A Place I call home

An Interview study with Diasporic leaders and followers in Rwanda

Author: Deborah Sheria Murenge Ranka
Supervisor: Mikael Lundgren
Examiner: Tomi Kallio
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Abstract

This Master thesis research aims at finding out the experiences and motivations of the Rwandan diaspora in a leading or following working position in their country of origin. This study draws on a qualitative research design and in-depth, semi-structured interviews. This research also looks into the role of belongingness and identity of the diaspora as leaders and followers. Themes such as (intercultural) communication and cultural diversity are also explored. The respondents come from different parts of the world and are now leaders and followers in Rwanda, their country of origin, it is their experiences that are drawn.

The research shows that the reasons for the diaspora to return to their ethnic homeland differ from individual to individual. While some of the respondents of this research have returned for the pursuit of better economic opportunities, others have returned because of the emotional ties with the ethnic homeland and because of a sense of belonging.

Key words

diaspora, diaspora return, identity, belongingness, followership, leadership, push and pull factors, brain gain, brain circulation, brain drain, brain waste, communication, cultural diversity, interviews
Acknowledgement

To everyone who made this master thesis possible,

To everyone who contributed to an amazing year in Sweden,

To everyone who believed in me,

I deeply thank you.
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1 Introduction

This chapter consists of the background to my master thesis research as well as the purpose of conducting this research. The chapter ends by addressing the research questions.

1.1 Background to the research

The number of people leaving their country for another is continuously growing. These diasporic communities around the world do not represent a new phenomenon: people have been moving from one country to another for centuries.

The term diaspora comes from the Greek language (διασπορά), speiro meaning ‘to sow’ and dia, meaning ‘over’. The word diaspora means the dispersal or scattering of seeds. It is used as an umbrella term that covers many types of group movements.

Although many authors have been writing about it lately (Sheffer, 2003; Ember, Skoggard, 2004; Kenny, 2013) diaspora isn’t a new word (Tejada, Bolay, 2010). De facto, the ancient Greeks used this word ‘to mean migration and colonization’ (Bergsten, 2003:10).

According to Prastacos et al. (2012), at that time, trading and colonizing activities were part of the Greek tradition. Greek tribes, from the Balkans and Asia Minor, would spread people of Greek culture, religion and language around the Mediterranean and the black sea basins.

In doing so, the Greeks founded 400 colonies in different places including Sicily, southern Italy, northern Libya, eastern Spain, the south of France and the Black sea coasts’ (Prastacos et al., 2012:526). Thus, it is probable that the word diaspora had a quite positive connotation for the ancient Greek.

According to Bergsten, the term diaspora became a negative connotated word over time and became a word exclusively referring to the fate of the Jews (Hammer, 2005), who were ‘forced out of their homeland to their countries of exile’ (Bergsten, 2003:10). Likewise today a negative connotated definition would not be applicable to the modern diaspora which is not per se forced to leave their country of origin (Boeri et al., 2012).

In recent years, scholars have come with other definitions of what the term diaspora means. One way the word diaspora can be defined is ‘those people who have migrated from their homeland – either by their own will or by force – to begin new lives elsewhere’ (Kim & Ma, 2011:119).
The last years our world has been experiencing massive waves of movement of populations. For instance, people are risking their life by crowding onto boats to reach what they see as the Eldorado, the Western world. These immigration flows and forced migration show how difficult and dangerous it is to live in certain parts of the world.

However, this master thesis is more concerned with return migration. More diasporic individuals from developing countries are leaving developed countries for new opportunities in their country of origin. Moreover, diasporic individuals are returning to start a business or to gain work experience. Indeed, return migration is a long-standing issue and it arouses several questions regarding the reasons for the diaspora return: what is the experience of returnees back home? This research also asks the question: How is it working in a leading or following position in the ethnic homeland? Therefore, my research shows the diaspora as working people in their countries of origin.

Thus, as background for this research, literature related to brain circulation, cultural diversity, and communication were examined. In addition, this research contributes to the literature in that it links the literature on the diaspora (return) with the literature about leadership and followership.

1.2 Research Purpose and Research Question

This study seeks to gain knowledge about the experiences of the Rwandan diaspora as leaders as well as followers in their country of origin, and their expressed motivations to return to their ethnic homeland.

Firstly, this master thesis offers an insight into the motivations that individuals have to pursue a professional career abroad, in this case, diasporic individuals who return to their country of origin (COO). In doing so, topics such as brain circulation and the push and pull factors are examined.

Therefore, the starting point of my research lies in the following research questions:

- What are the expressed motivations of the diaspora to return to their country of origin (COO)?

Secondly, this master thesis examines how individuals experience working in a leading or following position in another country, their country of origin. Therefore, this master thesis research looks into topics such as followership and leadership, cultural diversity and
communication. Thus, for the purpose of conducting an in depth study, the following questions were also considered:

- What is the experience of the diaspora as leaders in their country of origin?
- What is the experience of the diaspora as followers in their country of origin?

Thus, this master thesis research aims at providing leadership as well as followership insights for companies who employ diasporic individuals or are planning to integrate people from abroad into their workforce.

Irrespective of the work position, intercultural awareness is important. In other words, if one is not aware of the cultural differences that characterize the workforce of a company, it will be challenging to bring the workforce to work together towards a common goal, because of the lack of creation of a shared meaning (Moon, 2012; Lustig & Koester, 2006). Thus, this research is relevant not only for diasporic individuals who wish to return for work, but also for multicultural companies as a whole.

Corbin and Strauss (2008) define the research question as a statement that identifies a subject that the researcher wants to study. It is a statement that tells the reader why it is interesting to study a particular subject.

The reason why studying the motivations and experiences of diasporic individuals working in their COO is important is because it gives individuals and companies that aspire to work in a different cultural setting an understanding of the cultural differences that shape how business is done, how communication is made and how people interact with each other.

This research also gives diasporic individuals an insight of the experiences of other diasporic individuals, therefore helping them understand the potential challenges and cultural differences that comes with a temporary or permanent return.

In the conclusion of this research, the research questions are answered based on the theoretical framework as well as the empirical findings.
2 Methodology

In this chapter I introduce the methods I have identified as suitable in my process of knowledge creation and I explain why I have chosen these methods.

2.1 What is Methodology?

Methodology is a mode of thinking and acting about ways to create and search for new knowledge (Arbnor & Bjerke, 2009).

Choosing the appropriate research approach is important in order to establish a link between the theory and the research (Bryman, 2012). This is because theory forms the foundation of any social research (Awuzie & McDermott, 2017). Thus, theory provides a rationale for the research being performed, it provides a structure to study a social phenomenon and it helps in understanding the findings of a research (Bryman, 2012; Awuzie & McDermott, 2017).

Sharp and Howard (1983:3) define research as methodical and with the aim of adding ‘one’s own body of knowledge and, hopefully, to that of others, by the discovery of nontrivial facts and insights’. In other words, by conducting this research, I am acquiring knowledge about why individuals return to their country of origin (COO) and what their experiences are. The following section explains the type of research I have chosen and why.

2.2 Research Approach

2.2.1 Quantitative Research versus Qualitative Research

Qualitative and quantitative research are two of the main types of research methods to conduct a study.

Marshall (1996:522) explains that a quantitative approach aims at testing ‘pre-set determined hypotheses and produce generalizable results’. Thus, qualitative research emphasizes on objective measurements and quantifying data whereas qualitative research focuses on the social reality of people: the way they interpret their world and the sensemaking of their experiences (Holloway, 1997). In addition, qualitative research is useful for answering ‘humanistic “why?” and “how?” questions’ (Marshall,1996:522).
2.2.2 Why Qualitative Research?

I chose qualitative research above quantitative research for different reasons.

First, because I want to explore the expressed motivations for diasporic individuals to return to their country of origin.

Secondly, I want to explore the experiences of the diaspora as leaders as well as followers in Rwanda.

Furthermore, knowing that every participant has his/her own social reality, I want to understand how they make sense out of their social reality. Also, each individual makes sense of their reality based on their own frame of references which is based on their cultural, professional, religious background but also their education and their gender among other things.

Last but not least, I value the uniqueness of every respondent. Using a qualitative research approach permits me to connect with the respondents.

For all aforementioned reasons, I prefer a fluid, open-to-discoveries kind of approach for this master thesis research.

2.3 Actors view

Arbnor and Bjerke (2009) describe three different methodological views in academic research: the analytical, the systemic and the actors view.

The analytical and systemic views are both aimed at explaining knowledge (Arbnor & Bjerke, 2009). However the analytical view looks at a full-of-facts reality as different parts that can be considered in isolation from other parts whereas the systemic view consider its parts can be seen as systems (thus, not in isolation from each other) (Arbnor & Bjerke, 2009).

On the other hand, according to Arbnor and Bjerke (2009), the researcher using the actors view supposes that reality is a social construction. The actors view is aimed at understanding the knowledge (Arbnor & Bjerke, 2009). This research uses the actors view to understand the social reality of returnees working in a leading or following position in their ethnic homeland.
2.4 Data collection: semi-structured interviews

I chose interviews as a mean to collect data because it gives the respondents the possibility to relate their motivations to return and their work experiences in their country of origin. Interviews also give the respondents the opportunity to go into the research topics in-depth.

In addition, Hutchsinson et al. (quoted in Corbin & Morse, 2003:346) listed the following benefits of qualitative interviews: ‘(a) serve as a catharsis, (b) provide self-acknowledgement and validation, (c) contribute to a sense of purpose, (d) increase self-awareness, (e) grant a sense of empowerment, (f) promote healing, and (g) give voice to the voiceless and disenfranchised’.

Moreover, Björn and Arbnor (2009) argue that an object can always be looked at from different perspectives. Some of the respondents of this research were working in a following position before working in a leading position. Therefore, I looked at their experiences from different perspectives. In that respect, Björn and Arbnor (2009:30) state that being able and daring to do so ‘always give the creative mind suggestions for new ideas’.

For my master thesis research, I conducted semi-structured interviews. I started the interview with an open question: How would you describe yourself/Who are you?

I chose to start with an open question in order to cover as many aspects as possible. Furthermore, aforementioned question had great likelihood of discovering the respondents’ perception of their identity (which can provide direct information on what the respondent is involved in as well as direct information on their perception of their life in their COO). In addition, this question, although simple, provided me with much information about the topics I wanted to cover with the respondents.

