جامعة الأخوين

ⵜⴰⵙⴷⴰⵡⵉⵜ ⵏ ⴰⵅⴰⵡⴰⵢⵏ

AL AKHAWAYN
U N I V E R S I T Y

Transitional Objects of Sub-Saharan Migrants in a Context of Mixed Migration:

Remembering the Past, Stranded in the Present, and Dreaming of a Future

Author:

Nada Heddane

Thesis submitted to the School of Humanities and Social Sciences
in partial fulfillment for the degree of:
Master of Arts in North Africa and Middle Eastern Studies (MANAMES)
Spring 2019

Committee Members:

Dr. Catherine Therrien, Supervisor
Supervisor's Signature:

Dr. Paul Love, Internal Reader

Dr. Inka Stock, External Reader

Abstract

In this thesis, I use material culture, memory, transnationalism and displacement to examine the materiality aspect of migration. I conducted ethnographic fieldwork with sub-Saharan migrants and refugees in the city of Fez, in Morocco, to learn more about the objects they brought with them and the symbolism they carry. Their heavily vague and complex migratory drivers and journeys led me to resort to the concept of mixed migration to explain this blurriness. I argue that 'transitional objects' allow sub-Saharan migrants to preserve transnational links with their countries of origin, thus ensuring a continuity in the construction of their identity throughout their migratory experience. In doing so, they can remember their past, find strength and comfort in the present, and even create (or not) a sense of home away from their countries of origin; this second 'home' being closely linked, but not limited, to feeling welcomed and accepted in the country of reception.

Table of Content:

Introduction

From June 4th to October 23rd, 2016, the Arab American National Museum exhibited Jim Lommasson's project entitled "What We Carried: Fragments from the Cradle of Civilization".[1] Lommasson is an independent photographer and author whose project focuses on documenting the journeys of Iraqi and Syrian refugees to the United States through "collaborative photographic storytelling". He asks his participants to share with him an object they took with them when they left their country of origin; he photographs it and turns it into a 13"x19" archival print. He then gives this print to the owners and asks them to supplement it with a personal statement and reflection written directly on the photograph. Among these objects were family photos, books, jewelry, flags, glasses, and dominoes.[2] According to Lommasson, "the object photos and stories can help to break down stereotypes and share our common humanity and help to build bridges […] the more powerful understanding is the realization of what was left behind. What was left behind was everything else; homes, friends, family, school, careers, culture and history."[3]

I drew inspiration from this way of thinking about objects and migration and sought to emulate it using an academic approach. This MA thesis is an ethnography of how objects of Sub-Saharan migrants in Fez, Morocco, reflect their migratory trajectories, and shape their sense of home. Here, I argue that transitional objects allow sub-Saharan migrants to preserve transnational links with their countries of origin, thus ensuring a continuity in the construction of their identity throughout their migratory experience. In doing so, they can remember and connect to their past,

---

[1] "What We Carried: Fragments & Memories From Iraq & Syria", Arabamericanmuseum.Org, http://arabamericanmuseum.org/wwc.
[2] Jim Lommasson, "About The Project", What We Carried, Last modified 2018, https://whatwecarried.com/about/.
[3] "What We Carried: Fragments & Memories From Iraq & Syria", Arabamericanmuseum.Org, http://arabamericanmuseum.org/wwc.

find strength and comfort in the present, and hopefully create and maintain a sense of home away from their countries of origin.

In the first chapter, I layout the literature review, the contextualization, and the theoretical framework of my thesis. In the second chapter, I present my methodological approach to this topic. First, I give a brief introduction to feminist research ethics, then I present my research methods and data collection. The last part of this chapter is dedicated to a detailed account of my fieldwork. In the third chapter, I examine the concept of 'mixed migration' in a lot more depth and use examples from my fieldwork to illustrate this phenomenon, which corresponds to one of the main findings of this research; the blurring of trajectories where migrants move from one category to another. Regarding the fourth chapter, I take a closer look at the transitional objects that my subject-participants brought with them, the significance that these objects hold for their owners, and how they use them to maintain transnational links and thus to create a continuity in their identity construction in a context of migration. By analyzing these objects, I also take a look at the ones that were exchanged, lost, stolen or gifted along the way. For my final chapter, I analyze the different representations of 'home' to explore the transnational links that sub-Saharan migrants maintain with their countries of origin and to see how they create (or not) a second home. Here, I use Catherine Therrien's concept of 'home' and show that it needs to be nuanced depending on the empirical field being studied.

Chapter 1: Research problem

Literature review

Defining the terms refugee and migrant

The UNHCR defines refugees as people who have left their countries because of war, violence or persecution and crossed international borders to seek refuge and safety in another country. They are also unable to return to their homes in their countries of origin. They then apply for asylum with the qualified national institution or, if it does not yet exist, with the UNHCR's representation in the host country. Following the investigation of their cases and their recognition as meeting the definition of refugees, they receive a document[4] that they can use to apply for a refugee card and a residence permit issued by the authorities of the country in which he has been recognized as a refugee.

The UN Refugee Agency defines a refugee as people who "often have had to flee with little more than the clothes on their back, leaving behind homes, possessions, jobs and loved ones."[5] By the end of October 2018, over 543 000 Central Africans fled to Cameroon, Chad and RDC.[6] And as of August 2018, more than 811 300 people have fled the Democratic Republic of the Congo and sought refuge in neighboring countries such as Uganda, Tanzania and Zambia, or beyond (North Africa).[7] Morocco, for instance, has witnessed a 400% growth in its refugee population

---

[4] The UNHCR in Morocco calls this document "*à qui de droit*".
[5] The UN Refugee Agency, "What Is A Refugee?", UNHCR, Last modified 2018, https://www.unhcr.org/what-is-a-refugee.html.
[6] The UN Refugee Agency, "Central African Republic Situation", UNHCR, Last modified 2019, https://www.unhcr.org/central-african-republic-situation.html.
[7] The UN Refugee Agency, "DR Congo Emergency", UNHCR, Last modified 2018, https://www.unhcr.org/dr-congo-emergency.html; The UN Refugee Agency, "DR Congo - Fact Sheet", Data2.Unhcr.Org, Last modified 2018, https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/66532.

since 2014, and their duration of stay is increasing.[8] Moreover, Morocco is currently taking steps to provide social services to refugees such as health care and education.[9] The UNHCR's statistical report on its population of concern shows that, as of 1 March 2019, there are 8484 asylum seekers and refugees registered with UNHCR Morocco, including 3884 Syrian refugees, 434 Central African refugees, 187 Congolese refugees and 322 Ivoirian refugees present in Morocco.[10] In this thesis, I focus only on sub-Saharans, i.e. people coming from Central and West Africa, who came to Morocco.

Sub-Saharan 'refugees' in Morocco are recognized by the UNHCR office in Rabat and are issued a document that serves as a refugee identity card, which must be renewed annually. To get the refugee cards issued by the Moroccan state, refugees recognized by the UNHCR submit an interview request with the Bureau of Refugees and Stateless Persons[11] (BRA). The latter examines their files and decides to grant them or not that refugee card. Once they have received their state issued cards, refugees can use them to get their residency card. Regardless of whether the BRA issues a refugee card or not, the UNHCR's document guarantees the protection of its holder from expulsion and can benefit from the services of the organization's partners, such as education of children, health and legal assistance.[12] As for sub-Saharan 'migrants', they are West or Central African who have changed their place of residence usually by crossing international borders for

---

[8] The UN Refugee Agency, "UNHCR Morocco" (PowerPoint, UNHCR Rabat, March 2019).
[9] Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Program, "Update Of UNHCR'S Operations In The Middle East And North Africa", Sixty-Ninth Session UNHCR, 1-5 October 2018, 2. https://www.unhcr.org/excom/excomrep/5ba39c3d125/regional-update-middle-east-north-africa.html?query=syrians%20in%20morocco.
[10] The UN Refugee Agency, "UNHCR Morocco."
[11] Bureau des Réfugiés et des Apatrides.
[12] Emily Pickerill, "Informal and Entrepreneurial Strategies among Sub-Saharan Migrants in Morocco," *The Journal of North African Studies* 16, no. 3 (September 2011): 397.

an indefinite period of time.[13] Nevertheless the fieldwork I conducted for the purpose of this thesis showed me that the reality is much more complex than these clear-cut definitions.

Defining mixed migration

Migration and the movement of people have often been divided into forced migration, which is due to armed conflicts, and voluntary migration, which is driven by economic reasons. This perspective has been used as the basis for legal and policy frameworks, hence exacerbating the idea that these two categories of migration are separate and 'mutually exclusive'.[14] However, in the recent years, migration has been characterized by a flow of people who migrate for different reasons, yet they share the same routes, means of transportation, and trajectories.[15] This phenomenon, known as mixed migration, is distinguished by the multiplicity and diversity of the needs and the profiles of the people taking part in it. Indeed, these mixed flows include refugees, asylum seekers, stateless persons, unaccompanied minors, and other migrants in an irregular situation. Moreover, some of these people can belong to more than just one category.[16]

Mixed migration has been one of the findings of my fieldwork, so I will examine this concept in more detail in the third chapter of this thesis. For the moment, I will confine myself, in this research, to using the term 'refugee' to refer to an individual who is recognized as such by the UNHCR Morocco; and the term 'asylum seeker' to refer to a person who has started the procedure with the UNHCR and whose case is still under consideration. Regarding the term 'migrant', I will

---

[13] Ibid.

[14] Nathalie E. Williams, "Mixed and Complex Mixed Migration during Armed Conflict: Multidimensional Empirical Evidence from Nepal," *International Journal of Sociology* 45, no. 1 (January 2, 2015): 44.

[15] Judith Kumin, "Le Défi de La Migration Mixte Par Voie Maritime," *Revue des Migrations Forcées*, March 2014, 49.

[16] OIM, "Migrations Mixtes et Protection Des Migrants En Afrique de l'Ouest" (Organisation Internationale pour les Migrations - Bureau régional pour l'Afrique de l'Ouest et du Centre, N/A), 2, https://rodakar.iom.int/sites/default/files/MixedMigration_FR.pdf.

use it to speak of people who crossed international borders to come to Morocco, regardless of their situation (regular or irregular) and their motives. As such, when a distinction is not necessary, I will use the word 'migrant' as an encompassing term that includes refugees and asylum seekers.

The Moroccan migratory context

During most of the twentieth century, Morocco was a country of emigration since more than 10% of the population lived abroad.[17] However, in the 1990s, new migratory patterns emerged as a result of irregular labor migration towards Europe and trans-Saharan migratory flows towards Morocco. Consequently, Morocco adopted a new approach regarding its migration policies.[18] The new agenda was framed and reframed on several occasions: first, in 2003 with Law 02-03 which presented irregular migration from sub-Saharan Africa as a danger and a threat to the safety of Moroccans;[19] second, the 2005 crisis at the borders of the two Spanish enclaves, Ceuta and Melilla, which led to the outcry of civil society and called for a more rights-based approach; and the 2013 reform of the national migration policy, which introduced a more human-rights approach, was put in place in order to regain its role as a regional player both with the European Union and with African countries.[20]

Today, in addition to the large-scale Moroccan emigration, Morocco is confronted with issues related to transit migration, immigration and settlement of migrants from diverse backgrounds (West and Central Africa, Middle East, Europe, and Asia).[21] As Mohamed Berriane,

---

[17] Katharina Natter, "The Formation of Morocco's Policy Towards Irregular Migration (2000-2007): Political Rationale and Policy Processes," *International Migration* 52, no. 5 (October 2014): 17.
[18] Ibid., 17; Ibid., 24.
[19] Ibid., 19–20.
[20] Kelsey P. Norman, "Between Europe and Africa: Morocco as a Country of Immigration," *The Journal of the Middle East and Africa* 7, no. 4 (October 2016): 428.
[21] Mohamed Berriane, Hein De Haas, and Katharina Natter, "Introduction: Revisiting Moroccan Migrations," *The Journal of North African Studies* 20, no. 4 (2015): 504.

Hein De Haas, and Katharina Natter argue, the Moroccan society faces new social and legal challenges that arise with the increasing presence of immigrants. Indeed, a growing number of West African and Central African migrants relinquish their desire to enter Europe and decide to settle in Morocco.[22] Therefore, issues related to national identity, diversity, and integration constitute new debates in the Moroccan public sphere.[23]

Morocco, alongside the other Maghreb countries, lacked both a legal framework to manage the asylum and refugee issues, and an adequate governmental institution that could handle these matters. As a signatory of the 1951 Geneva Convention, Morocco allows the local UNHCR office to determine the refugee status, which is often disputed by the governmental authorities.[24] However, as part of its new geopolitical orientation, Morocco introduced changes to its migration policy to transform its image and appear as a country that helps the irregular migrants and refugees present in its territory.[25] Therefore, in 2013, the Moroccan government announced the adoption of new laws and a new policy that would launch the regularization of nearly 45,000 migrants by the end of 2014. Nevertheless, less than 18,000 migrants in an irregular situation were regularized.[26]

In Morocco, the main countries of origin of sub-Saharan migrants are Mali, Senegal, DRC, Cameroon, Central African Republic, and Cote d'Ivoire. Although sub-Saharan migrants are more visible in the big cities and border areas, there is still no accurate data neither on the numbers of migrants nor on the social characteristics of migration flows.[27] However, as highlighted by

---

[22] Ibid., 515.
[23] Ibid.
[24] Johannes van der Klaauw, "Multi-Dimensional Migration Challenges in North Africa," *Forced Migration Review*, July 2007, 14.
[25] Mehdi Lahlou, *Morocco's Experience of Migration as a Sending, Transit and Receiving Country*, IAI Working Papers (Rome: Istituto Affari Internazionali, 2015), 3.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Jane Freedman, "Analysing the Gendered Insecurities of Migration: A Case Study of Female Sub-Saharan African Migrants in Morocco," *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 14, no. 1 (2012): 41.

