

*“In Italy I always wanted more. I am still looking for more. That is life. Everyone is always looking for more. If you are lucky you find it early in life, others have to struggle.”*

Richard, 2015

## Map of West Africa



The informants of this thesis originate from Ghana, Cameroon and Nigeria in West Africa.

## Acknowledgement

We would like to thank and acknowledge the people who have made it possible for us to complete this thesis. The thesis is drawn from fieldwork conducted in the homeless community in Copenhagen.

Above all, our deepest gratitude goes to our informants; Richard, Karim, Paul, Benjamin and Joseph<sup>1</sup>. The stories of these five West African men are the core of our research, which is why we hope that our portrayal of them is in line with their own understandings.

We would also like to thank projekt UDENFOR for giving us the great opportunity to be a part of the foundation, by lending us an office to work out of as well as gain an insight into their work and to help us expand our knowledge and understanding of homelessness.

Furthermore, we owe gratitude to Den Sorte Gryde and Justine Mitchell for letting us make use of the place in order to establish contact with our informants, and for giving us an initial understanding of our target group.

Last but not least, our supervisor Katrine Borg Albertsen deserves our thanks. She has provided us with guidance and support throughout the process of our thesis.

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<sup>1</sup> All names are pseudonyms.

## Abstract

As a consequence of the Global Financial Crisis that affected the world economy from 2007 and onwards, more and more West African labour migrants lost their jobs in Spain or Italy, and migrated therefore further north in the search for new opportunities. Many of these West Africans came to Denmark. However, due to lack of job opportunities and expensive living standards in Denmark the West African migrants end up living on the street, and dependent on the support and services made available by homeless organisations.

In order to examine the motivation for the journey from West Africa to Europe this thesis explores the narratives of five West African men, who during the course of our fieldwork were living on the streets of Copenhagen. We analyse these narratives in order to answer the research question: *How do West African men navigate through the terrains of European countries in order to fulfil their social aspirations? And how does the movement of the terrains influence these social aspirations?*

The empirical data used in this research is based on fieldwork in Copenhagen, and our methodology includes observations, informal conversations and in-depth interviews built on a semi-structured interview guide. The analysis is completed by using Henrik Vigh's theory on social navigation as the main theory for the thesis. Furthermore, we use A. S. Bhalla & Frédéric Lapeyre's definition of social exclusion to support the analysis. In order to support our findings we use research by María Hernández-Carretero & Jørgen Carling, Hans Lucht and Jakob Jakobsen.

Firstly, we analyse the social aspirations of the West African migrants. We focus the analysis on social aspirations in terms of what they were before leaving West Africa, and discuss if others impose these social aspirations. Secondly, we analyse how these social aspirations change due to opportunities and limitations as well as the movement of the terrains. Furthermore, how these changes determine the West African men's social navigation. We discuss which actors create opportunities and limitations for the West African migrants. Thirdly, the analysis provides an explanation as to how the opportunities and limitations make the West African men get caught in an undesired position, and why they are unable to escape this situation. Finally, we argue that the West African men continue to navigate through different terrains in order to reach their imagined futures and how their reliance on luck plays a role in their further navigation.

We found that the West African men's aspirations change in relation the movement of the terrains, and that these changes determine the social navigation. We argue that social exclusion and

deprivation also play a role in the way the aspirations change, and that this makes the men caught in an undesirable position. Furthermore, we found that when the West African men are in a situation there is out of their control, they rely on luck.

We argue that migration to Europe cannot be seen as a direct solution to *social becoming* and that the situation of the West African men in Denmark can be compared to their situation in West Africa. Therefore, we see migration as a possibility to navigate in a new terrain that can provide them with new opportunities. However, in Denmark these new opportunities do not make them move closer to *social becoming*. Therefore, to *social become* is still an imagined future.

**Keywords: migration, West Africa men, homelessness, social navigation, social exclusion**

## Reader's guide

The following guide provides an overview of the signs and the specific writing style used throughout the thesis

- ‘Headlines with single quotation marks’ are quotation from our informants.
- ‘Single quotation mark’ is used when referring to informant’s use of word.
- *Italic type* is used when theoretical terms are mentioned.
- “*Double quotation marks and Italic typing*” are used for quotations of our informants or theorists.
- (...) within a quote indicate irrelevant information, which has been left out.
- [Square brackets] within a quote indicate explanatory words, which have been added in order to ease the understanding.
- When referring to quotations from our field notes we use the reference (Appendix: number).
- When referring to quotations of our recorded interviews we use the reference (Audio file: number; start time of quote).
- An overview of the appendixes and audio files will be presented in immediate continuation of the table of contents.
- Quotes from our informants are written as they are said, which means that they might contain grammatical errors or a wrong use of words.
- Footnotes are used in order to provide further explanations or translations from Danish to English.

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**Appendix 2:** Interview guide for informants.

**Appendix 3:** Notes from Hanan's first conversation with Benjamin, Joseph and Richard at Den Sorte Gryde on April 29<sup>th</sup> 2015.

**Appendix 4:** Notes from interview with Richard at the Copenhagen Central library on May 7<sup>th</sup> 2015.

**Appendix 5:** Notes from interview Richard at Nørrebro-hallen on May 13<sup>th</sup> 2015.

**Appendix 6:** Notes from interview with Karim at Kings of Kebab at Nørrebrogade of July 7<sup>th</sup> 2015.

**Appendix 7:** Notes from conversation with Paul at Café Kalasset in Nørrebro on April 24<sup>th</sup> 2015.

**Appendix 8:** Notes from conversation with Karim outside Den Sorte Gryde on May 5<sup>th</sup> 2015.

**Appendix 9:** Notes from conversation with Joseph and Richard at Nørrebro-hallen on May 17<sup>th</sup> 2015.

## Audio files stored on USB-stick

**Audio file 1:** Interview with Paul on April 30<sup>th</sup> 2015

**Audio file 2:** Interview with Karim on May 13<sup>th</sup> 2015, part 1

**Audio file 3:** Interview with Karim on May 13<sup>th</sup> 2015, part 2

**Audio file 4:** Interview with Paul on May 7<sup>th</sup> 2015

**Audio file 5:** Interview with Karim on July 7<sup>th</sup> 2015

**Audio file 6:** Interview with Karim on May 1<sup>st</sup> 2015

# 1 Introduction

For many years the trans-Saharan trade has connected North and West Africa economically, politically and socially. The colonization of North and West Africa in the late nineteenth century led to a decline in the trans-Saharan trade, and the labour migration increased within West Africa (De Haas, 2007; OECD, 2006). The development of agricultural production and industries in the coastal zones in West Africa as well as growth of some cities resulted in major rural-rural migration of farm workers and rural-urban migration of skilled and unskilled workers and traders (De Haas, 2007; 9). The growing economies of countries such as Ghana and the Ivory Coast attracted large number of both internal and international labour migrants. Therefore, the movement of people was dominated by migration countries in the North towards the coastal regions in the South of West Africa. However, due to outbreaks of civil wars, economic decline in the West African region followed, and by 2003 there were more than one million refugees or internally displaced persons (Drumtra, 2003). The increased violence and economic decline also resulted in lack of migration destinations in West Africa and numbers of West Africans started to look for new destinations both in Northern Africa and Europe (De Haas, 2007; 11, Van Hear, 1998; 204-207).

After a longer period of migration from the Sahel<sup>2</sup>, trans-Saharan migration from West Africa to the North African countries increased in the 1990s partially influenced by a shift in the Libyan foreign policy. The Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi positioned himself as an African leader and started to welcome sub-Saharan Africans to work in Libya (De Haas, 2007). Furthermore, migration towards Europe increased in the 1990s, both in terms of skilled migration to former colonial powers and irregular migration to Spain and Italy. Violent clashes between Libyans and sub-Saharan Africans have since 2000 increased, because dark-skinned Africans were seen as Gaddafi's mercenaries, and this has resulted in restrictive immigration regulation as well as major deportations of irregular migrants. However, West African migration to Libya has continued due to persistent need for cheap labour in Libya (De Haas, 2007). Since the death of Gaddafi in October 2011 the situation in Libya has been marred by tumultuous and violence which has hindered the establishment of functioning political institutions (Chivvis & Martini, 2014). Furthermore, it has caused a breakdown of the Libyan coast guard unit which makes it easier to reach European territory in the Mediterranean Sea (Kirkpatrick, 2015). The lack of border control and the increasing insecurity have caused a higher

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<sup>2</sup> Sahel is the zone between the Sahara desert to the north and the savannah in Sudan in the south. It stretches from the Atlantic Ocean in the west to the Red Sea in the east.

number of West African migrants crossing the Mediterranean toward better living conditions, which have transformed Libya from a country of destination to a country of transit.

For many years South European countries such as Spain and Italy have been countries of emigration. However, this started to change during the late 1970s, the 1980s and especially in the 1990s (King, 2000). Several factors have been important in order to explain their transformation into immigration states. One is the remarkable economic change in the Southern Europe from the 1970s which made the level of income and welfare closer to the northern standards, and therefore there was no need to emigrate in order to sustain a livelihood. Furthermore, due to better educational standards the construction and factory workers and the peasant farmers started to find better jobs which meant that there was a need for immigrants. Especially for seasonal workers in agriculture, fishery and tourism were needed (King, 2000; 9-10).

In recent years, migration from Africa to Europe has received widespread media attention; masses of desperate Africans fleeing poverty and war are trying to reach Europe illegally. (De Haas, 2007; 1) However, this image can be misleading. West African migrants are often portrayed as passive victims of human trafficking networks, though research on these migrants has suggested that trafficking is rare and that the majority migrate on their own initiative (De Haas, 2008; 18). The migrants tend to have moderate socioeconomic backgrounds (De Haas, 2007; 22) and instead of a desperate flight from poverty migration is a deliberate choice made in order to enhance the future livelihoods of a family (De Haas, 2008; 18). According to María Hernández-Carretero and Jørgen Carling (2012; 407) these migrants: *“Are neither suicidal nor irrational, but make decisions within a specific socioeconomic and moral context”*. They argue that migration is closely linked to the societies’ social aspirations for young men (ibid).

West Africans are to be found among the most mobile people in the world and also represent the largest number of Sub-Saharan migrants in Europe (Olsen, 2011). It is both West African women and men, who migrate in the search of better opportunities; however the vast majority are men, which is why this group is the focus of this thesis. Often these West African men have obtained residence permit to a European country, mainly to Spain or Italy, where some also have worked for years. Recently, the group of West African men has been seen on the streets of Copenhagen.

There is limited knowledge on West African men in Denmark, owing to the fact that this type of migrants is a relatively new phenomenon (Jakobsen, 2012; 5). The movement of West African

migrants is a result of the Global Financial Crisis, which started to show its effects at the end of 2007 and which resulted in a high rate of unemployment in Spain and Italy that subsequently hit the West African labour migrants hard (Castles, De Haas & Miller, 2014). Furthermore, the EU directive on free movement within the Schengen area has made the journey from one country to another more accessible.

The Schengen Agreement is signed by 26 countries<sup>3</sup>, which have agreed to eliminate border controls in order to establish free movement for people within this area. People who receive residence permit to a Schengen country are thereby permitted to travel in the Schengen zone for up to three months within 6 months (the European Union, 2009). However, they are not allowed to work or live in countries other than the one that has granted them residency.

Coming to Denmark in search of new opportunities can be rough for West African men, because most of them are entering the country on a tourist visa, which does not allow them to work. Therefore, most of the West African men make a living out of collecting bottles and many of them end up living on the streets of Copenhagen, still searching for work.

According to research made by anthropologist Jakob Jakobsen (2012) and a head count taken by Kirkens Korshær<sup>4</sup> (Kirkens Korshær, 2009), there has been a significant change in the users of Kirkens Korshær's shelter at Stengade 40<sup>5</sup> in Copenhagen, since 2009. Jakobsen's report shows that the number of African migrants has increased; from accounting for only four per cent of the users in 2009, by 2012 African migrants accounted for more than half of the users.

Inspired by the documentary *Days of Hope*<sup>6</sup> made in 2013 by the Danish director Ditte Haarløv Johnsen, our attention was drawn to West African men. Frequently, we see these migrants portrayed as desperate illegal immigrants risking their lives to reach Europe, but the aim of this thesis is to add a new perspective to the issue of migrants and migration.

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<sup>3</sup> The following countries have signed the Schengen Agreement: Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland.

<sup>4</sup> In English: Dan Church Social

<sup>5</sup> Stengade 40 is both the address and the name of the shelter provided by Kirkens Korshær.

<sup>6</sup> *Days of Hope* is a documentary where we see different African immigrants, from three different places in the world, all share the dream of a better life. They all embark on a perilous journey to reach a common destination: Europe: <http://cphdox.dk/en/screening/under-den-samme-himmel>

This thesis derives from an interest in the lack of knowledge of whom these West African men are and what led them to cross an ocean in the pursuit of better opportunities. There has been much research and debate, within the field of migration from Africa to Europe; however this has mainly taken place within global security discourses. The subject of West African migrants living on the streets of Copenhagen is still relatively new, which means there has only been done limited amount of research on this area. Recently, Jakob Jakobsen has done research on this subject and his focus was to provide an insight in the West African men's motivation for coming to Denmark, and their current challenges.

This thesis focuses on the West African men's motivation for migrating to Europe, and how they attempt to fulfil their aspiration of a better life in Europe, which leads us to our research question:

## **1.1 Research question**

*How do West African men navigate through the terrains of European countries in order to fulfil their social aspirations? And how does the movement of the terrains influence these social aspirations?*

Navigation is a crucial term to our research question, which we use throughout this thesis. In this thesis the term indicates that a person both navigate socially and physically between different terrains. Social navigation provides an insight in the interplay between objective structures and subjective agency, whereas physical navigation indicates the mobilization between different places and terrains.

The *terrains* have to be interpreted as the social environments in which the West African men move. The terrains are constantly moving and changing, and at the same time, they engage the agent to navigate tactically in relation to the movement of the terrain. The terrains are influenced by both internal and external factors and therefore, the social as well as physical navigation are constantly defined and redefined depending on the possibilities available in the current terrain (Vigh, 2004: 131).

The term social aspiration has to be understood as the change of the social status the West African men wish to achieve by migrating. The term is linked to the specific social context the men are found in in West Africa, which will be elaborated on in the theoretical framework. The social aspirations are seen as the reasons behind migrating to Europe.

The thesis is based on the West African men's own experiences, and we believe that this thesis can contribute with a better understanding of these men and their aspiration to achieve a better life in Europe as well as in West Africa. We believe that this thesis also can add to a further understanding of the pressure there is linked to the migration of these men.

In the following we present the structure of the thesis in order to provide an overview of the content.

## **1.2 Structure of the thesis**

This thesis is divided into two parts; firstly, an overview of how we have carried out the research and secondly, the outcome of our research.

In order to answer the research question, the first part of the thesis presents the methodological framework in chapter 2. This chapter explains our considerations during the process of the production of the thesis, the method used in order to conduct our research and an introduction to the field. This is followed by chapter 3: the theoretical framework for the thesis where the different theories applied will be elaborated. Henrik Vigh's theory on Social Navigation is the main theory of the thesis. This theory is supported by theoretical perspectives on social exclusion, presented by A. S. Bhalla & Frédéric Lapeyre.

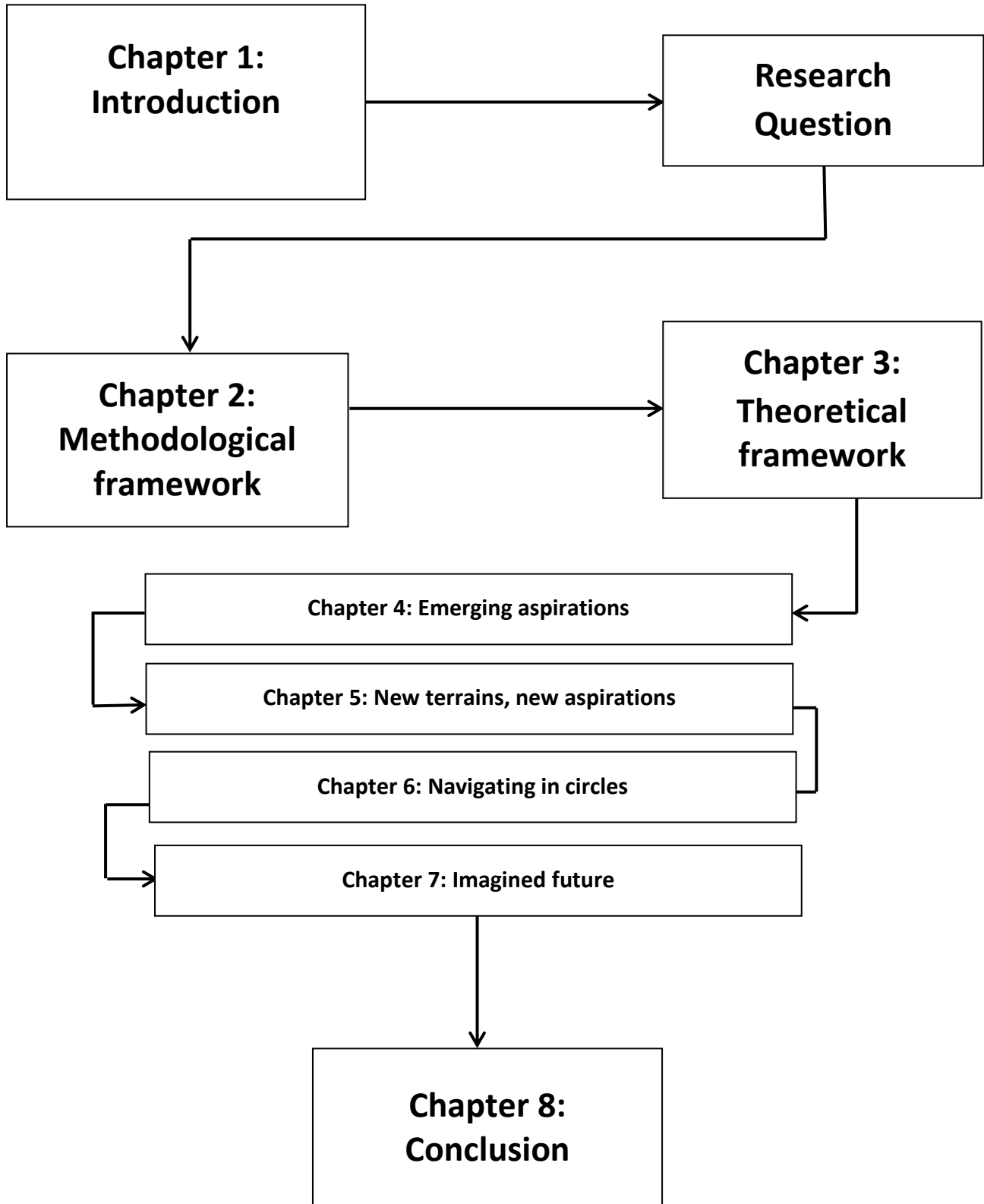
The second part of the thesis consists of our analysis, which is partitioned into four chapters, chapter 4 to 7. These chapters form the necessary steps towards the answer of the research question:

- Chapter 4 analyses the social aspirations of the West African migrants. We will focus on social aspirations in terms of what they were before they left West Africa. We discuss if these social aspirations are imposed on them by their relatives and societies. Finally, we shine a light on what the men expect from the countries they arrive to.
- Chapter 5 focuses on how these aspirations have changed throughout their journey towards Denmark. We analyse how experienced opportunities and limitations determine how the West African migrants navigate socially through different terrains. We discuss which actors create opportunities and limitations for the West African migrants as well as how the movement of the terrains has an impact on their social navigation.

- Chapter 6 analyses how the opportunities and limitations gets the West African men caught in an undesired position, and why they are unable to escape this situation. Furthermore, we analyse what pressure the West African men face, which also plays a role in their situation.
- Chapter 7. We argue that the West African men continue to navigate through different terrains in order to reach their imagined future and how their reliance on luck plays a role in their further navigation.

Finally, in chapter 8, a conclusion will summarize the main points of the thesis.

