Here no King.
There no King.

Perceptions of Return among Undocumented Nigerians in the Netherlands and Returnees in Nigeria

'Tulips from Lagos', Referring to the typically Dutch Tulips. Drawn by: Samia Benhayyoun while in Lagos, 16/01/2017

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Abstract

This thesis presents the results of an (official) six-month period of fieldwork research among two different groups in two countries: undocumented Nigerians in the Netherlands and Nigerians that have returned to Nigeria after they had been undocumented in the Netherlands. Unofficially the fieldwork period has lasted about a year and a half, following undocumented Nigerians and returnees in their on-going journeys across the world. The thesis presents three main topics: policies towards returns in the Netherlands and how these policies are implemented on the ground in Nigeria; the lives of undocumented Nigerians in the Netherlands; and the lives of those that have returned to Nigeria. Irregular migration is hot topic currently, the removal of those who don't hold the legal right to be here in the Netherlands is enforced, and different return programs are established in order to let people return voluntarily to their homelands with dignity. Some choose to return voluntarily, some due to the threat of deportation and some are deported back to Nigeria. How do undocumented Nigerians themselves perceive returning? The thesis presents different aspects related to their perceptions, their lives, strategies, constraints and fears. And how do those that have returned perceived their return? Accounts of their lives after return reveal the constraints, exclusion, shame and stigma that can shape their new lives.

The thesis takes as its point of departure the idea that we are all highly mobile: that migration trajectories, lives lived, perceptions of return and the return itself do not a singular movement, and presents the results confirming this idea. Return programs are set up with the idea of a: 'fixed return' yet the results show that many have aspiration to re-emigrate and some even do so successfully. It illustrates the migrant experience as a continuum of insecurity: insecure lives lived prior to the movement towards, in this case, the Netherlands, highly fluid migration trajectories and aspirations conditioned by uncertainty, and highly insecure livelihoods while being undocumented abroad. Moreover the accounts of returnees reflect a persistence of this marginalised state. Returning hadn't resolved the constraints; insecurities and alienation experienced by returnees, and had perhaps even reinforced them. The thesis presents paradoxes and tensions: those who are here undocumented regret coming to Europe and those who have returned regret returning and wish to return "back" to Europe.

Keywords:
Nigeria, Perception of Return, Return migration, Irregular migration, Undocumented in the Netherlands, Deportation, Voluntary Assisted Returns, Re-emigration

Abbreviations

Amsterdam ZO- Amsterdam-Southeast, a borough of Amsterdam. Commonly known for it large community of African and Surinam descents.

AMV – Alleenstaande Minderjarige Vluchteling (Unaccompanied Minor Refugees)

AVIM – Afdeling Vreemdelingenpolitie, Identificatie en Mensenhandel (Dutch Aliens Police)

AVRR-NL – Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration from the Netherlands.

AZC – Asylum Seekers Centre

COA – Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers

CUSUDOW- Committee for the Support of Dignity of Women.

DT&V – Dienst Terugkeer en Vertrek (Repatriation and Departure Service)

DJI - Dienst Justitiele Inrichtingen – Custodial Institutions Agency (refers to: Detention Centre)

EASO – European Asylum Support Office

EU – European Union

EUROSTAT – Directorate-General of the European Commission, main responsibilities are to provide statistical information of the European Union.

FAAN – Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria

FRONTEX – European Border and Coast Guard Agency

GGV – Gesloten Gezinsvoorziening (Closed Family Facility)

IND – Immigratie- en Naturalisatiedienst (Immigration and Naturalisation Service)

IOM – International Organisation for Migration- The United Nations Migration Agency.

KMAR – Koninklijke Marechaussee – Royal Marechaussee

NAPTIP - National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons

NDLEA - National Drug Law Enforcement Agency

NIS - Nigerian Immigration Service

REAN – Return and Emigration Assistance from the Netherlands

Ter Apel Groningen – First location where aliens file for asylum in the Netherlands.

Vluchtelingenwerk – Dutch Refugee Counsel

WAH – We Are Here

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1. Introduction

Migration is a global and ancient phenomenon. Theoretically migration is an age-old human means to improve life and can be defined as the movement of people from one place in the world to another for the purpose of taking up permanent or semi-permanent residence (Akinyoade and Gewald 2015). Within this global phenomenon there are millions of people who have migrated, sometimes a short distance, sometimes-larger distances, including millions of Africans that have migrated to Europe. In the last couple of years (irregular) migration has become a 'hot topic', not only within academia, but also in politics, the media and the public discourse. The so called 'migration crisis', refers not only those who massively flee war, but also to the illegal migrant influx from out Africa (Jansen et al. 2015). Pictures and footage of large or small, barely seaworthy boats overcrowded with sometimes hundreds of Africans; males; females and even infants are constantly on the TV screens and front pages.[1] Some Africans risk their lives taking this high-risk migration across the *Mer Mortelle* – the deadly waters of the Mediterranean Sea (Jansen et al. 2015). Before taking a boat, some endure harrowing, long and very risky journeys across thousand of kilometers of Sahara sand. Africans take different routes across Africa that sometimes leads to the shores of Libya or Morocco in order to reach Europe. And among those who arrive 'illegally' over the Mediterranean Sea: Nigerians are the number one nationality that arrive (registered) in Europe (EUROSTAT 2016). Yet most illegal entries in Europe are presumably visa-over stayers and not those who enter by sea (Jansen et al. 2015; De Haas 2016). Nigerians are in the top 5 nationalities found illegally present within Europe (EUROSTAT 2016). Yet they don't come near the largest group of returnees… whether forced or voluntary (EUROSTAT 2016; Asylum Trend Rapport 2016). Where are all these Nigerians? Do they end up living anonymously in one of Europe's bigger cities?

Some arrive here in the Netherlands, either as visa over stayers, on a boat, smuggled, as an adventurer, fortune-seeker, by accident or design. But they have one thing in common: they are here undocumented. This research focuses on those Nigerians, those that are in the Netherlands undocumented, those that are 'out of sight', on their daily lives, restraints, strategies and movements.

[1] see e.g. http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/01/boat-sinks-libya-coast-90-migrants-drown-180111075125603.html, among many other newsfeed on this topic, accessed February 2018.

Numerous summits among all the prime ministers and other relevant representatives have been held within Europe, Africa and America in order to discuss this 'migration crisis'. In the Netherlands immigration and migration feature prominently on the agendas of the major and minor parties. Some claim the Dutch state needs much stricter policy towards irregular migrants, others that the Dutch state should increase development aid in order to reduce the influx. Equally prominent is the debate on what to do with those that are here undocumented or are rejected asylum seekers, on who holds responsibility and how and *if* there should arrange bed, bread and bath (*BBB-kwestie in the Netherlands*) to meet basic humanitarian needs and fundamental rights. In the Netherlands different arrangements and organizations have established, controlling, deporting or running different voluntary return programs, so called 'migration management'. Obviously, there seems to be widely held a priori assumption that not everyone can just enter and live in this country. There needs to be some kind of migration management; people cannot just come and stay whenever they please. In that sense migration management is completely rational and accepted. But one of the consequences of this migration management is that authorities and organizations seem to see return as a permanent fix, thus that migrants will not return and that the problem is 'solved'.

But how do Nigerians themselves perceive returning? What happens before they decide to return or are forced? Which social, economic, psychological and institutional actors play a role? And what could these lives tell us about the common migration ideas of Africans who enter Europe in the first place?

Here they have returned, either forced; voluntary; with hopes; fears; dreams and regrets. This research also focuses on those that have returned to Nigeria, after being undocumented in the Netherlands. How is their returning perceived? What happens with them? And what could this maybe tell us about migration management's idea of a 'fixed' return?

Inevitably this research was motivated in part by personal curiosity and maybe even empathy with those who prefer to stay out of sight. Where are these people? Who are they? What drives them? How do they perceive themselves? How we live in the same city, but our experience is so profoundly different, yet eventually were all the same. Hearing about return programs and deportations immediately raises the question: 'what happens to those people after they return?'. It became my own moral obligation delving into the worlds both of the undocumented and of those that had returned. Seeing, feeling and even smelling both places gave me personally much more understanding. New relations were established which lasted

longer then I initially thought they would and sometimes eventually became key information within the thesis.

1.1. Research Questions

This thesis consists of two major stories: the undocumented Nigerian in the Netherlands and the Returnee. One chapter is in general more descriptive, outlining the general policies: 'migration management' in the Netherlands towards asylum seekers, irregular migrants, return regimes and how this management is implemented 'on the ground' in Nigeria.

Main research questions:
'How is returning perceived among undocumented Nigerians in the Netherlands? 'How is returning perceived among undocumented Nigerians that have returned to Nigeria?

Sub questions: migration management
'What is the institutional context of assisting returnees to their homeland?'
'How do institutions and organisations in Nigeria assist, guide and perceive the problems returnees face?'

Sub questions (undocumented) Nigerians in the Netherlands:
'What were the motives, decision shaping factors and circumstances for migration?
'What does it mean to be undocumented?'
'Are Nigerians familiar with applying for asylum, organizations, NGOs and institutions?'
'What were the motives, restraints and circumstances for returning, staying or moving forwards?'

Sub questions (undocumented) Nigerians that have returned from the Netherlands to Nigeria:
'What had been were the motives or circumstances for returning?
'How are lives rebuilt after return?'
'How do their families, relatives, friends and communities react on their return?'
'Is there an aspiration to "return" back to the Netherlands?'

1.2. The Nigerians: Where Are They? Recent Nigerian Illegal Migration Towards Europe In a Nutshell

As mentioned Africa has a long history of migration, towards Europe and other destinations. Nigerian migration to Europe has traditionally been predominantly towards the United Kingdom. Nigeria being a former colony officially established 1914 and disestablished in 1960, with British influence in the region from around 1807. Some Nigerians did move towards other regions in Europe, but the numbers were relatively small (van Heelsum and Hessels 2006).

In the Netherlands there is a small community Nigerians, which began to grow in the late 1980s (van Heelsum and Hessels 2006). In 2018 there were a total of 12.350 Nigerian persons registered in the Netherlands (CSB 2018). The primary modes of migration towards the Netherlands are for marriage, work or study (van Heelsum and Hessels 2006). The earliest asylum seekers and irregular migrants are estimated to have come to the Netherlands in 1987 and numbers have increased gradually since (van Heelsum and Hessels 2006).

This research focuses only on Nigerians that have entered the Netherlands and Europe irregularly. In the Netherlands, sub-Saharan African migration into the country has never been the main focus among scholars, probably because of its relatively small size compared to other migrants groups (Chelpi-den Hamer 2008). There have been a few studies on Ghanaians, Nigerians, Cape Verdeans, Somalians and Ethiopians (Engbersen and van der Leun 2002; Kessel and Tellegen 2000; van Dijk 2001; van Heelsum and Hessels 2006; Mazzucato 2015,b; Nimako 2000), but the bulk of literature has focussed on Turks, Surinamese, Moroccans and Dutch Antilleans within the Netherlands.

Within the Netherlands Nigerians are not responsible for a significant portion of asylum request. The top 5 nationalities of total asylum seekers in the Netherlands over 2016 were: 1. Syrians; 2. Eritreans; 3. Albanians; 4. Moroccans and 5. Afghans (Asylum Trend rapport 2016). In 2014 in total 223, 2015 in total 212 Nigerians asked for asylum in the Netherlands (Asylum trends rapport 2016). The total repeated asylum requests over 2016 were just 5 in total. Within the EU Nigerians rank nr. 5 in asylum requests: 47,270 in total (Eurostat, Asylum rapport 2016). According to EASO: 'Nigeria: The number of applications lodged by Nigerian nationals reached 48.705 in 2016.' Of the top eight nationalities, Nigerian applicants recorded the highest year-to-year increase (+ 54 %). Nigerian applications increased significantly in the first eight months of the year, with the highest level in August, while, in contrast to other nationalities, remaining at higher monthly levels in the last quarter

than in the beginning of the year.' Italy was the main receiving country for Nigerian applicants, in line with high number of arrivals via the Central Mediterranean route (EUROSTAT 2016). Along the Central Mediterranean route, arriving in Italy, Nigeria is the most common country of origin in 2016 and between January 2017-may 2017.[2] Within Italy: Nigerians are number 1 asylum seekers in 2016: 26.550 in total. Followed by: Pakistan (13.471); Gambia (8.845); Senegal (7.550) and Cote d'ivoire (7.435) (Eurostat 2016).

Estimates of how many persons remain in the EU without the required documents vary enormously, this is because there is no certain way of knowing how many migrants have left their country of origin and entered the EU. Thus the number of irregular migrants within the EU is not available in absolute terms. In the comparative report to the European Commission *Clandestino Project* (Triandafyllidou 2009), the estimates varied between 1.9 and 3.8 million for the whole EU in 2008. According to Jansen et al. (2015), the scholarly and political estimates for undocumented migration in Europe are low compared to the United States. Salient data demonstrates that only a very few of those residing in the EU without official documents have in fact crossed a EU-border without such documents: the overwhelming majority of undocumented migrants are so-called 'visa over-stayers' (Jansen et al. 2015; De Haas 2016). What is more measurable is the (illegal) amount of people that have crossed the Mediterranean sea, IOM estimates that in 2016: 363.348 have crossed and reached Europe,[3] with 5079 recorded death and many more missing at sea.[4] A German Newspaper, Der Tagesspiegel, published a staggering new report in 2017 that tallies 33.293 dead migrants.[5] In public and even academia it has been called the: European Migrants crisis. The EU, with its strong economy, has indeed emerged as a global migration destination, attracting between 1.5 and 2.5 million non-EU migrants per year, though to put this in perspective this corresponds to between 0.3 and 0.5 percent of the EU's total population of 580 million (De Haas 2017). Hein de Haas makes a different case on how migration flows should be studied. His main argument is to see migration as an inherent part of economic growth and societal change instead of primarily as a problem that must be solved. (De Haas 2017). Economic growth and improved education typically increase people's capacities and

[2] https://www.iom.int/news/mediterranean-migrant-arrivals-reach-77004-2017-1828-deaths, accessed December 2017.
[3] https://www.iom.int/news/mediterranean-migrant-arrivals-top-363348-2016-deaths-sea-5079, accessed December 2017.
[4] https://www.iom.int/news/mediterranean-migrant-arrivals-top-363348-2016-deaths-sea-5079, accessed December 2017
[5] See the entire list on: http://www.tagesspiegel.de/downloads/20560202/3/listeentireberlinccbanu.pdf, accessed December 2017.

aspirations to migrate. Development in the poorest countries, for instance in sub-Saharan Africa, will almost inevitably lead to more migration from those countries (De Haas 2017; 2016). Therefore, future immigrants in Europe might increasingly come from sub-Saharan Africa (De Haas 2017).

Another way that is used to measure the illegal migrants within the EU is the people that are found to be illegal within the EU, mostly due to a (minor) criminal act. Between 2008-2016, Nigerians are in the top-ten of persons that were to be found illegally present within the EU (EUROSTAT 2016). Among the five main indicators for statistics on the enforcement of immigration legislation, the data on non-EU citizens found to be illegally present grew at the most rapid pace in recent years (2013-2016). 'After a gradual reduction in the number of non-EU citizens found to be illegally present on the territories of the EU Member States between 2008 and 2013, a significant increase was observed between 2013 and 2015: by far the biggest increase was recorded in 2015, when the flow of irregular migrants entering the EU reached unprecedented levels' (EUROSTAT 2016). Demographic data on people that were illegally present in the EU indicate that irregular migration is predominantly a male issue (EUROSTAT 2016). Most of the non-EU citizens were young males, aged between 18 and 34 years.

On returns the numbers are not that staggering. In 2016: 493.785 people were ordered to leave the EU, of whom 16.4 % from France, 14.2% Germany and 12.1% the United Kingdom (EUROSTAT 2016). Ordered to leave doesn't necessarily mean they returned to their country of origin. This could be an order without actual force; a deportation to the first country of asylum (Dublin request) or forced deportation. Nigerians in 2016 make up about 4.000 orders to leave the EU (EUROSTAT 2016). In Italy in 2016: 1015 Nigerians were returned voluntary and 425 forced (EUROSTAT 2016). In the Netherlands in 2016 (until September 2016), 30 Nigerians were deported. In 2015 it was 55 in total.[6]
It leaves you wondering where all the Nigerians that enter the EU via the Mediterranean Sea end up? Leaving aside the number of Nigerians that enter the country legally, before overstaying legal visas.

I tried to make the group that are central within this research visible, or better said illustrate how invisible they are.

[6] email head strategic advice, DT&V, 17-10-2016.

1.3. Theoretical Framework

In this chapter I provide a theoretical framework, which guides the analysis on which this thesis is built. This thesis consists of two main topics: undocumented Nigerians in the Netherlands and Nigerians that have returned from the Netherlands, where they had been undocumented, back to Nigeria. The perceptions of return are central in this thesis, and in order to analyse this theme different theories are used and presented. Another topic that is touched upon is the policies towards returns in the Netherlands and the implementation of these policies in Nigeria; this topic is discussed in a purely descriptive manner.

The Paths Towards Undocumentedness

In order to analyse those that came here undocumented, their path towards arriving in the Netherlands must be examined. Within academia migration as a phenomenon has been studied extensively, there is a wealth of literature discussing migration trajectories, motivations, decision-shaping factors and expectations not only from Africa, but also from other regions in the world. Factors that shape migration are approached from different disciplines as well as through interdisciplinary approaches. Because of the nature of this research, discussing and exploring multiple factors that occur before, during and after the movement, but avoiding seeing migration as a singular movement: migration is not seen as just classical 'push-pull' models, which suggest that migrants are pushed by low incomes and living standards and are pulled by better living conditions and prospects in more affluent areas (e.g. Lee 1966; Passaris 1989); Rational action (e.g. Haug 2000; Kalter 2003); Household strategy, motivated by the need to spread risk, rather than an individual decision (Stark 1991); Social Networks and structures that influence individual decision-making processes to migrate (Boyd 1989; Massey et al. 1993; Massey 1990; 1997; Haugh 2000; 2008), just to name a few popular theories. Migration is seen and understood within this research as *transition*: several types of push and pull factors may influence people in their movement, which may occur simultaneously and spontaneously (Akinyoade and Gewald 2015). Migration *and* retuning is not seen as a singular movement. Return migration, I would argue, fits into the concept of migration as transition: a set factors and structural factors shape returns and, in some cases, re-emigration. Hein de Haas (2010) promulgated the transition theory, in which structure and agency are incorporated by conceptualizing migration as a

function of: ‘capabilities; aspiration and, on a macro-level, and the opportunity, rather than income differentials’ (De Haas 2010, 5). Schapendonk (2011) also demonstrates that African migration is characterized by circularity, temporality and onward mobility. Not only across continental borders, but also within Africa and within national borders (Schapendonk 2011, De Bruijn, van Dijk and Foeken 2001). Contemporary African migration towards the EU has a mixed character and Schapendonk (2011) argues that the EU is considered as only one of many possible destinations for African migrants. Ideas of migration, locations and destinations are not always set and remain largely undetermined prior to migrating (Schapendonk 2011). Just to have the aspirations to migrate are not enough to make the migration happen, a ‘set of shifting scenarios, multi-dimensional motivations and the appearance of new, rather unexpected opportunities’ are part of the movement, and aspirations can change along with migration trajectories (Schapendonk 2011). Akinyoade and Gewald (2015) expanded the theory of migration as transition. Several types of factors may influence people in their movement, all these factors may occur simultaneously and spontaneously (Akinyoade and Gewald 2015). It is understood as a situation that arises between origin and destination countries, often characterized by indefinite migrant stay (legal or illegal). Migration in this theory often emerges from various sets of circumstances. Contrary to popular belief, not all migrants have specific plans before leaving their homeland; it is during the migrant’s journey or even in the host country that the migration plans takes real shape (Akinyoade and Gewald 2015). The perceptions and intentions of migrants themselves are thus fluid.

As migration in this research is analyzed as transition, the necessary framework focused on migration trajectories, decision-shaping factors and experiences before exile as well, and guided the construction of a questionnaire. Part of the questionnaire framework used by Koser and Kuschminder (2015) in their comparative research on assisted voluntary return and reintegration of migrants was used in order to distinguish ‘experiences before exile’ and ‘decision-making factors in migration’.

Undocumentedness

Irregular migration as a phenomenon has also been extensively researched within academia, focusing on labour, students, and healthcare just to name a few: irregular migration touches upon in many different themes and in different regions around the world. *Being* undocumented is touched upon to a lesser extent, research that focuses on the lives lived by

undocumented people is less common and hardly any focuses specifically on undocumented Nigerians in the Netherlands, besides some work on Nigerian female prostitution, and on how undocumented Nigerians in the Netherlands can secure a legal status by Adrikopoulos (2013) in *Long Journeys. African migrants on the road* and by Mazzucato et al. (2015b) among Nigerian international migration and the well being of children in Nigeria, among few others. Therefore I used the analysis of Bloch, Sigona and Zetter (2009; 2014) used in their work on undocumented migrants in Britain that focuses primarily on young adults from different nationalities. Their in-depth research on the lives of undocumented people is invaluable and guided my analysis in of the lives of the undocumented Nigerian in the Netherlands. Being undocumented often creates a transitory and insecure identity (Bloch, Sigona and Zetter 2009). Lack of status is an all-encompassing experience, producing distinctive forms of social marginality with significant impacts such as 'enforced' mobility in the search for accommodation, for work, or to avoid detection (Bloch, Sigona and Zetter 2009). Being undocumented invades personal and emotional space, which often leads to a shadow existence, a lack of self worth, a lack of trust in others and often the internalisation of fear for migrants and families (Bloch, Zigona and Zetter 2009; 2014). This need to avoid detection stems from the notion of 'deportability' presented by De Genova (2001) and De Genova and Peutz (2010) who examine this concept in a modern political system. The understanding of effect of the term "illegality" on an undocumented person's every day life and therefore their status, which can be seen as the criminalisation of their identity, leading to denial of fundamental human rights and social entitlements, often with little or no recourse or protection from the law, is considered as a valuable entry point. The lives of illegal migrants are lived though the sense of that they can be deported, as De Genova calls: 'the possibility of deportation' (2002; 439).

Remittances and Reciprocity

In this thesis I use the concepts of remittances and reciprocity as a tool to analyze the perceptions of return. In the literature traditionally these theories are applied to explain migration strategies and the strategies of migrants who are abroad and in receiving countries. But since they seem to be themes that are constantly present in the daily lives of undocumented Nigerians, I use them a tool to understand the overall perceptions, restraints and difficulties.

In the literature remittances are discussed extensively in relation to migration and those who remain abroad (e.g. Piore 1979; Stark and Lucas 1988; Musumba, Mjelde and Adumsumilli 2015). Migration is regularly developed as a household strategy, sending one or several household members away in the hope of ensuring the future of others (e.g. Stark 1991; Pine 2014). Collective and family strategies are common in migration. In what he terms the new economics of labour migration, Stark (1991), views migration as an intra-family arrangement, assuming that household income, rather than individual income needs to be maximized: a household strategy, rather than a pure individual choice or strategy. Many studies have been done researching household strategies, specifically in the African case, and the effect of remittances on such families/ villages and/or regions (e.g. Poirine 1997; Hoddiott 1992, 1994; Azam and Gubert 2004; 2008; Pine 2014). As presented by Nieswand (2014) in the *Borgas*[7] Ghana case, that migrants who were abroad were expected to provide goods and material for those at home and their status is highly dependent on whether they are able to fulfil these expectations. The idea of reciprocity is the social rule that people should repay what another person has provided for them; that is, people give back (reciprocate) the kind of treatment they have received from another (Cialdini 2006). The idea of reciprocity in this type of migration may explain why it could be very hard for a person to return without any repayments to relatives and friends, especially since the initial migration is often co-facilitated by relatives and friends.

Stigma, Shame and Failure

In this thesis I draw upon different theories, examining stigma, shame and failure post-return *and* prior, thus while being undocumented abroad. I argue that these themes are very much present prior to the return, whether forced or voluntary. Being undocumented itself lends many attributes of stigma, shame and failure to migrant's daily lives, affecting their perceptions of return and as an attribute once returned.

Stigma, Shame and Failure are current themes especially in research dealing with those that have been forcefully deported (see e.g. Alpes 2011; Schuster and Majidi 2014; Brotherton and Barrios 2009; Drotbohm 2014). Either in relation to stigmatisation after

[7] 'Burgers could be defined as transcontinental migrants who have achieved middle-class status in Ghana by doing working-class jobs in Western Europe or North America' (Nieswand 2014; 403)

deportation (Alpes 2011); stigma after deportation causes remigration (Schuster and Majidi 2014); being expelled out of the society (Brotheron and Barrios 2009) or the illegalisation and labelled as criminals in their home countries (Drothbohm and Hasselberg 2015). Social stigma, defined by Goffman's theory (1963), works as an 'attribute that is deeply discrediting and caused the individual to be classified as the different from others, from the norm, undesirable and therefore to be rejected, reducing his/her identity, from a whole and usual person to be a tainted, discounted one' (Goffman, 1963; 3). Goffman's study has been used by researchers to examine the exclusion of a wide range of social groups labelled as other and treated as tainted by those who are 'normal'.

Return Migration

There has been some research done in return decision-making and returnees preparedness, e.g. Koser and Kuschminder (2015), Cassarino (2004). Carling et al. (2015) 'possibilities and realities of return migration', look at return migration from a wide-angle lens, in the form of refugee repatriation, deportation, retirement return, temporary return and other scenarios of moving back to one's country of origin. Return migration has many faces: 'for some it is a dream, for others, a threat, and still others, a duty' (Carling et al., 2015; 2). I use the analysis of Carling et al. 2015 as my main theory in this thesis. Carling et al. (2015) present these findings: 1. Return intentions are shaped by multiple attachments; 2. Return migration is not simply a personal issue; 3. Potential returnees grapple with uncertainties and distrust; 4. A secure status abroad creates opportunities for return; 5. Return migration is an engagement with time as well as with place

Transnationalism

I draw upon the notion of transnational ties, and especially in the light of those whose disconnected lives that can be shaped and for whom the new identities that can be formed while being abroad, sometimes for a very long period of time, and the feelings of alienation from their home country, as well as the pressure to transfer resources in order to consolidate their identity there. I draw on interviews both with those that are living in the Netherlands, but also those that have returned, in understanding their difficulties.

Transnationalism is often used in migration studies. Mazzucato (2015a,b; 2016) and Mazzucato and Grillo (2008), present this theory, among others. Especially focusing on transnational identities that are the result from the combination of migrants' origin with the identities they acquire in their host countries. According to transnationalists, this combination leads to the development of "double identities" which are sometimes in conflict. It is important to stress that focus on transnational linkages, and the simultaneity of these linkages, splitting migrants' lives into two or more disconnected arenas (Grillo and Mazzucato 2008). Grillo and Mazzucato highlight what they call: "dual engagement" and dual orientation as part of their daily-lived experience, and the significances of transnationalism. Tied into this is the extent to which migrants believe their aspirations might be better fulfilled 'there' than 'here'. 'Within this transnational framework it has been highlighted that migrants transfer resources from their countries of residence to their countries of origin in order to improve or consolidate their class position "back home" ' (Nieswand 2014; 400). As also described by transnationalism is the notion of *alienation* from the country of origin (see e.g. Grillo and Mazzucato 2008; Mazzucato 2015a,b; Brickell and Datta 2011).

1.4. Methodology

In this chapter I discuss the methodologies that I used to obtain information, and construct stories, which are a large part of the thesis. In this thesis qualitative types of research methods are used. Qualitative research within a (social) research project attempts to explore themes such as the attitudes, behavior and experiences of specific social groups or individual people (Carey 2013). It may also seek to investigate a social problem, political processes or set of ethical dilemmas relating to social work practice (Carey 2013). Quantitative research in this research isn't dismissed completely; in some cases 'qualitative' and 'quantitative' types of data may supplement each other and are potentially complementary (Dunn 1983). Research was conducted officially between August 2016 and February 2017. Unofficially the research period has lasted until January 2018, especially since contact and therefore obtaining data with several participants has continued.

The thesis deals with three main stories and types of information: one is information from organisations and institutions that deal with undocumented people in the Netherlands and from organisations and institutions in Nigeria that deal with returnees from the Netherlands. The second are the stories of undocumented Nigerians who are living in the Netherlands. The third are those of Nigerians that had returned from the Netherlands, where they had been undocumented as well. Both these last groups have two things in common: they are all Nigerians and all had been living in the Netherlands undocumented. Obviously those who had returned, are not the same as those interviewed in the Netherlands, thus they cannot be presented as one group. This is methodologically challenging, but not impossible. Therefore I present this thesis in two sections: the Undocumented Nigerians in the Netherlands and the Returnees in Nigeria. I did use the same methods on both groups in order to allow comparison both quantitatively and qualitatively. In general it could be argued that there were many similarities between the two groups, and a 'big assumption' can be made presenting the trajectories of the Nigerians, their lives, restraints and perceptions.

In what follows, I divide the methods in two: in the Netherlands and in Nigeria. I provide detailed accounts of how my data collection worked out in practice.

Netherlands

In the Netherlands my primary data would involve collecting data from two major sources: firstly qualitative types of data collected by interviewing and observing 14 undocumented Nigerians in the Netherlands, and secondly data which I obtained from interviewing and observing institutions that were active with undocumented people in the Netherlands. In order to find these undocumented Nigerians different methods were used.

Become a volunteer

I became a volunteer because for two main reasons:

1. Organisations (such as IOM-Netherlands, Vluchtelingenwerk, DT&V) who actively dealt with undocumented people and rejected asylum seekers wouldn't give me any personal information about Nigerians, due to privacy regulations, nor permission to be present in counselling sessions.
2. My 'target group' was especially those that were undocumented, thus 'out of sight'

Interviews with DT&V, Vluchtelingen werk, IOM and statistics on Nigerians in the Netherlands, confirmed that Nigerians didn't represent a big group among those that were actively involved with these organisations.

I became a volunteer with the We Are Here group in June 2016. The We Are group was set up as an organisation to fight for the basic human rights for rejected asylum seekers, especially for their basic needs called: BBB in the Netherlands, *Bed, Bread and Bath* English (more information about this organisation is given in Chapter 2: the undocumented Nigerian in the Netherlands). The organisation helped them squatting their own shelters, assisting them with their basic needs, sometimes providing little money and giving rejected asylum seekers a buddy who could assist them in filing for another asylum and be someone that provide overall moral support. As a volunteer I became the buddy (and still am) of an Ethiopian rejected asylum seeker, his main aim was to file his second asylum application.

I also became a volunteer at Vluchtelingen Werk, in November 2016 till January 2017. There I participated in their projects 'een nieuw hoofdstuk' (a new chapter) and 'met opgeheven hoofd' (with head held high). I only attended training sessions, meetings and visited an AZC in Amsterdam.

Finding the Nigerians and Snowball Sampling

As a result of frequent meetings with my Ethiopian buddy, primarily in the shelter where he lived in that period, I met many other undocumented people from around the world. I met one Nigerian in the shelter and several more would follow. I was moreover present at several parties that were held in the squatted shelters, which was also valuable in getting to know other Nigerians that were just visiting the party, thus not living there. Through snowball sampling, from different Nigerians; those who were living in the shelters, and those visiting the parties, contact was made with Nigerians that were not even familiar with these shelters or parties. Snowball sampling was the only practical option to locate undocumented Nigerians, as described by Morgan (2008; 112) 'snowball sampling is especially suitable to use when members of a population are hidden and difficult to locate (e.g. samples of the homeless or users of illegal drugs) and these members are closely connected (e.g. organized crime, sharing similar interests, involved in the same group)'. I was fully aware of the disadvantages of sampling this way: yet due to the sensitive topic of the research, and that undocumented Nigerians are a hidden and difficult to locate group, no other option than to use this technique was considered.

Participant observations

Because of my research question, which focuses on the perception of returning, but also most importantly their lives, restraints, and hopes - basically the world and the way they lived their lives in it, it was crucial to grasp *the undocumented world*. As described by Erlandson, Harris et al. (1993; 1) 'as observations enable the researcher to describe existing situations using the five senses, providing a "written photograph" of the situation under the study', these five senses were constantly alert during this study. As mentioned I was present in the shelters frequently, and moved with their inhabitants constantly. Listening to the stories they told each other, the music they played, quickly grabbed the food that was given by volunteers downstairs and how they shaved themselves in front of mirrors, putting perfume on and quickly did their hair, leaving the building to work - acting as if there was really nothing 'irregular' about them. The big fights they had in the building, and the little problems such as finding someone from whom you could borrow you a bike light, since going out in the night without a light could get you caught. They hosted parties – somehow they were able to throw fantastic parties – with minimal resources, yet if everyone contributes a bit, such as bringing an old stereo installation, nothing could stop them from partying away their sorrows. The

parties themselves attracted many other undocumented people and some would contribute by giving free services such as braiding hair or traditional health services.

The other undocumented Nigerians, those that weren't familiar with the shelters, minor participant observation was applied. The limiting factor here was that going to houses, other locations of stay, work locations, was all considered too unsafe for them as well as for me.

Semi-structured and Structured interviews

With 14 Nigerians, both semi-structures and structured interviews were held. The semi-structured interviews were held with during conversations, in most cases several, I had with the Nigerians. These semi-structured conversations were held during meetings in a shelter, café or park and/or during telephone conversations. Besides this there was frequently WhatsApp contact with the Nigerians. In most cases the contact started through WhatsApp, we phoned, met each other and kept in touch during the research. Part of these interviews and conversations was asking the respondents to describe their lives, as Riessman (2002; 333) states that "individuals narratives (….) can tell us as about individuals, as the social spaces they inhabit and the societies they live in.'. This research particular a focus is not just on life histories, narratives, yet these were part of understanding the respondents, their lives, and their societies and eventually understand their perceptions.

Structured interviews were held as well, conducting a survey questionnaire among the 14 Nigerians. Theoretically the structured interview is a qualitative research method. But particularly because I was aware of the disadvantages of snowball sampling, I felt it necessity to ensure that answers could be reliably aggregated and that comparison could be made between the two groups, thus also those that had returned. As quantitative research can also be used in a qualitative research methodology and can supplement and potentially complementary (Dunn, 1983), I applied it within this research.

The second source was the data, which I obtained from interviewing and observing institutions that were active with undocumented people in the Netherlands.

Semi Structured interviews – Institutions

Within this research several organisations that are active dealing with undocumented persons in the Netherlands were approached and successfully interviewed.

DT&V – The national organisation, part of the Ministry of Security and Justice that commissions forced departures. Semi-structured interview with head strategic department and e-mail contact obtaining further information.
IOM-Netherlands – Leading intergovernmental organisation worldwide dealing with migration, part of this organisation's work are the voluntary return programs. Officially all voluntary returns are commission by the IOM. Semi-structured interviews with project officer voluntary assisted returns.
Ministry of Foreign Affairs – Part of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is the sub-Saharan migration department. Semi-structure interview was held with officer.
Vluchtelingen Werk Nederland – Part of Netherlands biggest NGO, are the voluntary return programs that work with partner NGO's worldwide. Semi structured interview with project officer return programs.
We Are Here – an NGO that supports rejected asylum seekers and irregular migrants in Amsterdam – Semi-structured interviews with several founders of the organisation.
IND – who assess, among other requests, asylum requests. Semi-structured interviews on the phone and several e-mail contacts obtaining further information.

Observations were made in the We Are Here shelters and a bit with Vluchtelingen Werk.

Tracking the returnees

Part of the above-mentioned interviews with several organisations was posing the questions: 'could your organisations bring me into contact with your partner organisation in Nigeria?' and 'could your organisation refer me to those that have returned?' and 'could you bring me into contact with some undocumented Nigerians, that are enrolled in your return programs?'

The last question wasn't possible, as mentioned above. Luckily the others were endorsed and authorized by IOM-Netherlands and Vluchtelingen Werk. Contact was made with IOM-Nigeria and Idia Renaissace the partner NGO of Vluchtelingen Werk. IOM-Nigeria gave me contact information of many returnees and gave me permission to (try) to contact them. Many were successfully contacted ahead and several phone calls would follow before meeting them in Nigeria. Idia Renaissance didn't authorize contacting the returnees ahead of time, thus contacts were made for the first time in Nigeria. Moreover again snowball sampling techniques were used within Nigeria, some respondents would actively refer me to people that had returned, in this case it was mostly those that had been deported, thus not voluntary assisted, back to Nigeria.

Nigeria

In the Nigeria my primary data would involve collecting data from two major sources: firstly qualitative types of data collected by interviewing 19 Nigerians that had returned from the Netherlands, where they had been undocumented. And secondly data which I obtained from interviewing and observing institutions that were active dealing with returnees from the Netherlands, among other countries.

With 19 Nigerians, both semi-structured and structured interviews were held. The semi-structured interviews were held with during conversations, in most cases several, I had with Nigerians. These semi-structured conversations were held during phone calls we had, and in IOM-Nigeria office, Idia Renaissance office or University of Nigeria Enugu campus. Again just as in the Netherlands, I asked respondents to describe their lives, using life history techniques.

Structured interviews were held as well, conducting a survey, questionnaire among the 19 Nigerians. The questionnaires were the same as used among the undocumented Nigerians in the Netherlands, except there were also entries listing: life after return.

The second source was the data, which I obtained from interviewing and observing institutions that were active with returnees from the Netherlands.

IOM-Nigeria, based in Lagos – intergovernmental organisation working with IOM Netherlands among others around the world. Semi-structure interviews with different staff members and observations made in the office

Idia Renaissance, based in Benin City – local NGO, working with other NGO's around Europe. Semi-structured interviews with different staff members and observations made in the office and training centres, that would also host returnees.

NAPTIP, location Benin City – National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons tries create awareness for human trafficking, prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons, especially women and children. Semi-structured interviews with one staff members, NGO staff members actively cooperating with NAPTIP, based in Italy and observations made during a meeting among NAPTIP officials, NGO workers from Italy and CUSUDOW

CUSUDOW, based in Benin City – a shelter for women that had become the victim of human trafficking, especially in Europe. Semi-structured interviews with different staff members and observation in the shelter.

Secondary sources of data were utilized using in-depth literature review methods. A wide range of literature dealing with topics such as Migration, Return migration, Deportations among many others were utilized at the African Study Centre (ASC). And public statistic sources such as from EUROSTAT and DT&V were utilized as well.

Method of analysis

My data consists of several different types. The interviews, surveys, informal talks, phone calls and participant observation.

The surveys have been analysed using SP66, Statistical Package for the Social Sciences.

The data gathered during the interviews and phone calls were noted down in notebooks, during the interviews and phone calls. The data gathered during the informal talks and participant observations was noted down in notebooks afterwards.

All the notes in my notebooks have been digitalized, in most cases, the same day the conversations, events and occasions took place. The surveys have been digitalized as well. During the digitalisations categories were made per respondent, and per respondent listing the type of data and date. Afterwards per respondents a separate note was made, describing the life history per person. Per organisation, respondents were categorized and therein the types of data. Other notes were categorized per occasion or event, listing the type of data and date. In every note in my notebook or digitalized version I highlighted the most remarkable ones.

In order to analyse all this data I printed out per respondent all the notes and tied them together, creating a file for each respondent. I also had each individual's narrative on a separate page. All the respondents had their own little books in a way.

Limitations of data

As described before, using snowball sampling techniques among undocumented Nigerians had its disadvantages, I was fully aware of the disadvantages of sampling this way: in this case there was no way to know the total size of the overall population; the lack of definite knowledge as to whether or not the sample is an accurate reading of the target population and that someone else has more difficulties cross-checking the data (Morgan 2008). Moreover the method is heavily reliant on the skill of the individual conducting the actual sampling and to what extent participants want to participate. Yet due to the sensitive topic of the thesis, this

was considered the only way to research this group. Despite all the disadvantages and limitations, the overall results and volumes of data stood out in this case.

As described this thesis consists of two types of information: those undocumented here in the Netherlands and those that had returned. It wasn't possible to follow someone that was here in the Netherlands and that had returned to Nigeria within this period of fieldwork. Consequently the analyses that are made are 'making a big assumption' presenting the trajectories of the Nigerian returnees.

The opportunity to taking photos was, given the sensitivity of the lives of both the returnees and undocumented Nigerians, very limited. Those that did approve me taking a photo explicitly asked me not to publish it in any form. Therefore in this thesis there are very few photos.

In this chapter I have discussed the methodological underpinning of this thesis. I presented the methods used, sources of data, methods of analysis and limitations.

