its potentially sensitive nature. Indeed, during my fieldwork in Dembancané (Senegal), I was formally requested by the deputy-mayor not to ask this question. Amounts varied from month to month depending on the particular outgoings incurred, but most respondents affirmed transferring 25 to 40 percent of their income home each month. As the monthly income for most was in the range of €600 to €1000, typical sums remitted are €150 to €250, but this could rise to €400 in auspicious or urgent circumstances.

The means of sending money have evolved over time. Initially, the standard method in the past was via postal order (*mandat*). In certain cases the ubiquity of this method prompted the construction of post offices in migrants' home villages. However, costly transfer fees and lengthy delays in delivery led to the progressive abandonment of postal methods during the 1980s in favour of much faster transfer services such as Moneygram and Western Union (Tall 2004). While far quicker, these services also charge high fees and commissions (Hamel 2009). As a result, even in this age of electronic banking, one should not ignore the continued significance of informal transfers, such as carrying cash in hand luggage when travelling home, or entrusting money to relatives or friends who are travelling, with instructions as to who should receive it. I observed such informal practices on several occasions. This vital cash-handling function is of course a further justification for the back-and-forth trips which the older hostel residents effect.

How remittances are deployed

As mentioned, many residents felt uncomfortable disclosing their family finances. However, Ibrahima (59, Gorgol, Mauritania), a kitchen porter at a restaurant in Paris, readily supplied a very detailed breakdown of his monthly expenses, both in France and Mauritania. He works 35 hours per week, and earns the minimum wage, just under €1050 net a month in 2009 when this fieldwork was carried out. His monthly expenses are as follows:

France – Monthly Outgoings		Mauritania - Monthly Outgoings	
Rent:	257	Sixteen family members at his sole charge.	
- APL housing benefit	-41		
=	216	(Minimum) Grocery bill	**€105**
Public transport	90	**Mauritania – Occasional Expenses**	
Private health insurance	50		
Landline rental (in hostel)	20	Medical bills	
Groceries in France	150	Schooling	
Hometown Association dues	30	House building	
Union dues	8	Agricultural equipment	
TOTAL EXPENSES	**€ 564**		

Table 2. Ibrahima's monthly expenses.

Taking the total expenses away from his net income of €1050, what remains is a sum just under €500 approximately. This tallies with what he remits every month: a minimum of €250, occasionally rising to €400. Ibrahima insisted that "€250 is good in Mauritania." He has sixteen people in his charge, including his mother- and father-in-law. Every month, his family's grocery bill amounts to at least €100, purchased from the local co-operative in his village.

Providing for the subsistence needs of the extended family is the bare minimum which is expected of the migrant. The aspiration is that migrant earnings will also permit the accumulation of sufficient capital to bring about a change in the social status of the family in the country of origin. The construction or improvement of the family home is one such opportunity for visibly improved status, and was identified as one of the benefits of emigration by almost all respondents. Only one respondent rented his accommodation back home: the others were all home owners. House construction and/or improvement is not just a means of demonstrating social mobility to one's neighbours: for some respondents, property ownership was an example to inspire children to work hard in the future, a visible manifestation of "what Papa has been able to do, what his work has achieved, he worked hard"

(Ibrahima, 59, Gorgol, Mauritania). I will revisit this theme in more detail in the following chapter.

There is nothing particularly novel about these resource allocation decisions: the construction of a house in the emigrant's community of origin has been highlighted in many studies across different historical periods and migration systems (for examples, see King 1986; Obeng-Odoom 2010; Parreñas 2005; Wyman 1993). What *is* perhaps "innovative" (Cerase 1974: 261) is that migrants are investing in property not only for their families' needs, but also for rental, thereby diversifying once again the family's income streams. This explains in part the rapid growth of regional urban centres in prominent migrant sending areas of North and West Africa, as documented by other authors (Lacroix 2005; Quiminal 2002). This was also a feature of my own data. Abdoulaye (44, Tambacounda, Senegal) has built a large house for his family in Bakel, Senegal, but he has also started building a second house of three storeys in Dakar, which he will rent out. This rent will bolster his French pension when he comes to retire. According to Abdoulaye, many Senegalese emigrants have adopted this real-estate strategy for their retirement. Ibrahima likewise has built two houses in his home village, as well as a house in Dakar, which he currently leases. He also has ambitions to build a second rental property in Nouakchott, the Mauritanian capital.

While house-building was identified as important by almost all respondents – North African and West Africans alike – other uses of remittances seemed to be favoured by one group but not by the other. For example, many West Africans with whom I spoke paid considerable attention to agriculture. Idrissa (Dembancané, Senegal) explained that since farming helps to feed the family, much remittance money is spent on this domain. Ibrahima, for example, had imminent plans to travel to Belgium to complete the purchase of a tractor, which he will then ship to Mauritania. Issa's goals were more modest:

> Before, I used to work but I didn't save much, because back home there is the big household, but only me to provide for them, for food, for medicine if someone is ill. When I *was* able to save, I invested in livestock. (Issa, 70, Tambacounda, Senegal)

By contrast, very few North Africans reported consecrating remittances to agriculture. What was far more important to Moroccan and Algerian respondents was the education of children. While hostel residents may be required to provide for brothers, sisters and other still more distant family members, the principal care at the heart of the remittance practices is for their children. What emerged repeatedly in several of my interviews was the idea that they are "working for the next generation":

> We didn't get to go to school. We mustn't leave our children like that, without education. (Hamid, 70, Taroudant, Morocco)

> I have children. They study - because I didn't have the chance to pursue my studies. It was a question of poverty or bad luck, because my parents died when I was young. (Saleem, 60, Tiznit, Morocco)

For Saleem and Hamid, giving their children the gift of a good education is important precisely because it was something which had been denied them in their youth. It is also important insofar as it may determine the capacity of children to take on responsibility for providing for the household once the father retires from France. This in turn is important as it may have a bearing on return decision-making, as will be shown in the following section. Conversely, for my West African respondents, education was not highlighted as a goal for individual families, but rather as a collective endeavour, hence the substantial communal funds devoted to school-building projects in the villages of several of my respondents. The same applies to health and other non-material uses of remittances. In my fieldwork site of Dembancané (Matam Province, Senegal), and other hometowns of my West African respondents, it is the collective which provides electricity, drinking water, farmland and other common goods (see Chapter Six for details). While collective approaches to such provision also exist in Morocco – the efforts of the association *Migrations et Développement* are one example (Migrations et Développement 2011) – the tendency is for the onus to lie with individual migrants.

In summary, remittances sustain the lives of those remaining back home, and satisfy their basic vital needs. Be it on an individual family basis, as in North Africa, or on a wider community basis, as in West Africa, these remittances constitute a

social safety net (*protection sociale*) ensuring stability and minimising risk to family income. This analogy with the welfare state was made time and again by respondents. However, in addition to the sustenance aspect, remittances also function to bolster esteem and status. This can be seen in the houses which migrant families build and improve, as well as investments in agriculture and education for children. What is perhaps less clear is the relevance of the above to the central issue interrogated in this thesis, namely return migration decision-making at retirement. We have seen in this first section that the hostel has institutionalised remittance sending practices, as the work of Hmed (2006b) has demonstrated, and some respondents felt themselves to be "trapped" in these practices. It was also hinted that education and the readiness of children to take on responsibility once the father retires may have a bearing on whether the hostel resident is able to return. In both scenarios, a certain dependency on remittances may arise.

5.2 Continued Dependency on Remittances past Retirement

As was discussed in Chapter One, economic theories of migration predict return at retirement for North and West African hostel residents whose families have remained behind in the country of origin. Neo-classical economists argue that at retirement wage differentials between home and host countries no longer influence migration decision-making: instead what is important is the purchasing power parity (PPP) of the migrant's pension, which in most cases is fully transferable thanks to the bilateral social security agreements which operate between many labour-exporting and importing countries (de Coulon and Wolff 2006; Klinthäll 2006). The calculation in most instances is a 'no-brainer', since costs of living tend to be far lower in less wealthy home countries, offsetting any potential losses in currency exchange fees which may accrue if the pension is transferred home. Return home is the rational choice.

For some respondents the neo-classical logic remains valid. Discussing the Algerian case, Dr Ismail argued that a monthly pension of €200 or €300 was sufficient for an older couple living in Algeria. Issa (70, Tambacounda, Senegal) felt

that with €500 each month one could live very comfortably in Senegal. Djimé (Dembancané, Senegal) agreed:

> When you are a pensioner here, you live comfortably, you're not the same as those who don't have any resources, who don't have a pension. It's not the same life. Really, when you are a pensioner, you can live better here [i.e., Senegal].

However, the lack of definitive return at retirement by hostel residents calls into question these neo-classical precepts. Perceptions of individual wealth must be tempered by the size of the family in the pensioner's charge. For these respondents, it does not make sense to talk of individual economic decision-making. Rather, it is the new economics of labour migration (NELM) which has primacy. In this paradigm pioneered by Oded Stark and colleagues, retirement implies the end of the migration project and subsequent return home to rejoin children, who take on the responsibility for the household (Stark 1991). For some hostel residents, retirement means that there is less of an obligation to send remittances:

> Now it's up to them to get by. (Fouad, 60s, Constantine, Algeria)

> The other children can manage for themselves. It's normal. (Mehdi, 64, Chlef, Algeria)

> I'm going to rest and enjoy my retirement: my kids will do the work. (Habib, 65, Oran, Algeria)

These three testimonies support the NELM assertion that an inter-generational transfer of responsibility for providing for the needs of the family occurs when the migrant breadwinner retires. Yet this transfer of responsibility does not necessarily lead to definitive return. In these three cases, the men have remained in France, but their non-return is not presented as an economic issue. Instead, it is justified on health grounds. It was shown in the last chapter how powerful a justification health can be.

For other respondents, however, the NELM logic becomes distorted and the assumption of an inter-generational transfer of responsibility is called into question. In these cases, the duty to provide for a significant number of dependents *after*

retirement weighs heavily. Respondents often enumerated the many family members remaining in their financial charge past retirement. 70-year-old Issa (Tambacounda, Senegal) for example still has seven children living at home, some of whom are still at school. Hadyatou (Dembancané, Senegal), although in his 70s, has several children still at school, some at primary level. Thus, the passage to retirement does not always reduce the burden of continued dependency of family members. Hostel residents in this situation have not reckoned on continued dependency past retirement. The outcome of this continued dependency is that some hostel residents are obliged to continue living in France. Two principal motivations condition this obligation – one material, the other psychological.

Two motivations – money and shame

The first motivation underscores the material needs of the family and the distorted NELM logic. As was noted in Chapter Three, hostel residents over the age of 65 in receipt of modest pensions are eligible for the *minimum vieillesse*, a means-tested benefit which tops up the state-administered occupational pension to a minimum old-age income, set at €708.95 per month in 2010. Receiving this benefit enables the family to attain solvency, but only at the cost of the hostel resident respecting the residential conditions of eligibility. Thus, the hostel dweller must be resident in France for more than six months in a given calendar year. It is to be underlined that in no way is recourse to the *minimum vieillesse* a manifestation of individualistic neo-classical behaviour: the extra money is channelled to family dependents, not retained by individual breadwinners. But even if this benefit was only consumed by individual hostel residents (in France) and not by families, this would not be a cost-beneficial arrangement, since even a paltry basic pension of (for example) €250 has greater purchasing power in Mali or Morocco than a topped-up pension of €700 has in Marseille.

It is also to be underlined that the *minimum vieillesse* was more a feature of North African narratives: indeed, some West African community leaders remarked that they had never heard of retired West Africans staying in France in order to get this income support. However, a few West Africans admitted claiming it:

> Now I am old, I'm not able to work. At retirement what I earn isn't enough for me to live with my children, with my wife (...) So I requested the *minimum vieillesse*, it helps a bit. It's better now. (Issa, 70, Tambacounda, Senegal)

Other researchers have also documented this state of affairs, which prolongs the geographical separation of families after the retirement of the principal wage earner in France. Because of the minimum residence conditions, "these migrants become hostages to France, although their state of health or age would favour more a prolonged return to their family back home" (Bitatsi Trachet and El Moubaraki 2006: 104). Choukri Hmed likewise describes this situation as a form of "house arrest" (2006b: 122).

The second motivation – psychological – relates to the concepts of honour and shame, identified during an interview as primordial by psychiatrist Dr Slimane: "How to go back with one's head held high?" As was mentioned in the first section, hostel residents derive a certain amount of pride from their shows of asceticism and the remittances which result from their cost-cutting efforts (Hmed 2006b). In hostels, such shows of sacrifice and asceticism find an appreciative audience. But sometimes their responsibilities prove insurmountable. The question of responsibility seems to weigh heavier, or in a more insistent way, at retirement:

> We live in this solitude, but over there [Mali], there's more responsibility. Here [in France] we just have to take care of ourselves, our health etc, but over there, you're the dad, you're the head of the family who must look after everyone, who must take care of all sorts of problems. (Waly, 75, Kayès, Mali)

Similarly, Saleem (60, Tiznit, Morocco), noted that his generation of hostel residents has also acquired more responsibilities. "Some men have ten or fifteen people to support back home, and sometimes it is the *émigré* father who has to support everyone. This can lead to stress and worry. In France there are charges too of course, for rent and food, but back home the cost can be three times as much." As if to illustrate his point, at the end of our talk a fellow resident came to have a quiet word with Saleem. When he had departed, Saleem explained that the man, who has

recently retired, had asked for a loan to cover his outgoings until his next pension instalment at the end of the month.

The shame inherent in borrowing money from one's neighbours is the flip-side of the honourable practice of remittance sending as discussed at the start of the chapter. These values are also tied up in return decision-making. As one respondent put it: "to return poorer than when one left? Perhaps best not to return at all." As noted, their aim in life has been to support their families as long as possible, and when they can no longer do this, they "lose their shine", in the words of Vivianne (geriatric doctor).

Factors leading to continued or increased dependency

Three factors were identified as crucial in prolonging or exacerbating the dependency of the family on the emigrant's income after retirement: additional dependents in the form of grandchildren; educational attainment of children; and the 'mentality' of dependency.

It is when the retired hostel resident in France has to provide not just for one household, but for two or more, that the situation becomes less and less tolerable. Generally, this arises when respondents' children start their own families, but without the means to satisfy the new needs which result. As a consequence, new additions to the family were not always perceived as an unqualified source of joy for grandfathers in France. This was captured very well by Saleem (60, Tiznit, Morocco):

> The mistake we made, that most people have made, is that we marry off our children, which then means that we have to provide for another generation (...) we have to provide for the grandchild, and for me the grandchild ... well, it's a bit much. We didn't think that life would turn out like that, that this current complication would occur. And then, living with this problem, we can't tolerate many things because we become fragile, with the problems we have, and with our poor health.

The education of children was identified as key, in particular by North African respondents. Dr Ismail was adamant that continued family dependency was inversely

related to the education level of the children: "Those who have invested in their children's education reap the benefits", because these children have usually been able to find well-paid employment. Of Mehdi's eight children (aged 26 to 45), five passed the *Baccalauréat* school leaving certificate: his eldest son is an engineer, and two other children are high school teachers (Mehdi, 64, Chlef, Algeria). All of them speak French very well. He never forced them to study, but he always encouraged them. "If they passed the *Baccalauréat*, I would buy them a present." Yet he remarked that if they had come to France they would not have been able to get a job: in Mehdi's view there are no jobs for the children of immigrants, because of job market discrimination.

Conversely, the children of some respondents had been to university but had not been able to get a job. This was notably the case in Morocco, which has high graduate unemployment (Boudarbat 2008). Lahcen, a community worker in the Souss-Massa-Draâ region of Morocco, also focused on this issue. A principal cause of families' financial dependency is what Lahcen called "one of the major sins committed by the retired hostel residents (...) they haven't pushed their kids to work. The son is 40 years old but does nothing... he stays at home all day watching television, and asks for some pocket money to go buy a coffee." This is not the case for everyone of course, but some "have forgotten that there is the next generation to educate."

Years of remittance sending have inculcated a culture of dependency. As Moussa from Mali elaborated, "Generally it is in the interests of the non-migrant villagers to welcome you, because any wealth is shared throughout the extended family-village community. To maintain this family link, this solidarity, this is our strength. If we lose it, we lose our strength." However, family and extended kin solidarity can become abused. Some respondents noted an increased materialism among relatives who remain behind, evidenced by the requests for goods such as mobile phones, televisions and other home entertainment devices which hostel residents are expected to bring as presents when they return. Hostel residents themselves, according to Idrissa (Dembancané, Senegal), are used to a certain level of comfort, hence the need to import modern conveniences such as hot showers, televisions and refrigerators. Moussa labelled this an "inculcated mentality of

dependence-assistance (...) The traditional type of society is in the course of being destroyed, transformed into a society of assistance and dependence... a parachuted comfort" (Moussa, Mali).

5.3 New Communication Technologies amplify the Remittance Burden

A second change – additional to the "current complications" of the men's growing responsibilities as discussed above – relates to evolutions in communication technologies. Essentially this technological change means that the burden of their responsibilities is amplified. This has implications for return decision-making at retirement.

Chapter One discussed the transnationalism literature and its approach to return migration at retirement. The transnationalism literature sets great store in technological advances which facilitate social, political and cultural connections between migrants and their homelands. In such a perspective, information and communication technologies (ICTs) are viewed as tools which enable better and more rapid (if not simultaneous) communication between home and abroad, thereby smoothing the way potentially for an eventual return at retirement. But in actual fact, as will be discussed here, ICT use among hostel residents only serves to impede return, by exacerbating the pressures to remit noted above.

Narratives of globalisation often underline the advances in complex communications technology which are held to lead to a compression of space and time across the globe. A further corollary of globalisation is said to be the growing volume of international migration. Much attention has been focused on web technologies in the globalisation literature and migrants are often perceived at the "cutting edge" when it comes to adoption of such technologies (Panagakos and Horst 2006: 111).

While commentators prominent in the transnationalism and diaspora fields such as Arjun Appadurai and Alejandro Portes tend to emphasise new technologies and new media in their accounts (Appadurai 1996; Portes *et al.* 1999), web-based technologies are not always appropriate media for migrants who have difficulties

reading or writing, be this the host-country language or their mother tongue. Voice-to-voice communication conveniently removes such obstacles. However, much less attention has been given to the significance for international migrants of technological advances in the "seemingly pedestrian" domain of telephony (Panagakos and Horst 2006: 111-112). As Steven Vertovec puts it: "nothing has facilitated processes of global linkage more than the boom in ordinary, cheap international telephone calls. This is especially the case among non-elite social groups such as migrants" (Vertovec 2004: 219).

Hence, rather than speaking of the rupture that new communication technologies are commonly held to represent, Mattelart argues it is more accurate to describe today's long-distance communication technologies as forming a continuity with the past, encompassing letters, phone calls, tape recordings, radio, and television (Mattelart 2009: 18). Certainly, among my respondents, letters and tape-recorded messages were the most popular means of communicating with family up until the 1990s. One or two public call boxes were often installed in hostels, but home villages were generally not equipped with telephone facilities. With the arrival of the post office and telephone in 1975, Dembancané can reasonably be said to be somewhat advanced technologically, in comparison with Senegalese villages of a similar size.[99] Nonetheless, international calling tariffs remained prohibitively expensive until the 1990s. Preferring the low-cost postal alternative, the Dembancané men living in France were obliged to go long periods without contact:

> You could go two months without contact, because when you write and you send a letter to your wife or your mother, well it takes a long time for it to arrive, and then again for the response. Personally I didn't have any problems with writing, but when the letter arrived in the village, it took time for my mother to find someone who writes, because there weren't many 'intellectuals' in the village back then [laughs] (...) To be able to write a letter you had to be something special! (...) Communication was difficult, very difficult, at that time. There weren't any telephones, there weren't any mobiles at that time. (Djimé, Dembancané, Senegal)

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[99] By way of contrast, the landline is a new arrival in the village of M'Benguène which Mansour Tall studied (Tall 2004).

It was only in the 1990s that the price barriers to international telecommunications fell, as evidenced by the quite startling exponential growth in international call volumes.[100] A significant factor in this growth, additional to the improved carrying capacity of phone networks, was the drop in international call charges. Vertovec (2004) cites research which shows that the use of low-cost phone cards doubled between 2000 and 2002, and that over half of all calling card traffic was international. Moving to the specifics of the French case, a study by Pasquier (2001) noted the availability of pre-paid phone cards for North and West African migrants in France from the second half of the 1990s. These considerably reduced the costs of calls, which up until then had been a major worry for migrants and their families (Mattelart 2009). These evolutions at the global level are also mirrored at the local level in the village of Dembancané. There we see a boom in the use of fixed-line phones to communicate with loved ones living abroad and elsewhere in Senegal, and the opening of privately-operated telephone cabins (*téléboutiques*) to serve this demand.

The Dembancané *téléboutiques* opened in the late-1990s. Yet a mere decade after opening, they lie empty and obsolete, eclipsed by the all-conquering mobile phone. This change has been extremely rapid, occurring in the last five years or so, not just in Dembancané but throughout francophone North and West Africa. For example, in his 2001 study of hostel residents' family relationships, Jacques Barou did not discuss mobile phone communications (Barou 2001). Certainly, in terms of phone access among hostel residents, less than a third of respondents to a survey conducted in hostels in the Paris region in 2004-5 affirmed having personal access to either a landline or a mobile (El Moubaraki and Bitatsi Trachet 2006). By contrast, these days, in many hostels which I visited it is possible to get a personal landline connection for one's room. The first thing one sees on entering certain hostels, especially where West African residents are in the majority, is stallholders selling international calling cards.

Almost all respondents, including the oldest ones, owned a mobile handset. However, such technology is best able to exploit its potential for cheap international communication purposes only if one's interlocutors back home also possess such

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[100] In 1982, international call minutes stood at 12.7 billion. By 1992 this figure had risen to 42.7 billion, and by 2001 to 154 billion minutes (Held *et al.* 1999 in Vertovec 2004: 219-220).

devices. The comparative advantage – in terms of cost and installation – of mobile telecommunications over fixed line infrastructure has heralded a recent boom in mobile phone use in many developing countries (Vertovec 2004). Morocco and Senegal are no exceptions to this trend. Wherever I went in both countries, mobile phones were much in evidence and I was often invited to swap numbers with friends and relatives of my hosts. Furthermore, it was easy to find kiosks where top-up call-time could be purchased, even in small villages. These developments were summed up well by Souleymane:

> Until recently, no one had mobile phones, there were just fixed lines in France in the hostel, and maybe one or two fixed lines in the village in West Africa. But now everyone's got a mobile, both in the hostel but more importantly also in the country of origin. Every wife has a phone, so the men are constantly in communication with their families back home. (Souleymane, 50s, Mauritania)

What this means in practice is that use of international telecommunications technology, be it fixed-line or mobile, has become a daily part of life in a very short space of time. Many of my respondents, when asked, confirmed to engaging in daily or near daily telephone calls with family. Furthermore, my interviews were often punctuated by incoming phone calls from home. The everyday banality which the mobile phone represents for hostel residents has also been documented by other authors in different migration contexts (Ryan *et al*. 2009; Thompson 2009). Heather Horst describes how "[f]or many Jamaicans without access to a regular or reliable phone service prior to 2001, the mobile phone is viewed as an unadulterated blessing, transforming the role of transnational communication from an intermittent event to a part of daily life" (Horst 2006: 143).

The question remains however as to whether this technology was viewed in similarly positive terms by hostel residents in France. The structuralist and transnationalism literature suggests that easier communications with people at home will facilitate return insofar as potential returnees will have better knowledge of home conditions and therefore be better prepared for return. While intuitively one would expect that anything which contributed to making communication with distant

relatives easier and cheaper would be welcomed by hostel residents, this was far from always the case.

The promise and pressure of communicability

For some respondents, these new technologies were positively viewed. As Hamid (70, Taroudant, Morocco) pointed out, before the coming of the mobile phone, the only way to maintain contact was by letter. As we have seen, communication by letter was a painfully long and intermittent process. By contrast, these days Hamid is on the phone to his wife and children every day. He also talked about sending text and photo messages, and even being called by his family over the internet using VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) applications such as Skype. These technological developments are changes for the better in his opinion. The same applied to money transfers: before it would take fifteen or twenty days for the *mandat* to arrive in his Moroccan hometown. Nowadays, money wired by Western Union is there in fifteen or twenty minutes!

Horst (2006) comments that, in the past, sending money by post was unreliable and very time-consuming. Mail was problematic because it could be intercepted or lost or "simply did not reach the recipient in time for them to make effective use of the sum sent" (Hamel 2009: 20). As the recent interest in mobile banking (M-Banking) shows, there is great potential for the mobile phone to be employed as a financial tool by the 'un-banked' poor, such as urban-rural migrants and their families (Morawczynski and Pickens 2009). However, M-Banking is a very recent development in Morocco and Senegal (services were launched in both countries in 2010), and international money transfers are not yet possible there, in contrast to countries such as Kenya, the Philippines, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and some Gulf states, where M-Banking is very strongly implanted (Mobile Money Exchange 2011). But my respondents certainly did use their mobile phones for the "micro-coordination" of remittance transfers (Horst 2006: 153). In particular, the speed of money transfer services such as Western Union was seen as a notable advance, and the mobile phone was essential in requesting these transfers and coordinating their timing.