Since I chose for semi-structured interviews, I adapted my questions to what was told to me. However, if I saw that some issues were not covered, I asked follow-up questions on issues such as leadership (What does leadership mean to you? How would you describe your leadership style?) And followership (What has your experience as a follower, employee been like in your COO (compared to your previous COR)? Any challenges/differences between working in your COO and previous COR?).
2.4.1 Interview process: Four phases

Corbin and Morse (2003) defined four phases in the interview process.

The first phase is the pre-interview phase. During this phase, the objective of the interview as well as the ethical principles are explained before commencing the actual interview. Thus, I gave a short introduction of who I was and I explained what my research was about, even if I had already explained it by mail. I also considered it important to find a basis where we could relate to each other for instance the fact that my respondents and I share a common ethnic background. As Kvale (1984) states it ‘the very act of talking with another person that shares a common interest, is genuinely interested in your viewpoint, and who is not critical can be a richly rewarding experience’ (quoted in Corbin & Morse, 2003:339). This phase is also critical because it usually starts with a small talk which in turn has the objective to establish an open and comfortable atmosphere.

Secondly, there is the tentative phase in which the interviewees start to feel more at more at ease and gradually unfold their selves. This phase is named ‘tentative’ because it involves testing what and how much can be told or asked. In my experience, every respondent arrived on a different moment in this phase. In other words, to some it took entire minutes to reveal themselves, sharing personal notes, opening themselves to me in details, whereas to others, it did not took that long before they started opening up. Also, asking me, the researcher, questions about my experiences as a diasporic individual possibly encouraged some of the respondents to trustfully open up. Similarly, Booth and Booth (1994 quoted in Corbin & Morse, 2003) explain that trust is a two-way process, thus, it is important that I, as interviewer, give information if it is asked for but also if it is not explicitly asked for.

The third phase is named the immersion phase because the interviewer as well as the interviewees need to be immersed in the interview in order for it to be a good one. Corbin and Morse (2003) argue that sometimes, participants talk about unrelated topics in order to ease tensions or to gather thoughts. This was my experience when suddenly one of my respondents and I started talking about humanitarian aid in Africa. It was a very interesting subject and something I really enjoy reading about, however unrelated to my research study. In addition, Corbin and Morse (2003) argue that the immersion phase can be very intense as the participants share emotions and connect at a deeper level.
For instance, Lee and Renzetti (1990) note that any topic can be sensitive, it depends on the context. Being sensitive to the interviewees’ answers and body language is crucial because it minimizes their distress (Corbin & Morse, 2003). As for my experience, I could feel when my respondents wanted to go in-depth about a particular topic or when a topic was somewhat sensitive to them. At this moment, as the interviewer, I did not allow myself to insist, I was cautious because I did not want to make my respondents uncomfortable.

Finally, the phase of emergence is the last phase of the interview process. During this phase, the conversation becomes less emotional. This is also the phase were ‘without fear of influencing the narrative flow, the researcher can provide information, advice or validation’ (Corbin & Morse, 2003:343). Interestingly enough, I have experienced this as soon as I thanked my interviewees for their contribution, the interviewees would talk to me in a less formal way and some even proposed to meet if I planned to visit the country. As Corbin and Morse (2003:344) clarify it, ‘sometimes a participant takes this opportunity to reveal some extremely relevant information or secret. In fact, this often leaves investigators scrambling to get out their pen and paper or turn the tape recorder back on’.

2.4.2 Types of interviews

In this section, I describe the semi-structured interviews, the structured interviews as well as the unstructured interviews.

Corbin and Morse (2003) explain that interviewing is a skill that one acquires through experience. They also state that sensitivity is a crucial ingredient in interviewing and that it is a personal trait, not a skill. Therefore, it cannot be learned, it must be stimulated and developed through social interaction.

Semi-structured interviews allow the interviewer to have some control over the interview. Questions were formulated as open as possible in order to catch the insights of my respondents. Furthermore, the questions evolved around their motivations to return, their experience as a diaspora back to their ethnic homeland, their perception and meaning of identity etc.

Also, I researched certain topics in advance, in case I wanted to bring these topics up if my respondents did not mention them.

Along with the semi-structured interviews, there are the structured interviews. Corbin & Strauss (2008) explain that a structured interview is a process in which every participants is asked the same questions, thus, there isn’t a lot of freedom to answer.
However this type of interview does provide consistency.

Unstructured interviews, on the other hand, focus on shared experiences in which both the researcher and the interviewee ‘create a context of conversational intimacy’ (Ramos, 1989 quoted in Corbin & Morse, 2003:4). This allows the talk to happen freely and there is also the option to choose the emotional intensity.

Unstructured interviews give respondents control. Thus, the respondents deliberately choose the pace, the order and the depth of the interview (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

The interviewer can still ask additional questions once the interviewee(s) have related their story.

Finally, the main difference between unstructured interviews and the two other types of interviews is that the former are not ‘interrogation sessions’ (Corbin & Morse, 2003:339), but shaped by what the participants decide to share with the interviewer.

2.4.3 Profile Requirements

In order to participate to my research, respondents needed to fulfill certain requirements.

First of all, the respondent needed to have Rwandan ancestry, due to the fact that my research focuses on the Rwandan diaspora. However, I did not make limitations based on their country of residence (COR). Indeed, my respondents came from three different continents, all in all.

Secondly, the respondent needed to have lived outside of Rwanda for at least 5 years. The reason why I chose the number 5 is because I considered half a decade enough time to be immersed in a culture. However, I am aware that to some individuals immersion takes less time and to others it takes more time.

Finally, the respondent needed to be a working person in Rwanda, whether in a leading or a following position. In some cases, the respondent had been working in a following position before working in a leading position. The table below is a summary of the respondents’ requirements.
Respondents profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEADER</th>
<th>Someone who has followers (Drucker, 2007:205)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FOLLOWER</td>
<td>Someone who follows and accomplishes the tasks given by a person they identify as their leader</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Both leaders and followers have Rwandan ancestry and have lived outside of their COO for at least 5 years.*

Table 1: Profile Requirements

### 2.4.4 Demographic table

The demographic table below is based on the respondents’ profiles. A total of five person were interviewed: two men and three women from different ages but further observations can be made. All of the respondents except one, accepted to share their first name. The respondent who preferred to be anonym will be called ’Cédric’. Also, all the respondents are holders of a higher education degree and most of them have done their studies of higher education in Western countries. The respondents come from Europe, America and Africa.

Moreover, all of the respondents are working people: only one respondent is working in a following position, the others are working in a leading position. Therefore, I have marked the respondent in the table below as ’follower’. All the other respondents have worked in a following position before starting their own business or being promoted to a leading position. Thus, I have marked them in the table as ’first follower, then leader’. Lastly, they all are working in different sectors except Cédric and Natacha who both are active in the real estate sector.
### Table 2: Demographic table

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>GENDER</th>
<th>DIASPORA COUNTRY</th>
<th>LEVEL OF QUALIFICATION</th>
<th>SECTOR</th>
<th>LEADER or FOLLOWER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gael</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>Bachelor</td>
<td>E-commerce</td>
<td>First follower, then Leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cédric</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>DRC</td>
<td>Bachelor</td>
<td>Banking, Real estate</td>
<td>First follower, then Leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olivia</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>Bachelor</td>
<td>Medical</td>
<td>Follower</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grace</td>
<td>35?</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>Master</td>
<td>International relations, diplomacy</td>
<td>First follower, then Leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natacha</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Belgium</td>
<td>Master</td>
<td>Real estate</td>
<td>First follower, then Leader</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 2.4.5 Author’s role as knowledge creator

First of all, I want to explain what I mean by saying that I am the ‘knowledge creator’ of this research. Arnbor & Bjerke (2009) state that conducting a research is synonym for the work of creating knowledge. Thus, the researcher is a knowledge creator.

Secondly, when it comes to academic writing, scholars do not agree on whether or not to use personal pronouns. For this master thesis research, however, I have consciously chosen to use the personal pronoun ‘I’. As Daudi (1986) states it, a withdrawal from personal pronouns do not make the research objective because this is simply impossible.

As author of this research and as a creator of knowledge (Arnbor & Bjerke, 2009), my frame of references inevitably influences how I make sense out of the collected data. In order words, I cannot free myself from previous knowledge (Daudi, 1986) because the way I make sense is related to my identity (Lundgren, 2017).
2.5 Data Analysis

To analyze the collected data, I transcribed the data immediately after each interview. Then, I read through my notes while at the same time, writing my draft in a proper text including writing abbreviations in full words etc. The majority of my interviews were done through phone calls or skype and the interviews were not recorded. Thus, I wrote the interviews out in details and with the help of abbreviations and other techniques that would help me write everything quickly. After transforming my draft into a readable text, I read it through several times to obtain a clear picture of what the interview was about. I then divided the interview into sections based on the covered topics. For instance, if the main topics that were covered in the interview were communicational challenges, a sense of belonging and adaption, I would divide the interview as such. Furthermore, I translated the interviews from French to English as all my interviews were conducted in French (two of the interviews, were conducted switching into both languages). This process took me the longest as I had to choose suitable words without losing the meaning of the message that was told to me in French.

I repeated this process to analyze every interview. After analyzing each interview, I read once again through all of them, in search for similarities and differences. This helped me to frame the themes that were identified in the interviews. In a document, I separated the research questions in different parts: (1) motivations, (2) experience in a leading position, (3) experience in a following position. Then, I categorized the data from all the interviews into the different themes and based on the three parts above (motivations, experience as a follower/leader), I analyzed the data that was important for answering my research questions.

2.6 Reflexivity

Having been born in a Western country, not speaking the language of my ancestors and feeling somewhat foreigner in both my country of origin (COO) and my country of residence (COR), makes me believe I am well placed to conduct this research.

Also, I am aware that the methodology I used to conduct this research are colored by my experiences in both my COO and my COR. Also worth mentioning is that different factors come into play when conducting a research.
Moreover, the author’s social and educational background inevitably leaves his or her marks on the research. Denzin and Lincoln (2011:11) put it likewise:

‘[...]there is no clear window into the inner life of an individual. Any gaze is always filtered through the lenses of language, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity. There are no objective observations, only observations socially situated in the worlds of – and between – the observer and the observed.

2.7 Ethical considerations
Because ethics are critical in research, this section explains how I went about with my data collection.

