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Bridging Mobilities: ICTs appropriation by Cameroonians in South Africa and The Netherlands

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*‘I di beep na for beep, them di call’:*¹

Straddling relationships between the home and host country amongst kin and kith

Introduction

This chapter focuses on migrants’ moral obligations regarding remittances and their virtual presence in the family circle they leave behind. It considers the micro individual experiences of migrants’ kinship relations that highlight personalized ties towards kin and kith and the community. It moves away from the PIFAM and MACUDA communities and pays particular attention to the individual forms of relating with the family, looking at how migrants confront and deal with the emotional challenges of being away from the family, and also notions of witchcraft. Coming from societies and fondoms that have long been embedded in a history of migration, the notion of strangers ceases to be strange. The question is thus how they entertain multi-stranded relationships and how, as individuals, they are able to sustain relationships back home and cope with being apart from their family and having to adapt to the host society and yet hold on to the idea of being different. What accounts for individuals’ engagement in transcultural lives and what role does this duality play in trans-border relationships between mobile migrants and their home communities? Individualism as opposed to community is at the heart of this chapter.

This penultimate chapter in this volume details how individual Cameroonian migrants living in South Africa and the Netherlands are actively engaged in the livelihoods of those in the home country. I consider the myriad of transcultural practices migrants are engaged in towards their respective families back home, and also the way families at home respond and initiate similar transcultural pro-

¹ Interview, Pinyin: 10/10/2011. It is they who call me, I only beep them.

cesses. This is informed by the fact that looking after kin and ageing parents are inculcated in the moral upbringing of children. From this perspective, it is plausible to view migration not only as a transnational social process (Guarnizo 1997) but also as a transcultural process, which enables us to assess the various dynamic processes that are inextricably linked to it, such as the emotions that are brought to bear in the absence of relations and how migrants cope. As individuals, they seek to maintain multi-stranded relationships that are entertained in the construction of cultural identities and are able to express this identity in the relationships they sustain back home and in the coping mechanisms adopted following the separation of families. This means that migrants' pathways of 'simultaneous incorporation' are less to nation-state activities but closely relate to the cultural activities that they engage in (Levitt & Glick Schiller 2004). This presupposes that the 'concept of transnational field takes us beyond the direct experience of migration into domains of interaction where individuals who move themselves maintain socio-cultural relations across borders through the various forms of rituals and communication' (Levitt & Glick Schiller 2003: 7).

In this respect, I maintain that mobilities have reified migrants' quests to increasingly take part in transcultural activities to prove their loyalty to their families and, in the same light, mobilities have ceased to be a hindrance to families not to consider their mobile kin as successors. From another perspective, transcultural processes may emerge from visceral feelings or from the fear of bad mouthing as a result of not assisting the family, and this leads to imminent danger or bad luck.

Negotiating transcultural social fields

Migrants straddle different social fields and, as a result, their lives are embedded in multi-layered, multi-sited transnational social fields (Levitt & Glick Schiller 2004). Those with the correct legal documentation move back and forth between Cameroon and Cape Town for vacations and/or to supervise projects they are engaged in back home. This is not to say that those without documentation are incapacitated: they 'travel while sitting down' (Archambault 2012). This form of virtual migration enables them to navigate the transnational social field despite their absence. Two case studies will elucidate this perspective. As regards the first, Jake, who readers will remember from previous chapters, has permanent residence status in South Africa with his family. They visit home as a family once in a while but he has been twice before because of the project he is involved in, namely building student accommodation. In 2009 he went home with his older daughter and, in April 2011, he went with his wife and two children. Although they are always happy to be united with family, his experiences and the lack of development at home does not motivate him to go home until he retires. He em-

barked on this building project over three years ago and is also constructing a small shop to rent out for the time that he is away but plans to eventually put it to use when he retires and goes home. While at home, the family enjoyed visiting relatives but were constantly struck by the lack of development, the bad dirt roads and the increased police harassment and number of road checks. They were travelling with children whose experience of 'home' is Cape Town and who did not find their country (Cameroon) interesting, and constantly asked when they would return 'home'. It is important to note the nuanced meaning of home here. To the children, home is Cape Town and they do not identify with Cameroon. This is in contrast to their parents' disgruntled identification with it and, for them, attachment to home is through relations and the picturesque photos of greenery that Jake took during his visit to satisfy his nostalgic feelings, once in a while, when back in South Africa. In this respect, home is defined locally and globally because, as immigrants, people tend to define and develop an outsider's perspective of home, thus challenging the social and developmental shortcomings that characterize home. According to Jake:

I will never live in Cameroon until when I go back perhaps on retirement, I think because all this while I've been to Cameroon just twice and during these two periods, my experiences generally were ... I didn't experience the place as one that I want to live in. It's not just the physical environment but also the mentality of the people you meet ... you go into a bank to do a transaction, a person expects you to act in a certain way, you don't act that way and they have the right to say I am not serving you ... You sit in a vehicle, just because someone says something to someone in civilian attire who is a Captain in the Cameroonian army, they start beating him and they identify themselves '*Tu parle a un capitaine de l'armée Camerounais*'.² So I saw all these things and I felt like mad, and you cannot say anything ... And the physical environment, you get out of Douala airport you suddenly feel like you're on another planet.³

Other migrants visiting home have similarly concurred with Jake and, like him, would only retire home when the time is ripe, hence increasing the propensity of their connection back home. Prior to retiring, they maintain a 'dual frame of reference' (Guarnizo 1997: 310), whereby they constantly compare the situation in their home country to that in the host country.

The second case resonates with gender asymmetry and illustrates varying degrees of sentiments by female migrants. Female migrants take with them the family roles of care and structures across borders. The case of Joyce highlights a trend that exists within this community. She has four children and joined her husband in Cape Town in 2008. Of these children, the older two ones live with her elder sister in Bamenda, while the younger two boys live with her parents-in-law in Pinyin. In the school holidays, the children spend time with other sisters

² You are talking to the Captain of the Cameroonian Army (own translation).

³ Interview, Cape Town: 09/04/2011. It should be added that after this interview in August 2012, Jake went home with the family for a third visit. His impressions have not changed.

and those who live in town or go to the village as well. Through these connections, Joyce maintains her parenting obligations by sending money to her sisters and parents-in-law who look after her children. In addition, she is able to assign roles to various family members who look after her children. Although she does not like the fact that the younger two are still in the village where there is a lack of basic services (water, good schooling and proper sanitation), she is nevertheless consoled by the fact that her children are well brought up (well-mannered) and are not in South Africa where they would be exposed to the moral decadence of society there. Others like Joyce who have opted to send or keep their children at home share similar concerns: they want the children to be disciplined and not to be exposed to bad influences around them. As such, the decision to keep children back home overrides concerns regarding basic services and infrastructure that seem to be the guiding factor for men. The women are more concerned with family welfare and cohesion. They fear being alienated from their children by incompatibility between their own cultural identity and that which the children will acquire in Cape Town. They worry about any erosion of their authority and control over their children. The idea of leaving or sending children back is underpinned by the notion that 'a child is one person's only in the womb', the belief that the support system of kin will help raise the child in desirable ways (see Nyamnjoh 2002). And for the first time since her arrival in Cape Town four years ago, Joyce was able to go home in October 2012 to visit her children.

We should not lose sight of the fact that what these individuals perceive as intolerable is by no means new in the country or village. These were typical of their experiences before they left home and they constantly allude to how things have not changed since their departure. It would require more than a lack of basic services for people to leave. We should bear in mind that, there had been a virtual transnational comparison for most migrants prior to their departure and which intensified upon arrival in the host country. Their ability to navigate between the host and home countries has changed their tastes and perceptions of basic services. Conversely, their standard of living in Cape Town, where the provision of basic services is good, has changed their attitudes and make them more critical of their home, where basic services tend to be lacking. At first glance, this may seem to account for migrants' unwillingness to go back home but we must remember that the primordial reason for emigration was economic or spousal reunion and, much later, transnational comparison redefined their reasons for not wanting to compromise their standard of living.

Home to Joyce and Jake and their children does not have the same significance for them all. For Joyce, it is a place of nurturing and somewhere she can bring up her children to be well-mannered and is remote from the social ills that plague South Africa and, for Jake, it is his attachment with home as his place of

birth and where the rest of the family reside. In other words, they both have deep reservations about Cameroon's nation-state but great attachment to their village and place of origin. While this invariably affects their conception and attitudes towards home, it does not affect their emotional attachment to the place and relations there.

Despite misgivings about their country of origin, family ties are usually tightly maintained and nurtured, with families reaching out to each other in fascinating ways. Jake's desire to see his family after seven years in South Africa led him to adopt unorthodox means to go home with his elder daughter. Without a passport and as refugees, they used a *laissez-passé* to get into northern Nigeria and then went to the north of Cameroon and travelled by train to Yaoundé from where they continued to their village. For his part, Joe used a friend's passport that he pasted his photo into as a travel document to go to Cameroon the first time. Having spent over seven years without seeing the family, it was imperative, according to them, to use whatever means they had at their disposal to go home. Jake was very happy to have seen his mother before she passed away two years later. It would have been terrible for her to have died without seeing her granddaughter. Going home with his child was a way of connecting her to her roots and for Jake to re-establish his connections and sense of belonging.

In the event that those in Cape Town are unable to visit Cameroon, mothers are flown to Cape Town to visit. In the previous chapter we met Jane's mother who came to visit and to help her look after her first child. The visit of Charles's mother and Jake's mother-in-law were also planned to coincide with when their wives would give birth. Others arrange for sick relatives to travel to South Africa for medical attention or assist family with university admission. Despite the tendency for women to be more concerned and link up with home more regularly than men, the new technologies are increasingly involving men in linking home through the frequent calls they make.

