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Migrant Workers in South Africa: what a perspective of migrant transnationalism can make visible

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Migrant Workers in South Africa: what a perspective of migrant transnationalism can make visible.

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Abstract

Migration researchers in Southern Africa have begun to acknowledge that little is known about the forms of belonging – inclusion, solidarity and connectedness – among migrants who live in Africa's cities. This paper attempts to contribute to this knowledge gap. It fulfills two related objectives. The first is to identify some of the important conceptual aspects that are germane to the study of complex migrant belongings within Africa's global cities. Rather than reifying national frameworks and discourses, categories and labels, I argue, researchers ought to look at migrant identifications and attachments in every day experiences, and the ways in which these intervene in configurations of ties and practices of the migrants who inhabit the African city. This undertaking requires conceptual frameworks which are no longer constrained by nation-state discourses even as they anticipate positionality and boundedness of social formations within which migrants are embedded. The second object of the paper is to illustrate the relevance of using migrant transnational frameworks in studying migrant belongings in Southern Africa. I show that already, there is within the migrant transnational perspective conceptual language with which to get a handle on migrant identifications, ties and practices of actors. Evidence used in the paper stems from an on-going doctoral study of belonging and related social policy issues among Zimbabwean migrant workers in Johannesburg.

Key Words

Migrant workers, Southern Africa, rootedness, simultaneous embeddedness, migrant transnationalism, impermanence

Introduction

Migration researchers in Southern Africa have begun to acknowledge that little is known about the forms of belonging; inclusion, solidarity and connectedness, among migrants who *live* in Africa's cities (Landau, 2010; Landau and Freemantle, 2010). This paper attempts to contribute to this knowledge gap. It fulfills two related objectives. The first is to identify some of the important conceptual aspects that are germane to an understanding of complex migrant belongings within Africa's global cities. Four aspects are suggested: (i) *identifications* and / or *attachments*, and (ii) the *practices* of migrants that are enacted in (iii) configurations of the *ties* of different forms and content within which migrants are embedded. Lastly, researchers need to examine the *attributes* of *actors* who interact within micro-social contexts. Rather than reifying national frameworks and discourses, categorizations and labels, I argue, researchers ought to look at migrant identifications and attachments in every day experiences. Further, they need to reveal the ways in which these identifications and attachments intervene in configurations of ties and practices of the migrants who inhabit the African city.

This requires a commitment on the part of researchers to take a step back from macro-level generalizations, patterns, frameworks discourses and categorizations, and to zoom in on micro-social contexts within which migrants live. The second object of the paper is to illustrate the relevance of using suggested concepts – identifications, ties, practices and attributes – within migrant transnational frameworks in studying migrant belongings in Southern Africa. As I illustrate in the ensuing sections, migrant transnationalism already has conceptual language which provide grist for understanding migrant belongings.

Insights discussed in the current paper stem from on-going doctoral work that examines aspects of belonging and related social policy issues among Zimbabwean migrant workers in Johannesburg, South Africa. This on-going doctoral study examines three related issues: Firstly, it attempts to develop a rich and textured understanding of how Zimbabwean migrants in Johannesburg sustain a sense of belonging in dual contexts. Secondly, it examines how migrant experiences of belonging configure social and micro-family relations in both destination and exit contexts. Lastly, the doctoral study considers the implications of these changing social and human dynamics for social policy in South Africa and Zimbabwe.

The paper is organized as follows: In the first section, I set out to reveal key gaps in the study of human mobility and belonging in Southern Africa. Here, I show that scholarship's orientation toward general patterns and macro-level frameworks and discourses precludes understandings of complex migrant belonging within Southern Africa, much as it finds resonance in regional human dynamics. In the second section, I consider the relevance of using the concepts – identifications, ties, practices and attributes – within migrant transnational frameworks. Next, I discuss how these concepts were put to work in the current study. This is followed by a section on method. A description of how social network analysis was used as both an investigative and analytic tool, in conjunction with narrative analysis and semi-structured interviews is given. In the penultimate section, three cases stemming from interviews with three focal migrants are presented. The conclusions are given in the last section.

Mobility and Belonging in Southern Africa: Revealing Key Gaps

It merits mention up-front, that migration researchers in Southern have already generated a rich corpus of literature without adopting the conceptual language of migrant transnationalism. One of the things that come out strongly from this body of literature is that migration in Southern Africa is dominantly circular and impermanent. A number of studies have illustrated that migrants in South African cities are not staying forever. These works often depict the African migrant as an up-rooted, transient and mobile individual; a commuter who is always on the move (Crush and McDonald, 2000; McDonald, Zinyama, Gay, De Vletter and Mattes, 2000). For African migrants, living in the city is often regarded as a (temporary) livelihood strategy, one that is chosen as the last viable option. As Landau and Freemantle (2010) unequivocally illustrate, for most of the African migrants in South African cities, migrating to the city is not a manifestation of cosmopolitan tastes. Rather, it is part and parcel of pragmatic livelihood activities. Consequently, migrants are often represented as sojourners; persons who move back and forth between distant places and the city.

