Masja van Meeteren

Irregular Migrants in Belgium and the Netherlands

Aspirations and Incorporation

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In loving memory of Petra van 't Padje

Content

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The Hague, March 2013
Masja van Meeteren

1   Irregular Migration as a Fact of Life

1.1   Irregular migration as a common feature of Western economies

Irregular migration has emerged in all Western economies since World War II (Sassen 1999), and it has risen considerably in past decades (Arango 2004; Castles & Miller 2003; Jahn & Straubhaar 1999).[1] In Northern Europe, this increase has partly been an unforeseen consequence of the end of foreign labour recruitment, which was introduced in the 1970s (Brochmann 1999b). In addition, the 1990s witnessed large numbers of asylum seekers in search of protection who were not granted asylum, but nevertheless illegally stayed in their destination countries (Koser & Lutz 1998). The increased number of irregular migrants in Northern European countries is thus in part a result of the incapacity of these states to deal with asylum seekers who have been denied refugee status or other forms of residence permit.

In reaction to these growing numbers, governments have developed policies to prevent irregular immigration (Albrecht 2002). Initially, these mainly targeted controlling the external borders of the European Union. In recent years, however, border controls have proved to have little effectiveness in preventing irregular migration (Brochmann 1999a; Cornelius 2005). Moreover, beyond a certain level of control the costs of avoiding irregular migration exceed the economic damage caused by irregular migration. This means that, from an economic perspective, the 'optimal' degree of irregular immigration is greater than zero (Entorf 2002; Hillman & Weiss 1999; Jahn & Straubhaar 1999). Therefore, policymakers in Europe have increasingly turned their focus towards internal control mechanisms (Brochmann 1999a; Broeders & Engbersen 2007). Border controls are still important, but they have been increasingly supplemented by policies of exclusion and discouragement. According to Broeders and Engbersen (2007: 1,593) exclusion from formal institutions of society is the main thrust of current policies aimed at irregular migrants: '[F]or those illegal aliens who cannot be discouraged or deterred to come, exclusion is meant to complicate and frustrate living and

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1   What term is best used to denote this type of migration has long been a subject of debate. In this book, the term 'irregular migrants' is used. Irregular migrants are defined as people who stay in the country of residence without permission from the authorities, regardless of whether the person entered legally or illegally and regardless of whether they are economically active or not. Section 1.4 provides a more elaborate discussion on the term.

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

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

It appears that neither countries that rely on strong external controls, nor countries that have a dense system of internal controls are successful in managing irregular migration (Düvell 2006a). One of the most important reasons is that there exists a demand for the informal labour that irregular migrants can provide.[2] Many companies would not be able to compete on the international market were it not for the benefits they derive from employing informally. In Western Europe, employers have strong incentives to hire informal workers in order to avoid paying relatively high minimum

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2   Following the World Bank definition of the informal economy, informal labour can be defined as labour that takes place 'partially or fully outside government regulation, taxation and observation'. Note that in most cases, the informal labour irregular migrants engage in concerns labour fully outside government regulation, taxation and observation. Migrants are not the only ones who participate in the informal labour market, non-migrants do so too. See Van Meeteren (2013) for more information on informal labour and irregular migrants.

wages and social insurance contributions (Jordan & Düvell 2002). Firms'
continuing search for flexibility under pressure from international competi-
tion is thought to be responsible for employers' attempts to avoid the costs
associated with regular jobs due to employment regulations (Sassen 1999).
The specific demand for informal labour is considered to be one of the
reasons why irregular immigration continues to exist in spite of unemploy-
ment among legal citizens and increasing deployment of employer sanctions
(Ambrosini 2010; Castles & Miller 2003). The extent to which employer
sanctions are enforced differs from country to country and even from sector
to sector. Whereas some labour sectors are relatively unaffected by checks,
others are controlled on a more regular basis (Abella 2000).

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

1.2   Studying the lives of irregular migrants

Although the presence of irregular migrants has been a common feature
of Western economies for decades, the bulk of social research has tradi-
tionally been aimed at studying its causes and finding ways to solve the
'problem' (Portes 1978: 469). Recently, attention has also been directed to
its consequences in terms of its effects on native employment and on wage
levels (see, e.g., Ambrosini 2001; Amir 2000; Carter 2005; Chiswick 2000;
Djajic 1997; Gosh 2000; Hazari & Sgro 2000; Martin 2010; Sarris & Zografakis
1999; Tapinos 2000; Venturini 1998; Yoshida & Woodland 2005). The first
efforts to study the way irregular migrants live were made in the United
States in the 1970s and 1980s (see, e.g., Chavez 1998; Cornelius 1982; Massey

et al. 1987; Portes & Bach 1985; Rodriguez 1987). European studies followed from the mid-1990s and are therefore relatively recent (see, e.g., Adam et al. 2002; Alt 1999; Anderson 1999; Burgers & Engbersen 1999; Devillé 2006, 2008; Düvell 2004; Engbersen et al. 1999; Engbersen et al. 2002; Jordan & Düvell 2002; Lazaridis & Romaniszyn 1998; Leerkes et al. 2004; Leman et al. 1994; Paspalanova 2006; Slimane 1995; Staring 2001; Triandafyllidou & Kosic 2006; Van der Leun 2003b; Van Nieuwenhuyze 2007). As a consequence, the number of European studies of the lives of irregular migrants in receiving societies is still limited, especially compared to the United States, where the quality of the research also seems most encouraging (Düvell 2006c).

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

The questions that are typically addressed in these studies concern irregular migrants' migration histories, their work practices and job search activities, housing conditions, access to health care, social contacts and everyday strategies to remain undetected by the authorities. Because much of this research is exploratory in nature, many findings remain primarily empirical (Devillé 2006; Paspalanova 2006). As a result, there has been relatively little attempt at comparison or theory-building beyond specific empirical contexts (Black 2003; Bloch & Chimienti 2011; Cvajner & Sciortino 2010; see Portes 1997). However, these limited attempts have increased our understanding of the ways in which irregular migrants live in Western societies, and they have spurred the evolution of some theoretical debates. By far most of the work that has yielded theoretical contributions has been undertaken in two closely connected areas of research. The first area involves the description and explanation of different patterns of

incorporation of irregular migrants, and the second concerns analyses of the significance of different forms of capital for irregular migrants. These theoretical concerns are related to the questions of how irregular migrants manage to incorporate in receiving societies where they are not allowed to be and what makes them more or less successful at achieving this. These areas are also the theoretical focus of this book.

The main problem with current research practice on the incorporation of irregular migrants, which is discussed in detail in the next chapter, is its scattered nature. Although attempts have been made to arrive at theoretically meaningful findings by means of comparative research, these have been limited in important ways. To arrive at more comprehensive theoretical insights, this volume proposes an alternative approach to address the questions of what patterns of incorporation can be distinguished among irregular migrants and how these can best be understood.

This book contributes to the main theoretical debates regarding the way irregular migrants live in Western societies. In doing so, naturally the focus cannot be on all Western societies, which is why Belgium[3] and the Netherlands are used as case studies. The choice of these two countries stems from very practical considerations. I already had at my disposal many interviews with irregular migrants from previous research I had been involved in. As there were no theoretical or methodological objections to the choice of these two countries, I decided to profit from the previous experiences. The fact that the choice of countries in which the research was to take place was mainly based on practical reasons does not mean that the choice of these countries is not theoretically sound. The relevance of these national contexts is discussed in Chapter 4, on immigration policies. The following sections discuss some conceptual considerations concerning the terms 'irregular migrants' and 'incorporation' as they are used throughout this book.

1.3   Irregular migrants: Who are they?

The topic of irregular migration has received increasing attention in political and public debates in the past decades (Düvell 2006b). As irregular migra-

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3   In this book, I consistently speak of Belgium as a national entity even though the data on which this book is based were gathered in Flanders and Brussels only. Because for the irregular migrants in question, Belgium is the relevant frame of reference and for reasons of readability of the text, I have chosen to speak of Belgium instead of the longer and more confusing Flanders and Brussels.

tion is mostly perceived as a threat to European societies and economies, these debates tend to focus on the question of how to prevent irregular migration (Paspalanova 2006; Uehling 2004). At the basis of this perceived threat lie social myths and stereotypical images of irregular migrants as criminals (Coutin 2005b), welfare abusers or a source of unfair job competition (Broeders & Engbersen 2007; Devillé 2008; Eaton 1998). Research has indicated that few irregular migrants engage in criminal acts (Leerkes 2009; Van Meeteren et al. 2008) and few use welfare provisions (Cyrus & Vogel 2006; Düvell 2006c; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994; Van der Leun 2003a; Van Meeteren et al. 2008). Moreover, the labour that irregular migrants provide is generally complementary instead of substitutional (Jordan & Düvell 2002; Samers 2005; Venturini 1998). Nevertheless, these myths are widely accepted as common knowledge (Devillé 2008). Some scholars claim that it is because of the terminology used to denote this group of migrants that they have become surrounded with negative connotations which feed these social myths. Some blame social scientists, who have labelled irregular migrants 'illegals' or 'illegal aliens', for their role in this process. No consensus has been reached among scholars on what the proper terminology should be (see also Paspalanova 2006; Uehling 2004). It is therefore important to explain what is meant by 'irregular migration' and 'irregular migrants' in this book. Moreover, it should be made clear why these concepts are used and not others.

Irregular migration is sometimes referred to as 'undocumented', 'unauthorised' or 'illegal' migration. Likewise, irregular migrants are denoted 'undocumented' or 'illegal' migrants. When referring to *migration*, the adjective 'illegal' is mostly used uncritically. However, the practice of labelling *migrants* as 'illegal' has been the cause of much discussion. While in legal systems and in most public discourses the term 'illegal migrants' or even 'illegals' is usually employed, social scientists prefer to refer to 'undocumented' or 'irregular' migrants in order to avoid any discriminatory connotation and to prevent criminalisation (Düvell 2006b). Some argue that the term 'illegal' should not be used, because it is incorrect, as it wrongfully refers to a state of being (Schinkel 2005). After all, a person cannot *be* illegal; only his or her stay or employment can be. According to Paspalanova (2006) it is precisely this practice – the use of the word 'illegal' to refer to people – which has fuelled the perception of irregular migrants as a threat and as criminals. Because of these critiques most social scientists have stopped using the term. Recently, however, a small group of scholars purposefully employed the term and justified its use by arguing that it is precisely migrants' illegality which should be at the centre of research, as it is central to the lives irregular

migrants lead. In their opinion, researchers ought to ask the question of what it means to lack a valid residence status (Donato & Armenta 2011). Willen (2007a, 2007b) argues that migrant illegality should not only be seen as a juridical status and a socio-political condition; the impact of illegality on migrants' everyday lives, on their experiences of being-in-the-world, should be considered as well. De Genova (2005, 2007) likewise claims that migrants' experiences of their illegality should be studied.

As the latter arguments have been put forward relatively recently and have remained exceptional or outsider positions, the majority of scholars have tried to find a substitute word for 'illegal'. In this connection, the term 'undocumented' has been coined. Although less subject to debate, the term lacks precision. After all, migrants who reside illegally may well possess documents. Furthermore, they may currently lack proper documentation, but they might have crossed the border using legitimate papers. Moreover, some migrants own an abundance of documentation owing to their struggle to become legalised (see also Chauvin & Garcés-Mascareñas 2012). This means they not only possess a lot of legal documents themselves, but they may have been documented by the state as well. As a consequence, they are not necessarily undocumented vis-à-vis the receiving state. In order to avoid the shortcomings of terms such as 'illegal' or 'undocumented', the term 'irregular migrants' was coined. This term avoids the practice of labelling people as 'illegal,' while it simultaneously makes clear that these are not migrants who have followed the *regular* legal paths.

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

Although this may sound like a solid definition, even this definition requires further explanation due to the complexity of the subject at hand. Developments surrounding European integration have significantly diversi-

fied irregular migration in terms of legal categories (Jandl et al. 2009). Large groups of people – such as Bulgarians and Rumanians – do not need a visa to enter the European Union, but are allowed to cross the border with their passports. These migrants may stay legally (as tourists) usually for three months, but they are not allowed to work. However, many of them settle down and engage in informal employment. During the first period of their stay, their employment is irregular, but their stay is not. In this situation, they are not considered as irregular migrants. It is only when their legal stay expires that they become the subject of this book.

Although no uniformly accepted term yet exists (Paspalanova 2006), the term 'irregular migrants' is gaining in popularity and has the potential to become the new standard. For this reason and because it avoids stigmatising migrants by labelling them 'illegal,' I am content to use the term 'irregular migrants'. Additionally, I should technically speak of 'immigrants' instead of 'migrants'. However, for reasons of readability, I chose to use the version that reads most easily. In most cases, whenever I speak of 'migrants', the reader should understand this to mean 'immigrants'.

1.4   Incorporation, assimilation, integration

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

Studies of integration have not traditionally implied a linear conception of these processes. They do conceive the concept to comprise some kind of hierarchy: it is used as a scale on which one immigrant or group of immigrants can 'score' better than another. What 'better' exactly refers to usually differs from study to study. Social scientists compare groups of immigrants based on certain criteria they have developed to measure inte-

gration (Schinkel 2010). Traditional markers of integration are, for example, economic advancement, educational attainment and cultural acceptance. These are measured in diverse ways. Practical issues such as availability of data play a role in the use of different indicators for integration.

Despite the different ways in which integration is measured, scholars generally agree that integration is a multi-dimensional concept. Views on what the relevant dimensions of integration are differ only slightly among authors. In the Netherlands, the most common distinction is the one between socio-economic integration and socio-cultural integration (see, e.g., Liem & Veld 2005; Nugter 2004; SCP 2004). Others distinguish among the functional, the expressive and the moral dimensions of integration (see, e.g., Engbersen 2003; Engbersen & Gabriels 1995; Peters 1993); among economic, social, cultural and political integration (see, e.g., Fermin 1997); between structural integration and socio-cultural integration (see, e.g., Dagevos 2001; Vermeulen & Penninx 1994); or between social and ethnic-cultural integration (see, e.g., Dagevos, Gijsberts & Van Praag 2003). All in all, many slightly different dimensions of the concept of integration are used, and there is no consensus on the best conceptualisation, let alone on of what elements these dimensions are best composed. Social scientists thus infuse the concept of integration with different content by distinguishing different dimensions and items. Moreover, scholars do not usually provide definitions of the concept of integration itself. As a consequence, the concept has acquired a range of different contents, with the one used usually being that which best suits the current research objective.

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

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

After careful consideration, I chose to skip the concept of integration because of the confusion it generated and to use the concept of 'incorporation' instead. This concept has previously been employed in the study of how immigrants live in receiving societies (see, e.g., Chavez 1991; Hagan 1998; Itzigsohn & Giorguli-Saucedo 2005; Nee & Sanders 2001; Portes 1995a; Portes & Rumbaut 1996; Rusinovic 2006; Van der Leun 2000, 2003a; Van der Leun & Kloosterman 2006; Van Tubergen, Flap & Maas 2004; Yurdacul & Bodemann 2007). Incorporation is conceptualised and measured in an analogous way to integration. However, 'incorporation' offers the benefit of not causing too much confusion in Europe. Thus, despite its similar practical use among social scientists, the concept's connotations are more neutral.

2   Beyond Victims and Communities

Bringing in aspirations

2.1   Current research practice on incorporation

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

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

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

responsible for these different outcomes; only tentative post hoc interpretations can be made.

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

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

2.2   Common perspective focused on survival

One major aspect that studies on irregular migrants have in common is their perspective on the lives of irregular migrants. Scholars extensively show that irregular migrants' pre-migratory expectations can be unrealistically high (Adam et al. 2002; Staring 1999; Mahler 1995). Stories are frequently quoted of migrants who thought that the streets in the destination country were paved with gold (see, e.g., Staring 1999: 64). Consequently, when migrants find out that the society they encounter does not offer the opportunities they envisioned, their adaptation processes are automatically oriented *downwardly*. Many studies chronicle broken dreams and irregular migrants dealing with difficult conditions. In doing so, scholars equate the adaptation process that irregular migrants go through with a process of learning 'how

to survive' in the receiving societies. The story portrayed in most studies is a narrative of irregular migrants struggling to survive. While they had high expectations before they came, little is left of these once they arrive, and *survival* becomes the central theme in their lives.

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

While in Mahler's work the notion of 'survival' remains implicit, many other scholars explicitly use this term (e.g., Adam et al. 2002; Andrews, Ybarra & Miramontes 2002; Bloch, Sigona & Zetter 2011; Chavez 1998; Cvajner & Sciortino 2009; Datta et al. 2007; Düvell 2004; Düvell & Jordan 2006; Engbersen 1996; Jordan 2006; King & Mai 2004; Kosic & Triandafyllidou 2004; Psimmenos & Kassimati 2006; Triandafyllidou & Kosic 2006; Van Nieuwenhuyze 2009). Adam et al. (2002: 115), for example, write that their book is about 'accounting for the ways in which foreigners without documents live, *or more precisely survive*, in their clandestine situation' (my translation, italics added). Another example of the explicit use of the notion 'survival' stems from the work of Chavez (1998: 6). One of his main research questions is, 'What kind of strategies do migrants and settlers employ to survive?' Along the same lines, in the work of Jordan and Düvell (2002), the chapter called 'Why They Come' is followed by a chapter entitled 'How They Survive', and Triandafyllidou and Kosic (2006: 106) analyse the 'survival strategies' of irregular migrants.

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

Paspalanova (2006: 293) also occasionally uses the notion of survival, even while she simultaneously notes that the Polish irregular migrants she interviewed generally 'perceive their income as sufficient and enough to provide a comfortable standard of living'. This illustrates how much the notion of survival has become a convention: the concept is used even if the empirical findings point in a different direction. Perhaps the most telling indication that the notion of survival has become a matter of course is that at the World Congress of Sociology organised by the International Sociological Association (ISA) in 2010, the only session devoted to irregular migration was entitled, 'Survival Strategies of Irregular Migrants: Survey and Ethnographic Evidence'.[1]

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

This dominant perspective obviously has implications for our under-standing of how irregular migrants live. Although irregular migrants do indeed experience many limitations, the emphasis on survival has ob-structed our understanding of the ways in which irregular migrants manage to improve their situation. We can gather from Paspalanova's work, quoted above, that some irregular migrants do in fact manage to obtain a comfort-able standard of living (see also Burgers & Engbersen 1999; Roer-Strier & Olshtain-Mann 1999). Even though the stories of 'success' might make up just a small percentage of the total experiences of irregular migrants (which can never be established with certainty), the attention that has been awarded to these cases is disproportionally meagre, to say the least.

This is not surprising considering the focus on survival, but also because the upward social mobility that has been reported has been limited, not so much in terms of numbers of migrants who are able to achieve it, but in terms of the height they are able to reach in climbing up the ladder. Although some migrants manage to make more money than others, and some get better working conditions over time, they still usually occupy the lower strata in the receiving societies. Middle class jobs are not usually available to them. As people do not usually surpass class boundaries, the social mobility reported is considered insignificant from the perspective of the social scientist. Most scholars regard legalisation as the only true

1   See www.isa-sociology.org/congress2010/rc/rc31.htm.

way to achieve upward social mobility for irregular migrants, because only then can class boundaries be surmounted. At the same time, research has found that even with legalisation, few manage to improve their situation considerably (Bailey 1985; Donato & Massey 1993; Fakiolas 2003; Glytsos 2005; Hagan 1994; Powers, Seltzer & Shi 1998; Tienda & Singer 1995). Therefore, if scholars do document upward social mobility in terms of income or housing, it is usually framed in terms of how some manage to *survive better than others*.

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

2.3   Social mobility and incorporation

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

The answer to the question of what makes one category of irregular migrants more successful at survival than another is usually sought within the social networks of ethnic communities. Two viewpoints about the role that ethnic social networks play in this process can be derived from the

literature. Scholars embracing the first viewpoint emphasise the positive effects of ethnic networks and document how co-ethnics help each other migrate and take care of newcomers when they arrive (see, e.g., Adam et al. 2002; Engbersen 1996; Hagan 1998). Fellow countrymen assist each other in finding work and accommodation. Therefore, well-developed organisational forms ('strong communities') explain a successful settlement-experience (Hagan 1994). The concept of 'social capital' is often used in this regard and is thought to be the most important resource for irregular migrants:

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

As a result, migrants who have strong migrant community networks to rely upon are better off than migrants without such networks (Leerkes, Engbersen & Van San 2007). However, Mahler (1995: 225) suspects that such 'portrayals of solidarity may reflect a romanticisation of the immigrant experience' that has become conventionalised. As a representative of the second viewpoint, she tones down the significance of social capital, arguing that these communities can be exploitative as well (see also Cranford 2005; Grzymala-Kazlowska 2005; Staring 1998). In her study of Salvadorans and South Americans in Long Island, she paints a grim picture of two highly exploitative immigrant groups. As they are cut off from mainstream society, their greatest potential for socio-economic mobility lies within their own communities, by means of exploitation of their own compatriots. Although she does also see instances in which migrants help each other, the overall picture portrayed is one of competition, distrust and deceit, and clearly not of solidarity.

While these two viewpoints seem contradictory, they are in fact two sides of the same coin called 'ethnic community networks'. On one side are the positive effects of embeddedness in an ethnic community, while on the other side are the negative consequences. At the same time, both sides explain the differences between the relative successes of communities in terms of variations in social capital between these ethnic communities. The following example illustrates how such explanations are put forward in practice. Engbersen et al. (1999, 2006), for example, claim that 'ethnic community patterns of incorporation' play a substantial role in the explanation of the relative success of irregular migrants. These authors come up with three patterns of incorporation. The first pattern is labelled 'communal

sharing' and is widely found among the Turkish community. Within this community, permanent support is provided to irregular migrants for reasons of enduring solidarity. The second pattern entails 'bounded solidarity', where incidental support is provided to irregular migrants for reasons of situational loyalty. This pattern was discovered among the Moroccan and the African communities. The third incorporation pattern described is based upon 'market relations', and refers to the co-ethnic exploitation Mahler observed in the communities she studied.

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

Although research has not systematically studied the reasons for the correlations, some scholars have suggested possible interpretations of why different support patterns exist in different communities. Engbersen (1996: 102), for example, writes that Turkish irregular migrants in the Netherlands can rely more on their own community than Moroccans, because it is less divided: 'The Moroccan community is a divided community where discordant relations cause disruption and limit mutual solidarity and trust' (see Bouras 2012 for similar observations). Furthermore, Engbersen (ibid.) indicates that Moroccans have limited entry to the informal economy, because informal employment generated by ethnic business is far less available to Moroccans than to Turks. Another publication explains why Turks take care of each other by referring to the Turkish saying 'hemserim', which means, 'I am

compelled to help someone from my area of origin' (Engbersen et al. 2006). This suggests that community solidarity has something to do with their culture. Furthermore, scholars who have pointed to the negative effects of ethnic networks claim that harsh economic circumstances weaken displays of solidarity (Cranford 2005; Grzymala-Kazlowska 2005).

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

2.3.1   Conceptualising community

The first issue relates to the fact that social capital is considered to be derived from 'communities' that are poorly conceptualised. It is interesting to see that the concept of community is applied to groups using different denominators, yet these 'communities' are nevertheless subsequently compared to each other. Sometimes, for example, people from different African countries are seen as separate communities, and sometimes they are not. Whereas Leman (1997) analysed migrants from Nigeria and Zaire in Brussels separately, Engbersen et al. (1999: 157) studied the 'African community' in Amsterdam, referring to all migrants originating from 'countries south of the Sahara' as Africans (ibid: 156). A brief look into Africa's history of civil strife and tribal warfare is enough to convince anyone that Africans, even if they are from the same country, do not necessarily get along, let alone form one cohesive community. Nevertheless, the 'African community' in Amsterdam is compared to the 'Turkish community' in Rotterdam. The same variation in conceptualisations of community is found in studies of Eastern Europeans. Whereas Paspalanova (2006) compares Poles and Bulgarians (and does indeed find significant differences between them), Burgers and Engbersen (1999: 249) regard Eastern Europeans as one 'ethnic group', to be contrasted with other 'ethnic groups' such as Turks or Surinamese (though Suriname is one of the most ethnically diverse countries in the world).

The same logic is applied when it comes to migrants from Latin America. Hagan (1994), for example, studies Maya Indians from Guatemala as a distinct ethnic group, and Portes and Bach (1985) compare Cubans and Mexicans. However, in most other studies, all migrants from South and Central America are lumped together and regarded as one big Latin

American community (see, e.g., Adam et al. 2002; Leman 1997; Roer-Strier & Olshtain-Mann 1999). The fact that they both speak Spanish does not automatically imply that a migrant from Cuba trusts or associates with a migrant from Chile. It is not surprising, then, that respondents do not label this 'Latin American community' as one with a high level of solidarity. Moreover, it is not always clear who comes up with the notion of a community, the respondents or the researcher. Do respondents feel they belong to an African community? Or, was it the researcher who analysed them as one community, because he or she chose the level of the group as a starting point of analysis? Can groups that are so different in terms of composition be properly compared? Such questions have seldom been elaborated upon, though in fact they are crucial for our understanding of the ways in which irregular migrants are incorporated in receiving societies (see Schrover 2002, Schrover & Van Lottum 2007 for a similar critique on the use of the concept of community in immigration studies from a historical perspective). After all, considering the differences in makeup, it is not very surprising to find that the Turkish 'community' displays more solidarity than the African 'community'.

Community is also poorly conceptualised in terms of legal status. Scholars remain unclear on what kind of legal status the migrants who make up this community have, who is helping whom, and who is exploiting whom. Engbersen et al. (1999) explicitly studied regular migrants and asked them about the assistance they provided to irregular migrants. Other studies are less explicit about the legal status of care providers, although this might be very important. For example, whereas Engbersen et al. (1999) found that regular migrants are irregular migrants' main care providers, Anderson (1999) showed that established migrants are not always welcoming of new arrivals. Staring (1998) emphasised the dependent position irregular migrants are in vis-à-vis their legal compatriots, who sometimes take advantage of the irregular migrants' vulnerability. Van Nieuwenhuyze (2009) indicates that high levels of solidarity are found among irregular migrants themselves, regardless of their nationality.

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

2.3.2   Social networks as ethnic community networks

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

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

If one intends to study patterns of incorporation of irregular migrants, one obviously should not only select migrants from large communities. After all, irregular migrants might possibly mobilise social capital from sources other than ethnic community networks. Moreover, the insights gained from studying networks that span ethnic communities might be very valuable and should not be excluded beforehand. Hagan (1994) has shown that although ethnic community networks can be beneficial in the initial phase of settlement, they tend to lock migrants in and restrict

opportunities of social mobility in the long run, as migrants do not develop resources outside these networks. Others also emphasise the importance of contacts beyond the own community (see, e.g., Cyrus & Vogel 2006; Psimmenos & Kassimati 2006). Cross-community contacts are considered the most likely suppliers of upward social mobility. We therefore have a great deal to learn from social networks that span community boundaries and should pay more attention to these in our analyses.

2.3.3   The situational character of social capital

The third issue that needs to be resolved relates to the fact that even if there is abundant social capital present in some community, this does not mean that every individual is able to mobilise it to the same extent. Scholars do acknowledge that there are differences *within* ethnic groups in terms of the ability to mobilise social capital, but there is little attention paid to these differences. In other words, internal differentiation is noted, but not elaborated upon. Staring (1998: 226) presents a similar critique: 'Although … social capital [is] linked to membership of an (ethnic) group, [it is not] a constant and omnipresent element within those communities as is suggested by a network approach. Instead, both are situational and have to be activated.' Furthermore, Staring (ibid.) points out that within one community, acts of solidarity and exploitation can both occur simultaneously: 'In addition to the solidarity displayed and help offered to these migrants, many were also confronted with distrust, disloyalty and deceit by members of their own community' (ibid.: 227). This illustrates that solidarity is situational as well (see also Smith 2005). By looking at some sort of general level of solidarity, or a dominant support pattern for the whole group, one fails to see that migrants are assisted in some situations and exploited in others. In order to develop a better understanding of the mechanisms that shape patterns of incorporation and social mobility, we therefore need to take the situational character of solidarity into account by differentiating between situations in which assistance is provided.

2.3.4   Contextual perceptions of solidarity

The fourth issue that needs to be resolved refers to the fact that social scientists usually rely on their informants' understanding of solidarity, which complicates comparisons. For example, the Turkish respondents Engbersen et al. (2006) studied reported high levels of solidarity among Turks even though they had to pay money to their caregivers in exchange for their

accommodation. Mahler (1995) contrastingly indicated that her respondents felt exploited by co-ethnics for precisely the same reason. Whether or not someone perceives an act as one of solidarity or of exploitation is highly contextual. For example, some people experience exploitation if they have to work for € 5 per hour, while others perceive this to be an opportunity. For someone who has migrated with the aim of returning to their country of origin, € 5 per hour is likely to be considered a lot of money, because they desire to spend it at home, whereas for someone who wants to settle in the destination country, that amount might not suffice. How someone perceives an act consequently depends on individuals' migration motives and the contexts they live in. It makes little sense to compare the levels of solidarity reported by respondents without taking these differences into account. This constitutes a good reason why an approach that starts with the motivations of the individual migrants seems a fruitful course of action for uncovering the factors that shape ethnic patterns of incorporation. The arguments presented above indicate that this works better than to continue along the line of comparison of incomparable groups. However, comparative designs based on migration motives are problematic as well, as the next section discusses.

2.4   Comparative designs based on migration motives

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

First, because of practical difficulties involved in the selection of migrants with a specific migration motive, the selection of migrants is based on a proxy, which is ethnic groups. However, this does not work out well in practice. Not all migrants from countries with political problems are necessarily political refugees. For example, Poles and Bulgarians may be selected, because they are believed to represent a new type of migration in Europe that largely consists of commuters. But closer inspection teaches us that not all Polish or Bulgarian irregular migrants necessarily

commute. Paspalanova (2006) tellingly divided Bulgarians – a supposedly homogeneous group in terms of migration motives – into commuters (12 persons), settlers (45 persons), false students (14 persons) and migrants who had lost their residence documents (4 persons). This clearly shows how heterogeneous nationality groups can be in terms of motivations, which is strikingly at odds with the assumptions underlying comparative research designs. When researchers set out to compare two or more groups of migrants using country of origin as a proxy for migration motive, these nationality categories usually turn out to be quite a bit less internally homogeneous in terms of motivations and therefore not as easily compared as presupposed.

Second, even if one were to take the motives themselves as a starting point, instead of a proxy, it turns out that migration motives are not always easily divided into analytical categories. Political and economic motives, for example, are often intertwined (Mahler 1995; Portes & Bach 1985; Rodriguez 1987; Walaardt 2012). While they are easy to distinguish theoretically, they have proven difficult to disentangle empirically. As Portes and Bach (1985: 74) observe:

> Individuals labelled political refugees have been found, on closer inspection, to have very definite economic motivations to leave their home country … Conversely, movements that on the surface appear to be economic may turn out to have direct political roots … Political processes may turn out to induce migration, directly or indirectly, as they constrain the economic opportunities available to the general population or particular segments of it.

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

A third reason why selecting groups based on migration motives is problematic is that motivations seldom remain the same. As several studies have documented, irregular migrants' aspirations are often unrealistic, and many are therefore forced to adapt their expectations to the reality encountered once they arrive. Regardless of their original intentions and regardless of the factors that initiated their migration, irregular migrants who come with false expectations are forced to develop new aspirations that fit the situation they encounter. Moreover, according to Mahler, 'even those who had been well-informed by their relatives about life in the United States still did not anticipate how they would have to realign both their

expectations and their strategies after arrival' (1995: 89). Consequently, as irregular migrants have to adjust their migration motives to the situation they find upon arrival, their initial motives are likely to be altered, possibly to a considerable degree. This is illustrated most clearly by studies that have demonstrated that many migrants who come with the intention of staying for a short period end up settling (Chavez 1998; Paspalanova 2006; Van Nieuwenhuyze 2009; Triandafyllidou & Kosic 2006). Moreover, Van Wijk (2007) demonstrated that migrants sometimes apply for asylum, because that is what their smugglers tell them to do, while they in fact migrated with the intention of working. The finding that some economic migrants have profited from the opportunities that asylum procedures provide has been noted before (see, e.g., Bloch et al. 2011; Düvell & Jordan 2006; Walaardt 2012).

In short, when it comes to explaining patterns of incorporation of irregular migrants in the destination country, it is all the more important to look at their *current* intentions and not just their initial migration motives. Irregular migration and settlement are complex processes that cannot be captured by simply looking at migration motives in order to develop straightforward explanations for the patterns of incorporation found. These initial motives of irregular migrants can change significantly during the incorporation process and not necessarily always in the same direction. This does not mean that migration motives are not important for explaining patterns of incorporation. Research on regular migration has indicated their relevance (Castles & Miller 2003). However, in case of irregular migration, the relationship is much more complex than is assumed when developing comparative research designs based on migration motives or a proxy for them.

All in all, it seems better to compare migrants on the basis of their own motives and not to rely on categories thought to represent their motives. Moreover, for analytical purposes, it seems better to take irregular migrants' *current* goals and intentions, and not their *initial* motives, as a starting point of analysis, as the latter can significantly change during the incorporation process and are in any case difficult to disentangle. Such goals and intentions are usually referred to as *aspirations* (MacLeod 2009; Portes, McLeod & Parker 1978). Other scholars have acknowledged the difficulties inherent in research on migration and settlement processes. However, surprisingly they have not considered this to be a reason to make aspirations a central focus of their research. The next section elaborates on an alternative approach that takes aspirations as a starting point of analysis.

2.5   Bringing aspirations in

2.5.1   Prior research involving aspirations

A very limited number of previous studies have distinguished among ir-regular migrants' aspirations, though I encountered these only in the field of anthropology. In the United States, Chavez (1998) distinguished between migrants who want to stay temporarily and migrants aiming to settle down. This distinction draws heavily upon the classic literature on migration in which (regular) migrants are classified as either sojourners (Siu 1987 [1953]) or settled migrants (Piore 1979). In Europe, Leman (1997) makes a distinction between those who migrate primarily to work – usually temporarily – and make money (employment illegality) and migrants who come to reside and legalise their status (residence illegality). These studies have brought us increased understanding of the ways irregular migrants live by distinguish-ing between these aspirations. However, most sociologists active in the field of irregular migration deem such analytical distinctions irrelevant:

> Even if certain undocumented immigrants – and more precisely
> those in a clandestine situation – want to stay in Belgium for only a
> short period of time in order to earn money and then return to their
> country of origin, many among them experience the same fate as the
> traditional immigrant workers. The provisional becomes permanent,
> and while maintaining the dream of return, they settle in the country
> of destination. This observation shows that it is not relevant to make a
> clear distinction between migrant employment illegality and migrant
> residence illegality the way Johan Leman (1997) does (Adam et al. 2002:
> 207, my translation).

Hondagneu-Sotelo (1994: 17) writes, 'settlement often derives from sojourner or circular migration, and hence settlement cannot be treated as a discrete condition'. Scholars such as these argue that because many temporary migrants eventually become settlers, we must not study them as separate categories. Others likewise state that irregular migrants' aspirations are too fluid to capture and use for analysis. Mahler (1995), for example, claims that irregular migrants' lives are characterised by changing opinions with regard to temporary versus permanent settlement, sometimes even on a daily basis. Hagan (1994: 94) argues that irregular migrants rarely make long-term plans. Their decisions 'are often based on a constantly changing set of attitudes, options, conditions and relations in both the home com-

munity and host society'. She writes, 'ultimately, immigrant options are left open and remain flexible until one is forced to make a decision' (ibid.: 95). Furthermore, Hondagneu-Sotelo (1994) found that even if migrants are committed to staying, unanticipated events in their home country could sidetrack such plans. For this reason, she claims that 'a research strategy based on simply asking respondents about their settlement intentions has serious limitations' (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994: xxii).