1.5. Reflexivity, Ethics and Risk

'Not taking risk is risky'[8]. This is what Amaechi told me when he explained why he took the risk in going to Europe. But this sentence could be applied to numerous events. I felt the same during my research period often, although it was a total different context than his: had I not taken any risks, I wouldn't have had anything – at least no thesis.

My chosen methods and my research project gave rise, in my case, to many ethical, risky and reflective challenges.

Reflexivity has emerged as a central and critical concept in the methodology of qualitative social research (Day 2012). Reflexivity, in simple terms, in 'an awareness of the researcher's role in the practice of research and that the way this is influenced by the object of the research, the researcher to acknowledge the way in which he or she affect both the research process and outcomes' (Symon and Cassell 2012; 72). As research is primarily an enterprise of knowledge construction, the researcher, together with the participants, is engaged in producing knowledge (Guillemin and Gillam 2014). Moreover qualitative researchers must be aware of and explicit about their own social background as well as their political and ideological assumptions (Harding 1991). Often this involves a process of looking inwards and thinking about how our own life experiences and significant events that may have impacted upon our thinking.[9] As Harding (1991; 230) puts it: 'our social and political locations affect our research. Our research interests and the research questions we pose, as well as the questions we discard, reveal something about who we are'.

Ethical procedures in form of listing applications among organizations that you wish to obtain information from were part of this research as well. You file a form and sometimes very luckily get approval to continue doing research. But within a large part of this research there were no formal ethical procedures: you find yourself in a situation wherein your ethics are practiced in 'real life', not on a form, and 'out of sight'. Social science researchers are often placed at risk (Lee-Treweek Linkgole 2000). As described in methodology, a large part of this research was conducted using snowball sampling- diving into a world that was hidden and difficult to locate and that that seemed completely without boundaries: 'lawless'. Social research in practice, involved entering other people's workplaces, homes and communities

[8] Interview Amaechi, 20-01-2017 Lagos IOM Office
[9] Malcolm Carey, *The social work dissertation: using small-scale qualitative methodology* (e-book), Maidenhead: McGraw-Hill Education 2013, p. 117, accessed January 2016.

and we are often unaware of the threats of the field until we have been there for some time (Lee-Treweek Linkgole 2000). These dangers were often experienced during this research. Lee Treweek Linkgole (2000) depict types of social research where everyday life in the city, focusing upon street life, male dominated cultures, gangs and other groups in which the majority of people have little contact, provides us with a view of another world with different rules, values and experiences of risk. Along with researchers' risk, ethical tensions can be constantly unheard in order to provide vivid and alluring descriptions.

As described I initially entered the world of the undocumented Nigerian as a volunteer. I explicitly told the organization that I was also conducting research and that: 'I was looking for Nigerians'. Without any hurdles they told me to go my own way in looking for them. In practice, I did so without realizing how difficult this would be and not exactly knowing before hand what kind of sometimes dangerous situations I would enter. You enter a 'lawless' world in a way, wherein you are constantly aware of your need to be reflective and how you should present yourself in order to become as 'invisible' as possible but still mentioning you are doing research, which is ethically challenging. This all wasn't always easy. You find yourself constantly shifting between these ethical dilemmas you are confronted with.

I will try to illustrate this by telling a small story:

You go to one of the shelters, looking as normal as possible – nothing official at all. You act as normal as possible and start talking with one you know is Nigerian. You start to feel a bit guilty, since your intentions are not only having a normal chit-chat. You see people in a dire and vulnerable situation. You shift constantly from what is ethical and morally right and what is not. But you need to cross that boundary in order to enter this 'undocumented world'.

Personal risks often accompany research-related duties and these where not normal 9 to 5 duties. Frequently I would ride a bike in the evening to a café in another part of the city, because the subject had time in between his jobs and I didn't want to miss the opportunity. Some preferred to meet in a park, a neutral location and others insisted that we met in their homes. This last request I never approved, because the personal risk seemed too high. Moreover my phone was a 'hotline' for that period, and Nigerians were mostly 'active' in the evenings…

I was aware of my social background: being female; brought up in Europe; holding the right papers in this case and being raised non-religious. Conversely, I was speaking with male Nigerians that didn't hold the right papers and were commonly Christians. This role and interaction between me and them inevitably coloured the knowledge that was produced

(Guillemin and Gillam 2014). Sometimes my social background would be an advantage in the sense that Nigerians seemed to trust me, didn't fear me and didn't have to pretend to be something that they weren't. In other cases Nigerians would ignore my supposed neutrality in a way, and tried to take advantage as well, asking for goods, money, cigarettes, sex and marriage was common. There were numerous encounters with Nigerians that entailed this type 'communication' that aren't included within this thesis. But these encounters were often risky as well; mostly I could sense the intentions and problems before real contact was established. But sometimes I crossed the boundaries at my own personal risk in order to get my story:

I approached him at one of the party's; you start talking casually, since you have learned talking about returning or institutions will stop the contact immediately. You are much more familiar with the best way of approaching Nigerians. You learned about the popular music and start a conversation about this. His intentions are clearly not the same as I have. I explain I'm doing research among undocumented Nigerians. You see him crossing a boundary as well: okay well she's doing research, but maybe we could benefit both from this. We exchange phone numbers. Many Whats-app messages and conversations would follow. I constantly receive messages of the prayer of the day; he sends me nice selfies captioned with some bible passage. But this isn't uncommon. Your phone at that moment is a hot line, making sure you network to the max in order to keep in touch with them and follow them along their journeys. Yes he wants to meet me. We were supposed to meet in the shelter downstairs, but he changes the plan: he doesn't feel comfortable talking downstairs. I cross my own boundary by going to his room, to make sure I inform two others in the building I am there and that they should check on me after 10 minutes. I enter the room, tells me we should pray together on his bed before we could 'talk'. Luckily I could calm him down and quickly my 'helpers' entered the room, checking with me.

Is it really important information that helps straighten the analysis of the thesis? No. It the story worth telling? Yes. Because it illustrates the tension between taking personal risk, ethical tensions and the urge to enter a world that most people are unfamiliar with.

Besides the daily hurdles and often-extreme chaos in the Nigerian cities and modes of traveling were often experiences in itself. Speaking with the respondents that had returned was organizationally much easier since the meetings were set up in an earlier stage in cooperation with official organizations and were held in official buildings, where I had to list the names of the respondents, the times they would arrive, with guards in and outside the building and extensive body checking in the IOM Lagos case. Those that were approached

through snowball sampling were also interviewed at official buildings. But I was aware that my role a female researcher with a nametag on the other side of the desk in a nice building with air conditions in the nice Lagos neighborhoods - wasn't exactly representing the world they were living in. I was afterwards very grateful that I had the opportunity to speak to many of them ahead of time and afterwards on the phone frequently, this gave me such valuable information and insights.

Talking with returnees entailed a lot of frustration, fears, regrets and even anger. Frequently tears would flow and I wasn't prepared for these heavy emotional responses. After a short period I found myself constantly in an ethically challenging situation wherein I knew when I would pose certain question: answers could be followed up by a lot of tears and anger. My role as a female empathizer and thoughtful listener to their stories consequently also gave rise to requests such as visas; goods and money.

In this chapter I tried to reflect on my fieldwork experience, my own role, risks, ethics and my own personal struggles in an open and honest way. It hopefully gives the reader some necessary background information and context.

2. Towards Returns

Policies and Institutions

This chapter is partially descriptive, discussing the different institutions and policies dealing with irregular migrants and asylum seekers in the Netherlands. It discusses how Dutch law is enforced and what kind of intergovernmental organizations; national institutions and NGOs there are assisting rejected asylum seekers and irregular migrants. It also reflects on the organizations within Nigeria that assist returnees (from Europe). Although this chapter differs greatly from those that will follow, it is important to make this so-called: 'return landscape' visible, especially in relation to the lives of those that are here undocumented, those that are considering returning and those that have returned to Nigeria. The central question in this chapter is: *'What is the institutional context of organizing and assisting returnees to their homeland?'*

2.1. Dutch Policies

Dutch law makes the distinction between immigrants, people who come from other countries to the Netherlands for employment, family reunification or other purposes, and asylum seekers. Not all foreign nationals are automatically allowed to settle in the Netherlands. To settle here, you may require a residence permit, which you can obtain under certain conditions.[10] The Netherlands issues different types of documents to aliens (immigrants) such as a residence permit, aliens identity card a privileged person's identity card, and to asylum seekers, who may be given asylum in the Netherlands if they face persecution in their own country on grounds of religion; ethnic or social group; nationality or political beliefs. People can also be granted asylum if they are at risk of being subjected to torture, or inhumane or degrading treatment, or if the situation in their home country isn't safe enough, for instance if there is a war.[11] Special rules apply for unaccompanied foreign nationals under the age of 18. The Immigration and Naturalization Service (IND), under the Ministry of Justice, assesses all

[10] https://www.government.nl/topics/immigration, accessed December 2017.

[11] https://www.government.nl/topics/asylum-policy/question-and-answer/eligible-for-asylum-in-the-netherlands, accessed December 2017.

requests concerning Dutch immigration.[12] Part of the procedure is the list of 'safe countries' - persons from those countries will almost never be granted asylum.[13] According to the Dutch Immigration service there is a significant influx of requests from those countries[14], and to ease the pressure on the Immigration Services such requests are subject to streamlined assessments, rapid deportation and are entitled to no voluntary assisted support from the IOM. A few African countries are regarded as safe: Togo; Senegal; Morocco; Ghana and Algeria. The IND makes a distinction between refugees (asylum seekers who have been granted asylum) and (economic) migrants, those who choose to move not because of direct threat of persecution or death, but mainly to improve their lives by finding work, (better) education, family reunion, or other reasons. After a negative asylum decision people are urged to leave the country voluntarily or may be deported. In practice however, asylum seekers have the right to file a second, third or fourth asylum application, which can postpone their return. Moreover some simply cannot return, since they don't have any official documents, are stateless, or their countries of origin don't accept them as citizens or don't cooperate in accepting returnees.

2.2. Enforcement of Dutch Law

Forced departure is the responsibility of DT&V part of the Ministry of Security and Justice. The main aim of DT&V is to urge people to return voluntarily, but when a person doesn't want to return voluntarily, return can be enforced (more information on the legal procedure is available their website)[15]. DT&V is not the most popular organization within the Netherlands; it has received its fair share of negative media attention and activists have frequently vandalized the houses of staff members, especially directors that work for DT&V.[16] In one interview I had with a DT&V staff member, she told me that she is afraid

[12] See 'Asylum Procedure in the Netherlands' – https://ind.nl/Documents/Asylum_procedure_in_the_Netherlands.pdf, accessed December 2017.
[13] See list of safe countries, this list can change frequently. https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/asielbeleid/vraag-en-antwoord/lijst-van-veilige-landen-van-herkomst, accessed December 2017.
[14] https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/asielbeleid/vraag-en-antwoord/wat-gebeurt-er-met-asielaanvragen-van-mensen-uit-veilige-landen. Accessed December 2017.
[15] https://www.dienstterugkeerenvertrek.nl/binaries/web-94800-processchema_tcm49-129034.pdf, accessed December 2017.
[16] See e.g. the case of former director Rhodia Maas, https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2016/10/21/een-kinderpardon-vind-ik-heel-onrechtvaardig-4931336-a1527888

and is explicitly trying to hide her identity and in particular her address.[17] The organization has been known for its bureaucratic, non-empathetic, direct force, and being rather narrow-minded. According to Head of Strategic of DT&T: *'We (DT&V) just implement Dutch Law. If someone's asylum has been rejected- the IND reviews that very well - he or she is eligible to return. Everyone can return, really. We just implement the decision that is made.*[18]. Nigerians in the Netherlands, as we will see, seemed to be very aware that their nationality made them unlikely to receive asylum in the Netherlands and therefore avoided applying. DT&V tries to persuade people to return voluntary, sometimes for too long, the staff member thought.[19] The DT&V prefers voluntary returns, as they are far less costly, than forced returns.[20] But the problem was also that the procedure took more time than needed, since they had to return anyway, and that asylum seekers could always opt for another asylum request, therefore postponing their return, yet new policies had made it possible for new last-minute requests to be evaluated more quickly by the IND, so that they could be deported sooner. Although DT&V tries its best to implement Dutch law, the staff member estimated that about 50 percent of the people that are urged to leave, leave for an unknown destination.[21]

Unfortunately the interview with DT&V confirmed all the prejudices of the media and public, and that may have reached the Nigerians as well. Staff seemed extremely bureaucratic: *'we just follow the procedures'* and non-empathetic: *'sometimes people really seem to cooperate, and then they suddenly stop cooperating. We had cases of people that rub themselves in with their own dung'* and *'yes of course those children that have lived here for years have adjusted, but so do children of parents who work for an embassy, for example, they also move again, they will adapt again wherever they go'* and defiantly narrow minded: *'I don't understand it anyway. Most of these people pay smugglers to come here. If you can do that you are not really a refugee are you? Refugees are people that flee their country immediately out of war?*' and *'the countries that don't cooperate (in taking forced migrants) deliberately don't do that – because they receive a lot of remittances from the people here'* and *'Nigerians? Haha. They always have their own truth. It's not without reason we call them lie-gerians'.*[22]

[17] Interview with head strategic advice, DT&V, 5-09-2016 The Hague Ministry of Justice
[18] Interview with head strategic advice, DT&V, 5-09-2016 The Hague Ministry of Justice
[19] Interview with head strategic advice, DT&V, 5-09-2016 The Hague Ministry of Justice
[20] Interview with head strategic advice, DT&V, 5-09-2016 The Hague Ministry of Justice
[21] Interview with head strategic advice, DT&V, 5-09-2016 The Hague Ministry of Justice
[22] Interview with head strategic advice, DT&V, 5-09-2016 The Hague Ministry of Justice

Another force that can play a role in returns is the Dutch police. When an undocumented person commits a crime (which can be minor), and identity checks with the *Afdeling Vreemdelingenpolitie, Identificatie en Mensenhandel* (AVIM) reveal the person doesn't hold the right papers, they can be placed into special detention Dienst Justutiele Inrichtengen (DJI) centers, awaiting their return. The same counts for the Dutch *Koninklijke Marechaussee (KMAR)* who are also responsible for border patrol. Sometimes when refugees ask for asylum right at the airport or a border, they are responsible for first care. But they are also responsible for handing over 'strangers' to foreign authorities, and also for checking identities, visas, documents and passports (see for more information the official website).[23] There are three detention centers in the Netherlands: 1. *Justitioneel Complex Schiphol* (located near the national airport in the Netherlands); 2. *Detentiecentrum Rotterdam*; 3. *Detentiecentrum Zeist*, that also holds a closed center for families with minor children or (GGV) or unaccompanied minors (AMV). DT&V couldn't give exact numbers on how many Nigerians are in these detention centers, but stated that the numbers were low, at that moment, whilst East European nationals were highly represented.[24]

On the political side, the institutions mentioned above, e.g. DT&V have the task of implementing Dutch and EU-foreign policy. In the Nigerian case, the Dutch government has good relations in terms of migration management: the Nigerian authorities work closely with the Dutch government in terms of facilitating and accepting (forced) returnees.[25] A member of the Ministry of Foreign affairs explains why these relations are so good: *'we, as the Netherlands, are the biggest trade partners from Nigeria within Europe, and Nigeria is our biggest partner in Africa. The importance and stakes are high for both parties'*.[26] The officer at the Ministry of Foreign affairs claimed that in relation to migration management the Ministry of Foreign Affairs takes the lead and not the Ministry of Justice (DT&V), which isn't the case for every country. This is because, as mentioned, maintaining the good relations is important for both sides. But in the end the officer stated: *'in the end its about what can we offer (as a Ministry) for them (Nigeria) in order for them to corporate in accepting migrants, that's just how it works.'*[27].

[23] Interview with head strategic advice, DT&V, 5-09-2016 The Hague Ministry of Justice
[24] Interview with head strategic advice, DT&V, 5-09-2016 The Hague Ministry of Justice
[25] Interview with head strategic advice, DT&V, 5-09-2016 The Hague Ministry of Justice
[26] Interview Ministry of Foreign affairs staff member, 21-11-2016 The Hague Ministry of Foreign Affairs
[27] Interview Ministry of Foreign affairs staff member, 21-11-2016 The Hague Ministry of Foreign Affairs

2.3. Intergovernmental Organizations, NGOs, and National Institutions

Established in 1951, the IOM is the leading intergovernmental organization in the field of migration and works closely with governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental partners. In September 2016, it became a related organization of the United Nations. With 166 member states, a further 8 states holding observer status and offices in over 100 countries, 'IOM works to help ensure the orderly and humane management of migration, to promote international cooperation on migration issues, to assist the search for practical solutions to migration problems and to provide humanitarian assistance to migrants in need, including refugees and internally displaced people.'[28] The organization is responsible for the Voluntary Return programs, which will be discussed in more detail in the next section, other functions include refugee resettlement and counter-trafficking programs and, under its technical cooperation on migration management programs, providing technical assistance to enable source and transit governments to standardize and improve their border controls, travel documents and detection mechanisms for illegal entrants. The IOM maintains an office in The Hague the Netherlands, as well as in Lagos, Nigeria. IOM's operations in Europe are heavily funded by European governments and the EU (Webber 2011). The IOM can be seen as the leading organization in the world dealing with all the different aspects of migration. There is some debate whether voluntary return programs are sustainable or even desirable. Scholars like Webber (2011) and De Bono (2016) state that the assistance that the IOM provides to returnees is by its nature very short-term policy. The main point is that the IOM cannot ensure that justice is done in returnees' home countries, nor ensure political stability or personal security to those returning home (Webber 2011), several studies (e.g. Schuster and Majidi 2014; Rogge 1994; Kibreab 2000; Flahaux 2017**)** which will be discussed in more detail later in the research, have shown that those who return voluntary can face many difficulties in terms of reintegration, social exclusion; targeting and extortion. Different scholars have also raised the question of whether the return packages are really that 'voluntary', what Black et al. (2004) called the 'stick and carrot' strategy of policy-making, thus those who choose voluntary return programs do so most commonly because of the threat of deportation, and Koch (2013; 910) 'carrying out return under compulsion, and referring to these as voluntary', referring to the fact that there isn't that much 'voluntary' under these conditions. Yet some scholars, among them de Bono (2016) and Schuster and Majidi (2014)

[28] See for more information their website: https://www.iom.int/about-iom, accessed December 2017.

argue that forced deportation is much less human rights friendly, since voluntary return carries much less risk of human right violation than forced return. Still others, such as Black et al. (2004) and Koch (2013), see no difference between the two. Comparative research on the difference between them is very limited and deserves much more scholarly attention.

Another part of migration management are the numerous Dutch NGOs and institutions. Some, such as We Are Here*,* are proactive in highlighting so-called migration mismanagement, fighting for the rights of undocumented people and refugees. As nation-wide institution, COA seeks to provide for the basic needs of refugees and those who claim asylum in redemption centers. Vluchtelingen Werk, another NGO, ensures the rights to a fair asylum procedure, access to adequate housing, education, health care and work. Vluchtelingen Werk, as an NGO with one national office, 8 regional offices, and 310 local branches, is very active within the Netherlands. One part of the NGO's work is the return programs, for those who have absolutely no prospects and/or are considering return. Programs like: *Met Opgeheven hoofd* (with head held high) and *Een nieuw hoofdstuk* (a new chapter) are part of the return programs the NGO offers. The NGO's target group is not just rejected asylum seekers, but also the irregular migrants that are out of sight.[29] Trying to be as humane as possible, providing as good a return as possible, the NGO is also bound by targets that they have to meet in order to maintain the funding from the AMEF-EU funds.[30] This particular NGO works closely with local NGOs in the countries of return, providing a more sustainable and humane return than other organizations such as the IOM, they claim.[31] Kalir and Wissink (2015) argue that these NGOs, essentially mirroring the objectives of national institutions such as DT&V, serve to legitimize the deportation of illegalized migrants and/or voluntary return programs. Though such civil-society organizations as Vluchtelingen Werk, whose volunteers and salaried workers aim to contest state deportation policies and assist illegalized migrants with different return programs (Kalir and Wissink, 2015), strive to be as humane as possible, they remain bound by these targets and goals. They present themselves as 'human', but perhaps don't differ that much from other institutions.

[29] Meeting Vluchtelingen Werk, *Terugkeer*, 2-12-2016 Amsterdam

[30] Targets were: 750 returnees each year, the target wasn't met that year (2016), Meeting Vluchtelingen Werk, *Terugkeer*, 2-12-2016 Amterdam

[31] Interview staff member Vluchtelingen Werk, 16-09-2016 Amsterdam Vluchtelingen Werk

2.4. Return Regimes

Voluntary assisted returns are all commissioned by the IOM. They provide a Basic Program Return and Emigration assistance from the Netherlands (REAN). Counseling, tickets, support with obtaining travel documents, assistance at Schiphol airport and, when needed, support with transit and arrival. The REAN program also provides cash money (€200 for an adult and € 40 for children). To qualify for REAN assistance, a national has to be of a country eligible to assistance. Migrants from countries of the European Union and certain other countries are excluded from the REAN program (see REAN country list)[32]. Some nationalities may also qualify, besides the basic REAN program, for Reintegration Assistance- Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR-NL) (see list AVRR-NL country list)[33] including assistance in kind, a reintegration budget of maximum 1,800 euro for adults, 2,800 for minor children returning with their family and 2,800 for unaccompanied minor children. This money is not paid in cash, but is given in goods and/ or services (so called 'in kind' assistance). The amount can be used for an income generating activity (such as a small business), education and, if necessary, on accommodation. Before departure, the returnee will prepare a reintegration plan with an IOM counselor and afterwards the returnee is monitored. They also receive cash assistance to a maximum of 300 euro of their total budget. There are also other organizations and NGOs, such as Vluchtelingen Werk, and Bridge to Better who provide their own voluntarily assisted return packages to migrants, yet the basic return program (REAN) is always commissioned by the IOM.

Forced departure is the responsibility of the DT&V, part of the Ministry of Security and Justice. In short DT&V assesses whether return is possible; prepares a return plan; sets up a deportation date; holds evaluation meetings with the deportee; provides, when needed, temporary traveling documents: laissez passer; informs the court; checks if there are no new facts; and keeps in touch with local authorities. Those that are deported from the Netherlands, in such cases, are placed on a regular passenger flight. In certain conditions, such as with minors and those with a medical file or when there are indications that the deportee will resist, the KMAR will escort the deportee along the journey. In come cases, for example when there is a high rate of deportees with the same nationality, a dedicated flight can be

[32] http://www.iom-nederland.nl/en/voluntary-return/return-programme-rean/rean-country-list, accessed December 2017.
[33] http://www.iom-nederland.nl/en/voluntary-return/reintegration-assistance/avrr-nl-country-list, accessed December 2017

chartered. More frequently joint deportations with other countries in the EU are set in cooperation with Frontex, 'picking up' Nigerians in different locations around Europe. According DT&V Nigerians are preferably put on a reserved flight or with escort, since they generally tended to cause noise disturbance and were frequently uncooperative during deportations.[34] Research on the prevalence of use of force, and even the violation of human rights varies, Ratia and Notermans (2012) state that it varies between situations, and country. There have been stories of Nigerian women being handcuffed with extreme force and yelled at during the departures and flights (Ratia and Notermans 2012). In most cases, the deportees are taken handcuffed onto a plane, whereupon the cuffs are removed (Ratia and Notermans 2012).

2.5. Meanwhile in Nigeria…

There is a clear institutional structure dedicated to assisting people to their homelands, either by force or voluntarily, from the Netherlands. Whether they are functioning optimally is not a question for this research. Dutch relations with Nigeria are good and there are well-established organizations within Nigeria that assist voluntary assisted returnees. The central question in this section is: 'How do institutions and organisations assist, guide and perceive the problems returnees face?' Nigeria itself has many problems as a country, most visibly scams, corruption, poor governance; overpopulation; Boko Haram; poverty; and trafficking just to name a few. Nigeria doesn't have a good name when it comes to good governance or care for its citizens. Organizations, institutions and NGOs also face these problems when trying to reintegrate returnees, prevent remigration, and fight human trafficking. These structural social and economic problems within Nigeria are not the main subject of this research, and are therefore only touched upon.

Assistance on the ground

The deportees, upon arrival at Lagos International airport, are received by officers of the Nigerian Immigration Service (NIS), the police and sometimes the National Agency for the prohibition of Trafficking (NAPTIP). Occasionally the Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria (FAAN) and the National Drug Law Enforcement Agency (NDLEA) also receive the

[34] Interview with head strategic advice, DT&V, 5-09-2016 The Hague Ministry of Justice

deportees. In general the deportees are profiled by the immigration authorities and are allowed to depart to their destination of choice. Those that are deported receive no assistance and don't have access to organizations that assist voluntary assisted returnees.

Voluntary assisted returns are as described all commissioned by the IOM. Even so some choose a 'return package' through another NGO, such as Idia Renaissance. They are assisted on arrival by one of the IOM staff- members or other NGO staff member in the host country. They are assisted with their travel to their destination and are hosted in the office to receive reintegration assistance in terms of an in-kind reintegration budget, counseling, sometimes training, and 6 months monitoring after their return. The main aim was to spend the reintegration budget on starting a little business, in order to let the returnee generate an income and become economically independent. All the funding and proposed projects are commissioned by IOM head office in Geneva, according to an IOM-Nigeria staff member they frequently visit the office in Nigeria to see how the projects are running and decide whether to renew their project and funding, but this would most probably be the case; since there are so many people returning back to Nigeria.[35] Nigerians that returned from the Netherlands were eligible to receive not only the basic REAN-program, but also the AVRR-NL assistance. Moreover those that returned between 2014 and 2016 received extra money (1200 euros) as part of the 'Restart Program', this in no longer the case for the new arrivals however, since the program has closed for lack of funds.[36]

I had the opportunity to visit two organizations that frequently assist and guide voluntary returnees from the Netherlands in Nigeria. One was IOM-Nigeria, based in Lagos, which works with, among other many other countries worldwide, IOM the Netherlands. The second was the NGO Idia Renaissance, located in Benin City, which works with different NGOs from Europe, including the above-mentioned NGO Vluchtelingen Werk. I also visited a national institution that fights human trafficking and a shelter for female (ex-prostitutes) returned from Europe. The difference between the two worlds couldn't be more striking. One the one side Dutch officials in nice suits, talking about their migration policies and targets, and on the other side Nigerian case workers that were carrying out those procedures, dealing with the outcomes of such policies on the ground itself, in the context of Nigeria's problems.

Being in the IOM-Lagos office frequently afforded many opportunities to see how these voluntary assisted returns were implemented. The staff members were very open and welcoming while hosting me at their office. All the staff members had their particular regions

[35] Interview IOM-Nigeria staff member, 19-01-2017 Lagos IOM Office
[36] Interview IOM-Nigeria staff member, 19-01-2017 Lagos IOM Office

from which they assisted returnees. I worked closely with the staff member that assisted the returnees from the Netherlands. At that time (January and February 2017) and still now, there was a high influx of Nigerian returnees from transit countries, such as Libya and Niger.[37] Assisting the returnees from those transit countries was at that moment the main occupation of the office.[38] The officer told that the rates of the voluntary assisted returnees from Europe had dropped and those from transit countries had increased. Nonetheless there were a lot of returnees from other European countries such as Italy, France and Germany. The returnees from the Netherlands were a relatively small group compared to the other returnees. The IOM officer explained that Nigerians from transit countries and nearby European countries such as Italy, Greece and Spain, were generally younger, whilst returnees from the Netherlands were usually among the oldest. A possible explanation for this trend is that the conditions of stay in the Netherlands for undocumented people are quite good compared to other European countries and transit countries.[39] They came quiet at young age, usually early twenties, and are able to make some kind of money. This would be confirmed over the course of the research. Among the returnees from the Netherlands the proportion of those aged of 40-plus was high, as was the average duration of stay abroad. Concerning how the returnees coped after their return and how the assistance worked to their advantage the remarks were mixed. According to several IOM staff members, the key factor was how their families helped in terms of acceptance, housing and sometimes helping them to get work. Returnees that lacked a network, either family or friends, generally had much more difficulty reintegrating.[40] Housing was important since the money the returnee receives which could also be used for accommodation, was only enough to pay rent for a short period. Officers told me that there was clearly an advantage when returnees didn't have to spend their assistance money entirely on housing, instead of starting a business for example. An equally important factor was the attitude of the returnee. There is a limit to the role the IOM can play here; eventually people have to do it themselves.[41] When the returnee didn't feel returning was really voluntary but only chosen to avoid deportation, reintegration was much more difficult. Returnees would be: '*extremely difficult, not cooperating, and just pity themselves'*.[42] Another officer said after a few weeks the new businesses set up by returnees were often a disaster: *'many are just not*

[37] Interview IOM-Nigeria staff member, 19-01-2017 Lagos IOM Office
[38] Interview IOM-Nigeria staff member, 19-01-2017 Lagos IOM Office
[39] Interview IOM-Nigeria staff member, 17-01-2017 Lagos IOM Office
[40] Interview IOM-Nigeria staff member, 17-01-2017 Lagos IOM Office
[41] Phone Interview IOM-Netherlands staff member, 26-08-2016
[42] Interview IOM-Nigeria staff member, 17-01-2017 Lagos IOM Office

successful in it, they just don't have the skills, it's not that easy to set up a thriving business in this city (Lagos). They have been away, sometimes for so long, - what do they know?'[43]

The reintegration program includes 6 months of monitoring of the returnees by means of meetings and/or phone calls. IOM officers in Lagos and Netherlands explained that the IOM frequently loses contact with the returnees, monitoring them for a long period proved difficult, as a staff member said: *'They come, collect the money and leave'.*[44] Returnees would move, change their phone numbers and lose contact. The officer also stated that it was not unusual for returnees to decide to return to Europe very quickly: *'Some just come, leave numbers of their relatives and return to Europe, we have several such cases'.*[45] Their experiences and how they coped varied, but he stressed that for some people the programs really work and that it is good they exist, without any help at all it would be far more difficult. The officer told me that for many Nigerians it was also difficult on the emotional side: they suffered from shame. Often they had borrowed money to go to Europe from family etc. returning empty handed is not easy.

Idia Renaissance, another NGO I visited frequently, likewise assisted returnees. Located in Benin City the hub of human trafficking in Nigeria, the NGO tried its best to assist Nigerians from all over Europe. In Benin there was more time to talk, the pace was a bit slower than in Lagos. Established by Mrs. Eki Igbinedion to address the scourge of human trafficking and its attendant problems, a major concern in Edo State, the NGO became active in different fields such as: research; advocacy and mobilization; education; youth empowerment; HIV/Aids programs; training and capacity building (also preventive) and especially focused on young women and girls and Voluntary Return Programs.[46] I visited several classes for returnees, victims and those who were vulnerable, especially girls and young women. By training them to learn a skill, the NGO believed that that it made their position stronger, economically independent and less likely to migrate out of Nigeria or become a victim of human trafficking. They saw their center as a preventative and curative place, after graduation the NGO tried to get them a job. Many classes were full of young women, especially the 'fashion' class, learning how to sow was very popular. The atmosphere was good; teachers proudly showed what they had learned and the girls smiled. Voluntary assisted returnees could benefit from enrolling in these classes. The NGO also encouraged them to start their own businesses and assisted them in buying goods. All the

[43] Interview IOM-Nigeria staff member, 02-02-2017 Lagos IOM Office
[44] Interview IOM-Nigeria staff member, 19-01-2017 Lagos IOM Office
[45] Interview IOM-Nigeria staff member, 19-01-2017 Lagos IOM Office
[46] see for more information: https://idiarenaissance.org/how-we-do-it/, accessed December 2017.

return money was given in installments or in-kind. According to the project officer, they were more personal and took their time in order to let people rehabilitate better. They visited families, or tried to find them, and spoke with them if necessary. One of the project officers explained: *'Sometimes people have sold the houses their parents live in, in order to migrate to Europe – yes there is a lot of shame….'*[47]. The returnees were not the only ones with problems of course, Benin City itself was a problem. Edo State has bad reputation and received significant attention in media, political, and popular discourses as the place from which Nigerian sex workers originate (Plambech 2014; 2016). Indeed, it is estimated that up to 85 percent of Nigerian women selling sex in Europe originated in or passed through Benin on their way to Europe (Plambech 2014, 2016; IOM report 2011). Currently IOM estimates that over the past three years, IOM Italy has seen an almost 600% increase in the number of potential sex trafficking victims arriving in Italy by sea (IOM report 2017). With over 11,000 potential Nigerian women victims having arrived in 2016 (IOM report 2017). Among male migrant Nigerians those from Edo State also made up a disproportionate fraction (UN Migration Rapport 2017). Walking through Benin City shows many billboards warning of the dangers of human trafficking. As an NGO worker told me in Benin: *'Trafficking is like eating, everybody does it'.*[48] Trafficking in these cases most probably refers to brokers; the difference between brokers and human trafficking is clarified in paragraph 3.4. Besides that, human trafficking is also deeply rooted in Benin society: even women here encourage their daughters/siblings to go abroad, and make money.[49]

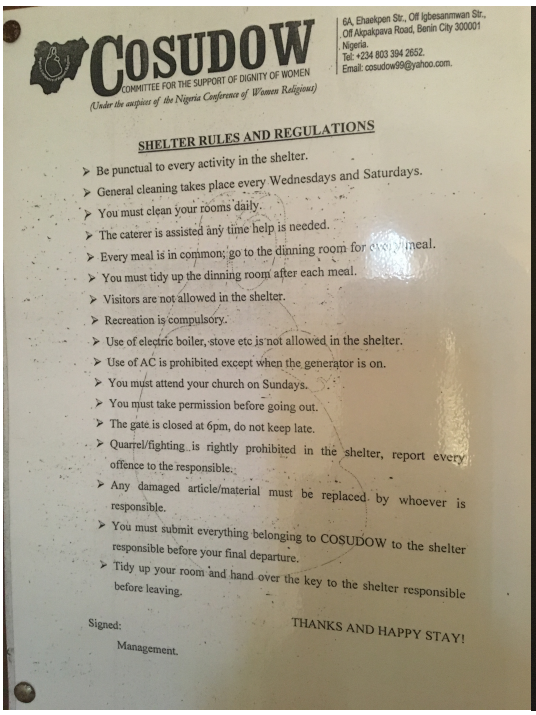
[47] Interview Project officer Idia Renaissance , 23-01-2017 Benin City Idia Renaissance Office
[48] Interview IOM-Officer, 24-01-2017 Lagos IOM Office
[49] Interview IOM-Officer, 23-01-2017 Lagos IOM Office

Picture 1: 'Fashion Class', Idia Renaissance, Benin City, Photo Credits: Samia Benhayyoun

Another organization I visited, CUSUDOW, is a shelter for women that have been the victim of human trafficking run by catholic nuns. The shelter was founded in 1998 by catholic nuns in Italy (NCRI) and supported by Caritas Italy. In the shelters there were women that were extremely vulnerable and not able to return to their homes. The shelter provided for basic needs, such as foods and clothes, as well as counseling, monitoring, rehabilitation and would refer them for training to Idia Renaissance. The girls that stayed there for various reasons, this could be because their families didn't accept them and/or their children any more, or that they had no family at all. Fear of traffickers might also play a role; some girls and women were very scared to face them, afraid of revenge and repatriation demands. The shelter hosted about 6 girls at the time, some with children.[50] The head-nun was clearly tired, saying: '*sometimes it is just very difficult'*.[51] They tried their best to return them back to their families, yet many return to prostitution. Some girls still had contact with their traffickers, not everyone was honest. The nun explained what the biggest problem was: *'the biggest problem is the family. They don't want the women back home. They most of the time are the ones facilitating the trafficking and encourage them to go. The whole family*

[50] The CUSUDOW shelter was visited, 24-01-2017 Benin City
[51] Interview CUSUDOW Nun, 24-01-2017 Benin City, Cusudow Office

depends on the income of these girls'.[52] In the whole of 2016, 33 girls were reintegrated successfully. The shelter tried its best to provide basic necessities, and was very determined in bringing structure into the lives of the young girls and children. There were many rules the girls had to follow e.g. not going out after 6pm; compulsory chores, and no visitors. The intentions of the shelter and the nuns were very good, yet they faced many difficulties reintegrating the girls into a society where trafficking is commonplace. It seemed like an endless job, curing a big wound with a small plaster. Just like Idia Renaissance, this shelter depended heavenly on charity, and was always short of funding.


COSUDOW
COMMITTEE FOR THE SUPPORT OF DIGNITY OF WOMEN
(Under the auspices of the Nigeria Conference of Women Religious)

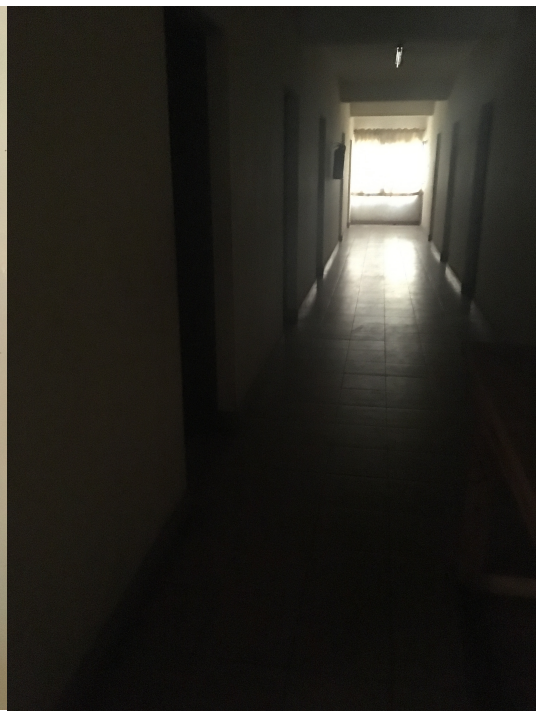
6A, Ehaekpen Str., Off Igbesanmwan Str., Off Akpakpava Road, Benin City 300001 Nigeria
Tel: +234 803 394 2652.
Email: cosudow99@yahoo.com.

SHELTER RULES AND REGULATIONS

- Be punctual to every activity in the shelter.
- General cleaning takes place every Wednesdays and Saturdays.
- You must clean your rooms daily.
- The caterer is assisted any time help is needed.
- Every meal is in common; go to the dinning room for every meal.
- You must tidy up the dinning room after each meal.
- Visitors are not allowed in the shelter.
- Recreation is compulsory.
- Use of electric boiler, stove etc is not allowed in the shelter.
- Use of AC is prohibited except when the generator is on.
- You must attend your church on Sundays.
- You must take permission before going out.
- The gate is closed at 6pm, do not keep late.
- Quarrel/fighting is rightly prohibited in the shelter, report every offence to the responsible.
- Any damaged article/material must be replaced by whoever is responsible.
- You must submit everything belonging to COSUDOW to the shelter responsible before your final departure.
- Tidy up your room and hand over the key to the shelter responsible before leaving.

Signed:
Management.

THANKS AND HAPPY STAY!



Picture 2 and 3: 'shelter rules' and the corridor in the shelter. Photo credits: Samia Benhayoun

NAPTIP is the National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons in Nigeria. With nine departments located across various regions, this national organization tries to create awareness of human trafficking, prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons, especially women and children. The organization is also able to enforce the law and has the power to investigate, arrest, detain and prosecute offenders.[53] I visited the Benin City-regional office and by coincidence was able to attend a meeting with several representatives from NAPTIP and partner NGOs from Italy. The current state of trafficking problems was

[52] Interview CUSUDOW Nun, 24-01-2017 Benin City, Cusudow Office
[53] See for more information: https://www.naptip.gov.ng/#, accessed December 2017

discussed in a hot, crowded little room. NAPTIP and the partner NGOs faced many problems tackling human trafficking, and especially the girls that were in prostitution in Italy. There were two main problems in Nigeria: 1. There was not enough money and resources to enforce the law, investigate, arrest, detain and prosecute offenders. 2. The problem of prosecution: when there is a case against a trafficker the women often don't want to testify, either scared of revenge or shame, or simply bought off by the trafficker.[54]
There were two main problems in Italy: 1. Girls knew exactly which stories to tell to the Italian authorities in order to receive asylum. Sometimes even the *Madames*[55] urged them to go and file for it. 2. The girls know what they are going to do in Italy, but are not aware of the cruelty and damage it will bring them.