Inasmuch as this story line which often depicts migration in the region as circular and impermanent finds resonance in migration dynamics in the region, it simultaneously precludes understandings of belongings among migrants as they live and move within emerging social formations. To date, fewer studies have focused on social formations emerging from migration processes in Southern Africa. Crush and McDonald (2000) seem to suggest that the dearth of

empirical research about social formations is linked to the reluctance with which scholars in the region have embraced migrant transnationalism. Moreover, this reluctance to use transnationalism can be attributed to the lack of "fixedness of new migrants in South Africa", which these scholars view as "a theoretical prerequisite for the application of concepts of transnationalism and transnational social fields" (Crush and McDonald, 2000, p. 11). However, without a paradigmatic optic whose language orients them to question patterns and regularities in migration dynamics, migration researchers in Southern Africa have inadvertently participated in manufacturing and popularizing discourses that fix contemporary migrants in constant motion. By accentuating impermanence and circularity in the mobility of the African migrants, scholars frame them as sojourners; as the other who is always arriving and never settling.

Yet recent studies in the region show that non-nationals actually "live" in African cities although at least at the level of intent, they continue to yearn either to go back or move on to a third country. In South Africa, such ambivalence is fuelled by a highly xenophobic and restrictive migration regime (Landau and Freemantle, 2010). But returning home or moving to a third country remains a pipe dream for many migrants as shown by Landau and Freemantle (2010, p. 381):

> Critically, journeys home or onwards often remain elusive for practical reasons of money, safety or social status. This leaves large sections of Johannesburg's non-national population effectively marooned in the city, but not necessarily planning to be here.

Thus, in some way, non-nationals do inhabit the African city even as they either intend to leave or actually go back and forth between South Africa and another country. This reveals an important gap, as Landau (2010) observes: interactions, forms of inclusion and exclusion, and solidarities among urban non-national populations in African cities have remained less clear. He invites us "to build a conceptual vocabulary of belonging reflecting practices of those living in and moving through Africa's cities" (Landau, 2010, p. 1). It seems to me that Landau's (2010) call is an exhortation to move the research agenda beyond macro-contexts, national discourses and general patterns, toward variable, grounded micro-contexts within which migrant interactions take place.

There are a number of reasons why the task of building a conceptual language of belonging that goes beyond national frameworks and discourses seems timely and indispensable in studies of

migration in Southern Africa. There is within Southern Africa, a growing recognition of the complexity of belonging among urban migrants. For example, Landau and Freemantle (2010) have observed that immigrant groups in Johannesburg engage in multifarious ways of negotiating and enacting belonging that go beyond ethnic, national and even transnational frameworks (Landau and Freemantle, 2010). They document the ways in which non-nationals in local networks and communities in South Africa's cities enact partial inclusion in mainstream South Africa's society while they avoid obligations that are part of it. While these theorizations do not represent a general pattern, they do point out that quotidian experiences of migrants in African cities often trouble national discourses of belonging, and categorizations in unknown, yet manifold ways.

Many other scholars have acknowledged the inadequacy of national frameworks and discourses as tools with which to study belongings. Scholars have shown that despite the material and symbolic power at the disposal of the state, persons in micro-contexts often distort national frameworks and categorizations. For example, De Federico de la Rúa (2007) observed that the state and its institutions of order often put in place "formalized, codified and objectivized systems of categorization" that work to socialize individuals within specific categories and labels (De Federico de la Rúa, 2007, p. 686). The state's symbolic power emanates from its ability develop categories, classificatory schemes and modes of social counting and accounting with which the officialdom must work and to which non-state actors must refer, thus reifying categories and labels as organic entities (Brubaker and Copper, 2000). However, within networks of relations at local levels, meanings, frameworks, discourses and categories imposed by the state and macro-level institutions "are negotiated, opposed, adjusted, filled, or emptied (De Federico de la Rúa, 2007, p. 684). Here, situated micro-practices and ties that migrants enact in local contexts generate discourses that in many ways contend with national frameworks, and that are largely contingent upon solidarities in these micro-contexts. In the following section, I suggest and illustrate that migrant transnationalism already provides some of the concepts with which to grasp migrant belongings.

Migrant Transnationalism

The key point to note about migrant transnationalism is that the bulk of research within this field has focused on social formations that emerge from migration processes (Vertovec, 2004, 2001). As such, scholarship in migrant transnationalism has developed a number of concepts and theorizations that are relevant to the study of migrant belongings in Africa's cities. To begin with, a transnational perspective considers that migrants' lives take place in *social fields* or sets of interlocking networks of social relationships through which ideas, practices and resources are unequally exchanged, organized and transformed (Levitt and Glick Schiller, 2004). Within these *social fields* migrants engage in social, economic and political ties and practices with non-migrants in the sending country even as they settle in the host country (Levitt and Jaworsky, 2007; Vertovec, 2007). Scholars in the field of migrant transnationalism refer to such migrant behaviour as *simultaneous embeddedness* (Levitt and Glick Schiller, 2004). Thus, as Glick Schiller and Fouron (1999) observe transnational migration can be understood as "a pattern of migration in which persons, although they move across international borders, settle and establish on-going social relations in a new state, maintain on-going social connections within the polity from which they originated" (Glick Schiller and Fouron, 1999, p. 344).

