

BRINGING AGENCY BACK IN:  
THE CASE OF SUB-SAHARAN AFRICAN MIGRANTS IN ISTANBUL

SONJA MARDEŠIĆ

BOGAZIÇI UNIVERSITY

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Sonja Mardešić

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## Thesis Abstract

Sonja Mardešić, “Bringing Agency Back In:

The Case of Sub-Saharan African Migrants in Istanbul”

In this thesis, I analyze the role of agency and structure in the migration process of Sub-Saharan African migrants in Istanbul, including their decision to leave their country of origin, their decision to come to Turkey and their experience as foreigners in Istanbul.

The research is based on in-depth semi-structured interviews with Sub-Saharan African refugees and asylum seekers, students and other migrants focusing on their choices, experiences and strategies. It also includes participant observation in public and private spaces where migrants gather, informal interviews and the study of secondary literature exploring the legal framework and background of migration to Turkey.

Using the structuration conceptual framework, I argue that structural forces, including economy, politics, legislation and culture, are a set of resources and obstacles that influence migrants’ choices and experiences. However, migrants do not react automatically to structural stimuli. Rather, they should be considered as knowledgeable agents who reflect on their environment and develop coping and advancement strategies while always keeping a certain degree of control over those structures. Furthermore, I argue that through their agency, migrants contribute to the change and reproduction of structural forces.

## Tez Özeti

Sonja Mardešić, “Aktör faktörünü geri getirmek: İstanbul'daki Sahra altı Afrika

### Göçmenleri Örneği”

Bu tezde, İstanbul'daki Sahra-altı Afrikalı göçmenlerin göç süreçlerindeki öznelerin ve yapıların rolünü, onların kendi memleketlerini terk etme kararlarını, Türkiye'ye gelme kararlarını ve İstanbul'da bir yabancı olarak deneyimlediklerini de inceleyerek araştırıyorum.

Araştırma Sahra-altı Afrikalı mülteciler ve sığınma talep edenler, öğrenciler ve diğer göçmenlerle yapılan, onların tercihleri, deneyimleri ve stratejilerine yoğunlaşan yarı yapılandırılmış derinlemesine görüşmelere dayanmaktadır. Ayrıca göçmenlerin bir araya geldiği özel ve kamusal alanlarda yapılan katılımcı gözlem, serbest görüşmeler ve Türkiye'deki göçün hukuksal çerçevesi ve temellerini inceleyen ikincil kaynakların literatür taramasını da içermektedir.

Yapılaşırma kavramsal çerçevesini kullanarak, ekonomi, siyaset, yasama ve kültürü içeren yapısal etkilerin, göçmenlerin seçim ve deneyimlerini etkileyen kaynaklar ve engeller bütünü olduğunu öne sürüyorum. Ancak, göçmenler bu yapısal etkenlere otomatik olarak tepki göstermiyorlar. Bunun yerine, göçmenler çevrelerini derinlemesine gözlemleyen ve başa çıkma ve ilerleme stratejileri geliştiren ve bunu yaparken daima bu yapılara karşı belli bir kontrol mekanizması oluşturan bilgili bireyler olarak değerlendirilmeli. Buna ek olarak, göçmenler kendi özneleri üzerinden yapısal etkilerin değişimi ve yeniden üretimine de katkı sağlıyorlar

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

As I was writing the last words of this research, four Liberians, one man and three women, got shot by a stranger in a café in the busy neighborhood of Şişli in Istanbul, Turkey. As it seems, the only reason of the attack was their skin color. As the African community was fulminating and organizing large group visits to support the victims at the hospital, most Turkish media and police did their best to cover up the matter. While their skin color makes them easy targets for violence and discrimination, it does not help them getting any visibility in the public debate and in the eyes of political leaders. They remain a largely invisible and unknown population of Istanbul.

Immigration to Turkey is a relatively new topic in the literature. Turkey has for decades been considered as an emigration country. Later on, an increasing number of scholars acknowledged its role as a receiving country. However, even then immigration to Turkey remained for a long time depicted as purely transitory. Being a developing country at the gateways to Europe, it was considered as a buffer zone from where migrants from the East and the South would then try to reach the Eldorado. Even in the eyes of the Turkish government immigration did not seem as an issue that would deserve full consideration and a comprehensive legislation. Indeed, until the 1990s, Turkey's law on immigration was an ad hoc collection of laws and circulars completing and amending each other without notorious consistency. Turkey really started tackling the issue of immigration as part of its

entry negotiations with the European Union starting from the early 2000s. It was given the paradoxical task to contain illegal migration to Europe while improving its human right records, especially concerning asylum seekers and refugees. It is not an easy task but the first comprehensive Law on Foreigners and International Protection<sup>1</sup> was adopted last year and entered into force last month, in April 2014. The law contains a lot of limitations and its implementation is still to be assessed. However, it is a most welcomed step towards the resolution of the immigration issue in Turkey and we are therefore at a cornerstone period in the immigration policy making in Turkey.

In addition, this research has to be seen within the wider context of an opening of Turkey to Africa that started at the end of the 1990s but accelerated in the recent years. Without the colonial heritage that great Western powers may have in African countries, Turkey asserts that it wants to establish a relationship on an equal footing with African countries. Their opening is very much based on economic cooperation, fostered in parallel with three other components, namely development aid, education including both the development of Turkish schools in Africa and the issuing of scholarships for African students in Turkey, and finally conflict resolution and peace building (Fait, 2012, 12 September). As a matter of fact, Turkish policy towards African countries and immigration from Africa to Turkey is closely related.

Sub-Saharan African migrants, designated henceforth simply as African migrants for more fluency, do not represent the bulk of immigration to Turkey. However, it is a surprising and interesting case of migration between developing countries that are not geographically, culturally or historically close. Moreover, their migration patterns and experiences as migrants differ significantly from other ethnic

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<sup>1</sup> Law No. 6458/2013 on Foreigners and International Protection

groups in Istanbul. While their number has been growing significantly since the 1990s, African migrants are still a quite understudied population. Brewer and Yüксеker (2009) conducted the first large survey on African migrants and asylum seekers in Istanbul. The aim of their survey was to draw a global picture of the situation and living conditions of African migrants in Istanbul as well as the legal framework of their stay in Turkey. Their work was very much welcomed as it provided a good overview of the phenomenon but being a survey, it did not go much further than the global trends. Especially, it did not enable us to grasp the individual migration decision processes and experiences of those people. Some other authors tried to go more in depth and analyze the case of African migrants using extensive field work and/or in-depth interviews. Those works are mainly PhD dissertations (Knight, 2011; Suter, 2012) and M.A. theses (Fait, 2010; Delahaye, 2011) as well as a few articles (Fait, 2013, Şaul, 2013). While they do provide insightful views on migrants' experiences and living conditions in Istanbul, most of them tend to focus on structural forces that limit migrants' scope of choices, on discrimination, racism and hardship. It is undeniable that most African migrants face extremely hard living conditions in Istanbul, and my own research confirms those claims. However, I argue that despite those difficulties, migrants should not be considered as passive victims of multiple marginalities.

While acknowledging the obstacles they face, I intend to bring migrants' agency back in the debate and analyze how they develop coping and development strategies and keep on exerting some degree of control over the structures, even when their resources are limited. There is no one simple definition of agency. I use it as a combination of power, control and freedom of choice. It refers to individuals' capacity of self-determination, their ability to make their choices and keep a certain

degree of control over their lives and the environment that surrounds them. Agency makes individuals agents. I use Giddens' (1984) definition of structures as resources and obstacles that are both the medium and the outcome of agency. A few authors acknowledged the agency of African migrants in Istanbul. Delahaye (2011) focuses on African artists in Istanbul and the cultural bridges they create and argues that the encounter of cultures also enables the celebration of difference. Şaul (2013) brings the attention of the reader to the social and economic contributions of African migrants in Turkey and Fait (2013) mentions the entrepreneurial spirit of some of those migrants. Before them, Özdil (2008) had drawn attention on the "quiet struggle" of African foreigners in Istanbul through the creation of public spaces used by migrants. Those contributions are most welcome in the academic debate.

However, I consider them as unable to fully account for the agency of African migrants in Istanbul, in large part due to their methodology: some are quite narrow, focus only on a specific population and are based on a very limited sample; others are too shallow due to the use of survey questions and the lack of in-depth analysis. Moreover, most of them are gender biased due to the lack of female respondents.

I intend to analyze the case of Sub-Saharan African migrants in Istanbul, their decision making process as well as their migration experience and living conditions in Turkey through an extensive and in-depth field research. I analyze this case through the theoretical lens of structuration as defined by Giddens (1984). Making use of Giddens' conceptual framework, I argue that while structural forces, including economy, politics and legislation, are resources and obstacles that influence migrants' decisions and experience, they are not the sole determinants of migration. Migrants are not passive victims of multiple marginalities but rather should be considered as agents who always keep a certain degree of agency and control over

those structures. They do not automatically react to structural stimuli but reflect on their situation and act according to the resources they have and the obstacles they face, but also according to their personal desires and aspirations. They develop coping and advancement strategies and through their action, either intentionally or unintentionally, contribute to the reproduction or change of structural forces, which leads to a discussion on the duality of structure.

I believe that structuration theory provides useful conceptual tools and an interesting framework that enables us to make sense of migration patterns and migrants' experiences. Indeed, I consider that neither structuralist nor functionalist approaches are satisfactory to explain the causes and mechanisms of migration and the experiences of migrants. Either they discard the importance of structural forces, such as legal obstacles and economic pressure, and overestimate the power of agents, or on the contrary fall into determinism. While some authors tried to combine both micro and macro levels or create a meso-level to overcome this deadlock, I argue that structuration goes further by not simply aggregating them but rather integrating both levels into a global mechanism. A few authors tried to apply structuration theory to migration but I believe that none of them managed to use the full potential of its conceptual framework.

My research is based on a literature review and an extensive fieldwork. I conducted formal qualitative in-depth interviews with forty migrants from sixteen Sub-Saharan African countries, fifteen women and twenty five men. Nine were refugees or asylum seekers, other nine were students, one was a trader or shuttle migrant and the remaining twenty-one were migrants falling in none of the above mentioned categories but had come for economic, medical or personal reasons. Moreover, I used participant observation and conducted informal interviews with

other migrants, NGO representatives and academics. My observations in the field lasted over a year starting from July 2012 to October 2013 included. I conducted most formal interviews in September and October 2013.

I do not consider my sample as representative of the African population in Istanbul. While encompassing a large number of countries, it does not include all of the nationalities present in Istanbul. Moreover, interviewees were not selected based on specific criteria such as age, education or neighborhood due to the difficulty to make a precise sampling among a changing and largely undocumented population. I did pay attention to the country of origin, gender and status (refugee, student or migrant) and tried to have a large scope of profiles but the interviews were done on the base of volunteering, which in itself represents a bias. Moreover, in order to fully assess the duality of structure and analyze how agents change and reproduce structural forces, it would be necessary to carry out longer term research, both in Turkey and in migrants' home countries. I had neither the time nor the resources to do that. However despite those limitations, I believe that this research is an interesting and valuable contribution to the literature on African migrants in Istanbul and on migration in general. I believe it also provides a good example of how structuration can be applied to the field of migration.

In the first part, I will provide the contextual and theoretical framework of the research before moving to a second part focusing on the main findings and conclusion arising from my fieldwork. In the first chapter, I will introduce the structuration theory and its role in migration literature. I will place it in the structure-agency debate in order to explain why I consider it as relevant to use it as the main theoretical lens for this research. In the second chapter, I will provide an overview of Turkey's legislation in terms of immigration and settlement policies and the practices

regarding African migration to Turkey. In chapter three, I will explain the methodology of my fieldwork. In chapter four I will focus on the main findings regarding migration and structure and analyze the role of structural forces in the decision making process and experiences of African migrants in Istanbul. In chapter five, I will focus on migration and agency and emphasizes the ability of migrants to exert control over their own lives and over the structures by developing coping and advancement strategies. In chapter six, I will engage in a discussion on migration and the duality of structure, or how migrants, through their social actions contribute to the change and reproduction of structures.

## CHAPTER II

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

There has been a large debate for decades about the primacy of agency or structure, micro or macro level factors to explain social phenomena in general and migration in particular. Most authors embrace one or the other approach. On the one side, functionalist theorists see social phenomena as the aggregation of individual actions and focus on actors. On the other side, structuralists consider that structures shape individual's decisions and actions. Some authors have tried to find a middle ground by incorporating meso-level factors such as households or networks as the main analytical elements. Others argue that both agency and structure matter but without integrating them in a comprehensive theory. Giddens (1984) articulates the balance between agency and structure in a more sophisticated way through the concept of 'duality of structure'. He claims that "structural properties of the social system are both the medium and outcome of the practices they recursively organize" (1984:25).

Although the 'agency-structure problem' is a broader debate in social science I will mainly focus on the context of migration. I will first provide an overview of the main functionalist and structuralist approaches and show that none of them is satisfactory to explain the causes and patterns of migration. I will then move to middle-ground theories but show that structuration theory provides a better theoretical framework and review some of the works done on migration using the structuration theory. Finally, I will mention some critics of the structuration theory.

## The Functionalist Approach

According to functionalist authors, migration is explained by the transfer of a surplus of labor in a predominantly agricultural economy to the growing urban industrial sector. Even though specific causal relations may differ from author to author, they are micro-level approaches in the sense that they assume that social processes are the aggregation of individual actions (Massey et al., 1993). In other words, they use methodological individualism by considering that actors make rational decisions based on the available knowledge in order to maximize their utility. Within the functionalist theoretical framework, migration is usually explained by the decision of individuals to migrate from areas characterized by labor abundance and capital scarcity to areas with capital abundance and labor scarcity. According to this approach the influx of migrant laborers to destination areas will eventually decrease wages while the influx of remittances and the return of skilled migrants will boost the economy in areas of origin. In the long run this mechanism should decrease the inequalities between those regions and thus eliminate the causes of migration (Goss et al., 1995).

As for all theories based on methodological individualism, bounded rationality and imperfect information remains problematic. Moreover, it is easy to see that on an empirical basis, inequalities and migration are not fading away, on the contrary. Harris and Todaro (1970) try to overcome this limitation by arguing that potential migrants do not take their decision based on the actual opportunities but on perceived wage differentials and expected probability of secured employment. However, even by overcoming this limitation, the model still reduces migrants to labor whose only motivations are higher wages. Furthermore, it does not take into

account various barriers to mobility such as visa and migration policies and cultural and social norms.

### The Structuralist Approach

While functionalist approaches focus on the individual, structuralist approaches focus on the macro-level and emphasize the role of structures in shaping individual's actions. The structuralist approach includes the neo-Marxist dependency theory, the world system theory and the modes of production theory. All of them explain migration with structural forces that in the long term perpetuate inequalities and migration. Neo-Marxist theorists argue that migration is the result of inequalities caused by the colonial heritage and relationships between the center, composed of developed capitalist countries, and the periphery of underdeveloped economies. It creates a dual labor market in which developed economies exploit cheap labor force from the periphery in order to maintain their profit rates (Piore, 1979). This mechanism leads to the perpetuation of inequalities and migration due to the outflow of the most productive and skilled workers from the periphery to the center. However, the lack of sensitivity to heterogeneity between and within source countries is problematic in the dependency theory.

According to the world system theory, the causes of international migration lie in the development of the global market economy that commodifies the means of production, create flows of capital and modes of production and establishes the ideological framework enabling migration (Portes and Walton, 1981). However, limiting the causes of migration to the market economy is too restrictive.

The strength of the modes of production theory is that it recognizes the coexistence of capitalist and precapitalist economies in the periphery. Therefore, individuals or households may be involved in both forms of production. As they are geographically dispersed, it causes migration (Goss et al., 1995). According to Kearney (1986), the modes of production approach refers to the articulation between the capitalist and the domestic economies. While the capitalist market gradually penetrates the domestic economy, the latter remains partially active and contributes to the reproduction of migrant labor.

The general limitation of structural theories is their determinism. They consider individual action as a product of great structures such as globalization, capitalism and market economy but they do not leave much room to migrant's agency and to various individual reasons an individual may have to migrate, or not to migrate. Therefore, some authors have tried to incorporate both agency and structure into single theories, either by including both micro and macro factor or by linking them through a meso-level unit. I will provide here a short overview of these approaches.

### The Middle-Ground Approaches

Lee (1969) reviews Ravenstein's Laws of Migration (1885) and identifies four main factors of migration, namely origin factors, destination factors, opportunities and personal factor. However, even though at first sight it seems to include both macro and micro-level causes, Lee (1969) discards personal factors as exceptions and reduces them to ephemeral emotions, mental disorders or accidents.

Other authors have tried to introduce a meso-level unit in order to make the connection between the micro and the macro ones. The ‘New Economics of International Migration’ include larger decision making units such as communities and households in their analysis (see for instance Fletcher and Taylor, 1992). Indeed, according to them, individuals are not the only ones taking the decision; migration decisions are taken collectively by the household or community. Moreover, the ultimate goal is not the maximization of utility but the minimization of risk through the diversification of income sources (Massey et al, 1993). The problem is that households are here used as a simple substitute to the individual, which does not solve the ‘micro-macro level’ deadlock. On the contrary, it adds an additional problem, which is the assumed homogeneity of interests within households. Potential conflicts of interests between individuals of the same household, such as gender and inter-generational power relations, are not taken into account (Goss et al., 1995).

The ‘system approach’ takes into account both micro and macro-level factors rather than creating a meso-level one. According to authors such as Fawcett and Arnold (1987), the political, economic and social contexts, as well as personal relationships and networks, influence and shape migration. Goss et al. (1995: 329) define social networks as “webs of interpersonal interactions, commonly comprised of relatives, friends, or other associations forged through social and economic activities that act as conduits through which information, influence, and resources flow.” Social networks evolve into migrant networks when those relationships and interactions are used to support migration by reducing the risks and increasing the potential benefits of migration. Goss et al. (1995) argue that migrant networks also include indirect social interactions over large distances and formalized and official

agents and institutions. Moreover, they argue that in the long term migrant network may become more selective as they expand.

I believe that most theories trying to solve the agency-structure or micro-macro dilemma by using both micro and macro level factors or by introducing a meso-level unit are unsatisfactory because they aggregate rather than integrate those levels. I argue that structuration theory as proposed by Giddens (1984) represents a more comprehensive and sophisticated theoretical framework to explain the causes and mechanisms of migration.

### The Structuration Theory

I will first explain the structuration theory as defined in Anthony Giddens' book *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (1984). More specifically, I will define its conceptual framework, which will be used to analyze findings from the field. Then, I will provide an overview of works using structuration theory in relation with migration. Finally, I will expose a few critics of the structuration theory.

#### Defining the Structuration Theory and its Conceptual Framework

Giddens (1984) defines structure as rules and resources, both allocative and authoritative, used by agents to reproduce and change the social systems. They are both the medium and outcome of social process. As such, they do not have an existence independent from agents' actions. Giddens (1984) defines it as the 'duality of structure'. Agency refers to the capacity of individuals to reflect on the structures and maintain a certain degree of control over those structures. He argues that day-to-day life has to be integrated in the analysis of the reproduction of institutionalized

practices. Indeed, according to him, the ‘duality of structure’ in terms of continuity of social life is expressed through routine which enables actors to reach or maintain their ‘ontological security’, defined as the “autonomy of bodily control within predictable routines and encounters” (1984: 61), or in other words, the way actors understand their place and feel comfortable within their worldview. He calls ‘critical situation’ circumstances where those routines are radically disrupted.

One of the major contributions of Giddens is the idea that “all human beings are knowledgeable agents” (1984: 281). They are generally aware of the conditions and outcomes of their activities and capable of monitoring the flow of social life through reflexivity. ‘Knowledgeability’ or ‘reflexivity’ is expressed through both discursive consciousness and practical consciousness. Practical consciousness refers to the way individuals deal with social life and recognize structures surrounding without being able to voice them while discursive consciousness implies that individuals are fully conscious of their actions and can account of reasons for them. However, Giddens (1984) does recognize that this knowledgeability is bounded by the unconscious and unintended consequences.

Through the concept of ‘dialectic of control’, Giddens (1984) transmits the idea that less powerful agents are also able to exert some sort of control over the more powerful agents. Indeed, according to him “all social actors, no matter how lowly, have some degree of penetration of the social forms which oppress them” (1984: 72). Constraints can be diverse. They can be material or structural or take the form of (negative) sanctions. Constraints reduce the number of options available to an actor in given circumstances but according to Giddens, they “only very rarely take the shape of compulsion which those who experience them are wholly incapable of resisting” (1984: 175) and usually require some kind of consent.

According to Giddens (1984), the researcher should try to explain how practices in a specific context refer to larger reaches of time and space and examine their relation to institutionalized practices, relating it to the concept of the duality of structure. In order to apply structuration theories to empirical research, Giddens identifies two possible methodologies, namely the institutional analysis and the analysis of strategic conduct. The difference is just a matter of degree and focus. The first one allows a greater focus on the analysis of institutions and their relation with agents. For the second one, the social scientist should rather focus on the discursive and practical consciousness and strategies of control of respondents. A particular attention should be given to knowledgeability, accounts of motivation and the interpretation of dialectic of control. Giddens insists on the importance of context and time-space sensitivity.

The theory of structuration is not a migration theory. However, since the 1990s, it has been gradually incorporated into migration literature as an increasing number of authors have used a structuration framework for their empirical research. I will review some of them and show that structuration theory provides excellent tools for the study of migration but that those tools are not yet exploited to their full potential by migration theorists.

### The Structuration Theory Applied to Migration

The number of migration studies using explicitly structuration theory is rather limited but the ways in which the structuration approach has been applied to migration are diverse. Structuration theory is rich and comprehensive. Therefore, none of the authors has incorporated all the concepts and mechanisms proposed by Giddens (1984) but rather selected the most useful ones in their specific contexts.

The application of structuration theory to migration can be very loose. Tammaru et al. (1999) study internal migration in Estonia during the transition period from central planning. They recognize using a loosely structurationist approach in order to analyze their sample survey data. Their use of the structuration approach is limited to the consideration of both micro and macro level causes of migration and the use of discursive and practical consciousness in the analysis of respondents' data. However, they do not apply Giddens' principle of 'duality of structure' but rather consider individual motives to move and place them in the broader context, assuming that structures are conditioning individuals' limitations and opportunities rather than being mutually dependent.

Healey (2006) explores the experiences of asylum-seekers and refugees in UK within the framework of structuration theory. She argues that structural forces influence human actions with human agency referring to the 'capabilities of human beings' (Gregory, 2000), as an individual's level of self-determination or 'ability to act' (Valentine, 2001: 349). Healey's article focuses on Giddens' (1984) notion of 'reflexivity' which refers to the idea that social interactions are the product of informed agents rather than a spontaneous response to structural factors. She analyses respondents' discourses in order to shed light on the discursive consciousness while she assimilates practical consciousness with asylum seekers and refugees' feelings or the information that was not voiced by the interviewees. The author finally illustrates practical and discursive consciousness with internalized and externalized coping strategies used by asylum-seekers and refugees to regain the agency and ontological security they lost by migrating to a foreign country.

Goss et al. (1995) use structuration theory to analyze international labor migration by focusing on the case of the Philippines. Rather than households and

social networks, the authors propose 'migrant institutions' as a suitable mid-level concept to theorize international labor migration. They argue that migration is being increasingly institutionalized and introduce the concept of 'migrant institutions' by using structuration theory. They defined migrant institutions as "a relatively permanent feature of social life that results from the regularization of social interaction for the purposes of overseas employment and which in turn regulates interaction and structures access to overseas employment through the operation of institutional rules and resources" (1995:336). Therefore, they mainly use the 'duality of structure' (Giddens, 1984) to theorize their empirical findings in the context of the Philippines.

Wright (1995) reviews the labor migration literature focusing on the southern Africa context and the problematic of gender on the one side and agency vs. structure on the other side. She explains that while neo-classical and structuralist theories diverge in the role given to agency or structure in the migration process, they share the weakness of being gender blinded. Neo-classical theories assume that men and women have the same motivations to migrate, sometimes adding marriage as a possible extra-factor for women (Chant, 1992). It thus does not explain why labor migration in Africa is dominated by men. The fact that mostly men migrate while women remain in rural areas was to some extent empirically confirmed but not questioned and exceptions were generally dismissed. Structuralist approaches are, according to Wright (1995), gender blinded as well since women's subordination is seen as natural and inevitable (Mackintosh, 77). In the context of southern Africa, the main factors affecting power of agency were considered to be class and race but rarely gender, or only in a deterministic way. The first major contribution of structuration theory, according to Wright (1995), is that it tries to overcome the

distinction between structure and agency by showing that they are mutually dependent rather than opposed to each other. A second major contribution is that it tries to explain the emergence and perpetuation of structures, including gender relations, through the social interaction of individuals while recognizing that not all actors have potentially the same ability to affect structures.

### Some Critics of the Structuration Theory

Although many authors have welcomed the structuration theory arguing that it provides a good theoretical framework for the study of social phenomena in general and of migration in particular, some authors pointed out its limitations.

Even though Healey (2006) uses the structuration theory in her study on the experiences of asylum seekers and refugees in UK, she recognizes that it has a weak understanding of culture and that it over-emphasizes the rationality of agents, leaving little space to their desires and emotions. While it might be true that Giddens does not specifically emphasize the role of culture, it does not discard it either and I believe that nothing impedes us from including cultural forces in an analysis applying the structuration approach.

