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

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Conclusion: Mobilities, transcultural communities and transcultural habitus

This study set out to understand the workings of the Pinyin and Mankon mobile communities in the context of accelerated mobility and ICTs. In an attempt to show how they function, I conceptualized mobilities in Chapter 3, ICTs in Chapter 4 and networks in Chapter 5 given that these concepts underscore the social fabric of every society, including mobile communities. These chapters (3, 4 and 5) equally laid the groundwork that underpinned the remainder of the Chapters (Chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9).

Taming wild geese: ICTs and networks enhanced mobilities

Chapter 3 focused on the mobility patterns of the Pinyin and Mankon communities and how they have evolved for the current migrant. It highlighted the multifaceted forms of social, virtual, cultural and emotional mobilities and how dynamic they now are as a result of ICTs.

Communication technologies however have a nuanced role in mobility. They connect and link up communities and families but functionally, they are a form of control; a leash on migrants dragging them back into the family circle if they begin to stray too far away. And some do break loose from this form of control by (dis)connecting with the family fold. Migrants navigate between SIM cards, thus establishing connections with the family on their own terms. What this also presupposes is that they have taken control of their agentic power. It is mobile technology that is the connecting factor here and it has become a tool that enhances disconnection. In this respect, ICTs give migrants the possibility to disconnect from family. Fearful of bad mouthing, they are aware that it runs against the moral ethos and endangers the social fabric of society. Such a move could thus only be temporal and normalcy is resumed when finances permit. While dis-

connection may be frowned upon, it posits migrants amid a higher echelon of actor than technology because of their ability to appropriate and tame it. It gives them room to reconfigure their agency, to tame ICT and enhance mobility, which is a central conclusion of this study.

In this regard and adding to Licoppe's connected presence (2004), I include the notion of '(dis)connected complexities' to show the vagaries of connections and disconnections that exist amongst migrants and families.

Migration of women from both communities came much later compared to their male counterparts. The women came mainly for spousal reunion, with few exceptions invited by their sisters or for studies. Trade was their major preoccupation, unlike the pitcher-men; the women are sedentary, running stalls from flea markets.

Passport mobility, 'lines' and *tuyaus* perpetuated by the migration industry and that are at the migrants' disposal are continuously enhanced by mobile and wireless communications. This has also resulted in chain migration, as there is the increasing need to relocate family members to maximize assistance for the home country. As a result, migrants map a coordinated and chain migratory route that is difficult to break thanks to the pre-migratory networks and host society networks that have been forged. In the process, they are tearing down nation-state borders with little regard for state hegemony and making a farce of selective migration. Chapter 3 underscores the importance of an historical approach to understand current trends in mobility as well as the intricacies of mobility among the Pinyin and Mankon communities.

The varied forms of mobilities (cultural social, virtual), as practised by the above communities, have come to represent an historical progression from a traditional rural society to that of an urban, mobile society where space has become unbounded. Similarly, accelerated mobilities in migrants' lives have led to the recasting of identity in terms of flexibility and adaptability, and the holding onto of values that they consider define their identity (Chapters 7, 8 and 9).

Flexible mobilities and migrants' dual lives have come at a cost to nation-states given that mobiles are gradually recasting the sovereignty and autonomy of nation-states and minimizing the state's ability to provide effective border controls. This by no means suggests that borders have become redundant but rather that flexible mobility is constantly looking to make nonsense of borders: they have become contested spatiality between migrants and states. In a way, immigration policies have not optimally attained their objectives of borderland control and exclusion because they have often viewed migration and mobility as a problem. While details about the Pinyin and Mankon communities in the Netherlands are not as detailed as those in Cape Town, they nevertheless offer insight into the difficulties of migrating to Europe as a result of the stringent legislation that is in

place to fence off unwanted migrants from Fortress Europe, although migrants are still able to access 'lines' that beat the system. By contrast, mobility exposes the porosity of South Africa's borders. Their fluidity and porosity are the consequence of regulations aimed at controlling the borders and a disjuncture between state policies and migration realities in sending and receiving countries. Migration and mobility, as such, should not be seen as a problem, described mostly in terms of disaster attributes or considered stasis. It is a dynamic process that is informed by different variables (information, networks, finances and serendipity). Much as these variables have given mobility a new dynamism, it is nevertheless hinged on internalized embodied practices. In this respect, policies need to take into account the development strategies that seek to manage migration flows in ways that serve the national interest, i.e. those of the sending country as well as those of the migrant, with the aim of achieving a win-win-win solution.