### 1.2.1 Project design





## 2 Methodological framework

This chapter presents and explains the methodological considerations of our thesis. First, we outline the initial considerations that led us to the preparation of this thesis including our delimitations. Second, we present the field of our work, which includes a presentation of our informants. Subsequently, we explicate the choices we made in connection with the way we have gathered and processed our data, after which we explain our ethical considerations. The last part of this chapter, provides a literature review, which outlines the main secondary literature we have used throughout the thesis, and how.

### 2.1 Choices and considerations

The aim of our thesis is to research the aspirations of the West African men before migrating to Europe, and how they hold up compared to their current situation in Denmark. In the initial phase of our research our knowledge within the field was limited and the topic was derived from our interest and curiosity as to why anyone would dare to take the dangerous journey by boat to Europe, only to end up living on the streets. We wondered if they might had been better off staying in their home country, and if the decision to migrate was a choice they made themselves or if it had been imposed on them by others. These questions have led us to our research question; *how do West African men navigate through the terrains of European countries to fulfil their social aspirations? And how does the movement of the terrains influence these social aspirations?*

We chose to focus on West African men because they are a relatively new group in the streets of Copenhagen. Several of the organisations that offer help and services to homeless people have noticed the increased number of West African men using their facilities (Jakobsen, 2012; Projekt UDENFOR, 2012b; Kirkens Korshær, 2009; Kirkens Korshær, 2013). Furthermore, we have noticed that these West African men seem to be an overlooked group within the Danish society. This group of men cannot be characterized as refugees or asylum seekers and are therefore not entitled to any assistance in relation to housing, education or healthcare. Furthermore, they are considered resourceful migrants by the homeless organisations, and are not as such viewed as the direct target group for their work and their services. Therefore, they are neglected and no organisation represents their case directly.

From the beginning, we have been aware of the fact that in order to answer our research question, the methodology was fundamental and the empirical data, reinforced by relevant theory, had to be

the focal point. The interviews and the participant observations provide two different perspectives of the field and therefore the interaction between them will provide the best results (Rubow, 2010; 243). With this in mind, we have decided to use a combination of participant observation of the field, informal conversations and semi-structured, in-depth interviews. We believe that with this combination of data collection, we have gained a better insight into the West African men's own perception of their situation, and thereby attained fruitful information.

### **2.1.1 Delimitation**

This subject is broad and several aspects are worthy of analysis. It has been necessary to limit our focus and work with one interesting and relevant aspect due to time restrictions. During the last couple of months there has been an increased attention on boat refugees. Some of our informants have crossed the Mediterranean Sea by boats, like thousands of people we see portrayed on the news. We have learned about our informants' stories and their experiences during their journey; however, we leave out this focus, as our thesis focuses on their experiences before and after their journey. In relation to this, it could be interesting to look further into the EU border controls, including the new initiatives established in the Mediterranean by the EU, but we will leave this to future research projects.

Another interesting point for further research would be to look into how many of these migrants return to Africa, and what happens after they do so. But seeing as our field of research is limited to Denmark, this is not possible.

## **2.2 Introduction to the field**

In the following section we will present the places where we have done our research and introduce our informants.

### **2.2.1 Projekt UDENFOR<sup>7</sup>**

Projekt UDENFOR is a private foundation, whose focal point is homelessness and which combines social street work with training and research within the area. The foundation's work focuses on the most vulnerable group of homeless people, such as people with an addiction or mental illness. Projekt UDENFOR was established in 1997 by MD Preben Brandt and is funded by government grants and private funds as well as income generating activities. (Projekt UDENFOR, 2015).

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<sup>7</sup> In English: project OUTSIDE

At an information meeting at projekt UDENFOR we were informed that the organisation had a designated office for thesis students, shortly thereafter we applied for the use of it. We viewed collaborating with projekt UDENFOR as an opportunity for us to seek advice and guidance. We learned that projekt UDENFOR considers West African men as resourceful even though they live on the streets, and they are therefore not the primary target group for projekt UDENFOR's work. The street-level employee in Projekt UDENFOR, Bo Heide-Jochimsen, categorizes the African men as work migrants instead of homeless.

During our thesis writing, we have used projekt UDENFOR in order to obtain knowledge and information within the field of homelessness and the issues relating to this. We have been introduced to the street-level employees' outreach work and methods as well as the organisation's advocacy work and research. In addition, the foundation has helped us to identify areas to search for our target group. The foundation introduced us to *Den Sorte Gryde* which became our primary place of research.

### 2.2.2 Den Sorte Gryde<sup>8</sup>

Den Sorte Gryde is a place where homeless people in Copenhagen can come and have a meal; every day between 11 am and 2 pm lunch is served. The place has capacity for up to 50 guests and offers a variety of services, such as health clinic referrals, laundry service and document translation for homeless foreigners. Furthermore, two hairdressers have been offering haircuts to the homeless. It is important to Den Sorte Gryde to include the homeless in their daily work, which is why the place employs a user as dishwasher; by providing him with a paid job Den Sorte Gryde believes that the earned income will lead to a sense of self-esteem and dignity (Den Sorte Gryde, s. a.).

The daily leader, and our contact person at the place, is Justine Mitchell. Before we could start contacting our target group, it was important for us to talk to Justine, as she could provide us with knowledge as to how we, as two Danish women, could approach West African men. This knowledge has proven crucial in avoiding any misunderstanding that could occur in relation to us approaching these men. Justine, among others, advised us not to use the word *homeless* during our conversations or interviews, because it is considered very offensive to our target group. Furthermore, we were advised to communicate clearly to our informants that the interviews were for study purposes only and that their participation was voluntary. After Justine provided us with information, we felt prepared and ready to contact our target group. Together with Justine, we

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<sup>8</sup> In English: The Black Pot (our own translation)

agreed to visit Den Sorte Gryde again, but separately. According to Justine, it would be difficult to approach our target group if we were together (Appendix: 1). Justine was very helpful during our separate visits, giving advice whenever we had any difficulties or uncertainties. We have used Den Sorte Gryde as a place to get in contact with our informants, and to collect relevant information about our target group.

### **2.2.3 Other homeless facilities**

Throughout the thesis different places are mentioned as our informants navigate between all the homeless facilities and services in Copenhagen. One of the places is Stengade 40, a night shelter in Nørrebro<sup>9</sup>. The shelter opens at 11 pm, where it offers food and a place to sleep for both Danish and foreign homeless persons (Kirkens Korshær, 2013). The shelter accommodates a limited number of people, with only 13 bunk beds, and therefore the homeless have to participate in a lottery in order to ‘win’ a place to sleep (Kirkens Korshær, 2013). As one of the only shelters in Copenhagen, Stengade 40 does not acquire that the user has a Danish health insurance card or a Civil Registration Number<sup>10</sup> (Kirkens Korshær, 2013).

Kompasset<sup>11</sup> is also a service provided by Kirkens Korshær. Their service is to give legal advice and support to homeless migrants, who are in Denmark to find work (Kirkens Korshær, s. a.). The main target group for Kompasset is migrants who are not registered in Denmark, and thereby do not have access to social services or public assistance. For instance, Kompasset counsel in: how to get a Danish work permit, inform about labour rights as well as reviewing job contracts and CVs (Kirkens Korshær, s. a.).

Café Grace is a place that offers breakfast, legal help and assistance in CV writing as well as Danish and English lessons for homeless foreigners in Copenhagen (Grace KBH, 2013a). Their main target group is people coming to Denmark in search for a better life. The café is open to homeless users between 8 am and 11 am. During the wintertime Grace opens up as an emergency shelter with 30 beds for both Danish and foreign homeless, as in Stengade 40 the homeless have to ‘win’ lottery in order to get a bed (Grace KBH, 2013b).

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<sup>9</sup> Nørrebro is a neighbourhood in Copenhagen.

<sup>10</sup> When referring to Civil Registration Number we will use the term CPR-number.

<sup>11</sup> In English: The Compass (our own translation).

#### 2.2.4 Informants' profiles

West Africa consists of more than 15 countries, and it is important to emphasize that the dimension of this research does not focus on one specific country from West Africa, but on the men migrating to Europe from this specific region of Africa and their journey to find better opportunities on the European continent. Our informants originate from Ghana, Nigeria and Cameroon. Due to privacy considerations all of the informants in this thesis are given pseudonyms. We have decided to anonymize all the men, as it is uncertain if some of the informants are in Denmark illegally and thereby could risk deportation.

The narratives from the following informants will be applied in the analysis:

**Paul** is 33 years old, and comes from Cameroon. He tells us that as a young boy he competed in weightlifting, and went to competitions in several European countries. When about 17-18 of age he went to France for a weightlifting competition and overstayed his visa. After three years in France, Paul went to Spain, where he lived for 9 years and obtained a residence permit. He is now hoping to obtain Spanish nationality. Paul tells us that his mother is from a rich family, and he has several relatives living in France. In spite of this he has never returned to Cameroon and has by his own accord limited contact to his family. Paul entered Denmark in February 2015 and is here for the first time. He speaks French, Spanish and English in addition to two local Cameroonian languages.

**Karim** is 31 years old, and comes from Nigeria. He tells us that he comes from the Northern part of Nigeria and left the country in the beginning of 2014 because of the Boko Haram fighting. He decided to leave after the death of his father and brother, and left his mother and sister there. He went through Niger and Chad and crossed the desert to Libya where he worked for 3-4 months before crossing the Mediterranean Sea to Sicily in Italy. Karim tells us that he applied for asylum and obtained a residence permit. Karim came to Denmark in the beginning of 2015 for the first time and went to Berlin for a couple of days in order to renew his three-month visa in Denmark. Karim speaks English and Arabic.

**Richard** is 55 years old and comes from Ghana. He tells us that he is married and has four children, and that he left Ghana in 1992, because his wife was pregnant with triplets. Before leaving for Europe, Richard obtained a business visa for Italy, where he wanted to go and buy shoes he could sell in Ghana. He overstayed the visa and worked irregularly in Italy for the first four years. After a statement from the Pope he obtained residence permit in 1995, and worked for a leather

manufacture for 16 years. He obtained Italian nationality a couple of years before our meeting with him. Throughout the years he has visited Ghana several times. He was in Denmark in 2004 on vacation, but this time he has only been here for two months. Richard would not let us record the interviews, but only take notes.

**Joseph** is 35 years old and comes from Ghana. Joseph has a tight schedule, because he wants to eat at all the places that offer free meals and he works very hard collecting bottles. He came to Spain in 2004 to find a job in Europe. Joseph has a wife and two children aged 3 and 5. During his time in Europe he has visited Ghana several times. Joseph tells us that he used to park cars in Spain; however a new parking system was introduced and Joseph lost his job. Therefore, Joseph came to Denmark in order to work and even though his job consists of collecting bottles, he takes it very seriously and is concerned about losing it.

**Benjamin** is from Ghana and is 55 years old. He came to Europe by boat from Morocco in 2000 and had worked in Spain until the financial crisis occurred, after which he decided to move to another country in order to find work. He wanted to move back to Libya, where he had been before, but because of safety issues he decided not to go back. Benjamin is very open about his daily work in Denmark, which is to collect bottles. However, he tells us that if things do not improve he wants to go back to Ghana and live there. He is married and has four adult children that all live in Ghana. He supports his family financially and sends them the things they need. He has visited Ghana several times.

Commonalities among these men are that they all come from West Africa, that they have migrated to Europe, and that they now live on the streets of Copenhagen. They all use facilities offered to the homeless such as Den Sorte Gryde and Stengade 40. Migrants can be seen as either regular or irregular; however the boundaries between these two are not always clear. Irregular migration is a product of laws made by a government to control migration, and to make distinction of who has the right to enter the country (Castles & J. Miller, 1994; 90). However, it has to be emphasized that there is a clear distinction between irregular entry and irregular stay. Most of the irregular migrants enter the country of destination legally, but overstay their visa, which makes their status become irregular, whereas migrants who enter a country illegally can acquire legal residency by obtaining work or marriage (De Haas, 2007; 4). Our informants all have a legal right to be in Europe, either by having a residence permit or nationality in a European country such as Spain or Italy. However we

consider them as moving in and out of regular and irregular status as they sometimes violate the visa rules. All of them have left their country of origin in a young age in order to find better life.

## **2.3 Methods of data collection**

We base this thesis on empirical data collected through interviews, observations and informal conversations. Our primary data consists of the information we have gathered from the West African men who live on the streets of Copenhagen, whereas the secondary data derives from conversations with the staff at Den Sorte Gryde and Projekt UDENFOR. Because of the limited timeframe the empirical data is supported with secondary literature from other research works in this field. The following section explains how we have approached our informants and the method of conducting interviews.

### **2.3.1 Preparations**

In order to identify the West African men living on the streets of Copenhagen we decided to do participant observation. The staff at Projekt UDENFOR told us that the target group we were searching for might be found at Den Sorte Gryde, which is why we went there from the beginning of our research.

Before contacting the informants we had conversations with both the staff at projekt UDENFOR and Justine from Den Sorte Gryde. We agreed that the best approach was separate and meet the informants on our own in order to make them feel more comfortable and because it is easier to get in contact with strangers when meeting them alone. Furthermore, we felt that we would be more open and outgoing when meeting the informants individually, which we have found to be necessary with our target group. In order to establish contact each of us went to Den Sorte Gryde once, but quickly established that this was not enough, and we therefore chose to work our way around places we knew our target group would be staying at such as Nørrebro-hallen<sup>12</sup> and Copenhagen Central Library.

As participant observers we have two objectives, to engage in the situation and to observe the activities, actions and the physical aspects of the situation (Spradley, 1980; 54). During our observation at Den Sorte Gryde we tried emulating the other users; we grabbed a cup of coffee, sat down and interacted with the people who approached us. At the same time we observed the West African men's interaction with each other and with others at the place. We are aware that once we,

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<sup>12</sup> Nørrebro-hallen is a cultural and sporting center in Nørrebro

as researchers, enter the field we have altered it (Carlson, 2014; 217). This means that we might have affected the actions and interactions of the users of Den Sorte Gryde, which in turn has influenced our research and the outcome. The observations led to informal conversations and trust building between the West African men and us, and it enabled us to arrange new meetings for the interviews.

After the first two visits to Den Sorte Gryde we continued to visit the places where we knew our target group would be staying to observe and interact with them. That way our informants also began noticing and recognizing us, and started to feel more relaxed when we approached them.

Furthermore, as researchers we have been careful not to converse in Danish, as it can create a distance between the informants and us. Therefore, we have interacted with them, followed them and tried to adopt the group slang in order to build trust. It is important to reflect on the use of language even in informal conversations. However, it has to be noted that it is impossible to completely avoid conversing in Danish.

From the beginning we have been aware of the fact that due to our gender and age, we were likely to face some challenges with our informants. Us being a part of the very society in which they wish to enter, fostered an unequal power relation between our informants and us from the start. Our informants have very limited contact to Danes and see us as a gateway to the Danish society. As two young women, we experienced during our first meetings that our informants were highly interested in our age and whether we were married or in a relationship. To keep the focus squarely on our subject, we therefore felt it necessary to make it clear, from start that each of us were in a relationship.

Before each interview we made a presentation of our purpose in order to make sure that they knew we were students and not from any authorities. Furthermore, we made sure always to ask for permission to record the interview and some of our informants did not mind the recording. However, a few did not feel comfortable with us recording what they said, which is why we in accordance with their wishes, chose to write down their answers (Appendix: 2).

The observations and informal conversations have helped us make each interview more focused and individualized. The majority of the questions are the same in order to be able to compare the answers, but our preliminary conversations have given us an idea of how to approach each informant and what the focus of the interview should be.



Initially, approaching the informants was difficult and uncomfortable for us, both because the areas we wanted to touch upon within the interviews might be sensitive to the informants, but also because we felt like we were taking advantage of their situation. However, during the research period there was a trust development between our informants and us. We tried adapting to our informants' daily life and work, and sought to not cause any disruption, which might have led to meetings getting cancelled.

### **2.3.2 Notes from the field**

We decided to make use of participant observation in order to get to meet our target group, as well as see how they interacted with their surroundings and managed themselves in their daily lives. This gave us a pre-understanding of their responses when interviewing them. We will not make a direct analysis of the observations as our research question is built on the target group's own perception of the aspirations and the fulfilment of these aspirations, and not our point of view. However, the observations gave us a pre-established framework to understand the informants' answers.

In order to record observations and informal conversations with informants we made field notes, as we found it necessary not to write notes or record informal conversations, so as to better blend in and not create a distance between the informants and us. We each completed field notes by ourselves in order to get as much as possible written down. The notes were written down immediately after the meeting, observation or conversation as comprehensive as possible with the purpose of documentation. Subsequently, we compiled the notes into one document for each meeting. It is possible that some insignificant details are left out or forgotten, but we have tried our best to make the notes as comprehensive as possible, and the focus has been to write everything down and not to worry about the chronology. However, we have considered that writing field notes after the observation have been better in order to focus more on our informants. All these field notes are attached as appendixes<sup>13</sup> in order to attest the happenings.

### **2.3.3 Interviews**

The interviews conducted during this research are a combination of informal conversations and semi-structured, in-depth interviews. As our research is based on the informants' perception of their own situation it is important that we let them tell their story from their point of view and that they tell us what they find important, and not what we think is important due to the pre-understanding

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<sup>13</sup> Appendix 1 and 3-9

that we have. By conducting semi-structured interviews, we let them highlight, within certain themes, the areas that are important to them (Kvale, 1996; 124).

After conversations with Justine and the staff at Projekt UDENFOR we know that the West African men do not necessarily feel comfortable telling us their stories. We took this into consideration in our preparation of the interview guide, and in our way of approaching them. We intended not to be too intrusive in our questions and our approach, and to make the questions open and thoughtful. It was important for us to make our informants feel comfortable, and not make the questions too direct or judgemental. However, we still made sure that the questions led them in the direction that we wanted. Therefore, we chose to use a semi-structured interview guide<sup>14</sup>.

The semi-structured interview is inspired by the phenomenological approach that focuses on how the informant interprets the world. The semi-structured interview attempts to understand themes from the daily life based on the informant's own perspective and with this type of interview we seek to obtain descriptions from the informant's world in order to interpret the meaning of the described phenomena (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009: 45). The semi-structured interview resembles a daily conversation, but it has a professional objective and allows the interviewer to follow the specific themes in the interview guide. Furthermore, it also allows the interviewer to ask explorative and clarifying questions. This is in line with the phenomenological approach as it focuses on how the informant interprets the world. The aim is to understand the social phenomena from each agent's own perspective and describe the world as the informants interpret it; the important thing is what the informant experiences. (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2009; 44).

Our role as interviewer made the power relationship more asymmetrical as explained by Steinar Kvale: *"The conversation in a research is not the reciprocal interaction of two equal partners. There is a definite asymmetry of power: the interviewer defines the situation, introduces the topics of the conversation, and through further questions steers the course of the interview."* (Kvale, 1996: 126) Although we have not completely been able to change the unequal power dynamics between our informants and us, we have taken this under consideration and attempted to reduce the imbalance by using a semi-structured interview guide, which has allowed the informants to influence the direction of the interviews. Furthermore, we have informed the informants that they should not answer any questions they felt uncomfortable answering.

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<sup>14</sup> Appendix 2: Interview guide for informants.

All of our interviews were conducted in a public space, either at Copenhagen Central Library, Nørrebro-hallen or at a café in downtown Copenhagen. We made it clear from the beginning that all of the interviews were for specific study purposes and if there were any questions that they did not wish to answer, we would respect their decision. During the interviews we were always mindful of asking simple questions and not using any offensive terms. The interviews were conducted mainly in English. However, if some of our informants did not understand the questions or had difficulties in answering in English, we used either Spanish or Arabic to help them understand the questions or understand the answers. However, we are aware that misunderstandings could have occurred as the interviews are conducted in a secondary language for both the informants and us.

It is important to emphasize that this thesis does not aim to investigate whether or not the information collected through the interviews is the only version of the informants' life stories and we are aware that the men might have been telling us one version of their story. Furthermore, as the informants' stories are told after arriving to Denmark, they probably have changed since they left their home country. Therefore, if we had talked with the men before they left West Africa the stories might have been different.