The money arrives immediately, but they call to check you've sent it too! (Issa, 70, Tambacounda, Senegal)

When they need food, or anything else, they call me, then I send immediately what is required. [So you are often in contact?] Oh yes, always in contact, to see if they have everything they need at home, so when they lack something, they get the money straight away. (Hadyatou, Dembancané, Senegal)

Just as with household budgets, fixed and mobile phone technologies can be harnessed to coordinate and manage household activities (Hamel 2009; Paragas 2009; Thompson 2009; Wilding 2006), potentially giving migrants new (or renewed) influence over family members who previously were out of reach. Critically for this discussion, researchers have also found that such technology can be used by emigrants to better manage the expectations of their loved ones back home. Horst notes that "the increased communication enabled through the presence of house phones and especially the ownership of mobile phones has led [stay-at-home] Jamaicans to more realistic expectations of the migration experience" (Horst 2006: 154).

The potential for mobile phones to generate more measured expectations of the migrant on the part of those remaining behind was not, however, a feature of my respondents' narratives. Quite the opposite, as the epigraph at the start of this chapter served to illustrate. Their exchanges with family members back home did not always have an affectionate or attentive content but instead revolved around the apparently ever-increasing financial needs of the household. Hostel residents complained of the 'pressure' to attend to these needs. Souleymane (50s, Mauritania), a member of his hostel's Residents' Committee, described this very aptly as "the pressure of communicability" (*la pression de la communicabilité*):

Every wife has a phone, so the men are constantly in communication with their families back home. And this creates a certain pressure; you are much more aware of everything going on in the village, and your responsibilities weigh more heavily. (Souleymane, 50s, Mauritania)

Intriguingly, few scholars of migration and ICTs have written about these pressures. This inattention to the remittance 'burden' generated by ICTs may be related in part to the fact that most studies of remittances focus on *recipients* in the country of origin, not the *senders* abroad (Riak Akuei 2005). Although not addressing the topic directly, Vertovec hints at such pressures when he comments that "[f]or migrants and their kin in distant parts of the world, telephone calls can only provide a kind of punctuated sociality that can heighten emotional strain as well as alleviate it" (Vertovec 2004: 223). This same phenomenon is brought out well by two authors, Stephanie Riak Akuei and Raelene Wilding. Wilding notes that "in some cases the availability of contact created its own anxieties – particularly when kin used ICTs to demand remittances from the refugees" (Wilding 2006: 135).

Similarly, Riak Akuei documents cases of Dinka refugees from southern Sudan living in San Diego and other resettlement locations throughout the world. In the eyes both of the refugees and their families remaining back in Sudan, resettlement is perceived as an opportunity "paved with gold" (2005: 6), thereby generating concomitant expectations that the refugees will send remittances. Crucially for this discussion of ICTs, Riak Akuei underlines that the volume and nature of phone calls made to refugees by dependent relatives "can easily compromise their good intentions. The increase in these unforeseen burdens can in fact be a major source of stress and anguish" (Riak Akuei 2005: 9). In terms of call volume, Riak Akuei documents between five and fifteen calls per week fielded by her individual respondents. The nature of the calls also led to anxieties. They were often abrupt, because the callers could not afford a long call. Invariably such calls were requests for money, sometimes phrased in aggressive and reproachful language, with callers alleging abandonment by the person at the other end of the line (Riak Akuei 2005: 10). To reduce the number of calls, some respondents would let their phone ring out, or redirect it to voicemail. Others, more drastically, have changed their phone numbers without informing their (extended) family (Riak Akuei 2005: 9-10).

None of the participants in this study admitted changing their phone number, but several made a link between the increasing burden of their responsibilities and the advent of improved telecommunications. Amadou (64, Tambacounda, Senegal)

talked about being in regular contact with home via mobile phones, concluding that "all in all there are many responsibilities: you have to give to almost everyone." For others, the dissonance created by being simultaneously far away (in body) but within earshot was an unwelcome break with the 'easy life' of the past, when intensive transnational communication was a rarity:

> Before, life was easy, there was no difficulty. Because we weren't sending money like nowadays, like all the time. We used to send money at the end of the month. Now, all the time, they ask you for money, one person's ill, the other one needs this, the other that, it's not like before (...) These days, there's Western Union, there's Moneygram, there's the fax, there's all that. (…) Nowadays, if they have a problem back home, it comes straight back to you. (Issa, 70, Tambacounda, Senegal)

ICTs – empowering or enslaving?

The relevance of the above to the transnationalism literature is clear. This literature tends to attribute an empowering role to information and communication technologies when taken up by marginal or precarious populations. As Tall puts it: "ICTs are a factor in achieving progress, a source of power that encourages people to access that power, a powerful element of social innovation" (Tall 2004: 47). Other positive appraisals of the technology abound. In Wilding's study, some of her respondents depicted this new technology as a "miracle" (Wilding 2006: 131). Similarly, although Horst rightly notes certain disadvantages of transnational mobile phone use, she concludes that "it was difficult to ignore the blessings of the mobile phone" (Horst 2006: 153-4). Other commentators speak of mobile phones in the developing world as a "pro-poor" technology (Mallalieu 2007). Much has been made of ICTs' potential to contribute to human development (Anderson 2007; Hamel 2009): a much-cited study from 2005 calculated that an increase of ten mobile phones per 100 people in developing countries in Africa increases GDP growth by 0.6 percent (Waverman *et al.* 2005). Finally, Steven Vertovec describes how the unprecedented volumes of "cheap telephone calls serve as a kind of social glue" for migrants and their home communities (Vertovec 2004: 220).

A point on which there appears to be even more unanimity among scholars is that older people are not so easily able to access ICT (Panagakos and Horst 2006; Prensky 2001; Tall 2004). Paragas finds that age is a significant variable insofar as "interpersonal media ownership" is concerned, with younger migrants more likely to own a mobile phone with camera compared to older migrants (Paragas 2009: 46). Similarly, Hamel comments that "those who are least likely to be able to use these new forms of communication [are] the elderly and the sick" (Hamel 2009: 29). Given that this literature on ICTs tends to stress 1) the developmental and empowering virtues of this technology, and 2) the lower take-up of such technology among older people, one would be forgiven for thinking that older hostel residents who use this technology would figure among the most empowered of all senior citizens. In fact, we find that ICTs actually serve to exacerbate or amplify the men's burdens, calling into question the empowerment thesis. Instead of feeling empowered, the geographically-single hostel residents feel trapped by a situation which they have no chance to change.

> 90 percent of us are trapped in this situation. We are trapped in this situation because it's a situation which has become monotonous (…) So we – excuse my language – but we become slaves, of ourselves. Because when you have a child and that child gets married, you have to work for the grandchildren too. (Saleem, 60, Tiznit, Morocco)

> Nowadays, you earn money, but you never free yourself from problems. Before, you would earn a bit, but there weren't many problems that bothered us, which trapped us. These days, you earn, but it doesn't stay in your pocket long. (Issa, 70, Tambacounda, Senegal)

In turn, this situation of dependency traps some older hostel residents in France, for the greater part of the year, in order to benefit from the *minimum vieillesse* and other non-contributory means-tested benefits which supplement their pension income. Saleem, in particular, returned again and again during our discussions to the motif of exploitation, both in France and back home. The new communications technology, while a blessing in some ways, also contributes to the sense of burden by making it easier for stay-at-home relatives to "exploit" family connections for money and other types of remittance:

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I don't feel at ease, because I feel that – I feel I am alone, and I am still exploited – exploited by those who are here [in France] and those who are there [back home] (...) It's true that it's my family, but I'm exploited all the same, because I don't have a choice. Well, if they have bills to pay, it's me who pays, because they don't have anyone else. (Saleem, 60, Tiznit, Morocco)

5.4 Gender Roles, Family Roles, and Conflicts

A final influence on return decision-making insofar as the family unit is concerned relates to family conflict, especially in terms of gender and family roles. Much socio-gerontological literature holds that older people – at least in modern industrialised society – undergo a process of 'role loss' as they advance in years, and the passage to retirement is a critical juncture in this process. For the hostel residents, the transition to old age is more complex. On one hand, hostel residents paradoxically have been able to retain some roles that normally they might be expected to shed at retirement in modern, industrialised society – the role of principal breadwinner being a notable example. On the other hand, ironically, they also risk losing roles which typically would be ascribed them at their stage of seniority in the place of origin.

The concept of intersectionality helps us to interpret these complex nuances. The intersectional literature first emerged in feminist accounts of race discrimination (Crenshaw 1989; hooks 1981) but in recent years, other scholars have sought to expand the scope of the concept to include age, class, disability and sexuality as further dimensions of differentiation and inequality (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992; Brah and Phoenix 2004; Maynard 1994: in Yuval-Davis 2006).When studying the motivations for late-in-life (im)mobility from a perspective which combines various dimensions of social stratification – gender, age, generation, and ethnicity – the complexity of the men's experiences becomes clearer. Thus, particularly amongst my North African respondents, prolonged exile constitutes a profound risk to patriarchal family models which tend to be the norm in North Africa (Mernissi 2003; Sharabi 1988), as will be described below. Wives, children and siblings who have stayed behind gain in autonomy at the expense of older hostel residents. This applied less to West African respondents however. While there are some West African testimonies on this theme, most of the voices below are North African.

Role loss and role conflict theory

Talcott Parsons finds that "retirement leaves the older man in a peculiarly functionless position, cut off from participation in the most important interests and activities of the society" (Parsons 1954: 103, in Bradley 1996: 152). Similarly, Chad Gordon writes that "[o]ld age very typically brings major reductions in both roles and resources, and is therefore considered as a period of declining independence and action" (Gordon 1972: 74). To the extent that this literature has distinguished the gendered aspects of ageing, elderly men are in particular singled out as experiencing loss of roles and resources. Summarising this literature, Edward Thompson notes: "Elders – in particular, elderly men – are thought to suffer significant losses: their occupational role, their livelihood and community of co-workers, their health and independence, and their masculinity are commonly thought to be displaced by ageing" (Thompson 2001: 264). All these theories of role over the lifecourse assume that in industrialised nations, the passage to retirement implies a disengagement from society, in terms of occupational roles (work roles, but also including friendships with work colleagues), additional social roles external to the workplace (leisure and voluntary activities), and family roles (breadwinner). To quote Gordon again, "Retirement seems to be the most crucial of these major role changes for men, because our instrumentally-oriented culture places such great value on a man's occupation as a measure of his competence, self-determination and moral worth. The culture holds "You are what you do'; by implication, if you do nothing, you are nothing" (Gordon 1972: 101).

However, previous sections in this chapter showed that in some ways, the passage to retirement for the older hostel residents does not necessarily equate to role loss. In particular, they often do not lose but maintain their role as principal breadwinner for the nuclear or extended family of dependents back home. This atypical experience in the passage to retirement cannot be studied in isolation from one of the characteristics which make their family situation so singular, namely the decision to continue living geographically separated lives – in administrative, legal and affective terms - for much of the year. Thompson notes that "[r]ole-theory

sociologies directed attention to the rolelessness of late life. Retired men were envisioned outside the "normal" work spaces, and, by default, they were invading their wives' space – the family home" (Thompson 2001: 266). In this, too, hostel residents are atypical, preferring to circulate rather than return to the household definitively.

Paradoxically, though, the hostel residents have also lost many of the roles which typically would be ascribed them at their stage of life in the society of origin. The disrupting experience of exile and emigration poses a profound risk to the patriarchal family structures which tend to be the norm in North and West Africa (Mernissi 2003; Sharabi 1988). This means that hostel residents, especially North Africans as noted, lose power over their families. They lose authority over their wives and children. This leads to family conflicts and as a result some men prefer to spend less and less time back home, returning to the "refuge" of the hostel when these conflicts flare up. In the following sub-section I will describe in greater detail how these changing power dynamics manifest themselves.

It would be mistaken to characterise these shifting power dynamics as a specific form of role loss occurring due to retirement, since these are processes which have been slowly unfolding since the *émigré* breadwinner first departed. Rather, these role changes might best be termed "role conflict". Abercrombie *et al.* define role conflict in three ways: "(1) when a person finds he or she is playing two or more roles at one time that make incompatible demands (...); (2) when a person defines his or her role in one way while those in related roles define it differently (...); (3) when related roles have incompatible expectations of the focal role" (Abercrombie *et al.* 2006: 334). I will argue in the next section that role conflict occurs in the lives of older hostel residents vis-à-vis two role groups: spouses (gender roles) and children (inter-generational roles).

Gender roles and conflicts

A clear example of role conflict is found in the contrasting domestic roles which fall to hostel residents and their wives. On the one hand, some men consider themselves as having become effeminate in the hostel in France. They have lived "*une vie de*

femme" as one hostel manager put it: they cook for themselves, they tidy up after themselves, they do the shopping. Residents also alluded to this: "we've had enough of being in France, living alone, without the wife, for 40 years: it's difficult. Doing your own housework, cooking for yourself." Occasionally, this would lead to reflection on the part of residents that "women's work is not easy, and we guys in the hostels know because we've done it, we've had to look after ourselves, cleaning, cooking, mending clothes etc; except for wives it's even harder as there are the children to consider" (Kader, 70s, Mostaghanem, Algeria).

On the other hand, however, there is sometimes resentment from hostel residents at the authority which wives have been able to gain. "A woman is like a wallet" said one, "she keeps your money." Indeed, there is potential for the wives of hostel residents to fundamentally upset the patriarchal model of family roles, by assuming control over the household budget, children's education and discipline, and so on. As Idrissa (Dembancané, Senegal) sees it, the wives have their own habits, and the men have theirs, and it can be very difficult to integrate these two lifestyles upon return at retirement. The result is "a clash of personalities", occasionally resulting in divorces at retirement. After a certain time away from the village -

> One loses one's bearings as the head of the household. Likewise the wife has lost the habit of living together. (Souleymane, 50s, Mauritania).
>
> You know how the kids are back home, they don't give a damn about what their father thinks. If he's happy or not, it's not their problem. They don't know what poverty is, and furthermore, they have a lawyer at home. [Author: Who is their lawyer?] It's their mother. You try to say: "What on earth is that? That's not on", and she replies: "Leave them alone." What are you going to do after that? She tells you: "You, you know nothing, it's me who raised them." (Bouziane, 62, Agadir, Morocco[101])

As a result, some men only stay for a few months back home, because they get annoyed with their families. "We get fed up, and decide to come back" (Kemal, 63, Algeria). Although family problems may not always be openly admitted, such

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[101] Source: Ville de Gennevilliers (1994) *Migrations: le temps de la retraite*

bitterness and "grudges" can lead to return being postponed, as the following quote suggests:

> It is like I was telling you last time, people here stay in France because of their health. But actually it's probably a problem of stress with their families. They hold out, hold out, and then – bam – they crack, an illness (...) They don't talk about this sort of thing, these are things which are not talked about. They hide the real roots of the problem. (Saleem, 60, Tiznit, Morocco)

Inter-generational roles and conflicts

One of the principal difficulties of migrating alone and not reunifying one's family in the country of origin is that "you risk losing your children" (Hamid, 70, Taroudant, Morocco). After having lived half their lives essentially as single men, "they end up not knowing their kids" (Idrissa, Dembancané, Senegal). Being away from home for long periods of time during working life means that as a father one does not witness the successive stages of development that one's children pass through. This is particularly the case for West Africans of working age, who tend to spend two or three years in France at a stretch. During my fieldwork in West Africa I was privileged indeed to witness several family reunions. While full of joy, they could also be tinged with uncertainty and anxiety, especially for younger children. This can mean that fathers are strangers to their children. Over time, this enforced estrangement can lead to less than respectful relations between fathers and children, as work by Jacques Barou has comprehensively revealed (Barou 2001). Denis, a hostel manager, noted that "They slave away here for their children, but their children aren't grateful," so they go back home for a while, and then they return to France when they have had enough of the family.

Even harder for some fathers to bear is the perception that their children behave just like French youths, an allusion to the media cliché of delinquency in France. Kader (70s, Mostaghanem, Algeria) noted this "moral degeneration" of youth in his home country, as did Ferouah: "The new generation of children fall easily into delinquency. They get bad habits. They steal, they take drugs, they don't

respect their parents" (Ferouah, 60s, Morocco). Hadyatou (Dembancané, Senegal) had this to say:

> It doesn't give me pleasure to say this but the youth of today are very difficult. In our day, when our parents told us to stay here-or-there, or do this-or-that, we listened. Whereas nowadays the young ones don't listen to their parents.

It might be tempting to interpret the preceding quotations of respondents as merely the disgruntled grumbles of husbands complaining about their 'nagging wives' and 'ungrateful' children. At times there was an element of this which crept into my discussions with older hostel residents, but their remarks cannot be passed off as mere complaints. There was a considerably heightened level of emotion when some men talked about their "enslavement", "exploitation", "pressures", "burdens" and "responsibilities" which went beyond everyday complaints about 'nagging wives'. The gravity of such words is enough to make that clear.

In summary, the result of these accumulated conflicts is that the hostel becomes a "refuge" from their problems. They come to France for paperwork or healthcare, and upon their return to Morocco there will be a family row – "a banal conflict" – and they will be off to France again. "When [a hostel residents] returns [to France], it's true he returns for healthcare, but when he is back he is relieved (...) It's a refuge for him", as Saleem (60, Tiznit, Morocco) put it. He continued:

> Everyone has changed, everyone has his own problems, everyone! The guy has problems back home, with his children, with his wife, with his inheritance, everyone has problems. Plus the problem of health, now. Nerves, stress (...) it builds up. (...) Now we are paying for what we have done! We didn't realise – when we left the kids back home – that the system would become like this. (Saleem, 60, Tiznit, Morocco)

Bouziane (62, Agadir, Morocco) echoed Saleem's words:

> You know, there are some retired guys who stay here because they have nothing more to do back home. They have gone back home, they have seen how their family and their kids give them a headache. So, they abandon them and come back here now. For example, me, I don't like it when they spend money willy-nilly, when they waste money. But my

children don't give a damn. If I see that, I get annoyed. I don't want them to do me the run-around too much. So I leave them, and come back to live here [i.e., France]. (Bouziane, 62, Agadir, Morocco[102]).

Conclusion

To conclude, this chapter has described how remittances have long been a way of life for the hostel residents and their families, sustaining – be it materially or morally – both recipients and senders. The state's migrant worker hostel policy itself was designed to facilitate such transfers: by keeping rents low, the men were able to send as much money as possible back home, thereby discouraging family reunification. The men who remain in the hostels past retirement have internalised this logic, to the point that remittance sending has become institutionalised. Subsistence needs are the first item of expenditure, but beyond this minimum expectation, remittances are also deployed to boost the social standing of families and to diversify household income streams. Such strategies include investments in property for rental purposes; investments in technology leading to greater agricultural productivity; and investments in children's education. The latter was identified as particularly important following the retirement of the breadwinner in France, since children who have good jobs are able to fulfil the expectation of support for their parents in old age.

Prima facie, the importance of remittances lends strong support to the new economics of labour migration (NELM) as unveiled in Chapter One. However in some cases the NELM logic appears to be distorted. Although the theory predicts that the passage to retirement of single migrant workers heralds the end of the migration project and subsequent return to rejoin the family in the place of origin, in some cases children and grandchildren remain dependent on the reduced income of the pensioner. This prompts some older men to remain in France *after* retirement, in order to satisfy eligibility rules for state benefits which boost their pension income. As a result they become "trapped" in France.

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[102] Source: Ville de Gennevilliers (1994) *Migrations: le temps de la retraite*

This dependency is painfully amplified by advances in telecommunications technology. Transnational communications between family members used to be slow and intermittent. While the enforced separation and prolonged silence were painful to bear, the silver lining was that there were fewer responsibilities weighing on the hostel residents. With the advent of new communication technologies this situation has been reversed: low-cost fixed and mobile telephony has resulted in greater "pressure of communicability". Theories of transnationalism consider such technology as an explanatory variable: easier and more regular communication should facilitate return migration, since prospective returnees will be better prepared for their return, a factor stressed by structuralist accounts. However, the opposite ensues: in contrast to accounts which ascribe to ICT a pro-poor and developmental role which empowers people, these new technologies sometimes serve only to further 'enslave' the men and impede return.

This in turn has contributed to conflicts with spouses, children and siblings, as was described in the preceding section. Role loss and role conflict were identified as key concepts here. Role loss is commonly identified as an outcome for older people in modern society, especially following the passage to retirement for men. On one hand, ironically, the men do not lose their role of principal breadwinner: on the other hand, however, years of separation have led to loss of patriarchal authority within the family. Several respondents referred, directly or indirectly, to these family problems as a motive for not returning definitively. The hostel thus becomes a refuge for certain residents.

6. Getting One's Bearings: re-integration to the home community

> When you return to the village, it's a time of new activity, a new condition. (Djimé, Dembancané, Senegal)

> The difficulty for [the North Africans in the hostels] is that they didn't think they were going to stay here and die here, instead the idea was to return (...) In the meantime they have grown accustomed to life here, when they return there, they may feel that they are not entirely integrated. *They lose their bearings.*
> (interview with Dr Slimane, psychiatrist: emphasis added)

In the previous chapter, several respondents complained that they had lost their bearings within their families. North Africans in particular despaired that repeated absence had led to role loss within the family, threatening their status as patriarch. As will be shown in this chapter, the same questions around role and status apply within the wider home community. The experiences of North African respondents contrast markedly with those of most West African hostel residents I spoke to. Many North African men had lost their physical and social bearings back home, whereas West Africans, being the drivers of physical and social change thanks to their contributions to village development projects, were less disoriented by their return trips and found it far easier to re-integrate, hence the central significance to our central research question about late-in-life return.

In this chapter, I will unpack this notion of 'bearings' and explore its relevance to the issue of re-integration to communities of origin following retirement. Case studies in Dembancané (Senegal) and Tiznit (Morocco) will be compared. Various grounds for comparison were unveiled in Chapter Two, and some of these – notably transnational communications and cultures of migration – were first explored in the preceding chapter, where some significant differences emerged between North African and West African respondents. These contrasts are mirrored again in the present chapter in relation to processes of re-integration at the community level, with relevance to the literature on structuralism and transnationalism in particular.

However, I should stress here that the differences I observed between the two localities of Dembancané and Tiznit in terms of re-integration processes were reproduced in the testimonies of North and West Africans in all the hostels I visited. Thus, while drawing this distinction between North African and West African experiences may appear crude at first sight, the qualitative differences between these two sending regions are, to my eyes, very marked.

As noted in Chapter One, processes of re-integration are often ignored by those scholars of migration who limit their gaze to the context of the host country. This isolation from the environment to which migrants (may or may not) return leads them to see return solely as a product of the individual experience of the migrant in the host countries (such as in the neo-classical paradigm). Yet, as Cassarino stresses, "return is also a question of context" (Cassarino 2004: 257, 260). The perspective of structuralists, as was summarised in Chapter One, is invaluable here as it sheds light on the socio-structural mechanisms in home countries which have a bearing on re-integration, which is the "process of adaptation (...) between those who have returned and those who remained behind during their absence" (Arowolo 2000: 62). This process unfolds in domains as diverse as physical environment and climate, but especially social, behavioural and economic structures (Arowolo 2000; Athukorala 1990; Dumon 1986; Gmelch 1980).

What is meant by 'bearings' here also requires some clarification. Standard dictionaries attribute several meanings to the term, but there are two aspects which I underline at this stage. Initially this chapter will explore bearings in the 'physical' sense of the word: "the direction or position of something relative to a fixed point; awareness of one's position relative to one's surroundings" (OED 1999). It will be demonstrated how retired hostel residents' degree of influence over their physical surroundings in places of origin – notably through participation (or not) in migrant-led development projects – in turn has an influence on the second, 'social' meaning of bearings, namely "a person's way of standing, moving or behaving" (OED 1999). Above all, it is hostels residents' standing and behaviour in places of origin that will absorb our attention in the latter half of the chapter.

Before turning to hostel residents' physical relationship to their native surroundings, it will nonetheless be useful for the reader to have an idea of the

physical situation of the two localities in Senegal and Morocco where I conducted fieldwork.

6.1 Sketches of Dembancané (Senegal) and Tiznit (Morocco)

Dembancané

Dembancané (population 6,100[103]) is situated on the left bank of the Senegal River, 40 kilometres downstream from Bakel, the closest administrative and commercial centre. Geographically, historically and linguistically, Dembancané has always been a frontier town. The river itself constitutes the frontier between Senegal and Mauritania, and in terms of administrative boundaries, Dembancané separates the regions of Matam (to the north) and Tambacounda (to the south). Furthermore, the village marks the start of Senegal's "fertile crescent" (Dilley 2004: 15), a floodplain extending 450km to the north-west forming a region known historically as Fuuta Toro (see Figure 23 below).[104] This region is distinguished culturally by the preponderance of the Pulaar-speaking Tukulor ethnic group, whereas to the south and east of the village in the regions of Ngalam and Guidimaxa, the majority of the population belong to the Soninke ethnic group.