Freedman, research suggests that sub-Saharan migrant women constitute a growing portion of the sub-Saharan population. Their lack of 'visibility' could be attributed to the gendered access to the public space and their dependence on male partners.[28] Jane Freedman also mentions a survey conducted by the Association Marocaine d'Etudes et de Recherches sur les Migrations, which shows that about 90% of the migrants enter Morocco illegally through the Algerian border, and the rest come to the country via official and legal channels, such as the airport in Casablanca.[29] It should be noted that the majority of African countries, such as Senegal, Cote d'Ivoire and RDC, are exempted from a visa to enter Morocco.[30]

According to Volker Turk, the Assistant High Commissioner in charge of Protection for the UNHCR, Morocco is presenting itself as a destination country for refugees and migrants.[31] By signing the 1951 Geneva Refugee Convention, Morocco agrees to protect the rights of refugees.[32] However, the country is in need of a legislative and institutional framework in relation to the protection of refugees and asylum-seekers.[33] In September 2013, the opening of the Moroccan Bureau for Refugees and Stateless People (BRA), under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, allowed for the Moroccan authorities' recognition of the refugee status delivered by the UNHCR.[34] Yet, in March 2017, the BRA was suspended and nearly 1000 refugees, recognized by the UNHCR, could not have their situation regularized due to this

---

[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Safaa Kasraoui, "Morocco Establishes Itself as Destination for Refugees and Migrants: UNHCR Official," *Morocco World News*, October 28, 2017, https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2017/10/232366/morocco-migration-unhcr-refugees/.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Angela Li Rosi and Alanna Ryan, *Refugee Protection and International Migration: Review of UNHCR's Role and Activities in Morocco*, Policy Development and Evaluation Service (UNHCR, 2010), 2.
[34] Nadia Khrouz, "Quelle Politique d'immigration ? La Problématique de l'accès Au Marché Du Travail," in *Le Maroc Au Présent : D'une Époque à l'autre, Une Société En Mutation*, ed. Assia Boutaleb et al., Description du Maghreb (Maroc: Centre Jacques-Berque, 2016), 975–983, http://books.openedition.org/cjb/1147.

suspension. In December 2018, the BRA was reinstated and people holding a refugee card were able to get their residence permit.[35]

As of February 2019, the UNHCR confirms the reinstatement of the regularization procedure of refugees and declares 8112 people (6199 refugees and 1913 asylum-seekers) to be part of its population of concern.[36] According the UNHCR, refugees in Morocco come from 38 countries and reside in 52 locations across the country.[37] Thanks to the National Immigration and Asylum Policy adopted in October 2018, refugees are able to access important services such as education and primary health-care.[38] Nonetheless, there is still a legislative limbo that needs to be dealt with in order for refugees and asylum-seekers to fully enjoy their rights and have a clear protection stated in the law.

Theoretical framework

Generally, migration in Morocco has been approached from a securitarian, geopolitical, legal and economic perspectives.[39] There has been research on migration and refugees which has been done,[40] but research on sub-Saharan migrants and refugees in Morocco using displacement,

---

[35] Zainab Aboulfaraj and Mehdi Mahmoud, "Les réfugiés peuvent à nouveau obtenir des titres de séjour au Maroc," *Telquel.ma*, last modified December 12, 2018, /2018/12/12/les-refugies-peuvent-a-nouveau-obtenir-des-titres-de-sejour-au-maroc_1621607/?utm_source=tq&utm_medium=normal_post?fbrefresh=9.

[36] The UN Refugee Agency, "UNHCR Morocco Fact Sheet," UNHCR Morocco, February 2019, http://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/UNHCR%20Morocco%20Fact%20Sheet%20-%20February%202019.pdf.

[37] Ibid.; The UN Refugee Agency, "Morocco | Global Focus," UNHCR, http://reporting.unhcr.org/node/10331.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Katharina Natter, "The Formation of Morocco's Policy Towards Irregular Migration (2000-2007): Political Rationale and Policy Processes," *International Migration* 52, no. 5 (October 2014): 15–28; Kelsey P. Norman, "Between Europe and Africa: Morocco as a Country of Immigration," *The Journal of the Middle East and Africa* 7, no. 4 (October 2016): 421–439.

[40] Marita Eastmond, "Stories as Lived Experience: Narratives in Forced Migration Research," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 20, no. 2 (June 1, 2007): 248–264; Keya Ganguly, "Migrant Identities: Personal Memory and the Construction of Selfhood," *Cultural Studies* 6, no. 1 (January 1992): 27–50; Sabine Marschall, ed., *Memory, Migration and Travel*, First edition., Contemporary geographies of leisure, tourism and mobility (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon ; New York, NY: Routledge, 2018); David Parkin, "Mementoes as Transitional Objects in Human Displacement," *Journal of Material Culture* 4, no. 3 (1999): 303–320.

transnationalism, and memory approaches has been overlooked. The goal of this thesis is to provide new data in the migration studies and memory studies literature by looking at the 'transitional objects' and mementoes that migrants and refugees brought with them and by analyzing the importance and the significance that these objects carry.

In this thesis project, I aim to examine the role of objects in the creation and maintenance, or disruption, of an identity in a context of displacement, from the perspectives of transnationalism, and memory. In contemporary societies, objects play a significant role in creating our identities, whether that is social or personal identities.[41] They can help assist in the formation of interpersonal and group relations, and mediate the construction of one's identity by identifying with different social groups, classes and/or tribes. Therefore, the possession of an object permits the cultivation and maintenance of identity, regardless of its aesthetic and functions.[42]

Material culture and the concept of 'objectification'

Since I worked with people and used objects to access their stories, I believe material culture would provide a helpful framework for my research. Material culture studies objects and their properties to understand culture and social relations. The central concept of objectification in material culture allows for the exploration of the relationships between people and objects.[43] Culture and society are seen to be shaped and reproduced by the way in which people interact with objects. In fact, material culture considers the material properties of things to be essential to the meanings an object can have, and much of the literature on material culture challenges the idea that objects are mere symbols or represent features of a prior culture or identity. What is more, the

---

[41] Ian Woodward, *Understanding Material Culture* (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2007), 137.
[42] Ibid., 135.
[43] Sophie Woodward, "Material Culture - Anthropology - Oxford Bibliographies," Oxfordbibliographies.Com, last modified 2013, http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199766567/obo-9780199766567-0085.xml.

question of agency and how objects can create particular effects and allow some behaviors or cultural practices to emerge are significant in this field.[44]

Christopher Tilley defines the concept of objectification as a perspective that deals with "what things are and what things do in the social world: the manner in which objects or material forms are embedded in the life of worlds of individuals, groups, institutions or, more broadly, culture and society."[45] Indeed, it seeks to go beyond the dualism of modern empiricist thought which considers people and objects as two opposed entities.[46] By making, exchanging and interacting with objects, people are able to 'make themselves' in the process. Therefore, material culture is integral to culture and society.[47] Objects become the means through which values, ideas, and identity construction are reproduced, legitimized and even transformed.[48] In this research, the concept of objectification would be used with regards to biographies and the creation of history and place. While the former deals with the representation of people through things, the latter looks at people's different relationships with places.[49]

Objectification also studies the construction of social relations, culture and values. It has three main concerns, namely the idea that knowledge and identity can pass through objects, the agency of an object and the methodological consequences of objectification as a theory.[50] G. W. F. Hegel's understanding of the relation between subject and object led to the idea that the two are in a feedback relationship. Indeed, "In perpetual fusion and separation, the subject and object leave

---

[44] Ibid.
[45] Christopher Y. Tilley et al., eds., *Handbook of Material Culture* (London: SAGE Publications, 2006), 60.
[46] Ibid.
[47] Ibid., 61.
[48] Ibid.
[49] Ibid., 63; Ibid., 70.
[50] "What Do Objects Do? A Material and Visual Culture Perspective. | Object Retrieval," accessed February 18, 2019, https://www.ucl.ac.uk/museums-static/objectretrieval/node/266.

an imprint on one another, enabling a secondary objectivity. Subjectivity is objectified and vice versa, and it is this which makes possible the application of the notion of biography to things."[51] Therefore, objects are models of human experience. They convey the intricacy and complexity of time and cultural settings, holding moments from the past, present and future.[52]

Displacement: between identity disruption and maintenance of transnational links

Susanna Ligabue argues that forced migration is an expanding phenomenon, which led 65.5 million people around the world to flee their countries in 2016 – 22.5 million of them are refugees.[53] She explains that, with forced migration, "nostalgic disorientation" emerges among refugees. This concept refers to problems related to language, place and space that arise as a result of losing one's home. Indeed, the latter represented a "hub of interconnection in place/space/sounds/meaningful relationships embedded in culture," but is now lost or hardly present.[54] Moreover, after the displacement, refugees often experience nostalgia, which emerges as an effort to reclaim a sense of identity through a redefinition of their past. Indeed, "loss results in identity discontinuity, which nostalgia can repair by creating a shared generational identity to mend the lost one."[55]

According to Melinda J. Milligan, locations are a main source of identity continuity. Once there is a disturbance in these locations, an identity disruption is most likely to happen because of the attachment that people have towards a place. Therefore, the disruption of this bond can lead to

---

[51] Ibid.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Susanna Ligabue, "Forced Migration and Refugees: Trauma Experience and Participatory Care," *Transactional Analysis Journal* 48, no. 2 (April 3, 2018): 166.
[54] Ibid., 175-176.
[55] Melinda J. Milligan, "Displacement and Identity Discontinuity: The Role of Nostalgia in Establishing New Identity Categories," *Symbolic interaction* 26, no. 3 (2003): 381.

discontinuities in identities.[56] She explains that a tendency towards continuity is one of the major aspects of identity. Consequently, a disturbance in this continuity is perceived as a loss and thus a disruption in identity. As a coping mechanism, people seek a way to preserve their former identities or create new ones to recover that feeling of continuity.[57] For Milligan, the 'place of attachment' is an emotional link to a space that has been given meaning and significance through social interaction, and is composed of two connected elements. On the one hand, there is the individual's memories of a place; and on the other hand, the person's expectations of future experiences in that place.[58] As such, when displacement occurs, identity discontinuity follows. It marks a turning point where their lives will no longer be the same.

In the literature on refugee studies, there is a predominance of the assumption that becoming uprooted and removed from one's national land and community automatically leads to a loss of identity and culture. The study of movement of people or their displacement across nation-state borders often supposes such an extraction, a rift. The receiving country is perceived as unfamiliar, obliging refugees to navigate a strange and scary society since the usual behaviors that sustained life in the country of origin are no longer enough.[59] Catherine Therrien, however, proposes a new way of looking at the movement of people by introducing her concept of 'home', which goes beyond the assumption of uprootedness. She suggests that this concept allows for an identity construction that is uninterrupted and cohesive, rather than one that is fragmented, uprooted, and unstable.[60] In chapter 5 of this thesis, I will come back this concept in greater detail.

---

[56] Ibid., 382.
[57] Ibid., 383.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Liisa Malkki, "Refugees and Exile: From 'Refugee Studies' to the National Order of Things," *Annual Review of Anthropology*, no. 24, Annual Reviews (1995): 508.
[60] Catherine Therrien, "Des repères à la construction d'un chez-soi : Trajectoires de mixité conjugale au Maroc" (Ph.D., Université de Montréal, 2009), 20, https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/55646043.pdf.

Portraying the receiving country as "strange" corresponds to the assumption that the country of origin is the norm due to its familiarity, and the ideal habitat for any person. It represents the place where one fits in, lives a quiet life and does not have issues of culture and identity.[61] However, mass displacements take place because the society in the country of origin has become strange and scary due to wars, genocides, political conflicts, or other forms of violence.[62] As a result, the usual way of life is no longer sustainable, which shows that the detachment process has begun before the displacement takes place.

A transnational approach to the study of migration emerged as a result of the observation that migrants cross borders to live in a new environment as a way to survive and seek a better life.[63] Transnationalism thus refers to the process that migrants use to create and maintain social relations, and which connects their countries of origin to their countries of reception.[64] Indeed, the activities and lives of migrants cut across national borders and bring together two societies into one shared social context.[65] Crang, Dwyer and Jackson build on the work of several scholars to argue that transnationalism installs a channel for two-way flow of ideas and objects and present it as a 'process of network building'.[66]

Studies of transnationalism have largely dismissed refugees and asylum-seekers because the main assumption was that these groups have less potential for the development of transnational identities compared to other types of migrants.[67] Indeed, Khalid Koser writes: "where refugees

---

[61] Ibid., 509.
[62] Ibid., 508.
[63] Thomas Faist, Margit Fauser, and Eveline Reisenauer, *Transnational Migration* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013), 7.
[64] Ibid., 8.
[65] Philip Crang, Claire Dwyer, and Peter Jackson, "Transnationalism and the Spaces of Commodity Culture," *Progress in Human Geography* 27, no. 4 (August 2003): 1.
[66] Ibid., 10.
[67] Khalid Koser, "Refugees, Transnationalism and the State," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 33, no. 2 (March 2007): 237.

remain in their host countries, attention has usually focused upon their integration and they are assumed to maintain few links with the 'homeland' to which they have chosen not to return."[68] According to him, forced migration represents a new context in which the study of transnationalism could be explored.[69]

Travelling memory: memory and transitional objects

Sabine Marschall argues that "as memory is the basis of all human experience and social interaction, it constitutes the foundation of individual and group identity, as well as a person's consciousness and sense of self."[70] Refugees who have been forcibly displaced experience loss and nostalgia and try to recreate elements of the home they remembered in their host country. While some take a piece of furniture or home decorations, others take photographs and mementoes as reminders of their previous lives. These objects that refugees keep are called "transitional objects". Usually, they are small objects of a sentimental value that they took along with them when leaving their homes in a hurry. As such, these items play an important role in linking the refugees with their past life and reconnect with their identity in a new context.[71]

The notion of return is also very present in the experience of refugees. Although a permanent return may be impossible, the idea of it could be done symbolically and through imaginary journeys in one's mind or through artistic expressions. As Sabine Marschall writes "home will always serve as a 'pole of attraction' via memory."[72] To deal with such an issue, refugees construct new narratives about their previous lives and try to overcome the memories of

---

[68] Ibid.
[69] Ibid., 248.
[70] Sabine Marschall, *Memory, Migration and Travel*, (New York: Routledge, 2018), 3.
[71] Ibid., 8.
[72] Ibid., 9.

trauma they experienced before settling in the host country.[73] As such, the movement of people and objects in the construction and preservation of memory is referred to as 'dynamics of memory', or 'travelling memory'.[74]

In this thesis, I argue that migrants are able to maintain transnational links through their transitional objects. Indeed, in a context of displacement, migrants often experience an identity disruption when they embark on their migratory journey and when they arrive to unfamiliar host countries. So to regain a sense of continuity in their identity, they resort to transitional objects that allow them to create and maintain transnational ties with their countries of origin.

Research questions and objectives

Through this thesis project, I aim to understand how transitional objects can shape the identity of sub-Saharan migrants in Morocco. To do so, I draw from the literature on migration, refugee studies, memory, transnationalism and material culture to present a new look on the study of migration in Morocco. As such, the main research question that will drive this thesis is: how do 'transitional objects' shape the identity construction of sub-Saharan migrants who are present in Morocco? From this question stem other sub-questions: Where does the importance of these objects lie? How can the experience of migrants be understood through these objects? What do they represent? How do these objects create transnational links with the migrants' countries of origin? What impacts the migrants' representations and sense of 'home'?

---

[73] Ibid., 10.
[74] Ibid., 18.

The main objective of this research is to understand how transitional objects affect the lives of migrants and shape their migratory experience in Morocco. The sub-objectives of this study are as follows:

- Highlighting the blurriness in the drivers of migration and the trajectories of sub-Saharan migrants (chapter 3);

- Understanding the symbolism behind transitional objects, as well as their multiple functions (chapter 4);

- Identifying the role of transitional objects in maintaining transnational links with countries of origin (chapters 4 and 5);

- Identifying the representations of 'home' amongst sub-Saharan migrants and the role of transitional objects (chapter 5).