According to Bakewell (2010) structuration approach does not only over-emphasizes the rationality of agents but agency as such, by always recognizing the ability of agents to act otherwise. He also argues that structuration has methodological limitations because if agency and structure cannot be separated, it makes empirical research quite challenging. He proposes critical realism as a more refined theoretical framework to analyze questions of structure and agency in the context of migration. The main argument of critical realism is that social structures have emergent properties, they are the ‘outcomes of agency which ‘‘emerge’’ or pass

a developmental threshold, beyond which they exercise their own causal powers, independently of the agency which produced them' (Parker 2000: 73). Thus, while according to structuration theory structures cannot exist independently from agents' actions, for critical realists, social structures exist before the individual because of a temporal disjuncture. Indeed, the agents of today are those shaping the structures of tomorrow (Archer, 1995).

While recognizing that structuration has some limitations, I argue that it does provide a satisfactory theoretical framework to study migration. I will use it in the context of African migrants in Istanbul, Turkey and try to apply a wider range of structuration concepts and assumptions since I believe that previous studies did not use all the potential of the structuration approach.

## CHAPTER III

### CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND

Since the 1970s, significant transformations in the global economy, as well as political instabilities and wars changed dramatically international migration patterns. While regular labor migration towards Western Europe decreased, irregular migration as well as refugee and asylum seeker flows increased (International Organization for Migration, 2005). In response to increasing concerns arising from these migration inflows and in the context of a greater regional integration, the European Union countries reinforced their border controls and asylum policies (Castles and Miller, 1998). As a consequence, “buffer zones” were “politically and socially constructed” at the margins of Europe in order to prevent irregular migrants from crossing the borders (Parreñas, 2000).

As Castles *et al.* (1998) emphasize, since the 1970s, international migration has been characterized by globalization, differentiation, feminization and politization. In the context of migration diversification, traditionally emigration countries such as Turkey are becoming transit and immigration countries (Baldwin-Edwards, 2006; Castles, 2007, see also Kirişçi, 2004). Even though it did not reach the scale of emigration, immigration to Turkey has been a significant phenomenon in Turkey during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Migration was to a great extent used as a tool for nation-building by the early government of the Turkish Republic and policies were implemented to attract migrants “from Turkish culture and descent”, in accordance with the official conception of the Turkish national identity (Kirişçi, 2000). Starting from the late 1980s, the increasing instability in the Middle-East, as well as the

collapse of the Soviet Union generated new waves of immigration. They were mostly irregular, either transit or “shuttle” migrants.

While push factors from countries of origin have been significant determinants of massive migration flows, the tightening of the EU visa policies and border-controls also had a great impact on the transformation in the migration patterns that Turkey is facing. Transit migration, through bordering countries in general and through Turkey in particular, in many cases became the only way to reach “Fortress Europe”. In 2009 for example, 146,337 irregular migrants were apprehended while trying to cross the Turkish/Greek border (Edsbäcker, 2011).

There are no statistics of total irregular migration but most of the apprehended irregular migrants between 1996 and 2006 were nationals from Iraq (114,000), Pakistan (51,000), Afghanistan (38,000), Iran (25,000), and Bangladesh (20,000) (Içduygu, 2008). African migrants thus do not represent the majority of immigration to Turkey. However, their number has been growing significantly since the 1990s. According to NGO representatives and state officials, the estimated number of irregular African migrants only in Istanbul was between 4 000 and 6 000 as of 2009 (Brewer and Yüksekler, 2009: 666), even though unofficial sources reported it was probably much higher and has been growing steadily since then. We should also note that there are an increasing number of African migrants, and especially asylum seekers and refugees also scattered around other parts of Turkey.

Not all, but many of African migrants in Istanbul come to Turkey taking advantage of relatively liberal visa policies and loose border controls, hoping to reach “Fortress Europe”. The issue of transit migration in Europe has been highly politicized due to the securitization and economization of the European migratory policy (Içduygu, 2012). Transit migration through Turkey has thus been central in

the EU accession negotiations with Turkey due to the fact that a significant number of irregular migrants who entered Europe come through neighboring countries, including Turkey (Içduygu, 2000; Papadopoulou-Kourkoula, 2008). But Turkey is not only a country of emigration or transit. It has also become a destination for immigration, often taking the form of circular labor migration, mainly between Turkey and former Eastern Bloc countries. Finally it receives increasing flows of asylum seekers that are sometimes entangled with irregular transit migration (Içduygu, 2012).

The EU has been constantly pressuring the Turkish government to align its migration policies with the *acquis communautaires*, which includes both a greater respect for human rights, especially regarding asylum seekers, and a tighter control of its borders and visa policies (Baklacioğlu, 2009). Turkey is thus now in a process of migration policy-making.

I will provide here a brief historical and legal background regarding migration in Turkey including visa and citizenship policies, irregular migration policies and asylum seeker and refugee issues. It is essential to understand the legal framework of African migration in Turkey in order to better grasp the structural forces into play when analyzing the role of structure and agency in migrants' decision-making and experience. As mentioned previously, the legal framework regulating migration in Turkey is changing rapidly. Therefore, the laws I introduce here are likely to change and are valid only at the time of writing this thesis.

### Immigration Policies in Turkey: the Legal Framework

For a long time Turkey did not have an integrated migration policy. Rather specific measures were often taken ad hoc and were under the responsibility of different governmental bodies. As a consequence, by the late 1980s, migration regulations were outdated and irrelevant. This situation has been changing dramatically for the last 20 years (Tolay, 2011).

### Visa and Entry

According to Tolay (2011), while Turkey was liberalizing its visa policy after the Cold War, the admission negotiations with EU reversed the process in the early 2000s in order to align with the Schengen requirements. However, from 2005, Turkey started liberalizing its visa policy again and working on visa-free agreements.

İçduygu and Sert (2009) also argue that, while Turkey pursues conservative policies regarding the settlement of foreigners, its visa policy is more liberal. However it is not the same for all foreigners. İçduygu and Yüksekler (2012) argue that the Turkish visa system, while encouraging circular migration from former Eastern Bloc countries, limits migration from various African and Asian countries and thus fosters illegal entry. Indeed, due to cultural and economic relations with those countries, citizens from former Soviet countries benefit from a relatively liberal visa regime. However, it is less liberal for many countries in Asia, Middle-East and Africa (Brewer and Yüksekler, 2009). Kirişçi (2008) argues that by doing this Turkish government is trying both to meet the EU requirements regarding irregular migration and to limit the asylum-seekers flows. However, even for non-former Soviet countries, the visa requirements are looser than many other countries, especially European ones. Indeed, in 2009, no visa was required for nationals of more than 40 countries and citizens from more than 30 countries could get the visa

directly at the border (Içduygu and Sert, 2009).

Until recently, nationals from many African countries could get a business 15-day visa or a visa to look for a job in a football club quite easily. Tourist visas were also quite easy to obtain from a Turkish consulate (Brewer and Yüksek, 2009). In 2005 however, visa policies were tightened in order to limit irregular migration in the context of Turkey's accession process to the EU. Nationals from 48 Sub-Saharan countries were affected by these visa policy changes. Following this change, their applications had to be approved by the Ministry of Interior before they can get a visa (Zaman, 2005). Visa exemptions were cancelled for Kenya and South Africa in 2003<sup>2</sup>. As of 17 April 2013, an electronic visa system was introduced, replacing the visas received at the borders (Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, n.d.a).

The Law of Foreigners' Residence and Travel in Turkey was amended in 2011 and was enforced in February 2012<sup>3</sup>. It aims at preventing foreigners to live in Turkey without a residence permit. Following this amendment, a person has to stay out of the country for three months before getting a new ninety day tourist visa. Nevertheless, Labor Ministry announced exceptions for domestic workers (Ziflioğlu, 2012).

Policies dealing with irregular migration were close to non-existent in the 1990s. In the early 2000s strong sanctions were introduced against illegal workers and human trafficking and smuggling (Tolay, 2011). Indeed, in 2002, two articles were added to the Criminal Code (Article 201/a and 201/b) in order to combat people smuggling and trafficking. In 2005 a new Criminal Code was adopted and replaced

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<sup>2</sup> Official Gazette, 2003

<sup>3</sup> Amendment No. 2306/ 2011 on Foreigners' Residence and Travel in Turkey

the previous one. According to Article 79 of the Turkish Criminal Code, migrant smugglers are exposed to three to eight year imprisonment in addition to significant fines (Kaya, 2009). According to the new Law on Foreigners and International Protection<sup>4</sup>, a residence permit can now be issued to victims of human trafficking.

### Settlement and Citizenship

The Law on Settlement<sup>5</sup> is a major reference regulating who can immigrate, settle and become a refugee in Turkey. The preference is given to migrants of Turkish descent and culture since the law was adopted in the context of a nation-building project in the early years of the Turkish Republic. The Settlement Law was amended in September 2006 but this preference for migrants with Turkish descent and culture remains (Içduygu and Sert, 2009). According to the new law, a migrant is defined as a “person of Turkish descent who is attached to Turkish culture”. In addition, a migrant has to enter the country legally and come to Turkey for settlement (Kaya, 2009).

The Turkish Law on Foreigners<sup>6</sup> and the Law on the Residence and Travel Activities of Foreigners<sup>7</sup> regulate the settlement and working status of foreign nationals in Turkey and compels foreigners willing to reside in Turkey to apply for a residence permit to the local police department. In order to be allowed to stay in Turkey, a foreign national must prove that he or she has sufficient financial resources and that he or she does not intend to disturb public order in Turkey (Içduygu and

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<sup>4</sup> Law No. 6458/2013 on Foreigners and International Protection

<sup>5</sup> Law No. 2510/1934 on Settlement

<sup>6</sup> Law No. 5685/1950 on Foreigners

<sup>7</sup> Law No. 7564/1950 on Residence and Travel Activities of Foreigners

Sert, 2009).

Significant amendments were also made to the Citizenship Law<sup>8</sup>. Until 2003, a foreign woman marrying a Turkish citizen could immediately obtain the Turkish nationality, which was not the case for a foreign man. The 2003 amendment makes the process of acquiring citizenship gender-neutral by stating that a foreigner, either male or female, marrying a Turkish citizen can obtain the Turkish citizenship if the marriage lasts at least three years (Içduygu and Sert, 2009; Kadırbeyoğlu, 2009).

### Labor Market

The law regulating the working status of foreigners in Turkey has been changed in 2003 in order to make it easier for foreigners to obtain a working permit. The Law on Work Permits for Foreigners<sup>9</sup> nullifies the Law on Activities and Professions in Turkey Reserved for Turkish Citizens<sup>10</sup> that prevented the access to certain jobs for foreign national which represents a significant legislative change for foreigners in Turkey. According to the new law, work permit should be issued based on the demand from the labor market rather than citizenship (Içduygu and Sert, 2009). One of the sectors that is now open to foreigners is domestic care services. In order to be allowed to work, a foreign national has first to apply for a work permit in a Turkish consulate abroad, then get an employment visa and finally get a residence permit once in Turkey (Kaya, 2009).

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<sup>8</sup> Law No. 403/1964 on Citizenship

<sup>9</sup> Law No. 4817/2003 on Work Permit for Foreigners

<sup>10</sup> Law No. 2007/1932 on Activities and Professions in Turkey Reserved for Turkish Citizens

According to the new Law on Foreigners and International Protection<sup>11</sup>, asylum seekers as well as non-European nationals seeking international protection may apply to a work permit six months after applying for international protection. Recognized refugees are officially allowed to work independently or under an employer. The law entered into force in April 2014.

### Access to Public Services

Groups entering Turkey and apply for asylum en mass are, according to the government regulations, entitled to periodic health checks and should have access to the state hospital. Until recently asylum seekers did not have access to health care according to the Turkish regulations. Children of refugees are by law eligible for primary school (Resmi Gazette 1994)

Refugees are entitled to health care if their fees are paid by the UNHCR. The public tuberculosis clinics should provide free treatment to all patients (Brewer and Yüksekler, 2009). Until recently, the government did not have any obligation of providing social assistance, including housing and healthcare to asylum seekers as stated in the “2006 Circular”. Instead, asylum seekers had to apply to the Social Solidarity and Assistance Foundations under the provincial governorates and aiming at assisting inhabitants in need residing in their respective provinces (Durukan, 2007).

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<sup>11</sup> Law N. 6458/2013 on Foreigners and International Protection

According to the new Law on Foreigners and International Protection<sup>12</sup>, asylum seekers and refugees shall have access to primary and secondary education. Social assistance and services shall also be granted to asylum seekers and refugees in need. Law on Social Security and General Health Insurance<sup>13</sup> shall apply to those who are not covered under any health insurance and have no means to afford medical services. Moreover, medical treatment shall be provided to victims of torture, sexual assault and others serious forms of violence.

### Asylum

In the area of asylum, Tolay (2011) distinguishes 3 main periods. Before 1994, the Turkish government refused to provide any systematic assistance to refugees. In 1994, a regulation enabled non-European refugees to seek asylum in Turkey and receive temporary protection before being resettled. Until 2008, asylum policies were generally softening. In 2009 a migration agency was set within the Ministry of Interior in order to draft a new asylum law.

Turkey signed the 1951 Geneva Convention on the Status of Refugees. It thus has to comply with the international obligations relative to asylum seekers and refugees. However, Turkish refugee legal system maintains the geographic limitation regarding the Article 1b of the 1951 UN Refugee Convention (Kirişçi, 2012). It means that in Turkey, the Refugee Convention applies only to persons fleeing their country because of events occurring in Europe. It thus excludes all non-European asylum seekers, who constitute nowadays the large majority, as mentioned before. Therefore non-European asylum seekers cannot benefit from the protection under the

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Law No.5510/2006 on Social Security and General Health Insurance

Refugee Convention. To accommodate these non-European asylum seekers, Turkey has created a parallel system that enables these people to get a “temporary asylum”, which creates a double-process system with the UNHCR procedures. As Kirişçi highlights, this geographic limitation has still not been lifted by the new law on asylum seekers. According to the new Law on Foreigners and International Protection<sup>14</sup>, non-European asylum seekers can only get a “conditional refugee” status in Turkey. Resettlement in a third country is then, due to the Turkish legislation and conditions, the most applicable durable solution. In case an asylum seeker’s application is rejected twice, the person is expected to leave the country or be deported.

Due to large inflows of asylum seekers from the Middle East, Turkey adopted in 1994, the Regulation on the Procedures and Principles Related to Mass Influx of Foreigners Arriving in Turkey or Requesting Residence Permits with the Intention of Seeking Asylum from a Third Country. It was highly criticized by the international community for being arbitrary and restrictive and driven by concerns on security rather than protection and respect for human rights. According to this regulation, migrants had to apply for asylum within 5 days following their entry<sup>15</sup>. This regulation was revised in 1999 when the application time limit was extended to 10 days<sup>16</sup>, before being removed in 2006 and replaced by a “reasonable period of time”<sup>17</sup>. The government returned to the close cooperation it had with the UNHCR before 1994 in the late 1990s. Amendments were introduced to the Asylum Regulation in order to prevent abusive deportations. In 1997, asylum seekers were

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<sup>14</sup> Law N. 6458/2013 on Foreigners and International Protection

<sup>15</sup> Official Gazette, 1994

<sup>16</sup> Official Gazette, 1999

<sup>17</sup> Official Gazette, 2006

allowed to appeal against deportation orders. In 2006, an internal regulation was circulated by the Ministry of Interior containing instructions for the police in implementing the Action Plan. It includes measures aiming at facilitating the access of asylum seekers to the procedures and the identification of asylum seekers, the provision of a translator and a positive environment during the interview. It also states that asylum seekers and refugees with a residence permit can be entitled to a work permit (Kirişçi, 2009)

In 1999, Turkey's candidacy for accession was accepted by the EU and led to the creation of the National Program for Adoption in 2001. This plan includes restrictive visa and border crossing measures as well as the creation of reception centers for asylum seekers and in the future lifting the geographical limitation mentioned above (Içduygu, 2003). In addition, readmission agreements were negotiated and are still being negotiated with a number of countries of origin (Brewer and Yüksek, 2009)

Asylum seekers and refugees were expected by the Turkish authorities to register with the police and stay in specific provincial centers, the so-called satellite cities while waiting for their status determination and eventually resettlement (Brewer and Yüksek, 2009; Suter, 2012) According to the new law, asylum seeker may still be asked to reside in a designated location<sup>18</sup>.

Turkey has engaged a process of policy making more than a decade ago in the field of migration and integration. What started as restrictive measures and a further securitization of migration incorporated with time more measures aiming at protecting the migrants, and especially refugees and asylum seekers. The Law on

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<sup>18</sup> Law N. 6458/2013 on Foreigners and International Protection

Foreigners and International Protection<sup>19</sup> was welcomed by the international community and the UNHCR as “an important advancement for international protection”, incorporating “key elements of international humanitarian and human rights law” (UN News Service, 2013, April 12). However, the law is still far from inclusive and remains most of the time exclusionary while further marginalizing significant portion of migrants in Turkey, particularly the irregular ones, who by definition fall outside the scope of the law. It is important to note again that this research was conducted before this law came into force in April 2014.

#### African Migrants in Turkey: Background Information

According to the International Organization for Migration, nine percent of migrants in the world are considered to be from Sub-Saharan Africa (International Organization for Migration, 2005) Regarding African international migration, particularly harsh economic conditions are the main push factor that motivates or forces individuals to migrate. Apart from poverty, ethnic conflicts and state failure constitute factors of African migration, especially under the form of asylum-seeker and refugee flows (Jamal, 2003). Many of these migrants cross borders within their region of origin but also transit through North Africa in order to reach Europe, or even attempt to get directly to Europe, often clandestinely and involving human trafficking. An increasing number of African migrants are women, in accordance with more general trends (International Organization for Migration, 2005). Moreover, since the 1990s, an increasing number of those migrants come to Turkey, usually with the intention of moving forward to Europe (Brewer and Yüksek, 2009).

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

Brewer and Yüksek (2009) conducted the first large survey on African migrants and asylum seekers in Istanbul in order to shed light on this under-studied phenomenon and uncover the characteristics of African migration to Turkey, the living conditions of Africans in Istanbul, as well as the legal framework of their presence in the city. According to their survey, most of the asylum seekers enter the country illegally. However, due to the relatively liberal visa policies, until recently the majority of irregular African migrants in Istanbul actually arrived legally and then overstayed the duration of their visas. West-Africans mainly enter legally according to the same survey while changes in visa policies led to a decrease in the number of irregular African migrants arriving legally and overstaying the duration of their visa. It would be interesting to know whether it really limited irregular migration or rather led to an increase in the number of illegal entries.

Detention of individuals from Nigeria and South Africa for illegal migration has been increasing significantly until 2002-2003 but then dropped. Brewer and Yüksek (2009) suggest that it may be due to the changes in the visa policy. However, at the same time, more migrants from Somalia and Mauritania were detained which may be due to push factors from their countries of origin. Even though their survey is not statistically representative, it is interesting to observe their data about the entry of African migrants into Turkey. Thirty-four percent of their respondents entered the country legally while sixty-six percent entered illegally. As a rule, nationals from Nigeria, Congo and Kenya entered legally while migrants from Somalia, Mauritania, Eritrea, and Ethiopia entered illegally.

İçduygu and Tokşa (2002) report that much of the illegal migrant flows to and through Turkey are organized by human smugglers. Migrants sometimes pay large amount of money to smugglers in order to get to Europe but are deceived and

left along coasts of Turkey or North Africa due to the tight border controls preventing them from crossing to “Fortress Europe” (Brewer and Yüksekler, 2009). It is too early to determine whether the recent regulations aiming at combating human trafficking have been effective and led to a decrease in smuggling and human trafficking to and through Turkey but human trafficking is still a reality. Suter (2012) reports that migrant women from Ethiopia and Eritrea were often first trafficked to Lebanon or Syria through recruitment agencies, sometimes Sudan and then decide to cross the border illegally to Turkey in order to reach Greece.

There is no balance between male and female migrant inflows. It is difficult to give an exact percentage but recent researches estimate that women represent the majority of migrants originating from Ethiopia and Eritrea. For Sudan, Congo, Nigeria and Ghana men constitute the large majority of immigrants. Somali migrant sex ratio is more balanced (Suter, 2012; Knight, 2011) Knight (2011) argues that there is in general a large majority of African men, with a more balanced ratio for countries sending mainly asylum seekers and a bigger unbalanced for those countries sending economic migrants. It is important to note however that migrants are not only affected by Turkish migration laws, but also by their country of origin and the final country of destination laws. Thus, while Turkish entry and visa policies are gender-neutral, it is not the case for many sending countries, such as Sudan, where it is very difficult for a married woman to leave the country alone. It may explain the very high ratio of men originating from this country (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 1994, June 1).

### Settlement

Brewer and Yüksekler’s survey (2009) reports that while for most of the African migrants in Turkey the aim is to reach Europe, the tight immigration policies force

them to prolong their state of transit and stay in Turkey for longer periods of time. Indeed, according to Fait (2013), the concept of transit migration was created in the context of the securization of immigration to Europe and does not reflect the reality of many African migrants in Istanbul.

While in Turkey, migrants have to develop different survival strategies in order to deal with multiple difficulties. Özdil (2008) mentions the creation of public spaces, such as restaurants and call shops, used or owned by migrants as a main coping strategy. Delahaye (2011) argues that during their stay in Istanbul, African artists build bridges between the communities and contribute to the encounter between different cultures through their creativity and the celebration of difference. It shows that they are not just birds of passage but that they leave their footprint in the social space of Istanbul.

One of the major problems directly related to their lack of legal status and involving an encounter with the state is their relation with the police. Indeed, most irregular migrants are exposed to continuous fear from eventual controls and potential deportation. Thus, their relation with the police plays a central role during their stay in Istanbul (Suter, 2012). Indeed, while targeted missions aiming at identifying irregular migrants are not so common anymore, routine check of papers are pursued by the police and even though they are not systematic, African migrants are often facing them due to their physical distinctiveness that makes them more visible and distinguishable (Brewer and Yükseser, 2009).

Several major incidents have been reported related to the vulnerability of African migrants to police harassment. In July 2001, 250 to 300 African migrants were arrested by the police, detained for several days and then left at the border with Greece. They stayed there for several days between the two borders with none of the

countries allowing them to enter their territory. They were eventually allowed to return to Turkey but by then three people reportedly died, a woman suffered a miscarriage and several women were allegedly raped (Human Rights Association, 2001). Another largely reported incident occurred in 2007 when a Nigerian migrant, Festus Okey, was detained and killed by the police of Istanbul (Brewer and Yüксеker, 2009). These incidents are significant. However, in Brewer and Yüксеker's survey, sixty-five percent of the respondents claim they were never stopped by the police, while thirty-six percent did. Out of those who have been stopped by the police, almost all were stopped more than once. In addition, thirty-one percent claim they were detained by the police (2009: 697). However, a majority does not believe that police treats African migrants differently than other migrants and only sixteen percent think they do (2009: 698).

Knight (2011) observes that while deportation is feared by the migrants, in practice it rarely happens, due mainly to financial and practical limitations, especially in the case of African migrants. Most of the time, persons arrested for illegal residency are released after spending an indeterminate period of time under arrest. There are no procedures allowing migrants to demand a release except filling a complaint that in practice is never followed up. What happens is that NGOs working with migrants are in some cases informed about the situation and try to persuade the police, which may or may not lead to the eventual release of the migrants. There is overall no control of the police and no effective way to complain about actual abuses. What is important to note is that even though it does not lead to deportation, a detention have serious and multiple repercussions for migrants. The most direct one is the eventual loss of a job that the migrant may have had due to a prolonged absence. However, most of the researches done recently report an improvement in

the way the police treats African migrants. Harassments and abuses seem less common and relations more relaxed and business-like (Suter, 2012; Knight, 2011).

### Citizenship

Marriage is in practice the only way for African migrants to get the Turkish citizenship, with the exception of children with a Turkish parent, or born in Turkey and not acquiring a citizenship from their foreign parents<sup>20</sup>. Brewer and Yüksekler (2009) reported cases of male African migrants getting legal residence in Turkey based on marriages with Turkish nationals. However, they do not specify whether these marriages took place before or after the amendment made on the Law on Citizenship in 2003. Toksöz and Ünlütürk Ulutaş (2012) reported on the other hand that some migrant woman obtain citizenship through marriage with Turkish men which seem to be a more common practice, even though it clearly concerns only a minority of African migrants. However, even if their residence status is legalized, they tend to continue working in the informal sector, since their diplomas are not always recognized. However, the authors argue that the problem of non-payment is relatively less common for migrants with legal status in Turkey, even though it is not absent, which shows once again the importance played by law in the actual migration experiences.

Suter (2012) reported the functional nature of marriage. The recent changes in law made marriages of interest more difficult. However, they are still practiced since even during the three years waiting period to get the citizenship, the migrant spouse benefit from a residence permit. Reportedly, such a marriage could cost 3,000 to 4,000 dollars. She also reports that African men marrying Turkish women is more difficult than the other way around, and may be more expensive as well. This kind of

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<sup>20</sup> Law No. 5901/2009 on Citizenship

marriages ends usually and not surprisingly with a divorce. On the “marriage market”, as Suter (2012) states, women seem more successful than their male counterparts, especially women from Ethiopia and Eritrea. Suter (2012) also shows the advantages of acquiring Turkish citizenship, such as being able to start a legal business, negotiate with Turkish officials, potentially remarry with somebody from their community and thus get a residence permit for their husband, go to court if necessary and last but not least, benefit from a privileged position among their community. Knight (2011) also reports that while it is legally possible for a migrant man to get the Turkish citizenship by marrying a Turkish woman, it is much more difficult in practice.

