

Pragmatic and Symbolic Negotiation of Home for African Migrants in South Africa

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Abstract

This paper is written in an attempt to unfold the complexities of the concept of home and sets out to probe what happens to the way people construct their perceived reality (subjectivity) when their life circumstances are altered by migration and mobility. It also interrogates how new forms of consciousness develop and adapt to the old and new imagined or created reality. Whilst in South Africa, migrants forge all kinds of relations with the country of abode, country of origin and with migrants from other African countries; alongside these contestations is the symbolic means through which they are creating a feeling of being ‘at home but away from home’. This anthropological conversation broadens our conceptual understanding of the ever changing and flexible nature of social identities in the context of migration. This perspective stands in sharp contrast with the notion of home as fixed, unchanging, bounded and given.

Key words: migration, home, space, place, transnational identities

Introduction

The fall of apartheid in South Africa, civil wars and political unrest in most African countries and the down-side of the Structural Adjustment Plan (SAP) has led to increased immigration to South Africa from the rest of Africa. This has resulted in a steady growth on study of the volume and consequences of migration of people from the rest of Africa to South Africa. Research

interests include cross-border migrants (Muzvidziwa 2001; Dodson 1998), street vendors and hawkers (Peberdy & Crush 1998; Rogerson 1997; Skinner 1999), migrant entrepreneurs (Ojong 2005), students as migrants (Muthuki 2010) and migrant academics (Otu 2009). Research epistemology has been both quantitative and qualitative in nature. Most of the quantitative work has focused on documentation and livelihoods; thereby portraying an overly simplistic characteristic of these forms of migration. On the other hand, the available qualitative research has been dedicated to bringing gender dynamics to the fore or prioritising country of origin experience or country of abode experience and thereby neglecting the renegotiation of these two sites, and highlighting how they impact on the everyday lives of the migrants. In this study, I draw on ethnographic research conducted among five Nigerians, four Ugandans, five Zimbabweans, five Zambians and ten Cameroonians; to show the experiences of migrants across the two sites of migration (home and host country) and how the negotiation of the concept of home is not linear but a complex inter-play of forces from both country of origin and South Africa, as well as the personalities of the individuals.

Studies of this nature lends itself to multi-sited ethnography which allowed me the opportunity as a researcher to follow the social locations, the virtual locations, the symbolic locations as well as the physical locations of these migrants. Being a migrant, I could not avoid positioning this work within an interpretivist and constructivist paradigm. My preliminary interest in the study was spawned by my personal struggles with responding to questions about home. Questions such as, when last did you visit home... and when will you be going home ... had often proven difficult to answer because for me. For I belong to a 'third space'. I do not completely belong to my country of origin or, to South Africa. I belong to a space I have carved out for myself which is a mixture of bricolage; it is a fluid, hybrid and symbolic space.

I write this paper fully aware of my own circumstances which often makes it difficult for me to understand as an individual, the parameters that define home. Often it has been said that home is where the heart belongs. If taken at face value, it can become a genesis of confusion and frustration for migrants because the reality of migration and the consequences it has for belonging becomes a blurred mixture of 'floating and balancing'. 'Floating' because it becomes increasingly difficult to tie home to places which have

been carved for the purpose of convenience and ‘balancing’ because migrants begin looking for frontiers of spaces where their hearts and socio-economic conditions permits them to belong.

Until recently, space and place has received little attention in anthropological literature (Appadurai 1986; Appadurai 1988; Gupta & Ferguson 2001; Rosaldo & Inda 2002). In our pursuit in Anthropology and the social sciences to understand how social boundaries shift and are re-defined, it is crucial for us to interrogate how the people who shift with these boundaries re-define them. The concept of home lends itself to the elastic, fluid and complex nature of contemporary identities. Often, home has been misunderstood as it is believed that migrants’ country of origin is what constitutes home for them. Robertson *et al.* (1994: 14) has defined home as ‘wherever your family is, and where you have been brought up’. In the general context of increased migration and displacement of people in contemporary Africa, such a definition is very limiting and fails to illuminate peoples’ lives as they are lived.