Remittances have always been one of the ways for migrants to try to reconnect with home, as was expressed by the much-acclaimed actor Sidney Poitier (2000: 62) as far back as the 1930s when his host country was connected to his home village only by letters and 'it was an unwritten law in the Bahamas that people who go to America to live write home (and) they put a little something in the envelope'.

Remittances

The focus on remittances has often been on monetary remittances and how these impact on the social welfare and transformation of the recipients (Vertovec 2009: 103-118; Guarnizo 2003; World Bank 2001). Apart from the financial side, they entail tangible and intangible benefits (medication, education and goods) that

have the same social welfare function and much more. Remittances also transcend the social imposition on migrants as they are embedded in the way social and kinship relations are constructed in the Grassfields where everyone (both distant and immediate relations) looks to the migrant for assistance. It is a given that when a family member migrates, the family will receive remittances and assistance because of the way migration and countries of destination have been construed, namely as a forest where migrants go to hunt and then send home the game. For example, Mike received a call from his maternal uncle asking for money to pay his children's school fees as the uncle sees himself as being entitled to what Mike makes as a bushfaller.

Gifts as a form of remittance

Remittances are not necessarily monetary, especially from parents and relations at home. As a way of being morally supportive to their migrant kin overseas, families send gifts of various size and significance. Lola, for example, sent a necklace from Pinyin to her spouse (Martin) and mothers often prepared small food parcels for me to take to their children living abroad. When Jake visited home, his father sent video messages for the other four children in Cape Town. He felt that this was the most valuable gift he could give them at this point in their careers: he sent advice, warm words and encouragement, things that money could never buy. As he put it; '*na the only thing that wey I fit sendam for ma pe-kin them – fine talk (advice)*'.⁴ He wanted to send a recorded message that the children would be able to keep even when he was 'gone' so that they would still be able to listen to him. Death will not separate him from his children. Studies on remittances have tended to focus on monetary remittances more than on intangible gifts, which also constitute an immense form of remittance. These kinds of remittances underscore family feelings of togetherness despite the distance that separates them, for example thanks to Jake's mobility and his adeptness with new technologies, especially the camcorder.

Migrants often take advantage of someone going home to send gifts and money, no matter how small these may be. As a result of my travels back and forth between Cape Town and Cameroon, I often carried money and gifts for families in the village, with instructions to change the money from South African Rand to Central African CFA at the airport before giving it to the family. I also took five Visa cards along to hand over to friends, fiancée and relations. Amongst the things I took, Max's gift to his children caught my imagination in particular. My diary entry for 03/09/2011 attests to this. I had just returned from Cape Town to Bamenda to continue my fieldwork.

⁴ Conversation with Jake's father in Pinyin: 11/10/2011.

I arrived in Bamenda ... and went out to distribute the parcels I brought from relations in Cape Town. Most had called me already given they had been given my number by the senders of these parcels. Some of the things sent were just to signify that they were out in Cape Town. Max, for example sent two packets of biscuits, some pens and some pirated cartoon DVDs for his children and a ball for the football club where he was a member. There was nothing special about what he sent. But I guess the significance is not so much about the things sent but rather the meaning attached to them and the bond that keeps them together. The things cement the relationship and maintain his virtual presence. Also, the meaning the children attribute to the things, anything foreign and coming from family abroad and no matter how small it is, plays an important role in the mind of the receiver.

Most migrants with ailing parents or family on medication for a chronic illness have found ways of consulting a doctor on their behalf in Cape Town and they then purchase medicine and send it home whenever they can find someone willing to take it. Bianca (from Pinyin), a nursing student in Cape Town, has been able to get her mother's drugs this way. Her mother lives in the village, is diabetic and also suffers from hypertension. Whenever she knows somebody will be travelling back to the village, she contacts her mother about the state of her health and consults her GP on her mother's behalf. She then buys the drugs prescribed and sends them with the person travelling. Bianca always prefers to send drugs to money for the drugs because the South African drugs are much better than what her mother can buy at home. This is her story:

... we communicate on a weekly basis and my mother is a patient. She's a diabetic patient and has high blood pressure too. What I do is that every two months, I can send her at least, FCFA 25,000 to FCFA 50, 000 to keep her constantly on medication. And sometimes when I see someone who is leaving for Cameroon, I go and consult a doctor ... My own doctor who I consult is a doctor in this new medical centre, Dr X. I consult him, then buy medicines and send (sic).⁵

Monetary remittances

As discussed in previous chapters, these 'mobiles' have established their own form of monetary transfers regarding remittances. While M-pesa is the obvious means of sending money today for most in Southern and East Africa, this method is still to appeal to Pinyin and Mankon migrants. Sending money via mobile phone is unpopular with them because mobile money is a fairly new way of transferring money and was not popular in Cameroon at the start of this research. By the time it gained currency, migrants had already turned to using Visa cards. And most parents in the village are not literate and can only manage to receive and make calls on a mobile phone. Quite a number have electronic Visa cards in the keeping of friends and relations who are frequently instructed on how much money to give to relatives. Those without cards at home use those of others to send money. The amount is deposited in the account with sufficient to cover any

⁵ Interview, Cape Town: 17/08/2010.

bank charges, and the recipient back home is requested to meet the cardholder in Cameroon.

Whether in cash or kind, remittances go a long way to alleviating the social and physical woes of recipients, as well as compensating for their children's absence. While some send money periodically or in times of crisis, others have felt it is their duty to place parents on a monthly subsistence allowance. Emile,⁶ who is from Pinyin but lives in The Hague, gives his widowed mother an allowance of FCFA 10,000 a month, over and above anything he might send her if there is a serious family crisis. Emile's mother told me about the financial assistance she receives from him and his sister in Cape Town. Although she rarely calls them, she beeps so they can call her back. And if in dire need, she beeps and waits for them to return her call with a simple message '*I di call for tell them say dat thing (money) don finish, I just be me empty hand*'.⁷ She goes on to describe how the money is sent to her from the Netherlands; 'Emile sends the money to his sister in Limbe (South West Region), who then sends it to the Mitayen Credit Union in Santa where the mother goes to fetch it, or the money is forwarded to the one in Pinyin'. She expresses her satisfaction with the level of financial assistance she receives from them (Emile's sister in Cape Town as well). And to mark her gratitude, every time they send her some money '*I di give special offertory for church for thank God for them and di beg yi (God) for them for continue di bless them*'.⁸ Unlike some parents who can place excessive demands on their children (noted from interviews with the children in Cape Town), Emile's mother is cautious about being too demanding and would not want to encourage them to engage in illegal activities in order to send her money. According to her, '*if pekin go out you di ask money all the time na for send yi say make yi go enter coupé (nyongo). Better yi give the small one wey ee get*'.⁹ Some of this money goes to sponsor funerals at home. Being cautious about her demands from her children is her way of morally protecting them from indulging in unlawful acts to satisfy her demands.

Partaking in virtual and transcultural funerals

Chapter 8 dwelt on how associations assist with funerals in the host country when a member passes away. In this section, I focus on how individual migrants relate to funerals in their respective families, the trauma of absence and the emotions that this brings to bear on them. Funerals and deaths back home account for

⁶ Interview, The Hague: 28/11/2010.

⁷ Conversation, Pinyin with Emile's mother; 10/10/2011 (see Footnote 1). Word in brackets is the researcher's.

⁸ Conversation, Pinyin with Emile's mother; 10/10/2011. Word in brackets is the researcher's.

⁹ See Footnote 8.

the greatest part of migrants' remittances and engagement in family circles (Mazzucato 2008; Mazzucato *et al.* 2006; Gugler 2002). And they also herald a time for increased telephone connectivity to make arrangements for a decent funeral and for rituals to be performed. Increasingly, they are becoming multi-sited events. Funerals and rituals form part of the code of honour that keeps migrants attached to the family leash, fearing bad luck if they do not participate financially in funerals at home. As was shown in Chapters 7 and 8, participation in such events has a multifocal role as it reifies identity and belonging to the community and the home village. It is an expression of wealth as it proves how much social and cultural capital one has garnered. In this light, the death of members with kin and children can either adopt the appellation '*bush-faller die*' (*ala-ah*) or '*yeye die*'. The former denotes that mourners were well catered for, and the latter means that there was barely enough food and drink to feed the guests. By extension, the quality of the funeral organized can render pride or bring shame to the family: pride that mourners are well looked after or shame if the home community expects a grand funeral and it turns out to be a '*yeye die*'. As such, funerals can sometimes be delayed for up to two months, with the body lying in the mortuary waiting for the arrival of all the deceased's children, to provide adequate time for decent funeral arrangements to be made. Bad mouthing and village gossip take centre stage, with people expressing their indignation. For a migrant, assent is important to their dignity as well as the entire family. John's story clarifies to this point.

John's story

John hails from Mankon and emigrated to the Netherlands in 1999 to study. Upon completion of his studies, he could not find work and decided to continue studying. He graduated in 2003 with a second MBA, this time in Management and Marketing and since then has only had secured work in low-paid jobs that do not match his qualifications. In the meantime, he acquired Dutch citizenship in the hope that this would open more doors for him. But he soon realized that a Dutch passport would only give him the opportunity to live in the country, as he was constantly asked at job interviews why he did not go back to Cameroon after completing his studies. He got married in 2005 to a Cameroonian with Dutch nationality who he met in Holland and in 2008 she passed away. Despite her having Dutch nationality, he took the body home for burial. Prior to his departure, the deceased's cousin and other friends spent weeks making funeral arrangements in the Netherlands, processing repatriation documents and liaising with family back home. A cry die was also organized in The Hague, when sympathizers and the church offered donations to help towards the costs of sending the body home.