#### **2.3.4 Philosophy of sciences**

This thesis takes a hermeneutical as well as phenomenological approach. We use both scientific approaches in different stages in our thesis; the phenomenological approach will provide a subjective perspective from our informants' life story and how they perceive the world. As Spradley (1979) expresses: *"I want to understand the world from your point of view. I want to know what you know in the way you know it. I want to understand the meaning of your experience, to walk in your shoes, to feel things as you feel them, to explain things as you explain them. Will you become my teacher and help me understand?"* (34). This will be done through interviews. The interviews provide us with the informants' view, an approach that is inspired by phenomenology, whereas the observations provide us an understanding of the unspoken and of the migrants' daily life.

In the hermeneutical approach, meanings and interpretations are all parts of a circular process in which to understand the whole story, also referred to as the hermeneutical circle. Each word and sentence can separately be interpreted and will, when connected, add to the understanding and interpretation of the complete story (Skott, 2014; 240-241). The pre-understandings are a part of the research and thereby influence the analysis and the outcome (Frisberg & Ôhlén, 2014). In accordance with the hermeneutical circle, we wanted to research the West African men's motivation

for coming to Denmark based on our pre-understandings and existing knowledge within the area. Our pre-understandings and knowledge have therefore formed the foundation of our choice of subject, our research question and the preparation of the interview guide. During the process we have moved further into the hermeneutical circle as our knowledge has developed and we have gained new knowledge from our empirical data. After we have conducted several interviews with the West African men, we have seen that our pre-understandings have been challenged, and that we have therefore been compelled to search for new knowledge within certain subjects, in order to obtain a new understanding. The process of our thesis can therefore be seen as a process of learning based on the hermeneutical circle.

Our pre-understanding derives from other researches we have read during our preparation as well as from our culture and daily life (Frisberg & Ôhlén, 2014). Therefore, we as researchers, have to clarify our pre-understanding in order to know how they can influence our interpretation of the data. In analysing the collected materials from our fieldwork the hermeneutical approach is essential in interpreting and understanding our informants' choices and decisions to navigate the way they do.

## **2.4 Literature review**

Throughout the thesis we use different research made by scholars within the fields of migration, globalization and homelessness, all based on a sociological or anthropological approach. We use this as secondary literature in order to support our empirical findings and supplement in the generalization of our results.

The three main research used are by María Hernández-Carretero and Jørgen Carling, Hans Lucht and Jakob Jakobsen. Commonalities among these scholars are that their studies focus on the subject migration of West African men in different terrains.

Researchers María Hernández-Carretero and Jørgen Carling have made conducted a study; *Beyond 'Kamikaze Migrants': Risk Taking in West African Boat Migration to Europe*. The research stresses the risks that young men are willing to take in order to reach Europe, to fulfil social adulthood. The men migrate by crossing the sea from the coast of West Africa to the Canary Islands in Spain. The researchers' work is based on fieldwork conducted in Senegal. Their focus is on young men with aspirations of migrating to Europe, and the huge social pressure the young men are facing, which is why they ignore the risk of crossing the ocean. The term 'aspiring pirogue migrants' is used in order to describe the young men, because they have yet to successfully migrate, but still have an

aspiration to do so. Their research has given us an understanding of how the socioeconomic context influences the young men to take a risky decision in order to achieve social acceptance. Furthermore, Hernández-Carretero and Carling's informants base the outcome of the high-risk migration on God's will.

We use Hernández-Carretero & Carling's research in order to understand our group of West African men's social position and why they have chosen to migrate. Furthermore, it also gives us an insight in the limited opportunities the men have to achieve adulthood in their home country. This insight helps us to understand some of the elements in the given situation that our informants were in before they came to Europe which is relevant in order to understand why they navigate the way they do to fulfil their aspirations.

The anthropologist Hans Lucht has a research on the conditions of West African migrants in Italy which is presented in the book *Darkness before Daybreak: African migrants living on the margins in Southern Italy today*. The research presents the West African men's migration from several perspectives and how the impact of globalization has resulted in that many West African men migrate in order to reach their dreams. Lucht describes how not all are included in the benefits of the globalized world and many West African men end up in a position in Italy, where they struggle in order to achieve their aspirations. Furthermore, Lucht gives us a picture of the working conditions in Italy and how the West African men try to find a job to be able to send some money to their families in their home countries. All of our informants have entered Europe through Southern Europe and have stayed in Italy or Spain for a longer period of time; therefore we find Lucht's research on the situation in that region relevant to use in our thesis, due to the fact that our fieldwork has solely been conducted in Denmark.

The anthropologist Jakob Jakobsen has conducted the study: *Skaberværk på standby: En antropologisk undersøgelse af afrikanske varmestuebrugere i København*<sup>15</sup> for the organization Dan Church Social on West African men who are using the shelter Stengade 40, which the organisation provides for homeless people in Copenhagen. His report highlights an insight in how the West African men live in Denmark and why they have ended up living on the streets of Copenhagen. This research has given us an understanding of the West African men's motivation for coming to Denmark and the current situation of their lives and challenges. Furthermore, the research outlines

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<sup>15</sup> In English: Creation on Standby: An anthropological study of African shelter users in Copenhagen (our own translation)

the wishes the African men hope to fulfil in Denmark. In the recent years more West African migrant have been coming to Denmark in search for better work opportunities, especially after the Global Financial Crisis.

In the report, Jakob Jakobsen follows and interviews West African men in order to give the reader an understanding of their situation and what they do in Copenhagen. This information has given us knowledge and formed our pre-understandings about our target group and what kind of subjects we should investigate. It has also given us an understanding of the sensitivities of our research among these West African men and how we should approach them. Like our fieldwork, Jakobsen's fieldwork is also conducted in Denmark, which is why we have found great similarities in the outcomes, and therefore we find his research relevant to use in order to support the analysis of our findings.

### 3 Theoretical framework

In the following chapter, we present the theoretical approach of this thesis. We have chosen to employ *social navigation* as the main theory in order to answer our research question. Furthermore, we find it relevant to apply a perspective on *social exclusion* in order to support our analysis of aspirations and the changes of these.

#### 3.1 Social navigation by Henrik E. Vigh

Social navigation is a theoretical tool that can explain how people mobilize in a certain way within the possibilities they have. In order to answer our research question we will use Henrik Vigh's theory on social navigation as he operates with the concepts of *social becoming* and *social death*. We will equate social becoming with the fulfilment of aspirations whereas social death will be equated to never getting one's aspirations fulfilled.

Vigh has done fieldwork amongst young men in Guinea-Bissau. His fieldwork has led to the development of the theory on social navigation. Guinea-Bissau is a country that since 1999 has experienced five coups or coup attempts as well as several outbreaks of fighting, which has caused great instability (Vigh, 2006). This means that Vigh's research was done in a terrain that moves faster than others might move. The terrain our informants come from and the one they find in Denmark, are not necessarily as much in motion as the one in Guinea-Bissau. However, all terrains are in motion, some just move slower than others, which is why we believe that the theory can be used in the terrain our group of West African men are found in after reaching Europe and Denmark. The theory on social navigation provides insight to what the aspirations of men in West Africa are, as well as an insight into how they can choose to navigate within the possibilities they have, in order to get their aspirations fulfilled. Our empirical data, conducted as interviews, will be used in order to support this theory. Migration is one option of becoming; however it does not shed a light on how the West African men navigate after migrating, which is why our empirical data will contribute new insights in this area.

Social navigation theory works as the framework for the analysis, as it explains how people move within their given possibilities, and this is what we want to investigate among the West African men who live on the streets of Copenhagen. The theory focuses on the interplay between the agent, terrain, planning and actions (Vigh, 2004). We have decided to use Vigh's theory as it provides an

insight in to how people navigate within the given possibilities, and the theory thereby allows us to analyse how the migrants' possibilities and limitations are marked by the structures of the given terrain and how their further navigation is affected when they reach Europe. In West Africa, people that are socially categorized as *the youth* are viewed as dependent on assistance from family, friends and the elders, and therefore occupy a marginalized position in society. This position can be compared to the one they find themselves in when living on the streets of Europe, where they are also limited both economically and socially. We therefore perceive this theory as useful both in order to analyse the West African men's situation before leaving their home country as well as their situation after having reached Europe. Furthermore, we use the concept of social navigation to analyse the West African migrants' movements both socially and physically.

In the following, we explain the main concepts within social navigation which we find relevant to use in order to answer the research question of this thesis. The concepts are interrelated and therefore support each other in the analysis.

### 3.1.1 Dubriagem

Inspired by the Guinean men Vigh adopts the term *dubriagem* to convey motion within motion. *Dubriagem* is the infinitive form of *dubria*, which originates from Guinean Creole and can be translated into "*the ability to get by*" (Vigh, 2010; 7). We use the term in order to analyse how the West African men manage themselves in the Danish society, and how they handle and cope with their situation once having arrived to Europe in order to fulfil their social aspirations. The term refers to more than just a way of survival; it "*is directed both towards making one's way through immediate difficulties as well as directing one's life positively into the future*" (Vigh, 2009; 423). It is a way to get the best out of the given situation. We put an emphasis on the relationship between the immediate struggle and the attempts to secure an existence, in a space where a positive future is not pre-given, and where the movement of the terrain is taken into consideration at every stage of action. We argue that the terrain of these men cannot be considered stable or static, and that they move through an environment in motion. Therefore, we have to consider the link between the terrain people move in and how terrain itself, moves them, before, during and after an act (ibid; 425). The social navigation must constantly be defined and redefined depending on the opportunities available in the current terrain (Vigh, 2004;131). As one of Vigh's informants explains; "*we must be attentive, we must dubria. If you do not dubria you will fall.*" Vigh argues that to fall is to stay passive: "*to have the world act upon you rather than act in relation to the way*



*it engages you.* (Vigh, 2009; 423). This statement is relevant to our analysis, as we want to analyse how our informants control their own lives through social navigation.

### **3.1.2 The concept of youth**

The concept of the youth enables us to investigate several perspectives of the West African men's situation. It provides us with an understanding of their social position, the context, which they are seen in, and the concept of being and becoming which will illuminate their process toward fulfilment of the social aspirations.

We apply the concept of youth as a social position in life, and not as the biological term of being young. We interpret the term youth as the generational position between being a child and an adult, and not as a person who is young.

There is no sole construction of youth (Christensen et al., 2006; 13) which is why it is important that we investigate the possibilities and limitations of the youth embedded in the local understanding of the social position. Most work on youth is done with a perspective tied to the youth in Western societies. However, in less economically developed areas the status of youth is not the same as in more economically developed areas. By way of Vigh, Chabal and Daloz (1999) state: *“Contrary to the Western view that youth is the most desirable station in life, adolescent Africans hunger after the age, which will endow them with, an authority currently denied”* (Vigh, 2006; 35). In continuation hereof Vigh argues that: *“In the North, where young people, ideally, have the possibility of building lives for themselves, youth is (...) seen as a positive social position; as a demarcated entity. Yet when resources are sparse and tied to political formations or networks, being young often becomes a position of social and political immaturity, drastically changing the status of the social position.”* (ibid; 36). ‘What youth is’ therefore always depends on what the youth is able to do in the given context, and on the possibility of building and maintaining their own lives independent of the control of elders (ibid; 35). This focus on possibilities in the North and the South is in our analysis used to clarify the given situation of the West African men before leaving Africa, and after entering Europe. This analysis will determine whether the West African migrants see themselves as included in the European category of youth.

The concept of youth has to be seen from two perspectives, *“in relation to both the generational dynamics and the space or position in which agents share similar horizons and points of orientation”* (ibid; 34), meaning that the concept has to be approached as both position and process.

The mannheimian perspective on youth is that they “*must be seen as bound together by formative experience and interpretative horizons, constituted by their historical becoming as a specific generation growing up in specific circumstances as well as defined by their mutual position in the intergenerational order.*” (ibid; 34-35). This perspective gives us the opportunity to illuminate the way youth is constructed as both position and as process, referred to as *social being* and *social becoming*, which we use to analyse the situation of the West African men. In this thesis social becoming is equated with the fulfilment of social aspirations.

The social and generational age does not necessarily follow biological time or linear chronology; it changes according to the socio-cultural contexts of power and position (Christensen et al., 2006; 12), meaning that in certain contexts the youth can be seen as children whereas in others they are seen as men. This is also why the biological age is not as important as the given social context the men are in. This is relevant to our analysis of the West African men’s unstable situation, as their position changes all the time. Furthermore, this focus is used as an argument as to why the West African men choose to migrate.

### **3.1.3 Possibilities of social becoming**

In continuation with the concept of youth, it is relevant to touch upon the moratorium seen among the West African men who are trying to go through the process of social becoming.

The difference between cultural moratorium and social moratorium is in the amount of possibilities on offer as well as the potential access to resources available to the youth. Adults in the North desire to be young or at least youthful, which according to Helena Wulff, is seen as *a cultural moratorium*; whereas youth in the South desire the status of adulthood, and being young is a part of a social category that people are involuntary caught in and seek to escape. It is therefore seen as social being and a *social moratorium*. Cultural moratorium is a space for amusement, creativity and freedom, where youth can delay and escape adult responsibilities; social moratorium is characterized by a lack of economic and social opportunities as well as a lack of control over access to resources, which reduces ones chances of moving towards adulthood. Vigh argues that the youth is not dying physically, but socially. They are unable to fulfil their social needs and the absence of opportunities to build a worthy life make them unable to enter the process of social becoming, which Vigh refers to as *social death* (Vigh, 2006; 45). Throughout this thesis, we equate social death with not getting one’s social aspirations fulfilled. The youth are in an involuntary position that they try to escape. The difference between cultural and social moratorium is therefore to be found in

the space of possibilities and opportunities of social becoming. (Vigh, 2006; 36-37). The concept of social moratorium is useful in answering our research question in relation to how the West African migrants' aspirations change through their social navigation and the possibility of escaping social death.

According to Vigh's research, the biological perspective of social moratorium encompasses boys aged thirteen to men in their forties (Vigh, 2004), who are caught in a social position of inadequate life chances. This is relevant to our research as many of our informants left Africa as young men, but they have been in Europe for several years and are now older than fifty.

The lives of the West African men are "*characterized by a tenacious struggle to get by in the face of persistent hardship*". They are "*set between an immediate struggle to secure themselves the next meal, find the next job and survive the present, and an unceasing attempt to figure out a way of gaining viable life chances, social worth and recognition*" (Vigh, 2009: 421). This description of the West African men is Vigh's portrayal of the men in Guinea-Bissau; however we find it identical to the description of our target group. Therefore, social navigation is related to movement through both the socially immediate and the socially imagined. Although Vigh paints a picture of the social position of youth in Bissau as an intergenerational immobility and impossibility of social becoming, he also wants us to see the youth in Bissau in a different perspective, because the youth seek new ways to escape social moratorium. Thus, his attention is on the social possibilities through the social relationships and networks the youth socially navigate through in order to gain better possibilities (ibid.).

Vigh presents ways to seek the realization of social becoming and to escape social death; he argues that there are three more or less available options for the youth; *migration*, *economy of affection* and *patrimonialism*. Of these options Vigh's research focuses on patrimonialism, whereas our focus is on migration, as this is the way our informants have chosen to escape the social death in West Africa and on economy of affection, because the West African men still depend on outside support after migrating.

In the following section we elaborate on the option known as *migration*, as we do not consider Vigh's theory to be comprehensive enough and choose to supplement it with other theoretical perspectives.

### 3.1.3.1 Migration

Although migration is the most desirable option for many West African men, it is also the most difficult to attain as it requires considerable resources and financial support from family and networks. According to Vigh this option is the fastest way to social become and thereby escaping social death (Vigh, 2006; 47). He argues that migration is an option to escape social death; however he does not offer a relevant insight into why this option arises and develops. Therefore, we find it necessary to add further perspectives to this issue. The decision to migrate can be viewed as a result of both structural and personal reasons. We have chosen to incorporate the notion of push and pull in order to understand and explain what factors inform our informants' decision to migrate.

When analysing the reasons behind migration we understand that there are always certain factors that make migration either necessary or desirable for West African men. The individual agent's decision to migrate is based upon a rational comparison of the standard of living and benefits in ones country of origin as opposed to an alternative destination (Castles and Miller, 1993;19). The lack of possibilities of social becoming for many West African men are considered push factors for migration, and the pull factors of moving to Europe is the idea of better economic opportunities to both achieve social becoming and a better life. In the following we argue that the social and cultural impact of globalization on the West African men can be considered a pull factor, as images of a better life in another part of the world are easily accessible to them.

According to Hans Lucht an important matter to understand in regards to the immigration to Europe is the inherent polarization of the globalized world, the parallel mechanism of inclusion and exclusion, which entails a growing connectedness as well as disconnectedness. The world becomes interconnected for some, as regards to movement, goods, capital and images, while other places and people are excluded from the privileges, but not from the media and the creation of aspirations: *"Globalization may reach all corners of the world, but only as a promise of wealth"* (Lucht, 2012; 85-86). According to Lucht, Daniel Cohen agrees with this perspective and argues that; *"The new global economy creates an unprecedented rupture between the aspirations to which it gives birth and the reality it brings about. Never before have means of communication – the media – created such a global consciousness; never have economic forces been so far behind the new awareness. For the majority of the poor inhabitants of our planet, globalization is only a fleeting image."* (2012; 86)

Therefore, in this thesis we argue that there are two experiences of globalization: For people in the West, the experience of being inside the circulation of material and symbolic goods with the freedom of movement and endless options, and the other experience of being on the outside and belonging to a geographical place cut off from the privileges of globalized world, with little or no opportunities of movement and limited power to influence one's circumstances (Lucht, 2012; 87). Grounded in our empirical data, we will apply these theoretical perspectives to analyse how the West African men are included or excluded from the privileges of the globalized world. Furthermore, we will support this part of our analysis with a theoretical perspective on social exclusion.

### **3.2 Social exclusion by A. S. Bhalla and Frédéric Lapeyre**

In the light of our observations and interviews we became aware of a common pattern amongst our informants. We saw that their aspirations changed in relation to their awareness of the limitations and obstacles they faced. We realised that these limitations and obstacles occur due to exclusion of the West African men in several levels and terrains. We therefore find it relevant to touch upon different perspectives of social exclusion in our analysis in order to explain the West African men's deprivations and social limitations, and how these influence their aspirations and navigation.

The phenomenon social exclusion is developed as a result of the emergence of new forms of poverty and marginalization. Bhalla and Lapeyre provide a comparison of social exclusion and poverty; however they argue that the economic aspect is too limited in order to understand the complexity of social exclusion. Where poverty is primarily focused on deprivation of economic and material resources, social exclusion is more multidimensional and is therefore *also* concerned with deprivation of social ties with family, friends and local community as well as being cut off from state services and institutions (1991; 34). Furthermore, they argue that the concept of social exclusion is connected to deprivation within three main dimensions: an economic dimension, a social dimension and a political dimension. These three dimensions are interconnected and each dimension has an impact on the other, which is why each dimension cannot be applied in isolation (ibid.; 28).

The economic dimension of exclusion is mainly concerned with income and access to goods and services, from which some people are excluded; this refers to deprivation of income from employment or insufficient coverage of basic needs through shelter, health and education (ibid.; 17). The economic dimension is relevant to our study as our informants are excluded from the

labour market, partly because of a lack of citizenship. It is important to emphasize that the deprivation occurs because of unemployment, but also occurs when in a situation of precarious employment (ibid.; 64).

Employment has a social dimension to it as well; social legitimacy and social status is gained through employment as well as the satisfaction that comes from being engaged in something worthwhile (ibid.; 19). The social dimension is mainly concerned with access to social services, labour market and the extent of social participation. This dimension is more concerned with the relational aspects, both between state and individuals and amongst individuals (ibid.; 22). This means that social exclusion contains deprivation of inclusion from both the state and the society.

The political dimension is concerned with the denial of citizenship as well as the denial of civil and political rights (ibid. 16) that create uneven opportunities for certain people; rights such as personal security, rule of law, political participation and equal opportunity. (Ibid.; 22). In relation to our target group consisting of West African men, we argue that they navigate with limited rights and political influence in Europe, mainly because of their status as non-European citizens. Furthermore, when they end up as homeless they are excluded from mainstream society, as they navigate in the homeless terrains.

We understand exclusion to be a lack of possibilities and the inability to participate as well as the inability to control the situation. Social exclusion is a relative concept based on local, cultural and time-based criteria, meaning that it depends on what people in the given society view as *normal life* at a certain time. (Ibid.; 30).

