Looking for a Greener Pasture
Exploring the Narratives of Gambian Clandestine Migrants

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Abstract


Clandestine migration from Sub-Saharan Africa to Europe is an increasing trend. In The Gambia, which is a relatively calm and stable country, young men dream about life in Europe and risk their lives in The Sahara with Europe as goal. The aim of this thesis is to investigate the expectations about life in Europe, and also, why it is mainly young men who become clandestine migrants. The research questions are: 1) how are narratives about clandestine migration and Europe constructed among young men in The Gambia? 2) What ideas about Europe are produced and reproduced in these narratives? And 3) Why is it, in the Gambian context, mainly young men who become clandestine migrants? Fieldwork and interviews was carried out in The Gambia. The study takes a narrative approach that acknowledges agency as well as structure. This is important because it shows how the narratives builds on discursive practice, and are connected to a broader social context. Thus, this study gives voice to the clandestine and highlights individual experiences. The analysis draws on discourse analysis, in combination with postcolonial and gender theory, and shows how clandestine migration is the result of primarily two discursive practices. First the ideas about Europe and The Gambia, represented as binary oppositions building on colonial stories about place, and second the local, gendered idea of ‘a successful son’.

Key words: Clandestine migration, The Gambia, Europe, Post colonialism, Gender, Narrative.
Summary

Clandestine migration from Sub-Saharan Africa to Europe is not a recent phenomenon, but an increasing trend. In 2014 at least 3500 people died in the Sea, many refugees in search for asylum, but also others who are not fleeing war but poverty. The number of migrants dying at sea has increased every year since the early 2000s.

In The Gambia, which is a relatively peaceful and stable country, many young men see life in Europe as the ultimate dream and the issue of clandestine migration through the Sahara is a growing problem. Earlier research has shown that prospective clandestine migrants from West Africa are prepared to risk their lives in order to get to Europe, and that over-expectations about what life in Europe is going to be like are important in the migration decision making process. Not much is known about clandestine migration from The Gambia. Since most young men who migrate from The Gambia are not refugees, but economic migrants it is interesting to investigate what drives them into the dangerous route through the desert.

The aim of this thesis is to explore the stories of Gambian clandestine migrants in order to investigate the expectations and ideas about Europe, as well as the gendered aspects of this type of migration. The research questions are 1) how are narratives about clandestine migration and Europe constructed among young men in The Gambia? 2) What ideas about Europe are produced and reproduced in these narratives? And 3) why is it, in The Gambian context, mainly young men who become clandestine migrants?

The material was collected during five weeks of fieldwork in The Gambia, and consists of semi-structured interviews with clandestine migrants, who migrated as clandestines but failed to reach Europe, and had returned to The Gambia again. This group is interesting since they are clearly prepared to risk their lives in order to get to Europe, and also because they have not been successful in their attempts. Thus, they still have only ideas, and not first hand knowledge, about Europe.

All human beings are storytellers and by analysing stories we can explore events that are important in peoples lives, the frames through which people understand them, as well as the discourses of which they are part. A narrative approach acknowledges agency as well as structure. This is important because it stresses the individual experience, but also how stories build on discursive practice, and are connected to a broader social context. The analysis of the narratives draws on discourse analysis, postcolonial theory and gender theory.

The analysis shows how different discourses, that builds on broader social structures are important in the production of narratives about Europe. The willingness to risk one’s life in the desert is the result of primarily two discursive practices. First the ideas of Europe and The Gambia represented as binary oppositions building on colonial stories about place, and second the local, gendered idea of ‘a successful son’. The narratives reveal an idea about Europe where everything is “easy”, and where there are many opportunities to create change. In opposition The Gambia is represented as ‘the other’, constantly compared to the dreamlike ideas about what life is going to be like in Europe. The narratives also reveal a master narrative about family and responsibility with gender norms that falls heavily upon men in terms of providing for the family. From a gender perspective this idea about ‘the successful son’ could be understood in terms of a ‘local gender contract’ where the man should take responsibility for, and care for the (extended) family, and especially for his aging parents who cared for him when he was growing up.
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1. Introduction

April 2015. A boat carrying about 550 clandestine migrants capsized on its way from Libya to Lampedusa. The Italian coast guard rescued 144 people of whom most were believed to be from Sub-Saharan Africa, many were very young men and some probably under-aged children. Over 400 people drowned in the Mediterranean Sea (BBC 2015-04-15, DN 2015-04-14). This is far from the only terrible accident in the Mediterranean. Clandestine migration from Sub-Saharan Africa to Europe is not a recent phenomenon but an increasing trend where people risk their lives in order to reach Europe (e.g. Mbaye 2014). In 2014 at least 3500 people died in the Sea, many refugees in search for asylum, but also others who are not fleeing war but poverty (UNHCR 2015). The number of migrants dying at sea has increased every year since the early 2000s (Amnesty International 2014:14). The repeated tragedies in the Mediterranean are powerful and telling examples of global stratification, and the very different realities people from different parts of the world face in terms of being able to control their own movements (Thörn 2002: 111). From a postcolonial perspective these differences could be explained in terms of unequal global power structures that build on colonial discourse.

Many clandestine migrants come from countries in West Africa and travel through the Sahara to Libya where they get into the boats (e.g. Gatti 2013). In The Gambia, many young men see life in Europe as the “ultimate dream” (Nyanzi & Bah 2010: 115). Since it is very difficult to get a visa to travel to Europe from The Gambia (Giabazzi 2014), the issue of clandestine migration, or “back way migration”, as it is locally known, is a growing problem. The Gambia is an interesting country in terms of clandestine migration since it is relatively peaceful and stable compared to other countries in the region, thus most clandestine migrants are not refugees but “economic migrants” (Samers 2010: 11). Also interesting is that, in the Gambian context it is primarily young men who become clandestine migrants, this in contrast to other countries where also women migrate through these routes (Doctors Without Borders 2010). This raises the question about what drives young men into the dangerous route through the desert?

In terms of earlier research we do not know much about clandestine migration from The Gambia. Earlier research carried out in West African countries has shown that clandestine migrants are aware of the dangerous routes and that they are prepared to risk their lives in order to get to Europe. It has also been shown that over-expectations about life in Europe are important in the decision to migrate as a clandestine (e.g. Hernández-Carretero & Carling 2012, Mbaye 2014, Sabates-Wheeler et al. 2009, Van Dalen et al. 2005). However, many studies on clandestine migration from West Africa have focused on policy and structures rather than taking an individual perspective (e.g. Carling 2007, Carling & Hernández-Carretero 2011, De Haas 2008). This is symptomatic for migration research where migrant agency has often been forgotten in favour of a structural view (IOM 2013: 24).

The aim of this thesis is to explore the stories of Gambian clandestine migrants in order to investigate the expectations and ideas about Europe, as well as the gendered aspects of this type of migration. The research questions are:

- How are narratives about clandestine migration and Europe constructed among young men in The Gambia?
- What ideas about Europe are produced and reproduced in these narratives?
- Why is it, in The Gambian context, mainly young men who become clandestine migrants?
In order to answer the research questions I explore the construction of narratives among young Gambian men, who travelled ‘back way’ as clandestine migrants, but failed to reach Europe, and returned to The Gambia again. This group is interesting since they are clearly prepared to risk their lives in order to get to Europe, and also because they have not been successful in their attempts. Thus, they still have only ideas, and not first hand knowledge, about Europe. The material, semi-structured interviews were collected during fieldwork in The Gambia.

All human beings are storytellers, and by analysing narratives we can explore events that are important in peoples lives, the frames through which people understand them, as well as the discourses of which they are part (Datta et al. 2009: 858). A narrative approach acknowledges agency as well as structure. This is important because it stresses the individual experience, but also how stories builds on discursive practice, and are connected to a broader social context (Riessman 2008: 10).

The analysis of the narratives draws on discourse analysis where discourse is seen as a certain way to explain and understand the world (Winther & Phillips 2000: 7). In the analysis of discourse and its connections to a broader social context we need to bring in social theory (Winther & Phillips 2000: 72). In this case I will draw on postcolonial theory with ‘the other’ as central concept (e.g. Thörn et al. 1999, Hall 1999) and gender theory with ‘local gender contract’ as important concept (e.g. Hirdman 2003, Caretta & Börjeson 2015). This combination will link the narratives with discursive practice and a broader social context (Fairclough 1992).

The repeated tragedies in The Mediterranean shows the urgent need to understand the reason for this kind of migration. Since these migrants come from very different backgrounds their reasons for migration is also likely to be very different. This study provides unique interview material that gives voice to the clandestine “economic migrant” and highlights the stories and experiences of Gambian clandestine migrants. In the case of refugees fleeing the stories are indeed likely to be very different.

Following this introduction I will set the scene by discussing terminology, introduce The Gambian context, and describe the route that is locally known as “the back way to Europe”. Then follows a section on previous research on clandestine migration from West Africa to Europe and on Men, Migration and Masculinity, in order to place this study in its broader context. I will then continue with outlining the theoretical framework, and method before presenting the results, conclude the research findings, and discuss the results in a broader social context.
2. Setting the scene

2.1 Terminology

In our globalized world, people move between countries for different reasons such as work, family, or as refugees. There have been many attempts to define migration, one example is the definition offered by UNESCO: “[Migration] is the crossing of the boundary of a political or administrative unit for a certain minimum period of time. It includes the movement of refugees, displaced persons, uprooted people as well as economic migrants” (UNESCO 2015). To capture the complexity of migration, some have referred to a condition of “migrancy”, a concept that points to the diversity of changed statuses and various migration paths (Samers 2010: 8). ‘Migrancy’ points to the difficulties in defining migration because it is not static, but rather a process of movement.

Migration has “accelerated” and there is reason to believe that all kind of migration will continue to grow. In 2005 there were 193 million migrants in the world and of these about 30 or 40 million are believed to be “undocumented” (Samers 2010: 20-21). What is important to remember in this context is that these numbers only consist of 3% of the world population; that is most of us are not migrants (Samers 2010: 20-21). This puts reports about increasing migration in perspective.

There is no standard or commonly accepted term to refer to the ‘clandestine migrants’, which is the term I choose to use here (Paspalanova 2008: 80). Many different terms including ‘alien’ and ‘irregular’ have been used, as well as ‘illegal’. The use of ‘illegal’ can be seen as problematic and linked to an increased politicization of migration (Castles et al. 2014: 5 ff). Andersson (2014) argues that the European attempts to stop irregular border crossings are part of the process of creating the “illegal migrant” as a concept. He writes that the term “illegal migrant” is humiliating as well as stigmatizing for migrants, and also, incorrect because it implies that these migrants “are criminals while they have usually only committed an administrative infraction” (Andersson 2014: 123). Paspalanova (2008: 88) points to the same thing when she writes, “a person per se cannot be illegal”. Thus it is not correct to use ‘illegal’ to refer to a human being who also happens to be a migrant who entered a country unauthorized. Instead Paspalanova advocate for terms such as ‘undocumented’ or ‘irregular’ to refer to migrants who have entered a country without authorization. These terms are free of the negative political and social connotations of ‘illegal’ (Paspalanova 2008: 88-89). However, I find the term ‘irregular’ problematic in the case of migration from West Africa to Europe. Using ‘irregular’ somehow implies that there are ‘regular’ alternatives to choose when in fact these alternatives are few and only open to a very limited group of people (Giabazzi 2014). In this respect the irregular has become the regular. From my point of view ‘Clandestine migrant’ better captures the hidden aspects of back way migration on dangerous routes through the Sahara Desert and points to a new group of people that the journalist Fabrizio Gatti has described as a new social class in the 21st century Europe; he describes ‘the Clandestine’ as an invisible person who we choose not to see (Gatti 2013: 15), and this captures very well the essence of this type of migration.

The question about who could really be defined as a migrant has no easy answer, especially not in the case of clandestine migration. Samers (2010: 11) defines clandestine migrants as “those individuals who cross international boundaries either without being detected by authorities (…) or who overstay their visa”. The group interviewed for this study clearly had the intention to become migrants in accordance with this definition, as well as UNESCO’s definition above. They were about to cross a boundary “for a certain
minimum period of time” as “economic migrants”, and I don’t think the fact that they
never reached Europe, which was the intended destination, makes them less of a migrant.
Some of them were away for over a year, crossed many borders and worked in Libya for
a period of time. Even though this group may be something in-between a migrant, a
return-migrant and a non-migrant I have decided to use the terms ‘clandestine migrants’
and ‘back way migrant’ as synonyms to talk about this group. They clearly started a
migration process with the intention to stay in Europe and I cannot find any term in the
academic literature that would work better in this context.

There is also a problematic distinction between forced and voluntary migration. This
is because the causes of these two types of migration are closely related; the migratory
processes as well as the policy responses to both categories are similar, this has been
called the “migration-asylum nexus” (Betts 2006: 655). However, usually there is a
distinction made between those who are forced to migrate as asylum-seekers and
refugees, and those who are forced to move by poverty. Even though the latter could be
categorized as forced in a sense, they are seen as voluntary “economic migrants” by
governments in receiving countries (Samers 2010: 11, 13). Here, I see clandestine
migrants mainly as voluntary even though some of them might argue that they are forced
to move because of poverty. This is because they have, at least to some extent, agency
and make decisions for themselves. However the complexity of terminology and
definitions should be kept in mind.