When contacting the respondents through social media, I told them that I was conducting a master thesis research about individuals of the Rwandan diaspora who are working in a leading or following position in Rwanda. I also mentioned that I guaranteed them anonymity. However, finding respondents for this research was not an easy process: I was told that the Rwandan people are very much concerned about their privacy and some topics are only discussed with close people. Luckily, five respondents accepted to be interviewed.

Aside from clarifying the ethical principles of my research to my respondents, I also followed the recommendation of Leedy and Ormrod (2005) to be fully committed to conducting a research that is honest and which does not misrepresent the findings.

When conducting the interviews, all my chosen topics were covered even though the order in which the questions were asked was not fixed, not structured. The semi-structured interview approach was helpful to me when I felt that the respondents were heading to a topic not related to my research. In other words, it helped me to maintain some sort of an influence over the course of the interview.

Also, I was able to allow the free flow of the interview without having to constantly bring the respondents back on topic. I really cared to gain the respondents’ trust and I cared about making them comfortable to share their experiences.
3 Theoretical framework

This section provides the relevant theoretical background for this research.

3.1 Brain circulation, brain gain, brain drain and brain waste

With brain circulation, I refer to the diaspora returning to their country of origin to establish businesses (for example) while maintaining their social and professional ties to their country of residence, in other words, reversing the brain drain (Saxenian, 2005).

When (young) talents move out of their country of origin, especially if it is a developing country, it is to gain knowledge and skills (human capital) and gain working experience (economic capital), establish professional networks (social capital) which Patterson (2007) refers to as brain circulation. Some scholars (Chand & Tung, 2011; Leblang, 2017, Roniger et al., 2017) argue that countries can benefit from this brain circulation.

For instance, diasporic individuals who return to their ethnic homeland bring, on the one hand, opportunities for local businesses in their COO to expand abroad and, on the other hand, they bring potential business relationships benefits to both the country of origin and the country of residence (Chand & Tung, 2011). This process of return migration is part of what scholars call brain gain.

Tung and Lazarova (2007) explain that the return of a highly skilled diaspora is crucial to the development of a country. However, they state that it is equally important for multinational companies (MNCs) that wish to operate in these countries. This is because returnees are, in the eyes of these multinationals, highly qualified people especially because of their experience studying and/or working in the West. Another reason returnees are attractive to multinationals abroad is because returnees ‘possess knowledge of the local market with access to networks in the host country’ (Tung & Lazarova, 2007:1854).
Besides brain gain, there is a concept called brain drain. In Africa, for example, countries are experiencing brain drain. The concept of brain drain (as well as the concept of brain gain) differ in meaning depending on the perspective one takes. For instance, Adepoju (2007) state that developing countries refer to brain drain as a loss of their talents whereas developed countries assert that this movement of talents reduces unemployment problems, in other words, it serves the developing countries as they are struggling to offer their talents attractive employment conditions (Adepoju, 2007).

Other scholars such as Tung (2007) also state that the phenomenon of young talents leaving their countries to gain work experience or to study in the West, represents a brain gain to the western countries and a brain drain to their ethnic homelands.

In most developing countries, human capital is crucial for the transformation of these countries. Thus, some scholars have argued that a downside to brain drain is that the qualified labour pool could shrink and ‘thus make these countries less attractive to multinational companies (MNCs) from the investment standpoint’ (Roe, 1996 quoted in Tung & Lazarova, 2007).

Patterson (2007) gives an example of the brain drain occurring in developing countries. According to him, Africa has approximatively 3% of the world’s health professionals currently on the continent. Indeed, many migrant health professionals are moving out of their country of origin to advance their skills or to gain a gainful employment. This migration process is often permanent and, therefore, has serious consequences for the continent (Eastwood et al.: 2005). Consider the troubling case of Malawi. In 2002, 75 nurses departed to the UK, which represented 12% of the country’s nurses. Additionally, Malawi has ‘one physician for every fifty thousand people’ (Brock et al. 2015:1). These dramatic low numbers in health care professionals translate in a short life expectancy and health problems in the region (Brock et al. 2015).

Brock and Blake (2015) explain that the reason why there are few health professionals in countries such as Malawi is because, although there is an interest and a demand for medical training in these countries, their ‘medical training provides the opportunity to leave the developing society and enter into a more developed one’ (Brock et al. 2015:1). Robertson (2006:1) observes that this seems unfair for developing countries, especially if they have ‘invested heavily in the education and training of these students and skilled workers, only to lose them to another country’.
This radical inequality and the shortage in health professionals in these countries may increase over the years if nothing is done to harness the talents from the diaspora. Moreover, developed countries have embarked on policies such as positive integration (through family settlement for example), which retains the diasporic talents of developing countries abroad (Tanner, 2005 quoted in Robertson, 2006). Also, there is not a full agreement on the definition of talented, high-skilled individuals mainly because countries differ in terms of education curriculum and the recognition of qualifications. Patterson (2007), for instance, defines talents as individuals who have a high impact in science and technology, business, culture and politics.

Coming back to the issue of brain drain, African countries are noticeably not alone. South American countries are also experiencing brain drain. Many talents from these countries are now diasporic individuals so much so that Argentina is the country with the largest number of scientific professionals working abroad (Roniger et al. 2017). Furthermore, western countries such as the UK, are in need of more doctors. In recent decades, the UK has been depending on health professionals trained overseas to secure the medical employment (Eastwood et al., 2005).

Eastwood et al. (2005) explain this brain drain by using the metaphor of a medical carousel where (African) health professionals continuously migrate towards a country with more health professionals than the source country, in the pursuit of better training, better employment conditions and a better salary. For instance, South African health care professionals migrate to the UK, UK health care professionals move to Canada and the US, and Canadian health care professionals migrate to the US, which creates a rotation around the world (Eastwood et al., 2005). Yet, as mentioned previously, depending on one’s perspective, this phenomenon can be seen as brain gain too.

Patterson (2007:5), for example, states that brain gain depends on ‘the extent to which the complex of human, social and economic capital of the immigrants is accumulated’, the extent to which this capital is recognized by the ethnic homeland and the extent to which there exists an enabling environment where the diaspora’s talent can be productively utilized. Because, according to Patterson (2007), retaining talent that cannot be productively utilized in a country is considered brain waste.

The example of the lack of health professionals in developing countries, shows that individuals from developing countries are emigrating from their country of origin with the potential to remain a diaspora for an indefinite period. The example also shows the potential risks that come with the brain drain phenomenon, in that case, a lack of professionals to care for ill people. In
the context of brain gain, many countries have embarked on policies to facilitate the return of their diaspora that permits their citizens to hold the citizenship of two countries.

Spiro (2016) explains that throughout history, having a dual citizenship was not something to brag about. Dual citizenship was considered disreputable and people were historically in disfavor of it. Only recently has dual citizenship been generally accepted. Spiro (2016:3) notes that it ‘has become a common place for globalization’. Holding the citizenship of two countries is beneficial in many ways: it facilitates naturalization and as a result facilitates the integration process of diasporic individuals, it gives the diaspora political and economic rights in both countries (Leblang, 2017), it has an overriding influence on the diaspora’s choice to invest in their country of origin in forms of remittances for example (Leblang, 2017). In addition, an individual who has dual citizenship do not need a visa to return home. Some scholars (Spiro, 2016; Leblang, 2017) also argue that the right of dual citizenship attracts and retains the diaspora to their country of origin. According to Leblang (2017), in the past, the high stay-rate of the diaspora in their host countries included higher incomes, more career opportunities, better quality of life, good working conditions, higher living standards etc. To date, diasporic individuals do not have to choose between staying in their COO or staying in their COR, in other words, they can live in between countries. Moreover, this being a qualitative research, the following section looks into the potential circumstances, in terms of push and pull factors, that foster diasporic individuals to return (Bogdan & Bilken, 2007).

3.2 Push and pull factors

The reasons for the diaspora to return to their ethnic homeland differ from individual to individual. On the one hand, when individuals leave their country of origin, they usually maintain (close) contact with their families (Sheffer, 2003), and despite the geographic gap, they often invest time and effort to keep their contacts alive (Saar, 2018). Moreover, these diasporic individuals are usually concerned about the social well-being of their family and friends back home (Tung & Chand, 2011). Moreover, emotional ties to the motherland serve as an important motivator for the diaspora’s willingness to partake and/or contribute to the continued economic growth of their country of origin.

In an attempt to identify what could foster the return of Rwandans to their country of origin, I looked into a model called the ‘Push-Pull-Mooring Model’. The model is based on the law of migration (Ravenstein, 1885) and was developed to explain the factors that determine migration
flows (Information Resources Management Association, 2016). This model describes three factors that encourage migration: the push factors, the pull factors and the mooring factors.

Louw and Mersham (2001: 305) explain push and pull factors as the following: 'Migration has multiple causation. Some migrants are ‘pulled’ by the prospects of a better life elsewhere; others are ‘pushed’ by unbearable conditions in their home countries; and others move because of a mixture of ‘push-pull’ factors.‘

As an illustration: an individual living in a place where there is a war going on (push factor), (s)he struggles to survive (push factor), may try everything to leave this place to go somewhere else where (s)he would be in security (pull factor), perhaps be reunited with his or her family (pull factor), find better living conditions such as better employment, fulfilment of human rights (pull factors).

Louw and Mersham (2001: 305) explain that a push factor involves ‘political shifts that create conditions deemed ‘threatening’ (i.e., economically, culturally, politically or in terms of personal safety)’. For instance, in the case of Rwanda, hundreds of thousands of Rwandans started entering Zaire (actual Democratic Republic of Congo) and other neighboring countries between April and July 1994 during the genocide (Twagilimana, 2015: xxxviii).

In summary, push factors are referred to as negative and pull factors are referred as positive factors (Information Resources Management Association, 2016). On the other hand, mooring factors are the ‘lifestyle, cultural and social issues that facilitate or hinder migration (Moon, 1995 quoted in Information Resources Management Association, 2016). In chapter ‘Empirical Findings’, I share what the push and pull factors are for Rwandan returnees.

The following section provides an understanding of the importance of identity in the context of the diaspora return. Atnafu and Adamek (2016:292) note that ‘one often overlooked challenge related to integration is defining one’s identity’. Moreover, diasporic individuals have to reconcile the culture and values they brought from their host country with those they encounter in the home country (Bathala,2005 quoted in Atnafu and Adamek, 2016:292).
3.3 Identity and Belongingness

According to Hammer (2005:20) ‘identities are developed in a process that entails being labeled, categorized, and named by others, a process equally important to self-perception and identification’. In other words, the identity of an individual is formed through identification by others and through socialization. For instance, returnees who are known to have come back from the West tend to be assumed to be wealthy (Atnafu and Adamek, 2016:294). Besides that identity is also formed through the way an individual sees himself or herself. Lührmann and Eberl (2007:116) argue that self-reflection as well creates a sense of self and helps building and maintaining one’s identity.