In 2010 John's mother passed away and he sent money home for the funeral, but still travelled home two weeks later because he had initially bought a non-refundable ticket to visit her while she was sick. At home he invited the choir that his mother was a member of to sing at a church service that he organized in her memory. After the service there was a meal (provided by John). Going home was the right thing for him to do and was a way of mourning his mother, despite the fact that he had already sent money home for the actual funeral. He maintained that: 'I really need to satisfy myself that I was at the burial because when I go

I will make something, I will throw a feast and it will satisfy me psychologically because people will come around; it will be as if am making my own service.' Prior to going home, he had reprinted and enlarged photos of her and hung them on his wall, and organized a cry die in The Hague among the Cameroonian community. On the day of the burial, he followed the ceremony virtually from the Netherlands, i.e. when his mother was being interred, he phoned his brother and asked that he put his phone on speaker so he could participate, while simultaneously recording the song that was being sung then and that he later used for a while as his ring tone in memory of her. Getting his brother to put the phone on speaker was the only way he could be part of the ceremony. This gave him some emotional consolation and the gesture was significant:

'I did that because I wanted to have some presence at the graveside, that's all ... I wanted to feel that atmosphere, to listen to the types of song they were singing at the grave, to listen to that melody, it's very important because I will never ever forget the songs. It gives me the idea of presence, as if I was also participating in the funeral. I felt that I was present there.'¹⁰

Despite this virtual presence, he went home two weeks later, as mentioned above. It was during this visit that he was given a title in the Fon's palace, loosely translated as the 'Fon's Listener'. Before returning to the Netherlands, he made arrangements for his mother's grave to be built and for a tombstone to be erected.

In 2011 his father passed away and this time he travelled home for the funeral and spent a month there. The body was put in the mortuary while he made funeral arrangements with the family. During this period, communication between him and home intensified, as well as communication in the host country, with friends calling to offer their condolences and gathering at his home every evening. (I was in Cape Town then and had a series of Skype calls with him and when he travelled home, I sent my mother to represent me at the funeral.) But before travelling, he again organized a cry die in The Hague. Having never attended a funeral back home since he left in 1999, this was his first and he was amazed at the elaborate expenditure on food, drink and clothes (*aswhabi*) for family and friends. Nevertheless, he was very happy to be home and to participate in the funeral.

John's story aptly shows, on one the hand, migrants' transnational virtual and corporeal engagement in funerals back home and, on the other, how living in the Netherlands for twelve years has not changed his notion about participating in funerals. If anything, his long absence had heightened his craving to be part of the family when his father passed away, which was why the body was put in the morgue until he arrived. Migration has played an important role in changing the face of funerals, in sharp contrast to the low-key and modest ceremony I used to see in the village when I was a child. Within hours of the death of both his parents, the news was communicated to him by phone. While such swift information was partly to let him know about their deaths, it was also in expectation that he would send money or bring it with him in person. When his mother passed away, the family did not want him to attend the funeral because of the earlier expenses he had incurred. Acknowledging his financial contributions during her period of hospitalization was a way of allowing John to recuperate financially. What also marks this moment for migrants is the emotional trauma they have to endure if they do not travel home or if they have not seen the deceased for a long time before his/her death.

¹⁰ Interview with John, The Hague: 29/09/2010.

Attending funerals and organizing simultaneous ceremonies in the host country helps individuals to deal with the situation psychologically and overcome the emotional trauma that comes with it. By organizing huge funerals, it is easier for them to come to terms with the death and it absolves them of their long absence and re-inserts them back into the family fold. But these are habits that they have been brought up with. However, going home gives them the opportunity to organize a 'bush-faller die'. Besides the emotions and the 'politics of status' (van der Geest 2000), fear is often at the heart of these elaborate funerals, fear of ill luck and that a poor funeral will bring shame to the family. As Bosman (1967¹¹ cited in van der Geest 2000: 104) noted with reference to funerals in the Akan society of Ghana, funerals are 'a point of honour to make a great show at their funeral customs, and they vie with each other in performing these expensive burials. Even the poorest will pawn and enslave themselves to obtain the means of burying a relation decently, according to the ideas of the country.' A Pinyin or Mankon would immediately identify with this process. This is testament to the similarity of funerals in both societies because death has come to symbolize munificence over the dead body in Pinyin and Mankon as well as in most African societies. And this munificent is escalated by the number of family members abroad who want to attend and request that the body be put in the mortuary pending their arrival. Their presence is usually remembered for their excessive spending at the funeral itself. On such occasions, it is common for families to be levied, with bushfallers paying the highest levy.

The case of Terence, who originates from Pinyin but lives in Cape Town, illustrates this point. His maternal grandfather passed away in the village in October 2011 and as the deceased was considered by all in the village to be a man of status (a 'baobab' in everyday parlance), the family was eager to maintain the status quo. A family meeting was held to plan the funeral and his mother was charged with communicating to him his levy of FCFA 300,000 (approx. € 500 or R 5000) and other obligations (*kontri fashion*) that he had to perform. This was a disappointment because he thought the amount was too high. He wondered aloud how much he would have to spend when his father died. However, the money was duly sent to allow his parents to entertain their own guests and when I arrived in the village a few days after the funeral, I heard stories about how grand it had all been. His father was very proud of him and claimed that such funeral remittances helped to give him and his peers a voice in the village because he could slaughter a pig for the occasion, pay for gunpowder and entertain his guests. Respect is not only gained by the migrants when they send remittances but the receivers of these remittances equally garner prestige and respect from their peers

¹¹ This is as relevant today as it was when it was written over four decades ago.

as it increases their spending capabilities and compensates for the migrant's absence.

Channelling emotions

... it's not just about the demands, it's about the attitude. The more you give, the happier the family is with you, the more responsive they are to your communication and phone calls. The more withdrawn you are financially, the more withdrawn they are, so sometimes you don't even feel like phoning when you're not giving. You know ... for me it's not just about phoning and getting these complains and demands, for me it's about phoning and speaking to people who really show emotions of joy and excitement that you have phoned, even over the phone. You can sense them. The more distance you have financially, the more some people will be distant even in their communication approaches so it puts me off and I just do not feel like phoning those people.

It should be reciprocal especially when you have a child out of the country ... The only thing you can give them is when they phone and you speak to them in a manner that they would go away knowing that I've connected with my family. But when they phone and they are distant with you, give more monosyllabic answers to their questions and there's no communication, then it puts one off and it makes you miserable being that far away.¹²

Using this quote as our point of departure and to give insight into how human interactions are characterized by social relationships and may lead to 'memorable and meaningful aspects of their lives' (Leach & Tiedens 2004), we can assess the impact of migrants' mental states when they feel disconnected from family bonds. It also shows how, if remittances are not properly managed, the situation leads to anger and unhappiness, and conversely to happiness when everything is well managed, as was shown above. Through Jake I aim to show the inextricable relationship between remittances and emotions and how, together, they lead to disruptive or interactive social relationships because 'social interaction and relationships are so important, and emotions respond to them' (*Ibid.*: 7). As such, it is difficult to talk of transnational families without incorporating the emotions expressed and the way migrants talk about these feelings because they form a 'constitutive part of the transnational family and migration experiences – experiences of adjustments, nostalgia, shattered sense of belonging, loss, abrupt ending' – all of which form salient sources of emotions' (Skrbiš 2008: 236). The emphasis on transnational studies has been less about remittances, double engagement and funeral participation than emotions. Empirical findings from this study show just how much emotional content pervades relationships within family circuits. These emotions are couched in the longing for home. In their absence, migrants substitute home for the mobile communities in place. In this respect, I contend that migration is an on-going emotional journey for both the migrants and those left behind in the home country, and an emotional challenge that they seek to mitigate. While ICTs have made nonsense of physical boundaries, match-

¹² Interview with Jake, Cape Town: 09/04/2011.

ing this with respect to emotional boundaries still requires co-presence and face-to-face interaction. However much emotional investment is made in maintaining contact with those left behind, those left behind also attempt to reciprocate with their kin abroad, making them 'local transnationals' (*Ibid.*: 238). While studies have primarily focused on migrants' involvement back home, as though communication was one-way traffic, I show that although calls from home are not necessarily frequent, they do have an effect on migrants. This sheds light on the emotional anxiety that occurs as a result of emigration and family separation.

As Turner & Stets (2005: 1) have so well argued, emotions can be seen as the 'glue' that binds people together ... to large-scale social and cultural structures, and by the same token emotions are also what can drive people apart and push them to tear down the social structures'. They extend their argument by asserting that emotions are 'socially constructed' given the fact that what people feel is 'conditioned by socialization into culture and by participation in social structures' (*Ibid.*: 2), namely ideologies, beliefs and norms as they impinge on social structures. We could thus infer that transcultural habitus is equally underpinned by the 'emotional culture' (Ryan 2008: 300) that defines how people should feel on various occasions, a feeling they have internalized throughout childhood and their adult lives and that forms part of their cultural ethos of 'feeling rules'. It follows that emotions emerge from situations that are intimately social, with individuals learning appropriate feelings and how to use them in different types of relationships (Turner & Stets 2005). The overriding question here is to what extent ICTs have enhanced or mitigated the channelling of emotions amongst transnational migrants. What role do emotions play in the negotiation of transcultural family life?

Imminent return visits and family reunions are, therefore, events that ignite deep emotional anxiety and joy. These visits and reunions, while leaving an indelible mark on the migrant, take place in the continuum and provide a window into their accumulation or degeneration of emotional capital. While such emotional contents have been made vivid as a result of enhanced communication technologies so that migrants can easily express joy or vent their frustrations about relationships with family, it does not preclude the fact that these expressed emotions date back to the period of rural-rural mobility when migrants eagerly awaited market days to hear news of family members from traders who came from the village to sell products at the market. Pa Muluh from Pinyin, for instance, used to live in Njinikom where he would go to the neighbouring markets in Nkambe, Wum and Fundong to buy goats to resell in Njinikom. On market days in Njinikom, he looked forward to receiving a message from his father and to getting news of his village. The last such message was an urgent message from his father requesting him to come home.