We apply this theory in order to analyse the West African men's deprivation and limitations in Europe and Denmark, based on economic, political and social dimensions. This we do in order to identify how they cope with these deprivations and limitations, and how that influences their aspirations.

## 4 Emerging Aspirations

The main focus in this chapter is to provide an analysis of the West African men's motivation migrating. Included in this analysis is a focus on the men's aspirations of what they wish to achieve after migrating as well as their expectations to the country of destination. In order to analyse these aspirations we need to shed a light on a socioeconomic dimension, and the images of Europe portrayed in West Africa. Furthermore, the risk of crossing the Mediterranean Sea needs to be taken into consideration. We base this analysis on our informants' experiences, so as to provide their perspective on the link between migration and social becoming.

### 4.1 'It is not because people are poor'

The majority of people in West Africa live in rural areas or in small towns. Most of them live under disadvantageous conditions and are less educated than people whom live in urban areas. Therefore, the vast majority of work takes place in agriculture (Filmer, Deon & Fox, Louise, 2014). Both in the urban areas and the rural areas there is a higher level of unemployment and underemployment amongst young people than amongst other members of the labour active population (UNFPA, 2012). However, Africa also has the youngest population in the world; an estimated 193 million people are aged between 15 and 24, a number that will increase to 362 million by 2050 (ibid.; 26). This population growth of youth potentially puts a great pressure on the labour markets, and makes the opportunities to find a decent job very limited.

Furthermore, many African countries in general are still facing many problems: *“lack of access to social services, environmental degradation, high levels of external debt, and increasing rates of poverty”* (Lucht, 2012; 209). All these problems as well as the growth of the population, affect West African men's opportunities to find a job. Finding a job is therefore considered very challenging.

In order to understand the impact of these factual limitations we have asked our informants about the possibilities of finding a job that can fulfil the social aspirations of West African men.

According to Paul, many people take an education in Cameroon, in the hope of finding a job after they graduate. However, finding a job is not an easy task, it requires both luck and a family member that can help you. *“If you have one profession like medicine or to be doctor or to be that, you do not have a job when you finish your class if you get lucky you can get a job. Many people when they have a profession if you have a family in a one company or hospital to take your hand and send possibility to enter there if you have or the certification you know very difficult* (Audio file: 1; 00:9:15). *“It is very complicated because if you learn many things in life you cannot have a*

*job...maybe if you are lucky” (Audio file: 1; 00:12:46). As well as Paul, Karim also explains how hard it is to find a job, even if a person has more than one education it does not bring a job; “yeah, if it is not only young people they do 40 years degree....so you don’t have jobs. You know how many people have degree from Nigeria who don’t have job. Too much too much I am not talking about people who do diploma you see, no I talk about people who have degree two degree....some day they take three degrees” (Audio file: 2; 01:25:58).*

Both Paul and Karim’s statements illustrate that educated West African men with one or more educations have difficulties finding a job. So although, young people in Africa are considered the best-educated generation (UNFPA, 2012; 12), they are however unable to find a work that matches their qualification.

As regards to underemployment, Richard had a good job analysing drinking water in a laboratory. He liked his job very much, however when his wife became pregnant with triplets (Appendix: 3), his pay check was not enough to sustain and support his family financially. (Appendix: 4)

Karim had a similar problem. He had several jobs in Nigeria; however he did not earn enough to establish a family, which he explains in the following statement; *“I am working agriculture one, I am sell business buy clothes, jeans, shoe. I have a small shop it is not big for my city, I have my senior brother before he died who sell to me, you understand. I am drive car taxi yeah, if it is no good I leave this one I drive car. So Africa is not like Europe if you know, if you know taxi, you do taxi only taxi, if want business you do business you are finish. So Africa no, Africa you can do three business you can drive taxi, later you see this taxi is money is too small, you can leave drive taxi you can enter agriculture, because agriculture you have money. You have money maybe you do working for agriculture now don’t have money too much, here you can leave agriculture you can go working supermarket” (Audio file: 3; 00:16:02).* In the statement he explains the difference between Europe and Africa. He states that in Europe a person only needs to have one job, whereas in Africa you need to have several jobs in order to earn a sufficient amount, and still it is often not enough. Both Richard and Karim had jobs in their home countries; however their jobs were not well paid and therefore not enough to either support Richards’s family financially or to let Karim start a family of his own.

In spite of the lack of opportunities, it is important to mention that our informants have not migrated due to poverty. All of our informants had a job and an income before they left, and they were therefore not considered as the poorest of the poor. As Paul explains it: *“Many people want to go*



*out, because they take a decision by yourself to go and find yourself. You know, it is not because people are poor, not because people are poor just because they want to change your life.*"(Audio file: 1; 00:20:50). Migrants do not come from the poorest countries and are not the poorest people from those countries; rather they are in a disadvantaged position and therefore have a desire to move forward socially and economically (Lucht, 2012; 84). This is also emphasized by Hernández-Carretero & Carling; *"the central paradox in the relationship between migration and poverty [is] when poor societies develop, migration aspirations tend to increase, not decline"* (Hernández-Carretero & Carling, 2008; 5). In this context, we argue that our informants are excluded from an economic dimension, because of the deprivation of sufficient money to improve their situation. As mentioned above, they are considered neither poor nor rich, however they are in between, which means that they are caught in a situation where they cannot better themselves and get closer to their aspirations.

Due to limited job opportunities, having an education in West Africa does not guarantee a job. Furthermore, if you have a job, the salary is very low. This makes it impossible for many men to take the next step towards adulthood, which entails getting married and starting their own family. Therefore they become excluded in a social dimension. This will be further elaborated in the following section.

## **4.2 'You have to pay the bride's price'**

In West African societies, the most desirable social position is to become an adult. To achieve this position, West African men have to be able to establish an independent livelihood, which means that they must be able to afford to get married and financially support their new family (Hernández-Carretero & Carling, 2012). However, many West African men are unable to fulfil this social role because of the lack of work opportunities, or if one has a job, the small salary one receives. This inability to financially support a family, excludes the men from social adulthood, and instead keeps them caught in the undesirable social category of a youth (Vigh, 2006). Therefore we argue that to be categorised as a youth is something that applies to all our informants, because although some of them have families back in West Africa, they were not able to fully support them financially.

According to Hernández-Carretero & Carling the financial barriers to marriage are manifested in three stages. The first stage is in relation to the romantic relationship where women have material wishes, such as clothing, hairstyles and beauty products. The second stage is right before entering a marriage, where expectations are that the groom pays the bride an amount of money and provides

his new family with a furnished accommodation. The third stage is in married life, where men are expected to fulfil the role as the breadwinner, and ensure the family's material wellbeing (Hernández-Carretero & Carling, 2012).

These three stages are recognizable to all of our informants as they explain the amount of responsibilities that men have in order to fulfil their social role. This highlights the immense pressure West African men face, when it comes to fulfilling their role in the West African society.

Paul explains; *"because it is the men who can bring something to the women not the women who can bring something to the men (so it is the man's responsibility?) That is supposed to bring something. Because it is the men who is supposed to marry the women so it is the man's responsibility to bring"* (Audio file: 4; 00:18:37). With 'bring something' Paul means material goods that women want, such as shoes, clothes and beauty products, which men are expected to bring before asking for a woman's hand in marriage. This statement also indicates that the women do not have responsibilities; according to Paul, all they have to do is to wait for the man to propose.

In addition to that, Karim explains that before leaving Nigeria, he had a job, a car and a house (Audio file: 5; 00:49:53). However, it was not enough to start a family. He explains that in order to get married you have to pay the bride an amount or *sadak*<sup>16</sup>, as he calls it. Furthermore, he also has to pay for the wedding and bring material goods to his bride.

*Q: But you didn't want to get married before you left?*

*Karim: "No"*

*Q: Why, before you left Nigeria?*

*Karim: "No because no Nigeria no, I don't have money"*

*Q: Do you pay a lot in Nigeria to get married; do you need a lot of money?*

*Karim: "Yeah, you can pay sadak (...) so you know Islam is different, Nigeria is different everything is for you, it is not like here. If you married like me if you marry for Nigeria my wife is no going anywhere understand is living to house anytime every day if you need cream, use all, this is for me (...) living for house"*

*Q: Yeah so, your wife has to be in the house?*

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<sup>16</sup> Sadak is Arabic and refers to the money that the man has to pay in dowry to the woman.

*Karim: "So if you don't have money it is a problem it is not possible because maybe you need cream, here cream you need too much money, you need shampoo it is different money"*(Audio file: 2; 01:28:35)

Karim comes from the Islamic part of Nigeria and according to Islamic traditions, when it comes to marriage the man is the sole provider. This means that in order for Karim to get married he has to pay the sadak for his future wife, the wedding, provide a home and provide his wife with material goods such as beauty products. Furthermore, the wife has to stay at home, meaning that Karim is solely responsible for financially supporting the household. This proves an impossible task with the small amount of money he earned back in Nigeria.

This mirrors Richard's explanation of the man's responsibility to pay the bride and her family and provide material goods. *"You have to pay the bride's price... you come home to her family with a bottle of snaps, money, clothes. Everything is now modernized. Today they bring a suitcase with clothes and underwear. The family makes a list. They also give money to the girl's brother in the family. If in the family, they don't have a brother they pay a close related boy. You also have to give money to the father and the mother; in order to get married you have to have money* (Appendix: 4). Although Richard is not Muslim, his marriage traditions are similar to Karim's. Richard mentions in his statements, that the groom also pays for things the bride's family wishes for and gives money to the brother of the bride as well, which shows how costly a marriage in West Africa can be.

The statements provided by Richard and Karim illustrate the amount of money that men need to have in order to fulfil the role society expects from them. This forces many young men to search for other solutions.

According to Richard, the man is responsible for supporting his family financially, whereas the woman normally is responsible for taking care of the household and children. If the woman chooses to work, the husband is responsible for providing a small business his wife can run.

As Richard explains: *"Normally the man is responsible and the woman has children, the man marry the woman, not woman marry the man woman take care of the house or sometimes opens a small business [a small store] that depends on the man"* (Appendix: 4).

Richard further explains that in Ghana, when a woman gets married she moves away from her family home to the husband's family home. Having four girls means that the house will be empty when they get married, which is a problem because who will take care of his wife and him (Appendix: 4). This illustrates the difference between men and women and the responsibility placed on men to take care of their parents. Here it clearly shows that the man is responsible for taking care

of his parents when they get older. For Richard it is a cause for concern that he only has daughters, because when they marry, they will leave the family home. According to tradition, men are responsible for both their own family and their parents. Paul also gives an explanation on this subject:

Q: *“But in Cameroon does the man also have responsible for his mother and father as well as his wife or how does it work?”*

Paul: *“Yeah, yeah but it depends on the family you know it depends on the family. If it is only boy in the family, only men your mother and father you, have all the responsibility. You get to fight for the family you get to work you get the animal more animal and when the animal grows you sell it to the money you know.”*

Q: *“So on this situation a man is responsible for two families?”*

Paul: *“Yeah, he gets to help his family and later anytime can he help his grandmother or grandfather you know. Because his mother and father depend on him”*

Q: *“What if you are not married, what is a man who is not married does he has any responsibility?”*

Paul: *“He have the responsibility like men who not married (...) single, yeah you have responsibility like single”* (Audio file: 4; 00:05:40).

This conversation illustrates that the man is not only responsible for his own family but also his parents and sometimes even his grandparents. Furthermore, men bear this responsibility even before they get married, which shows that the expectation of men as providers is developed in an early stage in life and that parents have an expectation of being taken care of by their sons when they become older. Richard believes that all women want to rely on a man. He uses the sentence *“women only want to sleep on men’s [shoulder]”* (Appendix: 4). According to him, women just want men to feed them and not do anything. He says that even though women have money, they will leave them in the bag and expect the men to pay. This statement further illustrates the expectations of what men are responsible for.

Richard further explains that it is very important that a man is independent in Ghana. However, to become independent you cannot rely on parents and you have to be secure financially as Richard explains it; *I have my own decision. When you have money, you can decide, on your own.* (Appendix: 4). In order to establish a family and achieve adulthood, having money is essential.

When West African men are moving from one stage in life to another, the amount of money needed to fulfil their social role increases. Even though some men may be lucky enough to get married, it does not necessarily mean that they are able to fully support their families financially. This means that West African men are under a constant pressure to earn more money in order to live up to their responsibilities. Furthermore, the responsibilities West African men have grown exponentially throughout their lives, whether it is the prospect of having to take care of aging parents or having to take care of their own children. Due to the limited opportunities our informants have had in order to fulfil their social role, they have chosen to migrate. The following section presents a deeper understanding of their decision to migrate.

### **4.3 ‘Europe has everything, how could you not succeed?’**

In this section, we analyse how the internal and external surroundings have affected the West African men’s decision to migrate. The decision to migrate is considered the fastest way to escape social death and to change one’s circumstances (Vigh, 2006). According to Hernández-Carretero & Carling, migration represents a way of “breaking out” of a socioeconomic situation that restrained many West African men from establishing independence and adulthood. Therefore, migration is perceived as a promise of individual progress, which leads to the success of social becoming (Hernández-Carretero & Carling, 2012). This offers an explanation on Richard’s statement on how his community in Ghana perceived migration as a success even though in reality it is much more complex.

Richard: *“Everyone know if you go to Europe you would succeed in life, you cannot go there and not succeeded”*

Q: *“How do they [people in Ghana] know if you would succeed in Europe?”*

Richard: *“Because they see it on TV, beautiful places, nature. Europe has everything, how could you not succeed?”* (Appendix: 4).

This statement can be viewed as a confirmation of Lucht’s idea of the inherent polarization of the globalized world, the parallel mechanism of inclusion and exclusion. He argues that: *“Globalization may reach all corners of the world, but only as a promise of wealth”* (Lucht, 2012; 85-86). According to Lucht, Daniel Cohen agrees with this perspective and argues that; *“The new global economy creates an unprecedented rupture between the expectations to which it gives birth and the reality it brings about. Never before have means of communication – the media – created such a*

*global consciousness; never have economic forces been so far behind the new awareness. For the majority of the poor inhabitants of our planet, globalization is only a fleeting image.*" (ibid.). We argue that our informants see migration as a possibility to be included in the *promise of wealth* in a specific part of the world; a part of the world they are aware of because of the access to images that show how life there is.

Therefore, the idea of success relies on the images that the West African societies are exposed to by the media. The great exposure to wealth is happening locally and through the global media and transnational connections which create new ambitions and desires (Carling & Hernández-Carretero, 2009). Cindy Horst explains *"the increased exposure to media of life in the West, and the personal accounts of emigrants enable increasing numbers of people to imagine their own lives as migrants"* (Massey et al., 1998; 47). For instance, Paul was influenced as well by the images on TV of Europe, therefore he started to imagine a life there; *"I feel Europe in my mind in my imagination, I looked many time in TV...I could not be here [in Cameroon]...because for me my mind is not here [in Cameroon]"* (Audio file: 1; 02:06:50).

Furthermore, Richards's statement also emphasizes that *"Europe has everything"* compared to Africa which attracts many to go to Europe and search for a better life. Karim heard on the news that Europe is better to be in than any other place in the world, as he explains below:

Q: *"You heard that before. Before you came to Libya you heard about [Europe] it is good?"*

Karim: *"Yeah for News, because I reading from News you see I read it too news BBC and BOE"*

Q: *"And what did the news says?"*

Karim: *"The news, the new, Europe, Europe is better in the world all the world is Europe is good so everybody looking Europe, you know if you are American people like, Brazil, Argentina Mexico they come to Europe so many people the come to Europe they say Europe Europe so that is why I said yes I believe"*

Q: *"So you believed what they were telling you?"*

Karim: *"Yeah so that is why I said I try"* (Audio file: 2; 00:07:12)

The news stories and images of Europe on television, as well as the perception of a causal link between a successful life and migration, can be a motivation for many West African men to migrate, especially when their families support them in their decision.

West African migrants are part of family livelihood strategies financed by a combination of the families' resources and by later on ensuring remittances or financial support for migration to other family members. Failing to 'succeed' as migrants and to fulfil such expectations can have economic consequences for the households, which expected or depended on remittance (Kleist, 2011; 4). Furthermore, deportation is seen as extremely shameful and sometimes results in social exclusion from the family and the local community as well as risky attempts of migration (Kleist, 2011:4). None of our informants failed to migrate and therefore have not experienced this kind of exclusion. However, all of them have told us that their families have supported their decision to migrate and expect economic help from them, which means that they have to send money.

Q: *"Why did you go to Italy?"*

Richard: *"To get a better future, why do you think people leave their country? To get a better future."* (Appendix: 4).

He travelled to Italy to get a better future. The decision to migrate was made together with his family; according to Richard, they were very happy, as most families in Ghana are when someone moves to Europe, because of what is described as the *"good money"* (Appendix: 4). Remittances as mentioned above are the source of economic improvement for many families in West Africa and therefore, families have high expectations for the person who emigrates. These expectations put a lot of pressure on our informants to either send money or gifts.

In addition, Paul told us that many of his family members from his mother's side live in Europe and America. They are well educated and live a successful life there. This had an impact on Paul's wish to migrate, and with financial support from his uncle it was made possible to save money to migrate.

Paul: *"It is that my uncle who made me come to Europe here"*

Q: *"How?"*

Paul: *"Because I worked, I worked for him many times before from I go to school and work you know school and work, school and work. So he decided to tell me about the money when I worked he could not pay me the money. I tell him to keep it because my mind was Europe. When I start make competition, I start make competitions I go outside I go France, I go in Africa intercontinental competition"*

Q: *"How old were you there, at that time?"*

Paul: *"I am think seventeen, eighteen years, yes like that. So sometimes he asks me money I keep for you since"*

Q: *"You saved up the money?"*

Paul: *"Yeah"*

Q: *"Your uncle did?"*

Paul: *"Yeah, I tell them to keep them"* (Audio file: 1; 02:13:45)

Paul did not tell anyone other than his uncle, about his plans to migrate. However, before he boarded the flight he called his mother and told her that he was going to Europe. The following statement shows his mother's reaction: *"My mother tell me that it is a very good idea I like it. She tells I very like it I can respect what you say and what you do"* (Audio file: 1; 02:17:50). This statement from his mother shows that she supports his intent to migrate, however it also shows the respect and the approval that Paul gets, as though he has now entered adulthood. Hernández-Carretero & Carling argue that migration is linked with great symbolic values such as *"manhood, honour, pride, responsibility and courage"* (Hernández-Carretero & Carling, 2008; 411). Therefore, migration is seen as a positive decision by our informants' families; as it is a way of achieve *social becoming* for the men, and at the same time an active decision to improve one's socioeconomic situation for the whole family. The migration is linked to masculine values, and is seen as an active decision towards the change one's social position. Paul did not inform anyone until the moment of migrating, and Karim did not tell his mother before he reached Europe. This shows that they made an independent decision, and therefore it can be incorrect to see them as youth; however because there are several more responsibilities linked to the position as adult, which our informants have difficulties to meet, they cannot be defined as adult who have *become socially*.

Many West African men see migration as a great way to improve their situation. The idea of Europe comes from the transnational media that invite them into a world where success and a better standard of living is achievable. Furthermore, the families and communities of these men support the idea, as it is not only a way to reach adulthood with all which that entails, but also a pursuit that provides economic benefits for the whole household. We argue therefore that our informants have had some elements of *social becoming*; however because of the better standard of living in parts of the world such as Europe, they chose to migrate to navigate towards the images of goods and materials that they desire to have. If they achieve the economic benefits from migrating, they feel more included socially and will *social become* in West Africa.



Therefore, migration is considered as positive in West Africa. However, there are great risks attached to migration and we will further elaborate on these risks in the following section.

#### 4.4 'Everybody and his luck'

Due to the responsibility the young men are faced with in their home country and the high aspirations of a better life in Europe, the West African men seem to ignore the risks there are in relation to the journey. This section provides an analysis of the risks and how the West African men cope with them.

Our informants came to Europe either by flight or by boat across the Mediterranean Sea, risking their lives. Richard and Paul both had the privilege of receiving a visa from a European embassy in their home country. However, Karim, Benjamin and Joseph had migrated through Sub-Saharan Africa, across North Africa and crossed the Mediterranean Sea to reach Europe.

