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FOREWORD

When Igbo men from Nigeria gathered in a scrap yard in an industrial estate in the Ruhr city of Essen to disassemble cars, refrigerators, and other technical waste, surrounded by the sounds of unfamiliar music and the wafts of exotic foods, they met with incomprehension and mistrust from their neighbouring German citizens and the municipal authorities. The present study offers the very insights into these immigrants' socio-cultural identity that enable one to overcome such ill-informed responses. Its author, Dr. Thaddeus Ejiofor Eze, shares this Igbo cultural provenance. He has meticulously studied the ideas and values that constitute their identity in the southeast Nigerian homeland and inform their interactions abroad. This has resulted in an 'ethnography of transnational transactions' – of managing the trade between the scrap yard and the markets in Lagos and Onitsha and interacting with their German co-citizens in various social and religious contexts.

Dr. Eze has examined the adaptive strategies enabling a participation in German social, economic and religious life. Drawing on Igbo cultural resources makes such strategies feasible in the first place. For the principles of ritualised kinship, affinity, ancestry and locality and the values of solidarity, cooperation and education not only structure Igbo society in the Nigerian homelands, but also steer their encounter with and participation in the German civil society. Conversely, that civil society in its various operative domains opens the door to intercultural interactions and exchanges that afford the Igbo their participation in that society without relinquishing their own cultural identity.

Dr. Eze aptly concludes that, instead of subscribing to the axiom that 'integration' require 'assimilation', German social conditions and Igbo social identity complement each other, leading to "a new valorisation of diversity and difference". In this respect the present study is of much wider relevance than that of a single case study only. For it is from such external cultural resources that any society may draw its benefits – as Germany, and other European societies, have done for centuries. Dr. Eze's study delivers a scientifically founded and eloquent plea for an assessment of the presence of 'strangers' in one's midst in these very terms.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, there have been massive migratory movements, especially from the Global South to the Global North: a phenomenon that continues to elicit mixed reactions from various quarters ranging from a strong exasperation over the subhuman conditions of migrants *en route* the Mediterranean Sea (Gebrewold and Bloom (eds.) 2016), through a palpable panic and fear over an apparent African invasion of Fortress Europe (de Haas 2008), to a mix of laudation and critique of the landmark German *Willkommenskultur* in the event of the latest refugee crisis of 2015-2016 (Hann 2015). With a correspondingly extensive scholarly interest in this phenomenon across disciplines, there are volumes of research literature relating to migration that have been produced in recent years. In the field of social anthropology, in particular, the focus of research has been mainly on themes such as the trajectories of migrant journeys, the economic impact of migration on the recipient and sending societies as well as the economically marginal status of immigrants in the host society. Evidently, there have been scarce intellectual outputs on the process of social integration of African immigrants in Germany. Although there have been extensive studies of earlier migrant communities in Germany – for example, the Turkish community (Mandel 2008, Yükleyn 2012, Yurdakul 2009, Mehdi 2012); the Italian community (Janz and Sala 2011, Schmid 2014, Vaccaro-Notte 2014), etc. – sparse publications on African immigrants are readily obtainable; amongst which include Simon (2010), Schader (2017) and Parris’ (2014) studies of the practices of African Pentecostal churches as well as Idemudia & Boehnke’s (2010) interrogation of issues related to the mental health of African immigrants in Germany. Up until now, hardly any publication specifically dealing on the processes of social integration of African immigrants is available. Perhaps, this paucity of literature is consequent of the earlier disposition of German politics which considered immigrants as mere temporal members of German society; hence the term *Gastarbeiter* – ‘guest workers’ – an evidence of the valorisation of migrants solely on economic terms that had delayed proactive policies of social integration of immigrants to the mainstream society until recently.

Fortunately, in recent years, there have been progressive changes in the German immigration policy, the latest amendment being that which took effect on March 1,

2020 and was accompanied by further relaxation as regards the requirements for prospective immigrants who possessed professional or vocational qualifications. This paradigm shift ushers in a new era with corresponding new challenges – especially the concerns of developing a workable and sustainable strategy for the social integration of immigrants. As such, it offers a chance to consider alternative ways to valorise foreigners in our midst. In lieu of this, there emerges the need for a constructive critique of earlier policies that were overwhelmingly based on the valorisation of migrants only in economic terms. Subsequently, one discovers the contributions which migrants make in the social and cultural life of the host society which help to highlight that migrants are not merely “economically equivalent to the German labourers” (Platenkamp 2014: 6) but are rather socially and culturally equivalent to the indigenous population. To this end, a careful study of the provenance cultures of the different migrant populations in the German society is of immense importance, hence the need for the present study of the Igbo migrant community in Germany.