Renegotiated Space of Migration Research

The phenomenon of migration and mobility has become a key issue in anthropological research because of the influence of urbanisation and modernisation and more recently because of globalisation. Such migrations have contributed to changing perceptions of boundedness of goods, commodities and culture and have also given rise to new perceptions of identity and place. These changed perceptions inevitably affect social interactions and the constitution of societies and social groups.

For decades after anthropology had become a discipline in its own right, ethnographic research focused on studies in which rapport was established with a small group of people who lived in a particular geographical area. Because this space was the place in which they had been born, such people were automatically viewed as sharing a common culture. Researching in a transnational context poses new challenges for both theory and method because the researcher is expected to extend his/her scope to develop diverse skills, to utilise the extensive social networks that link informants to their place of origin, and to use different methodologies to collect data. Research of this kind compels a researcher to utilise different

theoretical and methodological frameworks and to make use of those that already exist (Foster & Kemper 1974).

Contemporary Anthropological research now faces the challenge of having to understand migrants in the context of the social reality that they are investigating. Migration research has sometimes been regarded with varying degrees of animosity and doubt by proponents of conventional Anthropological research because it needs constantly to make changes that accommodate the changes in the social reality that it studies.

Why African People are Leaving their Home Countries and Migrate to South Africa

a) Entrepreneurial Opportunities Present in South Africa/ The Effects of Structural Adjustment Plan (SAP) in Most African Countries

Entrepreneurship has always been used by immigrants as a means for sustaining life in a new country. Starting small businesses with relatively small amount of capital that is needed in the start-up stage has enabled many African migrants to survive by providing basic food and shelter for themselves and their families. My observation is that the decision to become a migrant entrepreneur is not a sudden or impromptu action. It is always a calculated and premeditated action taken after many factors and conditions have been carefully considered. It is also, according to my observation, an act that is carried out under the full control of the migrants concerned. Although there are numerous motivating and inhibiting factors that influence the decision whether or not to immigrate, the focus here is to investigate why people would leave their familiar frames of reference and choose the thorny path of negotiating home in a foreign land.

The social and economic factors that put pressure on many Africans to leave their country of origin and immigrate to South Africa include the so-called Structural Adjustment Plan (SAP). This programme was devised and implemented by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) as a means of helping African countries to pay off loans to international banks. But the consequence of this policy was that many civil servants in Zambia, Cameroon, Ghana and other African countries ended up losing their jobs

while those who were allowed to stay on were obliged to accept reduced salaries. Because those who were once employed could no longer find jobs, they frequently ended up in the informal sector. Most of my informants described the damage done by the SAP and the unfortunate consequences it had for those who had to depend solely on informal activities for survival.

One of my informants from Ghana, Maria, describes the upheavals caused by the SAP in the following way:

As a little girl, after dropping out of school because my parents could no longer afford school fees, I was sent to a hairdressing salon, where I learnt how to dress hair. After I completed my course, I opened my own hair salon where I was managing until many people who had been working with the government started opening salons. This business became so over-flooded that I could hardly pay my rentals. By 1997 when I left Ghana, there was hardly a difference between those who went to school and those of us who did not because we were all doing the same things. Thus when I had the opportunity through Paulina, who first came to South Africa in 1994 and was repatriated in 1995 but returned in June of the following year, to come to South Africa, I did not hesitate.

Paulina and I know each other from way back in the 1980s when we both attended 'My Source Girls' Secondary School in Kumasi. I was born in Kumasi and spent most of my teenage years there. When I dropped out of school in 1981, I went to Accra where I lived with my mother's elder sister who was a dealer in beauty products. In Accra, I started braiding women's hair at home, and, at other times, I helped my mother's sister to sell in her shop. Before this time, I had no professional knowledge of hairdressing. When my mother's sister discovered that I was good with my fingers, she sent me back to Kumasi and registered me as an apprentice with King's Palace Beauty Salon. I learnt hairdressing for two years and in 1981 I completed my course and went back to Accra. With the assistance of my mother's sister, I opened a hair salon in Accra which I ran until 1997 when I left Ghana.