Chapter 4 addresses the evolution of communication technologies from its embryonic to its wide availability and affordability. I have shown how these societies, especially Pinyin, have leapfrogged from no telephonic connections straight into the era of mobile phones. Although communication technologies gingerly made their way to South Africa, they were mired by problems of affordability. As a result, we are confronted with the ingenious ways in which migrants have appropriated these technologies, especially fixed and mobile phones, to connect to their home country. The arrival of ICTs, as I have shown, is characterized by their ability to revolutionize the world and they have dramatically changed how people live their lives (dualistically) and how they perceive the world as deterritorializing spaces that are compressing time. In addition to geographical spaces, I have also shown how ICTs are changing lifestyles by creating an informal economy and job opportunities, especially in the DVD (Digital Versatile Disc) sector where migrants have championed the downloading and burning of movies for commercial purposes. The Internet has been a key factor in promoting this business in Cape Town (Chapter 6).

Throughout history and prior to these visible changes, the world was made up of layers of multiple spaces that were joined but were displaced in the event of migration. The advances in transport networks, and particularly in air travel, have given migrants access to constant and multidirectional flows of mobility. In this respect, I conclude that ICTs perpetuate mobilities and re-organize social structures. This study considers how everyday life is construed in the process of mobiles re-organizing their social structures.

Underpinning these social structures are the fact that mobility and ICTs do not function in isolation but are mutually reinforcing and inextricably linked to social relations of networks. The perception of ICTs as simply connecting people, or the catalogue of advantages that other scholars maintain, obfuscates the fact that

these technologies may be manipulated and become a disconnecting device with people hiding behind them. Much as ICTs reconfigure existing relationships and build new ones, but at the same time maintain existing ones in the process, ICTs (dis)connects as well. At one level, the relationship is convivial but at another it is antagonistic. The importance of Chapter 4 is its contribution to understanding the power of ICTs in enhancing contemporary migration as well as the failure of migration policies in attempts at mitigating unwanted migration and mobility because policies are yet to consider the power of ICTs and, if they do, it is difficult to challenge.

Understanding these concepts and societies demands an historical and a multi-sited approach that allows room to capture not only migrants' mobile lifestyles but also the in-betweens that occur in the process. I equally noted the developmental stages of communication technologies in both communities. While Mankon is connected to all three mobile service providers, Pinyin is still connected to one. However, the Pinyin connection is a catapult from no communication technology to having one. In addition, following the mobile communities discussed in this study through the various stages of availability of communication technologies sheds light on the appropriation and mutual shaping that occurs. Archival research was fundamental to comprehending shifts in mobilities.

From this perspective, mobility/migration is not new but predates the migration history of every society. However what is new today are the forms and dynamism that it has taken as a result of advances in ICTs and transport networks. This has led to new mobile societies characterized by mobile flows and miniaturized mobilities.

Chapter 5 looked at how mobile communities are able to draw on the plethora of networks at their disposal, including strong and weak ties. Like ICTs, social networks are the driving force behind migration and mobility, especially in the pre-migration and actual migration process. It shows how social networks impact on migration at all stages in the process and how these networks constantly shift to accommodate new networks in order to be relevant. My aim was to discover whether mobilities have affected network ties and, if so, how? If they have not, then are these ties continuing in the norm that migrants have been brought up to respect (social cohesion)? As a result of the formation of network societies thanks to ICTs, it follows that social networks are a dynamic process due the emergence of flexible communities that reconfigure themselves and reproduce complex structures of communication. It is important to note that these networks encourage people to be mobile because they are hierarchized as people do not have equal access to the various forms of economic, cultural and social capital. Although social capital is informed by history and is accumulated over time, it has become an almost exclusive right of the elite. This is a common theme run-

ning through all the chapters. Status and social hierarchy in both communities are differentiated along generational, gender, socioeconomic and cultural parameters. Kinship ties are important corporate networks that sponsor migration and provide migrants with the possibility of double engagement as well as people to whom migrants can entrust their affairs (Chapters 6 and 7).