Summary

This research isn't principally concerned with migration-policies per se, but is looking more at the return policies, and the organizations, which deal with those return policies. The main question in this chapter was: *'What is the institutional context of assisting returnees to their homeland?* And *'How do institutions and organisations in Nigeria assist, guide and perceive the problems returnees face?'*

There are evidently well-organized institutions dealing with asylum seekers and returns, though whether they are functioning optimally and assessing requests justly is beyond the scope of this research. Forced returns were commissioned from the imposing Ministry of Justice building in The Hague, where staff proudly told me they were rightfully implementing Dutch law. Given the fact that Dutch law doesn't allow every person to stay in the Netherlands legally, and forced deportations are costly and not always implementable: voluntary assisted return programs were set up in order to let rejected asylum seekers and irregular migrants return back to their countries of origin. It has shown that Dutch-Nigerian relations in terms of accepting returnees, in any form, are well set.

Meanwhile in Nigeria, returnee-hosting institutions and NGOs implemented the return programs on the ground The IOM-Nigeria did its best for the returnees, yet faced many external problems. As they said themselves: family and networks were crucial for a sustainable return – and many lacked them. The money available for the returnees wasn't

[54] Meeting NAPTIP, Benin City, 24-01-2017.
[55] Nigerian women, who are in many cases prostitutes themselves, who play a role in managing the prostitutes, coordinate the trafficking, and controlling the finances. This can be as a 'recruiter' in Nigeria or in the host-country in Europe. Operating in a relative small network to a very large one. Normally the madams are known for being very violent, abusive and cruel.

enough to cover all their expenses: it was normally for either business or housing – but could not cover both. And many returnees lacked the ability to start a business successfully. In the Benin case the local NGO did its utmost to assist returnees or prevent initial migration with their programs. Yet they faced near-insurmountable difficulties, since trafficking and migration are so deeply ingrained, so much 'part of the deal' in Benin society that their limited resources were hardly sufficient to help returnees that faced profound trauma and were a 'mental wreck', especially the women that had been in prostitution in the EU. Other organizations such as NAPTIP and the shelter CUSODOW likewise lacked staff, money and overall resources. And again, the deeply-rooted history of trafficking was hard to fight. They all had the best intentions, but to make it success bigger structural problems within Benin society needed to be solved.

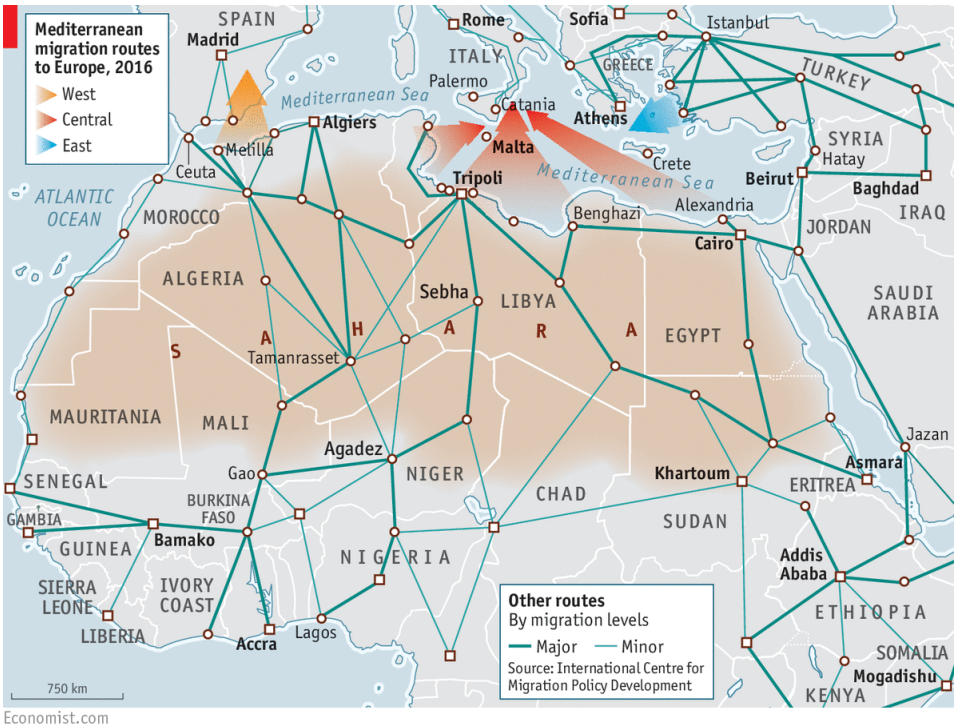


Figure 1: Mediterranean Migration Routes to Europe

3. The Undocumented Nigerians:
Migration: Motives, Decisions and Circumstances

'You speak about it as if it is a special thing: its not. You just move forward, don't you? When you don't like a place, you find another one you like'[56]

The following section seeks to explore the factors that shape, trigger or constrain migration decisions, or prompt onward migration or return. Central to this chapter is the question: 'What were the motives, decision-shaping factors and circumstances for migration?'. Conversations and interviews with questionnaires were held[57]. Practical movements were listed, as well as transit countries; time; obstacles and funding. Decision shaping, motivations and ways of staying in touch with family and friends during the movement were also listed. All of the results presented here were gathered during an originally planned 6 months of fieldwork among undocumented Nigerians in the Netherlands, but with incorporating evidence from outside that period.

3.1. Migration in Theory

This research focuses exclusively on Nigerians that entered the Netherlands, irregular. This particular chapter focuses on the circumstances and motivations that prompted migration, the decisions taken and trajectory followed. There is no shortage of literature discussing migration trajectories, motivations, decision-shaping factors and expectations not only from Africa, but also from other regions in the world. Migration is seen and treated as *transition*: affected by several types of push and pull factors that may influence people in their movement, that may occur simultaneously and spontaneously (Akinyoade and Gewald 2015). Migration *and* retuning is not seen as a singular movement. Return migration, rather, is equally subject to push and pull factors and indeed structural factors that shape returns and, in some cases, re-emigration. Hein de Haas (2010) promulgated transition theory, in which the structure and agency are incorporated by conceptualizing migration as a function of:

[56] Interview Fortune, 10-11-2016 WAH shelter Amsterdam
[57] See apendices: Nigerians in the Netherlands

'capabilities; aspiration and, on a macro-level, and the opportunity rather than income differentials' (De Haas 2010; 5). Schapendonk (2011) and Schapendonk and Steel (2014) also demonstrate that African migration is characterized by circularity, temporality and onward mobility, not only across continental borders, but also within Africa and within national borders (Schapendonk 2011, De Bruijn, van Dijk and Foeken 2001). Contemporary African migration towards the EU has a mixed character and, the EU is considered only as one of many possible destinations for African migrants (Schapendonk 2011). Ideas of migration, locations and destinations are not always set and remain largely undetermined prior to migrating (Schapendonk 2011; Akinyoade and Gewald). Just to have the aspirations to migrate are not enough to make the migration happen, a 'set of shifting scenarios, multi-dimensional motivations and the appearance of new, rather unexpected opportunities' are part of the movement, and these aspirations can change along with the migration trajectories (Schapendonk 2011; 77). The perceptions and the intentions of migrants themselves are thus fluid. Poverty was long seen as the key structural driver for out-migration. 'However, since the early 1990s, there has been recognition that the poorest rarely migrate since resources are needed to do so, especially for international migration (van Haer, Bakewell and Long 2017; Tapinos 1990). This acknowledgement has lead to a debate around how development influences migration (see e.g. De Haas 2008a; 2008b; 2010; 2016; Skeldon 2008). Common 'push-pull' views according to De Haas (2016) however, ignore the fact that people will only migrate if they have the ambitions and resources to make this happen. Migration can thus be seen as a function of people's aspirations and capabilities (De Haas 2016; Mazzucato and Grillo 2008). This idea helps in understanding why development is often associated with increased levels of migratory as well as non-migratory mobility (such as tourism and business travel). Development processes expand people's access to material resources, social networks, education, media and knowledge. Migration aspirations depend on people's more general life aspirations and their perception of the extent to which these aspirations can be fulfilled 'here' or 'there'. On the other hand according to Mazzucato and Grillo (2008) migrants and refugees keep moving between sides, dual orientation and double engagement, this transnationalism is part of their daily lives.

Koser and Kuschminder (2015) conducted comparative research on assisted voluntary return and reintegration of migrants, covering some 273 respondents in eight origin countries, three transit countries and four destination countries. Key variables presented as factors in reintegration and sustainability of return included 'experiences before exile' and 'decision-making factors in migration'. I used this partially in my proposed questionnaire to explore

migration trajectories. In this chapter I looked at experiences before exile as part of the circumstances and motivations for migration, and just as Koser and Kuschminder (2015) made the distinction between these and the decision-shaping factors. These factors are nonetheless clearly intertwined in many cases, as stated by van Haer, Bakewell and Long (2017), 'in any migration flow, several drivers complexes may interconnect to shape the eventual direction and nature of movement'.

These circumstances and motivations are seen as varying external conditions that arise in the lives of potential migrants, while the decision-shaping factors constitute the ways Nigerians responded to such circumstances and motivations and how the decision to migrate was eventually being made.

3.2. Circumstances and Motivations for Migration

Speaking with undocumented Nigerians that had left Nigeria revealed that economic reasons often factored into the decision to emigrate. Research among Nigerians that had returned after an irregular stay also pointed to the improvement of their economic conditions as a key factor (Eborka and Yefara 2016). In most cases, however, there had also been a high degree of mobility within Nigeria and/or Africa prior to departure for the Netherlands. Several researches have demonstrated this intra-African mobility, in some cases also leading towards inter-national mobility (e.g. Akinyoade and Gewald 2015; Schapendonk 2011; Schapendonk and Steel 2014; De Bruijn, van Dijk and Foeken 2001). Although Nigeria in general doesn't have the same 'culture of migration' such as Senegal has for example, where 'making migration' is almost an obligatory rite of passage among young men (Mondain and Diange 2013), this may be changing, as reflected in Nigerians forming the largest group of illegal (registered) entries into Europe. The Nigerians explained that the feeling of having no prospects in life, for the young especially was key to forming the aspiration to move elsewhere. This lack of prospects stemmed from not being able to attend and/or finish schooling, being forced to take several low-paid and low-skilled jobs; to migrate elsewhere in Nigeria (mostly Lagos) in search of a job or a better paid one. But even those Nigerians, who were able to finish schooling and obtain a degree and a profession but weren't always able to find any 'normal' -paid job in their home country and were forced to take low-paid and low-skilled jobs, may seek greener pastures abroad (Eborka and Yefara 2016). The absence of what the Nigerians called a: 'good government', the lack of a healthy economic environment,

bad healthcare and the huge inequality of wealth, were part of it as well. This 'cocktail' clearly made some Nigerians feel that staying in Nigeria would not lead to a further development personally or economically. Yet although these cited motivations were mostly economic, the circumstances that prompted migration often varied. In line with migration as transition, it became clear that it was often a combination of circumstances that led to these Nigerians leaving the country (Akinyoade and Gewald 2015). Giving the fact that millions of people around the world live in, let's say, 'bad economic circumstances,' this movement cannot be explained solely as 'looking for a better economic environment.' The interplay of aspiration, capabilities and opportunities is key to understanding the complexity of migration (see e.g De Haas 2010; 2016).

Asking undocumented Nigerians in the Netherlands why they migrated out of Nigeria often sparked talk of the helplessness and the insecurity they had felt back in Nigeria. It was often a combination of many (economic) factors, but also the lack of what the Nigerians called a 'good government'. Almost all of the Nigerians I spoke to had first tried to move elsewhere within Nigeria in search for better job opportunities and better life conditions. Yet for many lives in the 'big city' was even harder than before.[58] Nigerians were open in telling me what made them migrate out of the country, but as the next paragraphs will illustrate that that eventually arriving in the Netherlands was the outcome of a particular combination of circumstances.

The tables below illustrate that both Opportunity and Economic reasons where listed the most as the reason for migrating.

Table 1: Opportunity reason for migrating from Nigeria

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	4	28,6	28,6	28,6
Yes	10	71,4	71,4	100,0
Total	14	100,0	100,0	

[58] Many Nigerians mentioned that surviving in terms of work, food and housing in mega cities like Lagos was really difficult.

Table 2: Economic reason for migrating from Nigeria

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	4	28,6	28,6	28,6
Yes	10	71,4	71,4	100,0
Total	14	100,0	100,0	

Wisdom

1977/ Male / born Edo State / residence Amsterdam / arrived in Europe January 2001/ Nigeria / Ivory Coast / Spain / France/ Denmark / Netherlands / .....?

Wisdom was born in Akoko Edo, Edo State in 1977. He was the 9th of 11 children, 6 of whom had died. His father was working for the government and his mother was in trading and farming. He managed to finish junior secondary school and left to go to Lagos to work as a plumber. Life for Wisdom becomes too dull and he says and he decides to go to Abidjan, Ivory Coast, to take eventually take a large cargo boat to Valencia, Spain. He lives in Valencia and obtains a temporary working permit. Life is too difficult for Wisdom in Valencia, his big dream to study at the university seems out of reach and he decides to move to Paris. After a short and rather depressive stay in Paris he moves to what he heard was a better place: Copenhagen. Copenhagen turns out to be a real disaster in terms of living conditions for undocumented people and he gets caught by the police and deported back to Spain, from where he decides moves to Amsterdam directly. He wanders around in Amsterdam for several years and gets to know the shelters of We Are Here. He lives is several squatted shelters and becomes more and depressed about the life he is living. The notion that he has wasted all these years in his life forms, yet returning is so difficult - so difficult without anything. One day he left the Netherlands, to where? I have no idea.[59]

Wisdom tried to explain why he, among other Nigerians, migrated out of Nigeria. Wisdom had tried to move to other places within Nigeria in search for a better life, but with no good education, coming from a poor family, he, like other Nigerians that were in a similar situation, found he had hardly any prospects, research among returnees confirmed these feelings to be common in young Nigerians (Eborka and Yefara 2016 *): 'The youth don't have*

[59] Interview Wisdom, 14-09-2016 WAH Shelter Amsterdam

a good composition in life, the youth has no perspective at all'[60] Or Daniel: *'You know, Nigeria has many sides: if you know people and can access good things, then you have a good life. If you don't have that- it is difficult. It all depends on if you come from a poor/rich family. There is lack of everything in Nigeria. I know there are also problems in Europe, but in Europe they care about people. The Nigerian government doesn't care about people; you have to make it yourself'.* [61] Edos also stressed the lack of prospects in Nigeria, as he says: *'I'm from Benin City- there is no life. Nobody wants to stay there, really nobody. Everyone tries to get out of that place. I moved to Lagos, but it was also so difficult, for people like me. You need to know people who can help you, else you are a no-one'.*[62] When I asked Edos why all people want to leave Benin (city) he says: *'In Benin, if you are lucky, you most probably will have food to survive the day, besides that there is nothing left there for you. We (Nigerians) don't go to school, study what so ever. When your family is poor, surviving becomes a daily struggle- you get so tired of it. The government will just let you die on the streets, nobody cares'.*[63] Zuwa also stressed the 'bad' Nigerian government: *'You don't know Nigeria, right? Nigeria is a bad place. No good government, you can just die on the streets. Nobody cares'.*[64]

For some Nigerians there was also a sense of adventure in migrating; it allowed them to explore other parts of the world, other cultures and customs. Economic circumstances were sometimes clearly intertwined with a sense of adventure and even pride. Schapendonk (2011) and Mondaine and Diange (2015) call this the 'rite de passage of young migrants' a perception of what a young men must go through in order to become a 'real' man. Perhaps it was simply this sense of adventure that prompted these young men to take advantage of opportunity when it arose. Like Ken: *' I'm from Delta State. I come from a humble background; my parents are traders and farmers. I moved to Lagos at the age of 16 to live with other relatives and work. I had several jobs, but I was basically living from day to day. The little money I had left, I gave it to my family. I learned to be a mechanic, but the jobs were scarce. I didn't want to return back to Delta. I took the opportunity when it was there'.*[65] Again there was also a sense of not really planning the whole migration, choices were made along the way, like with Wisdom: *'I was fed up with Nigeria, I wanted to leave the country and left to Ivory Coast to see what was going on there, I eventually ended up taking a cargo-*

[60] Interview Wisdom, 14-09-2016 WAH Shelter Amsterdam
[61] Interview Daniel, 9-12-2016 Café in Amsterdam
[62] Interview Edos, 3-01-2017 Café in Amsterdam
[63] Interview Edos, 3-01-2017 Café in Amsterdam
[64] Interview Zuwa, 01-11-2016 Park in Amsterdam
[65] Interview Ken, 22-10-2016 Park in Amsterdam

boat to Spain. There was no real plan. I just wanted to discover the world'. [66]. Or Daniel *'I wanted to see other parts of the world. I got tired in Benin. My family got tired of me in the house. I needed to move forwards'.*[67] And Joseph told: *'I had a baby boy at that time. After I lost all my jobs and wasn't able to provide any normal income any more, a nephew of mine (who knew about my situation) contacted me that someone could 'help' me. I ended up in the Netherlands.*[68] Godwin had also been moving for several years, in search of better job opportunities, but he couldn't find them. Moving back to his parents' home in Anambra State was a crucial point in deciding collectively for him to migrate to Europe. *'I moved to Lagos from Anambra State. But life was so difficult there. I moved to Abuja to live with a relative of mine, but I couldn't stay there for long. I returned back to Lagos, but I couldn't find any good job. I had to return to Anambra, but there is no life. I had to move forward, I couldn't continue living like this'*[69]

These were just a few small quotes that illustrate the rather complex combination of factors that led Nigerians to migrate. I would argue that the feeling of helplessness that resulted from an overall insecurity and inability to find a purpose in life, let most of the Nigerians I spoke to migrate out of Nigeria. Simultaneously, in line with the idea of migration as transition, there were opportunities that arose before and along the way. This will be expanded upon in the paragraph: 'how did I get here?'.

3.3. Decision's Being Made

One part of the research and objectives in the proposed questionnaire with undocumented Nigerians in the Netherlands was listing how the decision was made to migrate. Based on the analysis of Koser and Kuschminder (2015) on 'decision-making factors in migration', with decisions, the distinction between: 1. Individual; 2. Collective and 3. Forced, was made. Within the forced category I made the further distinction between brokers and human traffickers, the latter explicitly meaning those that had been (partially) forcefully trafficked for labour purposes in Europe or Africa. Thus not those that had used some kind of broker in order to facilitate the journey at a certain point, e.g. obtaining a visa. None of the respondents

[66] Interview Wisdom, 14-09-2016 WAH shelter Amsterdam
[67] Interview Daniel, 9-12-2016 Café in Amsterdam
[68] Interview Joseph, 15-10-2016 Café in The Hague
[69] Interview Godwin, 26-11-2016 Park in Amsterdam

listed that they were ‘forced’, the results show that exactly half of the respondents listed their decisions as collective and the other halve as individual.

Table 3: Decision factor for migrating

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Individual	7	50,0	50,0	50,0
Collective	7	50,0	50,0	100,0
Total	14	100,0	100,0	

By asking and listing what the main sources of funding for the migration were, I also tried to underpin the decision-shaping factors, which sources they used, to see how this pre-migration trajectory took shape.

Table 4: Main source of funding for migration

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Family & relatives	5	35,7	35,7	35,7
Family relatives & friends	1	7,1	7,1	42,9
Yourself	5	35,7	35,7	78,6
Smuggler/trafficker	3	21,4	21,4	100,0
Total	14	100,0	100,0	

It showed that Nigerians despite the fact that half listed their decision shaping as ‘collective’ or ‘individual’, multiple sources were used in order to facilitate the migration. Yet speaking with undocumented Nigerians, as well as other undocumented people from other parts of the world showed that there was a complex cross-intersection within the decision-shaping categories. Decision-making could be listed as collective, but was often a component of all three distinctions. What were the circumstances of those funded their migration by a smuggler/trafficker, turned out to be exploited in various ways on the arrival destination, yet listed their decision-shaping factor as ‘individual’, for example? Looking at these decision-making factors and funding of migration was also very useful in understanding the complexity of returning. When decisions were listed as: ‘collective’ and interviewees emphasized to struggle to provide for the family left behind, there was clearly an urge not to

return empty handed. Returning was seen as highly difficult and even a topic that wasn't to be discussed, even though their living circumstances were sometimes very harsh.

Individual

In some cases it seemed very clear that they had made the decision to migrate on quite an individual basis, yet this was certainly not the case for all the Nigerians I spoke to. As also demonstrated by Schapendonk, some migrants (although it's a minority) are very aware of their destinations, and make clear plans both for the journey and arrival. Nigerians emphasised that it was a rational choice they made: an aspiration they had back in Nigeria. As De Haas (2010) and Mazzucato and Grillo (2008) suggest, migration intentions can derive from these personal aspirations. Although all of them used some form of trafficker/broker and/or contact person, the initiative was with the migrant. Consequently in terms of planning and finding the necessary resources Nigerians were very active in selling their goods, saving, and/ or borrowing money. Although these aspirations were individually shaped, there seemed to be an awareness of not telling relatives and friends about their ideas and plans. On the other hand they proudly told that family and relatives were very happy when they had arrived in the 'West'. Some noted that they didn't tell their relatives that they were planning a migratory attempt, like Wisdom: *'No I didn't tell my parents about my plans, only my brother knew. I knew my mother would have cried and wouldn't have let me leave my home country. I worked a lot and borrowed some money from my brother and friends. I wanted to leave; I had enough of my life as it was there. When I arrived in Spain I phoned my mother, she was happy I was in Europe'.*[70] Or Fortune: *'I didn't tell anyone I was leaving. I made plans myself. My mother would have died, knowing what I was doing. But now she is very happy about it'.*[71] John stressed that he made the decision on his own: *'I worked a lot and sold the land I had in my home town (Delta State). I was already living on my own in Lagos for a while; I didn't need anyone's approval for what I was doing. I phoned my mother when I was in Italy. That was the moment she knew I was in Europe for the first time'.*[72] Or Isaac: *'I worked a lot, saved money and sold all my things. I really wanted to leave Nigeria. I didn't*

[70] Interview Wisdom, 14-09-2016 WAH Shelter Amsterdam
[71] Interview Fortune, 10-11-2016 WAH Shelter Amsterdam
[72] Interview Isaac, 20-10-2016 Café in Amsterdam

tell anyone I was leaving, I phoned my mother when I had arrived in Europe'.[73] Isaac made clear that he made the decision to leave himself.

These stories these Nigerians tell make plain the fact that they really made the decision on their own, that they had personal ambitions leaving their country, plans to gather enough resources to migrate and planned their migratory attempt to a certain extent. Yet still many didn't really have a clear idea of their destination.

Collective and Family Strategies

Collective and family strategies are common in migration. In what he terms the new economics of labour migration, Stark (1991) views migration as an intra-family arrangement, assuming that household income, rather than individual income needs to be maximized: a house hold strategy, rather than a pure individual choice or strategy. Many studies have been done researching household strategies, specific in the African case, and the effect of remittances on such families/ villages and/or regions (e.g. Poirine 1997; Hoddiott 1992; 1994; Azam and Gubert 2004; 2008; Pine 2014). Azam and Gubert (2008), among others, argue that the decision to migrate, especially in African cases, is often a collective decision that is made by the family, or in some cases the village, in order to minimize income risk and financial support. Families or villages sometimes invest large amounts and use their resources to send, especially young men, to the city or even abroad (Bryceson and Vuorela 2002; Azam and Gubert 2006; Pine 2014). De Haas (2008) also states that migration generally is a 'conscious choice by relatively well-off individuals and households to enhance their livelihoods'. They then form great hopes of getting financial support or goods in return. Migration of young men from West Africa has increased in recent years, as attention from scholars (e.g. Palladino 2018; De Haas 2007; Lassault and Beauchemin 2009; Mondain and Diagne 2013). For example Akyeampong (2000; 207) states in Ghana, 'going abroad to "hustle (is) the stuff of popular culture'. Some studies suggest that in many communities in West Africa today, a large proportion of male population are living and working abroad (Boesen, Marfaing and de Bruijn 2014; 2008; Some 2009; Kaag 2008; Mondain and Diange 2013). De Haas (2010; 2008) suggests that the irregular migration from Western Africa is in fact relatively low compared to migrant stocks worldwide. Whatever the effects are exactly on sending and receiving societies, and whatever the extent to which household strategies

[73] Interview John, 17-12-2016 Café in Amsterdam

play a role in migration decisions: there seems to be a relation between the incentive to migrate and families of the migrants. Conversely, in considering return, there seemed to be a reluctance among migrants to return 'empty handed' and families might even urge them not to return at all, which will be discussed more in upcoming chapters. The Nigerians I spoke to never seemed very secretive about how the decision was made to migrate out of Nigeria, nor very secretive in explaining how they collectively made the decision. Collectiveness as such was spoken about with it being one of the most normal things in the world and even with a sense of pride.

Like Zuwa, who left Benin City when he was 20 years old for Belgium, eventually ending up in Amsterdam; he had been in Europe over 6 years and spoke openly about how the decision was made for him to migrate: *'When everyone struggles you know…My father initiated it and played a great role in supporting me. Everyone helped to make the journey happen, my whole family and some friends. This is normal were I come from'.*[74] Although Edos seemed very individualistic and hardly spoke about Nigeria or his family, he was very open about it: *'everyone helps, my whole family. It's better that one of us is here'.*[75] Or Ken: *' I expressed that I wanted to leave Nigeria - there was no good for me. Through family members a man introduced himself that he "could help me". I was 22 years at that time. We all collected money and the man helped me with a visa'.*[76] The quotes illustrate that indeed in these cases families and even friends invested (large) amounts to let someone migrate out of Nigeria, as Azam and Gubert (2006). The notion 'that its better one of us is here' as Edos' stated was common, referring to the fact that at least *one* could be in Europe providing financial support and that there seemed to be strategies for getting that person in Europe (Mondaine and Diange 2013). Yet the case of Ken illustrates as de Haas (2008) stated, that it is a conscious choice of young individuals that desire to migrate to enhance their own and the livelihoods of their families. Despite the fact that these 'collective decisions' seemed rather strategically planned, the actual migration plan, locations and destinations as stated by Schapendonk (2011) are rather blurred. It would be factors along the way that eventually led them here to the Netherlands (Akinyoade and Gewald 2015).

[74] Interview Zuwa, 1-11-2016 Park in Amsterdam
[75] Telephone Interview Edos 6-01-2017
[76] Interview Ken, 22-10-2016 Park in Amsterdam

No clear distinctions

A problem with the distinctions presented and used from Koser and Kuschminder (2015) emerged during the research: speaking to Nigerians showed that these clear distinctions couldn't always be made. It was, in many cases, a case of migration as transition: a case wherein no clear plans were made: rather the trajectory is dictated by various sets of circumstances. Also pointed out by Schapendonk (2011) African migration is highly mobile and the trajectories can be influenced by ideas take shape during the migration itself and even afterwards. But on the other hand, as also stated by Schapendonk (2011), is the notion of the 'third person': migrants who had no idea where they were going at the time they left their countries of origin, because a 'third person' organised their migration journeys. This could also result in being severely exploited at the arranged destination (Schapedonk 2011), as had happened to Smarty who had the following reaction regarding his migration out of Nigeria: *'I wanted to leave Nigeria, just to any place better, I searched for people who could "help me" you know… This person promised me a good life. Later I found out I was going to the Netherlands. After arriving in the Netherlands the other contact person didn't do what was promised. I worked so many jobs, to repay my debts, I hardly saw any money. It took me years to realize something was wrong'.* [77] Smarty lived in this situation over 11 year in The Hague. He told me he lived with other Nigerians in a house that he thinks was owned by his Nigerian contact person. Escaping his situation wasn't easy: besides the fact that he didn't know where to go, he also feared his contact person. Smarty says he finally had to courage to escape what he calls: 'prison' and moved in with other West-African friends he had met during his years in The Hague. Life became even more difficult; it is difficult for him to make ends meet and even survival becomes a daily struggle. Through other people he hears that life in Amsterdam is better and decides to move, after a year of wandering around from place to place in Amsterdam, he ends up in one of the Squatted shelters of WAH, where he shares a room with 5 others West-Africans. Smarty is clearly lost; he has been in the Netherlands over 19 years now with absolutely no prospects of a better life. He relies on the help of volunteers and the church. He feared the threats of his trafficker in Nigeria, despite the fact that he left over 19 years ago. Smarty feared the reactions of his family: how could he return like this? He didn't know where he belonged any more. Smarty moved along with the places that were squatted. One day I couldn't reach him any more. I tried to figure out what had happened and

[77] Interview Smarty, 26-10-2016 WAH Shelter Amsterdam

started asking around. Nobody really seemed to know what had happened exactly. I still wonder what has happened with Smarty, where is he?

Ben's story also illustrates that there were no clear distinctions on how he eventually came to the Netherlands. Ben told me he had made the decision together with his family: *We all worked and borrowed money and a contact person was supposed to help me… I gave him almost all my money, but he disappeared along the way.* [78] This 'third person' *was* aware about which route Ben should use, yet left him alone in one of the transit zones in Niger. Ben stated he didn't really know where he would end up, but that he did have the notion that he should cross the Sahara dessert in order to reach the Mediterranean Sea. It was along his journey that his real plans took shape as the view of *migration as transition* suggests.

The stories of Ben and Smarty illustrate on the one hand that there wasn't always a clear distinction to be made between the decision-shaping factors to migrate. Many interviews showed that there was a rather blurred line of individual, collective and forced incentives. The stories illustrate that migration plans are not always set, and are shaped along the journey itself.

3.4. How Did I Get Here?

'Someone helped me' 'Who was that someone?' *'I wanted to leave, it was better for us all, and someone helped me to make the journey happen'* [79]

Whether their entry route was a visa overstay or high-risk migration, such was Mediterranean boat crossings or transit-migration, most migrants I spoke to had used and/or approached individually some kind of broker in order to make the journey happen, and others were (partially) trafficked. As seen in the previous chapter, there wasn't always a clear distinction between the incentives, decision, approaches and tools Nigerians used prior, during and after they had arrived. Human trafficking and brokers are rather complex concepts within migration studies. Human trafficking in its legal definition refers to the recruitment, transportation and exploitation of a human being. Essential in this legal definition are the existence of deception and manipulation, coercion and abuse of authority, as well as debt bondage and forced labour (Alpes 2011). Theoretically, the deceitful nature of the

[78] Interview Ben, 22-11-2016 Café in Amsterdam
[79] Telephone Interview Godwin, 17-11-2016

recruitment process and the exploitative condition of work, rather than the type of work such as such, qualifies a migration trajectory as 'human trafficking' (Alpes 2011; Kampadoo and Doezema 1998). In practice, most policies are focused on trafficking within the sex industry, although some studies (e.g. Akinyoade and Gewald 2015) and my visit to Nigeria[80] reveal that many trafficked victims are sex workers seeking better professional pathways in Europe, and approach smugglers to assist in transportation towards countries with better opportunities. Alpes (2011) makes a case that the exploitation of migrants cannot be blamed exclusively on criminals. Current migration regimes have created a high demand for migration brokers. Those termed 'brokers' might also be categorized as either smugglers or traffickers. According to Alpes (2011) brokers can better be seen as actors within the economy of emigration, this can be a contact person or someone that operates in a large network facilitating emigration. Brokers can be highly respected within communities and do not necessarily exploit human beings (Alpes 2011). Yet exploitation itself is blamed on criminal migration brokers. What is portrayed and treated, as human trafficking is sometimes better understood as labour migration. Even with elements of deception or force at play, migration is always related to the need or desire for work, including work in prostitution (Alpes 2011).

Large parts of the Nigerian population are excluded from the possibility of being granted a visa and have few other options than to use brokers for their migratory attempts. Schapendonk (2011) calls these 'third persons' that can play a vital role, both negative and positive, in migration plans, trajectories and final destinations. This research won't be delving into the different types of brokers and human traffickers, the ways of using them or state policies directed at them, yet it's worth mentioning that they were usually part of the migration trajectories of the Nigerians in the Netherlands.

There were various ways in how undocumented Nigerians I spoke to came to Europe. During this research three different ways were mentioned: 1. Some came directly by plane; 2. Some took boats from Nigeria or neighbouring countries directly to Europe, and 3. Some crossed the Sahara and took a boat across the Mediterranean Sea. Both nr. 2 and 3 – were listed as: Road and Sea. It confirms other research (Jansen et al. 2015; De Haas 2015; 2016) that most irregular migrants are visa over stayers.

[80] Many NGO workers, such as from CUSUDOW and Idia Renaissance, confirmed this.

Table 5: Mode of travelling to Europe

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Air	9	64,3	64,3	64,3
Road & Sea	5	35,7	35,7	100,0
Total	14	100,0	100,0	

Talking about how they got here and their experiences during their journey was wasn't always easy. Interviewees would regularly skip or avoid the question. When answers came they were often rather secretive: 'someone helped me' or 'it was a coincidence'. Sometimes it was clear that the journey had been traumatic: people didn't *want* to recall what had happened, it was too shameful, and painful. This transit-trauma hasn't received a lot of scholarly attention; there have been studies focussing on unaccompanied refugee children arriving in the West (Verliet et al. 2014; Derluyn and Bean 2006; Bean et al. (2006), and numerous studies on refugees and their trauma after a war. Recently Lynda Mannik (2016) published a book entitled *Migration by Boat: discourses of trauma, exclusion and survival*, which deals with the subject of trauma during migration journeys and how these human lives, hopes and dignity are profoundly challenged by these events. During this research I came across so many examples of people who seemed to have lost a part of their selves during these events. This part of their migration experience was one they preferred to forget, although it was clear their ideas and plans were shaped and altered during this time and their changing situation meant their plans would perforce become fluid, taking opportunities as they arose, not always knowing how it would end (Akinyoade and Gewald 2015). The story of Wisdom illustrates how he took the opportunity to get on a ship, not even knowing where it was going.

'I was on a big cargo ship, from Abidjan (Ivory Coast), the ship was from people like you, you know "white guys", the cargo ship took me to Valencia (Spain), I arrived January 25th 2001'.[81] Wisdom was 24 when he decided to go abroad. Wisdom was very accurate with his dates and told his story with a sense pride: '*The journey was terrible, I didn't see daylight for I think weeks, I cannot remember, it was because I didn't see daylight, yet I made it, I am a lucky person'. 'Through a friend I got to know a person who could "help" me, he told me to go to Ivory Coast and contact the person. I did, I left to Ivory Coast, I remember I loved*

[81] Interview Wisdom, 20-09-2016 WAH Shelter Amsterdam

travelling out of Nigeria.' Wisdom seemed restless and eager to move out of the country. Wisdom describes his move to Europe as driven by coincidence and pure luck: *'There was no real plan, I met the right persons, and wanted to leave Nigeria to Europe, that I ended up in Spain was a coincidence'.* Coincidence was a word that was used frequently, as Daniel told me: *'It was a coincidence, I was helped to the Netherlands, with a flight and the right papers'*. [82] Or Godwin: *'I went to Ghana, there I met a person by coincidence who helped me to get on a ship to Spain'.*[83] The meaning of the term "coincidence" here seemed rather fluid, it seemed like for one coincidence meant 'bumping' into a person who brought you in contact with the right persons, for others coincidence was most probably expressing your desires to move out and actively finding the right person who could help you. Arguably coincidence in these cases was taking the opportunity when it was there, despite the fact that some people would express their desire or even find persons to help them, these stories confirm how migration trajectories are highly fluid and plans take shape along the journey (e.g. Schapendonk 2011; De Haas 2016; Akinyoade and Gewald 2015).

Sometimes these long, occasionally horrific journeys that people had to endure were deeply traumatic events in their lives. Nigerians seemed haunted by having moved out of the country, finding themselves in dire situations along the way, not always exactly knowing where they would end up. Some were able to talk about it, like Edos: *'The journey (through the Sahara) took me about 7 months, I think. You are treated like an animal; people who fall (from the cars) are left in the desert to die. There are so many problems along the journey: you get robbed, some even get killed. These places are places of hell. I was scared so many times, but I knew I would survive because of God. On the boat we couldn't take any belongings- we sealed our belongings on our body's. There were tears of joy when I made it to Italy, you cannot imagine'.*[84] Edos would recall what had happened along his journey to Europe. He tells his stories in a heroic way: he became a real man after enduring this horrific journey: a rite of passage in Edos' life, as referred to by Mondain and Diange (2013) as almost obligatory among young men.

For others to recall what had happened on the long journey through Sahara desert was too painful. They simply didn't want to talk about it. Sometimes they would cut the story very short and give short answers. When I would ask more about what had happened people ignored my questions or gave me the same answer again. Answers like: 'it was just terrible'

[82] Interview Daniel, 09-12-2016 -12-2016 Café in Amsterdam
[83] Interview Godwin, 26-11-2016 Park in Amsterdam
[84] Telephone Interview Edos, 15-3-2017

or 'I don't want to talk about that any more'. Like Ben, 32 years old, originally from Delta State, who left Nigeria in 2014 to cross the Sahara desert to eventually end up in the Netherlands in 2015; initially he didn't want to talk about it, he repeatedly avoided my questions, but eventually he told me: *'The money I had wasn't enough for the whole journey. I don't like talking about it; it was a very, very bad experience. Not a good period in my life'*.[85] Or Chris, 28 years old, from Edo State*: 'I don't want to talk about it. I don't remember what happened exactly. It is in the past now, ok?'*.[86]

Likewise Godwin, 25, from Anambra State, who went from Lagos, Nigeria to Ghana to take a cargo ship to Spain. Talking about his journey on the boat made him shiver. During our first two meetings he didn't want to say anything about how he got here exactly. He spoke about his life in Nigeria, his family and sisters, but mostly about how life was in the Netherlands. During our third meeting he would recall that he arrived by cargo ship in Spain. He took the boat from Ghana. He only wanted to tell that the journey is long and absolutely terrible. Talking about his journey on the boat, made him shiver. *'It was absolute horror. People die. I cannot talk about it'*.[87] I would meet Godwin one more time after this conversation: it remained too sensitive a topic to discuss.

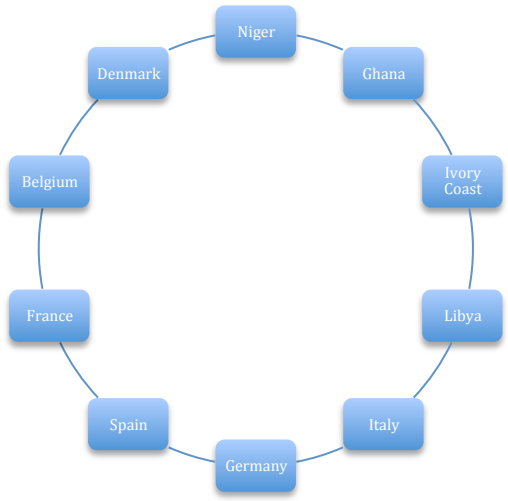
Fortune was secretive about many things in his life. About some things he would speak openly with enthusiasm and pride. These were in particular things that concerned goods, money, women and how he was able to prevent his deportation so many times. Always somewhat temperamental, pitching questions on how he came to Europe made him angry. Clearly under influence of some kind of drugs and/or alcohol, he looked me in the eye and said: *'I don't want to talk about these things with you. What does it matter? Why do you want with this information?'*.[88] Unpredictable as he was, I never dared to ask Fortune the same questions again.[89] *'It was a very difficult period in my life. I don't like talking about it. I am now happy, that is what matters'.* During our first conversation, John tells me about the happy life he lives in Amsterdam now, how he finally found a place that he really likes and enjoys. During other conversations he tells me that he also lived in Munich for a while, but that life in Germany wasn't a good. He didn't know anyone there and slept on the streets. But as he says: '*Italy was even worse'*. By listening to John's stories I could reconstruct his journey to a certain extent. Asked what happened before Italy he said: *The boat trip was*

[85] Telephone Interview Ben, 10-12-2016
[86] Interview Chris, 22-10-2016 Café in Amsterdam
[87] Interview Godwin, 30-11-2016 Café in Amsterdam
[88] Interview Fortune, 26-11-2016 WAH Shelter Amsterdam
[89] Fortune had a rather explosive personality, and turned very angry and aggressive now and then.

terrible. You cannot imagine. The boat was just floating and floating with no directions at one point. I had no food, water on me. I really thought I was going to die'.[90]

These are a few examples of how Nigerians would communicate with me about their journey. Brokers and forms of trafficking weren't explicitly mentioned - they referred to it as 'someone helped me'. Their experiences, rather than the practicalities of the journey, was what I sought to explore. These commonly involved fear, trauma and suspicion. For those who came directly by air to the Netherlands or another European City, there never really seemed to be any difficulties in talking about the journey itself. Besides the fact that this low-risk journey was less complicated than crossing the Sahara e.g., the actual telling consisted of just less facts and stories to tell. Respondents in general told me similar stories: visa arrangements were made and they took a flight to a European city. The stories were told in a rather casual way: like it wasn't worth noticing. Like Daniel:
'It was a coincidence; I was helped… with a visa. I took a plane and I arrived in Amsterdam'.[91] Or Smarty: *'They - the people who helped me - arranged everything for me. I got a visa and I came to Amsterdam'.*[92] And Zuwa: *'I was twenty (years) when I arrived in Belgium by plane. I arranged all the right papers through a contact person. Many people do it this way. It is normal in Nigeria'.*[93]

Table 6: Countries where Nigerians had lived or stayed for a longer period, before eventually arriving in the Netherlands.