Obviously, these scholars rightly observe that irregular migrants' aspirations can and do change over time. They are also correct in noting that this fluidity in aspirations makes it hard to capture them with standard survey techniques. Indeed, because of the insecurity of their situation, it is difficult to construct a typology of migrants based on their aspirations, as these change during their careers. After all, irregular migrants' evaluation of the opportunity structure can change, for example, through increased migrant experience, but also resulting from changes in government policies opening doors that were previously closed (see, e.g., Van Eijl 2012). However, even though there are many difficulties involved in studying the aspirations of irregular migrants, that does not mean it is not instructive to try to make these a starting point of analysis by using non-standard survey techniques. The possible merits of such an approach are underlined by the fact that the classic migration literature indicates that migrants' incorporation processes undergo many changes as a result of shifting aspirations. Piore (1979), for example, argues that the shift from temporary ambitions towards settlement almost invariably includes a shift in job aspirations. Temporary migrants are able to accept certain work conditions, because their frame of reference is the country of origin and not the host country. But there is less tolerance among those with residence ambitions. According to Massey (1986), migrants send less of their earnings back home and start to spend more money in the destination country when they decide to settle down. Such changes occur, even though they remain undecided about returning to their home country some day. Piore (1979: 65) writes, 'However settled they actually become, they continue to see themselves in a certain sense as belonging to some other place and retain an idea, albeit increasingly vague and undefined, of returning "home".' Although this option is always kept open, they do make significant changes in their lives that we can only understand with reference to their changing aspirations. So if we want to understand how certain patterns of incorporation are shaped, we have to look at irregular migrants' aspirations. Thus, one can analytically distinguish between aspirations, while at the same time recognising that aspirations can develop into other aspirations over time.

2.5.2   Towards an analysis based on aspirations

From the above it is clear that we have good reason to take aspirations as a starting point of analysis. First, focusing on aspirations helps to avoid the overemphasis on structure that is common to most studies. Second, the problems and issues mentioned above regarding the comparison of groups indicate that although explanations which take communities as a starting point of analysis have considerably advanced development of theoretical insights, they can only do so up to a certain point. Third, current aspirations are a better analytical category than migration motives, as aspirations can allow change to be incorporated into the model. Fourth, the classic literature on migration and two anthropological studies drawn on here indicate that distinguishing between aspirations can provide useful insights into the question of how patterns of incorporation are shaped.

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

<p style="text-align:center">*   *   *</p>

The literature has overemphasised structure and thereby neglected human agency. However, in putting aspirations at the centre of our analysis we have to make sure not to fall into the opposite trap, overemphasising agency and thereby failing to contextualise attitudes and actions as responses to objective structures. The following briefly outlines how this book aims to avoid this hazard.

Aspirations form parts of wider ethical and metaphysical ideas which derive from larger cultural norms (Appadurai 2004). Aspirations to a good life, for example, are part of a system of ideas of what constitutes a good life. However, aspirations also mediate what an individual desires and what society can offer (MacLeod 2009). Aspirations are therefore inextricably linked to an assessment of available opportunities. In other words, while aspirations partly stem from larger cultural systems, they also feed upon evaluations of the opportunity structure. Aspirations are thus

about wants and preferences, but also about choices and calculations. As a consequence, aspirations neither reflect untamed migrant dreams, nor are they necessarily rational in the sense that they are the result of the purposive and pre-planned pursuit of calculated goals (MacLeod 2009; Portes et al. 1978).

Aspirations are constructed in the habitus of the individual (MacLeod 2009: 15). The habitus is informed through socialisation into larger cultural structures and by the objective opportunity structure. However, although the habitus is informed by the objective opportunity structure, there is no direct relationship: all perceptions of the opportunity structure are necessarily subjective and influenced by a host of intervening factors (MacLeod 2009). This means that there is not a mechanistic and simplistic relationship between aspirations and real-life opportunities. Instead, there is a relationship between aspirations and the opportunities migrants perceive they have. This difference between objective and perceived opportunities is important, as irregular migrants are first and foremost people who are poorly informed about their opportunities and have limited experience of exploring or navigating them (see Appadurai 2004).

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

This means that, although the lives of the respondents in this book take place within distinct structural settings – Belgium and the Netherlands – I do not aim to assess the effects of these national contexts. After all, I am primarily interested in perceived opportunities and how these influence the aspirations and the behaviour of irregular migrants. At the same time, I certainly do not want to turn a blind eye to the possibility that one national context may in fact provide better opportunities for upward mobility than the other. However, experience in trying to localise the effects has taught us that is an almost impossible task. Only recently has such an effort been made. Van Nieuwenhuyze (2009) compared the lives of migrants from the Senegambian area in Belgium and Spain and concluded that there were differences in many respects between the group in Spain and the group in Belgium. Unsurprisingly, she found it difficult to attribute the differences she found in the lives of the two groups of migrants to differences in policy contexts. The observed differences could also have been the result

of her sampling, differences in migration histories of the two groups she compared, or the geographical location of the receiving societies. In other words, the variation in other factors made it difficult to 'isolate' possible effects of policies. This is not an uncommon problem when it comes to comparative research on irregular migration, and it is likely to be one of the reasons why so few systematic comparative efforts have been undertaken at the level of the nation-state.

For these reasons, this study does not aim to systematically study the effects of policies. Even though the lives of my respondents are situated in two different policy contexts, these different contexts do not mechanically constrain or construct irregular migrants' actions. Instead, irregular migrants take advantage of and react to this window of opportunity in different ways (Elrick & Ciobanu 2009; Kosic & Triandafyllidou 2004; Kyle & Siracusa 2005). I therefore find it more relevant to focus on the interaction between irregular migrants and the context in which they find themselves than to try to localise the effects of policies through deductive reasoning.

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

In arguing that one should take aspirations as a starting point of analysis, this book makes a number of other comments and suggestions for improvement of the study of irregular migrants and their incorporation. The section below briefly outlines how these are dealt with in this book.

2.5.3   Outline of this book

The next chapter, chapter 3, discusses the data and methods used to study aspirations. Chapter 4 deals with the national contexts in which the lives of the irregular migrants studied in this book take shape. Chapter 5 discusses my respondents' aspirations, and chapters 6 and 7 deal with the question of how these aspirations influence patterns of incorporation. Chapter 6 deals with the ways irregular migrants are able to sustain themselves (*functional*

incorporation). Chapter 7 is about the ways migrants spend their leisure time and the social contacts they have in the destination country (*social incorporation*).

An important point of attention is the one-sided focus on incorporation within the receiving societies and the associated neglect of irregular migrants' transnational engagements. There are good reasons to study the transnational activities of irregular migrants. As said before, irregular migrants mostly have a transnational view of their lives in the receiving societies. If we do not consider the transnational contacts they have and the activities they undertake, this hampers our understanding of the way irregular migrants live within the receiving societies, as their transnational engagements heavily influence the choices migrants make. According to Mahler (1995), migrants' transnational obligations are the prime mover towards their suspension of solidarity. The migrants she interviewed restricted their acts of solidarity in the destination country in order to fulfil transnational obligations. The role of transnational activities is therefore dealt with in chapter 8.

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

The aspirations of irregular migrants are investigated in chapter 5. What it takes to realise these is linked to the debate on the significance of different forms of capital and therefore requires an additional introduction. The present chapter discussed only social capital. Yet, this is not the only resource irregular migrants can deploy to realise their aspirations. Other resources, such as the ability to master foreign languages, educational credentials and

professional skills are likely to be relevant as well. As will be discussed in chapter 9, important controversies exist in the debate on the significance to irregular migrants of different forms of capital. Some scholars argue that social capital is the most important form of capital for irregular migrants, while others suggest that cultural capital is decisive. To find a way out of this stalemate, a contextualised answer is sought to the question of what significance different forms of capital have for irregular migrants.

3 Studying Aspirations

3.1 Grounded theory approach

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

Grounded theory methods are advocated by Glaser and Strauss in their book *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*. Grounded theory methods 'consist of systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analysing qualitative data to construct theories "grounded" in the data themselves' (Charmaz 2006: 2). The aim of researchers who adopt this approach is to develop theories from research grounded in data rather than to test existing theories by deducing testable hypotheses from them. Instead of verified or falsified, theory is *constructed* through comparative analyses (Glaser & Strauss [1967] 2006). The aim is not 'to provide a perfect description of an area' as ethnography aims to do, 'but to develop a theory that accounts for much of the relevant behaviour' (ibid.: 30). The formation of analytical categories – typologies – is what grounded theorists aim for. These analytical categories should 'yield a "meaningful" picture, abetted by apt illustrations that enable one to grasp the reference in terms of one's own experience' (ibid.: 38).

According to Glaser and Strauss ([1967] 2006), researchers adopting a grounded theory approach should not start their research endeavour by analysing the literature, because the theory should emerge inductively from the data. This idea that researchers approach reality as a *tabula rasa* has been heavily criticized as naïve (Charmaz 2006; Layder 1998; Strauss & Corbin [1990] 1998). According to this new branch of scholarship, it is best not to develop systematic theoretical ideas before entering the field, but to have a sense of theoretical direction. This way, researchers ensure that preconceived ideas or theories are not forced upon the data, but that concepts emerge from the data. Instead of a fully outlined theory, they argue, it is advisable to enter the field with some sensitising concepts (Blumer 1969), providing the researcher with some initial ideas to pursue (Charmaz

2006; Layder 1998; Strauss & Corbin [1990] 1998). For me, concepts such as incorporation, social mobility and transnationalism offered valuable 'points of departure' (Charmaz 2006: 17) to select interview topics and formulate questions and to think analytically about the data I gathered. Sensitising concepts primarily serve to guide the research process; the theoretical concepts are filled with content and are adjusted while the research unfolds. The sensitising concepts provided me with 'theoretical openings that avoid importing and imposing packaged images and automatic answers' (ibid.: 135). They enabled me to form meaningful analytical categories inductively, while still having a sense of direction.

Grounded theory methods offer a 'set of principles and practices' rather than 'prescriptions or packages' (Charmaz 2006: 9). One of its core principles is that data collection and analysis are not separate phases in the research process, but take place simultaneously (Charmaz 2006; Glaser & Strauss [1967] 2006). The research process unfolds in different stages, and in each stage data analysis and collection inform one another. Crucial to all phases in the research process are 'constant comparative methods' (Glaser & Strauss [1967] 2006). Researchers constantly look for patterns in the data. Coding and writing memos are crucial tools for making comparisons in grounded theory. Writing memos prompts researchers to analyse the data and codes early in the research process, helping to increase the level of abstraction of ideas that emerge. Memo writing allows researchers to make conjectures, after which they can go back to the field and gather more data to check these conjectures. Through writing memos and focused codes in the current research, I built and clarified categories and became aware of variations within and between categories. Furthermore, I identified gaps in my analysis, which I could take back to the field to fill by theoretical sampling. Theoretical sampling involves sampling to develop the properties of the categories until no new properties emerge. In other words, the categories are saturated with data and subsequently sorted to integrate into an emerging theory (Charmaz 2006).

While the previous chapter suggested taking aspirations as a starting point for the conduct of research, this was by no means the case in the current study. Rather, during my research, a typology of aspirations was *constructed*. When I started my research I began with some of the same preconceptions I argued against in the previous chapter. It was only during my fieldwork – especially in the writing of memos – that aspirations became my central categories.

Inductive research does not easily fit the standard formats for scholarly writing because the latter uses deductive logic. As there are no clear-cut

ways to deal with this tension in terms of typical formats used in qualitative studies, I have decided to present the reader 'reconstructed logic' instead of 'logic in use' (Kaplan 1964). Kaplan (ibid.) argues that science as a process is guided by 'logic in use' and that science as a product is guided by 'reconstructed logic'. It is the *product* of my scientific endeavour that is relevant and therefore presented here.

3.2   Researching the lives of irregular migrants

From the outset of this project I was in the privileged position of already having relevant data at my disposal: more than 300 semi-structured interviews with irregular migrants. These had been gathered by research assistants in connection with large-scale projects in Belgium[1] and the Netherlands.[2] The initial plan was to lump these interviews together for analysis. However, after I carefully studied these, the data seemed less suitable than originally thought. In the previous chapter it became clear that researching irregular migrants as active agents by means of standard survey techniques can be problematic. Even though the interviews I had at my disposal included open questions and contained a lot of relevant information, they did not provide me with enough understanding of irregular migrants' actions. I needed to enter the field myself. The semi-structured interviews did allow me to distinguish different patterns of incorporation. In addition, they provided me with a preliminary appreciation of how these patterns are shaped. However, in order to arrive at a more profound understanding that included dynamics and practices, additional fieldwork was required.

During the course of this project I choose to supplement the semi-structured interviews with participant observation in combination with in-depth interviews with irregular migrants and the organisations that interact with them. I therefore lived in the cities of Antwerp and The Hague in 2006 and 2007 for several months each. For purposes of fieldwork, I rented a room in both cities in centrally located areas where many irregular migrants live. In what follows, I first discuss the semi-structured interviews and then deal with the different types of data gathered during my own fieldwork.

1   See for more information: Van Meeteren et al. 2007b; Van Meeteren et al. 2008.
2   See for more information: Burgers & Engbersen 1999; Engbersen et al. 1999; Engbersen et al. 2002 and Leerkes et al. 2004.

3.2.1   Semi-structured interviews

Research assistants, who were selected because of their specific ethnic backgrounds, their experience with the research group and their interviewing skills, carried out 120 semi-structured interviews in Belgium in 2004 and 2005. The interviews generally lasted between one and a half and two and a half hours and were conducted in respondents' mother tongues, except for those with Congolese respondents, which were held in French. Quotations from the interviews used in the empirical chapters were translated into English by me. The interviewers had located respondents through community leaders, and they contacted respondents in bars, teahouses or churches. Furthermore, respondents were asked if they could refer the research team to other irregular migrants. This so-called 'snowball method' has been successfully applied in other studies involving irregular migrants (e.g., Burgers & Engbersen 1999; Chavez 1998; Kosic & Triandafyllidou 2004; Paspalanova 2006; Van Nieuwenhuyze 2009). It helps to develop rapport, since contact is made through an established and trusted personal relation (Chavez 1994). Snowball sampling is now widely recognised as a near prerequisite for meaningful surveys in the field of irregular migration (Black 2003). The downside of snowball sampling is its tendency to produce bias, which is why the number of referrals per respondent was kept to a minimum. In total, 120 semi-structured interviews were held with irregular migrants in Flanders and Brussels. Among these, 11 were with women and 109 with men. Respondent ages ranged from 19 to 47, and they had arrived in Belgium from as early as 1980 to as recently as 2005 (see appendix 1 for an overview of respondent characteristics). To capture variety in aspirations and social networks, various migrant groups were interviewed in different localities (see Chavez 1994). Moroccans were interviewed in Antwerp, Turks and Bulgarians in Ghent, and Congolese in Brussels, because these groups are heavily represented in these cities (Van Meeteren, Van San & Engbersen 2007b). The Bulgarians in Ghent are of Turkish origin. The Congolese group largely consists of former asylum seekers.

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

3.2.2   Participant observation

Participant observation is a research method that is not standardised and can be applied in multiple ways. It is therefore important to be clear about how this method has been used in this study in order to be able to judge the quality of the research. This section therefore describes my fieldwork, especially with regard to my observations of irregular migrants during this period.

I conducted fieldwork in Belgium for almost six months. When I started my fieldwork in Belgium in the spring of 2006, I was lucky to discover that at that time, irregular migrants were actively engaged in large public actions in order to enforce 'regularisation for all'. The emergence of this 'pro-regularisation movement' (Laubenthal 2007) made it easy for me to come into contact with irregular migrants. Throughout Belgium they had occupied churches, held protest marches and some were even engaged in hunger strikes. These actions were organised by UDEP (Union pour la Défense des Sans-Papiers), which is a collective of irregular migrants fighting for rights. In Flanders, their actions were coordinated with local churches and welfare organisations and became known as 'church asylum'. UDEP consists of several departments that work at both the local and national levels. I took part in the weekly meetings of the local department in Antwerp, and I visited all the events it organised during church asylum. I also joined in the national protest marches held by UDEP.

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

I was also often invited to eat with them, which gave me opportunities to follow the discussions they held amongst one another. I heard a number of

life stories told over the dinner table or over coffee afterwards. At the end of each day I wrote up field notes. From the moment I introduced myself to the participants in church asylum, I was clear about my objectives. I told them I was a PhD student in sociology writing a book about irregular migrants. I never expressed my own views on their political demands, yet some introduced me to others as 'Masja, our biggest supporter, she comes to see us every day'. I am therefore aware of the possibility that some of the irregular migrants involved in church asylum might have interpreted my presence as support. Every now and then I therefore found it appropriate to remind them that I was 'writing a book' about irregular migrants. Nevertheless, I was under the impression that they appreciated my daily company, especially on days when I was their only visitor.

Whereas I met close to a hundred irregular migrants through church asylum, I chose to interview only nine of them intensively, as described in the next section. Irregular migrants who are involved in such political actions constitute a very particular group and should not be regarded as representative of the population. Although I did not strive for a representative sample, I did aim for variety.

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

In addition to social gatherings connected to food and drinks, I often went for a walk with a respondent through the city or in one of Antwerp's parks. On Sundays, I accompanied some to church. Moreover, I was invited to parties and went swimming at a local lake with a group of 25 Latin American migrants. Some introduced me to their friends who then invited me to dinner at their house. Sunday dinners were particularly special, as in many cultures, extended families, neighbours and friends are all invited to

dine together on this day. In all of these different ways I gathered a lot of field notes. Again, all of these people knew that I was a student writing a book about irregular migrants. Outside church asylum, the irregular migrants I observed always introduced me to others as such. Nevertheless, I realise that people may have forgotten about my social scientific occupation on occasion. Although data tend to get better when they do (see also Hagan 1994), I made a habit of subtly reminding them every once in a while.

In exchange for the information they provided, respondents sometimes asked me for a favour in return. I therefore translated letters that people received and did not understand, I arranged for payment by instalment for some who had received a fine they could not afford to pay at once, and most importantly, I gave a lot of advice. This usually concerned places to go for free language lessons, shopping and medical care. I did not give any advice regarding possibilities for legalisation. Other research has indicated that living amongst the research population and assuming multiple roles besides being a researcher is a successful method of assuring good data (see, e.g., Hagan 1994; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994; Mahler 1995).

I spent time with those migrants I interviewed in-depth. This enabled me to validate the answers they gave during the interviews, and I was able to reflect, together with the respondents themselves, on their actions in relation to what they told me in the interviews. Thus the combination of participant observation and interviewing yielded a more accurate portrayal of the lives of irregular migrants than I could have gathered using self-report methods alone (see also Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994).

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

3.2.3   In-depth interviews with irregular migrants

I selected only a limited number of the irregular migrants I observed for an in-depth interview. I usually invited a person only after I had gathered

enough information through participant observation to determine whether the respondent's story was sufficiently interesting for an interview. This way, I was able to determine beforehand if a respondent would provide me with a story that I had more or less heard before or if an interview would yield new insight. In other words, participant observation allowed me to sample theoretically, to fill incomplete categories or gaps in my analysis. Participant observation enabled me to predict which respondents would help me in this process. The basic criterion governing the selection of respondents was their predicted theoretical relevance for furthering the development of emerging categories and their properties (see Glaser & Strauss [1967] 2006). Although in grounded theory methods, theoretical sampling is about saturating conceptual categories and not about representing a population or increasing the statistical generalisability, I did try to capture as much variety as I could (see chapter 2) – not only in terms of stories but also with respect to gender, socio-economic background, education, country of origin, age and length of stay.

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

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

I did not give participants monetary compensation for their time, although I always bought them a small gift as a token of my appreciation. Gifts usually consisted of fresh fruit. After the interview, most people were thankful, not so much for the gift, but for the fact that someone had taken that much time to listen to their story. All respondents offered to answer more questions if necessary, and many asked if I wanted to interview other people they knew. As I did not want to interview too many people belonging to the same social networks, I accepted this offer in only a limited number of cases.

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

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

As the migrants who were interviewed by the research assistants belonged to large ethnic communities, I made sure to interview members of smaller communities as well in order to capture enough variety. The migrants I interviewed myself were from a diverse group of countries: Algeria, Bang-

ladesh, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Congo, Cuba, Ecuador, Ghana, Guatemala, Guinea, India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Morocco, Mauritania, Moldova, Nepal, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Suriname, Syria, Turkey and Uzbekistan. In total, I conducted 45 in-depth interviews with irregular migrants, 37 in Belgium and 8 in the Netherlands, 30 of which concerned men and 15 with women. Respondents varied in age from their early twenties to their late fifties, and their length of stay ranged from 2 to over 20 years (see appendix 2 for an overview). This explicit aim for variety is what distinguishes the current research from many other studies, as these have mostly focused on one or a few nationality groups or on a specific type of migration, such as labour migration (see, e.g., Engbersen et al. 2006, 1999; Grzymala-Kazlowska 2005; Leman 1997; Mahler 1995; Hagan 1994; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994; Jordan & Düvell 2002; Kalir 2005a; Kosic & Triandafyllidou 2004; Lazaridis & Romaniszyn 1998; Leerkes et al. 2004; Massey et al. 1994; Paspalanova 2006; Portes & Bach 1985; Roer-Strier & Olshtain-Mann 1999; Staring 2001; Van Nieuwenhuyze 2009).

3.2.4   In-depth interviews with organisations

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

Almost all interviews with organisations were conducted in Dutch and recorded on tape. In a few cases I considered the notes to be insufficient.

These concerned organisations that were active in the so-called 'second' or 'third line', which involves policy-related work rather than daily contact with irregular migrants. All quotations were translated into English by me.

3.3   Difficulties in studying irregular migrants

Scholars who use qualitative research methods – especially when participant observation is included – often face questions about the methods they used to collect, analyse and interpret their data. Unlike quantitative research, methods are not standardised. The success of qualitative research, therefore, depends on the competences of the researcher and their actions during the research process. To be able to judge the quality of the research, it is important to have insight into the research process. The previous sections already provided much information about the research process. This section offers a more detailed discussion of the difficulties I sometimes faced and my techniques for maintaining high-quality data.

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

3.3.1   Establishing trust

The most important risk for validity in my research is that the irregular migrants I observed and interviewed might have lied to me. Establishment of trust between the researcher and the irregular migrant is a major issue in this type of study. Very few migrants would consent to be interviewed without knowing the researcher and the context and objectives of the research. To a certain extent this is an issue in all social science research. But there are reasons why it is more problematic in research on irregular migrants compared to that on other social groups (see Düvell, Triandafyl-

lidou & Vollmer 2009). First, irregular migrants are not allowed to live in the destination country; their presence is illegal. Respondents must therefore trust the researcher not to report them to the police. Second, many irregular migrants engage in illegal activities, such as informal employment, in order to make a living. Respondents therefore have to trust that the researcher will not report their illegal activities to the police. Third, some irregular migrants engage in activities that many people find morally questionable, such as bogus marriages. Some are reluctant to talk about such issues with a stranger who 'might not understand'. Fourth, some people live with lies, such as untruthful asylum or regularisation applications, and do not want their true stories to become known for fear of some kind of repercussions. Fifth, irregular migrants may not want to talk about their engagement in illegal or morally questionable activities, not so much out of personal fear for the police, but because they do not want to damage the image of irregular migrants in general.

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

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

Overall, I have good reasons to suppose that the people I interviewed told me the truth about their lives. If I questioned an individual's honesty or openness, I chose not to interview this person. Moreover, during participant observation some people told me stories of their life. Later on, some confided

in me that they had lied before, and offered to tell me their real life story. This is especially salient since for some of them, this new story differed from the story they continued to sell to the press and to the organisations and churches that supported them. In none of these cases had I interviewed these respondents before, because I doubted their honesty. These turned out to be valid judgments. Moreover, many people told me things that were not in their interest. Some, for example, told me they had applied for asylum using made-up stories. Others told me they were in a bogus marriage to get legalised, or that they intended to do this. Because I was involved in their lives through participant observation I could verify their stories to a great extent. My interviews with people in organisations that interact with irregular migrants enabled me to cross-validate much data in multiple ways.

3.3.2   Reflections on the personal identity of the researcher

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

My identity as a woman had the benefit of making it relatively easy to interview and observe women. For example, a man could not have participated in the monthly event in The Hague where irregular migrant women from all kinds of nationalities came together to cook and dine. My female identity also inspired some male respondents to participate. From the outset of my study I noticed that some men were eager to talk to me and they actively tried to acquire information about my marital status. A few went as far as to actually propose marriage; in only one case was I made an indecent proposal. These men ceased their efforts after I told them nicely that I knew what they were doing and why they did it, but that their attempts were futile. On occasion, my bluntness inspired a lively discussion on the ethics of bogus marriages. My identity as a woman could have caused a sample bias towards men who were trying to get papers through marriage. For that reason, I made sure to also include men who were already married or who were morally opposed to bogus marriages.

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

3.3.3   Use of data throughout the book

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

For the same reason, respondents have been assigned fictitious names. This has also been done for reasons of readability and to demonstrate that I quote different respondents. The names reflect the ethnic background of the respondents, meaning that Turkish respondents are given Turkish names, Moroccan respondents have been given Moroccan names, etc. Any religious affiliations or cultural meanings attached to these names are unintentional. This is common practice in qualitative research involving irregular migrants (Chavez 1998; Hagan 1998; Mahler 1995). Appendices 1 and 2 provide an overview of respondent background characteristics corresponding to the fictitious names.

The typology constructed in this book relies mostly on the in-depth interviews with irregular migrants and the participant observation. The semi-structured interviews with irregular migrants mainly served as a means of comparison in the initial stages, and later on they served as checks for the conjectures developed during the research process. Hence, whereas the analytical categories were formed during my own fieldwork – in my interactions with irregular migrants – the semi-structured interviews

provided empirical content and allowed me to achieve saturation of my categories much faster than I would have without them. In other words, the typology is grounded in both types of interviews, as well as in the participant observation.

The interviews with organisations served as a means of cross-validation; they are not part of the backbone of the analysis. After all, this book is about the lives of irregular migrants, and they do not necessarily interact with organisations. The interviews did greatly help in getting a sense of the context in terms of laws and regulations and therefore highly informed the next chapter. Sometimes they gave me ideas about themes to pursue in interviews or talks with irregular migrants. All in all, although the typology is not so much grounded in these interviews, the research process and hence the process of theory construction was informed by the interviews held with organisations.

4 Immigration Policies in Belgium and the Netherlands

4.1 Introduction

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

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

I interviewed informants working in organisations which interact with irregular migrants. Some of these informants have daily contact with irregular migrants, while others are active at the level of policymaking. These organisations are in fields such as health care, education, welfare and integration. By interviewing their staff, I gained insight into the processes that take place within the 'gaps' between policies and practices. However, I chose not to devote a separate chapter to describing these, as this goes beyond the scope of this book. This chapter therefore mostly describes how laws are formulated. Implementation practices are discussed here and in the next chapters where relevant, which is in those cases where they affect the incorporation or transnational activities of irregular migrants or their aspirations.

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

Most of the information from the organisations interviewed applies to the level of implementation. Sometimes, however, it concerned the level of policy formulation. As governments are not always transparent in the information they provide on their policies of immigration control, this sometimes proved very helpful.

4.2   History

Regulation of migration is not a new phenomenon, but something that has taken place for centuries (Van Eijl 2008; Schrover et al. 2008b). For a long time states did not formulate rules on entry, stay and exit of aliens, but local authorities did (Schrover et al. 2008b; Torpey 2000). In the Netherlands, the Aliens Act was passed in 1849 (Van Eijl 2008). State control of people's mobility increased when the government's interest in welfare and labour market regulation rose in the early twentieth century (Schrover et al. 2008b) and as a result of World War I (Moch 2003). But even then, migration was not referred to as 'illegal'. In the Netherlands, Jewish refugees who arrived from 1938 onwards were the first group of aliens to be referred to as 'illegal' in public discourse and government documents (Van Eijl 2008). The first post-World War II immigrants to be labelled illegal were the Chinese (Van Eijl 2012).

The birth of the idea of irregular migrants in Belgium and the Netherlands is generally associated with the emergence of the modern nation-state after World War I (Düvell 2006b; Moch 2003; Torpey 2000). Yet it was not until after World War II that irregular migrant workers lived in Belgium and the

Netherlands in unprecedented numbers (Moch 2003). At this time, irregular migration emerged in all Western economies, because the latter started to recruit guest workers due to labour market shortages (Sassen 1999). Belgium and the Netherlands were among the main receiving countries of immigration in this post-war period (Düvell 2006b; Moch 2003). Workers from Southern Europe as well as from Northern Africa and Turkey could travel freely to these receiving countries and could formalise their stay after they had started to work (Martiniello & Rea 2003; Van Amersfoort 1999). These migrants were considered welcome 'guests', as they were needed to alleviate the shortages in the labour market. However, when labour shortages decreased due to the economic downturn in the 1970s, immigration policies became more restrictive, and efforts were increasingly made to prevent immigration (Martiniello 2003). Whereas in the past irregular migrants had been welcomed as 'spontaneous labour migrants', from the 1980s onwards these immigration flows were regarded as problematic in Belgium and the Netherlands (Burgers 1999b; Engbersen 1997; Entzinger 2003; Martiniello & Rea 2003).

Since the early 1980s, European governments have become steadily more concerned with controlling immigration (Brochmann 1999a). Irregular immigration became a topic on the European Community agenda in 1985 (Düvell 2006b: 26). In the early 1990s the first references were made to policies to 'combat' irregular immigration (ibid.: 28). Most Western states have now developed exclusionary policies to avoid irregular migration (Engbersen et al. 2007) and have become increasingly inventive in creating measures to exclude, apprehend and expel irregular migrants as effectively as possible (Engbersen & Broeders 2009; Uehling 2004). Irregular migrants are now at the top of policy agendas (Broeders & Engbersen 2007), but in spite of all the attention, the presence of irregular migrants remains a fact of life. Recent estimates indicate that over 120,000 irregular migrants reside in the Netherlands (Van der Heijden et al. 2006) and over 100,000 in Belgium (Van Meeteren et al. 2007b). Governments have two types of policies at their disposal to control irregular immigration: policies aimed at controlling the external borders and policies aimed at guarding internal boundaries. These two types of control are discussed in the following sections.

4.3   External control policies

Initially, restrictive policies to prevent and control irregular migration were mainly targeted at the external borders. The construction of a 'fortress

Europe' expanded during the 1990s: visa requirements became stricter, and physical barriers were erected along the land borders of Europe in order to keep people out (Albrecht 2002). Walls similar to those along the Mexico-USA border (Andreas 2000) can be found in the enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla in Morocco and along the new EU borders in Poland. These walls have been strengthened with guards, watch towers, fences and state-of-the-art technology (Broeders 2009).

In addition to its land borders, Europe has had to control its large maritime borders, which are more difficult to guard because of the expansive area involved (Carling 2007b). Over the last decade and a half, Spain has invested heavily in surveillance of its maritime borders, intercepting along its shores on average 350 African boat migrants every week (Carling 2007a). Border controls, however, have proven only partially effective in controlling irregular immigration (Brochmann 1999b; Cornelius 2005). This is because many irregular migrants enter legally and become irregular migrants only in the destination country: once their visas expire or when they are denied refugee status (Black et al. 2005; Burgers & Engbersen 1999; Van Meeteren et al. 2008). Furthermore, even if migrants are apprehended, they have proven difficult to expel (Van der Leun 2003b). In 2002 and 2003 only about a quarter of the migrants who arrived in Spain – a major destination for irregular migrants from Africa – were expelled. The remainder were released from detention and either stayed in Spain or travelled to other European countries like Belgium and the Netherlands (Carling 2007b). In addition, European borders are simply too extensive to completely turn into steel and concrete, making them difficult to control effectively (Broeders 2009). Moreover, beyond a certain level of control, the costs of avoiding irregular migration exceed the 'damage' caused by irregular immigration (Entorf 2002; Hillman & Weiss 1999; Jahn & Straubhaar 1999). Therefore, governments are unlikely to invest in making controls more effective than they currently are.

Human smugglers constantly find new ways to circumvent controls (Heckmann 2004; Pijpers & Van der Velde 2007), for example, by changing operating routes (Okólski 2000). Researchers claim that human smugglers have become increasingly important in facilitating irregular migration (Cornelius 2005; Derluyn & Broekaert 2005; Jandl 2007; Staring 2003). Human smugglers facilitate illegal exit, transit and entry; they provide fraudulent or stolen travel documents; they provide information on border control, immigration control and asylum procedures; and they coach migrants on how to deceive immigration and law enforcement authorities (Schloenhardt 2001). Similarly, smuggled migrants are given detailed instructions by their smugglers on how to use the asylum system as part of their migration

strategy (Bilger, Hofmann & Jandl 2006). Smugglers have proven to be highly flexible. In response to new migration or asylum regulations and to changes in visa regimes, they change their operating routes and transit countries. Furthermore, forgers continuously update their equipment for forging papers and use modern computer technology to improve the quality of falsifications (Jandl 2007). Smugglers' adaptability makes it difficult for states to control external borders effectively, rendering practices of external control like games of 'cat and mouse' (Heckmann 2004).

Apart from external control policies being ineffective, they have also had unwanted side-effects. Along with the increased controls, fatal accidents have increased and are now the order of the day (Carling 2007b; Spijkerboer 2007). As migrant smugglers try to circumvent the most heavily controlled areas, boats now leave from as far as Senegal, making the trip all the more dangerous. It is estimated that for every hundred interceptions there is one death (Carling 2007b), and the number of deaths is increasing (Spijkerboer 2007). In addition, the line between human smuggling and trafficking has become blurred: human smugglers sometimes use the same 'safe houses' to store smuggled irregular migrants and trafficked prostitutes (Leman & Janssens 2007). Furthermore, as the risks involved become higher (Donato, Wagner & Patterson 2008; Eschbach et al. 1999), the financial costs of entry increase as well (Baganha et al. 2006; Cornelius 2005). Long-distance smuggling fees to Belgium now vary between € 3,000 and € 40,000, medium distance between € 1,500 and € 6,000 and short-distance between € 200 and € 5,000 (Kaizen & Nonneman 2007). Dutch findings indicate that smuggling fees have doubled since 2001 and that irregular migrants from Somalia now pay an average amount of $7,000 and migrants from Iraq between $3,000 and $10,000 (Van Liempt 2007). The result of these increased costs is that irregular migrants tend to stay as long as possible once they get in, while migrants from visa-free countries may come repeatedly, but also leave again voluntarily after a short period of time. The further away the country of origin and the tighter the restrictions, the more likely it becomes that initially mobile migrants who otherwise might have come and gone, stay and become irregular migrants (Düvell 2006c).

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

4.4   Internal control policies

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

4.4.1   Exclusion from public services

During the days of labour recruitment migrants could easily open bank accounts, take out medical insurance and enrol in educational programmes. Over the years, governments in both Belgium and the Netherlands have implemented policies to deny irregular migrants access to public institutions. An important centrepiece of such policies in the Netherlands is the Dutch Benefit Entitlement (Residence Status) Act that was enacted in 1998 to exclude irregular migrants from tax-supported public services such as social assistance, public housing, education for adults and nonemergency health care (Broeders & Engbersen 2007). This Act is commonly referred to as the Linking Act, as it was designed to link access to a whole range of public and semi-public provisions to a valid residence status (Engbersen 1999a; Van der Leun 2003b).

Whereas the Linking Act closed access to public services in the Netherlands at once, Belgium restricted access to public provisions bit by bit, using different decrees and policy measures. Irregular migrants were therefore much more excluded in Belgium than in the Netherlands before the Linking Act was introduced. The level of public exclusion has been very high in Belgium in recent decades (Kagné 2000; Suárez-Orozco 1994), yet the representatives of organisations I interviewed indicated that nowadays it is somewhat higher in the Netherlands than in Belgium. In other words, while exclusion in Belgium used to be more stringent than in the Netherlands, the cards have been reversed in recent years.