When Paulina was in South Africa, we used to write to each other and I was surprised to see her back in Ghana just one year after she left. Since she told me to be saving money to eventually come to South Africa, I had saved three hundred thousand Cedis, which she borrowed

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and used in paying her travel fare back to South Africa. She promised to assist me in coming to South Africa, which she did. I would say that I was succeeding with my business at home until SAP came.

Another informant, Cecilia, explained other difficulties caused by SAP in the following words:

In South Africa, we are seen as the ones stealing South Africans' jobs. I do not blame South Africans when they say that because I have been there. I know how it feels when some super giant comes with all the knowledge and puts you out of business. The civil servants back in Ghana stole our jobs. With all the money they got when they were retrenched, they had all the capital to buy sophisticated equipment that we could not afford. They came and stole our jobs and we were put out of business.

These people, who had already established themselves as self-employed business people in entrepreneurial activities in their home country, found themselves obliged to immigrate to South Africa which had economic opportunities which attracted them because of its vast market potential.

b) Promises of a Second Home Made by ANC during the Apartheid Era

During the years of the anti-apartheid struggle, many South Africans were scattered all over Africa. There were many in the secondary or high schools as well as in the universities. During those years, as one of my informants Margaret (a Nigerian migrant woman who is also a science and mathematics teacher in a high school in Richards Bay) said, money used to be collected and given to the South African students as part of the struggle against apartheid. In return, Margaret said, they were promised a home in South Africa when the struggle ended. She said that South Africa is their second home and that they have every right to be here.

Another informant, Maria, a Zambian nurse presently working at the Richards Bay hospital said that she and her family back in Zambia used to live next to a house, which was used by the ANC-in-exile. Whenever that house was under attack, they too had to run away

from home. She explained that they did not bother about those experiences because they were promised a second home in South Africa after the end of apartheid.

c) Skills Shortage in South Africa

Many foreign Africans in South Africa are professionals from such fields as academia and medicine and have much to offer to the knowledge-based economy of South Africa. The reality for South Africa today, especially in the academic and medical field, is that it relies heavily on the skills of Africans around the continent to satisfy its current demand, especially at the high end of the skills continuum. This strategy is used to compensate for its skills shortage because of past apartheid policies and current large-scale white emigration. In most hospitals around the country, even in remote areas, the presence of Nigerian, Zimbabwean, Zambian and Congolese medical doctors and nurses are resounding facts, which cannot be ignored. Even in private medical practice, Nigerian general practitioners are making a valuable contribution. In all Universities in South Africa, the presence and contribution of African migrant professionals cannot be ignored. Many strategic academic positions previously occupied by white South Africa professionals are increasingly filled by these foreign nationals. Positions such as Vice Chancellor, Heads of Schools, Heads of Departments and Deans of Faculties are occupied by academics from other African countries. Amongst these professionals, some have migrated directly from their countries of origin while others, who were previously employed in universities in Europe and America, have decided to bring back their acquired skills to South Africa because of the need. In terms of research and general scholarship, these academics are editors of peer reviewed journals, members of editorial boards of journals and recognised publishing houses like Langa and CODESRIA.

Theoretical Basis for Belonging and Connecting

Long before the colonial encounter by Europeans in Africa, African people had an elastic way of conceiving home which is far removed from the fixed notion given by classical theorists. Gupta and Ferguson (2001) have also

questioned the fixed notion of home and construct it as remembered places for dispersed people. In her work on the nature of contemporary social identities, Malki (2001: 56) had shown how identities come to be fixed. She writes that; 'people are often thought of, and think of themselves, as being rooted in a place and as deriving their identities from that rootedness' (Malki 2001: 56). Today, we are faced with a highly mobile (more so than ever before) and globalised world which increasingly erodes people from distinct places of abode. In such an era, we cannot continue to map people to particular places of abode.