For the better part, research in migrant transnationalism has been concerned to gain an understanding of the ways in which social groups – families, kinship groups, social movements and communities – are transformed by cross-border processes (see Vertovec, 2004). Some of the works in this area have explored the increasing consequences of migrant practices that are performed within networks and social and family relations which span nation-state borders. Focusing mainly on kinship and families, these studies have sought to illuminate on the internal dynamics of transnational families and the gendered asymmetries of power that characterize cross-border family networks and kinship groups (see for example Landolt and Da, 2005). Significantly, researchers in the field of migrant transnationalism have sought to understand how experiences of living in social worlds that span nation-state boundaries transform migrant modes of belonging and the meanings they have about home (see for example, NÍ Laoire, Méndez, Tyrell and White, 2010; Lucas and Purkayastha, 2007). Broadly, there is agreement that migrants do construct decentred and multiple attachments and identifications that are no longer in thrall with the territorial state and its national frameworks (see for example, Cheng, 2005). Further,

migrants' notions of home tend to be detached from specific physical contexts and they are often defined more in terms of mobility than fixity (NÍ Laoire, Méndez, Tyrell and White, 2010).

The foregoing two paragraphs only give a short survey of literature in migrant transnationalism. Nevertheless, they hint at the relevance of migrant transnationalism for the study of migrant belongings. The first point to emphasize is that the concept of *social fields* orients analysis to everyday experiences of ordinary persons who live and interact with others within multiple networks. Migrant transnationalism accentuates a focus on social formations – networks, collectives, kinship group, families, movements – that are emerging from migration processes. Although the spatial geometries of such formations may transcend the territorial state, such formations are always located in real geographical places. Moreover, migrants are often embedded in multiple configurations of ties that are located in both places of origin and destination. In these formations, researchers look at ties and (transnational practices) that are enacted through interactions. In the section below, I describe how the concepts – identifications, ties, practices and attributes – were put to work in current study.

Theorizing Complex Migrant Belongings beyond National Frameworks

In the current study, migrant belongings is conceived as migrants' *attachments* and / or *identifications* with other people, social groups, places and modes of being (Probyn, 1996). The terms *identifications* and *attachments* signify the affective dimension of belonging – the (on-going) need to gain positive evaluation of oneself which comes from positive evaluations linked to membership to a social group (De Federico de la Rúa, 2007). Furthermore, the two terms indicate that belonging is not an individual affair: persons *identify* with or get *attached* to other people, groups or places (see Probyn, 1996). In other words, belonging is entangled in on-going interactions between persons within specific settings. This is a key point. Migrant identifications, be it with other people, social groups, or modes of being are manifested in, and are part of ties and practices that are enacted between real persons in concrete settings. Identifications are complex because they vary across time and space; they are activities and processes that are situational and contextual (De Federico de la Rúa, 2007). And, whilst identifications are part of ties and are inseparable from them, they can be viewed as effects of configurations, forms and content of ties. In other words, they are manifested in ties and practices which emerge from interactions, exchanges, transactions and so on – between persons. This leads us to another

important dimension of belonging. In order to understand identifications, attention should also be given to attributes of persons involved in interactions. Another point to note is that identification refers more to on-going processes and activities than it connotes stable outcomes (Probyn, 1996). In addition, granted that belonging is an affective affair, it can be understood as one's or a group's claims, desires and yearnings of being part of this or that and becoming this or that.

Method

The context of field work is a transnational pentecostal religious movement: the Forward in Faith Mission International (FIFMI). The Forward in Faith Mission International originated in Zimbabwe, where it is popularly known as Zimbabwe Assemblies of God, Africa (ZAOGA). Under the guidance of its current spiritual leader, Ezekiel Guti, the present day ZAOGA developed from a small prayer band in the 1950s townships of colonial Zimbabwe (Maxwell, 2006). The Forward in Faith Mission International has spread across regional and continental boundaries and to date, it stands as one of the largest religious transnational movements with branches in Southern and Eastern Africa, United Kingdom, United States of America and many other countries (for a detailed reading of the FIFM, see Maxwell, 2006). In Johannesburg, this transnational religious movement has a large following of Zimbabwean migrants with only a small portion of non-Zimbabweans. Both the City Christian Centre Assembly and Berea Assembly claim memberships of more than 400 members.

At the beginning of fieldwork, much time was devoted to building rapport with members of two branches of the Forward in Faith Mission International (FIFMI) in Johannesburg: the City Christian Centre and Berea. Both branches are located in the Central Business District of Johannesburg. Members of these two branches live in and around places in Central Johannesburg including Berea, Hilbrow, Honeydew, Fairland, and Killarney. Building rapport involved attending church service, functions and meetings, and visiting church members, especially church leaders and key informants.

To recall earlier discussions, the current study is conceived within a migrant transnational framework and uses the *social fields* approach. As shown earlier, the *social fields* approach accentuates the relevance of networks and ties for the study of migrant lives. Further, it underscores the importance of exchanges and resources among migrants, but it also includes in

the analysis those non-migrants in the home country, who do not necessarily move across borders but participate in transnational activities in manifold ways (Levitt and Glick Schiller, 2004). From this optic, transnational formations such as the Forward in Faith Mission International provide an appropriate empirical context within which notions of migrant belongings can be fruitfully studied (see also Vertovec, 2001).