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[103] This population estimate dates from 2008, according to the website http://www.Dembancane.com/index.php/histoire-geographie/histoire/47-Dembancane

[104] A local saying in the Pulaar language of the Tukulor dominated floodplain is *Fuuta ko feetal jabaaji*, meaning Fuuta Toro 'is a double-barrelled gun' (Dilley 2004: 15). This is a reference to the two harvests which the topography and climate provide. The first harvest is provided by cultivating the elevated land which is watered by the rains (July-October), while the second is produced by cultivating the lower floodplain (*waalo*) once the floodwaters begin to recede.
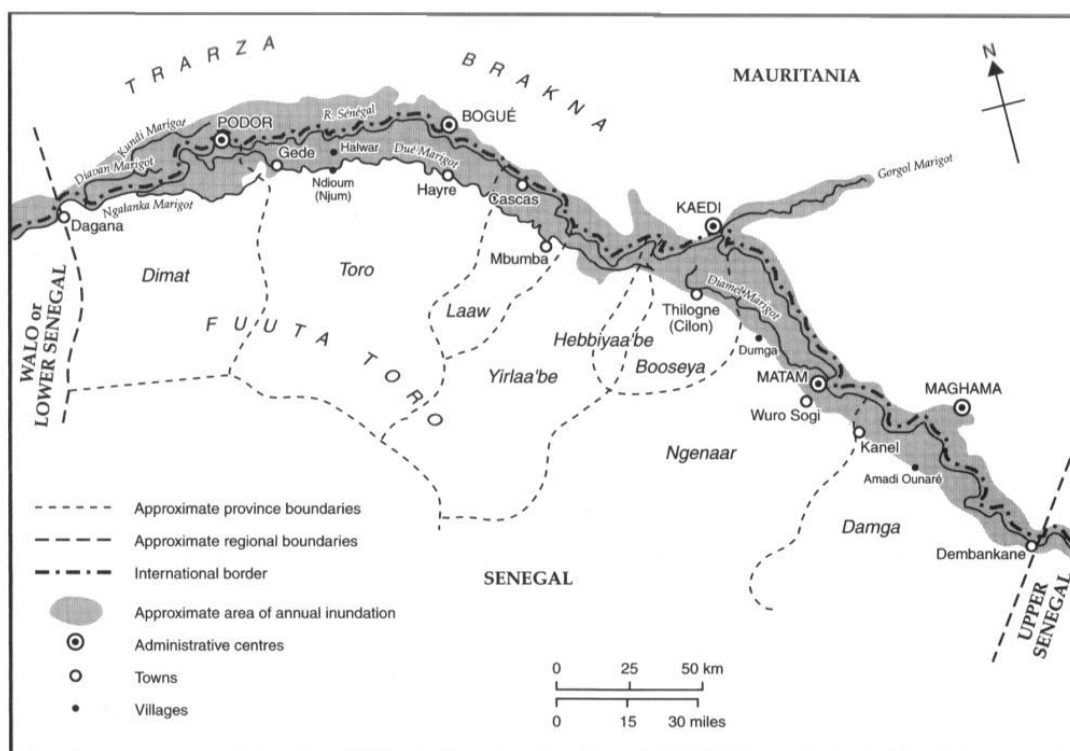
Figure 23. Fuuta Toro (with Dembancané in bottom right). Adapted from Dilley (2004).

The village was founded by a Tukulor fisherman named Demba, hence the name
Dembancané (the houses of Demba). The date of its founding is not known, but there
is documented evidence of its existence in the late 17th century. Over time, Soninkes
have displaced Tukulor as the principal ethnic group in the village. The Soninke are
reputed to be primarily a sedentary farming group: in terms of economic production,
given the village's situation on this fertile floodplain, agriculture has long been the
principal economic activity (M'Bow 1954).

Our principal documentary source of information on Dembancané is Amadou
Mahtar M'bow who made a survey of the village in 1954 during his time as a young
field officer for the national education board. (M'bow later went on to become
director-general of Unesco from 1974 to 1987, the first African to hold this post.)
M'Bow estimated that the population in 1954 was 95 percent Soninke. However, this
ethnic homogeneity "masks rigid social distinctions" (M'Bow 1954: 6), the most
notable of which is 'caste'[105] – an element of social structure which, on the African

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[105] Among the Soninke of Dembancané , four social ranks were traditionally consequential: free men
or nobles; *vanakouko*, also free men but designated as latecomers to the village (insofar as the noble
families settled in Dembancané first); next come the various vocational castes such as praise singers

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continent, is somewhat unique to West Africa, especially Senegal and Mali.[106] Since M'Bow's time, caste arguably has lost some of its significance: certainly, the "economic basis of the castes has disappeared"[107] (Timera 1996: 79). In any case, 'caste' did not appear to be a major factor with regard to my research question.[108] A second axis in the village social hierarchy is age. Manchuelle (1997: 114) notes that Soninke society, as with most Mandé ethnic sub-groups, is gerontocratic. This contrasts with the more meritocratic Tukulor downstream in Fuuta Toro. That said, one scholar of the Soninke finds that, through emigration, the preponderance of power concentrated in the hands of the elders from the noble families has diminished within some village associations, as demands for more democratic functioning have been made by younger people in migration (Timera 1996: 68).

To conclude, it is important to describe the built environment in the village, since this is a core focus of hostel residents' development projects. Family units are organised on the basis of patrilineage (*fabanka*), centred on the residential, productive and consumption unit (*ka*, house). The *fabanka* can regroup several mono- or polygynous households (Timera 1996). In the course of his 1954 survey, M'Bow was particularly struck by the very dense agglomeration of houses in the village:

> What essentially characterises the habitat is its extremely concentrated form. One would be astonished to see during the dry season large empty spaces around the village while the houses press up against each other only leaving between them very small alleyways. This concentration has been imposed less by the social structure than by nature. The houses have been established there where they were able to escape from the flooding of the river during the rainy season (M'bow 1954).

(griots) (*gassarou*), metalworkers (*tego*), leatherworkers (*garanko*), and weavers (*mabo*); at the bottom of the social hierarchy are the *komo*, the servile class, who are descendants of slaves. The *komo* cannot own land or property. Generally, the castes are endogamous (M'Bow 1954).

[106] Dilley finds the term 'caste' somewhat problematic and deploys it in his writings merely as a "shorthand gloss" (2004: 1): it is more accurate in his view to qualify these relations as social *ranks* for three statuses, and as social *categories* for the different vocation-based castes (ibid: 27).

[107] Caste no longer implies a relation of servitude or determines a villager's choice of vocation, but nonetheless it remains relevant in terms of marriage choice, despite the egalitarian injunctions of the Islamic faith (Diouf 1994).

[108] However, Timera (1996) cautions that the significance of caste is often overlooked – if not denied – by external observers when they rely on the responses of community members, who, knowing that such caste relations and power structures are understood to be retrograde in Western society, tend to downplay the reality.

Since M'Bow's time, while the central village still retains this highly concentrated form, the growth in population has led to expansion to the east. At the time of M'Bow's study, the population was 1,400: today it is 6,100 (M'Bow 1954). Instead of the traditional adobe-walled one-storey houses separated by narrow alleyways, as seen in Figure 24 below, concrete is the preferred building material of the new, much larger dwellings (Figure 25).
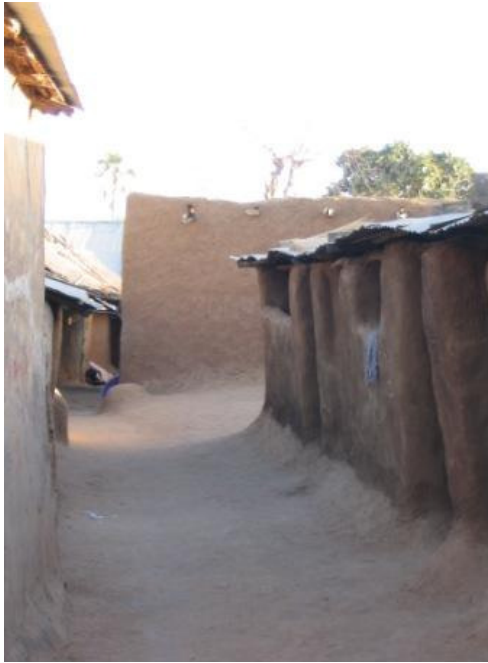
Figure 24. Traditional building style

Figure 25. Modern building style

Tiznit

Tiznit (population 50,000), the capital of Tiznit province in the Souss-Massa-Draa region of Morocco, is situated approximately 80km south of Agadir and 10km inland from the Atlantic coast.

Figure 26. Map of the Souss-Massa-Draa region (with Tiznit in bottom left corner).

The locality of Tiznit was home to several tribal factions in history (Ait Muhamed, Atban, Iddalha, Idzekri), but the town itself is of quite recent settlement, dating to the 1880s (Baladiya Tiznit 2009). It was at this time that the Sultan of Morocco Hassan I established a fortress at Tiznit from which to subjugate the unruly Berber tribes of the Souss. Since then, the town has enjoyed strategic importance as a major regional transport hub, being at the intersection of the N1 highway (north-south) and an east-west route linking Tafraoute and the Anti-Atlas mountains with the Atlantic coast towards Sidi Ifni.

The Souss region historically has been populated predominantly by Berber tribes of the Tachelhit-speaking Chleuh ethnic group, as distinct to the Arabised

peoples living on the northern and central coastal plains. As noted in Chapter One, the Souss region was historically a region of seasonal migration, and for much of the 20th century this tradition of emigration extended to France, with the Souss becoming the principal source region of Moroccan labour in France. The latter emigration has been fundamental to Tiznit's subsequent growth. On first impressions when driving into Tiznit, it soon becomes obvious that Tiznit is a large, prosperous, and well maintained town, visibly better off than most Moroccan towns (see Figure 27 below). In the view of a local civil servant, Tiznit exemplifies the contribution of emigrants to local development, since it is a growing, well equipped town, and yet there are no local "wealth-generating resources." Instead, prosperity is imported from abroad, by the emigrants.

Figure 27. Downtown Tiznit (the hotel on the left was built by a returning emigrant).

Prosperity driven by emigration is clearly something which Tiznit and Dembancané have in common. In many other aspects, however, they differ. One obvious difference is their respective sizes, with Tiznit's population almost ten times that of

Dembancané. Another crucial difference is Tiznit's strategic importance as a transport hub, whereas Dembancané has suffered from its marginal frontier position. A third intriguing element to note is the evolution of the social structure in the larger town and its hinterland: whereas in Dembancané the persistence (albeit attenuated) of a quite rigid social hierarchy was underlined, in Tiznit, emigration "has contributed to the break-up of traditional villages and the introduction of new types of construction and consumption habits" (Tiznit.org 2011).

Figure 28. A new housing development under construction on the outskirts of Tiznit.

These new trends in construction and consumption have been driven largely by returning migrants from France. This pattern began in the late 1960s and early 1970s, when vacationing emigrants transformed Tiznit into a boom town during the summer months, thanks to the homewares and electrical goods purchased in Tiznit and destined to furnish their homes in the villages (*douars*) of the surrounding region. From the 1980s, some emigrant villagers began to install their families in the town,

in order to benefit from the modern amenities and services available there, as will be described shortly.

As with the sketch of Dembancané, it will be helpful to conclude with a description of Tiznit's built environment. The growth of the town has long since expanded beyond the ramparts constructed by Sultan Hassan I a little over a century ago. Indeed, Tiznit is something of a boom town with new housing developments springing up on the outskirts of town (see Figure 28 above). Several of my respondents bemoaned the exorbitant real estate prices, amongst the highest in the country. The emigrants are blamed (in some quarters) for this price inflation.

6.2 Physical Bearings: constructing place back home

In the preceding chapter, the importance of constructing a home for one's family was briefly touched upon. Historians of migration have long acknowledged the substantial allocation of resources which emigrants direct towards housing in places of origin (Wyman 1993). The more recent literature on the migration-development nexus analyses this phenomenon anew, notably as to whether such investments constitute a 'productive' use of remittances or are instead ostentatious examples of remittance consumption (van Hear 2002). House construction was identified as a significant theme by almost all respondents, in both North and West African communities of origin. House-building (and/or house-renovating) is clearly one means of altering one's surroundings and physical environment, as well as very visibly augmenting one's social status, hence the primary importance it is accorded here in relation to bearings. The situation in Tiznit and its surrounding hinterland will be treated first.

Tiznit – boom town or ghost town?

Many older former migrants have purchased property in Tiznit, where their families now live, in preference to their native villages in the surrounding countryside. According to the international department at a local bank, 7,400 retired migrants

have property in Tiznit. They are attracted to the amenities and modern conveniences which are not available in their villages of origin: better schools, postal and banking services, as well as better infrastructure such as electricity, safe water supply, and so on.

Interviews with staff of the association *Migrations et Développement* (hereafter known as M&D) were insightful as regards local infrastructure. Initially, the association was founded to assist with the return of migrants who had been made redundant in France during the recession and workforce restructuring of the 1980s, and who had decided to return home (hence the association's original name *Retour et Développement*). The first projects were concerned with the provisioning of basic infrastructure in isolated home villages, such as electrification and drinking water, as well as tarmacking access roads. Currently, around 110 villages have been electrified. However, it would be way beyond the resources of M&D to provision all villages in the Souss-Massa-Draa region with this infrastructure. As M&D staff pointed out, this should really be the state's domain of intervention. However, the inability of the state to assure such amenities and the lack of resources available to M&D and other NGOs has meant that many villages continue to lack such provision. It should also be noted that these NGOs and hometown associations do not appear to be focal institutions for the North African community in France, or at least not for the hostel residents I spoke to. Very few North African respondents mentioned any involvement with such development organisations.

The result of these infrastructure 'gaps' in native villages is that returnees and retired migrants are attracted to bigger towns like Tiznit. One consequence of this is that the people who live there are more "westernised... here it's every man for himself," according to my host in Tiznit, Saleem (60, Tiznit, Morocco). Saleem is originally from the province of Goulmime, further south, but now he lives, or rather his wife and children live, in Tiznit. One advantage of living in Tiznit for Saleem's family is that it is within commuting distance of the university in Agadir (his three children are all aged in their late teens and early twenties). The town is also convenient for Agadir airport.

Saleem has clearly done well for himself, owning a large family home of thirteen rooms over three floors, in a central neighbourhood of Tiznit. Similarly, the

family of Badr (63, Tiznit, Morocco) owns a large house in an upmarket neighbourhood of the town. They too were clearly a well-off family (his nephew drives a big Mercedes, and his daughter has a brand-new Honda). Their house was luxuriously fitted and spacious. Nonetheless, the house lies empty for much of the year. Badr, the head of the household, used to reside in hostels in the northern Paris suburbs, but subsequently was able to move out into normal private housing when his wife and children came to France. Thus he is well-settled in France, and only comes to his house in Tiznit during the summer months. His nephew explained to me that many of the homes in their neighbourhood likewise remain empty most of the year, because the owners and their families are all living in France, or in the bigger Moroccan cities. Outside the summer season, parts of Tiznit resemble a ghost town more than a boom town.

A further issue encountered by retiring migrants is the difficulty in securing planning and construction permits. The case of Lhoussaine (60s, Tiznit, Morocco) is one glaring example. His parents have title deeds to a very large plot of land on the Atlantic coast not far from Tiznit. In addition to this terrain, Lhoussaine bought a separate plot to build a vacation house on, so as to avoid any family conflicts regarding inheritance of the large family plot. This personal plot adjoins an up-market development of holiday villas, a dozen in total, constructed by a Belgian developer a few years ago (see Figure 29 below). Since then, Lhoussaine has not been able to get any permission to build on his land. Furthermore, he has no access to the beach, or the tarmacked service road (which is for the use of the villa residents only). The villas have running water, electricity, internet provision, but none of these amenities have been supplied or are available to the neighbouring properties owned by local Moroccans.

Figure 29. Looking on in envy at the holiday villas, from Lhoussaine's plot.

Unless he is well-connected in the local administrative circles, or willing to pay bribes to everyone concerned – the prefect, the mayor, the municipal architect – the average Moroccan emigrant who wants to build a simple vacation home will be refused. Lhoussaine attributed his difficulties to the fact that – because of his long absence in France – he is not part of the local, 'insider' networks. A number of scholars of return migration argue that being outside such informal networks is a significant barrier to re-integration (Dumon 1986; Schaeffer 2001). The consequences of being 'out of the loop' were sadly all too obvious when we went on foot to inspect the villa complex. Although we were standing on Lhoussaine's land, a security guard from the villa complex came down to move us on. To add insult to injury, a section of his land has been transformed into a worthless gully due to the addition of concrete channelling designed to stop water infiltrating into the foundations of the villa complex. In addition, his plot is used as a local dump by the villa owners (see Figure 30 below).

Figure 30. The local dump

Dembancané: laying the foundations for return via the hometown association

Like Tiznit, Dembancané has undergone rapid expansion in recent years, thanks in large part to the construction of houses by emigrants. As in the North African case, my West African respondents had been expected to construct their own houses. In the preceding chapter it was noted that allocating funds for such purposes is not a novel or innovative development (Obeng-Odoom 2010; Parreñas 2005; Wyman 1993): what is perhaps new is the construction of a second (or even third) house, usually in major towns and cities, which can generate extra income in the form of rent. Like in Tiznit, a common feature of West African respondents' testimony was equipping one's family dwelling with the modern conveniences and comforts to which the hostel residents have become accustomed during their time in France. Electricity was installed in (many parts of) Dembancané five years ago.

My host in Dembancané, Jaabé explained that the *émigrés* were abandoning the traditional architectural style, consisting of thick adobe mud walls, in preference for larger modern houses made of concrete breeze blocks. At the time, Jaabé himself was actively engaged in such a construction project, and it was this which took up much of his vacation time. At least once a day he would undertake the five minute walk from his father's compound (built in the traditional style: see Figure 24 above) to a plot of land at the eastern edge of the village, in order to supervise the fabrication of the bricks with which the house would be built (see Figure 31). Jaabé himself acknowledged that the new architectural trend is not an unconditionally positive development, since the concrete constructions are notably less cool during the extremely hot summer months compared with the thick-walled adobe dwellings. This said, the concrete houses are quickly constructed, cheap and solid, hence the popularity of this architectural style.

Figure 31. Jaabé's bricks: from building blocks...
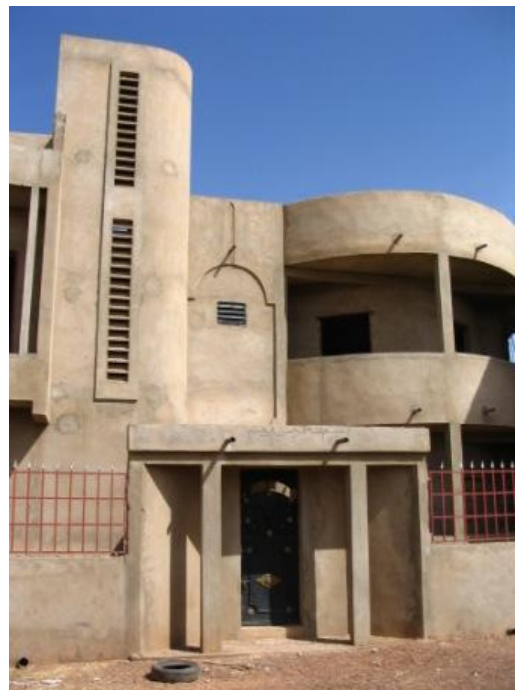
Figure 32. ... to finished product.

Just as in Tiznit, however, some houses lie vacant. The house shown in Figure 32 (above) is an example of one of the very grand dwellings in Dembancané built and owned by emigrants who brought their wives and children to France: these men do not come back to the village at retirement definitively. Despite their extravagant villas, these older men are 'trapped' (*coincé*) in France, according to their peers whom I spoke to in the village, because their families do not want to leave France. The implication is (and this was borne out later from respondents' discussions) that those who have stuck to the old model of 'solo emigration' leaving wives and children behind have made the better decision. They have resisted the 'temptation' of family reunification, and as a result they have a better retirement, enjoying the physical comforts and visibly improved social status which their grand dwellings provide. Similar stories were recounted to me by respondents from other parts of Senegal and Mauritania. Abdoulaye (44, Tambacounda, Senegal) remarked that the men in this situation – the family reunifiers in France who are retired but cannot return to the nice house they have built – are "losers" (*perdants*).

The expansion and growing importance of Dembancané is not just a result of house-building. Just as important have been the alterations to the built environment effected by hostel residents through the construction of communal, collectively-financed infrastructure. This type of construction is coordinated through hometown associations (HTAs). HTAs are not unique to the context of West African migration: their existence and significance in many different countries has been underlined by scholars working in the 'migration-development nexus' literature (Itzigsohn & Saucedo 2002; Maimbo and Ratha 2005; Orozco 2005; Portes *et al.* 2007). However, in the comparison of our case studies, the West African context distinguishes itself from that of North Africa: these institutions lay the foundations for political influence and shape the possibilities of a successful re-integration for my West African respondents, whereas North African respondents were only marginally implicated in HTAs.

The elders of Dembancané, and other hometowns in West Africa whose expatriate elders I interviewed, have been able to keep their place in the home community despite their absence. The normative expectation weighing on

respondents was to be of service to the community of origin at retirement, as Waly (75, Kayès, Mali), an army veteran of Malian origin, noted: 'When you are retired, you should be of service over there [Mali]; you return to better serve your village and your family.' For those who live at least some of the year in the hostel in France, such service takes place via village funds (*caisses villageoises*), which are often headquartered in hostels. These HTAs are the institutional means through which a great number of development and infrastructure projects – coordinated by the emigrants in conjunction with the villagers remaining behind – come to fruition. In contrast to North African home communities, where remittances tended to remain within the family decision-making unit (M&D excepted), in West Africa, the HTAs were the vehicle through which remittances were deployed on a communal basis.

Figure 33. The maternity clinic.

Figure 34. The *forage* (water well and storage tank)

Before going further, it should be borne in mind that the importance of the Dembancané HTA is far from exceptional when judged with migrants' development projects in other towns and villages in the Senegal River valley. Several authors have analysed the 'culture of migration' which pertains the length and breadth of the famous valley (Daum 1998; Dia 2008; Quiminal 2002). I was struck by the similarity of the infrastructure projects embarked upon by different HTAs I encountered. For example, I was privileged to be allowed to observe one of the monthly meetings of the HTA to which Ibrahima (59, Gorgol, Mauritania) belongs. This event took place at a Paris hostel, but members from all over the Paris region and further afield were in attendance. The leaders of the association listed the range of infrastructure which they have funded, an almost identical set of projects to that undertaken in Dembancané. Similarly, Dia (2008) observes a very similar contribution to development in the town of Agnam Thiodaye, in the Middle Senegal Valley. Another constant is that these projects have practically all been financed by the emigrants only: there has been very little help from foreign NGOs or the state.

The fruits of such communal remittance deployment were immediately visible in Dembancané: a very wide array of infrastructure and collective goods has been facilitated there thanks to pooled migrant contributions. This infrastructure included: post and telecommunications facilities (see Figure 35 below); a health clinic and maternity facilities (see Figure 33 above); drinking water supply and water storage (*forage*) (see Figure 34 above); schools (both at college and primary level); electricity; water pumps and other irrigation equipment; as well as an indoor market. The website of the local municipal authority leaves no room for doubt: "The quasi-totality of these structures has been financed and realised by the migrant sons of Dembancané" (Dembancane.com 2011).

In terms of contributions, every member of the Dembancané HTA is obliged to transfer €10.00 to the fund per month, and with 1300 members in France, this soon adds up to a significant sum. This individual contribution is an "*ob-li-ga-tion*" according to Idrissa (Dembancané, Senegal), stressing each syllable. Even the unemployed and those on the minimum wage are expected to contribute. The next project, as noted, is for a *complexe sanitaire* (small hospital), costing in the region of €150,000. Construction will be finished within the next two years. From an economic

perspective, building this clinic makes sense, as the price of a bed in hospital in distant Dakar costs a minimum of €100 per day, and this is in the state-run institutions, not the private institutions which cost a great deal more. Social security exists, but only for salaried individuals, either in the public or private sectors. For those in agriculture in the countryside there is no such protection. As a consequence of this lack, "the funds of the association, it's our social security fund" (Idrissa, Dembancané, Senegal).

The village funds have been in existence in one form or another for decades, beginning with the establishment in the early 20th century of 'communal houses' in West African cities such as Dakar when rural-urban migration first gained momentum. The initial function of the communal funds in Dakar was to provide mutual insurance and social protection in case of unemployment, occupational injury, sickness, or death when away from native villages. In Soninke migration culture, the communal houses for *émigré* village kinsmen are known as *kompe xoore* (literally 'big room'), and were first documented in Dakar in the 1930s (see Manchuelle 1997: 123-128 for more details). With the growth of international migration to France during and after WW2, such structures were transplanted internationally (Manchuelle 1997). Djimé, now in his 70s, noted his close involvement with the Dembancané fund and its development projects since the time of his first voyage to France, in 1961:

> I could spend hours talking about the development projects! It doesn't stop with the projects because the immigrants, since our day, have been contributing without pause, to the development of this village. We started with the post office; it was us who constructed our own post office [see Figure 35 below]. It was us who built the primary school. There are loads of projects. The secondary school, we financed it, with the pensioners too – we number more than 90, the pensioners here. Each one contributes to the development of this village. (Djimé, Dembancané, Senegal)

As the above quote indicates, these contributions continue into retirement, with fairly significant proportions of pensions being re-directed to the retiree's *caisse*. From their pensions, the emigrant elders are still expected to contribute, although not as much as those who are working in France. Pensioners in Dembancané would expect

to contribute between 50,000 and 100,000 CFA francs[109] per year (€75 to €150), but the sum varies according to the projects undertaken in a given year: it is not a fixed regular sum, unlike the monthly or quarterly levies imposed on villagers of working age living in France.

Figure 35. The Dembancané Post Office.

Putting Dembancané on the map: increased political importance

The physical transformation of place thanks to the collective efforts of the Dembancané emigrants leads to a concurrent transformation in the political status of Dembancané. This transformation is political insofar as the *caisses* are a substitute for absent state intervention. As noted above, state funding for development and infrastructure projects in the hometowns of my respondents has been very rare, if not

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[109] The West African CFA franc is the unit of currency used in many former colonies of France in West Africa: Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Niger, Senegal, and Togo. It is also used in Guinea-Bissau, a former Portuguese colony.

non-existent. By substituting for the state, the *émigrés* are able to boost the political importance of their villages in several ways.