Chapter 2: Methodology

In this chapter, I will start by presenting feminist research ethics, which guided my research; then I will present a detailed account of how my fieldwork unfolded, how I collected my data, the different situations I was confronted to and, lastly, I will discuss my positionality while doing fieldwork.

Feminist Research Ethics

Feminist research ethics is a set of questioning practices used during the research process, regardless of whether the topic is about feminism or not.[75] It is first and foremost a commitment to constantly reviewing and questioning ideas of what reliable ways of understanding the world are.[76] It is a research practice that can inform the researcher's theoretical choices, research design, data collection, and exposition and sharing of findings. It also helps the researcher with ethical dilemmas.[77] A feminist-informed research is "self-reflective, critical, political, and versed in multiple theoretical frameworks in order to enable the researcher to 'see' those people and processes lost in gaps, silences, margins, and peripheries."[78]

A commitment to feminist research ethics implies a constant self-reflection and a careful attention to the power of knowledge and epistemology, to the silences, marginalization, and boundaries, as well as to the relationships of power, and the researcher's 'situatedness', which refers to the sociopolitical location of the researcher.[79] In feminist research ethics, self-reflection is more than just looking back at the researcher's own identity. It includes an examination of the

---

[75] Brooke Ackerly and Jacqui True, *Doing Feminist Research in Political and Social Science* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 21.
[76] Ibid., 25.
[77] Ibid., 21.
[78] Ibid., 22.
[79] Ibid., 22-23.

gendered absences, the silences, the oppressions, and the power of epistemology because they can affect the research.[80] Since a researcher is not a neutral entity, it is important to pay attention to their race, class, gender, and all their other relevant social identities in order to prepare for and adapt to the political and power relations that may take place with the population under study. As Brooke Ackerly and Jacqui True write: "A researcher needs to be aware of how her own basket of privileges and experiences conditions her knowledge and research."[81]

Feminist research ethics focuses greatly on the relationships between the researcher and the people involved in the study. Indeed, paying attention to relationships has implications on how the research is conceived and on the language used to describe the parties involved.[82] A feminist research ethic rejects the phrase "research subjects" because it distances people from their sociopolitical contexts and treats them as fixed objects. Rather, it calls for the use of the term "subject-participants" to denote that people taking part in the research are participants helping with the research process, as well as the collection and analysis of the data.[83]

The relationship between the researcher and the subject-participant is an important aspect to consider especially in terms of resources, opportunities, time, experience, familiarity with the topic and knowledge of the field.[84] Acknowledging and attending to the relationship of power that exists between the two allow for an appreciation of the subject-participants' knowledge and the recognition that their daily lives might be disturbed as a result of their participation in the research.[85]

---

[80] Ibid., 23.
[81] Ibid., 24.
[82] Ibid., 32.
[83] Ibid.
[84] Ibid., 52.
[85] Ibid., 33-34.

Research Design and Data Collection

The goal of my research is to analyze how sub-Saharan migrants in Morocco perceive and interact with their transitional objects. To have a good grasp on my topic, I had to pay attention to the daily social practices of my subject-participants, be sensitive to their experiences and the ways in which they use their objects in the present to find strength, to remember their past, to connect with the people they left behind, and to conceive of their future. As such, the methods that I used to collect my data are: participant observation, semi-structured and unstructured/informal interviews. Moreover, I also resorted to Joseph Maxwell's idea that data, in qualitative research, can "include virtually anything that you see, hear, or that is otherwise communicated to you while conducting the study."[86]

Research Setting: from Rabat to Fez

Joseph Maxwell argues that making decisions about where to conduct a research are as important as deciding who to include in it. In other words, I not only have to sample participants, but also "settings, events and processes."[87] Therefore, the choice of my fieldwork has been done by purposeful selection. The latter refers to a strategy where "particular settings, persons, or activities are selected deliberately to provide information that is particularly relevant to your questions and goals, and that can't be gotten as well from other choices."[88]

While preparing my research design, I had chosen Rabat as my field site because it is home to multiple associations and international organizations that work with migrants and refugees, such as UNHCR, International Organization for Migration (IOM), GADEM, Fondation Orient-

---

[86] Joseph Maxwell A., *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach*, Third. (London: SAGE Publications, 2013), 87.
[87] Ibid., 96.
[88] Ibid., 97.

Occident (FOO), Conseil des Migrants Subsahariens au Maroc, Comité d'Entraide Internationale (CEI), Caritas-CAM (Centre d'Accueil Migrants). I thought that having all these associations and organizations in one place would facilitate my fieldwork, and allow me to have better chances to get in touch with refugees. Moreover, according to the UNHCR 2018 fact sheet, Rabat is the city where the majority of refugees choose to settle. Indeed, 1040 refugees (18.5%) chose Rabat as their new home.[89] Theoretically, Rabat represented a good setting where I could conduct my fieldwork. It should be noted that before starting my fieldwork, my original goal was to focus mainly on sub-Saharan refugees. However, considering how my fieldwork unfolded, I decided to include sub-Saharan migrants as well.

On November 19, 2018, I had the opportunity to accompany Professor Therrien on a fieldtrip to the UNHCR and to the Fondation Orient-Occident in Rabat. It was a chance for me to establish a first contact with them before actively starting my fieldwork. I was naïve to believe that, because of that first contact, my fieldwork was going to be fast and easy. I started my fieldwork during the winter break (end of December), and I contacted the UNHCR and the GADEM; however, a few months afterwards, I still have not received any response from them. Regarding the FOO, I went to speak with the person I had met before and whom had agreed to help me meet with refugees. Once I arrived, I was made aware that I should send my CV and a formal request detailing what I plan to do during my meetings with refugees and migrants. The FOO worker promised to follow up on the request and to contact me if there is any development. After a few days, I stopped by the FOO to check on the progress of my request. The answer I was given was "we receive many requests, but don't worry, we will get to yours."

---

[89] UNHCR Morocco, "Statistical Report On UNHCR Population Of Concern" Rabat: UNHCR, 31 October 2018.

I went to the FOO at least a couple of times a week to follow up on my request. Unfortunately, to this day, I still have not heard from them. After realizing that accessing refugees through associations would be nearly impossible, and considering the very limited time I had to conduct my fieldwork, I decided to seek other avenues to enter the field and to expand my fieldwork site to other Moroccan cities. After discussing this with my supervisor, a friend of hers shared with her the contact of Pierre[90], a person working with migrants and refugees in Fez, which she in turn shared with me. As soon as I received his number, I called him to set up a meeting and to discuss my research's needs. Moreover, since my chosen field site of Rabat was closed to me and would have required a lot more time to enter it, I decided to shift my site to Fez where I had an entry point thanks to Pierre.

Today, Fez is a hub for three types of migration. It is experiencing the emigration and return of Moroccans, an important flow of sub-Saharan migrants, and a growing number of Westerners coming to settle there.[91] The attraction of sub-Saharan migrants towards Fez resides in the religious role of the Zawiya Tijaniyya and in the presence of a large student community. Although the current growing population of sub-Saharan migrants in Fez is neither students nor pilgrims, these two factors offer a peaceful environment where migrants can blend in and integrate into the city.[92] Moreover, the violence encountered in Ceuta and Melilla, the two Spanish enclaves in Morocco, led the sub-Saharan migrants to favor cities where they can live quietly, without having to deal with constant police checks, as is the case in cities like Rabat and Tangiers. Fez also offers better living conditions because migrants can find more jobs and financial assistance due to

---

[90] This is a pseudonym. For confidentiality reasons, and in order to respect the wishes of my informant, Pierre, I will refrain from mentioning any detail that could give away identity.
[91] Mohamed Berriane et al., "Immigration to Fes: The Meaning of the New Dynamics of the Euro-African Migratory System," *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 34, no. 5 (October 2013): 490.
[92] Ibid., 491.

their lower concentration in this city, so there is less competition. The geographical position of Fez cannot be ignored either - it is located in the middle of the route that connects Rabat/Casablanca to Oujda.[93] The city of Oujda, located near the Moroccan-Algerian border, is the main irregular entry point to Morocco. Since it is close to Ceuta and Melilla, it functions as a transit zone for migrants. As such, the migrants living there face constant deportations by the Moroccan authorities towards interior cities, such as Fez.[94] Therefore, many irregular migrants prefer to live there until they are ready to carry on with their migratory journey.

Participant Selection

In the selection of my participants, I used both a purposeful selection and a convenience sampling. The purposeful selection refers to the strategy where particular people, activities or settings are selected deliberately to provide information that is relevant to the research questions.[95] Since I originally wanted to work with sub-Saharan refugees, I had to purposefully choose my subject-participants. Moreover, a convenience sampling can also be useful when visiting associations. The latter is used when attempting to learn about a population that is difficult to access and the sample is taken from a group of people that is relatively more reachable within the said population. Indeed, what I learned from my fieldwork is that associations are very protective of refugees. Since refugees are considered to be a vulnerable population that needs protection, the main concern of associations and NGOs is to protect the identity of refugees and shield them from any unnecessary questionnaires that could bring up past experiences and make them relive traumas

---

[93] Ibid.

[94] Joris Schapendonk, "Stuck between the Desert and the Sea: The Immobility of Sub-Saharan African 'Transit Migrants' in Morocco," in *Rethinking Global Migration: Practices, Policies and Discourses in the European Neighbourhood*, ed. Helga Rittersberger-Tiliç, Aykan Erdemir, and Ayça Ergun (Ankara: Zeplin IIetisim Hizmetleri Ltd, 2008), 133–134.

[95] Maxwell, *op. cit.,* 97.

they may be trying to leave behind. When I realized that entering the field through associations was going to prove unsuccessful, I started looking for other ways to find an entry point. This is where Pierre played a pivotal role. He helped me meet with sub-Saharan migrants and refugees, which could be qualified as a convenience sampling. The latter opened the doors for a snowball effect.[96] A snowball sampling refers to when a researcher accesses participants through the contact information provided by other participants.[97]

The criteria I used to select my subject-participants included nationality or region, and age. My subject-participants should be over 18 years old and from sub-Saharan countries. The reason I chose this population is because it has one of the highest presence rates in Morocco.[98] Aside from one refugee that I talked to in Rabat, I was able to meet with twelve sub-Saharan Africans in Fez, two of whom were women, all thanks to Pierre. From these thirteen people, seven of them were refugees, four of them were 'economic' migrants, one of them was a student, and the last one was an asylum-seeker. Their ages varied between 22 and 38 years old. In my sample, I had one refugee from Congo, one refugee from Cameroon, two refugees from South Sudan, and three Central Africans. As for the migrants, two of them were from Cameroon, three from Congo, and one from Central Africa. Considering this sample and their trajectories, the concept of mixed migration proved to be more and more relevant to my research.

Data Collection Strategies

- <u>Participant observation</u>

---

[96] Ibid., 97-98.
[97] Noy, "Sampling Knowledge", 330.
[98] UNHCR Morocco, "Statistical Report On UNHCR Population Of Concern" Rabat: UNHCR, 31 October 2018.

Participant observation is a method used to investigate a certain topic where the researcher actively takes part in people's everyday lives, while at the same time observing and collecting information. Participation gives access to the researcher to some data that would have been impossible to get for an external observer, for instance. Indeed, this method is used when a researcher wants to deepen their understanding of a specific topic or population.[99] Ackerly and True define participant observation as a researcher becoming engaged in the life and activities of the context of study. For some, it means taking part in all the aspects of the context of study. For others, it means that the researcher will be constrained to only certain activities.[100]

In my case, it was the second type of participant observation that Ackerly and True mention. Since I was constrained by the time I had to conduct my fieldwork and I couldn't fully immerse myself in the sub-Saharan migrant community, nor have access to them on a daily basis in order to create a relationship of trust, I was limited only to a certain type of participant observation. When I met with my subject-participants for interviews, we often engaged in informal conversations, during which I observed how they interacted with each other, what languages they used, and how they engaged with their environment. After each meeting, I wrote memos and recorded voice messages to make sense of what I saw, heard, and witnessed. It was also a way to reflect on my positionality as a researcher and as a human being.

- Interviews

Interviews are one of the main data collection strategies when conducting ethnographic fieldwork. Interviews are a way of producing oral history and help to provide information driven

---

[99] Jorgensen, "Participant Observation", 1.
[100] Ackerly and True, *Doing Feminist Research in Political and Social Science*, 202.

from certain experiences.[101] In my fieldwork, I used semi-structured and informal interviews with my subject-participants. The success of the interviews relies on the relationship between the researcher and the participant.[102] Since I was working with a category of people that is considered as vulnerable, the idea was to establish a relationship of trust with them before conducting my interviews. Therefore, before the fieldwork, I wanted to start by conducting one-hour unstructured interviews where I ask one question and the interviewee can answer freely and talk about the issues that seem important to them. It would have been very similar to an informal conversation.[103]

The second step would have been to conduct semi-structured interviews that would last from 45 to 90 minutes, depending on the responsiveness of the interviewee. In this type of interview, I would use an interview guide[104] with a list of questions and particular topics that I would like to cover. Among the themes that I wanted cover are the trajectories my subject-participants took to get to Morocco, their social and educational background, their lives before and after they decided to leave their home country, their idea of 'home', the objects they brought with them, the objects they would have liked to bring but could not, the objects they lost along the way, and their current links to their home country. Depending on the interviewee, I may not ask my questions in a specific order, and I might also add questions that were not included in the interview guide.[105] However, plans change. Considering the difficulty of accessing the refugees and migrants and their reluctance to talk to strangers, I had to adapt to my key informant's requests and conditions, to the migrants' requirements and to what they were willing to share with me.

Negotiating the field: Pierre, "Transportation fees", and (dis)trust

---

[101] Ibid., 168.
[102] Dauvin and Siméant, "Travailler sur l'humanitaire par entretiens — Retour sur une « méthode ».
[103] Bryman, Social Research Methods, 471.
[104] See Appendix.
[105] Ibid.

As I mentioned previously, Pierre, who works with migrants and refugees, played an immense role in opening the doors for me to meet with my subject-participants. He was my key informant, but also my 'gatekeeper'. After calling him and convincing him to meet with me, he told me to be at a garden in Mont Fleuri, a popular neighborhood in Fes where most of the sub-Saharan refugees and migrants lived, at 2pm. There is a strong probability that he was meeting with me because of a pre-established chain of trust. Indeed, Professor Therrien's Cameroonian friend, who is also a friend of Pierre, gave her Pierre's number to share with me. If at least one person in this chain did not trust the other, I do not think I would have been able to meet with Pierre as much as I did, and in turn, Pierre being open to helping me. With the goal of making a good first impression and having our meeting go as smoothly as possible, I did as he asked and I was at the meeting point at 2pm. When I called him to let him know that I was there, he said "I can't meet with you now, I am eating lunch. Just wait for me; I'll be there soon." He arrived after an hour and we went to a café close by. Our meeting lasted for about two hours, during which I presented myself, my research, an oral confidentiality agreement, and emphasized the fact that I was just a student doing research for my MA thesis.