Letters in the past were seen as methods to channel such emotions among transnational families, as was shown by Thomas & Znaniecki (1918/1974), whose seminal work provided an embryonic understanding of transnational family emotions amongst Polish migrants in the US. It is in this light that Skrbiš (2008: 232) opines that these letters contain information as well as being repositories of emotions that express ‘sadness, longing, dread, pain, happiness, love, faithfulness, betrayal and emotionalised claims about truth-making all competing for attention’. Returning to the opening quote above by Jake, this attitude could be read as emotions of longing and seeking attention. Today, such emotions are expressed more in phone conversations and emails than in letters, which used to take a long time before they reached recipients. Migrants and families have the agentic role and can choose which particular communication tool to use to best convey a specific emotion. For instance, when Joe’s mother passed away, the family at home chose not to inform him by phone even though he made frequent calls home. Instead, an uncle insisted on having his postal address and a letter was sent informing him about the death. According to Joe, it was the right decision as the emotional shock would have been too great if the news had been given in one of their phone calls. The carefully worded letter had a more soothing effect than any phone call could ever have had.

The opening quote is illustrative of the expected ‘emotional reciprocity’ (Wolfe 2002) that migrants constantly negotiate in terms of psychological balance, wellbeing and belonging. Additional information from the voice, tone, expression and silences that is derived from phone calls conveys lucid emotions from both parties. However, migrants like Jake are quick to notice when the voice and tone do not convey the usual emotional concern and this has a telling impact on the migrant. While phone conversations in the context of long-distance communication aims at calming fears of disconnection from the family fold or sustaining virtual intimacies, monosyllabic answers or long silences and lapses only help to raise the tension. What this equally affirms is that transnational family relationships are dynamic and fluid, shifting according to life-cycle events as well as responding to the flow of remittances and perceptions of emotional closeness. As such, families exhibit a variety of communication patterns over time and context.

Family reunions and planned visits

The imminent visit of a migrant triggers anxieties and emotions from when the journey is planned until the actual journey takes place, and any impending face-to-face meetings heighten emotional arousal and signify attachment to the home village. Gordon (1961, 1963 cited in Turner & Stets 2005: 27-28) conceives such face-to-face meetings as an ‘encounter’ that bespeaks ‘an emergent “we” feeling

of solidarity and flow of feeling and a ritual of ceremonial punctuation of openings, closings, entrances and exits'. He carries on to say that these encounters are embedded within an occasion that is part of a larger gathering. Such gatherings are meticulously arranged using any of the various forms of communication technologies available. As such, and prior to the gathering, there is endless communication back and forth to make advance arrangements. Longing for and requesting particular food to be prepared, mental notes of must-see members of the family and places to visit as well as what to take back are some other focal points. Similar to Gordon's 'encounter', Urry (2003: 156) affirms that such 'increasingly extensive networks, made further extensive through communication revolution, do need occasioned meetings for its survival', which he refers to as 'meetingness'. This 'meetingness' or 'encounter' is underpinned by emotions and the desire to reconnect with the family fold, and the affordable and myriad forms of travel that have made it possible for these reunions to take place at all.

The returning home of Rachael & Joe, as we will see below, was orchestrated by cultural obligations (Urry 2003) that were prescribed (*kontri fashion*) but also carried strong normative expectations of presence and attention from home. It was in this context that Goffman (1963: 22 cited in Baldassar 2008: 262) maintained that 'co-presence renders persons uniquely accessible, available, and subject to one another'. Rachael's case is a good example here. She originates from Mankon and migrated to Cape Town in 2007 for her studies. After she gained her Bachelors, she got married, had a baby and then informed the family back home. In 2010 her dad passed away and although she was unable to attend the funeral, she sent money. Communicating with her mother back home, they scheduled the memorial service for April 2012, and after that there was endless communication back and forth to meticulously plan the ceremony. She and her sister (also in Cape Town) sent money for the mother to begin renovation work on the house according to the standards that her father had mentioned in discussions before he died and also for the grave to be built. Money was sent to hire canopies and chairs and their mother was charged with asking the presiding pastor for the occasion, in advance, to diarize it. By the same token, Rachael was looking forward to 'just hugging her mother and crying with her'. 'I have missed her so much and can't even imagine what she is going through since my father died ... I also have a lot of things to tell my father when I go, I will have to talk to him over his grave'.¹³ When talking about her father, she tries hard to maintain her composure as her voice cracks in the course of our interview. Going home was very important for both of them as they needed to 'face the place' (their father's grave) with an emotional and corporeal co-presence that until now had only been virtual. Rachael was then also still a student (pursuing an MA) and a businesswoman,

¹³ Interviews: Cape Town with Rachael: 27/08/2011, and in Bamenda with her mother: 19/09/2011.

and had made a list of all the things she wanted to bring back for her shop as well as foodstuffs and a traditional dress (*ntogho*). The dress, which is a must-have in both communities, reinforces a woman's identity and sense of belonging to the home village as well as exhibiting her emotional attachment, judging by her insistence on buying the best cloth for hers. Rachael had been able to make all the necessary arrangements prior to her departure simply by pressing the call button on her phone and through email correspondence with one of her aunts who is good on the Internet.

Reunions, like return visits, are laden with emotions and can be seen to symbolize congregations of transnational family members who are of significant importance in the lives of transmigrants (Skrbiš 2008). While their importance should not be underestimated, what we should remember is that prior to these reunions, like return visits, a lot of behind-the-scenes phone calls and other forms of interpersonal communication are going on. In a Skype conversation from Leiden on 26/10/2012 with Joe in Cape Town, he told me he was delighted to inform me about the upcoming events in his family:

Q: What is news at home?

A: The good news is that the entire family will be at home this December; Esther, the baby and I will travel on 27/12/2012. Raymond will be flying in from Sweden, Alphonse is coming to get married and Chris will be going home for the first time since he arrived in South Africa (six years ago) to go and look for a wife with Raymond.¹⁴

Raymond is in Sweden and Joe and his two brothers are based in Cape Town so this would be the first time all of them were converging on home at the same time and the first time that Chris and Raymond had gone home since their father died in 2008. Joe was going home for the second time with his South African wife but also with a new addition to the family – their twenty-month-old daughter who is named after Joe's late mother.¹⁵ She will be presented to the family for the first time. In addition, Joe will be crowned as his father's successor, as was discussed in the previous chapter. Joe had been communicating with Raymond in Sweden via Skype and they will arrive in Cameroon on the same day and travel on to Bamenda together. Back in the village, he is in communication with his family, his uncle and the quarter's head (*ndei*) who was going to preside over the ceremony. Straddling different social fields, Joe was able to make arrangements with respect to the family gathering thanks to cheap calls to the home country and free Skype calls on the Internet to Sweden, as well as face-to-face meetings with two siblings in Cape Town that were interspersed with phone calls. This experience will stay with the entire family at home forever; as it is a once-in-a-lifetime gathering. It would be reminiscent of their childhood days and provide

¹⁴ Skype conversation with Joe: 26/10/2012.

¹⁵ After naming the child after his mother, he felt that he had brought his mother back to life.

fulfilment of their intense emotional longing and nostalgia. Earlier conversations with Chris highlighted how he longed for the day when he would go home and eat ‘proper *achu*’ and drink palm wine. All the stories of their return visit and imminent family reunion bear the hallmarks of nostalgia and experiences of longing and absence. What this also reiterates is the importance of mobile communication in arranging such a family gathering. First, the timing has to be right for those at home and abroad and it is only by telephone communication that the reunion of the dispersed – in Sweden, Cape Town, Nkambe and Pinyin – was possible. Co-presence and emotional feelings were channelled through telephonic communication to make the gathering possible.

Photos and memorabilia as co-presence

When I came to South Africa, I brought photos of my wife and children. These photos have been quite helpful especially on days when I miss them very much. I take them out and go through them, after which I call them while looking at the photos. It makes me feel as if they are next to me and after that I can sleep calmly.¹⁶

The opening quote in the title is reminiscent of when workers left the Grassfields to go to the coast as plantation labourers (Nkwi 2011) or when township workers left for the mines in South Africa (Feyder 2009) and all they had to remind them of their relations were their photos. Photos have long played a cathartic role in the lives of migrants and the families who stay behind. However, today, the story is one of evolution as cameras are common, have become digital and moved on from the black and white pictures of the past to today’s colour ones. And, importantly, people do not have to wait for three months for colour pictures to be sent to Europe for printing. Photos taken impulsively to capture unexpected moments are increasingly popular thanks to the availability of mobile phones that incorporate cameras as well. Photos have become a daily reality in the lives of migrants and their families. Joe’s mobile phone has allowed him to document his daughter’s progress from her birth to today, as well as their visit to Cameroon. Part of my fieldwork entailed immortalizing events by photographing families and individuals that I interviewed, as well as things that struck me as memorable in the course of my research. In Cape Town, Pinyin and Mankon, these photos of relations were the most sought-after. Families in the village would ask whether I had photos of their relations and would want to print and enlarge them. In this respect, I asked individuals interested to give me brand a new USB stick so I could transfer their photos onto them (and protect my own computer). Others (for example Joyce) printed the photos directly from my camera’s memory card. I

¹⁶ Interview with Max, Cape Town: 31/07/2011.

Photo 9.1 Joyce's children in Pinyin



Photo 9.2 Joyce printing out the photos from the researcher's memory card



also took back lots of photos from family in Pinyin to show to kin. Some were recent photos, while others were old ones.

Bourdieu ([1965] 1990: 19-20) likened photography to a process of 'solemnizing and immortalizing the high points of family life, of reinforcing the integration of the family group by reasserting the sense that it has both of itself and of its unity'. This was seen as the main purpose and *raison d'être* of popular photography, but it is just one aspect of the story that 'expresses the celebratory sense of family events; the internalisation of the social function of this practice' (*Ibid.*). In the context of global mobility, I maintain that photos also play an emotional role in calming the emotional stress of absence and longing and also perpetuate family memories (see also Feyder 2009). While its role bears witness to events, it is

Photo 9.3 Max, just before boarding a flight from Cameroon to South Africa.