There are two main theories about identity formation: identity theory and social identity theory. According to the identity theory, how individuals categorize themselves influences how their identity is formed. Furthermore, the identity theory suggests that individuals classify themselves through roles. Thus, individuals categorize the self ‘as an occupant of a role, and the incorporation, into the self, of the meanings and expectations associated with that role and its performance’ (Stets & Burke, 2000:225). In social identity theory, the social identity refers to an individual knowing that they belong to a social category or group (Hogg & Abrams, 1988). Moreover, a social group refers to people who view themselves as part of the same group (Stets & Burke, 2000).

Through comparing the self to others, people label the individuals who are alike as part of the in-group and those who differ from the self are labeled as outsiders (Stets & Burke, 2000). For instance, a diasporic individual can be labeled as part of the in-group or as part of the out-group, depending on how his or her home (or host) society categorize him or her. Moreover, each individual has several identities and each individual is part of a rich set of social categories; ‘therefore the set of social identities making up that person’s self-concept is unique’ (Stets & Burke, 2000:225).

Previous research in social psychology suggests that the possession of multiple social identities increases well-being and positive psychological outcomes (Rabinovich & Morton, 2016). However previous research also notifies that because of the difficulty to deal with conflicting identities, possessing multiple identities can also decrease one’s well-being (Rabinovich & Morton, 2016). Among the benefits cited in possessing multiple social identities are the ability
to cope with stress and resilience (Rabinovich & Morton, 2016). Research explains these beneficial effects of multiple identities by stating social support and meaning-making (Rabinovich & Morton, 2016). Thus, the more groups people are involved with, the wider their social support network and concerning meaning-making, each identity gives a source of meaning which increases people’s ability to cope with identity conflict (Rabinovich & Morton, 2016). However, Rabinovich and Morton (2016) note that ‘the meanings associated with different identities may clash and cancel each other out’ (Rabinovich & Morton, 2016:225).

This explains the multiple identities of some diasporic individuals. Concerning diasporic individuals, Chand & Tung (2011) note that diasporic individuals often have a bicultural identity that can sometimes be associated with identity conflict. Moreover, diasporic individuals may experience discrimination based on their ethnic background and failed labor market integration in their country of residence (COR) (Baser & Toivanen, 2018).

Similarly, Atnafu and Adamek (2016) argue that diasporic individuals who have a hard time integrating in the host country and who do not feel a sense of belongingness, return to their country of origin. When an individual do not feel a sense of belonging, (s)he may feel insecure, not recognized and not accepted as a person.

Research on self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000, 2008) explains that there are three universal basic needs that must be (continuously) satisfied in every human’s life and a sense of belonging or relatedness is one of them. The basic needs which are autonomy, competence and relatedness must be satisfied for well-being, happiness and positive behavioral outcomes.

Briefly, the need for relatedness involves the willingness to connect with people, to interact with people, to feel a sense of belonging with people, to feel cared after and to care for others. In other words, belonging to a group or to a community is a human need and each individual finds a sense of belonging in different places, with different people.

For instance, one may feel a sense of belonging with family, a Christian choir, a group of salsa aficionados (meaning: salsa lovers), with biology classmates etc. The need for autonomy refers to being in harmony with the self and is not to be confused with independence. Autonomy involves having the freedom to act according to one’s own interests and values.

The basic need of competence refers to the ability to accomplish things and to control one’s environment. The fact that relatedness is one of the basic human needs proves that there is a great chance that returnees who are treated as strangers and foreigners in their home countries
will feel as outsiders (Atnafu & Adamek, 2016:294). Moreover, people who do not feel a sense of belonging and feel excluded may develop depressive symptoms.

This section about identity and belongingness shows the potential link with the diaspora return and the satisfaction of the basic human needs. Because this research is focused on the Rwandan diaspora working in leading or following position in Rwanda, the next section provides an explanation of the terms followership and leadership based on the existing literature.

3.4 Followership and Leadership

The literature on followers and followership is relatively few compared to the literature on leadership. As far back as 1933, Mary Parker Follett, considered as the ‘Mother of Modern Management’ said this:

‘… let me speak to you for a moment about something of the utmost importance, but which has been far too little considered, and that is the part of the followers in the leadership situation. Let us not think that we are either leaders – or nothing of much importance. As one of those led we have a part in leadership’ (Follett 1949:41 quoted Graham 2003:178).

Uhl-Bien et al (2013:83) note that until recently ‘followers have been considered as recipients or moderators of the leader's influence or as “constructors” of leaders and leadership’. Uhl-Bien et al (2013:83) also argue that previous literature has not considered followers as central to leadership through their ‘enactment of followership’.

Selladurai and Carraher (2014) add that the term follower has a negative and demeaning connotation (‘weak’, ‘passive’, ‘conforming’), which causes that people do not want to be categorized as such. On the other hand, the term leader can also have a negative connotation (authoritarian, egocentric, demanding, oppressive).

However, Drucker (2007:205) shortens the definition of a leader and describe it as ‘someone who has followers’. Likewise, Maxwell (1998) shortens the definition of leadership in the book The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership. For instance, Maxwell (1998) defines leadership as having influence on others. This is because traditionally, the literature on leadership defined a leader as someone with particular traits of personality and competencies.

Moreover, in the recent years, the literature on leadership as a phenomenon which is a ‘broader, mutual influence process independent of any formal role or hierarchical structure and diffused among the members of any given social system’ has become more prominent than ever before (DeRue & Ashford, 2010:627). In addition, scholars have engaged in a debate on whether leadership is something that can be taught (Doh, 2012).
Furthermore, Uhl-Bien et al (2013) explain that there is confusion and misunderstanding regarding followership and its connection to leadership because leadership is not understood as a social construct.

Different scholars, however, have attempted to define its meaning and converge by suggesting that there is interdependence between both followers and leaders. For instance, Smircich and Morgan (1982:258) explain that leaders depend on the willingness of individuals to shape and define their own reality. An organization does not succeed because of the leader but because of the followers’ willingness to achieve the organizational goals. Depree (2008:159) puts it beautifully: ‘leaders only really accomplish something by permission of the followers’.

According to DeRue and Ashford (2010), individuals develop a leader-follower relationship through a process of claiming and granting whereby claiming refers to asserting one’s identity as either a leader or follower and granting refers to conferring a leader or follower identity onto another individual. Uhl-Bien and Pillai (2007:196) explain following behaviors as ‘allowing oneself to be influenced’ whereas leading behaviors ‘involve actively influencing others’. Moreover, Selladurai and Carraher (2014:273) define followership as ‘the ability to effectively follow the directives and support the efforts of a leader to maximize a structured organization’.

People usually follow a leader because (s)he is likeable, charismatic, has values and has a vision but also because of the belief that there is something to gain by following an individual. However, to be or to stay a leader first start with the self. As Bennis (2009) argues, leadership is a lifetime process because being a leader starts with knowing oneself.

Knowing one’s abilities and capacities is important, one’s passions and desires, one’s values and priorities as well as the values and priorities of one’s organization, the followers. As for diasporic individuals in leading and following positions, a related important aspect comes into play: culture.
3.5 Cultural Diversity

Cultural diversity includes culture and diversity. Culture refers to ‘the values, beliefs and systems of meaning’ that are proper of a group people (Stahl et al. 2010:442). These systems of meaning provide a guide for interpreting the social reality (Stahl et al. 2010:442). Hofstede (2001:9) defines culture as ‘the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one category of people from another’. In other words, culture acts as a mean to influence one’s thinking, one’s understanding, one’s actions and feelings as well as the way we make sense out of it in relation to other people (Stahl et al. 2010:442). Moreover, in this perspective, people from the other category is the out-group, and they tend to be labeled as ‘different, perhaps ‘weird’, ‘outsiders’.

Diversity, on the other hand, refers to what makes people different from each other based on an attribute that may lead to perceive that the other(s) are different from the self (Knippenberg et al. 2004:1008). For instance, the educational, religious, ethnical background, age, gender, sexual orientation, marital status etc. Other elements of culture include symbols, norms and language.

Individuals differ in how they use these elements of culture. Indeed, talking out loud and in a straightforward manner might be acceptable in a culture but shocking in another.

Secondly, addressing an elder by his first name may be common in a culture but impolite in another.

Lastly, wearing a headscarf may be a symbol of freedom of expression in a culture but a symbol of oppression in another. All these cultural differences hence, cultural diversity differentiate a society from others.
3.5.1 Communication

Even when individuals are not verbal, they are communicating. As a matter of fact, people are constantly communicating. Behavior conveys messages whether people are conscious about it or not (Moran et al., 2011). One could assume that silence is a solution to avoid communication, however, silence has also a meaning.

One of, if not, the main characteristic that differentiate humans from animals is the ability to communicate verbally (whether spoken or written). Humans express their feelings, their thoughts, their understanding through language. However, sometimes individuals do not understand each other. This is because sometimes people interpret words or gestures differently (Moran et al., 2011). Furthermore, individuals cannot take back what they have communicated: the communicated message ‘influences present and future meanings’ (Moran et al., 2011:47). The only solution then is to explain, clarify or restate the message (Moran et al., 2011).

Communication is also related to a context and is continuous (Moran et al., 2011). De Pree (2011) states that good communication is much more than to send, receive or exchange data. Good communication forces people to listen, it respects individuals (De Pree, 2011).

Another type of communication is intercultural communication. Moran, Harris and Moran (2011) explain that intercultural communication takes place when the sender and the receiver are from different cultural groups.

Intercultural communication requires cultural intelligence to avoid misunderstandings and conflicts through communication (Moran et al., 2011). On the other hand, intracultural communication happens when individuals from the same culture communicate with each other (Moran et al., 2011). According to Moran, Harris and Moran (2011:50), these misunderstandings involve low and high context of communication styles.

According to Hall (quoted in Moran et al., 2011), there are high-context cultures and low-context cultures: high-context cultures use high-context (implicit) communications meaning that the sender assumes that the listener already knows, thus the communication is quite blurry and vague. In other words, the listener is already “contexted” and does not need more clear information (Moran et al., 2011:50).