It has already been mentioned that of all migrant populations in Germany, Africans are the least studied. This is understandable considering the fact that the history of their contact with the German nation-state as a critical mass relative to the overall migrant population is a relatively recent one. It was only in the late 1990s that Africans began to constitute a sizeable population of German cities. Against this background, this dissertation seeks to fill this lacuna by engaging in an anthropological investigation of the integration processes of African immigrants in the German society. Using standard anthropological methods of field research and by appropriating a group of Igbo migrants in the city of Essen in Germany as its case study, this study describes the dynamics of social integration as “cultures influencing each other” (Tibère 2016). It further argues that although the importance of economic integration cannot be overemphasised, the subjective experiences of migrants with recourse to their sense of belonging to the host society are achieved not within purely economic domains but rather in the context of the informal domain of quotidian interpersonal interactions and social relationships. In this domain occurs the dialogic encounters on equal terms that make mutual disclosure and, consequently, cultural exchange between the interlocutors possible and inevitable. This dissertation therefore is arranged in two parts that progressively develop the central theme that the more the interlocutors have a fair knowledge of their respective cultural

backgrounds, the more effective their dialogue will be: a fact which reiterates Paul Ricoeur's assertion that, "No one speaks from nowhere" (cited in Odozor 2014: 166). To this end, the first part of the study describes the traditional Igbo society, its social structure and general worldview while the second part provides an analysis of the present-day social context of Igbo immigrants in Essen based on materials gathered from a long-term ethnographic study. The subjects of this ethnography – a group of Igbo immigrants in Germany – are thus situated in the cultural background in which they were originally socialised before undertaking their transnational journeys to Europe. It is upon this foundation that the subsequent analysis of their social context as immigrants in the German society would be based.

1.1 Research Methodology

A multi-sited ethnography which consists of "multiple sites of observation and participation that cross-cut dichotomies" (Marcus 1995: 95, Coleman and von Hellermann (eds.) 2011), especially in a transnational context such as that of our research, requires a research method that comprises standard ethnographic methods of participant observation as well as the study of traditional features of the Igbo culture in Nigeria as to be compared to the current context of Igbo migrants in Germany. Thus, the first part of this method utilization presents the results of a literature research of Igbo history and culture which complement those of oral interviews and participant observation of major traditional feasts, market practices and rituals in Igbo land, Southeast Nigeria. In the second part, the selection of the research field where the standard long-term ethnography was carried out among a specific population of Igbo immigrants in a scrap yard in Essen-Dellwig, a tiny enclave located in the outskirts of the Ruhr metropole of Essen in Germany, will be justified. Mostly because this research was conducted by participating with and observing the subjects in their workshops and by piloting structured and unstructured interviews, both within and outside the scrapyard, the multi-sited ethnography will embody a comparative analysis of both the Nigerian and the German scrap markets which made it possible to track the movement of goods between the two countries as well as monitor the social implications of the exchanges between traders from both sides of the divide. For the Nigerian market, the research was limited to the Alaba International Market in Lagos and to the Mgbuka Market in Onitsha, Anambra State. Incidentally, about

three informants had offices in all three markets – Dellwig, Lagos and Onitsha – and their contacts greatly facilitated the study.

Furthermore, the choice of the field site was informed by a number of factors amongst which includes the dominant type of business conducted in this site which provided a good material for ethnographic research since it entailed a transformation of German “waste materials” into economically viable commodities for export. Additionally, another factor that informed this choice was as regards the fact that these business ventures which took off some two decades ago have, in the course of some time, remained dominated by Igbo merchants who now constitute over ninety percent of regular workers, and whose daily tasks revolve around the transformation of used vehicles, electronic wastes and disposed household appliances into export wares for the African market. With recourse to these outlined factors, the overall aim of this ethnography is to elucidate the fundamental social processes and their implications for those involved in these seemingly purely economic transactions. Core research questions in this respect which would be explored include: What makes a particular line of business so attractive for Igbo immigrants and what are the processes involved for recruitment? How do Igbo immigrants experience and engage in social contexts in which they live both in their Igbo homeland and in the German society? How do they navigate life between their native systems of family and kinship, with its particular traditional values, and their present-day life in the context of the German system of values? Is there a correlation between the actors’ purely economic tasks on site and their social position in the larger German society? These questions when explored will foreground several highlights in this study and will help to establish its relevance.