Pierre also introduced himself and made it clear that, unless there is an incentive for the population I am interested in, they would not agree to come and meet with me. He explained that they have gotten used to researchers and journalists giving them money to meet with them; therefore, if I wanted to talk to them, I would also have to present them with an incentive. He said: "you know, even if they lived real close to the meeting point, they would say that they are coming from the other side of the city to meet with you." He also mentioned that if there is no gain for them, they may come and sit with me, but they would not share any information with me. At the moment, I felt conflicted about giving them money, yet I agreed to cover the "transportation fees"

(50 dirhams per person, Pierre included), which is what he called the incentive, and to pay for the beverages that they consumed.

Moreover, the way he proposed to carry out the meetings, and on which he insisted, was to meet with the participants in groups. Another point that he was adamant about was the fact that I should meet both refugees and migrants because, for him, it is important to hear from all types of migrants. I also believe that it was to allow him to have a larger pool of people to get in touch with and convince to meet with me. In addition, Pierre maintained that the interviews should last no longer than 15 minutes, which he considered to be way too long. After some negotiation, we agreed that I could meet 4 to 5 refugees and migrants in one sitting, but the interviews would have to be one on one in order to protect the confidentiality of their identities and to be able to speak as freely as possible. Although I tried to change his mind about the duration of the interviews, he would always say "no, trust me, 15 minutes is enough. If you do more, they won't come." Consequently, I agreed to his terms to bring the participants to the table; however, when doing the interviews, I asked all the questions that I had because 15 minutes was absolutely not enough. Although some interviewees were in a hurry, I started by making my subject-participants feel at ease as much as possible, in the limited time I had, before conducting my interviews with them. Overall, my semi-structured interviews lasted between 23 and 45 minutes. I was also able to meet with three of the refugees for a second time in order for them to show me their transitional objects and to tell me more about them. The second set of interviews was informal conversations, one of which was conducted in Ifrane. Indeed, Florent, a 37-year old refugee from Cameroon, gladly accepted to meet with me again in Ifrane, where our conversation lasted for about four hours - I will come back to this experience a bit further in the chapter.

The second time I met with Pierre, he arrived late and to which he told me "you are a real student, always coming on time." I laughed and said playfully "I will always be here at the time you tell me to be." We then went to a café called Goya Palace, where all my meetings and interviews in Fes were conducted. He always insisted on being present until I finished all my interviews and was on my way back to Ifrane. One time, he started rushing me to end my interviews because he had a training session to attend. I told him to not worry about me and that he did not have to stay. At the moment, he did not say anything, and stayed until I was done. In the evening, during a Whatsapp conversation, he shared that there were two reasons behind him staying until the end. First, so that the participants can see a familiar face that they trust, and thus show them that they can trust me. Second, he wanted to make sure the participants would not betray him. When I asked him to elaborate more about this, which he did during one of our informal conversations, he said that, by helping me, he was risking his job because he was under strict instructions from his employer not to put migrants in touch with third parties, whether they are other associations or private citizens. As a result, he stays until the end to make sure that the participants know that our meetings are not an event organized by his employer and that they should not mention it in the future in case they are interacting with someone from his place of work. He wanted to be certain that they were not going to talk about who sets up the meetings and keep his name out of the conversations. Despite knowing in the back of my mind that trust was important, this was the moment I realized concretely why. It was because my research could have consequences on the lives of the people involved in it, and could result in them losing their jobs.

Moreover, although Pierre was always present during the meetings, it did not stop some of the subject-participants from distrusting me. As Sébastien Bachelet writes, "trusting someone entails believing that the person whom we trust is unlikely, if and when the opportunity arises, to

behave in a way that is damaging to us."[106] Since my interviewees did not know me, it is understandable that they would be reluctant in sharing any personal or 'compromising' information that could hurt them or get them into trouble. The following three examples show that I was working within a 'sensitive field'[107], which could be defined as a field that carries social injustice and violence, and reveals important sociopolitical issues. Moreover, a field can be sensitive when it touches upon the vulnerability of the population under study and could reveal information that could put them at risk.[108] As Therrien argues, in a sensitive field, the access to the targeted population could be very difficult because it is either controlled by institutions, or because the people under study "are at the limit of legality".[109] The mistrust that is generated by this kind of fields can have an impact on the access to the field, and even the censorship of the data collected after the end of the fieldwork. In order to mitigate this mistrust, researchers need a gatekeeper that can vouch for them and help them verify their 'true identity'.[110]

The first noticeable moment was when I conducted an interview with Sandi[111], a sub-Saharan woman from the Central African Republic. After ending the interview, she went back to sit with Pierre while I started another interview. A few minutes later, she came back to me and said that she wanted to change some information about herself. She told me that she gave me a fake name (which I suspected) and that she was a refugee, not just a student. She said "I'm sorry, I thought this was something formal with the UNHCR or some other organization, so I got scared.

---

[106] Sébastien Bachelet, "'Wasting *Mbeng* ': Adventure and Trust Amongst Sub-Saharan Migrants in Morocco," *Ethnos* (October 30, 2018): 3.

[107] I am borrowing from the French concept of 'terrains sensibles'.

[108] Catherine Therrien, "Quand politique ou éthique oblige l'anthropologue à se taire : deux exemples de censure liés à des terrains sensibles dans le contexte marocain" (presented at the International conference « Terrains difficiles, sujets sensibles. Faire de la recherche au Maghreb et au Moyen-Orient », Rabat: Institut Universitaire de la Recherche Scientifique, 2019), 3.

[109] Ibid., 10.

[110] Ibid., 10-11.

[111] This is a pseudonym. I have attributed pseudonyms to all my subject-participants in order to protect their identities.

Pierre explained to me what you are doing, so I want to change some of the information I gave you." This example shows that, even if I introduced myself and presented my topic, she did not trust me. She needed someone she trusts to confirm my 'story' and my 'real identity' before conveying that trust onto me.

The second example of mistrust was with Florent, a refugee from Cameroon. He asked me on several occasions whether I worked with an association or an NGO, to which I always replied "no, I'm just a student doing research." He conveyed his feeling of distrust of associations and social workers because they would always ask him the same questions (age, nationality, trajectory, etc.) and promise him that it was going to make things better, but he would not see any change. After 12 years in Morocco, he told me he no longer wanted to speak with associations. However, because I was a student, he was willing to help me and answer my questions.

The third example of mistrust was with Jeremy, a Congolese asylum-seeker. From the start, I could feel he was there only for the incentive. His answers were very brief, he gave me a lot of one-word answers and he always kept a distance. Towards the end of the interview, I asked him if he had any questions to ask me or anything to add. He started by asking about the title of my research, then why I was interested in this topic. He then moved to ask more hypothetical questions such as "why are migrants not allowed to marry Moroccan women?", "how do you feel about a migrant and a Moroccan woman being married?", "if you married a Christian sub-Saharan migrant, how would your family react and how would you raise your children?", "if you saw a Moroccan insulting a migrant, what would you do?" At first, I felt that his questions were legitimate, however, the more he asked questions, the more I felt I was on trial answering for all his experiences with Moroccans. What is more interesting is that no matter what answer I gave him, whether I told him what he wanted to hear or not, he was not going to be convinced by my answers. My hypothesis

was that he must have had negative experiences with Moroccans and with associations to feel the way he does.

My Positionality during my fieldwork

As a young privileged Moroccan female student, I was constantly aware of my positionality during my fieldwork. On the one hand, my fieldwork was conducted in a male dominated public space, i.e. Café Goya Palace in Fez. Of all the times I went there, I never once saw a woman sitting in that café. As a result, I could feel the eyes of the men present there following my every move and wondering what I was doing there. Although no one said a word to me, I felt uneasy in that environment. Once my subject-participants (all sub-Saharan Africans) arrived, I could notice the Moroccan men staring and wondering what I was doing there with 'them'.

On the other hand, when interacting with my subject-participants, I always had to check myself and be sensitive to their experiences. For instance, one of the migrants came to Morocco to pursue his studies; however, his mother, who was paying for his tuition and living expenses, died a few weeks after his arrival. As a result, he was dismissed from school and is struggling to survive on his own. Therefore, during our conversation, I was self-conscious of my positionality as a Moroccan student who can finish her degree and him not being able to get one because of unforeseen circumstances. During other interactions, I was made aware that sub-Saharan Africans would have never been able to sit in a café as they did, had I not been present. On many occasions, they have been asked to leave because they did not have enough money to pay for a cup of coffee while watching football game, or because they were not accompanied by a Moroccan. Also, at the

end of the interview, I had a couple of migrants ask me for jobs or for financial aid because I was Moroccan and I could 'know people'.

Being a student and introducing myself as a student to my subject-participants had been a key to accessing the field. On a few occasions, my subject-participants alluded to the fact that my student status is what made them decide to share their personal stories with me, and introduce me to other migrants and refugees. Pierre, himself, clearly told me that he was helping me because I am a student, and because he was once a student as well. So for him, students have a responsibility to help each other. When he shared this with me, I asked him if he would have helped me had I not been a student, and was a social worker or a researcher instead. He immediately said "No, I wouldn't have helped you, because why would I do that for?! I am helping you because you are a student, and the people you talk to do so because you are a student. Otherwise, they would have refused to meet you." Although I was sometimes suspected of working for associations, my positionality as a student, with the help of Pierre, was the key to having access to the field.

In addition, my positionality as a Moroccan vis-à-vis my sub-Saharan participants was used a channel by a couple of them to 'send messages' of dissatisfaction and voice their discontent, and sometimes even anger, with the Moroccan society. Also, since I was a Moroccan, I was not a sub-Saharan African. I was not part of their community; therefore, accessing the field would have been much harder if Pierre had not been involved.

Ethical dilemmas

During this fieldwork, I believe the time I was more intensively confronted with an ethical dilemma was when I was told I had to pay the subject-participants. I felt like I was giving a bribe to get information and that I was violating an ethical code. However, after discussing this with my supervisor and my thesis seminar professor, I realized that what would be unethical was to not

have offered to cover their "transportation fees". Indeed, the population I am working with is vulnerable, and is struggling to survive and make ends meet in Morocco. Asking them to cover their own expenses to meet with me and share with me their experiences would have been against the spirit of feminist research ethics. As such, I realized that I was putting myself in a false ethical dilemma.

Therefore, for the remainder of my fieldwork, I had accepted this way of proceeding and did not question it until Florent mentioned it during our second meeting. He echoed Pascal Dauvin and Johanna Siméant's argument in the sense that contexts and places where the interviews are conducted are very important to keep in mind while transcribing and analyzing them.[112] Indeed, the context and place of the interview play a major role in how the interviewees respond to the researcher. During our second meeting, which took place in one of Ifrane's gardens, Florent expressed being uncomfortable during our first meeting because of the way it was organized and not appreciating the fact that I was giving money to my participants. For him, it felt exploitative. He even said "I don't sell my life. I don't sell it. I don't sell it. It's my life, it's not for sale. If I wanted to sell it, I could sell the events of my life to a screenwriter and make money. And believe me, a lot has happened to me." He was very adamant about this. Yet, he went on to add "however, if someone offers me money, I take it because I need it."

Although he did not say it explicitly, I believe that among the reasons that he agreed to meet with me for a second time was to correct that feeling of exploitation he had felt and to show me another way of proceeding with my fieldwork. The questions that arise here are: was the way I conducted my fieldwork from the beginning wrong? If it was possible to do a much deeper

---

[112] Pascal Dauvin and Johanna Siméant, "Travailler sur l'humanitaire par entretiens — Retour sur une « méthode »," *Mots* 65, no. 1 (2001): 3.

participant observation, why did Pierre present the field as inaccessible unless I am willing to pay? How can I distinguish between people who are willing to talk to me in exchange of a 'transportation fee' and those who just want to meet new people and interact with Moroccans, like Florent? How do I create a relationship based on trust without exploiting my subject-participants? Also, for the subject-participants who want to help me and refuse to talk to associations, what do I have to offer them? Although I see this academic project as a way to bring forth their voices, who is going to read it and hear them? So far, I am still grappling with all these ethical dilemmas and questions, and I hope to learn from them in order to conduct future fieldwork.

My experience with fieldwork showed me that reading about a topic and actually conducting a first-hand research on it are two very different things. No matter how much one reads about it and prepares for it, it is not the same as experiencing it. I would have never been able to witness the emotional heaviness of the topics discussed, the diverse migratory experiences, and the richness of the interactions with my subject-participants, had I only read about the subject and not done fieldwork. In the following three chapters, I discuss and analyze the findings my fieldwork led me to, starting with one of the main results of my research, i.e. mixed migration.

Chapter 3: Mixed Migration

The debates in migration studies have been divided between 'forced' and 'voluntary' movements.[113] Before I started my fieldwork, I assumed that I would find a clear distinction between the trajectories – and the experiences – of sub-Saharan migrants and sub-Saharan refugees. However, the fieldwork showed me that the trajectories of migrants and refugees are much more complex and cannot be categorized in a clear manner, because the migratory flows proved that there is an overlap between forced and voluntary movements, and between the different motives (economic, political, environmental, etc.) that drive these trajectories. In fact, since the 'root causes' of migration are connected, for instance poverty and conflict, and the distinction between forced and economic migrants in certain movements has become very difficult, migrants will move from one category to the other, and often resort to the same networks to reach their destinations.[114] As such, I believe it is important to take a closer look at this complexity.

In this chapter, I will start by exploring the concept of 'mixed migration' to explain this blurriness, and then use examples from the fieldwork to illustrate it. First, I will show that the drivers of migration flow over a forced/voluntary-migration continuum; second, I will highlight that the routes taken by migrants and refugees intertwine and are most of the time highly similar; and finally, I will demonstrate the fluidity among migratory categories during the migration journey.

Explaining the blurriness surrounding mixed migration

---

[113] Julie Vullnetari, "Beyond 'Choice or Force': Roma Mobility in Albania and the Mixed Migration Paradigm," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 38, no. 8 (September 2012): 1305.
[114] Norman, "Between Europe and Africa," 426.

