

# An Examination of the Online Transnational Networks of the Nigerian Diaspora

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## 1.1: ABSTRACT

Diasporic discourses reflect the sense of being part of an ongoing transnational network that includes the *homeland* not as something simply left behind but as a place of attachment in contraptual modernity (Clifford, 1997: 256).

The paper contends that in moving, seeking integration, trading across borders, acquiring properties abroad, and visiting the *homeland*, Nigerian Diaspora members are active in transnational spaces. They are found in different locations, and they interrelate from those locations. Modern media like the Internet facilitates these interactions. The paper maps how online media enhances the transnational activities of the migrants, by discussing how the migrants' cross border activities have become banal, and how the Internet makes this possible. In this context, transnationalism is discussed as being made possible by the larger framework of globalisation, and the inevitable role of communication in its processes.

## 1.2: INTRODUCTION

Migrants' destinations are determined on the promise it holds for economic improvement. The projection is also dependent on residency rules, popularity of a place, and the particular cause of dispersal. Migrants' inclination to move to the West is high. The relative economic prosperity of Western nations, because of the main economic reason for dispersal, remains a ready explanation for migration. George (accessed at [www.eturbonews.com](http://www.eturbonews.com)) adds, "It has become a matter of status symbol to have a family member living overseas". In situations where Western nations happen to be difficult to penetrate, many migrants have looked to the rising economies of Asia, or African economies like South Africa's. The desire to migrate is strong because of a controversial belief in Nigeria that migration automatically leads to prosperity. This belief at times makes migrants' consider some non-western destinations, classed as developing countries. Examples of these are Ukraine, Libya, and United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Importantly, the Internet has been helping the construction of imagined communities, as will be shown in this paper. The dispersed people are either constructing websites, or contributing to those constructed by others. Networks of newsgroups also flourish amongst them, just as events feature online. The diaspora members exchange invitations to contemporaries in diverse locations. As will be shown, their transnational activities experience endless forward and backward movements, residency in a particular location before another; and a continuous search for currencies with higher value than the Nigerian Naira. There is a flurry of remittances or desire for it. The dense process of gathering and exchanging information on a daily basis, across distance matters as well. Other than remittances, transactions in material resources are high.

Before looking at transnationalism in the present, I shall first examine how a historical link between cultures is represented online. I shall do this in a bid to demonstrate that while the Internet is important in fostering modern day transnational activities of the diaspora members, past relationships are also on display on the network. I am referring here to the case of a US group, which constructed a cultural narrative similar to that of a major ethnic group in Nigeria. They are important to this work because the Internet partly sustains their existence and their everyday imaginary connection. It is a significant case, as it gives a historical perspective to transnationalism through the viewpoint of culture.

## 1.3: METHODOLOGY

Data for this paper have been assembled through interviews, and the observation of sampled websites of migrants. The interviews were with migrants between London and Leeds, and it was a careful selection between the sexes, age groups, and income class. Online media is used in this paper largely as a broad-based concept aggregating social networking sites like Facebook, twitter, Whatsapp, Snapchat, Instagram, and indeed all information dissemination and sharing platforms, domiciled on, or facilitated by the Internet.

## 2.1: THE OYO-TUNJI VILLAGE IN SOUTH CAROLINA VERSUS THE YORUBAS IN NIGERIA

The participants' experience of transnationalism began long ago, through the slave trade, which was a regular activity across borders. The slave trade was of great consequence because of the high level of labour mobility that took place. If slavery carried traces of transnationalism, and partly began its present expression amongst participants, the succeeding colonialism, and post-colonialism are no less significant in originating it, because they also set off dislocations. Slavery has left significant traces in the West, through particularly the presence of blacks.

And a few black groups in the place have common cultures with ethnic groups in continental Africa. Some black groups also deliberately come together to align themselves with the cultures of ancestral origin.