[90] Interview John, 17-12-2016 Café in Amsterdam
[91] Interview Daniel, 9-12-2016 Café in Amsterdam
[92] Interview Smarty, 26-10-2016 WAH Shelter Amsterdam
[93] Interview Zuwa, 1-11-2016 Park in Amsterdam

The intensity of obstacles experiences along the journey, were in line with the modes of traveling used.

Table 7: Intensity of obstacles in the journey process

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
None	8	57,1	57,1	57,1
Some	1	7,1	7,1	64,3
A lot	5	35,7	35,7	100,0
Total	14	100,0	100,0	

Summary

In this chapter I have discussed the questions: 'What were the motives, decision shaping factors and circumstances for migration?. The circumstances, motivations, the decisions being made, and how the migration trajectories took place were discussed as well. Outcomes show that the decision shaping factors, Nigerians despite the fact that half listed their decision shaping as 'collective' or 'individual', multiple sources were used in order to facilitate the migration. Main motives were listed as economic *and* as an opportunity that arose. Side findings were that the majority of Nigerians that entered Europe were visa over stayers.

The migration plans, ideas and trajectories of the interviewees in many cases conform to the idea of migration as transition, uncertain, highly fluid, circular and shaped by set of shifting scenarios, multi-dimensional motivations and the appearance of new unexpected opportunities (Schapendonk 2011). It was shown that prior to eventual arrival in the Netherlands, in this case, Nigerians had been moving a lot within the Europe, within Africa and Nigeria itself. The Nigerians that eventually ended up here in the Netherlands, often ended up here (and might move again) owing to various sets of circumstances (Akinyoade and Gewald 2015). It has been important to illustrate migration as a circular movement conditioned by circumstance in order to eventually illustrate how returns are also not singular movement. Moreover the chapter has tried to demonstrate how migration decision shaping-factors are very often complex and intertwined, clear plans were rarely made: contingent on various sets of circumstances. These include family and collective strategies, yet these weren't the only factors that shape the actual journey. It has also tried to demonstrate that the insecurity was felt back in Nigeria prior to the migration in terms of insecure livelihoods was

central to the migration decisions. The use of traffickers and brokers or so-called ‘third’ person was also discussed as part of their migration trajectory. Finally we have seen that how they’re sometimes-horrific journeys were also part of the trajectory.

Figure 2: Depicting the Netherlands; Provinces and their major cities.

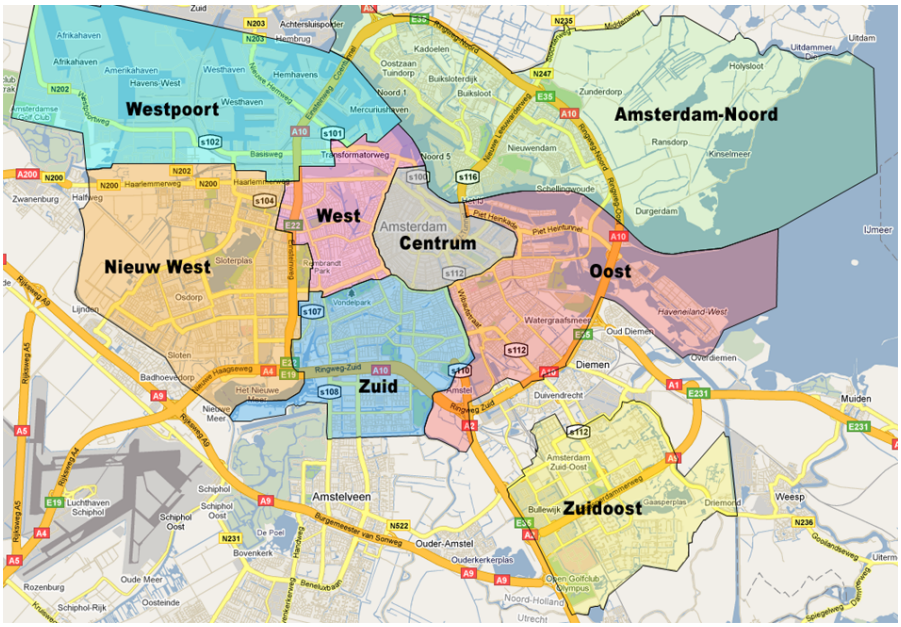


Figure 3: Depicts Amsterdam and the boroughs.

4. The undocumented Nigerians:

Undocumentedness

Here they are, in the Netherlands, whether by design or by circumstance. All had different dreams, intentions, aspirations, motivations and trajectories, yet all have one thing in common: they are undocumented. 'What does it mean to be undocumented?' is the central question of this chapter. Understanding the impact of such a circumstance is central in understanding why and under which circumstances people eventually decide to return to Nigeria. Moreover it can offer insight into how the returnees themselves experienced returning, their difficulties, insecurities, reliefs and reflections on the lives they lived back in the Netherlands.

Within academia irregular migration and irregular migrants occupy the attention of different disciplines, including politics, sociology, geography, ecology, anthropology and economics, impacting sectors such as labour, education, and healthcare just to name a few. Irregular migration – once a phenomenon of the wealthier countries of the global north and west – is now a global issue, with most irregular migration occurring between countries in the developing world (Koser 2005; Bloch, Alice et. al 2014). As such it is an issue that necessitates international action, as nation-states co-operate at the national, regional and supranational levels to try to control immigration, including irregular migrants (Bloch, Alice et al. 2014). More about irregular migration, politics and organisations was discussed in the

previous chapter. The causes of irregular migration are complex and multi-faceted. Uneven development, economic opportunities, survival migration, social networks, family reunion and exile are all included in the constellation of factors that result in irregular migration or in individuals becoming irregular. Some people are born into irregularity and begin their adult lives in this precarious situation, others enter into it as part of a migration project and some fall into it without ever realising it, or out of desperation due, for example, to their need to avoid returning to a country where they fear persecution (Bloch, Alice et al. 2014). Most irregular migrants initially enter countries legally (e.g. visitors or students with a visa) and then overstay their visas (Koser 2001, 2005; De Haas 2016). Whatever the routes to irregularity, according to Bloch, Alice et al. (2014) being undocumented permeates all aspects of migrants' lives, significantly reduces their access to economic and social opportunities, and renders individuals vulnerable to different forms of exploitation, exclusion and marginalisation. I take this analysis as my entry point, together with my experiences during fieldwork. Further research by Bloch, Sigona and Zetter (2009), focused on the social and economic lives of young undocumented migrants in Britain, is likewise a very valuable entry point. Being undocumented has significant practical, social and economic impacts and permeates the everyday lives and decisions of young people (Bloch, Sigona and Zetter 2009). De Genova (2002) and De Genova and Peutz (2010) examine deportability within the modern political system and consider the terminology: illegality. Although the researchers focus on migrant illegality as an epistemological, methodological and political problem; the effects of the term "illegality" on persons day-to-day life are very applicable in this case. According to de Genova (2002) due to this illegal status and criminalisation of their identity, they are denied fundamental human rights and social entitlements, often with little or no recourse to or protection from the law. The lives of illegal migrants are lived though the sense of that they can be deported, what De Genova calls: 'the possibility of deportation' (2002; 439). This has impacts on employment and job searching, social networks and friendships, housing and access to medical help and justice (De Genova 2002). Being undocumented often creates a transitory and insecure identity (Bloch, Sigona and Zetter 2009). Lack of status is an all-encompassing experience, producing distinctive forms of social marginality with significant impacts such as 'enforced' mobility in search of accommodation, for work, or to avoid detection (Bloch, Sigona and Zetter 2009). Although the study focuses primarily on young adults, experiences showed that those Nigerians that came to the Netherlands came here in their early adulthood and the circumstances are similar. Although this particular research focused on undocumented young adults of different nationalities, all with their own

parameters and circumstances, the implications of being undocumented are, to some extent, the same. Being undocumented limits aspirations and many migrants talk about being trapped, unfulfilled and unable to make plans. For some, life means simply existing; for others this is a temporary phase; some are considering return (Bloch, Sigona and Setter 2009). Feelings, adjustments, coping strategies and aspirations of young undocumented migrants intersect with gender, country of origin and life courses to shape their experiences and responses, according to Bloch, Sigona and Zetter (2008). Being undocumented invades personal and emotional space, which often leads to a shadow existence, a lack of self-worth, a lack of trust in others and often the internalisation of fear for migrants and their families (Bloch, Zigona and Zetter). There is an ever-present sense of feeling trapped in a situation where marginality cannot be resolved and a future cannot be constructed (De Genova and Peutz 2010). Any plans for the future – a crucial part of the optimism of youth – must be constantly appraised against the possibility of being arrested and deported (Bloch, Zigona and Zetter, 2009; De Genova 2002). Yet despite these 'harsh' circumstances, being able to survive and cope is a source of pride.

This chapter focuses on the irregular Nigerian migrants that are here in the Netherlands, for whatever the reason. It focuses on the lives of the undocumented people, their experiences, the restraints on them, their ways of getting around, and the coping mechanisms they use in order to survive in the Netherlands.

The table below gives the description of the average duration of stay in the Netherlands of the undocumented Nigerians within this research.

Table 8: Year Entered the Netherlands

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Year	1994,0	1	7,1	7,1	7,1
	2001,0	2	14,3	14,3	21,4
	2006,0	3	21,4	21,4	42,9
	2008,0	1	7,1	7,1	50,0
	2009,0	2	14,3	14,3	64,3
	2010,0	2	14,3	14,3	78,6
	2011,0	1	7,1	7,1	85,7
	2013,0	1	7,1	7,1	92,9
	2015,0	1	7,1	7,1	100,0
	Total	14	100,0	100,0	

4.1. *Life of The Undocumented – The Setting*

From a distance the former city hall building looks like any other official building, slightly reflective blue-tinted glass covers the three-story building, a corridor with revolving doors and two big (empty) plant pots in front guarding the entrance. Moving closer graffiti and flyers on the walls become visible: 'We Are Here' 'We are Humans' 'Equality and Dignity for Refugees'. This former city hall, located near the Lelylaan in Amsterdam-West, was a squat that used to host about 200 hundred undocumented people from all over the world, one of the buildings in Amsterdam occupied by the We Are Here group, a group of rejected asylum seekers in Amsterdam assisted by volunteers that stood up for the rights of those that have no place or right to stay in the Netherlands, yet in many cases according to themselves and sometimes even the authorities[94] cannot return to their homelands.[95] The initial idea of the highly fluid and changing group was to make the inhumane situation in which these rejected asylum seekers were living visible. As it turned out, not all of inhabitants in the building were rejected asylum seekers. Some were just that, but many never applied for asylum, others had already obtained asylum and were subletting their apartments, while living in the squatted shelter. There were, and still are, several such buildings located all over the city of Amsterdam. It seemed like there was a tolerance policy towards buildings that host the rejected asylum seekers, in the sense that the Mayor of Amsterdam doesn't evacuate them immediately. Where should they go anyway? Yet over the course of the past year the buildings were each evacuated in turn on the pretext of inconvenience in the neighbourhood, criminality, noise disturbance, dirt or that the owner(s) of the squatted buildings reclaiming their buildings - leaving the rejected asylum seekers and other irregular migrants on the streets, looking for another building to squat.

The former City Hall in Amsterdam-west was my first encounter with such a shelter. One could not walk through the entrance without greeting the various people sitting in front of the entrance, hanging out with a beer or something similar. The greetings are warm, some were keen to introduce themselves and make contacts. Although the building used to be a city hall and the interior design was clearly designed for government officials and visitors, little evidence of its previous use remained. There were piles and piles of stuff, what exactly

[94] There have been numerous cases of e.g. asylum seekers who claimed to be Eritrean, but couldn't prove their nationality, yet couldn't be deported back, because the Eritrean authorities couldn't confirm their nationalities.
[95] See for more information: http://wijzijnhier.org/who-we-are/, accessed July 2017.

remains a mystery. The floors were extremely dirty and the smell was a combination of herbs used for cooking, alcohol, cigarette smoke, weed, sweat and trash. In this particular building there was a male/female division. Within this division there was also a regional division, such as: Eritrea/Ethiopia, Francophone West Africa, Afghan, Anglophone West Africa, Sudan, Iraq and so on. Different types of regional music would sound from each division. As well as the regional division there was also a status-division; some had the privilege of a private room with locks, a degree of interior decoration, and a comparatively lavish lifestyle. Others shared a room with one other person, others shared a small room with up to ten other people and some had no room at all, sleeping in the corridors creating rooms themselves with old blankets tied to the ceiling to create some kind of privacy. In the whole building there was only one working shower (!), with a queue in front almost 24/7. I remember I was completely astonished when I visited my first shelter: I could never have imagined these kind of barbaric circumstances in a modern country like the Netherlands. Some of the undocumented were completely numbed, couldn't face daily life any more, others would smoke weed and drink alcohol the whole day, others would be active, having a little black job, going to 'work' on their bike and leading a quite normal life. Although the circumstances and people differed, the building for me resembled a little village with its own rules, citizens, kings and queens.

I visited this particular group and moved along with them. In August 2016 the building was located in Amsterdam-West, in September 2016 the group moved to another location in Amsterdam-West. Then the group separated and a part moved to Amsterdam-Zuid Oost, then to Amsterdam Noord, then another location in Amsterdam-Noord, then to Amsterdam-Amstel and then to Vluchtmaat-Diemen.[96]

This in not the only sort of undocumented life, however. Many undocumented Nigerians I spoke to didn't live in the shelters, although some were familiar with them or knew people that were living there. Even more than those in the shelters, they were completely out of sight, not only for us normal citizens but also for the government. They lived with other undocumented Nigerians or other Africans in apartments, with girlfriends, or in a church. Many shifted sites frequently, which will be discussed more later on. Entering this world wasn't always as easy as discussed, but it showed me that while those without documents aren't always visible, yet they really aren't that far away.

[96] The group of We Are Here, moved 29 times in November 2017 since 2012. https://www.parool.nl/amsterdam/arrestatie-bij-ontruiming-29ste-onderkomen-wij-zijn-hier~a4539509/, accessed November 2017.

Picture 4: a place of stay from one of the Nigerian respondents. Photo credits: Samia Benhayyoun

4.2. Undocumentedness and Everyday Life

Being undocumented manifests itself in different aspects of daily life. Nigerians described the many constraints on their day-to-day existence; being confronted with the fact that they didn't hold the right papers to live their lives as others could do around them. De Genova (2002) also argues that undocumented people engage with 'documented persons' in everyday life, yet it may become a problem when legal reality is imposed in their daily lives. Although not every Nigerian I met dealt with these problems the same way; yet these aspects, restraints, and confrontations were everywhere present.

Barriers to moving around, the feeling of being stuck in your (little) room, having no daily activities, avoiding detection or even desolation were often expressed by the Nigerians I met or else plainly evident. Like Wisdom, whom I met several times, and every time in the same situation: stuck in his room, created in the corridors with old blankets on the 3rd floor of Amsterdam-Lelylaan. Wisdom said: *'I don't do much during the day, I don't like going out you know… I like spending my time with reading and educating myself. By doing this I can move forward you know, I want to become an educated person, a politician: a new*

trustworthy leader in my country.[97] *I would have loved to study and complete university, I never had the means to do so'*.[98] Wisdom didn't have any work, enjoyed limited networks, activities and couldn't attend any university. Being undocumented in this kind of condition seemed like living in limbo, creating in this case a sense of desolation and even mental problems (Bloch, Zetter, Sigona 2009). Wisdom had already been deported once, from Denmark back to Spain, where he initially arrived in 2001 and got a temporary working permit. He openly feared governments, institutions, caseworkers and anything that looked official. He would habitually go downstairs, quickly pack the food that was given by churches, shops and sympathizers and go upstairs to store it in his room. This was basically what Wisdom did throughout the day. When he got bored in his room, he would stroll around the building and chit chat a bit with some other inhabitants, only to return to his room later on.

Living a life where you have to be constantly aware of your surroundings, fear the police, avoid detection, have minimal access to basic care, no stable income, forced mobility, insecure housing and not being able to build up a stable life, among other related factors, caused many undocumented Nigerians some form of stress. The experienced stress differed in degree, from being partially present to being an all-encompassing feeling of constant, severe stress, blocking almost every move along the way.

Joseph

1976 / male/ born Enugu State / residence The Hague / arrived 2006 / Nigeria / Amsterdam / Rotterdam / The Hague

Joseph was born in Enugu, Enugu state 1976. Both his parents were traders, both were dead by the time he was 16 years old. Joseph moves to several places within Nigeria searching for better work opportunities. In his home town he marries and has a baby boy. But life isn't easy for Joseph, he has difficulties finding reasonable work and moves again several times within Nigeria to search for better paid work. He returns back to Enugu after he lost all his jobs and his nephew helps him get to a place where they thought he would have better opportunities.[99]

[97] Wisdom may have suffered from mental problems, he often had delusional/unrealistic ideas.
[98] Interview Wisdom, 1-10-2016 WAH Shelter Amsterdam
[99] Interview Joseph, 15-10-2016 Café in The Hague

Joseph was moving constantly. He didn't have a fixed home and could only stay with people for a short period. Moving from the church to a friend's couch was very stressful for him. He didn't have any basic income and was relying on the help of others, and the little money he made sometimes in between. Joseph clearly wasn't enjoying the best period in his life. But life wasn't always like this, he said. He used to have quite a stable life in Rotterdam, where he was staying with other Africans in an apartment and had quite a steady income. Joseph would lose his jobs, however, and it became more and more difficult to find new ones that could provide him some kind of basic income to pay rent. After living in Rotterdam for over 10 years, he decided to move to The Hague to see what his chances were like there. Initially he stays with friends, but soon he is moving from one place to the next, sometimes for a longer period, but mostly for a shorter one. He would also sleep in a church sometimes, he told me. *'Sometimes I can sleep there. They give me food and shelter. There are more people like me… ' 'I'm lucky I have nice people around me that take care, that love me for who I am as a person, but I cannot always expect'.*[100]

For many others the stress of finding work and an income was almost constantly present. Some succeeded better than others in finding a job, usually on the black market, yet the pressure to have one was almost always present. As Isaac told me: *Food is not the problem here (Netherlands) you can always get food anywhere. The problem is work and housing. This causes constant stress'.*[101] Or Smarty, who was exploited for over 17 years in the Hague by his smuggler and ended up in one of the squatted shelters in Amsterdam: *'The last period (months) I only managed to create very minor income, most of the time in-kind, I rely on the few bikes I repair, the help of others and the church - I cannot continue like this'.* Joseph also stressed that the fact that he wasn't able to find a job caused enormous stress: *'I used to have many jobs before, yet it is getting so difficult now. Many people don't want to take to risk hiring you when you are without documents. I used to clean restaurants and bars, they don't do that any more.'*[102]

[100] Phone Interview Joseph, 20-10-2016.
[101] Interview Isaac, 20-10-2016 Café in Amsterdam
[102] Phone Interview Joseph, 20-10-2016.

The table below illustrates that among the respondents more then 50 per cent had no occupation at that moment. And confirms presumably why many felt a lot of stress.

Table 9: Main occupation

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Cleaning	2	14,3	14,3	14,3
Cleaning Market	1	7,1	7,1	21,4
Mechanic	1	7,1	7,1	28,6
Mover	1	7,1	7,1	35,7
none	8	57,1	57,1	92,9
Supermarket	1	7,1	7,1	100,0
Total	14	100,0	100,0	

4.3. The Search for Accommodation and Work

For the majority of the undocumented Nigerians, the pressure to find accommodation and work is very important in their lives. In both respects migrants rely extensively on informal social networks, which not only provide the framework for their lives in the Netherlands but also in large part determined the trajectory of their movements prior and during their movement through Europe. These contacts remain crucial to undocumented migrants' ability to access and secure particular resources and opportunities. This is confirmed in various types of research conducted among undocumented migrants, in Britain (Bloch, Sigona and Zetter 2009, in the EU (Morosau 2009) and among West Africans in the Netherlands (Chalpi-Den Hamer 2008). These networks weren't always easy to grasp or pin down and weren't the main aim of this research, yet it became very clear that they were often crucial in establishing a certain quality of life within the limits of being undocumented. Conversely, it was clear that most Nigerians that didn't have well access to such networks were limited in accessing accommodation and work. Like Joseph, who lost his 'good' contacts and jobs while living in Rotterdam, the search for accommodation and work became increasingly difficult. On the other hand, the few contacts he had left at least provided a cot for him to sleep on once in a while. Similarly Ken, who had a Nigerian contact person in the Netherlands. He lived in a house with other Africans and the Nigerian man arranged several jobs for him, like cleaning in supermarkets. Ken lost his job in a local supermarket when the police once came to

investigate, and when couldn't pay the rent any more, his Nigerian contact person could no longer help him and Ken was left on the streets of Amsterdam, wandering around, ending up in Haarlem, where he could stay with friends for a short while. Staying there was not a long-term option and he returned to Amsterdam and got to know the WAH-group. With limited friends and networks; he relied on the meagre help of the church and found himself in a desperate situation.

Nigerians would refer to their social lives and networks in different ways, like explaining how their migration trajectory took shape using their networks and how they were able to secure housing and accommodation: *'I heard along my journey in Europe, from another African man, that I should contact a Nigerian man when I was in Amsterdam. I decided to move (from Germany) to Amsterdam and see what my possibilities were. When I got there I contacted him and he gave me a room I could share with others (West Africans) in Amsterdam Zuid-Oost. I still live there till this moment'.*[103] This is how Ben got accommodation in Amsterdam, he told me. Ben also had quite a few (black) jobs in Amsterdam and he seemed fairly successful in keeping them. When I asked Ben how he got them he told me: *'It is because I have a good name. I work very hard. I'm not lazy'*.[104] People that lived in the house also helped each other in shifting the jobs: *'When one person cannot work, the other one goes.'*[105] Ben was also able to sent remittances to Nigeria and he seemed quite comfortable in Amsterdam at the moment. Similar to Ben's story was that of Daniel. He had many jobs and moving towards Belgium for a short period of working, was also facilitated by his Nigerian contact person in the Netherlands. Daniel very openly said that this Nigerian man arranged all his jobs: *'I got contact of this person (Nigerian man) already in Nigeria. I already spoke to him on the phone when I was there (in Nigeria)'*.[106]

These are just the stories of two Nigerians that illustrate how their networks were crucial in their migration trajectory and how they were able to secure accommodation, work and housing using these networks. Not every Nigerian I met was so open in telling me about how they managed get around, find housing and work, or which contacts they used. They remained rather secretive, like Edos: he didn't have any real jobs he told me. But still he managed to look very good in nice clothes, and was able to move around a lot in Europe, visiting friends he told me. How did he pay for all this? What kind of work did he do? I tried to figure it out by asking him several indirect questions, when I realized that wouldn't work I

[103] Telephone Interview Ben, 10-12-2016
[104] Interview Ben, 16-11-2016 Café in Amsterdam
[105] Interview Ben, 16-11-2016 Café in Amsterdam
[106] Telephone Interview Daniel, 20-12-2016

asked him directly: 'how do you manage to travel around like this? From what money?' Edos: *'You know I just know a lot of people around Europe, sometimes I do some work, you know?'*[107] No, I still didn't really know what he meant exactly. But it was clear that the networks that Edos had were very important in his life. Edos was also going out a lot and he had many different friends from around Europe. This was clear from the pictures he showed me and the ones he posted on Facebook. These were most commonly pictures of him standing with other people of different nationalities in a party scene. Edos remained a big mystery to me, even though he was very open and enthusiastic talking about the life he lived. Another person that clearly took good advantage of his networks was Fortune. Fortune was a king in establishing good contacts and using his networks to the maximum. Not only in his love life, but also for all the jobs he had. With several phones constantly ringing he almost seemed like a busy executive coordinating a flourishing company. Again what exactly that business might be was a bit unclear, but he clearly had plenty going on. He was one of the few Nigerians I met that would take time very seriously and told me explicitly in advance what time we could meet and what time he had to leave.

4.4. The Pressure

Being here undocumented entails constant practical limitations in searching for accommodation and work, and the pressure to find both was a persistent preoccupation. Beyond providing for their own basic needs, undocumented Nigerians also almost always face pressure to send remittances home. In the literature remittances are discussed extensively in relation to migration and those who remain abroad (e.g. Piore 1979; Stark and Lucas 1988; Musumba, Mjelde and Adumsumilli 2015). As touched upon in the paragraph *Collective and family strategies*, migration is regularly developed as a household strategy, sending one or several household members away in the hope of ensuring the future of others (e.g. Stark 1991; Pine 2014). Although, as stated before, not all of the Nigerians migrated because of these strategies, and indeed the rationale behind most of the migration decisions remain quite blurred, once here they all felt the pressure to sent remittances. As demonstrated by Nieswand (2014) in the *Borgas*[108] Ghana case, goods, material and is expected from those abroad, and

[107] Telephone Interview Edos, 6-01-2017
[108] 'Burgers could be defined as transcontinental migrants who have achieved middle-class status in Ghana by doing working-class jobs in Western Europe or North America' (Nieswand 2014;403)

their status is highly dependent on whether they were able to fulfil these expectations - and so it was for the Nigerians I spoke to, though not all of them were able to fulfil these expectations. In many cases the money they earned was mostly spent on basics - rent, food, travel - rather than on saving and remittances. Among those who were able to save enough to be able to send money home, both the frequency and quantity of remittances varied greatly. Those who weren't able to send remittances commonly experience a lot of stress. As Chris explained: '*it is very hard for me to make ends meet here (in the Netherlands), I have no money left to help my people (family in Nigeria). I can hardly feed myself*'.[109] Chris, from Edo State, Nigeria, used to work as a gas station worker in Benin City when he decided to take the high-risk journey through the Sahara in 2013, eventually ending up in Amsterdam in 2014. He lives with people in Amsterdam-ZO and appears to be stressed about his whole situation: '*Things are not easy. I take all the jobs I can, but it is so difficult. It feels like I am in prison sometimes. My family expects, you know. They think you are in heaven, they don't understand the life I live and that I have no money to send them. They phone, text me the whole time. They also think I can help other Nigerians to come here, I cannot do that*'.[110] Chris told me that he had only been able to send small amounts of money twice since he arrived in Europe in 2013. Chris' migration can be seen as a household strategy; the whole family was active in preparing the journey and sending him to Europe. The burden and pressure on Chris' shoulders was high. So it was for Isaac, who was living in the Netherlands since 2001, and the almost 15 years that he wasn't able to secure himself and his family money wore him down. He had lived in several places in the Netherlands, Rotterdam, Eindhoven and then Amsterdam and had several small jobs. He lived with other people in an apartment in Amsterdam, but he hadn't been able to make a living for the last few months. *'I cannot find work and haven't earned any money for a long time now. I cannot pay my rent. I cannot continue living like this. Maybe I should move to another place or return. I don't know what to do any more'.*[111]

Daniel was able to send remittances and told me about his strategies: *'I don't have a luxury life; I try to reduce the money I spend on food and other items to the minimal. There are days I hardly eat or we (housemates) share little food. I take all the jobs I can and work many hours a day. By doing this, I can manage to save money and send it to Nigeria'.* [112] Daniel's life had many similarities to Chris'; they had the same backgrounds, migration

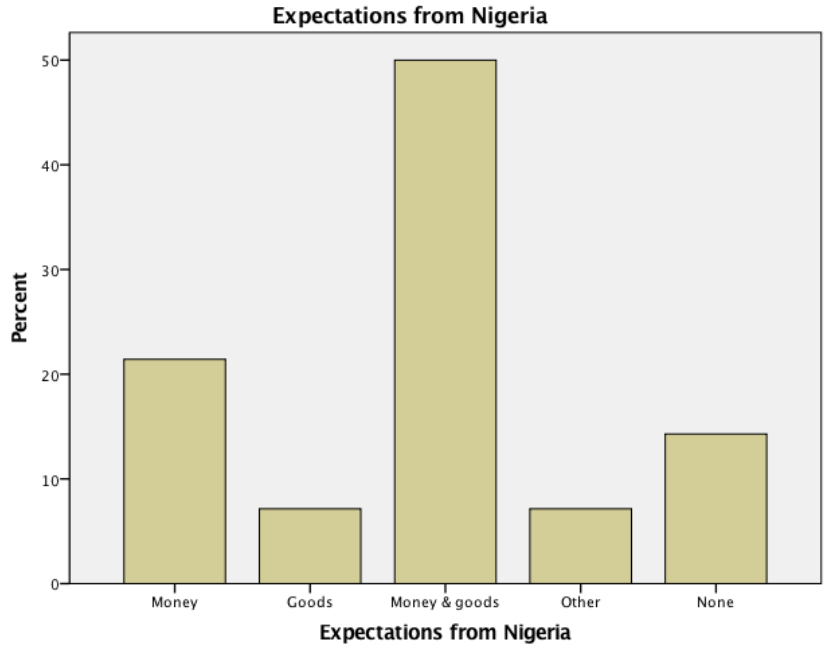
[109] Interview Chris, 22-10-2016 Café in Amsterdam
[110] Interview Chris, 22-10-2016 Café in Amsterdam
[111] Telephone Interview Chris, 12-12-2016.
[112] Telephone Interview Daniel, 20-12-2016

trajectories, and even the same age. Yet the pressure on Chris' shoulder seemed to be much higher, since the whole family had facilitated his migration in the first place. Moreover Daniel seemed to have established or secured a better network that provided him with housing and work opportunities. Given the chance that Daniel's work and housing was co-facilitated by some form of human trafficker and/or exploiter, which isn't uncommon among irregular migrants (Alpes 2011). For Fortune money and goods seemed to matter a lot: getting it, showing it and sending it. *'Yes, I send money – I need to help my family. They have a good life because of me, I am a king, I get a lot of respect'. 'I need money or stuff in return, I do nothing for free'*[113] and: *'Yes, of course I feel better than the others. The others (refugees) are stupid, they like sitting and waiting… waiting for nothing. Nobody will work for you, they don't understand your (Dutch) system'.*[114] There was only one respondent during all my interviews that didn't feel the pressure to send remittances, since he wasn't able to do so any more he stopped contacting his family out of shame. *'I didn't speak to my family for such a long while… I stopped contacting them when I left from Spain to Paris (France). Yes, I did sent them money when I worked and lived in Spain, then I had the means… but now… no…. what can I do?'.*[115]

[113] Fortune here referred to the fact that I wanted to interview him: he wanted money for it.
[114] Interview Fortune, 10-11-2016 WAH Shelter Amsterdam
[115] Interview Wisdom, 20-09-2016 WAH Shelter Amsterdam

The table below shows that for the fast majority money and/or goods were expected from family and relatives in Nigeria.

Table 10: Expectations from Nigeria



The table below shows that most respondents had contact with their relatives in Nigeria.

Table 11: Any contact with relatives in Nigeria

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	11	78,6	78,6	78,6
No	3	21,4	21,4	100,0
Total	14	100,0	100,0	

Yet the table below shows that the contact wasn't always seen as good.

Table 12: General note of contacts with Nigeria

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Good	6	42,9	42,9	42,9
Not good	6	42,9	42,9	85,7
Mixed	2	14,3	14,3	100,0
Total	14	100,0	100,0	

Summary

In this chapter I tried to touch upon the question: 'what does it mean to be undocumented?'. I tried to tell a bit about the lives Nigerians lived, the restraints they faced, their insecurities, barriers, and stress in finding work and housing and to send remittances. There were so many story tell about the lives of the undocumented Nigerians, yet not all of them could be told. I would agree with Bloch, Sigona and Setter (2009) that being undocumented is an all-encompassing experience that manifests itself in many different aspects of practical and emotional life. A further finding was the importance of networking prior to, during, and after the migration. Although this wasn't the main aim of this research, it was evident in every story I heard. Moreover it has also explained the movement of Nigerians within the Netherlands, in many cases being involuntary. This will be discussed more in the next chapter.

5. The undocumented Nigerians:

Living in Limbo

This chapter is partially a continuation of the previous chapter, and continues to explore the question: 'what does it mean to be undocumented?'. It seeks to highlight migrants' personal and emotional restraints, hopes, fears and sometimes luck. Exploitation, the use of brokers and how difficult it is to pinpoint exploitation, traffickers and brokers is discussed as well. This chapter emphasises how undocumented Nigerians are 'living in limbo' and how this creates insecure identities, or a 'shadow existence', as well as exploring the coping mechanisms they rely upon. Also considered is the question: 'Are Nigerians familiar with applying for asylum, addressing organizations, NGOs and other institutions?' to better understand where the Nigerian stood in relation to the authorities, and to which extent Nigerians were 'out of sight'- 'living in limbo'.

Westerpark, Amsterdam, Summer 2017.

Sitting on top of a bench, not exactly on it. Ready to leave as quickly as possible if needed. A few together, music is popping out of the iPhones, not the newest edition, but still good enough to shine with. Trying to look as normal as possible, you see the bikes are old and the jeans are torn. One watches every movement people make. The other looks ahead if something is coming towards them. In between they listen to the music. Just enjoying a normal day in the park, like any other person in Amsterdam does when the sun shines. Suddenly one spots a few policemen. They look. I look. They look at me. They quickly move from the bench. Just to be sure.[116] [117]

[116] I recognized the men from one of the shelters I visited. I think they recognized me as well.
[117] The police were phoned by someone in the park, because there was a dog walking around in the children's playground unaccompanied.

5.1. Shadow existence and insecure identity

Many participants in this study would express their feelings about being undocumented in a distressing way. Being undocumented invades so many aspects of practical life and emotional and personal space that it was often an impossibly loaded subject. The practical day-to-day restraints were numerous: no health care or other health services; being forced to take black (often low paid) jobs; not being able to start a family or relationship, or at least being very constrained in doing so; not being able to travel abroad safely; having to rely on networks more than normal people do, with the consequent vulnerability to exploitation. Beyond the distress and frustration caused by these day-to-day constraints, being undocumented invades and permeates personal and emotional space in other profound and disturbing ways (Bloch, Sigona and Zetter 2009).

Stigma, Shame and Failure are current themes in research, especially their effects on those that have been forcefully deported (see e.g. Alpes 2011; Schuster and Majidi 2014; Brotherton and Barrios, 2009; Drothbohm and Hasselberg 2015), either in relation to stigmatisation after deportation (Alpes 2011); stigma after deportation causes remigration (Schuster and Majidi 2014); being expelled from the society (Brotheron and Barrios 2009) or the illegalisation and being labelled as criminals in their home countries (Drothbohm and Hasselberg 2015; Drothbohm 2011). Social stigma, defined by Goffman's theory (1963), works as an 'attribute that is deeply discrediting and caused the individual to be classified as the different from others, from the norm, undesirable and therefore to be rejected, reducing his/her identity, from a whole and usual person to be a tainted, discounted one' (Goffman, 1963; 3). Goffman's study has been used by researchers to examine the exclusion of a wide range of social groups labelled as 'other' and treated as tainted by those who are 'normal' (Schuster and Majidi, 2014). Goffman's work has been used in areas such as mental illness, disability, migrants, but also in relation to sex work or HIV. In the case of migration, stigma has been examined in the case of deportees (Drotbohm 2011, Drothbohm and Hasselberg 2015; Galvin 2014; Peutz 2006, 2010; Brotheron and Barrios 2009. I apply these post-deportation themes; in this case, to examining and understanding the impacts of being undocumented, thus prior to the actual return itself. I would argue that these themes are just as evident in those that are still in the situation itself - prior to the return. The life of the undocumented is full of aspects related to stigma, shame and failure. As a result Nigerians would powerfully express their feelings about living on the margins:

'I am a no-one, I lost all these years of my life for absolutely nothing… look at me…. look at me…'[118]

'It's like being in prison, its even worse than in Nigeria'.[119]

'Being undocumented here in Europe, means you're a criminal'.[120]

The aspect that was the most distressing and invasive of personal and emotional space, was the fear of detection. Although Nigerians seemed very canny in avoiding attention, there was constant fear not only of the police or officials, but also caseworkers, volunteers and random citizens. H. Castaneda in De Genova and Peutz (2010) found similar findings among undocumented Nigerian women in Germany: women preferred to stay hidden even when some of them where pregnant, it gave considerably more freedom of movement and protection, than seeking help of authorities or organisations. Making themselves known to authorities and officials risked deportation (De Genova and Peutz 2010). As Wisdom had mentioned before, he didn't like 'going out', he feared detection, the police and other normal citizens and spoke about his fears openly: *'I know what can happen (referring to his earlier deportation). I don't trust anyone. Its better to be out of sight as much as possible'.*[121] It meant that Wisdom hardly left his room or the building. Ben was also frank about his fear: *'It is scary, I'm always afraid that someone knocks on my door or something like that. I always fear, every day. It's part of my life'.*[122] Or Daniel: '*I always fear detection; I'm constantly alert - especially when I'm working. It's dangerous you know'.*[123]

A common response to these fears of detection is not going out, or to minimise mobility, social encounters and to avoid public transport (Bloch, Sigona and Zetter, 2009), as the narrative of Wisdom shows. Many others, like Ken, also avoided going out: *I only walked to my work as a cleaner in a local supermarket (Amsterdam ZO), every single day. After work I walked straight back to my apartment where I shared a little room with others. When I didn't work I stayed in my room, watched television- didn't do much. I lived this live for almost 5 years'.*[124] Or Daniel: *'I have many jobs, I move around with my bike its feels the*

[118] Telephone Interview Wisdom, 7-10-2016
[119] Telephone Interview Chris, 07-11-2016
[120] Interview Joseph, 15-10-2016 Café in The Hague
[121] Telephone Interview Wisdom, 7-10-2016
[122] Telephone Interview Ben, 10-12-2016
[123] Telephone Interview Daniel 10-01-2017
[124] Interview Ken, 22-10-2016 Park in Amsterdam

most safe and I feel more free, I even bike to Haarlem. Besides my jobs I don't do much more- I keep low profile.[125]

A number of undocumented migrants reflect on the criminalisation and alienation of their identity. De Genova (2002) stressed that undocumented migrants are criminalized due to policies. It is not only a matter of the criminalisation of their identity, this criminalisation also produced distinctive forms of social stigma (Goffman1963), since they felt excluded and labelled less human. Like Smarty *'It is really hard that me as a person is considered as less human than you. That I when I commit a crime I can be deported and you're not. We are not equal.'*[126] Also Joseph was aware of his criminalized identity: *'I am always aware, I always look around to see who is around me. When I see police I always get nervous, even though I haven't done anything wrong'.*[127] Others reflected on their criminalisation in terms of the injustice they felt: *'I cannot see a doctor like normal people can here; I cannot open a bank account. I cannot just take a job I want, I always rely on the help of others. Some people are bad, but what can I do?! I have nowhere to go to.'*[128]

The lack of freedom Nigerians experience was often mentioned; that we (people like me) take it for granted to be able to move around in our cities, travel around the world and move basically whenever we wish, whilst this freedom isn't a given for the Nigerians I spoke to. Leaving your own country and moving to a place where you enjoy sometimes less freedom than before was a difficult aspect. *'You know, I just want to be free; I just want to move, travel, learn. I just want to be free… '*[129] Daniel spoke with sentiment and longing. I was a bit surprised, because he always seemed on the move. But being constantly on the move, I would later understand, did not always imply freedom.[130] Or Chris, who was even longing for Nigeria: *'It's even worse than Nigeria: at least I could move around freely there. Here I cannot do anything at all without looking back over my shoulder*.[131]

[125] Telephone Interview Daniel, 20-12-2016
[126] Telephone Interview Smarty, 13-10-2016
[127] Telephone Interview Joseph, 20-10-2016.
[128] Telephone Interview Ben, 22-11-2016
[129] Telephone Interview Daniel 10-01-2017
[130] It would show that this constant movement was partially due to enforced mobility. Which will be discussed more in this chapter.
[131] Telephone Interview Chris, 07-11-2016

Daniel

1988 / male / born Edo State / residence Amsterdam / arrived 2013 / Nigeria / Amsterdam / Brussels / Amsterdam

Daniel was born in Benin City 1988. Daniel's father passed away when he was very young and his mother was left alone, taking care of him and his 5 siblings. Daniel can only finish primary school before he is sent of to work in order to provide for the family, but its not easy. Daniel is in his early twenties and without any real income; he is too much in the house his mother finds. Daniel leaves, seeks his fortune elsewhere.[132]

The table below illustrates their general notes of stay in the Netherlands. The majority had mixed feelings or where unhappy.