As mentioned previously, North Africa and especially Libya has always been an important destination for West African migrants either for work or as a gateway to Europe (Castles, De Haas & Miller, 2014). However, since the violent conflict in Libya escalated in 2011, West African men have returned to their home country and a relatively small number of migrants have moved on to Italy (ibid.) as for instance our informant, Karim. In the recent years the European countries have tightened control measures and naval patrols which have forced migrants to take longer sea routes increasing the risks and death rate (ibid.; 187), yet it has not stopped the migration.

Benjamin explains that the main reason he left Africa was to find a job and achieve a good life. He took the boat from Morocco to Spain with 12 other people, because according to Benjamin, taking the boat from Morocco is not as dangerous as it is from Libya. Furthermore, he explains that everyone can take the boat to Europe because the sea is not blocked. By that, he meant that there is no boarder control. However, not everybody is lucky enough to make it through such a journey; *"You cannot block the sea if it happened and you died then that is it everybody and his luck"* (Appendix: 3). Many of his friends died trying to reach Europe. According to Benjamin, taking this risk is considered very normal and yet again spoke of *"everybody and his luck"*. Benjamin argues that people, who are willing to try their luck, know it is dangerous and even back home in Africa they know yet they are willing to take the risk. According to Hernández-Carretero & Carling, the dangerous journey represents hope, ambitions and glory even if death is the outcome (Hernández-Carretero & Carling, 2012; 412), which is also indicated by Benjamin. We asked further: *"How*

*does the family know back home in Africa if someone is dead?"* Both Benjamin and Joseph explain that the family knows, because friends, whom were on the same boat or journey but survived, contact the family or the local radio station in the village, which then delivers the news. (Appendix: 3)

Karim has also crossed the Mediterranean Sea in boat reaching Sicily in Italy from the coast of Libya. He worked in Libya in a factory making tubes, where he saved some money in order to pay for the trip, which cost him 1200 dollars. In the following conversation with Karim, he also talks about luck:

Karim: *"I working to get the money so I can go to connection house to be so if you have lucky you can enter, if you don't lucky you can die for water, finish."*

Q: *"So you were lucky?"*

Karim: *"Yeah"*

Q: *"How long did it take? How long was the journey, how long time?"*

Karim: *"Different, different, sometimes they do like two days and sometimes like five days"*

Q: *"For you?"*

Karim: *"Like five, five days"*

Q: *"Where did you arrive in Italy?"*

Karim: *"For Sicily"* (Karim: 2; 00:18:59)

Both Benjamin and Karim use the term luck or lucky if someone succeeds or fails during the journey. Luck is something uncertain and out of one's hand. However, at the same time it also creates hope. It can also be explained as a coping mechanism; that everything will be all right, even though it is a very risky decision to make. In the following statement from Karim, he explains how he suffered mentally from the journey.

Q: *"How did you feel when you came to Sicily?"*

Karim: *"If you come to Sicily, you don't feel again, if you enter this ship you don't have time to fear. They know everybody they if you know read news you can look television, if you look television you can enter internet today you can know many people died say 300, 400, 600. Everybody knows if you are listening to news you can know yes people enter many people can die in side water"* (Appendix: 2; 00:19:40)

As a consequence of the hardship of the journey, many boat migrants have faced a wide range of potentially life-threatening dangers in terms of physical as well as psychological damage. As Hernández-Carretero & Carling explain; *“Health hazards include seasickness, dehydration, and hypothermia. The overcrowded and unhygienic conditions on board, sometimes with the presence of dead bodies, can aggravate sickness. Health risks become particularly severe when equipment failure or weather conditions prolong the journey. In numerous cases, boats have drifted at sea for several weeks, with passengers eventually dying from thirst and starvation. The combination of overcrowding and isolation over a long period of time is a strain in itself, sometimes exacerbated by dramatic episodes with loss of life. Psychological risks become lethal when people jump into the ocean out of delirium of despair. Others are said to “go crazy” as a consequence of the experience.”* (Hernández- Carretero & Carling, 2012; 409-410)

Karim’s journey took five days and during the interview, we observed that his facial expressions changed and that our questions, as well as generally talking about his journey made him feel uncomfortable. It seemed very difficult for him to talk about and as he puts it, once he reached Sicily: ‘you don’t feel again’. Both the above quotation and Karim’s reaction illustrate that not only do the boat migrants risk their lives by crossing the Mediterranean Sea, but they also risk long-term physical and psychological damage.

Hernández- Carretero & Carling state that *“the notion of risk is challenged by faith in divine destiny”* (Hernández-Carretero & Carling, 2012; 415). They argue that according to their informants, the outcome of the journey is God’s will. Furthermore, their informants explained that God establishes one’s time of death from the moment of birth, when the time of death comes it does not matter if you are lying in bed or are in a boat crossing the sea (ibid.). This statement corresponds with Karim’s explanation. He uses the following quotation from the Quran to emphasize that it is God’s will when you will die:

Q: *“You knew but still you would take the chance, even though you knew that it was so dangerous, you made the decision to go?”*

Karim: *“So because people say some people like me, like me my religion ‘qooli nafsni zaykat al mout’<sup>17</sup>, anytime if the time die reach you can die, if you get to Africa, if you get to Europe, if you get to house if the time reach die you can die...”* (Audio file: 2; 00:21:35).

Karim chooses to rely on a verse from the Quran, which describes how destiny decides the outcome of a journey and thereby it can be seen as a strategy to reduce the conception of the risks and make

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<sup>17</sup> (Madsen, 1989; 93)

it easier for him to cope with the uncertain journey. Karim could also have chosen to rely on another quotation from the Quran, for instance, "*Allah does not burden a soul beyond that it can bear*"<sup>18</sup> (Madsen, 1989; 62) which means; that you should not take a risk that you cannot bear. However, he uses a certain outlook on life and death to be found in his religion to justify his choices. Thereby, his religious belief becomes a strategy to cope with the situation and let the outcome of the high risks of a journey depend solely on God's will. It could therefore be argued that this is a risk reducing mental coping mechanism that Karim relies on. As mentioned in his previous statement, he knows that many people have died trying to reach Europe, yet he still risked his life for the promise of a better future.

All of our informants told us that migrating is a result of wanting a 'good life', a 'better life' or a 'better future'. They have all explained that *good life* is related to having a job, getting married and having a nice house. These goals can be linked to Vigh's explanation of what is needed in order to move from the status of youth to adulthood; in other words achieving a status of *social becoming*. As mentioned previously, Vigh's theory states that migrating is a method of achieving a status of *social becoming*, which is also a belief held by the West African men and their families. They believe that the images they see of life in Europe in the media are what they can expect to have as long as they just reach Europe. Unfortunately, the reality is different which we will elaborate on in the next chapter.

The above analysis shows that the majority of West African men who migrate to Europe are influenced by several factors. Not only are the men influenced by what they see in the media but are also influenced by the expectations that are imposed on them because of their position and their gender. Due to limited job opportunities and low salaries they are unable to fulfil expectations as husbands-to-be. The images they see of Europe and the living standards there make them expectant of new possibilities if they migrate. Furthermore, the aspiration and the hope for a better life make the West African men disregard the risk of migrating.

In the following chapter, we analyse how the aspirations of the West African men change during their journey through Africa and Europe.

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<sup>18</sup> Our own translation from Danish to English

## 5 New Terrains, New Aspirations

In the previous chapter, we outlined and analysed what the aspirations of the West African men were before they left West Africa. This has given us an understanding of why the men have chosen to take the dangerous journey to Europe as well as an understanding of the sort of pressure the West African men face in their home countries. In this section, we analyse the West African men's first experience of Europe in order to show how their time in Southern Europe and Denmark has changed their experience, and how the changes have influenced their social aspirations. We also discuss why they have moved from countries in Southern Europe to Denmark. Furthermore, we focus on how the terrain moves, as opportunities and limitations arise.

### 5.1 'I see heaven, a very beautiful place!'

As explained in a previous chapter some of our informants have entered Europe by flight and some have entered by boat. Common for all of them, is that coming to Europe has been a huge experience. Karim migrated from Libya to Sicily by boat and for him his biggest success was that he survived the journey; *"I am very happy, I am very lucky because I just enter and I no die for this inside the water"* (Audio file: 2; 00:26:44). He explains how a UN ship picked them up from a small boat in the water, and carried them approximately 150 km to Sicily.

Paul on the other hand, who had obtained a visa for France and entered by flight, had dreamed about Europe for a long time and his first impression is described in the following statement; *"The first day I feel like I was in paradise, when I reach for France here, this is the place I need to live. You know, I just feel like I changed, even my way to speak afterwards. The first day I just started laughing, you know, because I am very, very happy to be there"* (Audio file: 1; 02:19:54). However, when we inquired further into the situation in France, Paul explains that the country was not as good as he initially thought. He later moved on to Spain to look for better job opportunities.

Richard was also impressed with Europe at first: *"I see heaven, a very beautiful place!"* He had obtained a business visa to go and buy shoes in Italy, and arrived by flight to the country in 1992. When asked if he was happy after reaching Europe, he says: *"Yes, but later no"* (Appendix: 4). For four years, he worked without legal papers in agriculture and other available jobs, as he explains in the following statements: *"I worked with agriculture with olives, potatoes and tomatoes, any type of work, I moved goods from one house to another, anything"*.

Q: *"How was that work?"*

Richard: *"Very hard, they give us small money, 35 lira, it is 50 euros for 8 hours, sometime more hours from 9 pm. They are very bad people."* (Appendix: 4). Richard explains how the jobs in Italy are very insecure and demanding. This suggests that he is excluded from the regular labour market, yet with access to *bad* irregular jobs, as both unemployment and precarious employment can be seen as a way to be excluded, according to Bhalla & Lapeyre (1999): *"This implies that there are different levels of exclusion, so that it is impossible to be included in the labour market and at the same time excluded from 'the good' labour market. Thus, for an increasing number of people the emergence of precarious form of work is associated with an increase in vulnerability."*(62).

Not only were the jobs poorly paid, but also the employment was insecure, as most agricultural jobs in Italy are seasonal work. In Richard's case the exclusion from the regular labour market was caused by his status as an irregular migrant, however even though his status changed later on he can still be seen as excluded. Richard was not only excluded from the labour market in Italy, but excluded socially as well; In Italy he did not have any contact with Italian people, according to Richard: *They mind their own business.* (Appendix: 4).

After four years, the Italian government, with help from the Pope, made an announcement to give all illegal migrants documents to stay in Italy in the year 1998. Richard was *"very happy to have legal documents"* (Appendix: 4), because it made his stay in Italy more safe. Richard says that some police officers would ask migrants to show their documents, which is mainly to be found in one's wallet, then the police officers (sometimes fake ones) would steal the money from the wallet, as he explains: *"You are a stranger and they know you have money"* (Appendix: 4) and as an undocumented migrant you do not have any protection. Furthermore, it was very difficult for Richard to make a living while staying illegally in Italy. He explains how he used to compete with other illegal migrants to get a job by standing on the road waiting for some Italian to give them a job for the day. He explains: *"You had to stand on the road with 30 people there and some people [Italian] came and picked us. It was very bad, how do you know the person is good"* (Appendix: 4). He explains that it was dangerous; getting in a car with a stranger and driving out somewhere, and after arriving at the destination they would tell you what the work and pay were. (Appendix: 4).

The stories illustrate how several of our informants were under the impression that reaching Europe was equal to *social becoming*. However, they quickly found out that obtaining legal work was more difficult than expected, which therefore has prolonged the process of *social becoming*. Furthermore, they can be caught in a vicious cycle where working in the underground economy makes it impossible for them to obtain residence permit, as this requires working legally, and obtaining legal

work requires a residence permit (Lucht, 2012; 30). However, Karim has a solution to this. He explains how it is possible to pay a shop owner in Italy in order to make them say that you work there. This cost like 200-300 euros. Furthermore, he explains that in Italy, you do not need to have a job in order to renew your permit but in Spain, you do. (Appendix: 6)

Being without a residence permit makes the West African men unable to enter *the European life*. Yet, for those who have a residence permit it can also be hard to find work legally, and for many they only succeed in getting a seasonal job for a couple of months. That was the case for Karim: “*I worked small like 60 days for Italy, like two months.*” (Audio file: 6; 00:15:10)

Karim is relatively new in Europe and he considers himself very lucky, because when he arrived in Italy after a short time, he received a residence permit. However, not all West African migrants are as lucky as Karim which he explains in the following statements: “*Maybe if you have luck, this residence it is lucky because people they like stay in Italy in three years, five years, ten years they don't have residence I see many people stay in Italy 10 years 15 they don't have residence no never*”

Q: “*What about you, do you have residence?*”

Karim: “*Me I am very lucky. I just came in like four months I have residence for Italy, you have residence what do you work one month in Italy. I see Italy no good for me. I have residence, I have chance, I have freedom everywhere for Europe, it is not Europe, all the world. Everywhere if you need if you like from here I say I need to go to America tomorrow I go, so everywhere if here it is not good for me*” (Audio file: 2; 00:34:53 )

This illustrates that many West Africa migrants have been in Italy for several years, even up to 15 years and have yet to receive residence permit. Therefore, it can be argued that they do not have the possibility to move forward with their lives and *social become* because they are caught in an irregular position in Italy without rights, and are therefore unable to leave the country. Furthermore, they are excluded based on all three dimensions, mentioned by Bhalla and Lapeyre; the political dimension because they cannot obtain legal right to stay in the country or leave to any other European country, which effect the economic and social dimension by being excluded from the labour market and society. This position makes many West African men navigate in the same terrain in Italy for years without getting included in the society.

Karim explains that having a residence permit means that he has a chance and the freedom to move or navigate physically anywhere in Europe, and even America. Therefore, the West African men who do not obtain residence permit are stuck both physically and socially.

Karim explains further what he means by the country 'it is not good for me':

Q: *"But why is not good for you?"*

Karim: *"I am coming here looking good life, if you don't see life good here what do you do? I am not crazy, you understand?"*

Q: *"Not really?"*

Karim: *"If me I am coming here I am leaving Italy coming here what happened of Italy, ask me?"*

Q: *"What did Italy not have?"*

Karim: *"No ask me I would give you an answer, what happened in Italy why I am leaving coming here?"*

Q: *"What happened in Italy since you come here?"*

Karim: *"Italy I don't have job, I have residence I don't have job I don't have good life so I don't want to stay in Italy"*

Q: *"But did you look for a job?"*

Karim: *"So you are suppose go look anywhere if you see something, you can go if you come here again like Italy, it is no good for me you are supposed to try another country maybe you can get something."* (Audio file: 2; 00:36:00).

Karim's answers illustrate that he cannot achieve a 'good life' without work; therefore he is compelled to move from one country to another in order to 'find life', i.e. work. In Italy, he is excluded from the regular labour market, and therefore he needs to expand his search for work to other countries. Karim's action illustrates that he takes control of his life and is determined to *social become*. However, it also shows that his aspirations have changed as the images and work opportunities he thought were easy to find in Italy turned out to be as difficult as they were in West Africa. Many West African men experience a different reality than the one they imagined before they left their home countries. Our informants thought that Europe was paradise when they arrived, however they quickly found out that the imagined did not correspond with the reality. They find themselves among other West African men who want to find work in a time with limited work opportunities for all of them. We therefore argue that West African men are excluded economically in terms of material goods and socially in terms of limited contact with the society, and thereby excluded from achieving the 'good life' they wanted. This situation comes close to what they



experienced in the home country, where they also were excluded from a sufficient income, and socially excluded, if they were not able to get married.

When coming to Europe our informants explain how they were filled with joy at the moment they arrived, however they rapidly found out that Europe was not equal to success and wealth, as they though based on the images they had seen in West African. The possibilities are more limited than the men expected, which is why all of our informants had a hard time finding a decent job in the country of arrival, as they are excluded from the regular labour market. Even though they have made an active *adult* decision to migrate, they are found in an undesired position in Europe which makes it hard to the West African men to achieve *social becoming*.

In the following section we analyse why there are no job opportunities in Southern Europe, and why the West African men get excluded from the labour market. One of the main factors mentioned by our informants is the financial crisis, which has made the West African men look for new opportunities in Northern Europe.

## 5.2 'Spain is caput'

The Global Economic Crisis started in 2007 and most European countries have been affected by it, especially Spain and Italy. A significant problem as a result of the crisis is unemployment, which has affected the migrants more than native-born people in Southern Europe (Castles, De Haas & Miller, 2014). In late 2010, 44 per cent of young migrants from the age 15- 24 were unemployed in Spain whereas the most affected migrants were Africans with 25 per cent unemployed. Thereby, the crisis also affected the remittance that the West African migrants sent to their families (ibid.). In this section, we analyse the impact of the crisis and how it has affected the West African men's social navigation towards social becoming.

Our informants are among the thousands of people who have lost their jobs, as a result of the financial crisis. As Benjamin explains: "*Spain is caput, there is no job in Spain, Portugal and Italy.*" (Appendix: 3). The same experienced Karim: "*Everybody knows Italy! Or to España or to Greece or to Portugal now they don't have nothing! So if Italy is nice it is no supposed to come here, do homeless here. No, if Italy is good, too much people, many people would not have come to here do homeless. You come here, you don't have sleeping place you don't have nothing*"

Q: "*So what is best, Italy or Denmark?*"

Karim: "*No. Now, because Italy does not have nothing, Italy's work is finished, the economy is lost, so many people they do not have job.*" (Audio file: 6; 00:13.45). Karim explains that he, and many

other West African men, would not have moved to Denmark, where they are homeless, if there were better opportunities in Italy.

Both Benjamin and Karim's statements illustrate the limited work opportunities in Southern Europe due to the financial crisis, which made both Benjamin and Karim move towards Denmark. The same goes for Paul and Joseph, and Richard, who have worked in the same place for 16 years. However, Benjamin explains that he used to live and work in Libya and that he was making good money during the time of Gaddafi; "*Everyone made money in Libya 'big dollars' now everything is gone because of the bombing*". (Appendix: 3). Joseph agrees that West African men enjoyed working in Libya due to the work opportunities and the amount of money they received. Therefore, after the crisis in Spain, Benjamin's plan was to go back to Libya, but because of the armed conflict he had to come to Denmark, because Libya is not safe; "*now people from Libya move out*" (Appendix: 3). Benjamin explains further that he had heard that there were work opportunities in Denmark from friends. The purpose of coming to Denmark for Benjamin was to find a job as it has been for all of our informants (Appendix: 3). This will be further elaborated on in section '*It is all about better life*'.

Richard's situation is different from our other informants'. After Richard received his residence permit in Italy, he worked in a leather factory for 16 years. According to Richard, "*it was very hard work physically*". (Appendix: 4) When he had a job in Italy, his wife lived with him there for four years. She had a job as well but because of the economic crisis her company had to close down and she had to go back to Ghana. (Appendix: 3). Furthermore Richard lost his job at the leather factory, as it had to move to another country with cheaper labour. It can be argued that Richard, during his time in Italy somehow achieved his social aspirations, with a regular job and the ability to invite his wife to join him in Italy. However, we argue that because of the financial crisis the *terrain* moved which means that he had to start over and reconsider his social navigation and thereby his aspirations.

As all of our informants have obtained residence permits, and all of them had a job in either Spain or Italy, we argue that all of them came closer to achieving *social becoming*, but the moving terrain 'interrupted' them in their social navigation.

As a result, of the financial crisis all of our informants have lost their jobs in Spain and Italy, respectively. Some of our informants came to Southern Europe recently, and have only worked there for a limited period of time whereas others have been working there for several years.

However, common for all of our informants is that they had to start over again in their social navigation, and have been searching for new destinations in order to *social become*. All of them went towards Northern Europe and have been navigating physically and socially through different countries. Yet, they chose to stay and try their luck in Denmark. In the following section, we analyse how our informants navigate socially and physically in the new terrain, where they experience new opportunities and limitations.