Photo 9.4 Most of Max's family, except for his mother, travelled to Douala to see him off at the airport



not as imminent as before. Unexpected photo shoots today tell the stories better given the proliferation of digital appliances and mobile cameras.

When I visited Max's family in Cameroon, his two children (aged three and five) were keen to show me photos of their father and were not happy when I asked if I could borrow some of them to scan before returning them. They cried and said: 'Don't take our daddy away, give back our daddy'.

The outpouring of emotion by the children made me return the photos but, understanding the importance of my research, their mother found a way of lending me the photos without their knowledge. Looking at the photos, I noticed Max's mother was not present among those who went to see Max off at the airport and I asked why. She said, 'going to the airport would have killed me, it broke my heart to see him leave the house on that day, and it was difficult to see my first son depart'. As she spoke, tears rolled down her cheeks and she is still bereft over his departure. On a second visit, the children told me: 'we will hide our daddy so that you do not take him away'. Incidentally, the opening quote is by their father Max, in Cape Town, and shows the extent to which emotions are embedded in photos and the soothing role they have on him and his children. Being miles apart, what keeps them together are the photos of each other that they both have in their possession, and the phone calls he makes to complement the photos. But his mother's emotions are still raw and all she wants is for him to come home. Through these memorabilia and his virtual co-presence, members seek to keep a 'sense of family' (Baldassar 2007: 392) across geographic boundaries and are updated with each other's developments. In other words, while these photos visually and virtually unite spouses and families within the abstract space and endless time zone of the oval frame (*Ibid.*), the outpouring of emotions witnessed (and captured) in this researcher's interaction 'describes an interpersonal dynamic in a way that no other description can, hence, constitutes the relationship' (Leach & Tiedens 2004: 8).

I arrived from the Netherlands with photos of Emile's son for his mother in Pinyin. Having called earlier to inform her about my arrival, she postponed her farming activities for that day and was at home waiting for me. When I gave her the photos, she looked at them, danced with them held tightly to her chest, and after a few turns kissed the photos and lifted them up to the sky and said 'Thank you Lord'. She then resumed her dance with the photos clasped to her, paused for a while, took another look at them and continued dancing (Photo 9.5).

This came to an abrupt end and she then sent for her eldest step-daughter to come and see the photos. When she arrived and they looked at the photos together, they both started dancing again. This was the first time they had seen pictures of their five-year-old (grand) son, which helps account for the outbursts of

Photo 9.5 Emile's mother looking at the photos of her grandson sent by Emile with this researcher (from Holland to Pinyin)



emotion. Photos, like ICTs, instil a sense that loved ones are present despite the geographic distance that separates them (Brinkerhoff 2009).

There are strong parallels with photos of the living and of deceased parents. All the photos are kept with utmost care and offer a sense of assurance to migrants that they are still connected with kin and that deceased relatives are still watching over them. As mentioned earlier, once migrants receive news of the death of a parent, they immediately enlarge his/her photo and put it on display, as was the case with John in The Hague and CJ, Paul, Peter and Joyce in Cape Town. When I visited John in The Hague, I noticed that the photos of his deceased parents had been moved from his living room to beside his bed. Asked why he chose to keep them so close, he said 'I want to enjoy them for a while, I get inspiration with them being so close to me'.¹⁷ A continuing bond with them and no feelings of detachment from the deceased are common (cf. Klass 2001), and this has psychological benefits for the bereaved persons as in John's case.

These 'transnational objects' (Baldassar 2008: 257), such as photos, memorabilia, recorded messages and gifts, are significant to givers and recipients because of their tangibility and this takes the physical place of the longed-for person or location. They stand for the absence of being. For instance, Jake's father's video message to his children has helped them to connect to their father by constantly

¹⁷ Conversation with John, The Hague: 25/11/2012.

watching and listening to his message. Placing their photos close to their chests (Emile's mother and sister) or like John beside his bed illustrates their commitment to their respective relationships. Although the photos and video become the 'co-virtual presence', they are the tangible things people can hang on to as a replacement for a 'physical co-presence' (*Ibid.*). But what we must remember is that the availability of these photos was as a result of me navigating between the Netherlands, South Africa and Cameroon because of improved airline travel. I was able to be at these loci at various times but there was also the possibility of sending the photos by Internet. The fact that John was able to enlarge old black-and-white photos of his parents to a restorative state signals great strides in digital technology that have helped him to immortalize his parents. Conversely, Jake going home with a portable camcorder that can record for a long time before re-charging is indicative of their evolution from the large and cumbersome equipment of the past to today's sleek ones that double up as both camcorder and camera. As a result, migrants and their families are able to express simultaneous emotions of proxy, missing and yearning, thus becoming transnational and trans-cultural families. The phone conversations, photos and memorabilia allow families to act out and express their sense of closeness and intimacy.

Mediating long-distance relationships (LDRs) and co-presence

Apart from these photos, I also have lots of photos of the children, my wife and mother on my phone. Even my screen saver (*photo displayed on the mobile phone*) is a photo of my children. On days when business is slow, I keep myself busy by scrolling through the photos.¹⁸

Max's coping mechanisms for dealing with the distance that separates him and the family are the phone calls he makes home and his kids' photos that are on his mobile phone. His phone is like a 'Swiss Army Knife' (Castells *et al.* 2007) that, besides calling, gives him emotional satisfaction and the feeling that his family is just a click away. Having been with Max in the field (see Chapter 4), his free moments are times to scroll through the photos on his phone to bring his family closer. He has given clear instruction to his siblings never to phone or beep him in the mornings and the only persons authorized to do so are his wife and his mother. For her part, his wife gives him a brief call in the morning just to 'say hello', especially if he has gone for two days without calling. She admits it is difficult for her and the children to be without him but at the same time they are happy as their lives have changed considerably for the better since his departure. Despite an improved livelihood, the strain on her is betrayed by long moments of silence, a cracking voice and watery eyes during the course of the interview. In this context, mobile phones do not replace face-to-face interaction but provide

¹⁸ Conversation with Max, Cape Town: 27/07/2011.

new opportunities for constructing a co-presence despite the distance (Horst & Miller 2006), as well as mitigating emotional worries of absence and loss. The use of SMS for both Max and his wife has become part and parcel of their daily routine. She informs him about developments in the family, seeks his opinion before any major decision is taken in the family and this, in turn, gives Max the feeling of still being in charge in his family although he is faraway. But text messages too have created a virtual space for both of them to affirm their loyalty to each other. For Max and his family, the mobile phone has become the tool that maintains the LDRs and 'relational continuity' and is a way to define the relationship as continuous. The Internet is not yet a part of their communication repertoire, perhaps because neither of them is well-versed in how to use it.

This connectedness enables us to understand how the proliferation of mobile phones has mitigated distance and enhanced spousal relationships. This begs the question about how those who travelled in the late 1990s and left their families back home, like Joe and Jake, connected with them. For Jake, the Internet, though scarce and slow back then in Cameroon, was his God-sent medium of communication because of its relatively inexpensive nature, but above all because a friend (who had an Internet connection then) served as the link between him and his family. According to him,

... In my case, I also had this friend, Simon, who has this NGO in Bamenda; one Pinyin man ... most often I'll write emails to him, he'll print them and give them to my family then they will come and give him messages, then he will write them and send them to me.

Q: OK he will print emails and send them to the village?

A: Yes ... then when they have a message, they will give him mine, then he will type out an email and send it to me.

Q: So somebody will leave the village and come to Bamenda to give him the letter?

A: Yes ... that's how I communicated with people in the village at that stage and I still have some of those emails (laughs) that he sent to me ... even when I started communicating with my wife, that's how I communicated in Cameroon ... when she was in Cameroon then. Because she didn't have a phone initially and she didn't even have an email. So that's how we communicated initially.¹⁹

Although Wilding (2006) contends that such 'virtual intimacies' are characteristics of transnational families, it is equally important to highlight that virtual intimacies cannot go on indefinitely but need to be greased by a corporeal presence.

Prior to the proliferation of mobile telephony, the Internet was the main form of communication between families and kin abroad, and sending or receiving an email would cost FCFA 1500 (approx. € 2.50) at the only Internet cafe – Allied Bamenda – back then. But for someone like Jake, having an anchor person in Bamenda who could deliver emails to his family and wife meant that the distance

¹⁹ Interview with Jake, Cape Town: 11/08/2010.

between them was less due to the ease of communication. And for urgent matters, he would phone his uncle in Yaoundé who had a fixed phone at home. Today, as a result of the reduced tariffs for telephone calls, migrants call more frequently and are able to 'lie on their beds and make calls home'.

On the whole, the introduction of ICTs in the lives of families makes migration and mobility more acceptable than ever before and gives 'distant individuals the means to manage and maintain their connections as well as to negotiate their roles through time' (Bacigalpe & Cámara 2012; see also Wilding 2006: 132). While ritualized communication helps to manage LDRs, it also fosters the transmission of belief systems and inculcates the notion of witchcraft.

Transcultural ↔ Transnational belief systems and the notion of witchcraft

*Since wey yi woman sick sote PIFAM contribute money senam back for Cameroon, the woman go sick sote die, ee no go for buryam. Till today ee never go for see whosai wey them bury ee woman, ee never go make ee own die, na yi bad luck ee don carryam so noh! Ee be among the first Pinyin people them for this kontri, but ee don fall (business) sote ee no fit pay yi rents, even for play njangi don pass yi. Na daso the bad luck di follow yi so.*²⁰

The above excerpt includes scathing remarks made by a female informant about another migrant (Jerry).²¹ He is considered by most as a failure because he is plagued by ill luck. He is thought to have a curse of bad luck hanging over his head as a result of his inability to travel home for his wife's funeral and the fact that he has not even gone home since her death to see her grave or organize a cry die in her honour. Such perceptions are deeply embedded in migrants' cosmic belief system and negligence or the inability to yield to the dogma of tradition is believed to be sanctioned by ill luck. It is believed that whatever Jerry does will meet with failure. The ripple effect of not going home to bury his wife has stirred up feelings of resentment amongst the village folk, especially the women. And this resentment may leave him vulnerable to real or imagined curses of *kontri fashion* (Nyamnjoh 2005). The term witchcraft is used here in its widest sense and includes sorcery, evil spirits, bad luck and jealousy when referring to the Grassfields, but also in the way it is used by my informants.