Although we talk of kinship ties, these are streamlined along gender roles. Despite being away from the family, female migrants continue to subscribe to their traditional role as carers as ascribed by society and care intensify with migration. ICTs, and in particular the mobile phone, have thus become the tools and links through which care is given.

Away from kinship ties (strong ties), I also focused on weak ties and, through this network, I try to understand the large number of Pinyin migrants in Cape Town compared to other ethnic communities. Weak ties include legal ties, such as lawyers and officials from the Department of Home Affairs charged with issuing refugee permit that assist migrants legalize their status. Migration syndicates that perpetuate migration are also perceived as weak ties. These weak ties appear as practical bridges that link various nodes and are ultimately stronger than strong ties, being defined by their shifting and bridging qualities. These weak ties, I maintain, connect better than strong ties.

Like mobilities, social interaction and linkages between migrants and family are not a new phenomenon but what is new is the manner in which network societies have built up their lives around ICTs and are a set of interconnected nodes that process flows. It therefore means that advances in new technologies are redefining the way migrants link up with each other and with friends and family, and how networks are forged and maintained. Earlier migrants have become the communication signposts and gatekeepers for subsequent migrants, with the latter being fed information about migration and given assistance in settling in after having migrated. While face-to-face networking is still privileged, virtual networking is incontestably the norm. As a result of the new mobile culture, mobile communities have developed an octopus-like ability to spread their tentacles in an attempt to create and link multiple networks.

Chapters 3, 4 and 5 complement earlier studies on the evolution of mobility and ICTs in marginal localities by the Mobile Africa Revisited research project,¹ of which this study is part. Its strength is its rootedness in an historical approach that is the basis for understanding contemporary mobilities; first by looking into the past. In addition, Chapter 3 is directed at those at the helm of migration policies and provides suggestions on how best to address migration and mobilities.

¹ This is a comparative study of the relationship between new communication technologies and social spaces in Chad, Mali, Cameroon, Angola, Sudan and Senegal. See <http://mobileafricarevisited.wordpress.com>.

Chapters 3, 4 and 5 are the conceptual chapters that enhance our understanding of the rest of the ethnographic chapters. Together, they argue that, contemporary migration and mobility are inextricably linked with ICTs and networks and networking. While ICTs have changed the form and style of migration and mobility, earlier migrants continue to be the signposts and gatekeepers of would-be migrants. Also, advances in communication technologies have reinforced communities and individual interaction, especially interactions with greater weak ties.

Mobility and trade

Chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9 offer in-depth analysis of the research findings. I draw largely from the three preceding chapters, namely Chapters 3, 4 and 5, to anchor my analysis with the final chapters (Chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9). Chapter 6 examines migrants' economic activities, particularly pitching (hawking) and other forms of income-generating activities. I also explain how, through the rapid development of information technology, migrants have been able to do business differently from their parents' generation due to increased opportunities, improved and reduced mobility as the mobile phone provides them with mobility. This difference is possible as a result of the extensive network they can garner because of the new ICTs at their disposal. I was interested in the extent to which ICTs, mobility and networks propel the economic activities of the mobile community.