The current study uses social network analysis as both an investigative tool and analytic framework (Butts 2008) in conjunction with narrative analysis (Ollerenshaw and Creswell, 2002). A complete ego-centric network approach is used to collect data from focal persons and the persons with who they have close ties. Semi-structured interviews are used to collect evidence from focal persons and the persons with whom they have close ties. Data are collected in two stages. Ten focal persons who are both Zimbabwean migrants and members of the Forward in Faith Mission International were purposively selected using pre-determined criteria: Firstly, all selected focal persons were documented migrants who had family members in Zimbabwe and South Africa, and who had been living and working in Johannesburg for at least 2 years. Secondly, focal persons represented different categories of migrant documentation namely asylum, temporary work permit, permanent residence, as well as those who had naturalized. Lastly, selected focal persons came from different family forms. These included families in which the migrant and the wife were living together as spouses, families in which one spouse lived in Zimbabwe and single parent families in which the selected focal person was either divorced, or widowed or had never married. In addition, focal persons represented different strata among the poor such as the working poor, those who are transient and those with special needs.

The purpose of the complete egocentric network analysis in this is not so much to understand the structure of a given network. Rather, the egocentric analysis is used to establish configurations, form and content of ties that were important to the focal migrant and the individual attributes of these persons (see Knoke and Yang, 2008). Name generators were used to establish persons with whom the migrant has had ties at different stages of the migration cycle. In addition, name generators were used to identify non-migrant persons with whom the ego had close ties. Such non-migrants included non-migrant family members, relatives and co-religionists in Zimbabwe. Semi-structured interviews are first used, with selected focal persons. Next, semi-structured interviews will be used to collect data from persons with whom the migrant has had close ties.

Data that are presented and discussed below were generated from semi-structured interviews with five migrant focal persons. In the next section, I present three different cases of three focal migrants: Mangwiro, Chizivi and Mudzingwa. Pseudonyms of persons and some places have been used to protect participants. The presentation is organized around reconstructed stories of the focal migrants and their ties at two different junctures and in both Johannesburg and Zimbabwe: (i) during the first few months after arrival and (ii) at present. Data on instrumental ties – specifically persons from whom the focal migrant is likely to borrow money to pay his monthly rental are also presented. Incidences of practices such as exchanges between migrants and non-migrants and involvement with co-religionists in Zimbabwe are also included in the presentations.

Presentation of Cases

Mangwiro

Mangwiro's Close Ties Few Months after Arrival

> Mangwiro, a father of three and a divorcee, was born in 1972 in Zaka Disrict, in Zimbabwe. After only two years of secondary education which his peasant parents could afford, Mangwiro set out to look for employment. He changed a number of menial jobs before he secured employment with a security services company where he worked as a guard. In 2005, the security company posted him to the border town of Beitbridge. He lost his job after a few months. Although the real income from the job was meager, given the skyrocketing inflation in Zimbabwe at that time, Mangwiro had a wife and 3 children to look after. It became logical for him to cross the border into South Africa. Before he crossed the border he wrote and posted a letter telling his wife that he had travelled to the other side to look for employment. This was an act of desperation: Mangwiro did not have a passport, let alone a visa or a permit. Neither did he have contacts in South Africa. In Johannesburg, Mangwiro stayed for some weeks in Jubert Park, looking for odd jobs during day. At night, he would find shelter behind a flat close to the Park. Shaken by the absolute destitution in a foreign city, Mangwiro, a Christian and member and ZAOGA since 2003, would spend much of his nights beseeching his creator:

> "I would sleep behind some flat, praying most the time."

> One day, his prayers attracted some passersby who stopped to ask some questions. Mangwiro got to ask where he could find the FIF Mission International. He was fortunate to get directions to the church premises in Berea, Johannesburg. At the church premises, Mangwiro was introduced to one of the leaders, Elder Moyo (see Figure 1 below). Moyo first asked questions to establish whether or not Mangwiro was a member of the Forward in Faith Mission International. When he was satisfied, he made arrangements with other leaders to have Mangwiro occupy one of the vacant rooms at the premises. For some months, and on a number of occasions, Moyo helped Mangwiro with money and food

stuffs. He also provided emotional support and encouragement. After close to a year, Moyo helped Mangwiro secure his current job – guarding the church premises.

Just after a couple of months, another desperate Zimbabwean moved in to share the accommodation – again, through Elder Moyo's hand. Mariro, a church elder from Zimbabwe, became close to Mangwiro during the time of they lived at the church premises. The two strengthened each other's faith, encouraging each other to up-hold Christian principles and to get jobs and to secure relevant documentation. During the time he stayed at the church premises, Mangwiro befriended Joseph – one of the young migrants from Zimbabwe who later showed him how to buy and sell loan and other garden plants. Joseph also familiarized him with places in Johannesburg. Mangwiro also became close to Beatrice, one of the migrants from Zimbabwe. Mangwiro and Beatrice discovered that they shared the same totem and could therefore be related in some distant way. They began to share their problems and challenges, helping each other out. They would lend each other money during times of distress. At one time, Beatrice could not afford to pay her monthly rental. She decided to live with a friend for a while. Because she could not move in with her belongings, she left her things at Mangwiro's place. Mangwiro describes their relationship as so close that;

 "she [Beatrice] became my blood sister." (Mangwiro, Author Interview, Johannesburg, 3 August 2010).

Mangwiro's Current Close Ties

At present, Mangwiro still relates closely with Mariro. However, he thinks that some things have changed in the way they relate:

"sometimes he [Mariro] is into ladies. Because of that, yes we relate but something has changed."