Going by ethnographic data, at the time of fieldwork there are over two hundred Igbo men and a few women who transact their businesses as regular workers in the study’s selected enclave daily; however, there are many more who work on these sites either on an ad-hoc arrangement or seasonally. More so, there are clients and customers who visit on business trips from various African countries mainly Nigeria, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Benin Republic, and Cameroon. In lieu of this, for the purpose of a more effective participant observation, I had to enrol for a period of apprenticeship with one of the pioneer traders on site, identified

here as ‘Chairman’¹, who eventually recruited me as one of his staff for the duration of this research. A fellow Igbo priest and friend who was once a chaplain for the English-speaking African Catholic Community in Essen where most of the merchants worshipped had introduced me to one ‘Chairman’ in January 2017. This fellow priest’s tenure in Essen (2001–2011) coincided with the early stages of the development of the African market at Dellwig, and as a Nigerian pastor, more or less, the above-mentioned played a critical mediatory role between the pioneer traders and the city council that helped eventually with some of the early challenges posed by the setting up of the business premises. This explains why he was trusted so much that his recommendation of my recruitment for the purposes of research was easily endorsed.

Furthermore, my recruitment as an apprentice had a double advantage. Firstly, due to constant clashes with local authorities and recurrent police raids in recent times, merchants became very wary of strangers on the site; therefore, identifying myself as an Igbo and as a member of staff of one of the established shops effectively removed me from the category of “strangers” and helped to shield me from mutual suspicions. Additionally, my status as a priest who worshipped with these merchants several times during the period of fieldwork at the St. Gertrud Church Essen also contributed to the two-folded advantage that I enjoyed. More so, my recruitment helped to break down the normal communication barrier that existed between the outsider and the insider; in this case my recruitment bridged this gap between myself and other colleagues on the site as I became eligible to share in their discussions and jokes unhindered. Nevertheless, the recruitment did not obscure my identity as a priest and as a researcher; as my boss emphasized so well to other regular colleagues, and his irregular customers, the justification behind my involvement. From the above stated dual advantages, it is evident that my identity as an apprentice secured me an easier access to the market society than my identity as an Igbo priest did. Although it is important in a qualitative study, such as the present one, that researchers acknowledge their own positionality (Conner 2019: 33); which of course helps to establish them as human assets especially in ethnography, some post-modernist scholars have however argued that no matter how hard researchers strive for objectivity, their personal perspectives

¹ Throughout this work I abstain from the use of the real names of my informants/interviewees. Thus, all the names of the people in this ethnography are pseudonyms. Also, certain information that could help identify these interviewees are purposely withheld.

on issues may still find a way, sometimes at the subconscious level, to influence their final positions (Ferber 2006: 178).

Nevertheless, in the context of this study, it is evident that my double identity was not in any way a limitation to the ethnography but on the contrary comprised a very important asset. As an Igbo man well socialised in the Igbo culture, I had unhindered access to the Igbo community and thus could interact with them in their own language, could identify with their worldviews and could also understand their jokes and other Igbo cultural representations more than any non-Igbo anthropologist could probably have. Again, as a Catholic priest who has lived and worked in Germany for close to a decade, I similarly enjoyed the advantages of a relative access to the Igbo community in Essen. As such, the two major hurdles which every ethnographer would encounter at the outset of any research, especially in the delicate context of migrant lives – language and confidence building – were taken care of at once by my double identity; as both identities played a crucial role in winning the trust of my subjects right from the beginning of the ethnography. Notwithstanding, I was also conscious of the necessity for an epistemological distance which was factored in during the ethnography and data analysis.