Table 13: General note of staying in NL

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	1	7,1	7,1	7,1
Happy	3	21,4	21,4	28,6
Unhappy	5	35,7	35,7	64,3
Mixed Feelings	5	35,7	35,7	100,0
Total	14	100,0	100,0	

5.2.Getting some kind of status

This paragraph aims to answer the question 'Are Nigerians familiar with applying for asylum, organizations, NGOs and institutions?' I realized more and more as I conducted this research that the Nigerians that I met most commonly were 'out of the system' and that they were out of it deliberately. This was broadly true of those I met that lived in one of the squatted WAH shelters in Amsterdam. Being set up for rejected asylum seekers who, after being rejected for asylum, don't hold grounds for basic care in the Netherlands, the shelter apparently also attracted 'other' people, most commonly irregular migrants, who for various reasons preferred not to get into the system - in the sense of not applying for asylum or seeking help

[132] Interview Daniel, 9-12-2016 Café in Amsterdam

or advise from institutions such as Vluchtelingen, or the IOM, in relation to returning. None of the respondents I spoke to ever consulted any institution, such as Vluchtelingen Werk or the IOM. Only two respondents had applied for asylum.

Tables shows that the vast majority, were not approached by any organization in relation to returning. Those who did list: yes, where commonly those that had applied asylum, and which was rejected, and were therefore approached by organizations and institutions about returning. The other two where those that had been either deported once, or the one where authorities had tried to deport him, but couldn't succeed.

Table 14: Did organizations contact you about returning to Nigeria

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	4	28,6	28,6	28,6
No	10	71,4	71,4	100,0
Total	14	100,0	100,0	

This table shows that the vast majority had never applied for asylum.

Table 15: Ever submitted an asylum application

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	1	7,1	7,1	7,1
Yes	2	14,3	14,3	21,4
No	11	78,6	78,6	100,0
Total	14	100,0	100,0	

The Nigerians I met seemed to be aware of the fact that they most probably wouldn't get asylum in the Netherlands. Moreover they seemed to be aware that 'getting into the system' would involve being known to the authorities, which wasn't preferable in their situations. As mentioned by Genova and Peutz (2010) the undocumented prefer to stay out- and are in many cases fully aware of these systems. Arguably ignorance of how the Dutch system works for people with and without legal status may have played a role in their decision -making. Again

the fact that many Nigerians are unfamiliar with registration in their home countries, may lead to an unawareness of registration and documentation.

David was born in Delta State, Nigeria. After living in several places in Nigeria, he eventually decides to take the high-risk journey to cross the Sahara desert to the shores of Libya, crossing the Mediterranean, arriving in Italy. He wanders around Europe and ends up in what he calls: 'the very gay-friendly city of Amsterdam'. David lives in one of the squatted shelters and has applied for asylum twice, on LGBT-grounds.[133] He fears persecution and even death if he has to return to Nigeria, the only thing David wants is to gain asylum status in the Netherlands. He was busy filing for his third asylum procedure. Unlike many other Nigerians I would meet, he was fierce and determined to get recognition from the Dutch government. I spoke to David several times, and he was always very negative about his future. The stress and fear to be deported back to Nigeria wore him down. *'I have applied for asylum twice: they rejected them both. How can I prove these people I like men?! I am just sitting here, I have nothing to do then waiting, waiting, waiting. I am afraid they will place me into detention; I heard they do these things to people like me. I will die in Nigeria, you people don't understand'*[134] David's stress didn't only consist of living an insecure life, as many other undocumented did. He also feared detention, deportation, death and the stress of applying and being rejected for asylum over and over again. He felt deeply misunderstood and rejected by the Dutch government. '*I heard you are free to live in this country if you like men, I heard they would help you. They don't help you at all here. Look how I am living, I have nothing!'*[135]

Isaac was the other respondent is spoke to that also filed for asylum. He filed for asylum once, just like David on LGBT-grounds. He applied for asylum after being in the Netherlands for over 10 years: '*I lived here over 10 years before I applied for asylum, I wasn't aware of my rights. I heard that they would give you a status if you are gay, that is why I tried it'*[136] Isaac told me this with a smile; he didn't seem to hide that he wasn't really gay. It got rejected and Isaac 'got into the system', DT&V urged him to leave to country and other organisations such as Vluchtelingen Werk tried to persuade him to leave the country voluntary. Isaac refused and escaped 'out of the system' back on the streets of The Hague. During the last conversation we had Isaac told me he also has a child in Rotterdam with a Dutch woman with Suriname roots, he never sees her or the child. His daughter must be

[133] LGTB in an initialism that stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender.
[134] Interview David, 28-09-2016 We Are Here Shelter Amsterdam
[135] Interview David, 28-09-2016 We Are Here Shelter Amsterdam
[136] Interview Isaac, 20-10-2016 Café in Amsterdam

about 4 years old now he tells me. *'Me and her mother don't get along, I cannot help her, I cannot even help myself'.*[137]

Although the breakdown of grounds for asylum applications from Nigerians is not publicly available,[138] applications on LGBT-grounds are not uncommon.[139] Help organisations and refugee lawyers have criticized the IND in how they judge the reliability of being LGBT (Amnesty report, Making Love a Crime, 2013). On the other hand abuse of LGBT-grounds is commonplace, often being claimed only after the first asylum case is rejected.[140]

All the other respondents I spoke to had never applied for asylum. As mentioned the varied, but most common was 'not wanting to get into the system'. What also needs to be taken into account is the fact that 'getting a status' does not seem to be a major initial objective for migrants.[141]

Table 16: Main reason for not applying

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	1	7,1	7,1	7,1
I want to sort things out	2	14,3	14,3	21,4
I don't want to be in the system	9	64,3	64,3	85,7
I don't know	2	14,3	14,3	100,0
Total	14	100,0	100,0	

Often Nigerians had some plan to get a residence permit in the Netherlands. Alpes (2011; 2017) also examined the ways Cameroonians secure marriages in order to migrate out of Cameroon or to become 'legal' in destination countries abroad. Nigerians I spoke to spoke of marrying Dutch women, building up relationships and getting children. As Edos said: *'I first want to see what position I am in, I need to sort things out. I would love to marry a Dutch woman and build up a family with her. Else I will go to the UK and see my*

[137] Telephone Interview Isaac, 6-12-2016
[138] Telephone Interview IND, 26-04-2017
[139] Interview Vluchtelingen Werk, 17-11-2016 Amsterdam
[140] Interview Vluchtelingen Werk, 17-11-2016 Amsterdam
[141] This was shown by the questionnaires: reasons for migration-see questionnaire Nigerians in the Netherlands.

relatives'.[142] Or Godwin: *'The police leave you alone in this country, unlike France: they chase you there, now I want to build up a life with my (Dutch) girlfriend, marry her and get children, but its not easy you know, I need to know my whereabouts'.*[143] Although these strategies weren't dominant discourses within this research, a few Nigerians would reflect on them. Wanting to stay out of the system was mentioned frequently with the Nigerians I spoke to, as Daniel relates: *'They don't care where you are, as long as you're out of the system. As long as you don't commit any crime, you keep low profile- they leave you. Many people (other refugees and undocumented) wait for your government to help you, I don't do that'.*[144] Some had come into contact with the authorities, or had even been deported once or placed in detention. Wisdom said he used to have a temporary working permit from Spain, but it had expired. Wisdom seemed to know exactly that he wasn't eligible to receive a residence permit in the Netherlands: *'I know how it works: I've already been deported once to Spain from Denmark, when they caught me. Showing my visibility here will just get me deported again'.*[145] Fortune had been in detention several times, yet they weren't able to deport him: *'yes, they have tried to deport me several times, but no country wants me.*[146] *They placed me into detention several times, but what can they do?! (starts laughing) It's only because of God, I never got deported'*[147] About applying for asylum Fortune was sure: *'No of course I never applied for asylum, I don't want to get into the system, I only got there because I did some stupid things'.*[148]

For some Nigerians the reasons for never applying were simply: 'I don't know', which always seemed connected to an ignorance of how the Dutch system works. Seeking advice or information was never mentioned as an option. The Nigerians seemed suspicious, unaware or scared. Like John: *'I don't know, I don't know exactly what to do…. can you help me?'.* [149] Or Joseph: *'I don't know. I don't think it is for people like me'* and *'I only believe and trust the church'.*[150]

[142] Interview Edos, 3-01-2017 Café in Amsterdam
[143] Telephone Interview Godwin, 17-11-2016
[144] Interview Daniel, 9-12-2016 Café in Amsterdam
[145] Interview Wisdom, 20-09-2016 WAH Shelter Amsterdam
[146] According to Fortune, Dutch authorities couldn't prove his Nigerian nationality, since he was born in Sudan. Both the Nigerian and Sudanese authorities couldn't provide a Laissez-passer (temporary travel document).
[147] Interview Fortune, 26-11-2016 WAH Shelter Amsterdam
[148] Interview Fortune, 26-11-2016 WAH Shelter Amsterdam
[149] Interview John, 17-12-2016 Café in Amsterdam
[150] Interview Joseph, 15-10-2016 Café in The Hague

5.3. Exploitation

Discussed in the chapter '*migration-motives, expectations and circumstances*'. The use of brokers or traffickers is common with irregular migration (see e.g. Alpes 2011), and need not involve exploitation. Yet many migrants are exploited, abused along the journey, especially on the Mediterranean route to Europe.[151] Children are especially vulnerable, and up to three quarters of trafficked children face (sexual) abuse or exploitation.[152] The same counts for irregular migrants within Europe, especially along the Eastern Mediterranean route.[153] Being undocumented exacerbates the risk of being exploited (Bloch, Sigona an Zetter 2009). This can range from low-paid, high-risk jobs, paying high rent, or use of brokers to acquire documents, to more severe exploitation such as forced prostitution, forced labour, and forced criminality. This research revealed something of a grey area in which, networks, brokers, and so called: 'contact persons' all blend together. It was sometimes difficult to pin down what was wrong and what wasn't. e.g. the networks and contact persons that played a vital role in establishing migrants' lives in the Netherlands may equally be responsible for varying degrees of exploitation. In the case of Smarty for example [154] he had clearly been misinformed, mislead, and even severely exploited by his contact person in the Netherlands. Smarty was able to talk about what had happened, since he managed to get out of this bad situation. In many other cases I got the feeling that there was something not quite right, and a similar pattern repeated in the stories: they lived in houses owned by Nigerians, and had multiple jobs that were arranged by these owners. The jobs, notably, were not always black.[155] Later I would hear from returnees in Nigeria that they worked these jobs in name of a documented Nigerian in the Netherlands and that they received very little money in return. Daniel was one of those from whom I got the feeling something was a bit wrong. He lived in a house with other Nigerians that were owned by a Nigerian that didn't actually live there. He openly said that this person arranged all his jobs. He had many jobs and had a very full schedule of activities around the city; he even went to Brussels now and then to work. There always seems to be a kind of pressure on Daniel's shoulders; he was always in a hurry, busy,

[151] see e.g. http://unitedkingdom.iom.int/abuse-exploitation-and-trafficking-iom-reveals-data-scale-danger-and-risks-migrants-face, accessed November 2017.
[152] https://www.iom.int/news/three-quarters-children-and-youth-face-abuse-exploitation-and-trafficking-mediterranean, accessed November 2017.
[153] https://www.iom.int/news/three-quarters-children-and-youth-face-abuse-exploitation-and-trafficking-mediterranean, accessed November 2016
[154] That he told he had been trafficked and severely exploited in the Netherlands.
[155] I heard stories of Nigerians that had jobs as postmen, garbage pickers, and butchers.

and very suspicious. He would phone me when he was biking in between his jobs and tell about his day, say bye and hang up.

Summary

This chapter has tried to answer the question: 'Are Nigerians familiar with applying for asylum, addressing organizations, NGOs and other institutions?', demonstrating that, with two exceptions, the respondents in general hadn't filed for asylum. Moreover none of the respondents had contacted any organization, NGO or institution to seek help, advice or voluntary return programs. Some had been in contact with the authorities, because they were caught in a crime or caught without the right documents to be here legally. Nigerians tended to be 'out of the system', either deliberately or non-deliberately, seemed quite aware that getting into the system wasn't preferable in their cases, and employed strategies to 'stay out of sight' as much as possible. Beside the practical day-to-day restraints, the lack of freedom, the fear of detection also sometimes leads to minimizing mobility, but also sometimes forced them to move elsewhere, which will be discussed more in the next chapter. Also the criminalisation of their identity and consequent social stigma was discussed. Nigerians were vulnerable to being exploited, more so than others who did hold the rights papers. This chapter has also demonstrated that many undocumented Nigerians here in the Netherlands express feelings of distress at their situation.

6. The Undocumented Nigerians:
Returning, Staying or Moving Forwards?

The prospect of return can occupy a variety of places in the lives of undocumented Nigerians, either as a dream or longing, a possible eventuality, or an enforced reality. During this research returning was discussed and touched upon as much as possible in every interview, meeting and conversation. The main research question was: *'How is returning perceived among undocumented Nigerians in the Netherlands?'* An auxiliary question was: *'What are the motives, restraints and circumstances for returning, staying or moving forwards?'*

There has been a bit of research done in return decision-making and returnees preparedness, e.g. Koser and Kuschminder (2015), Cassarino (2004). Carling et al. (2015) 'Possibilities and realities of return migration', looks at return migration through a wide-angle lens, examining refugee repatriation, deportation, retirement return, temporary return and other scenarios of moving back to one's country of origin. Return migration has many faces: 'for some it is a dream, for others, a threat, and still others, a duty' (Carling et al., 2015; 2). Summarized Carling et al. (2015) present these findings:

1. Return intentions are shaped by multiple attachments.

Considerations about return reflect attachments in diverse spheres of life. For many, return is existential, meaning that returning or not has to do with livelihoods, family, identity, ambition, and ideology. For some, issues of risk and security are also prominent. The discursive possibility of return - the idea that 'going back' is possible - affects experiences of belonging, inclusion, and exclusion. A feeling of alienation from the destination society can keep the possibility of return alive. Integration in the country of settlement and transnational ties to the country of origin both affect return intentions. Specifically, return intentions are shaped by the relative strength of integration and transnationalism. The highest likelihood of return intentions is found among individuals who are both weakly integrated and strongly transnational. Transnational ties to the country of origin are important for making decisions about return as well as for ensuring reintegration. For some, however, transitional ties are balanced by the impossibility or undesirability of return.

2. Return migration is not simply a personal issue.

For migrants who have left relatives behind in the country of origin, family considerations often exert conflicting pressures on the idea of return. On the one hand, the prospect of

uniting the family is a strong incentive for return. On the other hand, the family's needs are a push to remain abroad so as to continue earning the money that secures their quality of life.

3. Potential returnees grapple with uncertainties and distrust.

Potential returnees rely primarily on family and friends for information about conditions in the country of origin.

4. A secure status abroad creates opportunities for return.

Decisions about return migration are fundamentally affected by whether or not return is reversible

5. Return migration in an engagement with time as well as with place.

The factors that encourage return have different relationships with time. Missing faraway relatives can be a long-term factor in life abroad, but is often insufficient to prompt return. A sudden family crisis at home, however, can trigger return because of the sense of urgency.

As mentioned by Caring et al. 2015, part of the ideas and considerations about returning are the practical aspects: returning can be disincentivised by the family's need for the person to remain abroad in order to continue to send money or fulfil the expectations of doing so in the (near) future. Therefore Remittance and Reciprocity are themes that should be more thoroughly incorporated in understanding the perceptions of return. Migration is very often developed as a household strategy, as seen in the chapter migration, sending one or several household members away in the hope of ensuring the future of others (e.g. Stark 1991; Pine 2014). Migrants often undertake many jobs, try to borrow money from relatives and friends and seek help anywhere they can in their efforts to migrate (e.g. Bryceson and Vuorela 2002; Mondaine and Diange 2013). The investments are often enormous in terms of the money required for a ticket or other transport, for the necessary documents, and for the bribes that are usually involved in 'making the papers' (Bryceson and Vuorela 2002). Young men and women that in this case arrive in the 'West' are often very badly misinformed about the life they face (e.g. M. Chelpi-den Hamer 2008; Bryceson and Vuorela 2002). The remittance quickly expected by relatives is squeezed from meager earnings and savings (Azam and Gubert 2004; 2008; Bryceson and Vuorela 2002). Failures in traveling to the West, deportation, voluntarily returning or lack in success in finding some sort of income in the West, are all considered disasters (Bryceson and Vuorela 2002). One can imagine how returning can be perceived, when these expectations aren't (partially) fulfilled by migrants. The idea of reciprocity in this type of migration helps clarify why it could be very hard for a person to return without any repayments to relatives and friends. This especially since the initial migration often is co-facilitated by relatives and friends. Moreover, remittance is very

often expected by relatives and only rarely accomplished. As described before in the paragraph *Collective and family strategies,* there have been many studies done researching the effect of remittance, especially in the light of motives to migrate and the effects in the receiving countries (e.g. Piore 1979; Stark and Lucas 1988; Musumba, Mjelde and Adumsumilli 2015).

Remittance and reciprocity came up regularly when speaking with undocumented Nigerians: *'They (family in Nigeria) expect… I cannot return like this'.*[156] As seen in the paragraph: *'Decisions being made'* and *'The pressure to sent remittances',* often migration decisions are made collectively, and the financial resources of family/friends are employed to facilitate the journey. Family members back in Nigeria, as shown in this research, almost always expected remittances. Although not everyone was successful in doing so, the pressure seemed ubiquitous. In relation to returning, returning empty-handed was often considered as a disaster, as seen in e.g. the Ghanaian deportees case (Kleist 2017).

In this chapter I draw upon the findings presented by Carling et al. (2015) and expand the notion of remittances and reciprocity. I try to illuminate the motives for returning, staying or moving forwards, the anticipated reactions from family and relatives abroad. And questioning do they regret their movement abroad - 'was it worth it'?

6.1. Motives for Returning, Staying or Moving Forwards?

The topic of return was one I always tried to touch upon during all the conversations I had with undocumented Nigerians in the Netherlands. 'How did they perceive returning?' *'what are the motives, restraints and circumstances for returning, staying or moving forwards?'* . The subject, I discovered, was loaded with emotions, aspirations and fears.

Organizational aspects were discussed and listed with the respondents. Did organizations contact any respondents about returning to Nigeria? Did they encounter certain programs in relation to returning to Nigeria? The answer was for every respondent 'no'. As described before, Nigerians both in this research and others such as in Genova and Peutz (2010) tended to be out of the system deliberately, I would argue. Koser and Kuschminder (2015) also found in their research, conducted among respondents from 15 countries of

[156] Interview John, 17-12-2016 Café in Amsterdam

origin, transit and destination, that almost half of the respondents had never hear of assistance programs and that they weren't the key factor in deciding whether to return or not.

This table shows that none of the respondents had encountered any program in relation to returning.

Table 17: Did you encounter programs in relation to returning

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No	14	100,0	100,0	100,0

Return?! No No No

As migration is seen as transition, so the idea returning itself is subject to change along the way. As mentioned by Schapendonk (2011) aspirations change along with migration trajectories. Some Nigerians clearly found themselves, within the limits of being undocumented, in a comfortable enough position, or were even aspiring to move elsewhere. Carling et al. (2015) also mention this notion that integration in the country of settlement and transnational ties to the country of origin both play into return intension, thus those who feel integrated and are successful to some extent, are less likely to consider return. Like Edos, a 24 year-old young man from Benin City, Nigeria; always looking good, he clearly took great care of his appearance. His WhatsApp and Facebook pictures seemed always to be chosen with great care: always portraying a lavish lifestyle in Europe, in front of nice cars, a nice square or in the MacDonald's. No, Edos didn't want to return at all and was very explicit about it: *'No I don't want to return to Nigeria. I want to make a living here in Europe, marry a nice women and start a family. My dream is to go to the UK, I have relatives there.*'[157] Edos seemed to be wandering around in Europe: when we spoke on the phone or via WhatsApp he was frequently in another European city. *'I'm in Lyon now, visiting friends'* or *'I'm now in Paris'* or *'Now I'm Duisburg, how are you babe?'*[158] What exactly Edos was doing and *how* never became really clear to me. Nor what Edos' true feelings were. What was clear was that Edos was moving constantly. He seemed to enjoy his life as it was and was even dreaming of a better life in the UK. Godwin felt the same: He was explicit in telling me that he didn't feel like returning to Nigeria. Although life wasn't always easy for him in Amsterdam-ZO, living

[157] Telephone Interview Edos, 6-01-2017
[158] These phone calls and what's app messages occurred between December 2016- to March 2017.

with other people. He did have a small job as a painter and he was able to make money. But the most important for Godwin seemed to be his Dutch girlfriend. Godwin repeatedly spoke about the relationship they had and that his hope was too marry her and start a family with her. Later Godwin told me: *'I want to return, but only to visit and then to return back to the Netherlands. I miss my family and friends. I would like to show them Irene (his Dutch girlfriend)'*.[159] As triggers and life events may occur along the way, push-pull lets say (Akinyoade and Gewald 2015) Godwin's life also changed along his migration trajectory. I would have contact with Godwin later in July 2017, things had changed dramatically for him: His relationship had ended, he now lived in Rotterdam with other people and he told me his father had passed away. The once optimistic and sunny Godwin I met had turned into a hopeless and disorientated person. He talked about his father death: *'When my father passed away last month, I started to question if I was in the right place… My mother is alone now; I know how difficult life is for her'*.[160] This was one of these triggers along the way, described by Carling et al. (2015), that led people to eventually return. Fortune was also a Nigerian who felt himself strongly integrated in the Netherlands and wasn't keen on returning either. He would start laughing when I brought up the subject: *'Return?! (starts laughing) They (Dutch government) want me to return- I will never go voluntary'*.[161] No Fortune enjoyed his life as it was and, compared to many other Nigerians I spoke to, enjoyed quite a good life. Likewise John was happy about his life at was, at least that is what he told me. John always seemed very secretive about his life and feelings. About returning he was very explicit: *'no I never want to return, not even with goods. I want to make a living here and invite my family to see me'*.[162]

These stories illustrate how some Nigerians were not considering return, for now at least. Their ideas of their lives, aspirations and paths had changed along the way. They seemed more settled, integrated, but most of all quite successful in establishing reasonable livelihoods. Although all of them were undocumented, they found themselves in better living conditions than before migrating.

[159] Telephone Interview Godwin, 17-11-2016
[160] Telephone Interview Godwin, 10-07-2017.
[161] Interview Fortune, 26-11-2016 WAH Shelter Amsterdam
[162] Interview John, 17-12-2016 Café in Amsterdam

I want to return, but….

As mentioned by Carling et al. (2015) as well as Koser and Kuschminder (2015), some may be considering return, but that doesn't automatically mean they are planning it. The idea of returning was a possibility for others. Return intentions were, as per Carling et al. (2015), definitely shaped by multiple attachments. One factor is the notion exclusion and inclusion: a feeling of alienation from the destination society, Nigeria is this particular case. The example of Isaac illustrates this; he has already been living in the Netherlands over 15 years, had once filed for asylum, which was rejected, and was urged to leave the Netherlands either voluntarily or otherwise. Isaac escaped and avoided detention. As he stated: *'I heard they can put you in detention, I left the camp immediately. My life was better than in Nigeria, why would I return? I felt like there still were so many opportunities in my life. No, returning for what?'*.[163] Yet after many years of wandering around the Netherlands with no prospects he got more and more stressed about the situation he was living in. Isaac was indeed starting to wonder if he shouldn't just return, but also stated that he felt strong alienated from Nigeria: *'It is so difficult right now, really. I don't know what to do any more. Maybe I should go to another country. Maybe I should return. But I don't know to where, I don't have a life in Nigeria any more'.*[164] Isaac couldn't see himself living in Nigeria any more after being abroad for so many years. His transnational ties, but also his family and secure networks were lost, he found. Also Fortune also stressed that: *'he didn't belong to Africa any more'*[165].

Another factor influencing return intentions mentioned by Carling et al. 2015 and cited as most important by Koser and Kuschminder (2015), was the issue of risks and security in the return country. Although they weren't predominant within this research, I found three examples of Nigerians that emphasized that they didn't want to return because of the risks they faced. One was them was David, who is gay, which is punishable under Nigerian law. Another form of risk perceived by potentially returning Nigerians, in a way related to reciprocity and remittance, was the fear of traffickers that were used during the migration to Europe. There has been very little research on how the use of traffickers, smugglers and brokers effect returns intentions. Koser and Kuschminder (2015) touch on the subject in their research, but state that much more research is needed. I found two clear examples of Nigerians that openly feared their traffickers that were still living in Nigeria. Money and

[163] Interview Isaac, 20-10-2016 Café in Amsterdam
[164] Telephone Interview Isaac, 19-12-2016.
[165] Interview Fortune, 26-11-2016 WAH Shelter Amsterdam

therefore the debt involved and not being able to return it, were central. As Joseph told me, after many conversations: *I would love to return to my country, but I also have a lot of other things I have to pay, you know'.*[166] The 'other things' turned out to be money he had to repay for the 'people who helped him'. Joseph seemed rather trapped in the situation he was in. Longing for a return, but scared of his traffickers. The other clear case was the one of Smarty, not only did he mention that it was really difficult for him to return empty handed, he also feared: *'I cannot return like this. I am scared of the reaction of my family. Also the 'person who helped me', I haven't been able to pay it all. It is so so so much money you know. They might go and visit my family or something like that'.*[167]

The table below illustrates that none of the respondents was positive about returning. Those who listed: mixed feelings, were most commonly those who did feel like returning in a way, but different factors were giving them 'mixed' feelings about the whole feeling. As illustrated before, different factors and attachments shape the intensions and feelings about return.

Table 18: How do you feel about returning to Nigeria

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Negative	7	50,0	50,0	50,0
Mixed feelings	7	50,0	50,0	100,0
Total	14	100,0	100,0	

6.2. The problem of returning empty-handed

Returning empty-handed was frequently listed as one of the key obstacles making returning to Nigeria difficult. Nigerians would refer to this in different ways, sometimes directly, sometimes tentative and indirectly. Part of this was the existing pressure to continue sending remittances from abroad and part is the disgrace in returning without what Wisdom called 'cargo'. Both notions were clearly intertwined and reinforced each other. This section will focus on the 'empty-handedness' aspect of returning. Moreover it shows how the existing pressure to send remittances and reciprocity are intertwined with it.

[166] Telephone Interview Joseph, 2-1-2017
[167] Interview Smarty, 12-10-2016 WAH Shelter Amsterdam

The theory of reciprocity describes the social rule that people should repay that which another person has provided for them. In practice however this applicable in a broader sense, so those who had any help migrating abroad, contact during and after having arrived at the destination - can feel strongly that they own those people 'special' treatment, goods, money etc. Described by Carling et al. (2015) as: 'not simply a personal issue', thus partially related to what family and relatives expect from them whilst abroad and upon return. And as pointed out by Schuster and Majidi (2014) in an Afghan post-deportation case, those who return against their will, often empty-handed, can be a potential burden on their families. If the migrant was working abroad and sending remittances, their return also represents a loss of income for the family (Schuster and Majidi 2014). In some countries returnees face particular dangers because they are assumed to have money (Carling et al. 2015). This accords with the findings in the sections 'decisions being made' and above in cases where the migration decision was, yet even those that individually took the opportunity, soon found relatives expected remittances, which had to be squeezed from only very meagre earnings and savings (Azam and Gubert 2004;2008; Bryceson and Vuorela 2002). As also described in the paragraph 'the pressure to send remittances', there was almost in every case at least the notion that one ought to send money back to Nigeria. Although in many cases the family wasn't fully aware of the dire and difficult circumstances they were living in, being here undocumented. In conversations about return this theme was ever present. There was a ubiquitous desire to return, as Wisdom said, 'with cargo', in order to 'reciprocate' and become a 'big man' (Utas 2012).

The table below illustrates that the vast majority of those that had mixed and negative feelings about returning, were financially related.

Table 19: How do you feel about returning to Nigeria * Financial negative feelings of return to Nigeria

		Financial negative feelings of return to Nigeria		
			Yes	Total
How do you feel about returning to Nigeria	Negative	5	2	7
	Mixed feelings	1	6	7
Total		6	8	14

Similarly Daniel, like many others, tried to explain why it was difficult to return without goods, or to be burden on his family: *'Yes I want to return and visit my country. But not now, not like this. If I was able to establish something good there, then: yes. That I don't have to be begging, you know just comfortable in my own house'.*[168] Moreover Daniel was able to send remittances to his family frequently. Likewise Ben stressed that he couldn't return without goods: '*Yes I want to return… eventually. But I first need to make a living here. I need to do what I can do to provide for my son (in Nigeria). I cannot return like this'.*[169] Or Wisdom who didn't use many words explaining the problems concerning returning: *'It's a money issue: If I would have money, like 20.000 Euros, so that I could build a house, then I would return, definitely'.*[170]. For Zuwa, too, returning empty-handed was the main obstacle. Explosive and impressive as he was, he brushed the whole idea of returning aside like it was the most stupid idea in the whole world. *'You don't understand how life is here and how life is there. I cannot return like this. There are so many things that need to be done'.*[171] I tried to elicit what exactly the things were that needed to be done, Zuwa explained: *'I left with 5,000 naira. I cannot return with 0 naira, you understand?*.[172]

Some Nigerians also explicitly mentioned the fact that their families were reliant on them, and that it kept them here in the Netherlands, like Ben who came here to provide a better life for his son and family in Delta State, Nigeria: *'It is not always easy, but I can manage; only a little bit… but it's better then nothing.*[173] Ben told me that along his journey through the Sahara desert, with the many obstacles, he already felt like returning back home to Nigeria: *'Everybody wanted me to go to Europe. A contact person helped me a bit along the way, but disappeared. I never saw him again and lost all my money. The journey was terrible, but I couldn't return, I had to continue. My family wouldn't have understood it.*[174]

These stories, just a few among many, illustrate how returning was 'not always a personal issue' (Carling et al. 2015). Although remittances and reciprocity are common themes in discussions on life abroad for migrants, but are also crucial to understanding perceptions of return.

[168] Interview Daniel, 9-12-2016 Café in Amsterdam
[169] Interview Ben, 16-11-2016 Café in Amsterdam
[170] Interview Wisdom, 14-09-2016 WAH Shelter in Amsterdam
[171] Interview Zuwa, 01-11-2016 Park in Amsterdam
[172] Interview Zuwa, 01-11-2016 Park in Amsterdam
[173] Interview Ben, 16-11-2016 Café in Amsterdam
[174] Interview Ben, 16-11-2016 Café in Amsterdam

6.3. They Don't Understand…

As listed in the paragraph above, returning 'empty-handed' was in many cases seen as a key obstacle to return. Again the pressure to send remittances and the idea of reciprocity are themes that play into perceptions of return as well. The problem is often not just the inability to send remittances any more once returned, but also the feeling that they had not yet done enough, that what remittances that had been sent were not enough to fulfil the expectations of their families. They didn't return- reciprocate what was expected back home. Returning in that scenario seemed extremely difficult. Speaking to Nigerians in relation to returning entailed the family being discussed or mentioned frequently. It entailed shame and stigma to return empty-handed, the pressure to provide financially not only while abroad, but also once returned. Conversely, the longing for one's family was also present in many cases. Different research has shown that family triggers, missing home, and nostalgia are part of the decisions shaping return (Koser and Kuschminder 2015; Cassarino 2004; Carling et al. 215). Sometimes Nigerians would also mention that the family clearly wouldn't want them to return, as discussed by Carling et al. 2015; Schuster and Majidi (2014). In the transnational social field this 'dilemma' is also highlighted. In terms of negotiating between their household or origin countries and their new host counties can lead to sometimes-conflicting identities (Cassarino 2004). It is important to stress that focus on transnational linkages, and the simultaneity of these linkages, involves splitting migrants' lives into two or more disconnects arenas (Grillo and Mazzucato. 2008). And what Grillo and Mazzucato call: "dual engagement". 'Within this transnational framework it has been highlighted that migrants transfer resources from their countries of residence to their countries of origin in order to improve or consolidate their class position "back home" '(Nieswand 2014; 400). Nieswand (2014) presented this in his *Borgas* Ghanaian case, whereby Ghanaians who are abroad experience shame and were postponing their returns, when they couldn't meet the expectations of their status abroad, and role in transferring resources.

One part of the questionnaire was asking: *'how would your friends/relatives react on your return?'.* I tried to touch upon their feelings in connection with their countries of origin, the expectations they felt, and how these expectations were perhaps part of not wanting to return, because these expectations were (partially) unfulfilled.

The table below illustrates how Nigerians reflected how their families would react if they would return. It shows that only one Nigerian thought his family would react positive.

Table 20: Family reaction in case you return

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Positive	1	7,1	7,1	7,1
Not positive	8	57,1	57,1	64,3
Mixed reactions	5	35,7	35,7	100,0
Total	14	100,0	100,0	

Answers sometimes directly or indirectly referred to the problem of returning empty-handed. Also sometimes families urged them not to leave Europe and often Nigerians referred to their families in Nigeria being unaware of the circumstances they were living in. Like Wisdom: *'When I started talking about returning, they (family) got scared. They didn't want me to leave Europe. They wanted me to stay here. But they don't understand how life is here.*[175]. John, who seemed quite happy about life, and was able to send remittances and goods, didn't feel like returning at all, explaining that his family urged him not to return: *They wouldn't be happy, what do you think? Who will take care, ha? What do you think?!*

As Nieswand (2014) points out, migrants presumed to receive respect while being abroad. There was also a sense of status and pride for Wisdom, being in Europe as he explained: *'they admire me. I have a lot of respect'.*[176] Ben explained that his family would of course be happy, but that they would expect things from him. As Nieswand (2014) shows, for those who are abroad, goods and material evidence of having been to Europe are expected, when this isn't fulfilled this could even lead to them questioning their 'moral integrity'. As he told: *'My mother would be happy to see me of course. But you know they expect things from me. But in the end they would be happy…of course'.*[177] Zuwa was also caught in this dualism and concern for moral integrity (Grillo and Mazzucato; Nieswand 2013), which caused tensions: *'I think they would be happy to see me. But I am also a burden for them; they also have a lot of problems'.*[178] Edos also had mixed feelings about it. Flashy and boyish as his

[175] Interview Wisdom, 20-09-2016 WAH Shelter Amsterdam
[176] Interview Wisdom, 20-09-2016 WAH Shelter Amsterdam
[177] Interview Ben, 22-11-2016 Café in Amsterdam
[178] Interview Zuwa, 01-11-2016 Park in Amsterdam

appearance showed, the question made him slightly uncomfortable. *'Eventually they would be happy to see me. But not at this moment'.*[179]

Feelings of missing home and nostalgia appear throughout the research, shaping attitudes to return (Koser and Kuschminder 2015; Cassarino 2004; Carling et al. 215), but usually intertwined with the notion that they couldn't fulfil expectations upon return. So it was for Joseph; he longed for his family, son and Nigerian food: *'I really miss them, I miss Nigeria, I miss the food-everything. But it's not easy, you know?'*[180]

As also pointed out by Cassarino (2004) and other transnational scholars (e.g. Grillo and Mazzucato 2008; Levitt and Schiller 2004; Brickell and Datta 2011), migrants are often subject to conflicting feelings of having both nostalgic – and alienated- feelings towards the countries of origin. Like Godwin, who stressed that Nigerians perceive things differently: *'I don't think they would understand me returning' 'People (Nigerians) think differently, you know- they think you are in heaven'.*[181] Similarly for Daniel: *'No they wouldn't understand. They don't understand me and where I am. They wouldn't be happy about it, for sure'.*[182]

6.4. Was It Worth It?

During many conversations with undocumented Nigerians in the Netherlands, some would clearly reflect on what had happened to them along the way. Asking them 'would you have migrated if you knew your life would be as it is now?' sparked emotional reactions for some. In the transnational field this friction is partially presented as 'dualism' and 'the aspiration to which extent life can be fulfilled, here or there (Grillo and Mazzucato 2008). This dualism was particularly visible in the sense that Nigerians tended to regret coming to Europe, yet on the other hand didn't want to return. But, this is part of explaining this friction I would argue. Two other important aspects are: 1. The notion presented by Carling et al. (2015) of integration, that is to say the extent to which the person is integrated personally, but also in terms of how successful is he/she is in securing at least a better life than 'there'. 2: What Schapendonk (2011), among other migration as transition scholars, has argued; a matter of changing aspiration along the migration trajectory. People's views, ideas, hopes and ideas change along the way, due to different kinds of push-pull factors (Akinyoade and Gewald

[179] Interview Edos, 3-01-2017 Café in Amsterdam
[180] Interview Joseph, 15-10-2016 Café in Amsterdam
[181] Interview Godwin, 26-11-2016 Park in Amsterdam
[182] Interview Daniel, 9-12-2016 Café in Amsterdam

2015), a push-factor in deciding to return or move elsewhere could be in this case the practical and emotional downsides of being undocumented.

The table below shows that the vast majority wouldn't have came to the Netherlands, knowing how their situation and lives would have been.

Table 21: NL life: would you have come knowing this is how life would be?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	4	28,6	28,6	28,6
No	10	71,4	71,4	100,0
Total	14	100,0	100,0	

The answers given were diverse, and illustrate how the respondents experience aspects of 'dualism' 'here and there', 'mental and material integration' 'changing aspirations' and 'push- and pull-factors'. Broadly it showed that Nigerians whose experiences were negative in these respects were more liable to regret migrating out of Nigeria.

Wisdom was a particularly clear example, in that his expectations about 'here and there' had not been met and consequently he wasn't very positive about his whole decision to migrate: *'People that do know about how life is (being undocumented in Europe) and have a good life in Nigeria - don't go. People that don't know how life is here, do it when they have the opportunity - they don't know they will waste their life'*.[183] Wisdom stressed that Nigerians were very badly misinformed about life in Europe and the prospects of getting a better life: *'People, like I, didn't know about your document system, that you need papers to work, in Africa we don't have this'*. And '*Yes I deeply regret coming to Europe. I would never have left, knowing how my life is as it is now. I lost so many years of my life, you cannot imagine'*.[184] Smarty too, promised another life in Europe, deeply regretting migrating, as he noted: *'You know I was promised another life than I have now. There are bad people who do this to people. Nothing of this brought me any good at all. I wish I would have just stayed in Nigeria, married a woman and got a family of my own. Look at me… look at*

[183] Interview Wisdom, 20-09-2016 WAH Shelter Amsterdam
[184] Interview Wisdom, 20-09-2016 WAH Shelter Amsterdam

me…'[185] Smarty coughed and gazed into the sky, while we were sitting outside on a bench on a sunny autumn day.

The dualism of regretting migration whilst rejecting return was likewise apparent in Isaac: *'Its not what I imagined',* 'What did you imagine?'*, 'I imagined it to be easier to find work, to make money you know'*.[186] Isaac hadn't been able to make any regular income for the last year. He relied on the help of others and was completely stressed out about his situation. He told me he regretted coming to Europe, but on the other hand didn't want to return. Even though things were so difficult here, home promised little better. And even though Daniel seemed quiet successful in my eyes and always talked with confidence and pride about the situation he was in. He gave a very clear answer: *'All Nigerians come differently, but we all face challenges. For me: if I had known how life would have been in Europe, I wouldn't have left. Nigeria is a nice country, but the government is so bad'*.[187]

In terms of material and emotional integration the examples of Fortune and Edos illustrate how their secure status here meant they regretted little and were quite content about the situation as it was. For Fortune, who was visibly successful in terms of livelihood, goods, money and women, there didn't seem to be any regrets at all. Fortune also referred to the fact that he didn't feel any connection with Nigeria any more and felt more European: '*I don't belong to Africa any more: I belong here'*.[188] Evident again here is the transnationalist notion of *alienation* from the country of origin (see e.g. Grillo and Mazzucato 2008; Mazzucato 2015,a; Brickell and Datta 2011). Likewise Edos had no regrets, as he said: *'My life is much better here, I like the people more (than Africans)'*[189].