 Despite these differences in sexual behaviours, Mangwiro and Mariro still visit each other, and they still communicate frequently. They still help each other out. Again, Mangwiro is still close to Beatrice. Mangwiro is now close friends with Mark, a Zimbabwean migrant with whom he shares the room. They share rental, water and electricity costs. Mangwiro's closest friend at the moment is Clarence, another Zimbabwean and church member. Mangwiro and Clarence share problems, challenges and they help each other out.
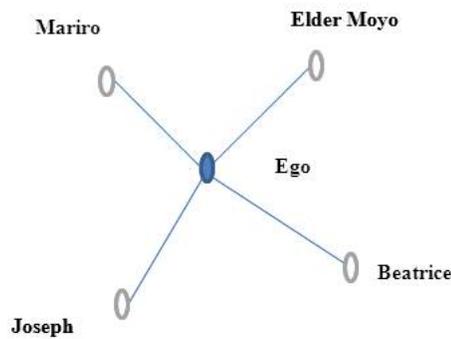
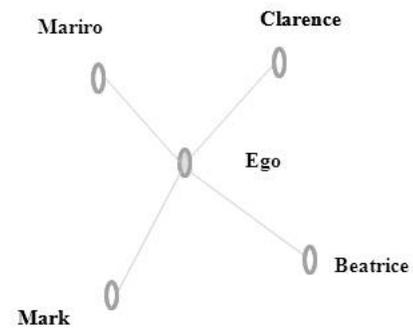Figure 1 Mangwiro' Close Ties during the First Few Months of Arrival

Figure 2 Mangwiro' Current Close Ties

Persons from whom Mangwiro is Likely to Borrow Monthly Rental

Mangwiro thinks that in the event that he failed to raise his monthly rental, he would first approach Beatrice. His reasons are that Beatrice knows his life very well and that they have had multiple exchanges. Mangwiro's second preference is Clarence. Clarence is his current best friend with whom he feels comfortable to share his problems and challenges. Mangwiro's third preference is his roommate, Mark. Mangwiro and Mark share costs of living in the room and have had no problems with their arrangement (see Figure 3 below).

Persons with whom Mangwiro has Close Ties in Zimbabwe

Figure 4 below shows persons, apart from his wife, kids and siblings. Blessed is a friend and church mate in Harare. Mangwiro visits him every time he travels to Zimbabwe and they also communicate occasionally by telephone. Bob and Tafadzwa are Mangwiro's cousins. They grew up together and attended the same primary schools.
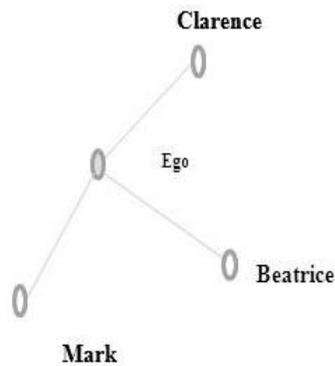
Figure 3 Persons from which Mangwiro is likely to borrow Monthly Rental
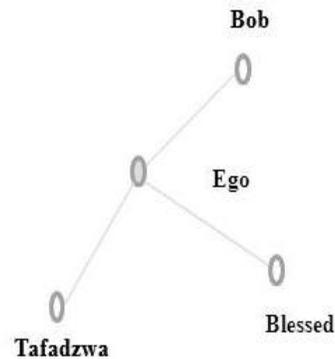

Figure 4 Persons with whom Mangwiro has close ties in Zimbabwe

Chizivi

Chizivi's Close Ties at Arrival

Chizivi was born in 1960 in Masvingo in Zimbabwe. He completed Zimbabwe's Ordinary Certificate Level in 1977. He is currently married and has 3 daughters. His first daughter teaches at a primary school in Masvingo. The second is a domestic worker in Mafikeng, South Africa. The last born is currently studying toward the Ordinary Level Certificate. Chizivi relocated to South Africa in January 2008 after securing a 1 year work permit. Before he started his journey, Chizivi arranged to travel with a cousin who was already based in South Africa. This would have been more convenient for him as the cousin had promised to live with him whilst he secured employment. However, his cousin had to secure fake documents in Musina before he could continue to Johannesburg. On their way, they stopped at the border town of Musina and went to some house where fake permits and visas could be bought at a cost. Chizivi's cousin failed to pay for the fake permit and decided to go back to Zimbabwe.

Chizivi was determined to get to Johannesburg. He had left a wife and two daughters at home. As well, he had plans to extend their house in one of Mavingo's high density suburbs once he secured a steady job. Whilst at the house where fake permits were produced, Chizivi got involved in a casual conversation with another Zimbabwean who was in his mid-twenties. During their chat, Chizivi and the man whose name was Norman discovered that they were related in some distant way. Norman, who rented a room in a flat along Jeppe Street in the Central Business District, offered to help Chizivi with accommodation and upkeep whilst he secured employment (see Figure 5 below). The two lived together for 10 months, splitting rentals, water and electricity costs between themselves. A day after his arrival in Johannesburg, Chizivi contacted Peter whom he had known since they were young. Peter had left his lectureship job at Masvingo State University in Zimbabwe and was working in Germiston. Peter helped Chizivi with information about jobs. This worked out well because Chizivi got piece jobs the very same day and worked for a week in Germiston. Chizivi then got a job in Mayfair, Johannesburg which was closer to the place he shared with Norman. His job involved

working in the storeroom person for a retail shop that specialised in automobile parts. Chizivi became close to the man who was working as the driver at the same shop – Obi. Formerly from Malawi, Obi, had lived in South Africa for the previous 10 years and had naturalized. In October, 2008, Chizivi was robbed at the staircase when he was walking up to the room which he shared with Norman. He lost his passport, money and cell-phone. After this incident, Chizivi decided to move out of the place and stay out of Johannesburg Central District. Obi agreed to share his room in Brixton with him. The two made arrangements to split rentals, and costs of water and electricity. In 2009, Chizivi lost his job at the retail shop.