Most informants believe that Jerry's shop and his attempts to get into pitching failed as a result of not him going home in eight years, and more specifically his failure to go home to bury or organize a cry die for his late wife. If he goes home to *make kontri fashion*, he will have some respite and '*yi road go di shine, anything wey ee want do-am go di waka fine*'.²² These beliefs also mirror those held in Pinyin by parents who urge kin to come home and participate in cry dies. Both Jake's father and Emile's mother alluded to this bad luck but maintain that the

²⁰ Interview with Zora, Cape Town: 24/08/2010. Insertion in brackets is by this author.

²¹ Incidentally this migrant has emigrated to Europe.

²² Interview with papa khan, Pinyin: 10/10/2011.

only way it can be warded off is by yielding to tradition and performing the ritual that is required because *'na kontri fashion; ee get to call dance, shot gun so that village go know say ee don come cry yi mami or papa'*.²³ Commenting on this, Pa Khan (Jake's father) says that failure to perform a cry die ritual in Pinyin and to see the grave *'na some bad luck, something go di happen say ee no be cry mami yi die'*.²⁴ He ends by alluding to himself and how he is still performing certain traditional rites following the death of his mother-in-law. These rituals are done less out of respect than as an obligation and out of fear of witchcraft or bad luck. In Jerry's case, the human body has become a vehicle of the spirit and its manifestation has occurred through ill luck and other forms of misfortune (Sabar 2010). How are traditional belief systems and the notion of witchcraft reinventing and refashioning themselves in the era of mobilities and new technologies?

Migration and mobility have not only fostered transnational communities but also illuminated the fluidity in transcultural beliefs and in witchcraft, thus expanding the discourse on belief systems. While the study of witchcraft has tended to be dichotomized and either focuses on the destructive nature that results in death or the aspect that stresses 'interdependence and conviviality' (Nyamnjoh 2005: 241), this section marries both trends of witchcraft: the destructive and the convivial. It shows how, although being away from home, the notion of witchcraft is still embedded in the migrant communities' repertoire because of the 'principle of simultaneous multiplicity' where the physical presence or the absence of the victim is inconsequential (Nyamnjoh 2001: 30). Migrants will do whatever it takes to avoid it chasing after them in the host country by negotiating 'conviviality between competing and conflicting expectations on their labour and its proceeds' (Nyamnjoh 2005: 245; 2001). Such notions of witchcraft and beliefs, as argued by Fisiy & Geschiere (1990, 1991), have injected postcolonial witchcraft discourses with a new dynamic reflecting the ability of witchcraft beliefs to adapt to the modern nation-state and new types of entrepreneurship. In this respect, failure in business is due to bad luck or witchcraft from home that pursues the migrant even in the host country or as a result of having jealous migrants in the host country (see also Parish 2000). This therefore assumes that witchcraft is not bounded by space and is capable of assuming new forms. Concurring with Nyamnjoh (2005), Ciekawy & Geschiere (1988: 3) posit that

Understanding witchcraft is an essential element in any attempt to comprehend people's mundane realities and thoughts ... In everyday life in Africa and elsewhere it is a discourse about action and the urgent necessity to handle these dangerous but hidden forces.

Such notions of witchcraft are as mobile as the migrants and are fanned by ICTs thanks to the myriad of mediated techno-spaces available to both migrants

²³ Interview with Emile's mother, Pinyin: 10/10/2011.

²⁴ See Footnote 22.

and their families in the home country who have taken them to distant countries and virtual spaces. Migrants are perpetually reminded of the number of cry dies that await them at home and failure to perform this ritual may lead to bad luck. For instance, after seven years without going home, Jonas mentioned that 15 cry dies awaited him as he prepared a visit home, and he vowed to perform all the ceremonies before returning to Cape Town. He achieved this. But also, the migrant community remind themselves of their obligations regarding these ceremonies. The possibility of going to distant places means that those at home increasingly have the potential to call and transmit messages about witchcraft or about complying with certain traditional values. This suggests that those at home are no longer on the fringes of technology waiting for calls from their migrant kin but can reach the individual either by phoning or constantly beeping until the desired effect is attained, namely a call from the migrant. Despite the fact that Jake was present at his mother's funeral without his wife, she still had to do something (weed and sweep the grave) to show that she too had buried her mother-in-law. For his part, Emile, as mentioned before, sent money for the funeral and planned to go home a year later to organize a memorial service. Even though phone calls play a role in increased communication during these periods, one's co-presence is vital for certain rituals. Phone calls compliment one's co-presence but cannot replace it.

Bad luck and misfortune are not only a result of not performing certain ritual practices but are also attributed to migrants' inability to send remittances (see also Sabar 2010: 121-23; Nyamnjoh 2005, 2011). As a result of some migrants' economic inability to respond to family demands, they temporarily disconnect from the family (see Chapter 4). This may at times be met with defiance from family who repeatedly call demanding money and talking ill about those concerned. This kind of bad mouthing, it is believed, can be picked up by evil spirits and used against a person. Recalling the reasons why Ron sent money to his mother to buy groceries (salt, palm oil, Maggi cubes and soap) to distribute to his aunts and uncles' spouses can be seen as a way of receiving his blessing through their prayers and by thinking positively about him.

While witchcraft is increasingly associated with new forms of consumption and the accumulation of wealth (Geschiere & Nyamnjoh 1998), the new technologies have strengthened notions of witchcraft and belief systems. They act as a leash that keeps migrants in check and does not let them stray too far. Migrants are trapped by the notion of being caught in the web of *kontri fashion* in which evil, jealousy and fear thrive and can cause bodily harm or bad luck (Nyamnjoh 2005). But it is also a domineering form of power and control over migrants. Nonetheless and as is argued by Geschiere & Nyamnjoh (1998), despite the negativity and violent acts involved in witchcraft, it is seen to strengthen rela-

tions between migrants and family back home and promote a transnational relationship. It is in this sense of connectedness that stories about witchcraft and their mode of transmission are of interest here. For instance, even though Jones was unhappy with his family for being unappreciative of what he had sent home (they never call or send a text message to acknowledge receipt of anything he sends) and never once have called just to say hello, he cannot escape them because (shrugging his shoulders) *'if I no call them, small time I want see my things them no di waka because say I don forget family'*.²⁵ In light of the above discourses by migrants, we begin to understand their perception that witchcraft and bad luck have no borders and how it can travel across the ocean and long distances even though Grassfielders previously believed that witchcraft did not cross oceans. Witchcraft thus 'functions' (Moore & Sanders 2001: 7) and maintains the status quo. In this regard, the mobile concept is not limited to migrants but to their belief system as well, as it inherently forms part of their cultural repertoire.

It is easy for the concept of transnational habitus to capture the notion of remittances (gifts, social and physical development as well as village development because they are tangible) but too often we miss out on belief systems and how they are practised and impact on the wellbeing of mobile communities and their relations back home. Witchcraft, as has been shown by Geschiere & Nyamnjoh (1998), Fisiy & Geschiere (2001) and Moore & Sanders (2001), is elusive yet people are prosecuted for it. Crick (1970 in Moore & Sanders 2001: 4) suggested that witchcraft can be better understood from an historical perspective and from the vantage point of those living with and within it. It is 'morally tied to systems and must be understood in context given the fact that it cannot be transferred to another context', nor can it be extricated from a given context. In these social fields, the narratives on witchcraft are poignant and involve bad luck, jealousy, bewitching and evil. However, migrants have learnt to come up with creative coping strategies to ward off such elements by sending remittances or calling home when it matters most.

Perpetuating perceived notions of witchcraft

Some calls from home fan accusations of witchcraft through rumours and gossip. Before her mother's health deteriorated, Joyce was in constant communication with her and her sisters who informed her that their mother had been bewitched. Her mother also believed this and sent anointing oil to Joyce for protection. For Joyce, her mother's death was the result of sorcery by jealous co-wives. According to her, she was weary of her stepmothers/sisters. The dispute with her step-niece stemmed from earlier tensions in the family that had been transposed to

²⁵ Conversation with Jones, Cape Town; 26/12/2011.

Cape Town. While migration is inclusive of migrants' habits and tends to reproduce and even reinforce old family tensions, class and gender hierarchies are a hangover from tensions back in the home village and have not been dealt with but instead are transported with migrants to their new abode. Fed with information from her sisters, Joyce believed her mother's death²⁶ was due to envy among her co-wives and she gave vivid details of the information passed on to her concerning her mother's death.

My mum was bewitched by her co-wives out of jealousy. They are jealous each time a car comes and pulls over in front of her house and brings her lots of gifts and foodstuffs. They had blown off her roof before through witchcraft. This prompted her brother to go to a native doctor to find out. He was told that the first wife is very jealous of her ... that she said she laboured on the coffee farm and when our dad sold the coffee, he used the money – FCFA 150,000 – to marry our mother. My sisters gave the money to our uncle to give to our father and he gave her the money as if it were from him. It was hoped that things would be quiet after this but she still continued bewitching her. The death of my mum has severed all links with my step-mums and even their children. My mum was aware of this and cautioned my sisters against any skirmishes after her death.²⁷

Witchcraft has become a cancer that eats deep into the heart of kinship relations and destroys the social cohesion and conviviality of the family and society. I refer to this as transcultural beliefs and tensions.