### Labor Market

As Knight (2011) observes, migrants in Istanbul may make a living in various ways in Istanbul. However, generally speaking only two categories are available to them; either the black market or self-employment. There are a few exceptions to this statement but it is the case for a very large majority of African migrants in Istanbul.

Indeed, getting a work permit is extremely difficult, even after the amendments made in 2003. Brewer and Yükseser (2009) report that informality is the norm among African migrants’ survival strategies in Istanbul. Even though the Law on Work Permits for Foreigners<sup>21</sup> is in theory supposed to make it easier for foreigners to enter the formal labor market, in practice, very few African migrants could actually benefit from this law. Indeed, they mainly work in low-skill jobs where informality is the norm. Calavita (2006) argues that a cheap and flexible labor force has strong economic advantages for the employers, limiting thus the capacity, and probably also willingness of the state to implement significant restrictions.

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<sup>21</sup> Law No. 4817/2003 on Work Permit for Foreigners

Instead, restrictions on irregular immigration and work permits for foreign nationals remain rather symbolic and contribute only to marginalize even more labor immigrants. Zolberg (1987) uses the expression “wanted but not welcome” to describe the situation of these migrants that are wanted in the informal labor market but not welcomed in the society.

Male and female migrants find different strategies and usually fall into traditionally male versus female sectors. İçduygu (2006) argues that there are more migrant women than men in the informal labor market in Istanbul, working mainly in the domestic care, entertainment, and sex industry and garment sector while Daniş (2010) believes that single young men are more numerous. It actually differs greatly according to the nationality and there is no doubt that a significant number of migrant women in the informal labor market are domestic workers from former Soviet countries. Recent researches report that some African women may also work in domestic services as the demand in Istanbul is high, which according to some, gives them a potential advantage as compared to men who eventually do not have access to this sector traditionally reserved to women (Brewer and Yüksekler, 2009; Knight, 2011; Suter, 2012). Migrants tend to work in labor-intensive and low-paid sectors. Sectors such as the garment manufacturing industry, domestic and care, entertainment and commercial sex services tend to be largely dominated by migrant women while men are more present in the construction industry. Tourism and agriculture, mainly in the Black Sea region, employ both male and female migrants. Male migrants are more present in the construction industry (Brewer and Yüksekler, 2009; Knight, 2011; Suter, 2012). Toksöz and Ünlütürk Ulutaş (2012) argue that construction is a sector employing large numbers of illegal male migrants due to its sub-contracting practices. Erder (2007) argues that migrants are preferred in this

sector over Kurdish worker, not because of nationalistic feelings but because they do not have a legal status and thus cannot unionize and can be more easily exploited.

It is not uncommon that due to the difficulties to find a proper job and in order to survive, African women are forced to offer sexual services in exchange of money or shelter and food. Their “protectors” or clients are often male migrants from different African countries (Ekberzade, 2006; Brewer and Yüksekler, 2009; Suter, 2012). Jureidini (2010) report the existence of physical and sexual violence against mainly Somali and Ethiopian women in Istanbul. Toksöz and Ünlütürk Ulutaş (2012) observe that commercial sex workers, many of whom shifted from another sector such as domestic care suffer from severe violations. They are often victims of human trafficking, forced to work long hours and without always receiving their earnings. Their passports may also be held by the traffickers. Due to their illegal residence and lack of work permit, they have no means to claim for their rights and denounce those violations. In addition, commercial sex migrant workers are often detained by the police and have to pay substantial bribes in order not to be deported (Gülçür and İlkaracan, 2002).

For asylum seekers and refugees, it is particularly difficult to get a work permit due to the regulations forcing them to reside in provincial centers where jobs are much more difficult to find. For these reasons, many asylum seekers give up the application process or leave these towns illegally and join the underground economy usually in Istanbul (Kirişçi, 2009).

Brewer and Yüksekler also raised the issue of criminalization of irregular migration and how “irregular migration inevitably leads people into legal gray zones, precisely because their entry into the territory of another country is criminalized by definition and the legal scope of their activities within that territory are severely

restricted” (2009: 671). What is at stake here is that by their legal status migrants may be pushed into criminal activities. Toksöz and Ünlütürk Ulutaş (2012) argue that according to the legislation, employment of illegal migrants is subject to heavy fines but loose inspection and implementation of the law makes it quite ineffective. Even when an illegal worker is actually spotted by the authorities, a high level of bribing keeps the migrants away from deportation. As they do not have a working permit, even in the cases when they reside in Turkey legally, it makes them enable to unionize or claim for their right. In the case when their employer refuses to pay them for their work, they do not have a possibility to sue the employer. The authors add that due to their legal status migrants generally fear from deportation and are subject to violations such as lower wages than the local workers despite higher qualification, absence of social rights and benefits. Migrant women are in addition exposed to sexual harassment.

Toksöz and Ünlütürk Ulutaş (2012) note that the entertainment sector employs more legal migrant labor than other sectors employing migrant workers. Mainly Ukrainian and Russian workers are employed in this sector, as part of tourism. In order to get a work permit, migrants first have to be employed through agencies and then apply to the MoLSS (Erder and Kaşka, 2003). According to Dedeoğlu and Gökmen (2010), these workers benefit from higher protection than illegal workers. Their contracts are reportedly written in their own language and they are informed about rights according to the Labor Code. Moreover, they benefit from health and security services. However, this rarely applies to African migrants, who according to Toksöz and Ünlütürk Ulutaş (2012) differ from other migrants by their culture, religion and language in addition to their skin color that makes them particularly visible and are not as much integrated in the labor market as other ethnic

groups. Saltan and Yardımcı (2007) argue that African migrants have the lowest status in the labor market and usually survive by taking the rests.

### Access to Public Services

In practice, children of refugees and asylum seekers, as well as irregular migrants in most cases do not have access to education because it requires a person to have a residence permit and be able to provide an address. The language barrier as well as the transit nature of African migration, at least in terms of migrants' intentions, also constitute an obstacle. NGOs usually try to fill in this gap, with rather scarce resources. Some NGOs such as Caritas and ICMC, offer some schooling programs to these children but they are usually not attended by many African children. Until recently, asylum seekers were required to pay relatively high residence fees in order to get and keep their residence permit. This prohibitive measure prevented many families from regularizing their situation and thus from getting access to public services such as education and healthcare (Durukan, 2007). Thus, for health care as well, NGOs are usually trying to cover the costs for the most vulnerable patients, which due to their tight budgets, usually means women and children (Brewer and Yüksek, 2009).

The definition of vulnerability is problematic. While it includes some people, it excludes others. Single men are rarely considered as vulnerable according to international humanitarian standards, unless they suffer from a severe disease or handicap. However, they may be extremely vulnerable as well. Moreover, irregular migrants can be just as vulnerable as or even more vulnerable than asylum seekers while in practice they do not benefit from as much help. Indeed, Toksöz and Ünlütürk Ulutaş (2012) note that illegal migrants do not benefit from any access to

health insurance. They can have access to free treatment only in case of emergency. Thus, many migrants have to wait to go back to their countries in order to get treatment. The lack of access to public services in general, and to education in particular reinforces the durable nature of migrants' marginalities.

### Asylum

While there is already a huge legal gap concerning asylum seekers in Turkey that has only very recently been filled to some extent by the new Law on Foreigners and International Protection<sup>22</sup>, even the existing laws were reportedly not fully implemented. Kirişçi (2009) argues that the directives were not implemented, in part due to the worsening of the relations between Turkey and the EU, which makes Turkish officials less prone to make efforts in the direction of the EU *acquis*. Indeed, Turkey is concerned about the possibility of lifting the geographical limitation without benefiting from a full support of the European countries. Burden-sharing is of main importance regarding this issue.

Despite the *non-refoulement* principles, there were reports of deportation of asylum seekers between 2004 and 2006, and even refugees in 2007. Moreover, difficulties in accessing the asylum procedures were reported, especially in the case of mixed populations of irregular and forced migrants. Even when asylum seekers do have access to asylum procedures, the lengths of the process is highly problematic due to the Turkish asylum system (Kirişçi, 2009).

While a large majority of asylum seekers prefer to stay in Istanbul, since it is not a satellite city, it can be assigned only under specific circumstances. In practice,

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<sup>22</sup> Law No. 6458/2013 on Foreigners and International Protection

it is granted to those considered as the most vulnerable one, namely women with children and disabled individuals (Suter, 2012). Despite the fact that they are forced to stay in designated provincial cities, many African migrants prefer to stay in Istanbul due to the difficulty to make a living in those cities, as well as because of the lack of community networks and the hostility of often conservative locals (Brewer and Yüksekler, 2009). In 2008, it was reported that half of the registered asylum seekers and refugees assigned in satellite cities left them (Kirişçi, 2009: 378).

Regarding deportation, even though those asylum seekers whose applications were rejected are supposed to be deported, it is rarely the case. For practical and financial reasons, their presence is usually tolerated and they thus become part of the mass of undocumented migrants residing illegally in Turkey, when they do not try to cross to Greece (Brewer and Yüksekler, 2009). It is a perfect example of the contingency and temporary nature of legal status discussed by Calavita (2006).

In practice there is both a gender and a race bias in the recognition and resettlement process of asylum seekers according to Brewer and Yüksekler (2009). They argue that the resettlement of Middle Eastern refugees is much faster than the resettlement of Somalis for instance. In addition, unaccompanied women and children are traditionally considered as a particularly vulnerable population and often given priority in both the determination and the resettlement process. This leads to different strategies from asylum seekers trying to have their cases prioritized. According to the same survey, it is not unusual that a woman declares herself as unaccompanied and then has her husband added to the folder with a derivative status. On the other hand, adult African men may face suspicion from the authorities as potential former combatants, smugglers, or even terrorists.

These asylum practices show the importance not only of law on migrants' experiences but also and above all of its implementation and practice. While a large span of the law is left to the discretion of state officials and is subject to interpretation and arbitrary change, it makes the legal boundaries blurred and creates additional stress for migrants who can never be sure of their rights, however limited they may be, and the possible outcome of their actions. Even NGOs are struggling to find their way in a legal limbo where it is difficult to differentiate formal policies from informal and changing practices. The lack of information is rampant and only contributes to reinforce migrants' marginalities and precariousness.

Another major issue related to African migrants in Istanbul is the bigger picture of Turkey's opening to Africa through its foreign policy and other measures aiming at tightening relations between Turkey and African countries such as scholarships for African students attending Turkish universities.

#### Turkey's Soft Power in Africa

Several authors emphasized the importance of the tightening political, economic and humanitarian relations that Turkey started developing with Sub-Saharan Africa in recent years (Fait, 2012; Şaul, 2013). It is a quite recent trend that emerged at the end of the 1980s but only started to really take shape at the end of the 1990s with Ismail Cem as the new Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs (Kohen, 2013). Since then, more than twenty-three new embassies opened, which means that thirty-five Turkish embassies are currently in function in Africa, the last ones to open being Chad, Guinea, Eritrea and Djibouti embassies. 2005 was declared as "the Year of Africa" in Turkey and the tenth African Union Summit held in January 2008 declared Turkey as strategic partner. In August 2008, the "Turkey-Africa Cooperation Summit" held in

Istanbul with the participation of forty-nine countries is a cornerstone in Turkey's relations with African countries (Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, n.d.b).

Turkey is also investing in an increasing number of humanitarian projects in Africa through the Turkish International Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TİKA), such as in Somalia or Darfour with projects mainly related to health, agriculture and education. Reportedly, Turkey has invested 300 million USD to humanitarian projects in Somalia so far (Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, n.d.b). Recep Tayyip Erdogan's visit to Gabon, Niger and Senegal in January 2013, following several other high level visits by Turkey's President Abdullah Gül or Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan are symptomatic of this clear political will (Kohen, 2013, January 9). Moreover, Turkish schools are flourishing in many African countries and are contributing to the spreading of Turkish culture, language and generally speaking influence, which are clear signs of the use of soft power by Turkish authorities in Africa. Especially schools inspired by the famous Turkish Islamic scholar Fetullah Gülen have become references of elite high schools in many Eastern and African countries (Mohamed, 2007).

Turkey's business sector sees in Africa a land of opportunities. As evidence, three hundred Turkish businessmen joined the Turkish Prime Minister on his journey to Africa (Kohen, 2013, January 9). Turkey's trade volume with African countries is booming with a global volume reaching 23 billion dollars in 2012 as compared with 9 billion in 2005. The opening of new Turkish Airlines destinations in Africa is following the trend with a total of thirty-eight direct flights connecting Turkey to the African continent today (Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, n.d. b).

In line with its foreign policy in Africa, Turkish government is providing an increasing number of scholarships for students from Sub-Saharan African countries

as part of the *Türkiye Burslari* programs. Again according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 561 such scholarships were provided in 2012-2013 (Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, n.d. b). Those scholarships are meant for foreign students willing to study in a Turkish university. A special program called *Türkiye Africa Scholarship Program* is aiming at enabling students from African countries to study in Turkey. The education is usually in Turkish. However, even in the rare cases when classes are given in another language (English, French or German), a one year Turkish language course is compulsory for all the Türkiye Scholarship students not having a C1 Level Certificate for the Turkish Proficiency Test. The allowance is regularly updated. To date, for undergraduate students it amounts to 250 USD per month and for master students 360 USD. In addition scholarship students do not pay any university fee, can benefit from free accommodation in public dormitories and are covered by the public health insurance (Türkiye Bursları, n.d.).

While Turkey is opening to Africa, generally speaking, policies regarding asylum, trafficking and visas seem to be evolving towards a more humanitarian perspective whereas irregular migration is being increasingly controlled and sanctioned. Tolay (2011) explains these changes by three main factors: changes in the migration context of Turkey, changes in the foreign policy environment and finally domestic changes in the conception and procedures regarding foreign policy in Turkey, including a shift in the balance of power and the increased influence of non-state actors. The experiences of migrants have been greatly influenced by these policies in a great range of areas including visa and entry into Turkey, employment, access to public services, asylum and education. This study uncovers how these structural forces influence migrants but also how they keep a certain degree of

agency and how, through their agency they keep some control and power over the structures.

## CHAPTER IV

### METHODOLOGY

In order to apply the structuration theory to empirical research, Giddens (1984) identifies two possible methodologies, namely the institutional analysis and the analysis of strategic conduct, the difference being basically a matter of focus and degree of analysis. I chose to focus on the latter. According to Giddens (1984), in order to analyze strategic conduct, the researcher should focus on the discursive and practical consciousness and strategies of control of respondents. Particular attention should be given to knowledgeability, accounts of motivation and the interpretation of the dialectic of control. Giddens (1984) insists as well on the importance of context and time-space sensitivity.

I tried to follow as much as possible Giddens' methodological recommendations. Since my research is about human agency and structure, it is too informal and subjective to be dealt through quantitative methods. The qualitative track was obviously more appropriate. I conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews with 40 interviewees, including 5 pilot interviews. A few interviewees were interviewed several times. The duration of the interviews ranged from twenty minutes to three and a half hours, the average duration being about one hour. More informal interviews were conducted with migrants, NGO staff and academics.

#### Interviewee categorization

I categorize the interviewees in three main sub-categories, namely migrants, refugees or asylum seekers and students. I consider an interviewee as a migrant when his or

her main reason to migrate is neither flight from persecution nor studies. Most of the time they are economic migrants but other reasons may also influence their decision such as medical issues, family reunion or other personal issues. For simplification, I will refer to all of them as African migrants when talking about general features. I argue that all of them are affected by structures and all of them are a reflection of agency. However, their different experiences and backgrounds may show us a greater variety of structural forces and the factors that affect the degree of agency a migrant may have. Nevertheless, the analysis of the experience of African diplomats and high officials is out of scope of this research. Besides representing only a tiny minority of African migrants, I consider their situation as being too different to be compared with that of the other populations considered in this research.

I do not categorize the interviewees according to their official legal status but according to the actual main reason of their presence in Istanbul. Indeed, legal status is a blurred and changing category. While a great majority of migrants coming to Turkey come with a visa, they are first so called legal migrants but soon become undocumented migrants as their visa expires. They may then apply to asylum and again get a semi-legal status. Even the legal status of asylum seekers is not clear for African migrants since only Europeans can officially be refugees in Turkey. Yet, African asylum seekers are tolerated in Turkey and get a temporary legal status. In addition, some migrants who came for economic or personal reasons may apply for asylum just to protect themselves from deportation while others who fled from persecution may give up the application process because it is too heavy and complicated. I argue therefore, that the official legal status does not reflect migrants' experience and influence their decisions as much as their actual background and situation. While almost all of the interviewees I consider as part of the migrants sub-

category are undocumented, I do not make a clear distinction for those same reasons. I also do not make a distinction between asylum seekers and refugees except when it is necessary (access to healthcare, or public services).

### Sampling

I conducted formal interviews with fifteen women and twenty-five men coming from sixteen different countries, namely and by order of representation from the most represented to the least represented ones, Cameroon, Senegal, Ethiopia, Somalia, Ivory Coast, DR Congo, Eritrea, Soudan, Nigeria, Niger, Liberia, Guinea Bissau, Gabon, Madagascar, Uganda and Rwanda. Out of the forty interviewees, twenty-one were migrants, nine were refugees or asylum seekers, nine were students and one was a shuttle trader traveling regularly between Africa and Turkey. The total duration of their stay in Istanbul ranges from two months to twenty-two years, the latter being a quite exceptional case. I conducted most interviews in French or English and had Somali and Amharic translators for most interviewees from Somalia and Ethiopia, which gave me access to a great range of communities.

Due to the characteristics of the population I worked with, I had to use the snowballing sampling method. However, in order to avoid having interviewees from only one or two communities, I used as many entry points as possible, making sure not to get in contact with the interviewees only through NGOs, which is the easiest way but also a biased one. Undocumented migrants usually do not want to be taped due to understandable reasons. I thus took notes during the interviews and typed them immediately after the interview.

I also conducted participant observation in places where migrants gather, including NGOs, churches, restaurants, streets and private houses mostly in the neighborhoods of Tarlabası, Osmanbey/Harbiye and Kumkapi/Aksaray.

Even if my sample contains more men than women, I tried to have a balanced ratio as much as possible. As there are more African men than African women in Istanbul, I believe a fifteen to twenty-five ratio is satisfactory even though I do not argue that my sample is representative of the African population in Istanbul. As most studies dealing with African migrants in Istanbul are gender neutral, which generally means in practice male-biased, I tried to pay attention to the gendered nature of migrants experience and agency throughout my research.

#### Access to the field

It is never easy to access undocumented and transiting populations. In order to enter the field I relied on the contacts I made during my four-month internship at the UNHCR Field Unit in Istanbul in summer 2012 as well as the colleagues I had while working as a translator for *Médecins Sans Frontières*, an NGO that offers psychological support to migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in Istanbul and as a social worker for Caritas in May 2013. During those experiences I built up a valuable network with UNHCR representatives, NGO workers and members of African communities who work as outreach agents and translators.

I believe that being a young female made the contact with the interviewees much easier. Most of my interviewees live in a male-dominated world and were happy to find a softer and gentle person to talk to. Of course it also implies some precautions. I had to make clear from the beginning what my intentions were and that I had a partner. They thus never openly tried to flirt with me. I also believe that being a foreigner in Turkey and being from a country that went through civil war created a certain degree of sympathy from some interviewees. I was told by some interviewees that they would never have shared information with me if I were Turkish.

## Duration of the Fieldwork

I have been making contacts in the field and making observations from July 2012 to October 2013. I conducted the pilot interviews in November and December 2012. I completed the interviews in September and October 2013. I asked interviewees about their background, their motivations to leave their countries and to come to Turkey, the decision making process, their experience and situation in Turkey and coping strategies, indirectly about their impact on the Turkish and home societies as well as a reflection on their migration experience and plans for the future. Moreover, I researched the structural forces that influence agents' decisions through interviews and participant observation but also through secondary sources. I conducted most interviews in neutral places such as big cafés or fast food restaurants. Some interviews were conducted at the migrant's house. A few interviews were conducted jointly with two migrants at the same time when the interviewees felt more comfortable that way or when there was a language barrier with one of the interviewees. It also enabled sometimes a discussion between the two interviewees that allowed us to touch upon issues that were not specified in the schedule.

## Ethics and Confidentiality

In order to respect basic norms of ethics and confidentiality, the names and details that may lead to the identification of my interviewees were changed or discarded. I attributed pseudonyms to the interviewees while paying attention to the origin and structure of their original name since I believe it may provide some information about their background. Therefore, pseudonyms generally respect the French,

English or traditional origin of interviewees' names. I did my best to make the purpose of my research as clear as possible and avoid false expectations in terms of potential financial or legal assistance or relationship. Interviewees were clearly informed that their participation is voluntary and that they can ignore any question they want or interrupt the interview.

I analyze the main finding through the structuration lens and its main analytical concepts. I start with the main findings related to the structural forces that play a key role in the migration process and in migrants' experience in Turkey, including the economic, political and cultural forces, educational opportunities and systems, migration and visa policies and institutions. Then I move to the agents and their characteristics including reflexivity, bounded knowledgeability, dialectics of control, coping and advancement strategies and reflections on the migration experience including the lessons learned. I conclude the agency part with a reflection on different factors that influence the degree of a particular migrant's agency. Finally, I engage in a discussion on migration and the duality of structure.

## CHAPTER V

### MIGRATION AND STRUCTURE

Giddens (1984) defines structure as rules and resources, both allocative and authoritative, used by agents to reproduce and change social systems. During my fieldwork, I identified several structural forces that influence migrants' migration process and their experience in Turkey. In the context of migration, rules include laws, migration and settlement policies and practices. Allocative resources include the economic situation and opportunities while authoritative resources include politics, education and culture. Giddens emphasizes the importance of time-space sensitivity. It is thus important to note that the trends I am drawing here are not meant to describe a global phenomenon but apply to the specific case of Sub-Saharan African migrants in Istanbul at the time of this research. However, parallels can be made with other migration movements specific to other communities, in different places and at different times. The structures in both migrants' home countries and Turkey play a key role, as well as the global context and migration patterns.

#### Economic Forces

The economic forces allocates resources to potential migrants and thus influences their propensity to migrate, the moment and the way of migration as well as their living conditions in Turkey. In the economic forces I include the availability and

stability of jobs, the level of salaries and relative cost of living and the stability and growth of economy in general.

### Push and Pull Factors

A lack of economic opportunities is the most common reason given by migrants to explain their decision to leave their home country. However, the African migrants coming to Turkey are usually not the poorest among their communities. Even though most of the migrants come from a poor economic background, the decision to come stems more often from an advancement strategy than a survival strategy. They are typically looking for a “better life”, for themselves and their families. Ndiaw, a student from Senegal says: “In Africa, we have enough to pull through. All the people here, they were not unemployed in their country. They had something but it was just enough to survive, feed the family, but not to improve.”

The main problem, according to most interviewees, is not the absence of jobs but very low wages and high taxes as well as arbitrary recruitment processes, often imbued with tribalism. David, a migrant from Cameroun says that in Africa, “it’s not about opportunities, it’s about rewards”. Several of the interviewees graduated from high-school and university in their home country. However, the salary they were offered to work in a field matching with their diploma was very low. Others complained about tribalism that allocates jobs according to one’s tribal belonging or family ties. Esther, a migrant from Uganda summarizes it the following way: “Basically, the salary was low; the working conditions were bad, and the taxes too high.”

While the economy in migrants' home countries constitutes a major push-factor, the economy, or rather the expected economic prosperity in Europe and/or Turkey represents a strong pull factor. Indeed, the majority of African migrants came to Turkey with the intention to transit to Europe, attracted by potential economic opportunities. Many of them end up staying in Turkey for different reasons and sometimes for many years. Ndiaw, a student from Senegal explains: "At the beginning, they were coming to Turkey in order to go to Greece or to Europe. But they found out that they could make some money, by guiding traders for example, by bringing them to the shops to buy goods. They don't dream of Europe anymore you know."

Indeed, many migrants who came initially in order to go to Europe had to give up their initial plans because "Fortress Europe" closed its borders. Some keep on trying to cross the border illegally, others went back home or move to a third country such as China. Some, as Ndiaw says, decided to try to make money in Turkey.

However, an increasing number of migrants also come with the initial intention to stay in Turkey. David, a migrant from Cameroun, wanted to study in Norway but he got scammed by a travel agency and ended up in Georgia. As he could not continue his travel, he decided to stay in Georgia for a while, first as a student and then as a worker. According to him, in Georgia, opportunities were limited for skilled foreigners like him. He used to work as a telemarketer for a small wage. He found out on the internet that Turkey had a growing economy so he decided to come and try his luck. Other migrants considered that Europe is already saturated with migrants while Turkey is an emerging economy offering new

opportunities to migrants. Many consider Turkey as having a great trading potential because products are of good quality and prices still relatively low.

Azekia is a trader from Eritrea working in a family business based in Soudan. He is one of many so-called shuttle migrants. He does not live permanently in Istanbul but for the last nine months he has been coming every month to buy goods, such as construction material, food and beverage or textile. He then sends it back home by containers. He stays each time for about fifteen days. He works with guides, usually African migrants staying in Istanbul, who take a commission. He has been working in this sector for many years and is traveling to many countries. He sees in Turkey a land of opportunities. Before, he says: “People in Africa were buying everything from China but the quality was not good. Turkey has European standard and complies with international quality norms, but it is much cheaper, even though it is not as cheap as China.”