Chizivi, a church leader from Zimbabwe (Elder) had joined the Forward in Faith Mission iin Berea during the first few weeks of his arrival. He had met a number of Christians that he knew from Zimbabwe. Among them were Elder Makiwa and Elder Zondo. Chizivi had worked with the two of them at one time in Masvingo, Zimbabwe. During the same time they were also his church mates. On several occasions, Makiwa helped Chizivi with money and food stuffs when he did not have steady income. When Chizivi lost his stores job, Elder Zondo helped him find his current job.

Chizivi's Current Ties

Chizivi maintained contact with Norman only for a few months after he moved to Mayfair. He thinks that they lost touch with each other because of differences in life styles. Norman not only drinks but he also enjoys urban nightlife. On the contrary, Chizivi is a practising Christian and a church leader. Chizivi has also lost touch with Obi. His current close friends are all his "workmates in the Lord" (Chizivi, Author interview, Johannesburg, 4 August, 2010). He is close to Elder Makiwa, Elder Zondo, Elder Sango and Elder Kuenda. All his current close friends in Johannesburg are Zimbabweans (see Figure 6 below).
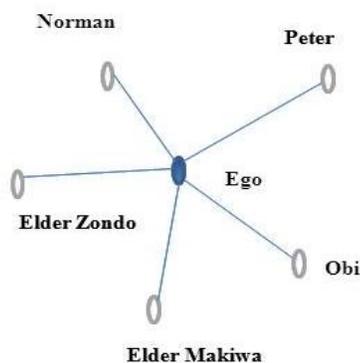

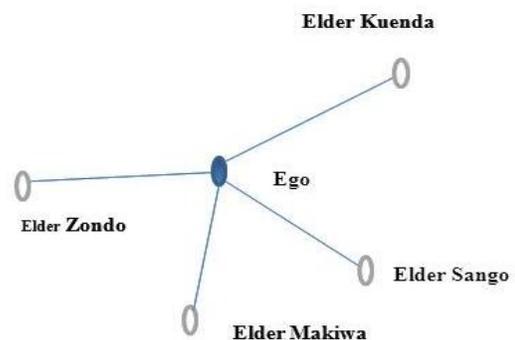Figure 5 Chizivi's Close Ties during the First Few Months of Arrival

Figure 6 Chizivi's Current Close Ties

Persons from Whom Chizivi is likely to Borrow Monthly Rental

In the event that Chizive failed to raise money for his monthly rental, his first preference is Elder Zondo. He prefers Zondo ahead of any person because he feels comfortable with him. Besides, they have known each other for a long time. The two have worked at the same company and worshipped at the same church in Zimbabwe. Chizivi and Zondo have long history of helping each other out in times of distress. Chizivi's second preference is Bothwell, who is Zondo's friend. Chizivi and Bothwell became friends because of their relationship with Zondo. Bothwell is also a Church member at City Christian Centre. Chizivi's third preference is Elder Makiwa. Although at present, Makiwa worships at the Assembly in Kempton Park, the two communicate frequently and occasionally visit each other. As well, their relationship goes back to their pre-migration time in Zimbabwe where they worked and worshipped together.

Persons with whom Chizivi has close ties in Zimbabwe

With the exception of his uncle, Sekuru Chizivi and Mbuya Jani, all of the people with whom Chizivi has close ties are co-religionists. Apart from being church mates, Magwiza and Chizivi worked at the same company at one time. They communicate occasionally by phone. Chizivi also visits him every time he goes back home. Chimombe owns a micro-finance company and is Chizivi's former employer. Their relationship goes beyond that. They are co-religionists and friends. Maona is another church mate with whom Chizivi is closely related. Mbuya Jani is a family friend. Everytime Chizivi travels to Zimbabwe; he visits her at her place and brings her gifts. Chizivi considers his uncle as his father. Sekuru Chizivi, along with his sisters paid Chizivi's school fees and provided for him in many ways. Chizivi visists him every time he goes back to Zimbabwe (see Figure 8 below).
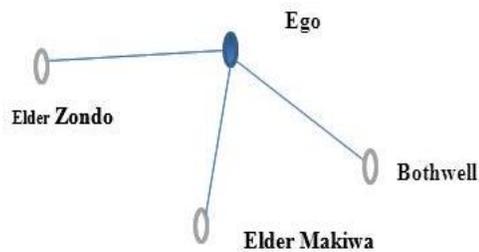

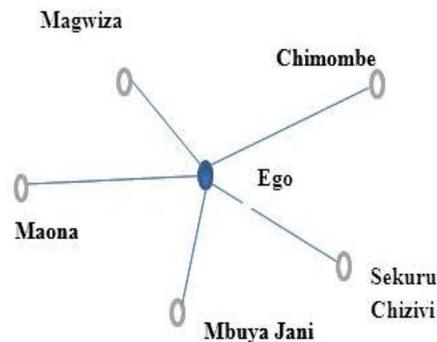Figure 7 Persons from whom Chizivi is likely to borrow monthly rental

Figure 8 Persons with who Chizivi has close ties in Zimbabwe

Mudzingwa

Mudzingwa's Close Ties at Arrival

Mudzingwa is a documented migrant with asylum status. He is married and has 4 children. His story is that he relocated to South Africa because his life was threatened by the ZANU PF regime in Zimbabwe. Mudzingwa became an activist for the main opposition movement in Zimbabwe – the Movement for Democratic change (MDC) – in 1999. After 1999, Mudzingwa became the Ward Chairman in Dzivaresekwa in Harare. In 2000, he was physically abused by alleged ZANU PF agents. A non-governmental organization known as Amani Trust took custody of him until he was fully recuperated. When he left Amani Trust, Mudzingwa decided to sell some of his belongings to raise money for travel.