My interviewees' aspirations could also be seen to have changed along the way (e.g. Schapendonk 2011: de Haas 2011). Some clearly discovered new opportunities, as described by Akinyoade and Gewald (2015). Like Edos, who took a high-risk and uncertain migration route to up in the Netherlands. Edos was now dreaming of going to the UK, which he didn't initially plan.[190] Also Zuwa's ideas had changed, although he stressed that it hadn't been easy, and still wasn't. He took the opportunity while being here with open arms: *'You gotta make a living, anyhow. I am here now, no I don't regret anything'*.[191]

[185] Interview Smarty, 26-10-2016 WAH Shelter Amsterdam
[186] Telephone Interview Isaac, 19-12-2016.
[187] Telephone Interview Daniel, 20-12-2016
[188] Interview Fortune 26-11-2016 WAH Shelter Amsterdam
[189] Interview Edos, 3-01-2017 Café in Amsterdam
[190] Interview Edos, 3-01-2017 Café in Amsterdam
[191] Interview Zuwa, 17-12-2016 Café in Amsterdam

The table below illustrates these mixed feelings and dualism.

Table 22: NL life: would you have come knowing this is how life would be? * How do you feel about returning to Nigeria

		How do you feel about returning to Nigeria		
		Negative	Mixed feelings	Total
NL life: would you have come knowing this is how life would be?	Yes	4	0	4
	No	3	7	10
Total		7	7	14

6.5. Enforced Mobility?

'I don't want to stay here any more. I want to go a better place. Do you know where to go?'[192]

Although I was fully aware that the persons I spoke to for this research were only a tiny fraction of the massive moment of people worldwide, I became aware of this complex and circular movement of people during my fieldwork experience. Part of the analysis presented by Bloch, Sigona and Zetter (2009) was that being undocumented can produce enforced mobility, thus those that are here without papers are more likely to (be forced to) move elsewhere due to the (bad) circumstances they are in. This can be in search of accommodation, work, or to avoid detection (Bloch, Sigona and Zetter 2009). Schapendonk (2011) argues that this 'entrapped' status is rather ambiguous and doesn't automatically imply immobility, 'the migrants who appear to be "stranded" in the EU border lands may be "on the move" across smaller or longer distances' (Schapendonk 2011; 211). On a larger scale, this mobility can be seen as presented previously as migration as transition (e.g. de Haas 2010; 2015; 2016; Akinyoade and Gewald 2015; Schapendonk 2011; van Haer,

[192] Telephone Interview Wisdom, 21-11-2016

Bakewell and Long 2017). Undocumented Nigerians, I noticed, where constantly moving, using their networks as shown in paragraph *'The search for accommodation and work'.* In the literature the use of networks has been studied quiet extensively, the transnational approach to migration emphasizes the role of networks (Massey et al. 1993; Massey 2003; Dankye, Mazzucato and Takyiwaa 2015; Mazzucato 2008; Portes et al. 2002; Morosau 2009; Chalpi-Den Hamer 2008). This mobility and movement was discussed in the chapter *Migration Trajectories,* but this chapter concentrates on onward movement, that is after the moment I met them for the first time.

There were different types of movements that became visible within this research. 1: Some would visit fiends/relatives in other parts of Europe for a short period of time. 2. Some would go to other parts of Europe for a short period to see what the possibilities were in other cities e.g. Some would go to other cities in Europe for a short period to work and then return back to the Netherlands. 3. Others would move on to another country without the intention to return to the Netherlands for a (longer) while. Also important was mobility within the cities they lived in. There was a constant movement from one location to the next, mostly within Amsterdam in this case. Either forced or not, a dream, an opportunity, the use of a network- it happened constantly and supplements the idea that migrants do not have just one fixed plan and are constantly on the move. I had the opportunity to stay in touch with about eight Nigerians for a longer period. With some I lost contact, but heard from others that they 'went abroad', confirming their onward mobility (Schapendonk 2011).

'I don't want to stay here any more. I want to go a better place. Do you know where to go?' This was what Wisdom asked me during our last conversation in November 2016. I remember I googled: 'best European country for undocumented people' that evening. I don't exactly remember which country seemed to be the best. But when I contacted Wisdom a week or so later, his phone was switched off. I tried again later, still switched off. One of the shelters of We Are Here had just moved again that week, but I couldn't find him at the new one. I started asking around. Different people told me had had moved to Germany. Another told me Sweden. But that he had moved to another country was for sure, according to the migrants. One told me his phone was stolen, but nobody really seemed to know what his new number was. I remember I waited for him to contact me, but he never did…. Still I wonder where he is and how he is doing. What happened to him? Did he find a 'better place'?

Wisdom's story illustrates how he regretting coming to Europe, severely disliking his life as it was, and having many difficulties surviving in terms of securing a reasonable

livelihood, was aspiring to move elsewhere in order to find a better place. His bad circumstances here pushed him to move elsewhere, but was this enforced?

Joseph was also constantly forced to move. He didn't have a permanent place to stay and was forever shifting from location to the next, first a church, then friends, a shelter, the streets. As mentioned before the stress wore him down. When in October 2016, he had been moving constantly like this for a few years. By December 2017 Joseph had moved to Germany, exploring his options over there. Call it enforced, taking opportunities, push- and pull-, I would argue most aspects are present in both Joseph and Wisdom's cases.

Chris too seemed lost and unsuccessful in his search for a good life. He regretted being here, he regretted going to Europe at all; yet returning was no option for him. He had already been in Italy and Germany and had settled in the Netherlands in 2014. He told me several times that he was looking for other places to stay, since life became very difficult in the Netherlands. He phoned me in late December 2016, just before New Years Eve. He had moved to Germany, Dusseldorf. I asked him why he had returned to Germany: *'I got to know people here. They told me there are more jobs here. It's better for me to try make a living here'*.[193] We regularly stayed in touch for the next few months; Chris told me he had a job as a cleaner at a local supermarket, where he would clean in the evenings. One day in April 2017 Chris phoned me to say that he had to leave his room he was renting and asked me to help him to return to Amsterdam. He had lost his job and was wandering on the streets. He found shelter and comfort in a church. But when we had contact in July 2017 he told me that he was in Lyon, France. Life was good and he told me had different small jobs and lived with people he had met along the way.

For Chris moving at this pace seemed to be quiet normal: when things didn't turn out as he hoped, he just made the decision to move, using the networks he made along his journey. He would find opportunities along the road and was highly mobile within Europe's borders.

Most Nigerians used their networks for mobility, either arranging short-term jobs abroad through someone in their direct network, like Daniel, who was I have mentioned before, always extremely busy with all his work in and around Amsterdam. When we had contact in the beginning of January 2017 he told me he was in Brussels, Belgium. He told me he got temporary work opportunities from the owner (a Nigerian man) of the house he lived in and

[193] Telephone Interview Chris, 20-12-2016

that he would stay there for about a month. Ben was highly mobile within Amsterdam, he moved twice since met in November 2016 until April 2017, both times within Amsterdam-ZO and both times with 'people he knew' and again both times with other Africans.

The table below shows that half of the respondents were planning to move elsewhere.

Table 23: Do you plan another migratory attempt?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	7	50,0	50,0	50,0
No	7	50,0	50,0	100,0
Total	14	100,0	100,0	

Summary

This chapter has tried to touch upon the theme of perceptions of return and answer the question: *'what were the motives, restraints and circumstances for returning, staying or moving forwards?* Again these motives were partially related to the extent to which Nigerians were able to meet expectations back home, moreover sometimes families urged them not to return. Nonetheless some did want to return, but not yet, not now, not in the situation they were in. It has showed that those who specifically wanted to stay had been able to secure some degree of success in terms of money, housing, remittances and sometimes love. Yet it also showed that those who wanted to move on were not only those that had been able to secure these livelihoods and were looking for even better opportunities, but also those who where 'pushed'- forced to move elsewhere *because* of their poor circumstances. Despite these circumstances they didn't want to return, but rather sought to move elsewhere. Thus in general neither success *nor* failure automatically generated aspirations to return.

Another recurring theme was how migrant Nigerians would refer to the fact that 'they' - Nigerians in Nigeria - didn't understand them and the situation they were in. Some expressed how they felt they didn't belong to Nigeria any more, or were partially disconnected from their countries of origin. Remarkably it also showed that many Nigerians experienced this 'dualism', call it even perhaps 'schism' whereby they deeply regretted coming to Europe, living and experiencing the constraints being undocumented - yet still didn't want to return to Nigeria.

Figure 3: Depicts the Map of Nigeria, the states and the major cities.

7. The Returnees

As described in methodology tracking the returnees was partially done ahead while I was still in the Netherlands true the list I received from IOM-Nigeria. Many were successfully contacted ahead. And several phone conversations would follow before actually meeting the returnees in Nigeria. Some didn't want to participate in the research; with others I lost contact before I had arrived in Nigeria. The returnees were scattered around the country, yet the majority was located in Lagos. I choose two other locations, beside Lagos, that were higher populated by returnees from the list I received. Those were in this case: Benin City- and Enugu region. I asked the returnees to meet me at the given location a head of time. Some had to travel longer distances in order to meet me. There were also returnees living in other regions, that were much further away, it was mostly one person living in that particular region, and due to the limitation of time and the long distances meeting those returnees or asking them to meet me was not considered an option. Those living in Benin City (returned from the IOM) were interviewed in the office of Idia Renaissance . Those living in the region of Enugu were interviewed at an office in the University of Nigeria Enugu campus. Those returned true the NGO Idia Renaissance, located in Benin City were not contacted ahead and contacts with the returnees were made true the organization itself on location.

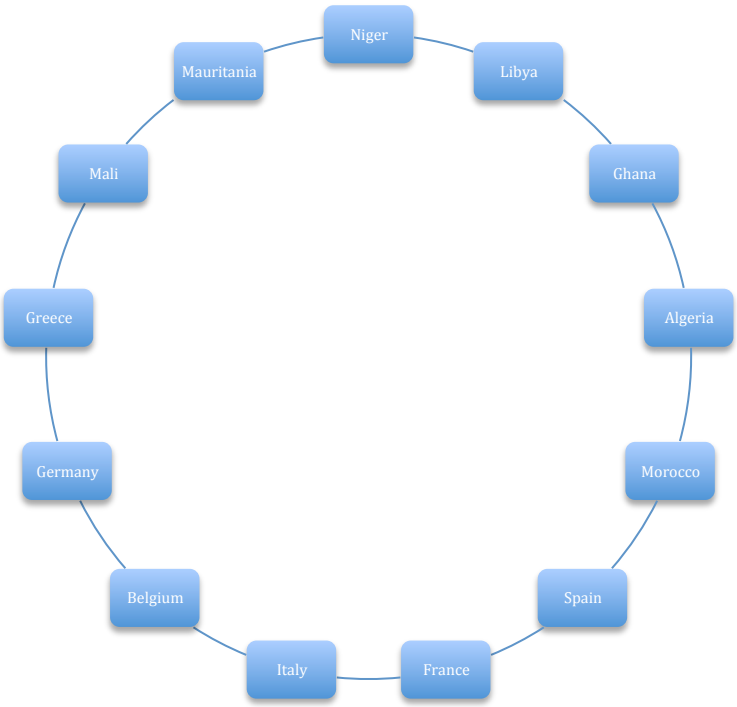
A smaller group was found at the location itself true snowball sampling. This was only in Benin City the case. I am sure if had stayed in Benin for a longer period I would have tracked many more returnees/deportees. People, this were either returnees that had returned voluntary or staff of the local university, would actively refer me to other returnees/deportees and basically just give me their phone numbers. Some were successfully interviewed in the Idia Renaissance office I could use.

Contact in Nigeria isn't always that easy. Phone lines would often break during a conversation or no contact at all could be made. Not surprisingly Nigerians tended to have several phones, all with different networks and were basically just using the phone that had the best connection at that moment. Moreover Nigerians tended to move a lot within a region or even the whole country prior to our final appointment. In combination with the sometimes very bad phone connections and hardly any usage of emails – it entailed a daily occupation in order to get all these people to the location I wanted to meet them.

7.1. Migration – Motives, Decisions and Circumstances - Some reflections

The additional stories I heard from the Nigerian returnees themselves on why they migrated in the first place were very useful. It allowed me to compare, reflect on and contextualise the stories I had heard from the Nigerians in the Netherlands. As explored in the chapter Migration - Motives, Decisions and Circumstances, this additional chapter on the returnees themselves is based on story telling. I choose a couple of stories that illustrate the circumstances and motivations for migration, how the decisions were being made, and the journey itself. The stories are personal; yet show many similarities with the stories told among the undocumented Nigerians in the Netherlands. The stories are constructed from actual facts and stories told during interviews and phone-call conversations, before, while, and after I met the respondents. One thing stood out with the Nigerian returnees in relation to how they told their stories: they were able to reflect much more, and were able to speak more safely than those still in the Netherlands without documents.

Table 24: Countries where Nigerians had lived or stayed for a longer period, before eventually arriving in the Netherlands.



James

1974/ male/ born Anambra State / residence Lagos / returned September 2016 / Nigeria/ Ghana / Greece (2001) / Netherlands (2012)

I grew up in Anambra State (South Eastern Nigeria) in a small rural village with one older sister. My mother was a petty trader and my father passed away when I was very young. Ever since I can remember surviving was constant a struggle. As a single mom with no husband my mother struggled even more than the others did in the village. I could only attend primary school and was sent off to work ever since. I moved to different cities within Nigeria to find work. Sometimes I was successful, but many times I wasn't. When I returned back to my home village in my twenties without an income, staying with my mom purposeless, a Nigerian man addressed my mother and sister, proposing me to move to Europe to make money for our poor family. My mother and sister, desperate as they were, trusted this man and arranged my movement to Europe. They did it out of abject poverty: I cannot blame them. I remember they told me one day about the plans they had made for me: at least I would be able to do something for the family as the only male left. I didn't refuse, I was even happy in a way. I felt like a real man that would go to Europe and make loads and loads of money for my mother and sister, so that they wouldn't have to suffer that much. I was send off to Ghana with instructions to take a large cargo ship heading to Greece. The journey was true hell, I had no idea how long the journey would take and was assigned to stay downstairs until the merchants would get me out. I completely lost it after a few days and went completely crazy. I started hallucinating and knocking on the ceiling and screaming for more water I remembered. I had no idea where this journey would take me to and was even questioning if I would come out of this ship alive. Luckily I did come out alive. I arrived in Greece, and my contact person arrived. Very soon I was bought to a house where also other Nigerians were. They told me that I had a really high debt, this all had cost them a lot of money: 70,000 dollars. I had to repay it all, and then I would be free to do whatever I wanted. I worked as a petty trader on the Greek beaches, selling mostly sunglasses, jewellery and other objects. I moved from beach to beach and island to island. I have seen them all really. I always had to arrange my own stay, leaving me renting little rooms. My life consisted of paying rent; paying for little food and giving all the money I had left to the Nigerian men. We would meet frequently, me giving the cash, them giving the goods. There were loads of other Africans like me selling goods on the beaches that were in same situation as I was. I was never able to repay all the money: it was impossible. I lost contact with my mother and sister after a while:

I was so ashamed I couldn't give them any money. I continued living like this over 10 years: a slave, a not even notable telling creature. Then the financial crisis hit Greece in 2009 and everything became unstable, so it was for my Nigerian traffickers. I made the attempt to escape Greece, they caught me and beat and threatened me really bad. They let people come to the house of my mother in Nigeria and threatened her: that if she wouldn't pay money they would kill me. Eventually my mother and sister sold the little land they had left and gave it to the traffickers. So so sad. I heard the story later from my mother. Shortly after my sister passed away and left my mother with her young children to take care of. With my second escape I was more successful. Again I found myself on a cargo ship. Again I experienced this horror, the feeling of being locked in the dark - not knowing how long it would take. I found myself in the Netherlands this time. I got of the ship and asked one of the first persons I saw for help. The women forwarded me to Ter Apel, Groningen.[194] *There I could file for asylum. Later I got relocated to Oisterwijk, my second camp.*[195]

James' story illustrates how in many cases there isn't really a clear distinction on how the were decisions were made to migrate out of Nigeria, as discussed in paragraph 3.3. *Decisions being made*. James' migration plan was set up partially as a household strategy, initiated by human traffickers, or what Schapendonk (2011) calls 'third person', in this case misleading James and his family and leaving him exploited in Europe for many years. Moreover it illustrates how James was already highly mobile and conceived the notion of onward mobility in Nigeria (e.g. Schapendonk 2011; de Bruijn, van Dijk and Foeken 2001). James had no notion of his destination, as described by Schapendonk (2011), prior to his movement. After he had arrived in Greece, in this case, he found himself on European shores and was clearly pushed to move elsewhere due to his harsh circumstances in Greece. That he eventually arrived in the Netherlands undocumented was a pure coincidence, a set of circumstances that occurred along the way.

[194] Everyone in the Netherlands that requests for asylum have to report to the Aliens police in Ter Apel, in Groningen. There the Central Agency for Reception of Asylum Seekers (COA) is responsible for the reception and guidance of asylum seekers in the Netherlands.
[195] Interview James, 01-02-2017 Lagos IOM Office

Tony

1970/ male/ born Imo State/ residence Lagos /returned January 2017/ Nigeria /Netherlands (1998)

I am originally from Owerri, Imo State. I am the youngest out of 4 children. Both my parents were traders and we lived a simple life. My parents were good and honest people, really. Like almost everyone that finished secondary school - I also left looking for a job. I came to Lagos and lived there over 8 years, but if you have no real skills you only get the dirty jobs. At that time, I don't know how it is these days, getting a visa was normal. Everybody knew someone that 'could help' you know. I borrowed money and saved money myself to pay, but I returned all the money long ago. I didn't tell my parents I was leaving, my mother would have cried for sure. For me personally, it was also an adventure leaving Nigeria. I just wanted to get out of that country, see what my possibilities would be elsewhere. I thought I was going to the UK, but instead I left for the Netherlands.[196]

Tony's story illustrates a few things; his life was categorized by upward mobility, going to Lagos in search for a better livelihood. He shows that there was a clear sense of adventure and that he took the opportunity when it was there. Tony didn't have a clear idea of his destination, partially due to the fact that his migration was co-facilitated by contact person in Nigeria (e.g. Schapendonk 2011; Alpes 2011) and partially due to his own unawareness of locations and destinations.

Kingsley

1977 / male / born Imo State / residence Lagos / returned February 2016 / Nigeria / Niger / Mali / Mauritania / Morocco/ Spain / Germany / Netherlands (2012)

I grew up in Imo State (South East Nigeria) in a small rural village. I was the 8th out of 9 children. Both my parents were farmers and my father was also a pastor. After completing primary school I went working at my parents farm and as a petty trader selling the goods along the roads. I left to Lagos to find a better paying job. All my brothers and sisters were scattered around the country, all looking for jobs. I did find a job in Lagos, I had several

196 Interview Tony, 20-01-2017 Lagos IOM Office

ones, that changed a lot. I also found love in Lagos and married a woman and got two boys. But things were not easy in Lagos, surviving was a daily struggle- and there were no prospects. I decided with my wife, that it was better for me to leave Nigeria- in search for a better paid job. The struggle was so tiring. Getting a visa was too expensive, I couldn't pay the broker. I decided therefore to go over land, away from Nigeria. Through the desert of Niger, Mali, Mauritania and Morocco, I eventually ended up on the Moroccan shores. The journey was hell: and with hell I mean true hell. I am so lucky I survived this. The journey took me over 6 months. I already felt like returning back home to my wife and boys, but I really felt so much shame doing so. [197]

Kingsley story illustrates a high-risk migration towards Europe. Kingsley's life in Nigeria was full of insecure livelihoods and mobility in search of better life conditions. Although he found love, married and had two children and a small job in Lagos, he still had aspirations and the notion that his life could be more fulfilled 'there' than 'here', as suggested by transnational scholars, e.g. Gillo and Mazzucato (2008). He did plan his migratory attempt in depth and did have clear idea where he was heading to: Europe.

The tables below shows the frequency listed for economic and opportunity reasons for migration from Nigeria in the initial state.

Table 25: Economic reason for migrating from Nigeria

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	10	52,6	52,6	52,6
No	9	47,4	47,4	100,0
Total	19	100,0	100,0	

Table 26: Opportunity reason for migrating from Nigeria

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	6	31,6	31,6	31,6
No	13	68,4	68,4	100,0
Total	19	100,0	100,0	

[197] Interview Kingsley, 18-01-2017 Lagos IOM Office

Yet it also shows that among the returnees also ‘arranged by others’ and ‘forced’ was also listed, unlike the Nigerians in the Netherlands.

Table 27: Arranged travelling by others

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	5	26,3	26,3	26,3
No	14	73,7	73,7	100,0
Total	19	100,0	100,0	

Table 28: Forced movement reason for migrating from Nigeria

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	2	10,5	10,5	10,5
No	17	89,5	89,5	100,0
Total	19	100,0	100,0	

The table below shows how Nigerians listed their initial decision factors for migrating. Comparing to the Nigerians in the Netherlands, collective was almost the same frequency. Yet forced was also listed in this case.

Table 29: Decision factor for migrating

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Individual	6	31,6	31,6	31,6
Collective	10	52,6	52,6	84,2
Forced	3	15,8	15,8	100,0
Total	19	100,0	100,0	

The table below shows the main sources of funding for migration. On average comparing to those in the Netherlands, they were similar. Except that returnees also listed 'friends' as a source.

Table 30: Main source of funding for migration

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Family & relatives	7	36,8	36,8	36,8
Family relatives & friends	5	26,3	26,3	63,2
Yourself	2	10,5	10,5	73,7
Smuggler/trafficker	4	21,1	21,1	94,7
None	1	5,3	5,3	100,0
Total	19	100,0	100,0	

The table below illustrates the mode of traveling to Europe. Figures show that comparing to those in the Netherlands, the same frequency of mode was used.

Tale 31: Mode of travelling to Europe

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Air	12	63,2	63,2	63,2
Road & sea	7	36,8	36,8	100,0
Total	19	100,0	100,0	

Summary

This chapter was set partially in story telling, of those that had returned to Nigeria, on their motives, decisions and circumstances that had led to migrating out of Nigeria. The stories showed many similarities with the stories told among the Nigerians in the Netherlands. Statistics showed that economic and opportunity reasons were cited the most as their motives. Funding for their migration was similar. The decision shaping factors were also similar, yet some also referred to the fact that they were. The mode of traveling to Europe was also similar.

7.2. The Everyday Life of The Undocumented Nigerians: Reflections on Lives Lived in the Netherlands

The table below shows the duration of stay in the Netherlands among the returnees. It shows that almost half of the respondents had been in the Netherlands over 10 years. This table doesn't include the duration of stay in other countries.

Table 32: Duration of stay in the Netherlands

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Years	0,5	2	7,4	10,5	10,5
	1,0	1	3,7	5,3	15,8
	2,0	1	3,7	5,3	21,1
	3,0	3	11,1	15,8	36,8
	4,0	1	3,7	5,3	42,1
	6,0	1	3,7	5,3	47,4
	8,0	1	3,7	5,3	52,6
	10,0	1	3,7	5,3	57,9
	12,0	1	3,7	5,3	63,2
	13,0	2	7,4	10,5	73,7
	16,0	1	3,7	5,3	78,9
	18,0	2	7,4	10,5	89,5
	19,0	1	3,7	5,3	94,7
	22,0	1	3,7	5,3	100,0
	Total	19	70,4	100,0	
Missing	System	8	29,6		
Total		27	100,0		

The table below shows their main occupation in the Netherlands.

Table 34: Main occupation

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	8	29,6	29,6	29,6
butcher	1	3,7	3,7	33,3
cars	1	3,7	3,7	37,0
cleaner	4	14,8	14,8	51,9
market	1	3,7	3,7	55,6
none	10	37,0	37,0	92,6
post	1	3,7	3,7	96,3
supermarket	1	3,7	3,7	100,0
Total	27	100,0	100,0	

Living undocumented, sometimes for many years, had its impact on the lives of the returnees. Respondents could reflect on the lives they had lived better than those that were still in the situation of being undocumented in the Netherlands. They were open about the insecure lives they had lived and how it had changed them in a way, how it had changed you as a person to had to be alert and constantly aware of your surroundings for so long. Introduced by De Genova (2002) and De Genova and Peutz (2010) as 'the notion of deportability' among illegals, this lack of status has been described before in *The everyday lives of undocumented Nigerian in the Netherlands* as an all-encompassing experience, producing distinctive forms of social marginality with significant impacts such as 'enforced' mobility in the search for accommodation, for work, or to avoid detection (Bloch, Sigona and Setter 2009). Some of the returnees I spoke to opted to return voluntary, some felt that there was no option; this will be discussed more later on in this chapter. What was clear was that all of the respondents had one thing in common: they had been undocumented in the Netherlands - they all had their experiences and were eager to tell me about them. I used the same question as in the previous chapter, but just framed it in the past: 'what had it meant to be undocumented?'. With the returnees I reflected on the lives lived back in the Netherlands: many stories were told. I chose to tell a few of them that illuminate the different aspects of being undocumented.

Kingsley was a returnee who was very open about what had happened: his feelings of being trapped, avoiding detection and minimizing his movement within the city of Amsterdam. As

illustrated in the paragraph *Shadow existence and insecure identities 5.1, a* common response to the fear of detection is not is not going out, or to minimise mobility, social encounters and to avoid public transport (Bloch, Sigona and Zetter, 2009). His income was never stable and he got the feeling that he wasn't paid very well, but felt that he had nowhere to go to. It also illustrates the pressure he felt to send remittances, as presented in the previous chapter (Azam and Gubert 2004;2008; Bryceson and Vuorela 2002), and how difficult it was to save enough money to send back to Nigeria, how he tried to reduce his costs, but that it never seemed to be enough. Kingsley saw this as a temporary phase in his life, applying for asylum wasn't his aim (de Genova and Peutsz 2010). He tried his best, but quickly (after about 3 years) realised that it wouldn't work out and decided to return voluntary.

Kingsley

1977 / male / born Imo State / residence Lagos / returned February 2016 / Nigeria / Niger / Mali / Mauritania / Morocco/ Spain / Germany / Netherlands (2012)

After living in Spain and Germany I came to Amsterdam in the summer of 2012. I had heard from other Africans like me in Germany that I should go to Amsterdam and that I would meet other Nigerians, it was true I met Nigerians that helped me. Ever since I came to Europe life was so extremely difficult. I really thought it was much easier to find a job and make money. That was my only intention: find a job, make money, send it to Nigeria to my family and to eventually return back to my homeland. I never applied for asylum, this wasn't my intention. I did find a job in Amsterdam, I was lucky. I had several jobs: I worked as a cleaner, in construction and as a dishwasher in a local restaurant. But the money I earned was never enough to really save enough money to send it back to Nigeria. The costs of living are really high in your country. I tried everything to reduce my costs, really everything, but still it wasn't enough. My jobs were never stable, I never really knew if they offered me some work. I don't think they paid me well, but I didn't know what to do or where to go to. I hardly left the Bijlmer area (Amsterdam ZO), I was too scared. When I think about my life back in the Netherlands I only think of the constant struggle and the feeling of always having to be alert. It was so tiring. I was never comfortable and always scared. You cannot compare Nigeria with the Netherlands: when you have the right documents you really have a very good life, but if not…. You are an absolute no one.[198]

[198] Interview Kingsley, 18-01-2017 Lagos IOM Office

Dickson described his life as an undocumented person as just a given that you had to work around. He took full advantage of every opportunity he saw, as might be expected by Migration as Transition scholars. Becoming very successful in car trading (and maybe some other things?), Dickson took great advantage of his networks, as described in the previous chapters (Massey et al. 1993; Massey 2003; Dankye, Mazzucato and Takyiwaa 2015; Mazzucato 2008; Portes et al. 2002; Morosau 2009; Chalpi- Den Hamer 2008).
Dickson had his own apartment in the end that he rented from another African, and made, in his own words, loads and loads of money. Enough to send remittances to Nigeria frequently so that his wife had a comfortable life back in Enugu and his children could attend a good school. Sending remittances and goods was important for Dickson in showing his status abroad (Nieswand 2014). Dickson was successful in avoiding detection for over 19 years, until he got shot in his apartment.

Dickson

1964/ male/ born Enugu State/ residence Enugu/ returned February 2015 /
Nigeria / Munich/ Amsterdam (1997) / Utrecht/ Baarn / Soest

I came to the Netherlands in December 1997, after I had lived in Munich for a short while. I was disappointed in Munich, there were very little opportunities for me there. I decided to move to Amsterdam and life was really good over there. Dutch are really good people, you care about people. You would never die on the streets there, unlike here in Nigeria. I even took some Dutch classes at one of your centres. I particularly loved your Dutch food, you know: Kentucky and Febo[199]. Of course life isn't always easy without the right documents, but you just have to make it work. After working in several African restaurants in Amsterdam- ZO, I got into car trading with another Nigerian man. Later I moved to Utrecht in 2000. I had my own apartment I rented from a West African man. I really earned a lot of money back then and was able to send large amounts back to my family in Enugu. Both my children could attend good schooling and my wife had a nice concrete house. I was always aware, but the thing is: you should act as normal as possible, I always had good contact with

[199] Febo is Dutch fast-food snack bar (not typically Dutch), and Kentucky is American Fast-food snack bar – not Dutch at all.

my neighbours; no one ever questioned my status. All the money eventually turned into the cause of my return. One day in 2012 I got shot in my apartment by black people, you know you have those Suriname people there. They must have known I had money in my house all the 15,000 euros, luckily I didn't have the 80,000 in my house at that moment; it was with my Nigerian companion. These people wanted money, I told them I didn't have any and out of nerves one shot me, it hit my spinal cord. I was really lucky though: one millimetre more and I would have died. Now I'm only partly paralysed. I told them where the money was and they also took one of my phones, but they didn't know I had another phone. I phoned my Nigerian companion, but he didn't dare coming: he was too scared these people would return. I had no other option than to phone the ambulance… they phoned the police…[200]

Susan's story illustrates the fear that can be felt when undocumented (Bloch, Sigona and Zetter 2009). The alienation she already felt at the airport leaving Nigeria (Mazzucato and Grillo 2008; Mazzucato 2016). How being badly informed, mislead (Alpes 2011), with limited networks leaves few possibilities (Massey et al. 1993; Massey 1997; Dankye, Mazzucato and Takyiwaa (2015); Mazzucato 2008; Portes et al. 2002; Morosau 2009; Chalpi- Den Hamer 2008).

Susan

1990 / Female / born Ebonye State / residence Lagos/ returned March 2016 / Nigeria / Amsterdam (2015)

My fear already started at the airport in Lagos to the Netherlands and it never stopped since then. I didn't know what to do at the airports; I didn't know how such things work. I didn't dare asking too much, since it would maybe show I'm a stranger. When I arrived at the airport in Amsterdam my contact person showed up to pick me up. They promised me a job, but there was no normal job at all. Nothing what they had told me was true. They (a Nigerian man and women) wanted me to prostitute, but I don't know how that works! I cannot do that. They told me to leave straight away and find myself a job I liked.[201] *I remember it was already late in the night when I was wandering around on the streets in Amsterdam-ZO, when an elderly woman came to me and offered me help. The women was from Ghana and*

[200] Interview Dickson, 30-01-2017 Enugu University of Nigeria Office
[201] After hearing many other similar stories, it seemed unlikely that Susan was able to escape her situation that easily.

must have known I was in a very bad situation. She offered me a little room in her apartment and I got to calm down a bit. The woman told me I should find a job as soon as possible so that I could pay rent, but it was so difficult. I didn't know anyone and didn't know what to do. I hardly left the house and always stayed in my room. One day we went to the market together and she urged me to ask people if they could offer me a job. I started crying, I was just so scared.[202]

The story of Tony illustrates the criminalisation and alienation of his identity, described by De Genova (2002); Sigona, Zetter and Bloch (2009) and transnationalists such as Mazzucato (2015a,b; 2016). How he had felt the injustice, while he hadn't done anything wrong. How he describes his stay in the Netherlands as being in prison - a commonly used word among the undocumented Nigerians I spoke to in the Netherlands.

Tony

1970/ male/ born Imo State/ residence Lagos /returned January 2017/ Nigeria /Netherlands (1998)

I was a good citizen, really. I never did any harm, yet officials see you as a criminal. I lived in Rotterdam over 18 years. I had so many jobs you cannot imagine, I cannot even remember them all myself. I cleaned very often, restaurants and homes wherever. I have also been a butcher for a while - this place was full of Africans like me I remember. I was constantly aware, especially in my first years in the Netherlands. You are always kind of nervous; you can never sit down with ease. Although my nerves eased a bit after a few years, you are never really comfortable. When I look back at those 18 years it feels like I have been in prison… I thought I would be free returning back to Nigeria, but instead I entered another prison.[203]

[202] Interview Susan, 19-01-2017 Lagos IOM Office
[203] Interview Tony, 20-01-2017 Lagos IOM Office

Amaechi

1978/ male/ born Lagos State/ residence Lagos / returned July 2016/ Nigeria/ Netherlands (2003)

I thought I would have been free arriving in the Netherlands: instead you're arriving in prison in a way. But everywhere you are: you have to make it work. And I did make it work as much as possible. I had several jobs: mainly as a cleaner. I rented a room in an apartment in Amsterdam Westerpark with other Africans. I also had a dog; I walked him everyday in the park. But I was always aware, always alert, always a bit on my nerves. You hear bad stories you know…. Eventually if you act normal the government leaves you alone in your country. Unluckily I ran into problems with your government….[204]

The table below shows that the vast majority had never applied for asylum in the Netherlands.

Table 35: Ever submitted an asylum application

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
		8	29,6	29,6	29,6
	Yes	3	11,1	11,1	40,7
	No	16	59,3	59,3	100,0
	Total	27	100,0	100,0	

[204] Interview Amaechi, 20-01-2017 Lagos IOM Office

The table below gives the reasons for not applying for asylum among those who didn't. More than half of the respondent's gave the reasons for not applying as: 'I didn't want to be in the system', thus quiet deliberately. Or as: 'I don't know', which often entailed speaking to the Nigerians, to having the feeling that they didn't peruse getting one; had the feeling they wouldn't obtain it or didn't really know how it worked.

Table 36: Give reasons for not applying for asylum

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	8	29,6	29,6	29,6
I wanted to sort things out before applying	4	14,8	14,8	44,4
I didn't want to be in the system	7	25,9	25,9	70,4
I don't know	7	25,9	25,9	96,3
Other	1	3,7	3,7	100,0
Total	27	100,0	100,0	

Stephen's story illustrates how undocumented people are at risk of being exploited, as described by Sigona, Zetter and Bloch (2009); Alpes (2011); M. Chelpi-den Hamer 2008; Bryceson and Vuorela 2002. In Stephen's case for over 14 years.

Stephen

1962/ male/ born Enugu State/ residence Enugu/ returned April 2015 / Nigeria/ Netherlands (1993)

I didn't know anyone when I arrived in Amsterdam. The one that was supposed to help me in Nigeria never showed up. I didn't have any contact at all. I went to Amsterdam Central Station and soon I met a Nigerian man, a Yoruba[205] I thought he was my brother; but he used me so badly for almost 14 years. This Yoruba man lived in The Hague and offered me a room in his apartment there. He told me he could arrange everything for me and help me. I really

[205] Yoruba's are an ethnic group of southwestern en north-central Nigeria, as well as southern and central Benin, Together, these regions are known as Yorubaland. The Yoruba constitute over 40 million in total; the majority of this population lives in Nigeria (21% of the country population).

trusted him. He arranged many jobs for me, I worked as a postman, in recycling, killing chickens, picking tomatoes. I worked in his name, all the money went to his back account and I only saw little money. I had different jobs in one week, I was either working or in my room. I really had no life at all. One day I confronted this Yoruba man, I told him he was using me and that I didn't receive all the money I had earned. He got really mad, he would threaten me that he would phone the police and that they would deport me back to Nigeria. I was so scared, that I would just be loyal. In all those years I confronted him several times, but he would just turn extremely aggressive. Looking back I cannot imagine I lived like this for 14 years! I was made a modern slave, no rights, no soul nothing of me was left. One day he suddenly told me he would go to London, he told me to pack all my things and leave the house. I cried and begged him to take me with him. He refused…. I went to the St. Agnes Church in The Hague and begged for help. After 14 years I opened up and told everything to Father Bosco (local priest). He told me that what had happened was really really bad. I would sleep in the church now and then and he would give me clothes and tinned food. He was the one that helped me to contact the right organisations to eventually return back to Nigeria.[206]

The table below shows that the vast majority among the respondents had unhappy or mixed feelings about their stay in the Netherlands.

Table 37: General note of staying in NL

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Happy	5	26,3	26,3	26,3
Unhappy	10	52,6	52,6	78,9
Happy & Unhappy	4	21,1	21,1	100,0
Total	19	100,0	100,0	

[206] Interview Stephen, 30-01-2017 Enugu University of Nigeria Office

Mathew's story also illustrated the risks of 'brokers' (Alpes 2011; Schapendonk 2014), being misinformed and the alienation he felt being undocumented in the Netherlands (e.g. Brickell and Datta 2011; Mazzucato 2015a; 2016; Dankye, Mazzucatoand Takyiwaa 2015)

Mathew

1981/male/ born Kano State/ residence Benin City/ returned October 2015/ Nigeria/ Amsterdam (2005)

I came to the Netherlands with my contact person in Nigeria. We came by plane with a visa. We first flew to France and then to Amsterdam. When we arrived in Amsterdam he turned violent took my passport and left. I was left on the train station on my own with no-one to help me. I was wandering around the station, looking for someone that could help me. I found a man from Ghana, he helped me contact some Nigerian friends he had. I could stay with one of them at first, but I was expected to find a job and earn money. I had several jobs, mainly as a cleaner in restaurants and homes. I moved several times within Amsterdam. Finding jobs and housing was a constant struggle. You wake up not knowing what the day will bring. You see all these people moving around the city, you know you are not part of it. You lose yourself. But somehow I managed to live like this over 12 years.[207]

The story of Nazarus illustrates strategies of getting a status in the Netherlands (Alpes 2011; De Genova and Peutz 2010) fighting for his papers and the stress he felt.

Nazarus

Male/ born Sudan/ residence Lagos / returned March 2016/ Nigeria/ Netherlands (2000)

I had obtained a temporary permit in the Netherlands. I was born in Sudan[208]*, I was a refugee. It took me years to obtain the temporary permit. The years where full of insecurity: you never knew how tomorrow would be. This constant insecure feeling made me feel very*

[207] Telephone Interview Mathew, 9-12-2017

[208] Sometimes used by Nigerians, that seek asylum in the Netherlands. People from Sudan where more eligible to receive asylum. Not sure if it was the truth.

depressive. When I got my permit after three years, I could start living. I was living in Eindhoven that time. I had a good life really. I also had a girlfriend from Ghana. I was stupid- I did bad things and committed crimes. I lost my permit, welfare, house and girlfriend. I fell into a deep depression again.[209]

Summary

In this chapter I tried to illustrate through small narratives the reflections on lives lived whilst undocumented in the Netherlands. It shows that there were many insecurities being undocumented, but also strategies for 'surviving' in the Netherlands. Moreover it showed how Nigerians were sometimes really badly informed, exploited and at risk. Returnees in general reflected on it being an all-encompassing experience, producing distinctive forms of social marginality with significant impacts such as 'enforced' mobility in the search for accommodation, for work, or to avoid detection. Statistics showed that the vast majority had been living in the Netherlands over 10 years; half of the respondents had no occupation prior to their return. It also showed that majority hadn't applied for asylum and that the main reasons were listed with: 'I don't know' or 'not wanting to be in the system'. It also showed that the vast majority had unhappy or mixed feelings about their stay in the Netherlands. Yet many returnees survived this way of life many years, or even found a way of cooping with it.