Economic forces constitute thus a major push and pull factor in migrants’ decision to leave their country and to come to Turkey but they remain fundamental in their experience in Turkey as well.

### Resources and Obstacles in Turkey

Economic forces do not only influence migrants’ migration decisions, they also have an impact on migrants’ lives once they reach Istanbul. While Giddens defines structures in terms of obstacles and resources, in the particular case of African migrants in Istanbul, most of the time they are rather obstacles than resources. The expectations migrants had regarding the economic opportunities they can find abroad are usually not met in Istanbul. For most of them, migration leads to a degradation of

their economic situation. Even though in terms of value, the money they manage to earn in Turkey may be higher than the wages in their home country, due to higher living expenses and the need to rent an often overpriced flat leads to lower economic conditions.

Housing and economic condition are closely related. Indeed, a significant number of property owners reportedly take advantage of migrants' vulnerability and difficulty to find accommodation to increase their rents. Most of the interviewees complained about expensive and overcrowded flats. It is not rare to have ten or fifteen people living together in a small place. Many of them had better housing conditions back home and report having difficulties to adapt to the shift from sharing a house with their family to sharing a studio with a lot of strangers. Yaasir, a refugee from Somalia, says housing is the major problem because there is no privacy and often no heating even though rents are high. Esther, a migrant from Uganda came with her husband. They rent a small room for 250 dollars a month in a flat where eleven people live. She is the only woman. The whole flat costs 700 dollars a month.

Even though she is not representative of the majority of migrants, Salomé, a migrant from Cameroun, used to work in a bank back home and is now washing the dishes in a restaurant. But she is not the only one. Others used to be pharmacists or teachers back home and none of them found an equivalent job in Turkey.

While life is expensive, African migrants usually lack economic resources to face them. As seen in the contextual chapter, migrants do not have the right to work. Those who, despite lacking a work permit, manage to access the labor market earn very little money. Besides doing most of the time odd jobs that in general do not pay well, many interviewees reported a wage gap between African and non-African

workers. When asked whether his earnings were sufficient to live, Haris, a migrant from Cameroun answered: “Even a beggar can live, but living decently is another matter. One can earn 200TL per week, and only if he works every day. If an African earns 200 TL, a Turk will earn 800 TL, and the African is not even permanent.”

High living expenses and limited resources make it difficult to live and almost impossible to save money, which was the initial goal for most migrants while coming to Turkey. Many migrants thus get trapped in Istanbul because they do not have savings that would enable them to move forward or go back home.

Major economic forces that play a key role in migrants’ experiences are limited opportunities in their home countries as compared to expected better opportunities abroad and the actual often bad economic situation they face once they get to Turkey. But other forces come into play as well.

#### Political Forces

Several interviewees reported that political forces pushed them to leave their countries. I define political forces as structures shaping the distribution of power, stability and the system of governance in a particular society. As compared to those countries, Turkey often has a more stable political situation, which constitutes a pull factor for some migrants, especially for those fleeing from persecution.

A high level of insecurity and war is often a major push factor but problems of bad governance, a lack of individual liberties, corruption or an abusive government were also reported by migrants as major political reasons to leave their countries. Tahir, an asylum seeker from Soudan explains: “I left because of the government. My brother was a member of the Liberation Front. They killed him. I knew I had to escape, if not they would kill me as well. They forced me.”

It is important to highlight that there may be a gendered difference in the influence of political instability on the propensity to leave the country. Indeed, while all the male members of Tahir's family had to flee, his mother and sisters are still in Soudan because, according to him, it is dangerous for men but not for women. Rather than war and insecurity, Haris, a migrant from Cameroun, reported governance problems in Africa as a major factor that pushes people to leave the country:

In Africa, everything is static. You were born a peasant, you remain a peasant. Our president has been in power for thirty years. Since you were born, you see the same thing. And there is corruption also. You see administrators richer than businessmen who plunder the state treasury. The government doesn't do anything for the people.

Joseph, a refugee from Rwanda has a similar account and links it directly to migration:

In Africa, you will have a leader making a coup when he's twenty-five and leaving the country when he is eighty-five and in the meantime he takes from the public treasury and doesn't invest in the country. There is a lot of corruption. When there was the crisis in Rwanda, lots of money was sent to our country by the international community. If the money was used in the country, you wouldn't see a Rwandan outside of Rwanda. It is a very rich country but only ten generals and ministers are rich, the others are very poor.

As some of the interviewees explained, politics and economy are often inter-related. Samuel for instance, a migrant from Eritrea said that there are jobs in his country but administrative problems impede people from investing in Eritrea. Some refugees from Somalia explained that insecurity was not the only reason for them to leave but that indirectly war leads to a lack of economic resources and educational opportunities and thus forces people to leave anyway.

As compared to most of the countries of origin of migrants reporting political forces as a determinant factor for migration, Turkey represents a safe haven. Even though Turkey does not lack political problems, for those who experienced severe

persecutions, Turkish relative political stability represents a pull factor. Thus, when asked her opinion about Turkey, Amal a refugee from Somalia answered that despite the difficulties she faces, “it’s a nice country. I didn’t face many problems like killing, torture...”

Therefore, while war, corruption and bad governance constitute push factors for some migrants, a relative political stability in Turkey may be a pull factor for some migrants. I did not find strong evidence of political forces playing a fundamental role in migrants’ experience in Turkey, which does not mean that such mechanisms do not exist. Rather, a further research may be necessary in order to examine them. In addition to economic and political forces, cultural forces play a major role in the migration decision and process.

#### Cultural Forces

I define cultural forces in a broad sense as the ideas, customs and behavior of a particular group or society. Cultural forces are determinant in the migration decision as well as in migrants’ experience in Turkey.

#### Push and Pull Factors

The will to travel and the myth of Europe as an Eldorado are the main cultural forces that urge individuals to migrate. It is important to note that there is a strong gender bias in this aspect. In most countries, there is a great imbalance between the number of male and female migrants. Cultural forces, and especially religion, also play a role for some migrants in the choice of Turkey as the destination country. Finally, cultural forces have a very strong impact on migrants’ experience in Istanbul.

The will to travel and the myth of Europe were mentioned very often by the interviewees. Aminata, a migrant from Senegal, explains that “in Senegal, we like to

leave”. Sarratou also says that parents are ready to sell their lands in order to send their children abroad, hoping it will allow them to build a bigger house. Arivo, a student from Madagascar adds: “It is a crazy idea that many people in Africa and in Madagascar have. They believe it is easier in Europe.”

This tendency to emigrate is however not identical for men and women and differs from country to country. Cultural forces contribute to the production of gendered patterns in the migration process. We will see later how agents reproduce and change those patterns. In most African communities in Istanbul men are more numerous than women. Ndiaw, a student from Senegal narrated the story of his friend who migrated. Little by little, all his family left and at the end, everybody had migrated, except the women. Louis, another student from Senegal explains that “it is easier to take the decision for a son than for a girl. For girls the father decides.” Sarratou, a migrant from Senegal argues however that those gendered patterns are changing. According to her, while before Senegalese women were just coming and going for business and trade but without staying more than a couple of weeks in Turkey, they also started migrating.

One can see similar patterns in the Somali and Sudanese community. Yaasir, a refugee from Somalia, explains that even though there are many women, most are men because of their culture. Indeed, he says that families don’t allow women to go. However, he adds that it is also changing due to the increasing insecurity.” Bakri, a student from Soudan explains why there are only very few Sudanese women in Istanbul, most of them being students: “It’s just that the family will not let them go. It’s cultural. It is hard for a girl to go out from Soudan alone, they should stay and wait to get married, then if their husband wants to go out and ask for asylum they can go as well.”

But it is the other way around in other countries. Sara from Ethiopia explains:

In Ethiopia, if the first baby is a girl, everybody is very happy, it means good luck. They think they will bring money to the family, go to an Arab country. If it is the girl, the family says go, go. If it is a boy, he just sits like that on the couch. They say “the family cannot be alone, the boy has to stay”. In Ethiopia, the daughter has more responsibility than a man. A man when he is married, he only takes care of his family (wife and children) but if the girl marries, she will still be responsible for her family (parents and brother, sisters). That’s why you will find Ethiopian girls everywhere in the world. But for example in Nigeria, the boys travel and the girls stay at home. It is tradition.

For some students, cultural forces were also a pull factor for coming to Turkey rather than other countries. It is especially the case for Muslim migrants. Thiame, a student from Senegal, said that she wanted to go to France but when she and her family heard that wearing a headscarf was forbidden they decided to send her to Turkey because it is a “Muslim country”. Marie, another student from Senegal shares a similar view. She explained: “My sister came to visit and buy some goods. She thought Turkey was a good country, a Muslim country.”

Cultural forces thus play a key role in influencing migrants’ decision to leave their countries and may also impact their choice of destination. Once in Turkey, cultural forces may be resources but are more often obstacles for migrants.

#### Resources and Obstacles in Turkey

Among the cultural forces that influence migrants’ experience in Turkey to a great extent are language and cultural prejudices. Most of the interviewees reported language as a major obstacle they face in Turkey. Indeed, Nayah, a migrant from Cameroun expresses a widespread impression among migrants: “Turks are not so sociable with us who don’t speak the language. I learned a bit of Turkish. I understand a bit but I cannot speak.”

A majority of African migrants in Istanbul have a similar level of Turkish: they have learned a bit of Turkish language, they can understand some words or simple sentences but they cannot have a proper conversation. Most of the time, they learned some basics in the street, by listening to the people. For them, not knowing the Turkish language is a barrier to social and economic integration and represents an everyday difficulty. However, language can also be a bridge for those who learn it. I observed migrants who had good interactions with Turkish people due to their language skills. Many learned in the street, others took language courses offered by some NGOs. Students are a particular case because one of the conditions to get the scholarship from the Turkish government is to attend a one-year language course. Not all the students I interviewed were part of a scholarship program but a large majority is. Ndiaw, a student from Senegal who speaks very good Turkish explains that once Turkish people see that one speaks Turkish they respect him/her. Séverin is a migrant from Cameroun. He has been in Istanbul for a few months and does not speak well yet but he understood that knowing the language facilitates greatly living in Istanbul. He is taking courses at Mutfak; a solidarity space created for migrants and people living in the neighborhood of Tarlabaşı, and is trying to learn as much as he can. He explains:

The situation is different now because of the language. When you learn a bit it is very different than when you don't speak. Sometimes, I pass by them and they insult me, they think I don't understand. Then I answer them, they are surprised. They ask "*türkçe biliyor musun?*" ["Do you speak Turkish?"] Then even if I don't understand I say "*evet*" ["Yes"] and they are so surprised.

Besides the language, cultural stereotypes are the other great obstacle that most migrants face in Istanbul. As a rule, there is a tremendous degree of mutual distrust between African communities and Turkish people. A great majority of the

interviewees complained about racism and discrimination often based, according to the interviewees on the ignorance of the local people. Indeed, according to many interviewees they lack knowledge about the countries migrants come from. While not everybody acts with violence, verbal or physical, many show curiosity towards African migrants and ask questions that may hurt them. Questions such as “What is the capital of Africa?”, “Do you have houses/streets/trees in Africa?” were often considered as insulting by the interviewees. Several interviewees said local people tried to touch their skin to see whether the color would fade away although it seems that it used to happen more often in the past than nowadays. Bakri, a student from Soudan says:

Sometimes they look racist, sometimes ignorant! They ask you really stupid questions like do you have streets in your country, and trees? After “where are you from?” they should ask you “what is your name?” but no they ask always those silly questions. The only thing they can get in Africa is starvation and war. For them Africa is bad and there are bad people.

Salif, a migrant from Niger adds: “Turks are very racist. They treat us like slaves”.

This attitude towards African migrants is reproduced in the labor and rental markets.

Many interviewees reported that local people refuse to rent to African migrants.

When they do, neighbors often complain about noise and smell and the rents are usually higher than the market price. Therefore, migrants in Istanbul are mainly concentrated in specific neighborhoods, usually in bad conditions and overpriced and overcrowded flats. Esther, a migrant from Senegal who sells products such as perfume and watches in the streets, complains that local people think “you don’t have money because you are black”, which makes it difficult for her to buy her products. In the labor market, racism and discrimination are visible through both the salaries and the working conditions of African people. Most interviewees reported

that white people's salary was higher than their salary. Moreover, they said that their working conditions were often very bad. Félicité, a migrant from Cameroun said that employers in the factories favor Syrians and "use black people for degrading tasks such as washing the toilets". However, some interviewees said that even though their working conditions are bad due to long working hours, short breaks and prolonged standing, local people experience a similar treatment. Salomé, a migrant from Cameroun explains:

Some say that Turkish people mistreat us but then I see the cook in the restaurant where I work. He is Turkish and his is tireless. Turkish people work. That's why they are rich. African people say they make them work standing from morning until evening, but that is also what Turkish people do. You have to work. "By the sweat of your face you will eat bread". You have to be a hard worker to get along with a Turk. When it is hard I think of the cook.

For many interviewees, the racism they experience is due to a lack of education and to the fact that most local people they encounter have never been abroad. But relations between African migrants and the local population is not always bad. Yaasir, a refugee from Somalia who has been in Istanbul for a couple of years, says that Turkish people are friendly and helpful. Even, Bakri, who so virulently complained about the racism and ignorance of Turkish people said that "when you know them, they are good people". Indeed, I observed several good relations between a migrant and a local person. As a rule, while general relations between the communities are tense and full of distrust, constructive relationships and even friendships may grow at a personal level.

It is important to note a great gender bias in the way cultural forces influence migrants' experience in Istanbul. Many interviewees, both men and women, reported a current stereotype about African women among local men who want to "try black

women”, which also explains the rise of prostitution among African migrants.

Séverin, a migrant from Cameroun says:

I try not to stay too close to them. They all have that same idea. “African Madam” they say. It disturbs me. It is a bit annoying. I am not too much in contact with them. So when they ask me “African Madam”, I look for a picture with a very fat woman. I know they don’t like fat women and then they say “ah no!

Sexual harassment of African women by local men is widespread, including at work places. Many interviewees reported that owners or managers, especially in factories, were constantly trying to have sexual relations with their employees. Reportedly, if the migrant refuses, there is a high risk for her of getting fired or not receiving her monthly salary. Justine, a migrant from Cameroun explains:

I found a job, in the textile industry, but each time after three or four days, the boss wanted to have sex with me. I had to work in ten factories, but I always had to give up. They want to try African women. The great majority of African women here face this problem. Even the current boss, he started after three months. But I explained to him that I was married and that I came here for work. He said OK.

This particularity for African women as compared to African men also influences their migration experience in terms of safety. Several interviewees, both male and female, agreed that it is more dangerous for a woman to sleep on the street or to be alone.

Religion may also be a resource or an obstacle for African migrants in Istanbul. Some interviewees consider that being a Muslim helps to be better treated by local people. According to David, a Christian migrant from Cameroun, it may even help whoever pretends to be Muslim. According to him, relations between African people and local people are not too bad. He explains:

It is because Turks are Muslim (even though I would rather say fake Muslims) and there are Muslims in Africa, so it is OK. What helps Africans is that there are lots of Muslims in Africa. If there was no

religion, there would be problems. If you meet a Turk, you use words like Salam Alikoum or Inshallah! [He loughs]

However, other interviewees believe religion does not make a difference in the treatment they receive from local people. My observation showed that it does make a difference on a micro level when the migrant is not only Muslim by birth but actually follows the rules of Islam starting with the prayers, which is not so common among the Muslim migrants I met.

On the other side, being part of a religious minority in Turkey such as Christianity, which represents a large part of African migrants, may also be a resource. While it does not attract sympathy from the majority of the local population, it does provide the migrant with a strong network of followers who are not necessarily African and thus builds bridges between ethnic communities. It is important to note that a majority of Christian interviewees were attending churches on a rather regular base. There they could find not only time for prayers and spiritual guidance but also practical help and information specific to their situation in Turkey. I attended several services, in both a Catholic and an Evangelical church in Harbiye. Both provided language courses and other services to their followers, but especially the Evangelical church. While the Catholic Church mostly follows the general protocol during the mass, the service in the Evangelical church I observed was specifically focused on migrants. I will touch upon the importance of churches for Christian migrants in the agency part.

Finally, it is important to note that while cultural forces influence migrants' decisions and experience, not all the migrants have the same cultural background and not all the people living in Istanbul have the same cultural background. Besides the fact that it can evolve depending on individual experiences, from a more general

point of view, it does vary according to ethnicity, social class and neighborhood, which is often related to the first two factors, among others.

To summarize, migration as a rite of passage, the will to travel and the myth of Europe as an Eldorado constitute major cultural push factors. Sometimes, Turkey being a mainly Muslim country is a pull factor for Muslim migrants. Once in Turkey, language, religion and cultural prejudices are both obstacles and resources for African migrants. Moreover, the findings indicate that cultural forces may differ depending on gender and ethnicity. Another major structural factor is the education system.

#### Education Systems

Educational systems and opportunities were a key factor for many interviewees to migrate. The educational system in Turkey also represents resources and obstacles for those who study in Istanbul. In education systems I include the existence of schools and universities, the scope of choices they offer in terms of disciplines and courses as well as their quality, the possibility to access those facilities and their cost as well as the availability of scholarships.

#### Push and Pull Factors

Among those migrants who reported education as a major decision factor, a majority study in Turkey at the moment but not all of them; for some it was the initial factor but they became economic migrants in the process. Many interviewees reported having very limited opportunities to study in their home countries. Moreover, education abroad is perceived as more prestigious and providing more choice. Finally, the scholarship programs offered by the Turkish government represent a

major pull factor even though not all of the students interviewed benefited from such a scholarship.

Joseph, a refugee from Rwanda who first left his country to study in Russia, explains: “In Africa it’s an honor for a student to go study abroad with a scholarship. We don’t have so many schools; to have access to secondary school is already a miracle.”

David, a migrant from Cameroun left his country many years ago with the intention to go to Norway. He had never been dreaming of leaving his country and wanted to work in Cameroun but he wanted to study Peace and Conflict and there was not such an option in his country whereas he found such a master at a low price and with a scholarship in Norway. He left his country to enroll in this school but got scammed and ended up in Georgia, where he finally did his master before coming to Turkey.

While poor educational systems, a lack of opportunities and of choice constitute strong push-factors, the possibility to study in Turkey with a scholarship attracts many students. Many of the interviewees chose Turkey only because it was their only opportunity to study abroad, most of the time with a scholarship.

Ndiaw, a student from Senegal explains that after World War II, Turkey had always been closed but the scholarships offered by the Turkish Government are a sign of opening. It’s a win-win situation because students get the opportunity to study and it gives the host country access to skilled young people who will potentially contribute to trade between Turkey and African countries in the future. The obligation for student with a scholarship from the Turkish government to learn Turkish gives them a particular value-added in that sense.

Yaasir, a refugee from Somalia says that there are over three thousand Somali students with a scholarship in Turkey. It is part of a wider humanitarian program Turkey is providing to Somalia. He says:

The Turkish government started helping the Somali community and giving scholarships for Somali students. I saw an opportunity as a Somalian to get a scholarship for a PhD. But I couldn't get it yet because for now there are scholarships for high school and bachelor but not yet for PhD. They told me I had to wait.

Bakri, a student from Soudan shows how scholarship opportunities and agreements between governments influence the decision of many students to come. He personally came without a scholarship four years ago. He says that they were only two students at the time because there was no agreement between the Turkish and the Sudanese governments. However, two years ago the system changed and they opened scholarship opportunities. Since then many more students arrived, including women, while there are almost no Sudanese female economic migrants or refugees.

Some students come not only because of the scholarships but also because of a specific will to study in Turkey because of the quality of education or the range of choice they may have. It is the case of Arivo, a student from Madagascar who said that before leaving his country he was only thinking about studies in Europe. But then he went to Europe and met many people from all over the world who told him about education opportunities in other countries where education is good but less expensive, such as India or Turkey. He said he does not want to make the same mistake as his fellows who all want to go to Europe because there may not be enough opportunities for everybody there. He thus chose to continue his studies in Turkey.

A lack of educational opportunities in Africa and the possibility to study in Turkey, often with a scholarship are major push and pull factors for some

interviewees. Studying in Turkey becomes a resource for those who manage to enroll in a university in Istanbul but also involves many difficulties.

### Resources and Obstacles in Turkey

While educational opportunities and systems represent strong pull and push factors for some migrants, they also have an impact on their life in Istanbul.

First, it is important to note some fundamental differences between the situations of students as compared to the situation of undocumented migrants in Turkey. The main difference is legal and can be considered as a resource. Students enrolled in a university program technically have the right to be in Turkey. They thus can get a residence permit, an *ikamet*, with all the advantages it involves: besides not fearing deportation, students can also get an internet connection, rent a flat if they want and can afford it, open a bank account and also get a discount for their transportation card. Moreover, the majority of the students interviewed do have a scholarship. Even though the amount of money remains relatively small, they do not have to fear for survival. Most of the time, a place in a dormitory is offered to those students. Even though the conditions are sometimes difficult and some students prefer to stay in a flat, they don't necessarily have to face the tremendous difficulty other migrants have with accommodation. Last but not least, having the status of a student gives them a certain degree of legitimacy and a status that makes it easier to be accepted by the local communities.

However, the educational system in Turkey also brings a lot of constraints for foreign students many of the interviewees complained about. Bakri, a student from Soudan, testifies:

I'm regretting my coming here. I wasted so many years. I have no scholarship so I spent one year preparing for the exam, then I was accepted to Istanbul University. But it was in Turkish so I had to waste one year studying Turkish. But my family didn't like that I studied in Turkish so they told me I should get education in English because my English was so bad at that time. So I wasted one more year learning English. Then I got accepted in a university where classes were in English. I am in second year now, studying engineering.

Indeed, learning another language, Turkish, or sometimes English, is an advantage, but also a constraint. The administrative backlog is another obstacle many students have to face. Procedures are often very strict and many foreign students need a lot of time to fulfil the requirement. Having a scholarship makes a big difference from a financial point of view but many interviewees consider that the amount received is not enough, even though it increases with time. Therefore, many students have to work or receive additional money from their families. Prisca, a student from Cameroun reported that when she arrived, the amount of scholarship she received was 275TL per month. It then increased to 325 TL the next year and to 500 TL two years later, which allows her now not to ask her family for help. Ndiaw, a student from Senegal said that the scholarship was his major problem when he came to Turkey. He says:

The first obstacle was the scholarship. I didn't have any information about the amount of the scholarship. I thought the scholarship would enable me to live here. I even had a laptop. I gave it away as a gift. I thought that with the scholarship I would buy one here. At the beginning we had 350TL per month, now it increased to 750TL. Sometimes I would spend 50TL a day. When the scholarship arrived, I almost cried.

The situation in the dormitories (*yurt*) was difficult for several interviewees. They struggled with discipline, strict schedule as compared to the freedom they used to have in their countries. Being six people per room was difficult to deal with for many

students because they were often the only African student in the room and had difficulties getting accepted by their roommates.

Educational systems are thus both push and pull factors in the migration decision and source of both resources and obstacles for migrants coming to study in Turkey. While it gives them a legal status, often some money to survive for those who have a scholarship and a place in a dormitory, it also brings a lot of administrative obstacles and constraints without totally eradicating financial difficulties. Migration and settlement policies are another major structural force that affects all migrants coming to Turkey.

#### Migration and Visa Policy

I will consider first Turkish migration policies that constitute a pull factor for potential migrants. Then, I will deal with those policies that affect migrants' experience once in Istanbul.

#### Pull Factors

For the great majority of migrants, the relatively liberal visa policy of Turkey, as compared to “Fortress Europe”, is the main reason to come to Istanbul. Most migrants from African countries come with a tourist or business visa that they usually overstay. The visa is reportedly relatively easy, but expensive, to get if one has to go through so called travel agents. Having a visa is necessary if one is coming by plane, which is generally the case due to the great distances. A few migrants enter illegally by land or by boat. It is the case most of the times for those coming through middle-Eastern countries. Many women from Ethiopia for instance used to work as housemaids in Lebanon or Syria, due to the placement agencies working between those regions, before fleeing the conflicts there and coming to Turkey. Somali

refugees usually enter illegally by land as well. Ndiaw, a student from Senegal explains:

First of all one should know that the destination of Africans is never Turkey. They want to go to Europe. Before, they were crossing through Morocco and then Spain but then they increased the security in the region. So they transited through Turkey and Greece. Turkey has two interests in doing that: trade and transports, Turkish Airlines. Because in order to come here, migrants have to buy plane tickets, pay taxes. So why do they go through Turkey now? Because visas became accessible. Those who were in the Arab countries can cross without a visa. But to come by plane you need a visa.

This finding was confirmed by many of the interviewees when asked why they chose to come to Turkey and not to another country. Haris, a migrant from Cameroun says:

I came directly to Istanbul, with a transit in Tunis because it was the only visa available at the moment. [...] Since Europe is closed, the flow decreased. The road that opened up is Turkey. People looked at the map, they saw it is nearby. One can cross to the other side. The authorities know it.

The story of Lucas, a refugee from DR Congo is significant in this aspect as well. He was arrested, put in prison and tortured in his country. He managed to escape but had to leave the country that same day. He wanted to go to France and saw that the only flight that day was transiting through Istanbul. He was arrested in Istanbul because he did not have a transit visa. He was released after applying for asylum. He is now a recognized refugee but is still waiting for resettlement and cannot legally leave the country until then. He has been in Turkey for almost six years now. When asked why he came to Istanbul he says: "I didn't choose Istanbul, Istanbul chose me."