These accusations of witchcraft and family tensions are fed and reinforced by telephone conversations and dreams. It should be noted that at times of crisis back home, the velocity of communication and wanting to know all that is happening intensifies. Whenever Joyce quarrels with her step-sister, this is communicated to her sisters at home and only helps to fuel divisions within the family. After her mother's death, Joyce dreamt that 'she was involved in a fight with someone and her mother intervened with a huge stick and chased away her adversary, and told Joyce that anyone who wants to attack her, had to confront her first'. Although migrants take solace from the fact that they are guarded by deceased relative, such endemic faith in witchcraft confirms beliefs, fear and the popular epistemology about witchcraft. After this dream, she phoned her sisters to warn them to be on their guard as well. ICTs, especially the mobile phone, play a role in perpetuating beliefs in accusations of witchcraft and in fermenting conflicts within families.

While the mobile phone serves as a conduit for allegations, it also shields migrant members from the brunt of emotional torture. In this connection, the family at home sees it as their duty to emotionally protect those who are abroad by sifting through information before deciding what to pass on (Baldassar 2008). But periods of silence or unfinished sentences in telephone conversations only serve to ignite suspicion. For instance, in the days leading up to her mother's death,

²⁶ Her mother died in November 2011.

²⁷ Conversation with Joyce, Cape Town: 17/11/2011.

Joyce made several calls to her but her sisters did not want her to talk to their mother because her condition was deteriorating, and talking to Joyce would make her realize the gravity of the situation. However this only escalated Joyce's emotional state and made her fear the worst. At such a time, migrants turn to the church to seek solace and to purge the emotional trauma and fright that they are going through.

Pentecostalism and recasting witchcraft

The flow of migration has equally seen an increase in Pentecostal churches, which have mushroomed to cater for migrants' spiritual needs and allay fears of unfulfilled desires (Sabar 2010; Meyer 1998; van Dijk 2001). Pentecostal churches recognize witchcraft practices and the struggle between good and evil, and provide believers with the solution to any ambivalence they may have about witchcraft. They take the fear of witchcraft amongst the faithful seriously and provide special prayer sessions to 'rebuke and shame the devil' (Sabar 2010). By imbibing these notions of witchcraft into their teachings, they make themselves relevant to modern-day Christianity and provide a new context in which they make sense and are relevant to migrants who are continually faced with the Herculean task of meeting never-ending demands for remittances and the consequences of being bewitched through bad mouthing or being caught up in the gimmicks of '*kontri fashion go catch them*'. In this regard, migrants are adopting global religious institutions and asserting their dual membership of spiritual arenas. They are thus broadening and extending the globalization of religious life and practices (Levitt 2004: 2). Joyce, for instance, was a practising Protestant but joined the Jehovah Witness Fellowship in Cape Town. She is not a regular churchgoer but admits that they provide her with the strength she needs to overcome her daily struggles in life. For others, mobile communication plays a significant role, facilitating therapeutic sessions for migrants by offering chain prayers between migrants and pastors, amongst migrants and among family back home and a pastor, i.e. a triangular prayer session. Jane's story again illustrates this point. When her parents received news at home that she had gone into labour, her father was driving from Yaoundé to Bamenda and immediately phoned his pastors to convey the news. They agreed to immediately start a chain prayer on her behalf and he stopped driving for an hour of prayers with the others. By the time he arrived Bamenda, Jane had given birth. While the idea was to pray for a safe delivery, it was also to ward off any sorcerer that might take advantage of the situation and harm her or the baby, given the perceived notion that sorcerers are opportunistic, invisible and can see into the future (Nyamnjoh forthcoming).

Groups of prayer warriors have emerged in Cape Town to assist members with prayers to ward off witchcraft and deliverance. Accounts of Neh's story highlight this phenomenon:

She joined her husband (Henry from Mankon) in Cape Town in 2010. While she was a practising Catholic at home, she worships with the Synagogue of all Nations' Church in Cape Town (which has its headquarters in Nigeria). According to her, it was a personal decision to 'give her life to Christ and to receive Him and know God ... I want to spend the rest of my life with Christ because I am far from home and the things I see happening worldwide'. In April 2011, she received a phone call that her brother was gravely ill and that the doctors were unable to offer any diagnosis. The family turned to a traditional healer who said that he had been poisoned because he was doing well in business. First she asked for a photo of the brother to be scanned and sent to her, and she printed it out and took it to church for a prayer warrior session. After this, the photo was posted on the church wall along with others for continuous prayer intercessions. Later, she called and offered to pray with him over the phone. But before she began, she invited him to believe that God could heal him, and if he had done any 'bad' to people, he should recant and change his way of life. After submitting himself to God, she prayed with him over the phone and implored him to continue praying while she did the same with the prayer warrior group. Two days after the phone prayers, she received a call from her sister to say that for the first time since his illness, he had slept through the night after the prayer session. Motivated by this news, Neh decided to 'stand for prayer line on Sunday in church' (to come forward with her petition and be prayed for) and to pray for him again. In addition, she would meet the pastor after the service and request a special prayer. A week later, her brother called to thank her and tell her that he had been blessed and his illness had disappeared. After a fortnight, he called to inform her that all was well and he had resumed his business activities. To her, this simply meant that 'the power of God is alive'.²⁸

Photo 9.6 Photos posted in church by relations for prayer sessions, including that of Neh's brother



²⁸ Interview, Cape Town: 20/05/2011.

The appropriation of communication technologies (mobile phone and the Internet) is beyond the conception of its designers. This was central in restoring Neh's brother's health on the one hand and, on the other, in transmitting rumours about witchcraft to her by members of her family. Given that ICTs have removed existing borders between states and witchcraft is capable of crossing borders, so too communication technologies are being used to transgress borders to fight against evil powers at home. Migrants have found refuge and emotional comfort in the church (Sabar 2010) and the church in turn serves as a spiritual bridge between them and families back home.

Disengagement and threats of witchcraft/curses

In spite of the trumpeting of transnationalism and the untimely death of assimilation as a result of advances in communication technologies, it would be too hasty to conclude that improved communication technologies have changed migrants' relationships with the home country to one of increased involvement and engagement (see Panagakos & Horst 2006: 112). However, increases in transnational/transcultural activities are punctuated by deliberate abstention from relating to home or momentarily disconnecting from the family fold, which goes against the canons of transculturalism. Interestingly, such disconnections give emotional satisfaction to those who choose to temporally sever links with kin and kith. For some, distance may be the desired goal to keep the family at bay or to settle in without continuous calls for remittances. ICTs thus have a dual role: to connect and to disconnect. In a phone call to Nsoh (from Mankon), I enquired after his parents back home but he told me that he had not communicated with them for more than five months. He went on to explain rather incoherently and with a tone of frustration in his voice that:

I do not like calling home because of the harassment and excessive demands for money each time I call them. They don't care about how I am living here, I earn just enough to live on (R 500) a week, I am still struggling to sort myself out as I made some mistakes in the beginning. If they want me to send them money, it means they are indirectly asking me to get involved in a dubious lifestyle; that is not what I want. When I left home, they sent me to come and hustle, but it is difficult and they don't want to hear me out. That is why I often change SIM cards and numbers just to remain out of touch.²⁹

Unlike others who navigate between SIM cards, Nsoh chooses to change his number when he can no longer stand his parents' incessant demand for money or calls for him to return home. He is often out of contact for long periods of time before calling again. Remembering what Emile's mother (see Footnote 10) cautioned about excessive financial demands by parents, Nsoh's attitude is a consequence of her prediction: disengagement or engaging in illicit activities to satisfy

²⁹ Phone conversation with Nsoh, Cape Town: 29/12/2012.

the pressing demands from home. For Nsoh, the mobile phone is a curse (Horst 2006), sent by the devil and is an invasion of privacy.

Migrants have developed various tactics and coping strategies, one of which is the notion of ‘present absence’ and involves navigating between SIM cards by giving numbers that are rarely in use and thus are unreachable from home. These are the SIM cards they only use when calling home, after which they are taken out of the phone until they are needed again. In instances where migrants do not juggle SIM cards, they simply decline calls from home or call back when beeped. It thus become a game of cat and mouse and the mobile phone becomes ‘both a tool for keeping in touch and for artfully avoiding that social obligation’ Lamoureaux 2011: 40; see also Powell 2012: 15-17). This notwithstanding, relatives go to great lengths to get money from their migrants’ kin with threats of curses or being indicted by tradition (*kontri fashion go catch you*) for having turned a blind eye to their requests (see Nyamnjoh 2005: 251-53). Mike’s case illustrates this:

His father is a retired gendarme and has four wives. The oldest wife has a son in Cape Town, while Mike, whose mother is the second wife, has two brothers – one in Johannesburg and one with him in Cape Town. When their father fails to get money from them, he directs his frustrations towards their respective mothers and accuses them of inciting the children not to look after him or send money to educate his younger children. In this respect, he sends messages to them via their mothers that ‘*if they no want give ma own things them wey I still dey alive make I chop, make man no come when ee hear say I die like sick wey ee kill me go kill them*’.³⁰ According to tradition in the Bamenda Grassfields, this is a terrible curse for any parent to say to a child and the child concerned will do anything in his/her power to avert it. A concise translation of this sentence is difficult but I will paraphrase it: ‘I would want to have material comforts while I am still alive, more than when I am dead, for the cause of my death will be a lack of these comforts and anyone who attempts to display wealth at my funeral will die of the disease that I suffered from’. Sending a message via their mothers is well calculated as the father is sure the women will plead with their children to avoid such a serious curse by responding to his demands. Mike’s mother recounted how, after such rants from his father, she called her son repeatedly and pleaded with him to send his father some money. At times Mike is adamant that he has been of assistance to his father and feels that his father should be understanding if he (Mike) is hard up too. However not even his mother is informed when the father receives money from one of his sons but he is calm until he needs more. From being a retired gendarme, Mike’s father has changed into being a ‘gendarme of tradition, who seeks to ensure or enforce poverty alleviation traditions as a kind of culture tax on the haves by the have-nots to redistribute wealth’ (Nyamnjoh 2005: 251). Having failed to get his way with his sons, he resorts to threats of curses and knows the special relationship mothers have with their sons. And of course the mobile phone has become the medium of communication and transmission between mothers and sons, who are implored to avert a terrible curse.