[209] Interview Nazarus, 03-02-2017 Lagos IOM Office

8. The Returnees:
Life after Returning

8.1. Returning in Literature

It was essential to speak to those that had made the decision, either of their own accord or under duress, to return to Nigeria. The motives for returning varied, from having enough of the situation as it was to the feeling that there was no option left but to leave the Netherlands. the central question in this chapter is: 'What had been the motives or circumstances for returning?' I went through this question in depth with the respondents. What had been the tipping point? Were the motives related to their living circumstances in the Netherlands? Or to lives back 'home'? Or was it pure bad luck: being caught in a criminal act, placing the undocumented in the legal arena: a place where they could be detected?

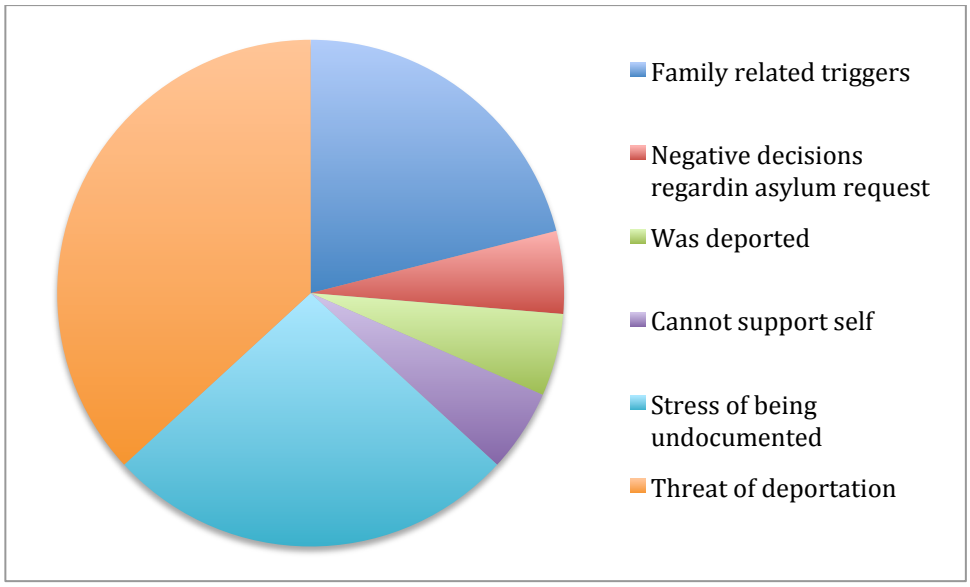
In the literature, and as described before in chapter 6: *Returning, staying or moving forwards,* there has been some research on return decision-making processes and returnees preparedness (e.g. Koser and Kuschminder 2015; Cassarino 2004; Carling et al. 2015). I took the analysis of Carling et al. (2015) as my entry point, discussing the perceptions of those that were considering return. As described in the literature, return intentions are shaped by multiple attachments (Carling et al. 2015; Cassarino 2004). Conditioning variables are presented and categorized by Koser and Kuschminder (2015) as; conditions in origin country, conditions in destination country; individual factors; social factors and policy interventions. Of these conditions in the destination country emerged as the most prominent (Koser and Kuschminder 2015). Beside that the conditions of return: safety and security was cited the most important (Koser and Kuschminder 2015). Also notable is that other studies found that the primary reason for selecting return packages was "…all other options were worse", in particular the threat of deportation (Strand et al. 2008; Koser and Kuschminder 2015). Black et al. (2004) and Schuster and Mahidi (2014) all found that this threat was the primary reason for choosing return.

In this research a few conditions stood out; most of the respondents spoken to in Nigeria had opted to return voluntary, through the IOM. The incentives for opting for voluntary return varied: from an individual choice to the feeling there was no other option, due to the threat of deportation. This was precipitated by an act of a minor crime in most cases, placing the undocumented Nigerian in the 'legal arena'.

8.2. Motives for Returning – The Tipping Point

I asked the question among the returnees: 'What were your main motives to return?'

Table 38: The table below depicts the main motives for returning:



In this particular research the three most commonly cited explanations were: 1: The stress of being undocumented; 2: Family related 'triggers' and 3: The threat of deportation. I will discuss the most commonly cited motives for returning below.

1. The returnees related how the stress of being undocumented 'wore them down', this was also found in research by Collyer et al. (2009), among Sri Lankan irregular migrants in the UK, as the primary reason to return. It is worth highlighting that the stress Nigerians experienced in being undocumented manifested in multiple ways, such as the struggle to secure good livelihoods, money, jobs, housing etc. Consequently Nigerians that were able to secure such livelihoods abroad were less likely to consider return, and those that did – did it because of the threat of deportation. Moreover this illustrates that there is only a limited distinction between what is 'forced' due to political threats of deportation and those that were 'forced' due to the lack of livelihood, leaving them almost no other option.

Susan, for example, didn't want to return but felt that she had no other option but to leave. '*I didn't want to leave. I really wished I could have stayed there. But there was no life - no prospects. I couldn't find a job, I had no money left. I couldn't stay in my room with no money. The women (from Ghana) helped me to get in contact with the IOM.*[210] And Esomo: '*I ended up in a shelter with my baby girl. My husband was a really bad husband. I didn't have*

[210] Interview Susan, 19-01-2017 Lagos IOM Office

the right papers. I thought everything was arranged well, but instead I was left with absolutely nothing.[211] *I couldn't continue living like this with my daughter.'*[212] And Simeon: *At a certain point I had enough, I was suffering so badly. What can you do there without documents?! Also the church (redemption church in Amsterdam) couldn't relieve the pain. I had to return.'*[213]

2. Family related 'triggers' were also commonly mentioned by the returnees. As highlighted by Carling et al. (2015) a sudden crisis at home can trigger return because of the sense of urgency. This was also found frequently within this research. Like Stephen: '*I had been living in the Netherlands 22 years without documents. After being very badly used for over 14 years by this Yoruba man, I tried to survive in the Hague for many years. Father Bosco persuaded me to return: there was nothing left here for me. The moment I heard that my mother was about to die, I got the courage to return. It was too late, I never saw her alive'.*[214] And Tony: *I had lived in the Netherlands over 19 years. After I had heard my mother had died, I just couldn't take it any more. I really missed my family so much. I missed a part of myself.'*[215]

3. As Black et al (2004) found, the threat of deportation was an essential component in many decisions to take up return programs. Black et al. (2004) called it the 'stick and carrot' strategy of policy-making. Within this research some returnees would feel there was no other option left but return to Nigeria. Most commonly this wasn't willingly. Sometimes there was a direct threat of deportation by national institutions; sometimes returnees were caught in a crime making them visible and placed into detention. But also returnees didn't really know what to do, or how the system worked - authorities would give them very few options.

Tomson, for example, was caught in a criminal act and placed in detention, he strongly felt he had no other option than to return, despite his frustration: '*They placed me into detention in Zeist, the Netherlands. I was a good citizen really. But your government is really bad. I had a temporary permit,*[216] *but I made mistakes. One day the police caught me, I paid my fines. Yet they still kept me there for over a year!. I have a son in the Netherlands,*

[211] Esomo was brought to Europe with a visa. She eventually found out she was a visa-overstayed. She thought she was holding the right papers to be in the Netherlands legally.
[212] Interview Esomo, 25-01-2017 Benin City Idia Renaissaince Office
[213] Interview Simeon, 31-01-2017 Enugu University of Nigeria Office
[214] Interview Stephen, 30-01-2017 Enugu University of Nigeria Office
[215] Interview Tony, 20-01-2017 Lagos IOM Office
[216] Tomson had said when he filing for asylum that he was from Sudan. He was given a temporary permit on humanitarian and political grounds.

who was living with his mother in Haarlem. DT&V wanted to deport me. Eventually I decided to go voluntarily since there was absolutely no other option left.[217] And Julia who was also caught in a criminal act, which she wouldn't tell more about: '*They (the Dutch government) caught me.* [218] *I had to return. Else I would have stayed there, for sure.*[219] And Dickson who was leading a comfortable life and wasn't expecting the worst: *The day I got shot in my apartment, I was bleeding so badly. I phoned my Nigerian business partner but he didn't dare coming over, he was too scared that the shooters would return. I had no option left than to phone the ambulance – they phoned the police… I got treated in the AMC-medical centre, later they placed me into a rehabilitation centre in Baarn. After that there was no place for me there any more.*[220][221] And the young student Henry, who sought greener pastures abroad, told with frustration: *I already escaped one deportation in Spain. After arriving in the Netherlands I ran into problems very quickly, really for the most stupid thing ever. They placed me into detention and deported me anyway.*[222] [223] Or Taiwo who seemed really unaware: '*my husband in the Netherlands promised me a good life. After arriving there: he treated me really really bad. He wanted me to do bad things. I was scared you couldn't imagine. I got two girls there. One day I couldn't take this life any more; I couldn't take living like this for my daughters. I filed for divorce - then the problems came. They told me I had to leave the country with my daughters. I still don't understand what happened exactly.*[224][225]

[217] Interview Tomson, 18-01-2017 Lagos IOM Office
[218] I later heard that Julia was a prostitute in the Netherlands. Eventually she was caught while she was lift shopping and placed into detention.
[219] Interview Julia, 26-01-2017 Benin City Idia Renaissance Office
[220] Dickson referred to the fact that the Dutch government gave him the necessary medical treatment, after he was rehabilitated he was urged to leave to country either voluntarily or by force.
[221] Interview Dickson, 30-01-2017 Enugu University of Nigeria Office
[222] According to Henry he didn't get the option to return voluntarily. Instead he was deported along with other Nigerians on a reserved airplane.
[223] Interview Henry, 26-01-2017 Benin City Idia Renaissance Office
[224] Taiwo seemed completely unaware of her rights or what kinds of documents she had or needed in order to stay in the Netherlands.
[225] Telephone Interview Taiwo, 16-12-2016

The figure below shows that the minority had positive feelings about returning to Nigeria.

Table 39: Feelings about return to Nigeria

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid		8	29,6	29,6	29,6
	Positive	4	14,8	14,8	44,4
	Negative	8	29,6	29,6	74,1
	Mixed feelings	7	25,9	25,9	100,0
	Total	27	100,0	100,0	

8.3. They Don't Understand….

Often returnees expressed their shame prior to returning. As described and introduced in previous chapters, stigma shame and failure are common themes in research dealing especially with post-deportation, introduced by e.g. Alpes (2011); Schuster and Majidi (2014) Drothbohm (2015) and social stigma defined by Goffman (1963). As argued above these themes are not only present post-return, but also beforehand, in relation to undocumentedness as a stigma in and of itself. These feelings of shame, stigma and failure also shaped the decision-making process as described previously. This paragraph focuses on the returnees, and how they experienced these themes while they were undocumented in the Netherlands.

The table illustrates their general feelings upon their return to Nigeria. Financially was cited most, this referred to the fact that they didn't want to return 'empty handed' without goods or money.

Table 40: Explain negative feelings of return to Nigeria

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	1	5,3	5,3	5,3
Financially	8	42,1	42,1	47,4
Shame and Failure	4	21,1	21,1	68,4
There was no other option	5	26,3	26,3	94,7
Other	1	5,3	5,3	100,0
Total	19	100,0	100,0	

Some Nigerians referred to the shame they felt they didn't 'make it in Europe', also referred to by Nieswand (2014) as the pressure from origin countries to regain their status abroad. Yet although they had these feelings, staying in the Netherlands was seen as worse. Like Kingsley: '*I felt a lot of shame that I didn't make it in Europe. That the whole journey had been for nothing basically. That I had to tell my wife: sorry I have no money for you. But in the end you have to me real: you cannot continue living like this.'*[226] Mathew also referred to the shame and that he hadn't been able to meet the expectations his mother had: *'I felt so much shame, telling my mother I was returning. I didn't dare telling her. But life was so bad. I tried for over 12 years to make a living there. I really tried my best….'* [227]

Sometimes the families urged them not to return. As the research of Carling et al. (2015) stated, potential returnees are pushed by family to stay abroad. Remittances and goods are expected, and when this expectation isn't fulfilled the respondents explained that family members weren't aware of the difficult life they lived, the attitudes of families in the country of origin towards them contributing to what transnational scholars describe as alienation (e.g. Mazzucato and Grillo 2008, Nieswand 2014). The case of Susan illustrates this explicitly in that she was told not to return to Nigeria by her mother as her return would represent an income loss. Moreover she stressed that her family didn't understand how life was in the Netherlands: '*When I told my mother in Nigeria that they had wanted me to prostitute in the Netherlands, they told me I should have done it! I stopped contacting my mother. When I later told my sisters I wanted to return they told me not to do it. They really don't understand how life is there'.*[228]

Many other Nigerians also stressed that their families weren't aware of the situation they were in. Some deliberately didn't tell them, like John who felt shame in telling them he was caught in a crime, and therefore returning was the only option left for him. *'My wife didn't want me to return. She didn't understand why. Later I explained it to her.'*[229] [230] Dickson also didn't dare telling his wife he was going to return to Nigeria, permanently: *'No no no. I told my wife I was just going to visit Nigeria'.*[231]

[226] Interview Kingsley, 18-01-2017 Lagos IOM Office
[227] Interview Mathew, 25-01-2017 Benin City Idia Renaissance Office
[228] Interview Susan, 19-01-2017 Lagos IOM Office
[229] John committed a crime in the Netherlands and was opted to leave either voluntary or involuntary by the Dutch government.
[230] Interview John, 19-01-2017 Lagos IOM Office
[231] Interview Dickson, 30-01-2017 Enugu University of Nigeria Office

The table below shows that still quiet a large percentage didn't inform their families about their situation in the Netherlands and their return.

Table 41: Knowledge of your situation in NL

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	11	57,9	57,9	57,9
No	7	36,8	36,8	94,7
3	1	5,3	5,3	100,0
Total	19	100,0	100,0	

Likewise Mike strongly felt his relatives didn't understand him and the situation he was in. *'My family didn't believe me when I told them about the situation I was in. I was open with them about it all from the beginning, but still… They think you are in heaven. After 4 years in Europe: a constant struggle and in the end not even being able to feed myself: I decided to return. I felt a lot of shame telling them - still they didn't believe me.'*[232]

Summary

This chapter has tried to answer the question: 'What had been were the motives or circumstances for returning?'. I used the main findings of Koser and Kuschminder (2015) as an entry point. In this particular case, a few conditions, circumstances and motives stood out. The first was the stress of being undocumented. The second, the family and related 'triggers' that occurred in Nigeria. And at last, the threat of deportation. It also reflected on the fact that Nigerians in general tended to feel a lot of shame prior to the final return, in part because they hadn't fulfilled expectations while being abroad. Moreover in several cases, the family urged them not to return at all. Consequently Nigerians tended to feel misunderstood by their families, didn't always inform them about the situations they were living in being undocumented, nor the crimes they sometimes had committed. Likewise they rarely shared with heir families the reasons they had to return, or said that their return was 'just a visit'.

[232] Interview Mike, 25-01-2017 Benin City Idia Renaissance Office

9. The Returnees:

Living in Limbo again?

The returnees would almost all refer to the notion of how they 'lived in limbo', some for a couple of months; a couple of years, many for over 10 years. Some literally 'grew up' in the Netherlands, having been there from early adulthood to their early forties. As highlighted by Mazzucato and Grillo (2008); Dankye, Mazzucato and Takyiwaa 2015; Brickell and Datta (2011); Al-Ali and Koser (2002), among many other scholars, migrants lives can be split into two or more disconnected areas. Hearing stories of people that had lived 18 years in the Netherlands weren't uncommon. Having lived this shadow existence, subject to all its insecurities, for several years or even half of their lives impacted on their mental well-being in profound ways. As argued in previous chapters, stigma, shame and failure are themes that were visible prior to and after return, as can be seen in the narratives above.
Two questions are central in this chapter:
'How are lives rebuilt again after return?' and 'How do their families, relatives, friends and communities react on their return?'. I try to answer these questions by telling the stories of the returnees themselves, illustrating how this insecure feeling had continued in their lives and how they were emotionally responding to rebuilding their lives and their families.

Arriving in Lagos airport, all with their own histories and life trajectories behind them. This insecure feeling- this living in limbo wasn't all in the past for most of them. The returnees experienced social marginality, minimal access to basic care, stress, getting some kind of status or avoiding detection, but most of all an insecure identity all over again. This chapter will go their personal stories, hopefully illustrating their feelings, hopes and fears, while starting a new life in Nigeria. As existing literature has made clear, the stress of being undocumented goes beyond the distress and frustration caused by the day-to-day constraints; being undocumented invades and permeates personal and emotional space in profound and disturbing ways (Bloch, Sigona and Zetter 2009). I would argue that there was a continuity of these feelings and constraints. Personal and emotional space was compromised by being undocumented for several years – yet wasn't automatically restored upon return. This continuity in an insecure identity, shadow, stigma, shame, exclusion was profoundly visible when talking with the returnees.

9.1. Rebuilding Lives

September 2nd 2016

I took my flight from Amsterdam to Lagos. I knew there was no way back any more. It was so strange, scary, but also exciting seeing my homeland after all these years. I could smell Nigeria at the airport. I could feel the heat of the bustling city of Lagos. Yet I was cold without any energy in my body. All my senses were overexposed. I got assisted to the IOM office in Ikeja. Lagos. There we talked about my future, my plans and my ambitions. But I didn't even knew who I was any more after all these years.

James arriving in Lagos after being abroad over 12 years.

Arriving in Nigeria, some after decades, some after a few years, after returning from the Netherlands being undocumented had had its impact on the returnees.
Whatever the reasons and motivation for returning were: new lives needed to be shaped. Some respondents I spoke to had already returned a couple of years ago, some had just recently arrived. Many of the respondents I spoke to had had some form of assistance.[233] They returned through the IOM, some through partner organisations that were linked to the IOM.[234] In some cases the return was involuntary – the deported didn't receive any assistance. The majority of the respondents stayed and lived in Lagos: the place where the airplane had landed.

Nigeria was at that moment[235] in a deep recession, the prices had tripled and almost everyone in the country could feel the effects of the economic recession.[236] *'Everything is so expensive now, prices have tripled. I buy water, little food and take public transport – then my money is already gone now'.*[237]

[233] Voluntary assisted returnee assistance.
[234] NGO's could have their own return programs. The financial assistance was in this case always commission by the IOM.
[235] January and February 2017.
[236] http://www.businessinsider.com/nigeria-enters-recession-2016-8?international=true&r=US&IR=T, accessed December 2017.
[237] Interview Susan, 19-01-2017 Lagos IOM Office

Me: 'so how is life now?'
He: 'what can I say? '

Not everyone was successful is rebuilding their lives. For many respondents the times were insecure and full of uncertainties. As referred to in different literature and research and discussed by Carling et al. (2015), the reintegration of return migrants can be as challenging as integration. Respondents were in many cases unsuccessful in terms of establishing good livelihoods: jobs, money and housing. Also many lacked social networks, families and in general 'help' of their surroundings. Partially as a result of these factors returnees were struggling in rebuilding their lives, depressed and sometimes even full of anger.

I am not happy, I am not happy at all. I am so angry you cannot imagine. Soon after I arrived I lost my mother. My brother also went abroad, many many years ago.[238] *I have no idea where he is. I don't even know if he is still alive. No one can help me. No one wants to help me. I returned to Benin City, after staying in Lagos for about 7 months, its impossible to survive in that city. I thought life would be better in my hometown but its not. I am just in my room, with no electricity; I have no job, no income- nothing. I don't like going out. I can hardly feed myself*[239][240]

Surviving here in Lagos is almost like: mission impossible. I squat a house with a friend in Sulelere, Lagos. But at least I have some options here; going to my home town in Anambra will give me nothing for sure. I have no stable income, I try to sell second hand clothes to rural areas, but I don't have enough money to make the business flourish. I want to marry, I want a family. I want to be… a man you know, that can take care.[241]

Things are going gradually, but not as I expected. It is difficult here in Lagos to make ends meet. I work at a shop that sells packed and canned goods. I work 6 days a week; on Sundays I go to church. And you are never sure if you can keep your job. I rent a room that I share

[238] Mathew gave me his name, and asked me if I could help find him.
[239] Mathew often told he could hardly survive. That there were days he didn't have any food. He didn't have any support and seemed heavenly depressed and was full of anger.
[240] Interview Mathew, 25-01-2017 Benin City Idia Renaissance Office
[241] Interview James, 01-02-2017 Lagos Idia Renaissance Office

with a girl. I go to work and return home, that is the only thing I do. I have no one for the rest, nobody wants to see me .[242][243]

The table below shows that 7 out of the 19 returnees where unemployed. 12 were working in the private sector, most commonly in trading.

Table 42: Employment status in Nigeria

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Unemployed	7	36,8	36,8	36,8
Private sector	12	63,2	63,2	100,0
Total	19	100,0	100,0	

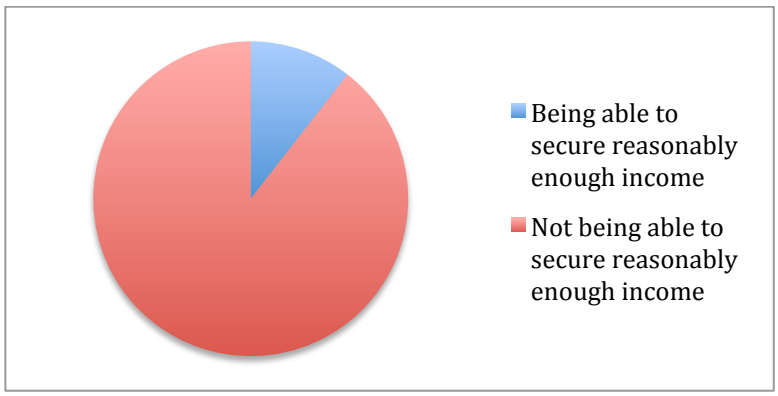
Tony had *just* returned a couple of days before when I was in the IOM office in Lagos, Nigeria January 2017. He was waiting for an appointment with one of the IOM-staff members. He quickly discovered I was from the Netherlands and started talking to me in Dutch proudly. On the spot I arranged interviewing him and many conversations with Tony would follow. Tony was one of the respondents I spoke to that showed the most emotions, fear, anger, depression and regret of them all. Tony was 47, with no wife and children and had lived 19 years in Rotterdam, the Netherlands. His Dutch was really good and I remember he was one of the Nigerians that seemed so Dutch - so not Nigerian any more. He referred to the feeling of being in prison in the Netherlands over 19 years, yet returning to one that was ever worse: Nigeria. He made big movements with his arms, started raising his voice in order to let me know how he felt about it all. Tony could stay with an old friend, but this was only temporary. Tony had no idea where to start, no idea what to do. Tony had lost almost all his networks and support system in Nigeria. As he continued saying: '*it feels like I'm getting crazy here: I don't belong to Africa any more!'* Lagos was a shock for him. Tony hadn't received any financial support yet, since he had just arrived. I really hoped things would become better for him and that time would heal. I spoke to Tony several times after our meeting in Nigeria on the phone and his mood wasn't better than before. *'I don't know where to start; this situation makes me so sad. I have been away for so long, nothing is the same any more. You get crazy, confused. I cannot connect with these people here – they are like*

[242] Susan always seemed very lonely when I spoke to her.
[243] Interview Susan, 19-01-2017 Lagos IOM Office

animals. I will die if I stay here, really. They (IOM) thought I used drugs, but it's not true, I have never used that kind of things; I'm just getting completely crazy over here! I will let you know when I'm in the Netherlands: I will not stay in this country, for sure!'.[244]

Table 43: Enough Income

The graph below shows that those who had an occupation, a very minority (2 persons) found that they were making a reasonably enough income to meet basic livelihoods needs.



Not everyone had problems adjusting in Nigeria, for some returning was a relief and had made life even better then before. Yet this was only the case for a minority of the people[245] Like Amaechi, he was 39 years old and reminded me of Mike Tyson, including the boxer body. He had a baby girl when he left Nigeria in 2003, and he was happy to be reunited with his daughter. Although he experienced problems in Nigeria: especially mentioning how bad the Nigerian government was functioning, he was happy to be back. Amaechi started a little cement building business with the money he received from the IOM and he was quiet successful with it. He proudly told he had people working for him and was trying the make the business grow even more in the near future. Staff members would proudly tell Amaechi was a success story: someone that was able to rebuild his life and reintegrate very well. He proudly told that he was the one taking care of his family and not the other way around. Amaechi looked healthy and told me he exercised a lot. Amaechi's attitude was different from most of the others I spoke to: he reflected on what had happened and tried to turn it into something positive. He had experienced stress being undocumented in the Netherlands, but also said: *'At least I have seen a bit of the world. I have learned a lot in the Netherlands, I've learned what works and what not. I made mistakes really, but I cannot continue living like a*

[244] Interview Tony, 20-01-2017 Lagos IOM Office
[245] Two respondents where successful in terms of finance, job security and livelihoods.

ghost. I have to move forwards. You will die here in Lagos if you don't have an attitude: you have to make it work; no one will work for you'. And *'Yes I understand people that take those boats (referring to migration over the sea). Poverty is scarier than death'.*[246]Amaechi was one of the few that refused taking money for travel costs.[247]

Mercy nr. 1 entered the room in the office of Idia Renaissance in Benin City. It took some effort to persuade her to talk to me. She was dressed very nicely: a modern, flashy, sexy look. Her face full of make up, tipping her toes, looking extremely bored in dis-interested in talking with me. Mr. Roland, the project manager for return programs, took the lead: *'Mercy was trafficked to Europe to prostitute. Her life was really bad over there. Right Mercy?'* Mercy: *'it was hell, yes'.* Mr. Roland: *'Mercy tell a bit about your life now, how your business is going'.* Mercy: *'Very good, I have now 5 girls working for me'.* Mercy was one of the most talented sewers in fashion class.[248] She started a business afterwards from the money she received and seemed quiet successful in it. She spoke about her business with joy; you could see she was really proud. And of course I understood. Speaking about the present gave room for speaking about the past. And so Mercy after all did open up a bit more.[249]

9.2. Social Marginality, Exclusion, and Shame

There is a widely held assumption that integration in destination countries may encourage sustainable return (e.g. Al-Ali et al. 2001; Bilgili & Siegel, 2013; Carling & Pettersen, 2012; de Haas & Fokkema, 2011). There are structural factors in the origin country that influence individual propensities to reintegrate and remain. These include origin country policies towards returnees, including critical elements such as property restitution and citizenship rights, the attitudes of the local community and their families towards returnees, and the number of people returning at the same time (Kibreab, 2003; Rogge, 1994). Attitudes of the local population towards returnees can be a critical factor determining sustainable return. In Afghanistan, for example, Schuster and Majidi (2014) found that deportees from Europe are treated as though they are 'contaminated'. Shame arising from a lack of acceptance from the local population for a failed migration attempt highly influenced the deportees' desire to re-migrate. Social networks are essential for a sustainable return by promoting connections and

[246] Interview Amaechi, 20-01-2017 Lagos IOM Office
[247] I offered every responded traveling compensation money, for those that had to travel to reach me.
[248] Mercy nr. 1 attended a 'fashion class' as part of the return program.
[249] Interview Mercy nr. 1, 26-01-2017 Benin City Idia Renaissance Office

acceptance within a local community (Cassarino 2004; van Houte and de Koning 2008). Returnees typically face great expectations from people in their community of origin and risk being regarded as failures. Commonly being deported is interpreted as a sign of having done something criminal in the country of destination (Carling et al. 2015). Migrants who had the ability to choose, sometimes feel they cannot return because the pressure to prove successful is too strong; while migrants on return visits typically come bearing gifts, those who return against their will often are empty-handed and are a potential burden on their families. If the migrant was working abroad and sending remittances, their return also represents an income loss for the family. In some counties of origin, returnees face particular dangers. Because they are assumed to have money, they risk being targeted for extortion. Social pressures on returnees tend to be greater in rural areas. Returnees can affect local communities and economies in ways not welcomed by all; Many returnees re-enter societies where emigration is a common desire and successful migrants garner prominence through their visits, houses or investments. Returning prematurely and empty-handed then easily gives rise to suspicions and gossip about how the migrants wasted their opportunities abroad. Returnees are sometimes faced with the challenge of rebuilding social networks and earning the trust of others. This analysis from Carling et al (2015) is broad and not specifically focused on Nigeria, yet there are arguments that seem to be very applicable in the case of the Nigerian returnees.

In this research going through these social aspects was one of the crucial aspects in understanding the implications of return. Remittances and expectations were discussed, family structures, reactions, but also just listing where the returnee lived and if they had contacted their family members – were part of understanding their social world. IOM staff members told me, and I had to agree to a certain point, the matter of reintegration success is very much linked to how their families, relatives and friends react, accept and assist after they have returned.[250] Research by Alpes (2011) among Cameroonian deportees also stresses that for deportees without family or social networks, life circumstances are much tougher. Therefore the central question in this chapter is: 'How do their relatives/friends/ communities react on their return?', asking: were they socially marginalized?

[250] Many conversations with IOM-Nigeria staff members mentioned this aspect, January 2017.

The table below shows that in just 3 cases, the family reacted positive on their return.

Table 44: Reaction of family on return

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	4	21,1	21,1	21,1
Positive	3	15,8	15,8	36,8
Not positive	7	36,8	36,8	73,7
Mixed reactions	5	26,3	26,3	100,0
Total	19	100,0	100,0	

9.3. Making Contact

Experience showed that contacting family and relatives wasn't automatically the first thing that people did when they returned to Nigeria. As described by Flauhaux (2017) among Congolese and Senegalese irregular returnees, many seek to hide from their families the fact that their return is not a visit but permanent. As described by van Houte and de Koning (2008) and Carling et al. (2015), returnees face great expectations from people in their community of origin, in terms of money and goods (Schuster and Majidi (2014) and risk being regarded as failures (e.g. Kibreab, 2003; Rogge, 1994).

Speaking with Nigerians in some cases showed that that they felt deeply ashamed returning in these conditions. It also showed that in many cases expectations weren't fulfilled. It was also a matter of knowing that money and goods were expected from family, relatives and friends. Moreover in some cases, like that of Henry (below) illustrates, repayments were expected from family, friends and relatives: the money that had been borrowed in order to migrate needed to be returned. Most of the respondents didn't have the money and or goods to repay, it created pressure on their shoulders and left them not contacting them at all, or only after a long while.

The table below shows how long it took respondents to contact their family.

Table 45: How long it took to contact family

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	5	26,3	26,3	26,3
Within 1 week	8	42,1	42,1	68,4
Within a month	4	21,1	21,1	89,5
Many months	2	10,5	10,5	100,0
Total	19	100,0	100,0	

When I arrived in Lagos after being forcefully deported: I collapsed. In the beginning I was so angry and got into drinking alcohol a lot – I completely lost myself. It took me 2 years to calm down. I didn't dare contacting my family in Benin (City). After two years I found the courage to contact them. My mother, aunt and uncle were happy of course, happy that I was still alive. But soon they expect: they expect you to repay the money you have borrowed to migrate.[251] *I wanted to enrol into university and finish it. But they wanted me to take the whole year again, instead of just two courses I had to finish. I couldn't afford it, nobody wanted to help me. It took me years in Benin to rebuild my life, but I succeeded partially. At least I make some money now photographing at weddings and other events. I don't like it that many people know that I got deported from Europe.*[252][253]

In some cases respondents wanted to contact family members, but felt a lot of shame doing so. Feelings of knowing the family wouldn't really understand why they returned were ubiquitous. The case of Taiwo illustrates a woman that returns because of the dire situation she was in in the Netherlands, with a very violent Nigerian husband and two little baby girls. Her move to the Netherlands was co-facilitates by her family members: a household strategy, returning wasn't desirable for the family. Her returning with two children in her family home was seen as a burden to the family and an income loss, and as described her return empty-handed, gave rise to suspicious and gossip on how she has wasted her opportunity being abroad (Carling et al. 2015; Schuster and Majidi (2014). Taiwo deeply felt that they didn't understand her and had no empathy for the situation she had been in.

[251] Henry had lent money from relatives and friends to migrate out of Nigeria. He didn't tell everyone the real purpose of why he needed the money.
[252] I got his contacts from another person who linked me to him. Many people in the city Benin City seemed to know that he had been deported.
[253] Interview Henry, 28-01-2017 Benin City Idia Renaissance Office

When I arrived with my two daughters in Lagos from The Hague, I didn't tell my family I had arrived in Nigeria initially. But I couldn't stay in Lagos; I had no one there to help me. With help of the IOM we contacted my family in Ibaden. They were angry and not happy at all. But they didn't leave me and my daughters on the streets luckily. Living there with them wasn't a good thing: I was a burden, they all wanted goods and money and my aunt kept repeating I had been stupid - leaving Europe.[254]

Just like Taiwo, Susan felt a lot of shame contacting her family in Nigeria after she had returned. Susan was less lucky then Taiwo: her family didn't want to see or speak with her at all, apart from one sister that lived in Abuja.[255] She was treated as is if she was contaminated (Carling et al. 2015) and was socially excluded from her society (Schuster and Majidi (2014). Her mother had urged her to stay in the Netherlands, even though she had to prostitute, to provide an income for her family and relatives, and wasn't happy at all about her return - excluding her completely from the family.

It took a while for me to contact my family. I knew they wouldn't like it all….
My mother was angry: she told me I was so stupid. I would like to visit them, they live in Ebonye State, far from here (Lagos), but I know she will not let me in the house. All my brothers and sisters, except one, don't want any contact with me. I have no one, no one can help me.[256]

Those that had wives, or children, in this research contacted their family members immediately. As described by Kibreab (2003); Rogge (1994), Alpes (2011) among other scholars, those who have strong social linkages and networks, have less difficulty socially reintegrating in the host countries. Yet as mentioned by Flahaux (2017) their return was also sometimes presented as a visit: not permanent. Although many suffered from feelings of shame and failure, the overall urge to see their family was much stronger. Moreover the families accepted them, at least to a certain extent in some cases.

[254] Telephone Interview Taiwo, 16-12-2016
[255] Her sister had just recently got married and was pregnant. There was unfortunately no place for Susan in her sister's home.
[256] Interview Susan, 19-01-2017 Lagos IOM Office

I went directly to my wife and two sons. We all cried. Of course I felt shame that I had to return like this. That our idea didn't work out. But what can she do? She was happy I was still alive.[257]

I hadn't seen my wife and children for such a long time (13 years). I felt a lot of shame, you know just coming like this… But my wife welcomed me: what else can she do?.[258]

My wife wasn't happy with me returning. I didn't tell her I was leaving the Netherlands, she was surprised finding out I was in Nigeria. But of course she didn't leave me on the streets. My friends don't want to see me, because you don't have anything. I'm like an orphan.[259]

Summary

This chapter has tried to answer the question 'How are lives rebuild again after return?'. It illustrated that many of the respondents had problems adjusting in Nigeria and rebuilding their lives; in terms of jobs, money and ensuring overall reasonable livelihoods. Some, although it was a minority, were able to rebuild their lives successfully, and even live better than before migrating. On the emotional side rebuilding lives again wasn't always easy, some felt alienated towards Nigerians and had problems adjusting in Nigeria, especially after being away for such a long time.

Which also leads to the second question: 'How do their families, relatives, friends and communities react on their return?'. We can see that returnees experienced social marginalization, stigma, felt deeply misunderstood and were sometimes even rejected by their families. Nigerians in general tended to feel a lot of shame in contacting them once returned or would give (partially) false explanations of why they had returned at all. Nigerians mentioned that their families tended to see them as failures returning under these circumstances, moreover goods; money and repayments were expected from families, friends and communities once returned, and returnees were in most cases not able to fulfill these expectations as they had wished. Overall I would argue the returnees experienced a continuum of insecure identities, overall struggles, shadow existences, stigma, shame and

[257] Interview Kingsley, 18-01-2017 Lagos IOM Office
[258] Interview John, 19-01-2017 Lagos IOM Office
[259] Interview Simeon, 31-01-2017 Enugu University of Nigeria Office

exclusion: these feelings that were profoundly present while being undocumented in the Netherlands, weren't automatically alleviated on return.

10. The Returnees:

Can you bring me back please?

Can you bring me back to Europe? Nigeria is nothing to write home about.[260]

The Nigerians that I spoke to had indeed returned back to Nigeria, yet not all of them were that happy about it. I discussed their ideas, plans and hopes for the future, questioning: 'Is there an aspiration to "return" back to the Netherlands?'

In literature the success and effects of return migration are in a few cases illustrated by looking at the re-migration. Schuster and Majidi (2014) wrote an article entitled 'Deportation, Stigma and Re-migration' in which they provide analyses suggesting that deportation creates at least three additional reasons that make re-migration the most likely outcome. These are debt; family commitment and the shame of failure and or 'contamination' leading to stigmatisation (Schuster and Majidi, 2014). Another study among Afghan deportees by Majidi (2009) found that 74 per cent of respondents wanted to migrate again irregularly, suggesting that their reintegration was unsuccessful. Risk of re-migration is key to the concept of sustainable return, in the IOM report (2004) sustainable return, a commonly used indication for the success of return programs, is essentially the extent to which returnees do not re-migrate, and the extent to which their return dissuades other from migration without authorisation. A combination of individual and structural factors in both the origin and destination countries influence reintegration and the sustainability of return (Rogge 1994; Black and Gent 2006). An immediate and important policy implication is that the circumstances of migrants in the country of destination may influence their prospects for reintegration and sustainable return. It is less clear however, to what extent policy interventions in the form of assistance also promote these outcomes. While it seems that individual factors such as age, sex and family ties may influence reintegration and sustainable return, the evidence is not conclusive. The individual experience of the migration cycle may also impact the sustainability of return. In a study, Cassarino (2004) found that migrants with an 'interrupted' migration cycle, including assisted voluntary returnees unable to achieve their migration goals, have substantial difficulties reintegrating back home, such as being more likely to be unemployed. This is similar to other studies that have found rejected asylum seekers and migrants unable to obtain residence permits in the country of destination faced

[260] Interview John, 19-01-2017 Lagos IOM Office

additional challenges upon return such as being unable to build sustainable livelihoods, and not feeling a sense of belonging in the return society (Ruben et al. 2009; IOM Rapport 2015). A range of agents may also be involved in the early stages of the migration cycle, variously influencing departure, movement, and potentially also entry and initial settlement. These agents range from legitimate recruitment agents, travel agencies and employers to illicit clandestine agents, migrant smugglers and traffickers (Salt and Stein 1997). There appears to be no research on how legitimate agents may influence return motivations or reintegration prospects. However, it is clear from several case studies that the involvement of smugglers at the start of the migration cycle may influence the course of the cycle. Most significantly, migrants may be reluctant to return at all if they are still in debt to smugglers after their initial migration. The impact of debts on reintegration and sustainability is unclear. While it heightens the need to find employment or alternative sources of income, it may expose returnees to direct threats from smugglers, and, as a result of both these pressures, it may exacerbate the propensity to re-migrate (Koser 1998; 2001). Flahaux (2017) research among Senegalese and Congolese returnees shows that migrants who experience a certain failure in their economic and psychological integration, wish to migrate again.

There was a clear paradox visible in this research: those who were in the Netherlands undocumented often regretted migrating out of Nigeria in the first place and those that had returned regretted returning. What could re-migration aspirations of the returnees tell in this case? Can their return be seen as a failure, non-sustainable? Are the return programs failing? Are the facilities in Nigeria for the returnees lacking? Is it, as Falahaux (2017) suggests, that if the economic and psychological integration fails, this most automatically leads to re-emigration aspirations? Or is it just a personal thing: a combination of personal experiences abroad, gender, length of stay abroad in combination with how the returnee is welcomed in Nigeria? One thing becomes clear: migration trajectories are multi sided, multi-faced, and can be an on-going trajectory.

Speaking with returnees, one would often hear the phrase: ‘I really regret returning’. I was puzzled sometimes, questioning whether it was a matter of time: time that needed to be fulfilled in Nigeria in order to reintegrate fully. Like: time will heal? Yet some had already been in Nigeria several years. Sometimes I wondered if the respondent were exaggerating, commonly respondents would ask me if I could help them obtain a visa to visit the Netherlands. Yet many had clear arguments why they regretted returning, ranging from

disappointment to dire anger and frustration. Remembering Tony: 'I don't belong to Africa any more'.[261]

The duration of stay in the Netherlands was often a component of why returnees wanted to return back to the Netherlands. Consequently Nigerians found themselves back 'home' after all these years, yet something had changed: they didn't belong home any more. Nigeria had changed, and so had they. Speaking Dutch fluently, accustomed to a western lifestyle and thoughts, and freedom. Some literally grew up in Europe: most of their memories where there. Some had built up a life in the Netherlands, even had children. Highlighted by *transnationalities* in academia, these *transational identities* are result from the combination of migrants' origin with the identities they acquire in their host countries. According to transnationalists, this combination leads more to the development of conflicting "double identities" (Cassarino, 2004). The Nigerians that returned arguably suffered from a disconnection from both places. The concept of "homeland" presented in the volume edited by Nadje Al-Ali and Khaid Koser explores how migrants may be attached to their countries of birth, while being at the same time emotionally connected to the countries to which they migrate. Transnationalism also aims to illustrate how 'the development of new identities among migrants, who are anchors (socially, culturally and physically) are neither in their place of origin nor in their place of destination' (Al-Ali and Koser 2002).