The possibility to get relatively easily a visa for Turkey and overstay, or to enter illegally is a major pull factor for migrants. However, once in Turkey, migration policies bring a lot of constraints and difficulties that vary depending on migrants' legal status.

### Resources and Obstacles in Istanbul

While relatively liberal migration policy of Turkey represents a pull factor for many migrants, the restrictions imposed on migrants, and especially undocumented migrants, are sources of major obstacles for migrants once in Istanbul. As Lucas, a refugee from Congo summarizes, most of the migrants do not have access to schools, health care, they do not have a residence permit or a work permit. The situation is slightly different for documented migrants, refugees and asylum seekers as compared to undocumented migrants.

The great majority of the interviewees who are neither students nor refugees or asylum seekers are undocumented migrants. Only a few interviewed migrants had a legal status in Turkey. The first category is newcomers whose visa was going to expire in a short time. A few others were regularized by their employers and thus benefit from a residence permit and in one case a work permit. They benefit from access to public services, healthcare and schools as other documented foreigners in Turkey.

For refugees and asylum seekers, the situation is somewhat different. First, getting the status of an asylum seeker, and even more the status of a refugee, is a hassle. Many migrants who come fleeing from persecution and who fulfil the requirements to get the refugee status give up their application because of the endless procedures and end up dropping their case. Tahir's story is a good example of many other similar stories I heard. Even though Tahir fled his country because his life was threatened after his brother got killed, he dropped his case after many unsuccessful attempts at getting his case recognized. From a legal point of view, he is considered as an undocumented migrant and can be potentially arrested and deported at any time. He recalls:

People didn't know anything about Africans, even the police. They didn't accept to register you. It happened to me. I was first in Istanbul. They refused to register me. It was back in 2003. I went to Helsinki [an NGO helping migrants with legal issues]. They still refused. Then they sent me to Eskişehir. I went alone, I stayed 7 days, they refused. I had my legal advisor at that time. They wrote a letter to MOI [the Ministry of Interior]. Then I went to Mersin but before I went to Eskişehir with my legal advisor. They told him it was ok, but again they refused even if they told him they would register me. Then I went to Mersin, and when I went to the police they said it's in Eskişehir. At that time I closed the case, I became sick of it. But lots of Sudanese stay in their satellite cities. Rents are cheaper. But you cannot stay there if you are not registered. Here it is not a problem.

Many interviewees told me a similar story. While the procedures are already quite heavy because of the obligation to register both with the UNHCR and the Turkish police independently, it becomes even more complicated when it comes to implementation. It is not rare, and it was even more common in the past, that the police officer supposed to register the applicant ignores the procedures or simply decides to ignore it and refuses to do so, which forces the applicant to endless come and goes between different cities. Besides the significant cost of going back and forth, which are sometimes but not always covered by different organizations, it is a tremendous source of stress and anxiety.

For those asylum seekers who manage to go through the hassle of asylum procedures, the satellite cities system is often a major concern that influences their experience of Turkey. As mentioned earlier, the Turkish government imposes asylum seekers and refugees a satellite city where they are supposed to stay and sign usually on a weekly basis at the police station. Istanbul is not officially one of those satellite cities. A person can be assigned Istanbul only in rare and specific cases, which means that many of the interviewees were in an irregular position even though they had "a paper from the UN". Lucas, a recognized refugee from Congo expresses it this way: "Sonja, whether I am legal or illegal, even I don't know. I am legal in

Turkey but illegal in Istanbul. I am supposed to sign in Karaman but who wants to go there. It's like hell. No, I want to live in Istanbul.”

Indeed, because most satellite cities are medium-sized Anatolian cities, asylum seekers and refugees often face even greater discrimination and racism and while life expenses and rents are rather cheaper, it is very difficult for them to make a living there. The smaller size of the city makes them even more visible and removes any possibility of anonymity. However, despite those difficulties, many asylum seekers and refugees, including many Sudanese and Somali people, stick to the rule and stay in those cities. A research focusing on African migrants in those cities would therefore be very interesting.

Despite the difficulty to get the refugee status in Turkey and the conditions it imposes, as compared to undocumented migrants, asylum seekers and refugees have the advantage of having a certain right to stay in Turkey. Theoretically at least, they do not have to fear deportation. As mentioned earlier, Africans cannot technically be refugees in Turkey under the Turkish law because of the geographical limitation that gives the refugee status available only to Europeans. However, they can have a temporary protection and be legally in Turkey until they are resettled in a third country.

Theoretically at least refugees have access to health care in public hospitals. The situation of asylum seekers is more complex and is changing with the new law on asylum seekers that should be implemented beginning of April 2014.

While refugees and asylum seekers have at least a temporary right to be in Turkey, it is by definition not the case for undocumented migrants who do not have the *ikamet* or residence permit and do not have access to public health care. The only

place where they can be treated is in private clinics that are very expensive but do not ask for papers. Several NGOs accept, under some conditions, to pay for the treatment of their beneficiaries. Aminata, a migrant from Senegal, confirms that foreigners have to pay three times the price if they have no papers. Her two sons were born in Turkey. She had to pay 40 TL per medical visit, 1,000 TL for the first delivery and 1,200 TL for the second one. For the first one, her husband's employer assisted them. For the second one, an NGO participated with 200 TL but they had to find the rest themselves, which represents a big amount of money for undocumented migrants who already have difficulties to sustain themselves.

Even though undocumented migrants reported that, unlike in the past, the police does not bother them too much unless they are connected to some illegal activity; not having papers does involve a certain degree of uncertainty and fear and prevents them from having access to basic services and schooling. It also means that in general mothers have to stay at home with their children and cannot work anymore. Therefore, when the Turkish government announced, in 2013 that they would launch a wide legalization campaign and provide undocumented migrants with six-month residence permits under the condition that they pay the fine, which is proportional to their illegal stay in Turkey; a great number of migrants seized the opportunity and asked for the permit. According to the interviewees, some migrants paid up to 4,000 TL or 5,000 TL in order to get their papers done. Aminata's husband, a migrant from Senegal who had been in Turkey for about ten years, paid a 2000€ fine. Due to the campaign, many migrants could go back home and visit their families for the first time. Some also took advantage of their newly acquired residence permit to open a bank account or rent a flat. However, those who benefited from the campaign were very disappointed when the government announced that

those residence permits would not be renewed. For most interviewees it was a big shock and they felt deceived by the Turkish government. Esther, a migrant from Uganda, went back to her country for a week but stayed the whole week at home because she had no money left. She says: “All the money to start a new life was wasted”.

An obstacle that is common to a very large majority of African migrants is the lack of work permit. Even though a couple of the interviewees managed to get a work permit, it seems quite rare. Ndiaw, a student from Senegal who has been in Turkey for more than four years and is quite familiar with African communities, laughed when I asked him whether some migrants do get a work permit and said: “Apart from some traders and diplomats, I have never seen an African with a work permit!” The work permit issue is a tricky one because most African migrants actually work in industries such as textile or construction where not having a work permit is the norm rather than the exception, including among local people. But it might be precisely for that reason that migrants stick to those sectors rather than working in better paid jobs. Sarratou for instance, a migrant from Senegal who speaks French, English, Turkish and a bit of Arabic cannot find a job in a shop because she has no work permit. Ndiaw, a student from Senegal, explains that if an African works in a call shop or a shop, it will attract African customers. As Africans are quite visible, they will easily be denounced by a competing shop. The shop keeper may have to pay a fine and the migrant risks deportation. Even though deportations are rather rare nowadays, Ndiaw recalls such a case where an African migrant working in a call shop was denounced by other call shop keepers and deported.

Last but not least, it is fundamental to address the issue of the relation of migrants with the police since they are those implementing the law. First, it is important to note that most interviewees reported that the situation changed dramatically since the 2000s. While in the 1990s the relation between the police and African migrants, especially undocumented ones, was one of fear and persecution, the relation seem to have normalized in the last years. For those migrants who came through Middle-Eastern countries and experienced the violent relations with the police there, the police in Turkey is often qualified even as friendly and helpful.

Eden, a refugee from Ethiopia, who worked as a housemaid in Arab countries recalls:

I came to Turkey to escape from Syrian police. I was in prison. Because the police caught me once, if they had caught me twice I would have had problems. Here the police will never disturb you if you don't commit a crime! The police is good! They don't touch me, they have respect! In Arab country it is not like this! In Arab countries if the police catch you, you will spend a year under Earth, nobody knows where you are, people who come to Turkey they called us "we took a picture with the police"! It was something incredible!" And she adds: "they even don't torture you!

The relation with the police seems better as compared to Arab countries, but also as compared to the past. Joseph, a refugee from Rwanda remembers:

Until 1995-1998 I had problems with security, with police. They would ask for your papers and if you didn't have any, they would put you in detention. At that time detention was 1 or 2 years. If you compare these times and now, now it is like heaven. At that time, when you would walk and see the police coming, you had to find a way to hide in a side street. If they stopped you and asked for the papers and you didn't have any, they would search you. If you had some money with you, they would take it, if not they would put you in detention and tell you to call your people and bring some money but we didn't have money.

Now however, most interviewees say that the police will not bother them if they are not involved in any illegal activity, which is very important for undocumented migrants because in European countries for instance police control is a major source

of stress. Some interviewees asserted that it is due to the fact that the police got human right trainings in the past years. However, there are still human right problems, especially in the case of detention. Ndiaw, a student from Senegal who is familiar with humanitarian work and who assisted many Africans in dealing with the police says:

In Kumkapı there are two polices, the normal one and the police for foreigners. When they [African migrants] get arrested, they spend one week at the normal police (there you can see them), and then they go to the foreigners police. There, only their father, mother or lawyer can see them. But can Africans have a lawyer? Can their parents afford coming to see them? So when you bring them money, you have to give it to the policemen. But at least those who were released say they did receive the money. The police has to sign a paper.” He adds: “They have to change detention conditions, give the right to a trial. Because here it is not the case. They put you in jail and they forget about you. For instance, there is this case (I know because I went to see him in jail). He had problems with some Turks. They came to his home, with all the weapons you can imagine. They stabbed him. They took him to the hospital just to make a bandage and then they took him to jail. They didn’t even wait for him to heal

Those migrants who sell products on the street are also more likely to face problems with the police. Several interviewees reported that Senegalese street sellers got arrested and had to pay a fine to have their products back.

In short, migration and settlement policies in Turkey affect migrants in different ways depending on their legal status. Therefore, documented migrants and students, refugees, asylum seekers and undocumented migrants have different access to work, public health care, schooling and other basic services. The relation with the police has evolved a lot in the past years, such as laws and their implementation. Last but not least, a structural force that several interviewees mentioned as determining in their migration decision is Turkish policy and presence in Africa.

## Turkish opening to Africa

Turkish presence in Africa is a relatively new phenomenon. Mainly due to economic opportunities and in order to increase its soft power, Turkey is trying to increase its presence in African countries directly through trade but also diplomatic agreements, humanitarian and social projects, schools and scholarship opportunities. Turkish Airlines is a major tool used by the government for its policy in Africa.

### Pull factors

Several migrants reported the importance of Turkish policy and presence in Africa as a pull factor. It includes Turkish Airlines connections, Turkish humanitarian, educational and construction projects in Africa as well as Turkish presence in local media.

The importance of Turkish Airlines promotions in their decision to come to Turkey, or even to leave their countries, was mentioned by many interviewees. It is the case of Salif, a migrant from Niger who used to be a taxi driver in his country and sold his car to come to Istanbul. He explains:

Turkish Airlines was making a promotion on the tickets. They was costing 150,000 CFA francs. Everybody knew about it. Also, the prime minister [of Turkey] came and invited people to come to make business with Turkey, not to come to live but for trade. I had never thought of leaving the country before. It went very fast, in two weeks it was done.

Disappointed by the poor living conditions of African migrants in Istanbul and the lack of opportunities, Salif migrated to China after only five months in Istanbul. He is now working in a trade company there. According to him, there are more opportunities and less racism in China in comparison to Turkey.

Samuel, a migrant from Eritrea who came to Turkey for the first time in the 1980s is now settled in Istanbul. He recalls that “before Turkey didn’t know Africa

and Africa didn't know Turkey." Turkish Airlines used to have only a connection to Johannesburg and a few places in North Africa while now they are in thirty-seven destinations. It encourages African people to come and see Turkish products. Several other interviewees reported that since Turkish Airlines opened a direct connection with their country, an increasing number of migrants is coming.

Turkey benefits also from an increasing presence in African media through advertisement, games, football, etc. Tahir, a refugee from Soudan narrates: "I had background about Turkey; I heard about it, watched it on TV. I loved Istanbul even before coming. There was a TV show in Soudan; the first price was a ticket to Istanbul. But I always loose so I came by myself."

Several Somali interviewees highlighted the humanitarian projects led by Turkey, assisting refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), building infrastructures and investing in education, as a key factor for their coming to Istanbul. Mustafa, a refugee from Somalia says that he came to Turkey because their countries have good relations, because Turkey has project to rebuild the country. Yaasir, another refugee from Somalia, explains: "The relations between Turkey and Somalia started about three years ago. People know about it because of the TV, the radio. There is a large refugee community living in Somalia and they are assisted by the Turkish government. So people talk about it." Johnny, a migrant from Nigeria also mentioned the fact that Turkey invests a lot in education in his home country. However, according to him, people still prefer to go to the United Kingdom because of the colonization heritage.

While Turkish policy and presence in Africa is above all a pull factor, it may also affect to some extent migrants' experience in Turkey.

### Resources and Obstacles in Turkey

Ndiaw, a student from Senegal explains that Turkey's policy in Africa is closely related to the way African people are treated in Turkey. He explains that Turkey arrived to Africa late, after the former colonial powers and China, therefore, it has to compensate by transmitting a good image and letting African migrants come to Turkey:

The policy in Turkey is different from France. In Turkey they do not deport undocumented migrants. In Africa, France China and Turkey are all competing to get the resources, the wealth. But Turkey came last so they have to give a good image of a host country. Because France has been in Africa since colonization. China exchanges products against primary materials. And Turks they haven't done anything yet, they have just opened schools. It's like missionaries. They have to give a good image then they come. Turks, in order to give a good image, have to let the Africans stay in Turkey. Moreover, it is good for the economy.

Structural forces including economic opportunities, political and cultural forces, educational systems, migration and visa policies and Turkish policy and presence in Africa, all affect migrants in different ways and to different extents, both in their migration decision and their experience in Turkey. However, migrants do not react automatically to those forces. In the next part, we will see how they use their power of agency to reflect on those structures and deal with them and maintain a capacity of self-determination.

## CHAPTER VI

### MIGRATION AND AGENCY

In the previous part I showed how and which structural forces influence migration decision and process as well as migrants' experience in Turkey. In this part however, we will see that while those structural forces include rules, obstacles and resources that migrants take into account when taking their decision, they do not react automatically to those structures but reflect on them, play with them and even resist them. They cannot be considered as passive victims of multiple marginalities. As a psychologist who has been working with migrants for many years said, migrants are actors who start their own journey while the majority stays at home. Therefore, they cannot in any case be considered as passive.

This section will first show that migrants are, in accordance with Giddens's hypothesis, informed agents who reflect on their situation and on the structural forces that impact them and include personal components in their decision-making. Nevertheless, we will also see that their knowledgeability is bounded and in particular that the information they have is imperfect and insufficient. Then, this chapters examines dialectics of control and see how migrants always maintain a certain degree of control over their lives and over the structures. Finally, we will move to migrants' coping and advancement strategies and plans for the future.

## Reflexivity

### Reflecting on Structural Forces

While interviewing migrants from different countries and backgrounds, I was struck by how well they could express and explain their situation. For a very large majority of them, they were quite aware of their own situation and very often of the situation of their fellows.

Very often, they are aware of the different available choices, the resources and obstacles they may face, and are able to explain to a great extent why they make a certain choice and not the other. For instance, David, a migrant from Cameroun had the choice between studying administration and becoming a state administrator back home or to study peace studies abroad. However, because he had written a critical book in Cameroun, he considered that due to his name, he was not likely to pass the exam. Therefore he decided to go abroad and come back with greater experience. Ndiaw, a student from Senegal, considers that he has the choice between working in trade or in NGOs and wanted to choose the most profitable option but then realized that he is more interested in doing social work.

Many interviewees from all backgrounds said that Turkey was a good country for business and trade and that one should come if he/she has money to buy products. Refugees also considered it as a safe country as compared to their country of origin. However, most interviewees agreed that it is not a good country to migrate to in order to work. Most interviewees were aware of the resources Turkey offered and the obstacles they and their fellows face. Many considered the possibility to move

illegally to Europe versus the possibility to stay in Turkey. Some decided that crossing the border illegally was not a good option for them while others were ready to take the risk. Most interviewees could give a quite detailed account of migration patterns and the situation of different groups of migrants in Turkey.

### Reflecting on the Migration Experience

While migrants are aware of the structures surrounding them, they are also able to reflect on their migration experience and learn from those experiences.

Most interviewees asserted that despite all the obstacles and, often unexpected difficulties, they do not regret their decision. It is quite paradoxical because the same interviewees usually say they would not take the same decisions if they had to do it again; they would have rather stayed in their country or left to another one but not Turkey. Ruth, a migrant from Ethiopia believes that one can choose what he or she wants to make out of the experience: be stronger or give up. She says: “If we didn’t pass through all this, we wouldn’t be who we are today”

Indeed, many migrants, even those who struggled most during their migration experience, take it as a lesson and a challenge. A psychologist who worked a lot with migrants talks about “post-traumatic growth”. Indeed, in some cases traumatic experiences make agents stronger and give them a greater sense of empathy. Several interviewees agreed that their experience enabled them to “demystify the white man” because as Lionel, a migrant from Gabon says, “in Africa people have preconceptions about Europe; they think everything is so rosy”. Ndiaw, a student from Senegal explains:

Coming here opened me up. Now I know what is going on in the two worlds. In Africa, people see it on TV. Here, I get the chance to demystify. If people in Africa could see what I see here, Africa could develop. There are lots of resources, there is no secret, work pays. In

Africa, people don't work. In one family, one person works for ten people.

Indeed, many interviewees reflected on the hard work of local people and said they learned how to work in Istanbul. They also learned about other features of "human nature" such as racism or kindness. Many consider they learned "how world is".

However, a few interviewees did admit that they regret coming to Turkey and consider it was a waste of time. Sarratou, a migrant from Senegal says: "I wasted the last two years of my life by coming to Turkey".

### Personal Factors

Besides reflecting on structural forces, migrants also have personal reasons to migrate that cannot be considered, as Lee (1969) suggested, as disorders or exceptions. One reason to migrate that was very often mentioned by the interviewees and that only scarcely appears in migration literature is a personal will to travel. Family reasons are another major personal reason to migrate.

While it is not easy to clearly distinguish the will to travel as a personal wish and as part of broader cultural forces including migration as a rite of passage, for some migrants it is more clearly an individual choice than for others. Haris, a migrant from Cameroun says he left his country partly for economic reasons but mainly because he had "this crazy wish to see how things are elsewhere." "I left because I wanted to travel", he says. Moriba, a migrant from Guinea Bissau explains that he left because he wanted to discover, to travel. "It was a personal decision; I wanted to see somewhere else." Moriba is currently working for free with a car painter, "to learn, to see". In a couple of months he plans to go to Tunisia where a job is waiting for him or to go back to his country.

Many interviewees left their country because of family reasons. Either they had problems with their family and decided to leave the country or they wanted to join a family member who had already migrated. While some migrants had severe Family issues that put their life in jeopardy, others left because they “needed some fresh air”. Nayah, a migrant from Cameroun who used to work in a bank in her country left after her husband cheated on her with the housemaid. “Deception made me leave”, she says. She first worked as a housemaid in Istanbul and is now washing dishes in a restaurant.

Several interviewees said they left in order to join a wife in Greece, a husband in Turkey or a sister in England. Others had very original and personal reasons. It is the case of Johnny, a migrant from Nigeria who reported coming initially to Turkey in order to conduct a research on a Turkish breed of dogs that does not exist elsewhere because he worked as a dog breeder in Nigeria. The importance of those personal reasons to migrate should not be underestimated in migration literature.

Migrants thus express their agency through the reflection they have of structural forces, their situation and experience as well as the inclusion of personal reasons in their decision-making. However, in accordance with Giddens’ arguments, their knowledgeability is bounded and in particular, the information they have about Turkey and the migration process prior to migration is very often insufficient and inaccurate.

#### Bounded Knowledgeability

While migrants are agents capable of reflexivity, the lack of accurate and sufficient information before migrating is widespread. Interestingly enough, it is often due to a lack of will to inquire rather than simply a lack of available information. Many

migrants did not see the need to inquire, sometimes because they considered Turkey as a transit country. Myth and rumors also play a role. Finally, many migrants are deceived by so-called agents or traffickers who intentionally provide them with wrong information.

A great majority of interviewees reported that they had no information about jobs, wages, housing, people's attitude towards foreigners before coming to Turkey. Students who came to Turkey with the intention of working and studying at the same time did not know that they would not be allowed to do so. Those who came through a scholarship program usually did not know the amount they would receive. They also did not know the administrative procedures they would have to deal with including the obligation to spend a year learning the language, the housing conditions in the dormitory. Sometimes they even did not know the language they would have to study in, thinking it would be in French while it was in Turkish.

This lack of information is often due to the fact that migrants came to Turkey because it was the only available option at the time and that, "on the map, it was next to Europe". For those migrants who had to flee their countries immediately, they did not have time to inquire but many of those who did take the time to consider different options said that it did not seem important to them to do so. Haris, a migrant from Cameroun explains: "Inherently, the Cameroonian loves moving. At some point one cannot know what he will find. It is difficult everywhere. The point is to leave. We always say "we'll see!"

Indeed, the words "we will see" came back very often in the interviews. Arivo, a student from Madagascar believes that it is a typically occidental attitude to inquire. Many interviewees also mentioned that they had no information about Turkey simply because they considered it as a transit country where they had no

intention to stay. Therefore, they did not see the point of inquiring about the situation in Istanbul. Other interviewees' knowledge of Turkey was based on rumors and myths. Amare, a migrant from Ethiopia, recalls: "People talk about Turkey; they say Turkey is very big, very rich. People here fly in the sky. The expectations are very high."

Finally, many interviewees got deceived by agents or traffickers who deliberately gave them wrong information or prevented them from talking to other people and ask for information about the situation in Turkey or the migration process. Many people were told that once in Turkey they could cross easily and legally to Europe. Aminata, a migrant from Senegal for instance was told that she could simply take a 50€ bus ticket and get to Europe from Istanbul. Others were told it would be easy to get a good job and accommodation in Istanbul. There are even extreme cases. While in Georgia, David, a migrant from Cameron was asked by another African migrant where he could find a bus for New York. Indeed, he had been told by the trafficker that he would be sent to the state of Georgia in the United States of America. He realized he was very far from his initial destination only when David told him where he actually was.

There are a few exceptions however. A couple of interviewees said they did inquire about Turkey before coming and they knew what to expect. They mainly searched on the internet and asked relatives who had been in Turkey before.

Even though migrants lack accurate and sufficient information, they do keep a certain degree of control within and over the structures. Giddens (1984) calls it the 'dialectics of control'.

## Dialectics of Control

The concept of dialect of control refers to the fact that agents always keep some degree of control on the structures that surround them. In my research, I identified two types of dialectics of control: control over migrants' own existence within given structures and resistance to given structures.

### Control within the structures

According to the structuration theory, there are no truly forced migrants. No constraint is total and migrants may be forced to leave but only given their motives and goals. Taking it to the extremes, according to Giddens, even the threat of death does not have an absolute value but has a meaning only if one values life. Therefore, within such a perspective, even refugees had some degree of choice, as limited as it might be. Within given structures, agents maintain a degree of control over their motives and goals and make their choices accordingly.

Samuel, a migrant from Eritrea left his country in 1977 during the war with Ethiopia. He said he had no choice because his brother died as a rebel. Therefore, he fled to Soudan. However, he adds later that he had no courage to be a fighter. Even though he said that he had no choice, he then implies that he could have made the choice of being a fighter instead. Indeed, his choices were limited but within a given context, he made the choice of leaving rather than fighting. Joseph, a refugee from Rwanda had a similar story. He left his country to study when war started. He said: "Many students abroad were called by the government to join the army and defend their country. Some accepted and some didn't. I didn't because at that time you were not sure on which side you would fight."

Once in Turkey, migrants do not generally have a wide range of choices regarding their legal status, their work or their housing conditions. However, they do keep making choices even within given constraining structures. For instance, while they cannot get papers to move to another country legally, they still can decide whether they want to stay in Turkey or try crossing the border illegally. Some migrants' goal is to reach Europe, no matter how, while others refuse to leave illegally. Nayah, a migrant from Cameroon says that because she used to work in public administration back home, she prefers to "stay straight" and does not want to leave illegally. Lucas, a refugee from Congo who has been waiting for his resettlement for many years also insisted on the fact that he could have left easily many times but that his goal is to leave legally. There are many examples of decisions migrants take even though their choices within given structures seem very limited. Others refuse to accept structural rules and make it their own way circumventing them.

### Resisting the Structures: Illegal Stay and Work

Two major examples of dialectics of control where agents keep some degree of control over the structures and refuse to submit are the illegal entry or stay of migrants in Turkey and the way they ignore or circumvent labor market legislation and find informal ways to live and work in Turkey.

#### Illegal Entry and Stay

Even though the visa policy prevents most African migrants from staying in Turkey, they keep on coming, either illegally or legally and overstaying their visas, and sometimes try to cross European borders afterwards, always finding new ways to break the rules.