The case of “Oyo-tunji”-The African Village in South Carolina, founded in 1970, comprising about fifty residents (Clarke, 2004: 9), is unique in the expression of the multilocality of Nigerian migrant groups. The representation of the Yoruba group from Western Nigeria in the distant US is a reminder of the force of history, culture and agency in the creation of transnational communities. Their online portrayal at [www.oyotunjiafricanvillage.org](http://www.oyotunjiafricanvillage.org), goes further to show how the age of transnationalism and globalisation leads to the undermining of place as the root of culture and identity. In this age, our understanding of the self comes up in space through the development and modification of values and ideologies. Clarke (ibid.: 21) writes:

With the power of religious ritual, Oyo-tunji Village awakens at night. Ritual and rhythmic drumming echo in the endless hours of the night as residents remake their ancestral *homeland* outside of the territory of Africa. If Africanness is defined as doing, rather than simply being, then *orisa* practitioners in South Carolina use ritual to produce a deterritorialised community in a US landscape through which they become “African” in their terms.

Although it is not an online group, the Internet facilitates presentations across transnational spaces, as it “has promoted...online *Orisa* chatrooms and Internet based services” (Clarke, Ibid.:7). (*Orisa* is a religious system, which believes in the supremacy of God, as *Eledumare*, or *Olorun*-all meaning the Supreme Being. It is a practice common amongst many nations and nation-states, including the Yorubas of Nigeria, and their peers in the Republic of Benin, Brazil, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, and the US, amongst others. Besides, it helps to nourish the link with the parent Yoruba group in Nigeria. The process of doing this may foster a sense of belonging with the Yorubas in other locations, thus expanding the possibility of imagined communities. Transnationalism will possibly not be limited to cross border activities of nationals of a nation-state abroad, or to their activities between the *homeland* and hostland, but could include their cross border ethno-tribal relationships. More like a transnational cultural group, their experience is one forerunner to modern evidence of multinational actions, as the following reveals.

### 3.1: EVIDENCE OF TRANSNATIONALISM AMONGST THE NIGERIAN DIASPORA

The Internet offers migrants a freedom that brings forward transnational belonging. The freedom enables the migrants to be active in a competitive global environment, which is not only representative of “a bottom-up experience of transnationalism” (Georgiou, 2002:1), but one that makes communicating spatially instantaneous, “everyday, virtual and visual” (Georgiou, ibid.: 1). The participants’ transnational activities are mainly intra and inter migration. It is inter, when they relate with migrants of other nation-states and intra when the relationship is within fellow migrants in closer locations. It involves the *homeland* when the activity is between its space (the *homeland*) and hostland. The problem of the digital divide nevertheless limits the participation of Nigeria in the relationship. Participants are, however, able to reveal their cross border activities.

In the first place, the trouble in Nigeria leads to dispersals and consequent settlement in hostlands for some. For others, those troubles simply lead to circular living. These people do not want to be too entrenched abroad, and neither do they want to lose touch with socio-economic and political developments in Nigeria. To live in both places, therefore, they move back and forth, exposing themselves to the supposedly secured environment of the West, and engaging in physical and psychological relationship with Nigeria. Economic or political engagement determines the length of stay in one part. The determination is to make the best of both worlds. Some of these people may resent a few things, including for example, a possible crisis of integration in the hostland. They do not want to fully experience the challenges and the assumptions on the limitations of personal development. At the same time, the better environment of the hostlands lures them. The compromise position is to live amid the borders of the two places.

Splitting family members between Nigeria and Western countries is a common way of showing transnational belonging amongst participants. Many of them express fears that Nigeria will not remain a single political entity in the future. They predict war, ethnic nationalists’ insurgency and many other forms of unrest. This state of mind comes from the seemingly fruitless efforts of some committed leaders to work towards development. The pains of watching the behaviour of many self-serving leaders is also frustrating.

Because of a lack of assurance in Nigeria’s unstable economic and political system, the West becomes another home away from Nigeria. Any of the two places, Nigeria or abroad, may turn out to be a workplace, and then they travel back and forth. This practice is especially common amongst the rich, who often buy homes abroad. Their activities have led to booms in estate business amongst migrants, as many migrants have become emergency estate consultants, who compete with few experts. They consequently make the Internet a target place for advertisements. While they publicise for fellow migrants, those in Nigeria are also targets.