In trying to unfold the complexities of home, Faists (2000) notion of transnational social space is useful since it denotes, in most cases, the symbolic spaces created through the process of transnationalism (Schiller 2004) which migrants occupy. These spaces are carved out by migrants who are always evolving and are not fixed. The transnational social space is made pragmatic within the social network theory since it links individuals to the different physical sites and with the different social locations and symbolic spaces.

Hannerz (1996), Kritiz and Zlotnik (1992), Basch *et al.* 1994) have written elaborately on how networks connect people to place and relationships. Faist (2000) also draws our attention to how the concepts of reciprocity and cultural solidarity function to keep these networks intact. In renegotiating home in South Africa, the concepts of solidarity as 'shared beliefs, ideas, and symbols; expressed in some sort of collective identity' (Faist 2000: 192) is fundamental. People forge a collective identity through their social networks. These networks are fluid and not fixed and are dependent on the need of the individual in question. Such needs vary from the need to access foodstuff from home country to gaining access to traders in foodstuffs and other commodities of African origin in South Africa. All these social relations are transformed at some point into social capital in different ways. In my opinion, one of the most important factors required as people negotiate home in South Africa is the ability of someone in these transnational social relations to provide a migrant with 'home food'. The process of migration disconnects one from their routine reality and people in this space constantly have to renegotiate their sense of belonging. Food has become one of the major adaptation strategy through which migrants regain a consciousness of self and group belonging. This resonates with Koptyoff's

(2006) assertion that commodities must not only be produced materially as things, but also culturally as marked as being a certain kind of a thing. The consumption of food for migrants does not simply serve the purpose of satisfying cravings and hunger, but fills a cultural and emotional gap and connects migrants to home or a 'feeling of being at home'. Miller (1995: 35) alluded to this fact when he stated that; commodities are brought to life in the consumption practices of the household and enact moral, cosmological and ideological objectification, and creates the images by which we understand who we have been, who we are, and who we might or should be in future. Being able to eat 'home food' or food prepared home-style; is very instrumental in their ability to adapt and adjust to life in South Africa. During their annual and monthly get-together, birthday parties, weddings and funerals, home food is prepared while they all relax, dance and listen to music from home. This reminds them of who they used to be and when they are able to taste home food; in most cases, it becomes the only thing in a foreign land that connects them with home.

If one examines the social networks with which these migrants surround themselves, one can see that most of their social networks reflect more than one type of activity. While social ties of various kinds are evident, for example, in widely separated networks, all these networks are connected with one another for the purpose of 'feeling at home'.

All the migrants interviewed have deliberately developed and sustained networks that benefit newcomers. Among Cameroonians, Nigerians and Zimbabweans, there is a clearly identifiable tendency for kin to cluster around a specific location around South Africa in towns like Esikhaweni, Durban, Cape Town, Pretoria and Johannesburg in order to feel at home. When such clustering occurs, it sometimes results in the formation of migrant associations. These associations (as is the case with Cameroonians in Pretoria, Cape Town, Durban and Ghanaians in Durban) provide invaluable assistance when it comes to adaptation and connecting all within the social networks.

Through the influence and patronage of one successful contact in South Africa, an enormous network of friends, neighbours, acquaintances and families back in Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Uganda and Cameroon have carved out a space of their own, called home. Apart from this very direct contact that is common to these migrants, others come into being in South Africa.

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Through the social network established by Eddy, a Cameroonian who came to South Africa and established himself in Cape Town in the informal sector, a whole group or social network of family, friends and neighbours have also established in Cape Town.