There is no shortage of explanations to why and where people migrate, and
researchers from different disciplines are exploring many different aspects of migration
from many different perspectives. The focus in this thesis is the narrative dimension of
clandestine migration. This is just one of many aspects of migration that needs to be
explored further and the results from this study needs to be seen in relation to a broader
field of research. In this background section I will focus on earlier research on clandestine
migration from West Africa, and about men, migration and masculinity, but first I will set
the scene by introducing the Gambian context and ‘the back way to Europe’.

2.2 The Gambian Context
The Gambia is one of the smallest countries in Africa, with an area of 11,295 sq. km and
a population of about 1,7 million people (Economist Intelligence Unit 2013). The Gambia
was a British colony until independence in 1965, and the Kuntah Kinte Island in the
river Gambia, that runs the entire length of the country, was a strategic centre for slave
trade between the 15th and the 18th century. Thus, English is the official language but a
number of other languages, with Mandingo and Wolof as the largest groups, are spoken.
Many, especially in the rural areas, do not speak English at all.

The Gambia is one of the poorest countries in the world with a GNI index of 500 USD
per capita (World bank 2013a), and many people do not have the capacity to meet their
basic needs and rights in terms of food, clothes and education. Life expectancy at birth is
59 years (World bank 2013a). There are few opportunities for employment, especially in
the rural areas, and many families rely on ineffective family farms. This results in internal
migration from rural to urban areas, however unemployment and poverty is widespread
also in the cities (Kebbeh 2013). The concept of poverty does not only refer to lack of
financial resources, but also to peoples capabilities to live a life that they value and to
control their own situation (Sen 2002).
The education system is 12 years, but most children do not complete their education. The government’s intention is to provide free education for everyone the first six years and for girls the first nine years, but because of lack of resources parents still have to pay for food, uniforms, and material. This excludes many children who come from families with a strained economic situation. It is very difficult to get hold of reliable statistics, but according to the World Bank the school enrolment is 87% (World bank 2013a). However, school enrolment does not tell us how many children who finish their education. What is known is that the quality of the education is often low and based on “chalk and talk” teaching (Informal conversations during fieldwork).

The current president, Yahya Jammeh, took power in a military coup in 1994 and is expected to retain a strong grip on power also in the coming years. The Gambia has a low rate of industrialisation and agricultural output stands for about one-third of GNP. The Gambia has been criticized for a weakness when it comes to Human Rights. The freedom of speech is highly restricted and the election in 2011, where Jammeh was re-elected with 72 % of the votes, were questioned by observers because of several aspects, among them is that the President controls the majority of the medias (Economist Intelligence Unit 2013).

About 95% of the Gambian population are Muslims, and there is a minority of Christians (Nation Master 2014). Religion characterizes daily life for most people, for example in many work places the staff comes together in the afternoon for prayer. There are good relationships between Muslims and Christians who often celebrate different religious feasts together. As a Christian European I have often been invited to Muslim friends for Tobaski or other celebrations.
The Gambian society relies heavily on family structures and family is a diverse concept where many relatives could be included in an extended family. Polygamy is common and therefore one man might have two or in exceptional cases three or four wives who sometimes also share the same compound. Since the fertility rate per woman is 5.8 children (World Bank 2013b) it is likely that one compound will be shared by about 20 people. The social system also requires that the one who works and has a salary supports the rest of the extended family. The relation between men and women are characterized by a patriarchal structure and strong traditions like child marriages and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). Women usually have a bigger workload, but the traditional role as a breadwinner is a man’s (Gambiarupperna 2015). When the father and head of household grows old this responsibility is usually passed on to the eldest son. Even though it might very well be a woman who supports the family in reality (e.g. Interviewees Bubacarr & Musa,) it is much more socially accepted for girls to rely on their family homes before they get married. Thus, in terms of providing for the family, gender norms falls heavier upon men, where successful sons are expected to contribute to the household and support their dependants (Nyanzi & Bah 2010: 114).

In the 1980s the low salaries, lack of job security and poor management of the healthcare system made migration to Europe and North America a common coping strategy for many Gambians. In 1994 the military coup, where Yahya Jammeh took power, caused an increase in Gambian asylum seekers in Europe, and the UK as well as other European countries started to require that Gambians should apply for visa before travelling. Despite the European policies and regulations, large numbers of young Gambian men continued to migrate “legally or illegally” to Europe (Kebbeh 2013). In a report from the Migration Policy Institute (Kebbeh 2013) it is estimated that the number of Gambians living abroad increased from 35 000 in year 2000 to 65 000 in year 2010. This also includes migrants who live in other African countries. The Gambia’s net migration rate of -2.34 migrants/1000 population (2013) is the tenth highest in Africa. The most popular destination is Spain, where it is estimated that 22 000 Gambians were living in 2012. Other popular countries of destination are the US, the UK and Germany, but also other West African countries such as Nigeria and Senegal. In recent years incoming remittances as a share of the Gambian GDP has been amongst the highest in Africa, and has been a mean to alleviate poverty (Kebbeh 2013).

Tourism has been a growing industry since independence and it is important for the economy where it accounts for one-fifth of GDP (Economist Intelligence Unit 2013). Many Gambians are dependent on the tourism industry to support their families and interact frequently with European tourists. However, very few have the opportunity to travel and to be a tourist somewhere else (Ugglia 2011). These tensions between the locals struggling for their livelihoods and visitors on luxury holidays makes The Gambia an interesting place to study in the context of migration. Interesting in this context is the group of young men who is locally referred to as ‘bumsters’ or ‘beach boys’. These young men offer sexual services to female tourists, often with the intention to create relationships that will lead to marriage, and thus give them the opportunity to migrate to the West with residence permits (Nyanzi & Bah 2010: 108, see also Nyanzi et al. 2005). For bumsters, white female tourists represent wealth and prosperity, and migration to the West is the “ultimate dream” (Nyanzi & Bah 2010: 114, 115).
2.3 Back way Migration from The Gambia

In The Gambia the ‘clandestine’ routes to Europe are called “the back way to Europe”. Since this concept is commonly used in the local society and by the interviewees I will also use it here in combination with ‘clandestine migration’. There are different back way routes to Europe; the one that seems to be most frequently used today is the way through the Sahara Desert and Libya. This route was thoroughly described by the interviewees and has also been described by for example the Italian journalist Fabrizio Gatti (2013: 10, see also Monzini 2007: 178). An alternative route is to go with boat directly from The Gambia or Senegal and travel up to Morocco and then try to enter Spain (e.g. Hernández-Carretero & Carling 2012). One of my interviewees tried this route once but failed and then tried to go through Libya twice (Ousman) and all the others used the Sahara-Libya route.

The Saharan route that seems to be most common to use from The Gambia has its first stop in Kaolack in Senegal, from there the migrants go with bus to Ouagadougou, the capital of Burkina Faso. From Ouagadougou they travel by bus to Agadez in Niger where the trafficking business starts. From Agadez migrants go with trucks or pickups through the Sahara Desert up to Dirkou, which is a small town or village in the middle of the Sahara, there they change vehicle to travel up to the Libyan border. When they enter Libya they travel with different cars up to Tripoli. In Tripoli there are agents who are scouting for migrants who wants to cross the Mediterranean trying to reach Italy.

The experiences of Tripoli differed between the interviewees, but all of them
described the political chaos and violence in the streets. All of the interviewees who came as far as to the boats were surprised by the fact that it was inflatables, they had all expected safer and steadier boats. One of the interviewees told me that migrants who volunteer as “captain” or to “read the compass” can go free (Bubacarr, see also Pastore et al. 2006), otherwise the price is about GMD 35 000 (app. 800 Euro). This means that inexperienced people volunteer as captains in order to go free, and this is one reason for the repeated tragedies in the sea. Another interviewee told me that these captains do not always speak the same language as the traffickers who are supposed to help them with directions and this is of course also a reason for boats getting lost at sea (Modou). For all of my interviewees the journey ended before they reached their goal. Either they decided to go back themselves, or were deported to The Gambia.
3. Previous Research

3.1 Clandestine Migration from West Africa to Europe

The motives for clandestine migration from West Africa and the decision making process of clandestine migrants has attracted researchers interest before. Van Dalen et al. (2005) and Sabates-Wheeler et al. (2009) both use Dickens’ classic title “Great Expectations” in two different cases. Van Dalen et al use it to capture the essence of the motives behind migration to Europe from Ghana and Senegal where they found that economic expectations and a very optimistic view of finding a job in the destination country was central in the migration decision making process (Van Dalen et al. 2005: 775). Sabates-Wheeler et al explore the role of information in the construction of “great expectations” of return migrants and their families in the case of Ghana. They show how expectations play an important part in explaining the experience of return-migrants. Those who have realistic expectations are more likely to adapt to life back home and have the most positive experience, consequently those who are not able to adjust their expectations to reality often get disillusioned and worse of than they were before migration. Thus, information flows between migrants and families back home are crucial in formulating these expectations (Sabates-Wheeler et al. 2009: 768).

Economic expectations are important, but others have shown that it is not absolute poverty per see that drives migration, but rather a wish to live up to a social role (Hernández-Carretero & Carling 2012: 410). Thus, the reasons for migration are complex, and the decision to migrate seems to be based on a combination of different variables. In The case of Senegal and The Gambia, Van Nieuwenhuyze (2009) writes that for the young generation migration is seen as a livelihood strategy, but also as a way to reach success in some broader sense. He describes remittances as “a social activity”, to illustrate that there is more to remittances than just economic gain1 (Van Nieuwenhuyze 2009: 76). Similarly Dünnwald (2011), writing about EU engagement and migrant security, gives an example from a Malian village where the decision to migrate is not primarily connected to economic status nor education. In addition to economic expectations, the stories told by others in combination with the opportunity to travel and get a “special experience” to tell about after return seems to be important (Dünnwald 2011: 106).

These expectations are closely connected to transnational links that migrants keep across national borders, between the local communities of origin and destination. These social networks provide a global flow of information (Castles et al. 2014: 39-40, 43, Suksumboon 2008: 474). In the case of Senegal, Mbaye (2014) argues that migrant networks in combination with expectations and migration policies are key for the willingness to risk ones life in a small boat. In her fieldwork she came across the expression “Barsa wala Barsakh” in the local language Wolof (also spoken in The Gambia) which translates “to Barcelona or die”, an expression that becomes a powerful illustration of how determined many people are to migrate no matter what the consequences will be (Mbaye 2014: 3). The aspect of risk-taking in clandestine migration has also been researched by Hernández-Carretero and Carling (2012). They explore the micro-level processes of perception and decision-making among boat migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa to Spain. Their analysis shows that the fact that people are aware of the risks with boat migration does not influence their attitudes towards clandestine migration. People are prepared to go even though they know they face the risk of dying on their way

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1 This will be developed further in the section on Theoretical Framework.
(Hernández-Carretero & Carling 2012: 409-410, 415, see also Samers 2010: 15).

Even though the risks of the migration route per se are often known by prospective migrants, it is not unusual that family and friends who are already abroad give non-accurate information about their living conditions in Europe, in order to “save face” (Suksomboon 2008: 475, Mbaye 2014: 4, Sabates-Wheeler et al. 2009). ‘Save face’ is a translation of the Thai concept “raksa na”, and it refers to how migrant Thai women do not tell their families about the reality and hardship of their lives abroad, but instead prefer to let their families believe that everything is fine by sending home remittances on a regular basis (Suksomboon 2008: 475).

This false information, in combination with remittances raises expectations about life abroad to an unrealistic level (Mbaye 2014: 4, see also Sabates-Wheeler et al. 2009). In addition, when people abroad do try to tell the truth they are not always believed (Van Nieuwenhuyze 2009:77). For many young people in West Africa, migration has turned into a dream and “obsession”:

It is hard to imagine the extent to which migration has become a feature of life: young people plan to leave, they work to leave, they talk about leaving, and they move around in order to leave. They spend their time on the internet chatting with foreigners, flirting with tourists, working hard to save, nagging parents and family for permission and money to leave, queuing endlessly in front of different embassies (Van Nieuwenhuyze 2009: 76).

Thus, ideas about migration are continuously present in West African societies, to the extent that they could even be described as above, by Van Nieuwenhuyze, as a “feature of life” (Van Nieuwenhuyze 2009: 76). To sum up, earlier research has shown that it is not absolute poverty and despair that drives clandestine migration from West Africa to Europe, but rather a combination of great expectations about adventure, experience and opportunities to make a lot of money to send home as remittances. We also know that the awareness of risk before migration do not have influence on peoples’ attitudes towards clandestine migration. Thus it is interesting to further explore the expectations about life in Europe, what they contain and how they are produced. In addition, a postcolonial perspective will help us understand these expectations in terms of discourse and global power structures. Before explaining the theoretical framework, I will outline earlier research on men, migration and masculinity.

3.2 Men, Migration and Masculinity

Gender came into migration research in the 1980’s. Early migration theory has been described as “gender blind” (Datta et al. 2009: 855), and it clearly rested upon the “‘male norm’ in light of widespread misconceptions that it was men who migrated and women who remained behind” (Datta et al. 2009: 855). However, in migration, as well as in other fields of research a gender perspective has meant to explore women in migration, or gender norms that structure the lives of female migrants. Thus, also contemporary migration theory could be described as half gender blind, in the sense that little attention has been given to the construction of masculinities and how that is linked to migration (e.g. Castles et al. 2014: 61-62). This is likely connected to the fact that ‘gender’ in migration studies has often been used as a synonym with ‘sex’ (Pessar & Mahler 2003: 813). That is, what have been addressed is mainly the differences between men and
women, for example in migration patterns, rather than approaching gender as socially constructed.