The Linking Act in the Netherlands and different policy measures in Belgium aim to exclude irregular migrants from all social care except for

that which the government is obliged to provide according to provisions of international human rights treaties that it has signed. NGOs and lawyers constantly battle with nation-states over the implementation of international agreements. This sometimes leads to agreements in which irregular migrants are given access to specific provisions. As a result of such actions, parents without legal residence status can, for example, nowadays get child support for their children.

Likewise, in Belgium asylum seekers who have filed a second appeal in their asylum procedure – and consequently reside illegally, though they are not expelled during their appeal (they are 'tolerated') – are granted a limited amount of social care by the Belgian government. In practice this usually means they are allowed to reside in an asylum centre (Berx 2007). In Belgium, in June 2006 more than 12,000 people lived in the federal asylum structures, almost 7,000 of whom were irregular migrants (Van Meeteren et al. 2008). Although local Dutch authorities also sponsor the housing of irregular migrants who are allowed to stay in the country to await the final decision of an appeal (they are also 'tolerated'), these numbers come nowhere near the Belgian figures. The huge numbers in Belgium are believed to be due to the country's slow administration of this process. Many irregular migrants file an appeal to buy themselves some extra time, on average three years (Van Meeteren et al. 2008).

While the national governments have developed policies to exclude irregular migrants, local authorities have usually been left to cope with the problem of their continuing presence. In the Netherlands the government formally forbids local authorities from providing aid to irregular migrants. Local organisations are subsidised to take care of homeless people and to provide food to people in need, but they only receive government funding for people who reside legitimately (including those who are 'tolerated') (see also Rusinovic et al. 2002). Any aid provided to irregular migrants therefore has to come out of local governments' own pockets, meaning that it has to be privately financed. Organisations tend to be secretive about the help they provide and to only provide such assistance in locations tucked away outside city centres and out of sight of the general public.

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

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

4.4.2   Policies of identification

Broeders (2009) documents a paradigm shift by which governments are replacing traditional policies of exclusion with new methods of identification and registration. According to Broeders and Engbersen (2007: 1595), keywords in the internal control of irregular migrants are now 'surveillance' and 'identification', because in order to effectively expel people it is crucial for states to know their real identity. Northern European Union member states have therefore intensified internal surveillance of irregular migrants in recent years (Broeders & Engbersen 2007).

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

With these new measures, European states counter irregular migrants and especially aim at identifying those who try to hide their true identity (Engbersen & Broeders 2009). It is no longer sufficient to determine if someone belongs because in order to expel someone, it is necessary to establish his or her identity (Broeders 2009). Migrants in turn are reacting. Recent news reports, for example, indicate that some migrants mutilate

their fingertips so that they cannot be properly identified (*Trouw* 24 April 2009). As a consequence, policies aimed at irregular migrants and the actions of irregular migrants to circumvent these resemble an arms race in which action provokes reaction (Broeders & Engbersen 2007). It remains to be seen who will be the winners of this 'tug of war'. According to Hagan, Eschbach and Rodriguez (2008), deportation policy does not end irregular immigration, but it simply raises the human costs for migrants and their families. Broeders and Engbersen (2007) argue that it is likely that irregular migrants will continue to come, but will go further underground, which will make them more dependent on human smugglers and other intermediaries.

The creation of databases in which information is stored on the identity and itinerary of specific groups of immigrants facilitates government strategies of detention and expulsion (Engbersen & Broeders 2009). If an irregular migrant is detained his or her identity can be established more easily, which makes it easier for authorities to expel the migrant in question.

4.4.3 Detention and expulsion

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

Under Belgian law, illegal entry or stay is considered an offence punishable by a fine and/or detention of up to three months (Van Meeteren et al. 2008). In the Netherlands, it is not yet punishable (Broeders 2009) but plans are being made to treat illegal stay as an offence in the near future. Even though the legal grounds are currently different, in both countries irregular migrants are incarcerated in special detention centres in order to be expelled. Broeders and Engbersen (2007: 1,602) signal a general trend throughout Europe towards increased detention of irregular immigrants. Most irregular migrants who are held in detention centres have not committed any crime; their only offence is being in a country without the necessary documents (Broeders & Engbersen 2007). Detention of irregular migrants is therefore different from criminal incarceration: it is detention

without court trial, referred to as 'administrative detention' (Schinkel 2009). Furthermore, irregular migrants are not held in regular prisons, but in specially-erected detention centres or expulsion centres. Whereas irregular migrants can be detained for a maximum period of five months in Belgium, there was no such limit in the Netherlands at the time I conducted my fieldwork (Schinkel 2009). Although the goal of imprisonment is expulsion, in the Netherlands, fewer than half of the detained irregular migrants were being effectively expelled from the country (Van Kalmthout 2005 cited in Broeders & Engbersen 2007: 1,602). In the Netherlands, the detention capacity increased from fewer than 1,000 places to 3,100 in 2007 (Van Kalmthout 2007). In Belgium, around 7,000 irregular migrants are detained each year, but due to faster processing the average 'stock' of irregular migrants in detention is around 500 individuals.[1] The Belgian authorities are more successful at expulsion; some 70 per cent of detainees are expelled each year.[2]

Governments hold irregular migrants in detention centres in the hope that they will reveal their identity or at least be cooperative in establishing it. According to Broeders and Engbersen (2007: 1,596) irregular migrants can be expelled only 'when identity, nationality, and (preferably) migration history can be established'. These authors discern two categories of detainees who raise problems for expulsion polices. The first are migrants who refuse to cooperate and frustrate the progress of procedures, for example, by stating a false name or by supplying an incorrect country of origin. The second group consists of migrants who cooperate in acquiring the relevant travel documents, but who cannot return because the authorities in their countries of origin refuse to accept them or because of specific political problems there (Broeders & Engbersen 2007: 1,602).

Broeders and Engbersen (2007: 1,606) argue that in the past, irregular migrants' main strategy to avoid expulsion was telling a lie about their identity. This proved to be a very effective weapon of resistance: they had to keep up this lie for a while until they were released. However, this 'weapon of the weak' is now targeted by new policies of surveillance and identification. It remains to be seen to what extent the efforts of irregular migrants to hide their identity will continue to be effective in the future.

1   Jaarverslag 2008, Dienst Vreemdelingenzaken, retrieved from www.dofi.fgov.be on 8 December 2009, p. 122.
2   Jaarverslag 2008, Dienst Vreemdelingenzaken, retrieved from www.dofi.fgov.be on 8 December 2009, p. 122.

4.4.4   Labour market control

As many irregular migrants engage in informal labour, controlling the labour market is an important tool for controlling irregular migration:

> [E]fficiency of immigration policy is more a question of the ability to supervise the labour market than of policing the national borders: it revolves on the state's ability to prevent employers from hiring undocumented workers and its ability to maintain generally high standards of employment conditions (Brochmann 1999b: 323).

In neither Belgium nor in the Netherlands are irregular migrants allowed to work. If they are caught doing informal labour, the authorities try to deport them (Broeders 2009; Leerkes et al. 2004; Van Meeteren et al. 2008). Although Belgium and the Netherlands take the same stance towards informal work, there are important reasons to believe that nowadays, it is easier for irregular migrants to find a job in Belgium than it is in the Netherlands, whereas in the past it was the other way around.

In the Netherlands irregular migrants used to be able to work formally by obtaining a 'social-fiscal number' (sofi-number) (Engbersen 1999c). In 1991, the government made sure that irregular migrants could no longer acquire these. Since then the Netherlands has severely tightened the net around the labour market and considerably increased its controls (Kromhout et al. 2008). In 1994, identification became compulsory at the workplace, and in 1998 the Linking Act was enacted which made sure that migrants who had acquired a legal social-fiscal number before 1991 could no longer work using this number. In 2000 employers became required to keep a copy of their employees' identification document on file (Broeders 2009). Furthermore, controls on irregular labour were intensified (Kromhout et al. 2008). It is a criminal offence for employers not to cooperate in establishing the identity of their employees (Broeders 2009). Since 2005, an employer may be fined € 8,000 per illegally employed worker and € 12,000 for a repeated offence (Broeders 2009), while in cases dating from just a few years earlier employers paid around € 1,000 (Benseddik & Bijl 2004).

Unlike in the Netherlands, the possibility of irregular migrants obtaining work permits had ended long before 1991 in Belgium. Very few irregular migrants have therefore managed to find entry to the formal labour market there (Adam et al. 2002; Van Meeteren et al. 2007b; Van Nieuwenhuyze 2009). Like the Dutch government, the Belgian authorities have increased their control of informal labour over recent years. Since 1999, employers

who hire irregular migrants have been liable for punishment (Van Meeteren et al. 2008).

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

4.5   Legalisation

As irregular migrants may be detained by the police and sent to a detention centre to be expelled, many irregular migrants try to legalise their status. For those not seriously ill or formally unable to return to their country of origin, there are basically two ways in which irregular migrants can do this: by marrying a Belgian or Dutch national or someone holding permanent residence rights or by applying for regularisation.

Marriage seems to be the dominant strategy in both Belgium (Van Nieuwenhuyze 2009) and the Netherlands (Engbersen 1999b; Staring 1998). In many cases, this concerns a marriage between an irregular migrant and a regular migrant. In other cases, an irregular migrant marries a Dutch or Belgian native. The chances of an irregular migrant marrying a native are different for men and women of different countries of origin. Whereas Dutch native women who marry a foreign spouse tend to find partners from Africa, Dutch native men largely marry women from Eastern Europe, South-East Asia or Latin America (Leerkes & Kulu-Glasgow 2010). Sometimes marriages stem from love relationships, but bogus marriages are not uncommon (Mazzucato 2005; Staring 1998). Governments both in Belgium and in the Netherlands have developed policies to discourage irregular migrants from entering bogus marriages (Broeders 2009; Van Meeteren et al. 2007b). They refuse to recognise marriages if they suspect them to be fake (Van Liempt 2007; Van Meeteren 2007b). Moreover, a couple has to remain married for

quite some time. In the Netherlands, the partner may receive a temporary permit to stay independent of his or her partner only after three years of marriage (Van der Leun 2003b),[3] in Belgium this is two years.[4]

Although both countries have stepped up their measures against bogus marriages, it is very difficult to determine the effects, partly because implementation of these policies differs even from city to city. Martijn,[5] a social worker in Antwerp, explains:

> It is always Antwerp where most problems arise ... In Antwerp you become a suspect of a bogus marriage very quickly. Sometimes an investigation into a bogus marriage is started before an official application for marriage has been filed. That is actually unlawful but it happens nevertheless. And future partners are asked very intimate questions. Sometimes ... I have the impression that the court in Antwerp is always more compliant [with the immigration services] than courts in other cities ... Therefore we advise people to move to another city or town, to marry there and then come back.

In addition to getting married, irregular migrants can apply for regularisation. They can file for regularisation based on 'exceptional circumstances'. The chances of regularisation for the average irregular migrant are slim: only about 300 persons per year are granted regularisation based on exceptional circumstances (Van Meeteren et al. 2008). Although the exact numbers are not identifiable in public records, news reports estimate similar numbers in the Netherlands.[6] Both in the Netherlands and in Belgium, criteria for these circumstances are not specified.

In Belgium, most irregular migrants applying for regularisation claim they should be legalised because they are 'integrated'. This is also what is advocated by the irregular migrants engaged in political action (see McNevin 2006). Efforts made to learn the native language, letters from natives they know well, children in school and a long length of stay are some of the exceptional circumstances migrants try to invoke to become

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3 Telephone consultation with Dutch immigration authorities on 26 November 2009.
4 Information retrieved from www.vreemdelingenrecht.be 3 December 2009.
5 All interviewed respondents who work for organisations have been provided fictitious names in order to guard their anonymity. I use different names in order to demonstrate that I quote different people.
6 Retrieved from www.nu.nl/algemeen/778954/verdonk-wil-blijven-beslissen-over-schrijnende-gevallen.html and www.dag.nl/binnenland/schrijnende-gevallen-mogen-17235 on 8 December 2009.

regularised. Most lawyers and people who work for organisations giving legal advice recommend that irregular migrants claim integration as grounds for regularisation. Petra, who works for a welfare organisation in Antwerp, explains how this procedure works in practice:

> [Y]ou have to prove exceptional circumstances … So many people who have applied for asylum or who have lived here for a while believe this is in itself enough to qualify as an exceptional circumstance … There are a number of criteria that can be invoked but these are not set by law … if you can prove that you have been here for five years and you can prove that you are integrated and that you have built your future here, that you have many social ties here, through school, neighbours, then you can apply on those grounds.

Although criteria are not specified by law, the people I interviewed in organisations that interact with irregular migrants kept insisting that integration is a valid criterion. This is the advice organisations and lawyers usually provide to irregular migrants: that they have to work on their integration in order to be eligible for application. As 'integration' is a vague criterion that can be interpreted in different ways, these applications are, in practice, trial-and-error exercises. Many irregular migrants try, and some try more than once (Verstrepen 2007). The same woman explains:

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

Another reason why some 15,000 irregular migrants apply for regularisation in Belgium each year is that the police tend to tolerate the presence of irregular migrants with pending regularisation applications (Van Meeteren et al. 2008). In the Netherlands, the same practice was common, but the number of applications has decreased because of recent policy changes, as Joke, who works for an organisation in the Netherlands, explains:

> [It] is more or less the same as you have in Belgium … Like in Belgium the benefit is you cannot be expelled … These types of applications are frequent in the Netherlands … Very few get a positive decision

though. But the care facilities are all full with this group of people; it is standard procedure for people to make this kind of application … [T]he applications used to be done with the municipalities, until last year, and then last year it was changed to the Immigration Services Offices … [T]he Immigration Services can refuse applications straight away and they can detain directly … so they have created a deterrent and built a system around it to prevent people from making too many applications. It used to be a nice escape, people just asked for a residence permit based on whatever, and then they would be in the procedure for one and a half years, during which you do not have rights to anything, but hey, you cannot be expelled either. That was a big advantage.

The number of applications was much reduced in the Netherlands by the rule referred to above, whereby irregular migrants filing an application without merit are immediately detained. This discourages migrants from making false applications. These practices might deter them from trying at all.

As the possibilities for individual regularisation are limited and uncertain, irregular migrants' best chances of legalisation are general campaigns for regularisation. Collective regularisations have been carried out all over Europe: in Italy (Mingione & Quassoli 2000: 50-51), Spain (Arango 2000; Hartman 2008), Portugal (Baganha 2000) and Greece (Fakiolas 2000, 2003; Glytsos 2005; Lazaridis & Poyago-Theotoky 1999). Belgium is currently undergoing its third campaign,[7] and the Netherlands has had its share of amnesties as well (Benseddik & Bijl 2004; Van Eijl 2012).

Belgium had its first general regularisation in 1974 and its second in 2000 (Martiniello 2003). During the campaign of 2000, over 30,000 applications were filed, representing roughly 50,000 people (Bernard 2000) of many nationalities, among which Congolese and Moroccans were the largest groups (Martiniello 2003). Applicants were required to fulfil one of the following four conditions:

having been engaged in the asylum procedure for an abnormally long period without having been informed of a decision (4 years in general, 3 years for families with minor children); not having the objective possibility of returning to one's country due to, for example, a war; suffering a serious illness; or having lived at least six years in the country

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7   See, for example, www.vreemdelingenrecht.be. Information retrieved on 3 December 2009.

without having received any official notification to leave the country
during the last five years. This last category of potential applicants is
supposed to be integrated in Belgium (ibid.: 229-230).

As mentioned earlier, when I was doing my fieldwork in Belgium in 2006,
irregular migrants all over Belgium were occupying churches, some were
demonstrating in the streets and some were engaged in hunger strikes.
These actions had begun in response to events in 2005, when a group of
130 irregular migrants occupied a church in Elsene, a district of Brussels.
After a prolonged hunger strike, the Minister of Internal Affairs Patrick
Dewael conceded to their demand for residency, fuelling actions all over
the country. These were organised by a collective of irregular migrants,
the UDEP (Union pour la Défense des Sans-Papiers). With the support of
several NGOs and semi-governmental organisations, the 'pro-regularisation
movement' (Laubenthal 2007) managed to influence government debate on
asylum procedure reform. Furthermore, it managed to get the government
to formalise some of the criteria for individual regularisation that had been
used informally since the previous collective regularisation. For example,
the criterion used during the campaign in 2000, stipulating that migrants
who had been enrolled in the asylum procedure for an unusually long
period of time would be granted regularisation, now became formal policy.

    In addition to the changes in asylum procedure and the formulation of
criteria for regularisation, the Belgian authorities decided to issue another
general amnesty long after my fieldwork had finished. Starting in Septem-
ber 2009, irregular migrants could apply for regularisation based on a set
of special criteria that were valid for a period of three months.[8] During this
period, irregular migrants could claim 'durable local embeddedness'. In
practice, this meant that persons who had been in Belgium for five years
and who had filed for regularisation before 2009 could apply. Furthermore,
persons who were in Belgium before March 2007 and could supply a future
work contract for a year met the criteria. It was only possible to claim
'durable local embeddedness' during these three months. About 30,000
people applied, of which only about 10,000 cases were new applications. The
others were individual requests for regularisation that had been shifted to
the general regularisation campaign. Many of my respondents have now
been legalised as a result of this general amnesty.

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

In the Netherlands, the last general regularisation schemes date back to 1975 and 1979 (Van Groenendael 1986). After that there were no more general amnesties; neither were there any special regularisation schemes close to the size of those in Belgium (Van Eijl 2012). Throughout the 1990s, there was a series of amnesties for irregular migrants who had worked legally in the formal labour market (Van der Leun 2003b; Van Eijl 2012). In 1991 an informal arrangement came into existence known as the 'six-year arrangement'. Roughly speaking, this meant that irregular migrants who could prove they had worked legally over the past six years were legalised. In 1999 a series of hunger strikes led to the formulation of a similar, yet more formal arrangement. In the 1990s, 3,000 people were legalised, while over 5,000 persons were rejected under these arrangements (Benseddik & Bijl 2004).

In 2007, the Dutch government announced another limited amnesty, this time targeting former asylum seekers. Migrants who had applied for asylum prior to April 2001 and could prove they had stayed in the Netherlands even though their asylum was rejected, or who had not yet been rejected, could apply. In June 2009, 27,700 persons were legalised.[9] This amnesty coincided with my fieldwork in the Netherlands. I interviewed migrants who had not applied and were sure they would not do so in the future because they did not meet the criteria, for example, because they had never applied for asylum. I also interviewed irregular migrants who had applied, but were still waiting for the final decision at the time of the interview.

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

In both Belgium and the Netherlands, it is very difficult to become legalised under the individual regularisation procedure. General amnesties

9   Rapportage Vreemdelingenketen periode januari-juni 2009. Ministerie van Justitie. Re-trieved from: www.justitie.nl/onderwerpen/migratie/asiel/pardonregeling/ on 3 December 2009.

therefore seem to provide the best chances of regularisation. Both countries have offered such possibilities to asylum seekers as well as to economic migrants. However, there is little hope for future irregular migrants to achieve legalisation through these means, as Europe is in the process of formulating laws against national regularisation campaigns (Broeders 2009). Perhaps the best bet, therefore, continues to be to marriage.

4.6   Research context: Belgium and the Netherlands

It has become clear that Belgium and the Netherlands are suitable countries for my research objectives. Both countries experienced labour migration after World War II, had large numbers of asylum seekers in the 1990s, and had substantial migration resulting from former colonial ties during different periods. These are also countries where diversity is expected to be present. Moreover, owing to their geographical location, these countries do not experience large shares of migration stemming from neighbouring countries.

Belgium and the Netherlands have both witnessed shifts in policies that are common to the European context. Whereas policies to combat irregular migration were, in the past, focused on guarding the external boundaries of the nation-state, they have increasingly turned inwards. Measures of internal control are changing as well. A paradigm shift is taking place in which policies of internal control aimed at exclusion are being replaced by policies targeting the identification and expulsion of irregular migrants.

While Belgium and the Netherlands have stepped up their efforts to exclude, identify and expel irregular migrants, they have also had to ensure basic migrants' rights, rooted in supra-national agreements. Furthermore, over the years both states have provided several ways for irregular migrants to legalise their status. It therefore appears that policies in Belgium and the Netherlands both exclude and include irregular migrants, thereby creating both opportunities and constraints. The room for irregular migrants to manoeuvre created by these policies seems to be in constant flux as a result of the many changes in policies and their implementation, partly in response to irregular migrants' actions to circumvent policies, and also because lawyers and human rights activists continuously battle with governments to create space.

This constantly changing environment in which my respondents found themselves made it difficult for me to determine if specific policy measures had certain effects, which is why I did not aim to do so. I already discussed

the main reasons for my reluctance to engage in comparative efforts (chapter 2). In addition, a gap appears to exist between formal policies and their practical implementation. One would therefore have to study not only formal policies, but also analyse how these are implemented (see Van der Leun 2003b). This is a complicated task given that implementation practices differ at the local level as well. Therefore many more than just two relevant policy implementation contexts can be discerned. Examining the effects of policy practices within all of these local contexts is a task that would require much more than analysis of the interviews I conducted with organisations.

Furthermore, even though the lives of my respondents are situated in different policy contexts, these contexts do not mechanically constrain or enforce their actions. Rather, irregular migrants react to opportunities and constraints in different ways. This chapter sketched the context in which my respondents' aspirations took shape. The following chapters analyse the interaction between irregular migrants and the context in which they live insofar as the context affects respondents' aspirations or their incorporation and transnational activities.

5 Investment, Settlement and Legalisation Aspirations

5.1 Three types of aspirations

This chapter examines my respondents' aspirations during their stay in Belgium or the Netherlands. From this analysis, it appears that three types of aspirations can be distinguished. The first type of aspiration concerns working and making money in the destination country and returning with it to the country of origin. Thus, respondents with this type of aspiration hoped to achieve future upward mobility in their country of origin. They were usually 'target earners'; that is, they saved for very specific projects, ranging from starting their own business to financing a future wedding in the country of origin (Massey et al. 1987). Musa from Turkey, for example, says 'I am here with only one goal and that is to save money and return to get married and start my own business.' Mbark says, 'When I have earned enough money, I will go back to Morocco to start a business there.' During their stay in Belgium or the Netherlands, these migrants try to acquire financial means for future investment in their home country. The following fragment illustrates how their stay serves a planned future in the country of origin:

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

These migrants intend to stay in the destination country only temporarily until their project has succeeded. They regard their stay as an intermediary period in which they work for upward social mobility in the future in their country of origin. Göksel, for example, says, 'This is a step that I take in order to realise my dream. I earn enough money here to make the savings I need before I go back to Turkey.' I denote such aspirations as *investment aspirations*. As irregular migrants with investment aspirations aim for a temporary stay – for a more or less pre-fixed amount of time – they do not aspire to settle down or become legalised. As Ilian says, 'My uncle will

probably get a residence permit at the end of this year, but I am not looking for a residence permit. I want to go back to Bulgaria in two years and start a family there.' When I asked Sofía from Bolivia if she was trying to get legalised, she replied, 'No, I am not trying anything.' When I subsequently asked her why she was not trying she said, 'You know I want to have papers but I don't know ... that is just to live you know and to not have this problem of fear of the police. But it is not for staying here indefinitely. No that is not my intention.' This illustrates that migrants with investment aspirations regard legalisation as a mere convenience and not as a necessity. In other words, it is something they would not refuse if it was offered to them, but it is not something they currently strive for.

Unlike the temporary ambitions of migrants with investment aspirations, the second category of aspirations is oriented towards residing in Belgium or the Netherlands on a long-term basis. These migrants, with what I have termed *settlement aspirations*, aim to start a new life in the destination country and do not intend to return:

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

Badr, and others like him, clearly believe that having a job is important to achieve the life he desires in Belgium. In such cases, the desire for long-term stay is inspired by a dream of economic prosperity:

> In Holland so much work exists, not officially, but they need workers, not for € 20 but for € 5. You need to start one month for five, later you work for seven, and in three months you work for ten. Later you have twelve or fifteen but believe me with € 15, cash, ah € 15, this is my price with what I have lived [during the] last three years. Masja, € 15 per hour is enough. Masja, € 120, € 150 every day, is not enough for life? No taxes or other things. It is perfect, perfect life (Andrei, Moldova).

Some migrants' settlement aspirations do not derive from their personal economic desires, but from family needs that span national boundaries. Arda, for example, says, 'I don't have any choice. I stay here to send money to my family. I can work all year round here, in Turkey I only work a few months a year.' Furthermore, focusing on settling in the new society does

not mean that migrants give up on the option of ever returning to their country of origin. Migrants with settlement aspirations regularly visit their home country – if they can – and many plan to return upon retirement, as living costs are usually much lower there.

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

Settlement aspirations are not always only about economic prosperity in the destination country. Some people, for example, want to stay because their right to urgent medical care gives them access to medical assistance they would not be able to afford in their home country (see Rosenthal 2007). Kees, a social worker in Antwerp, explains, '[W]e have been talking about voluntary return for five months now but this man has the entire medical dictionary, he has all kinds of illnesses. It is much better for him to stay here. This man costs the OCMW,[1] I think he is their best customer in terms of costs. What he has here [in Belgium] he is never going to get there [in South America], and he won't have the money either.' Medical services provided in the destination country can thus constitute a reason why migrants aspire to settle down:

> My sister has a tumour in her head ... [she] is undergoing hard treat-
> ment, and very long, it will practically be forever. And to this country
> we are so thankful because they help her so much. These examinations

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1   The OCMW are the Belgian social services responsible for the provision of medical care to irregular migrants.

could not be done in my country. Firstly because they don't have them there, they don't know how to do them, and secondly because we could never have afforded it economically … [T]he beautiful thing about Belgium is … that when someone is illegal, there is medical assistance for this person … regardless of … whether the medical problem you have is this big, the government accepts the expenses and they help you (Constanza, Bolivia).

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

Educational opportunities available to respondents' children fuelled settlement aspirations too (see Fozdar & Torezani 2008). When I asked Antonia if she had the chance to do it over, would she again make the same decision to come to Belgium and settle down illegally, she replied, 'Yes, because my children have learned Dutch, another language. They speak English, they speak French, and they know many things. They know many things that you don't have there [in Ecuador], intellectual things, everything. Here is the best future for them.' When I asked Benjamin from Ecuador if he was satisfied with his life in Belgium, he said, 'My children go to music school here, school for painting, dancing, karate, so that is something very nice for them. We are satisfied because we are complying with our obligation as parents to give a good education to your children. We hope that they will take advantage of it and have a better future later.' It is usually not just one of these underlying factors that shapes settlement aspirations, but a combination of several factors, as Javiera explains, 'We have grown away from our country so we feel better here, because we are better off here economically, and I can give my children the education that I would like to give them, and health too. And I can give that to my sister and my mother [who lived in her house] as well. I wanted to do all that in Ecuador but I could not.'

Settlement aspirations stem not only from economic conditions, but are inspired by many other factors as well, for example, the freedom from parental or community control that the migrant has come to enjoy. These types of structural factors – often in combination with one another – foster aspirations to build a more or less permanent life in the destination country, though not necessarily including legalisation. This does not mean that migrants with settlement aspirations would not seize the opportunity if legalisation were offered to them, but in their everyday life they do not focus on it.

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

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

Mehdi, also from Morocco, answers the question of why he chooses to remain in Belgium by saying, 'Because I plan to build a future here ... I will do anything to get a residence permit. I know that it is going to take much effort; nevertheless, I will do anything to become a full citizen of Belgium.' Jamal says that he '[can't] go back to Morocco without first having arranged for papers. All the effort and money would have been futile then.' For migrants with legalisation aspirations, obtaining legal residence represents a new beginning. This is unlike settlement migrants, who can start to build a new life without papers. Legalisation migrants feel that they can make such a new start only after obtaining papers. Illiass, from Morocco, for example, explains, 'I hope I meet someone who I can marry so that I can reside legally, because only then can I start to work on my future.' Tolga from Turkey also emphasises how legalisation represents a new beginning: 'My life here has yet to begin. I am going to marry my girlfriend and then I will start a restaurant with my brother-in-law.' For legalisation migrants, their life seems to stand still while they live in illegality. Tarek from Algeria explains, 'if I become legalised I can map out a route, make a plan, organise my life, and I cannot do that without papers ... It is very unfortunate that I am losing time like this.' Efunsegun, from Nigeria, says that he feels time is ticking away: '[I]t is because of my future that I stay here. I know that if I get the paper, I know that my future will be much brighter than it is now. So that is why you know I want to have permission to live here, nothing else, because I know that if I ever decide to go back to Africa I have to start again from where I stopped.'

Legalisation migrants consider legalisation a precondition for a good life. In many cases, they say that if they knew for certain that they would never get legalised, they would consider returning to their homeland or trying their luck somewhere else:

> There [in Africa], you know that you are in a shit situation. But here it is not a shit situation, but it does not result in anything either. No, for

> me, without papers I go back. Without papers there is no reason to live
> here. I go back then. I didn't go to Europe and stop here to do illegal
> work, that is no use (Dnari, Sierra Leone).

Dnari is clear about the fact that he did not come to Europe to do 'illegal work'. Legalisation migrants see their migration as part of a social mobility project in terms of advancement in life. They see legalisation as a necessary stepping stone towards achieving that upward social mobility. Migrants like Illiass, Medhi and Efunsegun talk about their need for papers for their 'future'. However, for some legalisation migrants, having papers represents more than just a stepping stone for the advancement of their personal careers:

> I don't just want to earn € 2,000 or € 1,500 working in this and to only
> be with people who are also in this environment [illegal employment].
> I want to do other things as well and move around in freedom. I want
> to be in the environment in which *I* want to be … if I knew for sure that
> I would have to be in this situation for two or three years or more, I
> think I would return then (Fernando, Chile).

Together with his wife, Fernando is earning a monthly income that would likely satisfy most settlement and investment migrants. Yet he says making this amount does not suffice for him. As for many legalisation migrants, this has to do with his educational background. He mentions his university degree when I ask why he does not want to stay in Belgium without papers: 'because I have graduated from university, I have a title and all that, and now I am here painting and doing work with my hands'. Several legalisation migrants expressed the wish to take up their studies after legalisation (see Menjivar 2008). Or they hoped that legalisation would enable them to find employment in a job using their education.

My analysis revealed three different types of aspirations of irregular migrants in Belgium and the Netherlands: investment, settlement and legalisation aspirations. Migrants with investment aspirations want to return and invest in a better future in their country of origin. Migrants with settlement aspirations aspire to build a new life in the destination country, regardless of whether they ever obtain a legal residence status, and migrants with legalisation aspirations hope to obtain legal residence. While other scholars have made comparisons based on two migration motives or two types of aspirations, the analytical distinction of the three categories presented here is new. Leman, for example, (1997) distinguishes

between those who migrate primarily to work – usually temporarily – and make money (employment illegality) and migrants who come to reside and legalise their status (residence illegality); and Chavez (1998) distinguishes between sojourners and settlers. Although my analysis broadly supports this distinction in individual aspirations, it reveals three categories of aspirations instead of two. Contrary to Leman's findings, I found a group of irregular migrants who do want to settle down but do not necessarily aspire to obtain legal residence. Contrary to the findings of Chavez I found a category of irregular migrants for whom settlement aspirations necessarily involve legalisation. It is important to distinguish three categories, and not just two, because these categories encompass very different definitions of success. Whereas settlement migrants describe their life in illegal employment as a 'perfect life', legalisation migrants say they are not here 'to do illegal work' and they are 'losing time'. To achieve their aspirations, those in the different categories need to employ very different strategies, and these different strategies are likely to require specific resources and to shape specific patterns of incorporation. Distinguishing between investment, settlement and legalisation aspirations therefore provides more insight into the lives of irregular migrants than can be offered by analytical distinctions with only two categories.

5.2   Where do they come from?

As explained in chapter 2, aspirations are not only fed by wants and desires; they are also influenced by structural factors. Some structural factors stem from characteristics of both the countries of origin and destination, while others have to do with the personal background characteristics and the personal social networks that respondents are embedded in. Chapter 4 described the main characteristics of the two receiving societies under study. These different contexts are likely to create an overrepresentation of specific categories of aspirations in each country. For example, the possibilities of achieving individual regularisation are perceived to be greater in Belgium than in the Netherlands, judging by the numbers of applications. It is therefore likely that migrants with legalisation aspirations will be a relatively larger category in Belgium. However, no conclusive statements can be made about distributions over the categories because of the qualitative nature of this study. All that can be done is to indicate that the aspirations described in the previous subsections were shaped in these structural contexts, and that other structural contexts may shape different distributions

and perhaps additional aspirations as well. Furthermore, this study can analyse how specific changes in migrants' perceptions of the structural context may foster changes in their aspirations or actions. In other words, it can indicate how irregular migrants react to the perceived policy context in which they find themselves. How do they adjust their aspirations and actions to the structural context in which they are embedded? This means that I can report mechanisms that shape patterns. These mechanisms are discussed later in this book.

This section analyses how specific structural conditions in the different *countries of origin* lead to an overrepresentation of migrants from certain countries within specific categories of aspirations. Furthermore, it discusses certain personal background characteristics that underlie specific categories of aspirations. As such, it becomes clear that the irregular migrants interviewed developed a 'migratory disposition' (Kalir 2005b), and their aspirations were shaped by the conditions in their country of origin and their own personal background.

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

The literature on 'regular' migration usually stresses that migrants who settle down often start out as temporary migrants (Piore 1979). In the same vein, irregular migrants are seldom found to aim for settlement from the start (Massey et al. 1987). Although I encountered migrants who initially had temporary aspirations that turned into settlement aspirations, I also found some who aspired to settle down from the start. Lucas, from Chile, answered my question about whether he had always intended to stay with a firm 'yes', later adding, 'We knew that we were not going back.' Recent research points out that, as immigration control has tightened for migrants who need a visa, these people tend to stay as long as possible once they have

successfully entered the country of destination (Düvell 2006c). This seems to indicate that migrants who have settlement aspirations from the outset are no longer the exceptions.

Even though initial settlement aspirations are becoming more common, many of my respondents who currently had settlement aspirations initially came to Europe with the desire to make money and then return home. Mustafa, who initially came with the intention of saving money for his wedding and returning home, said, 'I have work here, when I have saved enough money I go back to Bulgaria to get married. After that, I come back here with my wife. I lead a better life here.' Sometimes these are success stories, as in Mustafa's case. But many investment migrants turn into settlement migrants because they fail to get together the amount of money they need to return. They need more time than they planned to get the necessary savings together. For example, when I asked Martina, from Bolivia, if it had always been her intention to settle down, she answered as follows:

> No this was not my intention. It was covering what I owed, making a little money and going back to Bolivia. That was my original goal. My goal was to go back after a year. But after six months without work, and then after eight months of work I still did not have the same amount of money that I arrived with. So [I stayed] a year more, and then another year more.

For migrants who had high travel expenses, it can be especially difficult to meet investment aspirations. In these cases, paying back travel costs can constitute such a financial burden that migrants are unable to save any money for long periods of time. This more or less forces them to settle down. Gzifa, who migrated from Ghana with the help of a migration broker, ran away from the broker once she realised that the wages in Belgium were not as he had promised them to be. While she initially planned to work for a few years to save money, she realised that she could never save money with the enormous travel debt she had. Going back to Ghana was not an option because the migration broker's people would easily find her there. She therefore decided to leave Brussels and settle in Antwerp, hoping he would not find her there (he had not in the past six years).

Migrants with settlement aspirations usually come from countries where there are high levels of unemployment, corruption and economic problems, as in South America or North Africa (see Jokisch & Pribilsky 2002). The

economic crisis in Ecuador inspired Isidora to migrate to Belgium with her husband and four children:

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

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

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

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

Countries that foster settlement aspirations are those that offer little in terms of social security. Respondents often also worked in the informal

labour market there, and medical insurance and pension plans were usually out of their reach. This means that many of the conditions they face in their country of origin are the same as those in the destination country. But at least in Belgium or the Netherlands they have partial access to medical care and good education for their children.

