Wood in Water Does Not a Crocodile Make:

Migrants virtual place-making, ontological security and cosmopolitanism in the transnational social field

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ABSTRACT

Research in the field of diasporic studies relating to media, migration and transnationalism

Understanding how, despite heightened patterns of mobility, migrants retain a sense of their national identities and yet within a scattered diaspora, they may not necessarily feel 'uprooted', or 'placeless', despite a deterritorialised and physically fragmented 'home' remains an important objective in migration and transnational diaspora studies. Locating this research within London is a way to explore the specificity of the city in creating and

with the ancestral home (1010-1011). According to this framework, "if individuals engage in social relations and practices that cross border as a regular feature of everyday life then they exhibit a transnational way of being" (1011). Therefore the migrant experience is "a kind of gauge" where connection to the identified homeland depends on a variety of factors including context (1011). The concept of transnational social field shares similarities with Massey's 'global sense of place' (1991, 2005: 131) and the social relations and identities that characterise diasporic cross-border negotiations of space.

Diaspora and transnationalism

Due to this greater mobility, diaspora, "which implies a decentralised relation to ethnicity, real or imagined relations between scattered people who sustain a sense of community through various forms of communication and contact and who do not depend on returning to

'ethnoscapes' as a means to reimagine the organisation of people as 'a flow', a 'shifting landscape' composed of mobile populations (2011: 288-289).

Echoing this phrase, Massey's term 'global sense of place' points to a conceptualisation of

argues that ICTs allow migrants to "form multiple belongings, capture cosmopolitan values and develop deterritorialised identities and biographies" (1340). Yet by connecting migrants to those back home on a regular basis, they can also "claim a particular belonging while living as global citizens" (1341). Andersson's studies (2013) also highlight this shifting conjuncture between 'deterritorialisation' and 'reterritorialisation'. By learning of their homeland, maintaining relationships, exchanging information and sharing through ICTs, migrants and

Appadurai's 'ethnoscapes' (1991), places are locations informed by the global, they are nonetheless physically bound, tangible sites. They contend that individuals, through virtual interaction, construct places through 'meaningful' action or oriented action-controlled practices (Rossi, 2007: 341, 344, 348). Therefore, place, whether virtual or geographically 'anchored', is formed, sustained, and visited in 'space' through routinised habit, practices specific to the transnational social field or the transnational habitus.

According to Moores, places are constituted when "a habit field is formed, through repetitive, habitual practices"; it is not about occupying space so much as inhabiting it and making it familiar (2012: 27). Such familiarity requires a learning process, a know-how that is 'pre-cognitive', concerned with 'getting around' and orientation in everyday environments, which allows one to 'feel at ease' (2012: 31, 41, 44, 49). This 'embodied know-how' which is needed to 'feel at home', is equally constituted in digital or media environments as it is in what are traditionally termed 'places'; the physical, territorially-bound locales (Rossi, 2007: 344; Moores, 13). The physical or material, including the material technologies as well as urban infrastructure and the digital are co-constitutive (ibid.). For example, the 'know-how' in using 'Google Maps' relates not only to being able to orient oneself in a physical locale but through the digital interface as well; feeling at 'ease' thereby requires both knowing one's way around both 'places'. This embodied 'know-how', 'in the hands' (Moores and Metykova, 2009: 317) provides a sense of ontological security, the familiarity needed to ground oneself in any place within space.

Ontological security
Dupuis and Thorns's anthropological study of home ownership in New Zealand explores the ways in which the home as a physical locale provides homeowners with a sense of ontological security (1998). They draw on Gidden's definition of the term as "a sense of confidence and trust in the world as it appears to be....The confidence that most human beings have in the continuity of their self-identity and in the constancy of their social and material environments" (Giddens, 1990: 92).

This 'sense of reliability of persons and things', a 'feeling at ease' that is emotionally manifested, is 'closely connected' with routine and habit, and rooted in the unconscious (Giddens, 1990: 92). Yet, as Thorns and Dupuis explain, Giddens believed that it had become undermined in the modern world, with the demise of everyday life being lived in 'built',

routinised and takes place through familiar time-space paths", then this sense of ontological security could be maintained (Saunders in Thorns and Dupuis, 1998: 27). For him, the 'home' constituted that locale. Dupuis and Thorns posit that home ownership is an important source of ontological security for their subjects of study as it meets four conditions 1) it is a site of constancy 2) it is a spatial context in which day to day routines are performed 3) it is a place where people maintain a sense of control and privacy as it is a private realm and finally 4) it is a secure base around which identities are constructed (1998: 29).