The lack of research on the experiences of migrant men could be explained in part as a reaction to previous bias where migration has been seen as a masculine process including “risk, adventure and courage” (Datta et al. 2009: 853). Datta et al. (2009) suggest that the recent transnational approach to migration could give us an opportunity to advance more sophisticated theories on migration, and a more nuanced understanding of how gender and migration are linked. Despite recent advances the “tendency to marginalise or demonise the experiences of male migrants remains evident” (Datta et al. 2009: 855).

In recent years the problem of ignored masculinities in migration has been highlighted in different studies. I will highlight some of them in order to place this thesis in its context. For example Ye (2014), links migration, masculinity and class structures in the case of Bangladeshi men in Singapore, Broughton (2008) investigate how low-income men from rural areas in Mexico negotiate “hegemonic masculinities” in the light of an increasing pressure to migrate, and Datta et al. (2009) explore the narratives of male migrants in low-paid work in London, focusing on male identities and gender norms in the country of origin as well as in London.

Especially the findings of Broughton (2008) are interesting to highlight in relation to Gambian clandestine migration and masculinity. In the case of Mexico, Broughton identifies three different visions of “the border” and three different type of male migrants; “the traditionalist” who adopts “hegemonic masculinities” where family and community ties are important, “the adventurer” who is more individualistic, migrating in search for work but also in search of adventure and experience, and “the breadwinner” who is forced to migrate by economic circumstances (Broughton 2008: 585). Broughton’s findings and the different migrant roles are useful also in the analysis of clandestine migration from The Gambia to Europe.

In the case of migration from West Africa and gender there is not a lot of earlier research to be found. Van Dalen et al. (2005: 770) have addressed the differences in reasons for migration between men and women in Ghana and Senegal (compared to Egypt and Morocco). Nyanzi and Bah (2010: 114) highlights how gender norms in The Gambia falls heavier on men than women in terms of providing for the family, and how this is linked to young men dreaming about migration to the West. Gunnarsson (2011), explores the impact of male out-migration from three Gambian villages on livelihoods and the empowerment of women. The results show no change in women’s independence after their husband’s migration, instead they were economically dependent on other male relatives who received the remittances from the migrant (Gunnarsson 2011: 127).

Thus, in terms of earlier research on men, migration and masculinity there seems to be a significant gap to fill, especially in the case of West Africa and The Gambia. Datta et al. (2009: 856) write that “in many parts of the world, international mobility continues to serve as a rite of passage into manhood”, but continue stating that migration could also be a livelihood strategy triggered by traditional masculine roles of providing for the family. This goes well together with Broughton’s “traditionalist”, “adventurer”, and “breadwinner” (Broughton 2008: 585), and points to highly interesting aspects of male migration that is relevant to explore further also in The Gambian context.

In the next section I will outline the theoretical framework where gender theory is an important part together with narrative theory and postcolonial theory. The combination of these theories will facilitate in linking the stories with discursive practice and a broader social context.

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2 Gender theory will be further developed in the section on Theoretical Framework.
4. Theoretical Framework

Since migration is such a multi-faceted process it is essential to move beyond traditional disciplines and see migration from an interdisciplinary perspective, thus a combination of different theories will be used in the analysis (Samers 2010: 5). The theoretical framework draws on a structuration approach where structure and agency is conceptualized as interlinked (e.g. Giddens 1984). According to Giddens, structures shape individuals’ socialization at same time as individuals shape them. This means that structures have both “controlling and transformative” effects on individuals and vice versa (Caretta & Börjeson 2015: 645, see also Samers 2010: 33). This approach helps us understand the structural features of migration without excluding migrant agency. The main theoretical perspectives I use in the analysis are 1) narrative theory where ‘storytelling’ and ‘representation’ are central concepts, 2) discourse and framing theory, 3) postcolonial theory, with ‘the other’ as central concepts, and 4) gender theory, with ‘local gender contract’ as important concept. In order to link the notion of structures and agency the theory on social migrant networks is also helpful and will be developed in connection to narrative theory (Samers 2010: 35).

The combination of these theories will facilitate in linking the stories of the clandestine migrants with discursive practice and broader social structures. I see the stories as produced by individuals, but also as reproductions of discourse building on social structures, thus the individual stories are also forming a common narrative. I will begin with narratives and representation, move on to framing and discourse and then outline postcolonial theory and gender theory. In the text I discuss these theories separately, however they should be understood as interlinked.

4.1 Narratives and Social Remittances

Narrative theory builds on the idea that people are experts on their own lives and stories, even though they may not always understand what implications structures and culture have on their preferences, and the way they understand their options (Tyldum 2014: 60). In migration research a narrative approach can help us explore events that are important in peoples lives, but also the discourses of which they are part, and the frames through which people understand them. Thus, a narrative approach will allow us to link people’s stories to a broader context (Riessman 2008: 10). All human beings are storytellers in one or another way, and if we want to understand their choices and ideas about certain issues we need to listen carefully to their stories. Also, listening to the individual story return “a sense of agency to migrants” while they are also attributed “a certain rhetorical power” (Datta et al. 2009: 858, see also Adams 2009: 161).

‘Narrative’ is often used synonymously with ‘story’ and many different texts, including speech, written text, and images, can be analysed from a narrative perspective (Riessman 2008: 3-4). Individuals as well as groups form identities through narratives. Individuals use them to “remember, argue, justify, persuade, engage, entertain and even mislead an audience” (Riessman 2008: 8). Groups use narratives to “mobilize others, and to foster a sense of belonging” (Riessman 2008: 8). In this way there is a political dimension of narratives (Riessman 2008: 8). For individuals, there is also a meaning-making function of narratives, by narrating our stories we connect “events into a sequence that is consequential for later action and for the meaning the speaker wants listeners to take away from the story” (Riessman 2008: 3). Narrative stories reveal truths about human experiences, and the analysis of stories enable us to connect biography to a
broader social context (Riessman 2008: 10). In the case of clandestine migration this means that a narrative approach will help us connect the individual agency and personal experiences from the ‘back way’ to broader discourses, building on colonial and gender structures.

Linked to migration, agency and structure, is the theory on social networks and migration systems. From a transnational perspective it has been argued that globalization has made it easier for migrants to keep contacts and build networks over long geographical distances (Castles et al. 2014: 39-40, 43). Social networks in migration “are defined as a set of interpersonal ties which connect migrants, former migrants and non-migrants in both origin and destination countries through ties of kinship, friendship and shared community” (Suksomboon 2009: 10, see also Herman 2006). Interesting in relation to social networks and storytelling is the term ‘social remittances’ introduced by Levitt (1988, quoted in Castles et al. 2014: 43). ‘Social remittances’ is a concept that ”emphasizes the active agency of social actors and their interactions with global cultural flows”, and it describes the flow of information in form of “ideas, behaviours, identities and social capital” (Suksomboon 2008: 474) through networks, from destination countries to countries of origin. These stories are intentionally and unintentionally transferred by return-migrants, non-migrants, visiting migrants in receiving countries, or through communication by phone or through Internet. Social remittances “clearly influence shifts in attitude and cultural practices regarding international migration in the original community” (Suksomboon 2008: 474). Thus, from a narrative perspective these social remittances that flows from one part of the world to another are crucial. The stories that are told about migration as success could be described as a challenge to the life of those who are “left behind” (Suksomboon 2008: 474), and “give rise to a ‘culture of migration’ in which migration becomes the norm and staying home is associated with failure” (Castles et al. 2014: 44). Thus, through social networks, migration systems and social remittances individual narratives and agency is linked with global structures and transnational flows of information.

The narrative approach, in combination with representation, framing and social networks theory will help answering the research question about how narratives are constructed among clandestine migrants in The Gambia. In the next section I will briefly outline the concept of ‘representation’ that is an important concept in discourse analysis, as well as in postcolonial and gender theory.

4.2 Representation

Representation relies on a constructionist approach, and refers to how language is used in order to explain the world to others in a meaningful way. The concept of representation has become important in cultural studies (Hall 2013a: 1), and I would argue that the work of representation is always essential when studying the meaning of texts. Hall (2013a) describes representation as:

> the production of the meaning of the concepts in our minds through language. It is the link between concepts and language which enables us to refer to either the ‘real’ world of objects, people or events, or indeed to imaginary worlds of fictional objects people or events (Hall 2013a: 3, italics in original).

This means that representation works as a link between the concept or object, real as well as imagined, that we want to refer to and the language which we use to do so. From this perspective, meaning is seen as relational. Signs themselves cannot fix meaning, instead
meaning depends on the difference that is being produced through language (Hall 2013a: 2 ff). From this perspective language has to be understood as a system of signs and words that can have meaning only by the production of difference and contrast. Thus, language is seen as “structured around binary oppositions such as man/woman, white/black sense/sensibility, normal/abnormal etc.” (Thörn et al. 1999: 18, my translation).

From this perspective, the difference made through representation is essential for us to be able to communicate in a meaningful way with one another. Actually, without difference meaning could not exist, without the idea of ‘sense’ we could not understand ‘sensibility’. In the same way, Hall (2013b: 224) writes that we “know what it is to be ‘British’, not only because of certain national characteristics, but also because we mark its difference from ‘others’ – ‘Britishness’ is ‘not-French’, ‘not-American’” and so on. However, difference is not only essential – it also constitutes a danger of stereotyping ‘others’. The binary oppositions that structure our language could be “reductionist” as well as “over-simplified” (Hall 2013b: 225, 228). When this happens there is a production of stereotypes that reduces people “to a few essentials, fixed in Nature by a few simplified characteristics” (Hall 2013b: 327). Hall (2013b: 224-225) also states that there “is always a relation of power between the poles of binary opposition”. We will get back to representation and stereotype ‘others’ below in the sections on postcolonial and gender theory.

4.3 Framing and Discourse

I will build my narrative analysis of the migrant stories on discourse analysis (Winther & Phillips 2000), also drawing on ideas from critical discourse analysis (Fairclough 1992), as well as the idea about ‘framing’ (e.g. Entman 1993). Talking about representation, framing and discourse, presupposes a social constructionist approach that relies on one or more of these key assumptions: it takes a critical stance toward taken-for-granted knowledge, there is historical and cultural specificity, knowledge is sustained by social process, and knowledge and social action go together (Burr 2003: 2-5).

The concepts of framing and discourse are interrelated and it is useful to bring them both into this analysis in order to capture both the meaning and discourses that are produced by the interviewees, and the frames that their understandings and representations are guided by. Framing is a process where certain information is highlighted and emphasised, while other aspects of an issue is omitted or downplayed (Entman 1993: 53). A frame can be compared to a “cognitive window” (Pan & Kosicki 1993: 59) that restrict our perspective of the world and the production of meaning. Framing has often been used to describe political discourse but the concept is useful also in this context since we all “actively classify, organize and interpret our experiences to make sense of them” (Pan & Kosicki 1993: 56). That is, frames guide receivers of information as well as communicators; the framing intention and the framed interpretation may or may not correspond to each other (Entman 1993: 52-53). Thus, frames function both as “devices embedded in political discourse”, and as an “internal structure of the mind” (Kinder & Sanders, 1990: 74).

Whereas a frame can be described as a “device” a discourse refers to “a certain way to describe and understand the world” (Winther & Phillips 2000: 7, my translation). A discourse could be “a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements and so on” (Burr 2003: 64) that in some way produces a particular understanding of the world or a phenomenon. From a Foucauldian perspective things that people say or write are representational “manifestations of discourses” (Burr 2003: 66). Thus, a discourse manifests itself in texts. ‘Text’ is used in a broad sense, and could be
speech, like a conversation or an interview as well as written materials such as newspaper articles, letters or interview transcripts, it could also be something visual like an image or a film. This means that a discourse could be manifested through anything that can be ‘read’ (Burr 2003: 66, Fairclough 1992: 71).

Important is that “discourse is seen as social practice, it creates and reproduces knowledge, identities and social relations” (Winther & Phillips 2000: 71, my translation). At the same time discourses are created and produced by other social practices and structures (Winther & Phillips 2000: 71). This process of production and reproduction could be described with the concept of ‘intertextuality’, which describes how different texts communicate with one another. A text can never be a completely independent creation but is always a reproduction of earlier texts. Intertextuality was first introduced by Kristeva (1986). She writes that “any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another” (Kristeva 1986: 37). This means that all texts build on earlier texts, and that this particular text will be visible in future texts. From this point of view no text can stand alone; texts are woven together while they are produced and reproduced.

I will come back to critical discourse analysis when describing the method. However, in critical discourse analysis method and theory is closely interlinked and I would like to highlight here that from this theoretical perspective we need to draw on social theory in order to properly analyse a text (Winther & Phillips 2000: 72). In this case I have choose to work with postcolonial theory, gender theory and theory on social networks to identify how the narratives is linked to discursive practice and a broader social context.

4.4 Colonialism and Post Colonialism

Migration is not a new phenomenon, but the direction of “dominant migration flows” (Castles et al. 2014: 16) has changed over time. During the time of colonization many Europeans migrated to other parts of the world. Today, with increased globalization, the situation is reversed with increased migration from Sub-Saharan Africa with Europe as an important migration destination (Castles et al. 2014: 16, 187). From a postcolonial perspective these patterns could be understood in terms of global power structures that were established during colonialism, and still colour the world to a great extent (e.g. Castles et al. 2014: 32).