The highlight of chapter 6 is, firstly, the way Pinyin migrants do business in Cape Town. It would appear that this is informed by the historical skills inherited and internalized from a long history of mercantile trading, particularly by those who witnessed or accompanied parents to weekly village markets and from the stories they heard from their parents. Those from Mankon, however, tend to focus on the trade that they have learnt. Secondly, the chapter highlights the navigation between informal and formal business and the blurriness between legal and illegal business. This is because of the see-saw nature of activities that makes it impalpable to make a distinction between informal/formal and illegal/illegal, and this is difficult to analyze within the framework of dualism. In addition, those involved in business rarely consider it to be in any way illegal until they come into contact with the law. In general, migrants shrewdly circumvent the legal authorities. The same cannot be said of those in the Netherlands who do not have similar opportunities to operate in the informal economy because of the strict rules regarding asylum seekers. Those with educational qualifications seek formal employment. The navigation between informal/formal and illegal/legal shows the extent to which migrants' economic activities are informed by mobility, ICTs and networking.

Contrary to other studies that have announced the premature death of informal business due to lack of capital, I argue that migrants often receive support and/or

loans from family and personal and ethnic enclaves to set up businesses. I proceed to show how, through wealth accumulation, migrants have again been defined and ordered. Success in this regard has played an important role in the hierarchization of society, especially to those for whom success has come as a result of 'hardwork' and not through fraudulent means (drug pushing). In summary, the informal economy and its actors is a melting pot of false designer goods, as well as a point of convergence for the global and local with marketing insights.

Mobilities, identity and belonging

Chapter 7 explored the emergence of home-village associations and their role in maintaining social cohesion within communities in the host country. It also looked at how they serve as a platform for projecting migrants' identities. It examined the ways the Pinyin and Mankon migrants are crafting lives and communities and how they maintain ties with other associations and form Internet-mediated associations with diaspora groups and home-based elites.

The chapter departs from the premise that the associations include those who belong to one ethnic group and exclude those who do not belong as well as members of the host society. I maintain that associations should be understood within the framework of agency in the production of structures because structure is both the medium and the outcome of action. Such structures define belonging, identity and exclusion, and are a means by which action can be enabled. Associations as such play a major role in the societal fabric and seek to establish social cohesion amongst members and provide a bridge between the host community and the home-village community. Although being a member of these associations is seen as a logical conclusion to proving one's belonging to the home village, belonging is also perceived by migrants as an insurance policy. Due to the internal rules and regulations of the associations, they have taken on a parental role towards members, which is a pull factor in both the host and home countries and connects migrants to the spatially dispersed. The common factor that binds them is their sense of place. Place for the migrants in this study is the home village because of a common shared identity and culture, as well as a way of engaging with the ideology of home. Place is where they hope to retire or return to posthumously.

As regards the Cape Town communities, their identification is first and foremost Pinyin and Mankon, given that this is primarily based on their sense of place and a collation of ethnic identities through which they are linked to 'home', through a shared meaning and culture. This commonality can also be explained by the fact that migrants are more driven by the need to help develop their villages to prepare a place for their homecoming. Home is constantly work in process.

As such, mediated public spheres enable participants to move from a shared imagination to collective action thanks to the 'Internet-mediated network public'. This chapter therefore acknowledged that although migrants are trying to recreate home whenever and wherever they may be, home is still deeply rooted in where they come from.

In this respect, associational formations are complex and multifaceted phenomenon that prioritize identities and belonging and are constantly being negotiated through inclusion and exclusion, similarity and difference. The identities and belonging of Pinyin and Mankon communities are best understood as a relational and social phenomenon captured in the complexities (connections, disconnections and difference), contradictions and messiness of their everyday realities.

Continuing with in-depth analysis of how associations maintain and express belonging, Chapter 8 takes a closer look at the various ritual practices that connect them to home and reinforce notions of home and belonging. The overriding concern in this chapter was to examine how mobile communities, although far from home, continue to uphold and participate in the various ritual practices and ceremonies in their host and home countries simultaneously. Also, looking at how rituals are dynamic and reconfigured as a result of mobility and new communication technologies offers insight into the workings of society. Contrary to other studies that see home not as the place where one happens to have been born but rather as the place where one becomes oneself, home to these communities is where one comes from. And they are rooted in the present as much as in the past considering the rituals they still practise. This chapter focused on rituals as connecting devices that create the glue that connects mobile communities across borders as well as with the home village. By connecting them to the home village, they are simultaneously disconnected from the host society because rituals are a verbal form of expression and a means of attaining a higher sense of identity.