In November 1997, Eddy came to South Africa and decided to settle in 'Khayelitsha', a township in Cape Town. He realised that there was a ready market for hairdressers, electricians and mechanics. He immediately invited his sister Esther to him and opened a shop for her in 2000; in 2001, he invited his brother John and opened a car repair shop. In 2003, he invited his friend Joe, who eventually opened an electrical workshop. This network has increased and there are currently two¹ Cameroonian associations in Cape Town. These associations meet once a month and prepare home-style food. In 2010, they decided to each contribute money and order African fabrics and designed them to be of African style. All these are endeavours for feeling at home, away from home.

Connections between Home and Host Country *vis-à-vis* Constructions

a) Creating New Consciousness

Migration dislodges people not only from the places of origin and patterned senses, but as Ahmed (1999:341) had noted, it creates an abrupt change in migrants' sensecapes, a change in their 'sensory world of everyday experience'. As soon as someone decides to leave their country of origin, there is a certain level of disconnectedness and alienation from the place of origin. This begins with family members and friends who start perceiving the person as the 'other'. Such a person is called 'bush faller' in Cameroon. Upon leaving the native country, such a person therefore loses a home in the hope of finding a new home abroad. Upon arrival at the country of abode, he/she is denied a home because home is conceived (by people in the host country) as the country of origin. This automatically deepens the level of alienation and disconnectedness.

¹ Manyu meeting and Manyu Elders. He has been very instrumental in the formation of the two associations and is the current president of Manyu Elders.

Whenever someone is about to leave Ghana, Cameroon, Nigeria etc. to come to South Africa, one finds that there is great excitement among family members. Because one of their family members is emigrating, they already anticipate an end to poverty and suffering through the creation of a means to ensure prosperity. Such families tend to rally around the emigrant and offer every possible means of financial and moral support to the person who is leaving. Needless to say, they regard emigration as a good omen for themselves as individuals and for the family as a whole.

Such families will scrape the bottom of the barrel to contribute whatever amount that they can afford to sponsor the emigrant's trip. Agatha (an informant from Ghana) related how both her mother and mother's sister sold their traditional gold jewellery and expensive clothes to raise the air ticket for her trip to South Africa. Fathers whose children are emigrating will sell property such as land or even borrow money from money lenders. The child who thus benefits is naturally expected to work hard and send sufficient money back home to repay the debt or ultimately to pay back the money for the land that was sold (together with the interest) so that the family can take steps to repossess the land.

On the spiritual side, a lot of secrecy surrounds people who are about to leave their home country. As the time draws near for emigrants to leave their village for the city, everyone knows what is happening, even though they pretend that they do not. Whether the intending emigrant is from a family that practices Traditional African Religion or whether they are Christians, all information about imminent departure is kept a close secret from the wider community, and is revealed only to close kin. It is only once a person has actually left that the news is disseminated in the community and among friends. Immediately after the emigrant's departure, rumours will spread through the community and family members will either confirm or deny the rumours. This kind of secrecy prevails because of the traditional community belief that there are invisible (spiritual) powers that can sabotage a person's prosperity if they get to know too much about it. It is for this reason that all pertinent information is shared only among family members. Families believe that if they announce a person's departure from the country in advance, some hostile spiritual power might prevent that person from going. Christian families thus fast and pray to invoke divine protection. But they nevertheless also wait until the intending emigrant has left before they

announce the departure. Practitioners of Traditional African Religion will consult the local deities through the medium of a fetish priest and ask the ancestors to ‘keep an eye on the person who is leaving’ and bless him or her.

b) Home as a Dreaded Place

The process of migration and the expectations of those left behind makes home a dreaded place for migrants who intend visiting their country of origin. These expectations are in fact so high that they are often a source of concern for African migrants in South Africa. My informants continued to receive letters demanding money from those who remained behind up to six months after their departure. The amounts solicited in this way were quite unrealistic, and this also created a great deal of tension. Even people who were not closely related to the emigrant asked for money for expenses such as school fees and trips abroad. Eddy (a Cameroonian man) said: ‘in Cameroon you do not draw a line’, meaning that patterns of obligation extend without limit beyond one’s own family. Even cousins write letters requesting money without informing the migrants’ parents.