In order to understand the postcolonial we need to start by defining the colonial. Loomba (2005: 8) defines colonialism “as the conquest and control of other people’s land and goods”. Colonialism has been a widespread feature of human history and is not limited to the European colonization in the sixteenth century and onwards, but the European colonial practice altered the world in a way that earlier colonialisms did not (Loomba 2005: 8-9).

Thörn et al. have outlined the postcolonial theory in connection to globalization and a multicultural society (1999). According to them a postcolonial perspective relies on the presumption that colonial power structures in a significant way affect the world of today, both economically and culturally. Our time is different from the colonial period in many ways, but it is shaped by the colonial, and thus impossible to separate from it. This applies to the whole world, and not only to countries that were actively involved in colonialism. In a global world all societies are affected by these power structures. This means that post colonialism could be seen as a critique of the approaches that analyse contemporary cultural processes as phenomenon’s that are beyond colonialism (Thörn et al. 1999: 14, 16-17).
Further, Hall (1999) describes the postcolonial as a concept that includes the whole process of “expansion, exploration, conquest, colonization and colonial hegemony” (Hall 1999: 89, my translation) that has been characterizing the European, and later the West, capitalist modernity since 1492 when Columbus reached America (Hall 1999: 89). The new boundaries, maps and national census that were created in the colonial area, were the result of a European need to classify people and territories that they wanted to “develop” (Jonsson 2005: 51). On the same note Mudimbe (1999) writes about the colonial structures, and argues that they were giving rise to marginalised societies, cultures and peoples in Africa. Even though colonialism is only a short moment of time in African history, it was an important moment that opened up for “radically new discourses about African traditions and cultures” (Mudimbe 1999: 129, 131).

4.4.1 Colonial Stereotypes and the Idea of ‘Africa’

Coming back to representation and stereotypes that were discussed above, a central concept in postcolonial theory is “the other” introduced by Said (1967) and Fanon (1978). In their work they have discussed in what way a western 'white' eye looks upon the 'blacks' or 'the orient' as 'the other', i.e. a stereotype different. Said argued that the European identity has been created in contrast to ‘the orient’. Compared to the image of the exotic Orient, Europe was described as a superior civilization (Thörn et al. 1999: 20).

From this perspective, identity is understood as relational and as a result of ‘representation’. Identity is constantly created in interaction with others and by noting the difference to others. In this way the colonized and the colonizer’s identities are defined, reproduced and modified by one another, in an asymmetric relation, where the colonized will understand herself as ‘the other’, seen through the gaze of the colonizer (Thörn et al. 1999: 34-35, Hall 1999: 232). Thus, from this perspective the identities of the colonialists and the colonized were constructed, and defined by each other, “reproduced, modified and changed” in relation to one another (Thörn et al. 1999: 34). The asymmetric relation to the colonialist decides the colonized possibility of identification, and her identity is constituted through identification with the colonial stereotype (Thörn et al. 1999: 35). The identity of the “modern western project” (Thörn et al. 1999: 29) was constituted by a basic distinction between Europeans and the others. In this story there was a stereotype classification of people, where ‘the other’ was defined by “barbarism” and a close relation to “nature”, this in contrast to ‘the European’ that was defined in terms of “culture” and “civilisation”. In this story the Europeans were carrying the weight of a universal development process on their shoulders, while the others were seen as “happy natives” (Hall 2013b: 234) and left outside this process (Thörn et al. 1999: 29).

These dichotomies are not limited to stereotyping human beings but are also creating stereotype difference between places. The concept of ‘Africa’ and the geopolitical reality it represents is a colonial construction that was forced upon the people already living there. They were forced to accept this story with all its contradictions and its impossible national borders. Mudimbe has shown how ‘the idea of Africa’ as primitive is a social construction created during the colonial era in order to justify economic and territorial colonialism. A binary way of thinking resulted in a sharp division between Africa and Europe, and in art and anthropology, Africa was defined in opposition to Europe (1994, referred to in Thörn et al. 1999: 20).

Jonsson (2005) has described this process as a kind of ‘storytelling’. He points to the function of stories as a way for people to find their place, and to create boundaries between what we call ‘home’ and other places (Jonsson 2005: 50). The boundaries between African countries were drawn with a ruler at a desk. Thus, they were not describing some absolute reality, but instead telling a story about the world that the
Europeans wanted to create. Jonsson (2005: 49) writes that this was something new:

No other people had before seen themselves as the obvious subjects of world history. Never before had a people constructed their stories claiming universal truth. Outside Europe there were no other people with the wish or the resources to describe and represent themselves with the same precision as the Europeans were using to represent them. Thus, all other peoples were given subordinate parts in the universal history whose heroine was called Europe (Jonsson 2005: 49, my translation).

From a postcolonial perspective this colonial story still affects the world we live in, and in the Gambian context it will throw light on how places are constructed as binary oppositions. It will help us understand the ideas about Europe, and the discourse in which these ideas are produced. In the next section I will outline the gender perspective taken in this thesis.

4.5 A Gender Perspective

Gender is one of the oldest, if not the oldest, forces shaping human life and, accordingly, it influences migration and migrants' lives (Pessar & Mahler 2003: 812).

In this thesis ‘gender’ refers to how masculinity and femininity is socially constructed within a heteronormative society (e.g. Ambjörnsson 2006). In migration studies ‘gender’ has often been used as synonym with ‘sex’, but gender is much more “complex and involves the ways in which cultures imbue this biological difference with meaning such as demarcating between male and female domains in activities, tasks, spaces, time, dress and so on” (Pessar & Mahler 2003: 813). Heteronormativity refers to the institutions, structures and actions that maintain heterosexuality as something natural that includes everyone. It is not individual sexual preferences that are of interest here, but rather the system that reward one certain way to organize and live one’s life (Ambjörnsson 2006: 52). Within this heteronormative system difference between people becomes important, and the concept of gender helps us discover these structures when it highlights how human beings are ‘represented’ as ‘Man’ and ‘Woman’ (e.g. Hirdman 2003: 11).

Martin (2004) argues that there is reason to view gender as ‘a social institution’. Building on Giddens structuration approach (1984, referred to above) she argues that in order to address the origins and continuity of gender it is necessary to conceptualize gender as a social institution. This will increase awareness of “gender’s sociality and susceptibility to human agency” and it will also undermine popular presumptions about gender as something “natural”, biological and essential” (Martin 2004: 1261). Further, viewing gender as a social institution will facilitate in linking it to other institutions such as race/ethnicity and social class (Martin 2004: 1266).

In order to describe how the gender system works, Hirdman (2003) introduced the idea about a stereotype ‘gender contract’, as a culturally inherited and controlled agreement about men’s and women’s duties, obligations, and rights (Hirdman 2003: 84). This contract has been described as:
the unspoken rules, mutual obligations, and rights which define the relations between women and men, between genders and generations, and finally between the areas of production and reproduction (Rantalaiho & Heiskanen 1997: 25).

This contract builds in an intertextual way on primeval texts. In the context of ‘gender contract’ religious texts such as the Bible and the Koran are important. In The Gambian society where the majority of the population are Muslim we can assume that the Koran is most important. This text from the Koran is quoted in Hirdman:

Men should take responsibility for, and care for women (with the strength and) other advantages that God has given them, and in capacity of breadwinner (for the women) (Hirdman 2003: 78, my translation).

The concept of ‘gender contract’ has been used to analyse the structuration of social institution and cultural practices (Rantalaiho & Heiskanen 1997: 25). While it is important to see gender as a social institution in order to address its origin and continuity (Martin 2004), there is reason to be careful about applying a Western gender perspective in other contexts, such as in this case ‘The Gambia’ (e.g. Mohanty 2003). Thus, focusing on the culturally inherited and controlled agreement about men’s and women’s duties, obligations, and rights, where there is a basic understanding of a man’s duty to take care of, to protect, and to provide for women (Hirdman 2003: 85, 93), I would like to introduce the idea about a “local gender contract” (Caretta & Börjeson 2015: 646).

The idea of a ‘local gender contract’ refers to the geographical use of the ‘gender contract’ in different contexts where there are specific material and spatial conditions and therefore also ‘local gender contracts’. Applying this local perspective on Hirdman’s ‘gender contract’, we can avoid “simplifying, encompassing, and generalizing” the situation for women or men in different contexts (Caretta & Börjeson 2015: 646). We can also avoid taking a Western perspective on these issues (e.g. Mohanty 2003). The power structures of the ‘gender contract’ are most often unequal but not static, this in contrast to “other gender-related concepts, such as ‘gender regime,’ ‘gender structure,’ and ‘doing gender,’ [that] have been criticized for providing a static portrayal of gender structures” (Caretta & Börjeson 2015: 646). Thus, a gender contract analysis will illustrate the local dichotomies between men and women that shape and control gender structures (Caretta & Börjeson 2015: 645). In the Gambian context a gender perspective will throw light on ideas about family and responsibility, and the concept of ‘gender contract’ will help us answer the research question about why it is primarily men who become clandestine migrants.
5. Method

5.1 Narrative Method and Topical Life Document
Drawing on narrative theory I decided to work with semi-structured interviews, because it gives the opportunity to let the interviewees show what themes and issues that are important to them (Winther & Phillips 2000: 118). I was inspired by the life story interview, which could be described as a structured conversation with the purpose to obtain descriptions of the interviewee’s life and views on certain issues with the intention to analyse and describe its meaning (Kvale 1997: 13).

As the narrative is shaped in the interview situation it is flexible and variable. Thus, there is a paradox in the fact that the researcher should be well prepared to ask good questions that will give a certain story focusing on certain themes, but at the same time the very idea of a certain story is that it cannot be known beforehand. The interviewer cannot prepare or predict what story will be told because the story is created in the interview situation as a conversation between the interviewee and the interviewer (Chase 2005: 657, 662). I had planned for shorter life story interviews, that is in-depth interviews with open questions that are more focused than the longer life story (Plummer 2001: 24, see Appendix 1 for interview guide) but in reality it turned out differently because the interviewees focused a lot more on the actual migration event rather than on telling a coherent life story.

The form of the interview that were carried out could best be described as “topical life documents” (Plummer 2001: 26), a method that builds on the idea of life story interview, but where the aim is not to get a complete life story, but rather to focus on a particular issue and throw light on an important and highly focused area of life, such as in this case the story about clandestine migration to Europe (Plummer 2001: 26-27). However, the interviews also cover other parts of life in order to give context and a broader understanding of clandestine migration. On this note the fact that my ideas about narratives and research is to a great extent imbued with western assumptions about self and identity constitutes a problem (Chase 2005: 670). In the interview situation I realized that my western idea about identity and a life story was different from the interviewees who grew up in the cultural context of The Gambia. Since the focus was their stories, their perceptions and understandings were guiding the interview. This resulted in a focus on the actual migration process, the route, and local family structures.

5.2 Fieldwork and Interviews
Fieldwork was carried out in Kotu, an area in The Gambia’s biggest city called Serrekunda, that has about 360 000 residents (Economic Intelligence Unit 2013: 2). Kotu is an urban area where people live, work and go to school, but also a tourist area. This makes Kotu an interesting place in the context of migration. Tourism is an important source of income and many young people are working or hanging out in the tourist areas. As stated above, this means that the idea of Europe and the dreams about a successful life somewhere else is constantly present, and colouring daily life to a great extent (Nyanzi et al. 2005, Uggla 2011).

I was invited to The Gambia as a guest researcher by the Swedish NGO Gambiagrupperna (Gambia Groups) and its local partner organization Future In Our Hands The Gambia (FIOHTG). I was accommodated in their compound, and given a work place in their office during the time spent in the field. FIOHTG work with community based development programs, and among other social issues they do
advocacy work trying to prevent young people in the rural areas to migrate through the back way. The employees of FIOHTG gave me important background information, as well as helped me find interviewees through their own personal networks. However, they were not involved in the research design.

I spent five weeks in field; this is a limited period of time and the fact that I have been living in The Gambia for several months before, in 2011 and 2012, provided a necessary basis of knowledge about the Gambian society for this study. I was interested in the ‘back way’ phenomenon, and had planned to interview return migrants about their migration experiences. But after a short period of time in the field I realized that there is a large group of young men going back and forth to Libya trying to get further but who for some reason have to give up their journey, or are deported and sent back. Often they try to go again and again. This was described as a huge societal problem, and almost everyone I spoke to turned out to know at least one person who had tried, if not a close family member then a relative, a friend or a neighbour. I got interested in this particular group and what drives them. This group is interesting since they are clearly prepared to risk their lives in order to get to Europe, and also because they have not been successful in their attempts. Thus, they still have only ideas, and not first hand knowledge, about Europe. In The Gambia clandestine migration is such a huge issue, and the dream about Europe so widespread that almost every young man could be a “prospective migrant” (e.g. Van Niuwenhuyze 2009, Nyanzi & Bah 2010). However, that does not mean that all of the young men saying they are prepared to risk their lives going the back way (e.g. Mbaye 2014) would actually do so. Thus, this group who are really determined and could not be dismissed as daydreamers.