On the other hand, low-context cultures use low-context (explicit) communications meaning that the sender assumes that the listener may not know, thus the communication is less vague and more direct, there is also usage of explicit codes and words (Moran et al., 2011:50).
Two other variables discussed by Hall (1976) include time and space.

Hall distinguishes monochronic time from polychronic time: the former refers to the action of focusing and completing one thing at a time and the latter refers to multitasking and involves more flexibility and less pressure to get things done (Moran et al., 2011).

In addition, Hall described the relationships that people have with space. Cultures with high territoriality highly value ownership, mark their territory and people use words like “mine” (Croucher, 2015:118). But, in cultures with low territoriality, people have less concern for ownership and they share territory (Croucher, 2015:118).

4 Empirical work

In this chapter, I start with a presentation of the respondents of my research in order to give the reader an insight of who the respondents are, and I end the chapter with the content of the interviews as well as the empirical analysis.

4.1 The Respondents

4.1.1 Gael

“I hope to be an example.”

- Gael Murara (2018)

Gael Murara is the founder and director of GroceWheels Rwanda LTD, an online delivery service company based in Kigali, Rwanda. Gael founded the company in January 2015 and two months later, his first delivery was executed. Since then the company is growing amazingly. On the website, clients can choose from a large variety of fresh food products but that’s not all. From meat and fish to household and baby products: everything is sold and delivered at a competitive price. When I asked Gael if GroceWheels was targeted to the expats, he corrected me saying that his clients are both expats as well as locals including hotels. Everyone can shop at GroceWheels with a budget as low as 1,000 RWF which is equivalent to 1 EUR.
From follower to leader: Engineer to Self-made Businessman

Gael is a Rwandan-Canadian citizen and has lived in five different countries in his youth. He completed his Bachelor studies in Civil Engineering at École Polytechnique de Montréal before returning to Rwanda in 2014. Gael explained that he had returned to Rwanda to start his professional career there because of the scandals that touched his industry back in Canada.

A Man with a Vision

When asking Gael why he went about and created the first online grocery shop in Rwanda, he explained that it is to help people save their time and money.

Gael noted that when he returned to Rwanda, he saw that his family was struggling to find time to go to the market. Going to the market in Rwanda can be an overwhelming experience as in any other market elsewhere, especially on busy days.

That is when he came up with the idea to start an online business in 2015. Gael explained that clients of GroceWheels, do not need to wander in crowded stalls, negotiate the best deals, be stuck in traffic jams anymore: they order online and get the goods delivered at home.

Hard work pays off

Gael shared with me that he did not struggle to find a job when he returned to Rwanda. Indeed, he directly got offered a job position as a civil engineer in a project management company. There he was in charge of the construction of two micro hydro plant construction projects. Unfortunately his first job experience in Rwanda was not a good one. He remembered his very first job placement as ‘a company with a bad organizational management and a non-professional environment’. This bad experience was the stepping stone to his entrepreneurial career.

During our dialogue, I was impressed by Gael’s positive attitude towards his business and his new life in Rwanda. He always seemed to put what people may call ‘problems’ into perspective. Instead, he saw the challenges he had encountered as doors for new opportunities. Despite his young age, the way he expresses himself about his business, his passion show that he clearly knows what he wants to achieve with it.
4.1.2 Olivia

‘Every time you visit a country, the country leaves its footprint on you, which makes you develop a particular open-mindedness.’

- Olivia (2018)

Moving across cultures

Olivia is a recently graduated pharmacist from the Rwandan diaspora. She was born in the Democratic Republic of Congo and moved with her family to Rwanda when she was 7. When she was 16, she left Rwanda with her family for Belgium. Today she is living and working as a pharmacist in Rwanda. During our dialogue, Olivia expressed to me how happy she was since she had returned. Although moving to another country and another culture sometimes come with challenges, she seemed to have only positive things to say about Rwanda, her ethnic homeland.

No place like home

It has been almost four years now since Olivia has returned to a place she calls home. During our dialogue, she told me how happy she was with her current life. She noted that life is different in Rwanda and things can be challenging. However, she underlined that every country has its own history and culture. Something that I found particularly thought-provoking is her willingness and efforts to be Rwandan, not a hyphenated Rwandan.

Who wants to be an outsider?

When relating to me how people in the country of origin perceive returnees, I began to understand why she would be willing to fit in with the crowd. We both agreed on our experiences that people know that you are from abroad, even if they have never talked to you. It is as if they can smell it from afar. Olivia added that it is not really something to worry about, it is just that people are naturally curious. In addition, she told me that people tend to observe other’s behavior a lot. Certainly, people watching is not something exclusively Rwandan. It is a human thing to do.
Hard work and flexibility

After finishing her bachelor studies in Pharmacy, Olivia was immediately offered a job at a pharmacy in Kigali, the capital of Rwanda. This is because, she explained, the health sector is in high demand of professionals. She has been working in a small team for some months now and when I asked her what is was like working in Rwanda she said: ‘In Rwanda, people work hard and do not complain about overtime work.’

This is something that I have heard and seen closely. People do not grumble about work. If there is work to be done, people will do it. There is also less stress. Stress is usually the main reason why people complain.

4.1.3 Cédric

‘As part of the diaspora, we are a symbiosis of cultures.’

- Cédric (2018)

Cédric has been the chief financial officer of a bank in Kigali before he retired. He has been working in accountancy and finance all his life. When he retired, he converted to the business world. Cédric was born in the Democratic Republic of Congo. He returned to Rwanda in 1995, ‘one year after the genocide’, he noted. Since then, he has been living in Rwanda with his family.

Be yourself

Growing up as a diasporic individual in Congo was challenging sometimes. Even though they were born in Congo, Rwandan people were not considered as Congolese by the local people. Cédric also recounted that Rwandans would hardly talk about their Rwandan roots, trying to be more Congolese than the Congolese. Even if he had a lot of Congolese friends and he was integrated in the society, all the Rwandans usually kept among themselves.
Cédric advised me to never pretend to be someone else and to always be proud of my ethnic roots. ‘Because at the end of the day’, he said, ‘people try to define your identity so you need to know for yourself who you are and what you stand for.’ Today he has the Rwandan nationality and he is very proud to be Rwandan.

**Being from the diaspora is not a handicap**

During our dialogue, I was amazed by the way Cédric recounted his experience as a diasporic individual in Congo and the piece of advice he gave me, as a young individual from the diaspora. He said that the diaspora should be proud because they are a fusion of cultures, which is a good thing. He told me that diasporic individuals have a serious advantage because they can fit into different cultures.

In addition, he said that he had sent his children to study in America because he believed they would acquire knowledge and intercultural skills that are needed in Rwanda. Another thing he mentioned was the importance of having the right mindset: *the fact that you are from the diaspora is not a handicap.*

As for his experience, he said that he did not struggle to find a job when he returned to Rwanda. Before returning to Rwanda, he was working in accounting and finance and when he arrived in Rwanda, he was immediately offered a senior position in a bank.

‘Rwanda is full of opportunities’

The real estate industry in the capital of Rwanda has been a booming business for the last years and Cédric did not escape from it. Every year new buildings are rising from the ground. Today Cédric has his own real estate agency and he manages commercial buildings.
Grace was born in Rwanda and moved to Belgium with her family when she was 11. In 2013, she returned to Rwanda. She has done her studies in Belgium and holds a master degree of International Relations from the Free University of Brussels. After her studies, she worked in the international cooperation department of the Flemish government in Ghent. After that she worked during one year at the Zambian Embassy in Brussels.

Returning home

Nobody was astonished when Grace told her family and friends she was leaving Belgium for Rwanda. They laughed: ‘Well, you took a while to return’. She explained that her parents were already in Rwanda so she had a place where she could go to.

Dedication

During our dialogue, I quickly realized that Grace is the kind of person who can clearly picture what she wants, work hard for it and get it. For instance, Grace always knew she wanted to work in international cooperation and/or diplomacy but she always knew that this type of career was for a selected few.

Dreams do come true

Every year, she would go to her ethnic homeland during the holidays and see what kind of working opportunities she might be interested in. Thanks to her internship at the Rwandan ministry of foreign affairs, she got offered a job after her studies.

After working there for a couple of years, Grace was offered a senior job at the Embassy of Rwanda in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, where she is working now as the Second Counselor. Grace is very proud to serve the interests of her country of origin abroad. She described her job as the job of a soldier because it comes with a lot of sacrifices, and it requires a lot of determination.
Natacha Ndekezi was born in Rwanda but left her country at a very young age for Belgium. There, she did all of her studies, including master studies in Management Engineering at Solvay Business School. She has experience working in Luxembourg as a tax consultant and tax advisor. Since 2015 she is living and working in Rwanda. She first started working as a business development consultant before becoming an entrepreneur. Today, Natacha is the founder and owner of Cocoon Rwanda, a real estate agency in Kigali that offers professional real estate management services in Kigali. Her clients are Rwandans as well as non-Rwandans and she helps them finding a room, a house or an apartment at a fair price.

**Packing my suitcase**

The first time she returned to Rwanda was after high school, she did not have any link, any memory left about her country of origin, thus, she did not have any expectation when she permanently returned for the first time since years. Since high school, Natacha had returned several times to her ethnic homeland. She explained that as time when by, she noticed that things changed, things evolved in Rwanda. After her bachelor studies, Natacha did an internship in Rwanda. An internship that she described as ‘not very concluding’, because she did not feel like she was learning something. After that, she found another internship placement. ‘This one was much better’, she said. It was a six months internship and what she liked about it was that she had responsibilities.

**Friends and family’s reaction**

Natacha told me that even though she had already talked about her decision to return, her family and friends were still astonished. ‘And they still are’, she added. ‘For them, it is not a mature environment’, Natacha explained. Adding that it is hard to make them understand that everything is going well. In addition, Natacha did not know her family in her country of origin, all her close relationships are in Belgium. The following section contains the empirical data from the interviews as well as the analysis I have made of it. The section also links the empirical data with the theoretical framework.
4.2 Empirical findings and analysis

4.2.1 An Interview with Diasporic leaders and followers

The interviews started with the open question: Who are you? How do you define yourself?

Natacha replied:

‘As for my diasporic identity, I grew up in Belgium. The Belgian culture is very marked compared to that of other countries. I would say I am Belgian in my head, but a Rwandan traditionalist. I define myself as a patriot who wants to do something meaningful for her country and for myself.’