In Johannesburg, Mudzingwa had three contacts (Figure 9 below) namely: Patson, Manu and Nixon. Patson's is Mudzingwa's nephew. Patson and Mudzingwa's friendship goes back to the time when they lived in Harare. Nixon is Mudzingwa's aunt's grandson. Patson and Nixon relocated to South Africa in the early 1990s. At different times, Mudzingwa lived with both Nixon and Patson. Mudzingwa and Manu met and became friends in Beatrice near Harare. They were school mates until Form 2 when Manu dropped out of school because his mother could not afford the fees and other levies. Before Manu came to South Africa, he lived in Botswana for a while. Manu lived with Mudzingwa for more than 5 months. When Mudzingwa began to work odd jobs, they made an arrangement to split costs of rent, water and electricity.

Mudzingwa's Current Close Ties

Although Mudzingwa is on asylum, he visits his family in Zimbabwe. In 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, Mudzingwa went back to Zimbabwe, spending a month on each visit. In 2009, Mudzingwa spent 4 months in Zimbabwe. It was during his visit to Zimbabwe in 2003 that Mudzingwa lost touch with Manu. When he came to South Africa, Manu had changed places. His current friends are shown in Figure 10 below. Mudzingwa still maintains close ties with Patson and Nixon. Mudzingwa is also close to Mariro who is a church member. At one point, Mariro employed Mudzingwa in his small-scale surfacing and pavement project. Pindile is a local South African. At one time, he worked with Mudzingwa at a Furniture Distribution Company in Johannesburg. The two have maintained their friendship since then. Mudzingwa occasionally visits Pindile and his family in Soweto. As well, Mudzingwa and Pindile communicate frequently over the phone. Thebogo owned a company that provided extra waiting services at functions. Mudzingwa worked for Thebogo as a waiter. Later he established an Estate Company. Again, Mudzingwa worked for the Estate Company. Thebogo is a Zimabwean who has secured South African Identity Documents.
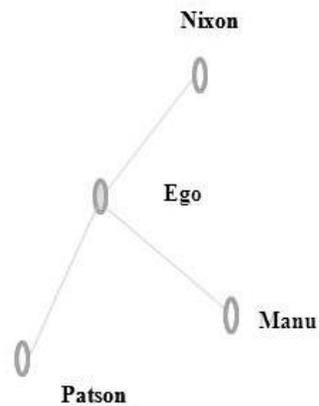
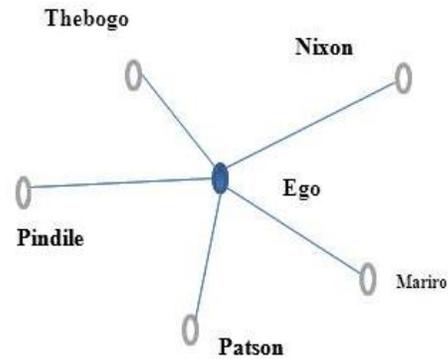Figure 9 Mudzingwa's close ties during the first few months of arrival

Figure 10 Mudzingwa's current close ties

Persons from Whom Mudzingwa is Likely to Borrow Monthly Rental

In the event that Mudzingwa wants to borrow money to pay his monthly rental, he would first approach Mummy Susan. Susan is a local South African who lives in Palm Springs. Mudzingwa and Susan first met when they hired him to take photos of her family in Johannesburg and at her mother's 96th birthday. Since then, they communicate frequently and over the phone and Mudzingwa occasionally visits. Mudzingwa mentioned many reasons why he would approach Susan ahead of any other person. Firstly, Mudzingwa is comfortable to visit Susan and her family:

"Yeah she is South African. Eeh, now with her I feel at home. I certainly feel that I am at home."(Mudzingwa, Author Interview, Johannesburg, 8th July 2010).

Secondly, and related to this closeness, Susan has once visited Mudzingwa's and his family in Zimbabwe. Thirdly, on a number of occasions, Susan helped Mudzingwa and his family with money for food, clothes and travel. The second person, Mudzingwa would approach is Pindile. Again, Pindile is South African. Both worked together at a Furniture distribution company. Mudzingwa's third preference is Boniface, who currently works in Cape Town. Mudzingwa trusts that Boniface will help him out. This is mainlybecause he lived with himfor 5 months when he was not working. Mudzingwa and Boniface also communicate frequently. The fourth person Mudzingwa would approach is Elder Tongai, one of the Church leaders at City Christian Centre. Tongai and Mudzingwa know each other from way back before the two of them got married. Mudzingwa was a church youth leader at Assembly level while Tongai was the District youth leader. Mudzingwa described Tongai as a brother with whom he is comfortable to share his problems.