Since back way migration is clandestine it is not possible to just ask any person in the street about it, it is necessary to go through a personal network and use ‘gatekeepers’ that can help establish contact. I found my interviewees through ‘snowballing’, either through people working at FIOHTG, or through another interviewee. Eight interviews were carried out; seven of the interviewees went through the back way but were not able to make it all the way, and returned again. One of them had not yet travelled but was preparing to go at the time of the interview. All interviews were carried out in February 2015, and the duration of the interviews was between 30 min and 2 hours.

To get a better understanding of back way migration also from a broader perspective, four interviews with stakeholders were carried out. Two were employees at FIOHTG and worked with advocacy trying to prevent young people from going, one was about to start working with advocacy through a network of young people, and the fourth stakeholder, who is a development worker, has been affected by family members who migrated illegally. In addition I had many informal conversations with employees at FIOHTG, friends and acquaintances about the back way. The interviews with stakeholders and informal conversation helped me get a broader understanding of clandestine migration as a problem for families, villages and the Gambian society as a whole. They could also confirm that in The Gambia it is mainly young men who try to migrate through the back way.

My only criteria when asking people to help me find interviewees was that it should be a person who tried to go the back way to Europe but who did not succeed, and were back in The Gambia again. All of the interviewees were men in their twenties, and most of them were relatively well educated, even though one of them did not go to school at all and could not speak English. Since it is a qualitative study with relatively few interviews this group is not likely to be representative in all aspects, but the fact that they are all

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3 Here The Gambia seem to differ from other countries in the region (e.g. Doctors Without Borders 2010)
young men is representative (Interviews with stakeholders). When it comes to education and economic status the people I have in my network and their social and economic status have likely influenced the composition of this group. However, the widely spread images of clandestine migrants from Africa to Europe as “a massive exodus of desperate people fleeing poverty and warfare” (Castles et al. 2014: 188), should be questioned. Since migration requires economic resources most migrants are not among the poorest (Castles et al. 2014: 194). Thus it is not surprising that most of my interviewees are educated and come from families with at least some economic resources (Interviews with stakeholders). A short presentation of the interviewees follows in the next section. In order to conceal their identities I will not reveal any detailed information about them.

5.3 About the Interviewees

**Buba** is in his early twenties, grew up in a town in “the provinces” where his parents are farmers. He went to school for twelve years and he is now working as a craftsman. He travelled to Libya once and made it to the shore but he was not able to raise money to pay for the boat and decided to come back to The Gambia. His mother was aware of him going and also helped him with money. At the time of the interview he is working and trying to save money so that he can go to Libya again.

**Ousman** is about thirty years old and grew up in “the provinces”. He went to school up to high school and is currently working as a craftsman. He tried to migrate three times, once in a small boat via Morocco and twice via Libya, he has not been successful yet but instead ended up in Libyan prison and was deported back to The Gambia, however he is determined to try again. “Buba”, who introduced me to “Ousman”, was also present during this interview.

**Bubacarr** is in his early twenties grew up in the urban areas together with his mother who works to support Bubucarr and his younger brothers. He went to school and was at the time of the interview in higher education. He used to advice people not to migrate illegally, but was then convinced to do it himself. When he entered the boat in Libya they were detected by Libyan rebels or police (he is not sure which), he managed to escape and returned to The Gambia. His mother did not know that he was travelling and she was not supporting his decision when she found out. He will not try to migrate illegally again even though he would still like to go to Europe if there was a safe and legal way.

**Alhaji** is in his early twenties and is a construction worker, he went to school up to grade ten but had to drop out “because of poverty”. At the time of the interview he is preparing to go to Libya together with “Buba”. He lives together with his mother and is supported by a family friend, who also promised to help him with money for the journey.

**Modou** is about twenty-five years old, grew up in a village in the urban areas where his parents are farmers. They could not afford to let him go to school, but he had a European sponsor who paid for his school and later for higher education. He travelled to Libya once and continued in a small boat that was supposed to take him to Italy, however the captain made a mistake and they ended up in Malta from where he was deported immediately to Senegal. He would still like to go to Europe but says that he does not want to go through Libya again.
**Musa** is about twenty-five years old. He grew up and lives in the urban areas together with his mother and his wife, when he has the opportunity he is working as a craftsman. He travelled to Libya once together with his uncle. It was his mother who initiated and financed the journey. He left his uncle somewhere around the Libyan border, went to Sabha and worked there but was then arrested and imprisoned there. He managed to escape and then decided to go back to The Gambia. He does not want to go to Libya again, but if it were possible to go to Europe in a legal way he would do so.

**Amadou** is in his early twenties. He grew up in a village up country, his parents are farmers and he is the only son who is still alive. He was working in the market and then heard his colleagues talking about “the back way to Europe” and they inspired him to go even though he didn’t have enough money. He travelled to Tripoli, worked there for a while and was then caught by rebels, when he was not able to bribe the rebels they sent him back to Agadez in Niger and from there he managed to get back to The Gambia. He has been home for a year and is back in the market, sleeping in a friends compound and has not yet been able to go visit his parents in the village. He is determined to go the back way again if he can save enough money.

“*Amadou*” do not speak English and his answers were translated from the local language Mandingo by a translator who was present during the interview.

**Omar** is in his late twenties. He went to school up to grade twelve and was then doing some kind of reseller business. He went to Libya and entered a boat, however there was some kind of problem with the boat and they drifted for two days before the Libyan navy rescued them. He was imprisoned and then deported to The Gambia. He would still like to go to Europe but not through the back way.

5.4 Transcription, Coding and Analysis

From a narrative perspective also researchers construct stories from their data (Riessman 2008: 3). Consequently, an analysis of an interview could be understood as a narrative that continues the narrative told by the interviewees. This analytical narrative aims to explore the themes brought up in the interviews but also to create a richer and more coherent story (Kvale 1997: 181-182).

The interviews were all recorded and transcribed, then they were coded by identifying common themes and concepts. When transcribing I wanted to stay as close to the spoken language as possible, therefore I used no commas or full stops, but just the words that were said. However, for readability I added full stops and commas to the quotes that are included in the thesis. When something was unclear in the recording I have marked that in the transcript. In my analysis I have used the transcripts in order to remember what was said during the interviews, but the actual experience from my meeting with the interviewees and my field notes are just as important.

The coding started already in the interview situation and transcription process, and continued in close readings of the transcribed material. The interviewees narratives where then compared and contrasted in what is called a cross-sectional analysis, where I tried to find similarities and patterns in order to construct a common narrative (explained further below). But then I also draw on a non-cross-sectional analysis when highlighting things that are specific for some of the interviews, but still important for the broader picture of clandestine migration (Spencer et al. 2014: 272-273).
In the analysis of the narratives I draw on discourse analysis (Winther & Phillips 2000) and Faircough’s (1992) model for critical discourse analysis. This model relies on the theoretical assumptions about discourse discussed in the theoretical section. The model is the result of an attempt to tie close textual and linguistic analysis to the macro sociological tradition of analysing social practice in relation to social structures, and to the micro sociological tradition where social practice is seen as something people actively produce and make sense of based on shared common-sense procedures (Fairclough 1992: 72). Discourse is seen as three-dimensional, thus critical discourse analysis is also an attempt to do three analyses in one; text analysis, analysis of discursive practice and analysis of social practice (Fairclough 1992: 73). I will not use Fairclough’s model for analysis in detail here (e.g. Winther & Phillips 2000), but I share his view on discourse as three-dimensional, i.e. that the analysis should explore the characteristics of the text, the production of discourse, and how it links to a broader social practice. Thus drawing on this model facilitates in seeing the narratives as texts produced by agents, but at the same time as part of a discursive practice that is decided by broader social structures.

5.5 Limitations and Ethical Considerations

Migration is a “bewildering set of processes” to understand (Samers 2010: 52). The focus in this thesis is the representations that are produced and reproduced in the stories about clandestine migration from The Gambia to Europe. This is a limited scope within a broad field of research and since it is a qualitative interview study with a limited number of interviewees the results cannot be generalized to a broader population (Kvale 1997: 209-210). However, the individual stories could give us something else than generalized knowledge; it could give us insight into the personal experiences, dreams and narratives. It could also help us identify important discourses and power structures.

The limitations of this study are also linked to ethical issues. In any kind of research there are ethical considerations and issues, this is of course especially important when human beings are involved as interviewees. Kvale (1997) have discussed informed consent, confidentiality and possible consequences for the interviewees as important issues that need to be considered (Kvale 1997: 107-110). In reality the question of informed consent is difficult. In the case of this study, I located the interviewees through “gatekeepers” in my own personal network. The gatekeepers asked people in their network, and this means that I did not have control over the question asked to possible interviewees, however the fact that many of those who were asked said no and refused to be interviewed gives me reason to believe that those who agreed did so with their full consent. Before the interview I explained who I am, where I come from as well as my intentions with the interview, and oral consent was given. I will come back to the question about anonymity in the end of this section, and now turn to the possible consequences of an interview for the interviewee.

When asking people to tell their stories of a journey that could be assumed to be a traumatic experience it is essential to be careful and responsive in the interview situation, not to push for more information than the interviewee is willing to give. It is impossible to say beforehand what the consequences of the interview will be for the interviewees. However, it is possible to be careful and bare possible consequences in mind during the interview, and that is what I have tried to do. Using semi-structured interviews that could be described as a structured conversation I have tried to be sensitive to the interviewees and their agenda. Actually, when research is conducted as a conversation rather than a questioning, the research process could contribute to raising the interviewees’ awareness about their own personal experiences, and they could even become empowered (Mendoza
and Moren-Alegret 2012: 766). It is not possible for me to say whether this was the case in these interview situations, but the general feeling was that the interviewees wanted to talk about their experiences, and therefore I hope that the conversation we had served a purpose also for them.

Another ethical issue that is difficult to get around is what I represent in the meeting with the interviewees. The fact that I am a European woman interested in their ideas about Europe and migration is not unproblematic (e.g. Mohanty 2003). I represent ‘the West’ and for some I might be seen as a possible way to Europe. This was also evident in some of the interviews where the interviewees asked me about advice on how to get to Europe in a legal way or trying to ask me out for a date. Another side of this showed itself when one of the interviewees said that he was happy to tell me some of his experience, however he could not reveal all facts about the route to Europe to a European because then it would be easier for “the Europeans” to stop back way migration (Ousman). It is likely that the narrative stories I got from the interviewees were influenced by who I am and what I represent to them. In this way we are all part of the discourses we study and may as well contribute to reproducing stereotypes while trying to break with and think beyond them (Winther & Phillips 2000: 28).

The transcription of interviews is also of ethical concern. As mentioned above, in narrative analysis the researcher is also seen as a narrator (Chase 2005: 657). Thus, “[t]ranscriptions are by definition incomplete, partial and selective – constructed by an investigator” (Riessman 2008: 50). The transcript is just a tool to remember what was said in the interview (Kvale 1997: 166), but it will still be interpreted as a new text, by me as well as by others. However close we stay to what is said in the recording, a transcription is always a matter of interpretation and choices (Winther & Phillips 2000: 84, Fairclough 1992: 229). On this note I will get back to the issue of confidentiality before presenting the results.

Since I have relatively few interviewees and because they were introduced to my by gatekeepers in my network it is very important to be careful with personal information. From a narrative approach it would be preferred to present the material as individual narrative stories, but in order to keep the anonymity of the interviewees I will instead present a ‘common narrative’ of “the clandestine”. This common narrative is a construction by me where I the intention is to stay as close to the interviews as possible, highlighting both things that the interviewees has in common and things that are specific for one or two of them. When referring to the interviewees in the text I do so with pseudonyms. I also avoid mentioning names of places that are not relevant to the research topic and that could reveal the identity of the interviewees. For the same reason I give no exact date in the references to the interviews. This way of presenting the material as a ‘common narrative’ might not be ideal from a narrative point of view, but what is most important is to assure the confidentiality of the interviewees (Smythe & Murray 2000: 320).
6. Results

The research questions in this paper concern how the narratives about clandestine migration are constructed, what ideas about Europe they produce and reproduce, and why it is mainly young men who become clandestine migrants in the Gambian context. In the results section I will first present the material collected through the interviews described above. I will present it as an independent narrative without any analysis in an attempt to let the interviewees speak for themselves as much as possible (e.g. Johansson 2014: 22).

As explained above in the section on limitations and ethical considerations, due to confidentiality, I will present the material as one ‘common narrative’ (Smythe & Murray 2000: 320). Since the focus in the analysis is how stories are produced as part of a discursive practice and broader social structures this story will focus on the common experience of the clandestine migrants from The Gambia. However, there is also agency in storytelling and migration and some personal differences will also be highlighted in a way that they do not reveal the interviewees identity.

Using a narrative approach I want to let the interviewees speak for themselves as much as possible and therefore I use relatively many quotes in combination with descriptive text in the section where I present the material (Johansson 2014: 22). I will then move on to the analytical part of the thesis, and drawing on critical discourse analysis I will discuss the narratives from a postcolonial and gender perspective in order to answer the research questions. First, I will discuss how these narratives are constructed, second what ideas about Europe that are produced and reproduced in the narratives, and third, why it is primarily young men who become clandestine migrants.

