LIFE WITHOUT PAPERS
Aspirations, incorporation and transnational activities of irregular migrants in the Low Countries

LEVEN ZONDER PAPIEREN
Aspiraties, incorporatie en transnationale activiteiten van irreguliere migranten in de Lage Landen

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Promotor:	Prof.dr. G.B.M. Engbersen
Overige leden:	Prof.dr. J.P.L. Burgers
	Prof.dr. H.B. Entzinger
	Dr. R. Staring
Copromotor:	Dr. W. Schinkel

LIFE WITHOUT PAPERS

ASPIRATIONS, INCORPORATION AND TRANSNATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF IRREGULAR MIGRANTS IN THE LOW COUNTRIES

MASJA VAN MEETEREN

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In loving memory of Petra van 't Padje

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION: IRREGULAR MIGRATION AS A FACT OF LIFE

1.1 IRREGULAR MIGRATION AS A COMMON FEATURE OF WESTERN ECONOMIES

Irregular migration has emerged in all western economies after the Second World War (Sassen 1999), and it has increased considerably in the last decades (Arango 2004; Castles and Miller 2003; Jahn and Straubhaar 1999). In northern Europe, this increase has partly been an unforeseen consequence of the end of recruitment of foreign labor introduced in the 1970s (Brochmann 1999b). In addition, the 1990s witnessed large numbers of asylum seekers in search of protection who were not granted asylum, but nevertheless stayed in these destination countries illegally (Koser and Lutz 1998). The increased numbers of irregular migrants in northern European countries is thus also partly the result of the incapacity of these states to deal with refused asylum seekers.

In reaction to these growing numbers, governments have developed policies to prevent irregular immigration (Albrecht 2002). Initially, these were mainly targeted at controlling the external borders of the European Union. However, in recent years border controls have proved to have little effectiveness in preventing irregular immigration (Brochmann 1999a; Cornelius 2005). Moreover, beyond a certain level of control the costs of avoiding irregular migration exceed the economic damage caused by irregular immigration. This means that, from an economic perspective, the "optimal" degree of irregular immigration is greater than zero (Entorf 2002; Hillman and Weiss 1999; Jahn and Straubhaar 1999). Therefore, policymakers in Europe have increasingly turned their focus towards internal control mechanisms (Brochmann 1999a; Broeders and Engbersen 2007). Border controls are still important, but they have been increasingly supplemented by policies of exclusion and discouragement. According to Broeders and Engbersen (2007:1593) exclusion from formal institutions of society is the main thrust of current policies aimed at irregular migrants: "for those illegal aliens who cannot be discouraged or deterred to come, exclusion is meant to complicate and frustrate

living and working conditions to such a degree that they will turn round and try their luck elsewhere." Examples of such internal control policies are exclusion from public services, increased surveillance by the police, increased employer sanctions, incarceration and expulsion.

Although governments increasingly try to exclude and discourage irregular migrants, this does not mean that they are successful in doing so. Many irregular migrants for example still manage to find work (Engbersen et al. 2006; Paspalanova 2007, Van Meeteren 2008), and in case irregular migrants are arrested, successful expulsion is only occasionally realized (Broeders 2009; Van der Leun 2003a). Moreover, even though some irregular migrants are successfully expelled, most Eastern Europeans simply come back the next day (Paspalanova 2006). Irregular migrants are difficult to expel, because they may hide their identity, and sending countries are reluctant to take migrants back whose identities have not been established. The keywords for recent internal control measures for irregular migrants have therefore increasingly become surveillance and identification (Broeders and Engbersen 2007). States need to make irregular migrants 'legible' (Scott 1998) in order to successfully expel them. Migrants obviously try to circumvent such policy innovations. Recent news reports for example indicate that some migrants mutilate their fingertips so that they cannot be properly identified (Trouw, 24 april 2009). As a consequence, policies aimed at irregular migrants and the actions of irregular migrants to circumvent these resemble an arms race in which action provokes reaction (Broeders and Engbersen 2007). So far, the irregular migrants who live in the destination countries appear to be the winners of this 'tug-of-war' (Düvell 2006a: 8).

It appears that neither countries that rely on strong external controls, nor countries that have a dense system of internal controls are successful in managing irregular migration (Düvell 2006a). One of the most important reasons is that there exists a demand for the informal labor that irregular migrants can provide. Many companies would not be able to compete on the international market were it not for the benefits they derive from employing informally. In Western Europe, employers have strong incentives to hire informal workers in order to avoid paying relatively high minimum wages and social insurance contributions (Jordan and Düvell 2002). Moreover, the continuing search for flexibility among firms under pressure from international competition is thought to be responsible for the fact that some firms aim to avoid the costs of employment regulations associated with regular jobs (Sassen 1999). The specific demand for informal labor is considered to be one of the

reasons why irregular immigration continues to exist in spite of unemployment among legal citizens and increasing deployment of employer sanctions (Castles and Miller 2003). The extent to which employer sanctions are enforced differs from country to country and even from sector to sector: whereas some labor sectors are relatively unaffected by labor checks, others are controlled on a more regular basis (Abella 2000).

Consequently, it is both impossible and partly undesirable for governments to completely avoid irregular immigration, and once irregular immigrants are there, they are difficult to expel, making the presence of irregular immigrants a fact of life in European countries (see also Baldwin-Edwards 2008). All European countries experience irregular migration, albeit on different scales and in different ways (Düvell 2008). The presence of irregular migrants in western societies has inspired social scientific investigations into the ways these migrants live in countries in which they are not allowed to reside. These studies have analyzed the different ways in which irregular migrants are incorporated in receiving societies (see for example Adam et al. 2002; Burgers and Engbersen 1999; Chavez [1992]1998; Engbersen et al. 2006; Hagan 1994; Jordan and Düvell 2002; Leman et al. 1994; Mahler 1995; Düvell 2006, Van Nieuwenhuyze 2009). The next section provides a concise overview of these studies and formulates three interrelated research questions within the context of this branch of research.

1.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Although the presence of irregular migrants has been a common feature of western economies for decades, the bulk of social research has traditionally been aimed at studying its causes and finding ways to solve the 'problem' (Portes 1978: 469). More recently, attention has also been directed to its consequences in terms of its effects on native employment and the level of wages (see e.g. Ambrosini 2001; Amir 2000; Carter 2005; Chiswick 2000; Gosch 2000; Hazari and Sgro 2000; Martin 2009; Sarris and Zografakis 1999; Tapinos 2000; Venturini 1998; Yoshida and Woodland 2005). The first efforts to study the way irregular migrants live were made in the United States in the 1970s and 1980s (see for example Chavez [1992]1998; Cornelius 1982; Massey et al. 1987; Portes and Bach 1985; Rodriguez 1987). European studies followed from the mid-1990s and are therefore relatively recent (see for example Adam et al. 2002; Alt 1999; P. Anderson 1999; Burgers and Engbersen 1999; Devillé 2006; 2008; Düvell 2004; Engbersen et al 1999; Engbersen et al. 2002; Jordan and

Düvell 2002; Lazaridis and Romaniszyn 1998; Leerkes et al. 2004; Leman et al. 1994; Paspalanova 2006; Slimane 1995; Staring 2001; Triandafyllidou and Kosic 2006; Van der Leun 2003; Van Nieuwenhuyze 2007). As a consequence, the number of European studies of the lives of irregular migrants in receiving societies is still limited, especially compared to the United States, where the quality of the research also seems most encouraging (Düvell 2006c).

Some of these efforts to study the ways in which irregular migrants live consist of exploratory research involving irregular immigrants from multiple ethnic backgrounds within one region (Krasinets 2005; Slimane 1995) or country (Adam et al. 2002; Alt 1999; P. Anderson 1999; Burgers and Engbersen 1999; Engbersen et al. 2002; Lianos 2001; Gibney 1999). Other studies focus on a single ethnic group within one nation-state (Düvell 2004; Kalir 2005a; Lazaridis and Poyago-Theotoky 1999; Massey et al. 2004; Portes and Bach 1985; Rivera-Batiz 1999; Staring 2001) or within one city (Grzymala-Kazlowska 2005). Furthermore, scholars have increasingly begun to compare two or more ethnic groups that have been strategically selected within one nation-state, a region or a city (Engbersen et al. 1999; Jordan and Düvell 2002; Lazaridis and Romaniszyn 1998; Leerkes et al. 2004; Leman 1997; Mahler 1995; Paspalanova 2006; Triandafyllidou and Kosic 2006). Apart from a few edited books (for example Düvell 2006), only one study that I know of has systematically compared the lives of irregular migrants in two national contexts (Van Nieuwenhuyze 2009). This case involved migrants with a similar ethnic background who were compared across two countries.

The questions that are typically addressed in these studies concern irregular migrants' migration histories, their work practices and job search activities, housing conditions, access to health care, social contacts and everyday strategies to remain undetected by the authorities. Because much of this research is exploratory in nature, many findings remain primarily empirical (Devillé 2006; Paspalanova 2006). As a result, there has been relatively little attempt at comparison or theory-building beyond specific empirical contexts (Black 2003; cf. Portes 1997). However, these limited attempts have increased our understanding of the ways in which irregular migrants live in western societies, and they have spurred the evolution of some theoretical debates. By far most work yielding theoretical contributions has been undertaken in two closely connected areas of research. The first area involves the description and explanation of different patterns of incorporation of irregular migrants, and the second concerns analyses of the significance of different forms of capital for irregular migrants. These theoretical concerns are related to the questions

of how irregular migrants manage to incorporate in receiving societies where they are not allowed to be and what makes them more or less successful at achieving this. These areas are also the theoretical focus of this dissertation.

The main problem with the current research practice on the incorporation of irregular migrants, which is discussed in detail in chapter 2, is its scattered nature. Although attempts are made to arrive at theoretically meaningful findings by means of comparative research, I will argue that this common research practice has important limitations. To arrive at more comprehensive theoretical insights, I will propose an alternative approach in chapter 2 to address the first research question:

> 1. What patterns of incorporation can be distinguished among irregular migrants, and how can these be understood?

Another point of attention is the one-sided focus on incorporation within the receiving societies and the associated neglect of irregular migrants' transnational engagements. As there are good reasons to study the transnational activities of irregular migrants – which are discussed in chapter 8 – the second research question is:

> 2. Which types of transnational activities do irregular migrants engage in, and how can this be understood?

As will be discussed in chapter 9, important controversies exist in the debate on the significance of different forms of capital for irregular migrants. While some scholars argue that social capital is the most important form of capital for irregular migrants, others argue that cultural capital is decisive. In order to find a way out of this stalemate, a contextualized answer will be sought to the third research question:

> 3. What is the significance of different forms of capital for irregular migrants?

In answering these interrelated questions, this dissertation contributes to the most important theoretical debates with respect to the way irregular migrants live in western societies. In doing so, naturally I did not study all western societies, but rather chose to focus on Belgium and the Netherlands. The choice of these two

countries stems from very practical considerations. I already had at my disposal interviews with irregular migrants from the previous studies my promoter had been involved in, and I was involved in large-scale research in Belgium at roughly the same time. As there were no theoretical or methodological objections to the choice of these two countries, I decided to profit from the previous experiences of my promoter as well as my own. The fact that the choice of countries in which the research was to take place was mainly based on practical reasons does not mean that the choice of these countries is not theoretically interesting. The relevance of these national contexts is discussed in chapter 4. Chapter 2 outlines a new approach to the study of incorporation and social mobility of irregular migrants after a critical discussion of the current research practices. Chapter 3 discusses the methods used in this dissertation. The next subsections discuss some conceptual considerations concerning the terms 'irregular migrants' and 'incorporation' that are used throughout this study.

1.3 CONCEPTUAL CONSIDERATIONS

1.3.1 Irregular migrants

The topic of irregular migration has received increasing attention in political and public debates over the last decades (Düvell 2006b). As irregular migration is mostly perceived as a threat to European societies and economies, these debates tend to focus on the question of how to prevent irregular migration (Paspalanova 2006; Uehling 2004). At the basis of this perceived threat lies social myths or stereotypical images of irregular migrants as criminals (Coutin 2005b), welfare abusers or suppliers of unfair job competition (Broeders and Engbersen 2007; Devillé 2008; Düvell 2006; Eaton 1998). Research has indicated that few irregular migrants engage in criminal acts (Leerkes 2009; Van Meeteren et al. 2008), and few use welfare provisions (Cyrus and Vogel 2006; Düvell 2006c; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994; Van der Leun 2003a; Van Meeteren et al. 2008). Moreover, the labor irregular migrants provide generally plays a complementary instead of a substitutional role (Jordan and Düvell 2002; Samers 2005; Venturini 1998). Nevertheless, these myths are widely accepted as common knowledge (Devillé 2008). Some scholars claim that it is because of the terminology that is used to denote this group of migrants that they have become surrounded with negative connotations which feed these social myths.

Some blame social scientists who have labeled them 'illegals' or 'illegal aliens' for their role in this process. Consensus among scholars on what the proper terminology should be has not been reached (see also Paspalanova 2006; Uehling 2004). It is therefore important to explain what I mean by 'irregular migration' and 'irregular migrants'. Moreover, it should be made clear why I choose to use these concepts.

Irregular migration is sometimes referred to as 'undocumented', 'unauthorized' or 'illegal' migration. Likewise, irregular migrants are denoted 'undocumented' or 'illegal' migrants. While referring to *migration*, the adjective 'illegal' is mostly used uncritically. However, the practice of labeling *migrants* as 'illegal' has been the cause of much discussion. While in legal systems and in most public discourses the term 'illegal migrants' or even 'illegals' is usually employed, social scientists often prefer to refer to 'undocumented' or 'irregular' migrants in order to avoid any discriminatory connotation and to prevent criminalization (Düvell 2006b). Moreover, some argue that the term 'illegal' should not be used, because it is incorrect, as it wrongfully refers to a state of being (Schinkel 2005). After all, a person cannot *be* illegal; only his or her stay or employment can be. According to Paspalanova (2006) it is precisely this practice – the use of the word 'illegal' to refer to people – which has fuelled the perception of irregular migrants as a threat and as criminals. Because of these critiques most social scientists have stopped using the term. Recently however, a small group of scholars purposefully employed the term and justified its use by arguing that it is precisely migrants' illegality which should be at the center of research, as it is central to the lives irregular migrants lead. In their opinion, researchers ought to ask the question of what it means to 'be illegal'. Willen (2007a; 2007b) argues that migrant illegality should not only be seen as a juridical status and a socio-political condition; the impact of illegality on migrants' everyday lives, on their experiences of being-in-the-world should be considered as well. De Genova (2005; 2007) likewise claims that migrants' experiences of their illegality should be studied.

As the latter arguments have been put forward relatively recently and have remained exceptional or outsider positions, the majority of scholars have tried to find a substitute word for 'illegal'. In this connection, the term 'undocumented' has been coined. Although less subject to debate, the term lacks precision. After all, migrants who reside illegally may very well possess documents. Furthermore, they may currently lack proper documentation, but they might have crossed the border using legitimate papers. Moreover, some migrants own an abundance of documentation owing to their struggles to become legalized. This means they not

only possess a lot of legal documents themselves, but they may have been documented by the state. As a consequence, they are not necessarily undocumented vis-à-vis the receiving state. As a means to avoid the shortcomings of terms such as 'illegal' or 'undocumented', the term 'irregular migrants' has recently been coined. This term avoids the practice of labeling people as 'illegal,' while it simultaneously makes clear that these are not migrants who have followed the *regular* legal paths.

Unfortunately, there is a downside to all the terminology discussed that the concept 'irregular migrants' has not been able to avoid either. Distinguishing between irregular and regular migrants offers a simple dichotomy, implying that a migrant is regular or irregular in the same way that a migrant is legal or illegal, authorized or unauthorized, documented or undocumented. However, there are three aspects that determine migrant status: entry, residence and employment (Düvell 2008; Gosh 1998). The tendency to conflate entry, employment and residence is probably a result of the fact that these are often intertwined (Gosh 1998; Samers 2001). With all this confusion surrounding the terminology, it is important to be clear about what is meant in the present study. In this dissertation, I define irregular migrants as people who stay in the country without official permission to do so at the time of research, regardless of whether they entered the country legally and regardless of whether they are economically active or not.

Although this may sound like a solid definition, even this definition requires further explanation due to the complexity of the subject at hand. Developments surrounding European integration have significantly diversified irregular migration in terms of legal categories (Jandl et al. 2009). Large groups of people – such as Bulgarians and Rumanians – do not need a visa to enter the European Union, but are allowed to cross the border with their passports. These migrants may stay legally (as tourists) for usually three months, but they are not allowed to work. However, many of them settle down and engage in informal employment. During the first period of their stay, their employment is irregular, but their stay is not. In this situation, I would not label them irregular migrants. It is only when their legal stay expires that they become the subject of this dissertation.

Although a uniformly accepted term still does not exist (Paspalanova 2006), I believe that the term 'irregular migrants' is gaining in popularity and has potential to become the new standard. For this reason and because it avoids stigmatizing migrants by labeling them 'illegal,' I am content to use the term 'irregular migrants'. Additionally, I should technically speak of 'immigrants' instead of 'migrants'.

However, for reasons of readability of the text I chose to use the version that reads most easily. In most cases, whenever I speak of 'migrants', the reader should read 'immigrants'.

1.3.2 Incorporation

Various concepts are used to analyze the ways in which immigrants live in receiving societies. Traditionally scholars have employed the concept of assimilation, which refers to a linear process by which immigrants give up past languages, identities, cultural practices and loyalties to gradually become full members of the receiving society (Asslin et al. 2006). In such a view, different processes of integration or incorporation are thought to follow one another in progressive stages towards full assimilation. Hence, assimilation is regarded as the inevitable outcome of subsequent processes of incorporation (Bloemraad et al. 2008). In time, scholarly attention has shifted from the study of assimilation to the scrutiny of processes of incorporation or integration. American studies usually use the concept of incorporation, while European scholars often use the concept of integration.

Studies of integration have not traditionally had such a linear conception of these processes. However, they do conceive the concept to comprise some kind of hierarchy: it is used as a scale on which an immigrant or a group of immigrants can 'score' better than another. What 'better' exactly refers to usually differs from study to study. Social scientists compare groups of immigrants to each other based on certain criteria they have developed to measure integration (Schinkel 2010). Traditional markers of integration are for example economic advancement, educational attainment or cultural acceptance. In practice, these are measured in diverse ways. Practical issues such as the availability of data often play a role in the use of different indicators for integration.

In spite of the different ways in which integration is measured, there is a general consensus among scholars that integration is a multi-dimensional concept. Views on what the relevant dimensions of integration are differ only slightly among authors. In the Netherlands, the most common distinction is the one between socio-economic integration and socio-cultural integration (see for example Liem and Veld 2005; Nugter 2004; SCP 2004). Others distinguish among the functional, the expressive and the moral dimensions of integration (see for example Engbersen 2003; Engbersen and Gabriels 1995; Peters 1993), among economic, social, cultural

and political integration (see for example Fermin 1997), between structural integration and socio-cultural integration (see for example Dagevos 2001; Vermeulen and Penninx 1994), or between social and ethnic-cultural integration (see for example Dagevos et al. 2003). All in all, many slightly different dimensions of the concept integration are being used, and there is no consensus on the best conceptualization, let alone of what elements these dimensions are best composed. Social scientists thus supply the concept integration with different content by distinguishing different dimensions and items. Moreover, scholars do not usually provide definitions of the concept of integration itself. As a consequence, scholars provide the concept integration with different contents, usually those best suited to their research objective.

Not only is this lack of clarity among social scientists responsible for the existing ambiguity surrounding the concept of integration: the public and political debate on the integration of immigrants in Europe has changed as well. As a consequence, the discursive meaning of integration has changed. The word now has a stronger cultural connotation than before (Bloemraad et al. 2008; Schinkel 2010, Snel 2003; Van Meeteren 2005). Integrating is something that immigrants are obliged to do according to current mainstream discourse. The term has become normative and has lost its neutral meaning as a tool for analysis. I discovered that this new connotation complicated my fieldwork – my respondents were very sensitive to issues concerning integration, especially when I asked questions that could be interpreted as having something to do with their cultural integration. Many respondents were for example quick in assuring me that they associated with Belgians or Dutch people. I usually had to make some effort to find out that they were referring to their employers with whom they occasionally had a brief chat and not to long-lasting friendships.

It has become clear that these days, the concept of integration deserves a proper introduction, before it can be used as a tool for analysis. One can even argue that it has become useless for these purposes, as it is no longer regarded a neutral concept. I noticed myself how much confusion it can generate – not only among respondents, but also in academic circles. In the beginning of my project I used the term integration, but each time I presented my work at a conference or in some informal gathering, I noticed how it led to huge misunderstandings. It slowly dawned on me that it would not be convenient to use the concept, because people had too many normative preconceptions.

After careful consideration, I chose to skip the concept of integration because of the confusion it generated and to use the concept of 'incorporation' instead. This concept has often been used in connection with the study of the ways immigrants live in receiving societies (see for example Chavez 1991; Hagan 1998; Itzigsohn and Giorguli-Saucedo 2005; Leerkes 2007; Nee and sanders 2001; Portes 1995a; Portes and Rumbaut 1996; Rusinovic 2006; Van der Leun 2000; 2003a; Van der Leun and Kloosterman 2006; Van Tubergen et al. 2004; Yurdacul and Bodemann 2007). The way incorporation is conceptualized and measured does not differ much from the way this is done with integration. However, 'incorporation' offers the benefit of not causing too much confusion in Europe. In spite of a similar practical use of the concept among social scientists, its connotations are more neutral.

The aim of this dissertation is to contribute to the literature on the incorporation of irregular migrants, so I only discuss those elements of incorporation which figure in an implicit or explicit scholarly debate to which I can contribute. In the context of this dissertation, incorporation should therefore be considered not so much as an unambiguous theoretical concept, but more as a heuristic device providing structure and links to relevant literature. I found it helpfull to distinguish two dimensions of incorporation: functional incorporation and social incorporation. *Functional incorporation* includes housing, work and other sources of income and thus refers to the way irregular migrants are able to sustain themselves. *Social incorporation* includes the way migrants spend their leisure time and their social contacts in the receiving society. Chapter 6 discusses functional incorporation, and social incorporation is dealt with in chapter 7.

CHAPTER 2

BEYOND VICTIMS AND COMMUNITIES: BRINGING ASPIRATIONS IN

This chapter first deals with the current research practice involving the incorporation of irregular migrants. In sections 2.1 to 2.4 the discussion of the literature is focused on its main findings and its inherent problems, which mostly stem from the common practice of comparing groups of migrants. In section 2.5 an alternative approach is suggested.

2.1 CURRENT RESEARCH PRACTICE ON INCORPORATION

Although the presence of irregular migrants has been a fact of life in western societies for decades, attempts to study their lives in these countries have long remained limited to the United States (see for example Chavez [1992]1998; Cornelius 1982; Hagan 1994; Mahler 1995; Massey et al. 1987; Portes and Bach 1985; Rodriguez 1987). The question of how irregular migrants are incorporated in the receiving societies has only started to take hold in Europe since the mid-1990s. After the pioneering Dutch project *The Unknown City* (Burgers and Engbersen 1999), studies of other European countries soon followed. These countries include Belgium (Adam et al. 2002; Devillé 2008; Grzymala-Kazlowska 2005; Leman et al. 1994; Paspalanova 2006; Slimane 1995; Van Nieuwenhuyze 2007; 2009), Germany (Alt 1999), the United Kingdom (P. Anderson 1999; Jordan and Düvell 2002) Greece (Lazaridis and Romaniszyn 1998), Italy (Kosic and Triandafyllidou 2004) and Portugal (Eaton 1998).

Even though these studies deal with various ethnic or nationality groups in different national or local contexts, many parallel outcomes are reported. These similarities usually concern the problems irregular migrants face due to their difficult position, ranging from finding affordable and adequate housing to getting access to medical care. While some of the older studies have reported that irregular migrants managed to find ways to work legally, recent studies document that irregular migrants are nowadays only able to access the informal labor market.

Parallel to these similar findings, the same studies report rather different results on other aspects, for example concerning the relevance of ethnic networks or the importance of cultural capital for irregular migrants. The potential reasons for the diverging outcomes are plentiful, considering the diversity in groups and contexts studied. For example, whereas Engbersen et al. (2006) find high levels of in-group solidarity among Turkish irregular migrants in The Hague, Mahler (1995) finds co-ethnic exploitation among Salvadoran and South American migrants in Long Island. Such contradictory findings can be attributed to differences in the organization of the respective communities or their migration histories, to distinct national or local policy contexts, or to other significant variations between the two research settings. However, one does not know what factors are in fact responsible for these different outcomes; only tentative post-hoc interpretations can be made.

The variety in groups and contexts therefore complicates theoretical generalization (Mahler 1995). Due to the impossibility of random sampling, drawing inferences is always a problem in research on irregular migrants, but the broad range of groups and contexts involved makes it an even bigger challenge. Therefore, many researchers have forsaken the attempt to arrive at general theories on the way irregular migrants are incorporated into western societies. Instead, some have turned to (historical) particularistic explanations by offering thick descriptions of the conditions of a distinct ethnic group in a certain area, allowing for increased understanding of how these specific conditions of this particular group of irregular migrants have become the way they are now (see for example Hagan 1994; Kalir 2005a; Massey et al. 2004).

However, most researchers have started to try to contextualize theories and develop sophisticated comparative research designs in order to single out factors responsible for different outcomes. These attempts usually involve two or more strategically selected ethnic or national groups within one receiving nation-state, region or city. For example, Engbersen et al. (2006) have compared Turks and Bulgarians in The Hague, Leman (1997) has studied Columbians and Poles in Brussels, Lazaridis and Romaniszyn (1998) have compared Albanians and Poles in Greece, and Jordan and Düvell (2002) have analyzed the lives of migrants from Brazil, Turkey and Poland in the United Kingdom. Although these studies have offered many insights, they share various problems which are discussed in the following sections.

2.2 COMMON PERSPECTIVE FOCUSED ON SURVIVAL

One major aspect that studies on irregular migrants have in common is their perspective on the lives of irregular migrants. Scholars have extensively shown how irregular migrants' pre-migratory expectations are often unrealistically high (Adam et al. 2002; Staring 1999; Mahler 1995). Stories of migrants who thought that the streets in the destination country are paved with gold are quoted frequently (see for example Staring 1999: 64). Consequently, when migrants find out that the society they encounter does not offer the opportunities they envisioned, their adaptation processes are automatically oriented *downwardl*y. Many studies indicate how dreams are broken and how irregular migrants have to deal with difficult conditions. In so doing, scholars equate the adaptation process that irregular migrants go through with a process of learning 'how to survive' in these societies. The story that is portrayed in most studies is a narrative of how irregular migrants struggle to survive. While they had high expectations before they came, little is left of these once they have arrived, and *survival* becomes the central theme in their lives.

The implicit assumption that the original expectations of irregular migrants fade upon arrival has been strengthened by the commonly held idea that irregular migrants have little control over their lives. Mahler (1995: 7) for example claims that migrants' efforts "are largely conditioned by macro-structural forces over which individuals have little, if any, power." She consequently does not differentiate in terms of newly developed motivations, but instead emphasizes "the common experiences and dilemmas" (p. 28) her informants face. Devillé (2006) denoted this dominant perspective, which implicitly assumes that irregular migrants have little to no control over their lives, a 'victim perspective'. She observes that most researchers describe irregular migrants as victims of laws and policies who are unable to undertake much action to improve their situation.

While in Mahler's work the notion of 'survival' remains implicit, many other scholars do explicitly use this term (see Adam et al. 2002; Chavez [1992]1998; Cvajner and Sciortino 2009; Datta et al. 2007; Düvell 2004; Düvell and Jordan 2006; Engbersen 1996; Jordan 2006; King and Mai 2004; Kosic and Triandafyllidou 2004; Psimmenos and Kassimati 2006; Triandafyllidou and Kosic 2006; Van Nieuwenhuyze 2009). Adam et al. (2002: 115) for example write that "il s'agit de rendre compte de la manière dont les étrangers sans documents vivent, *ou plus exactement survivent* en situation de clandestinité." [Italics added] Another example of the explicit use of the notion 'survival' stems from the work of Chavez

([1992]1998: 6) – one of his main research questions is: "What kind of strategies do migrants and settlers employ to survive?" Along the same lines, in the work of Jordan and Düvell (2002), the chapter called 'why they come' is succeeded by a chapter entitled 'how they survive,' and Triandafyllidou and Kosic (2006: 106) analyze the 'survival strategies' of irregular migrants.

While most scholars uncritically use the notion 'survival', others feel they have to explain themselves, for example,Van Nieuwenhuyze (2009: 97) who writes that "the uncertainty and the insecurity of their existence justify the notion of survival strategy." According to Datta et al. (2007: 405) the notion of survival *strategies* is even too strong, as it does not do justice to the "powerlessness" migrants experience. They therefore prefer to speak of the "tactics" migrants employ to "survive."

Paspalanova (2006: 293) also occasionally uses the notion of survival, even while she simultaneously notes that the Polish irregular migrants she interviewed generally "perceive their income as sufficient and enough to provide a comfortable standard of living." This illustrates how much the notion of survival has become a convention: the concept is used even if the empirical findings point in a different direction. Perhaps the most telling indication that the notion of survival has become a matter of course is that at the world congress of sociology organized by the International Sociological Association (ISA) in 2010, the only session devoted to irregular migration is entitled: "Survival strategies of irregular migrants: survey and ethnographic evidence."[1]

In short, studies of the incorporation of irregular migrants into receiving societies have in common that they tend to emphasize structure over agency (see also Black 2003). While irregular migrants had agency *before* they came, once they arrive they become puppets subjected to the control of structural forces. As a result, many studies first deal with migration motives ('why they come'), after which they turn to a section on 'how they survive'.

This dominant perspective obviously has implications for our understanding of the ways in which irregular migrants live. Although irregular migrants do indeed experience many limitations, the emphasis on survival has obstructed our understanding of the ways in which irregular migrants manage to improve their situation. We can gather from Paspalanova's work, quoted above, that some irregular migrants do in fact manage to create a comfortable standard living (see also Burgers and Engbersen 1999; Roer-Strier and Olshtain-Mann 1999). Even though the

stories of 'success' might just make up a small percentage of the total experiences of irregular migrants (although we can never be completely sure of that of course), the attention that has been awarded to these cases is disproportionally meager to say the least.

This is not surprising considering the focus on survival, but also because of the fact that the upward social mobility that has been reported is limited, not so much in numbers of migrants who are able to achieve it, but in terms of the height they are able to gain in climbing up the ladder. Although some migrants manage to make more money than others, and some get better working conditions over time, they still usually occupy the lower strata in the receiving societies. Middle class jobs are mostly not available to them. As people usually do not surpass class boundaries, the social mobility reported is considered insignificant from the perspective of the social scientist. Most scholars regard legalization as the only true way to achieve upward social mobility for irregular migrants, because only then can class boundaries be surpassed. At the same time, research has found that even after legalization few manage to improve their situation considerably (Bailey 1985; Donato and Massey 1993; Fakiolas 2003; Glytsos 2005; Hagan 1994; Powers et al. 1998; Tienda and Singer 1995). Therefore, if scholars do document upward social mobility in terms of income or housing, it is usually framed in terms of how some manage to *survive better than others*.

To conclude, a common perspective focused on survival has developed in studies on irregular migrants. The omnipresent implicit emphasis on structure is problematic, because it attracts attention away from the agency irregular migrants have and from the upward social mobility that some do in fact experience. As a result, both phenomena have remained relatively understudied. This is a deficit, as studies report that the limited amount of social mobility that is sometimes achieved is mostly considered reason enough for irregular migrants to stay in the receiving society and is consequently likely to foster new arrivals. After all, the amount of upward social mobility might be insignificant from the perspective of the receiving society, but that is not the way irregular migrants themselves evaluate their success. They have a more transnational outlook and compare their current situation with the situation they had in their country of origin (cf. Chavez [1992]1998; Fozdar and Torezani 2008; Mahler 1995; Piore 1979; Sladkova 2007). Hence, it is advisable to break with the current research practice and consider irregular migrants as active agents instead of mere victims determined by social forces.

2.3 SOCIAL MOBILITY AND INCORPORATION

As noted previously, the issue of social mobility of irregular migrants has been understudied, although the question of why some irregular migrants survive better than others has been raised in many previous studies. To be more precise, the question of why some *groups* of irregular migrants survive better than other groups has usually been answered. These studies have yielded some valuable insights, but they also have some limitations. Both are discussed in this section.

The answer to the question what makes one category of irregular migrants more successful at survival than another is usually sought for within the social networks of ethnic communities. Two viewpoints about the role that ethnic social networks play in this process can be derived from literature. Scholars embracing the first viewpoint emphasize the positive effects of ethnic networks and document how co-ethnics help each other migrate and take care of newcomers when they arrive (see Adam et al. 2002; Engbersen 1996; Hagan 1998). Fellow countrymen assist each other in finding work and accommodation. Therefore, well-developed organizational forms ('strong communities') explain a successful settlement-experience (Hagan 1994). The concept of 'social capital' is often used in this regard and is thought to be the most important resource for irregular migrants:

> This network of compatriots from which irregular immigrants are able to mobilize resources is of vital importance for irregular immigrants. Social capital is therefore the most important currency for irregular immigrants (Engbersen 2001 cited in Engbersen et al. (2006: 223)).

As a result, migrants who can rely on strong migrant community networks are better off than migrants who do not belong to such communities (Leerkes et al. 2007). However, Mahler (1995: 225) suspects that such "portrayals of solidarity may reflect a romanticization of the immigrant experience" that has become conventionalized. As a representative of the second viewpoint, she tones down the significance of social capital, arguing that these communities can be exploitative as well (see also Cranford 2005; Grzymala-Kazlowska 2005; Staring 1998). In her study of Salvadorans and South Americans in Long Island, she paints a picture of two highly exploitative immigrant groups. As they are cut off from mainstream society, their greatest potential for socioeconomic mobility lies within their own communities, by

means of exploitation of their own compatriots. Although she does also see instances in which migrants help each other, the overall picture portrayed is one of competition, distrust and deceit, and clearly not of solidarity.

While these two viewpoints seem contradictory, they are in fact two sides of the same coin called ethnic community networks. One side points to the positive effects of embeddedness in an ethnic community, whereas the other underlines the negative consequences. At the same time, both sides explain the differences between the relative success of communities in terms of differences in social capital between these ethnic communities. As this might come across as a bit abstract, let me give an example to illustrate how such explanations are put forward in practice. Engbersen et al. (1999; 2006) claim that 'ethnic community patterns of incorporation' play a substantial role in the explanation of the relative success of irregular migrants and come up with three patterns of incorporation. The first pattern they observe is labeled *communal sharing* and is widely found among the Turkish community. Within this community, permanent support is provided to irregular migrants for reasons of enduring solidarity. The second pattern entails *bounded solidarity*, where incidental support is provided to irregular migrants based on reasons of situational loyalty. This pattern was discovered among the Moroccan and the African communities. The third incorporation pattern the authors describe is based upon *market relations*, and refers to the co-ethnic exploitation Mahler observed in the communities she studied.

In short, the relative amount of 'success' of communities that are compared is explained by the difference in the dominant support pattern within those communities. In other words, the degree of success is explained by the type of solidarity that is dominant within that community. While there is primarily permanent solidarity in one group, there is mainly situational solidarity or instrumental solidarity (which is perceived as exploitation) in the other, and this explains why these groups have different outcomes in terms of income, labor, and housing conditions. However, it remains to be seen whether the causal relation does indeed work in that direction. Although success is now explained by solidarity, the direction of the relation might also be the other way around. It might be that there is a lot of solidarity in a community, because its members are doing well and can afford mutual support, or that people restrict reciprocity because they are not doing well. So we only know that high levels of solidarity and success go hand in hand. Therefore, the results of the studies discussed above have offered us a preliminary understanding of the relative success of different groups of migrants by indicating

that certain support patterns go together with ethnic community patterns of incorporation. However, in order to further develop our understanding, we need to gain insight into the underlying mechanisms responsible for their correlation.

Although research has not systematically studied the reasons for this correlation, some scholars have suggested possible interpretations of why different support patterns exist in different communities. Engbersen (1996: 102) for example writes that Turkish irregular migrants in the Netherlands can rely more on their own community than Moroccans, because it is less divided: "The Moroccan community is a divided community where discordant relations cause disruption and limit mutual solidarity and trust." Furthermore, he indicates that Moroccans have limited entry to the informal economy, because informal employment generated by ethnic business is far less available to Moroccans than to Turks. In another publication, the authors refer to the Turkish saying 'hemserim', which means 'I am compelled to help someone from my area of origin' when they want to explain why Turks take care of each other (Engbersen et al. 2006), suggesting it has something to do with their culture. Furthermore, scholars who have pointed to the negative effects of ethnic networks claim that harsh economic circumstances weaken displays of solidarity (Cranford 2005; Grzymala-Kazlowska 2005).

As researchers have so far only provided such tentative interpretations, it appears that studying the mechanisms responsible for the patterns of incorporation that have been distinguished in previous studies is the logical next step to take. However, in order to do so, we do need to resolve some issues and eliminate some problems that are present in the current research practice involving social capital and irregular migrants.

2.3.1 Conceptualizing community

The first issue relates to the fact that social capital is considered to be derived from 'communities' that are often poorly conceptualized. It is interesting to see how the concept of community is applied to groups using different denominators, and how these 'communities' are nevertheless subsequently compared to each other. Sometimes people from different African countries are for example seen as separate communities, and sometimes they are not. Whereas Leman (1997) analyzed migrants from Nigeria and Zaire in Brussels separately, Engbersen et al. (1999:157) have studied the "African community" in Amsterdam, referring to all migrants

originating from "countries south of the Sahara" as Africans (p. 156). A brief look into Africa's history of civil war and tribal warfare is enough to convince anyone that Africans – even if they are from the same country – do not necessarily get along, let alone form one cohesive community. Nevertheless, the "African community" in Amsterdam is compared to the "Turkish community" in Rotterdam. The same variation in conceptualizations of community is found in studies of Eastern Europeans. Whereas Paspalanova (2006) compares Poles and Bulgarians (and does indeed find significant differences between them), Burgers and Engbersen (1999: 249) regard Eastern Europeans as one "ethnic group", to be contrasted with other "ethnic groups" such as Turks or Surinamese (the latter being people from one of the most ethnically diverse countries in the world).

The same logic is applied when it comes to migrants from Latin America. Hagan for example (1994) studies Maya Indians from Guatemala as a distinct ethnic group, and Portes and Bach (1985) compare Cubans and Mexicans. However, in most other studies, all migrants from South and Central America are lumped together and regarded one big Latin American community (see for example Adam et al. 2002; Leman 1997; Roer-Strier and Olshtain-Mann 1999). The fact that they both speak Spanish does not automatically imply that a migrant from Cuba trusts or associates with a migrant from Chile. It is not so surprising then that respondents do not label this 'Latin American community' as one with high levels of solidarity. Moreover, it is not always clear who comes up with the notion of a community, the respondents or the researcher. Do respondents feel they belong to an African community, or was it the researcher who analyzed them as one community, because he or she chose the level of the group as a starting point of analysis? And can groups that are so different in terms of composition be compared properly? Such questions have usually not been elaborated upon, while in fact they are crucial for our understanding of the ways in which irregular migrants are incorporated in receiving societies. After all, considering the differences in makeup, it is not very surprising to find that the Turkish 'community' displays more solidarity than the African 'community'.

Community is also poorly conceptualized in terms of legal status. Scholars often remain unclear with regard to the question of what kind of legal status the migrants who make up this community have, who is helping whom, or who is exploiting whom. Engbersen et al. (1999) have explicitly studied regular migrants and asked them about the assistance they provide to irregular migrants. In other studies, it is not always made explicit what the legal status of care providers is, while

this might be very important. For example, whereas Engbersen et al. (1999) found that regular migrants are irregular migrants' main care providers, P. Anderson (1999) showed that established migrants are not always welcoming of new arrivals. Staring (1998) also emphasized the dependent position irregular migrants are in *vis-à-vis* their legal compatriots who sometimes take advantage of the irregular migrants' vulnerability. And Van Nieuwenhuyze (2009) indicates that high levels of solidarity are also found among irregular migrants themselves, regardless of their nationality.

The result of these poor conceptualizations is that different 'communities' are compared to each other, while these can refer to entirely distinct empirical phenomena such as categorizations based on ethnicity, geographical origin, or legal status. And it might be that precisely these differences shape distinct community patterns of incorporation. In order to study the mechanisms responsible for the patterns found, it is therefore crucial to take the considerable differences in composition of these communities into account.

2.3.2 Social networks as ethnic community networks

The second issue is closely related to the previous one and involves the practice that social networks are equated with 'ethnic community' networks (see also Düvell 2006c). Obviously, this practice has developed with good reason. Time and again researchers found that many migrants almost exclusively associate with people from their country of origin. However, this does not mean that assistance provided by fellow countrymen can automatically be equated with social capital from the 'ethnic community'. Adam et al. (2002) for example found that several of their respondents had close contacts with their family members (who obviously are their co-ethnics) and were often assisted by them in getting jobs and accommodation. At the same time, these same migrants did not want to have anything to do with their co-ethnics in general. Hence, the fact that these migrants are assisted by co-ethnics has nothing to do with their ethnic community or the social capital invested in community networks, but stems from their family relationships. If strong family relationships are frequent within a certain community, they could shape a spurious ethnic community pattern. If the focus of analysis is on the community as a whole, this is obscured. This means that we cannot properly understand how patterns develop if the unit of analysis is the level of the community instead of the individual.

Furthermore, not all migrants associate primarily with their co-ethnics. Some migrants, especially those migrants whose 'community' is relatively small in numbers (Adam et al. 2002), do mingle with other migrant groups. These migrants are usually not taken into account in research, because migrant communities are mostly selected on the basis of their relatively large size (see for example Düvell 2006b; Engbersen et al. 1999; Paspalanova 2006; Portes and Bach 1985). In such large communities, social and ethnic networks do indeed more frequently overlap than is the case with smaller migrant groups. As a consequence of this practice, those migrants who are part of relatively small communities, or who are embedded in networks that span community boundaries, are overlooked (see also Staring 1998).

If one intends to study patterns of incorporation of irregular migrants, one obviously should not only select migrants from large communities. After all, irregular migrants can possibly mobilize social capital from more sources than ethnic community networks. Moreover, the insights we can get from studying networks that span ethnic communities might be very valuable and should not be excluded beforehand. Hagan (1994) has shown that although ethnic community networks can be very beneficial in the initial phase of settlement, they tend to lock migrants in and restrict opportunities of social mobility in the long run, as migrants do not develop resources outside these networks. Others also emphasize the importance of contacts beyond the own community (see for example Cyrus and Vogel 2006; Psimmenos and Kassimati 2006). As these cross-community contacts are considered the most likely suppliers of upward social mobility, we could learn a great deal from social networks that span community boundaries.

2.3.3 The situational character of social capital

The third issue that needs to be resolved relates to the fact that even if there is abundant social capital present in some community, this does not mean that every individual is able to mobilize it to the same extent. Scholars do acknowledge that there are differences *within* ethnic groups in terms of the ability to mobilize social capital, but there is not much attention paid to these differences as the level of analysis is the group as a whole. In other words, internal differentiation is noted, but not elaborated upon. Staring (1998: 226) presents a similar critique: "Although (…) social capital [is] linked to membership of an (ethnic) group, [it is not] a constant and omnipresent element within those communities as is suggested by a network approach. Instead, both are situational and have to be activated." Furthermore, he

points out that within one community, both acts of solidarity and exploitation can occur simultaneously: "In addition to the solidarity displayed and help offered to these migrants, many were also confronted with distrust, disloyalty and deceit by members of their own community."(p. 227) This illustrates how solidarity is situational as well. By looking at some sort of general level of solidarity, or a dominant support pattern for the whole group, one fails to see that migrants are assisted in some situations and exploited in others. In order to develop better understanding of the mechanisms that shape patterns of incorporation and social mobility, we therefore need to take the situational character of solidarity into account by differentiating between situations in which assistance is provided.

2.3.4 Contextual perceptions of solidarity

The fourth issue that needs to be resolved refers to the fact that social scientists usually rely on their informants' understanding of solidarity, which complicates comparison. For example, the Turkish respondents Engbersen et al. (2006) studied reported high levels of solidarity among Turks even though they had to pay money to their caregivers in exchange for their accommodation, whereas Mahler (1995) contrastingly indicated that her respondents felt exploited by co-ethnics for precisely the same reason. Whether or not someone perceives an act as an act of solidarity or as an act of exploitation is highly contextual. For example, some people experience exploitation if they have to work for five euros, while others perceive this to be an opportunity. For someone who has migrated with the aim of returning to his country, five euros per hour is likely to be considered a lot of money, because he desires to spend it there, whereas for someone who wants to settle in the receiving society, such an amount might not suffice. How someone perceives an act consequently depends on the migration motives of individual migrants and the contexts they live in. It makes little sense to compare the levels of solidarity respondents report without taking these differences into account. This constitutes a good reason why an approach that starts with the motivations of the individual migrants seems a fruitful course of action for uncovering the factors that shape ethnic patterns of incorporation. The arguments presented above indicate that this works better than to continue along the line of comparison of incomparable groups. However, the next section indicates that comparative designs based on migration motives are problematic as well.

2.4 COMPARATIVE DESIGNS BASED ON MIGRATION MOTIVES

In the design of comparative studies, groups of migrants are often selected based on their presupposed motives for migration. This way, scholars intend to compare different types of migration, as these are believed to underlie distinct patterns of incorporation. Portes and Bach (1985) have for example compared Mexicans and Cubans in the United States. While the first group was assumed to consist of economic migrants, the latter was believed to be made up of political refugees. Although such designs look very promising, the selection of groups based on a priori assumptions regarding migration motives is problematic for three reasons.

First, because of practical difficulties involved in the selection of migrants with a specific migration motive, the selection of migrants is based on a proxy – ethnic groups – which does not work out well in practice. For example, not all migrants from countries with political problems are necessarily political refugees. Furthermore, Poles or Bulgarians are often selected, because they are believed to represent a new type of migration in Europe that largely consists of commuters. Closer inspection teaches us that not all Polish or Bulgarian irregular migrants necessarily commute. Paspalanova (2006) tellingly divided Bulgarians – a supposedly homogeneous group in terms of migration motives – into commuters (12 persons), settlers (45 persons), false students (14 persons), and migrants who have lost their residence documents (4 persons). This clearly shows how heterogeneous nationality groups can be in terms of motivations, which is strikingly at odds with the assumptions underlying comparative research designs. When researchers set out to compare two or more groups of migrants based on country of origin as a proxy for migration motive, it usually turns out that these nationality categories are not internally homogeneous in terms of motivations and therefore not as easy to compare as presupposed.

Second, even if one were to take the motives themselves as a starting point, instead of a proxy, it turns out that migration motives are not always so easily divided into analytical categories. Political and economic motives are for example often intertwined (Mahler 1995; Portes and Bach 1985; Rodriguez 1987). While they are easy to distinguish theoretically, they have proved difficult to disentangle empirically. As Portes and Bach (1985: 74) observe:

> Individuals labeled political refugees have been found, on closer inspection, to have very definite economic motivations to leave their

> home country. (…) Conversely, movements that on the surface appear to be economic may turn out to have direct political roots. (…) Political processes may turn out to induce migration, directly or indirectly, as they constrain the economic opportunities available to the general population or particular segments of it.

This mix of motives hampers the development of contextual theoretical insight, as it remains unclear which motive underlies observed patterns of incorporation.

A third reason why selecting groups based on migration motives is problematic is that these motivations usually do not remain the same. As indicated in section 2.2., several studies have documented that irregular migrants' aspirations are often unrealistic and that many are therefore forced to adapt their expectations to the newly encountered reality once they arrive. This means that, regardless of their original intentions and regardless of the factors that initiated their migration, irregular migrants who come with false expectations are forced to develop new aspirations that fit the situation they encounter. Moreover, according to Mahler, "even those who had been well-informed by their relatives about life in the United States still did not anticipate how they would have to realign both their expectations and their strategies after arrival." (p. 89) Consequently, as irregular migrants have to adjust their migration motives to the situation they find upon arrival, their initial motives are likely to be altered, possibly to a considerable degree. This is illustrated most clearly by studies that have demonstrated that many migrants who come with the intention of staying for a short period end up settling down (Chavez [1992]1998; Paspalanova 2006; Van Nieuwenhuyze 2009; Triandafyllidou and Kosic 2006). Moreover, Van Wijk (2007) demonstrated that migrants sometimes apply for asylum, because that is what their smugglers tell them to do, while they initially migrated with the intention of working. The finding that some economic migrants profit from the opportunities that asylum procedures provide has been noted before (see for example Düvell and Jordan 2006).

In short, when it comes to explaining patterns of incorporation of irregular migrants in the receiving society, it is all the more important to look at their *current* intentions and not just their initial migration motives. Irregular migration and settlement are complex processes that cannot be captured by simply looking at migration motives in order to develop straightforward explanations for the patterns of incorporation found. These initial motives of irregular migrants can change

significantly during the incorporation process and not necessarily always in the same direction. I do not mean to say that migration motives are not important when it comes to explaining patterns of incorporation. Research on regular migration has indicated their relevance (Castles and Miller 2003). However, in case of irregular migration the relationship is much more complex than is assumed when developing comparative research designs based on (a proxy for) migration motives.

All in all, it seems better to compare migrants on the basis of their own motives and not to rely on categories thought to represent their motives. Moreover, for analytical purposes, it seems better to take irregular migrants' *current* goals and intentions, and not their *initial* motives, as a starting point of analysis, as the latter can significantly change during the incorporation process and are in any case difficult to disentangle. Such goals and intentions are usually referred to as *aspirations* (MacLeod 2009, Portes et al. 1978). I would be the last to claim that other scholars have not acknowledged the inherent difficulties in research on migration and settlement processes before. However, they have surprisingly not considered this to be a reason to make aspirations a central focus of their research. In the next section the suggestion of an alternative approach that takes aspirations as a starting point of analysis is elaborated upon in terms of prior research, problems and theoretical background.

2.5. BRINGING ASPIRATIONS IN

2.5.1 Prior research involving aspirations

A very limited number of previous studies have distinguished among irregular migrants' aspirations; only in the field of anthropology I did encounter these. In the United States, Chavez ([1992]1998) has distinguished between migrants who want to stay temporarily and migrants aiming to settle down. This distinction draws heavily upon the classic literature on migration in which (regular) migrants are classified as either sojourners (Siu 1987[1953]) or settled migrants (Piore 1979). In Europe, Leman (1997) makes a distinction between those who primarily migrate to work – usually temporarily – and make money (employment illegality) and migrants who come to reside and legalize their status (residence illegality). In my opinion, these anthropological studies have brought us increased understanding of the ways irregular migrants live by distinguishing between these aspirations. However, most

sociologists active in the field of irregular migration deem it irrelevant to make such analytical distinctions:

> Même si certain sans-papiers, et plus précisément les clandestins, espèrent ne rester en Belgique qu'une brève période pour gagner de l'argent et puis rentrer dans leur pays d'origine, nombreux sont ceux qui connaissent la même destine que les travailleurs immigrés traditionnels. Le provisoire devient permanent, et tout en maintenant le rêve du retour, ils se fixent dans le pays d'arrivé. Ce constat montre qu'il n'est pas pertinent d'établir une distinction nette entre les migrants en situation d'illégalité de travail et les migrants en situation d'illégalité de séjour, comme le soutient Johan Leman (1997). (Adam et al. 2002: 207)

Hondagneu-Sotelo (1994:17) also writes that "settlement often derives from sojourner or circular migration, and hence settlement cannot be treated as a discrete condition." Scholars such as these argue that because many temporary migrants eventually become settlers, we must not study them as separate categories. Others likewise state that irregular migrants' aspirations are too fluid to capture and use for analysis. Mahler (1995) for example claims that irregular migrants' lives are characterized by changing opinions with regard to temporary versus permanent settlement, sometimes even on a daily basis. And Hagan (1994: 94) argues that irregular migrants rarely make long-term plans. Their decisions "are often based on a constantly changing set of attitudes, options, conditions and relations in both the home community and host society." She writes: "ultimately, immigrant options are left open and remain flexible until one is forced to make a decision."(p. 95) Furthermore, Hondagneu-Sotelo (1994) found that even if migrants are committed to staying, unanticipated events in their home country could sidetrack such plans. For this reason she claims that "a research strategy based on simply asking respondents about their settlement intentions has serious limitations." (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994: xxii)

Obviously, these scholars rightly observe that irregular migrants' aspirations can and do change over time. They are also correct in noting that this fluidity in aspirations makes it hard to capture them with standard survey techniques. Indeed, because of the insecurity of their situation, it is hard to construct a typology of

migrants based on their aspirations, as these change during their careers. After all, irregular migrants' evaluation of the opportunity structure can change, for example through increased migrant experience, but also resulting from changes in government policies which open doors that were previously closed. However, even though there are many difficulties involved in studying the aspirations of irregular migrants, that does not mean that it is not instructive to try to make these a starting point of analysis by using other than standard survey techniques. The possible merits of such an approach are underlined by the fact that the classic migration literature indicates that migrants' incorporation processes undergo many changes as a result of shifting aspirations. Piore (1979) for example argues that the shift from temporary ambitions toward settlement almost invariably includes a shift in job aspirations. While temporary migrants are able to accept certain work conditions, because their frame of reference is the country of origin and not the host country, such tolerance does not exist among those with residence ambitions. And according to Massey (1986) migrants send fewer of their earnings back home and start to spend more money in the destination country when they decide to settle down. Such changes occur, even though they remain undecided about returning to their home country some day. Piore (1979: 65) writes: "However settled they actually become, they continue to see themselves in a certain sense as belonging to some other place and retain an idea, albeit increasingly vague and undefined, of returning 'home'." Although this option is always kept open, they do make significant changes in their lives that we can only understand with reference to their changing aspirations. So if we want to understand how certain patterns of incorporation are shaped, we have to look at irregular migrants' aspirations. Thus, one can analytically distinguish between aspirations, while at the same time recognizing that aspirations can develop into other aspirations over time.