Firstly, the state legitimises these developmental actions insofar as government officials tend to look favourably upon the 'gap filling' function of the HTAs, since the state is absolved of the duty of funding the projects. HTA representatives in Dembancané show initiative in their approaches to planning permission: usually before starting a project they find out what the government regulations are for the infrastructure in question, such as size, construction norms, health and safety, and so on. Without waiting for the lengthy planning permission process to run its course, they start building. It is only when the project is complete that they ask for state authorisation. In this way, projects are completed quickly without getting tangled in red tape. Generally there is no problem in getting retroactive government authorisation, since, thanks to their self-reliance, the emigrants and villagers do the state's job of providing infrastructure. Ibrahima (59, Gorgol, Mauritania) feels that it should be the government who provides these things and finds it "shameful" that they do not. But his village is self-sufficient thanks to the emigrants. There is a justified pride in this self-reliance.

The political status of hometowns is enhanced secondly through the ability of expatriate HTA members to mobilise the human and social capital they have accumulated in France in order to forge partnerships with French NGOs and civil servants in the Ministry charged with international development. Such collaborations are prestigious, as are initiatives aimed at twinning hometowns with municipalities in France. At the time I met Idrissa, a prominent (younger) member of the Dembancané community in France, he was in talks about twinning with several municipalities. Another example of transnational development partnerships was a donation by the town of Villeneuve-Le-Roi of classroom equipment such as desktop computers, school desks and chairs for the college in Dembancané. Crucial in this trend towards more concerted cooperation on development have been the policies of "co-development" pioneered initially by the French government, later gaining credence in EU policy-making (Aumüller 2004). The village association leaderships have been very interested to see how the NGO world works, and eager to make the knowledge, contacts and expertise generated from their partnerships with French NGOs work for

the benefit of their hometowns. Such issues have been of growing significance in recent years, with the emergence of the literature on 'brain gain' and 'brain circulation' which has come to challenge the more pessimistic 'brain drain' paradigm (Beine *et al.* 2001; Bhagwati 1976; Pellegrino 2001; Stark *et al.* 1997).

Thirdly, as a consequence of the improved infrastructure and wealth in the town, Dembancané has become a focal point for people in the surrounding hinterland. The proliferation of communal services – water, electricity, post and communications, a new covered market, primary and secondary schools – means that the village has become a magnet for neighbouring populations, thereby boosting its importance politically. This allows the villagers to break with the past history of *enclavement* (remoteness, geographical isolation), identified as a major blight on the village by Siyaka, a municipal official. One shining example is the access track linking Dembancané with the N2 highway. In the rainy season the villagers are sometimes totally cut off by the flood waters – the track is submerged and the village resembles an "island." These are "primordial and vital questions... for economic life in the village, for life full stop" in Siyaka's opinion. Indeed, one of the motivations for the local elite to assist me in my enterprise was to counteract this isolation – "put us on the map!" they implored.[110]

It is this desire to put an end to isolation and *enclavement* which saw the Dembancané elders apply to get the administrative status of the town changed to that of a *commune*, with a town hall (*mairie*) and an elected municipal council headed by a mayor. Until recently, Dembancané was part of a lowly *communauté rurale* comprising fifteen villages, with the head office in nearby Bokhiladji. My respondents maintained that Dembancané is the biggest and most important of these fifteen villages, hence the application for commune status (incorporating the smaller village of Yerma which adjoins Dembancané). The main advantages of having commune status are (i) autonomy in how government money is spent, and (ii) better local services and administration, saving villagers the trouble of having to travel for routine administrative tasks. This application was approved by the President of

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[110] For this reason, as noted in Chapter Two, I have deliberately identified the village by name. However, to protect the anonymity of respondents from the village, I have omitted identifying features such as age, number of children, and occupation in France. In addition I have attributed a pseudonym to all respondents from Dembancané who are cited in the text.

Senegal Abdoulaye Wade in 2008: as a result Dembancané is no longer a village, but a fully-fledged town of 6,000 inhabitants. An essential ingredient in the success of this transformation has been the dynamism and experience of the expatriate community in France. This has enabled hometowns in the Middle and Upper valleys of the Senegal River to "accede to a higher status", as a specialist on migration from the Senegal River Valley commented in an interview.[111]

Difficulties of collective construction in North Africa

The same collective dynamism was not a feature of the testimony of my North African respondents. Just as migrants faced difficulties to construct at the individual level (see Lhoussaine's narrative above), so too were there difficulties in organising communal initiatives. Such initiatives used to be a feature for North African migrants 20 or 30 years ago, but this is less the case these days. Many North African respondents used to send money to their villages, but not via formal associations as with the West Africans. During our interview, psychiatrist Dr Slimane mentioned the "assemblies" of Kabyle migrants: these were important in the past, but the faltering bonds of cohesion between emigrants have weakened these institutions over time, following family reunifications. Currently, very few North African hostel residents were members of hometown associations. Mention was made earlier of *Migrations et Développement*, but few hostel residents discussed this organisation, or similar institutions, during interviews. Even the most dynamic North African residents, like Saleem (60, Tiznit, Morocco) – the president of the Residents' Committee in his hostel – felt themselves to be blocked in their efforts to pursue collective development projects back home, despite a clear willingness to act.

Saleem has been very keen to contribute to the development of his father's village in Goulmime Province, indeed his resolve –what he calls his "association mentality" – appears to harden as he approaches retirement. In his view it is at retirement that people have the time and expertise to devote to development

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[111] It is to be acknowledged that such transformations are not always solely driven by the dynamism of the expatriates. Rural-urban migrants in cities like Dakar can be crucial development players, as can the stay-at-homes of course. See Dia (2008) for a concise analysis of these different dynamics.

questions. Such activities can furthermore assist the psychological transition from employment to retirement. "The problem which we immigrants have, especially the retirees, is that we don't prepare what we're going to do afterwards. When the person quits his job, all of a sudden he sits down, doesn't move, the guy doesn't have any plans, he hasn't prepared something. Even just an association: the simplest thing is to create an association."

Thus Saleem founded an association in 2003, with the aim of assisting "children at risk of poverty, women, widows, people who have need of our help." At present, there are around fifty members, all of whom have kinship ties to the village and have paid €100 to join the association. The association's next project is to create a large hall, accommodating up to 60 people, to be used for public meetings and festivities. Saleem's aims for this project are clearly inscribed in what Cerase calls 'returns of conservatism' (Cerase 1974: 251):

> Each year – it's our tradition – we have a festival [*rassoul*], there are people who come from abroad, and from the countryside (...) It's so that the traditions remain alive for the next generation, because we have children who don't even know their place of origin, so the festival allows people to get to know each other (...) We are going to build a hall, a big one, because with the small box which we have at the moment, the room isn't big enough. So we have bought the land, we're going to enlarge the hall, there's going to be a separation between the men and the women, with toilet facilities etc. That's the project that we're currently working on, we've already begun it. (Saleem, 60, Tiznit, Morocco)

Yet, even with a project which is not in any way innovative or challenging of the accepted ways of doing things back home, Saleem meets resistance:

> We have things to do but it's a shame because we don't live in the country, we live here [in France], so we're not given help from over there. And when from time to time we go on holiday there, we can't do everything. [AH: So there isn't anyone over there who keeps an eye on the construction work?] No, we even asked to create an association over there which would be linked to ours, but currently there is still no progress (...) We have guys who are retired but they aren't interested enough in the association, that's the problem.

Interestingly in Saleem's example, the local government (*commune*) has shown its support for this venture by tarmacking the road which leads to the meeting hall. In part this is motivated by the fact that local officials will be able to use the space for local meetings. Just as in Dembancané, therefore, the state has an interest in this project because of its 'gap-filling' potential. However, other respondents in different circumstances mentioned that the Moroccan state was not at all supportive. As the daughter of my respondent Lhoussaine (63, Tiznit, Morocco) put it, "if it is an economic issue, bringing money into Morocco, there is never any problem, but if there's a legal, administrative, or human dimension, then there are always barriers" erected by the state.

An alternative stance has been taken by M&D: up until the end of the mid-1990s, M&D fulfilled a 'gap-filling' role vis-à-vis absent state interventions in service provision, just like the Dembancané HTA. However, towards the end of the 1990s there was a change of tack, since M&D and the people who lived in the villages which had been supplied with water and electricity came to the realisation that this type of development was not sustainable. Water and electricity is all very well but it costs money, "it's one more expense" for the villagers. Furthermore, the association's leadership concluded that it is the state's job to provide and fund these basic services, as the state has done elsewhere in more central and urban parts of Morocco. Thus, M&D is no longer in the business of seeking to replace the state: "you have to show the state what is possible, but then the state picks up the baton" as a representative of M&D put it. Since this realisation, M&D has moved towards more sustainable types of development, and especially activities which generate a source of income for villagers. Such activities include the creation of farming cooperatives (sometimes run by women only) for the production of saffron and argan oil, two local products which are eminently exportable and of high value.

This is an interesting divergence in outlook from the perspective of the people in Dembancané, who are still following a logic of substituting for the state when it comes to infrastructure projects. Recently, however, it seems some Dembancanéans are also attracted to M&D's sustainable development model, such as Siyaka (municipal official), who commented: "Above all, it's a problem of orientation... We must stop living off the remittances alone."

In summary, then, West Africans have been able to exert a durable influence on their physical surroundings, but at the risk of encouraging a culture of dependency and unsustainable development amongst those who remain behind and at the risk also of filling gaps in service provision which properly are the prerogative of the state. By contrast, North African respondents have been able to exert far less influence via development initiatives, but those development associations which do exist have realised some of the pitfalls of unsustainable development and seek to encourage the state to intervene where possible and appropriate. For North African respondents, this lack of physical construction back home leads to a situation whereby they also lack social bearings back home, as the following section will show. West African respondents, on the other hand, have been able to re-find their bearings, socially, thanks to their influence in decision-making concerning the physical environment and infrastructure.

6.3 Social Bearings: behaviours and mentalities

A second dimension of bearings was not manifested physically, but socially, in terms of status and mentality. In the preceding section, we saw how physical construction in West African places of origin leads to transformation of the political status of those places. Beyond the physical space, these transformations also have a social effect, since the status of the change-makers is likewise boosted.

Retirement in West Africa: "the start of another life", not a social death

The influence of retired returnees in Dembancané is greatly facilitated by transplanting power structures from home, in the form of the *caisses villageoises*. The economic resources which hostel residents marshal collectively via these institutions enable them to wield power in their local communities, despite their physical absence. As Catherine Quiminal notes, these associations have 'transformed the absence of each migrant into a prominent political presence in the home village'

(2002: 40). Upon retirement, West Africans are able to draw on the political, social and economic capital that they were able to retain through their involvement in the *caisses*, in order to facilitate their re-integration to the home village. Many such HTAs are headquartered in hostels in France. Simply by living in a hostel, residents are constantly informed of events in the village. The contributions they make via the HTAs enable older hostel residents to be the principal agents of change in Dembancané. The power they wield via the HTA thus enables them not only to keep tabs on developments in the village, but also to direct change in the village as they see fit. They are therefore not at all disoriented (*dépaysé*) upon their return. This eases their re-integration and gives them a sense of ownership in the community.

The second element to consider is the gerontocratic norms which operate in the West African villages of my respondents. In terms of political decision-making at the village level, older people have the most important role (for a brief discussion of role theory, see previous chapter). As Idrissa (Dembancané, Senegal) put it, "social power belongs to them". In Dembancané, the pensioners' contribution is political firstly because it is often the elders who take the lead on development projects. Inspiration for collective projects in Dembancané comes from the expatriates in France, as well as from the elders in the village, who necessarily include a good number of return retiree migrants. For example, the covered market was an initiative from France, whereas the new college and '*Ecole 2*' (one of two primary schools) were initiatives emanating from the village elders. Indeed, the funds for this latter project were almost entirely sourced by the returned retirees, who supplied 8 million CFA (over €12,000) of the 9 million CFA total.

It is also the elders who organise political meetings in Dembancané. Retirement is an active time of life in Dembancané at the political level. Engagement with Senegalese politics was particularly evident during my fieldwork visit, which was an unprecedented time of political campaigning given the forthcoming mayoral elections. Retired returnees were so implicated in these events that it was actually very difficult to arrange interviews: my hosts in Dembancané told me that this was the worst possible time to be arranging interviews with the elders!

Beyond politics, the men become more active socially at retirement. Contrary to representations of retirement as a 'social death' in modern industrialised society

(Guillemard 1972), retirement back in West Africa for hostel residents is portrayed as a new lease of life. As a senior figure in Dembancané's municipal administration described, 'it's at retirement that they lead an active life, socially... They become more present socially at retirement.' For an example of the active social life of retirees in Dembancané, one needs look no further than Samba, the father of Jaabé with whom I stayed during my time in Dembancané. Samba is undoubtedly an important man in the village: people constantly seek him out for advice. He is often away from morning to afternoon, visiting local politicians and mediating family tensions. By midday Samba was sometimes visibly fatigued by his morning exertions and visits.

It is not just in the field of village affairs that older returnees exert themselves, but also in the fields of millet, rice and sorghum which surround the village. The elders are strongly implicated in the economic and productive life of the village. Idrissa and Lassana stressed that those who have not emigrated from Dembancané often die young due to the very hard work they do in the fields. Generally, however, the role of the former emigrant elders is not to provide physical labour: it is more about supervision and strategy, according to Amadou (64, Tambacounda, Senegal), who at the time of our meeting in France was about to return home in order to supervise the coming season's groundnut planting. The actual manual labour involved in planting is more for young people: the older ones direct proceedings and purchase materials. Idrissa (Dembancané, Senegal) was adamant that old age in Soninke society is not like in the West, where it is considered as a ceasing of activity, as the beginning of the end of life. Instead, in Dembancané, it is the "start of another life, an *active* life... a return to the soil, for farming and rearing livestock" (emphasis added). Djimé also laid a stress on retirement as the start of a new stage of activity:

> Here it's not the same life as the pensioners in Europe, because here, when you return to the village, it's a time of new activity, a new condition. Because here you're always working, going to the fields, farming, administrative errands, construction. We're out there: we're not resting, unemployed! [laughter] In France, they said to us, "off you go, go and relax, take a rest – we'll pay you!" But on the contrary, we come here and we work! [more laughter] (Djimé, Dembancané, Senegal)

The gerontocratic power structures mean that elders are automatically respected. Allied to this, however, are their contributions to the infrastructure and political stature of their villages via the HTAs. Boubacar (Dembancané, Senegal) described how the hostel dwellers who have been 40 years in France really live in two worlds, the "developed" world and the "undeveloped" world. "By bringing the wealth of your French experiences you can contribute a lot to the village." As a result, the men are held in high esteem:

> They do many things over there, they build houses, they do everything back home. It's tiring you know. The people here help people there. [AH: So you have helped your family a lot?] A lot, a lot. [Your village too?] A lot, a lot. [I imagine that you are respected, in the village.] Oh yes, very respected, that's it exactly. (Issa, 70, Tambacounda, Senegal)

"We have a different mentality to them." Social bearings in North Africa

This sentiment of feeling respected and socially valued by the home community was not shared by most of my North African respondents. When they do go back they feel somewhat redundant. A representative of M&D noted that in certain cases, the retired returnees feel they are neglected (*delaissé*). Very interestingly, M&D runs an orientation service for retired returnees. Part of their recent work has involved administering a questionnaire with the retired returnees who come to see them.[112] One very revealing insight from this questionnaire is found in a question which asks whether the Moroccan state should build retirement homes in Morocco solely for retired migrants. For M&D, such retirement homes might be necessary because these elders are neglected within the family and the local community. "These people are treated like they are redundant. The Moroccan state should take care of them once they are retired" (M&D community worker). The very fact that this question needs to be asked illustrates the disparity between how these older returnees are viewed in

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[112] My agreement with M&D to help analyse this survey data had to be cancelled, since they had not completed their data collection by the time I came to write up my thesis. This is unfortunate, as such a source would have surely enriched my analysis.

Morocco and how they are viewed in Senegal. Such a question would frankly be unthinkable in the Dembancané context: on several occasions, West African respondents voiced to me their horror of being admitted to a retirement home in France. For them, it is out of the question that such facilities could exist in villages on the banks of the Senegal River!

The sole asset for which North African retired migrants appeared to be valued is their remittances. The deleterious consequences of this for family relations were underscored in the preceding chapter: such consequences also apply at the community and national level. A prominent figure in M&D argued that the Moroccan state shows no interest in the social, human, democratic or developmental contribution that the retired MREs[113] could make to Morocco, thanks to their experience and skills picked up abroad. They could make this contribution because they now have the time – they are retired but still active. But the Moroccan authorities are not interested: all they care about is the remittances. Certainly, such an impression was given to me by Moroccan consular staff, who were quick to note the importance which the Moroccan government accords the MRE community in France: "a good source of foreign currency which does not cease growing". The impression was only reinforced at events held in Tiznit to celebrate the Tiznitis who live abroad, in particular the very attentive welcome given to emigrant pensioners by representatives of local banks.

We saw in the preceding sub-section that retirement in West African villages is a time of renewed activity and influence, both socially and politically. However in North African home communities – unlike in Dembancané – the end of economic activity is not replaced by other activities. Instead of keeping active and taking control, North African respondents were more passive. Saleem (60, Tiznit, Morocco) stressed that during his holidays that he usually has very little time to himself – "everything is programmed" – and often he has very little say in how the programme is planned. "I am like a passenger" is his way of expressing this passivity in the face of family commitments.

Another respondent highlighted the men's sense of isolation: many older hostel residents have "cut their ties with the country of origin" to some extent. They

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[113] MRE = *Marocain résidant à l'étranger* (Moroccan resident abroad).

are "isolated socially here and there... When they are back home, they stay indoors, they don't leave the house often" (Dr Ismail, medical advisor, migrant welfare association, Paris). That they do not go out but instead prefer to be house-bound brings to mind the work of Pierre Bourdieu in Algeria, who early in his career wrote about the 'Kabyle House' and the dualism inscribed in this domestic space as regards gender. The 'Kabyle House' is a feminine space:

> [T]he house being the domain of women, the men are to some degree excluded from it. The place of the man is out of doors, in the fields or in the assembly, among other men. This is something taught very early to the young boy. Men who remain too much in the house during the day are suspect. The respectable man must allow himself to be seen, to show himself and place himself continually under the gaze of others, to face up to them (*qabal*). (Bourdieu 1965: 222)

When North African respondents did attempt to 'face up' to their peers who have remained in the community of origin, their honour – identified by Bourdieu (1965) as a fundamental value in North African society – was put in question. One respondent described this situation very eloquently:

> It's true, I have friends back home who have done well for themselves, and sometimes when I go home, when I sit with them, I feel that I am embarrassed. Because those guys have reached a level which I should have reached. Because for me – in my file it's written 'factory worker in France' – whereas they are doctors, lawyers, so we don't speak the same language. That's psychologically embarrassing: for me it's a regret. (Saleem, 60, Tiznit, Morocco).[114]

Generally, as noted, few North Africans were members of HTAs. Because of this, they arguably do not have the same presence as those West African 'change-makers' who are closely involved in their HTAs. North African respondents have not been able to make changes, instead they are unsettled by changes, both physical and social, in terms of character and mentality. When I asked Hamid (70, Taroudant, Morocco) what changes he had noticed back home, his main point was that people's

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[114] Immediately after this quote, Saleem went on to relativise his situation, following my prompt that "all the same, you have had the opportunity to travel, you've seen many things" [NB. Before coming to France, Saleem had lived and worked in West Africa.] Comparing his situation with his well-placed friends, he replied: "Yes, to travel, yes perhaps I've seen a world that they haven't seen, perhaps I analyse things which they don't know about."

mentality has changed, especially that of young people. "It's not like it was before." Similarly, Rahman (60s, Algeria) bemoaned the fact that he no longer understands the Algerian "character". Algerians back home do not have the same character as the Algerian immigrants in France. This implies a great difficulty for his compatriots to re-adapt to life in Algeria when they return. It is not that the men have changed; rather their countrymen have changed in their absence, and they are out of step:

> At home, people don't have the same way of speaking, they don't have the... same mentality. [AH: Their mentality has changed or ..?] No no, it's us who don't adapt to this mentality, to the mentality of the country of origin (Saleem, 60, Goulmime, Morocco).

> The culture of the country has changed... They left the culture of the country of origin at the time of their emigration, and the country has simply evolved, and sometimes it passes them by. (Béatrice, health advisor, migrant welfare association)

However, there are also instances where it is the men who have changed, who have adapted to a working class lifestyle in France, and cannot re-adapt back to the 'old ways'. This could manifest itself in apparently minor but psychologically-troubling ways, such as time-keeping and pace of life, an issue discussed by other scholars of return migration (Gmelch 1980). Being a factory shift worker, one of my respondents laid a particular stress on time-keeping: he was quite a stickler for punctuality. On one occasion, he had invited me to eat with him in the communal kitchen on his floor at 8pm. I was three (at the most, four) minutes late, but he was evidently quite annoyed to begin with: "when I say eight o'clock, I mean eight o'clock!" On another occasion, he told me:

> When we [immigrants] arrived in these countries in Europe, we followed the European system, a meeting at 3pm, it's at 3pm on the dot. Back home, a guy might say at 4pm but doesn't show up, even if you go looking for him, he'll say "yes, but I forgot" – so we have a different mentality from them.

More existentially troubling was some men's adaptation to a 'French' lifestyle which incorporated certain impious practices which are not (or no longer) tolerated back home. One Kabyle elder I met described changing customs back home, in particular

the fact that more and more woman are wearing the face veil (*nikab*). In the Kabylia of his youth no woman dressed like that. Personally he did not believe it was right for women to be covered up like that – "we weren't born like that, we were born naked". After 35 years in France he no longer feels at home back there: once again, "it's not the same mentality."

Importantly, however, this was a feature not only of North African respondents' testimony, but also of West Africans' talk. Hadyatou, who regularly travels back-and-forth between France and Dembancané, noted that when he returns from France it takes him a while to adjust, to feel at ease. It is a question of adjusting one's "mentality (...) The first time, I didn't have the same mentality as here [Senegal], you know. I had the mentality of a European guy... saying my prayers five times a day?! - I wasn't used to that. Now that I have returned I do my prayers every day." Indeed, his comments were very revealing of the 'French' lifestyle and social life which he used to enjoy when I asked him whether there were aspects of life in France which he missed: "Yes, many in fact. Because I have many friends there; also, I miss a glass of the good stuff from time to time, a Ricard, a glass of Beaujolais [laughs]." (Hadyatou, Dembancané, Senegal)

The consumption of alcohol, and the incompatibility of this practice with home life, was a recurrent theme. Saleem put it like this "when we were young, we had a different life. That's to say: we invited friends round, young people like us, we went to nightclubs, to bars." In Tiznit, Younes (60s, Tiznit, Morocco) mentioned that those who have taken to drinking during their time in Europe are not able to indulge this pastime back in their still very traditional villages, in front of their fellow villagers, or with the knowledge of the latter. "They have to do all the prayers, they can't go drinking etc. And they soon get tired of the strict regime, so they go back to France to continue with their libertine lifestyle." He believed that one reason why Tiznit is preferred as a base for the retired returnees is that they are able to indulge these pastimes which would be absolutely frowned upon in their native villages: in larger, more anonymous, 'westernised' Tiznit, provided drinking is discreet and amongst close friends, there is no problem.

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to unpack the processes of re-integration which retired hostel residents confront during their periods of residence in communities of origin. What emerged from respondents' testimony was the importance of 'getting one's bearings' and 'constructing' a place – physically and socially – to return to. In the physical sense, almost all respondents, both Moroccans and Senegalese, have been able to construct (or purchase) spacious, well-equipped dwellings for their families back home. This in itself was an important show of social mobility to stay-at-home neighbours. Some houses, both in Tiznit and in Dembancané, nonetheless remained empty much of the year, as retirees had not been able to leave France definitively upon retiring. Others noted the obstacles to gaining planning permission from local authorities: these obstacles were blamed on being outside informal local networks after years spent in France.

Despite some similarities, there were also substantial contrasts between North African and West African respondents in terms of the re-integration process. Many North African men had lost their physical and social bearings back home, whereas West Africans, being the drivers of physical and social change thanks to their contributions to village development projects, were not disoriented upon return. Indeed, their political and social status increased with the growing regional significance of their hometowns which their development work has brought about. In the case of Dembancané, improvements to infrastructure there have seen it emerge as a local administrative centre and gain in prominence politically.

Relating this discussion back to the theories presented in Chapter One, the explanatory model provided by scholars in the structuralist tradition like George Gmelch and Francesco Cerase is of considerable relevance. North Africans found it difficult to physically construct a place to return to because of a perceived lack of insider contacts among the local power holders, whereas in West Africa, it is the emigrants themselves who have become the power holders. Critical in this disparity between North and West African experiences of re-integration is the institutional dimension, namely the influence of transnational hometown associations. For West African respondents, these institutions lay the foundations for a political and social

presence in places of origin despite long absences, and shape the possibilities for a successful re-integration. North African respondents, on the other hand, were confronted with difficulties when attempting to organise communal initiatives. The existence and institutionalisation of hometown associations was far less significant for my Moroccan respondents.

These findings also speak to theoretical paradigms in the transnationalism literature, given the long-distance channels of communication which exist between hometown associations – often headquartered in hostels – and the community back home. Thanks to their *caisse villageoise*, the Dembancané men in France have reliable information about their hometown, which means they are better prepared for return. Although new communication technologies can be a barrier to return at the family level, as we saw in the preceding chapter, at the village level rapid and regular communications relayed by the hometown associations help members in France maintain a political, economic and symbolic presence in the village, facilitating return if so desired.