6.1 The Narrative of the Clandestine

The clandestines are called Amadou, Buba, Ousman, Musa, Alhaji, Modou, Bubacarr or Omar (pseudonyms, see 5.3 for short description of the interviewees). In this story though, they will be reduced to “the clandestine” or “the young man”, for the reasons stated above, considering the anonymity of the interviewees this is the best way to present the material. It should be kept in mind while reading that this is my construction of a ‘common narrative’, building on the interviewee’s stories. I have tried to stay as close to their stories as possible and also to highlight how their stories differ from each other’s, but this text is still a result of my interpretations and choices.

“The clandestine” is a man between 20 and 30 years old. He grew up in the provinces, or maybe in the urban areas. He is describing himself and his family as “poor”, and most likely his parents are family farmers growing groundnuts and sorghum, maybe also some vegetables to sell on the local market.

I am from a very poor family, and my father is very poor. I had two brothers but they both died within two weeks time, so I am the only son. My father is very old and mother, they are both there but they are very old. They cannot do anything for me now, they cannot give me any support, so I am the only one who has to support them (Amadou, translated from Mandingo).

Only farming. Sometimes [my parents] normally use to business business. Like, you know, garden yeah, when they grow their crops and the vegetable, after they go and sell it. Yeah, if they sell it they have money from it (Buba).
In some cases his parents could afford sending him to school, in some cases they could not. In all cases he finds it very difficult to find a job in The Gambia to support himself. In Modou’s case, he got a Swedish sponsor who paid for his further education, but even with further education he has not been successful in finding a job.

In the college here yeah I did [discipline taken out to ensure anonymity] [unclear] diploma. So after that you know I’ve been searching job up and down going up and down searching for job. I could not get no job, I have stayed for one year looking for job I could not get no job from anywhere, and I decided to [unclear] and go. Cause I’m from a very poor family and my parents are too old so I wanted to do something to help them, so I decided to go on back way to go, but things [unclear] yeah then I’m back here [in] Gambia (Modou).

No no no otherwise I would not have get that education. Because after my grade twelve I come out with a very good grade, but I’ve been, I have stayed for years, I just met one old woman from [Europe] going at Senegambia beach. Then I’m working [in Senegambia], then I met this old woman and then we become to make friendship, and she asks me what about I need in future. I told her that ehm, this I may like to get first of all I want to go to school, because I have not yet gained no certificate, I’m only with secondary certificate, so I want to go to school, to learn more to earn more certificate. Then she say ok, and then from there she takes my contacts my telephone and my e-mail, then she go with it. Then she, in one month time, she e-mail me that she get a sponsor for me that man called [name of sponsor] so he became my sponsor (Modou).

Also in the cases where the young man is some sort of craftsman he finds it difficult to earn enough money to support himself, and his family.

No there is not enough job you know, because sometimes to get job here is very hard. This is the problem of Gambia you know, to get job. No, it’s not easy you know (Buba).

An important part of the young man’s story is family. He states clearly that he wants to take responsibility also for his parents, siblings and extended family.

I have a hope when I go [to Europe] maybe when I have a little work there so that I can benefit myself. I can help my parents for the better future, that’s my intention [to] help my parents (Omar).

Omar is the eldest son and he feels responsible for his parents, and also for his younger brothers. He says that he needs to be a role model for his brothers to show them on the right way.

As mentioned above, the parents of the young man are likely to work hard in a family farm or in one case a single mother works with laundry for other families. In all cases the young man wants to ease the economic burden of his parents. When I asked Modou why he thought it was a good idea to migrate, even though he knew his parents would have stopped him if they knew about it, he answered that:

M: Because I’m the one who decided, so I said it’s a good idea [to go the back way], because I’m the one going. When I cross in peace and I’m in Europe, Italy
in peace, when I start work they will be happy, I will be happy and they will be happy and then I will stop them from going to the farm yeah.

F: Ok.

M: They are going to the farm because they don’t have nothing yeah.

F: So you feel like responsibility for your parents?

S: Yes I really want to take responsibility. I want to stop them, they are old. Basically, they are old that’s why I want to stop [them from] going to the farm, yeah I want them to relax they are really old.

F: And you feel it’s your responsibility as a son?

M: Yeah it’s my responsibility as a son because they have been taking care of me since I was a child and now I am grown up to be a man, so I have to take care of them. Yes, that’s why I decided, and then they have paid for my school secondary education till I graduate so it’s my duty now to take care of them too (Modou).

This quote from the interview with Modou illustrates how the young man wants to take responsibility, and provide for his parents so that they can retire. There is also a sense of responsibility to pay back what he got in terms of education, food and clothes while he was growing up.

The difficulty of finding a job and to provide for his family creates a feeling of hopelessness and resignation about the opportunities for those who stay back home.

You know we used to go through, you know, back way because of poverty. You know, it’s just because of poverty, to help our people. Because me, my mother have only me you know, and my father, you know, so and we are poor people (Alhaji).

In this hopelessness the young man hear stories, stories about “the back way to Europe” and about all the opportunities that waits after entering Italy. Some of the stories comes in the form of communication with others, some in form of economic remittances or tourist behaviour that illustrates how life in Europe will be “different” from life in The Gambia.

Yeah they are telling me Europe is fine you know. If you are here you can make your life easy you know, that’s what they told me. I told them anyway no problem I will try and come everyday when I talk with those guys that’s what they told me try and come. One of my friends which you know I normally used to work with him [name of friend] yeah now he is in Libya recently you know and even yesterday he called me, we were chatting about Libya you know (Buba).

Yeah, me why I want to go to Europe? Because I can say you know the money the power of the money they are different in Europe [than] in Gambia. Here if you work if all this [unclear] we are the ones who make the blocks [points to the blocks in the compound where we are doing the interview]. At that time I was
too young and sometimes I work from early in the morning eight o clock up to five o clock they pay me only 100 Dalasi. So, I think when in Europe I work from eight to five the money I’m going to get when I change it to Gambian dalasi it is going to be more than 100. So that’s why people here they use to go to Europe, to work there (Musa).

But why I wanna go to Europe? [It’s because] my friends living in Europe, when they come [back to The Gambia] they looks different [than] me. Can you tell me why? (Ousman).

In some cases the young man cannot concentrate on anything else except planning for his migration to Europe. This is illustrated in the following quote from the interview with Bubacarr where he tells me about when the back way “came into [his] mind”:

B: Friends left. I get information that yeah the way is there, but if you have the money you can go ahead, you can proceed. Many of them entered, others stopped on the way, others will tell you I’m in, but they are on the way. When my last friend called me and told me that he is on the way, but almost he will be crossing to Italy, then my mind come mixed up, I could not sit, I could not do anything. It was not my intention though, I even used to advice my friends not to.

F: Not to go?

B: Yeah … but unfortunately, when this thing came into my mind, I could not concentrate, I could not focus, I went to school, I come back, waiting. My mum used to ask me [unclear], I tell her ‘mum I also wanna go and find, look for a greener pasture some day’. It’s not easy, I only staying with my mum and two brothers and my mum is just a launderer [unclear]. So this is what my intention was all about. I decided the little money I was having during my teacher practice, I knew that that money would not make me reach Italy, but I said I will be going and people used to tell you if you reach at Libya you can work.

F: Work in Libya?

B: Yeah, have money and then go.

F: Ah ok.

B: So that was why I was so stubborn. One day I tell mum [unclear], I tell my mum nothing, I just left. I left her at home and start proceeding (Bubacarr).

Looking for “a greener pasture” and searching for new opportunities to change his life situation the young man decides to become a clandestine migrant. He crosses many borders, travel through the desert and has to bribe his way through (route described above). Sometimes he get money from his family in The Gambia, in two cases from his mother who wanted him to go, but most often he is keeping the migration project secret from his family. Sometimes he call his family from Agadez, asking them to send money, some families then feel like they are forced to send money even though they do not
support the migration project (confirmed by interview with stakeholders), others cannot afford it, which leave the clandestine to work his way up to Libya.

The clandestine witness about a difficult journey where he was packed together with other clandestine migrants in overloaded trucks and pickups. He says that they travelled for days with to little food, and always in the hands of the traffickers. Sometimes the journey stops somewhere after he crossed the Libyan border, sometimes because he was imprisoned by the authorities and deported, sometimes because rebels kidnapped him, beat and assaulted him and sent him back to Agadez. In this case, his friend and travel companion was beaten to death and thrown from the truck in the desert. Thus, the story of the clandestine is in many ways a tragedy.

Sometimes, though the clandestine managed to go all the way to the Libyan shore. In one case the boat was surrounded by the navy (or rebels, he was not sure which) only 100 metres from the shore, he managed to jump into the water and swim to land, then he decided to return to The Gambia. In another case the boat left Libya for Lampedusa, but the captain lost track and they reached Malta instead of Italy, the Maltese navy rescued the migrants and the clandestine was directly deported to The Gambia.

Coming back without achieving his goal is not easy for the clandestine, in some cases it feels like a failure, and in all cases the dream is still to go to Europe. In one case the clandestine has tried to go the back way three times and is determined to try again. In some cases he tried once and will try again. But, there are also cases where the clandestine went once and came to the conclusion that it is such a dangerous route that it is not worth to try again. However, also in those cases the dream is still Europe. If he could get a visa to travel in a safe way, Europe would be the goal.

6.2 The Construction of Narratives

As we have seen above individuals as well as groups form identities through narratives. Individuals use them to “remember, argue, justify, persuade, engage, entertain and even mislead an audience” (Riessman 2008: 8). Groups use narratives to mobilize others and to foster a sense of belonging (Riessman 2008: 8). In the case of clandestine migration from The Gambia, young men who have not, yet, managed to reach Europe as clandestine migrants tell stories about Europe. These stories are part of a broader discourse, producing and reproducing other stories in an intertextual process. In the narratives collected for this story it is possible to trace some of the ways in which these stories are constructed.

First, there are verbal stories that are transferred by return-migrants, non-migrants visiting migrants in receiving countries, or through communication with migrants, in this case mainly on Facebook and Viber (Suksomboon 2008: 474). As stated in the theory section these stories could be referred to as ‘social remittances’ that describe “the flow of information in form of “ideas, behaviours, identities and social capital” (Suksomboon 2008: 474) through networks, from destination countries to countries of origin. Social remittances have been shown to ”clearly influence shifts in attitude and cultural practices regarding international migration in the original community” (Suksomboon 2008: 474). As the following quote from Buba shows there is frequent contact between those who already migrated and those who are left behind:

Yeah you know most of my friends are in Europe, you know, right now. Yeah they normally used to call me on Viber or Facebook. We normally use to chat and so (Buba).
All of the interviewees had communicated with friends or families already abroad and built their narratives on the stories they have been told.

Yeah [unclear] I was in Gambia here I’m seeing many boys many countries. They are telling me, boy just try by the all means when you have a little money you just take [unclear]. When the money is finished you work on the way. You go to Europe because Gambia here, if you are here not working not strong after all you cannot help your father you cannot help your parents until you dead (Omar).

However, as shown before (e.g. Mbaye 2014, Van Nieuwenhuyze 2009) many migrants are not telling the truth, in order to ‘save face’ they prefer to give the impression of a successful life in Europe rather than telling about a hard life or a failure (Suksomboon 2008: 475). When Bubacarr reached Agadez he realized that his friends had lied to him:

B: They used to tell me we are in Italy and only one of them was in Italy the rest were all in … Tripoli.

F: Aha, they lied?

B: Yeah they lied to me. When I reach in Agadez, that was where I get the information that they are in Tripoli. Yeah only one entered and even one of my friend up today, the one I used to move with close, that one he told me he was in Italy, even up today he is in Tripoli (Bubacarr).

In contrast to this some clandestine migrants in Europe wants to tell the truth, and it is interesting that many of the stories about Europe includes the difficulties of the road and of life in Europe. Some of the clandestine migrants in the interviewees’ social network who made it to Europe describe the harsh climate, long working hours and difficulties to find jobs. The interviewees reproduce these stories in their narratives, however they don’t seem to take it in (see also Van Nieuwenhuyze 2009: 77). The interviewees are restricted to certain frames that they use to organize and interpret the stories they hear (Pan & Kosicki 1993: 56). Within these frames there is no room for failure, instead they are restricted to all the opportunities they think Europe will offer. Thus, the framing intention of the one who is describing the difficulties of Europe does not correspond to the framed interpretation (Entman 1993: 52-53).

Another aspect of social remittances is how the fact that so many friends seems to have made it to Europe in success, results in a feeling of being left behind in The Gambia. In my interview with Modou he told me that he has “no friend [in The Gambia] I’m alone, all my friends have travelled”. As Suksomboon (2008) points out, the stories that are told about migration as success could be described as a challenge to the life of those who are “left behind” (Suksomboon 2008: 474).

Second, there are economic remittances that represent success and are reproduced in the narratives as an image of a prosperous life in Europe (Castles et al. 2014: 44). This is illustrated by the following quote from the interview with Amadou.

What inspired me was that my colleagues were able to go the back way, even though it was hard they were able to reach European shore. Now they are supporting their families out of poverty (Amadou, translated from Mandingo).
When I asked the interviewees why they wanted to go to Europe the first and most frequent answer was the exchange rate between Gambian Dalasi and Euro, and they explained to me how their friends or acquaintances that had been living in Europe were earning a lot more than they were able to do themselves. Alhaji, who at the time of the interview was preparing to go the back way for the first time, told me about his friend who has been able to “do things” that Alhaji was not able to do himself:

So I decide to go you know, back way. It’s more better than, you know, to be staying here, because I have seen my friends who, you know, that, you know, we are in the same job, you know, but after, you know, he leave me here go to Europe, and now he is in Germany, but now what he is doing and me. I’m here for more than five years you know he is there for five years, but in that five years, what he is capable of doing here is, I’m not capable of doing that you know (Alhaji).