2.5.2 Towards an analysis based on aspirations

In the above it has become clear that we have good reason to take aspirations as a starting point of analysis. First, focusing on aspirations helps to avoid the overemphasizing of structure common to most other studies. Second, the problems and issues mentioned above related to the comparison of groups indicate that although explanations which take communities as a starting point of analysis have considerably advanced development of theoretical insights, they can only do so up to a certain point. Third, current aspirations are a better analytical category than

migration motives as aspirations can allow change to be incorporated into the model. Fourth, the classic literature on migration and two anthropological studies indicate that distinguishing between aspirations can provide useful insights into the question of how patterns of incorporation are shaped.

This means that in order to take our understanding of the ways in which irregular migrants are incorporated in the receiving societies a step further; we need to apply a more inductive approach and take the aspirations of individual migrants as a starting point of analysis. Now that we know what the dominant patterns in the large groups are, time has come to also assess the lives of those who do not conform to the general pattern. Moreover, instead of merely describing different patterns of incorporation, we need to increase our understanding of how these are shaped.

The literature has overemphasized structure and thereby neglected human agency. However, by putting aspirations at the center of our analysis we have to make sure we do not fall into the opposite trap by overemphasizing agency: we might fail to contextualize attitudes and actions as responses to objective structures. I will therefore briefly outline how the present study aims to prevent this hazard.

Aspirations form parts of wider ethical and metaphysical ideas which derive from larger cultural norms (Appadurai 2004). Aspirations to the good life are for example part of some sort of system of ideas of what constitutes a good life. However, aspirations also mediate what an individual desires and what society can offer (MacLeod 2009). Aspirations are therefore inextricably linked to an assessment of available opportunities. In other words, while aspirations partly stem from larger cultural systems, they also feed upon evaluations of the opportunity structure. Aspirations are thus about wants and preferences, but also about choices and calculations. As a consequence, aspirations neither reflect untamed migrant dreams, nor are they necessarily rational in the sense that they are the result of the purposive and pre-planned pursuit of calculated goals (cf. MacLeod 2009; Portes et al. 1978).

Aspirations are constructed in the habitus of the individual (MacLeod 2009: 15). The habitus is informed through socialization into larger cultural structures and by the objective opportunity structure. However, although the habitus is informed by the objective opportunity structure, there is no direct relationship: all perceptions of the opportunity structure are necessarily subjective and influenced by a host of intervening factors (MacLeod 2009). This means that there is not a mechanistic and simplistic relationship between aspirations and real-life opportunities. Instead, there is a relationship between aspirations and opportunities migrants perceive they have.

This difference between objective and perceived opportunities is important, as irregular migrants are people who, par excellence, are usually not well informed about their opportunities and have limited experiences exploring or navigating them (Appadurai 2004).

In summary, both cultural and social structures constrain and enable irregular migrants (Emirbayer and Goodwin 1994), and aspirations draw from both. Consequently, placing aspirations at the center of analysis does not imply overemphasizing agency. To the contrary, aspirations provide "a conceptual link between structure and agency in that they are rooted firmly in individual proclivity (agency) but also are acutely sensitive to perceived societal constraints (structure)" (MacLeod 2009: 139).

This means that, although the lives of the respondents in this dissertation take place within distinct structural settings – Belgium and the Netherlands – I do not aim to assess the effects of these national contexts. After all, I am primarily interested in perceived opportunities and how these influence the aspirations and the behavior of irregular migrants. At the same time, I certainly do not want to turn a blind eye to the possibility that one national context may in fact provide better opportunities for upward mobility than the other. However, experience in trying to localize the effects has taught us that is almost an impossible task. Only recently has such an effort has been made. Van Nieuwenhuyze (2009) has compared the lives of migrants from the Senegambian area in Belgium and Spain and came to the conclusion that there were differences in many respects between the group in Spain and the group in Belgium. Unsurprisingly, she found it difficult to attribute the differences she found in the lives of the two groups of migrants to differences in policy contexts. The respondents she interviewed in Spain appeared to differ from those in Belgium in so many respects that it was impossible to ascertain that this was in fact attributable to differences in policy contexts. The observed differences could also have been the result of her sampling, differences in migration histories of the two groups she compared, or the geographical location of the receiving societies. In other words, the variation in other factors made it difficult to 'isolate' possible effects of policies. This is not an uncommon problem when it comes to comparative research on irregular migration and is likely to be one of the reasons why so few systematic comparative efforts have been undertaken on the level of the nation-state.

For these reasons, this study also does not aim to systematically study the effects of policies. Even though the lives of my respondents are situated in two

different policy contexts, these different contexts do not mechanically constrain or construct irregular migrants' actions. Instead, irregular migrants take advantage and react to this window of opportunity in different ways (Elrick and Ciobanu 2009; Kosic and Triandafyllidou 2004; Kyle and Siracusa 2005). I therefore find it more relevant to focus on the interaction between irregular migrants and the context in which they find themselves than to try to localize the effects of policies through deductive reasoning.

As argued, we should start our analyses with the individual and his or her aspirations. For analytical purposes, we have to determine if there are patterns to be distinguished in the aspirations of irregular migrants, which is very likely to be the case. These categories of aspirations can be used as a first analytical framework instead of ethnic groups. Instead of starting with ethnic groups and then discovering that migrants belonging to the same ethnic group have different aspirations, we start with their aspirations and then see how incorporation into communities influences opportunities. After all, people must first aspire to something, such as work, before they have a certain opportunity structure in an ethnically stratified labor market.

In arguing that one should take aspirations as a starting point of analysis, some smaller comments and suggestions for improvement of the study of irregular migrants and their incorporation have been made as well. In the section below, I briefly outline how these issues are dealt with in this dissertation.

2.5.3 Outline of this dissertation

Transnational activities are important to take into account. As said before, irregular migrants mostly have a transnational outlook on their lives in the receiving societies. If we do not consider the transnational contacts they have and the activities they undertake, this hampers our understanding of the way irregular migrants live within the receiving societies as their transnational engagements heavily influence the choices migrants make. According to Mahler (1995), the transnational obligations that migrants have are the prime mover toward their suspension of solidarity. The migrants she interviewed restricted their acts of solidarity in the receiving society in order to fulfill transnational obligations. The role of transnational activities is dealt with in chapter 8.

Closely related, it is crucial not to look at social mobility from the perspective of the receiving society. Such a perspective does not take the transnational outlook

that irregular migrants use to judge their own success into account, but instead tries to objectively determine social mobility. However, migrants' pre-migratory situations cannot be compared to their current situations without possessing a great deal of background information. In order to be able to correctly interpret societal positions in sending countries, we need extensive information on their historical, cultural and social contexts. This kind of information, from such a variety of countries is of course nearly impossible to obtain and process in practice. So it is difficult to construct a standard by which social mobility of irregular migrants can appropriately be determined and compared to other irregular migrants. Therefore, it is best to take the perceptions of irregular migrants as a starting point instead. The question is then not focused on objective social mobility, but on the realization of aspirations. The question becomes: What kind of aspirations do irregular migrants have and what does it take to realize these?

While this first question is dealt with in chapter 5, the second is linked to the debate on the significance of different forms of capital and therefore requires an additional introduction. The present chapter has only discussed social capital, while this is not the only resource irregular migrants can deploy to realize their aspirations. Other resources such as the ability to master foreign languages, educational credentials or professional skills are most likely relevant as well. Moreover, as said before, there is a need to differentiate between the situations in which their social capital avails irregular migrants. The conceptual scheme developed by Briggs (1998) seems especially useful. He conceptualizes two types of social capital available in social networks: social support and social leverage. Social support helps people 'get by' or cope, while social leverage helps people 'get ahead' (Briggs 1998: 178). Social support thus ensures that irregular migrants' basic needs are met which enables them to 'survive', whereas networks that provide social leverage can help people to realize their aspirations (cf. Domínguez and Watkins 2003).

These considerations lead me to reformulate the third research question, which was described in the previous chapter:

3. What forms of capital do irregular migrants need to realize their aspirations?

This third research question is dealt with in chapter 9.

CHAPTER 3

STUDYING ASPIRATIONS: DATA AND METHODS

This chapter discusses the data and methods that I used in my research. The first section explains why I have adopted a grounded theory approach. The subsequent section discusses the different types of data I have collected to answer my research questions and is followed by a section on how these data are used throughout this study. The chapter finishes with a discussion of relevant methodological issues and a concise conclusion.

3.1 GROUNDED THEORY APPROACH

Since I aim to study irregular migrants as active agents, I need methods that enable me to study the practices and actions of irregular migrants. The grounded theory approach provides a suitable methodological framework. In the grounded theory approach, human beings are "viewed as active agents in their lives and in their worlds rather than as passive recipients of larger social forces." (Charmaz 2006: 7). Furthermore, as the aim of grounded theorists is to construct theory, it perfectly suits the inductive approach argued for in the previous chapter.

Grounded theory methods are advocated by Glaser and Strauss in their book *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*. Grounded theory methods "consist of systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing qualitative data to construct theories ´grounded´ in the data themselves." (Charmaz 2006: 2). The aim of researchers who adopt this approach is to develop theories from research grounded in data rather than to test existing theories by deducing testable hypotheses from them. Instead of verified or falsified, theory is *constructed* through comparative analyses (Glaser and Strauss [1967]2006). The aim is not "to provide a perfect description of an area" like ethnography aims to do, "but to develop a theory that accounts for much of the relevant behavior" (Glaser and Strauss [1967]2006: 30). The formation of analytical categories – typologies – is what grounded theorists aim for. These analytical categories should "yield a ´meaningful´ picture, abetted by apt

illustrations that enable one to grasp the reference in terms of one's own experience" (Glaser and Strauss [1967]2006: 38).

According to Glaser and Strauss ([1967]2006) researchers adopting a grounded theory approach should not start their research endeavors by analyzing the literature, because the theory should emerge inductively from the data. This idea that researchers approach reality as a 'tabula rasa' has been heavily criticized for being naïve (Charmaz 2006; Layder 1998; Strauss and Corbin [1990]1998). According to this new branch of scholars, it is best not to develop systematic theoretical ideas before entering the field, but to have a sense of theoretical direction. This way, researchers ensure that preconceived ideas or theories are not forced upon the data, but that concepts emerge from the data. Instead of a fully outlined theory, they argue that it is advisable to enter the field with some sensitizing concepts (Blumer 1969), providing the researcher with some initial ideas to pursue (see Charmaz 2006; Layder 1998; Strauss and Corbin [1990]1998). For me, concepts such as incorporation, social mobility and transnationalism offered valuable "points of departure" (Charmaz 2006: 17) to form interview topics and questions and to think analytically about the data I gathered. Sensitizing concepts primarily serve to guide the research process; the theoretical concepts are filled with content and are adjusted while the research unfolds. The sensitizing concepts provided me with "theoretical openings that avoid importing and imposing packaged images and automatic answers" (Charmaz 2006: 135): they enabled me to form meaningful analytical categories inductively, while still having a sense of direction.

Grounded theory methods offer a "set of principles and practices" rather than "prescriptions or packages" (Charmaz 2006: 9). One of its core principles is that data collection and analysis are not separate phases in the research process, but take place simultaneously (Charmaz 2006; Glaser and Strauss [1967]2006). The research process unfolds in different stages, and in each stage data analysis and collection inform one another. Crucial to all phases in the research process are "constant comparative methods" (Glaser and Strauss [1967]2006): researchers constantly look for patterns in the data. Coding and writing memos are crucial tools for making comparisons in grounded theory.

Grounded theory coding consists of at least two phases: initial coding and focused coding (Charmaz 2006). Initially, data are compared to data to find similarities and differences. Using this process, a focused code is developed that is more conceptual than the initial codes. In the next phase the data are compared to

these focused codes. In other words, new incidents are compared to properties of the category that resulted from the initial comparison of incidents. Through the process of writing memos a theory emerges from the data. Writing memos prompts researchers to analyze the data and codes early in the research process, helping to increase the level of abstractions of ideas that emerge. Memo writing allows researchers to make conjectures, after which they can go back to the field and gather more data to check these conjectures. Through writing memos and focused codes I built and clarified categories, and I became aware of variations within and between categories. Furthermore, I could identify gaps in my analysis, which I could go back to the field with to fill by sampling theoretically. Theoretical sampling involves sampling to develop the properties of the categories until no new properties emerge. In other words, the categories are saturated with data and subsequently sorted to integrate an emerging theory (Charmaz 2006).

In the previous chapter it may have seemed as if I conducted my research by taking aspirations as a starting point, but this is by no means the case. During my research, a typology of aspirations was *constructed*. When I started my research I began with some of the same preconceptions I argued against in chapter 2. It was only during my fieldwork – especially the writing of memos – that aspirations became my central categories: I originally set out with the research questions listed in chapter 1 seeking to answer them by means of inductive research.

Inductive research does not easily fit the standard formats for scholarly writing because the latter use deductive logic. As there are no clear-cut answers to deal with this tension in terms of typical formats used in qualitative studies, I have decided to present the reader ´reconstructed logic´ instead of ´logic in use´ (Kaplan 1964). Kaplan (1964) argues that science as a process is guided by ´logic in use´ and science as a product by ´reconstructed logic´, and it is the *product* of my scientific endeavor that is relevant and therefore presented here.

3.2 DATA

From the outset of my project I was in the privileged position of already having relevant data at my disposal: more than 300 semi-structured interviews with irregular migrants. These have been gathered by research assistants in connection to some of the large scale projects in Belgium[2] and the Netherlands[3] that my promoter and I have been involved in. The initial plan was to lump these interviews together for analysis. However, after I carefully studied these, the data seemed less suitable

than originally thought. In the previous chapter it has become clear that researching irregular migrants as active agents by means of standard survey techniques can be problematic. Even though the available interviews I had at my disposal included open questions and contained a lot of relevant information, they did not provide me with enough understanding of irregular migrants' actions. I felt a strong need to gain more understanding by entering the field myself. The semi-structured interviews offered me valuable information, allowing me to distinguish different patterns of incorporation. In addition, they provided preliminary understanding of how these patterns are shaped. However, in order to arrive at a more profound understanding that included dynamics and practices, additional fieldwork was required.

During the course of my project I have chosen to supplement the semi-structured interviews with participant observation in combination with in-depth interviews. I have therefore lived in the cities of Antwerp and The Hague in 2006 and 2007 for several months each. For purposes of fieldwork, I rented a room in both cities in centrally located areas where many irregular migrants live. The different types of data that were gathered during this period are discussed below, following a discussion of the data that were already available.

3.2.1 Semi-structured interviews

Research assistants, who were selected because of their specific ethnic backgrounds, their experience with the research group and their interviewing skills, carried out 120 semi-structured interviews in Belgium in 2004 and 2005. The interviews generally lasted between one and a half and two and a half hours and were conducted in respondents' mother tongues, except for those with Congolese respondents, which were held in French. The quotations of respondents that are used in the empirical chapters were translated into English by me. The interviewers had successfully localized respondents through important community members, and they contacted respondents in bars, teahouses, or churches. Furthermore, respondents were asked if they could refer the research team to other irregular migrants. This so-called 'snowball method' has been successfully applied in other studies involving irregular migrants (e.g. Burgers and Engbersen 1999; Chavez [1992]1998; Kosic and Triandafyllidou 2004; Paspalanova 2006; Van Nieuwenhuyze 2009) and helps to develop a measure of rapport, since contact is made through an established and trusted personal relation (Chavez 1994). Snowball-sampling is now

widely recognized as a virtual prerequisite for meaningful surveys in the field of irregular migration (Black 2003). The downside of snowball-sampling is that it tends to produce a sample bias, which is why the number of referrals per respondent was kept to a minimum. In total, 120 semi-structured interviews with irregular migrants in Flanders and Brussels were held (see appendix 1 for an overview). In order to capture variety in aspirations and social networks, various migrant groups were interviewed in different localities (cf. Chavez 1994). Moroccans were interviewed in Antwerp, Turks and Bulgarians in Ghent, and Congolese in Brussels, because these groups are heavily represented in these cities (Van Meeteren et al. 2007b). The Bulgarians in Ghent are of Turkish origin. The Congolese group largely consists of former asylum seekers.

Unfortunately, the interviews that were held with irregular migrants in the Netherlands did not provide enough information about the aspirations of the respondents. After aspirations became a central focus, I therefore chose to use only the semi-structured interviews collected by research assistants in Belgium and to leave those carried out in the Netherlands out of my analysis.

3.2.2 Participant observation

Participant observation is a research method that is not standardized and that can be applied in multiple ways. It is therefore important to be clear about how this method has been used in this study. To be able to judge the quality of the research, it is necessary to have insight into the research process. This section therefore describes my fieldwork, especially with regard to the observations of irregular migrants that I made during this period.

I conducted fieldwork in Belgium for almost six months. When I started my fieldwork in Belgium in the spring of 2006, I was lucky to discover that at that time, irregular migrants were actively engaged in large public actions in order to enforce 'regularization for all'. The emergence of this 'pro-regularization movement' (Laubenthal 2007) made it easy for me to get into contact with irregular migrants. All over Belgium they had occupied churches, held protest marches and some were even engaged in hunger strikes. These actions were organized by UDEP (Union pour la Défense des Sans-Papiers), which is a collective of irregular migrants who fight for the rights of irregular migrants. In Flanders, their actions were coordinated with local churches and welfare organizations and became known as 'church asylum'.

UDEP consists of several local departments that cooperate on both the local and national levels. I took part in the weekly meetings of the local department in Antwerp, and I visited all the events they organized during church asylum. I also joined them in the national protest marches held by UDEP.

During the time that the Antwerp branch occupied a church (June-July 2006), I visited the church and its temporary inhabitants almost every day. Thirty irregular migrants slept in the church they occupied, and many other irregular migrants visited them throughout the day. These others helped those who slept in the church in many ways, for example by cooking, being present at organized events, and attending the meetings that took place. Usually however, they just came by to keep up with the latest news on UDEP's actions and to keep the sleepers company. During these daily visits, I got to see them in their daily routine, and I was able to build up trusting relationships with them, as they were there every day, almost the entire day, playing cards or chatting with each other and with their visitors. One of the most important recurring events was the change of church that took place about every two to three weeks. Holding their mattresses under their arms, the irregular migrants loudly paraded, as they moved from one church to the other, escorted by the police.

I was also often invited to eat with them, which gave me the opportunity to follow the discussions they held amongst each other. Because not everybody knew everybody intimately, I heard some life stories told over the dinner table or over coffee afterwards. After each day I wrote many field notes when I got home. From the moment I introduced myself to the participants in church asylum, I was clear about my objectives. I told them I was a PhD student in sociology writing a thesis (or a book) about irregular migrants. I have never expressed my own views on their political demands, yet some introduced me to others as "Masja, our biggest supporter, she comes to see us every day". I am therefore aware of the possibility that some of the irregular migrants involved in church asylum might have interpreted my presence as support. Every now and then I therefore found it appropriate to remind them that I was 'writing a book' about irregular migrants. Nevertheless, I was under the impression that they appreciated my daily company, especially on those days when I was their only visitor.

Whereas I met close to a hundred irregular migrants in connection to church asylum, I chose to interview only nine of them more intensively, as described in the next section. Irregular migrants who are involved in such political actions constitute

a very particular group and should therefore not be regarded as representative for the population of irregular migrants. Although I did not strive for a representative sample, I did aim for variety. I therefore also observed many other irregular migrants, some of whom were even unaware of the political actions taking place on their behalf.

Apart from the observations I made in church asylum, I met many other irregular migrants whom I managed to observe in their daily activities. In order to capture variety, I used as many entries as I could think of (cf. Burgers 1998). I encountered irregular migrants to observe in the streets, in churches that were not involved in church asylum, through organizations, and through snowball sampling of my own personal network, as well as those of irregular migrants. Over the course of my fieldwork, I have often been invited to lunch or dinner with informants in their houses and on occasion in a restaurant. In return, I have invited some of them for dinner or drinks in my fieldwork apartment in Antwerp or The Hague. Furthermore, I often went for a drink in a bar with a respondent, especially during my stay in Belgium when the world soccer championships were held. With my respondents, I supported various countries and many respondents showed their sympathy towards me by supporting the Netherlands. Belgium did not qualify that year, but Ecuador and Ghana came very far, much to the joy of some of my respondents.

In addition to social gatherings connected to food and drinks, I often went for a walk through the city or in one of Antwerp's parks with respondents. On Sundays, I accompanied some of them to church. Moreover, I was invited to (birthday) parties and went swimming in a local lake with a group of 25 Latin American migrants. Some introduced me to their friends who then invited me to dinner in their house. The Sunday dinners were particularly special, as in many cultures, extended families, neighbors and friends are all invited to dine together on this day. In all these different ways I gathered a lot of field notes. Again, all of these people knew that I was a PhD student writing a book about irregular migrants. Outside church asylum, the irregular migrants I observed always introduced me to others as such. Nevertheless, I realize that it is possible that people forgot about my social scientific preoccupations on occasion. Although data tend to get better when they do (see also Hagan 1994), I made a habit of subtly reminding people every once in a while.

In exchange for the information they provided me with, some respondents sometimes asked me for a favor in return. I have therefore translated letters that

people received and did not understand, I have arranged for payment by installment in case someone received a fine he or she could not afford to pay at once, and most importantly I have given a lot of advice. This usually concerned places to go for free language teaching, shopping or medical care. I did not give any advice in terms of possibilities for legalization. Other research has indicated that living amongst the research population and assuming multiple roles besides being a researcher has proved to be successful method of assuring good data (see for example Hagan 1994; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994; Mahler 1995).

I tried to spend most time with those migrants I also interviewed in in-depth interviews to see how they ´lived´ what they reported to me in those interviews. This way, I was able to validate the answers they gave to me during the interviews, and I was able to reflect, together with the respondents themselves, on their actions in relation to what they told me in the interviews. Thus I was able to ensure that the combination of participant observation with interviewing yielded a more accurate portrayal of the lives of irregular migrants than I would have gathered if I had used methods of self-report alone (see also Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994).

Unlike in Belgium, there were no political actions in the Netherlands in which irregular migrants were actively involved for me to observe. I did however observe irregular migrants in other contexts in both countries. Nevertheless, I gathered more material in Belgium than I did in the Netherlands. This is because I started my fieldwork in Belgium, and by the time I started fieldwork in the Netherlands my categories were becoming theoretically saturated. After almost three months of fieldwork there, I therefore decided to stop, even though I did not collect the same amount of information as I did in Belgium. Furthermore, as my research does not aim to systematically compare experiences in the two countries and consequently does not need two comparable sets of data, this seemed to be a good decision.

3.2.3 In-depth interviews with irregular migrants

I selected only a few of the irregular migrants I observed for an in-depth interview. I usually only invited a person after I had gathered enough information through participant observation to determine if the respondent's story would be interesting for an interview. This way, I was able to determine beforehand if a respondent would provide me with a story that I had more or less heard before or if an interview would yield new insight. In other words, participant observation allowed

me to sample theoretically. This way I could fill incomplete categories or gaps in my analysis. The participant observation enabled me to predict which respondents would help me in this process. The basic criterion governing the selection of respondents was their predicted theoretical relevance for furthering the development of emerging categories and their properties (see Glaser and Strauss [1967]2006). Although in grounded theory methods, theoretical sampling is about saturating conceptual categories and not about representing a population or increasing the statistical generalizibility, I did try to capture as much variety as I could (see chapter 2) – not only in terms of stories but also with respect to gender, socio-economic background, education, country of origin, age, and length of stay.

All respondents orally consented to serve as 'human subjects', although their perceptions of what this entails diverged considerably. I always tried to explain as best I could, but I am aware of the fact that some might not have fully understood what social scientific research entails. In any case, I did my best to convince my respondents that I would guard their anonymity, though their concerns for this aspect varied greatly as well. While some people were initially anxious about supplying personal data, others straightforwardly asked if their picture could be on the cover of my book. In cases such as the latter I chose not to interview the person for reasons of personal protection, as I believed such persons could not properly foresee the consequences of participating in my research. In other word, in some cases I felt I had to protect the migrants in question, even though I had their consent, because I felt that they did not have proper knowledge of what they consented to.

Most respondents agreed to be interviewed because they wanted to help me get ahead in my career. After all, I knew most respondents quite well through my involvement in their lives by participant observation. In other cases, they granted me an interview as a favor to an intermediate person or to ask for attention for the situation of irregular migrants. The latter category could be particularly difficult to interview, as these people tended to talk about the injustice they felt was being done to irregular migrants in general. They often talked about other people who had been less fortunate, because their own lives did not serve well as illustrations for the struggles they believe many irregular migrants go through. In some of these cases, it took much effort to get them to talk about their own lives instead.

I did not give participants any monetary compensation for their time, although I always bought them a small gift as a token of my appreciation. Gifts usually consisted of fresh fruits. After the interview, most people were thankful, not

so much for the gift, but for the fact that someone had taken that much time to properly listen to their story. All respondents offered to answer more questions if necessary, and many asked if I wanted to interview other people they knew. As I did not want to interview too many people belonging to the same social networks, I accepted this offer only in a limited number of cases.

I used a reflexive and conversational approach in the interviews, because this had proved useful in other studies involving irregular migrants (see for example Hagan 1994). During the first few interviews I brought a paper listing the interview topics I wanted to discuss, but I no longer needed this structure in later stages. The shortest interview took about an hour, whereas the longest interview lasted over nine hours (in three sessions). Most interviews took between two and three hours and were held in Dutch, English, French or Spanish. Quotations were translated into English by me. Many of the respondents invited me to their homes, so the interview could take place there. In case someone did not want the interview to take place in their home, I invited them to mine. Apart from the comfort of private homes, I have also interviewed in a park (depending on the weather conditions), in a public library or in an office supplied by organizations for welfare work. Two respondents did not want the conversation to be recorded. In one of those cases the woman said that she did not like the way her voice sounded on tape, and in the other case the man was very emotional and indicated that he did not want evidence of his crying on tape. In these two cases I made extensive notes.

Because I asked open questions I could pick up and pursue specific themes that came up during an interview. Furthermore, after each interview I listened to it again and wrote codes and memos. Following grounded theory methods, I analyzed my data while I was still in the process of gathering material. By comparing each new interview to the previous interviews, I could return to the field and gather focused data that enabled me to answer analytic questions or to fill conceptual gaps (see Charmaz 2006). In this sense, the interviewing I did came to differ from conventional interviewing, because I narrowed the range of interview topics as I proceeded with my research in order to develop my theoretical framework.

Because the migrants who were interviewed by the research assistants belonged to large ethnic communities, I made sure to interview members of smaller communities as well in order to capture enough variety. The migrants I interviewed myself were from countries as diverse as Algeria, Bangladesh, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Congo, Cuba, Ecuador, Ghana, Guatemala, Guinea, India, Iran,

Kazakhstan, Morocco, Mauritania, Moldova, Nepal, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Surinam, Syria, Turkey, and Uzbekistan. In total, I have conducted 45 in-depth interviews with irregular migrants, 37 in Belgium and 8 in the Netherlands (see appendix 2 for an overview). This explicit aim for variety is what distinguishes my research from many other studies, as these have mostly focused on one or a few nationality groups or on a specific type of migration, such as labor migration (see for example Engbersen et al. 2006; 1999; Grzymala-Kazlowska 2005; Leman 1997; Mahler 1995; Hagan 1994; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994, Jordan and Düvell 2002; Kalir 2005a; Kosic and Triandafyllidou 2004; Lazaridis and Romaniszyn 1998; Leerkes et al. 2004; Massey et al. 2004; Paspalanova 2006; Portes and Bach 1985; Roer-Strier and Olshtain-Mann 1999; Staring 2001; Van Nieuwenhuyze 2009).

3.2.4 In-depth interviews with organizations

I have conducted open-ended interviews with organizations in Flanders and Brussels in 2006 and in The Netherlands in 2007. These organizations all had contact with irregular migrants, albeit in very different ways. The organizations included for example those involved in general welfare work, (semi-)governmental policy institutions, local authorities, and NGO's. Other respondents who worked for government-sponsored organizations were active in the fields of drug addiction, education, health, local welfare, and prostitution. I used some of these organizations to get in contact with irregular migrants. In total, I conducted 61 in-depth interviews with organizations, 51 in Belgium and 10 in the Netherlands (see appendix 3 for an overview). The organizations I interviewed in Belgium were located in Antwerp, Brussels, Ghent, Mechelen, Sint-Niklaas and Leuven, and the organizations in the Netherlands were in The Hague and Utrecht. The interviews provided me with insight into what both non-governmental and governmental organizations can do and do do for irregular migrants in practice. The interviews with semi-governmental and governmental organizations provide me with insight into local policy practices beyond the level of policy documents. Moreover, the experiences of several organizations that have daily contact with irregular migrants allowed for cross-validation of the material I gathered from irregular migrants themselves.

Almost all interviews with organizations were conducted in Dutch and recorded on tape. In only a few cases I assessed that notes were enough. These concerned organizations that were active in the so-called second or third line, which

involved policy-related work rather than daily contact with irregular migrants. All quotations were translated into English by me.

3.3 USE OF DATA THROUGHOUT THIS STUDY

The typology that is constructed in this thesis mostly relies on the in-depth interviews with irregular migrants and the participant observation. The semi-structured interviews with irregular migrants mainly served as a means of comparison in the first stages, and later on they served as checks for the conjectures I developed during the research process. Hence, whereas the analytical categories were formed during my own fieldwork – in the interaction with irregular migrants – the semi-structured interviews provided me with much empirical content and allowed me to achieve saturation of my categories much faster than I would have without them. In other words, the typology is grounded in both types of interviews, as well as in the participant observation.

The interviews with organizations mostly served as a means of cross-validation and do not form the backbone of my analysis. After all, this thesis is about the lives of irregular migrants, and they do not necessarily interact with organizations. The interviews greatly helped me to get a sense of the context in terms of laws and regulations and have therefore highly informed the next chapter. Sometimes they gave me ideas about themes to pursue in interviews or talks with irregular migrants. All in all, although the typology is not so much grounded in this data source, the research process and hence the process of theory construction have been informed by these interviews.

3.4 METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

Scholars who use qualitative research methods – especially when participant observation is included – often face questions about the methods they have used to collect, analyze and interpret their data. Unlike quantitative research, methods are not standardized, and the success of qualitative research heavily depends on the competences of the researcher and his or her actions during the research process. To be able to judge the quality of the research, it is therefore important to have insight into the research process. I have already provided much information on the research process in the previous sections. This section deals with a more detailed discussion of how I have tried to ensure I gathered high quality data.

Validity is considered a major strength of participant observation because researchers live with their respondents for a long period during which they get to know people well (Schensul et al. 1999). This allows for both continuous data analysis and opportunities to refine constructs so that they match sociological categories as well as participant realities. However, participant observation also brings some threats to validity, threats that I tried to avoid as much as possible. Observation is for example always filtered through the researcher's interpretative frames. The challenge for me has therefore been to transform the observations I made during my fieldwork into complete and accurate field notes. Doing so, I have always separated the observations themselves from my reflections on them, and I have kept exact quotes made by respondents intact as much as possible.

3.4.1 Establishing trust

The most important threat to validity in my research is that the irregular migrants I observed and interviewed might have lied to me. A major issue in research on irregular migrants concerns the establishment of trust between the researcher and the irregular migrant. Very few migrants would consent to be interviewed without properly knowing the researcher and the context and objectives of his or her research. To a certain extent this is an issue in all social science research, but there are reasons why it is more problematic in research on irregular migrants compared to other social groups (cf. Düvell et al. 2009). First, irregular migrants are not allowed to live in the receiving society; their presence is illegal. Respondents must therefore trust the researcher not to report them to the police. Second, many irregular migrants engage in illegal activities, such as informal employment, in order to make a living. The researcher must therefore be trusted by respondents not to report their illegal activities to the police. Third, some irregular migrants engage in activities that many people find morally questionable, such as bogus marriages. Many people are reluctant to talk about such issues with a stranger who 'might not understand'. Fourth, some people live with lies such as untruthful asylum or regularization applications and do not want their true stories to become known out of fear of some kind of repercussion. Fifth, some irregular migrants may not want to talk about their engagements in illegal or morally questionable activities, not so much out of personal fear for the police, but because they do not want to damage the image of irregular migrants in general.

All this means that research on irregular migrants is difficult, as the researcher has to make sure that any initial distrust is removed and that trust is constructed, which involves hard work and thorough planning. With regard to the semi-structured interviews, trust was usually established because the interviewers had similar ethnic backgrounds. But even then, it was very useful if respondents were referred by people they knew, as this greatly contributed to the establishment of trust. The interviewers made notes concerning the behavior of the respondents during the interview. From these notes, it appeared that most respondents were very open and cooperative. Only a few respondents refused to answer some questions. These mainly concerned questions about the area they lived in.

I used participant observation and referral by other people as a means to establish trust for the interviews I conducted myself, which I believe worked out very well. However, in a few cases I met irregular migrants in the street, which meant that trust had to be build from scratch. In such cases, I met a few times with these respondents for more casual talks before I asked them for an interview. These casual talks took place in public spaces to ensure my own safety. Partly for the same reason, I usually waited until I had met some of their close friends or family members before inviting them for an interview. Being acquainted with their kin and friends also enabled me to verify a lot of the information these respondents gave me and thus contributed to validity.

Overall, I have good reasons to suppose that the people I interviewed told me the truth about their lives. If I questioned an individual's honesty and openness, I chose not to interview this person. Moreover, during participant observation people told me about their lives. Later on some of them confided in me and told me that they had lied to me before and offered to tell me their real life story. This is especially salient since for some of them, this new story differed from the story they continued to sell to the press and to the organizations and churches that supported them. This means that because of the participant observation, I noticed how some irregular migrants initially distrusted me and told me the 'politically altered versions' of their lives. After winning their trust they told me that they had lied before. In all these cases, I had not interviewed these respondents before because I doubted their honesty. These turned out to be valid judgments. Moreover, many people told me things which were not in their interest. Some have for example told me that they had applied for asylum using made-up stories. Others told me that they were engaged in a bogus marriage in order to get legalized or that they intended to do so. Most importantly, because I was involved in their lives through participant

observation I could verify their stories to a great extent. Because I also interviewed people in organizations who deal with irregular migrants, I was even able to cross-validate much data in multiple ways.

3.4.2 Reflections on the personal identity of the researcher

Apart from validity issues concerning trust, I am also highly aware of the fact that my personal identity as a Dutch woman might have influenced the answers respondents gave me. While it was easy for respondents in Belgium to talk badly of Belgium or Belgians, interviewees in the Netherlands might have refrained from criticizing Dutch customs out of fear of offending me. I do not believe that such issues have seriously affected the quality of the data, as respondents in the Netherlands usually openly expressed negative opinions of the Dutch and the Netherlands. However, it is possible that they toned down their criticism. It is therefore important to be aware of this possibility to be able to see how it might have influenced the results.

My identity as a woman has obviously had the benefit of making it relatively easy to interview and observe women. A man could for example not have participated in the monthly event in The Hague where irregular migrant women from all kinds of nationalities came together to cook and dine. At the same time my female identity has also inspired some male respondents to participate. From the outset of my study I noticed how some men were eager to talk to me and how they actively tried to acquire information about my marital status. Few have gone as far as actually proposing marriage, and in only one case was I made an indecent proposal. Nevertheless, I was aware that my identity as a woman affected the willingness of people to participate. However, I believe my attitude in dealing with men who made marriage-related inquiries ensured that they usually stopped these attempts after a while, and consequently this has not seriously affected the quality of the data. These men ceased their efforts after I told them nicely that I knew what they were doing and why they did it, but that their attempts were futile. On occasion, my bluntness inspired a lively discussion on the ethics of bogus marriages. My identity as a woman could have caused a sample bias towards men who were trying to get papers through marriage. That is why I made sure to also include in my sample men who were married already or who morally opposed bogus marriages.

Furthermore, I do not believe that my female identity influenced the answers men or women gave me on gender-related issues. Although I have never expressed my opinion on such matters, respondents could have believed that I do not adhere to traditional gender roles, because I am both highly educated and working fulltime. Nevertheless, many men and women did not hesitate to express very conservative opinions concerning the division of housework and care for children. Some men felt free to label women as bitches and whores or to claim that men and women are unequal in other than biological respects. Perhaps my efforts to come across as gender neutral in terms of clothing have been successful. Overall, I think my identity as a woman has more likely been a benefit than a disadvantage.

3.5 CONCLUSION

I have argued that I use a grounded theory approach in my research because it fits with my aims to inductively focus on agency. I have used multiple data sources such as participant observation and in-depth interviews with irregular migrants to theoretically saturate the core categories that emerged during my fieldwork which ensures validity through triangulation. The population of irregular immigrants in Europe is extremely diverse (Düvell 2006a), and long-term fieldwork within one neighborhood alone would not capture the variation in lifestyles among irregular migrants (Chavez 1991). I have therefore located respondents to observe and interview in numerous settings, neighborhoods and cities, and I have sampled theoretically to make sure that my sample contained enough diversity in terms of gender, socio-economic background, country of origin, length of stay, education and age. My sample therefore contains much more variety than those of many other studies.

Researching a hidden population like irregular migrants is always problematic in terms of methodology. I have described how I have tried to ensure the quality of the data that I gathered. Nevertheless, some problems may have remained. In such cases, awareness of how these might have influenced the results and openness about such possible effects are crucial in enabling people to evaluate the quality of my research properly. In this chapter and throughout this thesis, I have therefore tried to be as open as possible, without giving away too much information that could lead to the identification of individual participants (cf. Düvell et al 2009).

CHAPTER 4

IMMIGRATION POLICIES IN THE LOW COUNTRIES

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Immigration policies play a decisive role in the allocation of life chances to irregular migrants (Baganha et al. 2006; Burgers 1998; Engbersen et al. 2007; Menjivar 2006b; Samers 2003). As governments create opportunities and impose barriers to irregular migrants, state policies shape their window of opportunity and their room to maneuver. In addition, policies may also affect the choices that irregular migrants make within this window of opportunity (Cyrus and Vogel 2006; Hollifield 2004). Furthermore, the room to maneuver that policies create is not limited to the boundaries of the receiving nation state: policies are believed to affect even irregular migrants' transnational interactions (Waldinger and Fitzgerald 2004).

Next to the impact governments can have by formulating laws and policies, the ways in which these are implemented in practice affect the lives of irregular migrants as well (Van der Leun 2003b; 2006). Research findings indicate that migrants actively react to the ways in which they perceive the implementation of policies (Cyrus and Vogel 2006), and it is widely acknowledged that the gaps between policies on irregular migration and their implementation can be large (Van der Leun 2003b). Any study of the lives of irregular migrants should therefore not only look at how policies are formulated, but also at how these are implemented in practice. However, so far "there is little insight into the concerted processes that take place within these gaps." (Van der Leun 2006: 311).

I have interviewed informants who work in organizations which deal with irregular migrants. Some of these informants interact with irregular migrants on a daily basis, while others are active on the level of policy-making. These organizations are active in fields such as health care, education, welfare and integration. Because I interviewed staff at these organizations I have gathered some insight into the processes that take place within these 'gaps' between policies and practices. However, I chose not to devote a separate chapter to describing these

processes, as this goes beyond the scope of this dissertation. This chapter therefore mostly describes how laws are formulated. Implementation practices are discussed in this and in the next chapters where they are relevant, which is in those cases where they affect the incorporation or transnational activities of irregular migrants discussed there or their aspirations.

The same applied to the rights irregular migrants can claim in the receiving society. According to Hollifield (2004: 901) we have seen a gradual extension of rights granted to non-nationals after the First World War, to the point where individuals have acquired a sort of international legal personality. Irregular migrants are therefore not totally excluded, but they have some rights that are partly rooted in supranational agreements and international human rights discourses. They for example have the right to imperative medical care and publicly financed legal assistance, and children have the right to education (Bafekr 1999; Kromhout et al. 2008; Van der Leun 2003b; 2006). Because of their supranational roots these rights are the same in Belgium and the Netherlands, but the way they are implemented in practice differs between the countries. In both countries, irregular migrants can for example get access to urgent medical care, but it is organized in different ways. In those cases where they are relevant for the scope of this dissertation, I deal with these diverging practices in the following chapters.

Most of the information from organizations applied to the level of implementation, but sometimes it also concerned the level of policy formulation. As governments are not always transparent in the information they provide on their policies of immigration control, this sometimes proved very helpful.

4.2 HISTORY

Regulation of migration is not a new phenomenon, but something that has taken place for centuries (Eijl 2008; Schrover et al. 2008b). However, for a long time states did not formulate rules on entry, stay and exit of aliens, but local authorities have (Schrover et al. 2008b; Torpey 2000). In the Netherlands, it was not until 1849 that the Aliens Act was passed and that conditions for entry and deportation were transferred from the local to the national level (Eijl 2008). At that time, rules were not enforced; state control on mobility of people only increased when the governments' interest in welfare and labor market regulation rose in the early twentieth century (Schrover et al. 2008b) and as a result of the First World War (Moch 2003). But even then, migration was not referred to as 'illegal'. In the Netherlands, Jewish refugees

who arrived in 1938 and onwards were the first group of aliens who were referred to as 'illegal' in public discourse and government documents (Eijl 2008).

The birth of the idea of irregular migrants in the Low Countries is generally associated with the emergence of the modern nation state after the First World War (Düvell 2006b; Moch 2003; Torpey 2000). Yet it was not until after the Second World War that irregular migrant workers started to arrive in the Low Countries in unprecedented numbers (Moch 2003). At this time, irregular migration emerged as a generalized fact in all western economies, because these started to recruit guest workers due to labor market shortages (Sassen 1999). Belgium and the Netherlands were among the main receiving countries of immigration in this post-war period (Düvell 2006b; Moch 2003). Workers from Southern European countries as well as from Northern Africa and Turkey could travel freely to these receiving countries and could formalize their stay after they had started to work (Martiniello and Rea 2003; Van Amersfoort et al. 1999). These irregular migrants were considered welcome 'guests' needed to alleviate the shortages in the labor market. However, when labor shortages decreased due to the economic downturn in the seventies, immigration policies became more restrictive, and efforts were increasingly directed towards the prevention of irregular immigration (Martiniello 2003). Whereas irregular migrants had been welcomed as 'spontaneous labor migrants' in the past; from the 1980s onwards these immigration flows were regarded as a problem in the Low Countries (Burgers 1999b; Engbersen 1997; Entzinger 2003; Martiniello and Rea 2003).

Since the early eighties, European governments have steadily become more concerned with controlling immigration (Brochmann 1999a). Irregular immigration was declared a topic on the level of the European Community in 1985 (Düvell 2006b: 26). In the early nineties the first references were made to policies to "combat" irregular immigration (Düvell 2006b: 28). Most western states have now developed exclusionary policies to avoid irregular migration (Engbersen et al. 2007) and have become increasingly inventive in creating measures to exclude, apprehend and expel irregular migrants as effectively as possible (Engbersen and Broeders 2009; Uehling 2004). Irregular migrants are now at the top of policy agendas (Broeders and Engbersen 2007), but in spite of all the attention, the presence of irregular migrants remains a fact of life. Recent estimates indicate that over 120,000 irregular migrants reside in the Netherlands (Van der Heijden et al. 2006) and over 100,000 in Belgium (Van Meeteren et al. 2007b). Governments have two types of policies at their disposal to control irregular immigration: policies aimed at controlling the external

borders and policies aimed at guarding the internal boundaries. These two types of control are discussed in the following sections.

4.3 EXTERNAL CONTROL POLICIES

Initially, restrictive policies to prevent and control irregular migration were mainly targeted at the external borders. The construction of a 'fortress Europe' expanded during the1990s: visa requirements became stricter, and physical barriers were erected along the land borders of Europe in order to keep people out (Albrecht 2002). Walls similar to those along the Mexican-US border (Andreas 2000) can be found in the enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla in Morocco and along the new EU borders in Poland. These walls have been strengthened with guards, watch towers, fences and state of the art technology (Broeders 2009).

In addition to its land borders, Europe has had to control its large maritime borders, which are more difficult to guard because they involve an area instead of a line (Carling 2007b). Over the last decade and a half, Spain has invested heavily in surveillance of its maritime borders, intercepting along its shores on average 350 African boat migrants every week (Carling 2007a). Yet in spite of all the increased efforts that have been made, border controls have proved only partially effective in controlling irregular immigration (Brochmann 1999b; Cornelius 2005). This is because many irregular migrants enter legally and only become irregular migrants while in the receiving society: once their visas expire or when they are denied asylum (Black et al. 2005; Burgers and Engbersen 1999; Van Meeteren et al. 2008). Furthermore, even if migrants are apprehended, they have proved difficult to expel (Van der Leun 2003b). In 2002 and 2003 only about a quarter of the migrants who arrived in Spain – a major destination for irregular migrants from Africa – were expelled. The remainder were released from detention and either stayed in Spain or travelled to other European countries like the Low Countries (Carling 2007b). In addition, European borders are simply too extensive to completely turn into steel and concrete, making them difficult to control effectively (Broeders 2009). Moreover, beyond a certain level of control the costs of avoiding irregular migration exceed the 'damage' caused by irregular immigration, suggesting that the optimal degree of irregular immigration is greater than zero (Entorf 2002; Hillman and Weiss 1999; Jahn and Straubhaar 1999). Therefore, it is unlikely that governments will invest in making controls hundred percent effective.

Furthermore, human smugglers constantly find new ways to circumvent controls (Heckmann 2004; Pijpers and Van der Velde 2007), for example by changing operating routes (Okólski 2000). Researchers claim that human smugglers have become increasingly important in facilitating irregular migration (Cornelius 2005; Derluyn and Broekaert 2005; Jandl 2007; Staring 2003). Human smugglers facilitate illegal exit, transit and entry; they provide fraudulent or stolen travel documents; they provide information on border control, immigration control and asylum procedures; and they coach migrants on how to deceive immigration and law enforcement authorities (Schloenhardt 2001)., Similarly, smuggled migrants are often given detailed instructions by their smugglers on how to use the asylum system as part of their migration strategy (Bilger, Hofmann and Jandl 2006). Human smugglers have proven to be highly flexible: in response to new migration or asylum regulations and to changes in visa regimes, they change their operating routes and transit countries. Furthermore, forgers continuously update their equipment for forging papers and use modern computer technology to improve the quality of falsifications (Jandl 2007). The adaptability that human smugglers display makes it very difficult for states to control their external borders effectively and has made practices of external control resemble games of 'cat and mouse' (Heckmann 2004).

Apart from external control policy being ineffective, it also has important unwanted side-effects. Along with the increased controls, fatal accidents have increased and are now the order of the day (Carling 2007b; Spijkerboer 2007). As migrant smugglers try to circumvent the most heavily controlled areas, boats now leave from as far as Senegal, making the trip all the more dangerous: it is estimated that for every 100 interceptions there has been 1 death (Carling 2007b), and the number of deaths is increasing (Spijkerboer 2007). In addition, the line between human smuggling and trafficking has become blurred: human smugglers sometimes use the same 'safe houses' to store smuggled irregular migrants and trafficked prostitutes (Leman and Janssens 2007). Furthermore, as the risks involved become higher (Donato et al. 2008; Eschbach 1999) the financial costs of entry increase as well (Baganha et al. 2006; Cornelius 2005). Long distance smuggling fees to Belgium now vary between 3,000 and 40,000 euros, medium distance between 1,500 and 6,000 and short-distance between 200 and 5,000 (Kaizen and Nonneman 2007). Dutch findings indicate that smuggling fees have doubled since 2001 and that irregular migrants from Somalia now pay an average amount of 7,000 dollars and migrants from Iraq between 3,000 and 10,000 dollars (Van Liempt 2007). The result of these increased costs is that irregular migrants tend to stay as long as possible once they get in,

whilst migrants from visa-free countries may come repeatedly, but also leave again voluntarily after a short period of time. The further away the country of origin and the tighter the restrictions, the more likely it becomes that initially mobile migrants who otherwise may have come and gone, stay and become irregular migrants (Düvell 2006c).

All in all, external control policies are only partially effective, and they create undesired side effects. When governments started to realize that they could not control their external borders effectively, they increasingly turned to policies of internal control (Brochmann 1999a, Broeders 2009). When irregular migrants cannot be stopped from entering the country, the aim becomes to exclude them from formal institutions and to discourage them in the hope that they might leave voluntarily. The internal control policies exercised by the Belgian and Dutch authorities are discussed in the next section.

4.4 INTERNAL CONTROL POLICIES

Governments who rely on internal control policies acknowledge that not all irregular migrants can be stopped at the external borders and aim to exclude them and discourage them from staying. According to Broeders and Engbersen (2007: 1593), states hope that exclusion and discouragement "complicate and frustrate living and working conditions to such a degree that they will turn around and try their luck elsewhere." A wide array of policy measures have been developed both on the level of the European Union as well as on the level of individual nation states in order to do so (Broeders 2009). Examples include exclusion from public services; surveillance by the police; policies of identification, detention and expulsion; and labor market control (Engbersen and Broeders 2009). These different forms of internal control policies are discussed in subsequent subsections.

4.4.1 Exclusion from public services

During the days of labor recruitment migrants could easily open bank accounts, take out state medical insurance and enroll in educational programs. Over the years, governments in both Belgium and the Netherlands have invented policies to deny irregular migrants access to such public institutions. An important centerpiece of such policies in the Netherlands is the Dutch Benefit Entitlement (Residence Status) Act that was enacted in 1998 to exclude irregular migrants from tax-supported

public services such as social assistance, public housing, education for adults and nonemergency health care (Broeders and Engbersen 2007). This Act is commonly referred to as the Linking Act, as it was designed to link access to a whole range of public and semi-public provisions to a valid residence status (Engbersen 1999a; Van der Leun 2003b).

Whereas the Linking Act closed access to public services in the Netherlands at once, Belgium restricted access to public provisions bit by bit, using different decrees and policy measures. These ensured that irregular migrants were much more excluded in Belgium than in the Netherlands before the Linking Act was introduced there. The level of public exclusion has been very high in Belgium over the last decades (Kagné 2000; Suárez-Orozco 1995), yet the organizations I interviewed indicate that it is nowadays somewhat higher in the Netherlands than in Belgium. In other words, while exclusion in Belgium used to be more stringent than in the Netherlands, the cards have been reversed over the recent years.

The Linking Act in the Netherlands and different policy measures in Belgium mean to exclude irregular migrants from all types of social care except for those that the government is obliged to provide according to provisions of international human rights treaties it has signed. NGO´s and lawyers constantly battle with national states over the implementation of international agreements which sometimes leads to agreements in which irregular migrants are given access to specific provisions. As a result of such actions, parents who have children without a legal residence status can for example nowadays get child support.

Likewise, in Belgium former asylum seekers who have filed a second appeal in their asylum procedure – and consequently reside illegally – are granted a limited amount of social care by the Belgian government. In practice this usually means they are allowed to reside in an asylum center (Berx 2007). In Belgium, in June 2006, more than 12,000 people lived in the federal asylum structures, of which almost 7,000 were irregular migrants (Van Meeteren et al. 2008). Although in some cases the central Dutch government also sponsors the housing of irregular migrants who are allowed to stay in the country to await the final decision of an appeal, these numbers do not come anywhere near the Belgian figures. The huge numbers in Belgium are believed to be caused by the slow administration of this process. Many irregular migrants file this appeal, so that they could buy themselves some extra time, on average three years (Van Meeteren et al. 2008).

While the national governments have invented policies to exclude irregular migrants, local authorities have usually been left to cope with the problem of their continuous presence. In the Netherlands the government even formally forbids the local authorities to provide aid to irregular migrants. Local organizations are subsidized for taking care of homeless people and to provide food to people in need, but they only receive government funding for people who reside legally (see also Rusinovic et al. 2002). Any aid provided to irregular migrants therefore has to come out of their own pockets, meaning that it has to be privately financed. Organizations therefore tend to be secretive about the help they provide and only do so in locations tucked away in areas outside of the city center and out of sight of the general public.

While this is basically the same in the federal state of Belgium, the Flemish authorities have developed policies in order to provide local care to irregular migrants. Acknowledging that local authorities have to deal with this group of people who may be in need, policies have been developed to do this, and limited funds have been allocated for this purpose (Van Meeteren et al. 2008). While in practice it also means that organizations have to gather private funding, organizations do not have to be secretive about it and can aid irregular migrants out in the open.

All in all, the effectiveness of this strategy of internal control by means of exclusion from public provisions has proven to be limited (cf. West and Moore 1989). Instead of having a deterrent effect, the restrictions provoke migrants to dive deeper into invisible activities (Van der Leun and Kloosterman 2006). Furthermore, irregular migrants are not only increasingly beyond the grasp of enforcement authorities, but also out of reach of those institutions that safeguard basic social and labor rights (Düvell 2006b: 21). States are therefore increasingly turning to policies of identification as a means of internal control.