Finally, influence over decision-making and changes to physical surroundings through house construction and infrastructure projects ensured that the change-makers do not lose their physical bearings. But this contribution also impacts on their social bearings, by raising their social standing and reputation amongst their fellow villagers. Contrary to representations of retirement as a 'social death' in modern industrialised society, retirement back in West Africa for hostel residents is portrayed as a new lease of life. By contrast, North Africans tended to feel redundant and passive, to the extent that there were demands for the Moroccan state to build retirement homes for retired returning migrants, a scenario which was completely unthinkable in Dembancané where retirement homes are anathema. The issues of retirement homes and what happens as the hostel residents approach and prepare for the end of life will now be taken up in the final chapter. While the foregoing chapter was, at least for the West Africans, imbued with the hope and prestige which flowed from their contributions to development, the issues of death and dependency are unsurprisingly marked by less sanguine attitudes.

7. Final Resting Places: the onset of dependency and the penultimate journey

> Habitually one has defined the stranger (...) in relation to birth: whether we grant or refuse him citizenship according to *jus soli* or *jus sanguinis*, the stranger is a stranger by birth. Here, on the contrary, it is the experience of death and of mourning, and firstly the place of burial, which becomes, we would say, determinant (Aggoun 2006: 129).

Death has been surprisingly under-researched from a migration studies perspective.[115] Very often in studies of migrants, the image conveyed is one of young people, of working age, finally as 'ageless' and immortal, as was noted in the quotation from Berger and Mohr's *A Seventh Man* on the third page of this dissertation. One could go so far as to suggest that the lack of attention to death in migration studies is indicative of the underdevelopment of the field. To reproduce a rather crude distinction between voluntary and forced migration, broadly scholars have focused either on economic migrants (hence of working age) or refugees and asylum seekers (who also tend to be younger adults).[116] For both categories of migrants, ageing and mortality have not been topics of immediate relevance in their interactions with researchers. This thesis is a study of migrants for whom such matters are of more pressing significance. In this chapter, I will describe how older hostel residents approach decline, death and dying and analyse how these issues influence their migration decision-making after retirement.

While hostel residents, as noted in the Introduction, constitute a rather unrepresentative case vis-à-vis the wider population of elderly immigrants in France, the issues which their ageing and dying raise with acuity apply to all minority ethnic elders in France. Following Yassine Chaïb (2000), I consider the decision by a

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[115] Equally, there has been little engagement with the topic of migration by scholars in the field of thanatology. Encyclopaedias and other reference works devoted to death and dying do not include entries for migration or related concepts (see Bryant 2003; Howarth and Leaman 2001). Against this general disinterest in 'death in migration', some notable exceptions include: Chaïb 2000; Firth 1997; Gardner 2002; Oliver 2004, 2007.

[116] Findings from a survey about the integration of refugees who were granted leave to remain (or an equivalent status) in the UK between December 2005 and March 2007 show that 70 percent of the 'new refugees' were aged 35 or under. Only 2 percent were aged over 65. See Cebulla *et al.* 2010.

migrant to be buried in France (in preference to burial in the place of origin) to be the ultimate – in all senses of the term – marker of integration and belonging. On the other hand, it also constitutes a decisive act of disaffiliation from the birthplace. In this way, death in migration becomes a political matter, a question of who belongs to a community. Equally political is the stance adopted by states – sending and receiving – towards their deceased emigrants/immigrants. In France, and for Muslims in particular, this raises the vexed issue of cemetery space, to which I will return.

In this final chapter before the Conclusion, the focus will be on hostel residents' mobility and residential strategies to manage their impending frailty, loss of dependence, and ultimately, the end of life. We will begin with more personal reflections from hostel residents about death and dependency, before turning to how the authorities and institutions which are confronted with death and dependency in the hostels deal with these 'unexpected' problems. As has been stressed earlier, the hostels were never designed to be final resting places for elderly foreigners.

We saw in the previous chapter that some norms and cultural expectations could be ignored or disregarded in the context of emigration (e.g., regarding the consumption of alcohol). Death in migration seems to permit no such compromises. For hostel residents, the rituals associated with death should be observed back home. It will be shown that end-of-life preferences are a true non-negotiable for hostel residents insofar as cultural norms are concerned.

7.1 End-of-life Preferences and Attitudes to Death

In Chapter Four on healthcare, it was observed that the *va-et-vient* can continue for a long time, even in situations of advanced frailty. Eventually, however, a critical juncture intervenes, namely the onset of dependency and impaired mobility, and a decision about where to live out the rest of one's days has to be made.

That the older hostel residents continue in the *va-et-vient* for as long as is humanly possible should come as no surprise given how engrained and (one could validly say) institutionalised it has become in their lives, amounting to a veritable 'culture of migration', to follow Kandel and Massey (2002). A 2007 report from

Adoma cites statistics showing that a significant percentage (10%) of all home care services administered in Adoma hostels are suspended due to return trips home (Adoma 2007). The report continues: "The non-negligible number of suspended care actions shows clearly that the migrants continue with the system of back-and-forth trips as long as possible, despite illness or a certain dependency" (Adoma 2007: 13). This is seen in the casefiles of certain 'at risk' residents (experiencing more advanced dependency) that I was able to consult in Marseille at Adoma South-East's regional headquarters.[117] I have reproduced some of these casefiles here in tabular form, taking care to anonymise the data as completely as possible. The following case is indicative of the phenomenon of *va-et-vient* in a situation of ill-health:

Employment status:	Not working
Marital status:	Married
Entourage:	His brother
Residence:	- - - - -
Age:	62
N° of years resident :	10
Difficulties observed:	-
Willingness to be helped:	Refuses
Medical costs:	-
Current aid:	-
Aid pending:	-
Other actions:	Doctor at work, GP
Other partners:	-
Remarks:	*Aller-retours* between hospital and country of origin.
Return trips:	Yes. two months per year.
Case notes: - Sept 2005. Had a short stay in hospital and since then has had a long illness. Returned to country of origin. - March 2007. Came back for a few days then returned to country of origin. - August 2007. Is still back home. - Nov 2007. Has been back since 15.11 to undergo hospital treatment in Marseille. Has difficulties walking due to diabetes.	

Table 3. Casefile n° FVA 2006-04

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[117] I should stress that such records are not kept for all Adoma residents. Rather, the aim of this early warning mechanism (*fonction de veille d'alerte*) is to record the health and social situation of certain residents who give hostel managers (or neighbours) cause for concern. At the time of my fieldwork, the mechanism had not been rolled out on a national basis, being most comprehensively piloted in the company's hostels in the south-east of France. Hence my trip to Adoma South-East's regional headquarters in Marseille, to find out more about the *veille d'alerte* system.

Anecdotally, I was able to observe the *va-et-vient* being undertaken in the most trying physical circumstances, during my three-day coach journey from Paris to Tiznit, Morocco. While in the ferry terminal at Algeciras in southern Spain *en route* to Tangiers, I was struck by a group of very old Moroccan men waiting beside me in the passport check queue. My field notes continue:

> A couple of the men were so frail that they could barely walk, shuffling along with their suitcases which (fortunately) were equipped with wheels. I got a quick look at one of their passports, and am sure I caught a glimpse of the address for the hostel at [location anonymised]. The guy looked so frail that I didn't want to disturb him, especially at this somewhat stressful time. But it just goes to show in what condition some of these guys are prepared to travel.

A geriatric doctor at Adoma recounted similar experiences:

> If you go to the airports, it's quite funny to see – they do the *va-et-vient* as long as possible. They leave in conditions sometimes which neither you nor I would accept our parents travelling in: one would think they wouldn't make it (...) They continue to do the *va-et-vient* as long as possible even in states of health or mobility which are really degraded, that's for sure.

Nonetheless there comes a point when the *va-et-vient* becomes unsustainable. In terms of age, a threshold appears to be reached for those in their 70s. According to a Sonacotra study of 2005, "The more the residents advance in age, the more they are engaged in the *aller-retour*, up until the age of 75. The percentage of people doing the *aller-retour* falls after 75" (Sonacotra 2005b: 6).

Broadly, there are three principal options regarding place of residence once dependency intervenes, as Vivianne (geriatric doctor) elaborated: "Afterwards it's very variable: there are those who stay over there [with their families]; there are those who come back here [to stay in France]; and then there are those who remain here but go back home, but really at the very last minute, those who return to die. It's what we observe, but we don't know too much about it: there haven't been many studies which have appeared on that topic."

Although quantitative evidence is sparse, the research undertaken by the association *Migrations Santé* does give some broad indications: at the ADEF hostel

at Hay-les-Roses, only 15 percent of residents envisage moving to a retirement home in a situation of dependency. 60 percent on the other hand indicate that they would return home to their families (Migrations Santé 2007). Indeed, it is likely that the first percentage concerns those who have no close family back home, who have "burnt their bridges" as an official at a Senegalese consulate put it.

The subtle distinction between dying and passing away

Generally, in my conversations with residents about mortality, death itself was not viewed with fear or trepidation. For some respondents, indeed, death was discussed in a jocular, light-hearted manner. Instead, as Omar Samaoli puts it, the fear for hostel residents is "dying badly in France" (Samaoli 2007: 112). Dying badly can mean dying "alone in the hostel room" (El Moubaraki & Bitatsi Trachet 2006 : 95; Hadjiat & Fevotte 2008: 333). The fear of dying alone was particularly widespread, as evidenced by residents' repeated comments that their rooms are "coffins" or *mouroirs*[118] (Sonacotra 2005a). Indeed, such fears were already being voiced when Mireille Ginesy-Galano (1984) undertook her research in the late 1970s, as the photograph reproduced below makes abundantly clear (Figure 36). Such sentiments are only accentuated as the residents approach their twilight years:

> [AH: Where do you feel more at ease, here or there?] Over there, with my kids, my family. Here it's nothing more than a tomb (*c'est une tombe*) ... It's no life, this! [At this point Mehdi stretches out his legs from the bed and touches the other wall with his feet, to indicate the cramped conditions]. Look! ... But we had no choice: here in the hostels it's cheaper. (Mehdi, 64, Chlef, Algeria)

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[118] The word *mouroir* has no direct English translation, but signifies the last place which sick or very old people will live in before dying; it is sometimes translated as 'hospice'.

Foyer de Cormeilles-en-Parisis
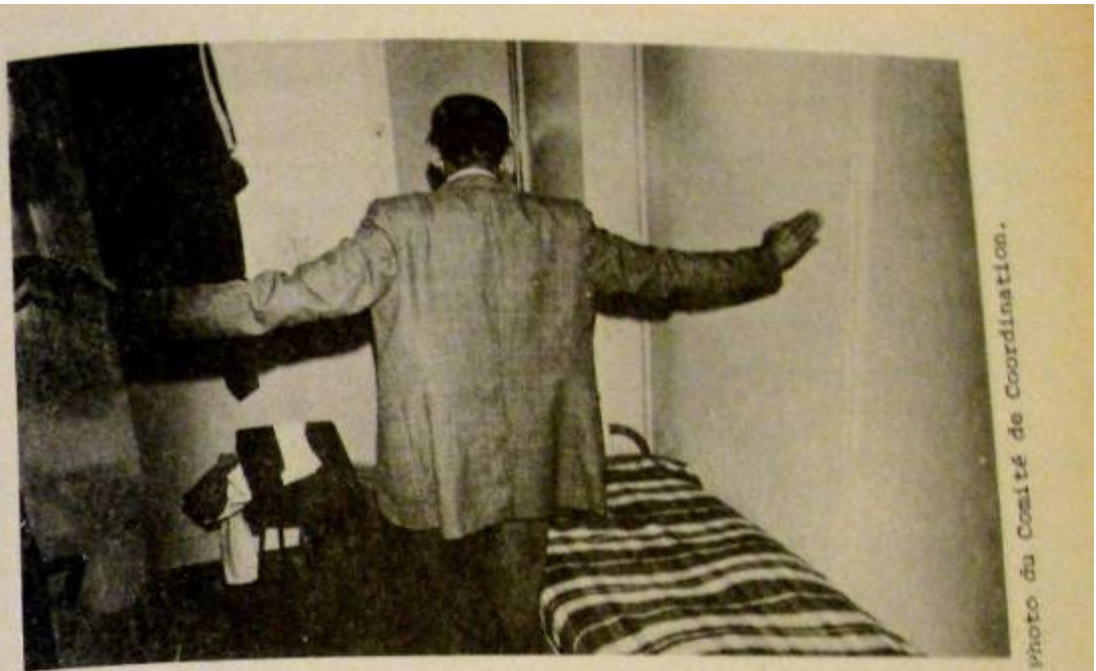
Photo du Comité de Coordination.

Foyer d'Argenteuil, quai Saint-

Photo du Comité de Coordination.

"DES CHAMBRES COMME DES CERCUEILS ......" disent les résidents.

Figure 36. "Rooms like coffins" say the residents. From Ginesy-Galano 1984: 59.

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> Here in the hostel, the room is like a coffin (*cercueil*). What about the residents who die in their rooms and lie there for several days before anyone notices – where are the nurses who come every day like in retirement homes for French people? That's my question. (Rahman, 60s, Algeria)

> This evening, when I was in the kitchen Moncef told me that a guy on the ground floor of our stair had died, but the body was only found yesterday, several days after his death, once it started to smell badly. Hence the strong smell of disinfectant in the corridor today and yesterday, and the (usually locked) door left wide open at all times in an effort to aerate the corridor. Moncef said it had been five days that the guy had been dead, adding: "it's sad to die like that." (From my field notes, 17 June 2009)

This latter situation is in itself an example of not 'dying well', in the manner prescribed by Islamic ritual which urges burial as soon as possible so as not to delay the return of the deceased's soul to God (Sahraee-Smith 2001). Furthermore, Islamic scripture stipulates that the attestation of faith (*shahada*) be said over the deceased at the moment of death, which clearly did not take place in the passing described immediately above. In a study of Bengali Muslim Elders in London, Katy Gardner records how critical the presence at the death-bed of family or friends is to 'dying well', so that the appropriate ritual processes are set in motion (Gardner 2002). Far from their families, in the institutionalised context of the hostel, residents cannot have confidence that these rites will be observed correctly.

Beyond the confines of the hostel, there are other factors specific to France which increase the risks of residents 'dying badly', notably for those considering burial in France. Given the strict separation of religion and state, cemeteries in France must be 'neutral' in confessional and/or denominational terms. As such, no separate contiguous tracts of land can be allocated only to Muslims (or to any other faith group).[119] Furthermore, French cemeteries require the deceased to be placed in a coffin, whereas in the Islamic rite bodies are merely wrapped in a white sheet prior to burial, since direct contact with organic matter is believed to have purifying effects. Most inimical to Islamic custom however is the practice in France of burial

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[119] The singular exception to this rule is found at the Muslim Cemetery in the grounds of Avicenne Hospital in Bobigny, inaugurated in 1937.

in a communal grave (except where families have purchased – at great expense – a private plot 'in perpetuity'). Islamic law firmly stipulates that a Muslim's grave constitutes a type of individual property, and therefore should not be possessed by any other souls (except in very specific circumstances), and especially not by non-Muslims. The obvious solution to this quandary for hostel residents – almost all of whom, nominally, are Muslims – is for repatriation following death in France (Chaïb 2000).

Yassine Chaïb who is one of the few scholars, in French- or English-speaking academia, to direct his attention to the question of death in migration (Chaïb 2000 2003). Chaïb makes the subtle but telling distinction between 'dying' (*mourir*) and 'passing away' (*décéder*) in France (Chaïb 2003). Essentially, the subtlety consists in the strategy taken to prepare for the end of life and the possibility of dying far away from the ancestral home. "*Mourir* en France" means to die and be buried in France, which is the "only fear", and in addition, a shameful thing which should be avoided. Burial in France tends to be unthinkable amongst hostel residents, primarily because there are fears that the requisite Islamic funerary rites will not be observed in France. Furthermore, hostel residents wonder who will tend their graves in France.

"*Décéder* en France", on the other hand, implies that one gets cared for in France, that one lives – one day at a time – in order to receive medical and nursing care in France. The decision of the individual to get cared for in France runs the risk that he will pass away (*décéder*) in France. However, to pass away in France does not imply burial in France. Instead, there are numerous solutions to ensure that one's body will be repatriated and buried beside one's ancestors.

We saw in the previous chapter the function that West African hometown associations fill for the hostel residents by valorising their life-giving contribution to the social, economic and political development of their villages, thereby facilitating their re-integration at retirement. However, the HTAs also fulfil a second, more morbid function: assuring repatriation of a member's body in the event of death in France. Indeed, this insurance function – not just in times of death, but also for unemployment, occupational injury and mental health – tends to pre-date the development function (Manchuelle 1997; Quiminal 2009; Timera 1996).

More formally, various repatriation insurance products are also offered by foreign banks operating in France, both North African and West African. I had the opportunity to discuss such products with an employee of the Moroccan bank BMCE (*Banque Marocaine du commerce extérieur*). The product which this bank offers in the event of client's death is an "assistance", not an "assurance" (i.e., it is not capitalised, there are no cash benefits, just benefits in kind). The product costs €17.53 per year, no matter what your age, but the maximum inscription date is 70 years of age: you cannot subscribe to this product after this age. According to my contact at the bank, almost every account holder at their Paris branches has signed up for this product.

As with the West African village associations, mutual funds have been set up by North African hostel residents to facilitate body repatriation, but on a more ad-hoc informal basis. Several deaths occurred in the hostel where I undertook participant observation during my time as a live-in resident, and this led to collections (*collectes*) being made on behalf of families in places of origin in order to facilitate the repatriation of their loved one's corpse. This is especially necessary when a resident is not subscribed to repatriation insurance through a bank. The local mosque might give €500 or so, but the Residents' Committee will also convene a meeting among the residents to collect money. Usually, enough money is raised to fund the cost of repatriation. This can be expensive, typically costing between €2,000 and €3,000. If there is any excess it is sent to surviving family members in the place of origin. Sometimes the president of the Committee, Saleem (60, Tiznit, Morocco), even travels to visit the family and spends some time with them.

Such a system again demonstrates the solidarity which it is possible to find in many hostels. Nonetheless, more marginal members of the hostel community cannot rely on such mutual aid. Recently, this situation has attracted the attention of the Moroccan consular authorities in France, as my interview with two diplomatic *chargé d'affaires* revealed. These officials noted one particular problem: the situation of Moroccans in France who are *sans ressources* (without resources, i.e., very poor). The Moroccan authorities are in the course of putting in place a system for the repatriation of those who are not in a position to do this for themselves. The consular staff acknowledged the existence of structures of "parallel solidarity" – mosques,

associations, collections in hostels, and so on – but this solidarity always operates "on a case by case basis. Now we're going to systematise the procedure."

7.2 The Penultimate Journey

As noted earlier, a clear majority of older hostel residents (60%) envisage returning home to die when problems of dependency become unmanageable in the hostel. Such a move enables ailing hostel residents to receive care from informal and family carers back home, which, as noted in Chapter One, is a strong rationale behind late-in-life migration in other contexts (Findley 1988; Longino 1992; Oliver 2007; Speare Jr. 1992). This option is preferable to the main alternative, namely entry into a retirement home. Furthermore, returning home is also seen as more practicable than the aspirations which some men have to accomplish a late-in-life family reunification so that their wives can come to France to look after them (see Chapter Four for more details).

By way of example, Walid (72, Oujda, Algeria) mentioned that he was hoping to quit the hostel soon, to go back to Oujda to "finish his days." Brahim (60s, Agadir, Morocco), recounted how, some time ago, he had experienced gastric and mental health problems. He returned to Morocco "to die", but with time – during three years of convalescence in Morocco – he managed to recover. Since then he has come back to France once again. It is a phenomenon also observed by healthcare professionals who intervene regularly on the ground in hostels, such as Béatrice (health advisor, migrant welfare association): "When they are too ill, too old, they return home, and they never come back here. That's for sure." Hadyatou in Dembancané put it this way:

> When I'm too beat-up, when I can no longer move, well I'll stay here [in the village] and re-direct my pension money here. But for the time being, I'm in good health, I can move just fine. (Hadyatou, Dembancané, Senegal)

This preference for returning home to die I will label the 'penultimate journey'. This choice of words corresponds to the religiosity which hostel residents evinced when

discussing their own mortality and their wishes at the end of life. Indeed, nowhere did this religious identity express itself more than when discussing burial preferences. Being Muslim, a very clear distinction is drawn between the temporal world of the living, and the spiritual world, the world of the soul. In such a cosmology, the final journey can only ever be the journey which the soul takes after death. Hence the phrase 'penultimate journey' to describe the final terrestrial voyage of the hostel residents.

Constrained returns

The penultimate journey may be willingly undertaken in order to benefit from the care of one's relatives, provided hostel residents' family ties are not too distended. "We know that the migrants who still have ties with their family in the country of origin go back if at all possible in order to end their days around their relatives" (Bitatsi Trachet & El Moubaraki 2006: 109).

However, just as will be seen below with the reluctance to enter retirement homes, sometimes there is a degree of constraint to these penultimate journeys. It is important to recognise that sometimes the 'choice' to return is more or less imposed by institutional actors, such as hostel management or healthcare professionals. In other cases, they are 'encouraged' to return by friends and neighbours in the hostel.

In terms of institutional constraints, these begin to operate when individuals start becoming a burden on institutional resources. Some men become indebted, and can no longer pay for their hospital care, their medication, or their home care services. Martine (geriatric care coordinator, Val d'Oise) remarked that occasionally hospital personnel become "exasperated to the point where they say, 'right, out you go, you're no longer ill and you're using up a bed'. But where to go? They can't afford a hostel bed: they can't afford anything in fact." In other cases, alternating between the local hospital and the hostel becomes impossible, since they cannot afford the hospital, and the hostel is not adapted to their health needs. In some cases, they are forcibly returned to the country of origin, or placed in a retirement home. Martine described this as "a form of institutional violence" when there are no family

members to liaise with. An interview with Anne-Marie, who works in a large hospital as a crisis social worker, also broached this issue:

> Sometimes, they arrive too late, that is to say the patients arrive too late at the hospital and they no longer have a choice, they can't be returned to the hostels – they might have problems walking and there's no lift – so either they have to be hospitalised for months, or a place in a nursing home has to be found, which is a bit complicated. So it's good to work with them beforehand on a potential return home. (...) But frankly, I've never seen a single person accept this willingly (...) Really the ones who accept to return, it's when they know they are going to die soon, because they are so completely dependent, that is to say, instead of going into a retirement home all alone when you have family back home, they reflect all the same on the possibility of returning to the family home, and having their wife or children look after them.

In other situations, family members are alerted by hostel management to the fact that an individual is sick and can no longer look after themselves in the hostel. In my discussions with Denis, a hostel manager, he mentioned that the managers in the past were not required to ask residents for next-of-kin contact details. It is only recently, with the growing seriousness of the ageing phenomenon in hostels, that recording such information has proved necessary. Then relatives can be summoned from overseas to take the individual home (provided a visa can be secured: not always straightforward as some respondents mentioned). The casefile below illuminates several of these themes:

Employment status:	Retired
Marital status:	Married
Entourage:	-
Residence:	- - - - -
Age:	82
N° of years resident :	-
Difficulties observed:	Eyesight
Willingness to be helped:	-
Medical costs:	-
Current aid:	-
Aid pending:	-
Other actions:	-
Other partners:	CLIC[120]
Remarks:	Returned home for good in March 2005 with his wife
Return trips:	-
Case notes:	

Case notes:
- 5-1-05. Request for intervention from the CLIC. Monsieur came back from country of origin in bad health (hemiplegia)[121]
- 17-1-05. Wife of Monsieur has come in order to look after her husband whose health is declining.
- 8-2-05. Monsieur is hospitalised. Upon leaving hospital, a wheelchair is prescribed for him. Use of which is impossible in the residence.
- 7-03-05. We solicit the CLIC to help us find a solution concerning Monsieur. Monsieur finds it impossible to walk. The CLIC doesn't know what to do. In the meantime, Monsieur's wife's visa is no longer valid, she decides to go back with her husband. Monsieur intends to return [to France.]
- 6-06-08. No more news from Monsieur since the last intervention.

Table 4. Casefile n° FVA 2005-1

The final instance where penultimate returns may be constrained pertains to the individual's social circle within the hostel itself. Instead of seeing their ailing compatriot sent to a retirement home (which is seen as shameful and even as reflecting badly on the hostel residents collectively), neighbours prefer to donate money to a collection fund in order to purchase a ticket to enable the man to return. "Very often, the compatriots in the hostels say to the elderly person, 'listen, you go home now; if it turns out OK you can come back, if not then you stay there'"

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[120] A CLIC is a geriatric care coordination service: the role of CLIC personnel is to liaise between the many different stakeholders involved in elderly care: the individuals concerned and their families, private care providers, hospitals, nursing homes, and so on. Most municipal councils (*communes*) in France are endowed with a local CLIC.

[121] Hemiplegia, i.e., paralysis of one side of the body, most often due to a stroke.