Worthy of noting is that because a typical Nigerian elite desires house(s) in the West, a lot have had to do this through corrupt practices. They sometimes buy these houses with funds from suspicious sources. The drive

is to create or sustain a picture of international mobility, which becomes easier if they own properties in more than one location. Online activism has however been exposing many of them, as shown in the consistent report of a website like [www.saharareporters.com](http://www.saharareporters.com).

Many trans-migrants do reside in the West. Several of them claim citizenship before a possible return, as citizenship or residency is an ultimate guarantee of unhindered back and forth travels. Moreover, a return to the hostland becomes an alternative, in case staying in Nigeria is no longer desired. Those who fall into this bracket usually leave their families behind, while they engage in other endeavours in Nigeria. Babalola for instance was in the UK for five years. He came as an asylum seeker during the period of military dictatorship. He eventually acquired British citizenship for himself and his family before leaving family behind to return to Nigeria for an appointment in the presidential department. He visits relations as often as resources and time permit. Again, he says the process of living in the two worlds becomes easier through developments in communication technologies particularly the Internet and mobile telephony. "I call my wife anytime and I am able to send e-mails to my children, who are more disposed to it whenever the need arises", he adds.

There is a gender component to this transnationalism. For example, the nursing profession is in high demand in the UK. The hostland is, therefore, attractive to many nursing professionals. Observations reveal that the Nigerian nursing population which boasts of more women than men find the UK to be a worthy destination. While the women go abroad to work, their husbands and children often stay back in Nigeria to await the rewards of the wife and mother's sojourn. The telephone, the Internet and word of mouth mediate their affairs during these separations. Sometimes, those who stay back in Nigeria join the migrant nurse. Before they rejoin, and in many cases where immigration hitches prevent it, the migrant worker travels back and forth to keep in touch with the family.

Transnationalism is not however limited to this category of migrants. Literature and my observations reveal a preponderance of illegal workers in the West. A significant number are from Africa, while Nigerians form a great percentage. Many of these illegal workers are entering the country legally as tourists. Friends and family members eventually help them to "manipulate" the system to gain employment. Many do succeed. While some return when their visas are nearing expiration, others do not. Those who return go backward and forward as tourists, or holidaymakers, but are actually migrant workers, even though illegal. Often, a lot of them are young, literate and are ready to take risks. They populate the newsgroups, and write opinions in websites in a quick bid to demonstrate their status as travelled people.

Whether documented or undocumented migrants, they invariably form the basis of what Cohen (1997:160, cited in Vertovec, 1999:9), implies as part of the details of family activities in transnationalism:

Traders place order with cousins, siblings and kin back home; nieces and nephews from 'the old country', stay with uncles and aunts while acquiring their education or vocational training; loans are advanced and credit is extended to trusted intimates; and jobs and economically advantageous marriages are found for family members.

The numerous Nigerian local shop owners across the world are notable amongst those who shuttle back and forth. They sell Nigerian foods to fellow migrants. They also advertise in noticeable online spaces. Examples of these in Leeds are Adonai Foods, Anti *Pheby* Foods, and Bliss Continental (Advert at <http://www.nigerialeeds.org/advert.htm>). London has a lot more. Amongst them are 805, Nigerian Kitchen, Presidential *Suya*, *Wazobia*, and *Mama Calabar*. These shop owners travel between the hostland and Nigeria to restock. At other times, they place orders with relations as Cohen said above. To begin, they may have borrowed money from friends and relations. The ultimate objective is to break even in a business that is taking place in a faraway location, but involving parties in the *homeland*, which reflects transnationalism. The question again is important: What is their residency status? Legal or illegal? Visitors who have a legal right of entry, and has never changed, or legal residents still physically attached to Nigeria? Discerning this is most likely complicated (and it is not my present pre-occupation), but trans-migration and an online agency, are evident.