4.4.2 Policies of identification

Since traditional policies of internal control aimed at exclusion and discouragement are ineffective, states are trying to develop more effective means of discouraging irregular migrants. Broeders (2009) documents a paradigm shift in which governments are replacing the traditional policies of exclusion with new methods of identification and registration. According to Broeders and Engbersen (2007: 1595) "the keywords for the internal control on irregular migrants" have now become

"surveillance and identification" because in order to effectively expel people it is crucial for states to know their real identity. Northern European Union member states have therefore intensified internal surveillance of irregular migrants in recent years (Broeders and Engbersen 2007).

The main examples of these new European policies revolve around identification by means of biometrical features. The fingerprints of migrants who enter the asylum procedure are for example registered in Eurodac. This system was originally designed to prevent migrants from applying for asylum in more than one European country, but it is now used in the fight against irregular migration. In addition to fingerprints of asylum seekers, the fingerprints of migrants who enter on a visa will be registered in the Visa Information System (VIS) that is currently under construction (Broeders and Engbersen 2007). This system will make it possible to identify irregular migrants who overstay their visa. Furthermore, the information stored also includes the details of the person who issues the invitation and hence can be held accountable for a possible overstay of the visa (Broeders 2007). While my respondents did not yet face the barriers imposed by the VIS-system, Eurodac was already in operation during my fieldwork.

With these new measures, European states counter irregular migrants and especially aim at identifying those who try to hide their true identity (Engbersen and Broeders 2009). It is no longer sufficient to determine if someone belongs because in order to expel someone, it is necessary to establish his or her identity (Broeders 2009). Migrants in turn are reacting: recent news reports for example indicate that some migrants mutilate their fingertips so that they cannot be properly identified (Trouw, 24 april 2009). As a consequence, policies aimed at irregular migrants and the actions of irregular migrants to circumvent these resemble an arms race in which action provokes reaction (Broeders and Engbersen 2007). It remains to be seen who will be the winners of this 'tug-of-war'. According to Hagan et al. (2008) deportation policy does not end irregular immigration, but it simply raises the human costs for migrants and their families. Moreover, Broeders and Engbersen (2007) argue that it is likely that irregular migrants will continue to come, but they will in reaction go further underground, which will make them more dependent on human smugglers and other intermediaries.

The creation of databases in which information on identity and itinerary of specific groups of immigrants is stored facilitates the strategy of detention and expulsion for governments (Engbersen and Broeders 2009). If an irregular migrant is

detained his or her identity can more easily be established, which makes it easier for the authorities to expel the migrant in question. This strategy of detention and expulsion is discussed in the next subsection.

4.4.3 Detention and expulsion

Irregular migrants with different migration histories face different risks of being stopped by the police. For irregular migrants who do not face visa restrictions and can travel with their passports, police controls are often meaningless. Dates of entry are not always stamped in passports which means that they can easily avoid internal controls by pretending to be tourists (Triandafyllidou and Kosic 2006). For migrants who cannot pretend to be tourists, these controls may be frustrating. Some therefore choose to buy false documents. Explicit internal control mechanisms such as ID cards make life more difficult for irregular migrants, but they do not prevent them from coming (Brochmann 1999b).

Illegal entry or stay is considered an offense under Belgian law, punishable with a fine and/or detention up to three months (Van Meeteren et al. 2008). In the Netherlands, it is not punishable (Broeders 2009). Even though the legal grounds are different, in both countries the practice is that irregular migrants are incarcerated in special detention centers in order to be expelled. Broeders and Engbersen (2007: 1602) signal a general trend throughout Europe toward increased detention of irregular immigrants. Most irregular migrants who are held in detention centers have not committed any crime; their only offence is being in a country without the necessary documents (Broeders and Engbersen 2007). Detention of irregular migrants is therefore different from criminal incarceration: it is detention without court trial and referred to as 'administrative detention' (Schinkel 2009). Furthermore, irregular migrants are not held in regular prisons, but in specially erected detention centers or expulsion centers. Whereas irregular migrants can be detained for a maximum period of five months in Belgium, there was no such limit in the Netherlands when I conducted my fieldwork there (Schinkel 2009). Although the goal of imprisonment is expulsion, in the Netherlands, fewer than half of the detained irregular migrants are effectively expelled from the country (Van Kalmthout et al. 2005 cited in Broeders and Engbersen 2007: 1602). In the Netherlands, the detention capacity increased from fewer than a thousand places to 3,100 in 2007 (Van Kalmthout 2007). In Belgium, around 7,000 irregular migrants are detained each year, but due to faster processing the average 'stock' of irregular

migrants in detention is around 500 individuals[4]. The Belgian authorities are also more successful at expulsion: around seventy per cent of detainees are expelled each year[5].

Governments hold irregular migrants in detention centers in the hope that they will reveal their identity or at least be cooperative in establishing it. According to Broeders and Engbersen (2007: 1596) irregular migrants can only be expelled "when identity, nationality, and (preferably) migration history can be established." These authors discern two categories of detainees who raise problems for expulsion polices. First, migrants who refuse to cooperate and frustrate the progress of procedures, for example by stating a false name or by supplying an incorrect country of origin. The second group consists of migrants who cooperate in acquiring the relevant travel documents, but who cannot return because the authorities in their countries of origin refuse to accept them or because of specific political problems there (Broeders and Engbersen 2007: 1602).

Broeders and Engbersen (2007: 1606) argue that in the past, the main strategy that irregular migrants had to avoid expulsion was telling a lie about their identity. This proved to be a very effective weapon of resistance: they had to keep up this lie for a while until they were released. However, this 'weapon of the weak' is now targeted by new policies of surveillance and identification. It remains to be seen to what extent the efforts of irregular migrants to hide their identity continue to be effective in the future.

4.4.4 Labor market control

As many irregular migrants engage in informal labor, controlling the labor market is an important tool for controlling irregular migration. According to Brochmann (1999b: 323) it seems that "efficiency of immigration policy is more a question of the ability to supervise the labor market than of policing the national borders: it revolves on the state's ability to prevent employers from hiring undocumented workers and its ability to maintain generally high standards of employment conditions."

Both in Belgium and in the Netherlands, irregular migrants are not allowed to work, and if they are caught doing informal labor, the authorities try to deport them (Broeders 2009; Leerkes et al. 2004; Van Meeteren et al. 2008). Although Belgium and the Netherlands take the same stance towards informal work, there are important reasons to believe that nowadays, it is easier for irregular migrants to find

a job in Belgium than it is in the Netherlands, whereas in the past it was the other way around.

In the Netherlands irregular migrants used to be able to work formally by obtaining a 'social-fiscal number' (sofi-number) (Engbersen 1999c). In 1991, the government made sure that irregular migrants could no longer acquire these. Since then the Netherlands has severely tightened the net around the labor market and considerably increased its controls (Kromhout et al. 2008). In 1994, identification became compulsory at the workplace, and in 1998 the Linking Act was enacted which made sure that migrants who had acquired a legal social-fiscal number before 1991 could no longer work using this number. Since 2000, employers must keep a copy of their employees' identification on file (Broeders 2009). Furthermore, controls on irregular labor have intensified over the last years (Kromhout et al. 2008). Since 2006, employers who do not cooperate in establishing the identity of employees are charged with a criminal offense and fined accordingly (Broeders 2009). Since 2005, an employer is fined 8,000 euros per illegally employed worker and 12,000 in case of repetition (Broeders 2009), while cases that date just a few years back report that employers usually had to pay around 1,000 euros (Benseddik and Bijl 2004).

Contrary to the Netherlands, the possibility of irregular migrants obtaining work permits had been precluded long before 1991 in Belgium. Very few irregular migrants have therefore managed to find entry to the formal labor market there (Adam et al. 2002; Van Meeteren et al. 2007b; Van Nieuwenhuyze 2009). Like the Dutch government, the Belgian authorities have increased their control of informal labor over the last few years. Since 1999, employers who hire irregular migrants are liable for punishment (Van Meeteren et al. 2008).

Although it used to be easier for irregular migrants to find employment in the Netherlands, as there were legal options there, Belgium seems to be more attractive nowadays. The relative size of its shadow economy is much larger than its Dutch counterpart (Schneider and Klinglmair 2004) and is consequently likely to attract more irregular migrants in search of work (cf. Baldwin-Edwards 1999; Kosic and Triandafyllidou 2004; Reyneri 1999; Ribas-Mateos 2004; Ruspuni 2000; Samers 2005; Williams and Windebank 1995). This is probably related to the degree of control that the governments exercise. Although the number of checks reported by the Belgian social inspection have only moderately increased, the number of checks that involved the police have increased significantly (Adriaenssens et al. 2009).

Nevertheless, the reported increase does not come anywhere near the amount of control exercised in the Netherlands.

4.5 LEGALIZATION

As irregular migrants can be caught by the police and sent to a detention center in order to be expelled, many irregular migrants try to legalize their status. If one is not seriously ill or formally unable to return to his or her home country, there are basically two ways in which irregular migrants can do this: by getting married to a Belgian or Dutch national or someone holding permanent residence rights, or by applying for regularization.

Engaging in marriage seems to be the dominant strategy in the Low Countries (Engbersen 1999b; Staring 1998; Van Nieuwenhuyze 2009). Sometimes marriages stem from love relationships, but bogus marriages are also not uncommon among irregular migrants (see Mazzucato 2005; Staring 1998). Governments both in Belgium and in the Netherlands have developed policies to discourage irregular migrants from entering bogus marriages (Broeders 2009; Van Meeteren et al. 2007b). Not only are marriages refused if they are suspected to be fake (Van Liempt 2007; Van Meeteren 2007b), a couple has to remain married for quite some time: in the Netherlands, after 3 years of marriage the partner may receive a temporary stay independent of his or her partner (Van der Leun 2003b)[6], in Belgium this is possible after 2 years.[7]

Although both countries have stepped up their measures against bogus marriages, it is very difficult to determine the effects, partly because the implementation of these policies differs even from city to city. Martijn[8], a social worker in Antwerp explains:

> It is always Antwerp where most problems arise and most difficulties are made around bogus marriages. (...) In Antwerp you become a suspect of a bogus marriage very quickly. Sometimes an investigation in bogus marriage is started before an official application for marriage has been filed. That is actually unlawful but it happens nevertheless. And very intimate questions are asked to future partners. Sometimes it is really (....) I have the impression that the court in Antwerp is always more compliant [with the immigration services] than courts in other

> cities. (...) Therefore we advise people to move to another city or town, to marry there and then come back.

In addition to getting married, irregular migrants can apply for regularization. They can claim regularization based on 'exceptional circumstances'. The chances of regularization for the average irregular migrants are slim: only about 300 persons per year are granted regularization based on exceptional circumstances (Van Meeteren et al. 2008). Although the exact numbers are not identifiable in public records, news reports have estimated similar numbers in the Netherlands[9]. Both in the Netherlands and in Belgium, criteria for these circumstances are not specified.

In Belgium, most irregular migrants who apply for regularization claim that they should be legalized because they are 'integrated'. This was also what the irregular migrants who engaged in political action advocated (cf. McNevin 2006). Efforts made to learn the native language, letters from natives whom they know well, children in school, and a long length of stay are often the exceptional circumstances migrants try to invoke in order to become regularized. Most lawyers and people who work for organizations who give legal advice recommend that irregular migrants claim integration as a ground for regularization. Petra, who works for a welfare organization in Antwerp, explains how this procedure works in practice:

> you have to prove exceptional circumstances (…) So many people who have applied for asylum or who have lived here for quite a while believe that this is in itself enough to qualify as exceptional circumstance (…) There are a number of criteria that can be invoked but these are not arranged by law (…) if you can prove social bonds (…) if you have clear bonds to people who live here, if your family situation is oriented towards Belgium, so this is actually the proof of integration (…) if you can prove that you have been here for five years and you can prove that you are integrated and that you have built your future here, that you have many social ties here, through school, neighbors, then you can apply on these grounds.

Although criteria are not specified by law, the people I interviewed who worked for organizations kept insisting on integration as a valid criterion. This is the advice organizations and lawyers usually provide to irregular migrants: that they have to work on their integration in order to be eligible for application. As ´integration´ is a vague criterion that can be interpreted in different ways, these applications have

turned into practices of trial and error, making many irregular migrants try and often try more than once (Verstrepen 2007). The same woman explains:

> There is a lot of uncertainty and no clear policy, so you have people who are in the same circumstances who get positive and the others arbitrarily get negative. And this fosters hope, because maybe I am the exception who does get it. You never know (…) so the indistinctness of the criteria fosters hope for a lot of people but it makes them live in miserable circumstances.

Another reason why around fifteen thousand irregular migrants apply for regularization in Belgium each year is that the police tend to tolerate the presence of irregular migrants with pending regularization applications (Van Meeteren et al. 2008). In the Netherlands, the same practice has been common, but the number of applications has decreased because of recent policy changes as Joke, who works for an organization in the Netherlands, explains:

> that is more or less the same as you have in Belgium. (…) Like in Belgium it has the benefit that you cannot be expelled. (…) These types of applications are frequent in the Netherlands (…) Very few get a positive decision though. But all the care facilities are full with this group of people; it is standard procedure that people make this kind of applications. It is not for nothing that the Netherlands has decided at a certain moment to…..the applications used to be done with the municipalities, until last year, and then last year it has been changed to the Immigration Services Box Offices. And the Immigration Services can refuse applications straight away and they can detain directly. (…) so they have created a deterrent and built a system around it to prevent people from making too many applications. It used to be a nice escape, people just asked for a residence permit based on no matter what, and then they would be in the procedure for one and a half years, during which you do not have rights to anything but hey you cannot be expelled either, and that was just a big advantage.

The number of applications is much lower in the Netherlands because irregular migrants who make applications which are found unqualified for application are immediately detained. This way, migrants are discouraged from making false applications. In addition, these practices possibly also deter them from trying at all.

As the possibilities for individual regularization are limited and uncertain, irregular migrants' best chances of legalization are general campaigns for regularization. Such collective regularizations have been carried out all over Europe: in Italy (Mingione and Quassoli 2000: 50-51), Spain (Arango 2000; Hartman 2008), Portugal (Baganha 2000) and Greece (Fakiolas 2000; 2003; Glytsos 2005; Lazaridis and Poyago-Theotoky 1999). Belgium is currently undergoing its third campaign[10], and the Netherlands has had its share of amnesties as well (Benseddik and Bijl 2004).

Belgium had its first general regularization in 1974 and its second in 2000 (Martiniello 2003). During the campaign of 2000, over thirty thousand applications were filed, representing roughly fifty thousand people (Bernard 2000) of many nationalities, among which Congolese and Moroccans were the largest groups (Martiniello 2003). Applicants were required to fulfill one of the following four conditions: "having been engaged in the asylum procedure for an abnormally long period without having been informed of a decision (4 years in general, 3 years for families with minor children); not having the objective possibility of returning to one's country due to, for example, a war; suffering a serious illness; or having lived at least six years in the country without having received any official notification to leave the country during the last five years. This last category of potential applicants is supposed to be integrated in Belgium." (Martiniello 2003: 229- 230)

When I was doing my fieldwork in Belgium in 2006, irregular migrants all over Belgium were occupying churches, some were demonstrating in the streets and some were engaged in hunger strikes. These actions started in reaction to some events that took place in 2005, when a group of 130 irregular migrants occupied a church in Elsene, a district of Brussels. After a prolonged hunger strike, the Minister for Internal Affairs Dewael conceded to their demand for residency, fueling actions all over the country. These actions were organized by UDEP (Union pour la Défense des Sans-Papiers), which is a collective of irregular migrants who fight for the rights of irregular migrants. With the support of several NGOs and semi-governmental organizations across the country, this 'pro-regularization movement' (Laubenthal 2007) managed to propel their demands and influence the government debate on reforming asylum procedures. Furthermore, they managed to get the government to formalize some of the criteria for individual regularization that had informally been used since the last collective regularization. For example, the criterion used during the campaign in 2000 stipulating that migrants who have been enrolled in the asylum procedure for an abnormally long period of time are granted regularization, was now made formal policy.

In addition to the changes in the asylum procedure and the formulation of criteria for regularization, the Belgian authorities decided to issue another general amnesty when my fieldwork had long been finished. Starting in September 2009, irregular migrants could apply for regularization based on a set of special criteria that were valid for a period of three months.[11] During this period, irregular migrants could claim 'durable local embeddedness'. In practice this means that persons who have been in Belgium for 5 years and who had applied for regularization before 2009 could apply. Furthermore, persons who were in Belgium before March 2007 and who could supply a future work contract for a year meet the criteria. It was only possible to claim 'durable local embeddedness' during these three months. About 30,000 people have applied, of which only about 10,000 cases were new applications. The others were individual requests for regularization that had been shifted to the general regularization campaign. Many of my respondents have been or will be legalized as a result of this general amnesty.

In the Netherlands, the last general regularization schemes date back to 1975 and 1979 (Groenendael 1986). After that there have not been any general amnesties; neither have there been any special regularization schemes close to the size of those in Belgium. Throughout the 1990s, there have been a series of amnesties for irregular migrants who have legally worked on the formal labour market. These migrants are commonly referred to as 'white illegals' (Van der Leun 2003b). In 1991 an informal arrangement came into existence known as the 'six years arrangement'. Roughly speaking, irregular migrants who were able to prove that they had worked legally in the last six years were legalized. In 1999 a series of hunger strikes led to the formulation of a similar, yet formal arrangement. In the 1990s, 3,000 people were legalized, while over 5,000 persons were rejected under these arrangements (Benseddik and Bijl 2004).

In 2007 the Dutch government announced another limited amnesty, this time targeting former asylum seekers. Migrants who had applied for asylum prior to April 2001 and who were able to prove that they had stayed in the Netherlands even though their asylum was rejected, or who still had not been rejected were able to apply. In June 2009, 27,700 persons had been legalized.[12] This amnesty coincided with my fieldwork in the Netherlands. I interviewed migrants who had not applied and were sure they would not do so in the future because they did not meet the criteria, either because of their criminal record or because they had never applied for asylum. I also interviewed irregular migrants who had applied, but who were still waiting for the final outcome at the time of the interview.

With each application for regularization, be it a general amnesty or an individual application, there are so called contra-indications that stipulate cases in which irregular migrants should be rejected even if they meet the criteria. These cases involve migrants who have been involved in crime and have been sentenced to jail time. Furthermore, migrants who have been caught using false identity papers or providing a false name are denied regularization. In addition, irregular migrants who have left the country, even for a short period as in the case of a family visit to Germany, are rejected. Similar contra-indications apply in Belgium and the Netherlands. These contra-indications provide irregular migrants with strong incentive to abide by the law and to remain within the boundaries of the country if they ever want to have a chance of regularization.

Both in Belgium and in the Netherlands, it is very difficult to become legalized under the individual regularization procedure. General amnesties therefore seem to provide the best chances of regularization. Both countries have offered possibilities both to asylum seekers, as well as economic migrants. However, there is little hope for future irregular migrants of achieving legalization through these means, as Europe is in the process of formulating laws against national campaigns for regularization (Broeders 2009). Perhaps the best bet therefore continues to be to marriage.

4.6 CONCLUSION

In this chapter it has become clear that the Low Countries are theoretically suitable countries for my research objectives. Both countries experienced labor migration after the Second World War, had large numbers of asylum seekers in the 1990s , and have had migration resulting from former colonial ties. As I aim for variety, these are countries where diversity is expected to be present. Moreover, because of their geographical location, these countries do not deal with large shares of very specific migration stemming from neighboring countries.

In addition, the Low Countries have witnessed shifts in policies that are common to the European context. Whereas policies to combat irregular migration have traditionally been focused on guarding the external boundaries of the nation-state, they have increasingly turned inwards over the last decades. In addition, these measures of internal control are changing as well. A paradigm shift is taking place in which policies of internal control aimed at exclusion are being replaced with policies targeting the identification and expulsion of irregular migrants.

While Belgium and the Netherlands have stepped up their efforts to exclude, identify and expel irregular migrants, they have also had to ensure basic migrants' rights rooted in supra-national agreements. Furthermore, over the years both states have provided several ways for irregular migrants to legalize their status. It therefore appears that policies in the Low Countries both exclude and include irregular migrants, thereby creating distinct possibilities and constraints. The room for irregular migrants to maneuver created by these policies seems to be in constant flux as a result of the "arms race" between authorities and irregular migrants in which "actions provokes reaction" (Broeders and Engbersen 2007: 1594), and because lawyers and human rights activists continuously battle with governments to create space as well.

This constantly changing environment in which my respondents find themselves makes it difficult for me to determine if specific policy measures have certain effects, which is why I do not aim to do so. I have already discussed the main reasons in section 2.5.2, yet this chapter has provided even more ground for my reluctance to engage in comparative efforts. It appears that a gap exists between formal policies and their implementation in practice. One would therefore not only have to study formal policies, but also analyze how these are implemented. This is a complicated task given that implementation practices differ on a local level as well. Therefore not just two relevant policy implementation contexts can be discerned, but rather several. Examining the effects of policy practices within all these local contexts seems a difficult task that would probably require more than the 61 interviews I conducted with organizations.

Furthermore, even though the lives of my respondents are situated in different policy contexts, these contexts do not mechanically constrain or enforce their actions, but rather irregular migrants react to opportunities and constraints in different ways. The context in which my respondents' aspirations take shape has been sketched in this chapter. In the following chapters the interaction between irregular migrants and the context in which they live will be analyzed in so far as it affects my respondents' aspirations or their incorporation and transnational activities.

CHAPTER 5

INVESTMENT, SETTLEMENT AND LEGALIZATION ASPIRATIONS

This chapter examines what my respondents aspire to during their stay in the Low Countries. In other words, - as introduced in chapter 2 – an answer is sought to the question of what aspirations do irregular migrants have. From my analysis, it appears that three types of aspirations can be distinguished which are discussed in the next section. The subsequent sections zoom in on how these types of aspirations are shaped and on changes that may appear in aspirations during irregular migrants' careers.

5.1 THREE TYPES OF ASPIRATIONS

The first type of aspirations concern working and making money in the country of destination with which to return to the country of origin. Respondents with this type of aspirations strive for future upward mobility in their country of origin. They are usually 'target earners': they save for very specific projects, ranging from starting their own business to financing a future wedding in the country of origin (Massey et al. 1987). Musa[13] from Turkey for example says: "I am here with only one goal and that is to save money and return to get married and start my own business." And Mbark says: "When I have earned enough money, I will go back to Morocco to start a business there." During their stay in the Low Countries these migrants try to acquire the financial means for future investments in their home country. The following fragment illustrates how their stay serves a planned future in the country of origin:

> I have big plans in Bulgaria. For starters, I will marry my girlfriend when I return to Burgas. (...) Furthermore, I intend to start my own business. At the least, I do not want to deprive my children of the education that I did not have. (...) My only aim is to get back to Burgas as fast as I can. However, to be able to achieve this, I need a

> considerable amount of euros. So that is what I try to achieve here in Ghent. (Dimitar, Bulgaria)

These migrants mean to stay in the receiving society only on a temporary basis until their project has succeeded. They regard their stay as an intermediary period in which they work for their future upward social mobility in their countries of origin. Göksel for example says: "This is a step that I take in order to realize my dream. I earn enough money here to make the savings I need before I go back to Turkey." Migrants with this type of aspirations aspire to make money with which to return and invest in a better future in their country of origin. I denote these aspirations *investment aspirations*. As irregular migrants with investment aspirations aim to stay on a temporary basis – often for a more or less pre-fixed amount of time – they do not aspire to settle down or to become legalized, as Ilian says: "My uncle will most probably get a residence permit at the end of this year, but I am not looking for a residence permit. I want to go back to Bulgaria in two years and start a family there." When I asked Sofia from Bolivia if she was trying to get legalized, she replied: "No, I am not trying anything." When I subsequently asked her why she was not trying she said: "You know I want to have papers but I don't know….that is just to live you know and to not have this problem with fear for the police but it is not for staying here indefinitely, no that is my intention." This illustrates that migrants with investment aspirations regard legalization as a mere convenience and not as a necessity. In other words, it is something that they would not refuse in case it was offered to them, but it is not something they currently strive for.

Contrary to the temporary ambitions of migrants with investment aspirations, the second category of aspirations is oriented towards residing in the Low Countries on a long-term basis. Migrants with what I have termed *settlement aspirations* aim to start a new life in the receiving society and do not intend to return:

> The employment situation is bad in Morocco (…) Belgium and the rest of Western-Europe to the contrary has much more employment possibilities and more industry to offer people jobs. (…) That is why I, like many other illegals by the way, have come to Belgium to build a new life here. (Badr, Morocco)

The respondent quoted above clearly states that he believes that having a job is very important in terms of the life he desires in Belgium. As in his case, the desire for a long-term stay is often inspired by economic prosperity migrants aspire to gain for themselves, as is very clearly expressed by Andrei:

> In Holland so much work exists, not officially, but they need workers, not for twenty euros but for five. You need to start one month for five, later you work for seven, and in three months you work for ten. Later you have twelve or fifteen but believe me with fifteen euros, cash, ah fifteen euros, this is my price with what I have lived [during the] last three years. Masja, fifteen euros per hour is enough. Masja, hundred twenty, hundred fifty euros every day, is not enough for life? No taxes or other things. It is perfect, perfect life (Andrei, Moldova).

For some migrants, their settlement aspirations do not derive from their personal economic desires, but stem from family needs that span national boundaries. Arda for example says: "I don't have any choice. I stay here to send money to my family. I can work all year round here, in Turkey I only work a few months a year." Furthermore, focusing on settling in the new society does not mean that migrants give up on the option of ever returning to their country of origin. Not only do migrants with settlement aspirations – if they can – regularly visit their home country; many plan on returning upon retirement as living costs are usually much lower there.

For migrants with this type of aspiration, legalization of their stay can be pleasant, but they do not regard it a necessity: they are primarily occupied with living a life that they regard as better or that they hope will become better than the life they left behind. Jean for example responds, in answer to the question of whether he wants to legalize his stay, that he "does not feel like getting into that whole affair." He indicates that he would be happy if he were legalized, but that he is not taking any action in that direction himself. He says: "in my own way, I have arranged for a pleasant stay in Belgium." Jean believes that the life he is living in Belgium is much better than the life he would lead in Congo. Like Jean, migrants with settlement aspirations seem to be content with the idea of living without papers, because in their opinion they lead a better life now than they would in their home country. Valentina from Cuba for example says: "honestly with all I have here, I don't have papers, but at least I work a little and with that I can buy things that I can't buy in my country." They are convinced they do not necessarily need papers to ensure a good life in the receiving society, like Chavdar from Bulgaria says: "I lead a better life than people with a residence permit. I even make more money than they do."

Not always are settlement aspirations only about economic prosperity in the receiving society. Some people for example want to stay because through their right to urgent medical care, they receive medical assistance they would not be able to afford in their home country (cf. Rosenthal 2007). Kees, who is a social worker in Antwerp, explains: "There is this man, we have been talking about voluntary return for five months now but this man has the entire medical dictionary, he has all illnesses. It is much better for him to stay here. This man costs the OCMW[14]; I think it is their best customer in terms of costs. What he has here [in Belgium] he is never going to get there [South-America], and he won't have the money either." Medical expenses that can be provided for in the receiving society can thus constitute a reason why migrants aspire to settle down:

> My sister has a tumor in her head (…) my sister is undergoing hard treatment, and very long, it will practically be forever. And to this country we are so thankful because they help her so much. These examinations could not be done in my country. Firstly because they don't have them there, they don't know how to do them, and secondly because we economically could never have afforded it. (…) the beautiful thing about Belgium is (…) that when someone is illegal, there is medical assistance for this person…. regardless of…. if the medical problem that you have is this big, the government accepts the expenses and they help you. (Constanza, Bolivia)

Even though irregular migrants only have limited rights in Belgium and the Netherlands, the few rights they can claim are often reason for them to aspire to stay here, as they often do not have similar rights in many countries of origin.

Similarly, the educational possibilities of respondents' children can fuel settlement aspirations (cf. Fozdar and Torezani 2008). When I asked Antonia if she had the chance to do it all over, if she would again make the same decision to come to Belgium and settle down illegally, she replied: "yes because my children have learned Dutch, another language, they speak English, they speak French, and they know many things. They know many things that you don't have there [in Ecuador], intellectual things everything. Here is the best future for them." And when I asked Benjamin from Ecuador if he was satisfied with his life in Belgium, he said: "My children go to music school here, school of painting, of dancing, karate, so that is something very nice for them. We are satisfied because we are complying with our obligation as parents to give a good education to your children. We hope that they

will take advantage of it and have a better future later." Mostly, it is not just one of these underlying factors that shapes settlement aspirations, but a combination of several factors, as Javiera explains: "We have grown away from our country so we feel better here because we are better here economically, and I can give my children the education that I would like to give them, and health too, and I can give that to my sister and my mother [who live in their house] as well. I wanted to do all that in Ecuador but I could not."

As most migrants with settlement aspirations point at several factors underlying their aspirations, they sometimes also mention reasons that would not shape these settlement aspirations independently. In combination with other factors, though, these do add to the total picture. In this connection, some for example emphasize the freedom from parental or community control they have come to enjoy.

Settlement aspirations not only stem from economic conditions, but may be inspired by many other factors as well. What these different structural factors have in common is that they – sometimes in combination with each other – foster settlement aspirations. They are responsible for a category of aspirations to arise aimed at building a more or less permanent life in the receiving society that does not necessarily include legalization. This does not mean that some migrants with settlement aspirations would not seize the opportunity if legalization were offered to them, but in their everyday-life they do not pay attention to it.

Contrastingly, irregular migrants who have *legalization aspirations* do aspire to acquire a legal residence status. For them, leading a better life is inextricably bound up with obtaining a legal status. They feel that they can only be comfortable by this means. Kamel for example says he can only start to live well if he acquires legal residence:

> You simply don't have any rights if you don't have your papers. (…) So my only hope is to get a legal status (…) only then can I start to feel good and try to actively participate in this society. (Kamel, Morocco)

Mehdi from Morocco answers the question of why he chooses to remain in Belgium by saying: "because I plan to build a future here (…) I will do anything to get a residence permit. I know that it is going to take much effort; nevertheless, I will do anything to become a full citizen of Belgium." Jamal says that he "[can't] go back to Morocco without first having arranged for papers. All the effort and money would have been futile then." For legalization migrants, obtaining legal residence

represents a start to a new beginning, unlike settlement migrants who can already start to build a new life without papers. Legalization migrants feel that only after obtaining papers can they make such a new start. Illiass from Morocco for example explains: "I hope I meet someone who I can marry so that I can reside legally, because only then I can start to work on my future." Tolga from Turkey also emphasizes how legalization represents a new beginning: "My life here has yet to begin. I am going to marry my girlfriend and then I will start a restaurant with my brother in law." For legalization migrants, their life seems to stand still while they live in illegality. Tarek from Algeria explains: "if I become legalized I can map out a route, make a plan, organize my life, and I cannot do that without papers. (…) It is very unfortunate that I am losing time like this." Efunsegun from Nigeria also expresses how he feels time is ticking away: "it is because of my future that I stay here, I know that if I get the paper I know that my future will be much brighter as it is now. So that is why you know I want to have permission to live here, nothing else, because I know that if I ever decide to go back to Africa I have to start again from where I stopped. My age is counting on me."

Legalization migrants consider legalization a precondition to be able to lead a good life. In many cases, they say that if they knew for certain that they would never get legalized, they would consider returning to their homeland or trying their luck somewhere else:

> There [in Africa], you know that you are in a shit situation, but here it is not a shit situation but it does not result into anything either. No, for me, without papers I go back. Without papers there is no reason to live here. I go back then. I didn't go to Europe and stop here to do illegal work, that is no use. (Dnari, Sierra Leone)

This respondent clearly explains that he did not come to Europe to do 'illegal work'. Legalization migrants see their migration as some sort of project in which they strive for upward social mobility in terms of advancements in their life. They see legalization as a necessary stepping stone towards achieving that upward social mobility. That is why migrants like Illiass, Medhi and Efunsegun talk about how they need papers for their 'future'. However, not all legalization migrants consider legalization to be only a stepping stone necessary for the advancement of their personal careers. For many, having papers represents even more than that:

> I just don't want to earn 2,000 or 1,500 euros working in this and to only be with people who are also in this environment [illegal

> employment]. I want to do other things as well and move around in freedom. I want to be in the environment in which *I* want to be. (…) if I know for sure that I have to be in this situation for two or three years or more, I think I will return then. (Fernando, Chile)

Together with his wife, this respondent is making a monthly income that is likely to be enough to keep most settlement and investment migrants content, yet he clearly expresses that the benefits of making this amount of money do not suffice for him. As for many other legalization migrants, this has to do with his educational background. He answers my question of why he does not want to stay in Belgium without papers: "because I have graduated from university, I have a title and all that, and now I am here painting and doing work with my hands". Several legalization migrants express the wish to take up their studies after legalization (cf. Menjivar 2008), or they hope that legalization enables them to be employed in a job in which they can use their educational knowledge.

It appears that my analysis has revealed three different types of aspirations of irregular migrants in Belgium and the Netherlands: investment, settlement, and legalization aspirations. Migrants with investment aspirations aspire to return and invest in a better future in their country of origin. Migrants with settlement aspirations aspire to build a new life in the receiving society, regardless of whether they will ever obtain a legal residence status or not, and migrants with legalization aspirations aspire to obtain legal residence. While other scholars have made similar distinctions based on two migration motives or two types of aspirations, the analytical distinction of these three categories is new. Leman for example (1997) distinguishes between those who primarily migrate to – usually temporarily – work and make money (employment illegality) and migrants who come to reside and legalize their status (residence illegality), and Chavez ([1992]1998) distinguishes between sojourners and settlers. Although my analysis broadly supports this distinction in individual aspirations, it reveals three categories of aspirations instead of two. Contrary to Leman's findings, I found a group of irregular migrants who do not aspire to obtain legal residence, but who straightforwardly aspire to settle down. And contrary to the findings of Chavez I found a category of irregular migrants for whom settler aspirations necessarily involve legalization. I believe it is important to distinguish three categories and not just two, because these categories encompass very different definitions of success. Whereas settlement migrants describe their life in illegal employment as a 'perfect life', legalization migrants express they are not here 'to do illegal work' and that they are 'losing time' like this. This means that in

order to get what they aspire to, they need to employ very different strategies, and these different strategies are likely to require specific resources and are likely to shape specific patterns of incorporation. I therefore believe that distinguishing among investment, settlement and legalization aspirations provides more insight into the lives of irregular migrants than analytical distinctions with only two categories can offer.

5.2 BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS

As explained in the second chapter, aspirations are not only fed by wants and desires, but they are also influenced by structural factors. Some of these structural factors stem from characteristics of both the sending and the receiving countries, and others have to do with personal background characteristics or the personal social networks respondents are embedded in.

In the previous chapter, I described the main characteristics of the two receiving societies. These different contexts are likely to create an overrepresentation of specific categories of aspirations in each country. For example, the possibilities of achieving individual regularization are perceived to be better in Belgium than in the Netherlands judging on the numbers of applications. This makes it likely that migrants with legalization aspirations are a relatively large category in Belgium. However, I cannot make proper statements about the distributions over the categories because of the qualitative nature of my study. All I can do is indicate that the aspirations described in the previous subsections have been shaped in these structural contexts, and that other structural contexts may shape different distributions and perhaps even additional aspirations. Furthermore, I can analyze how specific changes in the perceptions of my respondents of this structural context may foster changes of their aspirations or of their actions. In other words, I can indicate how irregular migrants react to the perceived policy context in which they find themselves: how they adjust their aspirations and actions to the structural context in which they are embedded. This means that I can report mechanisms that shape patterns. These mechanisms are discussed in the following chapters whenever they are relevant in the context of this thesis.

In this section, I analyze how specific structural conditions in the different *sending countries* create an overrepresentation of migrants from certain countries within specific categories of aspirations. Furthermore, I discuss how certain personal background characteristics appear to underlie specific categories of aspirations.

Doing so, it becomes clear that the irregular migrants I interviewed developed a 'migratory disposition' (Kalir 2005b) and how the conditions in their country of origin and their personal backgrounds shaped their specific aspirations.

Migrants with investment aspirations usually come from countries where there is some investment potential. Tümer for example says that it makes sense to invest in Turkey: "Turkey's economy is doing well now so I go back and start my own shop there." For people from war-struck countries in Africa, it does not seem like a very wise decision to go back to make investments there. Oudry from Congo explains: "Everybody knows what the situation is my country is like. How can I return when it is like this? With all these mass-killings? (…) There is no future there." Migrants with investment aspirations usually migrate without their partner and children to keep the costs down. Furthermore, they often originate from countries nearby, so that the costs of transport are relatively low in order to make the investment of their migration worthwhile. In addition to the proximity, the investment costs are a lot lower for migrants who do not need a visa than for those who do. Migrants with investment aspirations therefore often come from visa-free countries such as Bulgaria (cf. Düvell 2006c).

The literature on 'regular' migration usually stresses that migrants who settle down have often started out as temporary migrants (Piore 1979). In the same vein, only a few irregular migrants have traditionally been found to aim at settlement from the start (Massey et al. 1987). Although I have encountered migrants who initially had temporary aspirations that turned into settlement aspirations, I also found some who aspired to settle down from the beginning. Lucas from Chile for example answered my question of whether it had always been his intention to stay here with a firm "yes," and he later added "we knew that we were not coming back." Furthermore, recent research also points out that, as immigration control has increased for migrants who need a visa, these often stay as long as possible once they have successfully entered the country of destination (Düvell 2006c). This seems to indicate that migrants who have settlement aspirations from the outset of their stay are no longer exceptional.

Even though initial settlement aspirations are becoming more common, many of my respondents with current settlement aspirations have initially come to Europe with the desire to make money and then return home. Mustafa, who initially came with the intention to save money for his wedding and return, for example, says: "I have work here, when I have saved enough money I go back to Bulgaria to get

married. After that, I come back here with my wife. I lead a better life here." Sometimes these are success stories as in Mustafa's case, but many investment migrants turn into settlement migrants because they fail to get together the amount of money they need to return. They often need more time than they initially planned to get the necessary savings together. When I for example asked Martina if it had always been her intention to settle down, she said: "No this was not my intention. It was covering what I owed, making a little money and going back to Bolivia. That was my original goal. My goal was to go back after a year. But after six months without work, and then after eight months of work I still did not have the same amount of money that I arrived with. So [I stayed] a year more, and then another year more." It can be especially difficult to meet initial investment aspirations for migrants who had high travel expenses. In these cases, paying back these travel costs can constitute such a financial burden that migrants are unable to save any money for long periods of time which more or less forces them to settle down. Gzifa, who migrated from Ghana with the help of a migration broker, ran away from this broker once she realized that the wages in Belgium were not as he had promised them to be. While she initially planned to work for a few years to save money, she came to the conclusion that she could never save money with the enormous travel debt she had. Going back to Ghana was not an option because the migration broker's people would easily find her there. She therefore decided to leave Brussels and settle in Antwerp, hoping he would not find her there, which he has not been able to in the past six years.

Migrants with settlement aspirations usually come from countries where high levels of unemployment and corruption and economic problems are common, as in South America or in North Africa (cf. Jokisch and Pribilsky 2002). The economic crisis in Ecuador inspired Isidora to migrate to Belgium with her husband and her four children:

> So we had many problems in our country, a new government had come and all the business went down. (…) My husband and I had a pharmacy in Ecuador. (…) because of the change of government Colombian competitors came and they sold all the medicine very cheap and we could not compete with this (...) so we sold the pharmacy and we also had a car that we sold and for the little that we were lacking for the trip we took out credit. (…) So all the money that we got from selling the pharmacy we invested in the six airline tickets. (Isidora, Ecuador)

Migrants with settlement aspirations usually feel that the economic and political situation in their country creates few chances for future improvement in their situation. Moreover, they do not believe that this situation will change any time soon. That is why they migrate to Europe, where they hope to have a chance at some future upward social mobility, as is clearly expressed by Kamel and Younes:

> Morocco did not have and still does not have anything to offer me. In Morocco, being an uneducated boy, you don't have a chance to build up a life like you can here in Europe. If you don't have a job or you don't know anyone who can help you get one, you will continue to live in the same poverty you always have lived in. So, economically speaking it makes no sense to stay in Morocco and to think that there will be better times because everything will remain the same. The rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer (Kamel, Morocco).

> Morocco is a corrupt country with huge differences between rich and poor. I do not believe that this will ever change or that there will be an end to corruption in Morocco. I was not living well in Morocco. It was not like we did not have anything to eat at my house, but there was never an improvement in our financial situation. It stayed like it always was and that had to change. That is why I have taken the step to go abroad like many young people my age do. I wanted to do something to make my life better economically speaking (Younes, Morocco).

Countries that foster settlement aspirations often have hardly any social security system. Respondents often worked on the informal market there, and medical insurance or pension plans were usually out of their reach. This means that many of the conditions they face in their country of origin are the same as in the receiving society. But at least in the Low Countries they have partial access to medical care and good education for their children.

Like migrants with settlement aspirations, migrants with legalization aspirations often escape poor and corrupt countries. In addition, countries that have been struck by war or where other serious political conflicts are part of daily life foster legalization aspirations. Many migrants with legalization aspirations have therefore applied for asylum. In this connection, it is important to realize that many of these migrants had not been well-informed in advance about conditions in the

country of destination. Many respondents complain about the false image that prior migrants have portrayed of Europe. After hearing the stories of seemingly endless economic opportunities and political freedoms, they think European streets are paved with gold (cf. Staring 1999), and that people can do whatever they want. As a consequence, many migrants leave without basic information or with a completely wrong image of what to expect. Some of my respondents for example thought that they could easily start working once they arrived and did not even know that papers are required in order to work or reside in Europe:

> You know that you need papers in order to leave Africa (…) but you do not know that people apply for asylum here. You don't know that if you don't have papers you have a problem. You don't know that. (Albert, Congo)

Many migrants with legalization aspirations have been smuggled into the country – sometimes without knowing which country they were taken to (cf. Black et al. 2005; Jordan and Düvell 2002) – without having the slightest clue of the conditions they will face. They were simply told by the smugglers to apply for asylum, which they did. Often they are provided with details on how to do this best (see also Van Wijk 2007), but sometimes they are dropped off at the Aliens Office without further instructions:

> When I was there in 2000 there were a lot of people, from Kosovo, Chechnia, Burundi, Rwanda, Congo (…). And I asked: what is this place here? And they said this is where people ask for asylum. Asylum, what is that? Because I did not know, I knew nothing. Asylum what is that? It is asylum; asylum is like when you ask for an identity card. And that is here in Belgium. Oh ok, and I went to the office like that. (Tuyishime, Rwanda)

Many migrants with legalization aspirations have consequently just rolled into asylum procedures. Many have fled their countries in search of protection without knowing anything about asylum laws; they just thought they could work in Europe. After each negative decision they file another appeal or try another procedure. As there is always another procedure to try or an appeal to file – especially in Belgium – the lawyers who assist migrants who strive for legalization continuously provide them with hope that the next procedure does have chances of success, especially since there are no strict criteria for these procedures. As a consequence there is always some hope of achieving legalization, and only the slightest glimmer of hope

can make some continue along this path for long periods of time. Furthermore, some social workers also tend to encourage them to file for regularization procedures, as they believe that the circumstances in the home country are too bad to go back to. When I interviewed social worker Debbie and the irregular migrant she was assisting (Dnari), they told me how Debbie encouraged Dnari not to go back to Sierra Leone:

> Debbie: "He wanted to return."
>
> Dnari: "Yes that is the truth"
>
> Debbie: "So I said where do you want to go?"
>
> Dnari: "I said to Sierra Leone"
>
> Debbie: "What do you want to do there?"
>
> Dnari: "I don't know"
>
> Debbie: "How are you going to? You can't, I said. I said sorry but you are just not going to do that. Because you don't know what will happen to you there. At least here you have…it is not easy…. but we are trying to find you a place to stay. So yes you don't have a place to stay now but at least you do have some work and an income, and I am trying to arrange papers for you"

Apart from the group of respondents who are have legalization aspirations because they come from countries with political problems and have been socialized into the world of legal procedures, there is a group for whom personal background characteristics underlie their legalization aspirations. The first type of characteristics has already been mentioned and has to do with their educational level. The second is about social status. Some migrants with legalization aspirations have a high social status in their country of origin. These respondents look down on illegal employment and often lie to their family and friends about the conditions they are facing in order to protect their social status. They can obviously not keep this up forever, so they need legal status so that they can start to live the life that they are expected to be living. A third characteristic is age. Irregular migrants with legalization aspirations are either relatively old or relatively young compared to those with settlement and investment aspirations. While the latter two categories are usually roughly between 25 and 45 – and hence at a good age to work and form a family, some legalization migrants are over 50 which makes them less suitable for heavy physical labor and consequently more likely to aspire to legalization. The younger migrants with legalization aspirations have often just left school and have

no job experience: they have come to the Low Countries in search of a better future. As they are at a good age to get married, this is usually what they are after. Their families have often sent them to Europe to live with other family members for a while. This especially applies to migrants from Turkey and Morocco whose family members are former labor migrants who acquired a legal status in the seventies or eighties. Finding the newly arrived family member a marriage partner becomes an issue for the whole family to deal with.

It appears that specific social backgrounds or structural conditions in their home country make certain migrants more likely to have certain kinds of aspirations. Moreover, specific personal background characteristics underlie specific types of aspirations. Because categories of aspirations may overlap with countries of origin, people studying Poles and Albanians for example find that the former are mainly temporary migrants, while Albanians prefer to settle down permanently (see Triandafyllidou and Kosic 2006). Certain conditions in their home countries make them more likely to aspire to one thing than to another simply because it makes more sense in the context they live. However, there are always many exceptions. There are always Poles who do settle down or try to become legalized. We have already seen in chapter 2 that such nationality categories can be diverse in terms of aspirations. Moreover, people do not always have similar aspirations during their entire migrant career. If conditions in the country of origin change, aspirations may possibly change with these. A migrant who wanted to open a shop in his home country is for example likely to refrain from this idea once the economy in this country collapses. Moreover, irregular migrants can also change their aspirations due to certain events in the receiving society. These possible changes in aspirations are discussed in the next section in more detail.

5.3 CHANGING ASPIRATIONS

I take aspirations at different points in the lives of irregular migrants as a starting point for my analysis. For the respondents that were interviewed by research assistants in semi-structured interviews, I usually could assess only one point in their lives: the moment the interview took place. During my fieldwork I have however mostly been able to distinguish a sequence of aspirations throughout the migrant careers of my respondents.

I choose to use the terms *investment migrants*, *legalization migrants* and *settlement migrants* from this point forward instead of the longer terms 'migrants

with investment aspirations', 'migrants with settlement aspirations' and 'migrants with legalization aspirations' that I have used so far. I have made this choice for reasons of readability, but the reader should bear in mind that my aim is to construct a typology of aspirations, not of migrants. In other words, my analysis is on the level of aspirations and not on the level of agents. The concepts investment, settlement and legalization migrants are hence used to refer to irregular migrants who have these specific aspirations at a certain point in time, but the core analytical categories are aspirations.

According to Van Nieuwenhuyze (2007), a typical trajectory often takes place: the Senegambian irregular migrants she studied virtually all initially intended to return, but shifted their focus to obtaining a legal status after a while. However, research by Kosic and Triandafyllidou (2004) has indicated that not all irregular migrants are interested in the possibility of regularizing their work and stay. My own analysis also points in the latter direction: neither does there seem to be a hierarchy in aspirations, nor does a fixed trajectory exist. My respondents do not always find legalization important. Jean for example initially tried to legalize his situation, but purposely stopped all his attempts after he received a second rejection. Although I found that the typical trajectory from investment to settlement to legalization aspirations is surely not uncommon, I have encountered a variety of other trajectories. The only trajectories I did not come across were those in which settlement or legalization aspirations turned into investment aspirations. This does not mean, however, that these trajectories do not exist. But it is likely that migrants who have followed these have already returned and are consequently difficult to encounter in the destination country.

The question arises as to what it is that makes irregular migrants change aspirations. As explained in chapter 2, aspirations mediate what an individual desires and what society can offer, which inextricably connects aspirations to assessments of available opportunities and possible constraints. However, they are not necessarily linked to real-life opportunities and constraints, but to perceptions of these. This means that aspirations may change as a result of changes in perceptions of the opportunity structure. These changes in perceptions can be the result of changes in the opportunity structure, but this does not necessarily have to be the case. Changes in aspirations can therefore be the result of an opportunity opening up or of increasing constraints, but they can also stem from false perceptions or from changes in desires and wants. Many things can therefore make migrants change aspirations. In other words, it is difficult to isolate the effects of specific possibilities

or constraints on aspirations. I can only analyze how irregular migrants adjust their aspirations to perceptions of these possibilities or constraints. I therefore have not systematically studied factors inspiring changes in aspirations themselves. In the following chapters I pay attention to contextual factors that I found to actually have inspired my respondents to change aspirations and that are relevant for answering my research questions. What is important to emphasize at this point in connection with changing aspirations is that if migrants switch to another category of aspirations, the required strategies for realizing their aspirations change (Van Nieuwenhuyze, 2009), and their incorporation and transnational activities are likely to change as well.

5.4 ASPIRATIONS AND STRATEGIES

In order to get what they aspire to, irregular migrants need to pursue strategies. Whereas the strategies pursued by investment migrants and settlement migrants show limited internal diversity, the strategies of legalization migrants can be divided into two distinct types. Investment migrants try to make as much money as they can in the shortest period of time possible. This means they try to work as much as possible while economizing on other things where they can. Contrastingly, settlement migrants aspire to build a life, and this requires more long-term stability than such short-term investment strategies can provide. They therefore try to find regular and steady jobs, and they put effort into building a social network of people around them who can supply them with information and assistance (Van Meeteren et al. 2007a; 2009).

The two types of strategies that legalization migrants pursue correspond to the possibilities for legalization in the receiving societies. The first strategy is about trying to marry a native or a regular migrant with permanent residence rights. While some aim to find someone they love, others prefer to engage in a bogus marriage. In some cases the marriages are bought, and the partner consequently knows that it is a bogus marriage, yet I also encountered migrants who aimed to find a partner they could deceive and leave once they have obtained legal residence. The second type of strategy of legalization migrants revolves around legal procedures. Legalization migrants who employ this strategy aim to become legalized by means of all kinds of procedures, the most important of which being regularization. How exactly they pursue such strategies on a daily basis is discussed in the chapters dealing with

incorporation, transnational engagements and success. The same applies to the daily practices of investment and settlement migrants.

5.5 CONCLUSION

Whereas other scholars have made distinctions based on migration motives or aspirations using only two categories, my analysis has revealed three types of aspirations: investment, settlement and legalization. As these categories of aspirations are accompanied by distinct visions of what constitutes success, this distinction provides more insight than prevailing categorizations of two groups can offer. I have indicated that certain personal background characteristics as well as structural factors in the countries of origin underlie specific aspirations, and how changes in these characteristics are likely to inspire changing aspirations. Furthermore, I have described how migrants use certain strategies in order to realize their aspirations and how two specific types of strategies can be distinguished among legalization migrants. In the next chapters, I demonstrate how these types of aspirations underlie specific patterns of incorporation and transnational activities. The penultimate chapter focuses on how some irregular migrants manage to realize their aspirations.

CHAPTER 6

LIVING DIFFERENT DREAMS (I): ASPIRATIONS AND FUNCTIONAL INCORPORATION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The scholarly discussion on irregular migrants and their incorporation in receiving societies has been governed by the question of whether irregular migrants can achieve full incorporation. In line with the victim perspective, many scholars argue it is impossible for irregular migrants to achieve full incorporation due to their lack of legal status (see for example Chavez 1991; Engbersen 1999; Leman 1997; Van der Leun 2003b). In some conceptualizations of incorporation, participating in political life and having citizenship rights are regarded as important parameters for incorporation. In such views, lack of legal status is a direct impediment to achieving full incorporation. Other scholars use other conceptualizations and claim that irregular migrants are able to participate in many spheres in spite of their legal status. However, they do find that the lack of legal status has an indirect negative effect on incorporation. Massey et al. (1987) for example find that the illegal residence status acts as an important damper on the formation of social and economic connections. This dampening effect is especially pronounced in the early stages of the migrant career. At the same time, the authors find that this dampening effect does not change the basic *process* of incorporation (Massey et al. 1987). Although obtaining legal status is clearly an important event in the process of incorporation that greatly facilitates the formation of connections to the receiving society, "it is not synonymous with incorporation itself and it is not necessarily the most important step in the process." (Massey et al. 1987:270)

I do not aim to discuss the question of whether or not irregular migrants can achieve full incorporation. My focus is on the patterns of incorporation that can be distinguished among irregular migrants and how these can be understood. It is therefore much more relevant to look at the issues that are discussed under the

heading incorporation and to see how I can contribute to these implicit or explicit scholarly debates.

In the next sections and in the following chapter, I discuss the elements of incorporation that have often come up in the literature on the incorporation of irregular migrants, such as work, housing, and social contacts and that I have something to contribute to. I found it helpful to categorize these issues under two dimensions: functional incorporation and social incorporation. *Functional incorporation* includes housing, work and other sources of income and thus refers to the way irregular migrants are able to sustain themselves. *Social incorporation* includes the way migrants spend their leisure time and their social contacts in the receiving society. Note that this conceptualization of incorporation is not all-encompassing: I do not intend to make statements about *the* incorporation of irregular migrants or about full incorporation. Instead, I aim to contribute to the literature on the incorporation of irregular migrants, so I only discuss those elements of incorporation about which there is an implicit or explicit scholarly debate I can contribute to. In the context of this dissertation, incorporation should therefore not so much be considered an unambiguous theoretical concept forced upon the data, but rather as a heuristic device that provides structure to this chapter and the next and that links my findings to relevant literature. Whereas this chapter discusses functional incorporation, social incorporation is dealt with in the following chapter.