Thus, remittances, both in terms of money and stories, are used by the clandestine migrants in the construction of their narratives.

Third, as mentioned above, tourism is important in The Gambia and many young people are working, trying to find work, or ‘bumstering’ in the tourist areas.

Eh you know why I told you this cause the Europeans used to come here from Europe come here spend millions, you know, in Gambian into Gambian [unclear] millions of money. You know, and, you know, that maybe, you know, that is the first time he meet with you or she meet with you, you know, the first time to meet with you and [she] start, you know, spending on you, you know. So, I see this, you know, that mentality that, you know, that is in Europe, you know, and it’s only in Europe you know white woman will see you and help you out, you know, with your problems you know give you money take care of your family yeah (Alhaji).

In the narratives it is clear that the presence of tourists and what their appearance and actions represent, adds to the idea about Europe as prosperous. Here it is not so much verbal stories as visual images of Europe personalised in tourist behaviour and spending. In The Gambia, European tourists have the opportunity to consume food, drinks and body treatments as well as buying crafts to a, for them, relatively small cost. These things are seen as luxuries to the local population where a monthly salary could be as small as GMD 3000 (app. 65 Euros). Many tourists also get to know local people and decide to help their families by buying a bag of rice or sponsor a child with school fees.

There is clearly a postcolonial dimension of the interactions between locals and tourists (Uggla 2011). Images of others and selves building on colonial identities are produced in the tourism discourse. This is problematic because it builds on ‘the happy native’ (Hall 2013b), a stereotype ‘other’ thankfully dependent on the white man and his ‘burden’. Jonsson (2005) described the concept of ‘the white man’s burden’, as a product of the idea about development:

“Development” is a beautiful word – and originally it stands for a beautiful idea: as time passes by, the world will unfold before the human eye. She will find her place within the world and learn to use its resources. But along with this thought goes another one; those who developed most had a responsibility to help those
who had not yet reached as far. This is how the Europeans saw their mission” (Jonsson 2005: 49, my translation).

This “European mission” is what constitutes the concept of “the white man's burden” (Jonsson 2005: 49). These colonial power structures are colouring the meeting between tourists and locals, and adds to the idea about Europe as the solution to the problems in The Gambia (e.g. Uggla 2011).

As mentioned in the introduction, sex tourism is also a part of the production of discursive narratives about Europe. Thus, relationships between Gambian men and European women also nourish the dream about Europe. This is not something that is talked about much, and from earlier fieldwork (Uggla 2011) I know that it is a sensitive issue. Therefore, I decided not to ask specifically about it, however reading between the lines in the quote from Alhaji above (p. 33) we can see that ‘the white woman’ represents money also to him, or as Nyanzi et al. puts it she represents “gold” and “a white ticket to Babylon” (Nyanzi et al. 2005: 557, 564).

To sum up the narratives are constructed through ‘social remittances’, i.e. re-telling of stories that the clandestine migrants hear from their social networks, and new stories built on the representations of economic remittances and tourists appearance and behaviour. These stories and representations are understood through certain interpretative frames that build on colonial discourse. Thus, the narratives are producing and reproducing stereotype ideas building on colonial power structures.

6.3 The Postcolonial Stories about Place
In the narratives of the clandestine migrants there are certainly ideas about what Europe is going to be like. But, what became clear in the coding and analysis was that it is impossible to separate the idea about Europe from the idea about The Gambia. These two places are constructed as binary oppositions that are interesting from a postcolonial perspective. This could be understood in terms of binary oppositions and representational work producing stereotype images of ‘the other’. Here I will first present the representations about The Gambia that can be found in the stories told by the clandestine migrants, then I will move on to the ideas about Europe.

6.3.1 The Gambia

I want to go to struggle, you know, for my life, you know, because if you are here you know you will not get anything, you know, Gambia here no Gambia is too eh … (Buba).

“It is not easy in The Gambia”, Modou tells me. While reading the statement above, from the interview with Buba, we can almost hear him sigh that “Gambia is too eh”, the statement that “you will not get anything [here]”, exemplifies the hopelessness that the interviewees expressed when talking about The Gambia. As we saw in the common narrative presented above, a frequent theme in the stories about life in The Gambia is poverty. Most of the interviewees talked about themselves and their families as “poor”. Alhaji said that if he would invite me home I would not be “able to sit even”, this implies

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4 It is important to point out that even though The Gambia is well-known for this type of prostitution, women are probably not over-represented as buyers of sex in The Gambia. During my fieldwork I saw just as many, if not more, mismatched couples of very young Gambian girls and old European men.
that he feels like his home would not be good enough to show to me. The idea of being poor is clearly part of all the interviewee’s identities. Being poor is linked to the difficulties of finding a job. As we have seen above, even with education and some experience it is difficult to find a job in The Gambia. One reason for the difficulties to get a job that the interviewees point to is nepotism, i.e. in The Gambia it is “not what you know, but who you know” that counts (Omar).

According to the interviewees it is also difficult to start a business and get it to work out in The Gambia (e.g. Alhaji). There is a general feeling that life is “not easy” in The Gambia (e.g. Modou), and that if someone works for one year in Europe he/she will earn a lot more than they would do in The Gambia in the same time period. They also say that if they stay in The Gambia they will never be able to improve life for themselves and their families:

If I see here today somebody who will give me money, you know, I can help my family with, yeah I will stay, I will never go to Europe, you know, I will never go there, you know, yeah. But, you know, that’s the problem, you know, cause I wanna take my mother to Mecka, I wanna build good compound for her, you know, car for her you know. If I wanna get all those things, not Gambia here you know. I stay for twenty years, you know, or forty years, you know, in Gambia I will never get that you know [unclear]. So, this is the mentality of, you know, of youths in Gambia to go to back way you know (Alhaji).

As illustrated by the quote from Alhaji’s story there are also repeated statements from the interviewees that they would never go to Europe if they had opportunities to improve their situation in The Gambia. Ousman expressed this more than once during the interview:

I, if I’m living good in Gambia here, I could drive a nice car, you understand, and I could get an earning like a 500 ... 500 euros only 500 euros in a month, sister I’m not gonna travel to Europe ... I’m telling you (Ousman).

Thus, what the narratives reveal is an image of a representation of The Gambia as a place of poverty, hard work for little money, no work at all, corruption, and nepotism. In sum, The Gambia is represented as a place where there are no opportunities at all to change one’s situation of life.

6.3.2 Europe
If things are “not easy” in The Gambia they will be so in Europe. In the narratives of the clandestine migrants, Europe is represented as the solution to all the problems they see in The Gambia.

I tell ‘mum I can’t come back home. I have to enter Europe and make everything easy’ (Bubacarr).

In the quote above “Bubacarr” tell me about when he arrived in Agadez and called his mother to let her know that he decided to go the back way. His mother told him to come back and that she did not want him to go because it is dangerous, but his answer was that he had “to enter Europe and make everything easy”. This idea about “making everything easy” in Europe is repeated in some way in all the interviews. Bubacarr also comes back to it and says:
Yeah it was my main intention to enter Europe and make it. Because when you are here they tell you if you enter Europe it is more easier there (Bubacarr).

When I asked about what is going to be easy none of the interviewees gave me a concrete answer. Thus, the stories about Europe could be described as un-clear. It is not clear what life in Europe is going to be like, on my repeated questions about the interviewees’ imaginations about life in Europe I got only fragmented and blurry answers. However, the bottom line of the stories is always that in Europe everything will be “easy”.

No matter how it is, it’s more better. Life in Europe will be more better [than] here (Modou).

This blurry idea about life in Europe is also illustrated by the fact that the interviewees most often talk about “Europe” as one entity. This shows that the idea about Europe is in many ways dreamlike and unclear.

Anywhere in Europe is ok for me, you know, just let it be in Europe (Alhaji).

In The Gambia, Europe is often referred to as “Babylon” (e.g. Ousman). However, the biblical reference is somewhat different from the common idea about Babylon as representing materialism and a corrupt society. In the Gambian context Babylon “is a dream destination flowing with milk, honey, prosperity and wealth” (Nyanzi et al. 2005: 567). The idea about “Europe/Babylon” illustrates that most of the interviewees have little or no idea about the Geography of Europe and they have often not thought about where in Europe they would prefer to settle and why.

B: When I have Sweden I would go, when I have you know Austria I will go you know any part of …

F: Any place?

B: Yeah any place I get then I will go yeah (Buba)

When I ask Alhaji about the same thing he first seems to prefer Germany, but then suddenly change his mind and says that America is his “dream”. This exemplifies the arbitrariness of where in Europe the back way migrants see themselves after migration.

Yeah if I stay if I go to Italy I would like to go to Germany you know if I have America because America is my dream you know (Alhaji).

However, some also heard things about specific countries or prefer to go to certain places because they have family members or friends who are living there. Bubacarr for example says that for him Italy is just a transit point, he wants to continue to Germany which is a “rich nation compared to Italy” (Bubacarr). Initially Musa wants to go to a specific European country5, but then he also dreams about America:

5 Specific country left out to let the interviewee be anonymous.
Because for me like … for me my intention are, I want to go to [European country], I want to go to [European country]. My uncle he is staying in [this European country] with his wife and his daughter so I want to go to [this European country] and stay with him. After staying with him I start [unclear] I find company that do [construction work], I join them, start working and when I get money I travel to go to another country, but then I want to go to America (Musa).

This again shows the importance of social networks in the migration decision process. If the back way migrants have friends or relatives in a specific country it is more likely that they prefer to go there. At the same time the sudden change to America shows how little they know about their intended destinations, it is basically just “the West”, “Europe” or “Babylon” represented as one prosperous entity with many opportunities.

In addition, it is interesting to note how unclear the ideas about what life in Europe is going to be like. This is illustrated by the following quote from Bubacarr:

Where to stay [in Europe] was not in my mind it was just: let me enter Europe, there I can start thinking what to do, Yeah if I have the opportunity to go to school and start with the language, then fine, yeah (Bubacarr).

As Bubacarr says here he did not even think about where to live, instead he thought that all practical things could wait until he reached Europe, because the very idea of “entering Europe” is seen as the solution to all problems.

To sum up, The Gambia is represented as a place where people are “poor”, it is very hard to find a job unless you know the right people, and even if it was possible to find a job the salary would not be enough to support a family. This image of The Gambia is produced, mainly in contrast to the idea about Europe. In the narratives, Europe is represented as a place where everything is “easy”, where you can earn a lot of money fast, in order to solve your problems back home in The Gambia. Migration to Europe is represented as a life-changing event that will improve the situations of themselves and their families.

The story about The Gambia is mainly about what it is not, and what the young men cannot do if they stay in The Gambia. This story and the images in it build on colonial discourse and stereotype ideas about others, and the production of meaning in terms of identifying what things, people or places are not (Hall 2013b: 224). Just as ‘Africa’ was constructed in contrast to the colonial powers during the colonial period (Thörn et al 1999: 20), The Gambia is today constructed in contrast to the idea about Europe. In the following quote from the interview with Omar we can see how The Gambia is defined in terms of negations.

Yeah [unclear] I was in Gambia here I’m seeing many boys many countries. They are telling me, boy just try by the all means when you have a little money you just take [unclear]. When the money is finished you work on the way. You go to Europe because Gambia here, if you are here not working not strong after all you cannot help your father you cannot help your parents until you dead (Omar, also quoted on p. 32).

From a postcolonial perspective, we are not free from the colonial power structures. The stories about Europe and The Gambia build on the European storytelling about Europeans and Europe as the obvious subject of world history (Jonsson 2005: 51). As Jonsson writes
“at the heart of our image of Africa lies a negative presumption”, Africa and Africans is defined in terms of “what they are not and do not have”, and the lack of Africa could only be solved with aid from Europe (Jonsson 2005: 349, my translation). Thus, The Gambia is constructed as a binary opposition to Europe, and vice versa (Thörn et al 1999: 20). The Gambia is represented as ‘the other’, constantly compared to the dreamlike ideas about what life is going to be like in Europe.

6.4 Gender Aspects of Clandestine Migration

As Datta et al (2009: 856) has pointed out before international migration serve as a “rite of passage into manhood”, at the same time as it could be a livelihood strategy triggered by traditional masculine roles of providing for the family. Thus, ideas about masculinity have been shown to feature in the decision to migrate. In the case of The Gambia the ‘gender contract’ (e.g. Hirdman 2003) relies heavily on a patriarchal structure and primeval texts where the man is the breadwinner, taking care of his wife/wives and the rest of the extended family. Also, in The Gambia a successful son will contribute to the household and support his dependants (Nyanzi & Bah 2010: 114). This ”master narrative” (Riessman 2008: 27) is part of the stories told by clandestine migrants. What is perhaps even more salient is how the interviewees feel responsible for their aging parents. Modou is not the eldest son, but his brother married, and the responsibility is therefore passed on to Modou:

[I have] one elder brother and that one is married so right now he is concentrating on his family, so I’m the man taking over, taking care of my parents, trying to do something for them (Modou).