For many participants, their economic affairs across nations are eased through speedy networking media like the Internet. Many profit for instance in businesses needing instant messaging. Such businesses include the establishment of courier companies, for the transference of cash and goods, from one location to another. With patronages mainly from migrants, the promoters further advertise themselves on Nigerian affairs' newsgroups, e-mail groups, lists and at migrants' meetings. It all seems to be a determined attempt to replicate for the migrants what global companies like Western Union, Money gram, DHL and others do at an advanced and universal level. A lot of businesses or diaspora members also find it convenient to establish branches of their businesses in migrant locations. Some profit from the advances in communication technologies to move goods from one hostland base to another

Other types of businesses involving migrants are importation and exportation of clothing, shoes, wristwatches, and other accessories. They also provide job advisory services, soliciting or legal representations, traffic wardens, taxi driving, publication of migrant related journals/magazines/newspapers, and construction and maintenance of Nigeria related websites. The rest are computer and communication equipment sales, counselling

of fellow migrants, church leadership, child-minding, and African-style hair weaving, amongst many others. Several of these trades go on via online networking, advertising and sales. Some are performed without physical interactions, highlighting again the influence of electronic relationships.

The case of Soyinka (the 1986 Nobel Prize winner) can be used to illustrate transnational activities amongst participants. Apart from a regular teaching job at Emory University, Atlanta (as at the time of writing), he is a popular face in press conferences, demonstrations and other civil rights activities in Nigeria. More often than not, he is on the front pages of newspapers, and webpages, while cyberspace pundits regularly analyse his views. My main point is that the writer combines his role as a university teacher in the US, with that of a social critic in Nigeria, by frequently shuttling between the two places. It is why most of his acerbic press pronouncements against the Nigerian government are from interviews at International Airports

#### 4.1: Transnational Remittances

Though remittances are largely bank and financial institution transactions, diaspora members use online spaces for remittance related issues like advertising. This use makes it significant in the analysis of the Nigerian migrants' transnational activity. The flexible space of the Internet is inviting to all including the advertisers or marketers. Participants' favourite websites are those of the *homeland* based newspapers, the news inclined sites and those of ethnic groups. These are repeatedly targeted for advertising by the money transfer agencies. The result of this process is at three levels. First, the online financial activities show the public nature of the transnational space of the Internet. Second, the activities highlight the deregulated space of international migrants' financial affairs. Third, the Nigerian diaspora's participation in the transnational process is demonstrated through the activities.

From the point of view of participants, remittances occupy a prime place in their minds. To those in Nigeria, failure to remit funds is a sign of failure<sup>1</sup>. It is why plans for it are frequent in the calculations of migrants. The pressure for remittance also leads to its featuring in the decentralised space of the Internet. Remittance shows the regular transnational flow of participants' income and expenditure. The evidence of this is in their website and newsgroup discussions. While the websites feature adverts on different remittance agencies, the newsgroups sometimes mirror the feelings of migrants on the challenges of sharing income with those in the *homeland*. This is incidentally because of the constant quest to survive in the hostland.

The possibility of error in these estimates is high, but the central argument is that through remittances, migrants are playing key roles in Nigeria's financial affairs.

#### 4.2: Worshiping Without Borders

Religious networks in participants' transnational spaces of interaction use the Internet for expression. As observed, transacting activities across nations and ethnic groups is a difficult endeavour for participants because of the increasing competition in the complex global interactive environment. Divisions in the world across wealth, culture and class are also hurdles. Being largely on the disadvantaged side of the divisions sometimes diminishes chances of participation in the competition for relevance.

Many migrants attest to being on the weaker side of divides. "We may meet them (hosts) at individual level, but not at the corporate or collective level", a participant, Richard, Male, 39, says in Leeds, adding, "our problems are much in Africa, and it is why we have problems here (in hostland), because we are looked at with the eye of the African sufferer. But God knows best". The resort to God in Richard's comments is a sign of a general trend amongst migrants. God is seen as a last resort when difficulties appear. Participants consider God as always available to offer help when the many preventable problems and pains from poor image occur. God is omnipresent in their assumptions. This status gives Him a complementary abode in Cyberspace, as a globally available phenomenon. Participants therefore find networking for communion with God a worthy thing to do. Churches in Nigeria with branches abroad continuously expand online to reach dislocated members. Many rely on the Internet to reach prospective and existing constituents in their local places. Some publicise through their websites neighbourhood branches abroad for the benefit of the migrants.