Like migrants with settlement aspirations, migrants with legalisation aspirations escape poor and corrupt countries. In addition, countries that have been struck by war or where other serious political conflicts are part of daily life foster legalisation aspirations. Many migrants with legalisation aspirations therefore apply for asylum. In this respect, it is important to realise that many of these migrants were not well-informed in advance about conditions in the country of destination. Many complained about the false image that prior migrants had portrayed of Europe. After hearing the stories of seemingly endless economic opportunities and political freedoms, they thought European streets were paved with gold (see Staring 1999), and that people could do whatever they wanted. Many migrants leave their homes without basic information or with a completely wrong image of what to expect. Some of my respondents, for example, thought they could easily start working once they arrived and did not even know that papers are required in order to work or reside in Europe:

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

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

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

Many migrants with legalisation aspirations have consequently just rolled into asylum procedures. Many fled their countries in search of protection without knowing anything about asylum laws; they just thought they could work in Europe. After each negative decision they file another appeal or try another procedure. There is always another procedure to try or an appeal to file – especially in Belgium. Lawyers there assist migrants striving for legalisation, continuously offering them the hope that the next procedure will have a chance of success, especially since there are no strict criteria for these procedures. As a consequence, there is always some hope of achieving legalisation. Even the slightest glimmer of hope can make some continue along this path for a long period of time. Furthermore, some social workers encourage them to file for regularisation procedures, as they believe that the circumstances in the home country are too bad to go back to. When I interviewed social worker Debbie and the irregular migrant she was assisting (Dnari), they told me that Debbie encouraged Dnari not to go back to Sierra Leone:

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

Apart from the respondents who have legalisation aspirations because they come from countries with political problems and have been socialised into the world of legal procedures, there is a group for which personal background characteristics underlie their legalisation aspirations. The first type of characteristic has already been mentioned and has to do with education. The second relates to social status. Some migrants with legalisation aspirations have a high social status in their country of origin. These respondents look down on illegal employment and often lie to their family and friends about the conditions they experience in order to protect their social status. Obviously they cannot keep this up forever, so they need legal status so they

can start to live the life they are expected to be living. A third characteristic is age. Irregular migrants with legalisation aspirations are either relatively old or relatively young compared to those with settlement and investment aspirations. While the latter two categories are usually roughly between 25 and 45 years of age, and hence at a good age to work and form a family, some legalisation migrants are older than 50, which makes them less suitable for heavy physical labour and consequently more likely to aspire to legalisation. The younger migrants with legalisation aspirations have just left school and have no job experience; they have come to Belgium or the Netherlands in search of a better future. As they are at a good age to get married, this is usually what they are after. Their families have sent them to Europe to live with other family members for a while. This especially applies to migrants from Turkey and Morocco whose family members are former labour migrants who acquired a legal status in the 1970s or 1980s. Finding the newly arrived family member a marriage partner becomes an issue for the whole family to deal with.

Specific social backgrounds and structural conditions in the home country make certain migrants more likely to have certain kinds of aspirations. Moreover, specific personal background characteristics underlie specific types of aspirations. Categories of aspirations may overlap with countries of origin. Thus, people studying Poles and Albanians, for example, find that the former are mainly temporary migrants, while the latter prefer to settle down permanently (Triandafyllidou & Kosic 2006). Certain conditions in the home countries make migrants more likely to aspire to one thing than to another simply because it makes more sense in the context they live within. However, there are always many exceptions. There are always Poles who do settle down or try to become legalised. We already saw that nationality categories can be diverse in terms of aspirations. Moreover, people's aspirations do not always remain steady during their entire migrant career. If conditions in the country of origin change, aspirations may change with these. A migrant who wanted to open a shop in the home country, for example, is likely to refrain from doing so if the home economy collapses. Irregular migrants can also change their aspirations due to events in the destination country.

5.3   Changing aspirations

I took aspirations at different points in the lives of irregular migrants as a starting point for my analysis. For the respondents interviewed by research assistants in semi-structured interviews, I could assess only one point in

their lives: the moment the interview took place. During my own field-work, however, I was usually able to distinguish a sequence of aspirations throughout the migrant careers of respondents.

From this point forward, I use the terms *investment migrants*, *legalisation migrants* and *settlement migrants* instead of the longer 'migrants with investment aspirations', 'migrants with settlement aspirations' and 'migrants with legalisation aspirations'. This is for reasons of readability, though the reader should also bear in mind that my aim is to construct a typology of aspirations, not of migrants. In other words, my analysis is at the level of aspirations and not at the level of agents. The concepts investment migrants, legalisation migrants and settlement migrants refer to irregular migrants who have these specific aspirations at a certain point in time, but the core analytical categories are aspirations.

According to Van Nieuwenhuyze (2007), a typical trajectory usually takes place. The Senegambian irregular migrants she studied virtually all initially intended to return, but shifted their focus to obtaining a legal status after a while. However, research by Kosic and Triandafyllidou (2004) indicates that not all irregular migrants are interested in the possibility of regularising their work and stay. My own analysis also points in this latter direction. There neither seems to be a hierarchy in aspirations, nor does a fixed trajectory exist. My respondents did not always consider legalisation important. Jean, for example, initially tried to legalise his situation, but purposely stopped all his attempts after he received a second rejection. I found the typical trajectory from investment to settlement to legalisation aspirations was surely not uncommon, but I encountered a variety of other trajectories as well. The only trajectories I did not come across were those in which settlement or legalisation aspirations turned into investment aspirations. This does not mean, however, that these trajectories do not exist. Perhaps migrants who followed them had already returned and were consequently difficult to encounter in the destination country.

The question arises as to what prompts irregular migrants to change their aspirations. Individuals' aspirations are certainly mediated by what society can offer, and this inextricably connects aspirations to assessments of available opportunities and possible constraints. However, these assessments do not necessarily represent real-life opportunities and constraints, but rather perceptions of these. Changes in aspirations can therefore be the result of a real opportunity opening up or of increasing constraints, but they can also stem from false perceptions or from changes in desires and wants. In addition, as said before, aspirations are partially connected to migrants' stage of life. As a result, aspirations may change as migrants get

older, when they have children or when they become grandparents. In other words, many things can prompt migrants to change their aspirations. It is difficult to isolate the effects of specific possibilities or constraints. I can only analyse how irregular migrants adjust their aspirations to perceptions of these possibilities or constraints. I therefore did not systematically study factors inspiring changes in aspirations themselves. The following chapters instead examine contextual factors that I found to have actually inspired my respondents to change their aspirations and that are relevant for answering my research questions. It is important to emphasise at this point that if migrants switch to another category of aspirations, the required strategies for realising their aspirations also change (Van Nieuwenhuyze 2009), and their incorporation and transnational activities are likely to change as well.

5.4   Aspirations and strategies

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

The strategies pursued by legalisation migrants can be divided into two distinct types, corresponding to the possibilities for legalisation in the destination countries. The first type of strategy is to try to marry a native or a regular migrant with permanent residence rights. While some aim to find someone they love, others engage in a bogus marriage. In some cases the marriage is bought, and the partner knows that it is a bogus marriage, yet I also encountered migrants who aimed to find a partner they could deceive and leave once they had obtained legal residence. The second type of strategy is the use of legal procedures to become legalised, the most important procedure being regularisation. How exactly they pursue these strategies on a daily basis is discussed in the next chapters dealing with incorporation, transnational engagements and success. The same applies to the daily practices of investment and settlement migrants.

5.5   From aspirations to incorporation

Whereas other scholars have made distinctions using only two categories based on migration motives or aspirations, my analysis revealed three types of aspirations: investment, settlement and legalisation. As these categories of aspirations are accompanied by distinct visions of what constitutes success, this distinction provides more insight than prevailing categorisations of two groups can offer. Certain personal background characteristics as well as structural factors in the countries of origin also underlie specific aspirations. Changes in these characteristics are likely to inspire changing aspirations as well. Furthermore, migrants use certain strategies to realise their aspirations. Two distinct types of strategies can be distinguished among legalisation migrants. The next two chapters link aspirations to specific patterns of incorporation.

6 Living Different Dreams (I)

Aspirations and functional incorporation

6.1 Introduction

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

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

The next sections and the following chapter discuss the elements of incorporation that have come up in the literature on the incorporation of irregular migrants, such as work, housing, and social contacts and on which I have something to contribute. These topics have been categorised into two groups: functional incorporation and social incorporation. *Functional*

incorporation includes housing, work and other sources of income and thus refers to the way irregular migrants are able to sustain themselves. *Social incorporation* includes the way migrants spend their leisure time and their social contacts in the destination country. Note that this conceptualisation of incorporation is not all-encompassing. I do not intend to make statements about *the* incorporation of irregular migrants or about full incorporation. The aim, instead, is to contribute to the literature on the incorporation of irregular migrants. So I discuss only those elements of incorporation about which there is an implicit or explicit scholarly debate to which I can contribute. In the context of this book, incorporation should therefore be considered less an unambiguous theoretical concept forced upon the data, than as a heuristic device that provides structure and links my findings to relevant literature. This chapter discusses functional incorporation, whilst social incorporation is dealt with in the following chapter.

6.2   Housing

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

6.2.1   Type of accommodation

There is a debate among scholars studying irregular migrants about the relation between income and the amount spent on accommodation. A correlation between the two, as there generally exists in Belgium and the Netherlands, has not been found for irregular migrants (Leerkes et al. 2004; Van Meeteren et al. 2007b). Other research seems to point in the same direction. Paspalanova (2006), for example, found that her respondents lived in cheap housing of poor quality, even though some had average incomes. She claims that irregular migrants share the priority of 'living as cheaply as possible' (ibid.: 119). In addition to this common priority, scholars often assume that irregular migrants' juridical status prevents them from being able to do anything to improve their housing situation. In other words, they suggest that there is

no correlation between income and money spent on accommodation, as most irregular migrants live in cheap houses of bad quality because their vulnerable situation just does not allow them to find anything better (Burgers 1999a). Unlike the scholars referred to above, Chavez (1998) did find a relation between income and money spent on accommodation. He claims that crowded conditions are tolerated by temporary migrants, but they are not normally part of life for irregular migrants who aim to settle down. The latter do move into better housing if they can. In addition, other scholars emphasise that housing arrangements partly reflect the length of stay. Although most migrants share accommodation in the initial period, once a job is obtained, finding and moving to separate accommodation generally becomes a major objective (Leerkes et al. 2004; Roer-Strier & Olshtain-Mann 1999).

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

> I lived with my brother for a while in the beginning but when I found work I wanted my own room. A family member read an ad indicating that there was a studio for rent ... I like it very much to have my own room so that I do not have to bother anyone (Brahim).

Investment migrants, however, do not usually wish to move to more private and consequently more expensive accommodation, even if they can afford it. They prefer to continue to live in shared arrangements in order to save money. Martina, for example, said, 'We rented a studio with the four of us so we could share the costs, the rent and the electricity.' In some cases, migrants live with family members or friends during their entire stay, as

they know from the outset that their stay will be only temporary. This is usually something the migrants and hosts agreed upon before the migration took place. Other investment migrants share studios and (student) apartments in which they occupy one room per person or share a room with multiple persons, usually also irregular migrants. In some cases it is not the rooms that are rented out but the beds (see also Leman 1997). These are often provided by employers, as was the case with Musa, who said, 'My employer arranged a bed for me in a pension for € 150 per month.'

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

Legalisation migrants are like investment migrants in that they hope the situation they are in is only temporary. They are therefore more willing to make concessions in their housing situation than settlement migrants are prepared to do. Those trying to find someone to marry usually prefer to spend money on going out rather than on accommodation. After all, going out brings attainment of their aspirations closer, because it enables them to meet potential wedding partners. In addition, they often live with family members who help them in their quest. Those who are involved in legal procedures sometimes still live in the house that was assigned to them by the Aliens Office or in one they found when they successfully passed through the first stages of the asylum procedure. In the past, asylum seekers in Belgium were allowed to live outside the asylum centre after their first positive decision. For all of my respondents, the second decision turned out negative, which transformed them into irregular migrants, but they continued to live in the same place. In many cases, their landlords did not know that their tenants had become illegal. They knew only that their tenants were in a precarious situation or that they were 'arranging their papers'. Legalisation migrants are able to show some form of documentation to landlords, for example, their application form. As a result, they often manage to rent an apartment that is fairly decent from a landlord who is not trying to take advantage of their vulnerable situation. That is, the landlords do maintenance and ask market prices. In addition, organisations sometimes negotiate accommodation on their behalf.

However, if legalisation migrants have applied for regularisation and been denied, the police may come to their house to expel them. Some legalisation migrants therefore move and cannot afford to be picky about

where they move to. They have to settle for whatever they can get. Obviously, these tend to be dwellings in very bad condition offered by slumlords.

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

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

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

6.2.2   Spatial distribution

Irregular migrants are mainly accommodated in large cities and a limited number of border and rural areas (Engbersen et al. 2002; Leerkes, Engbersen & Van San 2006; see Lianos 2001). Within cities, irregular migrants live in – often centrally located – poor immigrant districts (Leerkes et al. 2007). They end up in these neighbourhoods because housing is cheap there and because they provide proximity to work (Engbersen et al. 2006; Leerkes et al. 2007; Leman 1997). In addition, there is a large presence of regular migrants there who may be able to provide work, housing, care, health care, information, relevant documents and possible partners (Engbersen et al. 2006). According to Leerkes et al. (2007) it is not just that co-ethnics can help them; irregular migrants also prefer to live in ethnically diverse neighbourhoods where many people speak their language. Moreover, the large presence of co-ethnics renders irregular migrants inconspicuous (Leman 1997; Lianos 2001). Furthermore, after some time, 'shadow institutions' (Scott 1998) or 'bastard institutions' (Hughes [1951] 1994) that cater specifically to irregular migrants begin to develop in immigrant districts (Engbersen et al. 2006; Leerkes et al. 2007). The population of irregular migrants is thus selectively incorporated into the urban landscape, and their spatial distribution is believed to reflect the preferences and interests of irregular migrants (Leerkes et al. 2007).

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

The reasons my respondents gave for their presence in the suburbs all indicate that they prefer living there, for example, due to the proximity to work, good schools for their children and the opportunities for recreation. Many respondents were happy to live close to a park where they could go for a stroll on the weekends. Most importantly, they liked the tranquillity of the suburban neighbourhoods, where they could escape the crowded

city centre and immigrant districts. Lucas, for example, commented on the neighbourhood he recently moved to:

> I like the area. I think it is peaceful, there is not so much noise, not too many people, not too many problems in the street, so it is good here … When we came to take a look at this apartment we immediately liked it because of its location … the school is close … and because the area is beautiful and the apartment is very spacious.

Furthermore, many preferred to live in suburban areas because they believed the immigrant districts to be dangerous, especially for children. They preferred to avoid associating with other groups of immigrants:

> The majority of the foreigners, immigrants, Moroccans, Africans … many of those people are below the cultural level or they have bad customs … Maybe I think a little like the Belgians as well. I think they are right when they say that the immigrants give many problems … I don't know, they do things … they harass people and that is not good … they bother you … I am not all right with the Moroccans and with their cars and all the harassing that they do or bothering women … the clashing of cultures is difficult (Fernando, Chile)

After Fernando's wife was harassed by a Moroccan man in the immigrant district where they used to live, they decided to move to Wilrijk, a quiet middle-class suburban area near Antwerp.

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

Engbersen et al. (2006) and Leerkes et al. (2007) likely found a preference for immigrant districts by interviewing irregular migrants whose ethnic background was well represented in the neighbourhoods they selected. Owing to the diversity in my sample, I found much more divergent housing preferences among irregular migrants. The investment migrants I inter-

viewed did want to live in immigrant districts because of the infrastructure catering to them, but the migrants who had settlement or legalisation aspirations and those who belonged to small communities preferred to live elsewhere, such as in the suburbs. Not all of them were able to realise this ambition, though; some indicated that they did not like living in the immigrant district, but it was all they could afford.

Leerkes et al. (2007) and Engbersen et al. (2006) used police data to determine the spatial distribution of irregular migrants. It is well known that women are underrepresented in police statistics. The share of women among irregular migrants is believed to have increased considerably in recent years (Jandl 2007; Jokisch & Pribilsky 2002; Raijman, Schammah-Gesser & Kemp 2003). For some nationalities, more than half of the irregular migrant population consists of women nowadays (Glytsos 2005). As migrant women with settlement and legalisation ambitions prefer to live in the suburbs, the underrepresentation of women in police data leads to an underestimation of the number of irregular migrants who live in suburban areas. In addition, the police are likely to exercise more control in immigrant districts than in the suburbs, which makes migrants who live and possibly also work in the suburbs less likely to end up in the police statistics. As a result, Engbersen et al. (2006) and Leerkes et al. (2007) probably overestimate the share of irregular migrants in immigrant neighbourhoods.

6.2.3   Differences between Belgium and the Netherlands

Aspirations appear to underlie irregular migrants' different housing preferences. Aspirations therefore partly explain the patterns found in the types and location of their accommodation arrangements. Table 6.1 presents irregular migrants' different housing preferences per type of aspiration.

Table 6.1   Housing patterns per type of aspiration

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

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

The housing market is organised differently in Belgium than in the Netherlands. Belgium has a lot more private home ownership and fewer social housing projects. Leerkes et al. (2007) therefore hypothesise that irregular migrants will be less evenly distributed across the urban landscape in Belgium than in the Netherlands. I can reflect upon what my respondents told me, but I cannot make systematic comparisons in this respect. In both countries, the migrants interviewed said that it was difficult to find a decent place to live for an affordable price. They indicated that there were always people willing to rent to irregular migrants, but they could be difficult to find. Furthermore, in both countries, migrants who did not belong to a large minority group preferred to live outside the immigrant districts. In addition, settlement migrants in both countries were willing to spend money on their accommodation and not search for the cheapest they could find. My impression of the housing situation as expressed by my respondents is that the differences between the countries are not profound. The average price did seem a bit lower in Belgium. The few respondents who had lived in both countries expressed the same view.

6.3   Employment

Irregular migrants often combine a number of different strategies to cater to their basic needs (Triandafyllidou & Kosic 2006). One of these strategies is employment, which is discussed in this section. Other sources of income are dealt with in section 6.4. I first briefly explain how irregular migrants engage in employment, before moving on to discuss the link between irregular migrants' individual aspirations and the hours they work, the type of work they do and the exploitation they experience.

Irregular migrants can work in several ways. First, they can be employed by an employer who pays them off the books. Second, they can obtain fraudulent working papers. Third, they can be self-employed (Coutin 2002). Self-employment is quite rare among irregular migrants. This is not surprising, as both Belgian and Dutch authorities demand substantial paperwork for this employment track, which is not easily done by migrants without nationality or permanent residency rights. Irregular migrants who are self-employed usually have started a business together with one or

more legal migrants (see Staring 2000). Apart from opening a shop as a form of self-employment, migrants come up with inventive forms of self-employment. Tuyishime, from Rwanda, for example, occasionally uses his three-room apartment as a hotel:

> They come for one week or two weeks and they prefer me over the hotel … they sleep here and I cook for them. They stay here, quiet, they can go in and out whenever they want. For two weeks maybe they pay € 600 or € 1,000. That is good.

He also does other activities that can be characterised as self-employment:

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

Activities such as those described by Tuyishime are never my respondents' primary source of income, but always a means to supplement their income from employment. Whereas I do consider such activities self-employment, I do not consider migrants who work for private households doing occasional chores as self-employed, because they work in an employer-employee type of relationship. Following this categorisation, I did not find self-employment to be common among irregular migrants in Belgium and the Netherlands. Instead, they usually worked off the books or by means of fraudulent papers. In the past, it was possible for irregular migrants to work legally on the formal labour market, but this only happens in very exceptional cases nowadays (Engbersen et al. 2002; Van der Leun & Kloosterman 2006; Van Meeteren et al. 2007b). I did not encounter any in this research.

6.3.1   Working hours

Most US studies find that labour force participation is high among irregular migrants (Chavez 1998; Hagan 1994; Mahler 1995; Powers et al. 1998). North European studies, on the contrary, indicate that a large share of irregular migrants are unemployed. Studies in the Netherlands, for example, find that one third of respondents had no job at all (Burgers 1998; Engbersen et al. 2002; Van der Leun & Kloosterman 1999). They report that when irregular migrants do work, they work a lot of hours, usually more than the general 40-hour working week (Ahmad 2008; Datta et al. 2007; Paspalanova 2006). This was

indeed the case among the investment migrants I interviewed. Work was crucial for them, as it allowed them to realise their aspirations. They worked long hours, six or seven days per week. To save the financial means necessary for future investments in their home country, they tried to work as much as possible during their stay in the destination country. Investment migrants like Diego and Constanza responded to the question of how much they work by saying, 'Well, I work every day really' or 'I take all the opportunities I can get.'

Settlement migrants, however, do not want to work six or seven days per week, and they do not want to work these long hours per day, as they value free time.

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

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

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

Having a regular and continuous job is also considered an important aspect of life for settlement migrants (see Psimmenos & Kassimati 2006). But sometimes they do not manage to find this type of employment, which means they have to accept other jobs. In such cases they tend to work intermittently.

> If I have some money I am not going to continue to work you know. The work is often very heavy, it kills you know ... Last time I worked for

> three months I think … but at last I just could not take it anymore. It is
> really heavy work you know. I have some money now you know, maybe
> it will last two months more (Dembah, Guinea).

In contrast, legalisation migrants aspire to become legalised, and working
informally could prevent them from achieving this goal. Both in Belgium and
in the Netherlands, if an irregular migrant is caught doing informal work, he
or she receives notification to leave the country, which severely reduces the
chances of legalisation and simultaneously increases the chances of being
deported. Therefore, legalisation migrants try to work as little as possible,
as Monana from Congo said, 'I don't look [for work], because by working in
black I run the risk of getting caught'. Although both settlement migrants
and legalisation migrants want to stay in the destination country, they have
quite distinct job preferences that lead to different patterns of incorporation.
I experienced the importance of the distinction between legalisation and
settlement aspirations when it comes to work in a conversation I had with
Lazzat from Uzbekistan. When we talked, he had just found out that his
application for regularisation had been denied, and he was contemplating
his next steps. He said, 'I am not sure what to do. I should either file a new
application for asylum or regularisation or I should start to look for a job.'
   Many legalisation migrants work part-time in order to cover their basic
needs and choose to spend the rest of their time searching for a marriage
partner and attending language courses. This does not mean that this choice
is always easy. Those who do not work may get bored and start to feel useless:

> It is black work … I do not take such risks in this life … that is danger-
> ous … every day. What if the police catch me? That is not good for
> my application. But do I still have a life like this? If I don't work it is
> good for my application but it is not good for my health … for my life
> (Alexandre, Congo).

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

> I never worked since I came to Belgium. I have been working voluntar-
> ily always [for an NGO] … Many undocumented people they are
> working in this country … but I don't want to associate myself with
> that system … because people go to rent documents you know they use

them to work, and by the time they get caught they end up in prison. Even when I was in Nigeria I have never been to prison you know. So I don't want to associate myself with when I have to rent a paper to work … when the control is there I am arrested and I end up my life in prison. And the worst thing that could happen to me is that they send me back to my country. You know, what is the use of my working? The best option that I have is to wait until I have my personal permission with my passport. Then I want to look for job … So these are the reasons why I don't want to run that risk, not that there are no people who do it but *I* don't want to do it.

Although legalisation migrants would rather not work, they are not all in a position where they can afford not to. Efunsegun lives with a Belgian family who supports him. Not all legalisation migrants are able to raise alternative sources of income, though. If they do need to work to gather or supplement their income, they work the minimum that is necessary. It is not the case that they can afford not to work and then make up a story about striving for legal papers around it. When I asked Efunsegun what he would do if he did not have this family to support him, he replied:

No, even if I was not with [this family] I never thought of doing it [informal work]. You say to somebody that you want to work and make money, this is a question of one or two of my friends they will rent a pass for me, but I will never do it you know.

Not working is thus his top priority because of the legalisation strategy he is pursuing. He is convinced he would find another way around working if he did not have the family to support him. It is likely that he would manage; after all he managed not to work for quite some time before he met the Belgian family. He is prepared to live with little. This is a sacrifice that he is willing to make in order to realise his aspirations.

   This does not mean that none of the legalisation migrants work, or that all unemployed irregular migrants aspire to become legalised. It only means that legalisation migrants prefer not to and consequently do it as little as possible if they can. I do not mean to say that no settlement migrants work more than 40 hours per week or that there are no investment migrants who work less than that. The point is that their aspirations lead them to have certain preferences regarding work. Some of them manage to realise the work situation that they prefer, others do not. If one wants to understand the patterns of functional incorporation of irregular migrants, one has to

consider their aspirations, as functional incorporation patterns are partially explained by aspirations. This applies not only to hours worked, but also to the type of employment they engage in and the extent to which they feel exploited. These issues are discussed in the next sections.

6.3.2   Type of work

It is commonly held – in both Europe and the US – that irregular migrant men work in economic sectors like agriculture and horticulture, construction, garment manufacturing, food processing and hotels and restaurants (Ambrosini 2001; Anderson 1999; Burgers 1998; Engbersen et al. 2002; Samers 2001), whereas women tend to work as housekeepers or as caregivers in private households (Leman 1997; Triandafyllidou & Kosic 2006). This latter is not generally regarded to be a matter of choice or preference. Rather, these are considered to be the only jobs available to irregular migrant women (Kosic & Triandafyllidou 2004; Raijman et al. 2003). Like other scholars, I found that women work almost exclusively in the domestic sector, cleaning or babysitting. They did not work in horticulture or construction as men did. However, it was not that they could not find jobs other than domestic work; these women actually preferred to work in this sector. Furthermore, whereas other researchers found domestic work to be the exclusive domain of women, I found that many men with settlement or legalisation aspirations did and preferred doing domestic work as well.

As said before, some legalisation migrants have to work some hours to be able to sustain themselves, though they would prefer not to engage in informal employment. In these cases they try to work in jobs where they have the least chance of government controls:

> I can work there in the church or in the house, in somebody's house. In someone's house, not outside but inside. If I enter a house like I have entered yours, if someone invites me, like, for example, if you would have an acquaintance I could come there and I clean, then I am done and they give me € 20. And then I come back next week for example. Then there is nobody who sees me because it is inside the house. And if somebody comes by they can say that I am a friend … I do not want to work in things like construction. I have my family here and moreover if they expel me today to Kinshasa I know that there will be people waiting for me at the airport. They will arrest me right there at the airport. So I try, even though I suffer, I try to respect the Belgian law a bit (Albert, Congo).

Private households are thus perceived as a much safer place to work than, for example, construction sites (see also Cyrus & Vogel 2006). This does not imply that only legalisation migrants want to work for private households. Migrants with other types of aspirations are also concerned with their safety. Andrei from Moldova – who has had settlement aspirations for quite some time – has always preferred to work in private households. He said, 'I have never worked for a company. I have avoided it all the time because at big companies all the time the process of control is much bigger than in the case I work for private people.' Settlement and legalisation migrants thus prefer to work for private households, as domestic workers, handymen, gardeners or babysitters.

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

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

Furthermore, settlement and legalisation migrants prefer to work for private households because this way, they usually work for several employers. As a result, if one employer does not treat them well or if an employer fires them, they do not lose their entire income. And if they get a new job

offer, they can more easily take a chance and try it out, as enough other jobs remain if it does not work out. They are therefore in a less vulnerable position than those who depend on one employer. Moreover, work for private households provides legalisation migrants the possibility of working part-time. Such opportunities are generally unavailable in horticulture, construction and restaurants.

Settlement and legalisation migrants also said they prefer to work for Belgian and Dutch private households because they paid the best and exploited irregular migrants least. Private Dutch or Belgian households pay between € 7 and € 15 per hour. My respondents agree that it is best to work for Belgians or Dutch people and not for other immigrants, including their own kind. Diego, for example, said, 'Honestly, foreigners don't pay well. To work for our own people always complicates things.' According to Constanza, from Bolivia,

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

Marouane said he preferred to work for Belgians because they paid € 50 per day, while a Moroccan or a Turkish employer paid only half. Valentina said,

> I only work for Belgians ... If this person is not Belgian, they don't pay you and, well Belgians are the best, they are honest people and the majority shows much consideration. They treat the persons who work for them as a normal person, you understand. The Belgians here do that.

These results run contrary to what is generally assumed. Many scholars find that migrants who can turn to co-ethnics in search of a job are better off than those who cannot (Burgers & Engbersen 1999; Leerkes et al. 2004; Van der Leun 2003b). Engbersen et al. (2002), for example, find that Turkish

and Chinese migrants have the highest employment rates because they can work for co-ethnic businesses. They further write that as Somali migrants lack ethnic entrepreneurship, they have to go outside their own community to find work, which, according to the authors, leads to many problems. In fact, many of my respondents preferred not to work for co-ethnics because they believed them to pay the least and to not always treat their employees correctly. My respondents therefore consciously turned to employment possibilities outside of their own communities. It seems that although the presence of co-ethnics may help irregular migrants in finding some kind of employment, working for Belgian or Dutch individual households guarantees the least exploitative conditions.

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

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

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

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

> Because for them in their country a euro is worth a lot, so they have the capacity to earn less and to go and invest that in their country so it is more convenient for them to be here and even though they earn less, the money multiplies there. We to the contrary do not have other possibilities … what we earn here is what we invest here, in this place itself. And this is the difference, because everything is very expensive here so we can't say all right we are going to earn € 6 per hour because I have to live from that and that is not possible with this amount. What happens is that they earn this because in their country this money is worth a lot, it is worth four times more than what it is here. So well, they charge less.

All in all, investment migrants work in the sectors that are traditionally associated with the informal labour of irregular migrants: horticulture, construction, personal services and restaurants. They usually have few problems with the working conditions there. Settlement and legalisation migrants, on the contrary, prefer not to work under such conditions, which attracts them to private households. Sometimes they do not manage to find anything else, and so they are forced to work in sectors where mostly investment migrants work and in which they feel exploited. They do normally manage to find work there, as the demand for workers is high. Most respondents say that if you want work it is not difficult to find, but it depends on the conditions and the pay you are willing to accept.

> People who say they can't find work in Holland, [on the] first day I say, good you don't have it, [on the] next day I give him advice. [On the] next day, [if] he says 'I don't have it', I say 'sorry you are an idiot, be gone, … I am a thousand percent, not hundred but thousand percent sure that if a person really likes to have work in the Netherlands, he has it in maximum three days (Andrei, Moldovia).

> To find work I just go to an employment agency. Here in The Hague
> there are many employment agencies. There used to be a lot of them,
> now there are fewer. Or you go to coffeehouses or to restaurants
> to ask for a job, to find work. It is not a problem, you can find work
> everywhere (Üsko, Turkey).

Marouane, from Morocco, said, '[I]t is very easy [to find a job] but they
don't pay well … [Brussels] is the easiest city in Europe, for finding a job.'
The problem is thus not so much to find work, but to find a job that fits
the aspirations of the migrant in question. And in this case, investment
migrants have an advantage as they are less demanding.

Recent changes

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

migrants are losing their competitive edge, because they cannot work under semi-formal arrangements (Iskander 2000). This means that Dembah is now less attractive to his employer. He demands more pay than investment migrants do. He can only work informally, and he only wants to work when he needs money. When he has enough, he quits and leaves it to the employer to find a replacement. Due to the developments outlined, it is becoming more difficult for settlement and legalisation migrants to work in jobs that investment migrants generally do.

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

A consequence of this sectoral shift to private households is that it is becoming more difficult for settlement and legalisation migrant men to find work than for women. Although some men also do cleaning work for private households, this sector is still dominated by women. This is likely to continue, as domestic work is traditionally labelled as women's labour. Men therefore usually work for Dutch or Belgian households as handymen, a job for which specific skills are required (see chapter 9). These jobs

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

6.3.3   Exploitation

According to Samers (2001), both social scientists and the media tend to focus on sensationalist stories of irregular migrants and their unscrupulous employers. Indeed, many scholars focus on the vulnerable situation that irregular migrants find themselves in vis-à-vis their employers (see, e.g., Adam et al. 2002; Anderson 2001; Anderson 1999; Devillé 2008; Kosic & Triandafyllidou 2004). Because of their lack of a legal status, irregular migrants are assumed to work under difficult conditions for low salaries and that they are powerless to do anything about it. Many of my respondents confirmed this situation: their position was very vulnerable and it was difficult for them to fight any injustice done to them. At the same time, only a few of my respondents indicated they had been maltreated themselves. The cases where this had happened were sometimes shocking and understandably food for sensationalist stories. Vincente, from Guatemala, for example, explained how his own family members had taken advantage of him:

> When I came here, I started to work on the second day. But I had bad luck ... I worked for almost a year and I was never paid. With my own family ... it was my brother-in-law ... it is a little difficult to explain but I lived in his house. And he said I will pay you, for example, € 80 or € 70 for a day of work, 10 for the food, 15 for the food, and the rest is for you. And because I was living in his house and everything, I said well, I am going to work hard and I believed them, I believed that they would carry out their word, but they did not, in the end they never paid me anything.

Like Vincente, persons who have been maltreated usually say that this was a one-time event at the start of their migrant career which taught them to be more cautious. Obviously, Vicente's experience made him extremely aware of his vulnerable situation. Dembah, who is from Guinea, could talk for hours about his precarious situation and how employers take advantage of his vulnerability, yet his personal experiences in this respect were limited:

> [T]hose Arabs they profit from me because they know about my situation. Sometimes if you go work for them you really have to be [hits with his fist on the table] otherwise you won't get your money … for example, I used to have some acquaintances with an employment agency that let me work for three weeks and then they did not pay me … but when I said [hits with hand on the table] I want my money, he paid it straight away.

When I asked him how often this had happened to him he said, 'Well just this one time with this Turk.' Usually I received an answer like the one Antonia, from Ecuador, gave me:

> Thank God it never happened to me that they did not pay me. Because I have heard about people who don't pay, it happens to many people when they come … I had bad experiences with one man but since I left him, everybody pays me and they are very nice.

Tarek, from Algeria, said, 'It has never happened that they did not pay me. They always give you your money. If you work you can even ask for an advance.' Arshan, from Iran, told me that he once worked a whole night for only one euro per hour. He said that ever since this happened he makes sure he negotiates his salary before he starts the work and he has not encountered such problems since.

Although there are a lot of stories about maltreatment in the literature, most of my respondents indicated they had not suffered from it, and when they had it was only at the start of their stay. Most migrants find ways to guard themselves against misbehaviour by employers. Constanza, from Bolivia, for example, said, '[O]nly the new people [are abused] because the other people already know many things so they don't let themselves be abused.' She further explained that irregular migrants talk amongst one another about the reputation of employers to make sure they do not work for abusive employers. For new employers there is obviously no such information. Constanza explained how employers are tested in such cases:

> You have to try the first month and evaluate if it is a good person or if
> they are going to pay you well or if it is punctual … the bosses make us
> go through a test, a trial to see if you know how to clean, how to cook,
> how to iron, etcetera etcetera. After you have gone through all these
> tests you also have the right to ask them when they are going to pay
> you, the data, and how, and also to know your rights … you find this
> security to be able to talk like this, this freedom to really say ok I want
> you to pay me every first of the month, I want to have a holiday, I want
> to have a subscription for public transport, many details.

A problem with determining the extent to which irregular migrants are
exploited is that exploitation is experienced differently. Other scholars
also report difficulties in determining exploitation (see, e.g., Triandafyl-
lidou & Kosic 2006). Düvell and Jordan (2006: 61) found many differences
in perceptions of exploitation, but were not able to explain them: 'Some
emphasised their success. Others would not even complain about low
wages or obvious exploitation … Others critically reflected on the humili-
ating conditions and their rank in the social hierarchy and admitted to
themselves that they had moved downwards socially.' Anderson (1999: 49)
remarked that some of his respondents 'looked back on their employment,
despite harshness of conditions, low pay and the attendant uncertainties
more positively than one would expect'. He further writes, 'The perception
of a job as lowly or exploitative at the objective level may not be felt by
an undocumented person in the same way subjectively' (ibid.: 44). One
therefore cannot compare subjective experiences and then make objective
statements about them. What can be done is to attempt to understand
where these different perceptions come from by bringing aspirations into
the analysis.