Besides, beyond the practice of participant observation, I also conducted structured and unstructured interviews and to achieve this, I had to scout for willing respondents among the regular workers on site. This was not so easy owing mostly to their recent experiences with the German police. However, from the regular workers on site, some forty persons agreed to become formal respondents for my research. Although I could not interview all of them individually, each became a significant part of my circle of friends all of whom I engaged with in discussions during breaks, over the telephone and on social media platforms especially on Facebook and WhatsApp. Eventually, I succeeded in conducting structured interviews with twenty-five persons and these interviews were held at various places for various periods of time – on site during a break or after work or outside the site during weekends in public places like restaurants or at home. The interviews lasted between twenty minutes and two hours, depending on the disposition of the respondent in question. For some respondents, there was the need for a follow-up interview, either for the clarification of some issues earlier raised or to seek alternative opinions on issues that had come up in interviews with others – for instance, to confirm the sequence of historical accounts.

One major challenge that was experienced had to do with the fact that some respondents lived outside of Essen city; hence they could not be easily reached. This made it difficult for me to find reasonable time during working hours for exclusive face-to-face interviews with these respondents, because of their busy schedules on site. In the face of this challenge, interviews by telephone became the preferable mode of communication; however, this happened only in a few cases which constituted the exception and not the rule. More so, the ethnographic data were also enriched by insights from the programmes of various Igbo diaspora organisations that remained active in the Federal State of Nordrhein-Westfalen, whose extension of invitations to their meetings, and seminars conducted in and around the city of Essen during the period of my research I gratefully honoured. In line with the principle of reflexivity, this ethnographic study benefitted handsomely from my own daily life practices, through encounters and conversations with my (African) friends and colleagues, touching on the themes and the rate of progress of my research. Such unplanned conversations, taking place while shopping, during casual visits, phone calls, or exercising helped to complement the insights gained from the formal ethnography.

In a broader perspective, the emergence of the African scrap market in Essen-Dellwig may be considered a demonstration of the dynamism of culture contact. As will be shown in the following pages, the results of this ethnographic research basically support the hypothesis that there ought not to be any contradiction between the integration of immigrants and the retention of their cultural identities; rather both could and should complement each other. As Ülker (2016: 21) argues, “confronting a pre-given understanding of culture, ethnicity and nation by promoting concepts like transcultural, multicultural or cosmopolitan forms of entrepreneurship allows for the creation of a counterpart and generates grounds upon which it can only exist in a binary opposition with its other, i.e., the pre-given understanding of culture”. Such a binary of oppositions yields not really to something completely new but to a novel possibility of the two sides existing in a harmonious manner. In the present context, the encounter between the Igbo culture and the German culture through our ethnographic subjects gives rise to a situation where the two cultural complexes forge out certain contexts where they can interact harmoniously in a new valorisation of diversity and difference. Furthermore, the ethnography underscores how engagements in a particular type of economic activity signifies the social position of those involved

in it. Subsequently, a connection will be established between the particular type of economic activity undertaken by Igbo immigrants at the scrap market on the one hand, and the social position they occupy in the German society at large, on the other. This study is therefore an ethnography of transnational transactions.

1.2 The Field: An Ethnography of Transnational Exchange

This ethnographic field research was conducted from February 2017 till August 2018. The research site was situated at the Ripshorster Strasse in Essen-Dellwig – a location intimately connected with the history of the Igbo in the city of Essen, Germany; as the scrap business that went on for many decades in this place was dominated by Igbo immigrants², who turned it into a small hub of transnational trade, beginning from the late 1990s. My first contact with this mainly Igbo-populated business enclave in Essen-Dellwig came by mere happenstance. I had visited a friend in Essen during the Christmas festivities of December 2016 who, in the course of a light discussion over dinner, cracked a joke about his need to “go to *Mgbuka* to eke out a living” should his current job application fail. Much later, I discovered it was more a statement of fact than a joke as this was an actual place that had been so code-named by Igbo residents in the industrial city of Essen. Since I had been in search of a research population of African immigrants in Germany for my doctoral thesis, I became curious to visit this place and see things for myself.

Etymologically, the term *mgbuka* is a substantive in Igbo language that roughly translates as “fragmentation”, “dissection”, or “the cutting into pieces” of something; in this context referring to a place where automobiles are sold in its component parts. Although there is a wide array of meanings that could be derived from this substantive, its dominant meaning in today’s Igbo business lexicon derives from the large automobile spare parts market in Onitsha, Southeast Nigeria that is popularly known as the Mgbuka Market: an expansive international market where all imaginable kinds of automobile spare parts are sold. Apart from the new spare parts that are imported directly from producers elsewhere, used automobile spare parts for sale in this large market are also imported from different