My informants all claimed that if they did not respond to these requests for money, they would be ‘painted black’ (denigrated) by both family members and community. The general belief back in the other African countries is that people who fail to send remittances home to all and sundry are ‘selfish’. There is a prevailing sentiment in these countries that can be paraphrased like this: ‘if things are really as difficult as some people abroad portray, then why are they still living there? They should come back home’. Some migrants even felt embarrassed to return to their home countries for visits because of all the inflated expectations of immediate family members, inhabitants from their villages and even friends from primary school days.

Whenever these migrants return home, everyone who comes to welcome them comes with great expectations. Questions such as ‘was I on your list?’ and ‘What did you bring for me?’ are soon asked. And if the visitor from South Africa gives them, for instance, a shirt or a hair product, they will not hesitate to say that they need only money and not goods or products. Some of my informants emphasised that ‘one cannot blame those who are left behind because one can see the genuineness of their requests’. There is undoubtedly a great deal of financial hardship in the rest of Africa.

Everyone in the extended family and even acquaintances expect the migrant to come back and help them with their problems. In short, a person is conceptualised as living abroad for the benefit and well-being of the entire family and extended kin network.

Even in South Africa, those immigrants who send money home look down on those who do not. The person who fails to send money home becomes a subject of gossip because of his or her inability to help those back at home. It is interesting to note that all immigrants in South Africa know who are sending remittances and who are not. This happens because whenever one of the migrants is about to return home, he or she is asked to take certain sums to family back at home. Since migrants tend to take turns in travelling home, who the recipients were, and what amount were involved is common knowledge.

When a poor family from any African country manages to send a family member to live abroad, one is able to notice the difference in their standard of living because the money that they receive to some extent transforms their lives. A family may, for example, build a house in the village on the strength of remittances received. Maria is but one example of an emigrant who built a house in which her mother and mother's sister now reside. Paulina built a house in Accra and rented it out. On the proceeds of the rent from this house she supports her parents. These migrants are intensely socially competitive and if his or her next-door neighbour builds a three-bedroom house, he or she will desire to build a four or five bed-room house. Each of them takes pride in the fact that they have been able to build a house back at home and they despise anyone who has not been able to do so. Most people try to send remittances home so that, when they return either to retire or when they die, they will be accepted by those left behind and not treated as strangers. African migrants are very careful to continue sending remittances home because they do not want the entire community as well as their families to reject them when they return. Rejection of this kind is regarded as one of the worst possible fates among African migrants.

Most of the migrants interviewed think that it is a great mistake on the part of those who return home for visits to talk only about the advantages of living abroad. These one-sided tales have led the people back at home to believe that those who live abroad invariably live in the lap of luxury. They explain that how people back at home do not understand how one is not

automatically made prosperous simply because of the act of emigration. They therefore cannot understand why some migrants are able to remit and others cannot. This has left migrants with mixed feelings about returning home for visits because of these expectations. But the attraction remains and the home country holds a potent appeal. As Maria says: 'home is home and there is no place like home'. Most of the migrants I spoke to demonstrated a strong desire to return to their home country some day. Most of them did not want to die in South Africa. This is the reason why one of their main priorities is to build a house back at home to which they might one day return. None of them fancy living in rented or family premises when they return because that, they feel that, that would be an insult to them because it would diminish their status. They did, after all, emigrate so that they would one day be able to own their own house back at home and they expect that such a house would always function as a sign and token of how successful they had been abroad.