I noted that divergent perceptions of objectively similar circumstances
have a lot to do with aspirations. For example, investment migrants hardly
ever experience exploitation, whereas legalisation migrants usually im-
mediately emphasise the exploitative conditions under which they work.
Houssine, from Morocco, for example, aspires to become legalised:

> I work two days a week in the black [off the books] and I earn € 50
> per day. Everybody profits from the people without papers. And you
> know why? Because he knows that if you give € 50 to someone without
> papers he is happy with it … Black work is not good. Why? Because
> with black work it is the boss who profits. He profits a lot. And why
> does he profit? Because you work without papers.

Houssine works an eight-hour shift in a restaurant for the € 50 he earns per day. Investment migrants usually work for much less without complaint. Furthermore, Houssine indicated that he was always paid on time and that his employers treated him well. Yet he kept stressing that his employer profited from him. It seemed to be the unequal relationship that bothered him and made him feel exploited more than the actual treatment he received. In the same vein, settlement and legalisation migrants who have to work in jobs that investment migrants typically do report high levels of dissatisfaction and perceptions of exploitation. Legalisation migrants especially complain of exploitation, as this is bound up with their aspirations. Recall legalisation migrant Dnari, from Sierra Leone, who said, 'I didn't go to Europe and stop here to do illegal work, that is no use.' Whereas settlement migrants come to Europe to work informally, legalisation migrants do not want to work informally. Settlement migrants may be dissatisfied with their job because it does not allow them to live a regular life or because it does not pay well, but for legalisation migrants their rejection of informal labour is much more fundamental. Exactly the same job is thus experienced differently by migrants with different aspirations.

6.3.4   Differences between Belgium and the Netherlands

The previous sections suggest that the types of jobs irregular migrants do can be explained by both irregular migrants' aspirations as well as the opportunities they have. The aspirations of investment migrants prompt them to choose to work as much as they can, taking sometimes exploitative conditions for granted, whereas the aspirations of settlement and legalisation migrants lead them to prefer work within private households. However, their opportunity structures mean that not all irregular migrants manage to get the jobs they want. Many investment migrants work for co-ethnics as a result of their opportunity structure, as these are the only people they associate with. Other scholars have found that irregular migrant workers are specialised by nationality as well (Glytsos 2005). This was also sometimes the case among my respondents. However, I found that although many irregular migrants work for co-ethnics, this does not stem from preference. If they have a choice, many actually choose not to work for co-ethnics. But some just do not have the opportunities to work for people other than their own.

Table 6.2 summarises the main findings regarding employment patterns and aspirations.

Table 6.2   Employment patterns per type of aspiration

	Investment	Settlement	Legalisation Procedures	Legalisation Marriage
Employment				
Work hours	As many as possible	Regular	As little as possible	As little as possible
Type of work	'Typical' ir-regular migrant sectors	In native private households	In native private households	In private house-holds and ethnic businesses
Perception of exploitation	No perception of exploitation	Certain types of work	Fundamental	Fundamental

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

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

anymore. It has become less in Belgium as well but there is still more here than in the Netherlands.'

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

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

6.4   Other sources of income and assistance

Besides engaging in informal employment, irregular migrants can obtain resources from the social networks in which they are embedded or by means of criminal activities (Van der Leun & Kloosterman 2006). Scholars in the Netherlands and Belgium have carefully studied the involvement of irregular migrants in crime (see, e.g., De Boom, Engbersen & Leerkes 2006; Engbersen & Van der Leun 2001, 1998, 1995; Engbersen et al. 2007; Leerkes 2009, 2007; Leerkes & Bernasco 2007; Leerkes et al. 2004; Van der Leun 1999, 2003a; Van Meeteren et al. 2008). As the focus of the current research was not on criminal activities, I do not elaborate on this topic here. The current research did look at the resources irregular migrants derive from their social networks, in other words, from the gift and barter economy (Van der Leun & Kloosterman 2006). Earlier in this book, I offered a theoretical critique of current research

practice involving the study of social networks and the social capital embedded in these networks. I now return to some of the points mentioned there. Doing so demonstrates the downsides of current research practice, as well as the insights gained by an approach that takes aspirations as a central focus.

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

6.4.1   The gift and barter economy

Irregular migrants mobilise support from the social networks in which they are embedded. This support is often referred to as social capital. Not all social capital supplied by networks is support. Social networks can supply other resources as well. Briggs (1998) conceptualises two types of social capital available in social networks: social leverage and social support. Social leverage helps people to 'get ahead', whereas social support helps people to 'get by' or cope (Briggs 1998: 178). Social leverage can help people to realise their aspirations, while social support ensures that migrants' basic needs are met. I conceptualised functional incorporation as relating to the way irregular migrants sustain themselves. This section therefore deals with the social *support* migrants derive from the social networks they are embedded in, leaving the role of social *leverage* in the realisation of aspirations to be discussed later in this book.

What is striking in the analysis of the support my respondents receive is that many investment and settlement migrants needed little support to sustain themselves and they received little of it. These migrants generated most of their resources from employment and needed support only if they were temporarily unemployed or in case of unforeseen circumstances. Whereas

they did rely on their social network for information about where they could receive health care and how to find jobs, they were largely self-sustaining, only occasionally needing to supplement their income from labour. When I asked Martina, from Bolivia, who helps her if she does not have money or work, she replied, 'I have always had work, and health. The first six months have been critical … I had some reserves; I made sure I did not spend much.' As Martina indicated, investment and settlement migrants mostly need support when they arrive and do not yet have a job. Once they have obtained employment they only occasionally need additional income sources.

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

Having established that different types of irregular migrants have different needs, the question is how do they get support, and from whom. Most scholars look within ethnic communities as a source of support. As pointed out earlier in this book, many scholars equate social networks with ethnic networks, or ethnic community networks, meaning that they look for sources of assistance within the ethnic community of the migrant in question, overlooking other possibilities. Their focus is on community structures in specific localities. Whereas others consider the ethnic community to be the most important source of support for irregular migrants, I found that this is certainly not the case for irregular migrants in general, but only for specific categories of migrants. My results indicate that migrants with different aspirations draw support from different sources. The most important sources are family relations, 'ethnic community' relations, relations with natives and support from organisations.

Family support

If respondents have family in the host country they receive help from them, regardless of the type of aspirations they have. Family receives them, provides a roof over their head, food on the table, and sometimes even gives the newcomers pocket money until they are able to find a job and sustain themselves independently. Support from family is generally all-encompassing and unconditional in the initial period. However, family members seldom want to provide all-encompassing support forever. After a while, migrants have to be able to settle down on their own, return with enough savings or become legalised so they can live independently. Once migrants live independently, they can always turn to family in case of a temporary setback, but they cannot expect to be fully taken care of forever.

> My family here helps me. They do the little that they can. They help me but they cannot sustain me, they also have their own obligations and they also don't earn much ... But yes, if I have a problem I go to one of them and they help me. But it is like this that they can't sustain me and my two sons, that they can't do (Catalina, Colombia).

Of all three categories, legalisation migrants who are involved in procedures receive the least family support. This is not because their family refuses to help them, but because they seldom have family residing in the country. When they do, these family members usually do try to support them until they receive papers.

All in all, people who can generate support from family members are relatively better off because family relationships allow for all-encompassing support. The closer the family relation the more valuable and the more easily obtained the support tends to be. Tarek, from Algeria, said, 'Help starts with the family ... support starts with those who are closest to you, if you have a brother or sister you start with them.' However, the support migrants receive from their family members should not be seen as support from the ethnic community. That they receive support from family does not mean they associate with, let alone receive help from, their co-ethnics.

> We have cousins and aunts here. The aunts are married to Belgians, and they have children here and they are already Belgians. And from this family we get support ... Normally with the Latinos here in Belgium I don't have a lot of contact (Fernando, Chile).

Systems of social solidarity

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

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

These social solidarity systems are open only to people who contribute to them. As a result, legalisation migrants, whose aspirations mean that they usually receive more than they contribute, have limited access to such systems. In addition, only people who are what my respondents call 'serious' have access. Marouane, from Morocco, explained these systems as follows: '[W]hen you are not serious … he will say he does not have anything, even though he has money. If you are not serious they won't give you [anything]. If you are serious, you can have whatever you want.' According to Tuyishime, from Rwanda, 'Serious means if you are correct … Masja, if you give me € 50, I will give it back on Friday. When it is Friday I give it. That is correct.' When I asked Marouane what serious means and how you can determine if someone is serious he said,

> There is no measure for it, it is like this, if you search for someone, you say to your friends that you need someone to live with you, but only if he is honest, so he will search for someone that he knows who is honest so he can say, this person here is serious, I vouch for him. Like that … [M]e I am also serious but I can't tell you that I am serious.

Marouane explains that other people have to vouch for a migrant's honesty to get access to social solidarity systems. These thus function based on trust. This means that in order to partake in social solidarity systems a migrant needs other participants who can vouch for them, and they need to pay the money back as promised. Otherwise they will be excluded from the system, as they will no longer be considered 'serious'.

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

Irregular migrants who fail to invest in social solidarity systems do not get access to these when they need help. They therefore run the risk of ending up in the streets. I met an irregular migrant who was denied access when he needed it because he previously kept all the money he earned to himself. I met him at a shelter where he came every day to eat soup and take a shower. He explained to me how he ended up there:

> I have worked a lot, like I told you almost five years; I put it all in
> the casino … if I had € 1,000, I played the whole day in the casino,
> try this, play that and then the money was gone … [A]ll the illegal
> people I know who come here are addicted to gambling too. They have
> all worked here for years but have destroyed their lives because of

gambling ... now people think that I am a junky ... nobody trusts me to
help me for money and all that (Adil, Morocco).

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

Who makes up these social solidarity systems then? Tarek is from
Algeria, but he says the system he partakes in is comprised not only of
Algerians but also includes other North Africans, like Moroccans, Tunisians
and Egyptians. One might be inclined to put a 'North African' or 'Arabic
speaking' label on it. But it is not that straightforward. Albert, from Congo,
explained that although Africans help each other, you cannot speak of an
African community:

[F]or us Africans, those who are here ... in Europe ... there is solidarity
among us, but it depends from person to person. Like you, you are
European, but you would never say that all Europeans have solidarity.
You would never say that among all Belgians or Dutch people there is
solidarity. There are always people ... that you do not want to help.

To Albert, no ethnic community of Africans exists. Not only are many ethnic
groups too large in numbers to form a single community, communities are
not necessarily formed on the basis of shared ethnic background. They can
be based on social boundaries like class as well (see Al-Ali 2002; Baumann
1996). Fernando, for example, does not want to have anything to do with the
Chileans who migrated decades before he did, because they are culturally
different:

I have more contacts with Belgians, or with people from outside
[Chile] ... [D]uring the time Pinochet ruled the country, many people
left abroad and during this time all kinds of people arrived here,
also people who were not very well prepared culturally, who had not
studied, nothing ... It is a very big change for people who don't have

much education. So they arrived in a country where they did not know the language or the customs.

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

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

It is not only the migrants of a higher class who indicate that they have such problems. Tuyishime had problems with other migrants from Rwanda because he is low class:

> In the beginning I lived together with other Rwandans. But there was a problem with us living together, their mentality was not the same as mine. In Rwanda, me I worked with my hands, while this man here had worked as an official, and it is not the same mentality, so [we could not] live together.

Hence, ethnic communities like 'the African', 'the Latin American' or 'the Bengali' do not exist. While some irregular migrants do not feel they belong to a community at all, others have a sense of community based on social markers that are meaningful to them and do not necessarily include ethnicity. These communities of solidarity are not always only comprised of people

with the same ethnic background, but they sometimes transcend ethnic boundaries. Furthermore, if an individual has a certain ethnic background, she or he does not necessarily belong to a social solidarity system.

Many of these communities are made up of a mix of both regular and irregular migrants. However, regular migrants often stop participating after a while, as they know they put more in than they get out. This is especially true for migrants whose 'community' consists of relatively few regular migrants. Many irregular migrants complain of their regular compatriots whose solidarity ends once they receive papers.

> Those with papers don't help us ... We ourselves, those without papers, we help ourselves. You have to give those who need it a helping hand. But the persons who have papers, no, they know what life without papers is like ... because at one point they did not have papers either, but well, that is life ... [W]hen it is family yes there is help but when it is someone else no ... [They] change here once they have papers ... some change slowly and others change radically. But they all change (Ignacio, Chile).

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

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

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

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

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

> I am fed up with it … He is too old. He will be spending the rest of his
> life washing dishes if he gets papers. Lately I think that he should go
> back. It seems that his girlfriend in Bangladesh is making good money
> and also his brothers all have university degrees. But he says he does
> not want his family to support him, and this is what hurts, because he
> does not want to accept their support but he has no problem accepting
> mine. And this I don't understand. … There are many things that I

> don't understand. I have many doubts but I give him the benefit of the
> doubt. He is a good man in his heart and I made the promise to him
> that I would help him, and I am keeping that promise.

Marlies's support enables Warsi to refrain from work as he desires. For most legalisation migrants, the support they get from people outside of their own community is less all-encompassing. Other legalisation migrants with procedures have to seek resources from multiple sources every day while they wait for the outcome of their procedures.

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

6.4.2   Formal and informal support from organisations

Research usually finds that irregular migrants receive limited or no resources from governmental organisations (Mahler 1995; Massey et al. 1987; Paspalanova 2006; Van der Leun 2003b; Van der Leun & Kloosterman 1999; Van Nieuwenhuyze 2009). Only informal help provided by organisations is believed to be within their reach. Moreover, the informal support they receive is considered to be insignificant compared to the resources irregular migrants generate from the informal economy. However, although the total amount of informal support provided by organisations is limited, I found that it can be of crucial importance to some migrants. While most irregular migrants receive no support from organisations, for those who do it is vital. Here again, my analysis revealed that in order to understand variation in the amount and type of support that irregular migrants receive, it is important to take aspirations into account.

Investment migrants practically never receive support from organisations. They often even refrain from using formal medical care systems, arranging for medical assistance on their own instead. They may either consult a doctor who caters specifically to irregular migrants or simply pay for medical services they receive. Turkish migrant Mehmet, who works for a removal company, said, 'I have problems with my back. I have been to a physiotherapist, a Moroccan. He showed me how I should lift things from now on and he massaged my back. I paid him € 50 for it.' When I asked Diego, from Chile, what he does when he falls ill, he responded, 'Well it has not happened yet, well a couple of times but nothing heavy ... With this you have to be a little intelligent.' When I subsequently asked if he knew that he was entitled to urgent medical care he said, 'Yes, that is what they say. Many people tell me to get this paper ... I don't do it because I have an aversion to it.' Paspalanova (2006) also found that temporary migrants do not use state support, and Leman (1997) notes that temporary migrants do not expect the destination state to come to their assistance in case of difficulties or illnesses. Migrants with investment aspirations have come to make money and return; they do not want to depend on state support.

In contrast, legalisation migrants who are involved in procedures receive a lot of support from organisations and for a long period of time. In Belgium, failed asylum seekers who have filed a final appeal are entitled to government support. In practice, this means they are allowed to continue to live at the asylum centre, receive full room and board and a limited amount of pocket money. Some of my respondents lived in such a situation and could fully support themselves that way. In other cases, failed asylum seekers who have filed an appeal continued to live in the house they lived in during their asylum procedure while they receive welfare benefits:

> When we just arrived [five years ago] we asked for asylum, political asylum but the answer was immediately negative because our country [Ecuador] is considered a country without political refugees. So it was almost directly that our asylum was denied ... until now they have not cut off the help, we still have the help from the [social services] because we are now in the final stage with the [name of the court] (Benjamin, Ecuador).

In Belgium, the benefits irregular migrants get are equivalent to what Belgian citizens receive if they have no other means to sustain themselves. However, most respondents indicate that they supplement their welfare benefits, usually by means of material support like food and clothes. If

irregular migrants receive welfare benefits, they usually perceive these to be too little to live on. At the same time, it is usually the most substantial support irregular migrants are able to generate.

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

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

The bulk of irregular migrants do not have access to this type of support. At the same time, like direct government support, it is the most substantial form of organisational support some irregular migrants are entitled to.

Some organisations provide not only governmental or semi-governmental support, but they also supply informal help to irregular migrants. For some, the informal support they receive from organisations is their most important resource. Alexandre, from Congo, said, 'Without all these organisations I don't think that life would be possible. My life here without papers would not be possible.' Although for some migrants the informal support they receive from organisations is their most important source of income, only a very few irregular migrants receive enough support to fully sustain themselves with these means only.

Furthermore, organisations adopt different criteria for the provision of different types of support, which renders distinct forms of support

unequally accessible. For irregular migrants to be eligible for financial support, they usually need to have what social workers call 'a perspective'. A migrant is considered to have a perspective if he or she is likely to become legalised, if he or she wants to return to the country of origin, or if he or she wants to go to some other country. Martijn, a social worker from an organisation, explains:

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

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

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

Because most organisations use the perspective of migrants as a criterion for the provision of financial help, settlement and investment migrants do not get it. What they can occasionally get is material support from organisations. However, this is usually only provided at the beginning of their stay and certainly not structurally.

> In the beginning when we did not have work we signed up at [an organisation]. Every Tuesday we went there and they gave us food. They gave us food, they gave us clothes for the children, and also [another organisation] gave social help. To one we went on Monday and Thurs-

day and to the other on Tuesday, and they gave us food for the whole
week, cornflakes, milk, chicken. Because of these organisations we had
no problems in the beginning because we always had food to eat. But
after a year they said that we were now here long enough to know how
to depend on ourselves, and that there are many people who also have
needs and who have just arrived (Isidora, Ecuador).

Organisations do not usually provide material help to irregular migrants
in a structural way, which is why settlement and investment migrants
are supported by them only intermittently, usually at the beginning of
their stay. While organisations do not structurally provide material help
to settlement and investment migrants, they do always provide them with
advice, for example, about how to get medical care.

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

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

As indicated before, a share of respondents with legalisation aspirations
try to find someone to marry. While some of them may think they have
a good chance of realising this ambition, organisations do not consider
this to be 'a perspective' on the basis of which they are willing to provide
support. Organisations therefore mostly treat legalisation migrants who
are not involved in procedures as settlement or investment migrants. Vera,
who works for an organisation, said, 'If they want to stay here 20 years until
they find a husband that is their decision ... But then they have to be able to
manage on their own, and then they should not be here every day.'

Even though the informal support provided by organisations to legalisa-
tion migrants with a perspective is limited, support accumulates because
migrants tend to shop around. Most legalisation migrants involved in
procedures receive help from multiple organisations for food, clothes and
cheap shopping.

I have a card from [organisation *A*], they help me a little ... [Organisa-
tion *B*,] they also give a package of food once every two weeks ... And

with [organisation *A*] I also have this card for clothes … and this shop [at organisation *C*] is very good … Now, for example, I have bought this schoolbag for ten cents, which is nothing. That is very good … once per month [organisation *A*] pays € 10 for us [to shop at organisation *C*].

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

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

Nawang, from Nepal, also combines support from organisations with help from his personal network of friends: 'My friends pay for the rent, I just sleep … But for the eating, you know you have [this organisation], I went every week there, they give me food … they are helping me to buy food.' Like Alexandre, Nawang manages to secure his basic needs through his personal network and by means of support from an organisation. In other words, he combines the social capital from his personal network with the support he receives from an organisation. In addition, Nawang has savings from his time as a settlement migrant, and he manages to live on this combination of resources. Although he has a modest existence, he accepts it, as he knows it is only temporary, until he receives papers or returns to his country. He proudly said to me, 'Before I was drinking, spending € 50, € 60 sometimes € 100 per day, but now € 200 for a month and I don't drink anything.'

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

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

The finding that aspirations are crucial in the ability to access support from organisations runs counter to the commonly held belief that as migrants accumulate time and experience, they become better acquainted with the host country's institutions (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994). Length of stay may be interpreted as having something to do with such support, because many legalisation migrants have a long length of stay, especially compared to investment migrants. However, my analysis revealed that it is not length of stay that shapes these patterns, but specific aspirations. For settlement migrants, their length of stay is actually negatively correlated with their chances of accessing support from organisations. These findings are summarised in table 6.3.

Table 6.3   Other sources of income per type of aspiration

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

One might wonder whether there are major differences between Belgium and the Netherlands in the extent to which irregular migrants manage to access support from organisations. Apart from the formal support that irregular migrants receive from governmental or semi-governmental initiatives, support seemed similarly accessible in both Belgium and the Netherlands. In both countries, a migrant's perspective is the determining factor in whether they receive financial or long-term support. Emergency aid and incidental support are provided and accessed to about the same extent in both countries. The major difference is that in Belgium, organisations tend to provide this support more openly and are not afraid to talk about it, whereas organisations in the Netherlands tend to remain more secretive about it.

6.5   Changing aspirations

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

Employment, for example, constitutes an important instigator of change for investment migrants. Chavez (1998) claims that in some cases, having obtained a steady job becomes a major reason for temporary migrants to settle down instead of going back. I found the reverse to be true as well: investment migrants who fail to find a good job are forced to stay longer than they intended and end up settling down. Recall Martina, from Bolivia, who said, '[S]ix months without work, and then after eight months of work I still did not have the same amount of money that I arrived with. So [I stayed] a year more, and then another year more.'

Not having employment or not being able to work can also inspire migrants to change their settlement aspirations into legalisation aspirations.

> Look, I have been here for seven years. I have always worked but now I cannot work anymore because I am sick ... my neck is broken, this is the problem. And from the neck comes the problem with the arm and shoulder ... I make something between 1,000 and 1,500 every month. But because I don't have insurance, I pay cash for my physiotherapist. This means I work to have money for the physiotherapist. I give him

all my money, and the physiotherapist says you should not work
otherwise you don't solve your problem. So I am in a vicious circle you
understand (Andrei, Moldova).

For others, an unexpected event in their employment career more or less
forced them to change their aspirations. As with Andrei, Nawang's settle-
ment aspirations transformed into legalisation aspirations because he could
not work anymore. I knew him for a while before I interviewed him. When
we first met, this Nepali migrant was working full-time in a restaurant.
However, circumstances forced him to stop working. He explained, 'There
was a really big control. There were more than 20 policemen there ... [T]hey
arrested me and I was there for five hours with the police station. Only five
hours, I was lucky.' I subsequently asked him if he had been able to find
another job. He replied,

> No I don't want to work because already they arrested me this first
> time and at that time they said to me this is your first time ... that
> is why I let you go, if you do it a second time I send you back to your
> country if I find you doing illegal work. So I don't want to work. I don't
> want to go back to Nepal ... [I]f I want to work I can find work, sure,
> because I know all the restaurants and the catering people. I can work,
> they said ok you come at night, you come in the morning, early in the
> morning you work, just make a sauce for us, they are telling me like
> that ... I told them no, I am fighting for the paper now. Now my way is
> to get the paper now ... [S]o my way is this, I go this way, so I don't work
> black.

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

6.6   Aspirations and functional incorporation

This chapter examined some elements of the functional incorporation of
irregular migrants in Belgium and the Netherlands. I demonstrated how
bringing aspirations into the analysis can improve our understanding of

specific patterns of functional incorporation. Next to such issues as length of stay and the opportunity structure, aspirations underlie patterns of incorporation of irregular migrants in receiving societies. Distinct aspirations shape specific patterns of housing, employment, and other sources of income, as can be seen in table 6.4.

Table 6.4   Functional incorporation per type of aspiration

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

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

questions concerning *the* functional incorporation of irregular migrants *in general.*

The qualitative nature of my endeavour does not allow me to draw conclusions about the frequency of the patterns found. However, the strength of the analysis presented in this chapter lies not in the description or quantification of patterns of functional incorporation, but in the understanding provided of how these patterns are shaped. It thus sheds new light on existing findings. Following the grounded theory approach, this typology has been constructed 'not to provide a perfect description of an area, but to develop a theory that accounts for much of the relevant behaviour' (Glaser & Strauss [1967] 2006: 30). Table 6.4 therefore presents ideal-type relations.

The results suggest that overemphasising structure in the analysis obscures understanding of the fact that migrants act differently under similar circumstances because they have different aspirations. Incorporating aspirations into the analysis increases our insight and brings clarity to scholarly debates and divergent research outcomes. Whereas I provided a theoretical critique of current research practice earlier in this book, I have now empirically demonstrated its downsides as well the benefits that can be gained from an approach that focuses on aspirations.

7   Living Different Dreams (II)

Aspirations and social incorporation

7.1   Introduction

A striking feature of studies on irregular migrants is that little or no atten-
tion is paid to their social incorporation. Most studies bypass this theme
entirely, while others consider it to be of secondary importance. This lack of
attention is probably inspired by the implicit assumption in much research
that when migrants are busy 'surviving' there is little time for recreational
activities or maintaining social relations. Most studies which do deal with
the social aspects of irregular migrants' lives therefore portray images that
are in line with this 'survival perspective' discussed in chapter 2. They tell
stories of migrants who avoid public spaces, stay inside their houses, behind
locked doors and closed curtains, either too afraid to venture outside or
too tired from work to do so (see also Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994). Psimmenos
and Kassimati (2006: 153), for example, write about respondents who live
'in the shadows', who are confined to their house and who are 'afraid of the
public'. Likewise, Anderson (1999: 67) asserts that for irregular migrants 'free
time is in short supply', and 'largely devoted to recovering one's energies'
at home. Iosifides et al. (2007: 1,351) paint a similar picture, saying that
their respondents speak of the 'almost total unavailability of free time
and recreation' and that 'the majority of interviewees equate recreation
and free time with rest at home'. Another example stems from the work of
Schuster (2005), who claims that irregular migrants do not visit shops, cafés
or cinemas, but only visit markets to buy food every now and then. Likewise,
Ahmad (2008: 311) writes that irregular migrants are 'locked in an endless
cycle of work that confines them to a physical space of a few square meters
both at work … and at home'. In addition, Engbersen (1999a: 236) reports that
irregular migrants live their lives in 'geographically restricted areas', show
'immobile behaviour' and that many are 'chained to their home' Likewise,
Iosifides and King (1999: 226) report 'high levels of socio-spatial exclusion'.
In addition, according to Diouck (2000: 57) 'the life of an [irregular migrant]
is characterised by a daily struggle to escape police controls'.

Not only are irregular migrants believed to have few contacts, but the
contacts they have are thought to consist of a select group of people. As
irregular migrants are assumed to have little time for recreational activi-
ties and as being afraid to venture into public places, they are portrayed

as spending most of their time at home or visiting the houses of family or friends, the latter usually being other migrants. Chavez (1998) claims that irregular migrants' social contacts primarily consist of other irregular or regular migrants. Datta et al. (2007) and Hagan (1994) describe their respondents as primarily socialising with migrants with a similar ethnic background, preferably from the same town or region. It is not surprising then that Iosifides et al. (2007) remark that for most of their respondents, social contacts with (native) local residents 'are reduced to banalities such as saying simply "good morning" or "good evening".' Paspalanova (2006: 261) writes that her respondents displayed a lack of interest in 'establishing social contacts, learning the languages, or to become familiar with Belgian customs or to follow local news', which fits the picture as well. Moreover, she found that their contacts with the local population were strictly work-related. Likewise, Grzymala-Kazlowska (2005: 683) claims that although the migrants she interviewed 'develop economic links with the Belgian society, in general they are poorly integrated in socio-cultural terms'. Apart from work, time 'is usually spent with their own ethnic group' (ibid.).

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

At the same time a few scholars claim that the 'cocoon' metaphor is invalid. Hondagneu-Sotelo (1994: 173) writes:

> The cocoon image is misleading because it suggests that undocumented immigrants, especially women, live in suspended isolation, in a domestic capsule void of community. I began my fieldwork with some of these preconceptions, but they were quickly dispelled. Instead

> of socially inactive lives, I witnessed a good amount of informal
> sociability, participation in formal groups and organisations, and
> contact with various institutions and agencies. Instead of anonymity,
> I observed and experienced an environment where the intensive
> scrutiny of personal life from kin, friends, and acquaintances at times
> reached stifling levels.

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

In summary, the little scholarly attention that has been devoted to the social incorporation of irregular migrants paints a grim picture of social isolation and geographic immobility. A small group of researchers has objected to this image, describing the richness of the leisure activities their respondents undertook and the social contacts they maintained. The question that logically follows is 'how have such diverging pictures been shaped'. Why do some researchers find active social lives, while most emphasise migrants' inactivity? As in the previous chapters, this chapter argues and demonstrates that aspirations play a major role in shaping these divergent outcomes.

7.2   Leisure time

Investment migrants are in the destination country to make money with which to return to their country of origin. They therefore try to maximise work time and minimise free time. They do not strive for an active social life because this is not part of their aspirations:

> I came here to work, of course I can go out and be with someone
> but I know my place you understand. I can't go out, for example, all
> week to go dancing all night long. I have a certain place here and this
> behaviour does not serve me or my family (Diego, Chile).

As their focus is on working as much as they can, investment migrants are not keen on free time or holidays. When they return home they say they may enjoy a holiday, but not during their stay in the destination country.

When I asked Sofía, from Bolivia, how she spends her free time, she replied, 'I don't have free time ... I have half a day on Saturday and half a day on Sunday, so I only go to church and I go on the Internet and I make some calls and then the time is up.' When I asked Constanza, also from Bolivia, what she does if her employers go on holiday, she replied:

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

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

When investment migrants are not employed, they sit in tea houses or bars where subcontractors come to look for workers. This way they hope to find a new job as soon as possible. If investment migrants do have work, they also inevitably have some amount of free time on their hands. What is distinctive about investment migrants is that they try to minimise the amount of money they spend during this leisure time. They therefore usually stay at home to play cards and talk with their flatmates, like Mehmet, from Turkey, who said, 'I live together with five other Turks. We get along very well. We cook together sometimes; we associate with each other in our free time. We play card games at night.'

Unlike investment migrants, settlement migrants highly value their spare time, and they like to spend it outside of their home. Settlement migrants may also associate with their flatmates, but in contrast to invest-ment migrants they do not stay predominantly indoors. Gökdeniz, from Turkey, said, 'My flatmates who have been here in Belgium illegally for a longer period have introduced me to their circle of friends. We do all sorts of things together in the weekends, like playing sports or instruments.' As explained in the previous chapter, settlement migrants do not want to work all the time; they want leisure time as well. Recall Ignacio, from Chile, who was quoted saying that he had refused a job offer because it would deprive

him of too much spare time. Since settlement migrants highly value time
for recreational activities, I had many opportunities to spend their leisure
time with them. I had drinks with some of them, I went swimming with
others, and I made hundreds of strolls around a park or through a city
centre in their company. While enjoying such recreation they commented
on how often they came there and how much they liked it. This enabled
me not only to hear from them how they liked to spend their leisure time,
but also to see how they spent it in practice.

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

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

Migrants with legalisation aspirations value their leisure time differently
than those in the other two categories. Because they usually do not work or
do not work much, they have a lot of spare time, which makes leisure time
less desirable than it is to settlement migrants. Dnari, from Sierra Leone,
said that he didn't do anything special in his leisure time: '[E]very day the
same thing. Yes. That is why you can't say free time because free time is if, for
example, you do something and then if you don't do that, then you have free
time but I always have free time, always, every day.' Legalisation migrants
tell stories of how they hang around in different places all day. As they usu-

ally do not have a lot of money, they have to be picky about the places they visit. Önder, from Bulgaria, said, 'I mostly spend my time in coffeehouses and bars. I also frequent [an organisation] here in the neighbourhood. I sit there all day and I get the possibility to watch television and drink tea for free.' This means that although legalisation and settlement migrants may value leisure time more than investment migrants do because they want to live in the destination country, they appreciate it differently. Furthermore, the way they spend their free time in daily life is very distinct as well.

Legalisation migrants who are involved in procedures spend a lot of their free time calling in at organisations for a chat, social support, to do voluntary work or to take part in some of the activities they organise.

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

Legalisation migrants who are involved in procedures hang around at organisations all day, as these offer a range of social and recreational activities for free. Furthermore, as became clear in the previous chapter, organisations also supply social support to legalisation migrants who are involved in procedures. In exchange they often work there as volunteers. This keeps them busy, and it allows them to return a favour.

However, there is another reason why legalisation migrants who are involved in procedures frequent organisations, take part in their activities and work there. Dakarai, from Mauritania, explained:

> I work also for [an organisation] because if I come here and I do nothing it would not be good for my application [for regularisation], and I would have nothing to do. If I don't have work and don't go to school, even if they don't pay me a lot, or if they pay me nothing, I have something to do in my life. To do something, to have people, and maybe it is also good for my integration.

It becomes clear from Dakarai's statement that apart from keeping themselves busy, legalisation migrants involved in procedures do things with

and for organisations because they think it helps their integration. It looks good on their application and therefore increases their odds of legalisation.

In contrast, legalisation migrants who aim to get married do not hang around organisations all day. As became clear in the previous chapter, organisations do not welcome these irregular migrants since they do not have 'a perspective'. But it is also not in the interest of this category of irregular migrants to go there, because this is not a good place to meet a partner to marry. They do not stay indoors like investment migrants, but go out a lot in order to meet potential partners. When I asked Marouane, from Morocco, how he aimed to find a woman to marry, he said, '[Y]ou have to go out a lot, you have to meet people. You have to flirt with women … Life for a person without papers is not only about working. You have to go out as well.' In fact, as we will see in chapter 9, going out a lot is a successful strategy for those with this type of aspiration. Legalisation migrant men who have no money to visit discos and bars stand on street corners and in front of bars and tea houses, flirting with women passing by. Before I started my fieldwork, I tended to ignore such approaches. During my fieldwork I developed the habit of responding to these attempts by engaging in small talk with these men. Without exception, these all turned out to be irregular migrants with aspirations to become legalised. I did not encounter any irregular migrant women who openly flirted with men passing by in order to find someone to marry. If so, they would probably be arrested for soliciting. There are, of course, differences in terms of precisely how irregular migrants try to find someone to marry between men and women, and between irregular migrants of different cultures. I made no systematic study of these differences. What they do have in common is that they go to places where they can meet a partner, be it a street corner, church, private party or disco.

Irregular migrants with different aspirations experience and spend their leisure time differently. Furthermore, aspirations underlie different patterns of geographic mobility. Many settlement migrants have visited other cities and even crossed national borders. Much to my surprise, many of my respondents in Belgium proudly proclaimed to have visited the Netherlands. Fernando, from Chile, told me about the places he had visited:

> Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Breda, Roosendaal, Vlissingen, Den Bosch … I know more in Holland than in Belgium … In Belgium, Leuven, Ardennen, Rouen … Brussels … Brugge yes I also know that and Zeebrugge, the beach. On the Belgian coast I only know Zeebrugge and in Holland Vlissingen.

Martina, from Bolivia, did the same: 'I got to know Antwerp. We went to Oostende, Ghent, Brugge. We also went to Paris.' Since settlement migrants want to stay permanently in the destination country, they want to get to know the country. Furthermore, they are often very interested in Western Europe and keen on visiting famous cities in the surrounding countries. As the internal borders of the European Union are not heavily controlled, they are not afraid to try. But there are obviously limitations to travel as expressed by Isidora, from Ecuador:

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

These accounts stand in sharp contrast to the immobility of investment migrants who see no need to venture beyond the safety of their home and their job location. However, it is not fear of the police that leads them to stay indoors. They stay put as a result of their aspirations. Constanza, from Bolivia, explained that she did not travel or go out because of her economic priorities:

> I don't know anything else apart from Brussels, I haven't gone to another place ... they say that in other places they have very beautiful parts but I don't know them ... I don't go to discotheques, I don't go to public places, I don't go to such places, and it is not because of fear of the police, I just don't like to go there. If I make € 50 after working for a day for eight hours, € 50 and to go there would cost me minimum € 50, for one night. So I don't do that ... And that applies to many things [like travel].