6.2 HOUSING

Many scholars write of the low quality of irregular migrants' housing arrangements. Stories of cramped rooms, lack of heating and landlords unwilling to make essential repairs are frequently quoted (see for example Adam et al. 2002; P. Anderson 1999; Burgers 1999a; Mahler 1995). I also encountered dwellings in which I felt uncomfortable eating the meals that were generously offered to me because of the many cockroaches running around. Yet after reading all these horror stories, it came as a surprise to me to also encounter very nice and well-maintained apartments, in which everyone had their own bedroom.

6.2.1 Type of accommodation

There is a debate among scholars studying irregular migrants about the relation between income and the amount spent on accommodation. A correlation between

the two, as there generally exists in Belgium and the Netherlands, has not been found for irregular migrants (Leerkes et al. 2004; Van Meeteren et al. 2007b). Other research seems to point in the same direction. Paspalanova (2006) for example found that her respondents live in cheap housing of bad quality, even though some had average incomes. She claims that irregular migrants share the priority of 'living as cheaply as possible' (p. 119). In addition to this shared priority, scholars often assume that irregular migrants' juridical status prevents them from being able to do anything to improve their housing situation. In other words, there is no correlation between income and money spent on accommodation, because most irregular migrants live in cheap houses of bad quality as their vulnerable situation just does not allow them to find anything better (Burgers 1999a). Unlike the scholars outlined above, Chavez ([1992]1998) does find a relation between income and money spent on accommodation. He claims that crowded conditions are tolerated by temporary migrants, but they are not normally part of life for irregular migrants who aim to settle down. The latter do move into better housing arrangements if they can. In addition, other scholars emphasize that housing arrangements partly reflect the length of stay: although most migrants share accommodation in the initial period, once a job is obtained, finding and moving to separate accommodation often becomes a major objective (Leerkes et al. 2004; Roer-Strier and Olshtain-Mann 1999).

I found that this diversity in research outcomes can be explained by bringing aspirations into the analysis. Most irregular migrants manage to arrange some form of accommodation; only one of my respondents lived on the streets when I interviewed him. A few others told me that they had lived on the streets in the past, sleeping in parks and public shelters during their initial period in illegality. The diversity in housing arrangements I encountered partly reflected the length of stay of the irregular migrants in question. Those who had lived in the receiving society for some time often had been able to get a better deal than migrants who had just arrived. However, I found that this aim was not shared by all my respondents, but only by those with settlement aspirations. These migrants prefer the privacy of their own room or apartment and are willing to pay something extra for it. As a result, while some settlement migrants live in shared arrangements out of economic necessity during the initial period of settlement (see also Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994) – those who can afford it move into more spacious and more private accommodation:

> I lived with my brother for a while in the beginning but when I found work I wanted my own room. A family member read an add

> indicating that there was a studio for rent. (…) I like it very much to have my own room so that I do not have to bother anyone. (Brahim)

Investment migrants, on the contrary, do not usually wish to move to more private and consequently more expensive accommodation even if they can afford it. They prefer to continue to live in shared living arrangements in order to save money. Martina for example says: "we rented a studio with the four of us so we could share the costs, the rent, and the electricity." In some cases, migrants live with family members or friends during their entire stay as they know from the outset that their stay will only last for a certain period. In these cases, this is usually something migrants and receivers have agreed upon before the migration took place. Other investment migrants share studios and (student) apartments where they either occupy one room per person or in which they share a room with multiple persons, usually also irregular migrants. In some cases it is not the rooms that are rented out but the beds (see also Leman 1997). These are often provided for by employers, as was the case with Musa, who says: "My employer arranged a bed for me in a pension for 150 euros per month."

Those who live in low-quality dwellings are thus not only those who cannot afford anything better or who have just arrived, but also investment migrants for whom this is part of their strategy: it helps them to realize their aspirations. Investment migrants want to economize on many things as this brings them closer to the realization of their aspirations. When Diego noted that I was impressed with the way he managed to save such a large share of his earnings he reacted: "Well we are a school of economics."

Legalization migrants are like investment migrants in the sense that they hope that the situation they are in is only temporary. They are therefore more willing to make concessions in their housing situation than settlement migrants are prepared to make. Those who try to find someone to marry usually prefer to spend money on going out rather than on accommodation. After all, it is by going out that the attainment of their aspirations comes into closer view, because they can meet potential wedding partners this way. In addition, they often live with family members who help them in their quest. Those who are involved in procedures often still live in the house that was assigned to them by the Aliens Office or that they found when they successfully passed through the first stages of the asylum procedure. In the past, asylum seekers in Belgium were allowed to live outside the asylum center after their first positive decision. In the case of my respondents, the

second decision turned out negative, which transformed them into irregular migrants, but they continued to live in the same place. In many cases, their landlords did not know that their tenants had become illegal. Because these landlords are usually not slumlords who are trying to take advantage of the vulnerable situation, these accommodations are often pretty decent. That is, the landlords take good care of maintenance and ask market prices. Furthermore, legalization migrants who move are often able to show some form of documentation to landlords: the forms of their application. As a result, they often manage to rent an apartment from a person who is not a slumlord. In these cases, the persons they rent from are not aware of their illegal residence status. They only know their tenants are in a precarious situation or that 'they are arranging their papers'. In addition, organizations sometimes negotiate accommodation on their behalf.

However, if legalization migrants have applied for regularization and have been denied, the police can come to their house to expel them. Some legalization migrants therefore move and cannot afford to be picky about where they move to. They have to settle for whatever they can get. Obviously, these are often dwellings in very bad condition offered by slumlords.

To my surprise, I found quite a number of legalization migrants with procedures who lived with a Belgian or Dutch family. In exchange for the free room and board offered to them, these migrants engaged in light house work such as doing the laundry, cooking and cleaning. In all cases, the accounts the migrants give of their living situation are that they have been taken in by a loving family with a heart for immigrants and are surely not being exploited as a live-in maid. Obviously, people in the latter situation are probably more reluctant to talk to a researcher, and they are in a more difficult position to do so than the migrants I interviewed, so I do not want to make statements about the general conditions that accompany such arrangements.

All in all, there does not seem to be a relationship between income and money spent on accommodation in general, but only for a specific category: settlement aspirations. In line with Chavez, I encountered migrants who were willing to spend more money on accommodation so that they could give their children a private bedroom or a room to study. Unlike Paspalanova (2006), I found that not all my respondents wanted to live as cheaply as possible; only investment migrants did. And contrary to Burgers (1999a) some settlement migrants did manage to find a nice apartment.

It is interesting to try and explain why other scholars came to different conclusions. Because Paspalanova (2006) interviewed Eastern Europeans, who often have investment aspirations, the explanation for her divergent results may lie in her specific sample. I probably found more diversity, because my sample contains more variety in aspirations. Mahler (1995: 207) claims that accommodation is so expensive for irregular migrants that "in almost every case a minimum of an extended family is required to rent and maintain an apartment or house." She claims that the high costs of housing tend to keep housing arrangements in flux such that they do not resemble the settling phase of migration as it is described by Chavez ([1992]1998) or Piore (1979). Not only were most of her respondents economically worse off than elsewhere, they lived in Long Island, a white middleclass suburb. According to the accounts provided by Mahler there was too little work available there – which made most irregular migrants relatively poor – and accommodation was relatively expensive there. That is to say, it was much more expensive than in many European studies (Leerkes et al. 2007). This means, apart from irregular migrants' aspirations, their length of stay and the economic opportunities they have, the structure of the local housing market partially explains the variety in irregular migrants housing situations. The next subsection therefore deals with the spatial distribution of irregular migrants.

6.2.2 Spatial distribution

Irregular migrants are mainly accommodated in large cities and in a number of border and rural areas (Engbersen et al. 2002; Leerkes et al. 2006; cf. Lianos 2001). Within cities, irregular migrants often live in the – often centrally located – poor immigrant districts (Leerkes et al. 2007). They end up in these neighborhoods because housing is cheap there and because these provide proximity to work (Engbersen et al. 2006; Leerkes et al. 2007; Leman 1997). In addition, there is a large presence of regular migrants there. This presence of regular migrants who are able to provide work, housing, care, healthcare, information, relevant documents and possible partners is believed to be very important for irregular migrants (Engbersen et al. 2006). According to Leerkes et al. (2007) it is not just that co-ethnics can help them; irregular migrants also prefer to live in ethnically diverse neighborhoods where many people speak their language. Moreover, the large presence of co-ethnics has the benefit of rendering irregular migrants inconspicuous (Leman 1997; Lianos 2001). Furthermore, after some time, 'shadow institutions' (Scott 1998) or 'bastard

institutions' (Hughes [1951]1994) that cater specifically to irregular migrants begin to develop in immigrant districts (Engbersen et al. 2006; Leerkes et al. 2007). The population of irregular migrants is thus selectively incorporated into the urban landscape and their spatial distribution is believed to reflect the preferences and interests of irregular migrants (Leerkes et al. 2007).

My own results do not allow for statements about distributions to be made, but they do contribute to our understanding of where irregular migrants live and why. I found that many of my respondents with settlement or legalization aspirations live in the suburbs, because they preferred to live there instead of in an immigrant district. For many women this had to do with the proximity to work. Whereas the preference to live close to work leads many men to immigrant districts, women mostly do domestic work for middle class families in the suburbs which drives them in the latter direction. When I asked Fernanda why she lived in the suburbs, she responded: "Because I am close to my work and because I like this neighborhood…..the first time I lived in this area too, a bit more south, and this sector is very quiet. It is close to everything, the school of my children. So I like it for that."

The reasons my respondents provide for their presence in the suburbs all indicate that they live there because they prefer to live there. They for example point at the proximity to work, good schools for their children, and recreational possibilities. Many respondents were happy to live close to a park where they could go for a stroll on the weekends. Most importantly, they liked the tranquility of the suburban neighborhoods where they could escape the crowded conditions of the city center and the immigrant districts. Lucas for example comments on the neighborhood he recently moved to: "I like the area, I think it is peaceful, there is not so much noise, not too many people, not too many problems in the street, so it is good here….when we came to take a look at this apartment we immediately liked it because of its location….the school is close… and because the area is beautiful and the apartment is very spacious."

Furthermore, many preferred to live in suburban areas because they believed the immigrant districts to be dangerous, especially for children. They preferred not to associate with other groups of immigrants. Fernando from Chile for example says: "the majority of the foreigners, immigrants, Moroccans, Africans…many of those people are below the cultural level or they have bad customs…. Maybe I think a little like the Belgians as well. I think they are right when they say that the immigrants

give many problems ….I don't know, they do things…they harass people and that is not good….they bother you….I am not all right with the Moroccans and with their cars and all the harassing that they do or bothering women….the clashing of cultures is difficult." After Fernando's wife was harassed by a Moroccan man in the immigrant district where they used to live, they decided to move to Wilrijk, a quiet middle class suburban area near Antwerp.

I found that only investment migrants and those migrants whose ethnic background is heavily represented in immigrant districts – like Turks and Moroccans – want to live in those neighborhoods. For investment migrants, these neighborhoods provide an infrastructure for irregular migrants that caters to their needs. This is where contractors come in search of employees, it is where the buses leave to take migrants to the location of their jobs and it is where many landlords are willing to rent accommodation to irregular migrants. Those settlement and legalization migrants whose nationality is well presented benefit from the presence of ethnic shops and like that they are able to speak their own language in the neighborhood.

It is very likely that Engbersen et al. (2006) and Leerkes et al. (2007) found a preference for immigrant districts because they only interviewed irregular migrants whose ethnic background was well represented in the neighborhoods they selected. Owing to the diversity in my sample, I found that the housing preferences of irregular migrants lead to much more divergent outcomes. While investment migrants wanted to live in immigrant districts because of the infrastructure catering to irregular migrants, the migrants I interviewed who had settlement or legalization aspirations and belonged to small communities preferred to live outside immigrant districts and in the suburbs. Not all of them were able to realize this ambition though; some indicated that they did not like to live in an immigrant district, but it was all they could afford.

Leerkes et al. (2007) and Engbersen et al. (2006) have used police data to determine the spatial distribution of irregular migrants. It is well known that women are underrepresented in police statistics. The share of women among irregular migrants is believed to have increased considerably in recent years (Jandl 2007; Jokisch and Pribilsky 2002; Raijman et al. 2003). For some nationalities, more than half of the irregular migrant population consists of females nowadays (Glytsos 2005). As settlement and legalization migrant women prefer to live in the suburbs, the underrepresentation of women in police data leads to an underestimation of the

number of irregular migrants who live in the suburban areas. In addition, it is likely that the police exercise more control in immigrant districts than in the suburbs, which makes a migrant who lives and possibly also works in the suburbs less likely to end up in the police statistics. As a result, Engbersen et al. (2006) and Leerkes et al. (2007) probably overestimate the share of irregular migrants in immigrant neighborhoods.

6.2.3 Differences between Belgium and the Netherlands

It appears that irregular migrants' aspirations underlie different housing preferences. Aspirations therefore partly explain the patterns found in the types and location of their accommodation arrangements. The following diagram reflects irregular migrants' different housing preferences.

Figure 6.1 Housing patterns per type of aspiration

	Investment	**Settlement**	**Legalization**	**Legalization**
			Procedures	**Marriage**
Housing				
Type	Cheap and crowded	Regular	Diverse	With family
Location	Immigrant district	If group is represented: immigrant district. Otherwise: suburb	If group is represented: immigrant district. Otherwise: suburb	If group is represented: immigrant district. Otherwise: suburb

The variety in housing situations that I encountered can be understood from the aspirations irregular migrants have, their (economic) opportunities, their length of stay, and the structure of the housing market in the area where they live. Bringing aspirations into the explanatory frame has cleared up a lot of confusion surrounding divergent research outcomes.

The housing market is differently organized in Belgium than in the Netherlands. Belgium has a lot more private homeownership and many fewer social housing projects. Leerkes (2007) therefore hypothesizes that irregular migrants will be less evenly distributed across the urban landscape in Belgium than in the Netherlands. My data do not allow me to make any statements in this respect – I can

reflect upon what my respondents told me, but I cannot make systematic comparisons. In both countries, the migrants that were interviewed feel that it is difficult to find a decent place to live for an economic price. They indicated that there are always people willing to rent to irregular migrants, but they can be difficult to find. Furthermore, in both countries, migrants who do not belong to a large minority group prefer to live outside the immigrant districts. In addition, settlement migrants in both countries are willing to spend money on their accommodation and not search for the cheapest they can find. My impression of the housing situation as expressed by my respondents is that the differences between the countries are not that profound. I did find that the average price level seemed a bit lower in Belgium. The few respondents who had lived in both countries expressed the same view.

6.3 EMPLOYMENT

Many times, irregular migrants combine a number of different strategies to cater for their basic needs (Triandafyllidou and Kosic 2006). One of these strategies is employment which is discussed in this subsection. The other sources of income that irregular migrants generate are dealt with in section 6.4. Before I discuss how the hours irregular migrants work, the type of work that they do and the exploitation they experience are connected to individual aspirations, I will briefly explain how irregular migrants engage in employment.

There are three ways in which irregular migrants can find work. First, they can be employed by an employer who pays them in black. Second, they can obtain fraudulent working papers. And third, they can be self-employed (Coutin 2002). Self-employment is quite rare among irregular migrants. This is not surprising as both Belgian and Dutch authorities demand substantial amounts of paperwork to open a shop, which is not easily done by migrants who do not have nationality or permanent residency rights. So when irregular migrants are self-employed, they usually start a business together with legal migrants (cf. Staring 2000). Apart from opening a shop as a form of self-employment, migrants come up with inventive forms of self-employment. Tuyishime from Rwanda for example occasionally uses his 3-room apartment as a hotel: “They come for one week or two weeks and they prefer me over the hotel (…) they sleep here and I cook for them. They stay here, quiet, they can go in and out whenever they want. For two weeks maybe they pay 600 or 1,000 euros. That is good.” Furthermore, he also does other activities that can be characterized as self-employment; he says: “I went to a garage over there and

they said to me when you find Africans who have a problem with their car, send them here, if they pay well, you get 50. It is always like that. And here in Europe there are a lot of Africans who have problems with their car."

The activities such as those described by Tuyishime are never my respondents' primary source of income, but always a means to supplement their income from employment. Whereas I do consider such activities self-employment, I do not consider migrants who work for private households doing occasional chores as self-employed, because they work in employer-employee type of relationships. Following this categorization, I did not find self-employment to be common among irregular migrants in the Low Countries. Instead, I found that they usually work in black or by means of fraudulent papers. In the past, it had been possible for irregular migrants to work legally on the formal labor market, but this only happens in very exceptional cases nowadays (Engbersen et al. 2002; Van der Leun and Kloosterman 2006; Van Meeteren et al. 2007b), and I have not encountered any.

6.3.1 Work hours

Most American studies find that labor force participation levels of irregular migrants are high (Chavez [1992]1998; Hagan 1994; Mahler 1995; Powers et al. 1998). North European studies to the contrary indicate that large shares of irregular migrants are unemployed. Studies in the Netherlands for example find that one third of respondents have no job at all (Burgers 1998; Engbersen et al. 2002; Van der Leun and Kloosterman 1999). However, they report that when irregular migrants do work, they work a lot of hours, often more than the general 40 hour workweek (Ahmad 2008; Datta et al. 2007; Paspalanova 2006). I found that this was indeed the case with the investment migrants I interviewed. Work is crucial for them, as it allows them to realize their aspirations. They often work six or seven days per week for long hours during those days. As they aspire to gather the necessary financial means for future investments in their home country, they want to ensure a quick return. As a consequence, they try to work as much as possible during their stay in the destination country. Investment migrants like Diego and Constanza usually respond to the question how much they work by saying "Well, I work every day really" or "I take all the opportunities I can get."

Settlement migrants, on the contrary, do not want to work all the time as investment migrants do. They do not want to work six or seven days per week, and

they do not want to work these long hours per day, as they value free time. Ignacio for example says:

> They have offered me work as a cook. They called me a month ago for a job but I did not accept it (…) you earn money but *I want to live* [in English instead of Spanish]. Yes because it is very difficult to have some time for yourself because in a restaurant you work from Monday to Sunday practically so there is no time for anything. I have to live as well.

I found that settlement migrants prefer to work at relatively stable, non-seasonal jobs (cf. Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994). They choose to work in Monday-to-Friday type of arrangements so that they have the weekends off, and they preferably work during the day so that they can be at home in the evenings. For many settlement migrants, this has to do with the fact that they live with their families, which sometimes include children. They want to spend time with their family members and friends and prefer to lead a regular life. If they can afford it they prefer to be home rather than to take on extra work. As Martina, who works 30 hours per week, said:

> My bosses ask me all the time, how are you with your jobs and I say "good, good." There was work for Friday, she said a friend of hers was looking for someone for Friday (…) And I said "no, I am good with my hours, I don't want to work all the time you know, no, no."

Having a regular and continuous job is also considered a very important aspect of life for settlement migrants (cf. Psimmenos and Kassimati 2006). But sometimes they do not manage to find this type of employment, which means that they have to accept other jobs. What they often do in such cases is work intermittently. Dembah for example says:

> If I have some money I am not going to continue to work you know. The work is often very heavy, it kills you know. (…) Last time I worked for three months I think…but at last I just could not take it anymore. It is really heavy work you know. I have some money now you know, maybe it will last two months more.

Contrastingly, legalization migrants aspire to become legalized, and working informally could prevent them from reaching this goal. Both in Belgium and in the Netherlands, if an irregular migrant is caught doing informal work, he or she receives notification to leave the country which severely reduces the chances of legalization and simultaneously increases the chances of being deported. Therefore,

legalization migrants try to work as little as possible, like Monana from Congo says: "I don't look [for work], because by working in black I run the risk of getting caught." Although both settlement migrants and legalization migrants want to stay in the receiving society, they have quite distinct job preferences that lead to different patterns of incorporation. I experienced how important the distinction between legalization and settlement aspirations is when it comes to work in a conversation I had with Lazzat from Uzbekistan. When we talked, he had just found out that his application for regularization had been denied, and he was contemplating his next steps. He said: "I am not sure what to do. I should either file a new application for asylum or regularization or I should start to look for a job."

Many legalization migrants work part-time in order to cover their basic needs and choose to spend the rest of their time searching a marriage partner and attending language courses. This does not mean that this choice is always easy. If they do not work they easily get bored and start to feel useless, as is expressed by Alexandre from Congo: "it is black work (…) I do not take such risks in this life….that is dangerous…every day. What if the police catch me? That is not good for my application. But do I still have a life like this? If I don't work it is good for my application but it is not good for my health…for my life."

Many legalization migrants choose to refrain from work as much as possible because this could obstruct the fulfillment of their aspirations, even though they could find a job if they wanted to. Efunsegun explains why he does not want to work:

> I never worked since I came to Belgium. I have been working voluntary always [for a NGO]. (…) Many undocumented people they are working in this country (…) but I don't want to associate myself to that system. (…) because people go to rent documents you know they use them to work, and by the time they get caught they end up in prison. Even when I was in Nigeria I have never been to prison you know. So I don't want to associate myself with when I have to rent a paper to work…. when the control is there I am arrested and I end up my life in prison. And the worst thing that could happen to me is that they send me back to my country. You know, what is the use of my working? The best option that I have is to wait until I have my personal permission with my passport. Then I want to look for job. (…)

> So these are the reasons why I don't want to run that risk, not that there are no people who do it but *I* don't want to do it.

Although legalization migrants do not want to work, not all of them are in a position in which they can afford not to. Efunsegun lives with a Belgian family who support him. Not all legalization migrants are able to raise alternative sources of income though. If they do need to work to gather or supplement their income, they work the minimum that is necessary. It is not the case that they can afford not to work and then make up a story about striving for legal papers around it. When I asked Efunsegun what he would do if he did not have this family to support him, he replied: "No even if I was not with [this family] I never thought of doing it [informal work] you say to somebody that you want to work and make money, this is a question of one or two of my friends they will rent a pass for me, but I will never do it you know." Not working is thus his top priority because of the legalization strategy he pursues. He is convinced he would find another way around working if he did not have the family to support him. It is likely that he would manage; after all he has also managed not to work for quite some time before he met the Belgian family. He could manage because he is prepared to live with little. This is a sacrifice that he is willing to make in order to realize his aspirations.

This does not mean that none of the legalization migrants work, or that all unemployed irregular migrants have aspirations to become legalized. It only means that legalization migrants prefer not to and consequently do it as little as possible if they can. Moreover, I do not mean to say that no settlement migrants work more than 40 hours per week or that there are no investment migrants who work less than that. The point is that because of their aspirations they have certain preferences regarding work. Some of them manage to realize a work situation that they prefer and others do not. What is important at this point is that if one wants to understand the patterns of functional incorporation of irregular migrants, one has to consider their aspirations as these partially explain them. This applies not only to the hours they work, but also to the type of employment they engage in and the extent in which they feel exploited doing it. These issues are discussed in the next subsections.

6.3.2 Type of work

It is commonly held – both in Europe and the US – that irregular migrant men work in economic sectors like agriculture and horticulture, construction, garment

manufacturing, food processing, hotels and restaurants (Ambrosini 2001; P. Anderson 1999; Burgers 1998; Engbersen et al. 2002; Samers 2001), whereas women tend to work as housekeepers or private caretakers in private households (Leman 1997; Triandafyllidou and Kosic 2006). The latter is not generally regarded to be a matter of choice or preference. Rather, these are considered to be the only jobs available to irregular migrant women (Kosic and Triandafyllidou 2004; Raijman et al. 2003). Like other scholars, I found that women work almost exclusively in domestic work, cleaning or babysitting. They do not work in horticulture or construction as men do. However, it was not the case that they could not find other than domestic work; these women actually preferred to work in this sector. Furthermore, whereas others find that domestic work is the exclusive domain of females, I found that many men with settlement or legalization aspirations did and preferred to do domestic work as well.

As said before, some legalization migrants have to work a certain amount of hours to be able to sustain themselves, even though they prefer not to engage in informal employment. In these cases they try to work in specific types of jobs, being those that have least chance of being controlled. Albert explains:

> If I work somewhere, if someone from the church calls. I can work there in the church or in the house, in somebody's house. In someone's house, not outside but inside. If I enter a house like I have entered yours, if someone invites me, like for example if you would have an acquaintance I could come there and I clean, then I am done and they give me twenty euros. And then I come back next week for example. Then there is nobody who sees me because it is inside the house. And if somebody comes by they can say that I am a friend. (…) I do not want to work in things like construction. I have my family here and moreover if they expel me today to Kinshasa I know that there will be people waiting for me at the airport. They will arrest me right there at the airport. So I try, even though I suffer, I try to respect the Belgian law a bit. (Albert, Congo)

Private households are thus perceived a much safer place to work than for example construction sites (see also Cyrus and Vogel 2006). This does not imply that only legalization migrants want to work for private households. Migrants with other types of aspirations are also concerned with their safety. Andrei from Moldova – who has had settlement aspirations for quite some time – has always preferred to

work for private households. He says: "I have never worked for a company. I have avoided it all the time because at big companies all the time the process of control is much bigger than in case I work for private people." Settlement and legalization migrants thus prefer to work for private households – as domestic workers, handymen, gardeners or babysitters.

Settlement and legalization migrants usually fear expulsion more than investment migrants do. This is because they generally have more to lose by being expelled, because they have settled down. In addition, many former asylum seekers stress the fear of expulsion (cf. Koser 1998). This has to do with the situation in the countries they are from, but also with the fact that fingerprints of asylum seekers are registered in a database. This means that the police can easily determine their identity which makes expulsion easier than it is for other irregular migrants who can hide their identity (Broeders 2009).

But these are not the only reasons why legalization and settlement migrants prefer to work for private households. Black (2003) for example points out that many irregular migrants try to stay clear of any form of illegal activity because illegal migration has already become criminalized (cf. Penninx 2006). Many migrants therefore prefer to do a job like informal domestic work, because they think this is more socially acceptable than an informal job in for example construction. Furthermore, I have already mentioned that the mere fact of being settled makes migrants fear expulsion, and this fear is usually even fiercer in case children are involved. In Albert's case this probably weighs heavier than the risk he runs in Congo. Although he said he was afraid to be arrested in Congo, he later indicated that he would go back to Congo if he obtained papers to visit his family there. I often noted such inconsistencies in the stories of the risks people would run if they were to be expelled. The reasons for not wanting to go back are therefore not so easily singled out, and often a combination of factors is at play. But whatever the reasons may be, they make these migrants avoid work as much as possible, and they make low-risk jobs especially attractive.

Furthermore, settlement and legalization migrants prefer to work for private households because this way, they usually work for several employers. As a result, if one employer does not treat them well or if an employer fires them, they do not lose their income altogether. And if they get a job offer, they can more easily take a chance and try it out as enough other jobs remain in case it does not work out well. They are therefore in a less vulnerable position than those who depend on one

employer. Moreover, work for private households provides legalization migrants the possibility of working part-time. Such opportunities are generally unavailable in horticulture, construction or restaurants.

In addition, settlement and legalization migrants prefer to work for Belgian and Dutch private households, because they are reported to pay the best and to exploit irregular migrants least of all. Private Dutch or Belgian households are perceived to pay between seven and fifteen euros per hour. My respondents agree that it is best to work for Belgians or Dutch people and not for other immigrants, often including their own kind. Diego for example says: "honestly foreigners don't pay well. To work for our own people always complicates things." Constanza says:

> It is better to work for a Belgian. Because of the way they treat you. Those for who you really don't want to work are Spanish and Italian people. (…) For example, sometimes we talk among friends, female and male, and we ask: 'how is your boss, where is he or she from', and normally Spanish and Italian people are people who are very, very difficult to deal with. Because they don't think they have someone who helps them with the work, they think they have a slave who has to work for them. And it is not like that. They don't respect the hours that you work, they don't respect many things. But normally Belgians do, it is better to work for Belgians. Obviously, with them the problem is the language. But it is preferable to struggle with the language than to struggle with hours.

Marouane says he preferred to work for Belgians because they pay 50 euros per day, while a Moroccan or a Turkish employer only pays him half. And Valentina says: "I only work for Belgians. (…) If this person is not Belgian, they don't pay you and, well Belgians are the best, they are honest people and the majority shows much consideration. They treat the persons who work for them as a normal person you understand. The Belgians here do that."

These results run contrary to what is often assumed. Many scholars find that migrants who can turn to co-ethnics in search of a job are better off than those who cannot (Burgers and Engbersen 1999; Leerkes et al. 2004; Van der Leun 2003b). Engbersen et al. (2002) for example find that Turkish and Chinese migrants have the highest employment rates because they can work for co-ethnic businesses. They further write that as Somali migrants lack ethnic entrepreneurship, they have to go outside their own community to find work, which, according to the authors, leads to

many problems. Contrastingly, many of my respondents prefer not to work for co-ethnics because they are believed to pay the least and do not always treat them right. They therefore consciously turn to employment possibilities outside of their own communities. It seems that, although the presence of co-ethnics may help irregular migrants in finding some kind of employment, working for Belgian or Dutch individual households guarantees the least exploitative conditions.

While settlement and especially legalization migrants are particularly attracted to individual households for work, investment migrants usually do the jobs that natives reject. These are the low status jobs found in economic sectors such as agriculture, horticulture, restaurants and construction. After all, both in the Netherlands and Belgium, organizations in these sectors often require (seasonal) labor market flexibility and cheap labor due to competitive pressures (Kaizen and Nonneman 2007). Like most temporary migrants, investment migrants tend to accept jobs that other migrants or natives would refuse because of their exploitative character. While others generally refuse to work long hours, investment migrants are happy to do so. Moreover, the jobs are unstable, and often seasonal, but this insecurity does not bother investment migrants it does other people, as their engagement is only temporary anyway.

Piore (1979) and Massey (1986) remark that work is purely a means to an end to temporary migrants and that they are consequently the closest thing in real life to the *homo economicus* of economic theory: they are target earners seeking to maximize short-term income before returning home. Recall Diego who said: "we are a school of economics." Investment migrants usually take what they can get, and if the work ends, they try to find something new fast. The labor they perform is usually the kind that requires people to work very hard and for long hours, which is not what settlement or legalization migrants like to do, because they find it too hard to do for long and too disruptive of their lives. Moreover, the jobs in these sectors are often risky, as they are heavily controlled. This constitutes less of a problem for investment migrants, as they have usually not migrated from far away and can easily travel back and forth. Newspapers often report how the police expelled eastern Europeans and how they arrived back on the job the next week (Paspalanova 2006).

But these are not the only reasons why investment migrants tend to do the type of work that natives or other migrants reject. They are also more likely to accept the prevailing low wages (cf. Carter 2005). These wages are below the official

minimum and below what settlement and legalization migrants usually demand, but they are higher than what investment migrants are used to in their countries of origin. From their frame of reference they consequently feel that they are being paid well. Moreover, they value the wages in terms of what they can buy with it in their countries of origin, as their earnings will be spent there. Settlement or legalization migrants on the other hand, are not prepared to work for such low wages. Vincente explains why investment migrants work for low wages and why he is not willing to do so:

> Because for them in their country a euro is worth a lot, so they have the capacity to earn less and to go and invest that in their country so it is more convenient for them to be here and even though they earn less, the money multiplies there. We to the contrary do not have other possibilities. (…) what we earn here is what we invest here, in this place itself. And this is the difference because everything is very expensive here so we can't say all right we are going to earn six euros per hour because I have to live from that and that is not possible with this amount. What happens is that they earn this because in their country this money is worth a lot, it is worth four times more than what it is here. So well, they charge less.

All in all, investment migrants work in the sectors that are traditionally associated with the informal labor of irregular migrants: horticulture, construction, personal services, and restaurants. They usually do not have many problems with the working conditions there. Settlement and legalization migrants on the contrary prefer not to work under such conditions, which attracts them to private households. Sometimes they do not manage to find anything else, and so they are forced to work in sectors where mostly investment migrants work and in which they feel heavily exploited. They do normally manage to find work there as the demand for workers is high. Most respondents say that if you want to work it is not difficult to find, but it depends on the conditions under which you want to work and the pay you are willing to accept. Andrei explains: "People who say they can't find work in Holland, [on the] first day I say, good you don't have it, [on the] next day I give him advice. [On the] next day, [if] he says "I don't have it", I say "sorry you are an idiot, be gone. (…) I am thousand percent, not hundred but thousand percent sure that if a person really likes to have work in the Netherlands, he has it in maximum three days." Ûsko says: "to find work I just go to an employment agency. Here in The Hague there are many employment agencies. There used to be a lot of them, now

there are fewer. Or you go to coffeehouses or to restaurants to ask for a job, to find work. It is not a problem, you can find work everywhere." And Marouane says: "it is very easy [to find a job] but they don't pay well. (….) [Brussels] is the easiest city in Europe, for finding a job". The problem is thus not so much to find work, but to find a job that fits the aspirations of the migrant in question. And in this case, investment migrants have the advantage as they are less demanding.

Recent changes

Things appear to be changing which is why the issue of finding work may become more difficult. Employers have started to prefer to employ investment migrants and new legal migrants over the other two categories of irregular migrants. They have several reasons to do so. First, investment migrants are willing to work for lower wages. Second, many investment migrants have set up systems in which they take over each other's jobs when they leave (see also Paspalanova 2006), which implies that employers are never short on workers and do not have recruitment problems as the migrants arrange for a constant supply of hard workers themselves. Settlement or legalization migrants on the contrary are much more demanding: they want holidays and time off to rest from the heavy work, and they are not so easily replaced. Third, the arrival of regular migrants from new EU countries makes irregular migrants less attractive as employees. Many respondents indicate that the competitive pressure from migrants from new EU countries makes it more difficult for them to find work. Dembah for example says: "Yeah I had an employer and actually I could always depend on him. If I needed money he would say ok come. In the past he really helped me out but now, when I say I need work because I really need money he says, yes at this moment I do not have anything for you because I have hired employees from Poland. I say what? Poland." The Polish workers Dembah is referring to have several advantages over him. First, they are temporary workers, and therefore they are committed to work hard for a certain period. Second, as Poles are now also citizens of the European Union, they are allowed to work legally. In practice, many do not work legally, but under semi-formal arrangements. Many employers prefer such hybrid forms of informal employment, such as fulltime work declared as part-time work, because their workers appear to work legally in case they are controlled (Ruhs and Anderson 2009). Irregular migrants lose their competitive edge, because they cannot work under semi-formal arrangements (Iskander 2000). This means that Dembah is not that attractive

anymore for his employer. He demands more pay than investment migrants do. He can only work informally, and he only wants to work when he needs money. When he has enough, he quits and leaves it to the employer to find a replacement. The developments outlined here make clear that it is becoming more difficult for settlement and legalization migrants to work in jobs in which investment migrants generally work.

Other scholars point to similar trends. According to Van der Leun and Kloosterman (2006), the arrival of new groups of immigrants in combination with recent policy changes has caused the labor of irregular migrants to go 'further underground' (Van der Leun and Kloosterman 2006: 59; cf. Djajic 1999). They for example claim that labor conditions have deteriorated, which is indicated by decreased wages and the increasing use of subcontractors. They also note a sectoral shift: migrants now more often work in restaurants and catering services and in the domain of personal services: "illegal labor appears to move to sectors or segments where undocumented workers can or will less easily be detected: autochthonous private households and ethnic businesses." (Van der Leun and Kloosterman 2006: 66) These findings are in line with the developments I signaled at earlier. However, Van der Leun and Kloosterman (2006) suggest that these developments are negative. Indeed, the increasing use of subcontractors is a development that weakens the employment position of irregular migrants. Furthermore, if informal work is increasingly taking place within ethnic businesses, then this is probably not a sign of improving conditions for irregular migrants either. Yet I am not so sure if the sectoral shift to 'autochthonous private households' should be interpreted so negatively. After all, my respondents with settlement and legalization aspirations actually preferred to work for private households. Furthermore, as indicated before, a shift to the sector of personal services usually means that they get multiple employers which means they become less dependent upon the whims of one employer. In addition, they are paid better and have better working conditions if they work for Belgian or Dutch households.

A consequence of this sectoral shift to private households is that it is becoming more difficult for settlement and legalization migrant men to find work than for women. Although some men also do cleaning work for private households, this sector is still dominated by women. Moreover, this is likely to continue as domestic work is traditionally labeled as female labor. Men therefore usually work for Dutch or Belgian households as handymen, a job for which specific skills are often required (see chapter 9) and therefore not easily accessed. Many respondents

consequently indicate that it is easier for women to find work than for men. Marouane says: "The women they work a lot, it is very easy for them to find work in black…..I know a girl who is without papers, she works three jobs per day. Three jobs, yes. She earns 2,000 euros per month." Women not only find a job more easily, the jobs they find are also those that are relatively well-paid and steady. When I asked Ignacio if he recommends that people in Chile migrate to Belgium he responded: "When it is a man I recommend he does not come, if it is a woman, then good, come, because women have more work than men. But for a man no." If more migrants give a similar advice to potential migrants, female irregular migration flows are likely to continue to increase in the future.

6.3.3 Exploitation

This subsection discusses the question of whether irregular migrants experience exploitation in the work they do, and if so, what circumstances lead to such experiences. According to Samers (2001) both social scientists and the media tend to focus on sensationalist stories of irregular migrants and their unscrupulous employers. Indeed many scholars focus on the vulnerable situation irregular migrants find themselves in *vis-à-vis* their employers (see for example Adam et al. 2002; B. Anderson 2001; P. Anderson 1999; Devillé 2008; Kosic and Triandafyllidou 2004). Because of their lack of legal status it is assumed that irregular migrants work under difficult conditions for low salaries and that they are powerless to do anything about it. This is also what many of my respondents indicated: that their position is very vulnerable and that it is difficult to fight any injustice done to them. Yet at the same time, only a few of my respondents indicated they have been maltreated themselves. The cases in which this happened were sometimes very shocking and understandably food for sensationalist stories. Vincente for example explained how his own family members had taken advantage of him:

> When I came here, I started to work on the second day. But I had bad luck. (…) I worked for almost a year and I was never paid. With my own family. (…) it was my brother-in-law (…) it is a little difficult to explain but I lived in his house. And he said I will pay you for example 80 euros or 70 euros for a day of work, 10 for the food, 15 for the food, and the rest is for you. And because I was living in his house and everything, I said well, I am going to work hard and I believed

> them, I believed that they would carry out their words, but they did not, in the end they never paid me anything.

Like Vincente, persons who have been maltreated usually say that this was a onetime event in the beginning of their migrant career which taught them to be more cautious. Obviously, Vicente's experience makes him extremely aware of his vulnerable situation. So is Dembah who could go on for hours about his precarious situation and how employers take advantage of his vulnerability, yet his personal experiences in this respect are limited: "those Arabs they profit from me because they know about my situation. Sometimes if you go work for them you really have to be [hits with his fist on the table] otherwise you won't get your money. (…) for example I used to have some acquaintances with an employment agency who let me work for three weeks and then they did not pay me. (…) but when I said [hits with hand on the table] I want my money, he paid it straight away." When I asked him how often this had happened to him he said "well just this one time with this Turk." Usually I received an answer like the one Antonia gave me: "Thank God it never happened to me that they did not pay me. Because I have heard about people who don't pay, it happens to many people when they come (…) I had bad experiences with one man but since I left him, everybody pays me and they are very nice." Tarek said: "It has never happened that they did not pay me. They always give you your money. If you work you can even ask for an advance." And Arshan told me that he once worked a whole night for only one euro per hour. He said that ever since this happened he makes sure he negotiates his salary before he starts the work and that he has not encountered such problems since.

Although there are a lot of stories about maltreatment in the literature, most of my respondents indicated they did not suffer from it, and when they had it was only in the beginning of their stay. Most migrants find ways to guard themselves against misbehavior of employers. Constanza for example says: "only the new people [are abused] because the other people already know many things so they don't let themselves be abused." She further explained to me how irregular migrants talk amongst each other about the reputation of employers to make sure they do not work for abusive employers. In case of new employers there is obviously not such as system. Constanza explains how testing an employer works in such cases:

> You have to try the first month and evaluate if it is a good person or if they are going to pay you well or if it is punctual. (…) the bosses make us go through a test, a trial to see if you know how to clean, how to

> cook, how to iron, etcetera etcetera. After you have gone through all these tests you also have the right to ask them when they are going to pay you, the data, and how, and also to know your rights (…) you find this security to be able to talk like this, this freedom to really say ok I want you to pay me every first of the month, I want to have a holiday, I want to have a subscription for public transport, many details.

A problem with determining the extent to which irregular migrants are exploited is that exploitation is experienced differently. Other scholars have reported difficulties in determining exploitation and sometimes seem confused about their findings (see for example Triandafyllidou and Kosic 2006). Likewise, Düvell and Jordan (2006: 61) found many differences in terms of perceptions of exploitation, without being able to explain them: "Some emphasized their success. Others would not even complain about low wages or obvious exploitation. (…) Others critically reflected on the humiliating conditions and their rank in the social hierarchy and admitted to themselves that they had moved downwards socially." P. Anderson (1999: 49) remarked that some of his respondents "looked back on their employment, despite harshness of conditions, low pay and the attendant uncertainties more positively than one would expect." He further writes: "The perception of a job as lowly or exploitative at the objective level may not be felt by an undocumented person in the same way subjectively." (P. Anderson 1999: 44) One can therefore not compare subjective experiences and then make objective statements about them. What can be done is attempt to understand where these different perceptions come from by bringing aspirations into the analysis.

I noticed that divergent perceptions of objectively similar circumstances have a lot to do with aspirations; e.g., investment migrants hardly ever experience exploitation, whereas legalization migrants usually immediately emphasize the exploitative conditions under which they work. Houssine for example aspires to become legalized and says: "I work two days a week in black and I earn fifty euros per day. Everybody profits from the people without papers. And you know why? Because he knows that if you give fifty euros to someone without papers he is happy with it. (…) Black work is not good. Why? Because with black work it is the boss who profits. He profits a lot. And why does he profit? Because you work without papers." Houssine works in a restaurant where he has to work 8 hours for the 50 euros he earns per day. Investment migrants usually work for much less than that without complaint. Furthermore, he indicates that he is always paid on time and that his employers treat him well. At the same time, he keeps stressing that his employer

profits from him. It seems to be the unequal relationship that bothers him and which makes him feel exploited, not so much the actual treatment he receives. In the same vein, settlement and legalization migrants who have to work in a job in which investment migrants typically work report high dissatisfaction and perceptions of exploitation. Legalization migrants especially complain of exploitation, as this is bound up with their aspirations. Recall legalization migrant Dnari from Sierra Leone who said: "I didn't go to Europe and stop here to do illegal work, that is no use." Whereas settlement migrants come to Europe to work informally, legalization migrants do not want to work informally. Settlement migrants can therefore be dissatisfied with their work, because it does not allow them to live a regular life or because it does not pay well, but for legalization migrants their rejection of informal labor is much more fundamental. Exactly the same job is thus experienced differently by migrants with different aspirations.

6.3.4 Differences between Belgium and the Netherlands

Reviewing the previous subsections, it appears that the types of jobs irregular migrants do can be explained by both irregular migrants' aspirations as well as the opportunities they have. Whereas the aspirations of investment migrants make them prefer to work as much as they can, taking the sometimes exploitative conditions in the typical sectors associated with irregular migrants for granted, settlement and legalization migrants aspirations' make them prefer to work for private households. Their opportunity structures are responsible for the fact that not all irregular migrants manage to get the jobs they want. Moreover, many investment migrants work for co-ethnics as a result of their opportunity structure, as these are often the only people they associate with. Other scholars often find that irregular migrant workers are specialized by nationality (Glytsos 2005). I found that this was also sometimes the case with my respondents. However, I found that although many irregular migrants work for co-ethnics, this does not stem from preference. When it comes to preferences, many actually choose not to work for co-ethnics. However, some just do not have the opportunities to work for people other than their own.

The following figure summarizes the main findings regarding employment patterns and aspirations:

Figure 6.2 Employment patterns per type of aspiration

	Investment	**Settlement**	**Legalization**	**Legalization**
			Procedures	**Marriage**
Employment				
Work hours	As many as possible	Regular	As little as possible	As little as possible
Type of work	'Typical' irregular migrant sectors	In native private households	In native private households	In private households and ethnic businesses
Perception of exploitation	No perception of exploitation	Certain types of work	Fundamental	Fundamental

One may wonder if there are major differences between the employment patterns of irregular migrants in Belgium and the Netherlands. After all, the informal sector is relatively larger in Belgium than it is in the Netherlands. Obviously, my data do not allow for systematic comparisons. Yet what I can do is reflect upon what my respondents perceive. Even if these experiences do not reflect the objective situation, most irregular migrants do act upon these perceptions, and this means that these experiences do affect the employment patterns.

Kamel for example moved to Belgium because of rumors. He says: "I [came to Belgium] because I heard from others that contrary to the Netherlands, there was work in Belgium. Rumors were spreading around that there was a lot more work in Belgium than in the Netherlands." Brahim had a similar experience: "I lived in the Netherlands for almost nine years before I came to Belgium. (…) I heard that it was easier to find work in Belgium and that they are less strict with the illegals." When Halil was still in Turkey he called several friends in Europe to inquire about the employment situation in the countries these friends lived in. He explains: "I called friends in Germany and the Netherlands. My friends there told me that it was difficult to find work. My friend in Belgium was the only one who said he surely had work for me." Hassan, who has lived in the Netherlands in the past and now lives in Belgium says: "there is no work in the Netherlands. In Belgium it is all a bit easier." And Nabil says: "I have lived in the Netherlands for twelve years. I left because it gradually became more difficult for me to find a job (…) In Belgium there was more work than in the Netherlands. I mostly worked in construction here." Armine says: "I left the Netherlands because I was unemployed at a certain moment and I could not find a job anymore. (…) There is no black work there anymore. It has become less in Belgium as well but there is still more here than in the Netherlands."

The respondents quoted above lived in Belgium when they were interviewed, but they had lived in the Netherlands before. I did not encounter any migrants in the Netherlands who had previously lived in Belgium. Nevertheless, like the respondents in Belgium – my respondents in the Netherlands all believed that it is easier to find a job in Belgium than it is in the Netherlands. Andrei for example says: "in Belgium it is much easier [to find employment]. I have met so many people who stayed for example one year in Germany, two years in Belgium and one year here, who say Belgium is much easier." Some irregular migrants appear to be quite mobile and move across the European borders in search of employment. According to Mohammed many irregular migrants have left the Netherlands: "there used to be a lot [of irregular migrants] here but many have gone to Spain. They get resident papers there, work; many people have gone … many Moroccan people I know have gone to Spain."

Although I cannot determine to what extent the statements made by my respondents reflect reality, it is clear that irregular migrants act upon rumors and the perceptions they have of the situation, and these perceptions all point in the same direction. I can therefore safely assume that Belgium is regarded as a country with more favorable conditions for work than the Netherlands. Irregular migrants who are in search of work – investment and settlement migrants – are therefore more likely to be found in Belgium than in the Netherlands.

6.4 OTHER SOURCES OF INCOME OR ASSISTANCE

Besides engaging in informal employment irregular migrants can obtain resources from the social networks in which they are embedded or by means of criminal activities (Van der Leun and Kloosterman 2006). Scholars in the Netherlands and Belgium have carefully studied the involvement of irregular migrants in crime (see for example De Boom et al. 2006; Engbersen and Van der Leun 2001; 1998; 1995; Engbersen et al. 2007; Leerkes 2009; 2007a; 2007b; 2004; Leerkes et al. 2004; Van der Leun 1999; 2003a; Van Meeteren et al. 2008). As the focus of my research is not on criminal activities, I have not gained insights that these studies have not already provided. I therefore choose not to elaborate on this topic. However, it is different when it comes to the resources irregular migrants derive from their social networks, in other words, from the gift and barter economy (Van der Leun and Kloosterman 2006). I have offered a theoretical critique on the current research practice involving the study of social networks and the social capital embedded in these networks in

chapter 2. The subsequent subsection deals with some of the points mentioned there. It empirically demonstrates the downsides of the current research practice, as well as the insights gained by an approach that takes aspirations as a starting point.

In addition to criminal activities and resources from the gift and barter economy, I found that some irregular migrants manage to receive resources from governmental organizations. This flies in the face of what is usually found in other research (Chavez et al. 1997; Mahler 1995; Massey et al. 1987; Paspalanova 2006; Van der Leun 2003b; Van der Leun and Kloosterman 1999; Van Nieuwenhuyze 2009). According to Van der Leun (2003b: 40) irregular migrants are unable to access the formal support (governmental) organizations provide; only the less-regulated informal support provided by organizations is within their reach. However, I found that in Belgium, state-sponsored support is substantial for some individuals. Because in practice it proved difficult to disentangle formal and informal support from organizations, I discuss both forms in one subsection, even though informal aid from organizations may technically belong to the gift and barter economy. The next subsection therefore deals with the gift and barter economy, which is followed by a subsection on support provided by organizations.

6.4.1 The gift and barter economy

Irregular migrants can mobilize support from the social networks in which they are embedded. This support is often referred to as social capital. However, not all social capital supplied by networks is support. Social networks can also supply other resources. Briggs (1998) conceptualizes two types of social capital available in social networks: social leverage and social support. Social leverage helps people to 'get ahead,' whereas social support helps people to 'get by' or cope (Briggs 1998: 178). This means that social leverage can help people to realize their aspirations, while social support ensures that migrant's basic needs are met. I have conceptualized functional incorporation as relating to the way irregular migrants sustain themselves. This subsection therefore deals with the social *support* migrants derive from the social networks they are embedded in, leaving the role of social *leverage* in the realization of aspirations to be discussed in chapter 9.

What is striking in the analysis of the support my respondents receive is that many investment and settlement migrants do not need much support to sustain themselves and receive little of it. These migrants generate most of their resources

from employment and only need support if they are temporarily unemployed or in case of unforeseen circumstances. Whereas they do rely on their social network for information about where they can receive healthcare and how to find jobs, they are largely self-sustaining, and they only occasionally need to supplement their income from labor. When I asked Martina who helps her if she does not have money or work, she replied: "I have always had work, and health. The first six months have been critical. (…) I had some reserves; I made sure I did not spend much." As Martina indicates, investment and settlement migrants mostly need support when they arrive and do not yet have a job. Once they have obtained employment they only occasionally need additional sources of income.

Contrastingly, legalization migrants structurally need a lot of support because they wish to refrain from work as much as possible. In fact, they prefer to generate resources from support rather than through informal labor. Instead of searching for a job, they therefore look for monetary gifts with which they can pay the rent and buy food. Settlement and investment migrants on the other hand sometimes live on gifts during the initial period of their stay, but after a while their caregivers expect them to be able to sustain themselves independently. When they find jobs and move into independent accommodation, they do still occasionally receive material help, like furniture or clothes, but they usually do not receive substantial monetary gifts anymore. Partly this is because they do not need it, but caregivers also appear to refuse structurally to give investment and settlement migrants money. That is why they receive only small sums on the order of 10 euros (see also Staring 2001). In case of special circumstances , such as when an irregular migrant is very ill and in need of expensive treatment, he or she may receive larger sums especially for this purpose. If there are no special circumstances and settlement and investment migrants need larger sums of money to sustain themselves, they have to borrow. Legalization migrants are thus to a much larger extent dependent on support to sustain themselves than investment and settlement migrants because they prefer to work as little possible.

Having established that different types of irregular migrants have different needs, the question is how they get support, and from whom. Most scholars look within ethnic communities as a source of support. As pointed out in chapter 2, many scholars equate social networks with ethnic networks, or ethnic community networks, meaning that they mostly look for sources of assistance within the ethnic community of the migrant in question and overlook other possibilities. Their focus is often on community structures in specific localities. Whereas others consider the

ethnic community to be the most important source of support for irregular migrants, I found that this is certainly not the case for irregular migrants in general, but only for specific categories of migrants. My results indicate that migrants with different aspirations draw support from different sources. The most important sources are family relations, 'ethnic community' relations, relations with natives, and support from organizations. While the first three sources are discussed below, the latter is left to be discussed in the next subsection.

Family support

If respondents have family in the host country they receive help from them, regardless of what type of aspirations they have. As family often receives them, during the initial period they provide a roof over their heads, food, and sometimes pocket money until the newcomers are able to find a job and sustain themselves independently. Support from family is generally all-encompassing and unconditional in this initial period. However, family members do usually not want to provide encompassing support that is everlasting. After a while, migrants have to be able to settle down on their own, return with enough savings, or become legalized so that they can live independently. Once migrants live independently, they can always turn to their family in case of a temporary setback, but they cannot expect to be fully taken care of forever. Catalina for example says: "my family here helps me. They do the little that they can. They help me but they cannot sustain me, they also have their own obligations and they also don't earn much. (…) But yes, if I have a problem I go to one of them and they help me. But it is like this that they can't sustain me and my two sons, that they can't do." Of all three categories, legalization migrants who are involved in procedures receive the least family support. This is not because their family refuses to help them, but because they often do not have family residing in the country. When they do, these family members usually do try to support them until they receive papers.