c) Pentecostal-Transnational Religion as a Type of Home

Pentecostal-Transnational religion also creates a feeling of being at home in South Africa. The Pentecostal churches in South Africa offer a social space whereby new migrants who see themselves as family members based on their religious affiliation meet and create social relations and a means of accessing niche markets. Being in the presence of God with fellow believers from their home countries makes migrants feel at home. Although some migrants use these churches as a 'bridge' to establishing themselves in South Africa, some were members of the 'mother churches' back in their home countries. For this group, joining the 'sister church' in South Africa is a way of being at home away from home. For others like Mary Kusi, a migrant woman from Ghana, who currently runs two hair dressing salons in Durban, business is not only seen as a route to success but as a way of carrying out God's creative and redemptive plan. Viewing her business in the light of God's divine plan gives her significance in what she does and a feeling of being at home.

Mary's conceptualisation of being at home includes the liberty and opportunity of incorporating her religious practices and business endeavours, which is demonstrated in her every-day life. Her salons, she says, are her pulpit given to her by God. She believes that if she is unable to preach in church, she has countless opportunities to preach to people who come to her

salons, as the opportunity arises. She said that God did not only provide her with a salon to dress women's hair but also to address their spiritual needs. This public space is used as a meeting place for other believers and Pastors from West Africa; who come from time to time for a word of prayer, especially in the early hours of the morning when there are no customers.

d) Negotiating Home '(ill)legally' in South Africa

The interviews I conducted confirmed that migrants tend to make use of any possible provision to live legally in South Africa. Marriage of convenience is one of the means used by African migrants to acquire the status that allows them to remain legally in South Africa. As soon as they arrive in South Africa, migrants apply for refugee status. Then, while they are in the process of seeking asylum, they enter into marriages of convenience with South African citizens. Minnaar and Hough (1996) state that when they are in South Africa, migrant males hasten to marry South African women and produce children from such unions. Minnaar and Hough believe that they do this so that they will have some grounds on which to base a plea, however fragile, to remain in South Africa if they are apprehended by the authorities. The basis of the plea would be that they already have dependents in South Africa if they are apprehended.

Other migrants merely enter into liaisons with South Africans and try to bear children as soon as possible. They do this so that if they are caught, they will be able to adduce humanitarian reasons for being allowed to remain in the country (the basis in this case would be that they have obligations to support a family who are South Africa by nationality). Some men even enter into traditional marriages and pay the traditional lobola (bride price) for their South African wives.

My study revealed that it is not only men but also women who enter into marriages of convenience of this kind. But they do it in a different way. Ugandan, Nigerian, Cameroonian and Ghanaian women do not bear children for their South African partners, nor do they engage in any kind of sexual encounter. To them, the men sign a marriage certificate, and they both go through the form of a marriage. But because the South African government has in recent times begun to follow up and investigate this kind of illegal

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marriage of convenience, the women who arrange them make sure that they remain constantly in touch with their supposed husbands.

Such immigration malpractices can create legal thickets of extraordinary complexity. One finds, for example, that the real husbands of these women are married to South African women while they themselves are married to other South African men. Sometimes these women will divorce their South African 'Husband' before marrying a man of their nationality. If a woman does this, she and her husband are able to live legally as permanent residents in South Africa.

Conclusion

The migrants who were interviewed for this project feel strongly that their decision to migrate to South Africa was a good one, irrespective of how they construct and conceive home. In South Africa, migrants draw on their social networks to access the necessary food or items that make them 'feel at home'. Certainly, all of them strongly believe that there is no place like home but have mixed feelings because they are caught in-between. The reality of migration; most of them agreed is that; once you have left, it is hard to return. Migrants have struggled over the years in being transnational with the intention of maintaining their roots and connections so that it would be easier for them to return someday. These efforts have only ended up deepening their level of alienation. Those who are left behind will always see them as the 'other' and are happy to have them living abroad so that they can continue receiving remittance. The interviews reveal that these migrants experience a sense of home in their transnational space and not just a location which is assigned to them. As I conclude this paper, I am tempted to define home for migrants as a place where an individual feels emotionally fulfilled and physically secure on a symbolic level.

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