Natacha continued: ‘I am part of a diaspora who believes. I do not want people to talk bad about Rwanda. I do not like people always associating Rwanda with the genocide. I do not like the image of the genocide. There’s more than that. It is not an image that I want people to have from my country.’

Chand & Tung (2011) explain that diasporic individuals often have a bicultural identity that can be associated with belongingness, pride, history on the one hand, as well as with identity conflict on the other hand. During my interviews, my respondents expressed their pride to be Rwandan, three of them considered themselves as hyphenated Rwandans, only two omitted their nationality from their country of residence (COR).

One respondent, Grace, put it this way:

‘I am Belgo-Rwandan. I cannot deny my Belgian side.’

I Made My Decision

I was amazed with my respondents’ leap of faith. Leaving their country of residence that they are accustomed to for their country of origin seemed to be the fruit of a long period of reflection, perhaps melancholy, or perhaps a growing awareness. Gael explained that he had returned to start his professional career in 2014, however Cédric’s decision to return was different, he said:

‘After the genocide, in 1994, I knew it was about time to return home. There were tensions where I was living. So, I returned shortly after the genocide, in 1995.’
Cédric left Congo and arrived in Rwanda at a time when the traces of the genocide were still visible, the tensions were still palpable, Cédric has seen his country transform to what it has become today. Grace and Natacha returned to Rwanda a couple of years ago from Belgium.

Grace related to me her decision to return as such:

‘I did my studies in international relations because I wanted to work in diplomacy. However, I did not know if I would work in Belgian or Rwandan diplomacy. But it is also my commitment to the Rwandan diaspora that directed me to Rwanda. After my studies, I knew it was time to return if I wanted pursue career in that field. I still kept all the options open to enter in Belgian diplomacy, but it is a lengthy process and it is not easy to break in’. Then, she added:

‘My old classmates, none is working in diplomacy today. Only one is working as a European parliamentary assistant. I did not see myself in Belgium, especially not in international cooperation, it has a pronounced middle-class atmosphere. Unless you were introduced by your family or if you have a political network, it is very rare to break into Belgian diplomacy, especially as an African. You need a connection. The majority now at the Free University of Brussels is more oriented towards the European Union, but countries have quotas. Either you work in political structure or you work in the private sector or as a researcher, hardly in international cooperation.’

Hence, Grace’s decision to return was motivated by her dream job. She is now the Second Counselor at the Embassy of Rwanda in Ethiopia. When commenting to her that she was a returnee who is now part of the diaspora again, she responded with a little hesitation:

‘I am socially diasporic but I am not really diasporic. Yes I am because I am not in my country, I am in Ethiopia but this is different.’

The concept of what a diasporic individual is and what makes an individual part of the diaspora can be hard to grasp. In the context of this research, a diasporic individual is someone who is living outside of his or her country of origin (COO).

Likewise, Natacha who had been living outside of her COO (respectively in Belgium and Luxembourg) explained her motivation to return as such:

‘I grew up in a country where I was considered foreign even though I do not think I am of less value. There, degree or no degree, they make sure to let you know that you are not “autochthonous”; she said with a laugh.'
Even though she said that a lack of sense of belongingness to the host countries was not the main factor that made her return home, Natacha still thought it was a considerable push factor. As Atnafu and Adamé (2016) had also noted it, diasporic individuals who have a hard time integrating in the host country and who do not feel a sense of belongingness, return to their country of origin.

Olivia also expressed a lack of sense of belonging as a push factor. She recounted her experience in her COR as the basic component that sparked her desire to return in these words:

‘I knew it was time to return. My life was stagnating. After several questioning: in Belgium it doesn’t function, I am going to try in Rwanda to see if it goes better.’

When I asked her if she wanted to share with me what it was that was not going right, she answered:

‘What was not going right: on an academic level, no matter what I did was never good enough. For example, concerning the remarks I had, during the practical work, I ask questions in class, my efforts were not valued so. In Rwanda, I work as hard, I succeed and my work is valued. There are preconceptions regarding people of color. I knew I would return to settle down. My contributions were not valued.’

During the interview, I got to experience how knowledgeable Olivia was concerning her field. She related to me how hard she worked and how difficult it was to be in an environment where she did not feel supported nor valued. According to the Self-determination Theory, her basic psychological need of competence was not satisfied in other words she did not feel competent. Hytter (2017) explains that individuals who receive positive feedback for their job see their intrinsic motivation increasing, it promotes the feeling of being competent and it also decreases their extrinsic motivation. However, individuals who receive negative feedback for their job see their intrinsic motivation decreasing (Hytter, 2017). Thus, this may explain why Olivia did not feel that she could function effectively and develop herself in such an environment. Moreover, Deci and Vansteenkiste (2004) state that individuals tend to go towards situations that satisfy their needs and to flee from situations that thwart their needs.

Olivia continued:

‘I wanted to start from zero and I did not want to be defined by my path in Belgium. I made a fresh start and I was determined to do everything I can to make it work. I have returned for a better life, for more opportunities.’
4.2.2 The diaspora magnet

Grace related to me that a particular event, acted as a pull factor. It was the Rwanda Day Event, it is an event where the Rwandan diaspora as well as the friends of Rwanda from all parts of the world are brought together to discuss ways on how to contribute to Rwanda’s social-economic transformation as well as to celebrate the country’s progress. The event starts and ends with interactions between the people, it is a great opportunity to network. The guests are invited to sit down whereupon all kinds of Rwandan performers sing, read poetry or perform the gracious traditional Rwandan dance. In addition, the president of Rwanda holds a speech and people can ask questions about the country’s development to the president as well as to the Rwandan ministers.

Grace also added that at that time, she was still working in Belgium, she said:

‘So I worked in Ghent, in International cooperation for three years before returning home. I thus ended my contract. I made the decision to direct myself towards Rwanda and to return definitively.’

It did not took too long for Natacha neither before quitting her job and return home:

‘I finished writing my master thesis and I worked three years in Luxembourg. I realized that I was working like a madman. So at the end, what is left for me? Only money left that you can enjoy 40 days a year.’

Then, Natacha added:

‘Rwanda, every time I would return, almost 10 times in 10 years, I noticed that every time I would go, things were changing. Besides that, Rwandans sell you the dream (to convince you to return) in a way that I did not think possible. They are very much “come with your degree, it will help”. Everyone believes in it and you believe in it too. You are also part of a movement, something that makes sense.’

Something that make sense. Natacha had put it beautifully. Humans do not exclusively act on perception but on the meaning of the social reality they are in.

James (quoted in Weick, 2009:74) states: “The world is a buzzing, pulsating, formless mass of signals, out of which people try to make sense, into which they attempt to introduce order.”
I can imagine an individual, like in the case of Grace, attending the Rwanda Day Event, hearing all this information about how the country is transforming itself and how there is still space for him/her to come and contribute to the country’s advancement. I can imagine someone networking for the first time with people extremely enthusiastic about the country’s future. All kind of information, people dancing at the event, tasting Rwanda’s food for the first time in a while, music playing, all these stimuli that are bombarding this individual. Likewise, Grace may have made sense out of this event. In other words, she may have linked all these stimuli into her frame of references in order to make sense out of it (Lundgren, 2017).

The frame of references represent the experiences and knowledge individuals have from the past (Lundgren, 2017). But sensemaking is not only individual, it is also a social activity (Lundgren, 2017). Thus, when she was at this event, networking with people, sharing their knowledge about Rwanda, she got an insight into how others make sense, what their meaning of the reality is, because reality has different interpretations, how they understand their reality or how they experience the Rwanda Day Event (Lundgren, 2017).

Likewise, when Natacha said how people had convinced her about returning, she said it made sense, it evoked feelings. Lundgren (2017) explains that sensemaking is not about finding the truth. As the truth is not always necessary. If Natacha was looking for the truth, she may have searched for concrete data about how worthy it was to return to her country of origin, (actually, she may not have found this data). Lundgren (2017) explains that sensemaking is rather about plausibility than accuracy.

When I asked Natacha if she knew she would stay permanently she answered:

‘I have returned since 2015. I was in a point in life where either I stopped flatsharing and I take an apartment for myself, either I make a trip that I will probably not have the time doing because of work etc. So, I did not get an apartment, no credit loan neither and I went telling myself that, if it works, good, if it doesn’t, too bad!’
Cédric knew he was returning permanently, mostly because of the political tensions in Congo. Gael returned for his professional career but mentioned to me he was keeping his options open and that he may even return to his previous country of residence, Canada, to pursue master studies. Olivia, however, mentioned that she couldn’t see herself returning to Belgium, her adoptive homeland. She asserted:

‘unless a friend is getting married,.. I have to have a valid reason.’

She promptly added:

‘but this is my experience, do not make a general conclusion out of it.’

Some scholars argue that countries can lure their diaspora back home by giving them the right of dual citizenship. For instance, Rwanda has passed a dual citizenship law in 2008. According to article 3 of the organic law nº 30/2008 of 25/07/2008 relating to the Rwandan nationality, dual nationality shall be permitted to individuals with a Rwandan ethnic background. Article 5 of the same law provides that Rwandans from the diaspora that have been granted the Rwandan nationality, enjoy the same privileges as domestic citizens of Rwanda, as well as the same rights and obligations.

Olivia said there definitely are benefits in having dual citizenship:

‘When I returned to Rwanda, I found a lot of facilities for example to get a loan for building a house as well as the possibility to register a business in less than 6 hours. Also, you can have your identity card in one day!’

However, in Gael’s opinion, dual citizenship is not something that has attracted him to his country of origin. These were his words:

‘Having a dual citizenship is not necessarily something that attracts or retains the diaspora in Rwanda. How to attract the diaspora? Well, through job creation, by being an organized country, no corruption, with modern infrastructure. Our government is very young-people-oriented, there’s a good environment to start in.’
4.2.3 The local’s perception

Tung & Chand state that diaspora entrepreneurs are often assumed to be more knowledgeable (2011:117). This intrigued me to find out how local people in the country of origin perceive the people that come from abroad.

During our dialogue I asked Gael what the people’s perception was of him as a person from the diaspora and founder of a flourishing company, he replied:

‘I hope to be an example. I think people like me are good for the country, for the economy. I hope there will be more leaders. I think what is being said about me is rather positive.’