It is important to note here that nationalism features through participants' transnational religious activities. Nationalism can be religious when it becomes passionate in some cases. For the migrants, communion with God is a root to express concern. Migrants evidently seek God's help in the travails of Nigeria. Though individual communion is likely, the collective act is more noticeable. The belief system of respective migrants, including Christianity, Islam and traditional religions (the three major Nigeria religious groups), determine the mode of worship. Pentecostal Christians are more popular because of the relative regularity of gatherings and their constant use of the World Wide Web for the exhibition of their loyalty to God and country.

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<sup>1</sup> As Hernandez-Coss and Egwuogu Bun (2007:8) put it, "Nigerian culture in general requires the more fortunate family members (*as those abroad are believed to be*) to provide for the less fortunate, and parents to invest in their children, who in turn will take care of them in their old age. Since, there are limited formal welfare systems in Nigeria, senders often feel obligated to provide for immediate family members as well as for extended family, friends and orphans" (*Emphasis mine*).

Some migrants admit to praying for Nigeria. In most cases, numerous Nigerian church founders, who have branches in foreign countries for tending to spiritual needs, preside over the sessions. Some of the churches that are popular for the publication of prayer sessions are The Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG); Living Faith Church; Mountain of Fire and Miracles Ministries (MFM); Christ Embassy (CE); the Cherubim and Seraphim Church (C&S); the Celestial Church of Christ (CCC); the Christ Apostolic Church (CAC); amongst others. Importantly, many of these churches boast of lively websites that encourage migrants to revive themselves spiritually, besides re-assessing the condition of their nation. In doing this, they create links between spiritualism and nationalism, and then spiritualism and dislocation.

They make spiritual attempts to reconstruct the Nigerian nation from a distance when groups cluster in churches sometimes after web announcements to fulfil spiritual needs. Examples include the estimated 15,000 worshippers in 50 different assemblies of the Christ Apostolic Church in London (Ajibewa and Akinrinade, 2003:6). Many more churches of the Pentecostal faith develop on a daily basis. Many are in London with branches in Leeds and other British towns. A majority are however churches with one branch in London. School, hotel and organisation buildings are rented for mid-weekly, night vigils, or Sunday meetings. They remind members of meetings via usenets, newsgroups, and group mails. They are also reminded through text messages or voice calls shortly before. Many of these churches buy television airtime. From there, they advertise their websites, and display telephone numbers.

Challenged by new realities, the last participant obviously remembers her Godly roots. To some, it determines their routes. Unlike Britain, Nigeria is more traditional. Religion plays a major part in its social and political life. As they profess, divine guidance conditions individual actions and inactions. The faithful turn to God seeking support when dealing with hardships associated with migration. It is why worship networks are common amongst them, and why contributors like to pray to God in instances of indecision. Many of the churches construct websites, from where they solicit prayer points on specific challenges. The migrant television network, *BEN Television* is moreover popular, both online and offline, but more so offline, for selling airtime to preachers and churches who in turn advertise their contact telephone numbers and addresses. Many migrants send e-mails to pastors in Nigeria for prayer points, while some telephone them for real time prayers or counselling. They support my online findings, from the testimonies of migrants, that memory and meanings about Nigeria evolve across distances, just as they negotiate belonging in the hostland.

### **5.1: DISPLACEMENTS AND REDEFINITIONS OF CLASSES AND FAMILY LIVES**

Nigerian migrants' working lives often change as they come across new conditions of living and new value systems in the country of settlement. For the participants, the new differences are not only limited to realities of existence, but also include colour differences. Race and skin colour become more obvious in countries where the majority of the population is white. While some succeed in maintaining their working status while abroad, many are never able to do this. Some return earlier than expected, or they may carry on leaving things to chance. Several live between Nigeria and the hostland. It results in shades of disruptions. Careers could change with the impossibility of continuing to work in areas of expertise. Sometimes, the change could be drastic.