According to Nicholas Van Hear, Oliver Bakewell, and Katy Long, there are structural forces that lead to the "*inception* of migration and the *perpetuation* of movement."[115] These structural forces are also known as drivers of migration.[116] The latter are understood to enable and limit the agency of social actors, and produce certain decisions, routes, and destinations. The consequence is a complex migration flow that defies expectations, and that encompasses both 'forced' and 'voluntary' migration.[117] Indeed, the decision to migrate (or not) and the development of wider patterns of migration are the outcome of an interplay between these drivers, which are part of the individual's environment, and agency. In this context, agency refers to more than just the ability of a person to take action; it includes the people's aptitudes to take their aspirations and transform them into different positions in the social and geographical world.[118]

In other words, the multiple drivers of migration produce the structural conditions within which people make decisions about whether to stay or to leave their country of origin. Nevertheless, these structural forces are not enough to explain migration. The expressions of migration are formed by decisions and actions of the people affected, i.e. "how they exercise their agency to 'process social experience and to devise ways of coping with life, even under the most extreme forms of coercion.'"[119] As stated previously, migration has several drivers (poverty, economic deterioration, food insecurity, political conflict, environmental degeneration, state fragility and demographic pressures) that lead people to move to a new area and look for a better

---

[115] Nicholas Van Hear, Oliver Bakewell, and Katy Long, "Push-Pull plus: Reconsidering the Drivers of Migration," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 44, no. 6 (April 26, 2018): 2.
[116] Ibid.
[117] Ibid.
[118] Ibid., 3-4.
[119] Ibid., 6-7.

living.[120] These factors (drivers) heighten the inequalities resulting out of religious, ethnic or political divisions that may lead to violence and more refugee flow. As a result, one situation could create economic migrants as well as refugees, at the same time.[121] Refugees become then part of a wider movement of people.[122]

The core distinction between voluntary and forced migration resides in the individual's "choice" to migrate or "obligation" to do so.[123] For the UNHCR, the difference between these two types of migration is that "migrants, especially economic migrants, choose to move in order to improve their lives. Refugees are forced to flee to save their lives or preserve their freedom."[124] Although this appears as a clear distinction, reality draws a much more complicated picture. Migration flows are not either 'forced' or 'voluntary'.[125] These two categories overlap and blur the lines used to define forced and voluntary migrants. This is where the approach of mixed migration, based on the 'voluntary/involuntary' paradigm, becomes useful.[126]

The mixed migration approach suggests that there is a large continuum between 'completely forced' and 'completely voluntary' migration. On one extremity of this continuum, there is entirely 'forced' or 'involuntary' migration, which could be exemplified by people who were forced to flee due to a war or persecution; and on the opposite side, there is entirely 'voluntary' or 'choice' migration, which is illustrated by tourists or business travelers. The majority of migration types could be placed somewhere along this continuum, therefore,

---

[120] Sadako Ogata, "Mixed Migration: Strategy for Refugees and Economic Migrants," *Harvard International Review* 17, no. 2 (1995): 30; Alexander Betts, "Survival Migration," in *Survival Migration: Failed Governance and the Crisis of Displacement* (London: Cornell University Press, 2013), 15.
[121] Ogata, *op. cit*.
[122] Ibid., 33.
[123] Vullnetari, *op. cit.*, 1306.
[124] Ibid.
[125] David Bartram, "Forced Migration and 'Rejected Alternatives': A Conceptual Refinement," *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies* 13, no. 4 (October 2, 2015): 449.
[126] Vullnetari, *op. cit.*, 1306.

showcasing fluctuating degrees of choice and obligation.[127] Indeed, "migrants move with some volition and some compulsion at the same time."[128] When speaking of forced migration, there is the implicit idea that forced migrants are completely devoid of agency. However, even in the most violent and extreme situations, individuals still have a choice. They can make the decision to move or to stay, which establishes their agency, in a certain political, social and economic context.[129]

Mixed migration is used to understand the complex social transformations of a globalized world and the challenges that blur the once clear difference between forced and voluntary migrants.[130] On the one hand, the complex variety of economic, political and social factors lead a person to migrate within the forced/voluntary migration paradigm. For instance, a country could have a high unemployment rate and quasi-inexistent economic opportunities, along with poor governance, human rights violations, ethnic discrimination, and political conflict. On the other hand, the migratory trajectories of migrants defined as 'economic migrants' and 'refugees' often overlay and produce "shared routes, smuggling networks and means of transport."[131] This overlapping increased due to the tightening of access to places of refuge and asylum in developed countries through regular migration and the strengthening of border controls. In the case of the European Union, the agreements that were signed with Morocco in 2004 stressed on the fight against illegal immigration and the enhancement of border security. Moreover, the Schengen area can refuse the entry of any third-countries' national who arrives at the external borders, if they do not meet the space's entry conditions.[132]

---

[127] Ibid., 1307; Williams, "Mixed and Complex Mixed Migration during Armed Conflict," 44–45.
[128] Williams, *op. cit.*, 45.
[129] Vullnetari, *op. cit.*, 1307.
[130] Ibid.
[131] Ibid.
[132] Papa Sow, Elina Marmer, and Jürgen Scheffran, "Between the Heat and the Hardships. Climate Change and Mixed Migration Flows in Morocco," *Migration and Development* 5, no. 2 (2015): 8.

Kwaku Opoku Dankwah and Marko Valenta argue that the terms 'mixed migration' and 'fragmented journeys' are closely linked to resources, time, legal status and location.[133] The idea of 'fragmented journeys' refers to the fact that "mixed migrations can happen in several stages and may include several international migrations as well as changes in migrant statuses and motivation for migration."[134] According to Dankwah and Valenta, the increase in fragmented movements could be a result of the tightening of immigration controls of Europe and North America. However, regardless of the structural barriers (borders of states), migrants resort to various techniques to move even further and have better life circumstances. The importance of fragmented movements (generally 'irregular' movements) is intensified by communication and technology such as international money transfers and the availability of telephone communications, and the lack of preparedness of the countries of reception, which lead people to continue their journeys.[135] The global migration system today is hence characterized by long and fragmented journeys that demonstrate the agency of migrants, even if they are still far from their target destination.[136]

Lastly, long periods of political and economic instability and armed conflicts lead to the emergence of mixed flows that do not quite fit in the legal labels used by the migratory policies of states. Indeed, unlike reality, policies provide a clear distinction between forced and voluntary migration, distinguishing between labor migrants and refugees.[137] However, a migrant can move from one category to another during his or her migration journey. As an example, a person who left to seek better economic opportunities could become a refugee, and a person who moved for

---

[133] Kwaku Opoku Dankwah and Marko Valenta, "Mixed Fragmented Migrations of Iraqis and Challenges to Iraqi Refugee Integration: The Jordanian Experience," *Middle Eastern Studies* 54, no. 2 (2017): 2.
[134] Ibid.
[135] Ibid.; Michael Collyer, "Stranded Migrants and the Fragmented Journey," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 23, no. 3 (2010): 273.
[136] Dankwah and Valenta, *op. cit.*, 6.
[137] Dankwah and Valenta, *op. cit.*, 2.

fear of persecution could become a labor migrant in the country of reception.[138]   According   to

Nathalie Williams, mixed migration is not enough to understand these complexities. She

introduces the concept of 'complex mixed migration', which argues that armed conflicts produce

a shift in migratory patterns, resulting in different people migrating or not during this period of

violence.[139] In fact, the structural drivers of migration influence migration differently during an

armed conflict than they would have before the emergence of said conflict. Therefore, since

personal experiences with migration, social norms, and family obligations are indicators of the

likelihood of migration, an armed conflict could lead to changes in migration patterns, which could

continue much longer after its end, thus resulting in a long-term shift to migration patterns.[140] In

spite of strong periods of violence, people would look for a stable environment within their new

living conditions; they both need and desire to carry on with their routines, which include work,

school, and other social interactions. In other words, on top of armed conflict, economic, social

and demographic factors - such as gender, age, and marital status - also impact the decision making

processes to migrate (or not).[141]

Thus, mixed migration changed the idea that economic reasons trumped all motivation for

migration. It brought new evidence that showed that economic and political factors both influence

migration. The inclusion of the political reasons was a "key contribution toward delving into the

complexity of migration decision making."[142] The literature on migration incorporated an even

more complicated standpoint on the decision to migrate by including social norms, family

obligations, life trajectories, and demographic factors.[143] In other words, after realizing that

---

[138] Sow et al., *op. cit.*, 8.
[139] Williams, *op. cit.*, 45.
[140] Ibid.
[141] Ibid., 47.
[142] Ibid.
[143] Ibid.

economic and political motivations were both significant in the study of migration, mixed migration theory adds other factors to the decision-making process surrounding migration during an armed conflict.[144]
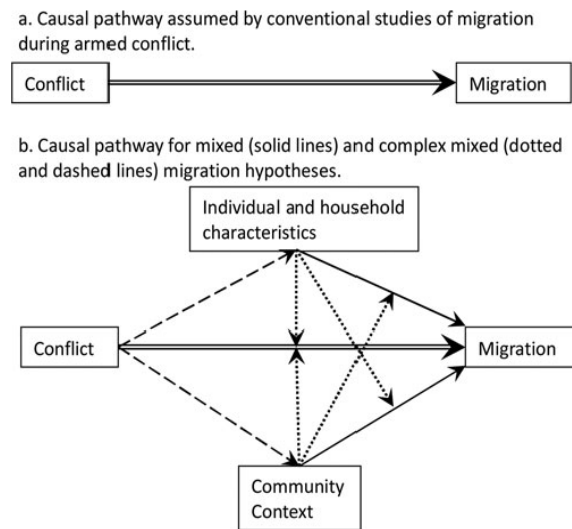

a. Causal pathway assumed by conventional studies of migration during armed conflict.

Conflict ⟶ Migration

b. Causal pathway for mixed (solid lines) and complex mixed (dotted and dashed lines) migration hypotheses.

Individual and household characteristics

Conflict   Migration

Community Context

Figure 1. Causal pathways assumed by conventional, mixed and complex mixed migration hypotheses.[145]

Williams uses Figure 1 a and 1 b (above) to sum up and explain the intricacies of mixed and complex mixed migration. Figure 1a shows that the conventional idea of migration in cases of violence and armed conflict is the only factor that influences the decision to migrate. Figure 1b suggests that, aside from violence and conflict, other factors such as community and personal experiences play a role in the individual's decision making process. Moreover, these factors would affect the person's decision differently before and during an armed conflict. Consequently, the process of mixed migration and complex mixed migration is "a complicated, multidimensional,

---

[144] Ibid.
[145] Ibid. 46.

and nonlinear one that varied with violence intensity, political events, and accessibility to social and economic services."[146]

To summarize, migration is attributed to more than just one driver or factor. The motivation of an individual to migrate includes a combination of economic, political, social and psychological variables. Moreover, force and voluntary elements are also added to the mixture regarding the decision to migrate.[147] Very often, migrants experience their migration journey in several stages, which is known as 'fragmented journeys'. They cross international borders and remain in a country for an indefinite period of time, until they get the opportunity to move closer to their final destination.[148] Thus, mixed migration highlights the fluidity and complexity of motivations and trajectories for migration. As a result, during their journeys, people flow through different categories of migrants.[149]

Mixed migration in Morocco

Morocco's proximity to Europe, its stability, as well as the reputation of its business schools and universities, and the availability of some job opportunities in the service and informal sectors make the country an attractive destination to many regular and irregular African migrants.[150]

In "Stranded Migrants and the Fragmented Journey", Michael Collyer argues that technological advancements have allowed changes in the nature of the potential migrants.[151]

---

[146] Ibid.
[147] Ibid.
[148] Dankwah and Valenta, *op. cit.*, 2
[149] Williams, *op. cit.*, 3.
[150] Sow *et al.*, *op. cit.,* 7.
[151] Collyer, op. cit., 276.

Because of these developments, the somewhat wealthy individuals from the middle class, who can afford to be smuggled, are not the only ones who migrate. Nowadays, poor individuals, who were restricted to sub-Saharan networks only, use the technological advancements to their advantage, allowing them to reach farther destinations through fragmented journeys.[152] Collyer writes: "Technological developments in the Saharan and the Sahel regions have stretched sub-Saharan migration networks so that they now reach to North Africa and for some even into Europe."[153] Indeed, the latter category may be labor migrants who have been mobile for years in the Sahel, and who made the decision to migrate due to poverty, conflict, or a combination of the two.[154]

Collyer identifies three groups of stranded migrants, mainly from West and Central Africa, in Morocco. The first one is a considerable minority, which is eligible for refugee status under the 1951 Geneva Convention. After the UNHCR moved to Rabat in 2005, and following the agreement with the Moroccan government in 2007, the recognition of refugees in Morocco increased and migrants have more chances of receiving a refugee status, compared to other countries they may have passed through.[155] The second category refers to transit migrants who have been recognized as refugees by the UNHCR in a previous country; yet, after years of living in refugee camps, they decide to depart again due to their 'despair' and the lack of opportunities to improve their lives. Once they arrive to Morocco, they are no longer considered as refugees because the status they received had a "specific, locally defined meaning, usually based on the OAU Convention, rather than the 1951 Convention." To regain that refugee status, they have to apply for it with the UNHCR.[156] This type of migration is referred to as 'irregular secondary

---

[152] Ibid., 277.
[153] Ibid.
[154] Ibid.
[155] Ibid., 279.
[156] Ibid., 284.

movement.'[157] The last group includes the migrants who are in a humanitarian crisis, whose country of origin cannot provide them with the necessary assistance, and do not qualify for the refugee status.[158]

Compared to the 1990s, the duration of stay in Morocco of undocumented migrants on a journey to Europe has nowadays increased considerably. Indeed, the average stay varied from 15.4 months to reach seven years in some cases. This shows that some migrants are deciding to stay in Morocco and not cross the border to Europe, and developing a life for themselves. This does not exclude those who embarked on their journey with the goal of reaching Morocco as a final destination.[159]

Since the UNHCR leads the development and the implementation of a migration management system in Morocco, in its eyes, 'mixed migration flows' legitimize the need for stronger border controls since it becomes more and more difficult to distinguish clearly between a 'migrant' and a 'refugee'.[160] This blurring of migrant categories explains why the UNHCR tries to establish this distinction through technological means, such as the introduction of fingerprinting, to make it impossible for rejected asylum-seekers to register with a new identity with the UNHCR. Therefore, according to Scheel and Ratfisch, the UN Refugee Agency's activities in Morocco use the notion of 'mixed migration' to implement more "restrictive effects and negative consequences for the majority of migrating people, including those labelled as asylum seekers."[161]

---

[157] Ibid., 279-280.
[158] Ibid., 280.
[159] Ibid.
[160] Stephan Scheel and Philipp Ratfisch, "Refugee Protection Meets Migration Management: UNHCR as a Global Police of Populations," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 40, no. 6 (2014): 933–934.
[161] Ibid., 934.

Reading mixed migration through my fieldwork

Before conducting my fieldwork, mixed migration was a phenomenon I was not expecting to find; first, because I was not aware of this theoretical concept and thus not looking for it, and second, because I had the assumption that I would find a clear distinction between 'migrants' and 'refugees'. When I started my fieldwork, I was looking for refugees, since they were my original targeted population. And, as my fieldwork evolved, I was meeting with both refugees and migrants. However, while I was collecting data, I got lost in all the blurriness present in the information I was getting. Not only were the migratory motives of my subject-participants very vague, especially for the refugees, but also their trajectories were puzzling. The clear-cut distinction that I had in my mind of the two categories was completely shattered by the data I was uncovering. In fact, I realized that some of the refugees in my sample do not even fit within the image of the typical 'refugee', nor within the UNHCR's definition. All this confusion led me to the concept of mixed migration, which can help make sense of the complexity of my data.