Grace gave me an insight into the stereotypes that local people have of the diaspora. She says it with these words:

‘They see us as people who do not have a culture, pretentious people. Of course, there exist stereotypes of the diaspora: people from the diaspora are outgoing, they always have a saying. To them, because you grew up in Europe, you are missing something. You are not completely Rwandan. On the other hand, the advantage lies in you talking Kinyarwanda [one of the national languages of Rwanda], they accept you as a real Rwandan. But it is not the advantage of everyone because not everyone speaks it. And so, they get together, people from the diaspora.’

In many societies, speaking the local language is an important factor for smooth integration. Therefore, returnees who speak the local language will encounter less challenges to fit in and to communicate with the locals. However, the existent language barrier does not mean people cannot communicate with each other. Grace added:

‘At the beginning, local people distrust you and you have to make a great deal of effort, but it is in both directions. You do have to make efforts to talk to people, not look down on them and demonstrate humility.’

When returning to a country, even if considered home, it is important to show respect and be humble.
When I asked Grace if there was some kind of feeling of superiority from the diaspora she answered:

‘When you are on holidays, you have money supposing you worked as a student. But for the locals, it can be perceived as you showing off. Yet, you just want to have fun because later, you know that you will return in the winter [return to the West]. There are also categories of diaspora who left Rwanda for economic reasons and they want to show that they have succeeded in life. And that they were right to leave. They try to sell a particular dream, it is typical of the Rwandan culture’, Grace concluded.

Olivia added that local people have the image of an arrogant diaspora, who thinks everything is allowed to them: ‘So people have this perception, but this is the diaspora’s fault.’

According to some of the respondents, the stereotypes of the diaspora derive from the behaviour of the diaspora when they return home, whether temporarily or permanently. Indeed, some of the diaspora tend to criticize their home countries based on the comparison they make with their host countries. Therefore, some respondents conclude that it is understandable that some of the local people tend to have a negative image of the diaspora.

During the interview, Olivia told me that she did not want to stand out as a returnee. She just wanted to be seen as the other Rwandans. She did not considered coming from abroad as something to brag about or to simply share with strangers. The reason why some returnees do not want to talk about their diasporic background may be because they do not want to experience any kind of favor or disfavor relating to their identity. For instance, Olivia stated:

‘They think I am polite, that I am not big-headed. Because they are some, who when they return, come with a big head. They criticize everything that doesn’t go well in Rwanda. They start distinguishing between what they saw elsewhere and they say “In Rwanda there is not this, there is not that”.’

This I found a very interesting statement. Coming from someone who also told me that she would work as to reconstruct the local people’s self-confidence because of the feeling of inferiority some have towards people coming from abroad. Olivia admitted that one of her colleagues did not know that she came from abroad. Olivia had omitted it to her colleagues.
The feeling of inferiority translates into thinking that the diaspora knows better and that there is nothing that the diaspora can learn from the others; on the contrary, people that come from abroad are in a better position to teach. This is very damaging to both the diasporic individual who has to deal with it, in this case Olivia, and the local individual, her colleague. This inherited belief that people from abroad, especially from western countries, know best is a belief that has to be fought as it is not true and it destroys people’s self-esteem.

4.2.4 Learning while following

Before working as a diplomat, Grace worked at the ministry of foreign affairs, in a following position. She recounted that she had learned tolerance. She mentioned that working with older people demands humility in order to be heard. She also added:

‘You work hard: during the day, in the evenings, on weekends. You also have non-written responsibilities. Sometimes you can get frustrated because you want things to get done but for them you work too quickly. They do not have your rhythm. In Belgium, it is much more organized, you have a job and your responsibilities are clearly defined.’

This also shows the importance of cultural intelligence in the work environment. Cultural intelligence involves the capacity to work effectively with people from a different background (Hannum et al., 2010).

Returnees who are involved in leader-follower relationships, tend to use the social cues that have worked in their country of residence (COR). However, these cues may not be helpful to engage effectively in a leading or following position in their COO. Furthermore, cues and information, which are mainly subconscious, are absent and misleading in culturally unfamiliar contexts (Hannum et al., 2010:133).

Natacha remembered how things were slow when she was working in a following position. However, some cultures can be distinguished between having monochronic time and polychronic time (Moran et al., 2011). In Rwanda, people may be used to focus on one thing at a time instead of multitasking. According to Natacha:

‘The rhythm is slow in Rwanda, everything is new. People are little perceptive. It is a little bit comparable to an environment were there are only start-ups. It is so unstable that they do not employ you full time. So, there are a lot of consultants, people working as independents here.’

This was also Natacha’s experience. Indeed, before starting her business, she was working as a consultant.
Gael resumed his experience in a following position as follows: ‘I demonstrated that I could achieve my goals. I also scheduled meetings, and justified my choices. My supervisor appreciated that, I think.’ Gael worked as a civil engineer before starting his own business and thus, working in a leading position.

Olivia is working in a following position as a pharmacist. She talks about her challenges this way: ‘The people where I am working were not used to work with a planning: it [work schedules] was more of a word of mouth thing. We also work in function of the manager’s planning: it is something they impose to you. The manager would say: “I cannot come to work today, come!” However I refused this before signing the contract.’

Olivia’s experience shows that it is worth it to do research before engaging into a job. As the working conditions may differ as well as the salary. Because of these differences, she explained that some diasporic individuals, when they return, prefer to work for foreign companies. The same is true for companies who find returnees attractive because they possess skills and knowledge acquired abroad (Tung & Lazarova, 2007:1854). For instance, I have personally seen job offers on MNCs’ websites clearly stating ‘for nationals only’ or ‘sponsor international candidates’. However, the extent to which a particular job position is ‘reserved’ for diasporic individuals or highly qualified talent from abroad is a question I am not able to answer.

### 4.2.5 Taking the lead

In order to succeed in leading or following roles, a diasporic individual has to not only have emotional intelligence which can be described as paying attention to the emotions of others and to one’s own emotions, but also cultural intelligence. According to Salovey and Mayer, (1990:201), an individual who has developed skills linked to emotional intelligence perceive emotions and uses appropriate approaches to regulate them. Moreover, an emotional intelligent individual ‘understand and express their own emotions, recognize emotions in others, regulate affect, and use moods and emotions to motivate adaptive behaviors’ (Salovey & Mayer, 1990:200).

Grace described her leadership style as such:

‘Leadership goes into several directions. In my case, I have to protect them and put each person in charge of each activity. As a manager, you cannot blame them, you have to protect them and give them possibilities to show what they are able of. You have to put them in a situation where they are able to come and see you and find a solution together.’
Grace added that a leadership style depends on the personality of each individual and it can also depend on the structure of the organization. She explained that she also has to follow someone else, she also has a leader to whom she has to report on things. She said:

‘You have to show them the example. You need to be responsible and show that you are also able of doing what you tell them to do, and even better. If you are a leader that screams, your followers will be afraid of you and they will give you the minimum of what they are able of.’

According to Gael, leadership can be defined in one sentence: ‘Lead by example.’

He also added: ‘A good leader is someone who takes time to listen to you and understand you, someone that has rigor. A leader who’s able to think about tomorrow. In my opinion, leadership is innate in the sense that you need a particular charisma, empathy, I always say “lead by example”, that is what I do. I sit with my employees and show them how to do, I teach them the tools that I use. You start something and the others will follow if they believe in it, lead by example.’

Talking about his challenges as a leader, Gael said: ‘[to] Hire the youth! Because they think: we are the same age, anyway, I can do that too. The good things with young people is that you can shape them. They do not have anything to lose, they give their 100%. The bad thing is that they do not have any experience, they lack rigor.’

Natacha related to me that she had started working as an entrepreneur because she wanted to see what she was able to do. She added: ‘Now I understand the value of a salary. I have never been someone who wastes money, but I have learnt the value of money. Also I need to learn to delegate, but my employees do have to be able. I need to work on that. I miss having colleagues. That is why I need to see my friends.’

During the interview, I was impressed by Natacha’s way of relating her challenging experience with humor. I felt like in 3 years since she had returned, she had matured a lot. Even though I did not know her before the interview. It looked like she had been analyzing the culture, the people and that she had been reflecting a lot on her journey in her ethnic homeland. Natacha also mentioned that, as an independent, she wants to inspire people.
Further in the interview, Natacha shared with me something thought provoking and to keep in mind for cross-cultural interactions. She noted that the assumptions and values of her upbringing were not shared with the people she was working with when she returned to Rwanda. She told me:

*I have learned so much. The first thing I have learned is that you cannot just talk like you used to. I have never had tact but I have learned it quite quickly here. People are easily offended so it is difficult to give feedback without offending them. I did not know that people were mad at me. I have learned to keep quiet.*

This must have been a painful experience for Natacha as the feedback was meant to be constructive and help her co-workers. Bennis (2009) also state that giving feedback is productive.

Natacha continued: ‘*The second thing I have learned is patience. Things take time here. You arrive thinking you are faster but the truth is that we aren’t faster in Europe. Actually, we talk more. We constantly communicate on the deadline so we feel that we progress more quickly. But it is just noise, at the end of the day, we postpone the deadline. However, we still believe we have made progress because we have been updating each other, attending meetings etc. but that’s all. On the other hand, people here in Rwanda do not update you, only if there is something new.*’

In the case of my respondents, the social cues that had worked in their previous country of residence (COR) were not helpful to engage effectively in the Rwandan working environment. This is the reason why cultural intelligence is such an important skill to have.

When asked if he encountered challenges when he first started, Gael replied:

*‘E-commerce is a virgin ground in Rwanda. The communication with the farmers and other affiliated partners was not always smooth at the beginning. It is easy to register a company but when I started, they did not gave us information concerning taxes, but today it is almost free, back then, it was rare. Other than that, I haven’t seen more differences than elsewhere, it’s not enough to have an idea, it is about hard work like everywhere else.’*
Gael was the first to start an online grocery company in Rwanda. During the interview, he recounted his experience with a lot of positivity in his voice. He went on and compared the different places where he had worked:

‘The good thing is that in Rwanda and in African in general, everything needs to be done compared to other countries, it is a ‘virgin territory’. In Rwanda, compared to Cameroon [he conducted an internship project in Cameroon during his studies] and Canada, the business environment is conducive to (youth) entrepreneurship. Rwanda has much more stricter regulation, you have to pay lots of taxes, you need to have your business in order, everything is also much more organized here. In Cameroon, it is a little bit more lax and things go faster than in Rwanda. Concerning, the business climate, everyone prefers doing business in Rwanda because there’s no corruption in Rwanda. In Canada, there’s more certainty, you are sure to get paid on time, the salary is higher and it is more mature market.’