Legalisation migrants who are involved in procedures may travel if they have the money to do so, but they usually remain within the country as they are afraid to cross national borders. They are more anxious than the other types of migrants, because getting caught in another country could endanger their procedure. Nawang, from Nepal, explains why he was afraid to cross the Belgian border into the Netherlands (which he did nevertheless): 'Because here [in Belgium] I can show my regularisation paper and there I did not have anything. I did not have anything there. I was totally illegal.'

Nawang's statement that he was 'totally illegal' in the Netherlands implies that he somehow feels partly legal and at ease in Belgium. His application for regularisation provides him with a form of semi-formal identification, but one that is accepted only in the country where he applied for it. He is afraid not only that crossing national borders could damage the outcome of his procedure, but also that he could be jailed and expelled. But these are not the only reasons why legalisation migrants feel safer in one country than in another. My respondents noted that they perceive police practices to be different in Belgium than in the Netherlands.

> [S]ometimes here [in Belgium] the police they check you, they say you have no good paper, they say no problem ... in Holland they do not do it like that, they send them directly to jail ... I know many people from Holland, sometimes they come ... to my house ... I don't go there ... I am afraid (Rakesh, India).

These perceptions influence irregular migrants' choices and consequently lead legalisation migrants to limit their travels.

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

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

All in all, irregular migrants with different aspirations value and spend their leisure time differently, as is summarised in table 7.1.

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

Investment migrants tend to be geographically immobile, as they like to stay close to their jobs. Settlement migrants like to travel and see different places. They even cross national borders to neighbouring countries. As the

internal borders of the European Union are not heavily controlled, they are not afraid to try. The next section discusses the company that irregular migrants keep during their leisure time.

Table 7.1   Social incorporation per type of aspiration

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

7.3   Social contacts

Investment migrants who have been received by friends or family usually spend their free time in the company of the latter. This type of social contact is easy, as they often live in the same house. Investment migrants who have come on their own usually spend most of their spare time with their room-mates or flatmates, who tend to be other temporary migrants. Investment migrants have a very small social circle, dominated by acquaintances. When I asked Diego, from Chile, about his friends in Belgium he said, 'I have little ... a few ... one.' While investment migrants usually have a small number of acquaintances, they tend to have very few intimate friends in the destination country. Diego indicated that although he has one person who he calls a friend, he still does not know him very well. Due to their temporary engagements and lack of free time, it is difficult for investment migrants to build and maintain friendships. Some investment migrants indicated that they felt lonely, especially those who lived alone.

In contrast, settlement migrants have a much larger social circle, and they are willing to invest time in maintaining social contacts. They have many acquaintances and often some good friends as well. They frequent all kinds of social gatherings in their leisure time. For example, they might regularly go to a church or mosque, visit or participate in sports events and undertake

a range of recreational activities with groups of friends and acquaintances. When I went to a lake for a swim with a group of women and children, they all brought food that they shared. Some brought an instrument, and they sang and danced to the music that was played. This group of women went there every Sunday, weather permitting. Such social gatherings strengthen social bonds and allow new arrivals to get to know people.

Settlement migrants tend to take part in all kinds of activities and celebrations. These are usually initiated by a small group of friends, but they can also have a more formal character. Many settlement migrants visit the activities organised by formal or informal socio-cultural organisations.

> There are many cultural activities here organised by a group of Ecuadorians … I have many contacts because I was working with my sisters in this Ecuadorian organisation before … [W]e left but right now we still collaborate and we see if there is some activity. And I know many people from there (Antonia).

Migrant women with settlement aspirations play a vital role in the development of these culturally distinct immigrant communities through the activities they organise (see Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994). Reproducing cultural symbols associated with the home culture enhances solidarity within such groups (see also Hagan 1994). Moreover, cultural activities provide a means to teach children about their cultural background. Through these social gatherings, settlement migrants meet many people which is why they usually have large social networks.

The social circles of legalisation migrants who are involved in procedures are much smaller than those of settlement migrants. Legalisation migrants have less opportunity to meet people as they do not work or at all and do not go out or participate in recreational activities much outside of the scope of organisations. Unlike settlement migrants, who constantly meet new people though the leisure activities organised by socio-cultural organisations, friends or family, legalisation migrants who are involved in procedures move in the same social circle of other irregular migrants who visit the same organisations each day. Legalisation migrants who aim to get married usually have a larger social circle, because it is usually through other people that a potential future spouse is located.

Investment migrants have a very small social circle, and this small circle is usually also very homogeneous, consisting primarily of other investment migrants. Next to their temporary engagements and lack of time, they face a language barrier that makes it difficult to make contact with local

residents. As Massey et al. (1987) remarked, temporary migrants do not learn to speak the native language; they acquire only enough familiarity with the language to deal with routine situations. I found that the same was true for investment migrants. They were not interested in learning the local language, because this would not bring the attainment of their aspirations any closer. Diego responded to my question as to why he was not in school to learn the language as follows:

> No because I do not have the time … because I came for two years and it was not my intention to stay here … many people here are studying the language obviously because they want to stay here. In my case, I came here to get enough money together to build a house [in Chile].

In short, investment migrants have priorities other than learning the local language.

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

For settlement migrants, the Belgians or Dutch are rarely part of their smaller circle of intimate friends. Yet, unlike investment migrants, settlement migrants do want to have some contact with local residents. Most settlement migrants therefore had some amount of contact with locals, but they usually knew only a few persons. Ignacio, from Chile, said, 'I have many friends without papers, the majority yes. And let's see, I have one

friend who is Belgian.' The Belgians or Dutch concerned are usually persons with whom they can communicate in their own language.

> I have Belgian friends as well. One I haven't spoken to for almost four months now but the other I see regularly. She helps me a lot with small things and she speaks Spanish perfectly. And now many Ecuadorians are married to Belgians as well … so I also associate with them, I talk to them, to the husbands of the Ecuadorian women (Antonia, Ecuador).

These men speak Spanish as well, which makes communication much easier. There thus seems to be a language barrier that makes it difficult for settlement migrants to associate with local residents.

Settlement migrants usually do very much want to learn the local language, because this enables them to function in the society where they want to build their future. Those with children, for example, mentioned that learning the local language allows them to speak with their children's teachers. Despite their firm wish to speak the language, in practice, they do not always manage to take language classes. Although these are usually offered free of charge, migrants find it hard to fit time for classes into their work schedules.

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

Language is probably not the only barrier to social contact with natives for settlement migrants. Emilia, an Ecuadorian who lives in Brussels and speaks French well, said, '[I]t is not very difficult to have friendships, except for friendship with Belgians … I have many many friends, but Belgians? No. Practically none.' In the absence of a language barrier, the precise reasons for this lack of contact are unclear. From the accounts

irregular migrants give in this respect, I suspect it might have something to do with cultural differences and settlement migrants' fear of being denounced.

Settlement migrants lack contacts with Belgians and the Dutch, but they also seem to lack contact with other migrant groups too. Some settlement migrants associate with migrants of other origins, but most are wary of contacts with other migrant groups (see Datta et al. 2007). Moroccans were perceived badly by practically all of my respondents with settlement aspirations. Moroccans are portrayed negatively in public discourse in both Belgium and in the Netherlands, and irregular migrants seemed to copy this kind of talk.

> One time a friend of the church gave a bike to my son as a present ... but they stole it. He parked it in front of the church one day and they took it away ... Sometimes the Moroccans, or I don't know who did it but you feel it (Catalina, Colombia).

According to Mahler (1995: 230) migrants are hostile towards other migrant groups and stereotype, especially the more established migrant groups she calls 'minorities'. She writes that the migrants she interviewed 'view minorities as a stagnant, parasitic population'. They perceive established migrants 'as architects of their own demise because even as citizens, with all their rights and advantages, they have not pulled themselves up by their bootstraps'. Camilla, from Ecuador, expressed a similar disrespect towards established migrant groups:

> I think that they behave badly sometimes, they make problems. Like the Moroccans, they make problems; they make problems and only that. I think that we are more reserved, maybe because we are in a different position where they can arrest us at any time and deport us. We prefer to stay quiet ... [W]e don't make that many scandals I think, that much noise.

Many settlement migrants wish migration policies were stricter. They express their understanding for the ethno-centrist attitude of a part of the native population.

> I can understand, it is logical that there are some racists but they are so with reasons, you know, how many people from other countries have not murdered, robbed or sold drugs? Yes. It is logical if they say they

have to send them back, but the Moroccans who do that get only one
year (Valentina, Cuba).

Settlement migrants said that although they lead quiet and hardworking
lives, their reputation as migrants is damaged by the bad behaviour of other
migrant groups. They felt that due to the misconduct of other migrants, they
were denied the opportunity to prove themselves. They therefore rarely
associated with migrants from a different background.

Legalisation migrants who were involved in procedures had more
diverse social circles than settlement migrants. In fact, their social circles
were more heterogeneous than those of all the other categories of mi-
grants, because they interacted with migrants of other origins through the
organisations they frequented. Due to these inter-ethnic contacts, these
legalisation migrants generally have a more open attitude than settlement
migrants towards other cultures, as expressed by Lazzat, from Uzbekistan:
'I respect the culture of the Belgian people but also others. In Antwerp
there are many different [cultures], it is a multicultural city. There are
different people, different cultures and that is pleasant and interesting.
This way I get to know other cultures.' The educational level of this category
of migrants is relatively high, which might be partly responsible for their
tolerance towards other cultures, but their visits to organisations are likely
to be the main reason for their open attitude and heterogeneous social
networks.

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

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

[for legalisation] are. And I have tried to learn Dutch then. That is, I had to learn it so that they could get to know me you see (Tarek, Algeria).

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

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

Legalisation migrants who were trying to find someone to marry showed diverging patterns, depending on the marriage markets they were active in. If they were looking for a spouse with the same ethnic background, they invested a lot of time and effort in maintaining good relations with family, friends and acquaintances with the same ethnic background. They did not learn the language or reach out to other local residents. The same usually applies to those who are looking for a bogus marriage. However, those that were trying to find a Belgian or Dutch person to marry usually learned the language and had contacts with local residents. These legalisation migrants sometimes went to great lengths in their efforts to get acquainted with locals. I was, for example, surprised to find Marouane, from Morocco, who is fluent in French, taking Dutch language courses even though he lived in largely French-speaking Brussels. I asked him the reason for this odd choice. He said it was much easier to find Flemish women to marry through the Internet than French-speaking women in the streets. But even though these legalisation migrants sometimes made great efforts to meet a Belgian or Dutch spouse, their closest circle of friends usually consisted of people

with the same background making the same kind of efforts in locating a potential partner for marriage.

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

Table 7.2   Social incorporation per type of aspiration

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

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

7.4   Shifts in aspirations

Aspirations can shift over time. It is important to realise that if aspirations change, the way migrants spend their leisure time and the company they seek change as well. Nawang, from Nepal, described how his social life had changed after his aspirations had shifted. As a young unmarried man, he explained, he took advantage of being away from the social control of his family by going out a lot as a settlement migrant. He spent quite a lot of money in his free time: 'I was drinking, spending € 50, € 60 sometimes

€ 100 per day.' After he developed legalisation aspirations, he spent his time and money differently:

> [I spend] € 200 for a month and I don't drink anything … Two times a week I go to [language] school. And the rest of the time well you know … I go to [an organisation], go to the Nepalese café, go to a demonstration, and Internet, mostly I spend my time on the Internet. Nowadays it is free at [an organisation] so I stay there three hours, even four hours sometimes. So that is my day (Nawang, Nepal).

The relationship between aspirations and social incorporation is not necessarily one-directional: not only do aspirations underlie patterns of social incorporation, but changes in irregular migrants' social surroundings also have an impact on their aspirations. Such changes can inspire shifts in aspirations. Although I was unable to systematically study changing aspirations, I did make some observations about the role of changes in irregular migrants' social life in inspiring shifts in aspirations. Furthermore, many scholars have scrutinised the reasons why some temporary migrants end up settling down.

As noted by other researchers, the social dimension is a very important instigator of aspiration shifts for temporary migrants. While irregular migrants are able to live a spartan lifestyle devoid of intimate social contact for a short period, they cannot maintain such a lifestyle for very long (see Massey et al. 1987). According to Piore (1979), the way temporary migrants live 'is essentially not a human condition' and therefore cannot be endured for long. The same is true for the lifestyle investment migrants lead. Diego, from Chile, for example, had lived as an investment migrant in Belgium for more than two years now and felt increasingly uncomfortable with his social life:

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

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

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

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

Apart from this social dimension, I found that developments in the cultural realm inspired change in the same direction. Upon arrival in the destination country, irregular migrants usually encounter cultures that are different from those they are used to. As migrants encounter new cultural beliefs and experiences, some of their own cultural ideals and guidelines for appropriate behaviour may change as a result of their migration (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994). A few studies describe how migrants react to and negotiate these cultural differences, especially with regard to changing gender roles (Dannecker 2005; Hagan 1994; Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994; Menjivar 1999). The encounter with new cultures affects migrants differently (Parrado & Flippen 2005) and may foster discord within families, making some family members long to return to the country of origin, whereas others prefer to stay (Chavez 1991). I also noted that cultural encounters fostered different reactions and preferences towards settlement. Whereas one of Isidora's daughters desperately wanted to go back to Ecuador because she felt unable to fit in, her three other children liked Belgium, felt adapted and never wanted to go back.

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

Although I did come across respondents who were in a transition phase between settlement and legalisation aspirations, or who had recently made the transition from legalisation to settlement aspirations, I found no clear link with developments in their social surroundings.

7.5   Aspirations and social incorporation

The little literature there is on the social incorporation of irregular migrants is dichotomised around two positions. The dominant view is that irregular migrants are busy surviving and have no time or opportunity to engage in recreational activities and to invest in social relations. Moreover, the social contacts they have are usually with other migrants. Challenged by this grim picture of social isolation, a few scholars dispute this image and describe a richness of social activities and contacts their respondents engaged in. So far, it has remained unclear how these different outcomes are shaped. However, this chapter has shown that an approach that takes aspirations as the central focus of analysis provides such understanding.

Investment migrants, who intend to stay in the destination country only temporarily, do not engage in recreational activities. They prefer staying home, possibly in the company of family or flatmates. Moreover, they have a very small network of social contacts. Their lives seem a lot like those portrayed by the dominant research stream. However, they usually stay indoors because they choose to do so and not because they are afraid to venture out in public. Settlement migrants, with their fondness of leisure time and their large social circle, appear to have much in common with the picture portrayed by scholars holding the second position. Furthermore,

my analysis revealed more diversity in outcomes than the two positions described in the literature. Legalisation migrants who are involved in procedures spend their abundance of free time with organisations and have small but very heterogeneous networks consisting of migrants with other backgrounds as well as Dutch or Belgian natives. Furthermore, legalisation migrants who aim to get married show diverging outcomes depending on the marriage markets they are active in.

All in all, the divergent patterns of social incorporation found among different types of irregular migrants in Belgium and the Netherlands were explained in this chapter by bringing aspirations into the analysis. Table 7.3 summarises the main findings.

Table 7.3   Social incorporation per type of aspiration

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

As in the previous chapter, table 7.3 does not do justice to the great diversity of outcomes. Rather, it represents a simplified ideal-type picture. As the aspirations of irregular migrants may shift over time, respondents sometimes find themselves in between the positions outlined above. Furthermore, personal circumstances may lead migrants to divert from the typical path. Nevertheless, the typology presented in this chapter increases our understanding of how patterns of social incorporation are shaped and provides insight into a debate in the literature in which seemingly opposing positions are held. It indicates that irregular migrants do not all occupy a single 'parallel world' or 'cocoon', but that there are several 'cages', depending on irregular migrants' aspirations.

8 Aspirations and Transnational Activities

8.1 Introduction

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

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

At first, studies on transnationalism tended to include all kinds of cross-border activities, thereby exaggerating the scope of transnationalism. Researchers purposefully looked for transnational phenomena, selecting case studies in which these were abundant. In other words, many studies sampled on the dependent variable, for example, by conducting qualitative studies of organisations active in the transnational field (Portes 2001). This exaggeration of the significance of transnationalism led some authors to seek to delimit its scope (Portes et al. 1999).

Attempts to limit the scope of the perspective have resulted in a conceptualisation of transnationalism in terms of 'regular and sustained cross-border activities of individuals', making 'freedom of movement the point of departure', thereby implicitly excluding irregular migrants

(Waldinger & Fitzgerald 2004: 1,178). Thus, studies of transnationalism seem to have overlooked irregular migration in their attempt to arrive at a clear conceptualisation. In the literature from transnational social fields (see, e.g., Levitt & Schiller 2004), irregular migrants are recognised as community participants, but their experiences are not systematically compared to the transnationalism of regular migrants, because the emphasis of such studies is on the level of the community as a whole. Consequently, questions are not asked about whether and how irregular migrants in particular experience and engage in transnationalism.

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

As the literature on transnationalism has so far mostly provided tentative indications of the activities irregular migrants undertake, one would expect the literature on irregular migration to supply better answers. However, studies of irregular migrants devote little attention to the transnational activities their research subjects engage in. It has been mentioned that irregular migrants have a transnational outlook and are oriented towards their country of origin (Chavez 1998, Mahler 1995, Piore 1979), but remittances are the only cross-border activities to which attention is commonly devoted. Neglecting the broader scope of the literature on transnationalism, studies

of irregular migrants have not extended their view to include social and political transnational activities as well. Furthermore, the focus of research on irregular migrants' transnational activities is on their transnational economic *obligations* and the limitations these pose for their incorporation into the destination country and their chances of achieving upward social mobility (Mahler 1995: 6-7). Following the 'survival perspective' (see chapter 2), researchers probably assume that irregular migrants are unable to engage in transnational activities: they only have transnational obligations which they struggle to fulfil.

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

Now that it is clear that transnationalism should be studied among irregular migrants, the question is how to do it. It is not always clear what exactly we mean by 'a transnational perspective' (Levitt, De Wind & Vertovec 2003), yet there is plenty of empirical research that calls itself transnational (Smith 2006). Although transnational migration studies form an emerging field that is still very fragmented, a distinction is generally made between economic, social and political activities (see, e.g., Portes et al. 1999; Snel, Engbersen & Leerkes 2006; Bloch 2008). I therefore analyse the transnational activities of my respondents under these same headings.

Because of the nature of my study I focus on transnationalism of individual migrants and not of groups. Although researchers do distinguish between transnational activities and transnational identifications (Snel et al. 2006), my focus is only on the activities. This choice stems from practical considerations: the semi-structured interviews did not contain questions pertaining to transnational identifications but only to economic, social and political activities.

8.2   Economic transnational activities

Investment migrants have come to the destination country to earn money that they want to invest in their home country. They therefore usually remit

large shares of their incomes. In practice, the sums of money they send home roughly amount to € 2,000 to € 5,000 per year. Investment migrants differ in the frequency with which they send their remittances. Some send small sums of money each month, while others save larger amounts that they send every few months. Mehmet, from Turkey, makes sure he sends money each month: 'I have a house in Karaman. [My wife] lives there with my three sons and two daughters. I take care of them financially … [I send] around € 350 each month.' However, some investment migrants do not remit at all. Although they save a large share of their income, they choose to safeguard the money themselves instead of sending it to their home country. The migrants who save instead of remit are often without a partner and children. They save for their own business projects or in order to finance a future wedding. Whether investment migrants send money to the country of origin or save it, in the end all of the money is intended for investment there. That means either way, investment migrants are very much engaged in economic transnational activities.

Settlement migrants normally prioritise their own financial situation and remit a much smaller share of their income than investment migrants do. They want to build a life in the destination country, and they need money to do so. Moreover, because settlement migrants have usually brought their immediate family over, they are not usually financially responsible for relatives back home. They have only their parents or extended family in the origin country, and no financial responsibilities for them, though they may support them occasionally or in case of special needs (see Bouras 2012 for similar observations). When I asked Isidora, from Ecuador, if she sends money home, she responded:

> A little. They [my parents] are old so I send a little bit of money. And my father is ill so I send a little money for that … It is impossible to send more money because I have four children who make expenses. And we have to pay the rent, and now that the children are studying they need Internet so I have to pay the rent and the Internet, the electricity, so the costs are high.

Isidora clearly did not work to support family in Ecuador, but to support her family life in Belgium. This does not mean that she did not remit at all, but she remitted a much smaller share of her income than investment migrants would do.

Although some do not remit at all, most settlement migrants send small sums of money on an irregular basis, usually in case of special needs that

come up in the country of origin. The amounts they send are normally under € 1,000 per year. A few of my respondents with settlement aspirations did have financial obligations in their country of origin that demanded they remit much larger sums. These settlement migrants were normally on their own in the destination country and worked to provide for their family in the origin country. In fact, they were settlement migrants, because they were able to support their families through their stay in the destination country. Recall Arda, from Turkey, who was quoted in chapter 5 saying: 'I don't have any choice. I stay here to send money to my family. I can work all year round here, in Turkey I only work a few months a year.' These are the migrants who have settled down in Belgium or the Netherlands so that they can provide for their family back home. They remit a smaller share of their income than investment migrants do because the length of their stay does not allow a spartan lifestyle to be endured. Nevertheless, they remit a lot more than the other settlement migrants do: between € 2,000 and € 4,000 annually.

In contrast, legalisation migrants hardly send any money to their countries of origin. Because they do not work much they have little money to remit. Efunsegun, for example, responded with surprise to my question of whether he sends money to Nigeria: 'No! I am not working, what money do I have to send?' Likewise, Fasila, a Congolese woman, responded, '[T]his is not possible now because I do not have any income.' Although their relatives in the origin country may have a strong need for additional income, legalisation migrants feel that they have to get their legalisation in order before they are capable of helping their family. René, also from Congo, said, 'Actually I am responsible for my family but I do not have the financial means to support them.' Legalisation migrants worry about their own needs first. Alexandre, from Congo, said, 'Money, I don't have any money. It costs € 1,200 to bring [my son] here nowadays. But even if someone would give me € 1,000 now, I choose to pay the rent two months ahead you know.' The incomes of legalisation migrants are too low in relation to their costs to allow them to send surplus income to the country of origin.

However, the fact that they do not work and consequently have little money to send home is not the only reason why legalisation migrants normally do not remit. Legalisation migrants usually do not have financial responsibility for people in the home country. Mehdi, for example, said, 'No [I don't remit] because there aren't any family members that I am financially responsible for, neither here nor in Morocco.' Likewise, Kiril said, 'The only family I have left in Bulgaria is my mother, and she lives from her old age pension. I don't send any money to Bulgaria, I just take care of my family here.' Rakesh, from India, responded, '[Money] is no problem. I have good land,

crops and everything, with a big house, no problem.' Since the migration of legalisation migrants had not been economically inspired, they did not have the financial obligations that investment migrants or settlement migrants had. Their migration was often the result of political conflict. In other cases, it involved young men who were unemployed in their home country and migrated to find a better future for themselves, not because family incomes needed to be supplemented. They were busy trying to find someone to marry and devoted their limited resources towards achieving this aim.

In a few cases, money even flows in the opposite direction. Some legalisation migrants come from rich families and therefore do not send money to the country of origin; instead their family members there send money to them. This financial support enables them to pay their expenses, while they wait for the outcomes of their procedures. However, as procedures may take a very long time and Belgium and the Netherlands are expensive countries to live in, their families cannot supply financial aid for long.

> Before my family used to send money to me. But in my country [Syria], look things are really expensive here, € 1,000 is nothing here, € 1,000 is the rent for less than three months but in my country € 1,000 is a lot of money. Way too much you understand that is why [they can't continue to send money] (Rasja, Syria).

A few of my respondents had occasionally been supported by their families back home and thus had experienced a small and temporary inverted financial flow. Others indicated that although they could ask family for financial support, they were too ashamed to do so.

All in all, the extent to which irregular migrants engage in economic transnational activities and the way they do it depends in part on their aspirations. Whereas investment migrants save much of their income to either remit or for their own use later, settlement migrants usually send smaller sums of money home, except for those whose partner and children still live in the home country. Of all three categories, legalisation migrants remit the least. In the next section, we will see how aspirations are related to irregular migrants' social transnational activities.

8.3   Social transnational activities

Investment migrants are socially oriented towards their country of origin. Feeling that their lives take place there instead of in the destination country,

they invest time and energy in maintaining social relations with their relatives and friends back home. When asked how often they contact family or friends in their country of origin, investment migrants responded with answers like, 'I call and send my wife text messages every day' (Cahil, Turkey) or '[I call my family] every weekend and normally I call friends as well' (Sofia, Bolivia). Most investment migrants call their friends and family members at least a few times each week and keep a minimum frequency of once a week.

Because investment migrants do not have an active social life in the destination country and because they cannot take part in social life back home, many investment migrants mention how much they miss their friends and families. Tümer, from Turkey, said, 'I don't have any difficulties, I just miss my family. As soon as I have enough money saved I'll go back.' And Asen (Bulgaria) said, 'I miss my wife and children very much. Last month my granddaughter was born and I haven't been able to see her yet. As soon as my savings are in order I'll go back.' The contacts they have with their spouse, children and other loved ones make them want to go home even faster, and this inspires them to work harder towards that goal.

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

While most settlement migrants contact their family and friends at least once a month, a few respondents with settlement aspirations do not have any contact with the home country at all. Over the course of their stay in Belgium or the Netherlands, they break all ties to family and friends in the country of origin. Adil, from Morocco, was one of these:

> I haven't called in almost four years. Four years yes. I didn't feel like it. If you don't have money or work, no future. And if I call now my family will say 'Why haven't you called?' Normally I called every week or every month but now I haven't called in almost four years.

Adil had not contacted his relatives because he was ashamed to say that he does not have work and that he lives in the streets.

Whereas some settlement migrants lose contact with their relatives back home over the course of their stay, legalisation migrants sometimes do not have transnational social contacts from the outset. Many legalisation migrants left their country of origin to seek security from political persecution or war. Keeping in touch with friends and family in countries that have been severely disrupted by war can be a difficult thing.

> I do not have contact with anyone. Seven years. I do still have a brother but I don't know where he is. I don't know if he is alive or not. I don't have any idea. I try to build a life here now for myself, we forget about the past (Dnari, Sierra Leone).

Likewise, Kalusha, from Congo, said, 'I don't know where my family is staying. I am trying to get contact with friends who have helped me but it is not working.' The difficulties some legalisation migrants experience in contacting friends and family help to explain why many legalisation migrants do not remit.

Even if they do know how to locate their family members, some legalisation migrants are afraid that contacting their relatives might bring them into danger, as was expressed by Lazzat:

> It is very dangerous [to call relatives in Uzbekistan]. If they would know that I am here then they might get problems and not me, and I don't want that you know ... I have three sisters ... I have contact with one now because she lives in Russia ... Russia is safe, she works in Moscow.

Clearly, for some legalisation migrants, the political situation in their country of origin complicates the maintenance of social contacts.

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

> Yeah I call my mother sometimes so that she doesn't worry. I would like to have contact more often but then they say, 'Oh, you don't have papers yet, you are not trying hard enough, or what are you doing there.' It is difficult to talk and to explain the situation (Tarek, Algeria).

Families have sometimes invested money in the migration plans of their relatives and do not want to see these fail. Furthermore, they may not know about the requirement of papers, or be unable to accurately assess the chances a migrant has of becoming legalised. Family members wonder why they do not receive remittances. When legalisation migrants try to explain that it is not so easy in Europe they are sometimes accused of lying because migrants before them have been successful. These misunderstandings can lead to arguments, as Tarek explained. Even if family members do understand, the stakes are so high they encourage legalisation migrants to keep on trying.

> I call them sometimes, maybe once or twice in a month. Sometimes they call me, but normally I call them. I always tell them about my feelings in Europe … [T]hey encourage me, they say that I am the eldest son of the family, that I have to continue struggling, and one of these days God will see me through (Enfunsegun, Nigeria).

Instead of providing emotional support, the telephone calls home increase stress, leading these migrants to call home less than they would like. In addition, these contacts strengthen their aspiration to become legalised.

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

While investment migrants are keen to keep up with the situation in their country of origin, settlement migrants care a lot less. Lucas, for example, said, 'No we don't have news from Chile. Despite the fact that there is news on the Internet and in newspapers, I don't do it a lot.' Lucas found it too much trouble to go to an Internet cafe in another neighbourhood, which

indicates that he did not feel an urge to be updated on the latest news from his origin country. While settlement migrants are interested in the lives of their relatives and friends and developments in the local communities where these live, they do not make much effort to follow the latest news concerning their country of origin in general. Instead, they look for a sense of home in the destination country by taking part in activities organised by socio-cultural organisations and other social gatherings.

In contrast to settlement migrants, legalisation migrants are usually keen to keep up with the latest developments.

> Ever since I fled I follow what happens in Uzbekistan every day, and the situation keeps getting worse and worse ... [I follow it] through the Internet. Everything via the Internet. On television here in Europe you see little, practically nothing (Lazzat).

Legalisation migrants have little money, because they do not work much, but they often do have satellite television and they find ways to surf the Internet. Rasja, from Syria, was several months overdue on the rent and about to be evicted by her landlord. Yet she proudly said to me, 'Yes of course, we have satellite television, we watch Al Jazeera.' This urge to keep up to date is obviously related to the fact that they fled their country when it was in a bad situation, and they want to know if things there are improving. After all, they have relatives and friends there whose lives might be in danger. Furthermore, while they seek legalisation in the destination country because of the bad situation in their country of origin, some hope they might be able to return one day if the situation improves there. Kalusha, for example, said, '[A]s soon as there is peace again in Congo I want to go back. My family is there and I want to be with them and I lived well there.'

Apart from social contacts and the extent to which migrants keep up to date on developments in their country of origin, research normally considers visits to the country of origin an indicator of social transnational activities (Smith 2006). Obviously, visiting the home country involves crossing national borders, and this is complicated for many irregular migrants. However, investment migrants do not pay visits to their home countries. Mehmet, from Turkey, example, answered the question of whether he visits his country of origin with, 'No because I will only go back once I have earned enough money.' Illian, from Bulgaria, answered similarly: 'No because I haven't saved enough money yet.' They want to work and make money, then go back for good, preferably not to leave again.

In contrast, most settlement migrants enjoy visiting their home countries, and they do this if they are able. They visit family and go back to attend important family events, such as weddings. For Eastern Europeans it is relatively easy to travel back and forth since border authorities do not usually stamp passports, and the costs of travel are relatively low. For those whose journey involves flying it is generally more difficult and more expensive to visit family. Those who do not have visa restrictions have to buy a new stamp-free passport during their visit. Due to the high costs attached to flying and buying a new passport, only few of my respondents had done so. However, this does not mean that they had not seen their family and friends since they left their country of origin. The lack of visa restrictions makes it possible for their friends and family to come to Belgium or the Netherlands. A few of my respondents with settlement aspirations told me that their relatives had come to the destination country on a holiday to pay them a visit.

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

Although most settlement migrants would like to visit their home country, there were a few among my respondents who did not feel any urge to go there. But their reasons for not wanting to visit the home country were very different from those given by investment migrants. Tellingly, settlement migrant Mustafa (Bulgaria) answered my question of whether he visits his home country very differently from the investment migrants quoted earlier: 'No because I live in Belgium now. I have nothing to go back to except for my father.' While investment migrants stress they only want to return once they have earned enough money, Mustafa focuses on his choice for settlement in Belgium in explaining why he does not want to visit his home country.

In contrast to settlement migrants, who sometimes did visit their country of origin, none of my respondents with legalisation aspirations had paid their country of origin a visit. After all, not only do they face the same barriers to travel as the other irregular migrants, their desire to become legalised is often connected to a fear of going back for safety reasons. Those from safer countries are afraid that temporarily leaving the country in which they have an application being processed might damage the outcome of the application.

All in all, it is clear that aspirations play a role in shaping different kinds of social transnational activities. The frame of reference of investment migrants is their home country, which is why they call, send text messages and use the Internet to communicate with their loved ones on an almost daily basis. For settlement migrants, 'home' is the destination country, which is why their social lives are focused there. They maintain personal contacts within the country of origin, but do not normally follow the latest news. Legalisation migrants do follow the news, but do not manage (or only moderately manage) to maintain social contacts within their country of origin. Not only are personal contacts within the country of origin often complicated by political conditions, contacts may be frustrated because people back home do not understand the struggles they go through in their attempts to become legalised. Settlement migrants are the only irregular migrants that occasionally visit the country of origin, if obstacles are not too high.

8.4   Political transnational activities

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

Settlement migrants are also not very politically active either. When I talked about their political engagement with Fernanda and Camilla, both from Ecuador, Fernanda said, '[W]hen my brothers call me they inform me but not like, I ask very little about politics personally.' Camilla said, 'I don't even know who the president of Ecuador is, I don't know.' These two migrants are focused on their lives in Belgium. They do care about their family and friends back home, but not about the political situation in their country. This lack of political interest is reflected in the activities settlement

migrants organise. These focus on transferring cultural heritage to their children and on increasing social solidarity in the destination country rather than on discussing the political situation of the home country. Although political issues may come up in private conversations, settlement migrants generally do not participate in political activities concerning their country of origin.

In contrast to investment and settlement migrants, legalisation migrants are more frequently engaged in political transnational activities. Maboula, from Congo, did engage in political activities concerning his country of origin: 'Yes, when people ask me to demonstrate in the streets against certain things that concern my country yes I do that.' Likewise, Kyiaki, also from Congo, said, 'Yes I am very active, I participate in every demonstration.' Similarly, Lazzat (Uzbekistan) described his political engagement:

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

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

In fact, many legalisation migrants have specific aspirations to become legalised because of the political problems in their country of origin. Bloch (2008: 301) similarly notes that participation in political activities by his respondents (both regular and irregular migrants) was 'related to the main motivation for migration: those who left Zimbabwe for political reasons were most likely to engage in diasporic political activities'(Bloch 2008: 301). Political issues in their country of origin often formed the reason for their flight, and more importantly, they make legalisation migrants afraid to go back. As they believe they cannot go back, they aspire to start a new life elsewhere and hence aspire to legalisation. They want to become legalised because they feel they have no other place to go. Lazzat said he engaged in political transnational activities because he felt he no longer had a home country. He was refused by both Uzbekistan and Belgium. He felt landless and wanted to try his chances not only in Belgium, but also in his native Uyghur land:

> I don't have anything to do with politics but to live like this and not be welcome anywhere, I am fed up with this. I just fight my own battle for

independence of our own country. Even though there is little chance that we will get it there is hope. Maybe it will work. Maybe such a large country will fall apart like the Soviet regime has. Maybe this will happen in China as well. And then we can have our own country, and Tibet as well. Then we will go back and build our country.

Migrant organisations usually coordinate the political activities that legalisation migrants engage in. These organisations not only devote attention to improving the political situation in the origin country, but they also look out for the well-being of those who live in the destination country. Albert, from Congo, explained the twofold mission of the organisation he belonged to:

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

While settlement migrants create and become members of organisations that focus on social solidarity and culture, legalisation migrants seek out organisations active in the political arena. These organisations might focus on political transnational activities concerning the country of origin, or they might address problems faced by the migrants in question in the destination country. Some of these organisations, for example, try to improve the situation of irregular migrants, and they inform all migrants about their rights and obligations.

Mascini, Fermin and Snick (2009) indicate that transnationalism is by no means self-evident among migrants who have sought to escape conflict. Likewise, I found that whereas many legalisation migrants who were involved in procedures were engaged in political transnational activities, there were also some who choose not to be. They had often completely closed the door to ever returning to their country of origin; or the problems in their origin countries were not considered that urgent (anymore). They found their own day-to-day problems too big of a worry to exert themselves for yet another cause. As Tarek, from Algeria, said, 'I like politics but I have never been a member of a political party ... [Y]ou know, you can't be a member of an organisation if you have a problem that is more important than that.'

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

8.5   Shifts in aspirations

The above demonstrates that the transnational activities of irregular migrants can be understood from their aspirations. Obviously, the results presented here represent a simplified ideal-type picture, and they do not do justice to all empirical diversity. Furthermore, as the aspirations of irregular migrants may change over time respondents sometimes found themselves in between ideal types. It is important here to understand that if irregular migrants' aspirations change, their transnational activities are likely to change with them.