In the absence of a curse, home-based relations use tradition as a form of extortion to enrich themselves in the event of death when a migrant comes for a funeral. When a parent passes away in Mankon, each child is obliged by tradition to provide a white cloth (*wabab*) to symbolically show that they buried the de-

³⁰ Conversation with Mike’s mother and step-mother in Pinyin: 12/10/2011.

ceased. This has on many occasions been converted into cash. In addition, all the married daughters and nieces of the deceased are expected to give a token sum of money to the successor of the compound, known as *á-beh nifvu*, for him to use for any traditional ceremony that is required. Too often advantage is taken of visiting migrants and they are asked for large sums of money and the latter, afraid of being indicted by *kontri fashion*, pay up the amount requested. In the case of this researcher, when my father passed away, I was duly informed of this custom and I phoned our successor who quoted me one of these exaggerated sums and insisted that the amount needed to be paid as soon as I arrived home. At moments like this, most family members are keen to 'protect' kin abroad by detailing all the 'law things' that tradition demands of them, while those on the receiving end call to emphasize them as these are rare periods for them to enrich themselves in the name of tradition. In this connection, the mobile phone becomes the tool/-town crier to communicate the message. Again as Nyamnjoh (*Ibid.*: 251) aptly puts it: 'There are lots of traditions that are not really traditions but a means of some of the less privileged in our community to "beg" without losing face, for resources to help them out of poverty'.

In an era when the mobile phone and the Internet have compressed geographic distance and rendered 'mobiles' to being 'over there' and 'reachable', not all migrants are comfortable with this perception and some consciously and/or temporarily suspend communication with relations at home. Irene's case is worth mentioning. Since she moved to Cape Town from Gabon she has lost touch with her family at home and has none of their numbers. According to her:

I don't have any of their numbers because I don't want to stress myself. I want to sort myself out first ... Business is slow and I am restarting, that is why I don't want to call. I have my aunt who is like my mum now, and I would never go for a month without calling her, but for a year now I have not called my aunt even my brother Moses, I have not spoken to him for a year now.³¹

Irene's coping strategy of self-alienation, or 'objectification' as Miller (2010: 59) puts it, is the 'way we enhance our capacity as human beings ... hence within the process of objectification, self-alienation is essential'. This does, however, go against the norm of transnational and transcultural habitus that teach people to know that the extended family are those who must not be neglected and one must keep the family unity intact.

In extreme cases, the family is divided following the death of both parents, with accusations and counter-accusations of selfishness and mismanagement of business, leading to a fractured family. Paul's story sheds light on this:

Paul originates from Mankon and is a successful businessman in Cape Town, with a branch in Cameroon that was managed by his younger brother but is currently managed by his twin

³¹ Interview, Cape Town: 07/08/2011.

sister. Since 2012, Paul has spent more time in Cameroon than in Cape Town, and his wife manages their business in Cape Town. When he was informed about his mother's illness, he called and instructed that she should be taken to a referral hospital where she was treated for lung cancer. Upon her discharge, the family took her to a traditional healer against his wishes and when he tried to dissuade them from doing so, he was met with insults 'Before you were even born, mum was sick and we took care of her. Don't you think that just because you have a little money, you can order us around now.'³² Unable to dissuade them, Paul had to travel to Cameroon to take her back to hospital, and a few weeks later she passed away. Paul acknowledges that things have not been the same since.

My younger brother and I were like very close, we did things together but since my mum passed away, it's been very-very difficult to deal with him and my other siblings. It's been really really difficult. It's like my mum was a shield or something, I couldn't see their real colours when my mum was alive. She's died and everybody is showing me what they are made of. I'm really struggling with them. I have been home on two occasions and I've tried to call family meetings to try and bring everybody together. I tried to raise issues. I'm not mad at them any longer about what they did because it won't help. She's gone, she's gone. I've tried to make peace. We are not like at daggers drawn, but we are just not getting along the way we used to.³³

The relationship took a nosedive when Paul's elder brother sold a piece of land Paul bought for him at less than cost price and also when the latter set out to build on a piece of land he (Paul) had bought adjacent to their compound. The elder brother claimed the land was a gift from Paul to their father and that Paul therefore had no rights to it. During another interview session with Paul, the brother tried calling him repeatedly but Paul would not take the call saying that 'I know why he is calling, to fight with me over my land. There is no way I can let go of that land, even the person who sold the land acknowledges that it is rightfully mine, as well as my elder sister. He says my elder sister is siding with me because I give her money.'³⁴ This dispute divided the family into two camps, with two people in favour of Paul and five against him.

Such family feuds are not uncommon and this is one of the fallouts of migration, with some wanting to take undue advantage of their migrant kin. But it also shows the extreme consequences of migration and mobility, and the adverse effects they can have on families and migrants who end up with deep emotional wounds that take a long time to heal.

Discussion and conclusion

Trans-border and transcultural relations have grown as a result of migrants trying to maintain connections and relations with the home village and to come to terms with the emotions and trauma of separation and absence. This chapter has gone beyond debates on transnationalism to incorporate the notion of emotions and belonging. Moving away from considerations of the community, the focus has

³² Interview, Cape Town: 01/03/2011.

³³ Interview, Cape Town: 20/05/2011.

³⁴ Interview, Cape Town: 03/06/2011.

been on individual migrants' connections with the family in an attempt to understand the emotional challenges involved and the related aspects of witchcraft that go with them. Emotions form an integral part of transnational/transcultural habitus. If these are guided by social relationships, then emotions are regulated by and respond to social relationships.

This speaks more to the idea of upholding the values and societal norms that migrants have learnt during childhood and in their adult lives and emerges in the way they relate to their family back home, the remittances they send and of course the funeral engagements that show their adeptness in maintaining trans-cultural practices. By the same token, we should recognize that transnational families and relationships are not a new phenomenon and they existed before the arrival of ICTs.

Creating a home-away-from-home means that migrants have adopted the tendency to develop a 'Janus-like' view of transnational migration (Guarnizo 1997). Like the god Janus, migrants have a dual visage that enables them to transgress borders irrespective of their loci. For the majority of those in the host society, such trans-border connections provide them opportunities to consolidate ties with the home village, such as through the objects they take with them and their activities (photos and memorabilia, co-presence and visits) that allow them to remember their attachment to family and home. Through this form of double engagement, individuals hope to become a whole.

Funerals have provided us here with a lens through which we can understand migrants' emotional trauma in times of loss. Virtual and corporeal mobility becomes an option given the importance of this ritual to migrants, as was seen in the previous chapter. Loudspeakers on phones and camera apps have increasingly made it possible for migrants to be virtually present at funerals, like John who asked for the phone be put on loudspeaker so he could follow his mother's burial. Through virtual, corporeal and financial participation, migrants also gain a sense of emotional satisfaction for having done what was required of them culturally. While relationships between the home and host countries are mutually reinforcing and soothing, they tend to be normative in nature because this is the expected norm within the social network in the home village rather than a question of individual affection.

Religious practices, like funerals, create space for migrants to engage simultaneously in the home and host countries. Through telephonic prayer sessions as well as chain prayers and the warding off witchcraft, Pentecostalism has reinvented itself and has become more relevant to migrants. Boundaries have become blurred and fluid as members navigate social fields to provide a cathartic effect for both migrant and family.

Photos too become a linking device, as do the memorabilia and virtual co-presence that members seek to keep a sense of family. This duality (an absent presence) is censored by what I refer to as a 'code of honour' – what others think and say about them – which invariably drives migrants to seek to relate with home more than ever before, or minimally. It is partly this ethos that invigorates the spirit of transculturalism and transnationalism. Emotions form an integral part of transnational/transcultural habitus, and if these are guided by social relationships, then emotions are regulated by and respond to social relationships. This also alludes to the perception of success and failure, as successful migrants are seen as those who maintain family cohesion, while those who are considered to have failed stay away from the family. However this is not a logical conclusion, given that even some of those who are considered to be successful have severed links with their families.

Much as some migrants would like to minimize relations with home, ICTs does not always offer a path that allows them to completely escape these contradictions and the fear of witchcraft. Instead, they have found themselves trapped in their fears and 'provide them with explanations of misfortune, and explanations that address the "why" more than the "how" questions' (Moore & Sanders 2001: 6). Notions of witchcraft and belief systems in many ways compel migrants' transculturalism but also play an important role in the way migrants view their worlds as well as the ways in which they navigate their daily lives in both the host and home countries. For some, the mobile phone and the Internet are God-sends whereas those who develop strategies to sever links with kin and kith see it as 'Devil-sent' (Nyamnjoh 2005; Horst 2006) given the speed at which it has helped to spread information about witchcraft from home to the host country and perpetuate belief systems – indictments of tradition – used by the less wealthy to extort material accumulation and monetary gains. Witchcraft, as such, is not frozen in time but should be seen as dynamic, 'resistant to changes, and capable of reinventing and refashioning itself to suit new situations' (Moore & Sanders 2001:10-11), especially in the light of new technologies.

From this premise, we can ascertain that while transculturalism has played a significant role in linking the home and host countries, we must guard against seeing ICTs as a panacea for a successful dual lifestyle. This would seem *prima facie*. The new communication technologies, much as they connect, equally serve to liberate migrants from the constant demands of the family as they have harnessed it to monitor calls and to know when and which calls to take. Or they are simply not reachable.