Paying particular attention to rituals of birth, marriage and death, I recognize that the ritual that disconnects the most is that of death because it encapsulates and symbolizes the society. Rituals surrounding births and marriages are dynamic as migrant communities adapt and borrow aspects from the host society to make sense of their stay in the host society and also as a result of mobility. What is referred to as invariance is informed by a recognized and accepted pattern or a *bricolage* constructed of cultural elements from both the homeland and the receiving nation. While these ceremonies are also premised on the notion of belonging, they are informed by the idea of wealth and success, which invariably results in a hierarchization in society. The practising of rituals by mobile communities contradicts earlier studies that hold that rituals are likely to vanish among migrants that are not living in ethnic enclave neighbourhoods. While the

Pinyin and Mankon communities in the Netherlands cannot be said to live in such enclaves, this does not stop them from performing various rituals.

Besides being rooted in cultural expressions, rituals are also informed by fear. Anxiety may be related to the community saying bad things about the bereaved (bad mouthing) or about a lack of a proper funeral and/or the fear of bad luck for the same reason. Migrants and mobile communities thus strive to give their members a funeral that can be seen as fitting for a 'bush faller die'.

Rituals become inescapable and are interwoven in the societal fabric, becoming a cultural and social force that dictates their wellbeing and belonging and at the same time revealing a sense of identity. The ritual of death, while it also depicts wealth, is primarily about belonging. Away from home, the mobile community wants to be seen as conforming to ritual practices. In this respect, ICTs become evidence of ritual autopsy and proof that the event was done according to cultural norms. Films and technology (DVDs and photos) have become a new form of autopsy that can be proof to either the families or the migrant that the ritual was done well. Being mobile and yet taking part in these practices calls for their reproduction at specific times.

A combination of mobility, advances in ICTs and networking has helped to discard the Weberian prediction that modernization, industrialization and the pursuit of material comfort would bring about a decline in ritual and a loss of value. Instead, what was considered to be the demise of ritual, namely mobility, advances in ICTs and networking, has increased participation in the very same rituals because they are what set communities apart from each other and underline their collectiveness. What distinguishes the mobile communities in South Africa from those in the Netherlands are the identities they have chosen to project. For those in South Africa, it is primarily Pinyin-ness and Mankon-ness, and their Grassfielder/Bamenda identity, while those in the Netherlands project their Cameroonian-ness. The argument put forward here is that the emphasis on Pinyin-ness and Mankon-ness is due to the association/ethnic enclaves that bind them together. People see themselves first as Pinyin or Mankon, secondly as a person from Bamenda in the Grassfields, and only then as Cameroonian. By contrast, migrants in the Netherlands have no established ethnic support mechanism but have found one in their Cameroonian identity and project this first. This can also be understood from the perspective of porous/regulated borders, where there is a continuous flow of Pinyin and Mankon migrants from Cameroon to Cape Town, while this is uncommon in the Netherlands where the borders are heavily fortified.

Emotions: An expression of belonging and cultural submission

In Chapters 6, 7 and 8, the focus was on communities while Chapter 9 shifted away from the collective and moved to the individual. The aim was to show how individuals deal with challenges of emotional separation from their family and the notion of witchcraft. The chapter debates how migrants, as individuals, are able to sustain multifaceted relationships back home and cope with separation. What accounts for this double engagement? Answering these questions call for a juxtaposition of the concepts of double engagement, transculturalism and trans-cultural habitus to unpack the ways in which migrants and families back home are engaged in each other's lives. I have tried to construe their social fabric by showing how migration is an on-going emotional journey for both the migrant and for those left behind in the home country. As individual migrants, they want to connect and relate to their families back home on a personal level and to share their emotions of missing kin, separation, of losing kin (death) and the emotions of reunion but they also have to cope with being strangers in the host country. These emotions are expressed in their relationship with their families and through their attachment to their culture and cultural practices because 'it is tradition and must be obeyed'. The increased tendency towards a dual relationship is informed by the fact that, having moved out of their original family circle, migrants lose their sense of togetherness and become individuals and strangers in the host country, which heightens their quest to link up with family back home. This quest has witnessed a rise in transcultural relationships, where the focus is more on the home village than on the nation-state. As such, they partake in family celebrations and rituals as well as holding on to objects that symbolize their connection with home to emphasize their belonging in family circles. This denotes an embodiment of their individual identity. What is predominant here is the fact that, despite the migrants' mobility pattern, they are self-conscious and are glued to their cultural practices.