Additionally, observations show that a professional in Nigeria may become a security person in the hostland. A medical doctor could become a nursing assistant. A PhD holder may turn into a guard. They rationalise the changes as having been made based on necessity. A further argument is that the dignity of labour exists in the hostland. "So it does not matter what work you do. The wage is the most important thing. When you compare the wage with what I was earning in Nigeria, you discover I now earn more", an anonymous former banker in Nigeria, who now works in the London underground as cleaner remarks.

A former food manager, Donald in a reputable Nigeria based hotel is happy to relocate and team up with his wife to establish a Nigerian food restaurant. "People respected me for my position in Nigeria, but I struggled to make ends meet. Now, the respects are gone, but ends are being met.", he says. Those who are able to continue with their occupations abroad are usually professionals like medical doctors, lawyers, university teachers, engineers, and nurses. Even then, it requires some "humbling" processes. Medical doctors, nurses and pharmacists at times go through various programmes, which could include adaptation courses, re-training, or re-certification. The boss in Nigeria becomes a hostland servant whose choices are probably limited to return, transmigrating, or pauperisation. An exilic PhD who was a former Nigerian university lecturer anonymously reveals online how he had to work in the London underground, and then taught in a college before he got a job as a university teacher in London. Of course, still angered by reasons for dispersal, the migrants are happy to accept new realities in the hostland, to earn a living. The experience of accepting lower status job could even go with bearing the psychological cost of re-structuring their working and other identities.

The more common disruption to working life affects the status of migrants. The professional, who enjoyed high status in Nigeria and who now does menial work because it has become necessary to do so, is in the same category as the unskilled former worker in Nigeria, that continues her/his trade in the hostland. While the latter is happier, the former recalls the better working days at origin, and may hope for better opportunities in the UK. The

unskilled worker may miss nothing in this context. If anything, s/he is glad to be doing it in the highly desired Western environment, where dignity in labour, it is assumed, reigns. In the hostland, there is a likelihood of an equal appreciation for persons regardless of job category. It could be skilled or unskilled. Occasionally, the unskilled worker heightens her/his job zeal, earns more and lives better as compared to the professional, who is weighed down by an inability to continue in his area of expertise. A more constant regret may take a better part of this migrant.

A diploma certificate holding female participant who works as a store assistant is happy to have a fellow migrant who holds a Masters degree as a colleague. Whereas she appreciates the hostland as a leveller, the Masters degree-holding colleague is dissatisfied. Though unable to get a suitable employment in the source country, he expects a better tomorrow in the hostland. The hoping is mostly endless. It delays the possible actualisation of return, and sometimes leads to immediate return or forward and backward movements. This is because the quest for a better life that led to dislocation is still to be realised. The myth of progress associated with living between the *homelands* and abroad sustains him. That myth continues online, through the networks, when loved ones at home encourage continuous perseverance and when he keeps giving the assurance of a better tomorrow. Stories of the few excelling, which are on the Internet and other media turn to beacons of hope, and are examples of the reward due to perseverance. Besides, there is a dominant black phenotype in origin. More varieties are now present in the hostland, because it is more multicultural. The former Nigerian professional and the unskilled worker are therefore presently the same before the host community. Influence and prestige are not immediately determined by type of job. The relative equal regard for everyone combine to weaken old classes, bringing up in its stead, identical opportunities for the migrants to begin.