All in all, people who can generate support from family members are relatively well off because family relationships allow for all-encompassing support. The closer the family relation the more valuable and the more easily obtained the support tends to be. Tarek says: "help starts with the family. (…) support starts with those who are closest to you, if you have a brother or sister you start with them." However, the support migrants receive from their family members should not be seen as support from the ethnic community. That they receive support from family

does not mean that they associate let, alone receive help, from their co-ethnics. Fernando for example tells: "We have cousins and aunts here. The aunts are married to Belgians, and they have children here and they are already Belgians. And from this family we get support. (…) Normally with the Latinos here in Belgium I don't have a lot of contact."

Systems of social solidarity

Those who do not have family support have to turn to others for help. For investment and settlement migrants these are usually friends or acquaintances, often with a similar ethnic background. In order to receive help from what others scholars denote 'the ethnic community', they need to invest in social relationships within these communities. For a tightly-knit community in which solidarity is exchanged to develop, migrants need to invest in the community and contribute to it. This way, they can create social security structures that serve as an insurance against temporary setbacks. Tarek explains how such social security systems work:

> 100 euros is a lot of money. But it is not between us. We look at these things from a different perspective. Who needs the 100 euros most, you or me. The need is the priority. If somebody else has priority then you give it. That is how it works among us. (…) if I have 50 euros and I do not have anything else (…) and he asks 50 euros from me, then I ask him if 45 is all right because I prefer to leave a few euros for myself. And I do that because I know that I won't gain anything bad with it. (…) because I know that if I give him 40 or 50 euros, then he will help others too if they need it. (…) he himself will act the same way, that is, how do you say it, the social financing, and the cooperation that is the social solidarity.

These social solidarity systems are only open to people who contribute to them. As a result, legalization migrants, whose aspirations mean that they usually receive more than they contribute, have limited access to such systems. In addition, only people who are what my respondents call 'serious' have access. Marouane explains about such social solidarity systems: "when you are not serious he can't give you, he will say he does not have anything, even though he has money. If you are not serious they won't give you [anything]. If you are serious, you can have whatever you want." Tuyishime: "Serious means if you are correct. (…) Masja, if you give me 50 euros, I will give it back on Friday. When it is Friday I give it. That is correct." When

I asked Marouane what serious means and how you can determine if someone is serious he said: "There is no measure for it, it is like this, if you search someone, you say to your friends that you need someone to live with you, but only if he is honest, so he will search someone that he knows who is honest so he can say, this person here is serious, I vouch for him. Like that. (….) me I am also serious but I can't tell you that I am serious (…)." Marouane explains that other people have to vouch for a migrant's honesty to get access to social solidarity systems. These thus function based on trust. This means that in order to partake in social solidarity systems a migrant needs other participants who can vouch for him, and he needs to pay the money back as promised. Otherwise he will be excluded from the system, as he is not considered serious anymore.

Furthermore, it is very important for irregular migrants who depend on social solidarity systems to continue to invest in them. If a migrant does not, and he needs help one day, he will be refused. This means that if an irregular migrant has money, and someone else needs help, he or she is obliged to lend or give the person in need money. If a migrant has money, but chooses to keep it to himself when someone else is in need, he will be refused support if he needs it himself one day. This is why it is unattractive for investment migrants to partake in such systems. After all, when they have money they do not want to invest it in a social solidarity system. Rather they want to save it as this brings them closer to the attainment of their aspirations. They are therefore more inclined to think about themselves than to help other people. Sofia, who is an investment migrant, says that the people around her are all "egoists who think only about themselves". Piore (1979) also stresses the radical individualism of temporary migrants. Lending money to other people does not get them closer the realization of their aspirations, but it instead drives its attainment further away. So investment migrants who do not have enough income from work and no family to support them encounter difficulties in gathering social support. In cases like these, they fully depend on the commercial infrastructure that caters to irregular migrants. In this circuit, migrants do not last long as support is not unconditional. Some of the investment migrants who depend on it therefore turn into settlement migrants after a while.

Irregular migrants who fail to invest in social solidarity systems do not get access to these when they need it and therefore run the risk of ending up in the streets. I met an irregular migrant who was denied access when he needed it because he previously kept all the money he earned to himself. I met him in a place where he

came every day to eat soup and to take a shower, where he explained to me how he ended up there:

> I have worked a lot, like I told you almost five years; I put it all in the casino. (…) if I had 1,000 euros, I played the whole day in the casino, try this, play that and then the money was gone. (…) all the illegal people I know who come here are addicted to gambling too. They have all worked here for years but have destroyed their lives because of gambling. (…) now people think that I am a junky (…) nobody trusts me to help me for money and all that.

This trust that Adil talks about is very important. As a gambling addict, Adil was not 'serious' like the other migrants who partake in social solidarity systems. When he borrowed money he did not always pay it back as he promised, and he did not lend money to other people. Migrants who contribute to social solidarity systems have to trust that the people they give money will pay them back or that they will help others in need if they can. In other words, they have to know that they do not only take from the system but also occasionally give and that they hold true to their word. That is why there is a lot of talk and gossip about people who partake in such systems. It has to be clear who can be trusted and who has failed to live up to his promise.

Who make up these social solidarity systems then? Tarek is from Algeria, but he says the system he partakes in is comprised not only of Algerians but also includes other North Africans like Moroccans, Tunisians and Egyptians. One might be inclined to put a 'North African' or 'Arabic speaking' label on it. But it is not as easy as that. Albert explains that although Africans help each other, you cannot speak of an African community: "for us Africans, those who are here (…) in Europe (…) there is solidarity among us, but it depends from person to person. Like you, you are European, but you would never say that all Europeans have solidarity. You would never say that among all Belgians or Dutch people there is solidarity. There are always people (…) that you do not want to help." To Albert, an ethnic community of Africans does not exist. Not only are many ethnic groups too large in numbers to form one community, communities are not necessarily formed on the basis of shared ethnic background. They can be based on social boundaries like class as well (cf. Al-Ali 2002; Baumann 1996). Fernando for example does not want to have anything to do with the Chileans who migrated decades before he did, because they are culturally different:

> I have more contacts with Belgians, or with people from outside [Chile] (…) during the time Pinochet ruled the country, many people left abroad and during this time all kinds of people arrived here, also people who were not very well prepared culturally, who had not studied, nothing. (...) It is a very big change for people who don't have much education. So they arrived in a country where they did not know the language or the customs.

Fernando has a university degree and does not want to associate with settled Chilean migrants because they are not well educated and because "they do not bring good things." He does associate with some South Americans, but only with those who have a similar level of education. Moreover, these people only come from Argentina and Chile and not from other South American countries as, according to Fernando, these countries are less well developed economically and culturally. Likewise, Warsi, who has a bachelor's degree, has problems associating with other Bengali migrants as he feels they are of a lower class. He says:

> We have class. From top to bottom we have class and this is a big difference. (…) our characters are very different because of the difference in class. (…) the people who come [here] they are really not rich, they are in the middle class. (…) my positioning, I could be something in Bangladesh but a lot of them, they are here, they have nothing to do in Bangladesh. Even I can be a teacher there. (…) The people who did not go to college or university, what can they do? (…) They don't have any chance there. I have a chance [there]. (…) So that is the difference. (…)You know that I don't have any friends. I don't honestly, not a Bengali here. (…)I don't think the same way, I think differently. [Between our lives] there is a big difference.

It is not only the migrants of a higher class who indicate that they have such problems. Tuyishime had problems with other migrants from Rwanda because he is low class: "in the beginning I lived together with other Rwandans. But there was a problem with us living together, their mentality was not the same as mine. In Rwanda, me I worked with my hands, while this man here had worked as an official, and it is not the same mentality, so [we could not] live together. "Hence, ethnic communities like 'the African', 'the Latin American' or 'the Bengali' 'community' do not exist. While some irregular migrants do not feel they belong to a community at all, others have a sense of community based on social markers that are

meaningful to them and do not necessarily include ethnicity. Therefore, these communities of solidarity are not always only comprised of people with the same ethnic background, but they sometimes transcend ethnic boundaries. Furthermore, if an individual has a certain ethnic background, she or he does not necessarily belong to a social solidarity system.

Many of these communities are made up of a mix of both regular and irregular migrants. However, regular migrants often stop participating after a while, as they know they put more into it than they get out. This is especially true for migrants whose 'community' consists of relatively few regular migrants. Many irregular migrants complain of their regular compatriots whose solidarity ends once they receive papers. Ignacio for example says: "those with papers don't help us. (…) We ourselves, those without papers, we help ourselves. You have to give those who need it a helping hand. But the persons who have papers, no, they know what life without papers is like (…) because at one point they did not have papers either, but well, that is life. (…) when it is family yes there is help but when it is someone else no. (…) [They] change here once they have papers. (…) some change slowly and others change radically. But they all change."

It has become clear that migrants with a common ethnic background do not necessarily form a cohesive community from which irregular migrants can draw support. Communities that are meaningful to respondents and in which there is an exchange in solidarity do exist, but these may have different social boundaries than ethnicity, or they may have social markers in addition to ethnicity. Therefore, what or who makes up a community cannot be established by a researcher beforehand. At the same time, these systems of social solidarity can be very important additional sources of income for settlement migrants, while they are less of a resource for irregular migrants with investment or legalization aspirations.

Native citizens

In addition to support from family or from social solidarity systems, irregular migrants can draw resources from a third source located outside these communities. Many legalization migrants who are involved in procedures manage to receive support from native Dutch or Belgian citizens. This is not because they have no other choice or as some form of last resort, as is sometimes assumed by others (see for example Engbersen et al. 2002). Quite to the contrary, I found that many legalization

migrants prefer not to ask for help within their own community, but instead turn to others for support. Albert for example says:

> The problem with Africans is that they help you today, but tomorrow they will talk about it to other persons. (…) many of our friends do not know that we live with difficulties and that we do not get money from social services anymore (…) (…) I rather explain my suffering to people I do not know. This person can be white, that is better. (…) But if I speak to someone who knows me about my problem, and he is African, he can help me but I am afraid that he will talk about me. (…) And this old [Belgian] lady that I spoke to you about earlier, she helps me sometimes, but if she were African, oh, then I do not think that our relationship would continue. No.

As explained before, social solidarity systems need a lot of talk and gossip circulating around in order to secure the necessary trust. Albert obviously does not like it, which is often the case with irregular migrants who belong to the higher classes in their country of origin. His social status in his country of origin makes him ashamed to have to turn to people of a lower social class for help, especially because he – as a legalization migrant – cannot contribute himself but only demand resources. He therefore chooses to turn to Belgians for support.

Warsi has also reached out to people outside of his own community and has found a Belgian woman who agrees to support him. I found several legalization migrants like Warsi, who lived with Belgians or Dutch people and who were fully supported by them. Because I associated with these migrants for a few months, I met some of the persons they were living with. One of them was Marlies. She started helping irregular migrants 20 years ago. Some of the individuals she supported are now very successful regular migrants. She explained that she wants to help irregular migrants get through the period in which they do not have papers until they are legalized. She is able to provide substantial support during this period because she assumes that it is only temporary. However, when I met her she had already sheltered, fed and clothed Warsi for eight years. Many family members of irregular migrants do not even last that long in providing substantial support. Understandably she expresses doubts about her arrangements with Warsi:

> I am fed up with it. (…) he is too old. He will be spending the rest of his life washing dishes if he gets papers. Lately I think that he should go back. It seems that his girlfriend in Bangladesh is making good

> money and also his brothers all have university degrees. But he says he does not want his family to support him, and this is what hurts, because he does not want to accept their support but he has no problem accepting mine. And this I don't understand. (…) There are many things that I don't understand. I have many doubts but I give him the benefit of the doubt. He is a good man in his heart and I made the promise to him that I would help him, and I am keeping that promise.

Marlies's support of Warsi enables him to refrain from work as he desires. For most legalization migrants, the support they get from people outside of their own community is not that all-encompassing as it is for Warsi and the others who live with Belgian or Dutch families. Other legalization migrants with procedures have to gather resources from multiple sources every day while they wait for the outcome of their procedures.

In summary, while legalization migrants who have applied for legalization reach out to Dutch or Belgian natives for support, migrants of the other categories do not. Only a few settlement migrants very infrequently receive support from Belgians or Dutch people. In these cases, it is usually their employers who give them furniture or clothes. Monetary assistance is extremely rare. Investment and settlement migrants and legalization migrants who try to get married depend on family members for substantial support. If they do not have family members residing in the host country, settlement migrants usually manage to draw resources from social solidarity systems, whereas investment and legalization migrants have problems accessing these. The latter categories depend on the commercial infrastructure for irregular migrants in such cases. Next to these resources stemming from their personal networks, there is another source that irregular migrants can mobilize which is discussed below.

6.4.2 Formal and informal support from organizations

Research usually finds that irregular migrants receive limited to no resources from governmental organizations (Mahler 1995; Massey et al. 1987; Paspalanova 2006; Van der Leun 2003b; Van der Leun and Kloosterman 1999; Van Nieuwenhuyze 2009). Only informal help provided by organizations is believed to be within their reach. Moreover, the informal support they receive is considered to be insignificant

compared to the resources irregular migrants generate from the informal economy. However, although the total amount of informal support provided by organizations is limited, I found that it can be of crucial importance to some specific migrants. Most irregular migrants do not receive support from organizations, but for those who do it is of vital importance. My analysis revealed that in order to understand variation in the amount and type of support irregular migrants receive, it is important to take aspirations into account.

Investment migrants practically never receive support from organizations. They often do not even use the formal procedure for medical care but arrange for medical assistance on their own, either by consulting a doctor who specifically caters to irregular migrants or by simply paying for medical services they receive. Mehmet who works for a removal company for example says: "I have problems with my back. I have been to a physiotherapist, a Moroccan. He showed me how I should lift things from now on and he massaged my back. I paid him 50 euros for it." When I asked Diego what he does if he falls ill, he responded: "Well it has not happened yet, well a couple of times but nothing heavy. (…) with this you have to be a little intelligent." When I subsequently asked if he knew that he was entitled to urgent medical care he said: "yes that is what they say. Many people tell me to get this paper (…) I don't do it because I have an aversion to it." Paspalanova (2006) also found that temporary migrants do not use state support, and Leman (1997) has noted that temporary migrants do not expect that the destination state will come to their assistance in case of difficulties or illnesses. Migrants with this type of aspirations have come to make money and return and do not want to depend on state support.

Contrastingly, legalization migrants who are involved in procedures receive a lot of support from organizations and often for a long period of time. In Belgium, refused asylum seekers who have filed a final appeal are entitled to government support. In practice, this often means that they are allowed to continue to live in the asylum center, receive full room and board and a limited amount of pocket money. Some of my respondents live in such a situation and can fully support themselves that way. In other cases refused asylum seekers who have filed an appeal continue to live in the house they lived in during their asylum procedure while they receive welfare benefits. Benjamin for example says: "When we just arrived [five years ago] we have asked for asylum, political asylum but the answer was immediately negative because our country [Ecuador] is considered a country without political refugees. So it was almost directly that our asylum was denied (…) until now they

have not cut off the help, we still have the help from the [social services] because we are now in the final stage with the [name of the court]." The benefits irregular migrants get are the equivalent Belgian citizens receive if they have no other means to sustain themselves. However, most respondents indicate that they prefer to supplement their welfare benefits, usually by means of material support like food and clothes. If irregular migrants receive welfare benefits, they usually perceive these to be too little to live on. At the same time, it is usually the most substantial support irregular migrants are able to generate.

Apart from support that is provided to irregular migrants directly by government organizations, there are some semi-governmental initiatives which support irregular migrants. There are a few organizations that select irregular migrants to whom they supply accommodation and financial help that more or less equals the official welfare benefits. These organizations receive government funding that enables them to provide this assistance. This type of help is not open to every irregular migrant. Evelien, a woman who works at such an organization explains what criteria she uses to select irregular migrants for this type of support:

> We have a very strict selection procedure (…) we ask many details about their history with procedures, their health, their length of stay, all together (…) For example people with Belgian children, they have high chances of becoming regularized, very ill people, those have been so far in a very precarious legal position and can't just end up in the streets, and then people with a long length of stay, those too, may be combined with health problems. Those three factors play a decisive role. (…) With very ill people I mean very serious applications like in case of children who have had cancer for the last three years and the father has cancer, people with AIDS in very advanced stages, a lot of cancer really and a lot of HIV. But with HIV we already have to select strictly, the length of stay decides who we choose then.

It has become clear that the bulk of irregular migrants do not have access to this type of support. At the same time, like direct government support, it is the most substantial form of organizational support some irregular migrants are entitled to.

Some organizations not only provide (semi)governmental support, but they also supply informal help to irregular migrants. For some, the informal support they receive from organizations is their most important resource. Alexandre for example says: "Without all these organizations I don't think that life would be possible. My

life here without papers would not be possible." Although for some migrants the informal support they receive from organizations is their most important source of income, only a very few irregular migrants receive enough support to fully sustain themselves with these means only.

Furthermore, organizations adopt different criteria for the provision of different types of support, which renders distinct forms of support unequally accessible. For irregular migrants to be eligible for financial support, they usually need to have what social workers call 'a perspective'. A migrant is considered to have a perspective if he or she is likely to become legalized, if he or she wants to return to the country of origin, or if he or she wants to go to some other country. Martijn, a social worker from an organization explains:

> We investigate if there is a perspective and if there is then we also investigate if we can help financially to realize this perspective. So we have a budget with which we can pay the rent for a number of families or the electricity bills. It never happens that we take all of their costs at our expense but we can pay the rent. And this way we can help a little while they wait for legalization. And this way we have helped some families who have received papers after two or three years.

This means that only legalization migrants who are involved in procedures are able to generate this type of support. Most organizations do not want to help people lead a life as an irregular migrant. That is why settlement and investment migrants have problems receiving financial support from organizations:

> We do not want to help people to install themselves in illegality because we think we do not help people with that. (…) So if there is no perspective we will help people to for example get urgent medical care, but financial aid for us is connected to the perspective of people. If people choose to live here illegally, if they think that life here in illegality is better than a legal life in their own country than this is probably true, those people are better judges of that than we are (…) but we are not going to support them financially in that. (Martijn)

Because most organizations use the perspective of migrants as a criterion for the provision of financial help, settlement and investment migrants do not get it. What they can occasionally get is material support from organizations. However, this is usually only provided in the beginning of their stay and surely not structurally. Isidora explains: "In the beginning when we did not have work we inscribed

ourselves in [an organization]. Every Tuesday we went there and they gave us food. They gave us food, they gave us clothes for the children, and also [another organization] gave social help. To one we went on Monday and Thursday and to the other on Tuesday, and they gave us food for the whole week, cornflakes, milk, chicken. Because of these organizations we had no problems in the beginning because we always had food to eat. But after a year they said that we were now here long enough to know how to depend on ourselves, and that there are many people who also have needs and who have just arrived."

Organizations do not usually want to provide material help to irregular migrants structurally, which is why settlement and investment migrants are only supported by them for periods, usually in the beginning of their stay. While organizations do not structurally provide material help to settlement and investment migrants, they do always provide them with advice, for example about how to get medical care. Kwami for example says:

> They can't help me with these things, with money and things like that, they can't help me with that. They can write letters for you or help you to investigate something, that's all. (…) I was in the hospital the other day and they write letters for me, for the payments you know, because hospital bills are pretty heavy.

Only a few 'restaurants' are open to investment and settlement migrants as a form of emergency care. Food packages are only handed out temporarily, usually to migrants who have just arrived.

As indicated before, a share of respondents with aspirations to get legalized try to find someone to marry. While some of these may themselves think they have good perspectives of realizing this ambition, this is not considered to be a perspective by organizations on the basis of which they are willing to provide support. Organizations therefore mostly treat legalization migrants who are not involved in procedures as settlement or investment migrants. Vera, a woman who works for an organization, says: "If they want to stay here twenty years until they find a husband that is their decision. (…) but then they have to be able to manage on their own, and then they should not be here every day.

Even though the informal support provided by organizations to legalization migrants with a perspective is limited, support accumulates because migrants tend to shop around. Most legalization migrants involved in procedures receive help for food, clothes and cheap shopping from multiple organizations. Rasja says: "I have a

card from [organization a], they help me a little (…) [organization b] they also give a package of food once every two weeks. (…) And with [organization a] I also have this card for clothes (…) and this shop [at organization c] is very good. (…)Now for example I have bought this schoolbag for ten cents, which is nothing. That is very good. (…) once per month [organization a] pays ten euros for us [to shop at organization c].

According to Düvell (2006c), those who turn to organizations are irregular migrants who do not have social capital. However, I found that irregular migrants who turn to organizations do not necessarily go there because they have no social network from which they could potentially draw resources. Legalization migrants often combine support from various sources, as is illustrated best by Alexandre:

> [organization a] gives me something every now and then and through them I find some cleaning work in people's home sometimes.(…) Once per month [this organization] gives me free food, and at [organization b] I can get free food twice per month. (…) [Organization b] also gives me clothes sometimes. (…) I have friends with whom I have worked, and they said all right, I pay every month for the subscription of your television. And another said, all right for the diapers of your baby I give you this much every month. And another said, all right, for the subscription of your phone I will pay every month. Friends. Moreover, there was another person that I knew and her brother said all right I will give you 15 euros every month. (…) And for the gas there is a Belgian lady who pays. But I pay the rent. [Organization a] sometimes pays it, once every few months but not every month.

Nawang also combines support from organizations with help from his personal network of friends: "my friends pay for the rent, I just sleep. (…) But for the eating, you know you have [this organization], I went every week there, they give me food (…) they are helping me to buy food." Like Alexandre, Nawang manages to secure his basic needs through his personal network and by means of support from an organization. In other words, he combines the social capital from his personal network with support he receives from an organization. In addition, Nawang has savings from his time as a settlement migrant, and he manages to live from this combination of resources. Although he lives a modest existence, he accepts it as he knows it is only a temporary sacrifice until he receives papers or returns to his country. He proudly said to me: "Before I was drinking, spending fifty, sixty euros

sometimes hundred euros per day, but now two hundred euros for a month and I don't drink anything."

Finally, there is another type of support that organizations provide. Some of my respondents receive help from the organizations they work for voluntarily. As with formal, financial and material support these were usually legalization migrants involved in procedures. Efunsegun for example says: "My organization that I am doing voluntary work for sometimes they help me with money too, so yeah so, they are helping me as well." In return for the work they do, migrants such as Efunsegun sometimes receive support. In addition, volunteer work provides irregular migrants with a temporary sense of purpose.

All in all, it appears that only legalization migrants involved in procedures are able to access (semi)governmental support from organizations. Only this category of migrants receives significant financial or material help from informal support organizations. Organizations do help investment and settlement migrants with information and advice, but they are expected to be able to live independently after a while and therefore do not receive long-lasting material or financial support.

The finding that aspirations are crucial in the ability to access organizations runs counter to the commonly held belief that as migrants accumulate time and experience, they become better acquainted with the host country's institutions (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994). It may seem as if length of stay has something to do with it because many legalization migrants have a long length of stay, especially compared to investment migrants. However, the analysis revealed that it is not length of stay itself that shapes these patterns, but specific aspirations. For settlement migrants, their length of stay actually negatively influences their chances of accessing support from organizations. The findings of this subsection as well as the previous subsection can me summarized in the diagram 6.3:

Figure 6.3 Other sources of income per type of aspiration

	Investment	**Settlement**	**Legalization**	**Legalization**
			Procedures	**Marriage**
Other sources of income				
Gift and barter economy	Commercial networks	Social solidarity systems	Native citizens	Family, friends
Organizations	None	Occasional material support	Intensive	None

One might wonder if there are major differences between Belgium and the Netherlands in the extent to which irregular migrants manage to access support from organizations. Apart from the formal support irregular migrants receive from the government or from semi-governmental initiatives, support seemed accessible in the same way in both Belgium and the Netherlands. In both countries, a migrant's perspective is determinant for the provision of financial or long-term support. Emergency aid and incidental support are provided and accessed to about the same extent in both countries. The major difference is that in Belgium, organizations tend to provide this support more out in the open and are not afraid to talk about it, whereas organizations in the Netherlands tend to remain more secretive about it.

6.5 CHANGING ASPIRATIONS

I have argued and demonstrated that aspirations underlie specific patterns of functional incorporation. However, this relation is not necessarily always one-directional. Although I did not systematically study what makes irregular migrants change aspirations, I have sometimes observed how events that changed the functional incorporation of irregular migrants resulted in changing aspirations.

Employment for example constitutes an important instigator of change for investment migrants. Chavez ([1992]1998) claims that in some cases, having obtained a steady job becomes a major reason for temporary migrants to settle down instead of to go back. I found that it also works the other way around: investment migrants who fail to find a good job are forced to stay around longer then they intended and end up settling down. Recall Martina who said: "six months without work, and then after eight months of work I still did not have the same amount of money that I arrived with. So [I stayed] a year more, and then another year more."

Not having employment or not being able to work can also inspire migrants to change their settlement aspirations into legalization aspirations. Andrei for example says:

> Look, I have been here for seven years. I have always worked but now I cannot work anymore because I am sick (…) my neck is broken this is the problem. And from the neck comes the problem with the arm and shoulder. (…) I make something between 1,000 and 1,500 every month. But because I don't have insurance, I pay cash for my physiotherapist. This means I work to have money for the physiotherapist. I give him all my money, and the physiotherapist says you should not work otherwise you don't solve your problem. So I am in a vicious circle you understand.

For others, an unexpected event in their employment career more or less forced them into changing aspirations. As with Andrei, Nawang's settlement aspirations transformed into legalization aspirations because he could not work anymore. I already knew him for a while before I interviewed him. When we first met he was working fulltime in a restaurant. However, circumstances forced him to stop working. He explained: "There was a really big control. There were more than twenty policemen there. (…) they arrested me and I was there for five hours with the police station. Only five hours, I was lucky." I subsequently asked him if he had been able to find another job. He replied: "No I don't want to work because already they arrested me this first time and at that time they said to me this is your first time.... that is why I let you go, if you do it a second time I send you back to your country if I find you doing illegal work. So I don't want to work. I don't want to go back to Nepal. (…) if I want to work I can find work, sure, because I know all the restaurant and the catering people. I can work, they said ok you come at night, you come in the morning, early in the morning you work, just make a sauce for us, they are telling me like that (…) I told them no, I am fighting for the paper now. Now my way is to get the paper now. (…) so my way is this, I go this way, so I don't work black."

Nawang said he had savings that would last him about a year. If he does not receive papers within this year, he will reconsider his actions. Nawang's story is a good illustration of how changes in the work situation can influence aspirations, and how in turn, aspirations affect the work situation. It thus shows how functional incorporation and aspirations mutually influence each other.

6.6 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, some elements of the functional incorporation of irregular migrants in the Low Countries have been analyzed. Functional incorporation refers to the way irregular migrants are able to sustain themselves and includes housing, work and other sources of income. I have demonstrated how our understanding of specific patterns of functional incorporation can be improved by bringing aspirations into the analysis. Next to such issues as length of stay and the opportunity structure, aspirations underlie the patterns of incorporation of irregular migrants in receiving societies. Distinct aspirations shape specific patterns, as can be seen in figure 6.4:

Figure 6.4 Functional incorporation per type of aspiration

	Investment	**Settlement**	**Legalization**	**Legalization**
			Procedures	**Marriage**
Functional incorporation				
Housing				
Type	Cheap and crowded	Regular	Diverse	With family
Location	Immigrant district	If group is represented: immigrant district. Otherwise: suburb	If group is represented: immigrant district. Otherwise: suburb	If group is represented: immigrant district. Otherwise: suburb
Employment				
Work hours	As many as possible	Regular	As little as possible	As little as possible
Type of work	'Typical' irregular migrant sectors	In native private households	In native private households	In private households or ethnic businesses
Perception of exploitation	No perception of exploitation	Certain types of work	Fundamental	Fundamental
Other sources of income				
Gift and barter economy	Commercial networks	Social solidarity systems	Native citizens	Family, friends
Organizations	None	Occasional material support	Intensive	None

The aim of this chapter has been to describe the patterns of functional incorporation of irregular migrants and to provide understanding of how these patterns are

shaped. The findings should not be interpreted as a description and understanding of *the* functional incorporation of irregular migrants. I have only dealt with issues that are relevant in the light of the typology I have constructed and that can be linked to debates in the literature or divergent research outcomes. As a result, this chapter sheds light on some of the basic processes of functional incorporation of irregular migrants by contextualizing migrant experiences and does not provide answers to questions concerning *the* functional incorporation irregular migrants *in general*.

The qualitative nature of my study does not allow me to say anything about the frequency of the patterns I found. However, the strength of my analysis does not lie in the description or quantification of the patterns of functional incorporation, but in the understanding that is provided for how these patterns are shaped. Doing so, new light has been shed on existing findings. Following the grounded theory approach this typology has been constructed "not to provide a perfect description of an area, but to develop a theory that accounts for much of the relevant behavior" (Glaser and Strauss [1967]2006: 30) The figure on the previous page therefore presents ideal-typical relations.

The results indicate how overemphasizing structure in the analysis obscures understanding of how migrants act differently under similar circumstances because they have different aspirations. Bringing aspirations into the analysis therefore increases our insight and provides clarity in important scholarly debates or divergent research outcomes. Whereas chapter 2 provided a theoretical critique of the current research practice, this chapter has empirically demonstrated its downsides as well the benefits that can be gained from an approach that focuses on structure *and* agency.

CHAPTER 7
LIVING DIFFERENT DREAMS (II): ASPIRATIONS AND SOCIAL INCORPORATION

7.1 INTRODUCTION

A striking feature of studies on irregular migrants is that there is little to no attention paid to their social incorporation. Most studies do not deal with the theme at all, and others consider it to be of secondary importance. This lack of attention is probably inspired by the implicit assumption in much research that when migrants are busy 'surviving' there is little time for recreational activities or maintaining social relations. Most studies which do deal with the social aspects of irregular migrants' lives therefore portray images that are in line with this 'survival perspective' discussed in chapter two. They tell stories of migrants who avoid public spaces, stay inside their houses behind locked doors and closed curtains, either too afraid to venture outside or too tired from work to do so (see also Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994). Psimmenos and Kassimati (2006: 153) for example write about respondents who live "in the shadows," who are confined to their house and who are "afraid of the public." Likewise, P. Anderson (1999: 67) asserts that for irregular migrants "free time is in short supply," and "largely devoted to recovering one's energies" at home. Iosifides et al. (2007: 1351) paint a similar picture by mentioning that their respondents speak of the "almost total unavailability of free time and recreation," and how "the majority of interviewees equate recreation and free time with rest at home." Another example stems from the work of Schuster (2005) who claims that irregular migrants do not visit shops, cafés or cinemas, but only visit markets to buy food every now and then. Likewise, Ahmad (2008: 311) writes that irregular migrants are "locked in an endless cycle of work that confines them to a physical space of a few square meters both at work (…) and at home." In addition, Engbersen (1999a: 236) reports that irregular migrants live their lives in "geographically restricted areas," show "immobile behavior" and that many are "chained to their home." Likewise, Iosifides and King (1999: 226) report "high levels of socio-spatial

exclusion." In addition, according to Diouck (2000: 57) "the life of an [irregular migrant] is characterized by a daily struggle to escape police controls."

Irregular migrants are not only believed to have few contacts, but also the contacts they have are thought to consist of a selected group of people. As irregular migrants are assumed to have little time for recreational activities and are afraid to venture in public places, they are portrayed as spending most of their time at home or calling at the houses of family or friends for a visit, the latter usually being other migrants. Chavez ([1992]1998) for example claims that irregular migrants' social contacts primarily consist of other irregular or regular migrants. And Datta et al. (2007) and Hagan (1994) describe how their respondents primarily socialize with migrants with a similar ethnic background, preferably from the same town or region. It is not so surprising then that Iosifides et al. (2007) remark that for most of their respondents, social contacts to (native) local residents "are reduced to banalities such as saying simply 'good morning' or 'good evening.'" Paspalanova (2006: 261) writes that her respondents displayed a lack of interest in "establishing social contacts, learning the languages, or to become familiar with Belgian customs or to follow local news" which fits the picture as well. Moreover, she found that their contacts with the local population were strictly work-related. Likewise, Grzymala-Kazlowska (2005: 683) claims that although the migrants she interviewed "develop economic links with the Belgian society, in general they are poorly integrated in socio-cultural terms." Apart from work, time "is usually spent with their own ethnic group." (*Ibid.*)

All in all, irregular migrants are generally believed to be locked up in immigrant neighborhoods where they primarily associate with co-ethnics and do not venture out on the streets. Mahler (1995: 106) therefore claims they are cut off from mainstream society and writes that irregular migrants live in a world that has evolved "parallel to the world of the larger society and there are few links between the two." The image that irregular migrants are trapped inside some sort of "cocoon" (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994: 173) separated from mainstream society is enhanced by the frequent use of metaphors as living "in the shadows" (Psimmenos and Kassimati 2006: 153) or "in a shadow" (Grzymala-Kazlowska 2005: 680) when referring to the social lives of irregular migrants. Moreover, because irregular migrants are cut off from mainstream society, they are believed to lack a sense of belonging to the country or city they live in. Chavez ([1992]1998: 160) for example claims that irregular migrants feel that although their lives take place within a larger

social system, they are not fully part of that social system: "Their incorporation is incomplete."

At the same time there are a few scholars who claim that the "cocoon" metaphor is invalid. Hondagneu-Sotelo (1994: 173) for example writes:

> The cocoon image is misleading because it suggests that undocumented immigrants, especially women, live in suspended isolation, in a domestic capsule void of community. I began my fieldwork with some of these preconceptions, but they were quickly dispelled. Instead of socially inactive lives, I witnessed a good amount of informal sociability, participation in formal groups and organizations, and contact with various institutions and agencies. Instead of anonymity, I observed and experienced an environment where the intensive scrutiny of personal life from kin, friends, and acquaintances at times reached stifling levels.

The author further lists a host of recreational activities her respondents like to engage in. Likewise, Leman (1997: 35) witnessed how irregular migrants spend their free time visiting dances, parties and discos, and how Columbians in Brussels have their own soccer club, which is also visited by wives, children and friends whose presence turns "matches into small community events." And Hagan (1994) too reported that irregular migrants engage in lively social interaction at soccer clubs and in churches.

In summary, the little scholarly attention that is devoted to the social incorporation of irregular migrants paints a grim picture of social isolation and geographic immobility. Only a small group of researchers has objected to this image and devoted their attention towards describing the richness in the leisure activities their respondents undertake and the social contacts they maintain. The question that logically follows from this discussion is how these diverging pictures are shaped. Why do some researchers find active social lives, while most emphasize the migrants' inactivity? As in the previous chapter, I argue and demonstrate how aspirations play a major role in shaping these divergent outcomes.

The next section discusses the way irregular migrants spend their free time, and the subsequent section deals with their social contacts. As in the previous chapter, the issues in each section are discussed by type of aspiration. Before the concluding section, the penultimate section deals with the role of the social realm in changing aspirations.

7.2 LEISURE TIME

Because investment migrants are in the destination country to make money with which to return to their country of origin, they try to maximize work time and minimize free time. They do not strive for an active social life because this is not part of their aspirations, as Diego explains:

> I am not going to (…) I came here to work, of course I can go out and be with someone but I know my place you understand. I can't go out for example all week to go dancing all night long. I have a certain place here and this behavior does not serve me nor my family.

As their focus is on working as much as they can, investment migrants are not keen on free time or holidays. They believe that when they return home they may enjoy a holiday, but not during their stay in the destination country. When I asked Sofia about the way she spends her free time, she replied: "I don't have free time (…) I have half a day on Saturday and half a day on Sunday, so I only go to church and I go on internet and I make some calls and then the time is up." When I asked Constanza what she does if her employers go on a holiday she replied:

> When they go on a holiday I look for other work. That is why there is never a holiday. They give me holiday, they think that I rest but I don't. (…) I don't forget my priorities (…) if you go to the cinema a lot or if you make many costs your salary will never rise, it will not last. So I don't have this, I can't afford to give myself this so I don't. To go to an ice-cream parlor, or to drink something in a bar, no I don't do anything like that. I only go to the supermarket and the house and work and the church.

Investment migrants regard their stay as an intermediary period in which they live for their future plan, which is why they are not very concerned with the lives they currently lead. When I asked Diego if he liked his life in Belgium he said: "It is living for living, I am here to get money together and that is it. Living is done in another way."

When investment migrants are not employed, they sit in tea houses or bars where subcontractors come to look for workers. This way they hope to find a new job as soon as possible. If investment migrants do have work, they also inevitably have some amount of free time on their hands. What is distinctive about investment migrants is that they try to minimize the amount of money they spend during this

leisure time. They therefore usually stay at home to play cards and talk with their flat mates, like Mehmet who says: "I live together with five other Turks. We get along very well. We cook together sometimes; we associate with each other in our free time. We play card games at night."

Contrary to investment migrants, settlement migrants highly value their spare time, and they like to spend it outside of their house. Settlement migrants may also associate with their flat mates, but in contrast to investment migrants they do not predominantly stay indoors. Gökdeniz says: "My flat mates who have been here in Belgium illegally for a longer period have introduced me to their circle of friends. We do all sorts of things together in the weekends, like playing sports or instruments." As explained in the previous chapter, settlement migrants do not want to work all the time, because they like to have some leisure time as well. Recall Ignacio who was quoted explaining that he refused a job offer because if he took it, he would not have enough spare time. Since settlement migrants highly value time for recreational activities, I had many opportunities to spend their leisure time with them. I had drinks with some of them, I went swimming with others, and I have made hundreds of strolls around the park or through the city center in their company. While enjoying recreation they commented on how often they came there and how much they liked it. This enabled me not only to hear from them how they preferred to spend their leisure time, but also to see how they spent it in practice.

Many migrants with settlement aspirations lead active social lives which for the younger generations include going out and sometimes experimenting with alcohol and drugs. Javier for example confessed over a Belgian beer that during the beginning of his stay he went out a lot to get high on cocaine. Just before it developed into a habit, his girlfriend became pregnant which made him calm down and choose a less restless path. Like Javier, other young migrants take the opportunity to experiment. Volkan for example says: "I smoke marihuana a lot. I have also tried other forms of drugs every now and then here in Belgium, but now I am sticking to marihuana." Not all settlement migrants have the money or the wish to go out, let alone try drugs, though. Older people in particular do not want to go dancing, but they have other ways to socialize in their spare time, like visiting parks or the city center. Florencia for example says: "We go to all kinds of places. The only places we don't go to is a place to dance." When I asked Ignacio how he spends his free time he said:

> I go for a walk around the center, and look at the shops, I don't know I walk around and every now and then if I have money I buy something. Yes, I buy something. I am saving money now for a computer. That is not very expensive here, a small computer. I have one now on which I make songs for the church. (…) and I run to lose some weight and I play basketball with [a friend].

Migrants with legalization aspirations value their leisure time differently than do those in the other two categories. Because they usually do not work or do not work that much, they have a lot of spare time which makes leisure time less desirable than it is to settlement migrants. Dnari for example explains how he spends his leisure time: "Nothing special, every day the same thing. Yes. That is why you can't say free time because free time is if for example you do something and then if you don't do that, then you have free time but I always have free time, always, every day." Legalization migrants tell stories of how they hang around at different places all day. As they usually do not have a lot of money, they have to be picky about the places they visit. Önder says: "I mostly spend my time in coffeehouses and bars. I also frequent [an organization] here in the neighborhood. I sit there all day and I get the possibility to watch television and drink tea for free." This means that although legalization and settlement migrants may value leisure time more than investment migrants do because they want to live in the destination country, they appreciate it differently. Furthermore, the way they spend their free time in daily life is very distinct as well.

Legalization migrants who are involved in procedures spend a lot of their free time calling at organizations for a chat, social support, to do voluntary work or to take part in some of the activities they organize. Rasja for example says:

> I visit groups of women who do not have work. The women who go there do not have papers, and you can learn how to sew and babysit there. It is a very nice place. And now during the summer holiday we go on many trips. To the park, in two weeks we go to the hills with my daughter which is very good. It is all free if people do not have papers. And sometimes we go the coast, to the beach, that is much fun. I have many friends. Only we do not visit each other [at home] but we only see each other in [our children's] school or somewhere else.

Legalization migrants who are involved in procedures hang around at organizations all day as these offer a wide range of social or recreational activities for free.

Furthermore, as became clear in the previous chapter, organizations also supply legalization migrants who are involved in procedures with social support. In exchange they often work there as volunteers. This keeps them busy, and it allows them to return a favor.

However, there is another reason why legalization migrants who are involved in procedures frequent organizations, take part in their activities and work there. Dakarai explains: "I work also for [an organization] because if I come here and I do nothing, it would not be good for my application [for regularization], and I would have nothing to do. If I don't have work and don't go to school, even if they don't pay me a lot, or if they pay me nothing, I have something to do in my life. To do something, to have people, and maybe it is also good for my integration." It becomes clear from Dakarai´s statement that apart from keeping themselves busy, legalization migrants who are involved in procedures do things with and for organizations because they think this helps their integration. This looks good on their application and therefore increases their odds of legalization.

Contrastingly, legalization migrants who aim to get married do not hang around organizations all day. As became clear in the previous chapter, organizations do not welcome these irregular migrants since they do not have 'a perspective'. But it is also not in the interest of this category of irregular migrants to go there, because this is not a good place to meet a partner to marry. They do not stay indoors like investment migrants, but go out a lot in order to meet potential partners. When I asked Maroune how he aims to find a woman to marry, he said: "you have to go out a lot, you have to meet people. You have to flirt with women. (…) Life for a person without papers is not only about working. You have to go out as well." In fact, as we shall see in chapter 10, going out a lot is what makes a successful strategy for this category of aspirations. In case legalization migrants do not have the money to visit discos and bars, they stand on street corners and in front of bars and tea houses, flirting with women passing by. Before I started my fieldwork, I tended to ignore such approaches. During my fieldwork I developed the habit of responding to these attempts by engaging in small talk with these men. Without exception, it turned out that these were irregular migrants with aspirations to become legalized.

Irregular migrants with different aspirations experience and spend their leisure time differently. Furthermore, aspirations underlie different patterns of geographic mobility. Many settlement migrants have visited other cities and have even crossed national borders. Much to my surprise, many of my respondents in

Belgium proudly proclaimed to have visited the Netherlands. Fernando tells about the places he has visited: "Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Breda, Roosendaal, Vlissingen, Den Bosch. (…) I know more in Holland than in Belgium. (…) In Belgium Leuven, Ardennen, Rouen (…) Brussels. (…) Brugge yes I also know that and Zeebrugge, the beach. On the Belgian coast I only know Zeebrugge and in Holland Vlissingen." And Martina: "I got to know Antwerp. We went to Oostende, Ghent, Brugge. We also went to Paris." Since settlement migrants want to stay permanently in the receiving society, they want to get to know the country they intend to spend their lives in. Furthermore, they are often very interested in western Europe and keen on visiting famous cities in the surrounding countries. As the internal borders of the European Union are not heavily controlled, they are not afraid to try. But there are obviously limitations to travel as expressed by Isidora:

> My daughter says, we are here in this beautiful cage, but we cannot leave the cage, and that is true because you can do many great things here but we are here in this cage. (…) My daughter is now in love with a boy from China and she could come with his family to China to get to know China, but she said I would like to but I can't because I don't have papers. (….) My daughter always says we are here in this beautiful cage but we cannot get out of this cage.

These accounts stand in sharp contrast to the immobility of investment migrants who do not see the need to venture beyond the safety of their home and their job location. However, it is not out of fear of the police that they prefer to stay indoors, but they are immobile as a result of their aspirations. Constanza explains that she does not travel or go out because of the economic priorities she has: "I don't know anything else apart from Brussels, I haven't gone to another place (…) they say that in other places they have very beautiful parts but I don't know them. (…) I don't go to discotheques, I don't go to public places, I don't go to such places, and it is not because of fear of the police, I just don't like to go there. If I make 50 euros after working for a day for eight hours, 50 euros and to go there would cost me minimum 50 euros, for one night. So I don't do that. (…) And that applies to many things [like travel]."

Legalization migrants who are involved in procedures may also travel if they have the money to do so, but they usually remain within the country as they are afraid to cross national borders. They are more anxious than the other types of migrants because getting caught in another country could endanger their procedure.

Nawang explains why he was afraid to cross the Belgian border into the Netherlands (which he did nevertheless): "Because here [in Belgium] I can show my regularization paper and there I did not have anything. I did not have anything there. I was totally illegal." Nawang's statement that he is "totally illegal" in the Netherlands expresses the thought that he must somehow feel partly legal and at ease in Belgium. His application for regularization provides him with some form of semi-formal identification that is only accepted in the country where he applied for it. He is not only afraid that crossing national borders could damage the outcome of his procedure, but also that he could be jailed and expelled. But these are not the only reasons why legalization migrants feel safer in one country than in the other. My respondents noted that they perceive police practices to be different in Belgium than in the Netherlands. Rakesh for example says: "sometimes here [in Belgium] the police they check you, they say you have no good paper, they say no problem (…) in Holland they do not do it like that, they send them directly to jail. (…) I know many people from Holland, sometimes they come (…) they come to my house. (...) I don't go there (…) I am afraid." These perceptions influence irregular migrants' choices and consequently make legalization migrants limit their travels.

Legalization migrants who aim to get married worry less about police controls as they can usually hide their identity. Unlike those involved in procedures they have not yet made themselves 'legible' (Scott 1998):

> If the police meet you in the street with proof that you are Moroccan with a passport, [they expel you] directly. But if they don't have proof they leave you. (…) They asked for my identity card, I said I was illegal, they said to me, come with us to the police station, I was there for nearly two hours and then they let me go. Yes. (Marouane)

All in all, it has become clear that irregular migrants with different aspirations value and spend their leisure time differently, as is summarized in figure 7.1:

Figure 7.1 Social incorporation per type of aspiration

	Investment	**Settlement**	**Legalization**	**Legalization**
			Procedures	**Marriage**
Social incorporation				
Leisure time	As little as possible	Highly valued	Nothing special	Instrumental
Ways of spending leisure time	Indoors	Recreational activities	Organizations	In the streets, going out
Geographic mobility	Immobile	Mobile (across national borders)	Mobile (within national borders)	Immobile

Whereas investment migrants do not value free time, settlement and legalization migrants do, but in different ways. Settlement migrants like to spend their free time in recreational activities, and legalization migrants who search for a marriage partner devote much of their free time to this quest. Legalization migrants who are involved in procedures are drawn to organizations where they spend their day working on their integration and engaging in recreational activities that are free of charge.

Investment migrants are geographically immobile, as they like to stay close to their jobs. Settlement migrants like to travel and see different places. They even cross the national borders of the neighboring countries. As the internal borders of the European Union are not heavily controlled, they are not afraid to try. The next section discusses in whose company irregular migrants with different types of aspirations spend their leisure time.

7.3 SOCIAL CONTACTS

Investment migrants who have been received by friends or family usually spend their free time in the company of the latter. This type of social contact is easily facilitated as they often live in the same house. Investment migrants who have come on their own usually spend most of their spare time with their room- or flat mates, the latter usually being other temporary migrants. Investment migrants have a very small social circle, dominated by acquaintances. When I asked Diego about his friends in Belgium he said: "I have little….a few….one." Like Diego, investment migrants usually have a small number of acquaintances, but very few intimate

friends in the destination country. Diego indicates that although he has one person that he calls a friend, he still does not know him very well. Due to their temporary engagements and their lack of free time, it is obviously difficult for investment migrants to build and maintain friendships. Some investment migrants therefore indicate that they feel lonely, especially those who live alone.

Contrastingly, settlement migrants have a much larger social circle, and they are willing to spend time investing in the maintenance of social contacts. They have many acquaintances and often also some good friends. They frequent all kinds of social gatherings in their leisure time. They for example regularly go to church or to the mosque, they visit or participate in sports events and they undertake many recreational activities with groups of friends and acquaintances. When I went to a lake for a swim with a group of women and children, they all brought food that they shared, some brought an instrument, and they all sang and danced to the music that was played. This group of women went there every Sunday weather permitting. The women all attached much value to social gatherings such as these because they strengthen social bonds and allow for new arrivals to get to know people.

Settlement migrants tend to take part in all kinds of activities and celebrations. These are usually initiated by a small group of friends, but they can also have a more formal character. Many settlement migrants visit the activities organized by formal or informal socio-cultural organizations. Antonia says: "There are many cultural activities here organized by a group of Ecuadorians. (…) I have many contacts because I was working with my sisters in this Ecuadorian organization before. (…) we left but right now we still collaborate and we see if there is some activity. And I know many people from there." Migrant women with settlement aspirations play a vital role in the development of these culturally distinct immigrant communities through the activities they organize (cf. Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994). Reproducing cultural symbols associated with the home culture enhances solidarity among such groups (see also Hagan 1994). Moreover, the cultural activities provide a means to teach their children about their cultural background. Because of these social gatherings, settlement migrants meet many people which is why they usually have large social networks.

The social circles of legalization migrants who are involved in procedures are much smaller than those of settlement migrants, because legalization migrants have less opportunity to meet people as they do not work (much) and do not go out or participate in recreational activities much outside of the scope of organizations.

Unlike settlement migrants, who constantly meet new people though the activities organized by socio-cultural organizations, friends or family in their leisure time, legalization migrants who are involved in procedures move in the same social circle of other irregular migrants who visit the same organizations each day. Legalization migrants who aim to get married usually have a larger social circle, because it is usually through other people that a potential future spouse is located.

Investment migrants have a very small social circle, and this small circle is usually also very homogeneous in makeup, consisting primarily of other investment migrants. Next to their temporary engagements and their lack of time, they face a language barrier that makes it difficult to make contact with local residents. As Massey et al. (1987) remarked, temporary migrants do not learn to speak the native language, but only acquire enough familiarity with the language to deal with routine situations. I found that the same was true for investment migrants. They are not interested in learning the local language, because this does not bring the attainment of their aspirations any closer. Diego responded to my question as to why he is not in school to learn the language: "No because I do not have the time. (…) because I came for two years and it was not my intention to stay here (…) many people here are studying the language obviously because they want to stay here. In my case, I came here to get enough money together to build a house [in Chile]." It is clear that investment migrants have priorities other than learning the local language.

As investment migrants usually do not speak the local language, they have a barrier to engaging in social contacts with local residents. However, even if there were no language barrier, investment migrants would probably still not be interested in associating with local residents. When I asked Sofia how she thought she could make her life in Belgium better, she responded: "To make my life better, economically or what?" I said: "What you think a good life is," and she responded: "The only way in which I can make my life here better, is in economical terms because; you see I came here [for economic reasons]. But like socially, no." So because of their aspirations, investing in social contacts does not take priority for investment migrants, contacts with local residents least of all. The only investment migrants who have contacts with native Belgian or Dutch people are those who have to deal with them because of their work. Servet for example replied to the question of whether he had contact with Belgians by saying: "It depends on the question if we have Belgian customers or not. If we do, I have daily contact with Belgians during my working hours." The same applies to contacts with migrants of other

nationalities. Investment migrants may live or work with them, but investing in social relations is not a priority for these migrants: making money is.

For settlement migrants, Belgians or Dutch people rarely belong to their smaller circle of intimate friends. Unlike investment migrants, settlement migrants do want to have some contact with local residents. Most settlement migrants therefore have some amount of contact with locals, but they usually know only a few persons. Ignacio for example says: "I have many friends without papers, the majority yes. And let's see, I have one friend who is Belgian." The Belgians or Dutch people they have contact with are usually persons with whom they can communicate in their own language, as with Antonia who says: "I have Belgian friends as well. One I haven't spoken to for almost four months now but the other I see regularly. She helps me a lot with small things and she speaks Spanish perfectly. And now many Ecuadorians are married to Belgians as well (…) so I also associate with them, I talk to them, to the husbands of the Ecuadorian women." Obviously these men speak Spanish as well, which makes communication much easier. There thus seems to be a language barrier that makes it difficult for settlement migrants to associate with local residents.

Settlement migrants usually do very much want to learn the local language, because this enables them to function in the society where they want to build their future. Those with children for example often mentioned that learning the local language allows them to speak with their children's teachers. In spite of their firm wish to speak the language, in practice they do not always manage to take language classes. Although these usually do not cost anything, migrants find it hard to negotiate time for it in their work schedules. Matias for example says:

> We have to work during the day on one day and then on the other day we work during the night. If it is on the same day as the [language] school, you skip school because well, I for example prefer to go to work because I need the payment to be able to pay the rent to pay the electricity, the gas. If I don't work….And sometimes there are things, if you don't appreciate a job at one occasion, then you don't have to come back the next day. And you don't have to call because they say if you don't want to work why are you calling? So you have to think about that, you have to prefer to work and not study. And so you lose the studying because you are not constantly involved in it, you lose the

> style of learning. Because if you miss two days of school, the teacher is not going to repeat things for only one person.

However, language is probably not the only barrier to social contact with natives for settlement migrants. Emilia who lives in Brussels and speaks French well says: "it is not very difficult to have friendships, except for friendship with Belgians. (…) I have many many friends, but Belgians? No. Practically none." In the absence of a language barrier, the precise reasons for this lack of contact are unclear. From the accounts irregular migrants give in this respect, I suspect they might have something to do with cultural differences and settlement migrants' fear of being denounced.

Settlement migrants lack contacts with Belgians and Dutch people, and they also seem to lack contact with other migrant groups. Some settlement migrants associate with migrants of other origins, but most are wary of contacting other migrant groups (cf. Datta et al. 2007). Moroccans are perceived badly by practically all my respondents with settlement aspirations. Moroccans are often portrayed negatively in public discourse in the Low Countries, and it seems that irregular migrants copy this kind of talk. Catalina for example says: "One time a friend of the church gave a bike to my son as a present (…) but they stole it. He parked it in front of the church one day and they took it away (…) Sometimes the Moroccans, or I don't know who did it but you feel it."