(Béatrice, health advisor, migrant welfare association). One example of such a situation, showing both the urgency of the situations which management and care services sometimes have to deal with, as well as the solidarity of neighbours, is found in the following casefile:

Employment status:	Retired
Marital status:	Married
Entourage:	Neighbours, mates
Residence:	- - - - -
Age:	70
N° of years resident :	More than 10
Difficulties observed:	Hygiene, memory loss, depression, delirium
Willingness to be helped:	Agrees
Medical costs:	CMU-C
Current aid:	-
Aid pending:	-
Other actions:	-
Other partners:	Doctor, CLIC, Psychiatrist at hospital
Remarks:	Return home organised by friends.
Return trips:	Yes
Case notes: There are no complaints but rather calls for help on the part of residents who know him. Feb. 2006: The residents on his floor came to alert us about the worrying state of health of the resident. Monsieur was wandering aimlessly, talking in an alarming manner and had lost an enormous amount of weight. We contacted his GP who, after having visited, said that it would be preferable for him to go back to his country of origin in order to speak with a psychiatrist and to take stock of his mental state. All the same, he prescribed a brain scan but the resident was in such a state of disorder that he didn't want to be treated. We got back in contact with the GP in order to proceed to a compulsory hospitalisation at the request of a third party (i.e., to be sectioned), as the CLIC had advised. The next day the resident came spontaneously to the office of the hostel manager and we then contacted the CLIC again in order to find a rapid solution so that he wouldn't be left to his own devices at the weekend. Made calls to almost all the external partners, and alerted the Emergency Services to find someone who would agree to accompany the resident to hospital. Via the social services who took charge of the transportation, we called upon the [Xxxxx] Association, who came very quickly. After a diagnosis made by the Emergency Services, the resident was referred to the psychiatric hospital and spent the weekend there. On the Monday, his friends went to collect him and made him go back to his country of origin.	

Table 5. File n° FVA 2006-2

7.3 Institutional Perspectives on Dependency and Death

As was intimated at the start of this chapter, death sometimes surprises hostel residents in France. Dependency and death is also a nasty surprise for the hostel management companies, since it was never expected that such accommodation would house populations in advanced old age and frailty.

In the Introduction to this thesis, the question was posed as to whether the migrant worker hostels constitute an appropriate living space for older people. The historical context provided in Chapter One and the photos of the accommodation which accompanied the Introduction suggest the opposite. Initially, the accommodation was aimed at young active workers who were not expected to spend prolonged periods of time in their rooms on a day-to-day basis (the primary function of the room was as a place of rest and recuperation after a hard day's work). Neither were the residents expected to spend a prolonged period of time working in France. Given the short-termism inherent in the migrant worker housing policy, the buildings were not built to last, and so were not constructed with durable materials or equipped with high-quality fittings.

It is not surprising then that, architecturally-speaking, most hostels are completely unsuited to the needs of elderly men in a state of partial or advanced dependency. Abdou, the migrant rights outreach officer with whom I conducted my first forays into hostels during the piloting stage, felt strongly that the men have no place in the hostels nowadays "because they are old men, ageing, tired, a bit ill, and the very environment of the hostel is no longer adapted, it is not adequate for their situation, for someone who is old, sick etc, who should be nowhere near a hostel, in a room of 7 square metres, with external toilets and a collective kitchen." A cursory visit to a typical 'F1/2' hostel (see Figures 1 to 9 in the Introduction) soon underscores the difficulties faced by less mobile populations (e.g., wheelchair-using residents) in such cramped quarters. Field notes taken during a visit to a hostel in Val d'Oise in the company of Dimitri, a professional home carer (*aidant à domicile*), illustrate these obstacles:

> The room was very narrow – 2m across and perhaps 3m or 4 m deep – a typical F1/2. Ten rooms off one long corridor, five on each side of the corridor, plus a communal kitchen at the end and bathroom facilities on the left-hand side. The bathroom facilities included two toilets (one squat and one sit-down toilet), and two shower cubicles. There was a big step up to the toilet and shower cubicles. A good 30 centimetres: I myself nearly stumbled. I'm sure it can't be easy at all for an older person to negotiate the bathroom facilities. (Fieldnotes, 11 November 2008)

Although not yet apparent in the above hostel, slowly architectural improvements are being made to hostels across France, in an effort to ease the comfort of older residents. This long-term rehabilitation programme is inscribed in the objectives of the statutory change from migrant worker hostel (*foyer de travailleurs migrant*) to *résidence sociale*, as noted in Chapter One. Examples of architectural improvements include configuring the private and collective spaces so that wheelchair users can circulate and turn around, installing lifts to all floors, and placing hand rails in corridors and shower facilities (Adoma 2008). Nonetheless, the programme to renovate France's 700-odd *foyers* is far from completion and considerably behind schedule, with the initial five-year programme having been extended twice, firstly in 2001 and then again for the period 2007-2013 (Union d'Economie Sociale pour le Logement 2007).

Readers might find it surprising that the French government is investing significant sums in this accommodation when the hostel population is ageing so rapidly and, as a consequence, predicted to steadily decrease in the coming years. However, it must be borne in mind that the statutory change to *Résidence sociale* also aims at a change in the clientele housed, with other fragile populations destined to inhabit these buildings in the future. As discussed in Chapter One, new clienteles such as former homeless people, recovering drug addicts and single mothers figure amongst the potential new hostel residents. In other words, the perspective of the authorities extends past the anticipated ageing of the elderly clientele.

Home care: 'maintien à domicile'

As in other European countries, the central policy orientation towards elderly care in France is the concept of *maintien à domicile* (henceforth translated as 'home care'[122]) (Jamieson 1991; Walker and Maltby 1997). The principle of home care is to enable older people to live independently in their own homes for as long as possible. This is seen as important firstly because surveys indicate it is what older individuals themselves prefer, and secondly because care in institutional-residential settings is perceived as more costly by European governments (Victor 1997; Walker and Maltby 1997). Surveying the diverse range of home care provision in Europe, Jamieson draws three principal categories: nursing help, undertaken by nursing professionals (giving injections, measuring blood pressure and so on); personal care (daily tasks such as washing and dressing); and home-making (tasks such as cleaning and cooking). In France, elderly care services provide all three types of assistance. For those in need of some level of care, home care provided by formal service providers is often supplemented by informal care provided by family members and neighbours (Litwin and Attias-Donfut 2009).

Central to the successful deployment of formal assistance for independent home-centred living in France is a welfare benefit known as the Personalised Aid for Autonomy (*aide personnalisée à l'autonomie:* APA). Since the level of APA is calculated on the basis of the cost of the services used minus any means-tested contribution the person concerned is required to make (Grandguillot 2009: 117), this benefit makes home care more affordable especially for those on lower incomes, such as those living in the hostels. It is important to note that a recent legal change means that hostel rooms now constitute a 'principal residence'[123] and thus home care services can and should be deployed there if need be as in any other type of residence. Therefore, we can reasonably ask: have hostels become retirement homes on the cheap, as alluded to in certain parts of media discourse (Le Monde 2004, 28 May; Libération 1999, 11 January; Notre temps 1999, May; Vidalie 2008)?

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[122] In anglophone contexts, the concept of 'community care' is sometimes deployed as synonymous with 'home care.' See Jamieson (1991: 6-8) for a discussion.

[123] Article 194 of the law of *Solidarité et renouvellement urbain* (SRU), December 2000.

In reply, the first thing to note is that a very low proportion of older hostel residents are in receipt of the APA benefit. An Adoma report of 2007 showed that in 2005 "5 percent of [residents] over 60 are identified as having difficulties accomplishing everyday tasks (...) Only 12 percent of these people benefit from the aid which they could claim" (Adoma 2007: 4), in other words only 0.5 percent of all residents over 60. This compares with a take-up rate of 8 percent for all over 60s nationwide, rising to 17 percent for those aged over 75 (Debout 2010). Since the Sonacotra report of 2005, slow progress has been made. A follow-up study in 2007 showed that the take-up rate had improved somewhat, with "2.06 percent of people over 60 receiving nursing care and 1.09 percent benefiting from home care" (Adoma 2007: 2). Given that hostel companies are consecrating considerable resources to renovating hostels and facilitating home care, what is blocking the deployment of these services?

Firstly, cost and ignorance of the services available are highlighted as principal factors explaining the men's wariness to make use of these care mechanisms (Dherbey and Jurdan 2002). Home helps are often viewed as a luxury that migrants cannot afford (Alidra *et al.* 2003), especially for those migrants who are still burdened with the expectation of sending remittances home every month. The biographical particularity of this situation has been noted at several points in this text. As Béatrice (health advisor, migrant welfare association) put it "even if it doesn't cost a lot of money, it costs a bit, and many migrants want to keep this money to send home, they don't want to have to pay someone for nursing, they prefer to ask a neighbour for help, or just muddle through themselves."

A second, and related, biographical particularity is the hostel residents' lack of family entourage, this being the customary source of support and information for senior citizens in France (Walker and Maltby 1997). "Normally it's older people who apply for help, or their families, but with us [i.e., at Adoma] that doesn't happen. [The residents] are all alone, they have no family, they don't know the mechanisms, they don't know the services" (geriatric doctor, Adoma). While some commentators argue that the absence of family members able to provide informal care is partially assuaged by help from neighbours and friends in the hostel, other sources are not so optimistic. A Sonacotra internal document notes that "[c]ommunity solidarity (...) is

not sufficient to ensure an efficient early warning: in fact, this is often unsystematic, often late, and it is often not done as it should be" (Sonacotra n.d.: 4). Similarly, a Unafo document points out that "solidarity among residents exists, but it is neither intense nor durable. It reaches its limits when problems of dependency appear" (Unafo 2002: 47).

The reticence of external services to intervene in hostels also appears to be a major block to residents' care. A report by consultancy firm Icares in the Rhône-Alpes region declares that "it appears that it is not so much the functioning of the early-warning system which causes problems. In fact, when the [management] team has enough time (...) the observation and identification of problematic situations proceeds quite naturally. Where there are more problems is in the alerting of professionals about a given situation, and in the follow-up to this" (Sonacotra-Icares 2003: 15).

Reticence on the part of external geriatric care services to intervene in the hostels can be attributed first of all to an ignorance of these places and people. "Older immigrants [in hostels] live in an unusual habitat for gerontological actors" (Dherbey and Jurdan 2002 : 13). Typically, such actors are accustomed to dealing with people aged 75 and over, especially older women, living alone in private housing. As was mentioned earlier, the family entourage is often at hand to keep a watchful eye over an elderly relative. The population in the hostels is quite the contrary; male, prematurely showing signs of dependency from 55 years, and living in collective accommodation yet where bonds of solidarity cannot always be taken for granted: as was just noted, neighbours cannot compensate for the lack of family support (Unafo 2002).

Once the initial barrier of service-provider ignorance is overcome, there remain difficulties in actually gaining entry to hostels. This was one of the principal factors given when I asked service providers what impeded their work in the hostels. Dr Ismail, a geriatric specialist who volunteers in several Paris hostels, replied firstly that, "it's a difficult terrain, there are difficulties of access." But eventually, with the cooperation of the hostel wardens, an agreement can be reached for gaining entry. Sonia and Martine, geriatric care coordinators in Val d'Oise county, bemoaned the difficulties of access, and the mass of keys which is required to see a patient; first of

all, a swipe card for the sensor at the entrance, then a key for the stairwell or lift, then a key for the corridor, then a key for the room itself. However, it was only when I accompanied Dimitri, a professional home carer, on his weekly visits to provide home help to an elderly client – Mr R – that these problems of access were brought home to me, as my field notes document:

> Unfortunately, it was difficult getting into the hostel in the first place – we had to call up to Mr R's room twice, and each time we had no reply. Finally we got in thanks to some other residents who were entering the building and left the door open for us. But clearly, if it wasn't such a busy time of day – mid-morning – then it would have been a real pain. Damien doesn't have any keys as it costs €15 per set and Mr R doesn't want to pay.

For some gerontology actors, the ambiance of the hostels is not conducive to doing their work either. One fear for certain service providers is the 'alterity' which supposedly reigns in the hostels – a fear of 'the other'. The negative visibility that the hostels gained in the past, notably through media representations of rent strikes, segregation and religious radicalism, has tainted their image. This is the case especially in the former Sonacotra hostels, despite the name change to Adoma in 2007. "The reputation and image of Sonacotra also gets in the way" (Martine, geriatric care coordinator, Val d'Oise).

A further fear concerns the violent or sexual proclivities which the men in this highly masculine environment are said to harbour. Martine also observed a "fear of the male, in the corridors, all alone" among many of the (generally female) care professionals who are called to intervene in the hostels, closely related to "racist phantasms" such as "the foreign man is more violent... these 'other' men, polygamous". Her colleague, Sonia, talked about the prevalent stereotype of the *foyer* as a dangerous place for (female) caregivers, populated by single men:

> The nurses aren't very keen – because of the hostels' reputation... these "cut-throat" hostels, hostels where there are problems, where you can get attacked, where your tyres get slashed, where your windows get broken. All in all a whole host of reasons why [female care providers] say 'no, especially not there.'

Ironically, such gender and cultural stereotypes are re-projected in the testimony of the residents. They too are reticent to be helped: the gender and age gap between themselves and their would-be carers is erected as a cultural barrier to assistance. Hostel residents have concerns especially where the gender of domestic helpers is considered. This was the perspective of a significant proportion of the care service representatives whom I interviewed, and appears also in reports and other grey literature on the topic. The Unafo report of 2002 argues that "in their culture, it is the wife who manages, alone, the domestic tasks, laundry, meals: support for elderly relatives is incumbent on the family members" (Unafo 2002: 47; also Alidra *et al.* 2003). Similarly, Vivianne (geriatric doctor) had this to say on the matter: "Home help – the person who comes to do your housework, the person who comes to help you get dressed, if you can no longer lift your arms – is something which they have problems accepting, since culturally it is the role of the wife or the daughter."

Nonetheless, it is important to guard against pinning the blame for everything on cultural incompatibilities. A senior civil servant very familiar with the hostels 'dossier' had a less essentialist view. Accepting outside aid to accomplish daily tasks is not easy for anyone, regardless of their age, gender or ethnicity:

> It's a very masculine universe, very introverted. To get help with going to the toilet from someone you don't know is always complicated, from a woman when you are a man is not simple, and from a woman when you are a North African man living separated from French society for decades is even more complicated: I mean to say, these problems are everyday problems, because all home care services encounter this sort of difficulty, but they are always inflated, always more complicated [in hostels] (interview with senior civil servant).

7.4 Retirement Homes? Classic and experimental models

When the sorts of difficulties found in providing home care for residents in hostels become too great, or when physically an individual begins to decline rapidly, an alternative solution has to be found. It is to be underlined that the expertise of Adoma and the other hostel companies does not lie in medical care: "Clearly, past a certain

physical state, we no longer know what to do: Adoma isn't a chain of hospitals after all" (architectural consultant, Adoma).

While moving to a retirement home or some other institutional setting is the classic solution for most dependent senior citizens in France, it appears to be the least acceptable solution for dependent hostel residents. As will be shown below, all observers – professionals and academics alike – are agreed that residents very rarely agree to reside in such establishments of their own volition: generally when this occurs, there is an element of constraint. Three main motivations account for this reluctance to envisage a move to a retirement home: cost, cultural norms, and the familiar social environment of the hostel.

(i) Cost, a brake on remittances

The most straightforward reason why the older dependent residents shun the classic retirement home model is the cost. In this respect the hostel residents do not distinguish themselves from other older populations in France, since for any older person – even those who have comfortable pensions – entry to a retirement home is an extremely costly affair. What is perhaps particular in the case of the hostel residents is – biographically speaking – the fact that they remain responsible for the living costs of their extended family even after retirement (Sonacotra 2005a; Unafo 2002).

According to Dr Ismail (medical advisor, migrant association, Paris), the minimum monthly tariff for accommodation in a fully-equipped nursing home in the Ile-de-France region is €2000. Other respondents quoted figures closer to €2,500. It is inconceivable that any hostel resident will be able to pay such fees given their lower than average pension incomes and the fact that they do not own any real estate assets in France which could be sold to cover this expense. Thus, any hostel resident who wishes to go into a home will have to be supported by the state, under a mechanism known as *aide sociale* (see Grandguillot 2009: 123-124 for brief details). This aid works on the basis that 90 percent of a claimant's revenues are appropriated by the state to fund their care (known as a *tutelle*), with the state covering the outstanding balance owed to the institution concerned. This latter contribution from

the state is a cash-advance, not a subsidy. In other words, the individual's estate is seized by the state upon death, or if the individual's financial situation improves. If the deceased has surviving relatives (*obligés alimentaires*, i.e., children or grandchildren) living in France, any monies due the state may be seized from them (Service-Public.fr 2010). Perhaps most critically in terms of hostel residents' general refusal to enter such accommodation, however, is the fact that they have very little money to remit home once the 90 percent appropriation of their revenues is applied by the state. For those with very small pensions, the minimum sum which they are permitted to keep from the state is €85 per month, "just enough to keep them in cigarettes basically", as one respondent wryly commented.

Even assuming that older hostel residents are aware of this financial assistance on the part of the state, it is not hard to imagine the difficulties posed to family finances by this swingeing cut to remittance income. This led Dr Ismail to comment that "the retirement homes aren't designed with the North Africans in mind." In a similar vein, a senior civil servant had this to say on the matter:

> We have noticed that few residents move to a retirement home. Few, if not very few, indeed astonishingly few! For reasons specific to these populations, notably when you enter a retirement home, it's your entire income which goes towards paying for the accommodation (...) For all intents and purposes, to enter an EHPA or an EHPAD[124] means renouncing the remittances which you send to your family each month - €100 – €150 – €200. Not simple. And yet this is the justification – I don't say it's the only reason for their presence in France, but it's the justification for their presence in France, you see (...) And it means recognising that when you can no longer fulfil this function, it's not simple (...) It's to recognise that you haven't succeeded in doing what you left for.

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[124] EHPA = *Etablissement d'hébergement pour personnes âgées* (housing establishment for older people); EHPAD = *Etablissement d'hébergement pour personnes âgées dépendantes* (housing establishment for dependent older people). Essentially, the difference is that the latter type of accommodation is more medicalised: it is destined for older people with more serious health problems beyond the usual difficulties encountered in day-to-day life by older people, such as washing, bathing, and so on.

(ii) Culture, age and gender: 'foreign bodies' in the retirement home

Nonetheless, the civil servant was quick to point out that "there aren't only financial reasons, there is a lot more to it than that." It is not only the biographically unexpected particularity of continued remittance sending which blocks entry into retirement homes. One important brake on admission to the classic retirement home environment was summed up neatly by Germain (outreach officer, social and legal rights charity) with his reference to 'foreign bodies', a phrase he employed to describe the radical alterity which the presence of migrant worker hostel residents in 'classic' retirement homes poses:

> And cohabiting with a population – let's say – non-Maghrebi [i.e., not North African] is also a question. Indeed, you will see very few North Africans there. First of all it's a question of revenues, then, when it does happen, there are rejections. You are once again a foreigner, amongst people whom you will have never mixed with. Moreover, things go badly in retirement homes in general. If, in addition, you constitute a foreign body there, I am very pessimistic for the future of those people. Except for those who can return home. But, as we've seen, that's not the case for everyone.

The older hostel residents constitute 'foreign bodies' in retirement hostels first of all in relation to gender. As was discussed in an earlier section, gender differences and stereotypes can be a barrier to care in terms of the relationship between carer and cared-for, but gender poses a problem also at the level of relations among care home residents, a fact underlined by a Unafo report. "Retirement homes appear to be ill-adapted to the migrant population (...) due to the very high percentage of women who live there" (Unafo 2002: 45). This is a point also underlined by a Sonacotra working document from 2005, which noted that "[t]he relations among EHPAD residents can pose a problem, notably between men and women" (Sonacotra 2005a).

Not only do retirement homes tend to house a predominantly female population; they are also marked by the preponderance of that fraction of the elderly described as 'the oldest old' (i.e., aged 85 and over). Yet, with the hostel residents one is dealing with a prematurely ageing population, given the difficult living and

working conditions which they have known earlier in life, as discussed in Chapter Four. As a geriatric doctor at Adoma put it: "the average age in the existing EHPADs is 87 years (...) Our old migrants have difficulties well before then."

In addition to age and gender, a further obstacle consists of divergent cultural orientations. As Vivianne (geriatric doctor) puts it, "The culture is not the same, the religion is not the same, which means that our old migrants do not feel at home in the EHPADs at all." Other observers suggest a fear on the part of hostel residents that cultural differences will not be respected by staff, as well as the "difficulty of practising one's religion, which becomes more necessary in later life" (Sonacotra 2005). Indeed, the alterity which this potential clientele represents sometimes leads to hesitation on the part of retirement home management to admit elderly men of North African origin, judged to be "too different" (Unafo 2002: 45). In one civil servant's opinion, it will be necessary in the future to "inform and help certain EHPAs or EHPADs – not all of them but some – to evolve their position on this question, to understand (...) how we can integrate the specialised side of things (*la façon spécialisée*)." By way of example, he noted for example Muslim residents' fears of not being served halal meals, a concern echoed also in the grey literature (Sonacotra 2005a).

(iii) Familiarity of the foyer

Finally, the classic retirement home model can feel "foreign" to older hostel residents in the sense of strange or unfamiliar. As with all older people, dependent hostel residents may be upset by a change in environment: "new surroundings and language problems lead to significant difficulties in adapting" (Sonacotra 2005a). It is in the hostels that these older men find their bearings. One report speaks of the residents' "anchorage" in the hostels (Adoma 2008). Under such circumstances, it is not surprising to find that "[t]o leave a residence, in which they have spent the better part of their life, is a difficult act" (Unafo 2002: 45). Leaving the hostel is tantamount to leaving home, even if it is not everyone's ideal of home. Thus, transferring one's residence to a retirement home can be validly described as a "new immigration" (Sonacotra 2005a).

After decades of communal living in these structures, it is there that the older men find a sense of companionship. "The hostel, it's what they know, it's 'their family', they are attached to it no matter what the living conditions are like" (Sonacotra 2005a; see also Adoma 2008). To leave the hostel is to break with one's community, given that the hostels historically have been so important in maintaining ties of solidarity and a sense of community among immigrants. This is not so often the case in the North African hostels nowadays, but remains the case for the tight-knit communitarian ethos which is found in West African hostels. In the latter establishements a collective sense of shame may be provoked if a member of the community is condemned to move to a retirement home (Sonacotra 2005a). Certainly, among respondents in Dembancané I sensed a certain outrage at the Western model of geriatric care which in their view 'banishes' the elderly individual from the family. Retired return migrants in the village were relieved that they had managed to avoid ending up in a nursing home in France, a situation which appeared repugnant to them.

Isolation and solitude are likely if one transfers one's residence to a retirement home. These institutions tend to operate on the basis of a logic of individualised, personalised care. What is specific to the hostel population vis-à-vis other potential clients of retirement homes is the transition from a collective to an individualised way of life:

> It would be necessary that the EHPAs or EHPADs take into account the specific history of these persons. What has enabled them to survive is life in a group, so it's very likely for someone who is liable to spend a significant period of time in an EHPA for example, that it's not just one person on their own, it has to be three or four people who understand each other, who know each other a little. They are required to go from a lifestyle where the collective served as the means to withstand the difficult life conditions which they were made to experience, to a lifestyle where everything is very individualised, inside the EHPA or EHPAD. (senior civil servant)

The spectre of retirement homes "reserved for immigrants only"

In an interesting recent development, the 'big two' hostel companies (Adoma and Aftam) have begun to explore possibilities of constructing medicalised nursing homes specifically for their dependent hostel residents. These experiments are clearly motivated by the cultural blockages impeding access to the "classic" retirement home model as detailed above, and the anchoring of the oldest residents in the hostels out of familiarity with this accommodation and with their neighbours. Thanks to the construction of EHPADs on the same site as existing hostels, dependent older residents would not have to endure a difficult change in their routine, social circle, and place of residence. Furthermore, in a handful of pilot projects (notably at the Aftam development at Colombes near Paris), architects have incorporated guest bedrooms so that close relatives can spend time with ailing residents. Such accommodation could be one potential solution to the distress evidently experienced by the dialysis patient documented in the following casefile:

Employment status:	Retired
Marital status:	Married
Entourage:	Neighbours
Residence:	- - - - -
Age:	69
N° of years resident :	11
Difficulties observed:	Mobility, anxiety, depression
Willingness to be helped:	-
Medical costs:	CMU-C
Current aid:	Dialysis
Aid pending:	-
Other actions:	-
Other partners:	GP
Remarks:	Monsieur is on dialysis and voices more and more his suffering, to have to undergo these repeated dialyses and to be far from his family. An extremely fragile person.
Return trips:	No .

Table 6. Casefile n° FVA 2007-03

The experiments of Adoma and Aftam with nursing home accommodation remain for the time being quite exceptional, numbering less than a dozen residences nationwide. However, I was able to see at first hand the development of one such site, since a medicalised annex was in the process of being created at the hostel where I undertook ethnographic research as a live-in resident. This hostel was chosen as a pilot site by Adoma primarily because the average age of the clientele is amongst the highest in Adoma's housing stock in Ile-de-France. For Denis, the hostel manager, the medicalised annex will be "a place where all those who really have health problems can be together and be watched over regularly by home care professionals." He was particularly keen on the idea that only one carer or nurse would be required to attend to the needs all of the most dependent residents. This was a very efficient use of resources in his view. The larger room size (15 square metres, as opposed to the standard size of 7.5 square metres[125]) likewise facilitates the work of home care personnel.

As in the Adoma hostel which Denis runs, Aftam's pilot project at Colombes near Paris was not yet in operation by the time I came to terminate my fieldwork, but the expectation was that it would be open by the end of 2009. It is located in a former hostel, and will have a capacity of 38 places. It is situated next to a *Résidence sociale* run by Aftam. Indeed, to access the latter accommodation one has to pass through the retirement home first. In this way, "the retirement home residents won't feel isolated", in the words of a medico-social coordinator for Aftam. She continued by saying that "the project at Colombes is really going to help us to see thereafter what we can offer in relation to these people." Others are less sanguine, and caution that "it's a subject all the same which demands some reflection, because we can't very well make a network of nursing or retirement homes reserved for immigrants only" (senior civil servant).