## **5.2: Pains and Pleasures of Family Life during Migration, Trans-Migration**

In the area of family lives and marriages, many migrants are married but live as singles away from the family while in the hostland. The economic advantage of working in the hostland propelled the migration in the first instance. Again, the divides cannot be rigid given problems of distant relationships as will be discussed. Cracks in family life are common. Determined to improve their economic or educational status, a spouse migrates. Husband, wife, or partner and children are left behind. Mediation of family life is now online or via telephone. A 39-year-old nurse left her family six years ago and hopes to return in another two years. She notes, "I reach home mainly through the phone, while I keep in touch with Nigerian events through the Internet. I phone my husband on a daily basis, using international call cards." Another, John, a 42 year old university teacher says he is "regularly online with relations and my fiancée. My fiancée that is happy to join me here any moment from now. We chat online, through the text or telephone, while she often sends cards to me online."

In Nigeria, labour is cheap. It is easy to be a boss, with an average income. Disparities in comfort are wide, while state institutions are too weak to intervene. One form of labour is possibly superior to the other. Many of these are products of a poor economic state, which largely reflects a developing status. The case is nearly the reverse in the hostland. Inequalities in living standards are reduced. The economically disadvantaged often get assistance from authorities, through benefits. All jobs can be noble, whether skilled or unskilled. State institutions are stronger and can care for the needy through different "benefits". Unpaid house helps are illegal. Equal rights to life as a statutory provision are in evidence. Moving and integrating from the developing country to a developed one is always an overwhelming undertaking. It sometimes results in temporary or momentary problems, or permanent ones.

Nkechi's husband works for an international organisation. They have been moving from one country to the other, including Kenya, Indonesia, Austria and the UK. Their problems, according to her were building up, but came to a head in the UK, where things fell apart. Her experience and those of others again echo cultural conflicts. Woodward notes this much, adding, "in the West, traditional expectations about the nuclear family-defined as male breadwinner, dependent wife and children-have been challenged and new family forms and familial identities have emerged" (1997: 1). Patriarchal values are dominant in Nigeria. New experiences strain the bid to reproduce this trait in the hostland, which leads to many break-ups.

Integration problems once more come to the fore. Economic liberation or lack of it is dependent on the extent of integration. For the speaker above, the chance to have a US Green Card is a symbolic identity. It could initiate a sense of belonging and an easier route to an economic objective, more than the consideration of getting British citizenship after five years. What is overriding is the non-fixation of the participant to a particular hostland. It was why Durowaiye says he re-migrated to Britain after three years in Germany. Therefore, his children can "grow up speaking English as against German, because English is Nigeria's official language." He adds, "Should they decide to return to Nigeria in the future, integration will not be hampered by language". So also is the case of a nurse, Peter who relocated from Frankfurt to Leeds, so the two eldest of three children will begin schooling in an English setting.

The transnational people notably register their presence online. This is when contributions to newsgroups come from their locations in Singapore, China, US, Canada, UAE, Japan, South Africa, Germany, and elsewhere,

as it appears in their signature lines. E-mails move backwards and forwards to those in their thoughts in other hostlands and to people with access in Nigeria. Webcams also relay distant images of close ones and places left behind. Telephones are busy, using the cost reducing impact of several international call cards. The sustenance of their relationships through the media across transnational environments is not limited to emotional needs alone. It helps the cross-border interests of many of these migrants as well.

Individuals who grew up, or were born abroad are quick to dismiss Nigeria. The country is not important to them as an ancestral home. It seems faint in their remembrance, if present at all. Neither do they consider returning. The place of growing up is their natural home, which they would not ordinarily leave. Integration problems are rare in their considerations. Through the years, they have probably met and mixed with “host” community members. Many do speak, and perhaps think like the natives. Furthermore, they likely enjoy greater working opportunities than the Latter-Day migrants do, and are sometimes competing with the “original” inhabitants.

In living and communicating across borders, migrants acquire citizenship of some foreign countries- a topic to which I now turn.

### **5.3: DUAL CITIZENSHIP**

The issue of transnational citizenship is also important. Over the years, many of the migrants gain citizenship of a host nation. Officially, therefore, they belong to two countries, and tend to make the most of the advantages possible. For them, it turns into a thing of pride, worthy of lifetime preservation. Through careful planning, they transfer the privileges in this status to their offspring. The transference is another source of pride, as they often believe it gives them an advantage over those in the developing origin.