Yet, if contemporary forms of 'dwelling' now 'almost always involve diverse forms of mobility' (Urry, 2000: 132), and if activities and relational activities can happen outside of a 'fixed' locale, then arguably in this new spatial and temporal context, home and place must also be ontologically redefined. As Giddens asserted, although ontological security is established through routine and 'unconscious' practices, it is still 'actively sought', and is therefore a

practices however, I do not wish to isolate these technologies from the dynamics of everyday life but see how they are interwoven into the context of the day-to-day activities and routines of the respondents who provided the empirical data for the exploration of the research question outlined below. The limited scope of this study means that I will not comment at any great length on the economic or technological institutions and processes in which the lives of middle-class migrants are embedded or the epistemological debates that continue to shape

contacts in the field and further recruits were snowballed from referrals. I used this method as I was looking for a particular type of under-researched person from a community to which I had some links. Recruiting respondents through my existing networks had the potential to bias the responses. The interviewees for example knew I had spent time in Senegal and this was clear from some of their responses … "You know how it is", "you've been there", etc. However, this was not seen to skew the responses, as the interview topic was not particularly

process is conceived as a 'performance' shaped by the particular situations in which the interview takes place (Holstein and Gubrium: 1997); gestures, body language and other actions are taken to be an important, constitutive part of analysis. Such an analysis could have been useful within the framework of this study because of the respondents' interaction

to theorise the data. For example, when respondents used phrases like 'go there' or 'every

in Senegal we went back to our...So to Tango. We could have changed actually. With my parents it always has been Skype and it won't change...

Badara, who lived with his cousin, Papa (also interviewed), referred to routine when relating to watching Senegal's most popular sport, wrestling, through the internet streaming service Roku:

We watch all the programmes relating to it — all the fights. And we always talk about it online at the same time. For example like usually Sundays. We've got a few friends, two of our friends and they come here watch it with us. The arguments and all that...

study involved a complex interweaving of consumption of Senegalese media and contact with family in the diaspora with other, diverse media and ties to the host nation as well as other cultures. Their articulation of their practices and the significance they attached to them was reflective of the 'dialogical imagination' (Beck, 2006), 'in-between' (Diminescu, 2010), 'syncretised' identities (Gilroy, 1994: 211) that exemplify the experience of being and belonging in the transnational social field.

Local, national, global: Senegalese, African, Londoner

All of the respondents identified as Senegalese, although three also had dual nationality. Bakary for example, who had been resident in London for six years and was married to a British woman identified as

> African and Senegalese. So it's in me, I can't get away from it but it's not, it's just not more important than me as a person. It's just, it's just...I don't know, how am I going to...It's a 'tag' basically. I am Senegalese, that's one tag, I'm African as well, and that's a 'tag', and also I am

Thus, she didn't conceive of being politically active through social media as bound by nation-state boundaries. Her political interest through social media was echoed in her involvement in her university's Pan-African society and could be seen to reflect a transnational way of 'belonging' as well as 'being' (Levitt and Schiller, 2004: 1010-1011).

For Badara and Papa, who described their interests as 'sport' and 'music', socialising at the weekends involves frequenting Afro-Caribbean nightclubs, where dancehall music and American hip-hop intermingle. When asked if he knew other people from the West African diaspora, unlike Malick who expressed a conscious decision to 'stay away from' such 'communities', both Badara and Papa stated that they attended 'African parties', every few months:

> There are like Nigerians and Ghanaians and that and at the end of the day we're all Africans so yeah...So when we go to like for example African parties in general, it feels like home. It's not that different to be honest...

For Badara, socialising occurred through friendship groups made through work and his local football team, which he had joined upon first arriving in London four years ago. He stated that when he first arrived he "spoke no English"... "We used to go out...Even though I couldn't answer them, you know what I mean, sometimes they'd talk to me, I'd check on my phone trying to translate..." Since then, however, he stated he feels 'at ease' communicating and on occasion he used slang such as 'touche' to describe women at clubs which he described as "a London word".

This contextualised and situated understanding of the practices, preferences and habits of each respondent illustrates a 'hybrid', 'creolised' (Gilroy, 1994), a 'multilocal' (Beck, 2000), multi-dimensional belonging' (Georgiou, 2010) and where the use of ICTs, such as the mobile phone to 'attempt to translate', listen to music or organise a night out, football match or respond to a message on Viber, FaceTime or WhatsApp from family constituted part of a daily flow of activities.

All of the respondents found that their Senegalese identity was simply 'part of who they were', an indissoluble aspect of their identity...For Malick, "the language, the culture. I think all of that, you'll always keep it, you can't just say ok I'll avoid this or that. Um...Even if I'm living here, in Europe, I still have that connection". As Fatou said "I do feel like this I guess this

American identity is not just something I can just delete because I did live in the States for like…I lived in Senegal for the longest but I did live in DC".

This 'hybrid' identity was reflected in the way she described that she felt she should "watch more Senegalese TV at home", even if she would have preferred to watch something else:

I feel like I should just stay in touch. It's like, it's not a matter of like, watching TV. I'm not a

reimagine how ontological security is achieved, despite a mobile lifestyle characterised by the experience of perpetual proximity to physically distant others.

Ontological security or "confidence of continuity of one's self-identity and the constancy of their social and material environments" (Giddens, 1990: 92) is afforded, in part by ICTs because they constitute environments through which a feeling of 'at-homeness' is attained. Furthermore, through the meanings attached to them (Rossi, 2007), they offer ways of being and belonging (Levitt and Schiller, 2004). Therefore, although the media settings and the physical locales which ground us may be multiple, shifting and pluralised (Moores, 2012:d12)

analysis. Future studies may consider how practices are subject to social differentiation (Warde, 2005), particularly due to unequal access to media resources, depending on class and how this may explain and reproduce particular practices.

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