He says that all his focus is on his parents and that he wants for them to be able to retire from their farm. When I asked whether his parents knew that he was going he said no. He kept it secret because he knew that they would not like him to go because it is a dangerous route. Then I asked why he thought it was a good idea to go, even though his family was against it and he answered that:

Because I’m the one who decided so I said it’s a good idea [to go the back way], because I’m the one going. When I cross in peace and I’m in Europe, Italy in peace, when I start work they will be happy, I will be happy and they will be happy and then I will stop them from going to the farm yeah (Modou, also quoted on p. 28)

This is interesting from many aspects. Earlier research has suggested that migration from West Africa often is a family decision (Van Nieuwenhuyze 2009: 76, see also Herman 2006), however most of the interviewees in this study said that they went without their families knowledge, and that their families would have stopped them if they knew. Only one of them were “sent” to Europe:

Yeah, so others they went and they succeed. So, one day I come from the beach training, I come, after my mother call me, she ask me … ‘I have money if I want to give it, whether you would like to go to Libya with your uncle? Your uncle is going tomorrow’ yeah she said. Yes, then I said ‘yes if you give me money I will go’ (…). We went inside and she bring me the money (Musa).
With the exception of Musa, all took the decision to migrate through the back way themselves. This shows agency as well as the importance of transnational networks rather than direct family influence. However, as we have seen in the ‘common narrative’ above, the indirect influence of family is clearly important in the decision to migrate through the back way. All of the interviewees express a feeling of responsibility towards their parents, and younger siblings. Omar says, “they all depend on me”, and that he wants to be a good role model for his younger brothers: “I should not be sitting without having nothing”. Buba also says that when he thinks of the future he wants to be “a good father” to his kids. Sometimes, when they have money they try to contribute by “buying a bag of rice” or sending money to family members living in other parts of the country:

Yeah it’s just me just to help myself you know. When they have problems they ask me, you know, yeah they ask me about it, you know, money, you know. Yeah family also you know and I used to buy a bag of rice for them, you know. Yeah, if there is money with me, you know, I used to send money for them (Buba).

To “buy a bag of rice” could almost be seen as a concept, a metaphor for helping out. Rice is staple food in The Gambia, and has grown expensive in recent years, thus “buying rice” is equivalent to helping out with the basic needs.

But I’m still trying to make life easier on me. Yeah I’m taking care of my parents, I want to go to bush and fetch some fire woods, then I buy some bag of rice, three to four bag of rice, and I leave it with them. Then, I come in town here also, then I start looking for job again yeah (Modou).

Amadou comes from what he describes as a “very poor” family in the rural areas. He had two brothers who both passed away and this means that he is the only child left for his parents. He describes how he felt a duty to follow his colleague’s example and go through the back way.

We are all men you know and the way they were able to survive [unclear] the hardship and able to reach [Europe] and able to support their families. But unfortunately I could not make it to where those people are, and I am still like bothered by that, you know. As long as those people are able to do it, why can’t I be able to do it? So that [troubles me] (Amadou, translated from Mandingo).

Also Amadou tries to help his parents, he has not been able to go to visit them in the village since he got back from Tripoli, instead he send them all the money he can spare:

We talk on the phone and they will tell me that they are living in serious hardship particularly with food to eat. So, I am always sad when I hear that, so whatever I earn, however small, I try to share it with them (Amadou, translated from Mandingo).

The stories about The Gambia, Europe and clandestine migration told by the back way migrants are clearly guided by a master narrative about family and responsibility with gender norms that falls heavily upon men in terms of providing for the family (see also Nyanzi & Bah 2010: 114). An important component in the migration decision process is the wish to fill the role as breadwinner for the family. However, drawing on Broughton
it is not only possible to trace the characteristics of “the breadwinner”, but also “the traditionalist” and “adventurer”. In the group interviewed here there is no clear distinction between these types of clandestine migrants, they could instead be seen as interlinked. The young men who become clandestine migrants adopts the traditional “hegemonic masculinities”, where family and community ties are important, there is also some element of the characteristics of “the adventurer” looking for experience as well as work. However, they see themselves mainly as “the breadwinner”. Even though they may not be forced to migrate out of absolute poverty they represent themselves as ‘the responsible son’ who wants to change the living situation of his family (Broughton 2008: 585).

From a gender perspective this idea about the eldest son’s responsibility as “breadwinner” towards parents, sibling and extended family could be understood in terms of ‘local gender contract’ (Caretta & Börjeson 2015: 646) where the obligation of the man is to take responsibility for, and care for the (extended) family, and especially for his aging parents who cared for him when he was growing up. What became clear in the analysis is that the ideas about responsibility cannot be separated from the ideas about Europe and The Gambia. From this perspective the migration decision is not so much about getting away or getting somewhere else, but rather it is about filling a local gendered role. In The Gambia this group of young men see few opportunities to actually provide for family and aging parents. They do not see how they could take the role as breadwinner if they stay in The Gambia. Thus, the solution is to migrate through the back way in search for change on the individual level and at the same time maintain the gender contract. Thus, from this perspective the migration decision is not mainly about getting away or getting somewhere else but rather to be able to meet expectations and fill an expected gendered role in The Gambia.
7. Conclusion

The starting point for this study was my interest in the question: why young men from The Gambia risk their lives in small boats trying to reach European shore? Earlier research has shown that over-expectations about life in Europe is an important variable in the decision making process. By exploring the narratives of clandestine migrants from The Gambia I wanted to understand what these over-expectations consist of, how narratives about Europe are constructed and what ideas about Europe that are produced and reproduced in them. I also wanted to know why it, in the Gambian context, is primarily young men who become clandestine migrants.

The analysis shows how discourses, that builds on broader social structures are important in the production of narratives about Europe. The willingness to risk one’s life in the desert and in small boats is the result of primarily two discursive practices. First the ideas of Europe and The Gambia represented as binary oppositions building on colonial power structures, and second the local, gendered idea of ‘a successful son’. I have argued and showed how narratives about Europe build on social remittances, i.e. on stories told by family and friends who are already abroad, as well as on the representations of economic remittances, return-migrants and tourist appearance and behaviour. These stories and representations build on colonial discourse and power structures.

What became clear in the analysis was that it is impossible to separate the ideas about Europe from the ideas about The Gambia. These two places are constructed as binary oppositions building on colonial discourse. The stories about Europe and The Gambia build on the colonial European storytelling where Africa was represented in terms of negations, in contrast to Europe (Jonsson 2005: 51, 349). The narratives reveal an idea about Europe where everything is “easy”, and there are many opportunities to make a lot of money that could be sent home as remittances in order to create change. In opposition to this, The Gambia is represented as a place where people are poor, where there are few, or no, opportunities to find work and to change one’s situation of life. Thus, The Gambia is represented as ‘the other’, constantly compared to the dreamlike ideas about what life is going to be like in Europe.

Linked to the idea about The Gambia and Europe are ideas about family and responsibility. An important component in the migration decision process is the wish to fill the role as breadwinner for the family. The back way migrants are clearly guided by a master narrative about family and responsibility with gender norms that falls heavily upon men in terms of providing for the family (see also Nyanzi & Bah 2010: 114). From a gender perspective this idea about the eldest son’s responsibility towards parents, sibling and extended family could be understood in terms of a ‘local gender contract’ where the man should take responsibility for, and care for the (extended) family, and especially for his aging parents who cared for him when he was growing up. In the narratives the clandestine migrants represent themselves as “the breadwinner” who is forced to migrate because of poverty. In addition it is possible to trace “the traditionalist” in terms of “hegemonic masculinities”, where family and community ties are important, and “the adventurer” looking for experience as well as work (Broughton 2008: 585). The gendered ideas are interlinked with ideas about the lack of opportunities in The Gambia and clandestine migration to Europe. To sum up, I have argued that the willingness to risk one’s life travelling the back way to Europe is the result of primarily two discursive practices. First the ideas of Europe and The Gambia represented as binary oppositions building on colonial discourse, and second clandestine migration becomes a strategy to fill an expected gendered role in The Gambia when returning as a successful son.
8. Discussion

The narrative method and discourse analysis in combination with postcolonial theory and gender theory acknowledges agency as well as structure. This is important because it stresses the individual experience and agency, but also how stories builds on discursive practice, and are connected to a broader social context. In migration studies this is a perspective that has often been neglected in favour of a completely structural understanding where migrants are not seen as individuals with a choice but as constrained by structural forces (e.g. Castles et al 2014: 32, IOM 2013: 24).

The results of this thesis highlight how discursive ideas about Europe feature to a great extent in the individual’s decision to migrate as a clandestine. In The Gambia a large group of young men are risking their lives, and at the same time spending their parents or relatives money on travelling back and forth to Libya. Many spend as much as GMD 100 000 on one journey, which is equivalent to one or two annual salaries for many Gambians (Interview with stakeholder). This instead of trying to do something to improve their situation in The Gambia, providing for themselves and developing the country. Something that, according to the stakeholders that were interviewed, is possible with the same amount of money. In this way we see what could be described as ‘a lost generation’ in several aspects; they are literary lost in the Mediterranean Sea or the Sahara Desert, their knowledge and competence are lost in terms of ‘brain drain’ and those who have not succeeded to reach Europe are lost in an obsessive dream (Van Nieuwenhuyze 2009: 76) that prevents their development in The Gambia.

The scope of this thesis is limited. As stated above the results of qualitative research with relatively few interviewees cannot be generalized to a broader group of people. However, if we want to understand clandestine migration, the individual perspective and its links to a broader context is one important piece of knowledge. With that point made, there is reason to be aware of the limitations of qualitative research and of this particular study so that we draw the right conclusions from the analysis. As discussed in the section on “Limitations and Ethical Considerations”, qualitative research always includes the consideration of ethical issues. This means that some questions that would be interesting to know the answer to, were not asked during the interviews, it also means that I did not push for more information when I had the feeling that the interviewee did not wish to explore the theme further. This affects the material and the extent to which I am able to answer the research questions. However, I am convinced that research should never be carried out at the expense of human beings. Kvale (1997: 104, my translation) states that “research with human beings as participants must serve scientific and human purposes”. It could indeed be argued that these two should always go together, what kind of research would be justified it if did not serve human interest?

With its limitations, the results of this study adds another small piece of knowledge to earlier research results that has other research questions and perspectives as staring point, and where fieldwork was carried out in other geographical areas. Earlier research has shown that it is not absolute poverty and despair that drives clandestine migration from West Africa to Europe, but rather a combination of great expectations about adventure, experience and opportunities to make a lot of money to send home as remittances (e.g. Dünnvald 2011, Van Dalen et al 2005, Van Nieuwenhuyze 2009). This thesis has explored these expectations further. The analysis show that the expectations are linked to images of Europe and The Gambia building on colonial discourse and this adds to the previous picture. This thesis confirms the results from earlier research in terms of the importance of migration systems and social remittances (e.g. Mbaye 2014, Suksomboon.
2008). This thesis also confirms research on gender and migration from other geographical places (e.g. Broughton 2008, Datta 2009), but also adds something new. The idea of a ‘local gender contract’ illustrated how it, in the Gambian context, is important for a man to support the family, this is not unique to The Gambia, but what was standing out as interesting in this context was the focus on the responsibility as ‘a successful son’ rather as for example ‘husband’.

To understand clandestine migration from a postcolonial and a gender perspective as a broader structural and discursive practice is important in terms of finding ways to take preventive action in The Gambia. This perspective might give us a better starting point to work with advocacy on back way migration as well as on gender issues. I have no concrete suggestions when it comes to measures and advocacy activities, but I am convinced that a deeper understanding of the issue we want to address will help us approach it in a more effective way.

In order to get at this problem it would be interesting to further explore if there are concrete measures that could give a sense of hope for the future to young people in The Gambia, as well as provide more realistic ideas about the opportunities of clandestine migration. The results also raise other questions for further research. Since one important part in the construction of narratives is social remittances from migrants in Europe it would be interesting to explore the attitudes of those who managed to get to Europe, especially in terms of ‘saving face’ (Suksomboon 2008: 475). The function of ‘saving face’ and its meaning is also interesting in the local context, in terms of what a successful migration project might mean to families back home. On an ending note, the repeated tragedies in The Mediterranean shows the urgent need to understand the reason for this kind of migration. Since the clandestine boat migrants come from very different backgrounds their reasons for migration is also likely to be very different, some are refugees fleeing for their lives, other are economic migrants, and some might be in-between these categories. This thesis gives voice to the clandestine “economic migrant” and especially highlights the stories and experiences of Gambian clandestine migrants. In the case of refugees fleeing war further research (and very likely other solutions) is needed.
9. References


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Appendix

Interview guide

- Age?
- From where in The Gambia are you?
- What were your parents working with?
- Did you go to school? For how many years?
- What did you dream about as a child?

- When did you start to consider migration?
- What was your idea about Europe at the time?
- When was the first time you heard about back way migration to Europe?
- How did/do you see Europe?
- Did you know anyone who had been to Europe? What did they tell you about it?
- Why the back way? Where there options?
- The route?
- Why did you want to leave The Gambia?
- How do you see The Gambia?
- Where in Europe was your original plan to go? Why?
- Did you go alone or travel together with others?

- What happened that made you return?
- Could you tell me about coming back? Meeting family and friends?
- What are you currently doing to support yourself?
- Where du you live now?
- How do you see the future?

- Would you go again?
- What are you telling people about your journey?

- Is there something that you would like to add?
- Is there something you would like to ask me?