According to Mahler (1995: 230) migrants are hostile to and stereotype other migrant groups especially the more established migrant groups she calls 'minorities'. She writes that the migrants she interviewed "view minorities as a stagnant, parasitic population." They view established migrants "as architects of their own demise because even as citizens, with all their rights and advantages, they have not pulled themselves up by their bootstraps." Camila expresses a similar kind of disrespect she feels towards established migrant groups: "I think that they behave badly sometimes, they make problems. Like the Moroccans, they make problems; they make problems and only that. I think that we are more reserved, maybe because we are in a different positions where they can arrest us at any time and deport us. We prefer to stay quiet. (…) we don't make that many scandals I think, that much noise."

Many settlement migrants wish for migration policies to be much stricter. They often express their understanding for the ethno-centrist attitude of a part of the native population. Valentina for example says: "I can understand, it is logical that there are some racists but they are so with reasons, you know, how many people

from other countries have not murdered, robbed or sold drugs? Yes. It is logic if they say they have to send them back, but the Moroccans who do that get only one year." Settlement migrants often feel that although they lead quiet and hardworking lives, their reputation as migrants is damaged by the bad behavior of other migrant groups. They feel that due to the misconduct of other migrants, they are denied the opportunity to prove themselves. They therefore rarely associate with migrants from a different background.

In comparison to settlement migrants, the social circle of legalization migrants who are involved in procedures is more diverse. In fact, their social circles are more heterogeneous than those of the other categories of migrants, because they get into contact with migrants of other origins through the organizations they frequent. Because of these inter-ethnic contacts, these legalization migrants generally have a more open attitude than settlement migrants towards other cultures, as is expressed by Lazzat: "I respect the culture of the Belgian people but also others. In Antwerp there are many different [cultures] it is a multicultural city. There are different people, different cultures and that is pleasant and interesting. This way I get to know other cultures." Although the educational level of this category of migrants is often relatively high and might be partly responsible for their tolerance towards other cultures as well, their visits to organizations are likely to be the most important reason for their open attitude and heterogeneous social networks.

Legalization migrants who are involved in procedures not only have more contacts with other migrant groups, they also more frequently associate with Belgians and Dutch people. It is obviously easier for legalization migrants to learn the local language as they do not work much and have time to go to school. Moreover, migrants who have an asylum background have usually already had some kind of language training during their asylum procedure. Furthermore, they do not have the fear of being denounced that settlement migrants expressed, as they are already known by the authorities through their involvement in procedures. However, it is not just that they have fewer obstacles than the other categories to reach out to natives; it is also their firmly expressed wish to do so. Tarek for example says:

> For me it is not interesting to know other people without papers. I have tried to make contact with Belgians to know what is happening. So I have tried to make contact with the people here. With the Flemish, with the Belgians, even with Dutch people. And I have subsequently

> integrated myself in the organizations to see what the opportunities [for legalization] are. And I have tried to learn Dutch then. That is, I had to learn it so that they could get to know me you see.

Like Tarek, Albert expresses a desire to have contacts with Belgians:

> I also like to have relations with people from other countries. I don't like to invite only Congolese people to my home. I also like to have contact with Kamerounese. But most of all I like to have contact with white people. That is my primary occupation. I like to have contact with white people often. (…) I have contacts with Africans but I prefer to have contacts with white people. I want to have something that we Africans do not have. Yes. (…) so I like to have contact with white people to take something. (…) So I associate with white people a lot because they have things that aid me in the future of my life. They have things that I copy, that can help me to integrate above all.

Legalization migrants who are involved in procedures want to have contact with local residents, as they hope that these contacts will help them to realize their aspirations. They reach out to locals so that they can 'copy' things as Albert says, but they also often ask for written testimonies that they can add to their application. Including records in their file of local people saying they are friends and expressing how well they think the irregular migrant in question is integrated is believed to increase the chances of regularization considerably and hence worth the effort.

Legalization migrants who try to find someone to marry show diverging patterns, depending on the marriage markets they are active in. If they look for a spouse with the same ethnic background, they invest a lot of time and effort in maintaining good relations with family, friends and acquaintances with the same ethnic background, and they do not learn the language and reach out to other local residents. The same usually applies to those who are looking for a bogus marriage. However, if they also try to find a Belgian or Dutch person to marry, they usually learn the language and have contacts with other local residents. These legalization migrants can go to great lengths in their efforts to get acquainted with locals. I was for example very surprised to find Marouane, who is fluent in French, taking Dutch language courses while he lived in largely French-speaking Brussels. When I asked him what the reason for this odd choice was, he said that it was much easier to find Flemish women to marry through the internet than French speaking women in the streets. But even though these legalization migrants sometimes make great efforts in

order to meet a Belgian or Dutch spouse, their closest circle of friends usually consists of people with the same background making the same kind of efforts in locating a potential partner for marriage.

All in all, the social circles of irregular migrants with different types of aspirations are quite distinct, as can be seen in the figure 7.2:

Figure 7.2 Social incorporation per type of aspiration

	Investment	**Settlement**	**Legalization**	**Legalization**
			Procedures	**Marriage**
Social incorporation				
Span of social contacts	Limited	Large circles	Small circles	Large circles
Type of social contacts	Other investment migrants	Ethnic community	Heterogeneous network	Ethnic community or heterogeneous

Whereas investment migrants primarily associate with a small group, other temporary migrants, settlement migrants have large social circles that mainly consist of migrants of the same ethnic background, both regular and irregular. The social circles of legalization migrants who aim to get married are dependent on the marriage markets they are active in. The social networks of legalization migrants who are involved in procedures largely consist of other irregular migrants who frequent the same organizations. Furthermore, they usually also know some Belgians and Dutch people they have consciously sought so that they can improve their integration and hence increase their chances of legalization. It shows that the social worlds in which irregular migrants are enmeshed are neither accidental nor predetermined by the ethnic group they belong to, but instead that they depend on the aspirations the irregular migrants in question have.

7.4 SHIFTS IN ASPIRATIONS

Aspirations can shift over time. What is important to consider is that if aspirations change, the way migrants spend their leisure time and the company they seek change as well. Nawang for example explained to me how his social life changed after he switched aspirations. As a young unmarried man, he explained that he took advantage of being away from the social control of his family by going out a lot as a

settlement migrant. Before he changed aspirations he spent quite a lot of money in his free time: "I was drinking, spending fifty, sixty euros sometimes hundred euros per day." However, since he developed legalization aspirations, he spends his time and money differently: "now [I spend] two hundred euros for a month and I don't drink anything." (…) "Two times a week I go to [language] school. And the rest of the time well you know (…) I go to [an organization], go to the Nepalese café, go to a demonstration, and internet, most of my time I spend my time on the internet. Nowadays it is free at [an organization] so I stay there three hours, even four hours sometimes. So that is my day."

This relationship between aspirations and social incorporation is not necessarily one-directional: aspirations not only underlie patterns of social incorporation, but also changes in irregular migrants' social surroundings have an impact on their aspirations. Such changes can therefore inspire shifts in aspirations. Although I have not been able to systematically study changing aspirations, I have made some observations about the role of changes in irregular migrants' social life in inspiring shifting aspirations. Furthermore, many other scholars have scrutinized the reasons why some temporary migrants end up settling down.

As has been noted by other research, the social dimension is a very important instigator of aspiration shifts for temporary migrants. While irregular migrants are able to live a spartan lifestyle devoid of intimate social contact for a short period, they cannot maintain such a lifestyle for very long (cf. Massey et al., 1987). According to Piore, the way temporary migrants live "is essentially not a human condition" and can therefore not be endured for long. The same is true for the lifestyle investment migrants lead. Diego has for example lived as an investment migrant in Belgium for more than two years now and feels increasingly uncomfortable with his social life:

> I leave the house like you do, I take the tram and I enter another house [to work], it is like I live in a cave. The tram arrives at your house and at this [other] house and like this is the system of life. And for example the little I have here I have to share with another person. I can't call somebody and say hey come to my house I am alone here we can talk. That is very difficult you understand.

Unable to keep up his ascetic lifestyle for much longer, he greatly misses his family and thinks about bringing them over, but at the same time he is afraid to bring his wife and child into what he perceives as a very hostile and dangerous situation.

Diego's accounts show that although investment migrants may have clear plans, it can be very difficult to realize them when it involves living an investment migrant life for very long. As migrants spend more time in the destination country, they enter what Massey (1986: 671) calls a "transition phase" during which the distinction between temporary stay and settlement becomes increasingly problematic. People begin to anticipate their inability to maintain the ascetic existence they had originally planned, and they begin to bring their wives, and occasionally their children (Piore 1979).

But it is not only that their inability to keep up spartan lifestyles inspires some to bring over their families and settle down, the few social contacts investment migrants have can affect their decisions in the same direction. By playing cards at night with their roommates, they may eventually develop friendships. Because they spend their evenings and weekends together, more intimate bonds can arise. Some investment migrants may begin to sacrifice overtime work for companionship. Investment migrants consequently start to earn less and spend more, which drives the attainment of their aspirations further away, and this means that they have to stay longer (see also Piore 1979). And the longer they stay the greater the chances are of them eventually settling down (Chavez 1991). This means that investment migrants who are unable to keep up this lifestyle will eventually seek to increase their free time and their social contacts, either by bringing over friends or relatives or by getting closer to the contacts they already have. It is thus the social life that is attached to the aspirations of investment migrants that instigates change in the long run.

Apart from this social dimension, I found that developments in the cultural realm could inspire change in the same direction. Upon arrival in the destination country, irregular migrants usually encounter cultures that are different from what they are used to. As migrants encounter new cultural beliefs and experiences, some of their own cultural ideals and guidelines for appropriate behavior may change as a result of their migration (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994). A few studies describe how migrants react to and negotiate these cultural differences, especially with regard to changing gender roles (Dannecker 2005; Hagan 1994; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994; Menjivar 1999). The encounter with new cultures affects migrants differently (Parrado and Flippen 2005) and may foster discord within families, making some family members long to return to the country of origin, whereas others prefer to stay (Chavez 1991). I also noted how cultural encounters foster different reactions and preferences towards settlement. Whereas one of Isadora's daughters desperately

wants to go back to Ecuador because she feels unable to fit in, her three other children like Belgium very much, feel adapted and never want to go back.

In addition, Khoo et al. (2008) have demonstrated that one of the most popular reasons for temporary regular migrants becoming settlers is a liking of the local lifestyle. Furthermore, women are more likely to want to stay, because they mostly have more to gain in this new cultural environment. According to Hondagneu-Sotelo (1994: 146), "changing gender relations in the family help to explain women's and men's divergent preferences toward settlement." While men lose authority and the monopoly over family resources, women gain greater personal autonomy and independence. Their "gendered orientations toward settlement [therefore] reflect the losses and gains." (*Ibid*.) In short, how irregular migrants react to the new cultural environment depends on many aspects, like gender and cultural background. Moreover, the cultural encounters may make some change their original aspirations.

Although I did come across respondents who were in a transition phase between settlement and legalization aspirations, or who had recently made the transition from legalization to settlement aspirations, I did not find a clear link with developments in their social surroundings.

7.5 CONCLUSION

The little literature there is on the social incorporation of irregular migrants is dichotomized around two positions. The dominant view is that irregular migrants are busy surviving and do not have time or opportunity to engage in recreational activities or to invest in social relations. Moreover, the social contacts they have are usually other migrants. Challenged by this grim picture of social isolation, a few scholars oppose this image and describe the richness in the social activities and the contacts their respondents engage in. So far it remained unclear how these different outcomes are shaped. However, this chapter has demonstrated that an approach that takes aspirations as the central focus of analysis is able to provide such understanding.

Investment migrants, who intend to stay in the receiving society only temporarily, do not engage in recreational activities and prefer to stay at home, possibly in the company of their family or their flat mates. Moreover, they have a very small network of social contacts. Their lives seem a lot like the social lives of

irregular migrants portrayed by the dominant stream in research. However, they usually stay indoors because they choose to and not because they are afraid to venture out in public. Settlement migrants, with their fondness of leisure time and their large social circles, appear to have much in common with the picture portrayed by scholars holding the second position. Furthermore, my analysis revealed more diversity in outcomes than the two positions described in the literature. Legalization migrants who are involved in procedures spend their abundance of free time with organizations and have small but very heterogeneous networks consisting of migrants with other backgrounds as well as Dutch or Belgian people. Furthermore, legalization migrants who aim to get married show diverging outcomes depending on the marriage market(s) they are active in.

All in all, the divergent patterns of social incorporation of different types of irregular migrants in the Low Countries are explained in this chapter by bringing aspirations into the analysis. The following figure summarizes the main findings of this chapter:

Figure 7.3 Social incorporation per type of aspiration

	Investment	**Settlement**	**Legalization**	**Legalization**
			Procedures	**Marriage**
Social incorporation				
Leisure time	As little as possible	Highly valued	Nothing special	Instrumental
Ways of spending leisure time	Indoors	Recreational activities	Organizations	In the streets, going out
Geographic mobility	Immobile	Mobile (across national borders)	Mobile (within national borders)	Immobile
Span of social contacts	Limited	Large circles	Small circles	Large circles
Type of social contacts	Other investment migrants	Ethnic community	Heterogeneous network	Ethnic community or heterogeneous

Obviously, the figure presented above does not do justice to the diversity in outcomes, but represents a simplified ideal-typical picture. As the aspirations of irregular migrants may shift over time, respondents sometimes found themselves in between the positions outlined above. Furthermore, personal circumstances may

have led migrants to divert from the typical path. Nevertheless, it has become clear in this chapter that the typology increases our understanding of how patterns of social incorporation are shaped and provides insight into a debate in the literature in which seemingly opposing positions are held. They indicate that there is not one "parallel world" or "cocoon" for irregular migrants, but that there are several "cages", depending on irregular migrants' aspirations.

CHAPTER 8
ASPIRATIONS AND TRANSNATIONAL ACTIVITIES

8.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous two chapters dealt with patterns of functional and social incorporation in the receiving societies. However, irregular migrants also maintain ties to their country of origin. To understand the way irregular migrants live in the receiving societies it is therefore important to also take their transnational engagements into account. Transnationalism has originally been defined by Basch and others (1994: 6) as "the process by which transmigrants, through their daily activities, forge and sustain multi-stranded social, economic, and political relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement, and through which they create transnational social fields that cross national borders".

From the outset of this emerging field of research, it has been argued that transnationalism is not new. After all, migrants have always engaged in cross-border activities. So instead of a new phenomenon, transnationalism is regarded as representing a novel perspective (Portes 2003: 874). This new perspective is relevant for the study of migration, because it offers a means to study "an alternative adaptation path" (Portes et al. 1999: 228). In other words, a transnational perspective is relevant because migrants' cross border activities are intertwined with the way they live in the receiving societies. This implies that the way irregular migrants live in receiving societies cannot be properly understood without taking their transnational engagements into account. In this chapter I therefore study the transnational activities of irregular migrants.

At first, studies on transnationalism tended to include all kinds of cross-border activities, thereby exaggerating the scope of transnationalism. Researchers also purposefully looked for transnational phenomena by selecting case studies in which these were abundant. In other words, many studies sampled on the dependent variable, for example by conducting qualitative studies of organizations active in the transnational field (Portes 2001). This exaggeration of the significance of

transnationalism has made some authors seek to delimit its scope (see Portes et al. 1999).

The attempts to limit the scope of the perspective have resulted in transnationalism having been conceptualized in terms of "regular and sustained cross-border activities of individuals," making "freedom of movement the point of departure," thereby implicitly excluding irregular migrants (Waldinger and Fitzgerald 2004: 1178). It seems as if studies of transnationalism have overlooked irregular migration in their attempt to arrive at a clear conceptualization. In the literature on transnational social fields (see e.g. Levitt and Schiller 2004), irregular migrants are also recognized as community participants, but their experiences are not systematically compared to the transnationalism of regular migrants, because the emphasis in such studies is on the level of the community as a whole. Consequently, the questions of if and how irregular migrants specifically experience and engage in transnationalism are not asked.

In spite of the lack of specific attention for irregular migrants, a dominant view can be derived from the literature on which one can base expectations about the transnational involvement of irregular migrants. Irregular migrants are not expected to be very active because of the obstacles they face. Portes (2001: 189) for example finds that "immigrants' transnationalism is associated with a more secure economic and legal status in the host country." Likewise, Mazzucato (2008: 213) claims that as irregular migrants face difficulties in their incorporation, these also "hamper migrants' possibilities of investing in their home country." Hence, because irregular migrants are less able to create a stable position for themselves in the receiving society, they are considered less equipped to engage in transnational activities. In addition, Bloch (2008: 298) found that migrants who had legal access to the labor market were "more than six times" as likely to send economic remittances as other migrants. According to the author this means that "structural exclusions based on immigration status" adversely affect transnational capabilities (Bloch 2008: 302). According to this set of authors, transnational activities are consistently associated with higher human capital resources, such as education, immigration experience, occupational status and legal status (Bloch 2008; Mazzucato 2008; Portes 2003: 886; Waldinger 2008). Portes (2003: 887) shows "unambiguously that the migrants most involved in cross border initiatives are not the most exploited or marginalized." Following this line of reasoning, it is likely that irregular migrants do not engage much in transnational activities.

As the literature on transnationalism so far mostly provides tentative indications of the activities irregular migrants undertake, one would expect the literature on irregular migration to supply better answers. However, studies of irregular migrants devote little attention to the transnational activities their research subjects engage in. Although it has often been mentioned that irregular migrants have a transnational outlook and are oriented towards their country of origin (Chavez [1992]1998, Mahler 1995, Piore 1979), remittances are the only cross-border activities to which attention is commonly devoted. Neglecting the broader scope of the literature on transnationalism, studies of irregular migrants have not extended their view to include social and political transnational activities as well. Furthermore, the focus of research on irregular migrants' transnational activities is on their transnational economic *obligations* and how these pose limitations for their incorporation into the receiving society and their chances of achieving upward social mobility (Mahler 1995: 6-7). Following the 'survival perspective' (see chapter 2), researchers probably assume that irregular migrants do not have the possibility of engaging in transnational activities: they only have transnational obligations which they struggle to fulfill.

All in all, studies on irregular migrants are focused on incorporation within the receiving societies and neglect their transnational engagements. If these do pay attention to transnationalism, they only take economic obligations into account and analyze how these affect outcomes in terms of mobility. This narrow focus is unfortunate, because we have learned from studies of regular migrants that there is a lot to gain from adopting a broader transnational perspective. This chapter therefore attempts to contribute to the scholarly debate on transnationalism, as well as to the literature on irregular migrants, by bringing a transnational perspective into the study of irregular migration.

Now that it is clear that transnationalism should be studied among irregular migrants as well, the question is how to do it. What exactly is meant by adopting a transnational perspective is not always clear (Levitt et al. 2003), yet there is plenty of empirical research that calls itself transnational (Smith 2006). Although transnational migration studies form an emerging field that is still very much fragmented, a distinction is generally made among economic, social and political activities (e.g. Portes et al. 1999; Snel et al. 2006; Bloch 2008). I will therefore analyze the transnational activities of my respondents along these same dimensions.

Because of the nature of my study I focus on transnationalism of individual migrants and not of groups (see chapter 2). Although researchers distinguish between transnational activities and transnational identifications (Snel et al. 2006), my focus is only on the activities. This choice stems from practical considerations: the semi-structured interviews did not contain questions pertaining to transnational identifications but only to economic, social and political activities. The transnational activities my respondents engage in are discussed in the following sections. As in the previous chapters, the role of their aspirations is central to this analysis.

8.2 ECONOMIC TRANSNATIONAL ACTIVITIES

As investment migrants have come to the destination country to earn money that they want to invest in their home country, they usually remit large shares of their incomes. In practice, the sums of money they send home roughly amount to 2,000 to 5,000 euros per year. Investment migrants differ in the frequency with which they send their remittances: whereas some send small sums of money each month, others save larger amounts that they send every few months. Mehmet makes sure he sends money each month: "I have a house in Karaman. [My wife] lives there with my 3 sons and 2 daughters. I take care of them financially. (…) [I send] around 350 euros each month." However, some investment migrants do not remit at all. Although these save large shares of their income, they choose to guard the money themselves instead of sending it to their home country. The migrants who save instead of remit are often without a partner and children. They save for their own business projects or in order to finance a future wedding. Whether investment migrants send money to the country of origin or save it, in the end all this money is invested there. This means that either way, investment migrants are very much engaged in economic transnational activities.

Settlement migrants normally prioritize their own financial situation and remit much smaller shares of their incomes than investment migrants do. As they want to build their lives in the destination country, they need money to do so. Moreover, because settlement migrants have often brought their closest relatives over, they are usually not financially responsible for family members back home. As they only have their parents or extended family in the origin country, they usually hold no financial responsibilities for them and only have to support them occasionally or in case of special needs. When I asked Isidora if she sends money home, she responded: "A little. They [my parents] are old so I send a little bit of

money. And my father is ill so I send a little money for that. (…) It is impossible to send more money because I have four children who make expenses. And we have to pay the rent and now that the children are studying they need internet so I have to pay the rent and the internet, the electricity, so the costs are high." It is clear that Isidora does not work to support family in Ecuador, but to support her family life in Belgium. This does not mean that she does not remit at all, but she remits a much smaller share of her income than investment migrants do.

Although some do not remit at all, most settlement migrants send small sums of money on an irregular basis; usually in case of special needs that come up in the country of origin. The amounts they send normally remain under 1,000 euros per year. However, a few of my respondents with settlement aspirations have such financial obligations in their country of origin that they remit much more than that. These settlement migrants are normally on their own in the destination country and work to provide for their family in the origin country. In fact, they are settlement migrants, because they are able to support their families through their stay in the receiving society. Recall Arda who was quoted in chapter 5 saying: "I don't have any choice. I stay here to send money to my family. I can work all year round here, in Turkey I only work a few months a year." These are the migrants who have settled down in the Low Countries so that they can provide for their families back home. They remit smaller shares of their income than investment migrants do because the length of their stay does not allow for spartan lifestyles to be endured. Nevertheless, they remit a lot more than the other settlement migrants do: between 2,000 and 4,000 euros annually.

Contrastingly, legalization migrants hardly send any money to their countries of origin. As they do not work much they have little money to remit. Efunsegun for example responded to my question of whether he sends money to Nigeria with: "No! I am not working, what money do I have to send?" Likewise, Fasila responded: "this is not possible now because I do not have any income." Although their relatives in the origin country may have a strong need for additional income, legalization migrants feel that they have to get their legalization in order before they are in the capacity to help their family. René for example says: "Actually I am responsible for my family but I do not have the financial means to support them." Legalization migrants worry about their own needs first. Alexandre for example says: "Money, I don't have any money. It costs 1,200 euros to bring [my son] here nowadays. But even if someone would give me 1,000 euros now, I choose to pay the rent two months ahead you know." The incomes of legalization migrants

are too low in relation to their costs to allow them to send surplus income to the country of origin.

However, the fact that they do not work and consequently have little money to send home is not the only reason why legalization migrants normally do not remit. Legalization migrants often do not have any financial responsibility towards people in the home country. Mehdi for example says: "No [I don't remit] because there aren't any family members that I am financially responsible for, neither here nor in Morocco." Likewise, Kiril says: "The only family I have left in Bulgaria is my mother and she lives from her old age pension. I don't send any money to Bulgaria, I just take care of my family here." And Rakesh responded: "[money] is no problem. I have good land, crops and everything, with a big house, no problem." Since the migration of legalization migrants has often not been economically inspired, they do not have financial obligations, as investment migrants or settlement migrants can have. Their migration is often the result of political conflict. In other cases, it involves young men who were unemployed in their home country who migrated to find a better future for themselves and not because family incomes needed to be supplemented. They are busy trying to find someone to marry and devote their limited resources towards achieving this aim.

In a few cases, money even flows in the opposite direction. Some legalization migrants come from rich families and therefore do not send money to the country of origin; instead their family members there send money to them. This financial support enables them to pay their expenses, while they wait for the outcomes of their procedures. However, as procedures may take very long and the Low Countries are expensive countries to live in, their families cannot supply financial aid for long. Rasja for example says: "Before my family used to send money to me. But in my country [Syria], look things are really expensive here, 1,000 euros is nothing here, 1,000 euros is the rent for less than three months but in my country a thousand euros is a lot of money. Way too much you understand that is why [they can't continue to send money]." Only a few of my respondents have occasionally been supported by their families back home and are thus responsible for a small and temporary inverted financial flow. Others indicated that although they could ask their family for financial support, they are too ashamed to do so.

All in all, the extent to which irregular migrants engage in economic transnational activities and the way in which they do it partly depend on their aspirations. Whereas investment migrants save large shares of their incomes to

either remit or to guard themselves, settlement migrants usually send smaller sums of money home, except for those whose partner and children (still) live in the home country. Of all three categories, legalization migrants remit the least. In the next section we will see how aspirations and irregular migrants' social transnational activities are related.

8.3 SOCIAL TRANSNATIONAL ACTIVITIES

Because investment migrants want to return they are socially oriented towards their country of origin, and they invest time and energy in maintaining the social relations with their relatives and friends back home. They feel that their lives take place there instead of in the receiving society. They therefore make efforts to keep up to date and to keep in touch when they can. When asked how often they contact family or friends in their country of origin, investment migrants respond with answers like: "I call and sms my wife every day" (Sercan) or "[I call my family] every weekend and normally I call friends as well" (Sofia). Most investment migrants call their friends and family members at least a few times per week and keep a minimum frequency of once a week.

Because investment migrants do not have a vivid social life in the receiving society and because they cannot actively take part in social life back home, many investment migrants mention how much they miss their friends and families. Tümer for example says: "I don't have any difficulties, I just miss my family. As soon as I have enough money saved I go back." And Elin says: "I miss my wife and children very much. Last month my granddaughter was born and I haven't been able to see her yet. As soon as my savings are in order I go back." The contacts they have with their spouse, children and other loved ones make them want to come home even faster, and this inspires them to work harder towards that goal.

Contrastingly, 'home' for settlement migrants is the receiving society. They call their relatives a lot less than investment migrants do: only once or twice a month. Antonia tells how she calls her parents less often now that she has settled down and brought her children over and now that her sisters all reside in Belgium as well: "Before I always called my mother and father every week but now I don't do that anymore." Settlement migrants want to build their futures in the Low Countries. They therefore do not feel the need to be in touch with the home country as often as investment migrants do.

While most settlement migrants keep a habit of contacting their family and friends at least once a month, a few respondents with settlement aspirations do not have any contact with the home country at all. Over the course of their stay in the Low Countries, they have broken all ties to family or friends in the country of origin. Adil for example says: "I haven't called in almost four years. Four years yes. I didn't feel like it. If you don't have money or work, no future. And if I call now my family will say 'why haven't you called?' Normally I called every week or every month but now I haven't called in almost four years." Adil has not contacted his relatives because he is ashamed to say that he does not have work and that he lives in the streets.

Whereas some settlement migrants lose contact with their relatives back home over the course of their stay, legalization migrants sometimes do not have transnational social contacts from the outset. Because legalization migrants have often sought security from political persecution or war, keeping in touch with friends and family in countries that have been severely disrupted by war can be a difficult thing. Dnari says: "I do not have contact with anyone. Seven years. I do still have a brother but I don't know where he is. I don't know if he is alive or not. I don't have any idea. I try to build a life here now for myself, we forget about the past." Likewise, Kalusha says: "I don't know where my family is staying. I am trying to get contact with friends who have helped me but it is not working." The difficulties some legalization migrants experience in contacting friends and family also help to explain why many legalization migrants do not remit.

Even if they do know how to locate their family members, some legalization migrants are afraid that contacting their relatives might bring them into danger, as is expressed by Lazzat: "It is very dangerous [to call relatives in Uzbekistan]. If they would know that I am here then they might get problems and not me, and I don't want that you know. (…) I have three sisters (…) I have contact with one now because she lives in Russia. (…) Russia is safe, she works in Moscow." Clearly, for some legalization migrants, the political situation in their country of origin complicates the maintenance of social contacts.

Whereas it can be practically impossible for some legalization migrants to keep in touch, those for whom it is possible to reach people in the origin country often face other barriers to maintaining transnational social contacts, which are connected to their aspirations. Relatives back home often do not understand the hardships irregular migrants go through in their efforts to become legalized. Tarek

for example says: "Yeah I call my mother sometimes so that she doesn't worry. I would like to have contact more often but then they say 'oh you don't have papers yet, you are not trying hard enough, or what are you doing there.' It is difficult to talk and to explain the situation." Families have sometimes invested money into the migration plans of their relatives and do not like to see these fail. Furthermore, they either do not know about the requirement of papers, or they do not accurately assess the chances migrants have of becoming legalized. Their family members wonder why they do not receive any remittances, and in case legalization migrants try to explain that it is not so easy in Europe they are sometimes accused of lying because migrants before them have been successful. These misunderstandings can lead to arguments as Tarek explained, and in case family members do understand, the stakes are often so high that they encourage legalization migrants to keep on fighting. Enfunsegun for example says: "I call them sometimes, maybe once or twice in a month. Sometimes they call me, but normally I call them. I always tell them about my feelings in Europe. (…) they encourage me, they say that I am the eldest son of the family, that I have to continue struggling, and one of these days God will see me through." Instead of providing emotional support, the telephone calls home lead to increased stress which makes these migrants call home less than they would like. In addition, these contacts strengthen their aspirations to become legalized.

Next to the social contacts migrants maintain with the country of origin, another issue that is frequently brought up in connection with social transnational activities is the extent to which migrants keep up to date on things that happen in their home country. Therefore, respondents were also asked if they watch television, read news papers, look on the internet or if they have other ways of following what happens in their home country. Investment migrants have little time to follow the news or to read newspapers. Moreover, they are often unwilling to invest in expensive satellite TV installations. After all, they are only in the Low Countries on a temporary basis, and such subscriptions cost a lot of money. When they are unemployed they watch TV or read newspapers in teahouses where they wait for new jobs. Investment migrants do very much want to keep updated on the latest developments in their home country, but they mostly only keep up to date through their conversations with friends and relatives over the phone as they find other means too expensive.

While investment migrants are keen to keep up to date with the situation in their country of origin, settlement migrants care a lot less. Lucas for example says: "No we don't have news from Chile. Despite of the fact that there is news on the

internet and in newspapers, I don't do it a lot." Lucas finds it too much trouble to go to an internet cafe in another neighborhood which indicates that he does not have the urge to be updated on the latest news from his origin country. While settlement migrants are interested in the lives of their relatives and friends and developments in the local communities where these live, they do not make much effort to follow the latest news concerning their country of origin in general. Instead, they look for a sense of home in the receiving society by visiting the activities organized by socio-cultural organizations and other social gatherings.

In contrast to settlement migrants, legalization migrants are usually very keen on keeping up to date on the latest developments. Lazzat for example says: "Ever since I fled I follow what happens in Uzbekistan every day, and the situation keeps getting worse and worse. (…) [I follow it] through the internet. Everything via the internet. On television here in Europe you see little, practically nothing." Although legalization migrants have little money because they do not work much, they often do have satellite television and they find ways to surf the internet. Rasja who was several months overdue with the rent and about to be evicted by her landlord proudly said to me: "Yes of course, we have satellite television, we watch Al Jazeera.". This urge to keep up to date is obviously related to the fact that they have fled their country when it was in a bad situation, and they want to know if it improves. After all, they often have relatives and friends there whose lives might be in danger. Furthermore, while they seek legalization in the Low Countries because of the bad situation in their country of origin, some hope that they might be able to return one day in case the situation improves there. Kalusha for example says": "as soon as there is peace again in Congo I want to go back. My family is there and I want to be with them and I lived well there."

Apart from social contacts and the extent to which migrants keep up to date on developments in their country of origin, research normally considers visits to the country of origin an indicator for social transnational activities (Smith 2006). Obviously, visiting their home country involves crossing national borders, and this is complicated for many irregular migrants. However, for investment migrants this is not a criterion because they clearly do not want to pay visits to their home countries, without regard to the difficulties involved. Mehmet for example answers the question of whether he visits his country of origin with: "No because I will only go back once I have earned enough money." And Illian answers: "No because I haven't saved enough money yet." Clearly, they want to work and make money to go back for good and preferably not to come back again.

Contrastingly, most settlement migrants very much like to visit their home countries, and those who are able to also do this. They occasionally pay family visits and go back to attend important family weddings. For Eastern Europeans it is relatively easy to travel back and forth since border authorities do not usually stamp passports, and the costs of travel are relatively low. For those whose journey involves flying it is generally more difficult and more expensive to pay family visits. Those who do not have visa restrictions have to buy a new stamp-free passport during their visit. Because of the high costs attached to flying and buying a new passport, only few of my respondents have done so. However, this does not necessarily mean that they have not seen their family and friends since they left their country of origin. The lack of visa restrictions makes it possible for their friends and family to come to the Low Countries. A few of my respondents with settlement aspirations told me how their relatives have come to the Low Countries on a holiday to pay them a visit.

Settlement migrants who do face visa restrictions have to buy false papers or find and pay smugglers that can take them across the borders. This is a cost and a risk that none of my respondents has been willing to take. Although these settlement migrants sometimes want to visit their home country, they have too many obstacles to do so in practice. For some of them, their urge to see family and friends becomes so great that is develops into a reason to shift to legalization aspirations after a while. After all, only through legalization can they possibly visit their family and come back to the Low Countries again.

Although most settlement migrants would like to visit their home country, there are also a few who do not feel any urge to go there. But their reasons for not wanting to visit the home country are very different from the reasons of investment migrants. Tellingly, the answer of settlement migrant Mustafa to the question of whether he visits his home country is different from the answers of investment migrants quoted earlier: “No because I live in Belgium now. I have nothing to go back to except for my father.” While the investment migrants stressed they only wanted to return once they have earned enough money, Mustafa focuses on his choice for settlement in Belgium in explaining why he does not want to visit his home country.

In contrast to settlement migrants who sometimes visit their country of origin, none of my respondents with legalization aspirations has paid their country of origin a visit. After all, not only do they face the same barriers to travel the other

irregular migrants face, their desire to become legalized is often connected to their fear of going back because of safety issues. In addition, those who come from safer countries are afraid that temporarily leaving the country in which they have a running application might do damage to the outcome of this application.

All in all, it has become clear that aspirations play a role in shaping different kinds of social transnational activities. The frame of reference of investment migrants is in the home country which is why they call, sms or internet with their loved ones almost on a daily basis. For settlement migrants, 'home' is the receiving society which is why they are focused on their social lives there. They mostly only maintain personal contacts to the country of origin; they do not normally follow the latest news. Legalization migrants on the other hand do follow the news, but have not managed or only moderately manage to maintain many social contacts in their country of origin. When their personal contacts to the country of origin have not been complicated because of political conditions, contacts are often frustrated because people back home do not understand the struggles they go through in their attempts to become legalized. Settlement migrants are the only irregular migrants to visit the country of origin in the event obstacles are not too high.

8.4 POLITICAL TRANSNATIONAL ACTIVITIES

None of my respondents with investment aspirations is engaged in political transnational activities. More specifically, they indicated that they did not take part in demonstrations concerning their home country and that they did not participate in politically inspired activities. Sometimes they even admitted that they did not follow what was going on in politics in their home country at all. Diego for example says: "Look, if I am honest, I am outside of all, of politics." Diego is here to work, and he does not want to spend his time on other things than work if they do not bring the attainment of his aspirations any closer. Furthermore, as indicated in chapter 5, investment migrants usually come from countries where there is some investment potential. These are therefore normally not countries that are afflicted by war or political strife, and irregular migrants may not feel the need to have up to date knowledge.

Settlement migrants are also not very politically active. When I talked about their political engagement with Fernanda and Camilla, Fernanda for example said: "when my brothers call me they inform me but not like, I ask very little about politics personally." And then Camilla said: "I don't even know who the president

of Ecuador is, I don't know." These two migrants are focused on their lives in Belgium. Furthermore, they care about their family and friends back home, but not about the political situation in their country. This lack of political interest is reflected in the activities the organizations of settlement migrants organize. These activities focus on transferring their cultural heritage to their children and on increasing social solidarity in the receiving society, rather than discussing the political situation of the home country. Although political issues may come up in private conversations, settlement migrants generally do not participate in political activities concerning their country of origin.

In contrast to investment and settlement migrants, legalization migrants are often engaged in political transnational activities. Maboula for example responded in reaction to the question of whether he engages in political activities that concern his country of origin: "Yes, when people ask me to demonstrate in the streets against certain things that concern my country yes I do that." Likewise, Kiyiaki says: "Yes I am very active, I participate in every demonstration." In the same line, Lazzat explains how politically engaged he is:

> Ever since I came here I have been very active with the Uyghur people, I have been very active for the future of the Uyghurs. We want our country to be independent, we want our country back. (...) We do political activities like for example each year we do a demonstration at the Chinese embassy in remembrance of the uprising that took place in a Uyghur city in 1997.

Some legalization migrants have even indicated that they are (still) members of political parties in their country of origin.

In fact, many legalization migrants have these specific aspirations to become legalized because of the political problems in their country of origin. Bloch (2008: 301) similarly noted that the participation in political activities of his respondents (both regular and irregular migrants) is "related to the main motivation for migration: those who left Zimbabwe for political reasons were most likely to engage in diasporic political activities."(Bloch 2008: 301) The political issues in their country often formed the reasons for their flight, and, more importantly, they make legalization migrants afraid to go back. As they believe they cannot go back, they aspire to start a new life elsewhere and hence aspire to legalization. They want to become legalized because they feel they have no other place to go. Lazzat explains that he is engaged in political transnational activities because he feels he does not

have a home country anymore. After he has been refused by both Uzbekistan and Belgium, he feels landless and wants to try his chances not only in Belgium, but also in his native Uyghur land:

> I don't have anything to do with politics but to live like this and not be welcome anywhere, I am fed up with this. I just fight my own battle for independence of our own country. Even though there is little chance that we will get it there is hope. Maybe it will work. Maybe such a large country will fall apart like the Soviet regime has. Maybe this will happen in China as well. And then we can have our own country, and Tibet as well. Then we will go back and build our country.

The political activities legalization migrants engage in are usually coordinated through migrant organizations. The organizations not only devote attention to improving the political situation in the origin country, but they also look out for the well-being of those who live in the destination country. Albert explains the twofold mission of the organization he belongs to:

> Here in Belgium I am a member of…there are Congolese who have started an organization like [name of NGO] which is called the Congolese liga. It is like [names of two organizations] and I am a member there. They do manifestations, organize debates, they invite people to talk, like for example about the way people without papers live here in Belgium, and for example we have invited someone who comes to talk about Congo, about the time of Mubutu, the time of Kabila."

While settlement migrants create and become members of organizations that focus on social solidarity and culture, legalization migrants seek out the organizations that are active in the political arena. These organizations can focus on political transnational activities concerning the country of origin, but they can also be about problems the migrants in question face in the destination country. Some of these organizations for example try to improve the situation of irregular migrants, and they inform all migrants about their rights and obligations.

Mascini et al. (2009) have indicated that transnationalism is by no means self-evident among migrants who have sought to escape conflict. Likewise, I found that whereas many legalization migrants who are involved in procedures are engaged in political transnational activities, there are also some who choose not to be. They have

often completely closed the door on ever returning to their country of origin, or the problems in their origin countries are not considered that urgent (anymore). They find their own day-to-day problems already too big of a worry to exert themselves for yet another cause. As Tarek says: "I like politics but I have never been a member of a political party. (…) you know, you can't be a member of an organization if you have a problem that is more important than that."

It has been suggested that irregular migrants' membership and participation in political activities of organizations are instrumentally motivated (Pasura 2008). By bringing the problems in their home country to the forefront, they hope that the chances of legalization increase. Their instrumental motivation is also indicated by the finding that irregular migrants participate actively, but once they become legalized they often cease all these activities. Although my findings do point in the same direction, they also remain suggestions. This suggestion of an instrumental motivation for political transnational activities does help to understand why legalization migrants involved in procedures tend to engage in political transnational activities and why legalization migrants who aim to get married usually do not.

8.5 SHIFTS IN ASPIRATIONS

Above I have demonstrated that the transnational activities irregular migrants engage in can be understood from their aspirations. Obviously, the results presented here represent a simplified ideal-typical picture and do not do justice to all empirical diversity. Furthermore, as the aspirations of irregular migrants may change over time respondents sometimes found themselves in between ideal-typical positions. What is important here is that if irregular migrants' aspirations change, their transnational activities are likely to change with them.

Antonia for example explained how her remittance behavior changed once she brought her two sons over and decided to settle down: "Before I sent a lot, [I sent] all I had. I was very generous. But right now I don't do that anymore. (…) before I sent money to keep it there but now I think it is better to keep it here. Because always if something happened I had to say give me this. (…) I think it is better to keep the little money I have saved here and not in Ecuador." Antonia's account indicates that she wants to be in control of her own money. In case sudden needs arise for her or her family in Belgium, they have to be taken care of. She sends a little money to her parents, and she lets her brothers keep the rent that she gets for

her house in Ecuador. When she had investment aspirations she remitted all that she could, but because her aspirations changed she now keeps her savings for herself and for her future. That migrants are inclined to remit less if they change aspirations and decide to settle down has been noted in other research as well. Massey et al. (1987: 207) for example observe that "a sure sign that a settlement process in under way occurs when migrants send fewer earnings back home and spend more in the United States."

If aspirations change the social transnational activities irregular migrants engage in change as well. Recall Antonia who not only explained that she remits less now that she has settled down, but who also said she does not call her parents every week anymore. The same applies to political activities. Lazzat for example explained to me that he was contemplating whether to file another asylum or regularization case or whether he should start to look for a job and forget about his political engagements.

8.5 CONCLUSION

In this chapter it has been demonstrated that the types of transnationalism irregular migrants engage in and the extent to which they are active can be understood from the aspirations they have. The figure below indicates which types of transnational activities irregular migrants with different types of aspirations engage in:

Figure 8.1 Transnational activities per type of aspiration

	Investment	**Settlement**	**Legalization Procedures**	**Legalization Marriage**
Transnational activities				
Economic	Very active	Occasionally	Little to none	Little to none
Social	Many personal contacts	Some personal contacts and receiving society	High involvement, TV, papers, internet	Personal contacts and receiving society
Political	No activities	No activities	Some activities	No activities

Investment migrants engage a lot in economic transnational activities, whereas settlement migrants spend a greater share of their incomes in the receiving society and send fewer remittances home. The frame of reference of investment migrants is in the home country which is why they call, sms or internet with their loved ones

almost on a daily basis. They keep up to date on what happens in the country of origin through these contacts. Settlement migrants on the contrary are focused on their social lives in the receiving society. They mostly just maintain personal contacts and do not normally follow the latest news from the country of origin. Legalization migrants appear to be the only category that engages in political transnational activities. Although not all legalization migrants engage in political activities, for those who do this seems to be closely connected to their aspirations.

In the literature on immigrant transnationalism it is noted that transnational activities are not common. Portes (2003: 877) for example writes that "subsequent research has indicated that regular involvement in transnational activities characterizes only a minority of immigrants and that even occasional involvement is not a universal practice." And Waldinger (2008: 24) finds that "transnationalism is a rare condition of being and transmigrants are an uncommon class of persons." Furthermore, as indicated in the introduction of this chapter, irregular migrants are expected to engage in transnational activities least of all because of the obstacles they face (cf. Portes et al. 2007). Portes (2001: 189) for example found that "immigrant transnationalism is associated with a more secure economic and legal status in the host country." Likewise Bloch (2008: 302) claims that "structural exclusions based on immigration status" adversely affect transnational capabilities. However, I have found that many of my respondents quite frequently engage in transnational activities. In addition, I found that in spite of the limitations they face, irregular migrants manage to find ways to engage in those types of activities that are important to them. In fact, investment migrants prioritize their economic transnational engagements over their own well-being in the receiving society. Hence, the aspirations irregular migrants have underlie the transnational activities they undertake.

Furthermore, I found that in those cases in which my respondents were not transnationally active, this is not necessarily because of the limitations they experience, but rather often stems from choice. This flies in the face of the implicit assumption that underlies much research that as migrants earn more they will engage more in transnational activities (see for example Bloch 2008). In the case that settlement migrants earn more, they do not necessarily remit more. Instead, they mostly choose to spend their extra earnings on their own family in the receiving society. In addition, increasing income will most likely not make legalization migrants remit more but actually work less. Only investment migrants increase their economic transnational activities if they earn more.

Whereas there may seem to be a logical relationship between migrants´ economic positions and their propensity to engage in economic transnational activities, this is even less obvious for social and political transnationalism. Whereas it does cost money to make telephone calls and to participate in political activity, my respondents hardly mentioned these as reasons for their lack of or infrequent activity. Furthermore, an investment migrant from Turkey calls home more often than an investment migrant from Chile – because of the costs involved - but the latter makes calls more frequently than his co-nationals with settlement aspirations. Whereas factors such as cost may somewhat affect the frequency of specific activities, they do not match the impact of aspirations in shaping transnational activities.

Scholars have been busy trying to find out if the general relationship between incorporation and transnationalism is of a positive or a negative nature. Some find that incorporation weakens transnational participation, and others find that it does not (Itzigsohn and Saucedo 2002). A huge step forward has been taken by recognizing that in order to make statements about this relationship, a differentiation needs to be made among economic, social and political activities, as the relationship works differently for distinct types of activities (Snel et al. 2006). Yet while researchers worry about the relationship between incorporation and transnationalism, they overlook the fact that both are rooted in aspirations. Studies have advanced by distinguishing between different types of transnational activity, but they also need to contextualize on the side of agency of the migrants to properly understand why migrants do or do not engage in certain types of transnational activities (cf. Al-Ali 2002). Future research on transnationalism can therefore significantly benefit from taking aspirations into account as well.

CHAPTER 9
STRIVING FOR A BETTER POSITION: ASPIRATIONS AND THE ROLE OF ECONOMIC, CULTURAL AND SOCIAL CAPITAL

9.1 INTRODUCTION

As argued in chapter two, one should take care not to regard irregular migrants as mere 'victims'. Although irregular migrants do obviously experience limitations, a 'victim perspective' can obstruct our understanding of the ways they manage to improve their situation or realize their aspirations (see also Devillé 2006; Paspalanova 2006; Van Nieuwenhuyze 2009). In this chapter, an answer is sought to the third research question: What forms of capital do irregular migrants need to realize their aspirations? The realization of their aspirations is closely connected to the extent to which they are able to mobilize and enforce resources like social, cultural or economic capital (cf. Bourdieu 1986). Numerous studies have explored the significance of different forms of capital for irregular migrants. Their findings are worthwhile, yet ambiguous.

Many studies find that social capital is of paramount importance to irregular migrants (Adam et al. 2002; Alguilera and Massey 2003; Chavez [1992]1998; Engbersen 1996; Engbersen 1999b; Engbersen 2001; Engbersen et al. 2006; Hagan 1998; Iosifides et al. 2007; Jordan and Düvell 2002; Massey et al. 1994; Staring 2003; Van der Leun 2004). Other researchers tone down the significance of social capital (Collyer 2005; Cranford 2005; Kyle 2000; Mahler 1995; Paspalanova 2006) or argue that its importance has diminished in favor of cultural capital. The latter argument is put forward by Grzymala-Kazlowska (2005: 694), who asserts that "cultural capital (especially knowledge of foreign languages) has become a major factor determining the position of individuals and the entire group in the market, whereas social capital has lost its crucial significance." A similar report emerges from the Italian literature on the bandante, the mostly Eastern European attendant of children and

grandparents. Those who master the Italian language and have familiarized themselves with customary Italian family rituals, benefit from these skills and are generally better off than those who lack such cultural proficiencies (Colombo 2007; Lyon, 2006). However, other studies indicate that cultural capital avails irregular migrants hardly at all, because their educational levels do not correspond to the work that they do (Engbersen 2001; Kosic and Triandafyllidou 2004; Van der Leun and Kloosterman 2006; Mahler 1995; Van Nieuwenhuyze 2009).

Some of this ambiguity in research findings has to do with the fact that different researchers use distinct definitions of their main concepts. Whereas some scholars define cultural capital as knowledge of foreign languages, others take educational levels as a starting point. Moreover, different perspectives are applied with regard to irregular migrants' aspirations: whereas one study deals with economic success (e.g. Grzymala-Kazlowska 2005), another emphasizes acquiring a legal status (e.g. Hagan 1998). This would be a minor problem were it not that scholars try to make statements about the significance of different forms of capital for irregular migrants in general. For example, whereas Engbersen et al. (2006: 223) write that social capital is "the most important currency for irregular migrants," Grzymala-Kazlowska (2005) claims that cultural capital has become decisive.

In this chapter, it is argued that a discussion of the significance of capital forms for irregular migrants in general does not lend itself to the development of theoretical insights. To shed light on the question of which forms of capital are beneficial to irregular migrants, we have to consider for what reasons these are deployed. After all, whether or not a form of capital is beneficial for migrants who strive for legalization is a different discussion than a debate on the significance of capital forms for migrants who try to realize economically inspired aspirations. Hence, instead of determining the most important form of capital for irregular migrants in general, it is more fruitful to analyze what makes one form of capital vital in one situation and a different form of capital decisive in another. As the deployment of capital is instrumental – that is, oriented toward the attainment of a certain goal (Portes 2000; 1998) – my analysis is focused on the relevance of different forms of capital for irregular migrants with different aspirations. The question that is central to this analysis is what forms of capital do irregular migrants need to realize their aspirations? In order to avoid the conceptual confusion mentioned above, I first elucidate the concepts used in this study before moving on to the analysis.

9.2 FORMS OF CAPITAL

Over sixteen different forms of capital have been distinguished in academic literature, ranging from emotional to digital (Svendsen and Svendsen 2003). The focus of this literature is usually on one specific form of capital without reference to its connections to other forms of capital. This means that a consistent theoretical framework is often lacking. As Bourdieu's understanding of forms of capital can be seen as an attempt to construct such a framework (cf. Anheier et al. 1995; Svendsen and Svendsen 2003), I take his analysis (Bourdieu 1986) as a starting point.

One of the basic assumptions in his analysis is that capital is unequally distributed among individuals (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992), thereby determining the chances of success of an individual's actions (Svendsen and Svendsen 2003). The instrumental use of capital by individuals is central to Bourdieu's work (Lebaron 2003; Portes 2000). In his analysis, he distinguishes economic, cultural, and social capital.

Economic capital "is immediately and directly convertible into money" (Bourdieu 1986: 243). Irregular migrants who possess economic capital could for instance benefit from it by using it to acquire false papers so that they can access the formal labor market, or they could deploy it in the arrangements for a (bogus) marriage in order to legalize their status.

With regard to cultural capital, I aim to determine if 'incorporated' cultural capital – long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body – benefits irregular migrants. Therefore, respondents were asked about their educational level, profession, work experience, and language skills. These cultural competences derive scarcity value from their position in the distribution of cultural capital and are consequently likely to yield profits to my respondents (Bourdieu 1986). This definition of cultural capital consequently resembles what is sometimes labeled human capital (Becker 1964). However, for purposes of consistency, I refer to it only as cultural capital.

Bourdieu (1986: 249) defines social capital as "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition." The amount of social capital possessed by an individual "depends on the size of the network of connections he can effectively mobilize and on the volume of the capital possessed in his own right by each of those to whom he is connected."

Research demonstrates how social networks not only include individuals, but implicitly exclude as well (Tilly 1990; Komter 2004). Furthermore, within social networks, rules of reciprocity apply. An individual who fails to return a favor can get excluded from social networks. Moreover, an internal hierarchy of power and social stratification characterizes social networks, which causes rivalry and forms of exploitation to arise (Cranford 2005; Mahler 1995). As a result, the way in which social capital operates is equivocal, rendering the size of an individual's network or the strength of its ties irrelevant to the outcomes. Therefore, I have not studied the networks of irregular migrants, but the instances in which their social capital has actually been activated. For this purpose, respondents were asked in which cases and in what manner people in their personal networks have aided them.

As indicated in chapter two, social capital can be subdivided into social leverage and social support (Briggs 1998; Domínguez and Watkins 2003; Kleinhans et al. 2007). Social support is a resource that is usually created in the strong social ties between family members, close friends and members of ethnic groups. These strong ties are a major source of emotional and material support, allowing individuals who can mobilize them to 'get by' and 'cope'. Social leverage is normally mobilized from the weak social ties between individuals, such as friends of friends or indirect acquaintances. This form of social capital helps migrants to 'get ahead', to change their opportunity structure through access to resources in social circles other than their own.

9.3 REQUIRED FORMS OF CAPITAL FOR REALIZATION OF ASPIRATIONS

9.3.1 Investment aspirations

For investment migrants, having arranged for work and lodging prior to their actual migration proves very helpful in realizing their aspirations. Hakan for example arranged his job in Belgium while he was still in Turkey. Hakan's friend, who had worked in Europe before, said he was going to Belgium to work in construction for a man that he knew from a prior stay. This friend said the man needed an additional skilled employee and asked Hakan to come with him. Hakan accepted the offer, and his future employer arranged for him to be picked up from Istanbul and taken to

Ghent, where he now earns 1200 euros a month. Likewise, Servet benefitted from the contacts he had in the destination country and arranged for a job before he migrated:

> I contacted my uncle who lives in Antwerp. He told me about employment here in Belgium for construction painters who work for private households. It seemed like a fairytale to me. I told him that I was very interested in a trip to Belgium and asked him what the possibilities were. (...) After a while he contacted me and made sure I could come to Belgium.