Numerous migration drivers at play

As stated in the theoretical part of the chapter, migration has multiple drivers, such as poverty, economic opportunities, studies, and conflict, that lead people to make the decision to migrate.[162] Although the answers of my subject-participants regarding their migratory motives were sometimes very vague, it is possible to see that their choices to leave their countries of origin were not completely forced nor completely voluntary. They all fell within the 'mixed migration spectrum' and thus had varying degrees of choice and obligation.

---

[162] van Hear et al., *op. cit.*, 6-7.

In my sample, six migrants[163] came to Morocco to pursue their studies. William[164], for instance, is a 28-year old Congolese man who came to Morocco to study human resources. The decision to study abroad was not his alone. His parents played an important role in the decision-making process. According to him, his parents believed that studying in Morocco represents a substantial step into getting a good job and a good social status once he returns home. Although he was open to exploring a new country, his parents' expectations were the main drivers into his migration journey.

For Tome and Diane, who are both from Central Africa, the drivers of their migration were studies and conflict. Even if these two factors were important to the decision to migrate, they had varying degrees of influence. For example, Diane's stronger motive was to leave the crisis in her country and go study abroad. Tome, on the other hand, wanted to study abroad in Senegal because he had friends there. However, his mother proposed (and insisted on) Morocco instead because he did not have any friends there with whom he can get into trouble. The fact of leaving behind a country ravaged by conflict was an added benefit.

Migratory drivers can also be fueled by curiosity and an inclination to discover new places, which is the case of Matisse, a 30-year old Congolese migrant. He left his country five years ago to go look for an adventure and learning more about the world. Before he arrived to Morocco, he had spent two years in Senegal where he met new people and built lifelong friendships. Yet, underneath the curiosity was a drive to find better opportunities. The examples of Yann and Cedric, who are migrants from Cameroon, show that poverty and family responsibility were the main reasons behind their reasons to migrate. Indeed, the lack of employment opportunities and his

---

[163] As mentioned in Chapter 1, when a distinction is not necessary, I will use the word 'migrant' as an encompassing term that includes refugees and asylum seekers.
[164] This is a pseudonym. To ensure confidentiality, all the following names are pseudonyms I gave my interviewees.

responsibility as a father and as the oldest in his family, led Cedric to embark on a migratory journey that he called 'an adventure.' Regarding Yann, he was not doing well in school, his dad had stopped working, and he had to look for work in order to pay for his studies and help his family. The political and economic context of his country were also drivers to migrate for him. He could see that "the country was not doing well, and I wouldn't be able to get by had I stayed there. That is why I decided to leave and look elsewhere."[165]

Through these examples, we can see that there are several migration drivers that play a role in the decision-making process. Some have more influence than the others, but there is clearly no sign of either totally 'forced' or completely 'voluntary' migration. After looking at the drivers of migration, I will now examine the routes and the trajectories that the migrants used to get to Morocco.

Overlaying routes and trajectories

Mixed migration argues that the migratory routes used by migrants and refugees are intertwined and more or less the same.[166] The routes taken by my subject-participants were divided into two types: air travel and terrestrial road. While eight of my interviewees arrived to Morocco via direct flights or flights with one layover, the remaining five reached Morocco through more or less similar routes. Aside from Matisse who came to Morocco from Senegal, by car thanks to his friends, Noah, a refugee from South Sudan, Florent, a refugee from Cameroon, Yann, and Cedric had fragmented journeys before they arrived to Morocco. These four migrants entered Morocco through Oujda by crossing the Moroccan-Algerian border. It is important to note that Noah and

---

[165] Translation of « je voyais le pays, ça n'allait pas, et je pouvais pas m'en sortir si je restais là-bas. C'est pourquoi j'ai décidé de partir pour aller chercher ailleurs. »
[166] Vullnetari, *op. cit.*, 1307.

Florent are refugees and Yann and Cedric are migrants. As for the air travel, five of the participants were refugees, one asylum-seeker, and two migrants.

It is clear that refugees and migrants use the same routes during their migratory journeys, complicating even further the clear distinction between the two categories. This complication is exacerbated when migrants move from one category to another. The last section of this chapter will be devoted to that flow from one migratory category to the other.

From one category to the other

Mixed migration is characterized by migrants moving from one category to the other in their migration journeys.[167] While analyzing my data, I was able to find that many migrants indeed changed categories. I discovered that there are migrants who come to Morocco as students and then become refugees, which is what I will demonstrate, as a first possible trajectory. The second one is that of economic migrants who become refugees. It should be noted that, in both possibilities, my subject-participants stayed vague regarding the reasons behind obtaining their refugee status.

From students to refugees

In my sample, four sub-Saharan Africans came directly to Morocco by plane as students before becoming refugees under the protection of the UNHCR. Two of them are Central African women, Diane, 26, and Sandi, 24, who arrived respectively in 2010 and in 2017. The other two are Pascal, a 30-year old Central African man who arrived in 2017, and Isaac, a 26-year old South Sudanese man, who came to Morocco in 2012. After discussing with them their journeys to Morocco, I discovered that students can become refugees. While some may think about leaving

---

[167] Sow et al., *op. cit.*, 8.

their countries of origin and use their studies as a reason to migrate (example of Diane), others leave their country with a student visa and, once they are in Morocco to pursue their degrees, there is a crisis or a conflict that breaks out in their country, thus preventing them from going back home. In this scenario, students get in touch with the UNHCR in order to obtain a refugee status (example of Isaac).

Diane and Pascal's stories will illustrate a first scenario where a student visa is used as a means to flee the country and then apply for a refugee status in the country of reception. Diane came to Morocco to pursue her studies and to "flee the country."[168] She said that, at the age of barely 18, she wanted to leave her country because of the emerging crisis, and needed to find a reason that would allow her to do so. She found that becoming a student and pursuing her studies abroad was one way to achieve it.. For her, the main goal was to leave the Central African Republic and her studies were a means to this end. She did not give me any details regarding her area of study nor did she tell me what she is doing now for work. Also, she did not mention when or why she became a refugee.

Regarding Pascal, a father of three children, he just recently finished his Master's degree in computer science in Morocco. His first choice was to go study in France. However, when that plan fell apart, he decided to come to Morocco to get his degree. He arrived in 2017 and only recently, in 2019, did he get recognized as a refugee by the UNHCR. Pascal originally left to pursue his studies, with the goal of going back home to help develop the telecommunication sector in his country. So becoming a refugee was probably a possibility that he discovered once in Morocco. Just like Diane, he did not reveal to me the details of why he became a refugee.

---

[168] Translation of "fuir le pays."

Generally, most of my subject-participants refused to answer or stayed very vague when I asked about the details of their refugee status and work opportunities. As I explained in my second chapter, I was often suspected of working for associations or being a social worker. Because migrants are very wary of strangers, even if Pierre (my informant) was always present, their lack of trust would usually take over. I believe that their answers were kept very vague by fear of losing what they have been able to acquire, i.e. a refugee status. What is puzzling here is how they became refugees and on what basis. This vagueness could also be a result of the refugees' apprehension that people would not believe them when they share their stories. Since they have been subjected to thorough investigations by the UNHCR, and had to tell their stories on several occasions, refugees become very careful when 'strangers' ask them about the motives behind their refugee status.

On their side, Isaac and Sandi, illustrate another possible scenario of students becoming refugees. Isaac came to Morocco in 2012, as part of a scholarship program. He spent six months in Rabat learning French, and then went to Marrakech where he joined the *Ecole Nationale des Sciences Appliquées*. However, he was forced to drop out after two years due to his poor level of proficiency in French. He then transferred to Fez to study Law in Arabic. The civil war in South Sudan started in 2013; however, it was not until 2017 that he decided to register with the UNHCR.

For her part, Sandi stayed as vague as possible about her drivers during the interview. She introduced herself as a student who came to Morocco in 2017 to study economics. During the interview, the only part where her 'story' got me questioning her student status was when she told me that she had classes only at 4pm. My doubts were exacerbated when her answers became extremely vague when I asked more questions. Since I could sense, during the interview, that she did not fully trust me (she introduced herself using a man's first name and refused to be recorded),

I did not want to push her on this point and risk her being even more distant. It was not until a few minutes after the end of the interview, and after talking to Pierre and other participants, that she came back and told me that she was a refugee, not a student. This example shows that Pierre's presence was key to establishing a certain kind of trust between my interviewees and myself. Although he was present during the meetings to explain that my work was not related to any association he is affiliated with (as way of 'keeping the meetings off the books' and protecting his job), his presence was also a sign that the participants could trust me. The fact that Sandi decided to correct the information she gave me demonstrates that she could have shared a lot more had there been trust between us. However, since she was a "refugee, not a student" raised more questions: did she come to Morocco as a student or as a tourist? Was she a student before getting her refugee status? Did she drop out of school after she got her status? When and on what basis did she get her refugee status? Did she use her studies, like Diane, to leave her country and apply for a refugee status to benefit from the UNHCR's protection? These questions would require a much longer discussion with Sandi; unfortunately, I had a short period of time to conduct my fieldwork.

After exploring the fluidity between the categories of students and refugees, the next section takes a closer look at the fluidity between the categories of economic migrants and refugees.

From economic migrant to refugee

Another movement between categories that the fieldwork revealed was one where individuals who could be considered as economic migrants obtained the status of refugees. Florent, who clearly embodies the concept of mixed migration and fragmented journeys, will be used to illustrate this scenario. He left his country towards the end of 2006 and arrived to Morocco in

2009. During these three years, he went from Cameroon to Nigeria, then Niger, followed by Mali, came back to Niger, then went north towards Algeria, before finally arriving to Morocco through Oujda. He shared that his original goal was to go further and maybe even reach the United States. However, he said, "life has decided so and I stayed in Morocco. I attempted the journey that everyone does: crossing the barrier; but the barrier has been increased."[169] After four years of attempting to go to Spain, he decided to remain in Morocco. In fact, it was not until 2013 that he reached out to the UNHCR to be recognized as a refugee and to benefit from their protection. When I asked him why he waited four years before contacting them, he replied that it was because he had been holding out hope, that he would still make it. However, he was disillusioned by the journey and the sacrifices that had to be made to arrive to Spain (broken ribs, broken legs, deep injuries, dead friends). Once he got his refugee status from the UNHCR, he stopped trying to enter Europe, and hoped that the UNHCR would help him stabilize his situation. He also decided to stay because he liked Morocco, regardless of the hardships that he may face. Regarding the drivers that led him to migrate, which could also be the motives for his refugee status, he said "it is a bit complicated. I prefer to keep this to myself."[170] Florent's example joins Sandi's in the sense that they both show the multiplicity of factors that played a role in their decision to migrate. Although their journeys are very different, they probably fall somewhere along the mixed migration continuum.

'Refugees' per se

In my sample, there are two people who fit the definition of 'refugee' trajectory set by the UNHCR and the 1951 Geneva Convention. However, their trajectories toward Morocco are very

---

[169] Translation of « La vie en a décidé ainsi et je suis resté au Maroc. J'ai essayé le voyage que tout le monde fait : traverser la barrière ; mais la barrière a été augmentée. »
[170] Translation of « c'est un peu compliqué. Je préfère garder ça pour moi. »

different. Noah, 33, is a South Sudanese man who left his country in 2012 due to the civil war, and went to the Central African Republic to find refuge. However, war erupted there as well, so he left for Chad. From there, he went to Niger, then Algeria, and finally arrived to Morocco in 2014. As for Boris, he is in his early fifties and is from the Democratic Republic of Congo. He arrived to Morocco over fifteen years ago. Being a military man, the reason that drove him to leave his country was war. He said "it is always torn apart by wars."[171] He arrived to Morocco by plane, after a short stay in Togo. They both fit within the typical definition of a 'refugee', yet their trajectories are very different. Moreover, in a context that can be considered as 'forced' displacement and devoid of choice, both Noah and Boris retained their agency, which means that they made the decision to leave in order to change their position in the social world. Indeed, unlike other members of their families who decided to stay in their countries, they *chose* to migrate.

By listening to my subject-participants, I could not identify a clear distinction among 'economic migrants', 'refugees' and 'students'. Indeed, considering their trajectories, their drivers to migrate, and their fluidity in moving from one category to another, mixed migration represents a concept that helps shed some light at the complex, vague, and intricate journeys of my subject-participants. After defining the concept of mixed migration and illustrating it with examples from my fieldwork, I will focus in the next chapter on the 'transitional objects' of my interviewees and their significance, which is the main focus of this study.

---

[171] Translation of « c'est toujours déchiré par les guerres.»

Chapter 4: The Multiple Functions of Transitional Objects

In this chapter, I examine the materiality aspect of my research by looking at the different transitional objects that my interviewees brought with them. After giving a brief explanation of what transitional objects are, I will present my migrants' transitional objects and the significance that these objects hold for them. In doing so, I identify four categories of transitional objects, namely religious, utilitarian, affective, and products *du pays*[172], although we will see that these objects can have more than one function. I argue that, through transitional objects and their multiple functions, migrants are able to create a continuity in their identity construction in Morocco.

Transitional objects provide a feeling of continuity, and may become objects of legacy linking one generation to the next.[173] There are also objects that have a pragmatic function[174] throughout the migration journey, such as money, telephones, knives, and passports, and during the migrant's settlement, such as bed sheets, plates, cups, knives, forks, spoons and food. Moreover, one object can have multiple functions at the same time. For example, a phone can have a pragmatic and utilitarian function, but also an emotional one since it contains personal memories to connect to one's family and loved ones.

In my sample, and contrary to what I was expecting, the status of refugee had little to nothing to do with the types objects that were carried. The distinguishing factor was the migratory project of the migrants. For instance, students, who knew they were coming to Morocco to settle

---

[172] *Du pays*: All of my subject-participants referred to their country of origin as "le pays" (the country). Further in the chapter, when I mention "le pays" or "du pays", it is in reference to the country of origin of my interviewees.

[173] Zeynep Turan, "Material Objects as Facilitating Environments: The Palestinian Diaspora," *Home Cultures* 7, no. 1 (2010): 46.

[174] Olivier Thomas, "Les Objets et La Condition de Migrant: Une Recherche Auprès Des Exilés à Cherbourg et Sur Les Côtes de La Manche," *Géographie et Cultures*, no. 91–92 (2014): 5.

for a relatively long period of time, brought with them bed sheets, blankets, cooking utensils, cups, food, and winter and summer clothes. As for the migrants who came to Morocco without any plans of settling in it, they travelled light and had only objects they considered to be important for them, such as mementoes, photos, religious items, diplomas, and phones. It should be noted that the routes and the trajectories the migrants took also had a clear impact on the amount of things that they brought with them. Those who came to Morocco by plane had a lot more objects than those who had a long migratory journey and arrived by land. Therefore, mixed migration, coupled with the settlement plans of migrants, can explain the differences in the objects that were carried.