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[125] This expansion in floor space is achieved by pulling down the light plasterboard partition separating two standard size rooms.

Conclusion

Strategies to manage impending dependency and death have been under-researched as influences on migration decision-making, but the material above indicates that these factors are salient for older hostel residents. These issues, though affecting hostel residents acutely, apply to many older immigrants in France, particularly Muslims given the incompatibility of French burial regulations with Islamic customs.

In sections 7.1 and 7.2, I focused on personal attitudes to death and strategies to plan for the onset of dependency and the end of life. Overall respondents talked quite openly about death and dying and few expressed any fears about mortality *per se*. Rather, residents' fears focused on the spectre of 'dying badly' in France, as opposed to 'passing away in France', which is part of a medical care strategy first outlined in Chapter Four. To die 'badly', on the other hand, implies dying alone in one's room without friends or family being present to ensure that the requisite Islamic rites are correctly observed. Equally worrying is the thought of being buried in France, since practices such as communal graves, burial in a coffin, and lack of dedicated Muslim cemetery space contravene basic Islamic stipulations on the issue. Repatriation for burial in the place of origin therefore becomes a real non-negotiable and the 'last request' of hostel residents should they happen to die in France. This echoes Stef Jansen's findings from research with displaced people in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Among the older generations of displaced people, the "elderly persons were dying to return and returning to die" (Jansen 2007: 24, in Jeffery 2010: 1115).

The ideal for hostel residents is that a return can be effected while they are still of this world, with death intervening on the other side of the Mediterranean. Numerous respondents in organisations noted the tendency of hostel residents to return definitively once a certain level of dependency is reached, in order to benefit from family care. Such returns may be voluntary, if a resident still has sufficient agency to undertake the voyage, or alternatively more or less forced upon residents through a combination of institutional and peer pressures.

Section 7.3 noted the numerous institutional constraints to adequate care provision in hostels when hostel residents begin to experience dependency, including: architectural constraints (e.g., lack of wheelchair-accessible facilities); low

take-up of financial aids for care and lack of knowledge of services on the part of residents; reluctance on the part of geriatric care providers to intervene in hostels; residents' reluctance to be cared for; and lack of family entourage to provide informal care.

In such circumstance, if a return home cannot be countenanced, the last resort for dependent elders who can no longer stay in the hostel is for a different type of move, not international but institutional, namely entry into a retirement home. However, as section 7.4 made clear, several barriers are erected to this final form of late-in-life mobility. Because of the expense involved, moving to a nursing home is tantamount to abandoning the life-long mission of remittance sending, a biographical particularity of their geographically-single status. The men's unexpected biographies are also translated in the geriatric services' struggles to provide suitable care for dependent hostel residents. Lack of family entourage, premature ageing, perceived cultural incompatibilities, and the masculine character of dependency do not fit easily into these services' institutional logics. In response, the two largest hostel companies have experimented with the creation of nursing homes specifically for hostel residents. For the time being the capacities of these pilot residences are rather meagre. In the years to come, all forecasts suggest that on a nationwide basis the need for such accommodation is only going to become more acute.

Appropriately, this final chapter has raised points which are pertinent to all four explanatory models presented in Chapter One. First of all we noted the distinction between 'dying' in France and 'passing away' in France. Hostel residents seek to avoid the former, which implies burial in France, at all costs. This links back to the literature on structuralism and the veritable 'culture of migration' which exists in hostels, a culture which recommends that burial takes place in countries of origin (applying equally to North Africans and West Africans). The strategy of 'passing away' in France, on the other hand, is based on the social systems logic of inclusion in the superior healthcare system found in France. While this strategy raises the probability that one will die in France, numerous solutions are available to ensure that the various rites associated with Islamic burial can take place in countries of origin. This highlights the cross-border activities of state and non-governmental institutions – consulates, banks and hometown associations – all of which are actors

seen as crucial in the transnationalism literature. Finally, the financial cost of a move into a retirement home conflicts with the desire to keep remitting until the last possible moment. This demonstrates the extent to which the logic of the new economics of labour migration remains pertinent – albeit in a distorted way – even in the very late stages of labour migration.

Conclusion

At the outset of the hostel building programme, the migrant workers who were destined to be housed in hostels were represented as ageless and immortal. The all-too-present spectre of mortality which stalks the corridors of hostels up and down the land has put paid to this myth of agelessness in the most finite and incontrovertible manner possible. Intersecting with the fiction of the everlasting youth of the migrant workers is a second myth, the myth of return (Anwar 1979). Return was a dream to which so many migrant workers in France aspired, but as survey data presented in the Introduction showed, most older immigrants now view France as the home where they will live out their days, surrounded by their partners and children (Attias-Donfut *et al.* 2006). In time, return became less likely for the straightforward reason of family reunification: France is the only home which the migrant workers' children and grandchildren have known.

Less straightforward, however, is the non-return of migrant worker hostel residents. At the outset of this research, hostel residents' non-return was presented as a puzzle. A puzzle firstly insofar as the retired residents' mobility preferences call into question the assumptions of the 'myth of return' literature, which explains non-return on the basis of family localisation. In this case, though, the grounds for non-return cannot be family localisation, since the men's families remain in places of origin. Secondly, older migrant hostel residents also remain unmoved by the financial incentives of a return homewards, where their French state pensions, paid in euros and fully transferable, would have far greater purchasing power. The aim of my dissertation has been to resolve this puzzle, by asking:

What explains the hostel residents' preference for back-and-forth mobility over definitive return at retirement?

It bears reiterating that the hostel population is far from representative of all older immigrants in France. Indeed, the hostels are represented as an extreme case, a bizarre prolongation of the post-WW2 guestworker logic into the new millennium. If

this is the case, what benefits can be had from taking the hostels as our focus of study?

The first point to note is that there is very little empirical work in languages other than French on the French migrant hostels, and that which exists is somewhat misleading. Under any circumstances, it is hard to concede that a total complement of nearly a quarter of million migrant worker hostel beds constitutes a "restricted scheme" (Castles *et al.*1984: 29), as was the case in the mid-1970s heyday of hostel construction (Lévy-Vroelant 2007). Moreover, the lion's share of work in French on the hostels concentrates - not without eminent justification – on hostel residents' difficult passage to retirement, in particular their acute health and welfare needs. Generally, researchers have overlooked the dilemmas of late-in-life return which confront residents at retirement and the outwardly puzzling preference for back-and-forth migration over definitive return. In the first section to this Conclusion I will revisit these real-life empirical dilemmas, providing a brief overview of the principal findings contained in Chapters Three to Seven.

Empirical literature gaps aside, this thesis has also aspired to make a substantive theoretical contribution. I would argue that the hostel residents constitute a population which can generate significant new insights for migration theory, despite their unrepresentative situation. Indeed, the theoretical value of this research lies in the very fact that it takes an unusual or 'deviant' case. Of all the post-WW2 labour migrants to France, the hostel residents would appear at first sight to be the most likely candidates for return given their family ties to home and the economic incentives of return. That they do not return challenges the assumptions of the family localisation and neo-classical economic models. This prompted me to ask whether other theories might be better able to explain hostel residents' mobility strategies. Thus, in the second section below, I elaborate from the empirical dilemma of 'retirement home?' to the theoretical models which might be used to explain the puzzling preference for the *va-et-vient* at retirement. Four theories – NELM, structuralism, transnationalism and social systems – will be evaluated.

In the final section I conclude by asking what 'home' can mean for the hostel residents? Are they 'homeless' everywhere, as more pessimistically-minded scholars have concluded, or have they found home in new and unexpected places?

Empirical Dilemmas of Late-in-Life Return

The early chapters of the thesis introduced readers to the central research question, reviewed the principal extant literature on the topic, and justified the methodology deployed for the collection and analysis of data. The presentation of the empirical findings began in Chapter Three. In that chapter and the one which followed it, the non-standard and suspect biographies of the hostel residents were shown to impede hostel residents' access to various welfare resources. The territoriality of the welfare state and its timetabling effects on hostel residents' back-and-forth trips was stressed above all.

Chapter Three acknowledged that timetabling and territoriality affect all those living in advanced welfare states, citizens and non-citizens alike, but I argued that the 'non-standard' biographies of migrant workers, documented in the form of administrative papers and proofs of identity, result in demands emanating from the authorities which non-migrants are generally not called upon to answer. These biographical features include non-standard employment trajectories such as later entry to the French job market and non-declared work, as well as non-standard documents of personhood such as inaccurate birth certificates, erroneous or non-existent payslips, and duplicate social security reference numbers. Interestingly, these non-standard trajectories and documents, although set in motion from birth and continuing into adulthood and employment, only become critical at retirement: prior to this time they do not have a major influence on life chances and outcomes. Papers are crucial at this stage of life insofar as they are required to prove eligibility for the welfare benefits upon which many residents (and their families) depend. Together, their non-standard proofs of identity and nomadic tendencies rub up against the temporal and territorial demands of the welfare state. This leads to enforcement 'strategies' made against them by state bureaucrats (passport checks, targeted fraud investigations), aiming at controlling the residents' comings-and-goings between France and countries of origin.

Temporal and territorial demands likewise timetable residents' comings-and-goings when it comes to healthcare, as described in Chapter Four. The case of the hostel residents brings into sharp focus an interrelationship which I term the 'health-

migration order'. *Good* health was a pre-condition for coming to France in the first place. Later in life, health again orders migration, but this time it is the fact of *poor* health which conditions their movements to France, in order to receive healthcare. Premature ageing, a biographical consequence of the dangerous and exhausting work conditions which they experienced during working life, has led to significant long-term health needs. These needs explain residents' strong relationships of trust with medical professionals in France, and their confidence in the superiority of the services available in France, which are powerful rationales for late-in-life back-and-forth migration. Various factors have the result of 'timetabling' this *va-et-vient*, including doctors' appointments; conditions of eligibility for state-subsidised medical insurance (CMU); and the limited amount of medication which GPs can prescribe.

However, just as was found in the previous chapter, the men's non-standard and suspect biographies have a bearing on their interactions with the relevant authorities, in this case health professionals and care organisations. The absence of family entourage to provide informal care means that an extra duty of care falls upon formal care providers. Furthermore, the duty to provide financially for dependents back home often means residents are unable to afford the full range of treatment which they need. Language difficulties also impact on the patient-carer relationship, both at the level of the GP surgery and in the hospital. Finally, in some cases, illness becomes the over-arching justification for remaining in France (sinistrosis), a justification directed above all at family members remaining in places of origin.

For some respondents, the family is a source of moral support; for others the family is a source of conflicts from which they take refuge in the hostel. These findings were unpacked in Chapter Five. Remittance-sending is the basis of the family's migration strategy. Initially, the hostel policy was designed to facilitate such transfers and limit family reunification by keeping rents low, thereby enriching the emigrant's family more than would have been the case had dependent relatives come to France. This remittance-sending logic continues to operate today, even at this late stage of labour migration, since in some cases the stay-at-home extended family is dependent on the reduced income of the pensioner. This leads some hostel residents to remain in France *after* retirement, in order to meet the residence requirements for

the *minimum vieillesse*, an old-age income support benefit. As a result, some men are "trapped" in France for part of the year. This dependency is only amplified by advances in communications technology, notably mobile phones. The increased pressures on household heads in France to remit following a drop in income at retirement sometimes result in family conflict. North African respondents, in particular, complained of losing their patriarchal authority within the family. In some cases, return is postponed or cut short, with the hostel becoming a refuge from family conflicts.

Chapter Six analysed the processes of re-integration to two home communities in North and West Africa respectively, highlighting the importance for hostel residents of physical and social bearings. Physically, almost all respondents have been able to construct spacious, well-furnished houses to return to. However, many North African men complained that they had lost their social bearings back home. West Africans, on the other hand, being the drivers of physical and social change thanks to their contributions to village development projects and hometown associations, were not disoriented by their return trips and found it far easier to re-integrate.

Lastly, in Chapter Seven, a final critical juncture in the hostel resident's lifecourse was identified, namely the onset of dependency and the immobility which comes with it. Quite simply, there comes a point when the *va-et-vient* becomes unsustainable due to advanced frailty. At this time, a decision about where to live out the rest of one's days has to be made. In this final chapter, the lack of literature on death in migration was highlighted, and it was noted that the issues which the hostel residents' ageing and dying raise with acuity also apply to other ethnic minority elders living in France. Examples include preferences regarding the place of burial (the ultimate indicator of integration and settlement, but under-researched for all that), and the issue of cemetery space in France. Death in migration seemed to permit no compromises from the hostel residents' point of view. The rituals associated with it must be observed back home, hence the collective aversion to entering retirement homes in France. It was shown that end-of-life preferences are a true non-negotiable for hostel residents insofar as cultural norms are concerned.

Evaluation of the Theories

From the very outset my research question has been erected against the myth of return literature. This literature relies on family localisation as the principal explanation for the lack of return amongst the post-WW2 immigration cohort in Western Europe, yet, crucially, this explanation cannot apply here. On the basis of the 'implantation' hypothesis (Mesrine and Thave 1999), this population would appear at first sight to be very likely candidates for return. Evidently, it is not just family localisation which influences location decisions at retirement, begging the following question: what else can explain this behaviour?

Neo-classical economics was a second approach which was dismissed at the outset. As was discussed in the Introduction, neo-classical theories predict return at retirement for North and West African hostel residents whose families have remained behind in the country of origin. Neo-classical economists argue that at retirement wage differentials between home and host countries no longer influence migration decision-making. Instead what is important is the purchasing power parity (PPP) of the migrant's pension, which in most cases is fully transferable thanks to the bilateral social security agreements which operate between many labour-exporting and -importing countries (de Coulon and Wolff 2006; Klinthäll 2006). The calculation in most instances is a 'no-brainer', since a pension drawn in euros will clearly stretch farther in Morocco or Mali than it does in Marseille, offsetting any potential losses in currency exchange fees which may accrue if the pension is transferred home. Return home is the rational choice. However, hostel residents tend to remain unmoved by these financial incentives of return.

Given that the approaches based on family localisation and neo-classical economics cannot account for hostel residents' prolonged presence in France past retirement, I proposed to examine other theories of settlement and return, drawing on the new economics of labour migration, structuralism, transnationalism and social systems. To evaluate these respective theories, let us return to some key points in the data.

Dependence-Assistance: the distortion of the new economics of labour migration

For a very few respondents, the neo-classical logic remains valid. As Djimé (Dembancané, Senegal) put it: "When you are a pensioner here [Senegal], you live comfortably, you're not the same as those who don't have any resources, who don't have a pension. It's not the same life. Really, when you are a pensioner, you can live better here." However, the lack of definitive return at retirement by other hostel residents calls into question these neo-classical precepts. Perceptions of individual wealth must be tempered by the size of the family in the pensioner's charge. For these respondents, it does not make sense to talk of individual economic decision-making. Rather, it is the new economics of labour migration (NELM) which has primacy.

In the opinion of some residents, retirement means that there is less of an obligation to send remittances – "now it's up to them to get by" (Fouad, 60s, Constantine, Algeria) – lending support to the NELM assertion that an inter-generational transfer of responsibility for providing for the needs of the family occurs when the migrant breadwinner retires. For other respondents, however, the NELM logic becomes distorted and the assumption of an inter-generational transfer of responsibility is called into question. In these cases, the duty to provide for a significant number of dependents *after* retirement weighs heavily. Many residents I spoke to enumerated the large families in their charge.

A particularly oppressive state of dependence ensues if the general regime pension is not sufficient to meet the household's needs. In this case, the only means for the family to attain solvency is for the pensioner to remain in France for more than six months of the year, in order to meet the conditions of eligibility for the old age income support benefit (*minimum vieillesse*), topping up the pension to just over €700 per month. This constitutes a distortion of the NELM logic of household insurance, based as it is on an implicit inter-generational contract that younger generations will take over the responsibility of providing for the household when the senior migrant breadwinner retires. Among my own respondents, several explicitly mentioned household dependence on the *minimum vieillesse* as a constraint to more

permanent return to the country of origin following retirement. It is worth reiterating that recourse to the *minimum vieillesse* can in no way be considered a manifestation of neo-classical rational actor behaviour: the extra money is channelled to household dependents, not retained by individual breadwinners.

Losing one's bearings or returning to serve? Structuralist interpretations

The structuralist approach found in the writings of Francesco Cerase, George Gmelch and William Dumon stressed the difficulties of re-integrating to the home context, since migrants risk losing their place within the established order of "vested interests and traditional ways of thinking" when away (Cerase 1976: 258). This was a feature of North African more than West African accounts.

Generally North Africans have not found it difficult to re-adapt to traditional lifestyles; rather, the norms in places of origin have changed in their absence. It is the migrants who have remained old-fashioned while new generations have altered the old village order. Many complained of having 'lost their bearings' in the place of origin. They had fallen out of touch with childhood friends and talked of how they would feel awkward when bumping into old acquaintances on the street. It was for this reason that they preferred to stay at home, among their family, when back in the country of origin. Others noted the obstacles to getting their re-integration projects off the ground: such endeavours included both individual projects such as house construction, and communal projects organised through fledgling hometown associations. Respondents felt themselves to be blocked in these endeavours and blamed this on being outside informal local networks after the long years spent in France.

Such a narrative was not a feature of West African respondents' accounts. The normative expectation weighing on respondents was to be of service to the community of origin at retirement, as Waly, an army veteran of Malian origin, noted: "When you are retired, you should be of service over there; you return to better serve your village and your family" (Waly, 75, Kayès, Mali). For those who live at least some of the year in the hostel in France, such service takes place via hometown

associations, which are often headquartered in hostels. Through such associations, hostel residents wield power in their local communities, despite their physical absence. As Catherine Quiminal notes, these associations have "transformed the absence of each migrant into a prominent political presence in the home village" (2002: 40).

West Africans, being the drivers of physical and social change thanks to their contributions to village development projects, were not disoriented upon return. Indeed, a virtuous circle operated whereby their political and social status increased as their hometowns gained in regional significance, which in turn was due to their ongoing development efforts. In the case of Dembancané, improvements to infrastructure there have seen it emerge as a local administrative centre and gain in prominence politically. Critical in this disparity between North and West African experiences of re-integration is the institutional dimension, namely the influence of transnational hometown associations. For West African respondents, these institutions lay the foundations for a political and social presence in places of origin despite long absences, and shape the possibilities for a successful re-integration. North African respondents, on the other hand, were confronted with difficulties when attempting to organise communal initiatives. The existence and institutionalisation of hometown associations was far less significant for my Moroccan respondents.

The "pressure of communicability": evidence for a transnational view

The importance of the institutionalisation of migrant-homeland ties via the hometown associations indicated that a transnational approach might be warranted. Indeed, one could argue that the retired hostel residents embody the transnationalist paradigm, given their remittances, their frequent home visits, and the constant allusions made to family members back home during interviews. Furthermore, the motivation for mobility at retirement was often justified on the grounds of affective ties to home communities, as is stressed in transnational accounts. It is only those hostel residents with a history of family conflict for whom return trips are not such a constant feature.

Other aspects which encourage a transnational reading are related to the empirical conditions for regular and sustained migrant-homeland interactions as discussed in Chapter One. Admittedly, in terms of one of the factors stressed in this literature – the institutionalisation of transnationalism by home and host governments – there is little evidence to suggest that much attention is paid to elderly hostel residents. According to one respondent, the consulates and homeland authorities take no interest in their ageing compatriots. "They don't give a damn... If they did there would be studies commissioned, with numbers and statistics on the people who have returned." In terms of a second explanatory variable stressed in the transnationalism literature – ease of transport – this is important in explaining *when* and *how* hostel residents travel back-and-forth, but is not pertinent in terms of our research question which asks *why* residents prefer the *va-et-vient* over definitive return.

However, a third transnational factor – ease of communication – does appear to be significant, although not in the manner one would expect. Communication with loved ones is a very central and daily feature of life for hostel residents. Improved regularity in communications has been a recent development in residents' lives following the expansion of access to mobile phone communications in origin countries. The transnationalism literature contends that regular communications can facilitate return, since individuals will be better informed about the environment they hope to return to. However for hostel residents, paradoxically, better communications appear to block return. Low-cost fixed and mobile telephony has resulted in extra "pressures of communicability", amplifying the burden of family dependency. In contrast to accounts which ascribe to ICT a pro-poor and developmental role which empowers people, these new technologies sometimes serve only to further "enslave" the men and impede their homeward return.

"Vos papiers, Monsieur." Inclusion in healthcare and bureaucratic organisations

Time and again, I was struck by the fact that hostel residents felt compelled to justify their presence in France. This justification was offered without me having requested it, and often within a few minutes of meeting. What was striking about this self-justification was that it was based on one or both of the following elements – healthcare and administrative reasons.

With advancing years, health problems become a more pressing concern. Hostel residents, although not experiencing a greater incidence of ill health compared to the rest of the resident population, tend to experience a state of dependence at a younger age than average (Hadjiat and Fevotte 2008). As for paperwork, this included tasks such as: initiating the payment of one's pension; nominating someone to act as a proxy for one's French bank account; claiming a reimbursement for medical expenses incurred abroad; completing the annual tax declaration form.

Proponents of economic theories might argue that healthcare and paperwork can be reduced to a simple utility calculation; the French healthcare system is heavily subsidised for all, and free to the least well off. To benefit from an equivalent standard of care in the country of origin would require recourse to what can be a very costly private sector. Similarly in terms of administrative tasks, proponents of economic theories would contend that the only reason to keep paperwork in order is to prove eligibility for certain means-tested welfare benefits.

In reply, I would argue that the prominence of such justifications for continued residence in France past retirement is not merely an economic rationale. Residence and mobility decisions are also constrained by a requirement to meet expectations of inclusion in French healthcare and legal-bureaucratic systems, so as to have continuity of care and to ensure that their entitlements are recognised. Such an interpretation does not seek to dismiss rational actor utility-based theories. Rather, the requirements for inclusion in the organisations of functionally-differentiated society, as theorised by Niklas Luhmann, broaden the scope of what a rational choice in migration decision-making can be.

For example with healthcare, respondents were concerned with ensuring a continuity of care and treatment. Certain treatments and drugs are not available in the country of origin. Kader (70s, Mostaghanem, Algeria) is not able to get the particular diabetes drugs upon which he relies. This is one reason why he returns to France periodically, in order to renew his prescription for this medication. There are also relationships of trust with GPs and consultants to consider. According to a recent medical survey carried out in five hostels in the Paris region, half of the 242 respondents were following a daily treatment. The immense majority were registered with a general practitioner whom they saw several times per year, and nearly a third were currently seeing a specialist doctor of some kind (El Moubaraki and Bitatsi Trachet 2006). This bears out the confidence and relationships of trust that hostel residents have established within the French healthcare system.

Turning to paperwork, again, the rationale is not just a cost–benefit calculation for the hostel residents. What is at stake is their legitimacy to grow old in France: the right to a pension as a deferred salary, the right to a good standard of medical care, the right to home help services. In fact, the issue cuts to the very identity of the hostel residents. At retirement, a renegotiation of identity is necessary in order to compensate for the redundancy of the former *raison d'être*, which was employment (Bolzman *et al.* 2006). The passage to retirement is a transition whereby proofs of personhood become critical tools of social inclusion, necessitating a shift from an identity of 'worker' to an identity of 'papers'. By holding valid proofs of identity, domicile, and income, hostel residents are able to ensure that their claims are recognised by the pertinent authorities. In order to maintain a continuity of treatment, hostel residents plan their *va-et-vient* trips around appointments with doctors and consultants, and ensure that they have sufficient quantities of medication for the planned period of absence from France. This illustrates their high degree of inclusion in healthcare and administrative systems.

Discussion

The above evaluation has shown that at various points in the data there is support for several theories. This does not imply that the theories concerned are too vague or

inconsistent to be of any analytical use. Rather, as Massey and colleagues maintain in a much-cited review of theories of international migration, the added value of each theory becomes most apparent when levels of analysis are kept distinct (Massey *et al.* 1993).

Neo-classical economic explanations taking the individual as the unit of analysis were not validated since they predicted permanent return for retiring hostel residents; purchasing power differentials mean that a pension drawn in euros buys more in the country of origin than in France. Yet for retired hostel residents, it did not make sense to talk of individual economic decision-making, given the number of family members dependent on their remittances. The new economics of labour migration, with its focus on the utility-maximising household as the decision-making unit, made much more sense of the crucial role remittances have played and continue to play at the end of working life.

At the level of the extended kinship and village community, the structuralist focus on vested interests and traditional ways of thinking in the home context also illuminated the data, in particular some of the contrasts between North and West African residents. Many North Africans alluded to having lost their place and bearings in the home community. West Africans, on the other hand, mentioned the normative expectation of return at retirement in order to serve their home communities. They have been able to convert a physical absence into a political presence via their hometown associations.

Moving to what Thomas Faist calls the intermediate 'meso-level' (Faist 2000), the institutionalisation of the village associations suggested that a transnational approach was warranted. Indeed, the geographically-single hostel residents appear at first sight to be archetypal transnationalists given their life-long remittances and regular home visits. This impression is cemented by the allusions to transport and communications in hostel residents' accounts. However, an important point bears repeating: while transport factors are well-equipped to explain the *how* and *when* of the *va-et-vient*, they do not address why hostel residents prefer back-and-forth migration over definitive return. Cheaper and more regular communications, on the other hand, have an unexpected effect. Instead of hostel residents being better prepared for return, the "pressure of communicability"

stemming from mobile phones and cheap calling cards actually impeded return. In sum, the transnational approach seems better suited to explaining the regularity and duration of back-and-forth trips. When confronted with the justifications for why residents keep on coming back to France, the explanatory variables identified by the transnationalism literature appeared too partial. Thus it was necessary to move up to the macro level of social systems.