According to many interviewees, the large majority of migrants, excluding students, come with a tourist or a business visa that usually, but not always, allows a migrant to stay in Turkey for fifteen days. Since most African migrants come from distant countries, a large majority of them comes by plane. Therefore they need a visa and cannot enter illegally. In order to get a business visa, a migrant has to provide certain documents that can easily be done by so called travel agencies who can make fake financial statements. The applicant also needs to have a return ticket. Those procedures constitute a tremendous source of money for those agencies and a big investment for migrants who often have to sell their lands or get their whole family's support to pay for it. Those who manage to enter Turkey legally usually overstay their visa and thus become undocumented migrants once their visa expires.

A minority of African migrants enter Turkey illegally by land coming through Middle-Eastern countries or by sea coming from North Africa. It is generally the case for migrants coming from Eastern Africa. According to Yaasir, a Somali refugee, and his friends, most Somalis come with traffickers by land. Amal, a refugee from Somalia, went to Iran on a tourist visa and then walked for three day across the border. Mustafa, another refugee from Somalia, stayed three days in Iran before taking eleven hours to cross the border with "connection people". Eden, a refugee from Ethiopia came by foot from Syria, like other women from Ethiopia and Eritrea who used to work as housemaids in the Middle-East before coming to Turkey. Moriba, a migrant from Guinea Bissau who used to work in Tunisia said he paid 1800€ for visa and travel fees. "You must have money to leave, poor people cannot do it", he says.

As mentioned before, according to the Turkish law, refugees and asylum seekers have to reside in a satellite city determined by the government. Living

conditions in those cities is usually harder than in Istanbul for most migrants because, despite lower prices, migrants lack job opportunities and network support. In order to avoid being sent to a satellite city, many asylum seekers used to declare they lost their passport in Istanbul. Indeed, there was at some point a practice allowing asylum seekers who had reportedly lost their passport, to stay in Istanbul, “in order to search for it”. However, due to a large number of abuses, such practice is reportedly no longer applicable.

While resisting entry and stay policies of Turkey, many migrants also try to break European rules and enter Greece illegally, either by crossing the border by boat from Izmir, or by land through Edirne. According to Ndiaw, because Frontex increased the control of the sea, an increasing number of migrants try to cross the border by land but it is very risky and some migrants refuse to take the risk. Ruth, a migrant from Ethiopia tried seventeen times to cross the Greek border. She recalls her experience:

Many times I tried to go to Greece, many times I was deported; I stayed in camps. I tried more than seventeen times. I spent nine months in detention in Edirne. One time it was one month, another time two months. Once I watched a man from Soudan dying in the river. We were four people on a boat. It was a small boat you inflate with your mouth but one time it touched something and *pshhhht*... Africans cannot swim. He was asking for help but nobody could help him. And you cannot even sleep, you still have to go. Now African people will help but at that time nobody helped anybody. We used to stay in Aksaray, in a park during summertime. Nobody gave us information. The connection people don't allow you to meet other people; they don't want them to give you information. So you have to stay, and wait, and in the meantime you cannot work. You don't pay each time you try. Normally, you pay only if you reach Greece. But you cannot work and each time you have to go with clean clothes. And you cannot carry a bag so you give your clothes and each time you have to buy new ones. You wait until they tell you “we go.

Ruth finally decided to stay in Turkey after many unsuccessful attempts but many of her friends did manage to cross the border and are nowadays in Greece or

somewhere else in the world. Migrants thus resist structures and break the rules by breaking entry and stay policies. Many of them also resist labor laws and enter the informal labor market.

### Working in Istanbul

As mentioned earlier, only a few African migrants manage to get a work permit. Most of them do odd jobs on an irregular basis, also called “*çabuk, çabuk*” (“quickly, quickly”) by migrants themselves. While the Turkish government refuses to allow refugees and asylum seekers to work, it does not provide for their accommodation or living expenses. Therefore, even refugees and asylum seekers, in order to survive, have to work illegally.

Very common working sectors for the interviewees are construction sites for men and textile factories where controls are rather scarce and where working conditions as well as salaries are bad. Salif for instance, a migrant from Niger used to work on a construction site two or three days a week and is paid 50 TL to work for ten hours. According to several interviewees, a full week of work in a factory usually pays around 200 TL a week or 800 TL a month, but only if one manages to work full time and without interruption. Moreover, it is not uncommon that employers take advantage of the vulnerability of undocumented migrants and do not pay them on time, as agreed, or not at all. In such cases, migrants do not have any legal remedy. Moussa, a migrant from Niger works in a jeans factory thirteen hours a day with products that may jeopardize his health according to his doctor. He is worried but says that he might stop but that he does not have many other options. Other migrants work in call shops, restaurants or as carriers for moving agencies. Women sometimes do some hairdressing or cook at home and then sell it among the community. Many female interviewees reported that employers try to abuse and blackmail them by

asking for sex in exchange of their monthly salary. It is a widespread practice, especially in factories, as mentioned before.

Many Senegalese, but also an increasing number of migrants of other nationalities, refuse to be exploited by local bosses and rather buy products such as watches and perfumes, usually in Eminönü, in order to sell them on the streets. The greater visibility of their activity makes them more exposed to police control. It is not rare that a street seller get caught by the police who takes his/her goods. In order to have them back, the seller has to pay a fine. I observed with a Senegalese migrant the work of street sellers in Aksaray from a window. They are always in a tenuous situation since they have to be visible enough for customers to notice them but not too visible in order not to attract the police. Street sellers usually know where and when the police tolerates their presence and where they should never go, but they always have to be alert. The street sellers we observed, two sisters from Senegal, displayed their goods in a risky place, with a lot of passers-by but also police patrols. Very quickly a man came to inform them that the municipal police or *Zabita* was coming. They took their goods and hid in a building. After a while, they came back. They kept on coming and going several times. The sales of a street seller are of course uncertain and while some days, one can sell five or six watches, there can also be days without any deal. Moreover, margins are usually low, reportedly one to four Turkish liras in general. Sarratou, a migrant from Senegal who usually sells perfumes and other products on the street is discouraged. She says it is too much stress for too little benefit.

Some jobs are considered as more desirable among the community, either because of better working conditions and/or because of higher wages. It is usually the case for guides or translators who assist traders coming to buy products in

Istanbul and take a commission on the transaction. It implies for the migrant at least a basic level of Turkish language and certain knowledge of the Istanbul market, as well as a personal network. While interviewing Esther, a migrant from Uganda, her mother called from Uganda to inform her that a trader is coming and that she should assist him during his shopping. Still directly related to trade, some migrants work in cargo companies for export, which is comparatively a rather good option. The few migrants who manage to get the Turkish nationality, usually through marriage, often open their own cargo company. Ruth, a migrant from Ethiopia, had been working for several years in a shop in Osmanbey. She was lucky enough to have her papers done by her employers and is now managing a shop. But as she does not have the Turkish nationality she must have a Turkish partner. A minority of African migrants works in NGOs, usually for programs related to migration and refugees where they can use their language skills. Some work also as translators for other organizations. While many African migrants have artistic skills, only a handful of them manage to live out of it in Istanbul, including some musicians, dance or music teachers, and it is usually completed by other activities.

Some migrant women work as housemaids but it is not as common as for migrants from other regions such as those coming from former Soviet countries who come through agencies. It is interesting to note that there are reportedly no recruitment agencies bringing African housemaids to Turkey while they exist in Arab countries. However, there are some agencies that accept African candidates who are already in Turkey. Among African housemaids, Ethiopians are the most common nationality. Many of them were brought first as housemaids to the Middle-East by agencies and then crossed the border to Turkey.

A few interviewees were professional football players. Their migration process is usually very similar to other migrants. Once in Turkey they try to be noticed by an agent in order to have a chance to play for a Turkish football club. For some of them, the club then does the paperwork and gets them a residence permit. However, in most cases clubs refuse to recruit undocumented migrants. Eric, a migrant from Cameroun, played last year for one of the three major Istanbul clubs. He got the papers through the club but they refused to renew them. Therefore, he became an undocumented migrant and is looking for another club that would accept to hire and register him.

Finally, some migrants engage in illegal activities such as drugs, money washing, trafficking or prostitution. African prostitution in particular is reportedly growing in Istanbul out of lack of other opportunities for migrant women. It seems that it involves mainly independent women from different countries rather than prostitution networks. However, a detailed research on migrants' illegal activities goes beyond the scope of this research.

In brief, while only very few African migrants manage to get a work permit, a large number of them actually resists Turkish labor laws and manages to make a living. The list of different ways in which African migrants make a living in Istanbul above is of course not exhaustive. Those are only the activities most commonly mentioned during the interviews. Some migrants find personal and original ways to survive in Istanbul and circumvent the law. There are also African migrants working in embassies and other official functions but their experience goes beyond the scope of this research. Apart from them, migrants who find a job in accordance with their diploma are very rare and clearly exceptions. There is a great number of undocumented migrants with university degrees working in factories or on

construction sites for miserable salaries and in hard conditions. While there are also Iraqi or Afghan migrants doing similar jobs, African migrants are more vulnerable due to their visibility and greater cultural gap. Sarratou, a migrant from Senegal says: “The work we do here we would never do it in Senegal, because here nobody, neither our family nor our friends, sees us”.

Despite the hard working conditions and exclusionary Turkish laws, migrants find ways to circumvent the rules and even improve their conditions with time. While most of them start with irregular and very precarious jobs, many strive in order to get a better position and manage to work for instance in the export industry. We will see in the next part the coping strategies migrants adopt to improve their situation in Turkey and overcome the obstacles mentioned in the first part.

#### Coping and Advancement Strategies

Migration is what Giddens would call “a critical situation”, where agent’s predictable routines and encounters are disrupted. Through migration, agents therefore momentarily lose a certain degree of control and therefore also their “ontological security” or the way they feel comfortable within their worldview. Most interviewees recalled that their most difficult moments were their very first days in Istanbul. They lacked information about their environment, they did not know what to expect or where to go. Usually they did not even know where to sleep that very night.

However, as time goes by, they manage to improve their situation or the perception they have of it. Joseph, a refugee from Rwanda who has been in Istanbul for more than twenty years says that while at the beginning the country was like hell, “now I know all the ways, the underground, the tunnel to overcome the obstacles I have no problems now. I know all the people, organizations, the culture [laugh] I know the

diplomacy of living with Turks. I have experience. I have no problem of surviving even if financially I am not secure.”

Marie, a student from Senegal also explains that while at the beginning her degree of regrets for coming to Turkey was around ninety percent, it is now about thirty percent. Salif and Moussa, both migrants from Niger who have been in Istanbul for 6 months explain: “It is easier now. Even though we still have no money, we know the customs and we learned a bit of the language”.

There are different ways for migrants to cope with the obstacles they face in Istanbul. They can be divided in two main categories: internal coping strategies that enable migrants to feel better about a given situation and external coping strategies that actually aim at changing that situation.

#### Internal Coping Strategies

In general, African migrants show a great level of resilience and are able to cope with extremely difficult situations. I believe that this capacity of resilience is enhanced through the migration process, a belief shared by many NGO workers. The strategies migrants use to internally cope with difficulties are personal and vary from one agent to another and from one situation to another. However, there are some internal coping strategies that were common to a great number of interviewees. Those strategies are: belief in God, contact with home country and community, confidence in the future and disregard of obstacles.

#### Belief in God

Belief in God is a widespread way to deal with hardship, not just among migrants. Many interviewees from different religions, mainly Muslim and Christians, were referring to God as a sign of hope. Sentences interviewees often pronounced were

“One shall not regret, God knows”, “God will bring a good surprise” or “God saved/will save us”. Many interviewees believe that the difficulties they endure are meant to be, that only God knows the reason for it and He will save them. Yaasir, a refugee from Somalia says: “Somalis are a hundred percent Muslim; they are very connected to God. We always think Alhamdulillah; it is for the sake of God. Maybe other nations are different. They complain a lot.”

While migration and hardship could have triggered this belief in God, most religious interviewees report that they were already religious in their country of origin. It is difficult to determine the causal relation if there is any.

#### Maintaining a Regular Contact with Home and the Community

Maintaining a regular contact with their home country and spending time with people from the same community helps migrants to regain a certain degree of ontological security. As mentioned earlier, most African migrants in Istanbul are constantly in touch with their family and sometimes friends back home by phone or through internet. Séverin, a migrant from Cameroun assures that his son is the one who gives him the energy to keep fighting. Thiame and Marie, both students from Senegal say that if they did not talk to their families every day they would go crazy. African migrants in Istanbul also recreate places where they can feel “at home”. David, a migrant from Cameroun says they meet in a kind of underground restaurants. They are not official restaurants and there is no sign outside, but everybody knows that they can go there and eat. When he enters these places he says he feels at home. There is Cameroonian music, food. “When I step there I am in Cameroon” he said. Such places exist for most countries. It is not just a matter of eating food from one’s home country, it is also about reproducing rituals and places that make them feel less like outsiders in Istanbul and create a sense of belonging to the community.

### The “One Day” Strategy

A very common internal coping strategy among migrants is the use of imagination and projection to the future. One migrant defined it as the “one day” strategy. It consists in persuading oneself that “one day, it will be fine”. Many interviewees said they have to accept today’s situation because it is a period of sacrifice in order to achieve a better future. Yaasir, a refugee from Somalia says: “When you hear what migrants are talking about, everyone is complaining, about hardship, social interaction, financial problems, communication. It is always mourning. But sooner or later things will change, there is hope and expectation.”

Some migrants dream about their future house, or wife, their glorious return back home and a future brilliant career in politics or business in their home country. Many interviewees used sentences such as “it will be difficult but I will succeed because I am a winner”; “one has to be patient and perseverant, it might not change in two months, sometimes it takes two and a half or ten years”; “one has to assume one’s own choices and fight”. Many migrants refer to the past: their situation in their home country, in transit countries, or their first days in Istanbul. They consider their situation as better now. They believe they are stronger and therefore able to cope with it and they hope it will get even better in the future. What used to be an obstacle becomes a challenge.

### Resignation

While some decide to fight, others choose to ignore those obstacles they believe they cannot change. It is often the case with the attitude of local people. While many were hurt by racism and discrimination, interviewees often said they started ignoring “those people”. “I don’t react, they have psychological problems”, says Arivo, a student from Madagascar who was many times victim of racism. “I know now, I

don't blame them, they don't know", adds David, a migrant from Cameroun, "I forget when it hurts and find inspiration out of it". Sofietou and Louis, two Senegalese students feel resigned: "We got used to it, there is nothing we can do, it is a life experience". In order not to hear insults or pretend so, Prisca, a student from Ivory Coast bought earplugs she constantly wears when walking alone on the streets or while in the dormitory with her roommates. A few interviewees disregarded racism and discrimination by joking and laughing about it, exposing therefore the absurdity and ridiculousness of some remarks and reactions.

In brief, migrants use different strategies to feel better about hard conditions they may face in Istanbul. Some find relief in God, others in their family and community. While some believe in a better future, others choose to accept hardship as inevitable. There are of course other internal coping strategies some migrants adopt such as arts. Wounds may become a source of inspiration and creativity and give birth to songs, books or dances that help the artist to better accept his or her situation. While internal coping strategies improve agents' psychological condition, external coping strategies enable them to improve their material condition and overcome some structural obstacles.

### External Coping Strategies

Making use of external coping strategies migrants actually take action in order to improve their situation and overcome the obstacles they face in Istanbul. Bakri, a student from Soudan who did not come through a scholarship program recalls:

"The first day my situation was bad, I couldn't find a place, a job, even a university to study. I had no friends. Now I have a university, a job, so many friends with whom I can meet. I have everything"

Once again those strategies vary depending on the person and the obstacle to deal with but some general trends were reflected in the interviews. Main external coping strategies used by African migrants in Istanbul are: referring to community solidarity and national organizations, learning a language and attending trainings, seeking assistance from NGOs, going to church and getting legal documents.

### Community Solidarity

The first reaction of almost all the interviewees when they got to Turkey was to look for another African person and ask him/her for help. Most basic needs are first met thanks to the network, even if the newcomer does not know anybody in Istanbul. The strategy is usually first to spot any African person and then ask him or her where he or she can find people from the migrant's country. Migrants usually find accommodation, a job and basic information about Istanbul and its systems through the community network. It is usually informal but it can also be formalized through national organizations.

Most communities have their own national organization such as the Cameroonian, Nigerian, Nigerien and Somalian organizations. The purpose of those organizations is to formalize solidarity among the community. Many establish for instance a small financial contribution for all the members that can be used in cases of severe medical issues, death etc. It can also be used to rent a flat for newcomers. Some migrants take responsibilities in those organizations. The president, the secretary, the treasurer are usually elected among the community. Some of those organizations even have a legal status and are recorded as associations under the Turkish law. Reportedly there were attempts at creating an African organization, a sort of umbrella organization that would include migrants from different African countries, but due to disagreements among members it does not seem very

successful. There are also formal student associations for African students in Turkey. They include both inclusive associations such as the African student Union in Turkey and again student associations specific to countries of origin. They organize different activities such as cultural awareness events for better relations between African migrants and local people; they welcome newcomers and assist students in their administrative procedures.

Those formal organizations are variably efficient, active and well organized but seeking help from the community remains a main coping strategy. Presley for instance, a migrant from Liberia was at the border without money to pay for the bus to Istanbul. He had a credit card but no cash. He asked an African stranger standing there to pay for his ticket. Reluctantly the stranger did so without anything but trust to believe he will pay him back. Presley gave him the money back when he got to Istanbul. When I asked him why the other man accepted to do so, he answered as if it was obvious: “Because we’re all Africans! He couldn’t leave me there”.

### Acquiring New Skills

As seen in the section about cultural obstacles, the language barrier is a major issue for African migrants. Many try to overcome it by learning some Turkish. While most migrants learn it on a very basic level that enables them to survive, some manage to have proper conversations in Turkish. It is the case for students who have to attend a one-year language course but also for some migrants who have spent several years in Istanbul and are actively learning the language, through books, internet but more often with friends or through the language courses provided by some NGOs. Many interviewees reported that local people’s attitude changes dramatically when one speaks Turkish. It also makes all administrative procedures easier and especially, it

gives Turkish-speaking migrants access to better paid jobs that non-speakers cannot access. Besides learning the language, some migrants also try to join courses provided by NGOs to improve their computer skills for instance.

### Seeking NGO Assistance

There are many NGOs assisting migrants and refugees in Istanbul. They include a wide range of services such as basic health care and medical referral, legal and psychosocial counseling, HIV treatment support, repatriation, assistance to victims of trafficking and of torture, human rights counseling for LGBT migrants, basic education, schools for children, trainings, language courses, distribution of clothing and/or food coupon, women groups discussions and mother and child programs. An informative list of NGOs assisting refugees, asylum seekers and migrants can be found in annex II.

Even though the number of organizations is quite significant, they have limited resources and cannot assist everybody. Some limit their support to or privilege a specific vulnerable group such as women, refugees and asylum seekers, HIV patients, LGBT migrants, children, etc.

According to Joseph, a refugee from Rwanda who has been in Istanbul for more than twenty years, until 1996-1997, only IIMP was providing medical, social and legal support to migrants. Nowadays, NGO's assistance is very precious especially for migrants who do not have access to public health care. Several NGOs pay for their treatments, at least partially. While interviewees very much appreciated assistance regarding health care, clothing, food and psychosocial and legal support, they were more critical of women group programs aiming at creating a space for discussion and visits. Several women expressed their frustration at attending

meetings that would not bring them practical benefits. “It is useless, a waste of time. We are not here for that, we are here to work” says a migrant woman.

### Going to Church

Going to church is a main external coping strategy for Christian migrants.

Interestingly, Muslim migrants did not mention or insist on going to the mosque. It differs from the belief in God which is an internal coping strategy because it brings concrete benefits to migrants and contributes to the improvement of their situation in Istanbul. As Christians in Turkey are a minority, a significant number of church followers are migrants. Therefore, many churches have specific programs for migrants that go beyond the weekly service or mass. Churches often organize food ministries, language courses and solidarity networks and provide information and support to migrants.

### Getting Legal Documents

Last but not least, some undocumented migrants try to solve the problems they face as undocumented migrants by having their papers done. Of course it is not that simple and only a few migrants succeed in doing so. There are different ways to get a residence permit. One is to pay for a long term residence permit but nothing guarantees it will be granted by the Turkish authorities, especially given the fact that there is a general distrust towards African migrants in Turkey. One has to provide documents that are difficult to get for most African migrants and even with those documents the authorities have no obligation to accept the application. As a rule, it is very hard and too expensive for most African migrants to get this long term residence permit.

Other migrants apply for asylum to the UNHCR. Applying for asylum gives migrants a temporary right to stay in Turkey while their case is being treated. Therefore, at least for a while, they do not have to fear the police. While a majority of asylum seekers did flee from persecution, many undocumented migrants who do not fulfil the criteria, ask for asylum in order to have a paper to show to the police in case of control and sometimes get access to health care. Disadvantages are that as asylum seekers they cannot go back to their country freely and are supposed to live in satellite cities. But asylum seekers and refugees cannot get the work permit and even migrants with a residence permit hardly ever can.

A few migrants I talked to however, managed to get a work permit. Ruth, a migrant from Ethiopia was working in a clothing shop in Osmanbey. She had good relations with her employers and they arranged a work permit for her. Today she is opening her own shop with a Turkish partner.

Finally, some African migrants manage to get the Turkish nationality, which allows them to live and work in Turkey, as well as to own their own business. None of my interviewees had the Turkish nationality. However, Johnny, a migrant from Nigeria says he knows at least twenty friends who married Turkish women. Ndiaw, a student from Senegal asserts that he knows three or four Africans who married a Turk and opened their own cargo company. According to Lucas, a refugee from Congo, some of his friends got married to Turkish citizens and still live together while others moved to Greece when they realized that procedures take too long. It is good to recall that now a couple has to be married for three years before the non-Turkish spouse can get the Turkish nationality.

To summarize, there are many strategies African migrants use to cope with the obstacles they face in Istanbul. Community networks, either formal or informal,

enable them to find an accommodation, jobs, basic information to survive in Istanbul. Learning the local language or attending trainings creates bridges and gives migrants access to higher esteem among local communities and better jobs. It also facilitates many administrative procedures. Going to church also gives Christian migrants access to greater solidarity networks and additional basic services and help. Seeking assistance from NGOs or the UNHCR enables migrants to better cope with economic, social, legal or health difficulties. Finally, some migrants manage to get a residence permit and even sometimes the work permit. In rare cases, a happy few manage to get the Turkish nationality and are therefore allowed to live, work and even own a business in Turkey. Other coping strategies are used as well by migrants to improve their condition in Turkey. Reportedly for instance, it is not rare that a woman accepts a relationship with a migrant man in exchange of financial support and protection. While those coping strategies enable migrants to overcome structural obstacles they may face in Istanbul, most of them are not in Turkey just to survive but to improve their situation. Therefore, they also develop advancement strategies and make plans for the future.

#### Advancement Strategies

When asked about their plans for the future, interviewees usually expose their further migration and career plans. While many want to go to a third country, some prefer to stay in Turkey for a while. However, in the long run, almost all the interviewees want to go back to their home country and work in politics or trade.

#### Moving to a Third Country

As mentioned previously, a majority of African migrants did not initially intend to stay in Turkey but wanted to go to Europe through Turkey. It is still the project of many African migrants in Istanbul. When I asked Haris, a migrant from Cameroun

why they would go to Europe and not somewhere else, he said “Look around Turkey, there is war everywhere else!” Many interviewees planned to go to Italy or Greece due to their relative accessibility as compared to other European countries. English-speakers often mentioned the UK, especially students who want to pursue their studies there, but also Yenee, a migrant from Ethiopia who wants to join her sister who is in a refugee camp in the UK. Some migrants want to go to Norway or Germany for specific reasons such as education programs. Tahir for instance, a refugee from Soudan wants to attend a course on how to manage a camp for homeless or refugees in Norway. French-speakers often plan to go to France, such as Lionel, a migrant from Gabon who used to play football in a French club and wants to go back there after getting a license to become a FIFA agent for which he is preparing right now. Bakri, a student from Soudan, wants to go to Europe and stay there for 4 or 5 years in order to get legal papers and ensure a better future for his children.

But not everybody wants to go to Europe. Some would rather go to the USA or Canada, which are host countries accessible to refugees. A few migrants mentioned other African countries. Samuel for instance, a migrant from Eritrea made a business research and plans to go to Uganda where he sees new economic opportunities. Salif, a migrant from Niger went to China only a couple of days after the interview after having stayed for 6 months in Istanbul. He said that there were no opportunities for undocumented migrants in Istanbul and he decided to try in China. As he had overstayed his visa, he was not allowed to board the aircraft. Therefore, he missed his first plane and had to buy a second ticket after paying the fine with the financial support of his family. He now works in his friend’s trade company in Yiwu,

China. According to him, the situation is better in China and there are more opportunities for those working in the export sector.

Reportedly, Europe is in general less attractive than before due to the crisis. Several interviewees reported that some of their African friends went to Greece and came back due to the hardship they faced there saying “better Istanbul than Greece”. Recognized refugees are a special case because they are usually waiting for resettlement and stay in Turkey until another country accepts to host them. It can take many years. “One must wait”, says Justine, a refugee from Cameroun. But some refugees, tired of waiting, asserted they would cross the border illegally if the decision does not come within a few months. It is the case of Joseph, a refugee from Rwanda whose family has been resettled to the USA. He is still waiting but plans to move to Russia if he does not get an approval from the USA in a couple of months. Finally, there are some interviewees who are ready to go anywhere in the world and are seeking for job or education opportunities everywhere.