² After a long period of conflicts and negotiations with the immigrants the City Council of Essen eventually ordered a closedown of a large part of the scrapyards towards the end of 2019. For details see Chapter 6.

parts of Europe. In Nigeria, these used spare parts are popularly referred to as “Belgium Parts” probably because the early importers from Europe preferred the Belgian seaport of Antwerp for the shipment of goods to Nigeria. Nowadays, other European seaports like Rotterdam and Hamburg are also much patronised. There are also sections of the market where old cars are dismantled to extract durable parts for sale. Such parts feed a booming local market patronised by a large array of automobile mechanics and, by extension, a huge population of car owners. It is popularly argued in Nigeria that “Belgium parts” are not only cheaper but are also more durable than new automobile parts on sale, which are mostly produced in China. In effect, the scrap market at the Ripshorster Strasse supplies these durable parts directly together with similar automobile spare parts markets in Nigeria and Africa at large; the largest of these markets in Nigeria being located in Onitsha (Obosi) and Lagos (Alaba), hence the nicknames “Mgbuka” or “Little Lagos”.

On a cold winter afternoon in February 2017, upon my request, I was led by my friend to this market located at the Ripshorster Strasse in Essen-Dellwig, at the northern outskirts of the Ruhr city of Essen, along the borders with the city of Oberhausen. I remember joking with my friend about my first impression on arrival, that should someone be blindfolded in Onitsha, Nigeria, and flown directly into this place and had his eyes opened in one of the premises, his first impression would be that he was in a typical “Mechanic Village” in Nigeria or perhaps in some strange part of an Mgbuka market in Onitsha or Lagos – that is, if he could be prevented from taking note of the well-paved streets and the constant power supply. It was not long before I became aware of the close relationship between the Mgbuka Market in Onitsha and the one at the Ripshorster Strasse, Essen-Dellwig. Interestingly, a good percentage of customers who patronised the business in the latter market came from or were linked with the Mgbuka Market in Onitsha, most of whom also had branches in Lagos and elsewhere. Many others came from similar markets located in Lagos, Lome, Ghana and Ivory Coast. The use of the acronym “Little Lagos” was already widespread around Essen-Dellwig, as acclaimed in an article published by the local newspaper in Essen, the *WAZ Zeitung* (Grenz, 2013). As such, I could not miss the striking similarities in both soundscapes and landscapes of both locations, just like anyone else who had been to the automobile spare parts markets in Lagos and Onitsha.

Our entrance point was a shop that would become one of my base shops at the Ripshorster Strasse. It belonged to the person I introduced earlier as the Chairman. The premises were a beehive of activities producing a cacophony of clattering sounds from working tools that interfered with the stillness outside. Intermittently, the soundscape would be evened out by the whirling noise of a cargo train passing through the railway tracks running a few meters away on both sides of the street. As the noise of the train dissolved into the distance, the soundscape returned to the immediate environment of clattering working tools and machines such as forklifts and cutting devices. These somehow harmonised with the other tones of laughter, the howling of instructions across workplaces as well as the hilarious jokes among colleagues that somehow combined to produce a replica of the boisterousness typical of the African marketplace. These evoked in me some feelings of usual nostalgia; a feeling of an ancient newness.

From the outset, one could immediately notice that the lingua franca at the place was not solely German. From different corners, ongoing conversations filled the soundscape with a mixture of Pidgin English and Igbo which was occasionally spiced with some German expressions. Sometimes, conversations would continue in German and this usually indicated the presence of non-Nigerians within the premises. For non-Nigerian (African) clients, it was usual to engage them first in German language unless the client showed a preference for English. But this did not imply that all the workers lacked proficiency of the German language; indeed, it was one of the pleasant surprises that many of them had a good command of the German language. However, the environment as such elicited those feelings of familiarity, at-home-ness and camaraderie that usually call for the mother tongue as the appropriate speech register.

Another significant component of the soundscape was the type of music filtering through different gadgets from all corners of the vicinity – from smartphones to big stereo equipment. They played Nigerian music in its different forms – *Afro-Juju*, *highlife*, *hip-hop*, *ogene* and *gospel*. Thanks to the internet, they could also stream the latest music albums online through such software applications as YouTube and Spotify, or the ones shared through WhatsApp from their smartphones, tablets or laptops. These were usually connected via Bluetooth to wireless loudspeakers to generate a booming effect that provided a soothing accompaniment to the tedious work of dismantling cars, loading used refrigerators and other home appliances, or packing used tyres for export to African countries.