### 5.3 'It is all about better life'

As explained in previous section all of our informants came from Southern Europe to Denmark in order to find a job. All of them have residence permits, in either Spain or Italy. This gives them the right to move within the Schengen area, which makes it easy for them to navigate physically and move from one country to another. In this section, we provide an analysis of the new challenges the West African men face once they arrive in Denmark. This includes the Danish legislation, the opportunities and the limitations in Denmark and the exclusion from Danish society. The section provides a better picture of how the West African men navigate physically and socially in their attempt to *social become*.

#### 5.3.1 'In Denmark, it is very rough'

When West African men migrate within Europe from one country to another, they enter a new terrain that differs from their own or from the previous terrain they lived in. People change the way they talk, their eating habits and the way they dress, because they adapt to a new environment and leave behind their old (Friedmann, 2002; 302). In accordance with this, our informants try to adapt to the Danish society in order to fit in. They have to learn a new language, a new system and how to adapt to a new terrain, which also can have an influence on the West African men's aspirations.

As mentioned previously, all of our informants came from Southern Europe to Denmark in order to find work and to search for a good life. In relation to this, Paul argues that moving to Denmark means changing one's situation. He states: "*When I am say to find life it is to look about, the job or to look about job or to have the job.(...) You know many people come here, they don't come only to visit Denmark; they come to change their situation here*" (Audio file: 1; 01:59:38). Paul's statement illustrates that the reason for moving to Denmark is a part of, what we consider as his social navigation, where he once again has migrated to find work, in order to become socially. He expresses that people do not just come to Denmark, to visit, but that they have purpose with

coming, namely to change their life situation. However, we argue that coming to Denmark from Spain or Italy means that the West African men are forced to start all over again with their social navigation in a new terrain, i.e. Denmark.

Finding a job in Denmark can be difficult, if not impossible. As Denmark is a part of the Schengen Agreement, an EU citizen has the right to enter freely for three or six months if the citizen is looking for a job. (TDis, 2015b). However, the West African men, who have a residence permit to a Schengen country, are only allowed to stay up to three months within a period of 180 days in another Schengen country on a tourist visa, in accordance with the Schengen Agreement. This is also stated in the Danish Aliens Act part 1 §2b: *Aliens holding a residence permit for another Schengen country may enter and stay in Denmark for up to 3 months per 6-month period reckoned from the date of their first entry into Denmark or another Schengen country than the country which has issued the residence permit. Any such 3-month period will be reduced by any period within the 6-month period during which the alien has stayed in Denmark or in another Schengen country than the country which has issued the residence permit.* (Retsinformation, 2015). As a tourist, you are not allowed to work either in Denmark or in any other Schengen country. This indicates that West African migrants with residence permit have the right to enter Denmark in a limited period; however they are not allowed to work without a Danish work permit (TDis, 2015b). In addition to this, when a person stays in a Schengen country other than the one that has issued the residence permit, he or she is not allowed to become an unreasonable burden to the social welfare system, for instance by making use of a homeless shelter (Kirkens Korshær, s.a.).

Based on informal conversations and interviews with our informants we have noticed that, they are not fully aware of these rules about their stay as well as not being allowed to work. As Karim explains: *“No, to get a job is not easy. No, get a job is not easy because you don’t have documents to job here. It is not easy.”* (Audio file: 6; 00:25:17) Several of our informants express that they had heard from friends, that there were work opportunities in Scandinavia, as those countries should be richer and thereby it should be easier to find work, than in the countries in the South. Our informants thought it was easy to find a job in Denmark, however, after realising how strict the rules are they quickly found out how difficult it is, and have therefore changed their aspirations. This will be explained later in this section.

Furthermore, Karim explains in our first interview with him that he came to Denmark in February; seeing as we met him on May 1<sup>st</sup>, this strongly suggests that the three months that his tourist visa is

valid for had expired. Therefore, we inquired as to when he had to leave in order to renew the visa. He explained that he had to leave before May 17<sup>th</sup> but he takes the bus to Hamburg or to Malmö for one day, and then returns to Denmark. He takes the bus to where it is cheapest. As he explains: *“It does not matter you can just go in and out, everywhere in Europe.”* (Appendix: 6). In the case of Karim, he stayed in Denmark for a longer period than is allowed and his understanding of three months is not in compliance with the Schengen Agreement; according to the agreement he has to go to the country where his residence permit is issued and stay there for at least 90 days, before he is allowed to return to Denmark. With an expired visa, a person cannot go back and forth between the different Schengen countries. Paul has a similar understanding of the Schengen Agreement as Karim. Paul has to go back to Spain to renew his residence permit, however again according to the Schengen Agreement he has to stay in Spain for 90 days before returning to Denmark with a renewed tourist visa. Paul only plan to stay in Spain for a couple of days before he returns to Denmark (Appendix: 7). Our informants believe that they are acting in accordance with the Danish rules; however this interpretation of the rules makes the majority of our informants move in and out of a state of legality, without them knowing it. The way our informants chose to move from one country to another, just for a couple of days, makes it easier to continue their lives when they are back in Denmark, with what they believe is a renewed tourist visa. If they returned to the country where their residence permit is issued, for 90 days every 3 months, in accordance with the rules, they would have to start all over again in their navigation each time they moved to a new place. It can therefore be argued that, even though their navigation is interrupted when leaving Denmark, it is not as much as if they followed the rules, and left for 90 days.

Richard’s situation is different from our other informants’ situation because he has obtained Italian nationality, which means that he as a European citizen has different rights than the others. As a European citizen, Richard has the right to move and the right to search for a job in Denmark. However, for Richard the job system in Denmark is very different compared to the one in Italy. Mostly, because he is not used to relying on the internet to search and apply for jobs, which is why he is struggling a lot as, he explains in the following statement: *“I talk to people, I went to the international house, and they give me a list of job websites. I have to go to companies and ask if they have a job. The system is not good to find a job. In Italy, there were job centres at the roads, where they help and ask for documents. They will call you when they have a job. In Denmark, it is very rough. It is not very good, just use the internet”* (Appendix: 4). Because Richard is not used to the Danish system, it would take him a longer time to find a job and to settle down in Denmark.

Even though Richard should have better opportunities for finding a job, and a legal right to search for one, the system in Denmark makes it difficult for him, and he ends up in a similar position as our other informants, where he navigates the same way as they do.

The Danish legislation makes it impossible for our informants to find a job, which was the purpose of the movement in the first place. We therefore argue that as our informants have no access to the Danish labour market they get excluded from an *economic dimension*, and thereby do not have an income, that can cover their basic needs such as food and housing. In addition, this makes them excluded socially, as employment provides social legitimacy and social status. (Bhalla & Lapeyre, 1999). Furthermore, Denmark is a very expensive country to live in and none of our informants can afford to rent a room; as Richard explains, renting a room in Copenhagen is very expensive, he paid 3000 DKK for a room in the North-western part of Copenhagen, which is in the outskirts of Copenhagen and considered a cheaper place to live. (Appendix: 3). In the duration of our fieldwork Richard went from renting a room to becoming homeless. In fact, all of our informants have ended up homeless and living on the streets.

According to a report made by Projekt UDENFOR the West African men are defined as *homeless migrant workers from third countries* and the purpose of their movement is to find permanent work (2012b; 10). However, during a conversation with Bo Heide-Jochimsen, he informed us that these men do not define themselves as homeless. Yet, we have experienced that the majority of our informants have not concealed the fact that they are homeless.

Our understanding of the term homeless is based on ETHOS<sup>19</sup> typology made by FEANTSA<sup>20</sup>. The basis of ETHOS covers a person who has no residence or lives in an insecure and insufficient housing. For instance it can be persons who sleep on the street, in stairwells or night shelters, but also persons who sleep in a hostel or hotel due to homelessness (Projekt UDENFOR, 2012b; 4-5). ETHOS is based on the housing situation and not the social situation of the person (Bejaminsen & Lauritzen, 2013: 17). Yet, one must highlight the fact that the West African men might have a residence in their home country or the country in which they have a residence permit, and therefore their status as homeless depends on the place and time.

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<sup>19</sup> ETHOS stands for European Typology on Homelessness and Housing Exclusion.

<sup>20</sup> FEANTSA stands for European Federation of National Organizations Working with the Homeless.

Moving to a new country has placed the West African men in a new terrain with fewer opportunities than in the one they came from. The Danish legislation leaves the men without little prospect of obtaining a job in Denmark, and they thereby change their aspirations and find new ways to navigate toward *social becoming*. In Denmark several organisations offer support in different ways to the homeless, which can be seen as a new form of opportunity.

### 5.3.2 'If you need to eat, you can go to eat'

In Denmark several private organisations provide the homeless with different services. These services include for instance a place to sleep, free or cheap meals, as well as legal consultancy and help to overcome addictions. The majority of these services are meant for Danish citizens with a Danish health insurance card; however some organisations also provide services for foreigners. Some of the organisations our informants use and navigate between are: Kirkens Korshær, Den Sorte Gryde and Café Grace, all presented in our methodology chapter. These organizations have seen the huge number of foreigners ending up on the streets in Denmark, and have therefore realized the need for support. They offer a range of services regardless of nationality.

All our informants use the different homeless facilities and services in order to cover their basic needs and most of them move from one place to another. Offers such as free food, laundry service, bathroom facilities and legal advice have made the West African men's life in Denmark more manageable than their lives in Italy or Spain. Karim explains this in the following statement:

Karim: *"Here Denmark, poor people like me people come here to Denmark today, you have place too much they help people, they help if you need to eat, you can go to eat if you need coffee you can go coffee, you know, not be like some countries because I go around here, I see many countries it is not like here"* (Audio file: 2; 01:00:27)

According to Karim's statement, he has been moving around in different countries; however, none of these countries offered him the same services as in Denmark. Therefore, being unemployed is considered better in Denmark than in Italy and in Spain. Paul as well makes use of different services for the homeless. One thing he is especially passionate about is learning Danish and English; according to Paul it is important to learn the language in order to be included in the Danish society. Paul participates in Danish lessons in a Danish church, that offers free language courses for foreigners, as he explains; *"I am student free, I am not pay"* (Audio file: 1; 01:33:55) in addition to this he explains; *"I like it here because everything is for free"* (Audio file: 1; 01:34:18). For Paul

and for all of our other informants the free services made available to the homeless make Denmark a more desirable place to live compared to other European countries.

The West African men explain that not all homeless services, such as finding a place to stay for the night, are easily accessible. Shelters such as Café Grace and Stengade 40 provide the homeless with a place to sleep, however because of the limited numbers of beds there is no guarantee that our informants will get one. As Karim explains; “*So Stengade is lottery maybe 80 people, 60 people, 70 people, so maybe they take 30-35, it is finish.*” (Audio file: 6; 00:37:44). During a conversation with Karim he tells us that homeless people are tired. When we ask him to elaborate, he explains that; “*everyone were tired, all homeless people. There are no places to sleep.*” We ask if it is because Café Grace is closed, due to the season, and he says: “*That is not only that. Everything has closed. Only Stengade 40 is open for homeless people to sleep.*” (Appendix: 8). During this conversation with Karim, we notice how his facial expressions changed, talking about this subject. His expression shows that being homeless is exhausting, even though a lot of services and facilities are offered in Denmark. For Karim and the rest of our informants, being homeless was not a part of their social aspirations when coming to Europe. They seem to believe that reaching their goals, requires a lot of hard work, however we argue that because of the Danish legislation it seems almost impossible for them to *social become*.

To be homeless, and therefore rely on homeless facilities, excludes the West African men from being a part of the Danish society, as they only navigate in homeless terrains. We therefore argue that they live in a parallel to the society. The men are caught in a situation as both foreigners and homeless which makes it difficult for them to access the opportunities that can lead them to *social becoming*. Relying on homeless facilities makes it impossible to *social become*, because they become dependent. It can be argued that it is a vicious circle, because as they are foreigners they are excluded from being a part of the Danish society and labour market, and because of the limited opportunities they become homeless and get more and more dependent on the homeless facilities, which exclude them from the very society even more. As mentioned previously, having a job is essential to becoming an adult and a provider, however because of the limited opportunities for finding work; our informants are forced to collect bottles in Copenhagen.



### 5.3.3 'Picking bottles'

As mentioned in a previous section, our informants are staying in Denmark on a tourist visa, and are not allowed to hold a regular job. Our informants therefore make use of two options, illegal work or collecting bottles. Here it is important to note that Denmark has a bottle return system, where you can receive a small portion of your money back when you return 'pant-labelled' bottles to the supermarkets and other designated 'pant stations'. Collecting bottles, or as our informants call it 'picking bottles', is therefore a way of making money and is considered a regular job by our informants. Furthermore, it is relevant to note that the illegal labour market is much more limited in Denmark, than in the Southern European countries.

As part of our observations of West African men, we have seen that they move around in Copenhagen on their bicycles with many bags hanging from the handlebars and looking for bottles. Yet, we have not experienced our informants 'in action'; however most of them have talked openly about 'their daily job', as bottle collectors. Justine Mitchell from Den Sorte Gryde, who works with both Danish and foreign homeless people on a daily basis, describes West African migrants as a special group amongst homeless people. She has noticed that they have a schedule for the day and they go to 'work', which is collecting bottles. She also describes them as very optimistic and says that they hold on to a tiny hope of finding a job, even though she has advised them to go back to Southern Europe, as their possibilities in Denmark are limited. Furthermore, she sees them as very structured and with a work ethic. (Appendix: 1).

Richard explains further that collecting bottles gives the West African men aim, and therefore they do not drink or do bad things. (Appendix: 4). He further explains that people who come from Africa are very responsible and have a plan to achieve a better future. According to Richard: *"They don't mess up with what they have."* (Appendix: 4). Collecting bottles is seen as a legitimate job especially because there are no job opportunities in Denmark for our informants. Karim explains why collecting bottles is considered something useful and helpful; *"Here it is very good for poor people, you see many people come here to Denmark here is good. Because if you don't have nothing, see this bottle? You know if you come today, if you are no lazy you can go in Copenhagen everywhere, you can look in bottles maybe you can get 100kr, 110kr and 80kr, even small you can go by, you don't ask anybody (...)"* (Audio file: 2; 01:07:39). Karim explains further that collecting bottles is something you can make a living of: *"It is good. Good, good! Very good, good 100 by 100 good (...) you can go and take bottles how maybe like Friday, Saturday, weekend you can get*

*like 300 crones to do this, you can get 250 crones it is good it is different in to many countries. So that is why me, it is no for me, here is very nice it is good for me*" (Audio file: 2, 01:10:40) He explains that Denmark is a good place to be, as it is possible to earn money by collecting bottles.

Our informants depend on the Danish weather in regards to their daily work. According to Benjamin and Joseph on a bad day, which means a rainy day, they can earn around 35- 50 DKK by collecting bottles. However, when it is a good day; a shiny day, they can earn around 150- 200 DKK. Benjamin refers to this as '*café latte day*' and '*beer day*'. (Appendix: 3). The changing weather in Denmark affects the way our informants move and collect bottles. In a conversation with Richard and Joseph they talk about the weather as well. They mention it is cold and rainy in Denmark, and the weather changes a lot. "*You never know how the weather will be*". (Appendix: 9).

The changing weather makes them move around to find a place, where they can go to if it is raining or too cold outside. When it is sunny they move outside to look for bottles. Therefore, the weather influences the amount of money they make in a day. Furthermore, the weather influences the number of bottles there are to be found on the streets of Copenhagen, as a shiny day in Denmark is equal to lots of empty bottles, as people move outside to drink beers and other beverages. This movement of the West African men illustrates how they navigate both socially and physically in Copenhagen in a moving terrain. We therefore argue that the weather determines how much money our informants can make in a day and that bad weather limits them. This means that, our informants always move in and out of the opportunities and limitations one day at a time.

Joseph is very concerned that collecting bottles will soon be impossible, because a new system for returning bottles might be introduced in Denmark, which will make it difficult for them to continue making a living out of it. He explains that this happened to him in Spain, however not with bottles but with parking cars. In Spain, he used to help people with parking their cars, and they gave him a small amount of money for this. Both Joseph and Benjamin used to make a living out of this in Spain. They explain that after the government introduced a new parking system, where the car owners put the money in a machine, they both lost their jobs. (Appendix: 3).

Both Joseph and Benjamin indicate that collecting bottles is their only opportunity in Denmark, therefore losing this 'job' means that they have to move to another country and start over again.

Karim has found another way to get by in Denmark. Even though he sometimes collects bottles, he also uses his background to navigate in other terrains, namely the Arabic community and Islamic

mosques. In these terrains he communicates with a lot of different people, and makes them know that he needs a job. He explains that sometimes someone has a job for him: *“Like in two hours, sometimes three hours, work is different, some day they have one shift here load container. Some days they bring rice from Pakistan, some day you come. (...) So maybe you can do 200 crones in 3 hours you can do maybe 300 crones in 1 hour you can do maybe 150.”* (Audio file: 6; 00:29:23). However, these small jobs are only temporary and do not enable Karim to improve on his homeless situation, both because he still does not earn sufficient to rent a place to stay, and because he sends a portion of his earned money to his mother in Nigeria. Karim explains: *“You are supposed to say yes, you are supposed to help your mother, if you get well, I am not crazy, crazy people would do junkie. You don’t remember mother, you don’t remember family, so if you get normal, normal, normal! Normal! You can take your mother, anytime you can take out, okay yes, this is your mother, call you mother 2 min. - 5min. if you have something you can send to your mother. You know?”* (Audio file: 2; 01:14:40). Karim expresses that it is a matter of course that he supports his mother. As mentioned in the previous chapter men are responsible for supporting their family financially this goes for both married men and single men. Karim supports his mother which is a part of his responsibility as an adult man. It can therefore be argued that; in the eyes of his family he has achieved status as *social become* and is seen as a man who has reach adulthood after going to Europe. However, his current situation in Denmark can be categorised as *youth* still caught in a social moratorium, unable to *social become*.

Benjamin and Joseph support their families in Ghana as well; by sending money to their wives, and communicating with them on a regular basis. During a conversation with Benjamin, his wife called to tell him that she had received the things he had sent to her. (Appendix: 3). When asking how Benjamin’s family’s situation is in Ghana, he answers: *“My wife lives better than me, at least she has a place to sleep.”* (Appendix: 3) The statements suggest that even though the aspiration for the men was to find a better life in Europe, only the families of the West African men seem to feel the joy of a better life, from the remittances the men send them. It can therefore be argued that the West African men’s families think of them as adults, who have reached *social become*. This will be further elaborated on in the next chapter.

Even though the West African men see ‘picking bottles’ as a job, they know that this will not bring them closer to their aspirations of life in Europe. Furthermore, because they are excluded from the Danish labour market, they seek new opportunities in order to enter the Danish society. In the

following section we outline how our informants see a marriage with a Danish woman as a way to *social become*.

#### 5.3.4 'I need a cappuccino-baby'

Learning Danish is important to Paul so as to be included in the Danish society. In the following statement, he explains why it is important for him to learn Danish: *"I am supposed to learn the language. I am supposed to do what I am doing now. The only different is, I have the possibility in one year if you learn I can have the CPR-number, but the problem can be the same."* (Audio file: 1; 01:45:44). Paul explains that he does not aspire to Danish citizenship; he has found another way to be included in Danish society, namely by learning the language. He wants to learn the language in order to be able to find a Danish woman to marry, which he explains in the following: *"They only think of money. I will like to get married and learn Danish, my focus is different. I want a future here; want to marry a Danish woman"* (Appendix: 7). Paul is very focused on finding a Danish woman to marry, and he keeps on saying that he wants his children to grow up in Denmark, so they can have a better future. Therefore, Paul is not focused on finding a job, but on learning the language and getting married to a Danish woman, in order to be able to stay in Denmark. He sees marrying a Danish woman as an opportunity to improve his life situation and achieve a better life. Furthermore, marrying a Danish woman would give him the security, to stay in Denmark legally. In his statement, Paul also separates himself from other West African men by saying that they only think about money, meaning searching for a job. This can be interpreted as a way of distancing himself from the situation all of the West African men are in: i.e. being homeless. Paul is also the only one of our informants who does not talk about homeless life, even though we know he makes use of the facilities on offer for the homeless in Copenhagen. Furthermore, Paul expresses that he only wants to associate himself with his Danish friends and he says that all of them are white, which further highlights the fact that he does not want to be associated with the other West African men.