### Staying in Turkey

However, one cannot consider that Turkey is only a transit country for African migrants. Indeed, some migrants decide to stay in Turkey for several years. Some of them realize they could have good opportunities in Istanbul as well. Ruth, a migrant from Ethiopia gave up her plans of going to Europe after too many unsuccessful tries. She tried to cross the border seventeen times and says she wasted one and a half year trying to go to Europe but then she decided that she should rather try to find her way in Istanbul. She is now running a shop with a Turkish partner. Turkey is especially promising for those migrants working with trade and export. Séverin, an entrepreneur from Cameroun wants to create partnerships between Turkey and his country and make technology transfer. Tahir, a refugee from Soudan working in an

NGO says he really loves his job and knows that he would not be able to have such a job in a European country where procedures are stricter and where an education and a work permit are needed. Despite the difficulties they face, students also usually intend to stay until they complete their studies.

### Going back home

No matter whether they intend to move to a third country or to stay for a while in Turkey, almost all the interviewees, except a few refugees, want to go back to their home country in the middle or long run. Their plan is usually very similar: to earn some money or finish their studies and go back home because “one cannot go back home with empty pockets”. Back in their home country, many interviewees want to engage in trade between Turkey and Africa or open a shop or a hotel. Others want to embrace a political career and work in diplomacy or try to change the country from within. Finally, some plan to work in the humanitarian sector or for an international organization. A couple of interviewees wanted to become a teacher or musicians and a few others said they first wanted to get married and have a family. While in general refugees who fled from persecution did not intend to go back to their country if the situation remains the same, some admitted that if peace and stability is reestablished they will go back as well.

Therefore, while migrants’ situations, status and strategies are different, they have in common the will to improve their condition and life beyond mere survival. Their plans for the future vary but one can observe as a general trend the will to earn money abroad and make some savings before going back home and often develop trading activities.

In the first part we saw a wide range of structural forces that influence migrants’ migration process and experience in Turkey. In this part, we saw that

migrants do not just passively and automatically react to those structures. They reflect on them and on their experience and include personal factors in their decision-making. Despite a bounded knowledgeability reflected especially in a lack of accurate and sufficient information prior to migration, they always keep a degree of control. These dialectics of control are expressed through their control over their goals and motives and thus the choices they make within given structures, but also through their resistance to those structures. Indeed, while the Turkish law tries to prevent them from being and working in Turkey, many of them circumvent the law and break the rules by entering and/or staying illegally in Turkey, crossing the border again to reach the European Union and by working without a work permit in Istanbul. All this shows that African migrants in Istanbul are not passively reacting to structural forces but that they fully and constantly express their agency.

However, while all migrants are agents, the degree of agency is different from one migrant to the other. The level of agency depends on multiple factors. The detailed analysis of the factors affecting a person's level of agency and their causal relation would deserve further research and goes beyond the scope of this thesis. Nevertheless, a general observation of the interviewees' background, personalities, attitudes and experiences allow us to make the assumption that factors affecting one's degree of agency at a certain time include age, gender, time spent in Istanbul, personal background (wealth, education and work experience, religion, culture, status, language and other skills), personality (proactivity, worldview, self-confidence, social skills), family background and social network including membership in a specific group or association.

The next chapter focuses on the duality of structure. After analyzing the structural forces that come into play in the migration process and migrant's

experience in Turkey in the first part and the different ways in which migrants express their agency, we will see how those two interact. More specifically, I intend to show that structures are both the medium and the outcome of social action and that migrants, as agents, use the obstacles and resources they are given to reproduce and change those structures.

## CHAPTER VII

### MIGRATION AND THE DUALITY OF STRUCTURE

While structural forces are resources and obstacles that influence agent's decisions and actions, they are also outcomes of those actions. Indeed, agents, through social action reproduce and change structures. As Giddens emphasizes, the consequences of social action can be intentional or unintended. Finding enough solid evidence of the duality of structure in the case of African migrants in Istanbul would require a much broader research including a greater focus on the evolution of structures, in time and in space, including both Turkey and migrant's home country. Despite this limitation I here provide insights of ways in which migrants can affect structural forces, both unintentionally and intentionally.

#### Unintended Consequences

Unintended consequences can be divided in two categories: those leading to the reproduction of structural forces and those changing structures.

#### Reproduction of Structural Forces

Most of the time unintentionally, African migrants in Istanbul contribute to the reproduction of migration patterns. Indeed, through the pictures they post on their Facebook profiles of Istanbul shopping malls or the Bosphorus, or simply by their presence in Istanbul, migrants stir their community's will to follow their steps.

Therefore, they perpetuate and reproduce migration patterns. Those same migrants who are today in Istanbul recall how they admired and envied those who left before them, especially the returnees who built big houses and bought cars nobody else in the village or town could afford. Many of the interviewees left to imitate their

relatives or friends who had left before. Sarratou, a migrant from Senegal explains: “Before, in my country, only migrants had beautiful houses and beautiful cars. They would marry beautiful women as they say. They would leave for four or five years and then come back. That’s what pushed people to leave.”

While the great majority of interviewees are not satisfied with their situation in Istanbul, many choose not to tell the negative sides of their experience to their family or friends in their home country in order not to worry them or to “give an impression of success”. Indeed, the image one gives of himself and reputation seem to be particularly important in African communities, especially among migrants. Therefore, while they live in difficult conditions in Istanbul, I could observe how the pictures many interviewees post on Facebook reflect a very different reality. They often chose pictures from fancy places, where they appear well dressed and often in company of smiling Westerners. Some feel ashamed of their work or living conditions in Istanbul and do not want their relatives and friends to know about it. Others simply want to show off. Therefore, they tell success stories or send pictures that unintentionally encourage others to come.

A few interviewees directly encourage people back home to migrate, usually to other countries but also in very rare cases to Turkey. However, a large number of interviewees want to prevent their friends and relatives from coming to Turkey by giving them the information about the hardship of life in Istanbul they did not have when they made the decision to leave. However, many interviewees reported that people in their country do not believe them. Even if they hear many bad stories, they prefer to believe the few good ones. The sentence that came up many times in the interviews is “if it is so bad there, why are you still there?” Indeed, the mere presence of their fellows in Istanbul certifies, in the eyes of potential migrants, that there are

opportunities for them as well. As Esther, a migrant from Uganda says, “many people come because there are other black people here”. While potential migrants believe that the fact that there are African migrants in Turkey means that there are opportunities, those who stay in Turkey usually do so not because they make a good living in Istanbul but on the contrary because they do not manage to pay back their debt or to save money to go further or back home.

Migrants also tend to reproduce the economic and social structures of Istanbul by living where their fellows live and looking for work in the same sectors as those before them did. It would be interesting to analyze more in depth the reproduction or change of gendered pattern. While reportedly many migrant women tend to reproduce gendered patterns by seeking protection of a man in Turkey in exchange of some kind of relationship, some women manage to emancipate themselves from the hold their relatives (often their father or husband) have on them and change those patterns. The sample of this research is too limited to be able to make generalizations on this aspect but these aspects could be examined in a further research.

While through their social action migrants unintentionally reproduce some structural forces, they change other structures.

#### Change of Structural Forces

Some structures such as the visa and migration policy, economic and social forces change as an unintended consequence of migrants’ actions.

While it is difficult to have a hard proof of it, there are evidences showing that migrants’ choices affect Turkey’s migration and visa policy. Indeed, many migrants reported that while it was easy to get a visa for Turkey, it is getting more

difficult as the Turkish government realizes that many people enter and stay illegally. It also affects border controls as the Turkish and European governments react to migration movements and reinforce their presence in the sea around Izmir and at the Greek border. The law enabling migrants married to Turkish citizens to immediately ask for the Turkish nationality reportedly changed in 2003 partially as the result of abuses and a high number of interest-based or fake marriages (Kadirbeyoğlu, 2009). Therefore, while migrants' decisions are influenced by legal forces and policies they resist and circumvent, those forces are in turn modified in order to adapt to those behaviors.

Migrants are also agents of economic change. They actively contribute to the growth and evolution of some economic sectors in Istanbul, even though the relatively low number of African migrants does not allow them yet to deeply change the whole structure of economic forces in Turkey. First of all, migrants spread information about the quality of Turkish products and trade opportunities in their countries and therefore foster trade between Turkey and Africa. Their presence in Istanbul is fundamental for the well-functioning of this trade. Traders coming from African countries need well-informed guides and translators for their transactions. Migrants fulfill this task. They also actively participate in the manufacturing of the products. Indeed, they constitute a cheap and tractable labor force for factories. Finally, they contribute to the Turkish economy by their mere presence in Turkey through their daily consumptions and the payment of their rent, which is usually over-priced as compared to local people. Ndiaw, a student from Senegal reports that in some neighborhoods, some flat owners even put a placard saying "rent flat to African people" because they know they can rent it for a higher price.

Finally, migrants are agents of social change. As seen before, discrimination and racism towards African migrants is widespread in Istanbul. However, reportedly it used to be far worse in the past. According to interviewees who came to Turkey in the 1990s, local people were not used at all to African people. They did not know anything about African countries. According to several interviewees, African migrants in Istanbul enabled local people to get exposure to other cultures. Amal, a migrant from Eritrea who has been in Istanbul for 22 years says that there were no Africans in Istanbul back then and that people were thinking he was painted. Others reported that local people used to throw eggs to black people from their windows. David, a migrant from Cameroun who became a teacher in Turkey says that everyday contact with African people changes the general perception of Africans. According to Ndiaw, a migrant from Senegal, it is very much related to the economic benefit African migrants may bring to some local people, through rents or trade for instance.

However, one must emphasize that those social changes are rather limited to specific neighborhoods or even individuals. Indeed, an NGO worker notes that black people were not totally unknown to people living in Turkey due to the historical presence of Afro-Turks. Moreover, this evolution is limited to specific neighborhoods. Indeed, African migrants in Istanbul remain settled and concentrated in specific areas such as Tarlabaşı, Aksaray, Osmanbey, Elmadağ or Harbiye. Many people in Istanbul hardly ever even see African migrants. Therefore, the changes performed by migrants are not necessarily noticeable at a macro level. David, a migrant from Cameroun, became an English teacher in a private high school. According to him, the perception his students have of African people is changing. Nevertheless, he says, an African migrant acting badly can tarnish the reputation of

all African people in the eyes of local people. One of my initial assumptions was that the good performance of famous African football players in Turkish clubs would change the attitude of local people towards Africans. Only one of the interviewees shared this opinion but for most of them it was not the case. As evidence they brought the incident when the famous Galatasaray player Drogba and his African teammates were treated as monkeys by Fenerbahçe supporters.

This section discussed the ways in which migrants may unintentionally contribute to the reproduction and change of structural forces. The next section shows that in many cases, migrants intend to affect the structures through their decisions and actions.

#### Intentional Consequences

Aware of the structures that surround them, migrants sometimes intend to affect them through their action. The will to affect the structure and to take action for this purpose is stronger in migrants' home country because that is where migrants feel more concerned and also have more agency that enables them to do so. However, despite stronger obstacles and a lack of sense of belonging, a few interviewees expressed their intention to change the structure in Turkey as well.

#### Affecting Structures Back Home

Many interviewees expressed their will to affect humanitarian, economic or political structures in their home country. It is difficult to conduct a proper analysis of migrants' ability to change the structures in their home country and to estimate the real extent of their effect due to geographical distance and the limited resources and time frame of this research. Therefore, the information given here comes exclusively from the interviews conducted in Istanbul. In addition to the geographical gap

between the research location and the countries I consider, there is also a time gap. In many cases the effects of migrants action on their home country is potential rather than actual. Indeed, many migrants express the strong wish to act when they go back to their country but are not able to do so from Istanbul. I believe this discourse should also be considered.

Several interviewees asserted they want to change the social situation in their home country through humanitarian or social action. Johnny, a migrant from Nigeria wants to change the orphanage system in three countries including his country of origin and create a social space for migrants in Nigeria. He is already in touch with an organization in his country and with several NGOs in Turkey and has reportedly already done some donations to an orphanage in Nigeria. Other migrants, like Eden and Sarratou, two migrants from Ethiopia and Senegal, actively try to prevent their fellows from migrating. Many refugees asserted that if their country finds peace and stability they want to go back and “do something for their country”. Some mentioned health and education, others economy or politics. It was the case mainly for the most educated migrants, refugees and students such as Yaasir, a highly educated refugee from Somalia who says: “There are lots of problems back home. I really want to go back and help my people. I have the feeling that I am in a position to help”

A few interviewees shared their vision for their country in the political sphere and their will to change the political life in their home country. Some of them were already active politically before migrating and had to leave due their opposition to the government. One of the interviewees is already part of a political group that is trying to change politics in his country and says that he will not be useful in Europe or in the USA but in his country. David, an educated migrant from Cameroun with a wealthy background says he is planning to go back to his country in 2014 to engage

in politics, to become a diplomat or a high official in his country. He asserts that he already had this vision before migrating but that his vision got more mature now.

When asked what he wanted to change in his country, he said:

First: education. People would study with ease. They have education now but it is not good, it is not relevant for the environment. There are no technicians, they focus on academicians. In early 1970s, Ghana and South Korea were the same... When education changes, development takes a different path. In Turkey people have the right education. Look at their universities.

Second: the political system. If you don't have a political education, you become a criminal; you become responsible for criminal acts. Thomas Sankara, a president of Burkina Faso said "a soldier without political education is a criminal.

Third: identity. They are beaten down to the ground because they don't know they are smart, and creative. They are waiting for Europeans to invent. But look at Singapore, Korea. They were poor and now they are booming.

He adds:

My dream is to sit around a round table with people with vision, uncorrupted vision and who want to change the country. When I travel I learned a lot of things. [...] My next trip will be a trip for change, for my country, not a personal trip. [...] The biggest challenge now: to find the right team. Because the other people out there, they just want to make money now, they have no vision. They are confused, they cannot think. But I understand; they have pressure from their families. b

Several interviewees criticized widespread corruption and the lack of a unitary vision in Africa and said they wanted to change it when they go back but without going much further.

While the scope of potential future social and political changes are difficult to assess. It is easier to evaluate the economic change brought by migrants in their home communities. I already talked about the role migrants play in fostering trade between Turkey and African countries by working as guides, traders, translators or

simply by spreading information about Turkey's products. Another major issue related to economy is remittances. As a rule, migrants are known for sending remittances back home that enable their community to develop and sometimes better invest their money to buy a tractor, land, or invest in education. This generality is hard to apply to African migrants in Istanbul due to the major economic difficulties they face. Indeed, their limited and irregular incomes combined with high rents and life expenses considerably shrink the amount available for saving or remittances. Most migrants try to send remittances to their families since it was the initial purpose of migration for most of them.

However, in the specific case of African migrants in Istanbul remittances are rather limited and irregular, which is often a great source of stress for migrants because their families invested in their migration and therefore expect returns. Amare, a newcomer from Ethiopia says he earns 400 dollars a month. One hundred go to food, one hundred is for housing and one hundred for transportation, and the rest is for miscellaneous expenses such as bills. He cannot save to send money back home. For many of the interviewees, it is actually the family back home who sends money to the migrant "when he/she is in need". It is mainly the case for newcomers, refugees and students. Salif for instance, a migrant from Niger decided to move to China after seeing the lack of opportunities he had in Istanbul. His family had to pay the fine for overstaying the Turkish visa and two flight tickets to China (because he was not allowed to take the first plane since he had not paid the fine yet).

Nevertheless, as time goes by and migrants use coping strategies to overcome obstacles, they are more able to send remittances back home, albeit on an irregular basis. Aminata, a migrant from Senegal says she manages to send about 100€ every three or four months, "which is nothing for Senegal". Sarratou, a migrant from

Senegal expressed her pride each time she manages to send remittances back home. A few interviewees who have been in Istanbul for many years report they regularly send a substantial amount of money to their families.

I asked those interviewees who send remittances, even sporadically, what those remittances were used for. Ruth, a migrant from Ethiopia is one of the few migrants able to send remittances on a regular basis. She has for instance financed her brother's studies until he graduated last year. Tahir, a refugee from Soudan who is working for an NGO in Istanbul and is therefore able to send remittances as well said he bribed the police to release his brother who had been detained for many years. He is also supporting his brother's family who cannot find a job in Greece and is planning to help his brother, sister and mother to migrate elsewhere. However, most interviewees reported their remittances are being used for living expenses, bills and clothing as well as in unexpected circumstances or special occasions such as a funeral or a wedding. Some interviewees said their remittances are used to pay their children's schooling fees and a few interviewees invested in land or building a house. A few interviewees asserted that they do not send remittances because their family does not need additional money.

Remittances are usually sent through Western Union or directly through an arrangement with traders, which is more convenient because they take a smaller commission, if any. Most interviewees agreed that remittances are a heavy burden on their shoulders and a major source of stress, especially when they are not able to send money to their family. Some interviewees reported that they feel ashamed of their inability to send money and therefore do not contact their family for a while to avoid having to admit it.

Most migrants remain very connected to their home country even while in Istanbul. They feel this connection and many consider themselves as responsible in part for what is happening back home. Most feel the obligation to send remittances to their home country and many want to engage in politics or in humanitarian affairs, usually when they return. We can consider that their aggregated actions have a voluntary effect on structural forces in their home countries. It is quite different in Turkey because of the lack of sense of belonging and because their degree of agency is not as strong in Turkey as it may be in their home country. However, some interviewees do engage in actions aiming at changing specific structural forces in Turkey.

#### Affecting Structures in Turkey

Some migrants find meaning in their life by fighting for their rights. While it is more common for migrants to actively engage for a cause in their country, some try to bring change in Turkey as well. They can engage through an NGO, national or student associations, arts or simply through personal commitment. We will see finally why this kind of activist attitude remains limited in Turkey.

Even though it represents only a small portion of the interviewees and of migrants in general, a certain number of migrants work or volunteer in NGOs, mainly NGOs assisting other migrants, but not exclusively. Working in an NGO as a translator and sometimes social worker is a good source of revenue as compared to other migrants' activities. But it is not only a source of revenue. Through the interviews, migrants reflected their will to engage in social change beyond the financial benefit NGO employees may get. Tahir, a refugee from Soudan and Ndiaw, a student from Senegal who both work in an NGO assert that even after leaving Istanbul they want to continue working in this area. Tahir says he "found his way".

He is working in two NGOs and is assisting another social project for tuberculosis patients. Others choose to volunteer. Johnny, a migrant from Nigeria for instance gives once a week free English classes to children from the poor Tarlabası neighborhood. Arivo, a student from Madagascar volunteers in an NGO helping migrants three times a week. Several interviewees engaged in African student associations that organize events aiming at bridging the cultural gap between local and African people and raise awareness among the local populations about African cultures.

Other migrants try to affect the structure in more personal ways. Arts are a tool for some interviewees. Lucas for instance is a refugee from Congo and also a well-known musician in Turkey. He uses his music to denounce racism, war, discrimination, violence. He started recording songs in English and French but is now also singing in Turkish “in order to enter Turkish homes, to reach grandmas” he says. He asserts that his music is humanitarian and considers himself as the spokesman of African migrants and refugees in Turkey. David, a migrant from Cameroun published a book in Turkish to share his story and perception of Istanbul and again bridge the gap. David says that it surprised Turkish people to see “a smart African” who writes about their country. Reportedly, he had already published a book in Russian while he was in Georgia. Besides arts, some migrants simply are committed to improve other migrants situation by paying an extra rent, providing advice, food, and help in general. Eden, a migrant from Ethiopia completely gave up work and receives donations from a rich person because she assists newcomers, tries to discourage people from migrating in the first place and crossing the European border for those already in Turkey. She considers that she can help because she went through all the struggles herself.

Despite some active migrants, most do not intend to change substantially the structures in Turkey. There are several reasons for this. The first one is the lack of sense of belonging. Most interviewees arrived in Istanbul a few months ago and even those who have been in Turkey for many years do not intend to spend their life in Turkey and do not feel attached to the country. Ndiaw, a student from Senegal explains that, whatever you do and no matter how well you speak Turkish, you will always be told “*sen yabancısın*” (“you are a foreigner”). Some very common answers during the interviews were: “it is none of my business if it doesn’t affect me directly”; “they do what they want with their country”, “it is not migrants’ business”, “it is among them”. As the interviews were done a few months after the large wave of protests that spread in Turkey in May-June 2013, I asked the interviewees whether they felt concerned by those events and if they participated. Except a couple of them, no interviewee participated in the protests. Most did not feel concerned, except for security issues. Nayah, a migrant from Cameroun says that unrest is never good for migrants since they are always the first ones to pay the bill. Prisca, a student from Ivory Coast says that the president of their student organization advised them not to intervene, because they “are not in Turkey to do politics”. Besides the general lack of interest in Turkey’s affairs, a few migrants admitted they would have participated if they did not fear deportation. An interviewee asserted that he supports the protesters but that he never participates in the protests because if the police catches him, they will deport him.

Through this discussion, I gave an insight in the ways migrants may reproduce and change structures, both intentionally and unintentionally, in Turkey and their home country, which goes in line with the duality of structure as defined by Giddens (1984).

## CHAPTER VIII

### CONCLUSION

This thesis was motivated by the will to shed light on a still understudied population and to better understand who African migrants in Istanbul are, why they left their countries and came to Turkey, how this process took place, what are the characteristics of their stay in Istanbul and their perspectives for the future. My main hypothesis was that despite the significant role played by structural forces, African migrants in Istanbul are not just passive victims of multiple marginalities but use structural resources such as loose visa policies or trade opportunities to develop coping and advancement strategies in order to regain the ontological security they lost during the migration process, and keep a certain degree of control over their lives and the environment surrounding them. This argument was substantiated by data gathered through an in-depth fieldwork combining interviews with African migrants having different backgrounds, informal interviews with migrants and NGO workers, participant observation in public and private spaces used by African migrants in Istanbul as well as the incorporation of the existing secondary literature analyzing the legal framework and global context of migrants in Turkey.

In chapter two, I placed the structuration theory within the ongoing debate on agency and structure. I first showed that neither structuralist nor functionalist approaches are satisfactory when it comes to explaining social phenomena. I also showed that despite their contributions, approaches trying to combine both micro and macro levels, or introducing a meso level, such as networks or households, fail to incorporate them in an integrated theory. Structuration theory offers a more realistic and sophisticated picture of social life by acknowledging the major role played by

both agency and structure and by showing that they are not opposed to each other but mutually dependent. It also enables us to grasp the dynamic nature of structure that may change as a consequence of agents' decisions and actions, or on the contrary be reproduced by them. I provided some examples of works on migration using structuration as their main theoretical framework and showed that they use only a very limited portion of the great potential of structuration theory, which I tried to exploit to a fuller extent in this research.

In chapter three, I placed my research in the general background of immigration in Turkey, and more specifically African migration to Turkey. I first provided an overview of the legal framework shaping migration to Turkey and the settlement of foreigners in Turkey including policies regulating entry and stay, settlement and citizenship, access to the labor market and public services and finally the asylum system. This overview provides an insight to the policies migrants have to cope with while coming and staying in Istanbul. I showed that until recently there was no consistent legal framework for migrants in Turkey but that Turkey is in the process of policy-making in this field. The coming into force of the new Law on Foreigners and International Protection<sup>23</sup> in April 2014 is considered as a cornerstone in this long and demanding process, which was initiated as part of the admission negotiations with the European Union. Turkey had to deal with the challenging task of containing irregular migration while improving its human rights records, especially regarding asylum seekers and refugees.

In the same chapter, after providing an overview of policy issues, I moved to practices and, based on the analysis of secondary literature, illustrated how those policies are applied at the migrants' level and the gap between Turkey's immigration

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<sup>23</sup> Law No. 6458/2013 on Foreigners and International Protection

policy and practice. I showed that in practice, the implementation of the above mentioned policies is unclear and inconsistent and that informality is the rule among African migrants in Istanbul. While some groups face strict structural constraints, others may have an easier time circumventing these structures due to their ethnic identity, religious affiliation or gender. I also placed the research in the broader context of Turkey's recent opening to Africa, its implications on trade, Turkey's attractive power in Africa and the increasing number of scholarships issued to African migrants willing to study in a Turkish university.

In chapter five, based on data from the field, I analyzed the role structural forces play in the decision making process and experiences of African migrants in Istanbul. I identified which structural forces come into play and how they affect migrants and showed that they represent both push and pull factors that influence migrants' decision to leave their country and come to Turkey, as well as resources and obstacles during their stay in Turkey. Economy is a main issue, including the lack of job opportunities and low salaries in migrants' home countries, perceived better opportunities abroad and actual poor economic conditions in Turkey. Political forces include political instability and bad governance in migrants' home countries, a relative political stability in Turkey and its opening policy in Africa that contributes to the spreading of a positive image of Turkey. Cultural forces include push factors, such as the conception of migration as a rite of passage and source of prestige in many African countries, and pull factors for some Muslim migrants attracted by a similar religious background. But culture brings also its set of resources and above all obstacles for migrants in Turkey such as language barriers and negative cultural stereotypes. I also showed the gendered nature of cultural forces in the migration decision and process. Then, I showed that legislation is a key factor for migrants, and

especially visa and entry policies. I showed that migrants use the relatively loose visa policy to come to Turkey, but also encounter many difficulties in Istanbul due to their lack of legal status and widespread informality. Finally, I demonstrated the impact of education systems on migrants' decisions and experiences. The lack of education opportunities in their home countries and the attraction of the quality of education and scholarships offered abroad in general and in Turkey in particular constitute major pull and push factors, but the organization of education in Turkey, and especially administrative issues create its share of difficulties for African students in Istanbul.