Apart from business discussions, most of the small talks and conversations revolved around current topics of Nigerian (African) politics which sometimes metamorphosed into loud debates and arguments, dividing the interlocutors into different parties – either for, against, or indifferent.

Incidentally, the period of my fieldwork coincided with a crucial phase in the agitation in Nigeria for a Sovereign State of Biafra³. This resurgent pan-Igbo agitation was championed by the outlawed Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), an Igbo separatist organisation led by one Mazi Nnamdi Kanu, who was arrested and detained without trial by the Federal Government of Nigeria in 2016. His arrest and illegal detention for some two years generated a considerable interest amongst watchers of the state of affairs in Nigeria, especially in the Igbo diaspora. In Germany, Essen has long been one of the acknowledged centres of the Biafran organisation in the Nordrhein-Westfalen region. Furthermore, Essen also doubles as the centre for different Igbo welfare organisations in the region – a platform where Igbo immigrants organise themselves in accordance with their specific natal-geographic origins in Nigeria; as the Igbos in the diaspora are known for organising themselves in welfare organisations usually along the lines

³ The Nigerian-Biafran War (1967-1970) was occasioned by the declaration of independence by the then Eastern Region following a pogrom of people of southern origin in the northern states of Nigeria in the aftermath of the January 1966 coup which was branded the “Igbo coup” by the Nigerian Government. The Federal Government of Nigeria objected to the secession of the Eastern Region and declared war on Biafra. Almost fifty years since the end of that war, the people of Eastern Nigeria (who are predominantly Igbo) still insist that the same factors that led them to the war of independence against the Nigerian state still persist as they still feel collectively marginalised and short-changed by the Nigerian state; hence the resurgence of the agitation for an independent State of Biafra. The neo-agitation began in 1999 as the Movement for the Sovereign State of Biafra (MASSOB), which declared itself as a non-violent movement under the leadership of an Indian-trained Igbo lawyer, Chief Ralph Uwazurike. MASSOB concentrated on organising rallies and peaceful protests in several south-eastern states.

However, in 2012 a separatist group emerged from MASSOB, basically in disagreement of the former’s principles of non-violent resistance as capable of leading to the realisation of the independent state of Biafra. The new group assumed the name Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), led by another Igbo lawyer based in the United Kingdom, Mazi Nnamdi Kanu. The IPOB adopted a more active agitation for the formation of an independent state of Biafra. According to her spokesperson, IPOB calls for a referendum “to settle the issue of Biafra in a civilised and democratic manner” (Adonu 2017). The activities of IPOB were proscribed by the Federal Government of Nigeria following an interim injunction by a Federal High Court in Abuja on 20 September 2017 after a series of clashes with the members of IPOB who were protesting the arrest and detention without trial of their leader, Mazi Nnamdi Kanu. Important to note is that both movements – MASSOB and IPOB are extensively sponsored by the Igbo in Diaspora.

of the socio-political divisions in Igboland, with each of the five Igbo states in Nigeria being organised as a unit or body. The polarisation of interlocutors during conversations sometimes also assumed an alignment according to these primordial divisions, with some people being defensive of their groups or some others taking a contrary position from the group while appealing to this as a testimony of their impartiality.

Similar to the soundscape was the olfactory familiarity of the environment: a flourishing aroma of familiar dishes which after a closer look, I discovered that there was a nearby kiosk that functions as a restaurant. Almost every type of Igbo delicacy was served there: fried plantain, *akara* (bean cake) and *pap* (made of liquid cornflour), rice and beans, *foo-foo* (pounded yam or garri) and various sorts of soup – *egusi* (melon soup), *onugbu* (bitter-leaf soup), *oha*, *ogbono*, *nsala*, and vegetable soup – as well as other Nigerian dishes which were regularly on the menu. Even the list of available drinks was dominated by popular Nigerian beer brands like *Hero*, *Star*, *Life*, *Gulder* and *Guinness*. Subsequently, during the course of my fieldwork, I would count two other such restaurants within the vicinity – those were apart from some food vendors that occasionally hawked in the facility, offering special traditional Igbo delicacies like *okpa*, *abacha* and *akara* for sale. The availability of quality and assorted African (Igbo) cuisines combined with other factors already mentioned helped to create a sense of home for Africans within this market.