This gives them the moral and emotional satisfaction of maintaining a sense of family despite being away because emotions are socially constructed. As a result of missing kin, migrants seek alternative ways to cope with separation and the feeling of being disconnected from family. They turn to photos and memorabilia as coping mechanisms to bring family close and also to the things they have taken with them to the host country. Long-distance relationships are carefully natured and choreographed, with family reunions and imminent visits much anticipated. These are events packed with emotions that give migrants and family a sense of co-family. Social interaction and relationships of this sort are important and emotions abound binding migrants to large-scale social and cultural structures. By the same token, emotions can also drive people apart and push them to tear down social structures.

In summary, individuals try to adjust and readjust transcultural practices to suit specific situations owing to the dialectical processes of simultaneous departures and arrivals, and absences and the presence of members of the community. The transnational habitus thus links South Africa, the Netherlands, Pinyin and Mankon as a web of multifocal arena of emotional and sociocultural fields. In this light, migrants' (virtual) mobility within transnational social and physical fields allows them to re-engage with their communities of origin in new ways given their insatiable craving to know what is happening and to ease the pain of separation. Keeping in touch with and being connected to the home village is measured more through relationships, attitudes and behaviour over time than through mere claims or physical presence. From this perspective, we could assert that it is by leaving their families that migrants gain a stronger presence in their home through their ability to improve the lives of those left behind by sending remittances.

Trust

What seems to keep both associations glued together is a notion of trust. The sheer fact of coming from either Pinyin or Mankon has an impact on the way migrants relate to each other. They see themselves first as brothers and sisters in relation to other ethnic groups and there is a need for trust. This is also seen in the way financial transactions are organized. It takes only one phone call for a person to be given a loan in PIFAM and there is no question of any form of collateral being requested. People are held to their word and they will repay the loan (Chapter 6) because it is all done on faith and trust that the money will be repaid as promised.

It is for such reasons that members prefer *njangi* than the bank given its relaxed nature regarding borrowing and the fact that money can be easily transferred to the home country bypassing all the laws concerning money transfers. However trust at times comes at a price as it is sometimes broken by debtors, and the matter is then referred to the Conflict Resolution Committee.

In the same way, migrants are willing to trust friends or relations back home with their credit cards to carry out financial transactions at home. Although ICT has made it possible for them to monitor authorized or unauthorized financial transactions, there is no guarantee that there will not be any mismanagement of funds as this can happen anywhere. However, these worries are held in check by the trust that migrants, friends and family are willing to put in each other.

Those engaged in business between Cape Town and Johannesburg do so solely on the basis of trust. Members send money to friends and relations to buy goods for them and these are then sent as registered baggage by train or with one of the bus agencies. Although M-pesa (mobile money) has made its mark in

Kenya and Uganda, the Pinyin and Mankon communities are wary of mobile banking in case their phones are stolen and most settle for ATM (automated teller machine) transactions.

Trust does not refer only to financial transactions but also to the way migrants and families speak well or badly of each other. Migrants seek to follow the moral ethos that is expected of them by the migrant community and their families, i.e. to support their family financially and earn a decent living in the host country. Diverting from this breaches any trust invested in the migrant and may lead to bad mouthing, which can weigh down on them emotionally. In addition, the frequency of communication between migrants and families makes for convivial relations and provides an opportunity for them to be a part of each other's lives. However, lengthy spells with no communication can lead to misgivings concerning the migrant, such as Penn who went for more than a year without communicating with his parents.