After acknowledging the importance of structural forces in migrants' decision making and experiences, in chapter six, I showed that migrants do not automatically react to those forces, but reflect on them and develop strategies not only to survive but also in order to thrive. I showed that they are able to reflect on the structural forces surrounding them as well as on their own experiences and to learn lessons from them. Moreover, they not only take their decision based on a reflection on structures but also for personal reasons such as family issues or personal desires and aspirations. I also showed that migrants' knowledgeability is bounded and that they seriously lack information before leaving their countries. I then discussed dialectics of control and showed first how migrants keep a certain degree of control within the structures. Even when the scope of available choices is very restricted, the final choice is rarely totally imposed and usually involves a certain degree of consent. Using illegal entry and stay and informal labor as evidence, I then showed that migrants keep control over the structures by circumventing the rules and breaking the laws.

Finally, in the same chapter, I demonstrated migrants' coping abilities by analyzing their coping and advancement strategies. Coping strategies include internal coping strategies that enable them to better accept their situation in Istanbul, such as belief in God and the constant contact with their community; and external coping strategies that improve their situation, such as the practice of religion, community solidarity or language learning. Migrants' future plans included most of the time staying for some time in Turkey before moving to another country and in the end going back home while developing trading activities.

In chapter seven I engaged in a discussion on migration and the duality of structure. I showed that while structural forces impact migrants' decisions and experiences, they can in turn affect structures, either unintentionally or on purpose. Unintended consequences of migrants' actions include the reproduction of migration patterns or the change in the legal framework, social and economic forces in Istanbul. It is not uncommon that migrants intend to change structures they consider as unfair or discriminatory. I showed that some migrants engage or plan to engage in politics, trade or humanitarian affairs in order to improve the situation in their home country, while a few of them also engage in similar activities in Turkey, which is more rare however, due to their vulnerability and the lack of sense of belonging.

It is important to note that despite the fact that migrants are agents, not all of them have the same degree of agency. The degree of agency depends of the context, temporality and capitals of the individual, as well as the conjunction of those factors. Personal factors determining an individual's degree of agency include financial capital, education, experience, gender, age, religion, cultural background, social status and network, languages and other skills, as well as personality, including proactivity, worldview, self-confidence, optimism and interpersonal skills. Agents

will also have more capacity to act when they benefit from a welcoming environment, with migrant-friendly laws, access to public services and education. Such an environment would enable them to maintain or increase their physical or education capital, rather than having to use all their skills and energy in order to survive and meet their most basic needs.

In addition, factors determining migrants' degree of agency will be more decisive in some contexts and situations than others. For instance, migrants' social capital is more decisive at the beginning of the migration and settlement process, when migrants are more dependent on others, than after they get experience and knowledge about their host country. Regarding the context, while speaking Portuguese would have increased a migrant's agency in Portugal, it is not very useful in Turkey. Similarly, having diplomas may increase individuals' social status in their home country and therefore their agency, but it will not impact their agency in Turkey where their diplomas are not recognized. Gender is a complex issue. While being a female will increase a migrant's agency in some cases by giving her access to a greater range of jobs (such as housekeeping) or NGO assistance, it will also limit her choices in other circumstances due to greater security risks in the migration process.

Concretely, most students I interviewed had greater degrees of agency as compared to most irregular migrants for several reasons including their legal status, the knowledge of Turkish language, a longer time spent in Turkey, a higher social status and legitimacy in the eyes of the host society as well as a somewhat higher financial capital. On the opposite, the only interviewees who explicitly expressed the idea that their future does not lie in their hands are refugees who are waiting to be resettled in a third safe country. In this sense, their agency is rather limited.

However, the most educated among them and those who have spent most time in Turkey, and therefore know the language and the mechanisms, have a greater degree of agency and keep a great degree of control over their life in Turkey as well as the life of other migrants and refugees they may assist. Economic migrants are a very heterogeneous group and it is hard to generalize but their agency depends a lot on their financial capital, time spent in Turkey, education and social capital. David, a migrant from Cameroon explains that it is hard for most irregular migrants to have a vision and bring change because “they are confused” and under pressure due to the remittances their families expect them to send.

Taking two concrete examples may help us to better grasp how the combination of different factors can influence a migrant’s degree of agency and which coping mechanisms he or she may use. Amal is a Somalian refugee. She has been in Turkey for one and a half year but does not speak Turkish. Neither does she speak English. She left without her family and with no belongings and is waiting for the UNHCR to resettle her in a third safe country. Her degree of agency is very low. She can hardly find a job in Turkey as she does not speak the language. She uses community solidarity as a coping mechanism as she relies on Somali speaking people. She also has strong family ties that enable her to get financial support and accommodation. Belief in God is a powerful internal coping strategy in her case. On the opposite, David, a migrant from Cameroon has been in Turkey for about seven months. He got scammed while going to Norway in order to study and ended up in Georgia. As he already had a bachelor’s degree, spoke good English, and had a wealthy family, he managed to enroll in a Georgian university instead and get a master’s degree there. After getting some information from the internet, he then decided to cross the border to Turkey, where he managed to connect with the

European and American NGO communities, write a book about his experience in Turkey and get a job as an English teacher. He also has a strong vision for his country and plans to go back to his country this year and engage in politics. His degree of agency is high. He uses several coping and advancement strategies, including acquiring new skills, keeping in touch and developing relationships with other people, both inside and outside his community. He is a good example of a person using the “one day” internal coping strategy as he talks about “the day” he will come back to Turkey “as a diplomat or a president”.

One should also highlight the importance of Turkey’s foreign policy towards Africa for African migrants in Turkey. Interviewee’s testimonies tend to show that Turkey’s soft power policy in African countries have a significant impact in migrants’ decision to come to Turkey as well as their experience in Istanbul. Turkey’s humanitarian projects in Africa as well as the increased volume of trade between Turkey and African countries contribute to the spread of a positive image of Turkey, making it better known and more attractive. As highlighted by Ndiaw, a student from Senegal, Turkey’s will to get access to African markets also influences the way African migrants are treated in Istanbul. As a rule, their situation has improved since the beginning of the 2000s and harassment by the police has decreased. According to Ndiaw, the government does not want to tarnish Turkey’s image in Africa by mistreating or deporting irregular migrants, which does not mean that ill-treatment has totally disappeared. Related to the same opening policy, the proliferation of Turkish Airlines flights to Africa and the relatively loose visa and entry policy aiming at attracting tourists and traders, made the access to Istanbul easier for migrants as well.

I believe this research contributes significantly to the literature on African migrants in Istanbul, and more generally on migration to and through Turkey as well as migration between developing countries. As compared to purely sociological or anthropological studies, this research contributes to the literature by taking into account the bigger picture through the analysis of the role of economic, political, legal and cultural forces. As compared to political science studies, it brings in a micro approach by considering migration from an individual level, through the eyes of the migrants themselves in their daily lives and decision making process. It contributes to the debate on agency and structure by providing a concrete case where structuration theory can be empirically used. It shows that structuration provides interesting conceptual tools, which can be used in a wide range of academic fields, and how they can be applied to a particular social phenomenon. It goes beyond the obstacles migrants face, beyond discrimination and vulnerability usually depicted in the existing literature, and shows what migrants are capable of developing coping and advancement tools in order to regain control over their lives and environment. Therefore, I hope this research will contribute to a shift in the perception we have on migrants who are too often seen as passive victims of multiple marginalities and denied their ability to reflect on, monitor and control their lives. I tried to bring agency back in the debate and show its complex relation with structure as a dynamic and changing entity.

Moving to the limitations of this thesis, first of all, I must acknowledge the difficulty of studying migration as a research area. It is a very complex and dynamic topic with multiple dimensions and factors involved. In addition, in this precise case, it is very difficult to obtain hard data regarding irregular migration in Turkey. Therefore, it is particularly challenging to build a grand theory and go beyond mere

description. While I showed that both agency and structure matter, and that they are mutually dependent rather than opposed to each other, it remains difficult to measure precisely and predict when each component will prevail and how exactly they will interact with each other. In addition, while in chapter seven I gave some insights on the ways migrants may affect structures, I am aware that I failed to provide solid evidence on that point. I lacked the time and resources necessary to fully demonstrate the duality of structure in the case of African migrants in Istanbul. I could observe intentions and impressions rather than hard facts, mainly due to the fact that the analysis of structural change and evolution requires by definition a longer period of observation. Moreover, I believe it would require a more sophisticated methodology.

Many other issues remain unresolved and would deserve further research. First, it would be interesting to analyze more in depth the different factors affecting an individual's level of agency. Second, as mentioned earlier, a major law just entered into force last month in Turkey<sup>24</sup> and is likely, if fully implemented, to change significantly some structural forces affecting migrants in Istanbul, hopefully meaning more resources and fewer obstacles. This research was conducted prior to this major legal change. It would be interesting in the future to analyze the ways this structural change may or may not affect migrants' experiences and how they will or will not adapt their coping strategies to the new context. Third, it would also be interesting to look at this change the other way around through an institutional analysis. This law is usually considered a result of Turkey's negotiations with the European Union. It would be interesting to look at it from a micro point of view and analyze the potential contributions of agents and civil society in this process. Fourth, I focused on African migrants in Istanbul but many more live in others cities all

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<sup>24</sup> Law No. 6458/2013 on Foreigners and International Protection

around Turkey and face quite different situations. As far as I know, no research has been conducted on those populations yet but I believe it would be an interesting case to study.

Traditionally considered as an emigration country, Turkey is emerging today as a host country for hundreds of thousands of migrants and asylum seekers due to its strategic location at the crossroads between the North, the South, the East and the West, as well as the changing patterns in global migration. Since 2011, it is facing massive inflows of Syrian refugees, which represent an additional major challenge for the government and the local community. Turkey has just started assuming its responsibilities as a host country and the new legislation is yet to be implemented. Furthermore, there is a long way to go in the immigration policy-making process, starting with the long awaited lifting of the geographic limitation that still prevents non-European asylum seekers from getting the refugee status in Turkey. In addition, the issue of irregular migration should be fully addressed and cannot be tackled only within a securization perspective. This whole process cannot be successfully accomplished without the involvement and support of Turkey's neighbors and civil society.

APPENDIX A

LIST OF FORMAL INTERVIEWS

Interview number	Date	Pseudonym	Country	Sex	Status	Time spent in Turkey at the time of interview
Pilot 1	18.11.2012	David	Cameroun	M	migrant	7 months
Pilot 2	01.12.2012	Roger	Liberia	M	migrant	4,5 years
Pilot 3	07.12.2012	Lucas	Congo DRC	M	refugee	5,5 years
Pilot 4	10.12.2012	Leo	Ivory Coast	M	refugee	1,5 year
Pilot 5	30.06.2013	Ndiaw	Senegal	M	student	4 years
6	07.09.2013	Ndiaw	Senegal	M	student	4 years
7	08.09.2013	David	Cameroun	M	migrant	1,5 year
8	11.09.2013	Marie	Senegal	F	student	3 years
9	11.09.2013	Thiame	Senegal	F	student	2 years
10	11.09.2013	Sofietou	Senegal	F	student	3 years
11	11.09.2014	Louis	Senegal	M	student	3 years
12	16.09.2013	Haris	Cameroun	M	migrant	8 months
13	18.09.2013	Yenee	Ethiopia	F	Transit	2 months
14	18.09.2013	Amare	Ethiopia	M	migrant	4 months
15	18.09.2013	Amy	Ethiopia	F	refugee	5 years
16	19.09.2013	Eden	Ethiopia	F	refugee	4 years
17	19.09.2013	Ruth	Ethiopia	F	migrant	7 years
18	19.09.2013	Tahir	Soudan	M	refugee	8 years
19	20.09.2013	Azekia	Eritrea	M	trader	total 3 months
20	22.09.2013	Yaasir	Somalia	M	refugee	2 years
21	22.09.2013	Victor	Nigeria	M	migrant	7 months
22	23.09.2013	Séverin	Cameroun	M	migrant	6 months
23	25.09.2013	Moussa	Niger	M	migrant	6 months
24	25.09.2013	Salif	Niger	M	migrant	6 months
25	25.09.2013	Aron	Eritrea	M	migrant	5 months

26	26.10.2013	Nayah	Cameroun	F	migrant	1 year
27	27.09.2013	Mustafa	Somalia	M	refugee	2 months
28	27.09.2014	Amal	Somalia	F	refugee	1,5 year
29	30.09.2013	Moriba	Guinea Bissau	M	migrant	3 months
30	30.09.2013	Arivo	Madagascar	M	student	1 year
31	03.10.2013	Johnny	Nigeria	M	migrant	5 years
32	06.10.2013	Félicité	Cameroun	F	migrant	6 months
33	06.10.2013	Justine	Cameroun	F	refugee	1,5 year
34	06.10.2013	Lionel	Gabon	M	migrant	2 months
35	09.10.2013	Aminata	Senegal	F	migrant	4 years
36	11.10.2013	Esther	Uganda	F	migrant	1 year
37	11.10.2013	Samuel	Eritrea	M	migrant	3 years
38	13.10.2013	Prisca	Ivory Coast	F	student	4 years
39	13.10.2013	Eric	Cameroun	M	migrant	1 year
40	21.10.2013	Sarratou	Senegal	F	migrant	2 years
41	23.10.2013	Bakri	Soudan	M	student	4 years
42	24.10.2013	Joseph	Rwanda	M	refugee	22 years

## APPENDIX B

### NGOS PROVIDING ASSISTANCE TO REFUGEES, ASYLUM SEEKERS AND MIGRANTS IN ISTANBUL<sup>25</sup>

Name of Organism	Beneficiaries	Services Provided
Association of Mutual Aid and Solidarity for Migrants (ASEM)	Migrants, refugees and asylum seekers	Medical consultations
Foundation for Society and Legal Studies (TOHAV)	Migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, victims of human trafficking	Basic health services, medicine provision
Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Migrants (ASAM)	Refugees, asylum seekers, victims of human trafficking, LGBTTT, victims of torture	Legal counselling, social counselling, clothing, aid, psychosocial counselling, psychological counselling, language courses, medicine provision.
Positive Life Association	People with HIV/AIDS, including migrants	Social, psychosocial and legal counselling, medicine provision
Human Resource Development Foundation (HRDF)	Refugees and asylum seekers, victims of human trafficking, people willing to apply for asylum	Information about asylum process and rights, referral to appropriate organizations, legal and social counselling, clothing aid
Helsinki Citizen's Assembly Refugee Advocacy and Support Program	Refugees and asylum seekers, people willing to apply for asylum, migrants detained for illegal entry or at risk of arbitrary detention or deportation	Legal aid
Human Rights Foundation of Turkey (THIV)	Victims of torture, including migrants	Legal counselling, psychological and psychiatric care

<sup>25</sup> This list was provided by NGO workers in Istanbul. It is meant for informative purpose only and may be subject to change according to the availability of resources and the current policy priorities of given organisms.

LAMBDA Istanbul	LGBT individuals including migrants	Social and legal assistance
Médecins Sans Frontières (closed in December 2013)	Refugees and asylum seekers, victims of human trafficking, people willing to apply for asylum	Social and psychosocial counselling, therapy
Caritas	Asylum seekers refugees and undocumented migrants	Limited medical, social and educational support, distribution of food and non-food items, organization of migrant women support groups for discussion and trainings
Istanbul Interparish Migrant Program (IIMP)	Asylum seekers, refugees and undocumented migrants	Social and material services, mother and child program, distribution of food coupons, economical support, referrals for medical care
Kitchen Project by Migrant Solidarity Network ( <i>Mutfak</i> )	Migrants and local communities	Space for interaction and solidarity, cooking and free food session, language classes

## APPENDIX C

### NON-ENGLISH QUOTES IN ORIGINAL LANGUAGE

Aminata, Sénégal:

P60: “Au Sénégal, on aime partir”

Félicité, Cameroun:

P64: “Ils utilisent les noirs pour les tâches dégradantes comme nettoyer les toilettes.”

Justine, Cameroun:

P66: “J’ai trouvé du travail, dans le textile mais à chaque fois au bout de 3-4 jours le patron veut coucher avec moi. J’ai dû travailler dans 10 fabriques mais toujours j’ai dû abandonner. Ils veulent essayer les africaines. La grande majorité des femmes africaines ici ont ce problème. Même le patron actuel, au bout de 3 mois il a commencé. Mais je lui ai expliquée que j’étais mariée que j’étais venue pour travailler. Il a dit OK. ”

P112: “Il faut attendre.”

Haris, Cameroun:

P111: “Regarde autour de la Turquie, il y a la guerre partout!”

P57: “Bon pour vivre, même le mendiant vit, mais vivre décemment, c’est autre chose. Si on est à une base de 200TL par semaine, 800/mois. Et encore il faut avoir la chance de travailler tout le mois.”

P59: “En Afrique tout est statique. Tu es né paysan, tu le restes. On a un président au pouvoir depuis 30 ans, depuis que tu es né, tu vois la même chose. Les individus ils peuvent se battre. Et puis il y a la corruption. Tu vois des administrateurs plus riches que les hommes d’affaire qui pillent les caisses de l’état. Le gouvernement ne fait rien pour les gens.”

P74: “Je suis venu directement à Istanbul, enfin avec un transit à Tunis parce que c’était le seul visa disponible à ce moment. [...] Puisque l’Europe a fermé, le flux a diminué. La route qui s’est ouverte c’est la Turquie. Les gens ont regardé la carte, c’est à côté. On peut passer de l’autre côté. Les autorités le savent.”

P88: “cette envie folle de voir comment c’est ailleurs” “ Je suis partie parce que je voulais voyager.”

P90: “Par essence, le camerounais aime beaucoup bouger. A un moment on ne veut pas savoir ce qu’on va trouver. L’important c’est de partir. On dit toujours « on verra ».

Lionel, Gabon:

P87 : «En Afrique, les gens ont des préconceptions sur l'Europe ; ils pensent que tout est rose. »

Louis, Sénégal:

P61: “C’est plus facile de prendre la décision pour un fils que pour une fille. Pour les filles c’est le père qui décide.”

Lucas, Congo DRC:

P76: “Sonja, si je suis légal ou illégal, même moi je ne le sais pas. Je suis légal en Turquie mais illégal à Istanbul”, je suis sensé signer à Karaman mais qui va aller là-bas, c’est l’enfer. Non moi je veux vivre à Istanbul.”

Marie, Sénégal:

P62: “Ma sœur est venue pour visiter et acheter des produits. Elle a pensé que la Turquie était un bon pays, un pays musulman”.

Moriba, Guinea Bissau:

P88: “C’était une décision personnelle; Je voulais voir ailleurs.”

P94: “Tu dois avoir de l’argent pour partir, le pauvres ne peuvent pas le faire.”

Moussa, Niger:

P82: “Turkish Airlines faisait une promotion de billets. Ils étaient à 150 000 francs CFA. Tout le monde était au courant. Aussi le premier ministre est venu et a invité les gens à venir faire des affaires en Turquie, pas pour vivre, mais pour le commerce. Je n’avais jamais pensé à quitter le pays avant. Ça c’est fait très vite, en 2 semaines.”

Nayah, Cameroun :

P62: “Les turcs ne sont pas vraiment sociable avec nous qui ne parlons pas leur langue. J’ai appris un peu le turc. Je comprends un peu mais je ne peux pas parler.”

P89 : “La déception m’a fait partir.”

P93: “rester droite”

Ndiaw, Sénégal:

P54: “En Afrique, on a assez pour s’en sortir. Tous les gens ici, ce n’était pas des chômeurs au pays. Ils avaient quelque chose mais ça suffisait juste pour survivre, nourrir la famille, mais pas pour s’améliorer.”

P55: “Au départ ils venaient en Turquie pour après aller en Grèce et ne Europe. Mais ici ils ont trouvé qu’ils peuvent faire de l’agent, en guidant les

commerçants par exemple, en les emmenant dans les boutiques, pour acheter des marchandises. L'Europe ne fait plus rêver, tu le sais."

P72: "Le premier c'était la bourse. En venant j'avais 2000€ d'argent de poche. Je n'avais pas d'information sur le montant de la bourse. Je pensais que si j'avais une bourse ça me permettait de vivre ici. J'avais même un ordinateur portable. J'en ai fait cadeau. Je pensais qu'avec la bourse je pourrais m'en acheter un ici. Mais au début on avait 350 TL par mois, maintenant c'est monté à 750 TL. Parfois je dépensais 50TL par jour. Quand la bourse est arrivée j'ai presque pleuré."

P73: "Tout d'abord il faut savoir que la destination des africains n'est jamais la Turquie. Ils veulent aller en Europe. Avant ils passaient par le Maroc puis en Espagne mais ensuite ils ont augmenté la sécurité dans la région. Alors ils sont passés à la route Turquie-Grèce. Il faut savoir que la Turquie a deux intérêts dans ça: le commerce et les transports, Turkish Airlines. Parce que pour venir ici, les immigrants doivent acheter des billets d'avion, payer des taxes. Alors pourquoi ils passent par la Turquie maintenant? Parce que les visas sont devenus accessibles."

p79: "A part quelques commerçants et les diplomates, je n'ai jamais vu un africain avec un permis de travail!"

P81: "A Kumkapi il y a 2 polices, la police normale et la police des étrangers. Quand ils se font arrêter ils restent une semaine à la police normale, là tu peux les voir, après ils vont dans la police des étrangers. La seuls leur père, mère ou avocat peut les voir, mais est-ce que les africains ils peuvent avoir un avocat, et est-ce que leurs parents ont les moyens de venir les voir? Alors quand tu leur apporte de l'argent il faut donner l'argent aux policiers. Mais au moins ceux qui sont sortis disent qu'ils ont bien reçu l'argent. Les policiers doivent signer un papier. [...] Ils devraient permettre de faire des petits boulots. Et aussi changer les conditions de détention, et donner droit à un procès. Parce qu'ici ce n'est pas comme ça. Ils te mettent en prison et ils t'oublient. C'est une autre chose à changer. Par exemple il y a un cas, je sais parce que je suis allé le voir en prison. Il avait des problèmes avec des turcs. Ils sont venus chez lui, avec toutes les armes que tu puisses imaginer. Ils l'ont poignardé. On l'a emmené à l'hôpital juste pour lui faire un pansement et après on l'a emmené en prison. On n'a même pas attendu qu'il guérisse."

P84: "La politique en Turquie est différente de la France. Ici on ne renvoie pas les clandestins. Il faut savoir qu'en Afrique, la France, la Chine et la Turquie ils sont tous en compétitions pour avoir les richesses, les ressources. Mais la Turquie c'est la dernière à arriver alors ils doivent donner une bonne image du pays comme un pays d'accueil. Parce que la France est là depuis la colonisation Chine elle échange des produits contre des matières premières. Et les Turcs ils ont rien fait encore, ils ont juste ouvert des écoles. C'est l'équivalent des missionnaires. Ils doivent donner une bonne image, après ils viennent. Les turcs, pour donner une bonne image, doivent laisser les africains ici. En plus c'est bien pour l'économie."

P87: "Je ne regrette pas, ça me fait une expérience ne plus. Le fait d'être venu m'a ouvert. Maintenant je sais ce qui se passe dans les 2 mondes. En

Afrique, les gens voient à la télé. Ici j'ai la chance de démystifier. Si les gens en Afrique pouvaient voir ce que je vois ici, l'Afrique pourrait se développer. Il y a beaucoup de ressources, il n'y a pas de secret, y'a que le travail qui paye. En Afrique, les gens ne travaillent pas. Dans une famille, 1 personne travaille pour 10 personnes."

Salif, Niger:

P64: "Les turcs sont racistes, ils nous traitent comme des esclaves."

Salif and Moussa, Niger:

P101: "C'est plus facile maintenant. Même si on n'a toujours pas d'argent, on connaît les coutumes et on a un peu appris la langue."

Sarratou, Sénégal:

P88: "J'ai gâché deux ans de ma vie en venant en Turquie."

P100: "Le travail qu'on fait ici on le ferait jamais au Sénégal, parce qu'ici personne, ni notre famille, ni nos amis, ne nous voient."

P117: "Chez nous avant il n'y a que les immigrés qui avaient de belles maisons, de belles voitures, ils se mariaient à de belles femmes comme ils disent. Ils partaient 4-5 ans, revenaient. C'est tout ça qui a poussé les gens à partir."

P124: "{...} ce qui n'est rien pour le Sénégal."

Séverin, Cameroun:

P63: "La situation est différente maintenant à cause de la langue. Quand on apprend un peu c'est très différent de quand quelqu'un ne parle pas. Parfois je passe et ils m'insultent, ils pensent que je ne comprends pas. Après je réponds, ils sont surpris. Ils me demandent « türkçe biliyor musun ? » alors même si je ne comprends pas je dis « evet » alors ils sont tout surpris."

P65: "J'essaye de pas trop les coller, ils ont tous la même idée « African Madam » ils disent. Ca me dérange. C'est un peu chiant. Je suis en contact avec eux mais pas trop. Alors quand ils me demandent « African Madam » je cherche une photo avec une femme très grosse. Je sais qu'ils n'aiment pas les grosses et après ils me disent ah non !"

Sofietou, Sénégal:

P53: " On s'y est habitué, il n'y a rien qu'on puisse faire, c'est une expérience de vie."

Prisca, Ivory Coast:

P128: "Vous n'êtes pas en Turquie pour faire de la politique."

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