When talking about marriage with a Danish woman, we ask Paul, who has lived in Spain for several years, why he does not want to marry a Spanish woman; *"No, no I want a Danish woman"* (Appendix: 7). It seems like a Danish woman is viewed more favourably than a Spanish woman, due to fact that the former can provide access to the Danish labour market and welfare system, which he explains in a later interview: *"I need to change my life first to learn the language and I want to pay for my English first, and second to perform my marriage second, because I like women in Denmark, Danish women because they are beautiful [and] because I like the education here in*

*Denmark, because the government can help everybody to go to school*”(Audio file: 1; 00:43:05) Paul is absorbed with the future, and the future family he wishes to have in Denmark. In his statement, he explains how he can give his future children a better education and therefore a better life in Denmark. This is more accessible in Denmark than in Spain because everything is free, according to Paul. Therefore, marrying a Danish woman is considered an opportunity, and a new aspiration.

According to Danish Aliens Act, a person from a non-European country must hold a residence or work permit in order to have a job in Denmark. For our informants, marrying a Danish citizen is a path to gaining residency and thereby an opportunity to gain regular work in Denmark. Although a marriage to a Danish citizen can enable the West African men to obtain a Danish residence permit, this is only possible if the Danish partner as well as the West African man meet several requirements. The requirements for the Danish spouse include the ability to support the foreign partner financially and accommodation of an adequate size. The Danish partner must deposit 52,490.12 DKK in a verified bank account in a fixed timeframe, and have permanent residency in Denmark (TDis, 2015a). The foreign spouse has to pass a Danish language test within six months in order for a residence permit to be granted. (TDis, 2015a) A Danish woman therefore has many responsibilities, including financial ones, if she wishes to marry a non-European citizen, but the man also has a responsibility to learn Danish. To marry a Danish woman can be viewed as an opportunity for our informants and a step toward *social becoming*, as it enables them to enter the Danish labour market and gives them the possibility of staying in Denmark. Even though they see the marriage as an opportunity, it also has several limitations. Yet, none of our informants expressed that they are aware of the many requirements there are in relation to marrying a Danish woman, and therefore they are not aware of the limitations that follows.

Karim also expresses that he wishes to marry a Danish woman. He wants us to find a girl for him; not just a Danish woman, but a *white* Danish woman. This is shown in the following conversation:

Karim: *“I want anyone if you are Danish, you understand? If you Danish I no want say no”*

Q: *“She has to be Danish, Danish?”*

Karim: *“Yes, I want to say, no”*

Q: *“No African/Danish?”*

Karim: *“No don’t want African/Danish, no I don’t want African girl”*

Q: *“Why?”*

Karim: *"Me I am coming from Africa, I want Africa, I go back to Africa, I don't want a black girl"*

Q: *"What do you want, only what colour?"*

Karim: *"White, don't bring to me black I don't want black?"*

Q: *"Why? If it is Danish black?"*

Karim: *"Never, I need cappuccino baby"* (Audio file 5; 00:03:50)

Karim explains that he wishes to marry a white Danish woman, and not a Danish woman with African roots, because he wishes to have a mixed-race child. Also Richard keeps telling us that he wants us to find him a Danish girl. When asked why not an African girl from Denmark, he says: *"No, I want a woman with lighter colour. It is all about the colour."* (Appendix: 9) This illustrates that the skin-colour has great importance for both Karim and Richard, which is implied by Paul as well.

Karim gives an explanation about the differences between white and black people, and why skin-colour matters to him: *"White people and black people is no the same, it is too much different, you understand today? White people like you and black people like me is different, you understand, this white people... Wait! White people like you, like you go to Africa before, before seventy something year, 100 years ago, before Africa is no good it is nothing small people some city in Africa they don't want to wear clothes you put only this, you know? This white people come to Africa and they say come they go school all black people go school after they go school they teach it is no the same. Like lectures, you know? Lectures university like lectures... so this is lecture, this is student, it is no the same. Africa is like student, Africa is student here Europe is lecture"* (Audio file: 5; 00:25:10).

Karim compares Europe to a lecturer and Africa to a student, which illustrates that he sees Europe as developed and Africa as in a process of learning. As 'developed' is more desirable and what he came to Europe for, he wishes to find a Danish white woman, as she represents this development and greater opportunities. It can be argued that this is also the reason why he wants a child with a lighter skin-colour, as he wishes his child to have better opportunities than he had, like Paul also indicated. It can be argued that a woman of colour, even if she is Danish, represents what he escaped from and not what he wishes to move towards. Furthermore, the statement illustrates that his perception of white people originate from the time of colonization.

Like Paul, Karim also knows that he needs to obtain a Danish health insurance card or a residence permit, in order to get a regular job in Denmark. However, where Paul does not care about the residence permit, Karim wants to change his residence permit from Italian to Danish. He explains

that he does not just want a Danish woman in order to get a residence permit, but he wants to get to know her, be a couple and then in time they can get married. (Audio file: 5; 00:05:59) However, he also explains that he needs a job, but in order to get a job, he needs a Danish health insurance card, and therefore he needs a Danish address. That is why he needs a woman, because then she could let him use her address. He explains: *“Now me I don’t have address so I am looking lady, if you have lady, women so maybe this women will help me, you know? Help me I am using this address with my wife, my girlfriend can help you go looking job. After looking job you can go to Kompasset sign everything, later you can get yellow card<sup>21</sup>.”* (Audio file: 5; 00:33:22)

Karim also sees marriage with a Danish woman as a way to enter the Danish labour market and get a residence permit, however as mentioned above he does not take into consideration the requirements for the Danish woman and him, before he can become a citizen.

We interpret marriage to a Danish woman as a new aspiration for the West African men, which they did not have when leaving West Africa and Southern Europe. This new aspiration makes our informants navigate differently, and in new terrains. They are now more focused on meeting new Danish people, especially women, and they therefore go to bars and night clubs. Furthermore, they have tried to reach out to us, in order to get in contact with more girls. It can be argued that this is because they find it difficult to meet and approach Danish girls, because they are not included in the Danish society and terrains.

All of our informants reveal that they, in Spain and Italy, heard that there should be good opportunities for finding work in Denmark. Yet, they were not informed about the strict rules, which make it impossible for them to find decent and regular work. This limitation has changed the West African men’s situation, and they have ended up homeless in Copenhagen. They all make use of all the facilities and services made available to the homeless, and navigate amongst them in order to cover their needs and get by. However, life as a homeless person is rough and it is not what they aspired to before leaving either West African or Southern Europe. As the West African men are excluded from the Danish labour market, they are left collecting bottles or doing temporary irregular jobs paid by the hour, which does not fulfil their aspirations of a ‘better life’. Although their own lives have not improved substantially, to some extent their families in their home countries have a better life now than before. As the West African men find out how impossible it is to become a part of Danish society, they change their aspirations, and try to find another way to join

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<sup>21</sup> A yellow card means Danish health insurance card

society. Thus, several of the men have shifted the focus of their search from a job to a Danish woman to marry, as this will also make it possible for them to stay in Denmark and *become socially*.

In the following chapter we analyse how the limitations in Denmark make the West African men caught in a position where they do not move forward toward fulfilling their aspirations or reach *social becoming*.



## 6 Navigating in Circles

We have in the previous chapters, analysed the West African men's aspirations before leaving their home country and how these aspirations have changed during their social navigation through Africa and Europe. In this chapter, we argue that our group of West African men move within Europe between different terrains without navigating forward or towards *social becoming*. We argue that the men leave West Africa in order to achieve a status of *social becoming* but get caught in a similar position in Europe to the one they found themselves in, in Africa.

As mentioned in the chapter on theory, there are three ways to escape social death; migration, economy of affection and patrimonial networks. Of these, migration is the fastest way to become, as Vigh states it; “...migration stands out as the most desirable yet the most difficult to attain (...) However, migration makes it possible to rapidly become someone (...)” (Vigh, 2006; 47).

However, we argue that migration does not necessarily make the West African men *social become* as it depends on the possibilities in the terrain they migrate to. In the previous chapters, we have reached the conclusion that the limited opportunities in Europe have made the West African men change their aspirations and left them homeless. Their position as homeless has forced them to depend on homeless facilities and services, which we compare to Vigh's notion of *economy of affection*. Further, we argue that the homeless facilities and services can be seen as the limited possibilities the West African men have in Denmark, however not as possibilities that let them move forward but rather keep them stuck in the same position or even worse off that can make them decay.

### 6.1 'In life you should not depend on anyone'

*Economy of affection* is a way for the men to become, by relying on the support of family, friends or networks. This support fulfils the basic needs of the young men or helps them financially. This support from the nearest network can help the men to survive and cover their immediate needs. If they are lucky, the men will gain an inheritance of worth. However, the majority are not able to acquire sufficient resources to secure their future and typically, the support does not offer a way out of the social moratorium (Vigh, 2006; 47).

Several of our informants indicate that they depended on economic assistance from family members before they left for Europe. Karim explains how his mother helped him financially with the journey; “...so me I don't have money my mother help me with money so I say I am try to go to Niger,

*because Niger they have security and everything they don't have problem like Nigeria...*” (Audio file: 6; 03:30). Paul depended on the help he got from his family as well: *“When I am there, yeah, they helped me to go school, they helped me for many thing, they help me to come Europe, here”* (Audio file: 1; 25:25). However, in both situations our informants did not see this as a solution but rather as something they were forced to. This situation influenced their decision to migrate, as it is not a desired position to be in. Paul states very clearly that it is not good to depend on others; *“My father's family was very poor. My mother's family is very different, because they are nice people everybody have money and they live here in Europe, half of my family live here [in Europe] they have education, they have possibilities but you know I don't want to use my mother's family to build my life because I don't want to live and have help anytime, and forget to find myself, because when I am here if I call my brother or the brother [of his mother] I have money any times, money, money, money, it is not good. When I am here I take myself to be here, so I decide to find myself. I don't want to depend.”*(Audio file: 1; 00:23:55). What Paul suggests with this statement is that not only is it important to be financially independent, but also independent in life. This means that it is important for Paul to fend for himself, and to make his own decisions, which he explains further in the following statement: *“Nobody can decide on my life, because now I have '33 år' [33 years] so I decide on my life now. How I can educate my family, how I can live with my lady. So now I cannot accept my mother or family to tell me where I need to go”* (Audio file: 1; 00:19:55).

Also Richard illustrates that it is not good to depend on family. When we were talking to him about how it is to be a man in Ghana, he said that the worst thing was to depend on your parents. *“You have to be independent”* (Appendix 4) He explains further: *“In life you should not depend on anyone, not even the government. If you depend on your parents and expect that they die and you will get their money, then what if you don't get them. What if their house burns and all the money you expected to get disappeared?”*(Appendix: 4).

This illustrates that depending on family is not a solution, but rather something that you are forced to do in order to survive and get by. Our informants emphasize that they have made the decision to migrate in order to take responsibility for their own life and escape the economy of affection. During one interview Richard says several times that: *“Life is what YOU make!”* (Appendix: 4).

This can be linked to Hernández-Carretero & Carling's description of the migrants in their study. They describe them as determined to break out of the protracted stagnation: *“The migration has an appeal as a way of “breaking out” because it represents a radical break; it holds the promise of individual progress, unrestrained by impediments prospective migrants face in their everyday*

*lives.*” (Hernández-Carretero, 2012; 411). Therefore, it is a combination of doing something about your situation, and to do it by yourself.

However, even though several of our informants explain that they do not want to depend on their families, the lack of opportunities in Denmark and Europe force them to rely on charity. In the following we argue that even though the West African men have taken responsibility for their own lives, and are proactive in changing their prospects, they end up being in a situation depending on what we compare with economy of affection.

According to Paul he stays in an apartment with a friend. Paul worked in Spain for several years, and has accrued savings, which he uses for rent. However, he would not be able to stay in Denmark if he could not depend on the food offered to the homeless. As he explains it: *“If I not pay every day to go restaurant to eat I can use about one year to be here with the money, but if I go restaurant and eat every day I use to do anything I can no reach, that why I am coming here eating and later sometimes Stengade, I go there and eat that is why I don’t have problems with eat..”* (Paul; 01:26:05). According to Paul he is able to stay in Denmark for one year with the money he has now, but only by relying on charity.

Paul is not the only one who is relying on charity from the homeless organizations; actually all of our informants make use of the facilities and services made available for the homeless and suggest that these facilities and services play a great role in their daily navigation. For instance Joseph who has a tight schedule, because he wants to make use of all the offers there are. He explains, that; first he goes to Café Grace for breakfast, then he goes to Christianshavn<sup>22</sup> where they also serve breakfast, and after that he goes to Den Sorte Gryde, where he eats lunch before he goes to a place in Nørrebro<sup>23</sup> where they serve food at 2 pm., between and after the meals he collects bottles. This is what Joseph does every day, when the eateries are open, and it keeps him satisfied as regards to his need for food. However, it does not bring him closer to *social becoming*.

We met Joseph together with Richard several times; Richard follows him to these eateries. In our first conversation with Richard he told that he was renting an apartment for 3,000 DKK each month. (Appendix: 3). However, in our second meeting he indicates that he uses the shelter at Stengade 40 even though he does not seem satisfied with the way they operate; *“I have noticed it is very bad here especially sleeping places, Stengade, they allowed people to sleep there, and there is only 30 beds. Where to sleep?”* (Appendix: 4). And later in the interview: *“Things are very rough here.*

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<sup>22</sup> A neighborhood in Copenhagen

<sup>23</sup> A neighborhood in Copenhagen

*Like Stengade there is a lottery. And the rest just have to leave. Where should they sleep?"* (Appendix: 4).

The above statements illustrate that both the free food as well as shelter provided by different organizations are important to the West African men, and these services enable them to survive by covering their immediate needs. However, this charity does not provide them with opportunities for changing their life situation. We argue therefore that these free services fall in to Vigh's category of economy of affection.

During an informal conversation with Richard he asks; *"How can your government can help us?"*. We explained that the government assists indirectly through Den Sorte Gryde and Stengade 40. Richard says; *"If we could just receive 200 crones a week."* (Appendix: 9). This conversation indicates that even though Richard finds it degrading to rely on family he feels different about getting help from the Danish state.

Economy of affection is regarded as undesired, however the West African have not indicated that relying on offers from homeless organizations bothers them in the same way as relying on family does. Yet these two situations can be compared with each other as they make the men dependent. Even though they have migrated to Europe they have ended up in a situation where they rely on others in order to cover their immediate needs and in order to survive. Therefore, they are also kept in a situation where they live from day to day, but are unable to move forward to *social becoming*. This will be elaborated in the following section.

## **6.2 'You have to change the system'**

In this section, we discuss how the West African men's situation has them caught in a position where they are not able to move forward. Several factors have an impact on why they stay in Denmark even though their opportunities are limited.

As outlined in previous sections all of our informants use homeless facilities and services. The free food made available by several organisations offer two purposes for the West African men. First, it covers their immediate need of sustenance, and second, it creates an opportunity to save money; what they save on food makes it possible for the men to send a larger amount of money to their families back home. Furthermore, the free food makes homeless life easier to overcome, as their immediate needs are covered. As mentioned in the previous chapter Karim expresses that Denmark is good for him, because; *"You have homeless place too much they help people,(...) I go around*

*here, I see many countries it is not like here.*” (Audio file: 2; 01:00:27). This indicates that one of the reasons Karim has decided to stay in Denmark, is because life as a homeless is better there than in other countries. According to Karim a homeless person gets his immediate needs covered in Denmark whereas in other countries, Italy for instance, the same facilities and services are not offered.

Yet, it can be argued that not only does the charity make the West African men stay in Denmark, but it also traps them in the same position, as it makes them decide to stay in Denmark even though there are no opportunities in regards to labour or a better future. Therefore, there are no opportunities for them to move out of the *social moratorium* and *social become*.

Justine Mitchell from Den Sorte Gryde and Bo Heide-Jochimsen from projekt UDENFOR agree that the West African men are resourceful with drive and focus, wanting to find a job, however due to the lack of possibilities they are pushed to live on the streets and make use of the homeless facilities and services, and this makes them decay, some even start to drink or use drugs. This way, by staying in Denmark, their situation deteriorates after they arrive. According to Richard; “*Those you see [other African men on the streets] all have an aim. Those who do not have aim they are the one drinking. Those from Africa are more responsible. They have plans for a better future.*” (Appendix 4). This illustrates how the situation as homeless can make the men lose their hopes and aims, and thereby decay, in the long term.

As argued in the previous chapter the West African migrants change their aspirations as time goes by. It can be argued that this happens as they meet obstacles and limitations on their way. For instance, all our informants came to Denmark with the expectation of finding a job. However, even though they still hope to find work in Denmark they have found out that it is not possible without a Danish working permit or Danish health insurance card. Therefore, several of our informants have changed the way they set out to find a job in Denmark. Their intention now is to find a Danish woman to marry, as this seems to be more accessible than the work permit for the West African men, and can be another way to enter the Danish labour market. This is also something Lucht alludes to in his research. As he describes it, the migrants often stay longer in the same situation because it is so hard to get papers or a job. Furthermore they change their aspirations: “*The trend toward lingering in Italy under unfavourable conditions may eventually lead migrants to modify their planned time frame as well as their hopes and dreams*” (Lucht, 2012; 28). Yet, it can be

argued that their ever-changing aspirations can prolong the process of social becoming, as their focus changes from their initial goals.

As mentioned West African men collect bottles which they think of as their job, as Richards says: *"Picking bottles keeps the streets clean. It is also a job. It is a good thing."* (Appendix: 4). He admits that he also collects bottles even though he had told us in a previous conversation that he did not. They still hope for a *real* job, and however unsatisfactory it is, they collect bottles in order to get by day by day, all the while hoping for a better job. Karim says the following about collecting bottles: *"No good! You don't have nothing it is very so far, you go and pick bottles one night, 7 hours 8 hours you can get 50 crones. You can do Friday-Saturday picking bottles one night from 8 to 9 in the morning, maybe you can get 115 crones. 140 someday you can get 100. Like in 8 hours in the night. You know?"* (Audio file: 6; 00:33:08). Thus, collecting bottles is just a way to get by and cover immediate needs, and not something where the West African men earn enough to move closer to a position of social becoming.

Furthermore, as the West African men are only allowed to stay in Denmark for three months within a period of six months they are not able to gain a foothold in Denmark. Due to the visa restrictions they have to spend a substantial amount of their money on leaving Denmark every three months. Furthermore, as they have no legal right to receive support, they find it difficult to be in Denmark. As Paul explains it: *"I am not European person but I have residence here in Europe that is very difficult, the [Danish] government can't help you because we are here like tourist, not here to live"* (Audio file: 1; 01:34:50).

Richard explains further that he finds it very difficult, especially when it comes to getting help. As mentioned before, his situation is slightly different from our other informants' situation, as he has obtained Italian nationality, which allows him to apply for a job in Denmark. Even though he explains that he has tried to get help from the Danish services, but found it very difficult because he had to have a CV, which he had never written before. In Italy there are companies that you can call in order to get help finding a job. As mentioned previous, Richard says that he has been in contact with Kompasset, but they do not really help: *"You have to change the system to help people. Here they just tell you to look for a job at the internet. What about people who don't know the internet. It is very rough here. In Italy they get your documents and phone number and they call you if they have anything for you"*. (Appendix: 4).

Richard does not feel that he receives the support that he needs and therefore cannot move any closer to his aspirations of a job and a good life. As mentioned in the previous chapter, it took some time for our informants to realize that they are not allowed to work in Denmark making it impossible to find a job. This has also prolonged their stay in Denmark and has put them in a position where they are unable to move on.

Another reason why the West African men are relatively trapped in Denmark is due to family and friend's expectations. Several of our informants express how they feel under pressure from their relatives when they are in contact with them. We have noticed how they each cope with it differently, either by telling the truth about their situation in Denmark, by lying or even by breaking contact with the family.