Retired hostel residents repeatedly justified their presence in France on the grounds of healthcare and administrative reasons. It was shown that mobility decisions are constrained by requirements for inclusion in healthcare organisations, so as to maintain relationships of trust with medical professionals and to assure a continuity of medication and treatment. The same applies to administrative agencies. By keeping in good order their travel documents and other officially recognised proofs of identity, domicile, and income, hostel residents were able to ensure that their claims were recognised by the relevant authorities.

A social systems perspective also encourages us to analyse how the importance of different social systems changes over the lifecourse. While earlier in life, it might be more appropriate to analyse return in terms of economic success or failure (Gmelch 1980; King 1986; Jeffery and Murison 2011), later in life other factors become prominent. The idea that motivations for migration vary over the lifecourse is a rather straightforward and uncontroversial point. However, it is an important point which is easily overlooked when the gaze of researchers and those who fund research is focused on more youthful flows of human capital. The growing body of literature on international retirement migration provides a useful and necessary counterpoint.

To conclude this discussion, it is important to ask what contribution the foregoing theoretical arguments can make to the existing literature on international retirement migration. Several studies of elderly labour immigrants in Western Europe have appeared and a handful have focused on the retirement return decision (Bolzman *et al.* 2006; Byron and Condon 1996; Gardner 2002; Klinthäll 2006; Rodríguez and Egea 2006). However, these studies tend to analyse a situation where family reunification has occurred, thereby replicating earlier findings about the myth of return.

Significant overlap is found between my findings and those of Katy Gardner in her work on elderly Bengalis in London. Gardner discusses how her elderly Bengali respondents no longer felt at home in their communities of origin, and emphasises the value they placed on the British healthcare and welfare systems. Although she does not reference Luhmann's theory of social systems, the parallels between our findings are clear. However, in Gardner's study, return was also blocked by the fact that these elders had their children and grandchildren with them in the UK. The added value of this thesis is that the relative weights of family localisation and social systems in the return decision can be kept separate, demonstrating the hitherto unexplored significance of the latter.

Retirement and the Meaning of 'Home': re-visiting an old concept

Of the different theoretical paradigms evaluated above, social systems theory is the least well-known or applied in migration studies, at least in anglophone writings. One reason for this is because Luhmann's *oeuvre* is mostly in German and has yet to be translated widely into other languages. But even among German-speaking social scientists, Luhmann's work is reputed to be fiendishly difficult to interpret: he deliberately (and obtusely!) couched his theorising in abstract language to minimise the risk, as he saw it, that readers would over-simplify his analysis (Moeller 2006).

In my view this is regrettable, as I am convinced that social systems theory gives us new eyes with which to view contemporary social questions, and indeed is particularly apt for analysing contemporary processes of international migration in an era when nation-states' sovereignty is more and more challenged by diverse institutions and processes which are not *as* constrained by national demarcations of territory as they were in the past. A handful of scholars have grasped the salience of Luhmann's work in this field, foremost among them Michael Bommes (2000, 2005 2008), Christina Boswell (2011, 2009 [with Oana Ciobanu]) and Jost Halfmann (2000, 2005).

In these final pages, I would like to build on these pioneering efforts to integrate the migration and social systems literatures by singling out a term which is

much used in migration studies by social scientists in diverse disciplines and which also features prominently in the title to this thesis, namely the concept of 'home'. Home is a concept which is often deployed rather uncritically in the migration literature, being "equated with a country of origin even if migrants might actually feel at home elsewhere" (Hatfield 2010). One manifestation of this is the customary distinction between 'home' and 'host' societies.

The starting point for this thesis was the observation that geographically-single hostel residents did not seem to be well integrated in conventional reference groups in the 'host' society, instead retaining ties to analogous groups in the 'home' society. Paradoxically, however, they do not return definitively. These reference groups – the family, the local community, and the nation – represent various sites and scales in the literature on home. To conclude, I would like to explore what a Luhmannian concept of home could be.

As I have tried to stress throughout, I was often struck by the fact that hostel residents felt compelled to justify their presence in France on the basis of healthcare needs and administrative requirements, revealing the influence of medical and bureaucratic organisations on the men's lives. This gave me pause for reflection: could inclusion in the welfare state also constitute a type of 'home' for the men in the hostels?

If one takes a Luhmannian view, the answer is yes. What it means to be 'included' and be 'at home' no longer necessarily only implies attachment or belonging to a territory (place) or social group (household, ethnic group, nation), as home has conventionally been conceptualised across the social sciences (Rapport and Overing 2007). Geographers (unsurprisingly) have long (but *not* exclusively) analysed home in terms of space and/or territory (Porteous 1976). Social anthropologists initially followed geographers in seeing home as a "localizable idea (...) home starts by bringing some space under control" (Douglas 1991: 289), but more recently anthropologists, geographers and sociologists have come to challenge the sedentarist, territorially-rooted ideal of home (Jackson 1995; Jacobs 2004; Jansen and Löfving; 2007; Malkki 1992; Mallett 2004).

Luhmann's theory of social systems challenges the assumptions that society is constituted by big groups of individuals (kin groups, tribes, ethnic groups, nations)

belonging to clearly defined territorial segments. Instead, Luhmann proposed an alternative theory whereby society is now constituted by individuals' communication in different social realms differentiated by their function, such as the economy, law, politics, religion, the family, education, and healthcare (Luhmann 1995). The organisations of society – with the exception of nation-states which are the basic units of the political system – are increasingly unconcerned by demarcations of territory or national belonging (Bommes and Geddes 2000; Halfmann 2000, 2005). We see this for example in the emergence of a global financial system, international law, and supra-national political institutions.

In principle, access to these communicative systems is open to every social agent, because the differentiation of society into functions (such as politics and law) rather than social strata (such as households) no longer permits discrimination on the basis of inherited or ascribed characteristics.[126] In practice, inclusion in function systems is processed through organisations such as courts, hospitals, firms, schools, and so on, which only discriminate on the basis of whether function-specific "rules of access" are satisfied or not (Luhmann 1990: 35). In other words, whether a candidate for a job has a certain qualification, whether one is ill or not, whether one's legal status is recognised under such and such a jurisdiction. Function systems are "indifferent" (Luhmann 1990: 30) to all attributes other than whatever the relevant expectations happen to be. In such a conception of society, it is one's "biographically accumulated" markers of inclusion which are important (Bommes 2000: 91), not inherited attributes. Hence the new importance in this day and age for proofs of identity and life history such as passports, identity cards, CVs, medical records, national insurance numbers, and social security files, as previous chapters have underlined in the case of the hostel residents.

As has also been underlined throughout, observing minimum residence conditions in France in order to be eligible for certain forms of welfare provision, be it cash or in-kind benefits, was vitally important for hostel residents. Above all, they had to prove that they were *domiciled* in France. The etymological connection between home and domicile is evident given the latter word's Latin roots, from *domicilium* 'dwelling', in turn from *domus* 'home'. Domicile in modern English

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[126] See pp61-62 for a disclaimer about discrimination from a social systems perspective.

usage can signify "a person's home" as well as "the country in which a person has permanent residence" (OED), giving it purchase on the multi-scalar nature of home upon which many authors have insisted. Nonetheless, the potential of the term domicile as a conceptual tool for unpacking the notion of home has not been exploited by many social scientists (one exception is Blunt 2005). Instead, domicile is used above all in legal and fiscal contexts (Rogerson 2000; Wigmore 1927).

I argued earlier that the social systems rationale behind hostel residents' *va-et-vient* is not just a cost-benefit calculation for the hostel residents. What is at stake is their legitimacy to grow old in France: the right to a pension as a deferred salary, the right to a good standard of medical care, the right to home help services. This involves a psychological transition from an identity of 'worker' to an identity of 'papers'. I will go one step beyond this by making the further point that international migration itself – the act of transferring one's residence from one nation-state to another – can imply a transition from a 'paperless' to a 'papered' way of life, just like retirement. For many of my respondents, the realisation that they needed proofs of identity in order to travel was the prompting factor in registering (i.e., registering their identity, their personhood) with the authorities. Many of my respondents, as young men, did not have birth certificates or identity cards, let alone passports, until the time when they thought about emigrating.

This underlines the initial transition the men had to make from a society of origin where such modern proofs of identity were unnecessary for day-to-day living, to a new society where such documents of personhood could become essential and everyday tools of inclusion. In Luhmannian terms, this is the epitome of the transition to a functionally-differentiated society. The men had spent the first 20 or 25 years of their lives quite happily without a piece of paper stating who they were and – more unnecessary and obsolete still – who their parents were. This changed abruptly when they began to be confronted by state officials demanding certain documents in exchange for certain rights being recognised. These demands have only grown stronger as the men make the transition to retirement, demonstrating their life-long struggle to find social inclusion and uphold their rights.

In summary, home *can* be about belonging to a territorially-marked locality, just as it *can* be about belonging to a socially-marked group affiliation (household,

community, nation). But I have argued that to be 'at home' can *also* mean to be included in different social systems. To repeat, this is not to deny the importance of place-belonging and group-belonging as constitutive of home. Instead, it is to recognise the growing complexity of social relations. If Luhmann's claim that society has become more complex and differentiated is accepted, then it becomes interesting to explore the implications of his theory for our thinking about home. With this argument the thesis aims to contribute to broader debates on what it means for immigrants to belong and achieve inclusion in society.

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Avis aux résidents
(agés de 55 ans et plus)

"Un jeune Français croise un immigré dans la rue et se dit
<<Mais qu'est-ce qu'il fout ce vieux ici?>>
Mais le jeune Français ne savait pas que c'était cet
immigré qui a construit la rue, qui a construit ce trottoir même.
Donc c'est très important que les gens savent ce que nous
les immigrés avons fait ici en France."
[Témoignage d'un résident retraité du foyer *Brenu*, Gennevilliers]

1) Qui suis-je ?
Bonjour, je m'appelle **Alistair**, je suis **écossais** et **étudiant** en doctorat. Ma thèse porte sur **l'histoire de l'immigration** en France. Je viens de m'installer à la résidence. Je resterai ici jusqu'à fin juin.

2) Que fais-je ?
Il s'agit d'un projet sur **vos expériences dans la migration** – travail, logement, liens avec le pays d'origine, perspectives sur la retraite à venir. Pour faire ce projet, je cherche des témoignages de la part des résidants eux-mêmes. Tout simplement, **je vous donne la parole**, pour raconter vos expériences en France et dans le foyer.

3) Et pourquoi ?
Parce qu'il est *« très important que les gens savent ce que les immigrés ont fait ici en France »*. Il est très important aussi de **laisser une trace** en France, et c'est pour ça que je voudrais – avec votre permission – déposer les témoignages aux plusieurs musées et bibliothèques en France. Comme ça, l'histoire de la migration peut être sauvegardée pour que les générations à venir puissent la comprendre.

Vous dites peut-être <<**Comment ce projet va-t-il changer ma situation ?**>> C'est vrai que je ne peux vous promettre une amélioration de votre situation personnelle. Mais, qui sait? Peut-être, un jour, les gens qu'on croise dans la rue penseront autrement.

4) Comment participer ?
Si vous voudriez participer à ce projet, ou si vous souhaitez davantage d'information, n'hésitez pas à me contacter. S'il fait beau vous me trouverez peut-être dans **le jardin**; sinon, vous pouvez me trouver dans **la caféteria** pendant les heures de permanence, ou **dans ma chambre, n° 211**, escalier A, 4ème étage.

AVIS AUX RÉSIDENTS

١) مَن أنا ؟

السلام عليكم . أنا إسمي Alistair ، أنا من سْكوتلانْدا و أنا طالب أحضّر دكتوراة في تاريخ الهجرة في فرنسا . وصلتُ في إقامة « بوت بلانش » مؤخراً . سوف أبقى هنا حتى نهاية يونيو .

٢) ماذا أفعل ؟

فيما يتعلق بموضوع مشروعي ، هو خبركم في الهجرة – الشغل ، السكن ، التوصّل مع البلاد الأصلي ، و الأفكار في التقاعد . و لإتمام هذا المشروع ، أبحث عن شهادات المقيمين . سأطلب إليكم أن تتكلّم عن خبركم في فرنسا و في هذه الإقامة .

٣) و لماذا ؟

أريد أن أكمّل هذا المشروع لأنّه من المهم أن يعرف الناس ما فعلوا المهاجرون في الماضي في فرنسا . من المهم كذلك أن يحفظ تاريخ الهجرة في فرنسا لكي يفهموه الأجيال التالية .

تقول ربّما « كيف سيُغير هذا المشروع حالتي ؟ » من الصحيح أنني لا أستطيع أن أعدكم تحسين حالتكم الشخصية . ولكن مَن يدري ؟ ذات يوم ، الناس الذين تشوفهم في الشارع ربّما سيفكّرون مختالفاً .

٤) كيف يشارك في هذا المشروع ؟

إذا أردتَ أن تشارك في هذا المشروع ، أو إذا أردتَ أن تعرف أكثر عنه ، فإتّصل بيّ من فضلكم . في الأيّام المشمّسة سوف تُجدني في المدينة . بطريقة أخرى ، يمكن تُجدني في المقهى حين تكون مفتوحة ، أو في غرفتي – رقم ٢١١ .

شكراً جزيلاً و إلى اللقاء .

Appendix 2. The Life Grid

Date _____ **Foyer** _____ **E#**_____ **Prénom** _____ **Nationalité**_____

Ville/Région _____ **Quand arrivé, âge**_____ **Age actuel**_____ **Sit. familiale**_____

Année	I Logement	II Travail	III Santé	* / **
		Avant départ?		

I. Logement 1. Depuis quand résidez vous dans ce foyer? Avant ici, où habitiez vous? 2. Pourquoi avez vous décidé de résider en foyer? 3. Etes-vous satisfait de votre logement? Quels sont les inconvénients / les avantages?	1. [mark on grid] 2. 3.
II. Emploi 4. Qu'est-ce que vous avez fait comme travail avant votre arrivée en France? 5. Qu'est ce que vous avez fait comme travail en Fr ? 6. Avez vous été jamais au chômage? 7. Etes vous maintenant à la retraite? Bientôt? 8. Recevez vous une aide sociale? Si oui, laquelle? 9. Avez vous rencontré des problèmes pour recevoir une aide sociale ou pour la liquidation de votre retraite?	4. - 7. [mark on grid] 8. 9.
III. Santé	10., 11. [mark on grid] 12.

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10. Avez vous jamais eu un accident de travail? Précisez (quand, genre d'accident etc).	13.
11. Avez vous jamais eu une maladie grave nécessitant des soins hospitaliers? (quand, genre de maladie etc)	
12. Comment évaluez-vous votre état de santé actuel?	14.
13. Combien de fois par an voyez vous le médécin?	
14. Pour quel type de maladie avez vous été chez le médécin?	

IV. Famille	15.
15. Avez vous des enfants? Combien? Quels âges ont- ils?	16.
16. Résident-ils au pays, en France ou ailleurs?	17.
17. Qu'est-ce qu'ils font dans la vie?	
18. Est-ce que vous envoyez de l'argent à votre famille? Précisez la régularité et le montant.	18.
19. Combien de personnes avez vous à votre charge?	19.
20. Par quels moyens restez vous en contact avec votre famille? Précisez la régularité.	20.
V. Retours au pays	21.
21. Retournez vous dans votre pays d'origine? Combien: de fois par an / de mois par an?	22.
22. La dernière fois, motivation spécifique pour votre voyage / de votre retour en France, par ex. un mariage, ou c'était tout simplement pour voir la famille?	23.
23. Est-ce que vous comptez voyager prochainement? Quand?	24.
	25.
24. Comptez vous un jour rentrer définitivement dans votre pays d'origin?	26.
25. Est-ce compliqué selon vous pour un retraité immigré de vivre sa retraite dans son pays d'origine?	
26. Qu'est-ce qui rend compliquée la retraite au pays?	27.
27. Est-ce que vous avez souscrit une assurance repatriement de corps au pays?	
28. Avez-vous des suggestions à faire pour améliorer les conditions de vie des retraités aussi bien en France qu'au pays d'origine?	28.

Appendix 3. Life Story Interview Guide

<u>Présentations</u>
- J'explique ce qu'on va faire, les buts du projet, l'accès aux données et la situation en ce qui concerne la confidentialité, les possibilités d'anonymiser l'entretien.
- Déclaration de consentement est signée.
- Je me présente: d'où je viens, mes origines, le temps que j'ai passé au Maroc/Senegal.
- J'invite Monsieur à se présenter: d'où il vient, âge, nationalité, situation familiale etc.

Récit de Carrière

Commençons au début. Le premier boulot que vous avez fait ici, c'était quoi?
- Comment arriviez-vous à trouver cet emploi ? Avant de venir? Aidé par des amis, des proches?
- Et après ce premier boulot, qu'est-ce que vous avez fait pour gagner votre vie...
- **Pouvez-vous me raconter ce que vous faisiez/ avez fait chez _____?**
- Et vos conditions de travail chez _____ , c'était / c'est comment ?

<u>Questions ouvertes</u>

Si Monsieur ne fait pas mention des aspects suivants pendant son récit, une fois le récit terminé je lui demande....

Quelle était votre situation avant de partir pour la France ?
- Etiez-vous à l'école avant de partir ? Quel niveau d'études?
- Travailliez-vous avant de partir pour la France?
- Quelle était l'occupation de votre père?
- Etiez-vous marié avant de venir en France?

L'arrivée en France.
- La prèmiere fois que vous êtes venu en France, c'était en quelle année?
- Vous aviez quel âge à cet époque-là?
- Combien de temps comptiez-vous rester en France au début?
- Comment trouviez-vous la vie en France au début ?

Quels projets avez vous réalisé grâce à l'argent que vous avez gagné ici?
- Etiez-vous jamais au chômage?
- Quand ?
- Pendant combien de temps etc ?
- A part le travail, que faisiez-vous ? Comment passiez-vous votre temps libre ?
- Assistiez-vous à des cours de langue française?
- Et maintenant, êtes-vous retraité ? Depuis quand / Bientôt ?
- En ce qui concerne votre pension de retraite, sans indiscretion, quel est le montant (prévu) ?
- Avez-vous jamais eu de problèmes avec les *caisses* de retraite, par ex. pour la traduction des documents,   etc?
- Recevez-vous des aides sociales, telles que l'APL, l'ASPA (min V), AAH etc?

Pourquoi avez-vous décidé de loger dans un foyer ?
- Vous avez toujours habité ce foyer-ci?
- Quand vous étiez plus jeune, la vie au foyer c'était comment?
- Maintenant, après ___ ans dans le foyer, à votre avis quels sont les avantages et quels sont les inconvénients de la vie en foyer?

Pourquoi avez-vous choisi d'habiter cette ville ?

- Qu'est-ce qui vous plaît en cette ville?
- Est-ce qu'il y a des choses qui vous ne plaisent pas ici?
- Est-ce que vous avez des proches qui habitent ici?
- Vous les voyez régulièrement?

Avez-vous des enfants? Combien?
- Ages du plus jeune, du plus âgé ?
- Qu'est-ce qu'ils font dans la vie ?

(Pendant votre vie active) **Retourn-(i)-ez vous au pays de temps en temps?**
- quand, et combien de fois par an?
- Avez-vous jamais pensé à faire un regroupement familial?

Maintenant que vous êtes à la retraite, retournez-vous au pays de temps en temps?
- quand, et combien de fois par an?
- Pourquoi voyagez-vous à ce moment-là?
- D'habitude, vous prenez le car ou l'avion?

Ou....
Vous serez à la retraite bientôt: avez-vous des projets pour votre retraite [retour, v-et-v, etc]?
- Pendant vos retours au pays, est-ce que vous avez remarqué des changements au pays?
- Est-ce qu'il est facile d'adapter à ces changements ou pas?

Envoyez-vous de l'argent à votre familiede temps en temps ?
- Combien de personnes avez-vous à votre charge?

Etes-vous en bonne santé ?
- Avez-vous un médecin traitant ? Depuis? Suite à ?
- Cette année, avez-vous été chez le médecin ou à l'hôpital?
- Pour quels types de maladies ?
- Avez-vous jamais eu une maladie nécessitant des soins à l'hôpital ?
- Avez-vous jamais eu un accident de travail ?
- Que pensez-vous de la qualité des soins que vous avez reçus en France?
- Que pensez-vous de la qualité des soins au pays ?
- Etes-vous bénéficiaire de la CMU-complémentaire (« le 100 pourcent ») ?
- Avez-vous une assurance rapatriement?
- Donc vous souhaitez être enterré au pays?

On n'est pas loin de la fin de l'entretien maintenant !
- Quelle est la situation de vos amis qui n'ont jamais quitté le bled ?
- Quels sont les avantages de la migration?
- Quels sont les inconvénients? Avez-vous des regrets?
- **Quels sont vos projets pour l'avenir ?**
- **Où sentez-vous le plus à l'aise, ici ou là-bas ?**

[(Moi) Quand est-ce que vous comptez retourner au pays prochainement?
(Monsieur) _____. (Moi) Ah super! Moi aussi je pense y aller à ce moment-là. Si jamais je me trouve dans votre région peut-être qu'on pourra se rencontrer. Est-ce qu'il serait possible d'échanger de numéros et d'adresses?] **Merci beaucoup !**

Originaire de:		Choses qui vous ne plaisent pas?	
Age: Nationalité:		Avez-vous des proches qui habitent ici?	
Marié:		Vous les voyez régulièrement?	
Commençons au début. Le premier boulot que vous avez fait ici, c'était quoi?		**Enfants**: 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Ages du plus jeune, de l'ainé ?	_ _
Comment arriviez-vous à trouver cet emploi?		(Pendant vie active) **Retourn-i-ez vous au P de temps en temps?**	
Et après, qu'est-ce que vous avez fait pour gagner votre vie?		Quand, et combien de fois par an? Jamais pensé à faire un regroupement fam.	_ _
Pouvez-vous me raconter ce que vous faisiez/ faites chez _____?		**Maintenant que vous etes retraité, retournez vous au P de temps en temps ?**	
Et vos conditions de travail chez _____, c'était/ c'est comment ?		*Quand, et combien de fois par an ?* *Pourquoi à ce moment là ?* *D'hab., vous prenez le car ou l'avion ?*	_ _ _
Situation avant de partir? Etiez-vous à l'école avant de partir?	_ _	**Vous serez à la retraite bientôt: avez-vous des projets pour votre retraite [retour, v-et-v, etc]?**	
Travailliez-vous avant de partir:		Pendant vos retours, changements remarqués?	
Quel travail faisait votre père?		Est-ce que facile d'adapter à ces changements?	
Déjà marié avant de partir?		**Envoyez-vous de l'argent à la famille?**	
1ère fois en France, année: **Age:**		Combien de personnes à votre charge	
Temps prévu pour ce séjour:		**Etes-vous en bonne santé ?**	
Comment la vie en France au début:		Avez vous un médecin traitant? Depuis? Suite à ?	
Projets réalisés grâce à l'argent gagné:		Cette année., combien de fois chez médecin/à l'hôpital?	
Jamais au chômage ?		Pour quelles maladies	
Quand:		Jamais eu une maladie nécessitant soins à l'hopital	
Pendant combien de temps:		Jamais eu un accident de travail	
Temps libre, passé comment?		Que pensez-vous de qualité des soins reçus en France	
Cours de langue française:		Que pensez-vous de qualité des soins au P	
Retraité: Depuis / Bientôt?		Bénéficiaire de la CMU comp, le 100 pourcent?	
Sans indiscretion, quel est le montant (prévu) de votre retraite ?		*Q sensible*: Avez vous une assurance rapatriement ? Donc vous souhaitez être enterré au P ?	_ _
Jamais eu de problèmes avec *caisses* de retr. (par ex. traduction docs d'état civil)		– **On est pas loin de la fin de l'entretien maintenant.**	
Recevez vous des aides sociales, APL/minV?		Quelle est la sit de vos amis qui n'ont pas émigré?	
Pourquoi décidé d'habiter dans un F?		Quels sont les avantages de la migration?	
Toujours habité ce F?		Quels sont les inconvénients? Avez vous des regrets?	
Quand plus jeune, le F c'était comment?		**Quels sont vos projets pour l'avenir?**	
Maintenant, avantages et inconvénients du F		**Où êtes-vous le plus à l'aise, ici ou là-bas ?**	
Pourquoi décidé d'habiter cette ville?		**[Maroc trip]**	
Qu'est-ce qui vous plaît en cette ville?		**Merci beaucoup !**	

Appendix 4. Generic Interview Guide for Organisations

Interviews with representatives of organisations

- what is the role of your organisation generally?
- what is the role of your organisation vis a vis hostel residents?
- in what ways does your organisation intervene in hostel residents' daily lives?
- what are the conditions of access (cost; age; place of residence; income; proofs of status required; duration of contributions etc.) to your services?
- to what extent do hostel residents make use of your services?
- what are the major issues that the hostel residents have to face at retirement?
- Why do hostel residents not return definitively at retirement? Why do they do the va-et-vient?
- do hostel residents differ from other users of your services?
- how does your organisation seek to improve the situation of the hostel residents?
- what impedes the work of your organisation regarding hostel residents?
- do you have any documentation that I could look at relative to the hostel residents?
- do you have any statistical information regarding the work of your organisation with hostel residents?
- other people that you advise me to contact?