Like Hakan and Servet, successful investment migrants are often doing the same kind of work in the Low Countries as they did in their country of origin. Likewise, Musa is able to profit from his skills in the Low Countries:

> An acquaintance of mine is from Ghent and his son owns a hairdresser's shop in Ghent and he was looking for an employee who knows his job. (…) He called his son, he agreed and they consequently arranged a visa for me to come to Belgium. (…) They know me well and they know that (…) I am good at my job. I needed them and they needed me.

Because of their professional experience these successful investment migrants are able to make job arrangements before they migrate and therefore manage to find jobs that match their own capacities (cf. Burgers and Engbersen 1999; Staring 2001). These migrants therefore enjoy relatively good bargaining positions and are consequently relatively well paid. They are not easily exchangeable for other irregular migrants because their skills are needed. As Musa said: "I needed them and they needed me." So some investment migrants who had for example been working as hairdressers, bakers or construction workers in their country of origin were doing the same type of work in the Low Countries, owing to their specific professional skills.

Sometimes they were even invited to come to Belgium because of their skills, as was the case with Göksel. He was working as a singer in Turkey. In 2002, a good friend called him and asked if he would like to become the new singer with his band in Belgium. This friend said he had always been impressed with Göksel's voice. He said he would earn considerably more money in Belgium than in Turkey and that he would fit in perfectly with the band. Because Göksel had always dreamt about publishing his own CD, and this could be a quick way of realizing that dream, he agreed. Until he has saved the required sum for the CD he will continue to sing in

Belgium at weddings, engagement parties, openings, and circumcision parties in the Turkish community. He is the only person in the band without legal residence, but his salary equals that of the other band members. Semih was also invited to come to Belgium and start a business together with his brother. He says: "My brother borrowed money from the bank to start a shop, which he had already done before I arrived. I have job experience, I know how to fit up a shop and how to run it. He does the administration and I am in the shop to sell things and maintain it."

Such investment migrants were able to arrange their jobs prior to their migration because of their job competencies. They were able to make use of a specific form of cultural capital because family, friends or acquaintances acted as mediators. These successful investment migrants have proved able to effectively use their cultural capital by means of their social capital. In other words, successful investment migrants are able to deploy a specific form of cultural capital – job competencies – because family, friends or acquaintances acted as mediators.

Other successful investment migrants did not have any pre-migratory job-arrangements, but managed to find work quickly through contractors or acquaintances from their own ethnic group. Chavdar explains: "Once I arrived in Ghent I went into a bar in which I encountered other Bulgarians. They told me where I could get shelter. And a few days later I had a job." Many investment migrants find employment through contractors or through their well-organized ethnic networks. Inexperienced workers usually earn thirty euros per day, but Chavdar is a skilled construction worker who can do complex jobs that allow him to make fifty euros per day. He therefore benefits from his skills in two different ways: Chavdar's job competencies not only enable him to find work, they also ensure he receives better pay than irregular migrants without relevant working experience.

The work irregular migrants do is by no means necessarily of such a low-skilled nature that employees are interchangeable: respondents with certain professional skills are better paid than respondents without qualifications. However, the value of cultural capital does not follow the same hierarchy as in the formal economy. Respondents who are highly educated are not able to use their qualifications in acquiring employment positions in the Low Countries. In this connection, Van der Leun and Kloosterman (1999) speak of a "legal ceiling": qualifications above a certain level are hardly valuable on the informal market, whereas certain technical or manual skills can benefit irregular migrants because these skills can be marketed more easily in the informal economy (cf. Williams and

Windebank 1998). For investment migrants, cultural capital (job competencies below the legal ceiling) – which can be activated by social capital – prove decisive in determining the chances of success on the informal labor market in the Low Countries, and consequently in their aspiration attainment.

As said before, Grzymala-Kazlowska (2005) asserts that the importance of cultural capital, in the sense of mastering languages, has increased in terms of the ability to ensure an employment position. This does not appear to be the case for investment migrants. None of the successful investment migrants indicated that mastering a Belgian language had benefited them, which is probably because they mostly work within their ethnic economy. Furthermore, investing in language is not worthwhile, because investment migrants do not mean to stay in the Low Countries.

Economic capital also did not appear to play a major role. None of the investment migrants were working with false or borrowed papers; they were all immersed in the informal economy. However, this does not mean that economic capital is necessarily irrelevant. Many other scholars find that, especially on the heavily controlled Dutch labor market, it can be almost a necessity to have false papers to work with (Benseddik and Bijl 2004; Broeders 2009). Had I interviewed more investment migrants in the Netherlands, the relevance of economic capital might have increased.

There are also investment migrants who said they remained unsuccessful in realizing their aspirations or who indicated they had been unsuccessful and therefore changed aspirations in the past. It appeared that they lacked specific work experience or competencies that they can assert in the Low Countries. For example, one of them had been selling vegetables and fruits on a cart, two of them had been unemployed, one had been working as a truck driver all his life, and another had always worked as a farmer. In the Low Countries, they depend heavily on seasonal labor in horticulture, cleaning work or the lowest jobs in construction. These jobs are usually very irregular, and remuneration does not surpass thirty euros a day for ten hours of work. Although my respondents were prepared to work these long hours, they indicated their earnings were not yet sufficient for attainment of their aspirations.

9.3.2 Settlement aspirations

Some settlement migrants are able to build up the life they aspire to in the Low Countries in spite of their illegal residence status. Yilmaz for example, judges his illegal settlement in Belgium positively: "So far I haven't experienced any real difficulties; I lead a better life than people with a residence permit. I even make more money than they do." When I asked Antonia if was content with her decision to migrate to Belgium she responded:

> Yes I think so (…) because my children have learned Dutch, they speak English, they speak French, and they know many things. They know many things that you don't have there [Ecuador]. Intellectual things everything. Here is the best future for them. (…) we have gained so much, many things that you can't have there. A computer you can't have it there, you can now, but if I had not come here I would not have gotten to know all these things. (…) the majority of the people that I know, the majority is doing well. They have work, they have money, they have mobile phones, they have cars, yes, there are many Ecuadorians here who don't have papers but who have cars, and very nice cars too. They have it all. They have their things and people are very well.

One is inclined to think that job competencies are of major importance to settlement migrants as these ensure a good income. However, few settlement migrants do the same kind of work in the Low Countries that they did in their country of origin. That does not mean that some have not acquired skills during their stay in the Low Countries that enable them to earn better wages. Vincente for example says:

> Someone who does not have experience, who does not know how to do the job well, earns very little. They pay a person like this very little, for example 20 euros per day or 30 for working the whole day and they do the heaviest work. I did it when I came here, because I did not know how to do the work here, I did the heaviest work, the hardest work, and I earned very little (…) you need to have experience, and if you don't have it you can learn, see how others do it, buy literature so you can learn it.

Whereas investment migrants do not normally have the time to acquire skills, this can be a good strategy for settlement migrants to gain more income. A few of my

respondents with settlement aspirations have managed to gain experience in construction work and now make good wages. However, high wages alone do not make settlement migrants realize their aspirations, as work with high pay cannot necessarily be performed on a regular basis. Moreover, settlement migrants attach more value to steady employment than to high hourly wages (see chapter 6, and see Chavez [19921998). The importance of stable work conditions is indicated by the fact that all successful settlement migrants have regular jobs or combine many jobs at once, thus guaranteeing a certain level of stability as well, even though these jobs bring in average pay. Successful settlement migrants do not do the lowest paying jobs that Vincente was referring to; neither do they get the highest salaries.

Most of the jobs successful settlement migrants have do not require special skills or call for skills that can be easily acquired. For women, and sometimes for men as well, jobs usually involve cleaning, and for men, also painting or gardening work for private households or work in restaurants. These migrants have been able to get these jobs through acquaintances in their social network. Jobs do not usually come directly to settlement migrants. They have to know people who know that they are looking for work in order to get it. Lucas says: "Sometimes I get a call and someone asks me Lucas can you go to […] you want to work, do you have time? (…) and then I say ok I can come on Monday, I have three or four hours something like that then. (…) This telephone is very important. That is the first thing that you need to have."

One would be inclined to think that having a large network of acquaintances who can refer a migrant to a job is very important, but this is only partially true. The social capital available in these large networks also needs to be activated, and other research demonstrates that people do not just refer everyone they know to an employer (Cranford 2005). Having a good reputation is crucial. When I asked Diego if it ever happened to him that he did not refer someone to a job he knew was vacant, he replied: "Yes and it is not because I don't want to, it is because, how can I explain, it is because I am the guarantee." So irregular migrants do not just recommend each other to anyone, They have to know each other well because they have to bear consequences in case the worker they recommended does not live up to expectations:

> If I recommend someone I am certain that this person that I know works good and that he does not have problems. That he will not create problems for me or my boss, because in that case it is me who is

> the colleague. (…) if he steals from the boss, and even if you tell this to the boss, then in this case even if I have done nothing, I have stolen nothing, he will say it is someone you know so for him you will have the same image as he, so it is very important that if you recommend someone that you know this person. Trust is very important. (Dakarai)

In order to vouch for someone migrants have to know each other well. By vouching for other people irregular migrants are sometimes able to create a fairly large network in which they refer each other for work. When person B vouches for person A, and person C trusts person B, then person C is usually willing to recommend person A as well. This way the guarantee someone gives for another person can reach quite far:

> They put us in contact with another person and like that, they know us a little, they say well I know these people, I think they are serious and responsible and well, how you say it, I put my hand in fire for this person (…) And yes like that they help us. And this other person who you have just met, opens doors for you like he knows you already.

It appears that for settlement migrants it is important to mobilize social leverage (Briggs 1998) from their 'weak ties' (Granovetter 1973) in order to get the jobs they desire (cf. Yakubovich 2005). In order to be able to do so, migrants have to make sure they have a clean reputation. If they make a mistake the social capital that is potentially available in their social network will not be mobilized.

Next to the relevance of securing stable working conditions, settlement migrants often point to the importance of nearby family members or close friends, who can support them in case of a temporary set-back. Even though their jobs can be regular for lengthy periods, the fact remains that they can be fired at any time. In times of financial stress, the proximity of friends or family members who can support them is what they need in order to feel secure. Most successful settlement migrants therefore have family in the Low Countries to whom they can turn in case of need. In case they do not have family, they have close friends with a residence permit, who are usually better able to assist than compatriots who are in an illegal situation as well. The assurance to be able to turn to relatives or close friends appears to be a necessity in order to secure independent settlement in the Low Countries:

> Being illegal you always depend on others, especially your family. You get nowhere without family, because you can't expect to live with just

> any person, free of charge, for a year. Being illegal you realize you cannot do without support. (Hassan)

Families and close friends provide irregular migrants with social support so that they can 'get by' or cope (Briggs 1998: 178) during periods of unemployment or when they have little work available:

> I owe my family a lot (…) If you have work it is fine because you can take care of yourself then, but that is different if you don't have money because you have to pay the rent and you have to eat. I have many relatives here who help me when I need help so I can always count on them. (Brahim)

At the same time, they mobilize social leverage that helps them to acquire the steady employment they desire (Briggs 1998: 178). These two forms of social capital are thus complementary to one another; they need both to secure independent settlement. Social support provided by strong ties combined with social leverage acquired through 'weak ties' (Granovetter 1973) proves decisive for settlement migrants' realization of their aspirations.

Cultural capital in the sense of mastering the host country's languages does not appear to play a major role for settlement migrants. For some jobs, such as babysitter or live-in maid it can be relevant. Martina for example explained to me the problems she had communicating with the family she worked for in Antwerp:

> So one day one of the children wanted to go out for the park. I explained to the eldest girl that I was taking the child to the park. I had understood from the mother that it was all right to take her to the park. So I was leaving and the girl arrived. And she said to me in French, you go to the park? And then the mother called me on the telephone saying are you leaving for the park, I told you not to do that. While I had understood that it was all right. (…) And then later she said I don't want to have problems because you don't understand anything. (…) so they said it would be better if I stopped working there.

It appears that for a few jobs it is important to be able to communicate properly. However, for most jobs speaking a host country language is not that relevant. Therefore, cultural capital in terms of mastering languages is only moderately important and surely not a form of capital that is decisive for settlement migrants. Although some respondents do speak a little Dutch or French and some are taking language courses, only a few of them indicate that this has any influence on their

ability to find (better) work. Knowing a few words usually suffices. The decision to learn a language is probably related more to their choice to settle in the Low Countries than inspired by a quest for employment.

Contrary to the accounts provided so far, many respondents with settlement aspirations do not manage to make a decent living in the Low Countries. A few respondents cannot mobilize either social leverage or social support, whereas most only manage to mobilize one of the two, instead of the combined social capital that is needed. Some for example lack social support:

> No work means no money. I don't have any family here, so I have nobody who can support me. (…)When I am out of work, I have to find work as soon as possible, because you won't survive otherwise. Your friends cannot support you. They are encountering hardship themselves. (Adel)

Besides those who lack social support, there are unsuccessful settlement migrants who do not manage to find steady work. Necessity often compels them to reside with family. The social support provided by their strong ties enables them to cope and 'get by', but not to 'get ahead', and settle down independently. Because these unsuccessful settlement migrants do not manage to find steady employment, they remain dependent on social support:

> My family here in Belgium has sheltered me in their midst because I am their kin. I am very thankful for that. (...) Finding work is still a problem in Belgium. For an illegal, searching for a job means a lot of work. Regardless of the great efforts you make to find work, you often come home empty-handed. (...) I hope to find work so I don't have to depend on my family all the time. That would also make me feel good personally. (Younes)

In short, unsuccessful settlement migrants are usually only able to mobilize either social support or social leverage, while they need combined social capital in order to fulfill their aspirations.

9.3.3 Legalization aspirations

Successful legalization migrants have, one way or the other, legalization of their stay in prospect – usually because they are getting married. It is known from other research that marriage is the most successful legalization strategy in the Low

Countries (Van Nieuwenhuyze 2009; Staring 2001). Sometimes marriages are instrumental, but among my respondents these usually stem from a love relationship. It often concerns marriages within the same ethnic group, as in Abdeslam's case: "I am about to get engaged to a Moroccan girl. She is born in Belgium and has a residence permit. My cousin introduced me to her." Family members or close friends introduce migrants to their future spouses, or they meet while going out. Emre explains: "I have a Turkish girlfriend, I am about to get engaged to her. She is my sister's friend, I met her when I was visiting my sister. My sister introduced us to each other."

At the same time, respondents indicate that it is not always easy for a migrant without a legal status to find a partner in their ethnic community. The parents of a potential candidate do not always agree with an intended marriage because they suspect that the candidate's hidden intention is to obtain residency rights or because they feel that an irregular migrant lacks social status (cf. Engbersen 2001). Marouane explains: "if you don't have papers, you are my friend, but if you demand my sister or even my girlfriend, it is like that, it is war, no. Because here, for women it is not good to marry someone without papers (…) they regard someone without papers as a handicapped person." This is where the significance of social capital in the form of social support comes in: all respondents who are getting married within their ethnic community have family members residing in Belgium. Their presence allows for a relationship of trust to evolve between the two families and can compensate for the potential lack of social status and trust attached to the marriage candidate.

Obviously, mastering a native language benefits these migrants hardly at all. However, if respondents aim to marry a Dutch or Belgian national, this does become salient. All successful legalization migrants who try their luck on the Belgian or Dutch marriage market are reasonably fluent in Dutch or French. Some of them have attended language courses, most likely because they realize that in order to meet someone, it is important to be able to communicate properly. Marouane, who was living in Brussels – where they mostly speak French – even attended Dutch language classes so that he could meet women on the internet.

Finally there are respondents who pay money in order to enter a bogus marriage. In the Netherlands, the going rate for a bogus marriage is between 10,000 and 15,000 euros (Mazzucato 2005: 10). Usually legalization migrants do not have the required amount of money themselves: they therefore mobilize economic capital by means of their social capital:

> My boss told me he could arrange for me to get married to a Belgian student in Antwerp. He says he knows her. The amount that I would need to pay her, he could pay. I should then repay him afterwards. I haven't seen the girl. If all goes well, we will head for Antwerp next month. (Nihat)

As mentioned above, those who do not have family in Belgium often do not succeed in finding a marriage partner from their own ethnic group. Other unsuccessful legalization migrants try to find a Belgian or Dutch person to marry, but fail to do so because they run short of knowledge on Belgian or Dutch cultural conventions or because they have not yet sufficiently mastered the Dutch or French language. Furthermore, they do not have the financial means or the right contacts to get into a bogus marriage. For these legalization migrants, their lack of relevant capital for the right marriage market renders them unable to realize their aspirations.

However, lack of capital that is required for specific marriage markets does not tell the complete story of unsuccessful legalization migrants, as not all of them try to find their luck on a marriage market. In fact, most legalization migrants try to become legalized through all kinds of legal procedures. They choose to remain in the Low Countries because they continue to cherish the dream of getting papers, although they seem to have little chance of success:

> I have come to Europe to check out my chances and to try and obtain a residence permit, in spite of all the difficulties associated with being illegal in Belgium. I still have hope, for I would not stay here otherwise. (Nadir)

These respondents have either filed appeals in their asylum applications or they have applied for regularization. If they had not applied for legal residence they indicated that they were waiting for another regularization campaign. Even though their hopes were high, none of my respondents was convinced that she or he would get a positive result any time soon, which I thought at the time was likely to be a realistic assessment. But as indicated in chapter four, decisions made by the Belgian government have proved me wrong on this point: many of my respondents in Belgium have now been legalized as a result of the collective regularization in 2009. However, success achieved through a regularization campaign is not related to the theoretical focus of this chapter, which is on the relevance of different forms of capital. It is not the possession of a form of capital that leads to legalization, but a decision made by the government. I have therefore not included the regularization

campaign in this analysis, although it has unexpectedly made many legalization migrants realize their aspirations.[15] In fact, because of the lack of transparency in the procedures legalization migrants apply for, employees of organizations complain that it is impossible to realistically assess the chances an irregular migrant has of achieving regularization (see also Van Meeteren et al. 2008). My analysis is therefore focused only on legalization migrants who aim to get married.

As legalization migrants aspire to become legalized, they do not usually invest in work, because working informally could prevent them from getting papers. Although many legalization migrants do have job competencies which could help them, they choose to refrain from working as much as possible, because this could obstruct the fulfillment of their aspirations. Hence, unsuccessful legalization migrants do not necessarily lack capital altogether – although this happens as well – but they especially lack the right form of capital that allows them to realize their specific aspirations. As a result, some of them could be successful in realizing other type of aspirations, but for this moment, they choose to continue to focus on legalization instead.

9.4 SHIFTS IN ASPIRATIONS

What is important in the context of this chapter is the assumption that if a migrant switches to another category of aspirations, the required strategies change (cf. Van Nieuwenhuyze 2009), and consequently so do the forms of capital that are required. The question that arises next is what makes people change their aspirations. Do migrants change their minds if they realize they have the right configuration of capital for meeting another aim than the one they currently aspire to? No doubt that this could make a switch easier, but strategies here should not be understood as the "purposive and pre-planned pursuit of calculated goals", but as "the active deployment of objectively oriented lines of action that obey regularities and form coherent and socially intelligible patterns"(Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 25). Consequently, the strategies my respondents pursue are not necessarily a calculation of costs and benefits, although they can be (see also MacLeod 2009; Portes et al. 1978). Irregular migrants' aspirations are influenced by other things as well, such as morality. For example, to some people getting married for papers does not represent a moral option, even though they might have this possibility, given a certain capital configuration. Future research could benefit from investigating what makes

irregular migrants' aspirations and accompanying strategies change and to what extent their capital configurations affect such decisions.

9.5 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have tried to answer the question of what forms of capital irregular migrants need to realize their aspirations. The findings indicate that the extent to which irregular migrants manage to attain their aspirations depends on the extent to which they possess the right (combination of) capital. The finding that those who do not realize their aspirations do possess capital, but lack the correct form or the right combination of forms of capital required for that specific aspiration, validates this conclusion. Figure 9.1 summarizes the main findings:

Figure 9.1. Aspirations and required forms of capital for attainment

	Investment	**Settlement**	**Legalization**
Required capital for attainment	*Cultural capital*: Job competencies *Social capital*: Ethnic (transnational) networks	Combined *social capital*: Leverage and Social support	Dependent on marriage market: *Cultural*, *economic* or *social capital*

One should be careful in making generalizations based on these findings. My respondents are obviously not an accurate representation of the population of irregular migrants in the Low Countries or anywhere else in the world. Research conducted in another country and with different respondents could yield different results. The same would be true if this research had been done in a different time when immigration policies were different. However, whereas different or changing policy-contexts undoubtedly result in different distributions of irregular migrants over the three categories of aspirations, future research has to determine to what extent the configurations of capital required for the attainment of these aspirations remain the same under different conditions.

I have shown that different aspirations require distinct forms or combinations of capital. Thus, a contribution has been made to the theoretical debate on the significance of different forms of capital for irregular migrants. The importance of various forms of capital has been extensively discussed in previous research (see for example Chavez [1992]1998; Cranford 2005; Engbersen 2001; Grzymala-Kazlowska 2005; Hagan 1998; Mahler 1995; Massey et al. 1994; Staring 2001), but it remained unclear in which situations which form or combination of capital is decisive because the discussion tended to focus on the question of what form of capital is important for irregular migrants in general. For example, whereas Engbersen et al. (2006: 223) write that social capital is "the most important currency for irregular migrants", Grzymala-Kazlowska (2005: 694) claims that "cultural capital (especially knowledge of foreign languages) has become a major factor determining the position of individuals and the entire group on the market." Clearly, dealing with the question of which form of capital is vital for irregular migrants in general does not facilitate the development of theoretical insights. After all, I have shown that the significance of various forms of capital depends on irregular migrants' aspirations. These aspirations should therefore be the starting point of any analysis dealing with their success.

CHAPTER 10
CONCLUSION: ASSESSING A NEW PERSPECTIVE

10.1 MAIN FINDINGS

In this dissertation three interrelated research questions have been formulated:

1. What patterns of incorporation can be distinguished among irregular migrants, and how can these be understood?
2. Which types of transnational activities do irregular migrants engage in, and how can this be understood?
3. What forms of capital do irregular migrants need to realize their aspirations?

In order to answer these questions, I have developed a research approach that takes the individual aspirations of irregular migrants as a starting point. By doing so, a better understanding has been developed of how patterns of incorporation and transnational activities of irregular migrants are shaped. Whereas the literature on irregular migrants has traditionally overemphasized structure and neglected agency, I have sought to connect the two by bringing aspirations into the analysis, as these provide "a conceptual link between structure and agency in that they are rooted firmly in individual proclivity (agency) but also are acutely sensitive to perceived societal constraints (structure)." (MacLeod 2009: 139)

My analysis revealed three types of aspirations. Investment migrants strive to acquire financial means for investments in their home country. They aspire to work and make money in the country of destination, and to return to their country of origin once they have acquired enough savings. These respondents strive for future upward mobility in their country of origin and are usually 'target earners' (Massey et al. 1987): they save for very specific projects, ranging from starting their own business to financing a wedding in the country of origin. Whereas investment migrants mean to stay in the receiving society only temporarily, settlement migrants aspire to start a new life in the receiving society and do not have the intention to return. Settlement migrants do not feel they necessarily require a legal status in

order to lead the better life they aspire to. This stands in sharp contrast to the aspirations of legalization migrants, for whom leading a better life is inextricably bound up with obtaining a legal status. For them, obtaining legal residence represents a start of a new life, unlike settlement migrants who feel that they can already start to build a new life without papers. Legalization migrants do not want to live as irregular migrants and therefore actively strive to obtain a legal status.

As aspirations may change over time, it is important to emphasize that I have not constructed a typology of migrants, but a typology of aspirations. The concepts investment, settlement and legalization migrants have been used to refer to irregular migrants who have these specific aspirations at a certain point in time, but the core analytical categories are types of aspirations. In chapters 6, 7 and 8, I have demonstrated how these three types of aspirations underlie distinct patterns of incorporation and transnational activities. Chapter 9 has demonstrated how irregular migrants with different types of aspirations require different forms of capital to realize their aspirations. The main empirical findings of these chapters are discussed in the following subsections. As a means of achieving synthesis, they are not discussed by chapter, but by type of aspiration. The subsections are followed by a section on the implications of my research and a section containing suggestions for further research.

10.1.1 Investment aspirations: preferring work over leisure and comfort while oriented towards 'home'

Investment migrants try to work as much as possible during their stay in the destination country because this facilitates a quick return. They therefore often work six or seven days per week for long hours. Because they are in the destination country to work and make money, they do not positively value leisure time that much. They do not engage in recreational activities and prefer to stay at home, mostly in the company of their family or flat mates. Moreover, they have a very small network of social contacts. Because investment migrants do not want to stay in the receiving society, they are socially oriented towards their country of origin, and they invest time and energy in maintaining social relations with their relatives and friends there and do not put much effort in building social relations in the Low Countries. They therefore make efforts to keep up to date on the latest developments in their home country and try to keep in touch with their loved ones at least once a

week. However, most investment migrants call or sms on a daily basis, because they indicate they miss their loved ones very much.

Investment migrants try to live as cheaply as possible in order to save money and ensure a quick return. They therefore live in cramped houses, often sharing rooms with multiple persons. They economize on virtually everything and spend very little money in the receiving society. Instead, they usually remit large shares of their incomes: approximately 2,000 to 5,000 euros per year. Others save similar amounts of money and guard it until they have acquired enough to return and invest it in their country of origin.

Investment migrants often live in immigrant districts where they can profit from the infrastructure that caters to irregular migrants. In such areas contractors in search of employees visit tea houses and bars, and vans that drive irregular migrants to work usually leave from locations within immigrant districts. As work is a top priority for investment migrants, they often take exploitative conditions and low pay for granted. The low pay does not bother investment migrants that much because they aim to spend it in the country of origin where life is much cheaper and wages even lower. Moreover, exploitative conditions can be tolerated because they are only temporary. Investment migrants therefore often work in the sectors that are typically associated with informal migrant labor, such as horticulture, construction and restaurants: they do the type of work that natives typically reject. Investment migrants do not mind working there even though such sectors are often heavily controlled. In case they are caught doing informal labor and expelled, they can easily return because they often come from countries nearby.

If investment migrants have specific job competencies that they are able to deploy in the Low Countries, they are relatively well paid. Furthermore, having arranged for work and lodging prior to their actual migration proves very helpful in realizing investment aspirations, because it allows them to find jobs in which they can use these competencies. For investment migrants, cultural capital (job competencies below the legal ceiling) – which can be activated by social capital – proves decisive in determining the chances of success on the informal labor market in the Low Countries, and consequently in their aspiration attainment.

If investment migrants do not have job competencies, they earn low wages or do not find much employment. As a result they either have to stay longer than they envisioned, or they have to go back without having realized their aspirations. My respondents have obviously all chosen to stick around; otherwise I would not have

encountered them. These unsuccessful investment migrants indicated that they had to live off their savings or reach out to others for help until they found employment. Investment migrants who have family members in the receiving society can usually turn to them for help. In case they do not have family, they depend on the commercial infrastructure for additional sources of income or support. Investment migrants practically never receive support from organizations. Sometimes they are unaware of arrangements for irregular migrants, but many just do not expect that the state will come to their assistance in case of difficulties or illness. They have come to make money and return and do not want to depend on state support.

10.1.2 Settlement aspirations: enjoying a better life in quiet suburban neighborhoods

Unlike investment migrants, for settlement migrants 'home' is the receiving society. Their lives here are not all about working, but rather about leading a regular life that they regard as better than what they had in their country of origin. Settlement migrants prefer to work at relatively stable, non-seasonal, Monday-to-Friday type of arrangements, so that they have the weekends off, and they preferably work during the day, so that they can be at home in the evenings. For many settlement migrants, this has to do with the fact that they live with their families, which sometimes include children.

Because settlement migrants aim to live a good life, they are willing to spend some money on a nice apartment. These migrants prefer the privacy of their own room and only live in shared arrangements out of economic necessity or during the initial period of settlement. Many settlement migrants opt for an apartment in the suburbs, because they prefer to live in a nice and quiet area with good schools for their children and recreational possibilities. Settlement migrants whose ethnic background is largely represented in immigrant districts – like Turks and Moroccans – form an exception: they want to live in immigrant districts because for them these neighborhoods have specific advantages.

The suburban areas also provide proximity to settlement migrants' preferred employment: in native private households. Settlement migrants prefer to work there because private households have the least chance of being controlled, while they generally have a lot to lose by being expelled as they have built their lives here. Furthermore, private households offer the possibility working for several employers, which allows them to spread the risk of exploitation and low pay. In addition,

settlement migrants are attracted to Belgian and Dutch private households, because these are reported to pay the best and treat irregular migrants well.

In case they do not manage to find this type of employment, settlement migrants have to accept other jobs, usually the kind that investment migrants typically do. As settlement migrants cannot keep up the heavy conditions and work hours that accompany such employment for too long, they usually work at intervals. Settlement migrants who do jobs that investment migrants typically do are very dissatisfied with their working conditions, because these do not allow them to live a regular life. Moreover, they feel exploited because of the low wages they receive, which do not allow them to lead the good life in the Low Countries that they aspire to.

Since settlement migrants want to stay permanently in the receiving society, they want to get to know the country they aim to spend their lives in. They therefore sometimes travel around and undertake various types of leisure activities. In addition, they frequent all kinds of social gatherings. Many settlement migrants visit the activities organized by formal or informal socio-cultural organizations. Because of these social gatherings, settlement migrants meet many people and create large social networks. Furthermore, through the activities organized by socio-cultural organizations cultural symbols associated with the country of origin are reproduced, which adds to a sense of 'home' in the receiving society (cf. Coutin 2005a). While settlement migrants do maintain personal contacts to their country of origin, they do not keep up to date on the latest developments there. Their frame of reference is the receiving society, and they probably have enough association with co-ethnics in the receiving society to fulfill their cultural needs. Because for settlement migrants ´home´ is in the receiving society, they spend the largest share of their income there and only send small sums of money to their relatives back home. These sums are usually in the order of 1,000 euros per year or in case of special needs.

In order to lead the good lives they desire, settlement migrants have to mobilize social leverage (Briggs 1998) from their weak ties to get the jobs they want. The social gatherings they visit are helpful, because they enlarge migrants' social networks and provide access to a lot of information about jobs that circulates in these networks. In order to effectively mobilize the social leverage potentially available in these networks, settlement migrants have to make sure they have a good reputation. Next to the relevance of social leverage, settlement migrants require nearby family members or close friends who can support them in case of a

temporary set-back. Social leverage and social support are thus complementary to one another; settlement migrants need both to secure the life they aspire to.

However, many settlement migrants do not manage to mobilize both social leverage and social support and consequently fail to secure the stable working conditions they need to fulfill their aspirations. Some for example do not have family to whom they can turn for unconditional support. These settlement migrants have to turn to informal social solidarity systems. However, such systems are not easily accessed as migrants need to invest in and contribute to them. Furthermore, these function based on trust. This means that in order to partake in social solidarity systems, a migrant needs other participants who can vouch for him, and he needs to pay borrowed money back as promised. The social gatherings settlement migrants frequent serve to enhance solidarity in such systems, because information on who is 'serious' is exchanged there.

In case settlement migrants do not have the resources to invest in such systems, they can turn to organizations for help. Most organizations help settlement migrants temporarily by providing them with material support. However, this is usually only provided in the beginning of their stay and surely not structurally. Organizations do not want to help irregular migrants install themselves in illegality by providing financial or material support for too long, and therefore information is the only type of assistance that is offered to settlement migrants on a structural basis.

10.1.3 Legalization aspirations: sacrifices in the pursuit of a legal status

Legalization migrants prefer to work as little as possible, because they perceive informal labor to be a risk that could obstruct the fulfillment of their aspirations. Getting caught while engaged in informal work severely reduces the chances of legalization and simultaneously increases the chances of being deported, which is why legalization migrants avoid it if they can. Many legalization migrants work part-time in order to cover their basic needs and choose to spend the rest of their time in search of a marriage partner or in pursuit of improving their 'integration'. They believe that if they learn to speak the local language and associate with native citizens, they will increase their chances of legalization on the basis of their ´integration´. Because legalization migrants work only the minimum that is needed to sustain themselves, they do not send money to the country of origin. Furthermore, they are picky about the jobs that they are willing to do. They consciously seek those

jobs that have least chance of being controlled: jobs in private households. Such employment is relatively risk-free, and it offers the possibility of working only a limited amount of hours.

Because legalization migrants wish to refrain from work as much as possible, they need a lot of support to sustain themselves. In fact, they prefer to generate resources from support rather than through informal labor and therefore spend much time looking for monetary gifts with which they can pay the rent and buy food. As they prefer not to ask for help within their own community, they often turn to native Dutch or Belgian citizens instead, and some legalization migrants even live with native citizens. These legalization migrants usually receive free room and board in exchange for some light housework. In these arrangements they not only find support, but are also provided with additional means to integrate themselves, and these contacts with natives obviously look good on their applications. Legalization migrants who aim to get married also need support, but they usually turn to family members who likewise provide them with room and board until they manage to find a partner. If they do not have family members in the receiving society they depend on the commercial infrastructure, or they need to work more than they would like to.

Legalization migrants who are involved in procedures also receive a lot of support from organizations, usually for a long period of time. As these have 'a perspective' in the eyes of organizations, they can get food packages and sometimes even long-term financial support. Even though the informal support provided by organizations is limited, support accumulates because legalization migrants tend to shop around and combine this type of support with assistance from their personal networks. Legalization migrants who aim to get married cannot turn to organizations for support, as they are not considered to have 'a perspective'.

Furthermore, it is not in the interest of this category of irregular migrants to hang around organizations, because this is not a good place to meet a partner to marry. Contrastingly, legalization migrants who are involved in procedures spend a lot of their free time calling at organizations for a chat, social support, doing voluntary work or taking part in some of the activities organized there. They hang around at organizations all day, as these offer a wide range of social or recreational activities for free. In the absence of fulltime work, they keep themselves busy this way, and they believe that visiting organizations is good for integration. Through their visits to these organizations these migrants develop rather heterogeneous

networks in terms of ethnic background. However, their social circles are quite small, because they primarily associate with other irregular migrants who visit the same organizations each day. Furthermore, they do not have much opportunity to meet people through work and do not participate in recreational activities much outside of the scope of organizations.

Legalization migrants who aim to get married usually have a larger social circle, because it is usually through other people that a potential future spouse is located. They therefore put effort into building a large social network. They also maintain contacts with their relatives and friends back home, although this type of contact tends to become frustrated in case it takes the migrant in question long to become legalized. Many legalization migrants who are involved in procedures have lost contact with family and friend in the country of origin due to the political problems there. However, they do try to keep up to date with the situation there, especially regarding politics. The political issues in their country have often formed the reasons for their migration, and, more importantly, they make legalization migrants afraid to go back. They want to become legalized because they feel they have no other place to go to. The political activities legalization migrants engage in are usually coordinated through migrant organizations. The organizations not only devote attention to improving the political situation in the country of origin, but they also look out for the well-being of those who live in the destination country.

It is difficult to determine what could make legalization migrants who are involved in procedures successful in their quest for legalization. Because of the lack of transparency in the procedures legalization migrants apply for, it is impossible to realistically assess the chances an irregular migrant has of achieving regularization. My analysis of the forms of capital that legalization migrants require to fulfill their aspirations has therefore focused on legalization migrants who aim to get married. Migrants who try to find a co-ethnic to marry need social capital from family members. The presence of family members in the receiving society allows for a relationship of trust to evolve between the two families and can compensate for the potential lack of social status and trust attached to the marriage candidate. Legalization migrants who try their luck on the Belgian or Dutch marriage market have to speak Dutch or French to be able to communicate with potential spouses. Moreover, those who pay money in order to enter a bogus marriage require economic capital which they often mobilize by means of their social capital.

10.1.4 Overview

Aspirations partly reflect the dreams and wishes of irregular migrants but they should also be understood as responses to objective structures. These structural opportunities and constraints are located both in the country of origin and the receiving society, as well as in the personal social networks of irregular migrants. Throughout this dissertation, many examples have been presented of how aspirations reflect the structural conditions of irregular migrants. Patterns of incorporation and transnational activities of irregular migrants can therefore be understood from the agency individual migrants have, as well as from the structures they are embedded in. I have for example indicated how specific conditions in countries of origin shape specific aspirations. Furthermore, I have described the specific structural contexts in which the aspirations of my respondents have been shaped. In addition, throughout chapters 6 to 9 I have illustrated how perceptions of structural barriers like specific policy measures or chances of encounters with the police affected irregular migrants with different aspirations differently. Furthermore, I have indicated how migrants from the same ethnic group can be embedded in different social networks because of their aspirations. The approach outlined here therefore does not imply that structural barriers or embeddedness in social groups are not relevant for understanding how patterns of incorporation and transnational activities are shaped; instead, it implies that our understanding is *improved* by taking aspirations into account *as well*.

Obviously the pictures portrayed in the previous subsections do not do justice to all empirical diversity, but they represent ideal-typical images of irregular migrants with different types of aspirations. Furthermore, as the aspirations of irregular migrants may shift over time, respondents sometimes found themselves in between the typical positions outlined above. When reading the main findings as summarized in the following figure, it is important to keep their ideal-typical nature in mind:

Figure 10.1 Main findings by aspiration

	Investment	**Settlement**	**Legalization**	**Legalization**
			Procedures	**Marriage**
Functional incorporation				
Housing				
Type	Cheap and crowded	Regular	Diverse	With family
Location	Immigrant district	If group is represented: immigrant district. Otherwise: suburb	If group is represented: immigrant district. Otherwise: suburb	If group is represented: immigrant district. Otherwise: suburb
Employment				
Work hours	As many as possible	Regular	As little as possible	As little as possible
Type of work	'Typical' irregular migrant sectors	In native private households	In native private households	In private households or ethnic businesses
Perception of exploitation	No perception of exploitation	Certain types of work	Fundamental	Fundamental
Other sources of income				
Gift and barter economy	Commercial networks	Social solidarity systems	Native citizens	Family, friends
Organizations	None	Occasional material support	Intensive	None

Figure 10.1 Main findings by aspiration, continued

	Investment	**Settlement**	**Legalization**	**Legalization**
			Procedures	**Marriage**
Social incorporation				
Leisure time	As little as possible	Highly valued	Nothing special	Instrumental
Ways of spending leisure time	Indoors	Recreational activities	Organizations	In the streets, going out
Geographic mobility	Immobile	Mobile (across national borders)	Mobile (within national borders)	Immobile
Span of social contacts	Limited	Large circles	Small circles	Large circles
Type of social contacts	Other investment migrants	Ethnic community	Heterogeneous network	Ethnic community or heterogeneous
Transnational activities				
Economic	Very active	Occasionally	Little to none	Little to none
Social	Many personal contacts	Some personal contacts and receiving society	High involvement, TV, papers, internet	Personal contacts and receiving society
Political	No activities	No activities	Some activities	No activities
Forms of capital				
Required capital for attainment	*Cultural capital*: Job competencies *Social capital*: Ethnic (transnational) networks	Combined social capital: Leverage and Social support	Unable to determine	Dependent on marriage market: *Cultural, economic* or *social capital*

10.1.5 Shifts in aspirations

Although I have taken aspirations at different points in the lives of irregular migrants as a starting point of my analysis, I have mostly been able to distinguish a sequence of aspirations throughout the migrant careers of the people I interviewed during my fieldwork. However, for the respondents that were interviewed by research assistants in semi-structured interviews, I could usually assess merely one point in their lives. My analysis indicates that there does not seem to be a hierarchy in aspirations and that a fixed trajectory does not exist. Whereas Van Nieuwenhuyze (2007) found that a typical trajectory from investment, to settlement to legalization aspirations often takes place amojng the Senegambians she studies, the diversity in my sample allowed me to demonstrate that this trajectory is surely not uncommon, but that other variations occur as well. The only trajectories I did not come across were those in which settlement or legalization aspirations turned into investment aspirations. This does not mean, however, that these trajectories do not exist. But it is likely that migrants who have followed these have already returned and are consequently difficult to encounter in the destination country.

I have demonstrated that if irregular migrants change aspirations, their functional and social incorporation and the transnational activities they engage in change as well. In addition, irregular migrants require different forms or combinations of capital if their aspirations shift. However, the relationships among incorporation, transnational activities and configurations of capital are not necessarily one-directional: changes in these domains may foster shifts in aspirations as well.

Because aspirations mediate what an individual desires and what society can offer, they are inextricably connected with assessments of available opportunities and possible constraints. This means that aspirations may change as a result of changes in perceptions of the opportunity structure. Although I have not systematically studied factors inspiring changes in aspirations, I have demonstrated how aspirations on the one hand and functional and social incorporation, transnational activities and configurations of capital on the other are intertwined.

10.2 IMPLICATIONS

The qualitative nature of my study does not allow me to draw quantitative conclusions about the patterns I found. However, the strength of my analysis does not lie in quantitative description, but in the understanding that is provided of how these patterns are shaped. In this way, new light has been shed on existing findings and scholarly debates about the ways in which irregular migrants live in western societies. Moreover, the results have implications for the way research on irregular migrants is conducted. These contributions to the literature are discussed in the next subsections.

10.2.1 Beyond a 'victim perspective'

In chapter 2 I have argued that studies of the way irregular migrants live in western societies have a 'victim perspective' in common. Scholars commonly perceive irregular migrants as passive recipients of structural forces who have little control over their lives. As they overemphasize structure, they neglect the agency irregular migrants have to act within structural boundaries and that sometimes enables them to overcome structural barriers. My analysis has demonstrated how a survival perspective does not do justice to the empirical reality.

My results indicate that a perspective that includes more agency adds to our understanding by showing that irregular migrants act differently under similar circumstances. These diverging actions can be understood from the different aspirations they have. So instead of passive victims, I have shown how irregular migrants actively strive for specific goals. Furthermore, my findings demonstrate that not all irregular migrants are busy 'surviving', but that many irregular migrants do achieve some success: some even manage to realize their aspirations. In addition, even though not all irregular migrants realize their aspirations, a focus on aspirations helps to understand why irregular migrants prefer certain jobs or accommodation over others and therefore adds to our understanding of how outcomes are shaped.

Since only the question of why some irregular migrants 'survive' better than others has been raised in previous studies, the dominant perspective has obstructed our understanding of the social mobility that some irregular migrants achieve. It is of crucial importance to distinguish between 'survival' and social mobility, and my

results clearly demonstrate that each requires different resources. Moreover, irregular migrants with different aspirations 'survive' differently as well. Future research should therefore surpass the victim perspective by taking aspirations into account. The subsections below discuss the main fields that can be advanced this way.

10.2.2 Functional incorporation and ethnic community patterns

My analysis has taken individual aspirations as a starting point and has offered insights into a number of implicit or explicit theoretical debates or diverging research outcomes pertaining to the functional incorporation of irregular migrants. These concerned issues such as the relationship between income and money spent on accommodation, the spatial distribution of irregular migrants and the hours they work and the type of work they do. These insights are discussed in detail in chapter 6 and will not be repeated here. What these have in common is that they could be formed because my analysis has inductively focused on individual aspirations instead of on groups or on structural constraints.

Researchers have traditionally investigated why some *groups* of irregular migrants have different outcomes than other groups. According to Piore (1979) migration and settlement must be understood as processes relating to communities rather than to individuals. Likewise, Engbersen et al. (1999; 2006) speak of 'ethnic community patterns of incorporation', and explain why ethnic groups display different outcomes in terms of income, labor, and housing conditions by referring to the dominant support patterns within these ethnic communities. My analysis reveals that it is problematic to explain outcomes by referring to the level of the community, and it demonstrates that an analysis that focuses on the group instead of the individual yields different results than an analysis that starts with individual aspirations.

For example, it turned out that my Turkish respondents are more often employed and more often employed fulltime than my Moroccan respondents. On the basis of these results one could conclude that Turkish migrants manage to survive better than Moroccans, who only manage to acquire part-time employment. One could interpret these results by referring to the different characteristics of the two communities, the Turkish being a stronger, tighter community than the

Moroccan, with higher levels of ethnic entrepreneurship, consequently offering better employment opportunities to irregular migrants (see for example Engbersen 1996; Engbersen et al. 2006). In addition, one could attribute these differences to levels of solidarity. After all, successful communities display more solidarity. Although such explanations are likely to be partially valid, they obscure the fact that many Moroccan irregular migrants are legalization migrants who choose not to work that much because this could endanger the possibility of acquiring legal papers. Hence, for these migrants, the fact that they work part-time is not primarily the result of lack of employment opportunities or solidarity in their ethnic community, but of the aspirations they have. This means that outcomes are not simply determined by structural conditions such as community characteristics; they should be understood by taking aspirations into account as well.

Apart from issues such as housing and income, ethnic community patterns of incorporation are often discussed in relation to support irregular migrants generate from these communities. However, I found that not all irregular migrants belong to an ´ethnic community´. Some irregular migrants are assisted by family members who are obviously also co-ethnics, but which has nothing to do with their ethnic community in general. It appeared that some of my respondents were assisted by family members, while they did not have much contact with other co-ethnics. If strong family relations are frequent within a certain community, they shape a spurious ethnic community pattern. I believe for example that I could have easily misinterpreted the support my Turkish respondents receive as 'community support'. Many Turkish investment migrants live with and are supported by family members. Moreover, many Turkish legalization migrants who aim to get married are supported by family members as well. Combined with the fact that there is a large presence of Turks who can construct social solidarity systems for Turkish settlement migrants, one might easily conclude that there is a lot of solidarity within the ´Turkish community´. However, although many Turks are supported by other Turks, this does not have something to do with a dominant support pattern within the 'Turkish community', because different mechanisms are in play here.

In addition, even though irregular migrants might have a specific ethnic background that could theoretically provide access to an ´ethnic community,´ this does not always happen in practice. I have explained in chapter 6 how informal systems of social solidarity operate: if migrants want to access these they have to

contribute as well. For settlement migrants who aim to spend their lives in the receiving society, this seems a wise investment, but this is less so for investment and legalization migrants. Because of their temporary engagements, investment migrants see no need to invest in such social systems and therefore cannot access them either. Because legalization migrants wish to refrain from work as much as possible, it is not possible for them to occasionally contribute any surplus income to help others in need. In addition, legalization migrants do not usually seek support from informal systems of social solidarity, but primarily derive social support from native citizens and organizations. In fact, they prefer to stay away from their own communities and consciously seek solidarity with native citizens.

Moreover, even if migrants have access to support within social solidarity systems, this does not mean that every individual is able to mobilize it to the same extent. By looking at some sort of general level of solidarity or a dominant support pattern for the group as a whole, one fails to see that migrants are assisted in some situations and not in others. Irregular migrants need to contribute to these systems in order to get support, and they have to make sure that their reputation is solid. They need to be known as trustworthy employees or tenants and as people who will pay back money that was loaned to them. In other words, having a Turkish background does not guarantee access to social capital invested in social networks of the 'Turkish community´. Whereas a lot of migration research takes social capital in social networks for granted (Ryan et al. 2008), I have indicated how it requires effort and the investment of time and resources to effectively mobilize social capital (cf. Portes and Landolt 2000). Furthermore, my analysis revealed that migrants with different aspirations vary in their willingness to make such investments.

All in all, whereas many scholars explain outcomes by referring to ethnic communities, I have indicated that this is problematic. Although patterns of incorporation and solidarity may sometimes seem like ´ethnic community patterns of incorporation´, I have demonstrated that they are shaped by different mechanisms than dominant community support patterns. In other words, these 'community patterns' are often spurious relationships: they are shaped by other mechanisms pertaining to individual aspirations. This is obscured if the level of analysis is on the level of the group.

10.2.3 Social mobility: objective measures?

My findings are also relevant for studies of social mobility of irregular migrants, since they indicate that it is difficult to 'objectively measure' success amongst irregular migrants. Because irregular migrants have different definitions of success, it is problematic to take a standard like a certain level of income or hours of work, as is sometimes done in other research (see for example Powers and Seltzer 1998; Tienda and Singer 1995). I have for example indicated how legalization migrants prefer to generate social support instead of income through employment and how settlement migrants prefer leisure time over work if they can. Not taking irregular migrants' aspirations into consideration would lead us to prematurely label some of these migrants as 'helpless victims,' while they themselves regard their life in the receiving society a success.

Since 'success' is defined differently by irregular migrants with different aspirations, we need different standards to measure their 'success'. I have therefore reframed the question of social mobility into the question of how irregular migrants realize their aspirations. It turned out that different aspirations require distinct resources. Whereas irregular migrants require social support to ensure their basic needs in case they do not have enough income from employment, social leverage and other forms of capital can help them to realize their aspirations. I have demonstrated that irregular migrants with different aspirations require distinct forms or combinations of capital. The relevance of various forms of capital has been extensively debated in previous research (see for example Chavez [1992]1998; Cranford 2005; Engbersen 2001; Grzymala-Kazlowska 2005; Hagan 1998; Mahler 1995; Massey et al. 1994; Staring 2001), but it remained unclear in which situations which form or combination of capital is decisive because the discussion tended to focus on the question of what form of capital is important for irregular migrants in general. Clearly, it is not instructive to debate about the role of different forms of capital for irregular migrants in general. After all, I have shown that the significance of various forms of capital depends on irregular migrants' aspirations. These aspirations should therefore be the starting point of any analysis dealing with their success.

10.2.4 Social incorporation

There has been little research that explicitly devotes attention to the social incorporation of irregular migrants, that is, to their leisure activities and to their social contacts beyond the scope of social capital. In other words, while much has been reported about the role of social networks in irregular migrants´ ability to ´survive´, the social dimension of irregular migrants´ lives as a feature in itself has often been neglected. Not hampered by a victim perspective, in my research I perceived irregular migrants as active agents who may do things in their free time and who create social networks of friends and acquaintances around them, and I found that they do this in different ways, depending on their aspirations.

The finding that irregular migrants with different types of aspirations live distinct social lives provides insight into the implicit debate on the social incorporation of irregular migrants, which seems to be dichotomized around two positions. The dominant position portrays images of the lives of irregular migrants that are in line with the 'survival perspective' (chapter 2) of migrants who stay inside their houses behind locked doors and closed curtains and who do not participate in recreational activities. They live their lives in "geographically restricted areas", show "immobile behavior" and are "chained to their home" (Engbersen 1999a: 236). Furthermore, irregular migrants are believed to primarily associate with their own ethnic group, usually also other irregular migrants, as they are cut off from mainstream society and have few contacts with local citizens. The few scholars holding the other position argue that this 'cocoon' image is misleading and emphasize how their respondents spend their leisure time with all kinds of recreational activities in the company of co-ethnics.

So far it has remained unclear how these different outcomes are shaped. In chapter 7 I have demonstrated how an approach that takes aspirations as the central focus of analysis is able to provide such understanding. Whereas the dominant viewpoint seems to reflect the social lives of investment migrants, the lives of my settlement migrants seem to correspond to the images portrayed by scholars holding the second viewpoint. Furthermore, the social lives of legalization migrants indicate that there is more diversity to be found than has been reported by the literature so far. Legalization migrants who are involved in procedures for example spend most of their abundant leisure time in the company of local citizens and by visiting

organizations. Hence, not all irregular migrants live in a 'parallel world' without contact with local citizens, and not all spend their leisure time participating in recreational activities with co-ethnics.

My findings indicate that irregular migrants spend their leisure time differently and have different social networks depending on their aspirations. The analysis further demonstrates that the lives of irregular migrants are not always only about surviving, but that there is room for leisure and social contact. In fact, settlement migrants even prioritize their social lives over additional work that would allow them to 'survive better' according to the dominant perspective. This indicates that irregular migrants should be perceived as social beings who engage in meaningful social interaction with others. Moreover, their social lives affect their aspirations and hence the choices they make in other domains of life as well. For example, investment migrants may come to enjoy the company of their flat mates, or other friendships may evolve which make it harder to return to the country of origin and which eventually foster settlement aspirations. Likewise, parties may be primarily about fun and cultural display, but new social encounters at these gatherings may lead to job opportunities or social support. This means that in order to properly understand the ways in which irregular migrants live in receiving societies, their social lives should be taken into consideration as well.

10.2.5 Transnational perspective

So far little research has been devoted to the transnational engagements of irregular migrants. My findings have therefore filled a gap in our understanding of the transnational activities irregular migrants undertake. Furthermore, the results are relevant, because they run contrary to expectations about irregular migrants' transnational engagements in the literature, which presume that transnational activities are not common among immigrants because of the obstacles they face.

My findings indicate that many irregular migrants frequently engage in transnational activities and therefore contradict these claims. In addition, my analysis revealed that their transnational engagements should be understood from a position of choice rather than limitations, which indicates that the underlying assumption of other research, that irregular migrants engage less in transnationalism when faced with exclusion, is to be questioned. Again, a focus on aspirations yields

vital insights. In the event that settlement migrants earn more, they do not necessarily remit more. Instead, they mostly choose to spend their extra earnings on their own family in the receiving society. In addition, an increase in income will most likely not make legalization migrants remit more but actually work less. Only investment migrants increase their economic transnational activities if they earn more.