Antonia, from Ecuador, is a good example. She explained how her remittance behaviour changed once she brought her two sons over and decided to settle down:

> Before I sent a lot, [I sent] all I had. I was very generous. But right now I don't do that anymore ... before I sent money to keep it there but now I think it is better to keep it here. Because always if something happened I had to say give me this ... I think it is better to keep the little money I have saved here and not in Ecuador.

Antonia indicated that she wanted to be in control of her own money. She needs to be able to take care of any sudden needs that arise for her or her family in Belgium. She sends a little money to her parents, and she lets her brothers keep the rent that she gets for her house in Ecuador. When she had investment aspirations she remitted all that she could. But her aspirations changed and now she keeps her savings for herself and her future. That migrants are inclined to remit less if their aspirations shift and they decide

to settle down has been noted by other authors as well. Massey et al. (1987: 207) observe that 'a sure sign that a settlement process in under way occurs when migrants send fewer earnings back home and spend more in the United States'.

If aspirations change the social transnational activities irregular migrants engage in change as well. Recall Antonia, who not only remitted less after she decided to settle down, but who also said she no longer called her parents every week. The same applies to political activities. Lazzat, from Uzbekistan, said that he was contemplating whether to file another asylum or regularisation case or whether he should start to look for a job and forget about his political engagements.

8.6   Aspirations and transnational activities

This chapter examined the types of transnationalism irregular migrants engage in and the extent to which they are active, which can be understood in relation to the aspirations they have. Table 8.1 characterises the types of transnational activities engaged in by irregular migrants with different types of aspirations.

Table 8.1   Transnational activities per type of aspiration

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

Investment migrants are very engaged in economic transnational activities, whereas settlement migrants spend the greatest share of their incomes in the destination country and send fewer remittances home. The frame of reference of investment migrants is in the home country, which is why they call, send text messages and use the Internet to communicate with their loved ones on an almost daily basis. They keep up with what happens in the country of origin through these contacts. Set-

tlement migrants, in contrast, focus on their social lives in the destination country. They might maintain personal contacts within the country of origin, but they do not normally follow the latest national news from there. Legalisation migrants appear to be the only category that engages in political transnational activities. Although not all legalisation migrants engage in political activities, for those who do this seems to be closely connected to their aspirations.

The literature on immigrant transnationalism notes that transnational activities are not common. Portes (2003: 877), for example, writes that 'subsequent research has indicated that regular involvement in transnational activities characterises only a minority of immigrants and that even occasional involvement is not a universal practice'. Waldinger (2008: 24) finds that 'transnationalism is a rare condition of being and transmigrants are an uncommon class of persons'. Furthermore, as indicated in this chapter's introduction, irregular migrants are expected to engage in transnational activities least of all because of the obstacles they face (see Portes, Escobar & Radford 2007). Portes (2001: 189) finds that 'immigrant transnationalism is associated with a more secure economic and legal status in the host country'. Likewise, Bloch (2008: 302) claims that 'structural exclusions based on immigration status' adversely affect transnational capabilities. However, many of my respondents engaged quite frequently in transnational activities. In addition, despite the limitations they faced, many of my respondents managed to find ways to engage in those types of activities that were important to them. In fact, investment migrants prioritise their economic transnational engagements over their own well-being in the destination country. Hence, the aspirations irregular migrants have underlie the transnational activities they undertake.

Furthermore, in those cases where my respondents were not transnationally active, it was not necessarily because of the limitations they experienced. Rather, it sometimes stemmed from choice. This flies in the face of the assumption implicit in much research that as migrants earn more they will engage more in transnational activities (see, e.g., Bloch 2008). Settlement migrants do not necessarily remit more when they earn more. Instead, they tend to choose to spend their extra earnings on their own family in the destination country. For legalisation migrants, increasing income is not likely to lead them to remit more, but actually to work less. Only investment migrants increase their economic transnational activities when they earn more.

Whereas there may seem to be a logical relationship between migrants, economic positions and their propensity to engage in economic transna-

tional activities, this is less obvious for social and political transnationalism. Whereas it does cost money to make telephone calls and to participate in political activity, my respondents hardly mentioned money as a reason for their lack of or infrequent activity. Furthermore, while an investment migrant from Turkey called home more often than an investment migrant from Chile – because of the costs involved – the latter made calls more frequently than his co-nationals with settlement aspirations. Whereas factors such as cost may somewhat affect the frequency of specific activities, their influence is by far overshadowed by the impact of aspirations in shaping transnational activities.

Many scholars have sought to learn whether the general relationship between incorporation and transnationalism is a positive or negative one. Some find that incorporation weakens transnational participation, while others find that it does not (Itzigsohn & Giorguli-Saucedo 2002). It is a huge step forward to recognise that in order to make statements about this relationship, a differentiation needs to be made among economic, social and political activities, as the relationship works differently for distinct types of activities (Snel et al. 2006). Yet while researchers worry about the relationship between incorporation and transnationalism, they overlook the fact that both are rooted in aspirations. Distinguishing between different types of transnational activity has advanced research, but studies also need to contextualise on the side of agency of the migrants to properly understand why migrants do or do not engage in certain types of transnational activities (see Al-Ali 2002). Future research on transnationalism can therefore significantly benefit from taking aspirations into account as well.

9 Striving for a Better Position

Aspirations and the role of economic, cultural and social capital

9.1 Introduction

As argued throughout this book, one should take care not to regard irregular migrants as mere 'victims'. Although irregular migrants do obviously experience limitations, a 'victim perspective' can obstruct our understanding of the ways they manage to improve their situation and realise their aspirations (see also Devillé 2006; Paspalanova 2006; Van Nieuwenhuyze 2009). The present chapter seeks to answer the question of what forms of capital irregular migrants need to realise their aspirations. Realisation of their aspirations is closely connected to the extent to which they are able to mobilise and enforce resources like social, cultural economic capital (see Bourdieu 1986). Numerous studies have explored the significance of different forms of capital for irregular migrants. Their findings are worthwhile, yet ambiguous.

Many studies find that social capital is of paramount importance to irregular migrants (Adam et al. 2002; Aguilera & Massey 2003; Chavez 1998; Engbersen 1996, 1999b, 2001; Engbersen et al. 2006; Hagan 1998; Iosifides et al. 2007; Jordan & Düvell 2002; Staring 2003; Van der Leun 2004). Other researchers tone down the significance of social capital (Collyer 2005; Cranford 2005; Kyle 2000; Mahler 1995; Paspalanova 2006) or argue that its importance has diminished in favour of cultural capital. The latter argument is put forward by Grzymala-Kazlowska (2005: 694), who asserts that 'cultural capital (especially knowledge of foreign languages) has become a major factor determining the position of individuals and the entire group in the market, whereas social capital has lost its crucial significance'. A similar report emerges from the literature on the *bandante*, the mostly Eastern European caregivers of Italian children and grandparents. Those who master the Italian language and have familiarised themselves with customary Italian family rituals, benefit from these skills and are generally better off than those who lack such cultural proficiencies (Colombo 2007; Lyon 2006). However, other studies indicate that cultural capital is of little avail to irregular migrants, because their educational levels do not correspond to the work that they do (Engbersen 2001; Kosic & Triandafyllidou 2004; Van der Leun & Kloosterman 2006; Mahler 1995; Van Nieuwenhuyze 2009).

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

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

9.2   Forms of capital

Over 16 different forms of capital have been distinguished in academic literature, ranging from emotional to digital (Svendsen and Svendsen 2003). The focus of the literature is usually on one specific form of capital without reference to its connections to other forms of capital. This means that a consistent theoretical framework is often lacking. Bourdieu's understanding of forms of capital can be seen as an attempt to construct such a framework

(see Anheier, Gerhards & Romo 1995; Svendsen & Svendsen 2003). I therefore take his analysis as a starting point (Bourdieu 1986).

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

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

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

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

Research demonstrates that social networks not only include individuals, but they implicitly exclude people as well (Tilly 1990; Komter 2004). Furthermore, within social networks, rules of reciprocity apply. An individual who fails to return a favour can be excluded. Moreover, social networks are characterised by an internal hierarchy of power and social stratification, which causes rivalry and forms of exploitation to arise (Cranford 2005; Mahler 1995). As a result, the way in which social capital operates is equivocal, rendering the size of an individual's network or the strength of its ties irrelevant to the outcomes. Therefore, I did not study the networks of irregular migrants, but the instances in which their social capital had

actually been activated. For this purpose, respondents were asked when and how people in their personal networks had aided them.

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

9.3   Required forms of capital for realisation of aspirations

9.3.1   Investment aspirations

For investment migrants, having arranged for work and lodging prior to their actual migration proves very helpful in realising their aspirations. Hakan, for example, had arranged a job in Belgium while still in Turkey. Hakan's friend, who had worked in Europe before, said he was going to Belgium to work in construction for a man he knew from a prior stay. This friend said the man needed an additional skilled employee and asked Hakan to come with him. Hakan accepted the offer, and his future employer arranged for him to be picked up from Istanbul and taken to Ghent, where he now earns € 1,200 a month. Likewise, Servet, also from Turkey, benefited from the contacts he had in the destination country and arranged a job before he migrated:

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

Like Hakan and Servet, successful investment migrants often do the same kind of work in Belgium or the Netherlands as they did in their country of

origin. Likewise, Musa, from Turkey, was able to profit from his skills in the destination country:

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

Owing to their professional experience these investment migrants were able to arrange jobs before they migrated. They therefore managed to find jobs matching their capacities (see Burgers & Engbersen 1999; Staring 2001). They enjoyed relatively good bargaining positions and were consequently relatively well paid. They were not easily exchangeable for other irregular migrants, because their skills were needed. As Musa said, 'I needed them and they needed me.' So some investment migrants who had worked, for example, as hairdressers, bakers or construction workers in their country of origin were doing the same type of work in Belgium or the Netherlands.

Sometimes they had even been invited to come to Belgium because of their skills, as was the case with Göksel. He worked as a singer in Turkey. In 2002, a good friend called him and asked if he would like to become the new singer with his band in Belgium. This friend said he had always been impressed with Göksel's voice. He said he would earn considerably more money in Belgium than in Turkey and that he would fit in perfectly with the band. Göksel had always dreamt about releasing his own CD and saw this as a quick way to realise that dream. He agreed. Until he has saved the required sum for the CD he will continue to sing in Belgium at weddings, engagement parties, openings and circumcision parties within the Turkish community. He is the only person in the band without legal residence, but his salary is equal to that of the other band members. Semih, also from Turkey, was invited to come to Belgium and start a business together with his brother: 'My brother borrowed money from the bank to start a shop, which he had already done before I arrived. I have job experience, I know how to fit up a shop and how to run it. He does the administration and I am in the shop to sell things and maintain it.'

These investment migrants were able to arrange jobs prior to their migration thanks to their job competencies. They made use of a specific form of cultural capital, as family, friends or acquaintances acted as mediators. These successful investment migrants proved able to effectively use their cultural capital by means of their social capital. In other words, they

deployed a specific form of cultural capital – job competencies – by means of their social capital – family, friends or acquaintances acting as mediators.

Other successful investment migrants did not have pre-migratory job arrangements, but managed to find work quickly through contractors or acquaintances from their own ethnic group. Chavdar is one of these: 'Once I arrived in Ghent I went into a bar where I encountered other Bulgarians. They told me where I could get shelter. And a few days later I had a job.' Many investment migrants find employment through contractors or through their well-organised ethnic networks. Inexperienced workers usually earn € 30 per day, but Chavdar is a skilled construction worker who can do complex jobs. This allows him to earn € 50 per day. He therefore benefits from his skills in two different ways. Chavdar's job competencies enable him to find work and they ensure he receives better pay than irregular migrants without relevant working experience.

The work irregular migrants do is by no means necessarily of such a low-skilled nature that employees are interchangeable. Respondents with certain professional skills are better paid than respondents without qualifications. However, the value of cultural capital does not follow the same hierarchy as in the formal economy. Respondents who are highly educated are not able to use their qualifications in acquiring employment positions in Belgium or the Netherlands. In this respect, Van der Leun and Kloosterman (1999) speak of a 'legal ceiling': qualifications above a certain level are hardly of value on the informal market, whereas certain technical or manual skills benefit irregular migrants because these skills can be marketed easily in the informal economy (see Williams and Windebank 1998). For investment migrants, cultural capital (job competencies below the legal ceiling) – which can be activated by social capital – proves decisive in determining their chances of success on the informal labour market in the destination country, and consequently these migrants' attainment of their aspirations.

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

Neither did economic capital appear to play a major role. None of the investment migrants were working with false or borrowed papers; they

were all immersed in the informal economy. However, this does not mean that economic capital is necessarily irrelevant. Many other scholars find that, especially in the tightly controlled Dutch labour market, false papers can be almost a necessity for finding work (Benseddik & Bijl 2004; Broeders 2009). Had I interviewed more investment migrants in the Netherlands, I might have found a greater relevance of economic capital.

Some investment migrants said they remained unsuccessful in realising their aspirations or indicated that they had been unsuccessful and therefore had shifted their aspirations in the past. It appeared that they lacked specific work experience or competencies that they could assert in the destination country. For example, one of them had been selling vegetables and fruits on a cart, two had been unemployed, one had worked as a truck driver all his life, and another had always worked as a farmer. In the destination country, they were dependent on seasonal labour in horticulture, cleaning work or the lowest jobs in construction. These jobs are usually very irregular, and remuneration does not exceed € 30 a day for ten hours of work. Although my respondents were prepared to work these long hours, they indicated their earnings were not yet sufficient for attainment of their aspirations.

9.3.2   Settlement aspirations

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

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

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

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

Whereas investment migrants do not normally have the time to acquire skills, this can be a good strategy for settlement migrants to gain more income. A few of my respondents with settlement aspirations had managed to gain experience in construction work and were now making good wages. However, high wages alone do not enable settlement migrants to realise their aspirations, as highly paying work is not always available on a regular basis. Moreover, settlement migrants attach more value to steady employment than to a high hourly wage (see also chapter 6 and Chavez 1998). The importance of stable working conditions is indicated by the fact that all successful settlement migrants had a regular job or combined many jobs at once, which also guaranteed a level of stability, even though these jobs brought in average pay. Successful settlement migrants did not do the lowest paying jobs that Vincente was referring to; but they did not get the highest salaries either.

Most successful settlement migrants do jobs that require no special skills or that call for skills that can be easily acquired. For women, and sometimes for men as well, this usually involves cleaning, and for men, also painting or gardening for private households or work in restaurants. These migrants have been able to get these jobs through acquaintances in their social network. Jobs do not usually come directly to settlement migrants. They have to know people who know that they are looking for work in order to get it.

> Sometimes I get a call and someone asks me Lucas can you go to ... you want to work, do you have time? ... [A]nd then I say ok I can come on

> Monday, I have three or four hours something like that then ... This
> telephone is very important. That is the first thing that you need to
> have (Lucas, Chile).

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

> If I recommend someone I am certain that this person that I know
> works well and that he does not have problems. That he will not create
> problems for me or my boss, because in that case it is me who is the col-
> league ... [I]f he steals from the boss, and even if you tell this to the boss,
> then in this case even if I have done nothing, I have stolen nothing, he
> will say it is someone you know so for him you will have the same image
> as he has, so it is very important that if you recommend someone that
> you know this person. Trust is very important (Dakarai, Mauritania).

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

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

It appears that for settlement migrants it is important to mobilise social
leverage (Briggs 1998) from 'weak ties' (Granovetter 1973) in order to get

the jobs they desire (see Yakubovich 2005). In order to be able to do this, migrants have to have a clean reputation. If they make a mistake the social capital that is potentially available in their social network cannot be mobilised.

Next to the relevance of securing stable working conditions, settlement migrants often point to the importance of nearby family members or close friends, who can support them in case of a temporary setback. Even though their jobs can be regular for lengthy periods, the fact remains that they can be fired at any time. In times of financial strain, the proximity of friends or family members who can provide support can help them to feel secure. Most successful settlement migrants have family in the destination country to whom they can turn in case of need. Those without family have close friends with a residence permit, who are usually better able to assist than compatriots who are in an illegal situation as well. The assurance of being able to turn to relatives or close friends appears to be a necessity in order to secure independent settlement in the destination country:

> Being illegal you always depend on others, especially your family. You get nowhere without family, because you can't expect to live with just any person, free of charge, for a year. Being illegal you realise you cannot do without support (Hassan, Morocco).

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

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

At the same time, they mobilise social leverage to help them acquire the steady employment they desire (Briggs 1998: 178). These two forms of social capital are thus complementary to one another. Both are needed to secure independent settlement. Social support provided by strong ties combined with social leverage acquired through 'weak ties' (Granovetter 1973) thus prove decisive for settlement migrants' realisation of their aspirations.

Cultural capital in the sense of mastering the host country's languages does not appear to play a major role for settlement migrants. For some jobs,

such as babysitting or live-in maid services, it can be relevant. Martina, from Bolivia, said she had difficulty communicating with the family she had worked for in Antwerp:

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

For some jobs it is important to be able to communicate properly. However, for most jobs speaking a host country language is not that relevant. Therefore, cultural capital in terms of mastering languages is only moderately important and surely not a form of capital that is decisive for settlement migrants. Although some of my respondents did speak a little Dutch or French and some were taking language courses, only a few of them indicated that this had any influence on their ability to find (better) work. Knowing a few words usually sufficed. The decision to learn a language is probably related more to their choice to settle in the destination country than inspired by a quest for employment.

Many of my respondents with settlement aspirations did not manage to make a decent living in Belgium or the Netherlands. A number had been unable to mobilise either social leverage or social support, and most had managed to mobilise only one of the two, instead of the combined social capital that was needed. Some, for example, lack social support:

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

Besides those who lack social support, there are unsuccessful settlement migrants who do not manage to find steady work. Necessity compels them to reside with family. The social support provided by their strong ties enables them to cope and 'get by', but not to 'get ahead', and settle down inde-

pendently. Not being able to find steady employment, these unsuccessful settlement migrants remain dependent on social support:

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

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

9.3.3   Legalisation aspirations

Successful legalisation migrants aim, one way or another, for legalisation of their stay – usually because they are getting married. Other research has shown that marriage is the most successful legalisation strategy in Belgium (Van Nieuwenhuyze 2009) and the Netherlands (Staring 2001). Sometimes marriages are instrumental, but among my respondents they usually stemmed from a love relationship. Marriages were often within the same ethnic group, as in Abdeslam's case: 'I am about to get engaged to a Moroccan girl. She was born in Belgium and has a residence permit. My cousin introduced me to her.' Family members or close friends introduce migrants to their future spouses, or they meet while going out. Emre explained, 'I have a Turkish girlfriend, I am about to get engaged to her. She is my sister's friend. I met her when I was visiting my sister. My sister introduced us to each other.'

At the same time, respondents indicated that it was not always easy for a migrant without a legal status to find a partner in their ethnic community. The parents of a potential candidate do not always agree with an intended marriage because they suspect that the candidate's hidden intention is to obtain residency rights or because they feel that an irregular migrant lacks social status (see Engbersen 2001).

> [I]f you don't have papers, you are my friend, but if you demand my sister or even my girlfriend, it is like that, it is war, no. Because here, for women it is not good to marry someone without papers … they regard someone without papers as a handicapped person (Marouane, Morocco).

This is where the significance of social capital in the form of social support comes in. All of my respondents in Belgium who were getting married within their ethnic community had family members residing in Belgium. Their presence allowed for a relationship of trust to evolve between the two families and compensated for the potential lack of social status and trust attached to the marriage candidate.

Obviously, mastering a native language hardly benefits these migrants at all. However, if respondents aimed to marry a Dutch or Belgian national, this did become salient. All legalisation migrants who were trying their luck on the Belgian or Dutch marriage market were reasonably fluent in Dutch or French. Some of them had attended language courses, most likely because they realised that in order to meet someone, it was important to be able to communicate properly. Recall that Marouane, a Moroccan native who was living in Brussels – where people mostly speak French – even attended Dutch language classes so that he could meet women via the Internet.

It should be noted that the chances of an irregular migrant marrying a native are likely to be different for men and women from different countries of origin. Research shows that whereas Dutch native women who marry a foreign spouse tend to find partners from Africa, Dutch native men largely marry women from Eastern Europe, South-East Asia or Latin America (Leerkes and Kulu-Glasgow 2010). Such preferences of natives are likely to concern irregular migrants as potential partners as well.

Finally, there are respondents who pay money to enter a bogus marriage. In the Netherlands, the going rate for a bogus marriage is between € 10,000 and € 15,000 (Mazzucato 2005: 10). Legalisation migrants seldom have the required amount of money themselves; they therefore mobilise economic capital by means of their social capital:

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

As mentioned above, those without family in Belgium were usually unsuccessful in finding a marriage partner from their own ethnic group. These legalisation migrants might go on to try to find a Belgian or Dutch person to marry, but often fail to do so because of their limited knowledge of Belgian or Dutch cultural conventions or because they have not

yet sufficiently mastered the Dutch or French language. Furthermore, they usually lack the financial means and the right contacts to get into a bogus marriage. For these legalisation migrants, their lack of relevant capital for the marriage market renders them unable to realise their aspirations.

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

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

These respondents had either filed appeals in their asylum applications or they had applied for regularisation. Those who had not applied for legal residence indicated that they were waiting for another regularisation campaign. Even though their hopes were high, none of my respondents was convinced that she or he would get a positive result any time soon, which I thought at the time was a realistic assessment. But as indicated in chapter 4, decisions made by the Belgian government have proved me wrong on this point. Many of my respondents in Belgium have now been legalised as a result of the collective regularisation in 2009. However, success achieved through a regularisation campaign is not related to the theoretical focus of this chapter, which is the relevance of different forms of capital. It is not the possession of a form of capital that led to legalisation, but a decision made by the government. I therefore have not included the regularisation campaign in this analysis, even though it unexpectedly enabled many legalisation migrants to realise their aspirations.[1] In fact, because of the lack of transparency in the procedures that legalisation migrants apply for, employees of organisations complain that

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1   It could be interesting to determine the relevance of different forms of capital in being able to access the regularisation campaign. Hagan (1994) indicates due to a lack of social capital, some irregular migrants remain unaware of the regularisation programme. But as my fieldwork was long over at the time the programme was issued, I could not gather data that would allow me to make statements in this respect.

it is impossible to realistically assess the chances an irregular migrant has of achieving regularisation (see also Van Meeteren et al. 2008). My analysis is therefore focused only on legalisation migrants who aim to get married.

Migrants who aspire to become legalised usually do not invest in work, because working informally could prevent them from getting papers. Although many of the legalisation migrants I interviewed did have job competencies, they choose to refrain from working as much as possible, because this could obstruct the fulfilment of their aspirations. Hence, unsuccessful legalisation migrants did not necessarily lack capital altogether – although this happens as well – but they especially lack the right form of capital to realise their specific aspirations. As a result, some of them could be successful in realising other types of aspirations, but for now they choose to continue to focus on legalisation instead.

9.4   Shifts in aspirations

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

9.5   Aspirations and capital

This chapter tried to answer the question of what forms of capital irregular migrants need to realise their aspirations. The extent to which irregular migrants manage to attain their aspirations was found to depend on the extent to which they possess the right (combination of) capital. The finding that those who do not realise their aspirations do possess capital, but lack the correct form or the right combination of forms of capital required for that specific aspiration, validates this conclusion. Table 9.1 summarises the main findings.

Table 9.1   Aspirations and required forms of capital for attainment

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

One should be careful in making generalisations based on these findings. My respondents were not a representative sample of the population of irregular migrants in Belgium or the Netherlands, or anywhere else in the world. Research conducted in another country and with different respondents could yield different results. The same would be true if this research had been done at a different time, when immigration policies were different. However, whereas different or changing policy contexts would undoubtedly result in different distributions of irregular migrants over the three categories of aspirations, it will be up to future research to determine the extent to which the configurations of capital required for attainment of these aspirations remain the same under different conditions.

I have shown that different aspirations require distinct forms or combinations of capital. This contributes to the theoretical debate on the significance of different forms of capital for irregular migrants. The importance of various forms of capital has been extensively discussed in previous research (see, e.g., Chavez 1998; Cranford 2005; Engbersen 2001; Grzymala-Kazlowska 2005; Hagan 1998; Mahler 1995; Massey et al. 1994; Staring 2001), but it remained unclear in what situations which form or combination of capital was decisive. This is because past discussion has tended

to focus on the question of what form of capital is important for irregular migrants in general. For example, whereas Engbersen et al. (2006: 223) write that social capital is 'the most important currency for irregular migrants', Grzymala-Kazlowska (2005: 694) claims that 'cultural capital (especially knowledge of foreign languages) has become a major factor determining the position of individuals and the entire group on the market'. Clearly, dealing with the question of which form of capital is vital for irregular migrants in general does not facilitate the development of theoretical insights. After all, I have shown that the significance of various forms of capital depends on irregular migrants' aspirations. These aspirations should therefore be the starting point of any analysis dealing with their success.

10   Assessing a New Perspective

10.1   Analysing aspirations: The merits

This book has sought a better understanding of the lives of irregular migrants in Belgium and the Netherlands. It focused, in particular, on irregular migrants' patterns of incorporation, their transnational activities and the role played by different forms of capital in their realisation of their aspirations. I outlined a research approach that takes the aspirations of irregular migrants as a starting point. Following this approach, we arrived at a better understanding of the way patterns of incorporation and transnational activities of irregular migrants are shaped. The literature on irregular migrants has in the past overemphasised structure while neglecting agency. The current research sought to connect the two by bringing aspirations into the analysis. Aspirations provide 'a conceptual link between structure and agency in that they are rooted firmly in individual proclivity (agency) but also are acutely sensitive to perceived societal constraints (structure)' (MacLeod 2009: 139).

The analysis revealed three types of aspirations. Investment migrants strive to acquire financial means for investment in their home country. They aspire to work and make money in the country of destination, and then return to their country of origin once they have acquired enough savings. These migrants strive for future upward mobility in their country of origin and are usually 'target earners' (Massey et al. 1987). That means they save for very specific projects, ranging from starting a business to financing a wedding in the country of origin. Whereas investment migrants mean to stay in the destination country only temporarily, settlement migrants aspire to start a new life in the destination country. They do not intend to return to the country of origin. Settlement migrants indicate that they do not necessarily require a legal status in order to lead the better life they aspire to. This stands in sharp contrast to the aspirations of legalisation migrants, for whom leading a better life is inextricably bound up with obtaining a legal status. For them, obtaining legal residence represents the start of a new life, unlike settlement migrants who say they can start to build a new life without papers. Legalisation migrants do not want to live as irregular migrants. They therefore actively work to obtain a legal status.

As aspirations may change over time, it is important to emphasise that I have not constructed a typology of migrants, but a typology of aspirations. The concepts of investment migrants, settlement migrants and legalisation migrants are used to refer to irregular migrants who have these specific

aspirations at a certain point in time, but the core analytical categories are types of aspirations. Chapters 6, 7 and 8 demonstrated that these three types of aspirations underlie distinct patterns of incorporation and transnational activities. Chapter 9 demonstrated that irregular migrants with different types of aspirations require different forms of capital to realise these. The main empirical findings of these chapters are recapped below. As a means of achieving synthesis, they are not discussed by chapter, but by type of aspiration. This is followed by a discussion of the implications of this study and suggestions for future research.

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

Investment migrants try to work as much as possible during their stay in the destination country because this facilitates a quick return. They therefore tend to work long hours, six or seven days per week. Because they are in the destination country to work and make money, they place little value on leisure time. They seldom engage in recreational activities and usually stay at home, mostly in the company of family or flatmates. Moreover, they have a very small network of social contacts. Not wanting to stay in the destination country, investment migrants remain socially oriented towards their country of origin. They invest time and energy in maintaining social relations with relatives and friends there, putting little effort into building social relations in the destination country. These migrants do make efforts to keep up with the latest news developments in their home country and they keep in touch with loved ones. Most investment migrants call or send text messages on a daily basis, because they indicate they miss their loved ones very much.

Investment migrants live as cheaply as possible in order to save money and ensure a quick return. They tend to inhabit cramped houses, often sharing rooms with multiple persons. They economise on virtually everything, spending very little money in the destination country. Instead, they may remit a large share of their income: approximately € 2,000 to € 5,000 per year. Others save a similar amount of money, safeguarding it until they have acquired enough to return and invest in their country of origin.

Investment migrants usually live in immigrant districts where they can profit from the infrastructure that caters to irregular migrants. In such areas, contractors in search of employees visit tea houses and bars, and vans that drive irregular migrants to job sites usually leave from locations within immigrant districts. As work is a top priority for investment migrants, they take exploitative conditions and low pay for granted. They are not overly

troubled by low pay, because they aim to spend their earnings in the country of origin where life is much cheaper and wages are even lower. The exploitative conditions can be tolerated because they are only temporary. Investment migrants therefore usually work in the sectors that are typically associated with informal migrant labour, such as horticulture, construction and restaurants. In these sectors, they do the types of work that natives typically reject. Investment migrants do not mind working in these sectors, even though these jobs are often tightly controlled. If they are caught doing informal labour and expelled, most can easily return, because most come from countries nearby.

If investment migrants have specific job competencies that they are able to deploy in the destination country, they are relatively well paid. Furthermore, having arranged for work and lodging prior to their actual migration proves very helpful in realising investment aspirations, because it allows them to find jobs in which they can use their competencies. For investment migrants, cultural capital (such as job competencies below the 'legal ceiling'), which can be activated by social capital, is decisive in determining their chances of success on the informal labour market in Belgium and the Netherlands, and consequently in attainment of their aspirations.

Investment migrants without job competencies earn low wages and have difficulty finding employment. As a result, they either have to stay longer than they envisioned, or they have to go back without having realised their aspirations. My respondents had as yet chosen to stick around; otherwise I would not have encountered them. These unsuccessful or not yet successful investment migrants indicated that they had to live off their savings or reach out to others for help when they were without employment. Investment migrants who have family members in the destination country can usually turn to them for help. Those who do not have family in the destination country depend on the commercial infrastructure for additional income or support. Investment migrants seldom receive support from migrant assistance organisations. Sometimes they are unaware of these organisations' existence, and besides, they do not expect the state to provide them with help in case of difficulties or illness. They have come to make money and return and do not want to depend on state support.

10.1.2 Settlement aspirations: Enjoying a better life in quiet suburban neighbourhoods

Unlike investment migrants, for settlement migrants 'home' is the destination country. Their lives are not all about working. They want to lead a regular life that they regard as better than that which they had in their

country of origin. Settlement migrants prefer to work in relatively stable, non-seasonal, Monday-to-Friday types of arrangements, so that they have the weekends off, and they preferably work during the day, so they can be at home in the evenings. For many settlement migrants, this is often because they live with their family, which may include children.

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

Suburban areas provide proximity to settlement migrants' preferred employment, which is in native private households. Settlement migrants seek work there because private households have the least chance of being controlled. Migrants with settlement aspirations generally have a lot to lose if they are expelled, as they have built their lives here. Furthermore, private households offer the possibility of working for several employers, which allows settlement migrants to spread the risk of job loss, exploitation and low pay. In addition, settlement migrants are attracted to Belgian and Dutch private households, because these are reported to pay the best and to treat irregular migrants well.

If they do not manage to find this type of employment, settlement migrants have to accept other jobs, usually of the kind typically done by investment migrants. As settlement migrants cannot cope for long with the hard conditions and working hours that accompany such employment, they usually work at intervals. Settlement migrants in jobs that investment migrants typically do are dissatisfied with their working conditions, because they do not allow them to live a regular life. Moreover, they feel exploited because of the low wages they receive. This prevents them from leading the good life that they aspire to in the destination country.

Since settlement migrants want to stay permanently in the destination country, they want to get to know the country. They sometimes travel and take part in a range of leisure activities. In addition, they frequent all kinds of social gatherings. Many settlement migrants take part in activities organised by formal and informal socio-cultural organisations. Through these social gatherings, settlement migrants meet many people and create

a large social network. Furthermore, through the activities organised by socio-cultural organisations cultural symbols associated with the country of origin are reproduced, which adds to the sense of 'home' in the destination country (see Coutin 2005a). While settlement migrants do maintain personal contacts within their country of origin, they do not keep up with the latest general news there. Their frame of reference is the destination country. They tend to have enough contact with co-ethnics in the destination country to fulfil their cultural needs. For settlement migrants 'home' is in the destination country, so they spend the largest share of their income there and send only small sums to their relatives back home. These sums are usually in the order of € 1,000 per year or in case of special needs.

To lead the good life they desire, settlement migrants have to mobilise social leverage (Briggs 1998) from their weak ties. The social gatherings they visit are helpful, because they enlarge migrants' social networks and provide access to the job information that circulates within these networks. Effective mobilisation of the social leverage potentially available in these networks requires settlement migrants to maintain a good reputation. Next to the relevance of social leverage, settlement migrants need family members nearby or close friends who can support them in case of a temporary setback. Social leverage and social support are thus complementary to one another; settlement migrants need both to secure the life they aspire to.

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

Settlement migrants who do not have the resources to invest in such systems can turn to organisations for help. Most organisations help settlement migrants temporarily by providing them with material support. However, this is usually offered only early in their stay and certainly not on a structural basis. Organisations try to avoid helping irregular migrants install themselves in illegality. Information is the only type of assistance they offer to settlement migrants on a structural basis.

10.1.3   Legalisation aspirations: Sacrifices in the pursuit of a legal status

Legalisation migrants work as little as possible, because they perceive informal labour to be a risk that could obstruct fulfilment of their aspirations. Getting caught while engaged in informal work severely reduces the chances of legalisation and simultaneously increases the chances of being deported, which is why legalisation migrants avoid it if they can. Many legalisation migrants do work part-time in order to cover their basic needs. They spend the rest of their time in search of a marriage partner or in pursuit of 'integration'. They believe that learning to speak the local language and associating with native citizens will increase their chances of legalisation on the basis of their being well integrated. Because legalisation migrants work only the minimum necessary to sustain themselves, they do not send money to their country of origin. Furthermore, they are picky about the jobs they are willing to do. They consciously seek jobs that have least chance of being controlled: jobs in private households. Such employment is relatively risk-free, and it offers the possibility of working only a limited number of hours.

As legalisation migrants wish to refrain from work as much as possible, they need a lot of support to sustain themselves. In fact, they prefer to generate resources from support rather than through informal labour. They therefore spend a lot of time looking for monetary gifts with which they can pay the rent and buy food. They furthermore prefer not to ask for help within their own community, so they turn to native Dutch or Belgian citizens instead. Some legalisation migrants even live with native citizens. These legalisation migrants usually receive free room and board in exchange for light housework. In these arrangements they find not only support, but also additional means to integrate themselves. Contacts with natives are perceived as strengthening their applications too. Legalisation migrants who aim to get married also need support, but family members usually provide them with room and board until they manage to find a partner. If they do not have family in the destination country, they depend on the commercial infrastructure, or they must work more than they would like to.

Legalisation migrants who are involved in procedures also receive substantial support from organisations, usually for a long period of time. As these migrants are considered to have 'a perspective', they can get food packages and sometimes even long-term financial support. Even though the informal support provided by organisations is limited, support accumulates

because legalisation migrants tend to shop around and combine this type of support with assistance from within their personal networks. Legalisation migrants who aim to get married cannot turn to organisations for support, as they are not considered to have 'a perspective'.

Furthermore, it is not in the interest of this category of irregular migrants to hang around organisations, because this is not a good place to meet a partner to marry. In contrast, legalisation migrants who are involved in procedures spend a lot of their free time calling in at organisations for a chat, for social support, to do voluntary work or to take part in the activities organised there. They may hang around at organisations all day, as these offer a wide range of social and recreational activities for free. In the absence of full-time work, they keep themselves busy this way, and they believe that visiting organisations is good for their integration. Through these visits, legalisation migrants develop rather heterogeneous networks in terms of ethnic background. However, their social circles are quite small, because they primarily associate with other irregular migrants who visit the same organisations each day. Furthermore, they have little opportunity to meet people through work, and they seldom participate in recreational activities outside the scope of organisations.