Paul explains: *"I was not telling my family in Africa because my situation is different here, I am new here I am just coming here and I don't know my situation here, I want to call them because I know what, why because when I call my brother or my father and call this, and the next day they can call me; ooh you live in a good country it is better, this I don't want from now. No, no, I don't want to tell the for myself, because I don't want to have problems with them because sometimes they can call and many people can allowed to see me married because sometimes they ask me are you married, how are you there, when you come when they call we need to see your lady so every time I call I very feel bad"* (Audio file: 1; 00:48:59). Paul has not told his family how hard life is in Denmark, which is why they expect a lot from him. They expect him to have what he defines as a good life, with a wife and a good job. Therefore, he has cut off contact with them, as he felt pressured. He says: *"Nobody can call me, because nobody can have my number."* (Audio file: 1; 00:34:22). To avoid feeling pressured Paul has chosen to limit contact with both friends and family from home. Moreover, he explains how it was like when his family had his number: *"When my mother calls me some times she cannot ask you; how are you? How you feel or how are you there? (...) but the only thing she can ask me I'm away and I need this and that, I need this, but she cannot ask you how you live there, how are you working, you do this and sometimes I have a problem with they calling me, because I pains me, you know?"* (Audio file: 4; 00:36:56). The statements illustrate that in West Africa they still believe that European countries offer a better life than in West Africa. Furthermore, they only have eyes for the benefits that come with having a relative in Europe, which puts further pressure on these men. As regards to Karim, he has tried to tell friends in Nigeria that life is not as good in Europe as they think, however they do not believe him: *"I have*

*many many friends, they are calling me. They say they want to come, if they like you, many many friends they will call you and say they want to come to Europe. I not talk anybody and make you come to Europe. I say no try!*" (Audio file: 5; 57:06).

Q: *"And what do they say?"*

Karim: *"No people they don't believe it, because any people you, you know African people; if you say Europe, they think about if you come to Europe it is easy, it is very good life, you understand?"* (Audio file: 5; 00:57:19)

The pressure from family and friends back home also keep the West African men in a position where they are not able to move forward. The families keep asking for more money, and are expecting something from the men. Paul explains how it makes him feel when he talks with the family: *"I no like to call them anytime because anytime I call them they tell me about their problems I don't feel good. I do not call my mother about two month I have [not calling her] since I was here but I told her that I am coming here"* (Audio file: 1; 00:26:49). Paul is the only one of our informants who has decided to cut off contact with his family. The rest of our group of West African men see it as their responsibility to send money and gifts home. However, they still feel the related pressure to this responsibility. Karim: *"No it is supposed you to try help yourself, you have mother okay – your mother is in Africa, so you have small money help her, you have small money 200 kr., 300 kr. Okay, where can you go? Western Union. You can send, so you are good small small."* (Audio file: 6; 28:30) Karim explains how he is supposed to help his mother and he sees it as his duty to send money if he has some, but first he has to take care of himself. Richard, Joseph and Benjamin all explain that it is the man's responsibility to support the family, and they all send remittances back home in order to give their family a better life. As mentioned previously, Benjamin says: *"My wife live better than me, at least she has a place to sleep"*. (Appendix: 3)

The expectations and requests from the relatives also mean that the West African men are not able to return to their home country, which we will elaborate on in the following section.

### **6.3 'I need something!'**

There are expectations to be met if the West African men decide to return to their home country. Not only are they expected to bring gifts to the family, but also to friends and relatives who come to visit when the men have returned. Furthermore, you are expected to have earned sufficient money



to support your family, and maybe even build a house or buy a car. In the following we explain how our informants are in a situation where they are unable to return.

Richard explains why he cannot go back to Ghana: *“How can you go back, when you don’t even have money for the ticket? When I have something that can sustain me and my family for some time, then I will go home to Ghana.”* (Appendix: 4). Several of our informants express that they cannot go back to their home country without money and gifts. Karim explains that he wants to go back, but not right at the moment. We asked what he needs before he can go back: *“I need something! You know! (...) If you no have something, why can you go back?”* (Audio file: 2; 00:45:35). When asking what this something is, he explains that if he goes back to Nigeria, he needs money for more than just the flight ticket. He explains, how people will come and visit him from far away, because he has been in Europe, and all these people expect to get something: *“You are supposed to help your people”* (Audio file: 2; 00:49:58). As they cannot go back empty-handed, they are obligated to stay in Europe to keep looking for ‘the better life’ they hope to find, not only for themselves but also for their families. If they come back home empty-handed, they would be looked on as failures. According to one of Hernández-Carretero & Carling’s informants: *“So if you come home empty-handed that means you messed up over there.”* (Hernández-Carretero, 2012; 411). He reasons that everyone in Senegal knows that there is work in Europe. We have heard similar arguments from our informants, from Karim for instance whose friends do not believe him when he tells them that Europe is not equal to success, as explained in the previous section. Richard further iterates: *“Everyone know if you go to Europe you would succeed in life, you cannot go there and not succeed.”* (Appendix 4) As explained previously this idea of Europe is linked to the images of Europe the Africans see.

It is not only money the men need, in order to show that they have succeeded in Europe, it could also be a white Danish woman. As mentioned previously, several of our informants want to marry a Danish woman; however it is not only in order to get access to the labour market in Denmark or to get a mixed-race baby, but also in order to bring her back to the home country, as a white wife also seems to be an indication of success. Therefore, as none of our informants have yet to obtain a job, sufficient money, or a Danish girlfriend or wife they do not wish to return to their homelands. They keep searching, but get caught in a position where it takes longer for them to move forward and *social become*, as the possibilities in Denmark are limited.

Vigh argues that migration is a way to escape *social moratorium* and to *social become*. Therefore, it can be argued that the West African men are seen as stuck and unable to *social become*. We argue that because these men's families either do not believe the hardships they face in Europe, or know about them, because the men lie to them, the people back in West Africa see them as men who have gained *social become* and the status of adulthood. This also means that as long as the men stay in Europe, they are viewed as having *social become*. They might not see themselves in this way, but their families and friends do.

As regards to Richard who has been in Europe for more than 20 years, we asked him, when is it enough, when is he ready to go back to Ghana: "*I do not know when it is enough for me. I will still look for more. To be in Ghana now; I am not ready now. I will when I am satisfied, with what I want. By that I mean having a work and money, and then I will go back to Ghana. That can take time for me.*" (Appendix: 4) He says further: "*I don't dream to stay here forever and ever, all my life. Home is sweet*" (Appendix: 5). So even though Richard has been in Europe for more than 20 years, he is still not satisfied with the outcome, and he can still not meet his family's expectations if he returns.

Therefore, the situation of the West African men in Denmark can be compared to their situation in West Africa. The men subsist by relying on economy of affection, but they are not able to obtain a job that can make them move forward and have the life they are looking for in Europe. It seems like the West African men are uncomprehending of Danish laws and regulations and why they seem designed to exclude them from Danish society on a social, political and economic dimension. Therefore, it takes some time before they change the navigation toward their aim. This prolongs the situation they are in.

The West African men keep on navigating in a terrain that moves. They move toward their imagined future but because of their situation they move in order to get their immediate needs covered. This means that they get 'interrupted' in their way toward their imagined future because it is a struggle to get by, day by day. This is what Vigh calls *dubriagem*.

## 7 Imagined Future

In the previous chapters we have outlined the aspirations of the West African men in order to give an insight in the reason why they chose to migrate to Europe. Moreover, we have concluded that because of a lack of possibilities our informants' aspirations have changed during their journey. Subsequently, we have concluded that this lack of possibilities also has meant that the West African men do not move forward and toward *social becoming*. In this chapter we argue that the men rely on hope and luck in order to reach their aspirations; their imagined future. Furthermore, we argue that the West African men keep on navigating in order to reach their imagined future.

### 7.1 'It is all imagination'

In the above chapter we argued that the West African men navigate in circles and not forward to *social becoming*. Yet, they still have hopes of reaching their imagined future. This hope plays a great role, in their social navigation, however their situation makes it difficult to reach it. *Dubriagem*, a notion developed by Vigh based on his research, means moving toward something in a moving terrain. *Dubriagem* is both about the present situation and the imagined future. Therefore, it indicates that even though the West African men navigate from day to day focused on getting their basic needs covered, they still have a focus on their imagined future and their changing aspirations. When the men left West Africa the aspiration was to find a better life. However, after some time in Europe their aspirations have changed, or at least the way to get these aspirations fulfilled has. Therefore, it can be argued that the West African men navigate toward fulfilment of their aspiration by changing these aspirations to something perceived as more reachable.

When asking Richard if he thought going to Europe was the right decision, his answer is clear: "*Travel is one's future imagination – it is all imagination. It is all about choice. Here [in Europe] if you work, you have a chance to save. It is more likely to succeed in life when you move from one country to another country. It is all about better life!*" (Appendix: 4). We have argued that the West African men have certain aspirations when leaving Africa, and that these aspirations change through their journey. Further, we discuss that even though they make use of all the possibilities they have in Europe they still do not move closer to *social become*, which is why their aspirations change through time. Richard, who has been in Europe for 20 years, proves this point with his statement.

One day when trying to schedule an interview with Joseph, Richard explained to him what our questions were about, Joseph said to us: "*The situation is the same for all of us here. We all want*

*the same; a better life.*” And Richard confirmed: “*Everyone wants to go to a better place. It is all about a better future.*” (Appendix: 9).

We have noticed that our informants are all determined to achieve their aspirations. They take Danish lessons at the church, go out to meet Danish women and they try to fit in, by having nice clothes and smartphones. However, because of their situation as homeless, they have to constantly consider how to have their immediate needs covered, in a moving terrain. For instance; firstly, the African men care a lot about how they look; they make sure to wash their clothes, cut their hair and make sure that they stay clean. However, during the time of our fieldwork, Den Sorte Gryde stopped maintaining a laundry service as the West African men was the main users of this service, and they are not Den Sorte Gryde’s main target group, as they are not seen as vulnerable. Secondly, as explained previously, the weather is fickle in Denmark, and therefore determines how much money the West African men can earn by collecting bottles. Thirdly, the requirements for obtaining a Danish work permit were a lot stricter than our informants thought before coming to Denmark. These external circumstances can all be seen as movements of the terrains, which force the West African men to reconsider their navigation all the time. They have to consider new possibilities for reaching ‘the good life’; the imagined future. This is also something Lucht has noticed in his research. He uses the term *califo*, which means *carry you forward* until you reach your goal, which is a term he has adopted from the men in his research. He explains how the migrants’ day-labouring carry them forward, first towards Libya and later on towards Europe, until they reach their goal. It can be argued that this is also what has brought our informants to Denmark; however we argue that instead of day-labouring it is the lack of possibilities in one terrain that carries them further to a new terrain. And therefore, it can also be argued that they are not carried forward, but pushed forward, or rather backwards seen from a social perspective. (Lucht, 2012; 30). However, it can still be compared to *dubriagem* as every move they make is something they do in order to get closer to their imagined future.

It can therefore be argued that new ‘possibilities’ have turned up for our informants and they have a new imagined future, such as marrying a Danish woman and staying in Denmark, because of the moving terrain. This goes both for Richard, Karim and Paul. Yet, it can be argued that this imagined future of staying in Denmark, occurred out of necessity as this is seen as their only possibility at the moment, because they have not obtained sufficient to return home.

By getting married to a Danish woman it means that they then are able to return to their home country, yet they only wish to do so on vacation or in a limited period of time. The Danish woman can be seen as a way to *social become* both because she might have resources to support the family in West Africa, and because the Danish woman is a living representation of success in Europe. Yet, it can be argued that, when our informants find out about the requirements for marrying a Danish woman, and because of the fact that they have still not, met a woman to marry, they will have to change their aspiration and the navigation.

It can be argued that the West African men have no possibility of changing the external factors that move the terrains and determine their social navigation and changing aspirations, therefore they rely on luck in order to *social become*. This is due to the absence of control. During our interviews several of our informants express that they count on luck in order to fulfil their aspirations. Benjamin uses the term, when talking about crossing the Mediterranean Sea: *“You cannot block the sea if it happened and you died then that is it everybody and his luck”* (Appendix: 3). Karim also indicates that he was *lucky*, when he survived the journey across the ocean and reached Europe: *“I work to get the money so I can go to collection house so if you have lucky you can enter, if you are not lucky you can died for water, finish!”*

Q: *“So you were lucky?”*

Karim: *“Yeah”* (Audio file: 2; 00:18:40)

He continues: *“I am very happy, I am very lucky because I just enter and I no die inside the water”* (Audio file: 2; 00:26:47)

The term lucky is not only in relation to surviving the dangerous journey across the Mediterranean, but also in relation to other situations, where one of our informants has been unable to control the situation, due to external factors. For instance when talking about the situation in West Africa before they left, Paul states: *“If you have one profession like medicine or to be doctor or to be that, you do not have a job when you finish your class, if you get lucky you can get a job.”* (Audio file: 1; 00:9:15) He explains that you need to be lucky in order to find a job in Africa, even though you have a good education, and therefore many Africans decide to migrate instead. During our interviews Karim often uses the term luck or lucky, when talking about obtaining a residence permit in Italy:

*“Me I am very lucky I just came in four month I have residence for Italy. (...) I have residence, I have chance, I have freedom everywhere for Europe, it is not Europe all the world everywhere if you need if you like from here I say I need to go to America tomorrow I go so everywhere if here it is not good for me”* (Audio file: 2; 35:25) Karim considers himself lucky, because he has obtained a residence permit within four month, and consider this permit as an open door to the rest of the world. This gives him the opportunity to change his aspirations and move with different terrains in order to *social become*.

When talking to Richard about future plans he explains that it is impossible for him to make future plans, because his situation changes all the time. According to Richard; it depends on how lucky you are. (Appendix: 4). Richard’s explanation indicates that because the terrains move all the time, it is impossible to make plans, which is why he just has to hope for some good luck. As Richard cannot control the moving terrains, because they move due to external factors, he sees it as lack of luck. Therefore, we argue that the changing terrains determine and change the West African men’s aspirations.

When the West African men let luck determine their future it can be argued that they become passive, which is the opposite of migrating, where they took control of their own lives and made an active decision to change it. Furthermore, the above statements show that each time our informants have been in a situation that they have been unable to control they rely on luck, and it can therefore be seen as a coping mechanism used in order to empower themselves to continue their navigation.

During their journey, the West African men have changed their aspirations, and the majority of our informants now see marriage as an opportunity to *social become*. A Danish girl can provide them with a residence permit in Denmark, and the possibility to stay. Furthermore, the Danish girl represents success in search for a ‘good life’ in Europe, at least to friends and families in their home country. We argue that marriage is an aspiration that our informants have at the moment, because they have realised that obtaining a work permit on their own is almost impossible, and that marriage therefore seems more accessible. However, we argue that this aspiration only seems more accessible, because the men are not familiar with the Danish rules about marrying a foreigner, and that this aspiration will change once they are aware of the difficulties inherent in marrying a Danish woman, and will be forced once again to have to find a new way of continuing their navigation.

Based on the above analysis we argue that migration to Europe cannot be seen as a solution that will make the West African men *social become* as their possibilities in Europe are too limited. Migration is a possibility to navigate in a new terrain and the terrain in Denmark provides them with a new opportunity to collect bottles and make use of the services made available to the homeless, however these opportunities do not make them move forward and come closer to *social becoming*. Therefore, to *social become* is still an imagined future.

## 8 Conclusion

In this chapter, we summarize the main points found throughout the thesis.

In recent years, West African migrants, who live on the streets of Copenhagen, is seen as a new phenomenon in Denmark. As a consequence of the Global Financial Crisis many West African men lost their jobs in Spain or Italy, and migrated therefore further north in the search for new opportunities in Denmark. However, due to lack of job opportunities the West African men end up living on the streets, and dependent on the support and services from homeless organisations.

The focus of this thesis was to answer the research question; *How do West African men navigate through the terrains of European countries in order to fulfil their social aspirations? And how does the movement of the terrains influence these social aspirations?*

With the aim to answer this research question we decided to base our thesis on empirical data. Information and narratives of five West African men were conducted in Copenhagen through observations, informal conversations and semi-structured interviews. Our fieldwork in the homeless environment and the meetings with our informants enabled us to collect the necessary data.

In order to analyse the collected data we found it relevant to use Henrik E. Vigh's theory on social navigation, as the main theoretical framework. This provided us the possibility to analyse how the West African men navigate through moving terrains with both possibilities and limitations. This gave us an understanding of the West African men's aspirations, and how these aspirations changed and the men adjusted their navigation in order to *social become*. A. S. Bhalla & Frédéric Lapeyre's definition of social exclusion supported our analysis of the limitations and restrictions the West African men face in Europe. Furthermore, to support our findings we used research by María Hernández-Carretero & Jørgen Carling, Hans Lucht and Jakob Jakobsen, which provided us with diverse perspectives on West African men migrating.

The analytical part of the thesis was partitioned into four chapters: *Emerging Aspirations*, *New Terrains*, *New Aspirations*, *Navigating in Circles* and *Imagined future*. This was done in order to form a clear structure of thesis with the necessary steps towards an answer of our research question.

In the chapter *Emerging Aspirations*, we analysed how several external factors push the West African men to decide to migrate. We found that the external factors as lack of job opportunities and low salaries make many young men delay their social responsibility and they therefore get



caught in an undesired social position as youth. Furthermore, we found that men in the West African societies have a huge social and economic responsibility towards their families, both in term of their parents and their future wife and children. Therefore, the expected responsibility and the inability to achieve a social status as adult push many West African men to make the active decision to change their circumstances by migrating, which is considered the fastest way of social becoming, by Vigh.

In addition, we found that the ground for migrating to Europe is the images of Europe shown in West Africa, which promise success and wealth as well as a living standard that many of our informants aspire to achieve. Furthermore, we found that even though migration can be filled with great risks the West African men put their lives in God's hands and rely on luck in order to cope with the uncertain journey with an uncontrollable outcome.

In the chapter, *New Terrains, New Aspirations*, we analyse how and why the aspirations of the West African men changes through their journey. We found that our informants' images of Europe were not in accordance with the reality that met them, shortly after arriving to Europe. The possibilities were more limited than expected, due to exclusion of the labour market. In addition to this, we found that all of our informants lost their job, in either Spain or Italy, due to the Global Financial Crisis. This forced them to look for new opportunities elsewhere, and therefore they decided to migrate to Denmark. Furthermore, we found that, because of the West African men's deprivation of citizenship, they were excluded from an economic dimension as well as social dimension, in Spain and Italy.

We found that the reason for coming to Denmark was to find a job in order to achieve a better life. However, due to lack of a work permit, and the fact that the West African men entered Denmark on a tourist visa, it makes them unable to occupy a regular job. This exclusion from the labour market made the men homeless, and forces them to collect bottles to earn money. Furthermore, we found that they depend on homeless facilities and services in order to get by from day to day, but that they do not move forward. Finally, we found that due to limited opportunities the West African men change their aspirations, and that marrying a Danish woman becomes a new gateway to the Danish labour market, and a better life.

In the chapter, *Navigating in Circles*, we analysed why the West African men get caught in an undesired position in Denmark. In this part of the analysis, we found that possibilities such as

relying on homeless facilities and collecting bottles make it easy for the West African men to cover the immediate needs, and enables them to send remittances to their families. However, we also found that the limitations such as strict legislation in accordance with the Schengen Agreement, and unfulfilled requirements, in order to get a work permit make it impossible for the West African men to achieve 'the good life' they aspire, and therefore it unable them to *social become*.

Furthermore, we found that the charity from homeless organisations can be compared to Vigh's notion on *economy of affection*, as both make the West African men become dependent, and therefore in a social position as youth.

Finally, we found that even though they have realised the hardship of their situation they are unable and unwilling to return to West Africa, due to expectations imposed by family, friends and society in their home country. Therefore, they keep on navigating towards the imagined future.

In the chapter, *Imagined Future*, we argued that the reliance on luck plays a great role in the men's further navigation toward the imagined future. We have found that the West African men rely on luck when they are unable to control the situation they are in, which we see as a passive approach. The West African men navigate in moving terrains, all time with their focus on their imagined future. However, due to their situation they get interrupted in their navigation by the daily struggle to get their immediate needs covered.

Based on the above analysis we argued that migration to Europe cannot be seen as a direct solution to social becoming, their possibilities in Europe are too limited. Thereby, the situation of the West African men in Denmark can be compared to their situation in West Africa. Migration is a possibility to navigate in a new terrain and the terrain in Denmark provides them with new opportunities. However, these new opportunities do not make them move closer to *social becoming*. Therefore, to *social become* is still an imagined future.

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