Moreover, the food business thrived very well for a number of important reasons. Firstly, most of the people who did business in this place were men who might not have learnt how to cook in their childhood because this was traditionally considered a female task in Igbo society. Also, because most workers at the scrapyard spent the whole day in the market, they would have almost all their daily meals at their workplace in Essen-Dellwig. Additionally, most clients who came from Africa were not used to the European foods served in standard restaurants, and for this reason, they were also dependent on these African restaurants within the premises for their daily meals. Interestingly, all the restaurants that served the market were run by women; the only one run by a man had mainly women on staff. In other words, the Igbo traditional division of social and gender roles was similarly replicated here.

Furthermore, another striking familiarity was as regards the arrangement of the landscape. As with the case in similar markets in Nigeria, most of the working-

shops within this business enclave were separated by walls from one another – although not necessarily brick walls. In some cases, the boundary between shops were marked by piles of scraps like the carcasses of disassembled cars or refrigerators, etc. Most shops were similarly ordered in a binary division into an outside (workspace) section and an inside (office) section. The outside section usually comprised an open space with untarred floors where the cutting of cars, rolling of tyres and other physical works were done. The greasy floors, dirty working clothes, littered tools and automobile parts testified to the physically demanding tasks that were performed there. In contrast, the inside section was a more restricted area which functioned as the office where secretarial work was done. This section was usually well furnished to create a proper atmosphere for negotiation of business deals and a place of repose from the harsh weather. However, such a facility was not every man's privilege; only a few established persons could afford such a luxury at the Ripshorster Strasse. Many others could only make do with much simpler arrangements like the make-shift containers as offices.

1.3 Organisation and Data Management

The work is organised into two broad parts that are arranged in eight chapters. The first part consists of the first five chapters which present the core characteristics and defining features of Igbo cultural identity inclusive of their cultural values and practices, rituals, and beliefs as well as traditional systems of social organisation. This articulation of Igbo society underscores the fact that migrants are first and foremost carriers of particular cultures. The second part of the dissertation deals with the ethnography and data analysis of my long-term field research in the scrap yard described above, where a group of mainly Igbo traders ply their unusual trade. This part explores how these traders are able to transform what has become 'wastes' in Germany into useful and viable commodities for the African market. From a description of the social and economic practices at the scrap yard, this section proceeds to trace the social networks and relationships that are created outside the business premises, including their social engagements in the multicultural urbanised environment of the city of Essen. These activities take place in the three contexts of sociality of the neighbourhood, the school and the church. Against the backdrop that social integration is a complex process that is actualized at different levels of social interaction that entails a mutual exchange

of values, the work also describes with the aid of ethnographic data particular contexts in which social distinctions between Germans and the Igbo are transcended. This leads to the emergence of a new form of social reality that is founded on shared values.

The study shall also observe how this social integration only unfolds when there is a fundamental acknowledgement that people are carriers of cultural values and that no particular culture is self-sufficient. Social integration therefore requires an acknowledgment of the cultural dynamism that celebrates an openness to mutual exchange with the Other as a necessary implication of culture contact. For these reasons, the chapters in the second part of this dissertation seek to provide answers to some relevant questions arising from culture contact and cultural flow in the city amongst which include: Does the process of reciprocal enrichment apply also with the case of a minority population of migrants such as the Igbo in Essen? In the face of their asymmetrically disadvantaged position vis-à-vis the mainstream society and the enduring contact with a plethora of meanings and meaningful forms from other cultural groups, what remains of the Igbo cultural identity, their traditional practices, their rituals, their language and histories, among those who now live in the culturally alien context of municipal Essen? Will these cultural identifiers disappear or are they becoming redundant? Is there any impact or influence from the mainstream society on the cultural identity of these Igbo migrants and vice versa? To what extent does the Igbo social reality influence the emergence of the new social reality of the host city? Are there some idea-values of the Igbo that impact on the German system of values such that the emerging new social reality is not only assimilating to the mainstream German society but perhaps influenced from both sides? If a new social reality emerges from the confrontation between Igbo and German cultures, is this new social reality exclusively German defined or not? What types of exchanges are occasioned by culture contact in this case? In a nutshell, what is the position of the Igbo cultural identity in the present German mainstream society? The quest for answers to these questions were the reasons for my one-year ethnographic field research in the scrap yard in Essen-Dellwig.