Respondents regularly referred to these identities, the length of their stay abroad and their feelings of displacement, like Tony, who experienced a hard time adjusting in Nigeria after returning. He regretted returning immediately. He had a hard time adjusting in Nigeria and referred to 'them' as: 'animals'. He hadn't realized that he had changed so much, that returning would be so difficult. Tony had missed a part of himself after being in the Netherlands for so long, the struggle to survive without documents in the Netherlands tired him, his mothers death was the tipping point to return. Yet returning didn't bring him any peace, his family wasn't waiting for him, many had passed away anyway, and paradoxically the struggle to survive was even worse. Mathew also had a hard time coping in Nigeria, his mother died when he was about to return and there was no one to help him. He had lived in the Netherlands over 12 years and had difficulties adjusting. '*Benin (city) is not the same. People are not the same. No one is left here to help me. If I had known how my life would have been here, I wouldn't have returned for sure!'.*[262] Tomson also struggled and really wanted to return to the Netherlands. Tomson's return wasn't that voluntarily, but a package

[261] Interview Tony, 20-01-2017 Lagos IOM Office
[262] Interview Mathew, 25-01-2017 Benin City Idia Renaissance Office

chosen because he didn't wanted to be deported forcefully. '*I don't belong here. I belong to the Netherlands. I belong to my son. My son deserves a father in his life.* [263] *I cannot cope here-these people (Nigerians) are not the same as I. My only aim is to go back home.*[264] [265]

The notion of not belonging in Nigeria any more wasn't always the reason why people wanted to return to the Netherlands. It was also a matter of not being able to find a job, money security, housing but mostly realizing that things were even worse than back in the Netherlands. Nazarus entered the room, full of anger, with one eye almost completely closed and thick with pus. *'Either you win or lose - I have nothing to lose any more. I will return. One way or the other. I know how to do that: I could smuggle myself into a container, even cross the desert again - I know what to do!'*.[266] Also Julia realized that things had gotten worse: *You find yourself in the same situation as before (before migrating) – even worse in a way. What will you do? You move. I'm planning 'new things'....*[267].

The table shows that 4 respondents where happy about their return and didn't regret returning.

Table 46: Would you have returned knowing how life in Nigeria would be

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	4	21,1	21,1	21,1
No	15	78,9	78,9	100,0
Total	19	100,0	100,0	

[263] Tomson had a son in the Netherlands with a Dutch wife.
[264] Tomson referred to the Netherlands, as being his home.
[265] Interview Tomson, 18-01-2017 Lagos IOM Office
[266] Interview Nazarus, 03-02-2017 Lagos IOM Office
[267] Interview Julia, 26-01-2017 Benin City Idia Renaissance Office

The table below shows that even those that referred to their live in the Netherlands as: unhappy, still were not happy about their return to Nigeria.

Table 47: General note of staying in NL * Would you have returned knowing how life in Nigeria would be

		Would you have returned knowing how life in Nigeria would be		
		Yes	No	Total
General note of staying in NL	Happy	1	4	5
	Unhappy	2	8	10
	Happy & Unhappy	1	3	4
Total		4	15	19

Benin City 26th of January 2017. Idia Renaissance office.

I was in the office when be accident Mercy nr. 2 dropped in crying, with her ill son who was suffering from Malaria. Her message was clear: she needed more money and the case worker needed to phone the Nigerian ambassador in the Netherlands in order to get her back to Europe. Mercy couldn't cope in Nigeria; she was mentally severely unstable and was suffering from many traumas[268]. Being trafficked going through the Sahara dessert at the age of 14 (!), arriving a year later at the age of 15 in Italy, working as a prostitute for years had had its impact on her mental state in a profound way. Mercy had given birth to her son in the Netherlands, a boy who was conceived after being raped. Mercy agreed after many conversations to return to Nigeria, not exactly knowing what she was doing, she claimed. According to Mercy the Dutch NGO mislead her: not mentioning that she could never return back to the Netherlands.[269] She was able to rent an apparent for herself and her son from the money she received, but the money was running short. Her family didn't want to see her and were pushing her to return to Europe. She was hardly able to attend any classes, let alone start a business. Mercy was suffering from psychosis, paranoia, and feared everyone around her. It

[268] Caseworker pointed out that Mercy had severely psychological issues and traumas, but that good medical care and support wasn't always available in Benin City.
[269] Caseworker did state that in the mental condition she was in (and still is) isn't completely advisable for someone to return.

wasn't really clear what was the result of her paranoia and what was in fact the case. *My son is not safe here: one day when he was in school they (the teachers) lost him. They couldn't find him any more, after days we found him somewhere wandering around the streets.*[270] Mercy got additional money because of her psychosocial state, the cash money she received was robbed from her all at the same time while walking on the streets, she said.[271] Mercy cries repeatedly and doesn't fight her tears: she only wants to return, she cannot continue living like this. Whatever was exactly the case with Mercy, it was clear that she was completely dysfunctional and unable to cope, much less rebuild her life in Nigeria.[272] [273]

Mercy's story was a remarkable one though, not resembling the general picture of the returnees. But her story does show how dysfunctional, helpless and sad a return can be. How someone clearly traumatized by what had happened to her, by her life abroad, upon return faced conditions so dire that she desperately wanted to return to the place she called hell: Europe.

The table below shows that almost half of the respondents where planning another migratory attempt.

Table 48: Planning other migration attempt?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Yes	8	42,1	42,1	42,1
No	11	57,9	57,9	100,0
Total	19	100,0	100,0	

Summary

This final chapter has tried to answer the question 'Is there an aspiration to return to the Netherlands?'. One thing definitely stood out: most respondents wanted to return, back to the Netherlands in this case. Hearing stories of returnees that regretted returning wasn't

[270] Caseworker confirmed the story that her son had been missing for a couple of days.
[271] Caseworker later explained that the money was indeed gone, but how it had happened remained a mystery.
[272] Later (after fieldwork) I asked how Mercy was doing, her condition remained the same.
[273] Interview Mercy nr. 2, 26-01-2017 Benin City Idia Renaissance Office

uncommon at all. Not all of the regrets are quoted above. Bearing in mind that regretting returning wouldn't always lead to re-emigration, the expression itself was remarkable enough, I find. The motives for wanting to re-migrate arguably because the expectations of life once returned weren't met, or not to the extend in which they had hoped. In general it could be said: life was perceived as even worse than before, while being undocumented in the Netherlands. Those who chose return due to the threat of deportation all wanted to return to the Netherlands. Respondents spoke openly about their desires to return to the Netherlands, some were planning it as we spoke and two did successful re-emigrate during the period of January/February 2017 to November 2017. [274] [275] Re-emigration aspirations are a measure of the success and effects of return migration, indicating whether those who take advantage of return programs see their return back to their country of origin as a definite settlement, thus as a 'fixed' return. Partially this is not the only way to measure the success of returns, looking more broadly these findings can also be seen as a confirmation that migration, worldwide so to speak, cannot be seen as a singular movement. Re-emigration aspirations are part of this movement; people are pushed and pulled along the way. None of these returnees, besides those who did it because all the other options were worse, I think had the actual idea that they would regret their return. No, their aspirations and ideas had changed along the way, Nigeria, as a destination itself, was just another stop along the way.

[274] These were two returnees that expressed their wishes to return in our conversations, among others. After staying in touch after fieldwork I was told by them they had indeed returned to the Netherlands.
[275] I tried to keep in touch with many of the returnees, yet many 'disappeared'. I have no idea weather they actually returned to the Netherlands, EU or went to another African country.

11. Summary and Conclusion

My first sub-question was, as described in chapter 2, *'What is the institutional context of assisting returnees to their homeland?'*. Chapter 2 was partially descriptive, discussing the policies towards irregular migrants and asylum seekers, and the different institutions that are actively involved with asylum seekers and irregular migrants in the Netherlands. I demonstrated that there is a clear institutional structure dealing with asylum seekers in the Netherlands, though the question of whether it is functioning optimally was not addressed. Given that Dutch law doesn't allow every person to stay in the Netherlands legally, institutions are required to return those that don't hold the right to remain to their country of origin, by force or voluntarily. This counts for those that have filed for asylum and been rejected. In practice however, asylum seekers have to right to file for a second, third or fourth asylum application, which can postpone their return. Moreover some simply cannot return, since they don't have any official documents, are stateless, or their countries of origin don't accept them as citizens or don't cooperate in accepting returnees.
In the Netherlands there are two ways (leaving aside those that return by themselves) in which an irregular migrant or rejected asylum seeker can return to their country of origin: either forced (commissioned by DT&V) or voluntary - which is commissioned by the IOM, but can be implemented in partnership with another institution or NGO, such as Vluchtelingen Werk. Those who have entered irregularly and remain undocumented are in practice not subject to those laws until they either apply for asylum (and are rejected), get caught in criminal act and/or are discovered to lack the right documents, or opt to return voluntarily. Those who choose or have the option to return voluntarily to Nigeria are eligible to receive both Basic Program Return and Emigration assistance from the Netherlands (REAN) and Reintegration Assistance-Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR-NL), consisting of counseling, tickets, support with obtaining travel documents, assistance at Schiphol airport and cash money (€200 for an adult and € 40 for children) and in some cases the extra AVRR-NL assistance in kind - a reintegration budget of up to € 1,800 for adults, that has to be used in Nigeria. The Dutch authorities have good relations with Nigeria's in terms of accepting forced and voluntary assisted returnees, and there are well-established organizations within Nigeria that help the assisted voluntary returnees.

The next sub-question of chapter 2 was: *'How do institutions and organisations in Nigeria assist, guide and perceive the problems returnees face?'* We have seen that the two

major organisations aiding voluntary assisted returnees from the Netherlands (and other countries), the IOM-Nigeria and Idia Renaissance, sought to implement the return programs as best they could. Key for both organisations was to motivate the returnees to start their own little business, in order to become economically independent. Yet in practice it wasn't always that easy; returnees overall just lacked the capability to begin and build a business that would allow them to support themselves. Moreover, frequently they lost contact with the returnees during the monitoring period; the money received wasn't enough, especially in Lagos, to cover both housing and business overheads; and they also faced returnees that were desperate and angry because they 'had' to return voluntarily. In Benin, the NGO did its best through its rehabilitation centres to teach returnees a skill (when they lacked one) before starting a business. In most cases the money was not handed over at once. Yet they were also hampered in their efforts by structural and societal problems that were present in the city and region itself. These issues were exacerbated by the fact that many returnees lacked acceptance from their families and enjoyed limited networks – which are crucial for a sustainable return.

In chapter 3, I focused on the undocumented Nigerians in the Netherlands, asking the sub-question: *'What were the motives, decision-shaping factors and circumstances for migration?'* I have tried to demonstrate that in many cases the migration plans, ideas and trajectories that brought them to the Netherlands were highly fluid, circular and influenced by a shifting set of scenarios, and that few had a 'fixed' plan regarding their migration ideas, plans and destinations. Motives for migration were multi-dimensional, thus not only economic-related - looking for better livelihoods, but could also arise in response to spontaneous triggers or opportunities. Nonetheless almost all interviewees in the Netherlands characterized their lives in Nigeria as insecure or bereft of opportunity. In examining decision-shaping factors prompting migration, distinctions were made between individual, forced and collective decisions, but it proved that in many cases that the line between them was rather blurred. In many cases various sets of factors influenced and reinforced each other. During the course of the research it also became apparent that prior to their migration to Europe many of the migrants were highly mobile within Nigeria and/or Africa, and it was also revealed that for some the journey to Europe had been made under horrific conditions. The picture of migration that emerged was one of mutable trajectories and multiple way-points, driven by sets of circumstances that arose along the way, rather than a 'fixed' plan, and likewise the act of returning to Nigeria was rarely pre-planned, but rather subject to similar conditioning factors that prompted (onward) migration. Moreover, this examination of the migration intentions, aspirations, trajectories and decisions that shaped the migrants'

experiences before and during migration provided an illuminating context in which to understand the problems, restraints and insecurities that returnees would face when they eventually returned.

Chapter 4 focused on the lives of undocumented Nigerians in the Netherlands, examining the sub-question: *'What does it mean to be undocumented?'*. I discussed their daily lives, the restraints they faced, the insecurities they felt, barriers to moving around and the overall stress in finding work and housing, and the pressure to send remittances to Nigeria. Being undocumented is in all-encompassing experience, which manifests itself in many different aspects of migrant's lives, from practical limitations to emotional strain. The importance of networks prior to, during and after the migration was also highlighted, although they were not the principal aim of this research. In the context of the limitations faced by the Nigerians, the centrality of these networks to their lives is difficult to overstate.

Chapter 5, which was partially a continuation of chapter 4, discussed how Nigerians were 'living in limbo'. The sub-question in this chapter was: *'Are Nigerians familiar with applying for asylum, addressing organizations, NGOs and other institutions?'*, seeking to illuminate the relationship between the Nigerians and the host society, and the extent to which they were 'out of sight' or 'living in limbo'. Nigerians within this research were, in almost all the cases, completely out of sight. In practical terms, they preferred to 'stay out of the system' and were fully aware of the fact that applying for asylum, attracting the attention of the authorities and contacting organizations would get them 'in the system', and thus risk deportation. Nigerians nonetheless did have some strategies in how they maybe would be able to secure documented status. Emotionally, exclusion from the legal normality of 'documented' society commonly entailed personal and emotional restraints, the stigmatization and criminalization of their identity, fear of detection, and lack of freedom. It also left Nigerians more at risk of being exploited in various ways. Overall Nigerians would express their feelings about being undocumented as characterized by anxiety and distress.

Chapter 6 discussed how undocumented Nigerians perceived returning through the lens of the sub-question was: *'What were the motives, restraints and circumstances for returning, staying or moving forwards?'*. It was demonstrated that motives and restraints concerning returning were in many cases related to the extent to which Nigerians were able to meet the expectations back home - sometimes families even urged them not to return. The most commonly cited problem was reluctance to return empty handed. Thus those that were not meeting expectations were mostly unwilling to consider returning, even when the circumstances they were living in were difficult and harsh. It was argued that themes such as

remittances and reciprocity should be studied more, looking at the perceptions, intentions and limitations of returning. On the other hand those that had been able to secure good livelihoods, meeting the expectations (even if only partially) were not considering return either. Instead it appeared that their plans had changed along the way and often they were considering moving elsewhere. Yet it also became apparent that those who wanted to move elsewhere were not only those that had been able to secure their livelihoods and were looking for better opportunities, but also those that were pushed, forced to move elsewhere *because* of their (lack of) livelihoods. Thus neither meeting expectations nor securing a reasonable livelihood *nor* failure in these respects reliably generated aspirations to return. This dualism was also present with the Nigerians in general: they felt disconnected from Nigeria and felt deeply misunderstood by their families and relatives back home who, they felt, didn't understand the situation they were in at all. Remarkably it also seemed that many Nigerians would exhibit this 'dualism', call it even maybe 'schism' whereby they deeply regretted coming to Europe, living and experiencing the restraints being undocumented - yet still didn't want to return to Nigeria.

Chapter 7 described the reflections of the Nigerians that had returned on their migration trajectory, motives, decision-shaping factors and circumstances, as well as on their lives while undocumented in the Netherlands. The same sub-questions as in chapter 3 and 4 were used. Reflections were presented through the narratives of the returnees. It emerged that there were many similarities between the stories told by the returnees and those of undocumented Nigerians in the Netherlands. In general it was evident that these Nigerians didn't have a clear idea of where they were going and that their eventual arrival in the Netherlands was a product of circumstance, rather than a fixed plan. Often a sense of adventure and opportunism prompted their initial migration, yet there was also a notion of upward mobility: that life might be better somewhere else. It also illustrated that Nigerians tended to have insecure livelihoods in terms of housing, jobs and money prior to departure, and that the distinctions in decision-shaping factors that led Nigerians to migrate were often blurred; it was often a combination of compulsion, individual ambition and household strategies. Talking about how they experienced their 'undocumented lives' they openly spoke of their struggles, insecurities, fear of detection, social marginality and their strategies to make a living in the Netherlands. Commonly they referred to their stay as: 'being in prison' in a way. Many would very openly tell about the exploitation they faced in the Netherlands and how some were misused very badly over many years. It was nevertheless clear that those

who had returned felt more comfortable in relating their experiences, and could reflect much more freely than those that were still in the situation itself.

In chapter 9, I discussed the tipping point that led Nigerians to return to Nigeria. The central sub-question in this chapter was: *'What had been the motives or circumstances for returning?'*. Three main motives, conditions and circumstances were highly represented among the respondents: 1. The stress of being undocumented; 2. Family and related 'triggers' that occurred in Nigeria and 3. The threat of deportation. Prior to return, whatever their conditions - Nigerians all stressed that they had felt a lot of shame at returning. Most commonly this was because they hadn't fulfilled expectations while abroad and felt they were returning empty handed. Consequently Nigerians tended not to inform their families about their plans to return, or that they had no other option but to do so. Those who did tell them about their decision expressed their frustration that their families didn't understand their decision or even urged them not to return. Despite these family-related pressures that Nigerians often felt, they had still made the decision to return whether it was partially 'forced' or 'voluntary'. Staying in the Netherlands seemed worse

In chapter 10, I discussed the continuity of living in limbo. Two sub-questions were central in this chapter: *'How are lives rebuilt after return?'* and *'How do their families, relatives, friends and communities react on their return?*'. It was demonstrated that the majority of Nigerians had difficulties rebuilding their lives, even though some had already returned to Nigeria a couple of years before. Nigerians struggled to establish reasonable livelihoods in terms of work, housing and money. Emotionally some felt alienated from Nigerians and Nigeria in general: they struggled since they had been abroad for such a long time. The other sub-question was: '*How do their families, relatives, friends and communities react on their return?*', It was clear that their families especially had little understanding for their return and in some cases the families even rejected and expelled them. Commonly Nigerians experienced social marginalization, stigma, and felt deeply misunderstood by their families, friends and communities. It wasn't that surprisingly that returnees didn't contact their families immediately on landing at the airport or gave (partially) false explanations as to why they had returned. Moreover the majority didn't go live with their relatives but stayed in the mega-city of Lagos: becoming as anonymous as possible. Returnees mentioned that their families tended to see them as failures for returning under these circumstances, moreover goods; money and repayments were expected from families, friends and communities upon return and returnees were in most cases not able to fulfill these expectations as they had wished. Overall I would argue the returnees experienced a continuum of insecure identities,

overall struggles, shadow existences, stigma, shame and exclusion: these feelings that were profoundly present while being undocumented in the Netherlands, weren't automatically alleviated on return.

Finally, in chapter 11, the sub-question: *'is there an aspiration to "return" back to the Netherlands?'* was discussed. I argued that the aspiration to re-emigrate was prevalent among the returnees I spoke with. Some had the aspiration, which didn't automatically lead to re-emigration, others were planning it, which also doesn't automatically lead to re-emigration, but others did successfully return after I interviewed them in January-February 2017. Those who had chosen to return 'voluntarily', under threat of deportation all had aspirations to return, and had difficulties accepting, adjusting and coping after return to Nigeria. Those that chose to return voluntarily without any immediate threat of deportation commonly cited factors such as family triggers, or that the stress of being undocumented wore them down. Their aspirations varied, but nonetheless the majority also hoped to return to the Netherlands. The motives for wanting to return were usually that their expectations of life once returned weren't met, or not to the extent to which they had hoped. Nigerians in general realized life in Nigeria was even worse than being undocumented in the Netherlands, those who genuinely chose to return voluntarily, so to speak, therefore deeply regretted their decision.

So what light does this shed on the two main questions of this thesis: *'How is returning perceived among undocumented Nigerians in the Netherlands?* and *'How is returning perceived among undocumented Nigerians that have returned back to Nigeria?'*

Starting with the first main question: *'How is returning perceived among undocumented Nigerians in the Netherlands?* Firstly it was crucial to examine the phenomenon of undocumentedness, and in particular how it manifested in the lives of undocumented Nigerians in the Netherlands, how it shaped their perceptions and defined the limits of the world as they inhabited it. I will go through the different aspect of being undocumented and how it relates to perceptions of return. Undocumented Nigerians in general seemed to have a strong notion that families, friends and communities had expectations of their stay abroad. Nigerians would almost constantly refer to the fact that 'they' expect certain goods and remittances. Moreover there was awareness that they had gained a certain status while being abroad. Nigerians constantly felt the pressure to sent remittances and/or goods in order to meet these expectations and secure their status. Yet despite this awareness and pressure, not all of them were successful in meeting these expectations. Those who felt they had not fulfilled these expectations repeatedly told me: 'I

cannot just return empty handed'. Although many Nigerians were living in emotionally and materially dire circumstances, they were nonetheless extremely reluctant to return under such circumstances and would therefore rather continue the life they were living, although it wasn't always comfortable at all. The role of remittances and reciprocity I would argue are very important themes in discussing and understanding the perceptions of return among undocumented Nigerians in the Netherlands. Paradoxically on the other hand, those who did fulfill the expectations of their families, enjoyed stable livelihoods within the margins of being undocumented often didn't feel like returning either. Thus the extent to which Nigerians were able to secure reasonable livelihoods was not a key component in return decisions. Eventually, as the returnees showed, particular events would eventually lead to return.

Being undocumented as a fact in itself is very invasive, practically in terms of day-to-day constraints: limited access to health care and other health services; being forced to take (often) low paid jobs in the black market; significantly reducing access to economic opportunities; rendering individuals vulnerable to different forms of exploitation and often enforced mobility in search of accommodation and work. But being undocumented also had a profound impact in the emotional and personal sphere: being constantly alert in avoiding detection created often constant stress and deeply ingrained feelings of criminalisation of identity; social marginality; denied fundamental human rights; limitations in building up relationships and starting families – generally creating enormously insecure identities in those living on the margins. Therefore I argued that stigma, shame and failure, themes that are common in literature on returnees post-deportation, are likewise very important analysing and understanding the lives of undocumented Nigerians abroad. Stigma, since being undocumented, through its attendant practical and emotional constraints, was already deeply stigmatizing. Shame, manifest in the constant awareness of not being able to fulfil the expectations of families, friends and communities in Nigeria, and consequent feelings of failure, only compounded in the prospect of an 'empty handed' return. Yet it is still worth noting that some Nigerians were able, despite these pressures, restraints, limitations and expectations, to find a way of living or even thriving in this 'jungle' of insecurities. Some, although it was a minority, were full of optimism, hope and saw every new day as new opportunity.

Many Nigerians would revise and adjust their aspirations constantly: migration plans, ideas, and trajectories were highly fluid and Nigerians were pushed and pulled by events, circumstances and opportunities along the way. Those who weren't able to secure a form of

livelihood might move elsewhere seeking greener pastures, but many were prepared to take any opportunity as it arose, swept by circumstance to the next destination. This observation of the movements of Nigerians confirms the idea of migration as transition, that the migrants didn't really have a fixed plan or idea of their actual destination, and that their ideas, aspirations and plans changed along the way. The Netherlands as a destination itself was just part of that whole way.

Another recurring observation among the subject of this research is that Nigerians in general sought to avoid detection if at all possible and seemed very aware that detection, 'getting is the system' as they called it, could lead to detention and eventually deportation. With two exceptions, none of the interviewees in the Netherlands had applied for asylum or contacted any organisations that dealt with undocumented people. This suggests the conclusion that Nigerians in general didn't want to return, or least feared having to return under duress.

A somewhat paradoxical finding was that many Nigerians in the Netherlands explicitly told me that they wouldn't have migrated out of Nigeria if they would have known how difficult their lives would be abroad. 'I really regret it all, I have wasted all these years of my life' sums up a common sentiment, yet few wanted to return; Nigeria seemed even worse.

The perceptions of return among undocumented Nigerians were invariably coloured by the extent to which they felt they had fulfilled the expectations of their families, friends and communities in Nigeria; unfulfilled expectations could form an almost insurmountable psychological barrier to return, even though life in the Netherlands was very difficult. Yet conversely, success in meeting expectations or establishing a reasonable life in the Netherlands was no more likely to prompt aspirations to return. Return was seen as an outcome to be avoided if at all possible, especially return by force.

The second main question: *'How is returning perceived among undocumented Nigerians that have returned back to Nigeria?*. Drawing on the accounts of returnees in Nigeria, a number of observations can be made on this question.

Firstly positive perceptions of return were strongly related to the extent in which the returnee felt their decision to return was voluntary. Those who returned either due to the threat or actuality of deportation almost all perceived returning as a disaster. Those who returned voluntarily because of other reasons such as family triggers that occurred back in Nigeria or the stress of being undocumented wearing them down evidenced more mixed perceptions of their return. Unsurprisingly, those that were able to secure good livelihoods in

Nigeria were positive and those that didn't were less positive. Most returnees, however, fell into the latter camp.

The success of reintegration socially depended strongly on how families, friends and communities reacted on their return. Thus those whose families strongly disapproved their return, had little moral support and understanding, or were even totally rejected by their families, had extreme problems adjusting socially and psychologically and were therefore inevitably not positive about their return. This was also shown by the fact that returnees didn't contact their families immediately after their return, or gave false explanations about the true reasons for their return.

The majority of the returnees regretted returning because both social and economic reintegration had proved to be very difficult. In terms of re-emigration aspirations: the majority had the aspiration to return to the Netherlands. Again this paradox emerges: those that had returned regretted returning, even though they referred to their lives while being undocumented in the Netherlands as extremely difficult and even as 'prison'. Despite the practical and emotional restraints they felt during their undocumented lives abroad, it was perceived as better than Nigeria.

Following, speaking to and listening to both the undocumented Nigerians in the Netherlands as those that had returned showed clearly that there was a continuum of insecurity: insecure identities; being forced to take low paid jobs; feelings of criminalization of their identities; stigma; shame; failure; vulnerability to exploitation; limited access to economic opportunities. Being undocumented, sometimes for many over decades, had generally had a profound emotional impact. Yet returning didn't automatically alleviate these feelings, restraints and insecurities. Rather they were again experienced in another setting, leaving many Nigerians this time with a very clear notion where they wanted to go to: The Netherlands.

11.1. Academic 'Transit' Zones

My research has been explanatory and preparatory, delving into so many different subjects, some unanticipated. The topics of returning, undocumented lives, strategies, brokers, migration, its management, lives after return, families, stigma, shame, hopes and fears, just to name a few, have all been touched upon in this research. Finding an entry wasn't always easy and just like the snowball it just kept rolling, rolling and accumulating. But along the research this ball sometimes stopped and entered a region of transit: waiting for a new way path or avenue to roll further. I highlight a few of these 'transit' zones that may need further attention within academia.

Firstly, I think it would be very useful to dedicate more research to the difference afterwards between forced deportees and voluntary assisted returns. Post-deportation is touched upon more frequently nowadays, but post-voluntary assisted return has seen comparatively little attention. More comparative research between the two groups could be very instructive, in order to see (if there are) the differences between the two ways of returning. Voluntary assisted returns are considered among political institutions and organisations as more human friendly and conducive to the reintegration of the returnee, but research hasn't confirmed this widely-held assumption.

Which lead to the second transit zone, more research would be useful on why voluntary assisted returnees choose to return 'voluntarily', questioning the voluntariness of those return and more broadly how there is this a priori acceptance that those who return 'voluntarily', do so freely and of their own volition.

Thirdly, Nigerians, who are the most prevalent nationality among who enter the EU illegally (registered), receive very little attention from scholars. Why specifically Nigerians? What broader societal, networks and maybe even historical factors shape this? Is it a temporary or structural trend?

Fourthly, returning to the question from my introduction: 'where are the undocumented Nigerians?' I realize this is rather difficult to research, but in general research among undocumented people in the Netherlands specifically, let alone Nigerians in Europe in general is very limited, with the exception of research on female prostitutes, especially in Italy. This was a question that returned constantly over the course of this research, wherein it is clearly demonstrated that Nigerians are largely 'out of sight' and were that quite deliberately, I would argue.

Fifthly, research on perceptions of return both among returnees and those still abroad, as well as the specific circumstances or triggers that precipitate return, remains in its infancy. Moreover such research as has been done is in general very broad and not focused on any particular group or nationality. In the Nigerian case: remittances and reciprocity stood out. Therefore I would argue that these themes ought to be incorporated into future research in relation to return, or perhaps suggest a more focused research on these themes.

Sixthly, the question of the impact of having been undocumented in the lives of migrants after return to a 'documented' place, in specifically in the West African case. It would be useful to broaden understanding of both post-deportation and post-voluntary-assisted returns as well as remigration aspirations.

Currently, return migration is generally treated in public discourse, politics and scholarship as a singular movement: a 'fixed' return. I think it would be very useful to question and therefore research this general perception among those who return.

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Appendices

Questionnaire: Research 2016/2017 - Among Nigerians in the Netherlands

Date:
Location:

1. Demographic

1.1. Name (optional):

1.2. Age (or birth date):

1.3. Sex:
(1): Male
(2): Female

1.4. Birth place (state):
(1): Lagos State
(2): Edo State
(3): Enugu State
(4): Other (specify)

1.5. Place/State of residence in Nigeria, before migrating:
(1): Lagos State
(2): Edo State
(3): Enugu State
(4): Other (specify)

1.6. Do you have any Children: if no, go to 1.8
(1): Yes
(2): No

1.7. If yes, how many children do you have?

1.8. Do you have siblings? If no, go to 1.11
(1): yes
(2): no

1.9. If yes, how many siblings do you have?

1.10. Birth order:

1.11. What is your highest level of educational attainment?:
(1): None
(2): Primary
(3): Junior Secondary
(4): Senior Secondary
(5): Vocational/Technical
(6): University

1.12. What was your Employment status in Nigeria before you travelled:
(1): Unemployed

(2): Private sector
(3): Government sector
(4): Other (student, apprentice etc.)

1.13. What was your Mother's major Occupation before you travelled:
(1): Unemployed
(2): Private sector
(3): Government sector
(4): Other (student, apprentice etc.)

1.14. What was your Father's major Occupation before you travelled:
(1): Unemployed
(2): Private sector
(3): Government sector
(4): Other (student, apprentice etc.)

2. Migrating

2.1. Decision Making Factors for Migrating:
(1): Individual
(2): Collective
(3): Forced

2.2. During your movement to the Netherlands, which countries did you cross?

2.3. What year did you enter Europe?

2.4. What mode of travelling did you use:
(1): Road
(2): Air
(3): Road and Air
(4): Road and Sea

2.5. What kinds of Obstacles did you encounter during this journey?
(1): None
(2): Some
(3): a Lot

2.6. Why did you migrate out of Nigeria? (more options possible)
(1): Economic reasons
(2): Political reasons
(3): War/Violence
(4): Opportunity
(5): It was arranged for me true others
(6): I was forced

2.7. List the main sources of funding for your migration:
(1): Family and Relatives
(2): Friends

(3): Family, Relatives and Friends
(4): Yourself
(5): Smuggler/Trafficker
(6): None

3. Stay in the Netherlands

3.1. Where do you live in the Netherlands?
(1): region Amsterdam
(2): region Rotterdam
(3): region The Hague
(4): region Amsterdam, and/or Rotterdam, and/or The Hague
(5): Other

3.2. Living Situation (more options possible):
(1): Squatted Shelter
(3): Church
(2): With Friends
(3): With Relatives
(4): Alone
(5): Other (specify)

3.3. What is your current occupation?

3.4. Duration of stay in the Netherlands: (how long have you been living in the Netherlands)

3.5. Did you ever return back to Nigeria?
(1): Yes
(2): No

3.6. Have you ever submitted asylum application? If no, go to 3.11
(1): Yes
(2): No

3.7. If yes, how many times have you submitted asylum applications:

3.8. If no, list the main reason for not applying
(1): First, I want to sort things out
(2): I don't want to be in your system
(3): I don't know
(4): Other (Specify)

3.9. General notes of your stay in the Netherlands (happy/unhappy etc.):
(1): Happy
(2): Unhappy
(3): Happy and Unhappy

4. Contact with 'home'

4.1. Is there any contact with relatives or friends in Nigeria?
(1): Yes
(2): No

4.2. General notes of this contact:
(1): Good
(2): Not good
(3): Mixed

4.3. What kinds of expectations does your family and friends in Nigeria require from you?
(1): Money
(2): Goods
(3): Money and Goods
(4): Other
(5): None

4.4. Did they know in what situation you were in (being undocumented):
(1): Yes
(2): No

5. Returning

5.1. Did organizations contact you about returning to Nigeria?
(1): Yes
(2): No

5.2. Did you encounter certain programs in relation to returning?
(1): Yes
(2): No

5.3. How do you feel about returning to Nigeria?
(1): Positive
(2): Negative
(3): Mixed feelings

5.4. If, negative, why do you feel negative about returning? (more options possible)
(1): Financially
(2): Shame and failure
(3): Feelings of not wanting to leave the Netherlands
(4)): Other

5.5. (If positive) Why did you feel positive about returning? (more options possible)
(1): Seeing family, relatives and friends
(2): Seeing my home country
(3): Feelings of wanting to leave the Netherlands
(4): Financially
(5): Other

5.6. (If mixed feelings) See options of 5.2 and 5.3 (more options possible)

5.7. How would your family react on your return?
(1): Positive

(2): Not positive
(3): Mixed reactions

6. Reflexions

6.1. Looking at your life now in the Netherlands: would you have come here after knowing your life would be as it is now?
(1): Yes
(2): No

6.2. How do you see your initial migration tot the Netherlands?
(1): Success
(2): Failure
(3): Other

6.3. Do you plan another migratory attempt?
(1): Yes
(2): No

Questionnaire: Research 2016/2017 - Among Nigerian Returnees in Nigeria

Date:
Location:

1. Demographic

1.1. Name (optional):

1.2. Age (or birth date):

1.3. Sex:
(1): Male
(2): Female

1.4. Birth place (state):
(1): Lagos State
(2): Edo State
(3): Enugu State
(4): Other (specify)

1.5. Place/State of residence (in Nigeria):
(1): Lagos State
(2): Edo State
(3): Enugu State
(4): Other (specify)

1.6. Do you have any Children: if no, go to 1.8

(1): Yes
(2): No

1.7. If yes, how many children do you have?

1.8. Do you have siblings? If no go to 1.11
(1): yes
(2): no

1.9. If yes, how many siblings do you have?

1.10. Birth order:

1.11. What is your highest level of educational attainment?:
(1): None
(2): Primary
(3): Junior Secondary
(4): Senior Secondary
(5): Vocational/Technical
(6): University

1.12. What was your Employment status in Nigeria before you travelled:
(1): Unemployed
(2): Private sector
(3): Government sector
(4): Other (student, apprentice etc.)

1.13. What was your Mother's major Occupation before you travelled:
(1): Unemployed
(2): Private sector
(3): Government sector
(4): Other (student, apprentice etc.)

1.14. What was your Father's major Occupation before you travelled:
(1): Unemployed
(2): Private sector
(3): Government sector
(4): Other (student, apprentice etc.)

2. Migrating

2.1. Decision making factors for Migrating:
(1): Individual
(2): Collective
(3): Forced

2.2. During your movement to the Netherlands, which countries did you cross?

2.3. What year did you enter Europe?

2.4. What mode of travelling did you use:
(1): Road
(2): Air
(3): Road and Air
(4): Road and Sea

2.5. What kinds of Obstacles did you encounter during this journey?
(1): None
(2): Some
(3): a Lot

2.6. Why did you migrate out of Nigeria? (more options possible)
(1): Economic reasons
(2): Political reasons
(3): War/Violence
(4): Opportunity
(5): It was arranged for me true others
(6): I was forced

2.7. List the main sources of funding for your migration:
(1): Family and Relatives
(2): Friends
(3): Family, Relatives and Friends
(4): Yourself
(5): Smuggler/Trafficker
(6): None

3. Stay in the Netherlands

3.1. Where did you live in the Netherlands?
(1): region Amsterdam
(2): region Rotterdam
(3): region The Hague
(4): region Amsterdam, and/or Rotterdam, and/or The Hague
(5): Other

3.2. What was your living situation (more options possible):
(1): Squatted Shelter
(3): Church
(2): With friends
(3): With Relatives
(4): Alone
(5): Other (specify

3.3. What was your main occupation?

3.4. Duration of stay in the Netherlands: (how long have you been living in the Netherlands)

3.5. Did you ever return back to Nigeria?
(1): Yes
(2): No

3.6. Have you ever submitted asylum application? If no, go to 3.8
(1): Yes
(2): No

3.7. If yes, how many times have you submitted asylum applications:

3.8. If no, list the main reason for not applying
(1): First, I want to sort things out
(2): I don't want to be in your system
(3): I don't know
(4): Other (Specify)

3.9. General notes of your stay in the Netherlands (happy/unhappy etc.):
(1): Happy
(2): Unhappy
(3): Happy and Unhappy

4. Contact with 'home'

4.1. Was there any contact with relatives or friends in Nigeria?
(1): Yes
(2): No

4.2. General notes of this contact:
(1): Good
(2): Not good
(3): Mixed

4.3. What kinds of expectations did your family and friends in Nigeria require from you?
(1): Money
(2): Goods
(3): Money and Goods
(4): Other
(5): None

4.4. Did they know in what situation you were in (being undocumented):
(1): Yes
(2): No

5. Returning

5.1. Which way did you return?
(1): Deported
(2): Voluntary Assisted
(3): Other

5.2. Did organizations contact/inform you about returning to Nigeria?
(1): Yes
(2): No

5.3. Did you contact organisation yourself about returning?
(1): Yes
(2): No

5.4. Did you encounter certain programs in relation to returning?
(1): Yes
(2): No

5.5. What were your main motives to return? (more options possible)
(1): Family related
(2): Cannot support self
(3): Stress of being undocumented
(4): Negative decision regarding asylum request
(5): Threat of deportation
(6): Got deported

5.6. How did you feel about returning to Nigeria?
(1): Positive
(2): Negative
(3): Mixed feelings

5.7. (If negative) Why did you feel negative about returning? (more options possible)
(1): Financially
(2): Shame and failure
(3): Feelings of that there was no other option than leaving
(4): Other

5.8. If mixed, see categories of 5.3 and 5.4 (More options possible)

5.9. (If positive) Why did you feel positive about returning? (more options possible)
(1): Seeing family, relatives and friends
(2): Seeing my home country
(3): Feelings of wanting to leave the Netherlands
(4): Other

6. Back in Nigeria

6.1. Since when have you returned to Nigeria?

6.2. What is your Employment status in Nigeria?
(1): Unemployed
(2): Private sector
(3): Government sector
(4): Other (student, apprentice etc.)

6.3. Housing/Living
(1): Alone
(2): With friends

(3): With Family
(4): Other (specify)

6.4. How do you feel after you have returned?
(1): Happy
(2): Unhappy
(3): Mixed feelings

6.5. Did you receive help from (any) institution after you have returned?
(1): Yes
(2): No

6.6. If Yes, What kind of help?
(1): Financial support
(2): Financial support and Training
(3): Training

6.7. If No, why not?
(1): I was (forcefully) deported
(2): financial and or training support didn't reach me
(3): I didn't want it

6.8. Does your family know you have returned? If no, go to 6.11
(1): Yes
(2): No

6.9. If Yes, How did they react on your return?
(1): Positive
(2): Not positive
(3): Mixed reactions

6.10. If Yes, How long did it take you to contact them?

6.11. If No, Why not? (more options possible)
(1): Feelings of shame and failure
(2): Scared of reactions
(3): I cannot repay the debts I have with them
(3): I don't want to see them
(4): I don't have any contact at all with my family
(5): I don't have any family left (died) or don't know who my family is

6.12. Looking at your life now in Nigeria: would you have returned after knowing your life would be as it is now?
(1): Yes
(2): No

6.13. How do you see your initial migration tot the Netherlands?
(1): Success
(2): Failure
(3): Other

6.14. Do you plan another migratory attempt?
(1): Yes
(2): No