The problems of Nigeria create despair amongst the citizenry, which lead to a subtle craving for another nationality. Claiming citizenship of hostland often enhances transnational migration. The result is the presence of a high number of ‘citizens’ amongst respondents. Sometimes, the quest for this citizenship lasts a lifetime, which does not really matter to the typical migrant. It may not however undermine the desire for longing and even transmigration. This is because of the many challenges in the hostland as the research indicates. Acquiring citizenship improves their status in the estimation of the host community. It also signposts the likelihood that they have stayed relatively long enough to be so qualified. It further points out that return to origin will likely be continually idealised, rather than actualised. For many of the transnationalists, citizenship status is a source of pride whenever they are in Nigeria. Chances of outright return sometimes remain unpredictable because push conditions in Nigeria still exist, in the face of the improving pull factors of the hostland. Location now matters less with the existence of many on-the-spot media like the Internet, while they are enjoying citizenship rights.

Imaginations of return, actual return and issues related to the controversial subject have featured in my analyses. They are also likely to be a continuing theme. I shall now discuss it within this context, given its close relation to forward and backward movements, and movements between diasporic locations, which are the focus of this paper.

### **5.4: Understanding Return as an Elusive End**

As with other diasporas, participants are in the hostland, from where transmigrancy takes place. The case in this research is not too different. My observations reveal that return is largely a mythologized aspiration as in the cases of other diasporas and migrant groups. As Tsagarousianou (2004:56-7) argues, globalisation flows affect diasporas as people at its centre. “In that sense, there is no going ‘home’ again. There is a detour and no return”, and they are no longer “backward-looking”. Modern media such as the Internet help to undermine thoughts of return as they “provide a sense of contemporaneity and synchronicity to the dispersed populations” (Tsagarousianou, *ibid.* 2004:62). For some, however, the plan is always to attain economic advantage and then return to Nigeria. Nonetheless, attaining that condition is rarely possible. The situation can forever be better. Nwaochei (2007:1) explains this:

There is something unique about some Nigerians living abroad. They never regard themselves as emigrants. They always regard their stay in a foreign land as transient, or temporary.

It is an age-honoured belief amongst Nigerians that a man should die and be buried in his fatherland

For many others, return is no longer a consideration. Those who give it serious consideration soon express fear of losing a better working environment and all other advantages in the hostland. The goal is to make remittances geared towards investments, or well-being of friends and families at home and then actualise it. It never really takes place in the end, though. Even then, it remains a consideration.

The desire to return, which has roots in their culture, as Nwaochei and Femi above say, is further confirmed by what a majority of participants say. Quest for return sometimes takes them from one place to another, but rarely permanently, while the media mediates the dislocations. Yet again, and as seen in the above quotes, the influence of culture on online participants is implicit. They choose the hostland for economic gains, by conceiving

it as a safeguard, and then leave after attaining the difficult economic objective. Nwaochei (2007:1) notes once more that:

It can be said that any Nigerian who left in search of the Golden Fleece never consider the idea of staying abroad permanently. His principal aim was to go there, acquire necessary education, and contribute his quota, no matter how small it might be to the development of his country

While this submission could be doubtful, unpredictable and hardly empirical, it is a reminder of the elastic transnational space of interactions. It may be because participants are largely on the wrong side of divides in the third spaces. This eventually sustains nostalgia and longing, with expectations that a guarantee of dignity and security can only be provided in Nigeria.

## 6.1: CONCLUSION

This paper is somewhat a reminder of the pain with which some migrants associate thoughts of returning to Nigeria. It is not different from the trend of opinions that often dominates interviewees' responses. Just as many hope for return, suggestions of return put off others. For one group, staying in the hostland is temporary, as they plan to leave sometime in the future. To the other, it is a new *homeland*, now constructed as a place to live in for a long time. Those who are indifferent about the positions share a similarity with the others through idealising. For a few others, criss-crossing borders, or building a transnational network is an answer to the question of return. Common but not definite to all the circumstances is that the subject of return remains an end that is desired, but which hardly comes.

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