Legalisation migrants who aim to get married usually have a larger social circle. They realise that others can introduce them to a potential future spouse, so they put great effort into building a large social network. They also maintain contacts with their relatives and friends back home, although these types of contacts may become frustrated if it takes the migrant in question a long time to become legalised. Many legalisation migrants who are involved in procedures have lost contact with family and friends in the country of origin due to political problems there. However, they do try to keep up with the situation there, especially politics. Political issues in the country of origin are often the reason for their migration. More importantly, many legalisation migrants are afraid to go back. They want to become legalised because they feel they have no other place to go. The political activities that legalisation migrants engage in are usually coordinated through migrant organisations. These organisations not only devote attention to improving the political situation in the country of origin, but they also look out for the well-being of those who live in the destination country.

It is difficult to determine what could make legalisation migrants who are involved in procedures successful in their quest for legalisation. Due to the lack of transparency of the procedures legalisation migrants are involved in, it is impossible to realistically assess the chance that an ir-

regular migrant has of achieving regularisation. My analysis of the forms of capital that legalisation migrants require to fulfil their aspirations was therefore focused on legalisation migrants who aim to get married. Migrants who try to find a co-ethnic to marry need social capital from family members. The presence of family members in the destination country allows for a relationship of trust to evolve between the two families and can compensate for the potential lack of social status and trust attached to the marriage candidate. Legalisation migrants who try their luck on the Belgian or Dutch marriage market have to speak Dutch or French to be able to communicate with potential spouses. Furthermore, those who pay money in order to enter a bogus marriage require economic capital, which they may mobilise by means of their social capital.

10.1.4   Overview

Aspirations reflect the dreams and wishes of irregular migrants, but they must also be understood as responses to objective structures. These structural opportunities and constraints are located both in the country of origin and in the destination country, as well as within the personal social networks of irregular migrants. This book presented many examples of how aspirations reflect the structural conditions which irregular migrants face. Patterns of incorporation and transnational activities of irregular migrants can therefore best be understood in relation to both the agency that individual migrants have and the structures they are embedded in. For example, specific conditions in countries of origin shape specific aspirations. Furthermore, my respondents' aspirations were formed in specific structural contexts. We saw in the empirical chapters of this book that perceptions of structural barriers, like specific policy measures and chances of encounters with the police, have different effects on irregular migrants with different aspirations. Furthermore, we saw that migrants from the same ethnic group may be embedded in different social networks because of their different aspirations. The approach outlined here does not imply that structural barriers and embeddedness in social groups are not relevant for understanding how patterns of incorporation and transnational activities are shaped; instead, it implies that our understanding is *improved* by taking aspirations into account *as well*.

Obviously, the picture portrayed up to now does not do justice to all empirical diversity. The categories represent ideal-type images of irregular migrants with different types of aspirations. Furthermore, as the aspirations

of irregular migrants may shift over time, respondents sometimes find themselves between the ideal types outlined above. When reading the main findings, as summarised in table 10.1, it is important to keep their ideal-type nature in mind.

Table 10.1   Main findings by aspiration

	Investment	Settlement	Legalisation Procedures	Legalisation Marriage
Functional incorporation				
Housing				
Type	Cheap and crowded	Regular	Diverse	With family
Location	Immigrant district	If group is represented: immigrant district. Otherwise: suburb	If group is represented: immigrant district. Otherwise: suburb	If group is represented: immigrant district. Otherwise: suburb
Employment				
Work hours	As many as possible	Regular	As little as possible	As little as possible
Type of work	'Typical' irregular migrant sectors	In native private households	In native private households	In private households or ethnic businesses
Perception of exploitation	No perception of exploitation	Certain types of work	Fundamental	Fundamental
Other sources of income				
Gift and barter economy	Commercial networks	Social solidarity systems	Native citizens	Family, friends
Organisations	None	Occasional material support	Intensive	None
Social incorporation				
Leisure time	As little as possible	Highly valued	Nothing special	Instrumental
Ways of spending leisure time	Indoors	Recreational activities	Organisations	In the streets, going out
Geographic mobility	Immobile	Mobile (across national borders)	Mobile (within national borders)	Immobile
Span of social contacts	Limited	Large circles	Small circles	Large circles

	Investment	Settlement	Legalisation	Legalisation
			Procedures	Marriage
Functional incorporation				
Type of social contacts	Other investment migrants	Ethnic community	Heterogeneous network	Ethnic community or heterogeneous
Transnational activities				
Economic	Very active	Occasionally	Little to none	Little to none
Social	Many personal contacts	Some personal contacts and receiving society	High involvement, TV, papers, internet	Personal contacts and receiving society
Political	No activities	No activities	Some activities	No activities
Forms of capital				
Required capital for attainment	Cultural capital: Job competencies Social capital: Ethnic (transnational) networks	Combined social capital: Leverage and Social support	Unable to determine	Dependent on marriage market: Cultural, economic or social capital

10.1.5   Shifts in aspirations

Although I took aspirations at one point in life as a starting point of my analysis, I was typically able to distinguish a sequence of aspirations throughout the migrant careers of the people I interviewed during my fieldwork. However, for the respondents who were interviewed by research assistants, I could usually assess merely one point in life. Analysis of my own interview results indicates that there is no firm hierarchy of aspirations and that no fixed trajectory exists. Van Nieuwenhuyze (2007) found a typical trajectory from investment, to settlement to legalisation aspirations among the Senegambians she studied. The diversity in my sample allowed me to demonstrate that this trajectory is surely not uncommon, but that other variations occur as well. The only trajectories I did not come across were those in which settlement or legalisation aspirations turned into investment aspirations. This does not mean, however, that these trajectories do not exist. But it is likely that migrants who have followed these have already returned and are consequently difficult to encounter in the destination country.

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

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

10.2   Implications

The qualitative nature of the current study does not allow me to draw quantitative conclusions about the patterns I found. However, the strength of my analysis does not lie in quantitative description, but in the understanding that it provides of how these patterns are shaped. The current study sheds new light on existing findings and contributes to scholarly debates about how irregular migrants live in Western societies. Moreover, the results have implications for the way research on irregular migrants is conducted. These contributions to the literature are discussed below.

10.2.1   Beyond a 'victim perspective'

I argued that many studies of irregular migrants in Western societies share a 'victim perspective'. Scholars commonly perceive irregular migrants as passive recipients of structural forces who have little control over their lives. Whereas they overemphasise structure, they neglect the agency that irregular migrants have to act within structural boundaries and which sometimes enables them to overcome structural barriers. My analysis demonstrates that a survival perspective does not do justice to the empirical reality.

A perspective that includes agency more prominently deepens our understanding, because, as the current study shows, irregular migrants may

act differently under similar circumstances. Their diverging actions can be understood by recognising the different aspirations they have. Instead of being passive victims, I showed that irregular migrants actively strive for specific goals. Furthermore, my findings demonstrate that not all irregular migrants are engrossed solely in 'survival'. Many irregular migrants do achieve success; some even manage to realise their aspirations. In addition, even though not all irregular migrants realise their aspirations, a focus on aspirations helps us to understand why irregular migrants prefer certain jobs or accommodation over others and therefore adds to our understanding of how outcomes are shaped.

Most previous studies have raised only the question of why some irregular migrants 'survive' better than others. This dominant perspective has obstructed our understanding of the social mobility that some irregular migrants achieve. It is of crucial importance to distinguish between 'survival' and social mobility, and my results clearly demonstrate that each requires different resources. Moreover, irregular migrants with different aspirations 'survive' differently as well. Future research should therefore rise above the victim perspective by taking aspirations into account. The sections below discuss the main advances that can be expected in this way.

10.2.2   Functional incorporation and ethnic community patterns

The analysis presented in this book took individual aspirations as a starting point and produced insights relevant to a number of theoretical debates and diverging research outcomes pertaining to the functional incorporation of irregular migrants. These concern issues such as the relationship between income and money spent on accommodation, the spatial distribution of irregular migrants, and the hours they work and the types of work they do. These insights were discussed in detail in chapter 6 and will not be repeated here. These insights could be gained because this analysis inductively focused on individual aspirations instead of on groups or on structural constraints.

Researchers have traditionally investigated why some *groups* of irregular migrants have different outcomes than other groups. According to Piore (1979), migration and settlement must be understood as processes relating to communities rather than to individuals. Likewise, Engbersen et al. (1999, 2006) speak of 'ethnic community patterns of incorporation' and explain why ethnic groups display different outcomes in terms of income, labour and housing conditions by referring to the support patterns dominant

within these ethnic communities. My analysis reveals that it is problematic to explain outcomes by referring to patterns at the level of the community. I demonstrate that an analysis that focuses on the group instead of the individual yields different results than an analysis that starts with individual aspirations.

For example, my Turkish respondents were more often employed and more often employed full-time than my Moroccan respondents. On the basis of these results one could conclude that Turkish migrants manage to survive better than Moroccans, who manage to acquire only part-time employment. One could interpret these results by referring to the different characteristics of the two communities, the Turkish being a stronger, more tightly knit community than the Moroccan, with higher levels of ethnic entrepreneurship, consequently offering better employment opportunities to irregular migrants (see, e.g., Engbersen 1996; Engbersen et al. 2006). In addition, one could attribute these differences to levels of solidarity. After all, successful communities display more solidarity. Although such explanations are likely to be partially valid, they obscure the fact that many Moroccan irregular migrants are legalisation migrants who choose to work as little as possible so as not to endanger their possibility of acquiring legal papers. Hence, for these migrants, the fact that they work part-time is not primarily the result of lack of employment opportunities or solidarity within their ethnic community, but due to the aspirations they have. This means that outcomes are not simply determined by structural conditions, such as community characteristics; they can be better understood by taking aspirations into account as well.

Apart from issues such as housing and income, previous research has discussed ethnic community patterns of incorporation in relation to the support irregular migrants garner from these communities. I found that not all irregular migrants belong to an 'ethnic community'. Some irregular migrants are assisted by family members, who are obviously also co-ethnics, but this has nothing to do with their ethnic community in general. Some of my respondents who indicated receiving assistance from family members had little contact with other co-ethnics. If strong family relations are frequent within a certain community, they produce a spurious ethnic community pattern. I believe, for example, that I could have easily misinterpreted the support my Turkish respondents received as 'community support'. Many Turkish investment migrants live with and are supported by family members. Many Turkish legalisation migrants who aim to get married are supported by family members as well. Combined with the fact that there is a large presence of Turks who can construct social solidarity systems

for Turkish settlement migrants, one might easily conclude that there is a lot of solidarity within the 'Turkish community'. However, although many Turks are supported by other Turks, this is hardly a dominant support pattern within the 'Turkish community', because different mechanisms are in play here.

In addition, even though irregular migrants might have a specific ethnic background that could theoretically provide access to an 'ethnic community', this does not always happen in practice. Chapter 6 described how informal systems of social solidarity operate: if migrants want to access them they have to contribute as well. For settlement migrants who aim to spend their lives in the destination country, this seems a wise investment, but this is less so for investment and legalisation migrants. Having only temporary engagements in the destination country, investment migrants see no need to invest in such social systems and therefore cannot access them either. Because legalisation migrants wish to refrain from work as much as possible, it is not possible for them to occasionally contribute any surplus income to help others in need. In addition, legalisation migrants do not usually seek support from informal systems of social solidarity, but primarily derive social support from native citizens and organisations. In fact, they prefer to stay away from their own communities and consciously seek solidarity with native citizens.

Even if migrants have access to support within social solidarity systems, this does not mean that every individual is able to mobilise it to the same extent. By looking at some general level of solidarity or dominant support pattern for a group as a whole, one fails to see that migrants are assisted in some situations and not in others. In order to get support, irregular migrants have to contribute to these systems, and they must maintain a solid reputation. They need to be known as a trustworthy employee or tenant and as someone who will repay a loan. In other words, simply having a Turkish background does not guarantee access to social capital invested in social networks of the 'Turkish community'. Whereas much migration research takes social capital in social networks for granted (Ryan et al. 2008), this study found that it requires an investment of time, effort and resources to effectively mobilise social capital (see Portes & Landolt 2000). Furthermore, my analysis reveals that migrants with different aspirations vary in their willingness to make such investments.

All in all, whereas many scholars explain outcomes by referring to ethnic communities, my findings indicate that this is problematic. Although patterns of incorporation and solidarity may sometimes appear to be

ethnic-community related, this study demonstrated that they are shaped by different mechanisms than dominant community support patterns. In other words, these 'ethnic community patterns of incorporation' are spurious relationships, shaped by other mechanisms pertaining to individual aspirations. This is obscured if the analysis is carried out at the level of the group.

10.2.3   Social mobility: Objective measures?

This book also presents insights relevant to studies of social mobility of irregular migrants, since my findings indicate that it is difficult to 'objectively measure' success amongst irregular migrants. Irregular migrants have different definitions of success, which means that it is problematic to take a standard metric, like a certain level of income or hours of work, as is sometimes done in research (see, e.g., Powers & Seltzer 1998; Tienda & Singer 1995). The current study, for example, indicates that legalisation migrants prefer to generate social support instead of income through employment and that settlement migrants prefer leisure time over work. Not taking irregular migrants' aspirations into consideration would lead us to prematurely label some of these migrants as 'helpless victims', while they themselves regard their life in the destination country a success.

Since the way irregular migrants define 'success' depends on their aspirations, we need different standards to measure 'success'. I therefore reframed the question of social mobility into the question of how irregular migrants realise their aspirations. I demonstrated that irregular migrants with different aspirations require distinct forms or combinations of capital. The relevance of various forms of capital has been extensively debated (see, e.g., Chavez 1998; Cranford 2005; Engbersen 2001; Grzymala-Kazlowska 2005; Hagan 1998; Mahler 1995; Massey et al. 1994; Staring 2001). But it has remained unclear in which situations which form or combination of capital is decisive, because the discussion has tended to focus on the question of what form of capital is important for irregular migrants in general. Clearly, it is not instructive to debate the role of different forms of capital for irregular migrants in general. After all, the current study shows that the significance of various forms of capital depends on irregular migrants' aspirations. These aspirations should therefore be the starting point of any analysis dealing with their success.

10.2.4   Social incorporation

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

The finding that irregular migrants with different types of aspirations live different types of social lives provides insight into the implicit debate on the social incorporation of irregular migrants. This debate, thus far, seems to be dichotomised around two positions. The first and dominant position portrays irregular migrants as living a 'survival' existence; that is, migrants stay inside their houses with locked doors and closed curtains and do not participate in recreational activities. They live their lives in 'geographically restricted areas', show 'immobile behaviour' and are 'chained to their home' (Engbersen 1999a: 236). Furthermore, this perspective believes irregular migrants to associate primarily with their own ethnic group, usually with other irregular migrants, as they are cut off from mainstream society and have few contacts with native citizens. Yet a few scholars hold another position. They argue that this 'cocoon' image is misleading. They emphasise that their respondents spent their leisure time involved in all kinds of recreational activities in the company of co-ethnics.

Chapter 7 shed light on how these different outcomes were shaped by using a research approach that takes aspirations as its central focus. Whereas the dominant viewpoint seems to reflect the social lives of investment migrants, the lives of my settlement migrants corresponded more to the images portrayed by scholars holding the second viewpoint. Furthermore, the social lives of legalisation migrants indicate that there is more diversity to be found than has been reported in the literature so far. Legalisation migrants who are involved in procedures, for example, spend most of their abundant leisure time in the company of native citizens and visiting organisations. Hence, not all irregular migrants live in a 'parallel world' without contact with native citizens, and not all spend their leisure time participating in recreational activities with co-ethnics.

The findings presented in this book indicate that irregular migrants spend their leisure time differently and have different social networks depending on their aspirations. The analysis further demonstrates that the lives of irregular migrants are not always solely about survival, but that there may be room for leisure and social contact as well. In fact, settlement migrants prioritise their social lives over additional work, even though extra work would allow them to 'survive better' according to the dominant perspective. This indicates that irregular migrants should be perceived as social beings who engage in meaningful social interaction with others. Moreover, their social lives affect their aspirations and hence the choices they make in other domains of life. For example, investment migrants may come to enjoy the company of their flatmates, and other friendships may evolve that make it harder for them to return to their country of origin. This may eventually foster settlement aspirations. Likewise, social gatherings may be primarily for fun and cultural display, but new social encounters at these gatherings may lead to job opportunities or social support. Thus, in order to understand the ways in which irregular migrants live in receiving societies, their social lives have to be taken into consideration as well (see also Van Meeteren 2012b, 2010).

10.2.5   Transnational perspective

So far little research has been devoted to the transnational engagements of irregular migrants. My findings therefore fill a gap in our understanding of the transnational activities that irregular migrants undertake. Furthermore, the results are relevant, because they run contrary to expectations about irregular migrants' transnational engagements in the literature, which presumes that transnational activities are uncommon among immigrants because of the obstacles they face.

My findings indicate that many irregular migrants frequently engage in transnational activities, therefore contradicting these claims. In addition, my analysis revealed that irregular migrants' transnational engagements should be understood from a position of choice rather than limitations. This casts doubt on the assumption underlying other research, that irregular migrants engage less in transnationalism when faced with exclusion. Again, a focus on aspirations yields vital insights. In the event that settlement migrants earn more, they do not necessarily remit more. Instead, they usually choose to spend their extra earnings on their own family in the destination country. In addition, an increase in income is more likely to prompt legalisation migrants to work less rather than to remit more. Only

investment migrants increase their economic transnational activities if they earn more.

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

While researchers have scrutinised the relation between incorporation and transnational engagements, they have overlooked the fact that both are intertwined with aspirations. Recent studies have distinguished different types of transnational activity, but they still need to contextualise findings in relation to the agency of migrants, in order to properly understand why migrants do or do not engage in certain types of transnational activities. Future research on transnationalism can therefore benefit from taking aspirations into account. At the same time, research that studies the way irregular migrants live in Western societies should consider a transnational perspective. Such a perspective acknowledges the intertwined nature of aspirations and transnational engagements, and hence outcomes in other domains as well (see also Van Meeteren 2012a).

10.3   Moving forward

This book has theoretically and empirically demonstrated the downsides of the dominant survival perspective, as well the benefits that can be gained by adopting an approach that better combines structure and agency. In addition, our understanding of the ways in which irregular migrants live can be improved by shifting the level of analysis from communities to the level of aspirations. Future research could significantly benefit from taking aspirations into account.

As indicated in chapter 2, aspirations form a conceptual bridge between structure and agency, as aspirations are fed not only by needs and wants, but also by perceived possibilities and constraints. Taking irregular migrants' aspirations into account therefore does not imply neglect of structural barriers. However, one can only determine which barriers and possibilities are relevant once the aspirations of irregular migrants are known. For example, one first needs to know if an individual migrant aspires to work, before going on to analyse his or her opportunity structure in a labour market. Likewise, it makes little sense to analyse the horticulture sector when determining the opportunity structure of settlement and legalisation migrants, as they prefer to work for native private households. In other words, analysing irregular migrants' aspirations enables researchers to better grasp what structural barriers and opportunities are relevant to the migrants under study. Hence, instead of studying the effects of structural barriers on irregular migrants in general, future research should put such barriers into context by focusing on the interplay between opportunity structures and aspirations – and more generally on the processes that mediate between structure and agency.

Furthermore, by focusing on individual aspirations instead of communities, I do not imply that communities are irrelevant for our understanding of the way irregular migrants live. Communities appear to be particularly crucial in the lives of settlement migrants. However, irregular migrants actively choose the communities they want to belong to, and membership may require a good deal of investment and effort. Moreover, the communities that irregular migrants are part of are not always comprised of co-ethnics. In other words, while embeddedness in communities is relevant for us to understand how irregular migrants live, these are not necessarily 'ethnic' communities or in any other sense connected to the country of origin. The results presented in this book indicate that researchers cannot determine in advance which 'communities' are relevant for immigrants. Future research should take better note of the possibility that immigrant community boundaries may well be different from the way they first appear.

The current study offers a point of departure for future research to develop contextualised theory. The typology constructed here cannot be simply abstracted to a general level, as it is situated in specific local contexts. Since aspirations are fed by perceived opportunities and constraints, they are connected to a particular context. Research conducted in other countries would therefore probably yield different proportions for each category. The same would apply if this research had been done at another point in time, because immigration policies are undergoing continual change (Broeders 2009). However, whereas a different or changed policy context would

undoubtedly result in different distributions of irregular migrants over the three categories of aspirations, future research has to determine if and how different structural contexts are associated with different types of aspirations and mechanisms. Moreover, future research should analyse if and how the configurations of capital required for the attainment of aspirations play a role under different conditions. It is by analysing the mechanisms connected to aspirations in different countries or after policy changes that a focus on aspirations will be able to take research on irregular migrants a step further. My analysis provides a theoretical point of departure that allows research to move beyond specific empirical contexts to engage in comparative efforts in order to arrive at contextualised theory. By analysing how patterns of incorporation, transnational activities and required forms of capital are associated with aspirations in different contexts, this approach provides insight into the interplay between structure and agency.

This possibility of constructing contextualised theory is beneficial for the advancement of research on irregular migrants, even though it is currently assumed that this is hardly feasible. Düvell (2006b), for example, argues that results from the United States cannot be easily applied to the European context. He claims that the theoretical conclusions from US research are biased, because most research there is concentrated on Mexican immigrants, whose characteristics tend to be too specific to be simply projected onto migrants of other origins (see Weeks, Stoler & Jankowski 2011). Düvell (2006c) also argues that irregular migration to Europe is unique, and he therefore calls for a separation of European and US research. I would argue the contrary. An approach that takes aspirations as a starting point of analysis allows for comparative studies to be done. Such studies would allow us to contextualise the grounded theory that has been constructed here within divergent contexts.

Scholars could assess the theory developed in this book by testing hypotheses derived from it. At the same time, quantitative research efforts may be frustrated by the impossibility of drawing random samplings and because of the dynamic nature of aspirations. Studying the latter is a worthwhile subject in its own right, since aspirations are not a fixed trait but change over the course of a migratory career (see Massey 1986: 671). Future research could further scrutinise what causes aspirations to change. Such an investigation would allow for a more systematic understanding of the ways in which irregular migrants' aspirations are intertwined with their incorporation, their transnational activities and the forms of capital required for them to attain their aspirations.

Appendices

Appendix 1 Semi-structured interviews: Overview of respondent characteristics

Rsp.nr	Fictitious name	Nationality	Gender	Age	In Belgium since
1	Atanas	Bulgarian	Man	23	2001
2	Krum	Bulgarian	Man	49	1999
3	Momchil	Bulgarian	Man	19	2004
4	Volkan	Bulgarian	Man	35	2001
5	Plamen	Bulgarian	Man	36	2002
6	Kiril	Bulgarian	Man	26	2004
7	Chavdar	Bulgarian	Man	35	2002
8	Boyana	Bulgarian	Woman	21	2003
9	Illian	Bulgarian	Man	25	2003
10	Asen	Bulgarian	Man	41	1998
11	Emiliya	Bulgarian	Woman	31	2000
12	Todor	Bulgarian	Man	33	2001
13	Boyko	Bulgarian	Man	38	1999
14	Lavor	Bulgarian	Man	21	2002
15	Mustafa	Bulgarian	Man	28	2001
16	Önder	Bulgarian	Man	31	1997
17	Velin	Bulgarian	Man	32	2001
18	Yasen	Bulgarian	Man	27	2003
19	Iskren	Bulgarian	Man	25	2003
20	Kosta	Bulgarian	Man	43	2000
21	Lyuben	Bulgarian	Man	39	2002
22	Ivanka	Bulgarian	Woman	19	2003
23	Tsvetan	Bulgarian	Man	40	2002
24	Vassil	Bulgarian	Man	22	2001
25	Vilko	Bulgarian	Man	19	2004
26	Nedelya	Bulgarian	Woman	32	2003
27	Yordan	Bulgarian	Man	28	2002
28	Dimitar	Bulgarian	Man	24	2004
29	Sinan	Bulgarian	Man	28	2003
30	Ivailo	Bulgarian	Man	27	2003
31	Christ	Congolese	Man	27	2004
32	Bela	Congolese	Woman	38	2004
33	Maboula	Congolese	Man	20	2004
34	Prince	Congolese	Man	Unknown	2003
35	Ray	Congolese	Man	37	2004
36	Oudry	Congolese	Man	39	2003
37	Fred	Congolese	Man	23	2002
38	René	Congolese	Man	38	2002

Rsp.nr	Fictitious name	Nationality	Gender	Age	In Belgium since
39	Nicia	Congolese	Woman	31	2003
40	Arcel	Congolese	Man	Unknown	1994
41	Richi	Congolese	Man	47	2001
42	Christian	Congolese	Man	34	2000
43	Reine	Congolese	Woman	33	2001
44	Junior	Congolese	Man	35	1998
45	Archange	Congolese	Man	31	2001
46	Fasila	Congolese	Woman	44	2001
47	Lionel	Congolese	Man	31	2003
48	Eudes	Congolese	Man	21	2004
49	Gloire	Congolese	Man	37	2003
50	Arthur	Congolese	Man	32	2000
51	Jules	Congolese	Man	30	2005
52	Grasnie	Congolese	Woman	33	1999
53	Shabani	Congolese	Man	38	2002
54	Wiliam	Congolese	Man	38	2003
55	Kyiaki	Congolese	Man	38	1999
56	Evrard	Congolese	Man	37	2005
57	Kevin	Congolese	Man	51	2002
58	Eden	Congolese	Man	35	2004
59	Dorion	Congolese	Woman	24	1999
60	Geslin	Congolese	Man	35	2004
61	Brahim	Moroccan	Man	29	2000
62	Hassan	Moroccan	Man	26	2001
63	Nabil	Moroccan	Man	41	1998
64	Kamel	Moroccan	Man	36	2002
65	Younes	Moroccan	Man	22	2002
66	Mehdi	Moroccan	Man	25	2003
67	Nadir	Moroccan	Man	28	2002
68	Armine	Moroccan	Man	35	2000
69	Hicham	Moroccan	Man	30	2001
70	Khalid	Moroccan	Man	28	2002
71	Benaissa	Moroccan	Man	22	2004
72	Badr	Moroccan	Man	26	2002
73	Jamal	Moroccan	Man	37	1998
74	Issam	Moroccan	Man	29	2000
75	Rachid	Moroccan	Man	27	2002
76	Bashir	Moroccan	Man	29	2002
77	Gabir	Moroccan	Man	27	1998
78	Illiass	Moroccan	Man	23	2003
79	Hossam	Moroccan	Man	29	2004
80	Haroun	Moroccan	Man	29	2003
81	Jasim	Moroccan	Man	29	2002
82	Abdeslam	Moroccan	Man	25	2003
83	Thamir	Moroccan	Man	38	2000

Rsp.nr	Fictitious name	Nationality	Gender	Age	In Belgium since
84	Sharif	Moroccan	Man	30	2003
85	Umar	Moroccan	Man	33	2001
86	Adel	Moroccan	Man	28	2004
87	Wakil	Moroccan	Man	28	2001
88	Yahia	Moroccan	Man	24	2004
89	Saleh	Moroccan	Man	25	2004
90	Othman	Moroccan	Man	25	2000
91	Rüstü	Turkish	Man	29	1995
92	Servet	Turkish	Man	27	1997
93	Göksel	Turkish	Man	36	1987
94	Mehmet	Turkish	Man	22	1999
95	Musa	Turkish	Man	26	2001
96	Nihat	Turkish	Man	20	2003
97	Alp	Turkish	Man	35	2002
98	Baris	Turkish	Man	44	1980
99	Semih	Turkish	Man	25	2002
100	Emre	Turkish	Man	27	2002
101	Gökdeniz	Turkish	Man	27	2001
102	Göksel	Turkish	Man	28	2002
103	Halil	Turkish	Man	31	2000
104	Levent	Turkish	Man	40	1995
105	Tümer	Turkish	Man	36	1997
106	Onan	Turkish	Man	44	1989
107	Tolga	Turkish	Man	35	2001
108	Fatih	Turkish	Man	26	2002
109	Cahil	Turkish	Man	23	2002
110	Murat	Turkish	Man	33	1999
111	Erol	Turkish	Man	43	1994
112	Arda	Turkish	Man	27	2002
113	Kudret	Turkish	Man	29	2000
114	Tuncay	Turkish	Man	24	2003
115	Kazim	Turkish	Man	31	1998
116	Hakan	Turkish	Man	33	1999
117	Omer	Turkish	Man	27	2002
118	Khan	Turkish	Man	36	2001
119	Metin	Turkish	Man	36	1995
120	Songül	Turkish	Woman	22	2004

Appendix 2   In-depth interviews with irregular migrants: Overview of respondent characteristics

Resp. nr.	Fictitious name	Nationality	Gender	Age	Length of stay	Country
121	Antonia	Ecuador	Woman	40-50	11-12	Belgium
122	Warsi	Bangladesh	Man	30-40	8-9	Belgium
123	Isidora	Ecuador	Woman	50+	6-7	Belgium
124	Martina	Bolivia	Woman	50+	2-3	Belgium
125	Diego	Chile	Man	30-40	2-3	Belgium
126	Alexandre	Congo	Man	30-40	4-5	Belgium
127	Catalina	Colombia	Woman	30-40	8-9	Belgium
128	Tarek	Algeria	Man	30-40	5-6	Belgium
129	Benjamin	Ecuador	Man	30-40	6-7	Belgium
130	Javiera	Ecuador	Woman	30-40	6-7	Belgium
131	Arshan	Iran	Man	40-50	6-7	Belgium
132	Radimir	Kazakhstan	Man	30-40	6-7	Belgium
133	Dakarai	Mauretania	Man	20-30	3-4	Belgium
134	Tuyishime	Rwanda	Man	30-40	5-6	Belgium
135	Sofia	Bolivia	Woman	30-40	2-3	Belgium
136	Fernando	Chile	Man	30-40	2-3	Belgium
137	Lucas	Chile	Man	40-50	3-4	Belgium
138	Constanza	Bolivia	Woman	30-40	2-3	Belgium
139	Rasja	Syria	Woman	30-40	3-4	Belgium
140	Öznur	Turkey	Woman	20-30	7-8	Belgium
141	Enfunsegun	Nigeria	Man	30-40	4-5	Belgium
142	Rakesh	India	Man	40-50	3-4	Belgium
143	Albert	Congo	Man	40-50	3-4	Belgium
144	Fernanda	Ecuador	Woman	50+	6-7	Belgium
145	Houssine	Morocco	Man	20-30	5-6	Belgium
146	Florencia	Ecuador	Woman	40-50	6-7	Belgium
147	Matias	Ecuador	Man	40-50	6-7	Belgium
148	Valentina	Cuba	Woman	50+	7-8	Belgium
149	Javier	Colombia	Man	20-30	2-3	Belgium
150	Vincente	Guatemala	Man	30-40	5-6	Belgium
151	Emilia	Ecuador	Woman	30-40	5-6	Belgium
152	Marouane	Morocco	Man	30-40	4-5	Belgium
153	Lazzat	Uzbekistan	Man	40-50	4-5	Belgium
154	Nawang	Nepal	Man	30-40	6-7	Belgium
155	Camilla	Ecuador	Woman	30-40	7-8	Belgium
156	Gzifa	Ghana	Woman	40-50	6-7	Belgium
157	Ignacio	Chile	Man	30-40	5-6	Belgium
158	Üsko	Turkey	Man	30-40	7-8	Netherlands
159	Andrei	Moldova	Man	40-50	6-7	Netherlands

Resp. nr.	Fictitious name	Nationality	Gender	Age	Length of stay	Country
160	Adil	Morocco	Man	40-50	14-15	Netherlands
161	Dnari	Sierra Leone	Man	20-30	6-7	Netherlands
162	Fenik	Turkey	Man	40-50	9-10	Netherlands
163	Kwami	Suriname	Man	50+	21-22	Netherlands
164	Dembah	Guinea	Man	20-30	4-5	Netherlands
165	Mohammed	Morocco	Man	40-50	16-17	Netherlands

Appendix 3   Organisations interviewed

1   Steunpunt Algemeen Welzijnswerk – Berchem
2   Protestants Sociaal Centrum – Vluchtelingenwerk – CAW De Terp – Antwerp
3   Transithuis – CAW Artevelde – Ghent
4   Inloopcentrum De Vaart – CAW Metropool – Antwerp
5   Onthaalteam Amok – CAW Metropool – Antwerp
6   De Mutsaard – CAW de Mare – Antwerp
7   CAW Leuven – Leuven
8   CAW Mozaïek – Brussels
9   Vlaams Minderhedencentrum – Brussels (koepel)
10   De Acht vzw – Integratiecentrum Antwerpen Stad – Borgerhout
11   Integratiecentrum Foyer – Brussels
12   Intercultureel netwerk Gent – Integratiecentrum stad Gent – Ghent
13   Prisma vzw – Integratiecentrum provincie Antwerpen – Mechelen
14   ODiCe vzw – Integratiecentrum Oost-Vlaanderen – Ghent
15   Provinciaal Integratiecentrum Vlaams-Brabant – Leuven
16   Stedelijke (integratie)diensten
17   Contactpunt Integratie – Ghent
18   Integratiedienst – Antwerp
19   Dienst Asiel- en Vluchtelingenbeleid – Ghent
20   Vereniging van Vlaamse Steden en Gemeenten – Brussels
21   OCMW Gent – Dienst Vreemdelingen – Ghent
22   OCMW Gent – Dienst Administratie Gezondheidszorg – Ghent
23   OCMW Antwerpen – kabinet voorzitter - Antwerp
24   Sociaal Centrum Plein – OCMW Antwerpen – Antwerp
25   Vzw Medmigrant – Medisch Steunpunt Irreguliere migranten – Brussels
26   Inloopteam Pothoek – Kind en Gezin – Antwerp

27   Artsen Zonder Grenzen – Antwerp and Brussels
28   Oriëntatiepunt Gezondheidszorg Oost-Vlaanderen – Ghent
29   Vluchtelingenwerk Vlaanderen – Begeleiding vluchtelingen naar hoger onderwijs – Antwerp
30   Pina 18 – Sociale Zaken dienst Integratie – Onthaalbureau voor Nieuwkomers – Antwerp
31   Stedelijke Basisschool De Wereldreiziger – Antwerp
32   Huis van het Nederlands Brussel vzw – Brussels
33   VSKO – Brussels
34   Onthaal Nieuwkomers Oost-Vlaanderen vzw – Ghent
35   Ghapro vzw (Gezondheidshuis voor Antwerpse Prostitutie) – Antwerp
36   Free Clinic (opvang drugsverslaafden) – Antwerp
37   Boysproject – Antwerp
38   PICUM – Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants – Brussels
39   EVA-Centrum – Steunfonds irreguliere migranten – Ekeren
40   Bond zonder Naam vzw – Antwerp
41   Kerkasiel.anders – Oecumenisch netwerk van lokale initiatieven met asielzoekers, nieuwe migranten en irreguliere migranten – Brussels
42   YWCA – Antwerpen vwz – Antwerp
43   INFOPUNT Latijns-Amerikaanse Federatie – Antwerp
44   Caritas International – Brussels
45   Huize Triest – Gemeenschapshuis Tabor – Ghent
46   Vluchtelingenwerk Vlaanderen – Brussels
47   VLOS vzw (Vluchtelingen Ondersteuning Sint Niklaas) – Sint-Niklaas
48   Vluchtelingendienst.be vzw – Mechelen
49   Sint-Egidiusgemeenschap – Antwerp
50   Fedasil – Brussels
51   ACV – Antwerp
52   Stichting LOS – Utrecht
53   Emmaus – The Hague
54   STEK – The Hague
55   STEK Migrant churches – The Hague
56   Streetcare – The Hague
57   Apotheek Transvaal – The Hague
58   OKIA – The Hague
59   Vrouwen eten – The Hague
60   Pharos – Utrecht
61   Drugpunt – The Hague

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