A word on methods

This research is part of the Mobile Africa Revisited project that has combined historical and anthropological methods to address how people in Africa are appropriating new ICTs and how they did so in the past. Such an approach redirects the debate towards placing more emphasis on agency in historically specific contexts. This study has maintained this tradition, with a keen focus on life histories and archival research.

Life histories became an integral component in establishing social practices in the past and these link them to the present and ascertain whether there has been continuity or disjuncture in these patterns. It thus allowed me to juxtapose mobility, trade, networks and social relations from the past with those of today's migrants and to come up with an analytical framework of transformation and continuity. Complementing life histories with archival research has resulted in interesting information on the Pinyin bush trade and trade between East and West Cameroons. Can archival information about the Pinyin man who was imprisoned be linked to the information I received from an informant about his father being imprisoned for tax evasion and the sale of contraband goods?

I also chose to use themes such as confidentiality and photos that were prominent during data collection as entrance to my methodology. Interview sessions and conversations were moments that were at times marked by significant confidential information that was embedded in an outpouring of emotions. When such moments are attained, it created a significant bond between the researcher and the informant. This in no way suggests that there was no bonding between other informants. An historical perspective was important in understanding the continuities in the past that make contemporary mobilities intelligible. Through this

approach we can account for a pattern of linear mobilities and migration between the current mobile communities and their parents. Joe's case is a good example. As a young boy, he accompanied his father to various bush markets and he has since followed in the footsteps of his father in his mobility and trade. But what differentiated them is Joe's adoption of ICTs, which has enabled him to reach out to more clients and create multiple networks.

This research is built on a triangular study that spans Cameroon, South Africa and the Netherlands. A multi-sited approach was the logical path to follow as it led to the investigation of networks and the mobile community. As a result, I described the network of relationships locally and trans-locally and how mobile communities are joined or torn apart by their appropriation of ICTs. I also embarked on investigating the patterns of connections between mobile communities and the home village and amongst various mobile communities, and considered the challenges that occur and how these are dealt with. Despite the merits of this approach and its ability to follow migrants in different fields, engagement in one area prevents one from participating in important happenings in others. Equally, depending on who is telling the story, the latter may be different from one informant to the next.

A reflexive approach was used as a tool to bring me closer to the informants. The choice of a reflexive approach in part helped to understand my own personal migration and mobility trajectories and to better understand those of my informants as well as to be informed about the ethical decisions and stance that were made in the field and from the field.

Using comparative analysis, I was able to chart the various mobile trajectories of the Pinyin and Mankon communities as well as concerns concerning identities. This also shed light on the priorities of Internet-mediated forums.

Part of my approach was well embedded in the use of ICTs as a way of keeping up with the multi-sitedness of the study. Going virtual thus proved useful in making possible my absence and presence at various sites. Phone calls, texts, emails and Skype conversations complemented the quest for data collection but I was also able to follow discussions on the Pinyin News Forum and Mankon Forum that enhanced my knowledge about how Internet-mediated technology is being appropriated. In the context of accelerated mobility, ICTs have thus become a means of keeping up with mobile communities but, for researchers, they are fast becoming a research tool. Through their use, I kept abreast of happenings at different sites. Photos were important communicators throughout the research and I often carried them back and forth for families. It was always a moment of mixed feelings – nostalgia, joy, guilt and resolution when migrants and families received photos of each other. Inasmuch as these photos are virtual representations of missing kin, one cannot ignore the emotional pain that communities go

through because of their separation, and photos tend to heighten the emotional challenges. In this respect, whilst families and mobile kin are connected by ICTs in their lives, they still acknowledge the geographic distance that separates them and yearn for face-to-face meetings. I agree with John Ury's notion of 'meetingness' (Ury 2003: Chapter 9) as a way of fully bridging this gap.