Persons with whom Mudzingwa has close ties in Zimbabwe

Apart from his wife, children, siblings and mother, Mudzingwa maintains close ties mainly with co-religionists in Zimbabwe. As shown in Figure 12 below. Deacon Shumba is one of the church leaders in Hatcliff, in Harare. Mudzingwa describes Shumba as a brother whom his wife can approach for material assistance in time of need. On a number

of occasions, Shumba bought mini-groceries for Mudzingwa's family in Zimbabwe whilst he was in South Africa. Although Mudzingwa is close to Dube and Mwale, these relations are less instrumental. Mudzingwa thinks that in time of need, his wife cannot approach them for assistance. Although Mai Makondo is not a member of the ZAOGA, she is close to the family and often gives counsel. At one time, she helped Mudzingwa's wife access food aid when his family failed to meet the criteria for food hand outs. The non-governmental organization had considered since Mudzingwa was based in South Africa and was therefore better placed to provide for his family.
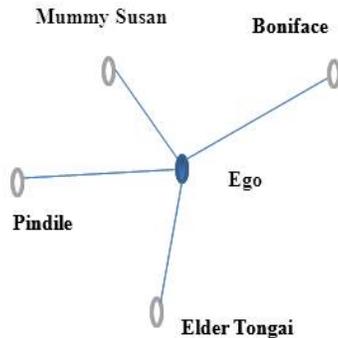
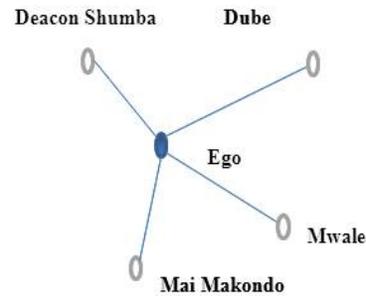Figure 11 Persons from whom Mudzingwa is likely to borrow monthly rental

Figure 12 Persons with whom Mudzingwa has close ties in Zimbabwe

Conclusions

The stories indicate that there is heuristic value to be had in focusing studies of migrant belongings at quotidian interactions involving migrants and other actors in micro social contexts. Systems of identification and categorization that the state and its functionaries impose on ordinary people are often out of sync with the ways migrants interact and identify with each other. Two examples from the preceding stories illustrate this point. In the first one, Norman acquires a fake South African permit produced at a home in the border town of Musina. In the second one, Mudzingwa uses his asylum documentation to allow him to live legally in South Africa even as he frequents back to Zimbabwe. In the two examples, the condition of "being" called a "refugee" or a "work permit holder" is distorted and adjusted for the pursuit of migrant pragmatic concerns. In order to capture the complexity of belonging, researchers need to zoom in on interactions in micro-social contexts within which migrants live.

The complexity of migrant belongings can be captured when researchers attend to migrant's ties over time, revealing their configurations, form, and content and migrant practices through which identifications are manifested. Further, researchers need to look at the attributes of the persons

migrants identify with at different moments during the migration cycle, and at different contexts – work, church, country of origin etc. For example, in the current study, the three cases presented above illustrate that the three Zimbabwean migrants maintained close ties with other Zimbabweans who were either kinship members or co-religionists. However, looking at migrant ties has potential to reveal the variability and complexity of attachments over time, as shown by Mudzingwa's case. Some of Mudzingwa's closest ties were with local South Africans. Whilst Mudzingwa's could be a unique case, it could signify emerging forms of inclusion, which transcend ethnicity and national frameworks. But, we can only begin to see these identifications if researchers retreat from macro-level generalizations, patterns, frameworks and discourses, and zoom in on interactions in micro-social contexts.

Focusing on interactions, particularly on ties and practices of migrants has potential to illuminate often latent processes of groundedness and boundedness that take place, albeit, in contradiction to migrants' intents. The evidence presented above shows that all three migrants were embedded in configurations of close ties in both places of destination and exit at the same time. This further illustrates that migrants form multiply-located attachments and identifications. However, it also shows that although migrants sometimes move back and forth between places, they do so within configurations of ties of proximity which are often located in real geographical spaces in specific historical moments (see for example, Smith and Guarnizo, 1998). The foregoing stories also illustrate that some migrants' close ties are durable: migrants maintained with other migrants who live in Johannesburg over long periods of time. Mudzingwa for example, has maintained close ties with Patson and Nixon who also live in Johannesburg. Similarly, Mangwiro has maintained close ties with Beatrice and Mariro. What this implies is that for both Mudzingwa and Mangwiro, even when they engage in back and forth movements between Johannesburg and home countries, they are not to be seen as always arriving. There is in either of the migrant's life, at least, a modicum of rootedness.

Configurations of ties are important in the study of complex migrant belongings, but the analysis of ties – their form, content and the attributes of the actors – is also indispensable. In the three cases presented above migrants maintain close instrumental ties which strategically place them in positions that further their pragmatic concerns at specific moments. This is shown in the way Chizivi disconnected with Norman and Obi. Chizivi's current close ties are with his co-

religionists. This instrumentality with which migrants negotiate inclusion in social formations implies that for certain groups of migrants, exclusion may be the desired end, not a limit-act. Therefore, most theorizations of belonging which start from the premise that inclusion in the mainstream society is desirable for migrants may be erroneous.

Acknowledgements

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