Transitional objects

The study of material culture has often focused on objects as signs or symbols. A shortcoming of this approach is that it treats material culture as symbolic representation and the attributes of the object as unimportant. However, material objects contribute to human culture in more than just significance; there is an important process that takes place, namely 'material interaction.'[175] A material interaction denotes an asymmetric reciprocity between people (actors) and objects. Since people have the capacities of will and intention, they are the ones who initiate and control the interaction. Objects have embedded within them the intentional actions of those who designed them or own them. The most important aspect of people's interactions is the orientation towards meaning. The latter is produced within a society so that objects "are constituted in terms of meanings within the social process of experience."[176] Indeed, objects get their meanings

---

[175] Tim Dant, *Materiality and Society* (New York: Open University Press, 2005), 109.
[176] Ibid., 110.

from the people, considered to be social beings, who perceive them, give them symbolic meanings, and interact with them.[177]

Objects can produce feelings of positivity, support and a sense of belonging through shared meaning and identity. They provoke specific memories and generate a nurturing sentiment within the person. People often seek out and get attached to objects that give them a sense of comfort and security. In addition, these objects provide a feeling of confidence to their owner to explore their environment.[178] For people who have experienced a displacement, objects represent an important element to remember their past. They are means that provide cultural continuity during a long period of time and "shared connections to pre-migratory landscapes with post-migratory memories."[179] Transitional objects are used by people who embarked on a migratory journey to help them ease their transition from one place to another by giving them a sense of security and comfort, and provide them with a feeling of continuity. In fact, these types of objects maintain a connection to one's group and situate the owner within a personal or a group's narrative.[180]

Functions of transitional objects

Each migrant and refugee had at least one of these categories of objects in their possession at a certain point in time. While the religious objects carry a religious meaning and serve as a comforting safety net and a reminder of faith, the utilitarian objects are more pragmatic and are brought by the migrants in the hopes of using them during their migration journey and to help them create a better life for themselves in their country of reception. The affective category refers to

---

[177] Ibid.
[178] Taryn Bell and Penny Spikins, "The Object of My Affection: Attachment Security and Material Culture," *Time and Mind* 11, no. 1 (2018): 26.
[179] Turan, "Material Objects as Facilitating Environments: The Palestinian Diaspora," 45.
[180] Ibid., 46.

objects that have been passed on from one generation to another, received or given as a gift to a dear friend, or belonged to the family. The affective objects hold an emotional connection to their owners because they symbolize the bond between the people involved. As for the products *du pays*, they refer to all the goods that the migrants brought with them on their journey to give them a taste of home away from home.

Religious objects: source of comfort and hope

Many sub-Saharan refugees and migrants brought with them a religious item, such as rosaries, rosary rings, crosses, and Bibles. William[181], a 28-year old Congolese student who arrived to Fes in 2013, brought a rosary ring with him (Image 1, below). He brought the ring to help him pray constantly, even if he is just walking. He said to me:

> When I wanted to come here (Morocco), my dad told me: 'you know you are Christian, everywhere, even there (in Morocco). It is an Arab country. So I built you this (shows me his ring), instead of wearing the long rosary. So he ordered it. He asked for it to be made specifically for me. My dad was the one who ordered it as a ring. That way, people would think that it is just a simple ring, but I know that this is a rosary… To pray, I just turn the ring around my finger. There are ten points on the ring, and that is what I use to pray… I use it at any time. If I feel that I am alone, I can start praying. If I feel threatened, I start praying. Even at home when I feel alone, I use this, which is typical for prayers. I feel at ease afterwards. You know, for a Christian, the first contact with God is through prayer. This is why I use this. I feel at ease… If I don't wear it, there is something missing. This is why I constantly wear it, since 2013.[182] (William, male, 28, DRC, migrant, student)

---

[181] This is a pseudonym. All the names used for my subject-participants are pseudonyms.
[182] Excerpt from the interview with William, which I translated to English from French.

For William, the rosary ring his father made for him represents a sanctuary that keeps him connected to his religion and provides him with a feeling of security and comfort. Indeed, through this use of the rosary ring, William is the one who initiates and controls the interaction. He has infused it with meaning and purpose, which procure him with a nurturing feeling and a sense of confidence.[183] Because of the comforting sensation that the ring generates in him, William has become very attached to it. Moreover, it is clear that the rosary ring helps him 'make himself' in a foreign environment.[184] Since his father gave him the ring with clear directions and reasons (to remember that he is Christian), the ring represents the religious values that his father wanted to pass on to him. Here, we can see the double function of the rosary ring: first, as a religious object, and second as an affective one. Therefore, it is a symbol through which values and identity construction are reproduced and legitimized.[185]

Image 1: William's rosary ring and telephone[186]

---

[183] Dant, *op. cit.*, 109-110.
[184] Tilley et al., *Handbook of Material Culture*, 61.
[185] Ibid.
[186] All the photos in this chapter (except 'Image 2') were taken by me during my meetings with my interviewees.

Diane, a 26-year old Central African refugee, came to Morocco in 2010 with a Bible. She is Catholic and brought with her the Bible that was used to baptize her. For her, the Bible is her comfort:

> When I start suffering, I start having nostalgia *du pays*, or grief, I take the Bible, it comforts me. Every day, I pray. I read it to… in the Bible, there are words that comfort, that appease and that help show me the way. It is like that. I use it every day.[187] (Diane, female, 26, Central Africa, refugee, student)

Much like William, Diane uses the Bible to find comfort. She reads it and interacts with it on a daily basis in order to hold on to her past (*her pays*). Leaving her country and coming to Morocco represents an identity disruption for her. And since an individual tends to look for continuity when it comes to identity, Diane tries to preserve hers through religion. She hopes that, by reading the Bible, she will find answers that will help her navigate her new life. As Melinda Milligan argues, people try to find a way to preserve their former identities or create new ones in order to regain that feeling of continuity.[188]

In the case of Matisse, a migrant from Congo, he finds more than security in carrying his Christian cross (Image 2, below). It gives him confidence and hope.

> It gives me confidence. Let's say I am in grief or in moments where you feel alone, it helps me revive past moments and remember or trust in something that is unreal. There is something there. A trust. It gives you hope, in one word. For example, now, I remember that I had a cross at home. It was for prayer, to trust God etc. When I felt a little… when I wanted to reconnect with my past, I take it and I try to remember and pray… When I want to pray, or I want to intercede for something that I want, I always take it (the cross) out, put it in my hand, then

---

[187] Interview with Diane, translated from French to English.
[188] Milligan, "Displacement and Identity Discontinuity," 382–383.

I speak or I wish for something. And just by looking at my cross, I trust that what I want, I can have it.[189] (Matisse, male, 30, DRC, migrant)

Image 2: Matisse's cross[190]

Not only does Matisse use his cross as a way to remember and reconnect with his past, but he also uses it to envision his future. His cross represents the link between his past and his future. In addition, the function of this cross is mainly related to the present. He interacts with it, in the present, to give himself confidence and to remind himself that, through faith, he can achieve his desires. Timothy Smith (in Martha Frederiks) suggests that when migrants experience loss and separation, faith offers them an avenue to express these feelings and give them meaning.[191]

In all three examples, we can see that William, Diane, and Matisse use their religious objects as symbols that hold moments from the past, the present and the future.[192] Also, all three

---

[189] Interview excerpt with Matisse, who arrived to Morocco three years ago.
[190] This photo was taken by Matisse, and he shared it with me via Whatsapp.
[191] Martha Frederiks, "Religion, Migration, and Identity. A Conceptual and Theoretical Exploration," in *Religion, Migration and Identity: Methodological and Theological Explorations*, ed. Martha Frederiks and Dorottya Nagy (Boston: Brill, 2016), 13–14.
[192] "What Do Objects Do? A Material and Visual Culture Perspective. | Object Retrieval," accessed February 18, 2019, https://www.ucl.ac.uk/museums-static/objectretrieval/node/266.

talked about feeling alone and being in grief, and find solace in religion through the medium of their objects. Frederiks writes: "religion sustains people in times of difficulty, religion can serve as an identity marker in a new context or as a source for reconciliation and healing [...] Religion can also aid a person in giving meaning to his/her migration experiences or function as a resource in resolving adjustment issues."[193] Furthermore, besides ensuring continuity with the past, the present and the future, religion is embraced as an identity marker.[194]

Affective objects: remembering and connecting with those left behind

The majority of the migrants in my sample had some kind of object that was passed on to them by a family member, or was a gift they gave to someone close to them. In the category of 'affective objects', I include photos, family heirlooms, and mementoes. William, Diane, Matisse, Sandi, Noah, and Florent, for instance, all had affective objects when they arrived to Morocco. Photos represented such an important possession that most of the interviewees said that they kept them 'preciously' in a safe place where they cannot be torn, except for William. He brought with him posters of his parents that he hung on the wall, as well as a drawing made for him by his younger brother and other photos as souvenirs of his family and friends. For him, these photos express a need to maintain memories of his family across space, and even time, and retain feelings of belonging. As Natalia Alonso Rey argues, the emotional bonds between people and photos are crucial to understanding the creation of a sense of belonging in the country of reception and maintain links that extend transnationally, to the country of origin.[195]

For Diane, however, her photos are souvenirs of her past life.

---

[193] Frederiks, *op. cit.*, 14.
[194] Ibid.
[195] Natalia Alonso Rey, "Memory in Motion: Photographs in Suitcases," in *Memories on the Move: Experiencing Mobility, Rethinking the Past*, ed. Monika Palmberger and Jelena Tosic (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 102.

It reminds me of *le pays*. It is nostalgia. It reminds me of all the people that I had met. Sometimes, I remember everything, how it (event on the photo) happened. I make a small (mental) video of how it was. Every time I look at the photos, I try to look, I look at them one by one. And that makes me immensely happy. And I really want to see them, but I don't have the opportunity to see them again; not for the time being. *Le pays* is in crisis et now I am a bit stuck here, I don't even know what I am going to do. But I always have hope that I will see them again. (Diane, female, 26, Central Africa, refugee, student)

As someone who feels, and to a certain extent is, stranded in a foreign country, Diane cannot return to her *pays*, her home. Although she holds out hope to one day go back to Central Africa, it is realistically unconceivable for her in the near and medium future. This notion of return, as Sabine Marschall explains, is heavily present in the minds of refugees. Since Diane cannot physically return home, she uses her photos to symbolically experience a return sensation by living it in her mind as an imaginary journey.[196] Moreover, photographs, and other transitional objects, imply multisensory and emotional dimensions for their material nature. Not only are the senses of touch, sight and smell of the person interacting with the object triggered, but his or her emotional and memory sides are also activated.[197]

Aside from photos, Matisse's affective object is a small statuette of a man holding an arrow on which was inscribed "He, who comes as a friend, arrives late and leaves early."[198] This item was very important to him because it was a gift he received from a friend of his before he embarked on his migration journey. He told me that he valued that statuette because it was "very pretty to look at"[199], and most importantly, because of the sentimental value that it represented for him. He

---

[196] Marschall, *Memory, Migration and Travel*, 3,8.
[197] Alonso Rey, *op. cit.*, 104.
[198] Translation of « qui vient en ami, arrive tard et quitte tôt. »
[199] Translation of « très jolie à voir ».

was not really sure where his friend bought it from -he assumed it was from a museum-, but the message inscribed on it was very reflective of his personality and his friendships. He explained that most of the friendships he had built never lasted long. Not because of a falling out, but because circumstances made it so that one of the parties had to leave and pursue its own adventure. Therefore, time is never on the side of friendship. Once Matisse creates a deep bond with someone, he finds himself in a position where he has to leave. So, for him, it always feels like he is arriving late to meeting his new friend, and leaving early before he has had the chance to create memories and see that bond blossom. When he was in Senegal, he met a new friend, who later on became one of his best friends. After two years of friendship, Matisse decided to go to Morocco and his friend helped him arrange for the trip. However, before he departed, that friend asked Matisse to give him that statuette as a souvenir of their time together. Although it was very hard for him to get separate from it, Matisse gave the statue as a gift, just like it was given to him. He said:

> "I never wanted to get separated from it. But since it was a gift, you are obliged
> to give it as a souvenir."[200] (Matisse, male, 30, DRC, migrant)

By giving his precious statuette to his friend, Matisse was letting go of all the advantages that were procured to him by this object. He can no longer look at it, hold it, or display it in order to reminisce on his time with the friend who gave it to him in the first place. In addition, he was giving away part of himself, since he identified completely with the quote engraved in the small statue. Since Matisse gifted a valued item to a valued friend, Matisse was remaking himself in the migratory process. Indeed, objectification, which refers to the relationship between people and objects, reflects the representation that people make of themselves through things.[201] Besides, objects exist within a certain culture and a certain society; as such, one can pass on values of his culture through

---

[200] Excerpt from the interview with Matisse.
[201] Tilley et al., *op. cit.*, 63, 70.

objects.[202] In the case of Matisse, on the one hand, he was transmitting values of friendship, sharing, and selflessness; on the other hand, he was reconstructing himself in the absence of his memento.

As for Florent, a 38-year old refugee from Cameroon, he brought with him a small piece of the trunk of a tree, that he used to keep in his wallet. The importance of this small object lies in the fact that it was given to him by his grandmother, who still lived in his village of origin. When he was about to embark on a migratory journey, his grandmother gave it to him and told him to keep it on him for it will protect him. Also, if he gets sick, he could take a small bite from it, and he would get better. This example shows that migration is also affecting those who were left behind. The grandmother, worried about her grandson, handed Florent a piece of his 'home', which would provide him with protection from sickness, poison etc. This transitional object holds a double function for two different people. For Florent, it is a reminder of his grandmother and his village; and for the grandmother, it represents a 'peace of mind', that her grandson will be protected. Florent arrived to Morocco through the Moroccan-Algerian border, after a long journey across the Sahara. The conditions dictated by his trajectory obliged him to travel light. When he left, he had his passport, a few clothes, a rosary, and a lot of money in his wallet, along with the piece of the tree trunk that his grandmother gave him. He kept this object mainly because it was given to him by his grandmother and tried to hold on to it for as long as he could, however, he lost it to a group of Algerian policemen who burned all his belongings during a police raid. He said:

> Florent: I am not going to lie to you, when we were on the road, we got rid of almost everything. We were traveling light…
>
> Me: can you tell me how you lost your tree bark?

---

[202] Ibid., 61.