The findings concerning the transnational activities of irregular migrants not only fill an empirical knowledge gap, but they also have implications for our understanding of the way irregular migrants live in receiving societies. Transnational engagements affect aspirations, which in turn affect incorporation. In fact, some irregular migrants are incorporated in a specific way because of their transnational engagements. Investment migrants for example sacrifice many things for their economic transnational projects. Moreover, increasingly troubled relations with family and friends in the home country sometimes explain why irregular migrants stay even though their lives do not seem good from our perspective. Furthermore, the inability to see relatives and loved ones sometimes makes migrants change from settlement to legalization aspirations. This means that transnational engagements affect aspirations, and aspirations in turn impact outcomes in terms of incorporation.

While researchers have scrutinized the relation between incorporation and transnational engagements, they have overlooked the fact that both are intertwined with aspirations. Studies have advanced by distinguishing between different types of transnational activity, but they also need to contextualize on the side of agency of the migrants to properly understand why migrants do or do not engage in certain types of transnational activities. Future research on transnationalism can therefore seriously benefit from taking aspirations into account as well. At the same time, research that studies the way irregular migrants live in western societies should seriously consider a transnational perspective. Such a perspective acknowledges that transnational engagements, aspirations and hence the outcomes in other domains are intertwined.

10.3 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This thesis has theoretically and empirically demonstrated the downsides of the dominant survival perspective, as well the benefits that can be gained by adopting an approach that focuses on structure *and* agency. In addition, I have indicated how our understanding of the ways in which irregular migrants live can be improved by shifting the level of analysis from communities to the level of individual aspirations. I therefore believe that future research can significantly benefit from taking aspirations into account.

As indicated in chapter 2, aspirations form a conceptual bridge between structure and agency, as aspirations are fed by needs and wants, as well as by perceived possibilities and constraints. Taking irregular migrants' aspirations into account therefore does not imply that structural barriers are neglected. However, one can only determine which barriers and possibilities are relevant once the aspirations of irregular migrants are known. For example, one first needs to know if an individual migrant aspires to work, before it makes sense to analyze his or her opportunity structure in a labor market. Likewise, it makes little sense to analyze the sector of horticulture when determining the opportunity structure of settlement and legalization migrants who prefer to work for native private households. In other words, by analyzing irregular migrants' aspirations researchers are able to see which structural barriers and opportunities are relevant for the migrants under study. Hence, instead of studying the effects of structural barriers on irregular migrants in general, future research needs to contextualize by focusing on the interplay between opportunity structures and aspirations.

Furthermore, by focusing on individual aspirations instead of communities, I do not imply that communities are irrelevant for our understanding of the way irregular migrants live. Communities have for example appeared crucial in the lives of settlement migrants. However, irregular migrants also actively choose the communities they want to belong to, and membership may require much investment and effort. Moreover, it appears that the communities irregular migrants are part of are not always comprised of co-ethnics. In other words, while embeddedness in communities is relevant for our understanding of the ways in which irregular migrants live, these are not necessarily 'ethnic' communities or in another sense connected to the country of origin. My results have shown that researchers cannot determine which 'communities' are relevant for individuals beforehand. Future

research should therefore start on the individual level and analyze to which potentially relevant 'communities' irregular migrants belong or strive to gain access to.

Another contribution to future research is that this dissertation offers a point of departure to develop contextualized theory. The typology constructed here cannot be simply abstracted to a general level, as it is situated in specific local contexts. Since aspirations are fed by perceived opportunities and constraints, they are connected to a particular context. Research conducted in other countries would therefore probably yield different numbers for each category. The same applies if this research is done at another point in time, because immigration policies are undergoing many changes (Broeders 2009). However, whereas different or changed policy-contexts undoubtedly result in different distributions of irregular migrants over the three categories of aspirations, future research has to determine if and how different structural contexts are associated with different types of aspirations and mechanisms. Moreover, future research needs to analyze if and how the configurations of capital required for the attainment of aspirations play a role under different conditions. It is by analyzing the mechanisms connected to aspirations in different countries or after policy changes that a focus on aspirations is able to take research on irregular migrants a step further. My analysis provides a theoretical point of departure that allows research to move beyond specific empirical contexts to engage in comparative efforts in order to arrive at contextualized theory. By analyzing how patterns of incorporation, transnational activities and required forms of capital are associated with aspirations in different contexts, this approach is able to provide insight into the interplay between structure and agency.

This possibility of constructing contextualized theory is beneficial for the advancement of the field of research on irregular migrants, even though it is currently assumed that this is hardly feasible. Düvell (2006b) for example argues that the results from the United States cannot be easily applied to the European context. He claims that the theoretical conclusions from US research are biased, because research there is mostly concentrated on Mexican immigrants, whose characteristics tend to be too specific to be simply projected onto migrants of other origins (cf. Weeks et al. 2009). Düvell (2006c) simultaneously argues that irregular migration to Europe is unique, and he therefore calls for a separation of European and American research. I would argue the contrary: an approach that takes aspirations as a starting

point of analysis precisely allows for such comparative efforts to be made. These efforts allow us to contextualize the grounded theory that has been constructed here to divergent contexts.

Moreover, scholars could assess the theory developed in this thesis by testing hypotheses derived from it. However, quantitative research efforts may be frustrated by the impossibility of drawing random samplings and because of the dynamic nature of aspirations. Finally, studying the latter is a worthwhile subject in its own right since aspirations are not a fixed trait but change over the course of a migrants' career (cf. Massey 1986: 671). Future research should further scrutinize what makes aspirations change. Such an investigation allows for a more systematic understanding of the ways in which irregular migrants' aspirations, incorporation, transnational activities, and the forms of capital required for the attainment of aspirations are intertwined.

NOTES

[1] See http://www.isa-sociology.org/congress2010/rc/rc31.htm

[2] See for more information: Van Meeteren et al. 2007b; 2008)

[3] See for more information: Burgers and Engbersen 1999; Engbersen et al. 1999; Engbersen et al. 2002 and Leerkes et al. 2004

[4] Jaarverslag 2008, Dienst Vreemdelingenzaken, retrieved from http://www.dofi.fgov.be on 8 December 2009, p. 122

[5] Jaarverslag 2008, Dienst Vreemdelingenzaken, retrieved from http://www.dofi.fgov.be on 8 December 2009, p. 122

[6] Telephone consultation with Dutch immigration authorities on November 26 2009

[7] Information retrieved from www.vreemdelingenrecht.be at 3 December 2009

[8] All interviewed respondents who work for organisations have been provided ficticious names in order to guard their anonymity. I use different names in order to demonstrate that I quote different people.

[9] Retrieved from http://www.nu.nl/algemeen/778954/verdonk-wil-blijven-beslissen-over-schrijnende-gevallen.html and http://www.dag.nl/binnenland/schrijnende-gevallen-mogen-17235 on 8 December 2009

[10] See for example www.vreemdelingenrecht.be. Information retrieved on december 3 2009

[11] The information in this paragraph was retrieved from www. vreemdelingenrecht.be and: Newsflash numbers regularisation. Edition 27/11/2009. Nr. 13/09. Newsflash issued by de 8vzw edited by Vlaams Minderhedencentrum.

[12] Rapportage Vreemdelingenketen periode januari-juni 2009. Ministerie van Justitie. Retrieved from: http://www.justitie.nl/onderwerpen/migratie/asiel/pardonregeling/ on 3 December 2009

[13] Respondents have been assigned fictitious names for reasons of readability and to demonstrate that I quote different respondents. These names refer to the ethnic background of the respondents, meaning that Turkish respondents have been given Turkish names, Moroccan respondents have been given Moroccan names etc. However, any religious affiliations or cultural meanings attached to these names are unintentional. This is common practice in qualitative research involving irregular migrants (Chavez 1998; Hagan 1998; Mahler 1995). See appendix 4 for an overview of the respondent numbers corresponding to the fictitious names

[14] The OCMW are the Belgian social services responsible for the provision of medical care to irregular migrants

[15] What could be done is determine the relevance of different forms of capital in being able to access the regularization campaign. Hagan (1994) has indicated that lack of social capital makes some irregular migrants unaware of the regularization program being held. But as my fieldwork was long over at the time the program was issued, I have not gathered any data that would allow me to make statements in this respect.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS – OVERVIEW OF RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS

Respondent nr	Nationality	Gender	Age	In Belgium since
1	Bulgarian	Man	23	2001
2	Bulgarian	Man	49	1999
3	Bulgarian	Man	19	2004
4	Bulgarian	Man	35	2001
5	Bulgarian	Man	36	2002
6	Bulgarian	Man	26	2004
7	Bulgarian	Man	35	2002
8	Bulgarian	Woman	21	2003
9	Bulgarian	Man	25	2003
10	Bulgarian	Man	41	1998
11	Bulgarian	Woman	31	2000
12	Bulgarian	Man	33	2001
13	Bulgarian	Man	38	1999
14	Bulgarian	Man	21	2002
15	Bulgarian	Man	28	2001
16	Bulgarian	Man	31	1997
17	Bulgarian	Man	32	2001
18	Bulgarian	Man	27	2003
19	Bulgarian	Man	25	2003
20	Bulgarian	Man	43	2000
21	Bulgarian	Man	39	2002
22	Bulgarian	Woman	19	2003
23	Bulgarian	Man	40	2002
24	Bulgarian	Man	22	2001
25	Bulgarian	Man	19	2004
26	Bulgarian	Woman	32	2003
27	Bulgarian	Man	28	2002
28	Bulgarian	Man	24	2004
29	Bulgarian	Man	28	2003

30	Bulgarian	Man	27	2003
31	Congolese	Man	27	2004
32	Congolese	Woman	38	2004
33	Congolese	Man	20	2004
34	Congolese	Man	Unknown	2003
35	Congolese	Man	37	2004
36	Congolese	Man	39	2003
37	Congolese	Man	23	2002
38	Congolese	Man	38	2002
39	Congolese	Woman	31	2003
40	Congolese	Man	Unknown	1994
41	Congolese	Man	47	2001
42	Congolese	Man	34	2000
43	Congolese	Woman	33	2001
44	Congolese	Man	35	1998
45	Congolese	Man	31	2001
46	Congolese	Woman	44	2001
47	Congolese	Man	31	2003
48	Congolese	Man	21	2004
49	Congolese	Man	37	2003
50	Congolese	Man	32	2000
51	Congolese	Man	30	2005
52	Congolese	Woman	33	1999
53	Congolese	Man	38	2002
54	Congolese	Man	38	2003
55	Congolese	Man	38	1999
56	Congolese	Man	37	2005
57	Congolese	Man	51	2002
58	Congolese	Man	35	2004
59	Congolese	Woman	24	1999
60	Congolese	Man	35	2004
61	Moroccan	Man	29	2000
62	Moroccan	Man	26	2001
63	Moroccan	Man	41	1998
64	Moroccan	Man	36	2002
65	Moroccan	Man	22	2002

66	Moroccan	Man	25	2003
67	Moroccan	Man	28	2002
68	Moroccan	Man	35	2000
69	Moroccan	Man	30	2001
70	Moroccan	Man	28	2002
71	Moroccan	Man	22	2004
72	Moroccan	Man	26	2002
73	Moroccan	Man	37	1998
74	Moroccan	Man	29	2000
75	Moroccan	Man	27	2002
76	Moroccan	Man	29	2002
77	Moroccan	Man	27	1998
78	Moroccan	Man	23	2003
79	Moroccan	Man	29	2004
80	Moroccan	Man	29	2003
81	Moroccan	Man	29	2002
82	Moroccan	Man	25	2003
83	Moroccan	Man	38	2000
84	Moroccan	Man	30	2003
85	Moroccan	Man	33	2001
86	Moroccan	Man	28	2004
87	Moroccan	Man	28	2001
88	Moroccan	Man	24	2004
89	Moroccan	Man	25	2004
90	Moroccan	Man	25	2000
91	Turkish	Man	29	1995
92	Turkish	Man	27	1997
93	Turkish	Man	36	1987
94	Turkish	Man	22	1999
95	Turkish	Man	26	2001
96	Turkish	Man	20	2003
97	Turkish	Man	35	2002
98	Turkish	Man	44	1980
99	Turkish	Man	25	2002
100	Turkish	Man	27	2002
101	Turkish	Man	27	2001

102	Turkish	Man	28	2002
103	Turkish	Man	31	2000
104	Turkish	Man	40	1995
105	Turkish	Man	36	1997
106	Turkish	Man	44	1989
107	Turkish	Man	35	2001
108	Turkish	Man	26	2002
109	Turkish	Man	23	2002
110	Turkish	Man	33	1999
111	Turkish	Man	43	1994
112	Turkish	Man	27	2002
113	Turkish	Man	29	2000
114	Turkish	Man	24	2003
115	Turkish	Man	31	1998
116	Turkish	Man	33	1999
117	Turkish	Man	27	2002
118	Turkish	Man	36	2001
119	Turkish	Man	36	1995
120	Turkish	Woman	22	2004

APPENDIX 2: IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS WITH IRREGULAR MIGRANTS – OVERVIEW OF RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS

Resp. nr	Origin	Gender	Age	Length of stay	Country
121	Ecuador	Woman	40-50	11-12	Belgium
122	Bangladesh	Man	30-40	8-9	Belgium
123	Ecuador	Woman	50+	6-7	Belgium
124	Bolivia	Woman	50+	2-3	Belgium
125	Chile	Man	30-40	2-3	Belgium
126	Congo	Man	30-40	4-5	Belgium
127	Colombia	Woman	30-40	8-9	Belgium
128	Algeria	Man	30-40	5-6	Belgium
129	Ecuador	Man	30-40	6-7	Belgium
130	Ecuador	Woman	30-40	6-7	Belgium
131	Iran	Man	40-50	6-7	Belgium
132	Kazakhstan	Man	30-40	6-7	Belgium
133	Mauretania	Man	20-30	3-4	Belgium
134	Rwanda	Man	30-40	5-6	Belgium
135	Bolivia	Woman	30-40	2-3	Belgium
136	Chile	Man	30-40	2-3	Belgium
137	Chile	Man	40-50	3-4	Belgium
138	Bolivia	Woman	30-40	2-3	Belgium
139	Syria	Woman	30-40	3-4	Belgium
140	Turkey	Woman	20-30	7-8	Belgium
141	Nigeria	Man	30-40	4-5	Belgium
142	India	Man	40-50	3-4	Belgium
143	Congo	Man	40-50	3-4	Belgium
144	Ecuador	Woman	50+	6-7	Belgium
145	Morocco	Man	20-30	5-6	Belgium
146	Ecuador	Woman	40-50	6-7	Belgium
147	Ecuador	Man	40-50	6-7	Belgium
148	Cuba	Woman	50+	7-8	Belgium
149	Colombia	Man	20-30	2-3	Belgium
150	Guatemala	Man	30-40	5-6	Belgium

151	Ecuador	Woman	30-40	5-6	Belgium
152	Morocco	Man	30-40	4-5	Belgium
153	Oezbekistan	Man	40-50	4-5	Belgium
154	Nepal	Man	30-40	6-7	Belgium
155	Ecuador	Woman	30-40	7-8	Belgium
156	Ghana	Woman	40-50	6-7	Belgium
157	Chile	Man	30-40	5-6	Belgium
158	Turkey	Man	30-40	7-8	Netherlands
159	Moldova	Man	40-50	6-7	Netherlands
160	Morocco	Man	40-50	14-15	Netherlands
161	Sierra Leone	Man	20-30	6-7	Netherlands
162	Turkey	Man	40-50	9-10	Netherlands
163	Surinam	Man	50+	21-22	Netherlands
164	Guinea	Man	20-30	4-5	Netherlands
165	Morocco	Man	40-50	16-17	Netherlands

APPENDIX 3: INTERVIEWS WITH ORGANIZATIONS

1. Steunpunt Algemeen Welzijnswerk – Berchem
2. Protestants Sociaal Centrum – Vluchtelingenwerk – CAW De Terp – Antwerp
3. Transithuis – CAW Artevelde – Gent
4. Inloopcentrum De Vaart – CAW Metropool – Antwerp
5. Onthaalteam Amok – CAW Metropool – Antwerp
6. De Mutsaard – CAW de Mare – Antwerp
7. CAW Leuven – Leuven
8. CAW Mozaïek - Brussel
9. Vlaams Minderhedencentrum – Brussel (koepel)
10. De Acht vzw – Integratiecentrum Antwerpen Stad – Borgerhout
11. Integratiecentrum Foyer – Brussel
12. Intercultureel netwerk Gent – Integratiecentrum stad Gent – Gent
13. Prisma vzw – Integratiecentrum provincie Antwerpen – Mechelen
14. ODiCe vzw – Integratiecentrum Oost-Vlaanderen – Gent
15. Provinciaal Integratiecentrum Vlaams-Brabant – Leuven
16. Stedelijke (integratie)diensten
17. Contactpunt Integratie – Gent
18. Integratiedienst – Antwerp
19. Dienst Asiel- en Vluchtelingenbeleid – Gent
20. Vereniging van Vlaamse Steden en Gemeenten – Brussel
21. OCMW Gent – Dienst Vreemdelingen - Gent
22. OCMW Gent - Dienst Administratie Gezondheidszorg – Gent
23. OCMW Antwerpen – kabinet voorzitter - Antwerp
24. Sociaal Centrum Plein – OCMW Antwerpen – Antwerp
25. Vzw Medmigrant – Medisch Steunpunt Irreguliere migranten – Brussel
26. Inloopteam Pothoek – Kind en Gezin – Antwerp
27. Artsen Zonder Grenzen – Antwerp and Brussel
28. Oriëntatiepunt Gezondheidszorg Oost-Vlaanderen – Gent
29. Vluchtelingenwerk Vlaanderen – Begeleiding vluchtelingen naar hoger onderwijs – Antwerp
30. Pina 18 – Sociale Zaken dienst Integratie – Onthaalbureau voor Nieuwkomers – Antwerp
31. Stedelijke Basisschool De Wereldreiziger – Antwerp

32. Huis van het Nederlands Brussel vzw – Brussel
33. VSKO – Brussel
34. Onthaal Nieuwkomers Oost-Vlaanderen vzw – Gent
35. Ghapro vzw (Gezondheidshuis voor Antwerpse Prostitutie) – Antwerp
36. Free Clinic (opvang drugsverslaafden) – Antwerp
37. Boysproject – Antwerp
38. PICUM – Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants – Brussel
39. EVA-Centrum - Steunfonds irreguliere migranten – Ekeren
40. Bond zonder Naam vzw – Antwerp
41. Kerkasiel.anders – Oecumenisch netwerk van lokale initiatieven met asielzoekers, nieuwe migranten en irreguliere migranten – Brussel
42. YWCA – Antwerpen vwz – Antwerp
43. INFOPUNT Latijns-Amerikaanse Federatie – Antwerp
44. Caritas International – Brussel
45. Huize Triest – Gemeenschapshuis Tabor – Gent
46. Vluchtelingenwerk Vlaanderen – Brussel
47. VLOS vzw (Vluchtelingen Ondersteuning Sint Niklaas) – Sint-Niklaas
48. Vluchtelingendienst.be vzw – Mechelen
49. Sint-Egidiusgemeenschap – Antwerp
50. Fedasil – Brussel
51. ACV – Antwerp
52. Stichting LOS – Utrecht
53. Emmaus – Den Haag
54. STEK – Den Haag
55. STEK Migrant churches – Den Haag
56. Streetcare – Den Haag
57. Apotheek Transvaal – Den Haag
58. OKIA – Den Haag
59. Vrouwen eten – Den Haag
60. Pharos – Utrecht
61. Drugpunt – Den Haag

APPENDIX 4: FICTITIOUS NAMES AND RESPONDENT NUMBERS

Ficticious name	Respondent number
Adel	86
Adil	160
Abdeslam	82
Albert	143
Alexandre	126
Andrei	159
Antonia	121
Arda	112
Armine	68
Arshan	131
Badr	72
Bela	32
Benjamin	129
Brahim	61
Camila	155
Catalina	127
Chavdar	7
Constanza	138
Dakarai	133
Dembah	164
Diego	125
Dimitar	28
Dnari	161
Efunsegun	141
Emilia	151
Emre	100
Fasila	46
Fernanda	144
Fernando	136
Florencia	146

DUTCH SUMMARY

Leven zonder papieren. Aspiraties, incorporatie en transnationale activiteiten van irreguliere migranten in de Lage Landen

Dit proefschrift gaat over de vraag hoe irreguliere immigranten leven in de Lage Landen. Hoewel irreguliere migranten – ook wel 'illegale migranten', 'illegalen' of 'mensen zonder papieren' genoemd – hier officieel niet mogen verblijven, is hun aanwezigheid in de Lage Landen steeds vanzelfsprekender geworden. Dit geldt voor westerse landen in het algemeen, maar desondanks is er nog weinig onderzoek gedaan naar de manier waarop irreguliere migranten daar leven. Pas halverwege de jaren negentig zijn de eerste Europese onderzoekers zich met deze vraag gaan bezighouden. Veel van hun studies zijn exploratief en hebben vooral beschrijvende kennis opgeleverd over onderwerpen als huisvesting, werk en de gezondheidssituatie van irreguliere migranten. Theorievorming is nog beperkt en heeft zich voornamelijk op twee vlakken ontwikkeld. Er zijn theoretische debatten ontstaan rond de vraag wat voor patronen van incorporatie er kunnen worden onderscheiden en hoe deze te verklaren zijn, en rond de vraag welke vormen van kapitaal relevant zijn voor irreguliere migranten.

In *hoofdstuk 2* wordt uitvoerig ingegaan op het onderzoek dat rond deze twee discussies is verricht. In het eerste deel van dit hoofdstuk wordt kritiek geleverd op de dominante onderzoekspraktijk. Een eerste punt van kritiek is dat veel onderzoekers een zogenaamd 'slachtofferperspectief' hanteren. In plaats van de vraag te stellen hoe irreguliere migranten leven of hoe zij geïncorporeerd raken, vragen veel onderzoekers zich af hoe irreguliere migranten er in slagen om te 'overleven' in westerse landen. Vertrekkend vanuit dit slachtofferperspectief richten zij zich vooral op de belemmeringen die irreguliere migranten ondervinden, waardoor een belangrijk deel van het leven van irreguliere migranten en de activiteiten die zij ondernemen onderbelicht is gebleven. Zo is er weinig aandacht voor sociale mobiliteit omdat er vanuit wordt gegaan dat irreguliere migranten hun positie niet kunnen verbeteren zonder hun status te legaliseren. Bovendien is er weinig aandacht voor de *agency* van irreguliere migranten. En door een eenzijdige focus op overleven is er nauwelijks onderzoek gedaan naar de transnationale activiteiten die irreguliere migranten mogelijkerwijs ondernemen.

Een tweede punt van kritiek is gericht op de gangbare praktijk van het vergelijken van 'etnische gemeenschappen'. Om de vraag te beantwoorden hoe het komt dat sommige irreguliere migranten er beter in slagen om te 'overleven' dan

andere, wordt er vaak gewezen op verschillen in solidariteit binnen etnische groepen. Zo zouden Turkse irreguliere migranten er beter in slagen om te 'overleven' (vastgesteld aan de hand van werk en inkomen) dan Marokkaanse omdat de Turkse migranten meer worden geholpen door hun eigen gemeenschap dan de Marokkaanse. Met andere woorden, irreguliere migranten behorend tot de ene gemeenschap zouden er vanwege het dominante patroon van solidariteit binnen hun etnische gemeenschap beter in slagen om te 'overleven' dan migranten die behoren tot een andere groep. Deze benadering is echter om vier redenen problematisch.

Ten eerste worden er zogenaamde etnische gemeenschappen met elkaar vergeleken die qua aard en achtergronden sterk verschillen. Het is daarbij soms onduidelijk of deze etnische gemeenschappen meer zijn dan door de onderzoekers geconstrueerde categorieën die losstaan van de betekenisverleningen van de betrokkenen. Men vergelijkt bijvoorbeeld de 'Afrikaanse gemeenschap' met de 'Turkse gemeenschap', maar aangezien Afrika een continent is dat verscheurd wordt door oorlog is het twijfelachtig of er onder Afrikaanse irreguliere migranten echt een idee van een 'Afrikaanse gemeenschap' bestaat.

Ten tweede gaan irreguliere migranten niet noodzakelijkerwijs alleen maar om met, en worden zij niet uitsluitend geholpen door mensen uit hun eigen etnische gemeenschap. Met andere woorden, sociale netwerken en etnische netwerken overlappen niet volledig. Dit geldt in het bijzonder voor irreguliere migranten die afkomstig zijn uit een land waaruit er weinig andere migranten in de Lage Landen wonen. Zij moeten wel met andere mensen dan leden van hun etnische gemeenschap omgaan. Bovendien blijkt uit ander onderzoek dat juist contacten buiten de eigen groep vaak zorgen voor sociale mobiliteit. Om te analyseren waarom sommige irreguliere migranten beter 'overleven' dan anderen zou men daarom niet alleen sociaal kapitaal binnen etnische gemeenschappen moeten onderzoeken, maar zou men juist ook de hulp van relatieve buitenstaanders in de analyse moeten betrekken. Bovendien zou men niet, zoals nu meestal het geval is, louter irreguliere migranten moeten onderzoeken die behoren tot grote gemeenschappen maar juist ook diegenen die niet tot een grote etnische groep behoren in de analyse betrekken.

Ten derde moeten de hulpbronnen die potentieel aanwezig zijn in (etnische) sociale netwerken worden geactiveerd voordat men er iets aan heeft. Louter de aanwezigheid van sociaal kapitaal in een gemeenschap is niet genoeg, en het ene individu slaagt er beter in dan de ander om deze hulpbronnen te mobiliseren.

Ten vierde wordt er doorgaans vertrouwd op wat respondenten zeggen over de solidariteit binnen hun gemeenschap. Hun oordeel over ontvangen steun is

echter afhankelijk van hun motieven en van de context waarin zij zich bevinden. Zo zal een irreguliere migrant die tijdelijk verblijft om snel wat geld te verdienen positief staan tegenover iemand die hem helpt aan werk voor 5 euro per uur, terwijl iemand die zich hier vestigt dit waarschijnlijk beschouwt als uitbuiting. Het is daarom beter om niet gemeenschappen als uitgangspunt van analyse te nemen, maar de motieven van individuele irreguliere migranten. Omdat motieven gedurende het verblijf kunnen veranderen is het daarbij belangrijk om aandacht te besteden aan hun huidige doelen in plaats van hun oorspronkelijke migratiemotieven.

In het tweede deel van hoofdstuk 2 wordt daarom een alternatieve benadering uiteengezet die individuele aspiraties tot beginpunt van analyse maakt. Aspiraties zijn de doelen die irreguliere migranten nastreven, en een focus op aspiraties ondervangt het eerste kritiekpunt doordat er daarmee aandacht wordt besteed aan de *agency* van irreguliere migranten. Aspiraties zijn niet perse strikt rationeel maar worden gevormd in de habitus. Zij worden gevoed door enerzijds subjectieve culturele waarden en dromen, en anderzijds door objectieve mogelijkheden. Daarom is het niet zo dat een benadering die uitgaat van aspiraties geen rekening houdt met belemmeringen: aspiraties vormen juist een conceptuele brug tussen structurele belemmeringen en de *agency* van irreguliere migranten.

Aan de hand van deze alternatieve benadering worden in het proefschrift de volgende drie onderzoeksvragen beantwoord:

1. Welke patronen van incorporatie van irreguliere migranten kunnen worden onderscheiden en hoe kunnen deze worden begrepen?
2. Welke transnationale activiteiten ondernemen irreguliere migranten en hoe kan dit worden begrepen?
3. Welke vormen van kapitaal hebben irreguliere migranten nodig om hun aspiraties te realiseren?

In *hoofdstuk 3* wordt uitgelegd dat een zogenaamde 'grounded theory'-benadering is gebruikt om deze vragen te beantwoorden, waarbij het doel is om theorie te construeren middels kwalitatief onderzoek. In dit proefschrift zijn vier soorten data geanalyseerd: 120 semi-gestructureerde interviews met irreguliere migranten, veldaantekeningen en memo's geschreven op basis van intensieve omgang met irreguliere migranten, 45 open interviews met irreguliere migranten, en 61 interviews met organisaties die met irreguliere migranten te maken hebben. De analyse is vooral gegrond in de interviews en de omgang met irreguliere migranten.

De interviews met organisaties zijn vooral gebruikt om een beeld te krijgen van de context en ter validatie van de bevindingen.

De semi-gestructureerde interviews met irreguliere migranten zijn uitgevoerd door een team onderzoeksassistenten. Zij probeerden via sleutelfiguren respondenten te werven, en daarnaast werden potentiële respondenten aangesproken in cafés, theehuizen, een parochiehuis of op straat. Tot slot werd gebruikt gemaakt van de zogenoemde 'sneeuwbalmethode'. Deze is eerder op een succesvolle manier toegepast bij de werving van irreguliere migranten en helpt bij het creëren van een vertrouwensbasis omdat contact wordt gemaakt via een persoon die men goed kent.

Naast de door onderzoeksassistenten gehouden interviews heeft de auteur in de steden Antwerpen en Den Haag gewoond om irreguliere migranten te observeren en interviewen. Respondenten werden gevonden in kerken, op straat, via organisaties en met behulp van de sneeuwbalmethode. Gedurende het veldwerk had de auteur dagelijks contact met irreguliere migranten, waarvan veel notities zijn bijgehouden. Een aantal van de migranten die werden geobserveerd is ook geïnterviewd.

De onderzoeksassistenten hebben vier migrantengroepen geïnterviewd: Marokkanen, Turken, Bulgaren en Congolezen. De Bulgaren hebben een Turkse achtergrond en de Congolese groep bestaat grotendeels uit afgewezen asielzoekers. Omdat dit grote migrantengemeenschappen zijn heeft de auteur ook irreguliere migranten geïnterviewd die niet tot een grote groep behoren. Door respondenten uit 25 herkomstlanden te interviewen is gezorgd voor variatie in de onderzoeksgroep, en ook de theoretische selectie van respondenten heeft hier aan bijgedragen.

In *hoofdstuk 4* wordt de beleidscontext geschetst waarin het leven van irreguliere migranten in de Lage Landen gestalte krijgt. Aandacht wordt besteed aan beleidsmaatregelen om de aanwezigheid van irreguliere migranten tegen te gaan, en de mogelijkheden die irreguliere migranten hebben om hun verblijf te legaliseren.

In *hoofdstuk 5* komen de aspiraties van irreguliere migranten aan bod. Er blijken drie typen aspiraties te kunnen worden onderscheiden: investerings-, verblijfs- en legalisatieaspiraties.* Investeringsmigranten zijn in de Lage Landen om geld te verdienen waarmee ze investeringen kunnen doen in hun land van herkomst. Ze willen terugkeren wanneer ze voldoende hebben gespaard. Vaak

* Omwille van de leesbaarheid wordt steeds gesproken over investeringsmigranten, verblijfsmigranten en legalisatiemigranten in plaats van migranten met investeringsaspiraties, migranten met verblijfsaspiraties en migranten met legalisatieaspiraties.

sparen ze voor een specifieke investering zoals voor het beginnen van een eigen onderneming of het financieren van een bruiloft. Hun verblijf wordt gezien als tijdelijk en fungeert als een middel om een doel in het land van herkomst te bereiken. Verblijfsmigranten zijn daarentegen gericht op het opbouwen van een bestaan in de Lage Landen. Voor hen is het leven in de Lage Landen dus geen middel maar het doel. Zij willen een bestaan opbouwen dat ze beter achten dan het leven dat ze hadden in het land van herkomst. Legalisatie van hun situatie zou een prettige bijkomstigheid zijn, maar ze beschouwen dit niet als noodzakelijk. Legalisatiemigranten ambiëren daarentegen wel een legaal verblijf. Zij willen net als verblijfsmigranten in de Lage Landen verblijven, maar dan wel legaal. Terwijl verblijfsmigranten het gevoel hebben dat ze gedurende hun illegale verblijf aan hun nieuwe leven kunnen bouwen, begint voor legalisatiemigranten het nieuwe leven pas na legalisatie. Hun leven staat in het teken van het bemachtigen van een legale verblijfsstatus.

Irreguliere migranten uit specifieke herkomstlanden hebben vaak specifieke aspiraties vanwege de omstandigheden in deze landen. Zo zullen migranten uit Congo bijvoorbeeld niet snel investeringsaspiraties hebben vanwege de instabiele situatie in hun herkomstland. Herkomstlanden en aspiraties overlappen echter niet volledig: uit veel landen zijn migranten met alle drie de typen aspiraties afkomstig. Aspiraties kunnen bovendien gedurende het verblijf veranderen, en er is geen sprake van een standaardtraject of een hiërarchie in aspiraties, waarbij migranten beginnen met investeringsaspiraties en eindigen met legalisatieaspiraties.

Het onderscheid tussen de drie typen aspiraties is bovendien van belang omdat er verschillende definities van succes mee gepaard gaan. Zo is er in de ervaring van een verblijfsmigrant geen sprake van succes wanneer hij zeven dagen in de week, tien uur per dag zou moeten werken, en zijn kamer moet delen met vier anderen. Voor een investeringsmigrant kan dit echter deel van zijn strategie zijn. Een legalisatiemigrant kan een baan aangeboden krijgen waarmee hij relatief veel verdient en weinig hoeft te werken, maar hij zal dit niet ervaren als een manier om te komen tot succes. Dit betekent dat irreguliere migranten met verschillende aspiraties verschillende strategieën moeten hanteren om hun aspiraties te realiseren. Voor migranten met legalisatieaspiraties zijn er twee typen strategieën te onderscheiden. De eerste strategie is gericht op het verwerven van verblijfspapieren via een huwelijk met een Nederlander, Belg of immigrant met voldoende verblijfsrecht. Irreguliere migranten die gebruik maken van de tweede strategie proberen hun verblijf te legaliseren middels procedures.

In hoofdstuk 6 en 7 staat de eerste onderzoeksvraag centraal. *Hoofdstuk 6* draait om functionele incorporatie, en gaat in op de vraag hoe irreguliere migranten in hun basisbehoeften voorzien. Patronen in huisvesting en werk en andere bronnen van inkomen worden geanalyseerd omdat hier debatten over worden gevoerd in de wetenschappelijke literatuur, of omdat er sprake is van strijdige onderzoeksuitkomsten. Het is dus niet de bedoeling om uitspraken te doen over *de* functionele incorporatie van irreguliere migranten, maar om een bijdrage te leveren aan lopende discussies. Het blijkt dat de verschillende strategieën die gepaard gaan met uiteenlopende aspiraties aan de basis liggen van specifieke patronen van incorporatie. Met dit inzicht kunnen vastgelopen debatten over de relatie tussen inkomen en geld dat besteed wordt aan huisvesting, de geografische spreiding van irreguliere migranten, het werk dat zij doen, de uitbuiting die zij ervaren, en formele en informele steun die zij ontvangen worden vlotgetrokken. Door aspiraties in de analyse te betrekken wordt bovendien duidelijk dat strijdige onderzoeksuitkomsten veelal kunnen worden begrepen vanuit verschillen in aspiraties.

Investeringsmigranten willen gedurende hun verblijf zoveel mogelijk werken, zodat ze snel met de benodigde investeringen kunnen terugkeren naar hun land van herkomst. Ze werken zes of zeven dagen in de week en maken lange dagen. Ze zijn bovendien vaak bereid om slechte werkomstandigheden en een relatief laag loon voor lief te nemen, omdat het werk tijdelijk is en omdat ze hun verdiensten in het land van herkomst willen besteden, waar het leven veel goedkoper is en de lonen nog veel lager. Om kosten te besparen wonen investeringsmigranten vaak zeer eenvoudig en delen zij woonruimte met andere irreguliere immigranten. Indien ze geen of weinig werk hebben zijn ze afhankelijk van het commerciële circuit om geld te lenen, tenzij ze in de Lage Landen familieleden of goede vrienden hebben. De steun die wordt geboden aan investeringsmigranten is echter altijd van korte duur. Ze hebben doorgaans geen toegang tot steun van organisaties.

Het leven van verblijfsmigranten is minder eenzijdig gericht op werk. Om een bestaan op te bouwen willen verblijfsmigranten vooral stabiel werk doen dat niet seizoensgebonden is en een betrouwbare stroom van inkomsten garandeert. Zij werken ook het liefst doordeweeks en op reguliere tijden, vooral diegenen die kinderen hebben. Verblijfsmigranten werken bij voorkeur voor private huishoudens. Hier lopen ze de minste kans om aangehouden te worden, en bovendien betalen Belgische en Nederlandse huishoudens de hoogste lonen en ervaren irreguliere migranten hier de beste arbeidsomstandigheden. Wanneer het niet lukt om dit soort werk te vinden zijn ze gedwongen om het werk te doen dat investeringsmigranten

doorgaans verrichten. Omdat ze de harde omstandigheden en lange dagen doorgaans niet goed vol houden werken ze dan meestal slechts periodes van een aantal maanden aan een stuk. In tegenstelling tot investeringsmigranten voelen verblijfsmigranten zich uitgebuit als ze dit soort werk moeten doen. Ze krijgen weinig betaald en kunnen zo niet het leven leiden dat ze willen.

Omdat verblijfsmigranten een bestaan willen opbouwen zijn zij bereid meer geld te besteden aan hun woning dan investeringsmigranten. Zij delen doorgaans alleen een kamer met andere migranten wanneer dit economisch gezien niet anders kan, meestal in het begin van het verblijf. Veel verblijfsmigranten wonen bovendien liever in rustige buitenwijken dan in de centraal gelegen immigrantenwijken. Voor verblijfsmigranten die afkomstig zijn uit herkomstlanden waaruit er veel immigranten in deze wijken wonen – zoals Turken en Marokkanen – is dit echter niet het geval, zij wonen juist vaak in immigrantenwijken. Wanneer verblijfsmigranten niet genoeg inkomsten uit werk genereren proberen zij sociale steun te mobiliseren. Omdat verblijfsmigranten niet altijd familieleden hebben op wie ze kunnen terug vallen investeren ze in informele systemen van solidariteit. Irreguliere migranten die deel uit maken van dergelijke systemen kunnen hier een beroep op doen in tijden van nood. Omgedraaid worden zij geacht anderen in nood te helpen indien ze hiertoe in staat zijn. Verblijfsmigranten kunnen meestal alleen tijdelijk – in het begin van hun verblijf – terugvallen op organisaties en zijn daarom meestal aangewezen op deze solidariteitssystemen of steun van familieleden.

Legalisatiemigranten willen zo min mogelijk werken omdat zij informele arbeid als een groot risico beschouwen. Wanneer irreguliere migranten worden aangehouden voor informele arbeid reduceert hun kans op legalisatie en daarmee op het realiseren van hun aspiraties. Daarom vermijden legalisatiemigranten werk zoveel mogelijk. Zij werken vaak parttime en alleen voor zover het noodzakelijk is om in hun basisbehoeften te voorzien. Zij werken bovendien bij voorkeur voor particuliere huishoudens omdat het risico om opgepakt te worden daar het kleinst is en er voldoende mogelijkheden zijn voor parttime werk.

Omdat legalisatiemigranten zo min mogelijk werken hebben zij veel steun nodig om in hun levensonderhoud te kunnen voorzien. Ze prefereren dit zelfs boven werken, en vaak weten ze vanuit meerdere bronnen steun te mobiliseren. Ze ontvangen vaak de meest uitgebreide steun van organisaties omdat ze een perspectief op legaal verblijf hebben. Daarnaast ontvangen veel legalisatiemigranten die verwikkeld zijn in legalisatieprocedures steun van Belgen en Nederlanders. Legalisatiemigranten die gericht zijn op een huwelijk worden vaak ondersteund door familieleden. Familieleden bieden kost en inwoning en ondertussen zoekt de

hele familie mee naar een huwelijkskandidaat. Organisaties helpen hen wegens het ontbreken van een formeel perspectief op legalisatie niet structureel.

Uit hoofdstuk 6 blijkt dat verschillende patronen van functionele incorporatie begrepen kunnen worden door te kijken naar verschillende aspiraties. Bovendien blijkt dat indien de aspiraties van irreguliere migranten veranderen, de gehanteerd strategieën ook veranderen en daarmee patronen van functionele incorporatie. In *hoofdstuk 7* wordt aangetoond dat dit ook geldt voor patronen van sociale incorporatie. In dit hoofdstuk ingegaan op de vraag wat irreguliere migranten doen in hun vrije tijd en met wie zij hun vrije tijd doorbrengen. Vanwege het gangbare slachtofferperspectief gaan onderzoekers er meestal impliciet vanuit dat irreguliere migranten nauwelijks mogelijkheden hebben om een sociaal leven te leiden aangezien ze druk bezig zijn met 'overleven'. Uitgedaagd door het dominante perspectief heeft een klein aantal onderzoekers bezwaar gemaakt tegen dit eenzijdige beeld van sociale isolatie door de uiteenlopende sociale activiteiten die hun respondenten ondernemen te beschrijven. In dit hoofdstuk blijkt dat een analyse die uitgaat van aspiraties helpt begrijpen waarom sommige irreguliere migranten inderdaad sociaal geïsoleerd leven en geografisch immobiel zijn terwijl anderen een rijk sociaal leven hebben.

Het sociale leven van investeringsmigranten wordt gekenmerkt door sociale isolatie. Zij hebben weinig vrije tijd omdat ze veel werken en ze willen in hun schaarse vrije tijd zo min mogelijk geld uitgeven zodat ze sneller voldoende hebben gespaard om te kunnen terugkeren. Avonden en vrije dagen brengen ze daarom veelal thuis door in het gezelschap van hun huisgenoten. Omdat ze terug willen keren vinden zij het niet de moeite waard om te investeren in sociale relaties. Zij hebben daardoor een beperkte sociale kring.

Verblijfsmigranten willen een bestaan opbouwen in de Lage Landen en waarderen daarom de vrije tijd die ze hebben en proberen deze te vullen door leuke dingen te doen. Ook willen ze hun nieuwe omgeving leren kennen. Ze maken soms uitstapjes en zijn veel mobieler dan investeringsmigranten. Veel verblijfsmigranten hebben meerdere plaatsen bezocht en sommigen zijn zelfs in buurlanden geweest. Bovendien hebben zij een rijker sociaal leven en een groter sociaal netwerk dan investeringsmigranten. Hun vrije tijd brengen ze door met familie, vrienden en kennissen, die veelal afkomstig zijn uit hetzelfde herkomstland. Verblijfsmigranten zijn ook vaak lid van culturele organisaties die activiteiten organiseren rond hun herkomstland.

Legalisatiemigranten die gericht zijn op procedures hechten geen bijzondere waarde aan vrije tijd omdat ze er doorgaans veel van hebben, aangezien ze weinig

werken. Ze brengen veel van hun vrije tijd door rond charitatieve instellingen waar ze komen voor sociale steun. Bovendien zoeken ze actief Nederlanders en Belgen op, en volgen ze vaak taalcursussen om aan hun 'integratie' te werken. Door goed te integreren hopen zij sneller in aanmerking te kunnen komen voor een verblijfsvergunning. Omdat ze weinig werken en niet veel ondernemen buiten organisaties om hebben ze geen groot sociaal netwerk. Er komen echter immigranten met diverse achtergronden bij charitatieve organisaties waardoor het sociale netwerk van deze legalisatiemigranten relatief divers is in vergelijking met de andere categorieën. Legalisatiemigranten die hun aspiraties proberen te realiseren door een huwelijkspartner te vinden besteden veel hun vrije tijd aan deze zoektocht. Zij gaan veel uit om potentiële partners te ontmoeten en bevinden zich veel op straat of op internet.

In dit hoofdstuk wordt duidelijk dat de sociale activiteiten die irreguliere migranten ondernemen afhankelijk zijn van hun aspiraties. Hiermee wordt een uitweg geboden uit de gepolariseerde discussie in de literatuur. Bovendien blijkt dat belemmeringen wel degelijk belangrijk zijn om patronen van sociale incorporatie te begrijpen, maar dat irreguliere migranten met verschillende aspiraties anders reageren op deze belemmeringen.

Hoofdstuk 8 draait om de tweede onderzoeksvraag. Ondanks het vermeende gebrek aan transnationale activiteiten wordt duidelijk dat irreguliere migranten wel degelijk transnationaal actief zijn. Het type activiteiten dat zij ondernemen blijkt bovendien afhankelijk van hun aspiraties. Daarnaast wordt aangetoond dat ook het niet ondernemen van specifieke transnationale activiteiten kan worden begrepen vanuit hun aspiraties; dit vloeit dus niet noodzakelijkerwijs voort uit structurele belemmeringen.

Investeringsmigranten geven zo min mogelijk geld uit in de Lage Landen. In plaats daarvan zenden zij een groot deel van hun inkomsten naar het land van herkomst, of sparen ze het om het daar bij terugkeer te investeren. Omdat investeringsmigranten niet in de Lage Landen willen blijven zijn zij sociaal georiënteerd op het herkomstland, en besteden zij tijd en energie in het onderhouden van sociale contacten met het herkomstland.

Verblijfsmigranten sturen een kleiner deel van hun inkomen naar het herkomstland en zij bellen hun familieleden ook minder vaak – variërend van een keer per maand tot eens per week. Hun referentiekader is de ontvangende samenleving. Door allerlei culturele activiteiten gericht op het herkomstland reproduceren ze een idee van het herkomstland in de Lage Landen.

Omdat legalisatiemigranten zo min mogelijk werken sturen ze geen geld naar het herkomstland. Veel legalisatiemigranten die zich richten op procedures zijn afkomstig uit landen die geteisterd worden door instabiliteit. Zij hebben het contact met familie en vrienden in het herkomstland daarom soms verloren. Een deel van deze legalisatiemigranten onderneemt politieke transnationale activiteiten in de hoop dat de situatie in hun herkomstland hierdoor zal verbeteren. Daarnaast is hun politieke transnationale participatie vermoedelijk instrumenteel gemotiveerd: door duidelijk te maken dat de problemen in hun herkomstland ernstig zijn hopen zij hun kansen op legalisatie te vergroten. Legalisatiemigranten die gericht zijn op een huwelijk ondernemen niet veel transnationale activiteiten – zij zijn vooral bezig met het vinden van een huwelijkspartner.

In *hoofdstuk* 9 staat de derde en laatste onderzoeksvraag centraal. Hoewel het slachtofferperspectief er vanuit gaat dat opwaartse sociale mobiliteit voor irreguliere migranten niet is weggelegd, blijkt in dit hoofdstuk dat sommige irreguliere migranten er wel degelijk in slagen om hun positie te verbeteren. De mate waarin zij hierin slagen hangt nauw samen met de mate waarin zij hulpbronnen als sociaal, cultureel of economisch kapitaal kunnen mobiliseren. Over het belang van verschillende kapitaalsoorten voor irreguliere migranten zijn onderzoeksresultaten tot op heden niet eenduidig. Volgens veel onderzoekers is sociaal kapitaal van doorslaggevend belang, terwijl volgens anderen cultureel kapitaal cruciaal is. In dit hoofdstuk wordt beargumenteerd dat een discussie over het belang van kapitaalsoorten voor irreguliere migranten *in het algemeen* geen theoretisch inzicht biedt. Om de vraag te beantwoorden welke vormen van kapitaal relevant zijn voor irreguliere migranten is het nodig om te zien waarvoor het kapitaal wordt ingezet. Daarom wordt in dit hoofdstuk onderzocht welke kapitaalsoorten relevant zijn voor irreguliere migranten om hun aspiraties te verwezenlijken.

Het blijkt dat voor het realiseren van elk van de drie typen aspiraties specifieke kapitaalsoorten nodig zijn. Indien investeringsmigranten specifieke beroepscompetenties (cultureel kapitaal) hebben die zij kunnen gebruiken in de Lage Landen worden zij relatief goed betaald. Wanneer ze al een baan hebben geregeld voor vertrek uit het herkomstland kunnen ze bovendien makkelijker werk kunnen vinden dat aansluit bij hun competenties. Cultureel kapitaal in de vorm van beroepscompetenties beneden het legale plafond blijkt voor investeringsmigranten van doorslaggevend belang, mits gecombineerd met sociaal kapitaal in de zin van transnationale netwerken waarmee al in het herkomstland werk in de Lage Landen kan worden gearrangeerd.

Voor verblijfsmigranten is sociaal kapitaal van cruciaal belang, zowel in de vorm van sterke familiale- en vriendschapsbindingen ('strong ties') voor sociale steun als in de vorm van lossere, verbindende netwerkrelaties ('weak ties') die nodig zijn voor het vinden van werk. Beide vormen van sociaal kapitaal zijn nodig en vullen elkaar aan. Voor verblijfsimmigranten is een combinatie van ondersteunend en verbindend sociaal kapitaal ('social support' en 'social leverage') van doorslaggevend belang.

Het is moeilijk om te bepalen welke vormen van kapitaal relevant zijn voor legalisatiemigranten die zich richten op procedures. Vanwege het gebrek aan transparantie in procedures is het ondoenlijk om de kansen op legalisatie realistisch in te schatten. De analyse is hier daarom enkel gericht op legalisatiemigranten die iemand zoeken om mee te trouwen om zo hun verblijf te legaliseren. Voor legalisatiemigranten die een huwelijkspartner zoeken uit de eigen etnische kring is het van belang om familie te hebben in de Lage Landen, omdat op die manier een vertrouwensrelatie tussen de families kan ontstaan die anders afwezig is. Voor legalisatiemigranten die een Belg of Nederlander proberen te vinden om mee te trouwen is het relevant om de taal te spreken en de belangrijkste culturele conventies te kennen. Voor legalisatiemigranten die een schijnhuwelijk willen kopen is economisch kapitaal van belang, of sociaal kapitaal dat hierin kan worden omgezet. Voor legalisatiemigranten is het kapitaal dat zij nodig hebben dus afhankelijk van het type huwelijksmarkt waar zij zich op begeven.

Veel irreguliere migranten blijken echter niet in staat om hun aspiraties te verwezenlijken. Zij hebben niet zozeer een gebrek aan kapitaal in het algemeen – hoewel dit soms ook voorkomt – maar vooral een gebrek aan de juiste kapitaalsoort die benodigd is om hun specifieke aspiraties te realiseren. Ook dit maakt duidelijk dat het belangrijk is niet naar het belang van kapitaalsoorten in het algemeen te kijken, maar te onderzoeken in welke contexten welke kapitaalsoort doorslaggevend is.

Aan de hand van de drie centrale onderzoeksvragen worden in *hoofdstuk 10* de belangrijkste bevindingen samengevat en de implicaties hiervan geschetst. Ten eerste blijkt uit dit proefschrift dat een benadering die uitgaat van aspiraties theoretische inzichten biedt die normaliter door het slachtofferperspectief aan het oog onttrokken worden. Ten tweede blijkt dat vaak ten onrechte wordt verondersteld dat verschillen in solidariteit binnen etnische gemeenschappen aan de basis liggen van patronen van incorporatie. Dit proefschrift laat zien dat patronen van incorporatie worden gecreëerd doordat irreguliere migranten strategisch handelen op basis van uiteenlopende aspiraties. Dit betekent dat waar er bij

oppervlakkige beschouwing etnische patronen van incorporatie lijken zijn, hier dikwijls andere mechanismen aan ten grondslag liggen. Ten derde maakt het onderzoek duidelijk dat irreguliere migranten sociale mobiliteit niet louter in economische zin duiden. Men kan dan ook niet eenvoudigweg een 'objectieve' maat als inkomen gebruiken om positieverbetering vast te stellen. Zonder inzicht in de aspiraties van irreguliere migranten zou men geneigd zijn sommige irreguliere migranten als kansarme slachtoffers te bestempelen terwijl zij hun migratie zelf als succes typeren. Ten vierde laat de analyse zien dat het leven van irreguliere migranten niet alleen draait om 'overleven' maar dat zij, afhankelijk van hun aspiraties, diverse sociale activiteiten ondernemen. Om te begrijpen hoe irreguliere migranten leven in ontvangende landen is het van belang deze sociale dimensie mee te nemen in onderzoek. Deze maakt namelijk deel uit van de afwegingen die zij maken; onder bepaalde omstandigheden wordt vrije tijd bijvoorbeeld geprefereerd boven extra werk. Ten vijfde toont dit proefschrift dat onderzoek naar het leven van irreguliere migranten baat heeft bij het hanteren van een transnationaal perspectief, omdat transnationale activiteiten, aspiraties en incorporatie met elkaar verknoopt blijken te zijn. Tot slot wordt aanbevolen om in vervolgonderzoek meer aandacht te besteden aan de aspiraties van irreguliere migranten, en om individuen in plaats van etnische gemeenschappen tot het uitgangspunt van de analyse te maken. Op die manier kan bijvoorbeeld de hier ontwikkelde 'grounded theory' verder gecontextualiseerd worden middels onderzoek in andere contexten, en kan er licht worden geworpen op de vraag wat irreguliere migranten van aspiraties doet veranderen.

CURRICULUM VITAE

During her studies, Masja van Meeteren (Wageningen, 1978) worked as a research assistant at the department of Sociology of the Erasmus University Rotterdam and at the Rotterdam Institute for Social-Scientific Policy Research (RISBO). She obtained her master's degree in June 2005 at the Erasmus University Rotterdam, where she wrote a thesis on the shift in the dominant discourse on the integration of immigrants in the Netherlands. Since then, she has worked at this university as a PhD student and currently as a researcher/lecturer. Her PhD project has yielded other publications apart from this dissertation, among which the Dutch book entitled *Zonder Papieren* (Without Papers, Acco publishers 2008) and publications in journals such as *International Migration Review*. For an up to date overview of Masja's academic activities, please see: www.masjavanmeeteren.nl.