Although corruption is not really non-existent in Rwanda, there are evidence that the country is on the right path. According to Transparency International, Rwanda was ranked on the 50th position (2017) of the less corrupted countries based on 176 countries. Rwanda is making progress: in one year, it has gone from the 54th to the 50th position. The non-profit organization’s annual report is based on data collected by a dozen international organizations such as the World Bank or the African Development Bank (ADB). Furthermore, Cédric talked about his experience in a leading position in these words:

‘I did not have any particular difficulty to integrate myself in the professional environment. However, I’d say that the only challenge is the language. Also, back in 1998, people were afraid that you, being from the diaspora, would steal their job. Today not anymore!’

Cédric is the oldest of my respondents and he returned years ago to his ethnic homeland. He seemed to know the country all too well and seemed to still take the Rwandan culture easily, not complicating things. He told me he was aware of how different the Rwandan culture was to other cultures he had been in contact with, but he has learned to embrace it. He has learned how to communicate ‘Rwandan style’.
5 Conclusion

This chapter consists of the answers to the research questions, based on the empirical findings. In addition, the limitations along with suggestions for further research are discussed. The chapter ends with the respondents’ piece of advice to all people from the diaspora desiring to pursue a professional career in their country of origin.

The aim of my research was to gain knowledge about the expressed motivations of the Rwandan diaspora to return to their ethnic homeland and their experiences in a leading or following position in their country of origin.

I answer these research questions by stating that the reasons for the diaspora to return to their ethnic homeland differ from individual to individual. While some have returned for the pursuit of better economic opportunities, others have returned because of the emotional ties with the ethnic homeland and because of the need of belongingness.

In the theoretical framework, I looked into the topics of brain circulation as well as the push-pull mooring model. Furthermore, the topics of identity and belongingness, followership and leadership and cultural diversity were also discussed. The empirical work shows that the push factors for the returnees were a lack of interesting work opportunities, the feeling of belonging elsewhere. Moreover, the pull factors for returnees involved the desire to work in the ethnic homeland because of the numerous possibilities in a leading and/or following position, the desire to contribute to the country’s development and in that sense also, through rewarding work and meaningful relationships, finding one’s own identity. In this regard, I realized that identity is not something fixed. It is intertwined with an individual’s sensemaking of his/her social reality.

By conducting the semi-structured interviews, I found out the importance of communication in a different cultural setting. Indeed, being aware of the differences in culture and being able to work with people from a different culture are issues important to consider when working abroad.
All the respondents come from cultures where the communication is less vague and more direct whereas people in their country of origin tend to not explicitly communicate in certain work situations as they assume that the person already is informed. These cultural differences in communication often lead to misunderstandings where, for instance, one person will ask him/herself why the other did not communicate on a matter and the other person will ask him/herself why the need to communicate on that matter. These examples of cultural misunderstandings were shown in the empirical work of this research.

Furthermore, through the empirical findings, I have discovered similarities in the respondents experience. For instance, all of the respondents stated that it would have been more challenging and even unimaginable to be at the work position they are today in their country of origin. According to my respondents, this is is mainly because (1) diasporic individuals bring with them new skills and knowledge and (2) the government facilitates the diaspora’s integration. In addition, having an open mind was a necessary factor for the returnees. Rwanda is a country that has been rebuilding itself for the past 24 years and there is still work to be done, thus, people coming from abroad have to come with an open mind and willing to contribute to the country’s development, which will also help to not be focus on everything that is wrong. Returnees are required to adjust themselves to the culture, in order to experience a positive work relationship with the people in their country of origin. Also because of all the respondents of my research come from a country of residence with a low-context culture. Their country of origin tend to be a high-context culture, thus, I argue this is part of the reason why cultural misunderstandings may occur sometimes between the diasporic people and the local people.

Prior to my empirical work, I assumed that the diaspora return was mainly linked with the wish to contribute to the ethnic homeland. I concluded that these diasporic individuals were leaving their country of residence because of the emotional ties with the family and friends in the country of origin. However, I was surprised to find out that one of the important motivator to return was the lack of belongingness: feeling excluded and not understood. This leads to the explanation of my thesis title: A place I call home. The title refers to home being a subjective concept: what may be home for an individual may not be home for another individual even though they share a similar background. In other words, how returnees experience home and what they call as their home depends on each individual. Thus, the concept of Home is subjective and individual, as is a sense of belongingness (Hammer, 2005). Moreover, interesting to find out was that some of my respondents, although having a double nationality, they did not consider themselves as part of both the country of origin (COO) and the country of residence.
This research shows that work still needs to be done to integrate diasporic individuals into societies in order to enhance the feeling of belongingness and retain these individuals in the societies.

The two main important factors in the experience as a leader or follower in the ethnic homeland was communication and flexibility. All the respondents stated that at the beginning they experienced issues in understanding the other and being understood. However, because of these misunderstandings, they have learned to communicate effectively with the local people. For instance, they have learned to be less direct when giving feedback and they have learned to never express their anger because this is seen as a lack of self-control. The respondents also mentioned how people in the country of origin work long hours and that overtime hours are not always paid. In addition, people do not always have the same skills or the same work rhythm. Therefore, they argued that flexibility in terms of productivity, work schedules and working without a planning is something to consider when working in abroad. This is a matter to especially have in mind when working in a leading position, when one has to offer training to employees or give feedback to co-workers. Considering these cultural differences will prevent losing followers and will contribute to a positive work relationship between the local people as well as the returnees, irrespective of the work position.

Thus, although the experiences of the respondents of this research are all different ones and despite of the challenges they have encountered and may encounter in the future, none of them regrets to have returned to a place they are now proudly calling home.

5.1 Limitations and Future research

One of the limitations of this research is the limited number of respondents. Indeed, this research is done based on the contribution of only five respondents. However, the detailed insights into these respondents’ answers provide the reader of this research with trustworthiness of the empirical findings.

Furthermore, this master thesis research was conducted in a short time frame. Due to this, a higher variance and amount of interview respondents was not possible to achieve.

Another limitation is that only phone calls were used to conduct the interviews and these interviews were not recorded. However, the empirical findings are very detailed and provide the reader with a clear insight into the respondents’ experiences.
In addition, the experiences of the respondents of this research may not fit with other diasporic individuals and/or returnees. For instance, this research is only limited to the Rwandan diaspora who had lived at least half of a decade in their country of residence, other people’s experiences (e.g. people who have lived in their COR for a longer or shorter period) were not considered. Also, this research is focused on a limited number of respondents which is not evenly distributed on gender (two male respondents and three female respondents). Moreover, future research could be done on a broader and homogenous range of respondents.

Furthermore, the respondents of this research are active in the medical sector, the real estate sector as well as the public and private sector. Further research could be done on returnees working in other sectors or further elaborated on the aforementioned sectors.

I strongly believe that this research could help other diasporic individuals who have a wish to return to their country of origin to gain an insight into what some challenges and benefits might be. Furthermore, future research on the return of other diasporas is interesting because it might lead to different outcomes which could also be compared with each other in order to get a general view on the diaspora return.

For this research, the motivations and experiences of returnees in leading and following positions were examined. However, this research doesn’t clearly show the relation between how these experiences relate to each other. On the other hand, through the empirical findings, the reader can see similarities in the motivations for the diaspora to return as well as some similarities in their experiences.

Also, this research shows that even though, most of the respondents’ identity is defined by both their COO and COR, once they return, they experience some cultural challenges related to communication and working habits. In other words, growing up with both cultures does not mean one will automatically engage efficiently in intercultural interactions. It is through intercultural awareness and cultural intelligence that returnees succeed in their (re)integration as professionals.

Lastly, researching and understanding the experiences of diasporic individuals may assist in designing appropriate policies to attract these individuals to their country of origin but also policies to retain them in their country of residence.
I hope that this research inspires somewhat future researchers to conduct studies of the return migration process of individuals who willingly returned as opposed to those who were forced to return. Moreover, research is needed on the returnee experiences as professionals in their country of origin in order to develop a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon.

An enhanced understanding of diasporic individuals’ experiences in their host countries as well as their experiences as returnees can help with the development of more effective and integrated policies to assist in smoothly (re)integrating into a society as professionals.

5.2 Dear diaspora

In my opinion, individuals, not only from the diaspora, need to have intercultural awareness. Working in society with another culture can be challenging yet rewarding. Understanding the other helps to put the experiences into perspective and helps with smooth integration into the society. As part of the diaspora, I understand that my home society does not have to resemble my host society in order to be a good society or in order for it to be a likeable society. The (cultural) differences between societies are what lies behind the subtle charm of these places one calls home. Living with an open-mind, approaching differences lightly, strive to understand, letting go of the own frame of references is beneficial to the self. The following statements are the piece of advice that the respondents of this research have shared with me. These are their recommendations on how to successfully return home:

‘Dear diaspora, if you are an ambitious person, yes, come back home. If you are young, it is a beautiful opportunity especially if you can make a difference, with a particular knowledge. And if the sector isn’t a developed sector, you are an added value. Also, if you are business-oriented, there are also opportunities for you. It has to be a decision carefully thought. Also, be financially prepared.

Network.

Especially the young ones, non-maried and without children, it is probably much ore easier for them to return than a whole family. Because the truth is that the education system is usually better in Europe.’

- Grace
‘Dear diaspora, strive to understand how things function here. Take the time to understand. Be diplomatic. Use the codes.’

- Gael

‘Dear diaspora, do your research on the sector you want to work in. return home knowing what it is that you are going to contribute. They are not impressed by your degrees anymore, the question is, however, what is your added value going to be? Reflect concretely., otherwise you’ll be out of the game. Ask yourself this question: am I competitive on the market?’

- Olivia

‘Dear diaspora, come with a humble heart, come and make yourself small, learn. Do not worry about the language, you’ll learn it while you are here.’

- Cédric

‘Dear diaspora, it is O.K. to be integrated, but do not lose yourself. Do not show your anger, this is not seen as honorable. You need self-control, anger shows weakness.’

- Natacha
6 References


**Online resources**


Rwanda day, consulted on 17 March 2018 [http://archive.presidency.gov.rw/event_rwanda_day](http://archive.presidency.gov.rw/event_rwanda_day)