Frequent air travel made it possible for me to offer a courier service to the research communities. I would carry photos from Emile in Holland to his mother in Pinyin and would take foodstuffs from her to her daughter in Cape Town. I offered the perfect bridge between her and her children in Europe and Africa. This also impacted on the data collection as the recurrent visits created a relationship of trust that made it possible for regular encounters when stories emerged.

In conclusion, contrary to seeing a disintegration of societies, a breakdown in relationships and/or a dramatic transformation in societies due to advances in ICTs and mobilities, I argue that ICTs and mobilities have, in fact, complemented social relational interaction and provided mobiles with opportunities to partake in cultural practices that express their Pinyin-ness and Mankon-ness.

It should be remembered that disintegration and estrangement are part of the nuances of technologies that are akin to social relationships and are dynamic. ICTs serve as a connecting factor, especially as networking among families has increased due to improvements and transformations in communication technologies. Pinyin and Mankon migrants are still as rooted in the past as they are in the present. They are born into a community with a sense of home, moral ethos and cultural pride but live in a context of accelerated ICTs and mobility that is fast changing the way people live their lives. Acknowledging that technologies and mobilities have enhanced livelihoods in these communities, I maintain that they have not resulted in a change in people's affection for their cultural values and practices. Instead, ICTs have helped them to become more connected and increased their zeal to be transcultural migrants. In other words, mobile communities have appropriated technologies to bridge the distances that separate them from other family members and to remain true to their cultural practices by actively participating in the various activities that give them a sense of family and belonging, as well as alleviating emotional trauma. In the process, this has brought home closer to them. The empirical question at the start of this study was about ascertaining how people in these mobile worlds create and navigate their social fabric and make sense of their individual being. In an attempt to find an answer to this question, this study has contributed towards our understanding of mobile communities by taking into account their multidimensional trajectories, as shown in the different chapters. Innovatively embracing transculturalism and transcultural habitus as concepts to comprehend the societal fabric has brought

out the in-betweens that would have been overlooked in the course of data collection.

In addition, the focus by migrants is increasingly less about transnationalism than transculturalism, although studies still focus on the former, thus reifying migrants discourse as national. In the context of the globalization of fluid and blurred borders, mobility should be less about (trans)nationalism than about 'villageism' and the pursuit of belonging. As a result of the move from (trans)-nationalism to villageism, it is important for the social sciences to increasingly reflect on this paradigm shift.

As far as policy orientation goes, I am optimistic that this study will influence the vision and thinking of those who develop migration policies. I trust that they will see migrants as people who want to stay firmly connected to their cultural roots and the spaces they have created for themselves, where difference should be celebrated rather than ignored. As Greenblatt (2010: 6) put it so well, cultural mobility is a thing to be celebrated as 'enhanced cultural mobility would foster new cosmopolitanism, an unregulated free trade in expression and feelings, and an epoch of global respect'. It is only when we begin to view identity as being mobile and as an often unstable relation of difference that we can begin to understand the full dimension of mobility.

From this study, it has emerged that policies put in place by states could either be seen as 'policy failures' or 'securitization'. These measures probably epitomize the failure to consider migration as a dynamic social process and the very essence of global governance of migration indicates the complexity of the subject and the difficulty of finding a comprehensive policy that will mitigate migration because nation states are yet to comprehend the full scale of transnationalism where sovereign national states are crisscrossed and undermined by transnational actors with varying prospects of orientation, identities and networks. By the same token, states and policy makers have underestimated the agency of migrants to circumvent and circumnavigate border regimes and state legislature, showing the limitations of nation-states in addressing mobility. In this regard, policies need to take into account the development strategies that seek to manage migration flows in the sending country as well as those of the migrant in ways that serve national interests. They should aim to find a 'win-win-win' solution.

With regard to recommendations for future research, a coordinated and longitudinal study of migration syndicates would give insight into the continuous flow of migrants, the role of weak and strong ties in the process, as well as the appropriation of ICTs to enhance or mitigate the migration process.