Florent: I lost everything in Algeria: my papers, my diplomas, my wallet, my passport… It was around the frontier in Maghnia when I wanted to cross to Oujda… We lived there, imagine a space like that (pointing at an empty field), and there was kind of a basement, like military bunker but just with a slab on top. And that's where we would go to sleep. It was surrounded by fields… The police and all the security apparatus knew that we, the blacks, lived there. So they would come and chase us, and push us way back into the desert. So when they arrived that day, we were sleeping […] and they arrived by surprise. They surrounded us from all sides. It was around 8pm, which is a time when they don't come. When they come, they come around 5am, and they would free us around 1 or 2pm. That day, they arrived at 8pm, and it was a time when we would hang out (migrants together), talk to each other, eat, etc. I had left my bag inside the basement and it had everything in it. I was able to flee, but all my things were burned by the police […] So how I lost the thing, is that I always kept it in a small pocket inside my wallet, and the wallet was inside my bag. (Florent, male, 37, Cameroon, refugee)

For Florent, the loss of all of his belongings at once represented a loss of who he was and where he came from. Because objects are part of a people's culture, they are attached to a person's story. In fact, person and object leave imprints on each other; the subject's experiences are objectified, and the object's characteristics are personified. They are in a constant state of fusion and separation.[203] In addition, objects are reminders of all the values, ideas and experiences that people want to highlight and reproduce.[204]

Noah, a 33-year old refugee from South Sudan, was one of the subject-participants who were very open with me and who accepted to see me for a second time, and as many times as I needed to. He expressed that his willingness to help me was due to my student status, and that his

[203] "What Do Objects Do? A Material and Visual Culture Perspective. | Object Retrieval."
[204] Tilly et al., *op. cit*, 61.

dream in life was to become a teacher. Because he valued education and he really wanted to help me with my research, he chose to tell me the details behind his family heirlooms. Before examining his objects, I will go over Noah's migration journey in order to highlight the importance of his objects. He left South Sudan with his whole family in 2012 because of the war and sought refuge in Central Africa. They were Sudanese refugees in Central Africa. When another war erupted in Central Africa, they decided to leave again. This time, they got separated, his parents and his younger siblings went to the DRC, and he and his younger brother went to Chad. In Chad, they were subject of aggressions and decided to leave to Niger, which was even harsher. They survived by doing some small jobs, and when they earned some money, they went to Algeria. In 2014, they entered Morocco through Oujda, unfortunately, his brother did not survive the trip because of the travelling conditions. So once they got into Morocco, his brother died. Ever since their separation, Noah had no updates on his parents' whereabouts and he was not even sure if they were still alive. It was only recently that he learned, through his uncle whom he met by chance in Rabat, that his parents are alive and settled in DRC. The loss of a sibling during a migration journey and the separation from his parents created a disruption in Noah's identity. To deal with this, and to recover a sense of continuity regarding his identity, he used transitional objects as a reminder of his previous life and as a source of strength.[205]

First, Noah told me that the objects he brought with him were very meaningful to him. He had in his possession a small rectangular black leather bag with a couple of rips, one on the side and one of the front (Image 3, below), and his vaccination booklet. These two items remind him of his parents because his father paid for the vaccines and his mother bought him the bag. For

---

[205] Ibid.

Noah, that bag symbolizes a motivation to not give up and "his will to live."[206] He imbues them with personified characteristics that generate a biography of things. In other words, his objects are the symbolic representation of his parents, thus allowing them (the objects) to be models of human experience.[207]

On top of the bag and vaccination booklet, he had a bracelet (Image 4, below) which represents "everything" to him. It is a bracelet that has been passed on from grandfather to grandson and was specifically made by his great-great-grandfather for his family. The bracelet serves as a protection object from anyone and anything that wants to harm the person wearing it. "Although it is an ugly bracelet when you look at it, for me, this is the most important thing I own."[208] Noah described to me how his grandfather gave it to him. It was during the night, around a camp fire near his village, a few weeks before he and his small family left South Sudan. Only men were present, and more specifically men from his family. Towards the end of the night, the grandfather told Noah to give him his hand. Noah, thinking he was being pranked, gave his left hand, which the grandfather tapped and pushed aside to show the seriousness of the moment. He told him "give me your hand as if you were going to shake someone's hand, like a man."[209] Feeling the importance of the situation, Noah obeyed. When shaking his hand, the grandfather put the bracelet in the palm of Noah, and told him the story of the bracelet, and how to use it. Noah is the third generation to receive that bracelet. It used to belong to his grandfather, and his great-great-grandfather before him - it always needs to skip a generation. Noah's grandfather gave it to him as a sign of manhood. According to him, a man is confronted to all sorts of hardships outside his

---

[206] Translation of « envie de vivre.»
[207] "What Do Objects Do? A Material and Visual Culture Perspective. | Object Retrieval."
[208] Translation of "c'est moche comme bracelet quand tu le vois, mais ça c'est le truc le plus important que je possède", taken from Noah's interview
[209] Translation of « donne moi ta main, comme si tu allais saluer quelqu'un, comme un homme ».

home, and in a context of war, he needs to be protected. The bracelet is used as a protection from all kinds of dangers. Since then, that bracelet has become the most important possession of Noah.

Image 3: Noah's bag

Image 4: Noah's bracelet

Much like Florent's tree bark, the bracelet carries two meanings. The first one is the grandfather's – he wants to make sure that he has passed on the values of his family to the future generation and that his grandson is protected. The second one is Noah's – the bracelet represents a clear connection to the past, present and future. Indeed, once Noah's grandson becomes a man, he will receive the bracelet along with all the advice and meaning that comes with it. Therefore, it is an object that carries the values that his family has been reproducing. The generational aspect of the bracelet confronts its owner with time. Objects can outlive people, which means that they were received by previous generations, preserved, and passed on to the next. In this sense, they

shape memories and give them meaning, which assumes an important role in the migration process.[210]

Affective objects represent the emotional bond that has been established between two people before migration or during the migratory journey. They also shed the light on what, or rather who, was left behind. In preparation of the migration journey, those who stayed gave the soon-to-be migrants mementos and family heirlooms in order to ease their voyage and preserve a sense of identity continuity in a displacement context.

Utilitarian objects: preparing for the unknown

Almost all my interviewees had at least one utilitarian object. Some had only a telephone, others had a telephone, diplomas, criminal record, birth certificates, passports, and of course money. Tome, for instance, is a 22-year old young man from Central Africa, who came to Morocco to pursue his studies. Since his mother died shortly after he arrived to Morocco, he can no longer afford paying for his studies. Consequently, he is trying to find a way to become a refugee and profit from the UNHCR's services of assistance. When he came to Morocco, he had his telephone, his baccalaureate, his criminal record, his birth certificate and his passport. Although these documents were part of the registration documents the school asked for, Tome said that these papers were of the utmost importance to him. They proved who he was and "prove that you are legal."[211]

> Let's take the criminal record, that is what proves if you have done prison time, that's what is going to justify that you have done this or that. And secondly, the criminal record, that's what allows you to do your residency card. It is very

---

[210] Alonso Rey, *op. cit.*, 101.
[211] Translation of "c'est ce qui prouve que tu es légal," from Tome's interview.

important. These documents, I have the originals and the copies, they are hidden under my clothes, very well protected.[212] (Tome, male, 22, Central Africa, student)

Tome considers his documents as proof of identity. Since he was planning on studying in Morocco, he needed all his legal papers to be in order and safe so that he can use them in case he needs them.
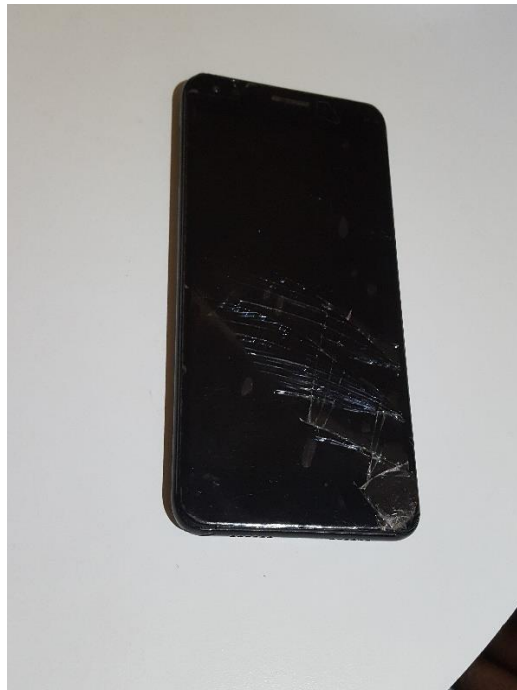
Image 6: Tome's phone

He also noted that with the technological advancements, he has all these documents in his phone (image 6, above). Telephones also have a double function. They are both utilitarian and affective objects. Besides using them to communicate with families and to store soft copies of important documents, telephones keep photos of family and friends close by.

Tome: there are photos on Whatsapp, Facebook. Family photos. Everything is digitalized.

---

[212] Excerpt from Tome's interview.

Me: do you ever look at these photos?

Tome: yes, a lot! Yesterday, I remembered my girlfriend, so on Whatsapp, I went and saw her photo, then I posted it with "I miss you a lot" etc. She's no longer my girlfriend, she is already engaged now… Memories, thoughts, they push you to look at photos. It happens to me a lot, even my mother now, I start thinking about her…[213] (Tome, male, 22, Central Africa, student)

From this excerpt, we can see that nostalgia is very much present in Tome's words. His decision to come study in Morocco created a distance between him and his loved ones, and the photos on his phone are now the only sentimental objects that he has. The tendency towards continuity is what pushes Tome to look at his photos and reminisce about his past. This nostalgic feeling emerges as a way to connect to his past and his pre-migratory landscape to his post-migratory memories. In doing so, one can create a continuity in his disrupted identity construction.[214]

William, from DRC, also brought a phone with him (Image 1, above). Although it holds all his contacts, he also has photos of family and friends on it:

"If I think about the family often, I look at it like this, and I feel like I am still with the family, together… I feel like I am always with them." (William, male, 28, DRC, migrant, student)

William, too, uses the photos of his family on his phone to combat the nostalgia that he feels as a result of being far from them. He uses his phone as a quick connector to his family, which provides him with a sense of belonging and comfort.[215]

For the case of Diane, from Central Africa, although her phone was stolen a while back in Morocco, she had physical copies of her photos and had a small notebook where she wrote all the

---

[213] Excerpt from Tome's interview.
[214] Milligan, *op. cit.*, 381–382; Turan, *op. cit.*, 45.
[215] Milligan, *op. cit.,* 382.

contact numbers of people she might need to call. The loss of her phone, since it was years ago, did not seem to affect her today because she had the copies of the photos and the phone numbers. Noah, from South Sudan, echoes this. Among the objects he brought with him was a small address book that had all the important numbers in it, as well as a piece of paper that had the information of the people he might call for help in case of a problem. This shows that they prepare to the hazardous journey that they embark on. Through his trajectory, Noah learned that the most important things to have are food and water, and that what he was carrying with him could be sold or exchanged in order to survive the journey. For example, he sold his watch, some bracelets, some of the extra clothes he had with him. Although it was painful to let go of some of his belongings, he understood that, in order to survive the trip, he had to travel light and to use what he had so that he could bargain, buy, sell and exchange them for much more necessary items, i.e. food and water.

In fact, contrary to Noah, some migrants like Diane, Sandi, and William brought with them bedsheets, a bed cover, a plate, a cup, a spoon, a knife, a fork, winter clothes, and summer clothes. Not only does this show that they were prepared for their trip, but it also indicates that they were embarking on the discovery of the unknown. They had no idea what to expect in Morocco, so they preferred to have at least the minimum to 'survive' the first few weeks there. In addition, although Diane and Sandi are now refugees, they arrived to Morocco as students, as mentioned previously, which means that they planned to settle in this country, at least for the duration of their studies.

The utilitarian objects highlight that mobility comes with hardships. Migrants prepare for the worst and bring with them their documents, their diplomas, their address books, as well as their telephones, in order to be ready to live in a new country and possibly build a future there. The fact that some were able to bring more items than others could be explained by the trajectories that they took. The main function of utilitarian objects is to help migrants during their migration

journey. Moreover, as seen with the case of the telephone, utilitarian objects can also have a double function and be used as an affective item.

Products du pays: taste of home

Transitional objects are reminders and connectors to one's family and origins.[216] Some of the sub-Saharan migrants and refugees I interviewed brought with them culinary goods, as well as modern African *pagne*, the traditional African fabric. Indeed, they bring with them products such as peanut paste[217], gambo leaves[218], Guinea grains, Hibiscus flower, bissap, and spices. Diane, for example, brought gambo leaves and peanut paste *du pays.* She said:

> I came here to Morocco, I don't know anyone. I only knew the person who did my enrollment with the school, but I didn't know how it works here. So, I have to prepare myself to have a minimum of objects to meet my needs.[219] (Diane, female, 26, Central Africa, refugee, student)

By bringing familiar tastes with her, Diane was preparing herself for the unknown. Since she had no idea what to expect in and from Morocco, she decided to bring a product that would make her feel a little bit more at home in a foreign country. In this case, the food could also be considered as a utilitarian object since it helps Diane to adjust slowly to her new environment.

Echoing Diane's position, Tome, from Central Africa, also brought food *du pays* (peanut paste, gambo leaves, and dried fruits) to Morocco because he wasn't familiar and accustomed to Moroccan food. So he felt like he had to eat the food he brought with him while getting used to

---

[216] Marschall, *op. cit.,* 8.
[217] Pates d'arachide.
[218] Feuilles de gambo.
[219] Taken from my interview with Diane.

the culinary taste of his country of reception. Among the few things Noah had with him was an herb used for cooking (Image 6).

Image 6: Noah's cooking herb

Ever since he left his country in 2012, Noah has been very careful when using it. He would use it on special occasions or when he really missed his family and his previous environment. Cooking with it procures him with a sense of home and connects him to his country and his family. Therefore, this herb's functions are to give Noah a taste of home, and to provide him with an emotional and affective bond. It is once again a testament to the reproduction and legitimation of ideas and habits in a displacement context.

Ruba Salih argues that a major aspect of transnational practices is "the extent to which they enable migrants to rely on two countries to construct their social personhood by distributing not only economic but also symbolic resources."[220] Migrants, like Diane, Tome and Noah, try to recreate a taste of their countries of origin by using the goods they brought. This helps them

---

[220] Ruba Salih, "Moroccan Migrant Women: Transnationalism, Nation-States and Gender," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 27, no. 4 (October 2001): 666.

construct a space where they can establish a continuity in their identity in a foreign country. In fact, they try to connect to their homes, which in this case is understood as a physical space and a symbolic one.[221]

All in all, migrants use transitional objects to help them transition from one country to another by offering them a sense of security and comfort. They generate a feeling of continuity in a place that disrupts their identity. By analyzing the transitional objects of my sample, there are two conclusions that can be drawn. First, transitional objects can have more than just one function. They can carry sentimental and emotional meanings, as well as a religious and a utilitarian significance. Second, the nature of the objects that were carried shows that the decision to migrate did not take place overnight, even for those who have a refugee status. Although the migrants' journeys were very diverse, the reasons behind the objects they chose to bring with them, and the symbolisms and meanings they represent, demonstrate that their decision was planned long before they left their countries and homes for the unfamiliar and the unknown. In the following chapter, I explore how my subject-participants maintain transnational links with their countries of origin through their interactions with their transitional objects as well as their feelings of 'home', that is where and how they feel home.

---

[221] Ibid., 666-667.

Chapter 5: Sense of 'home': between transitional objects and being welcome

In this chapter, I examine how my subject-participants use transitional objects to maintain transnational links with their countries of origin and create a sense of home. To do so, I draw inspiration from Catherine Therrien's concept of 'home' to demonstrate that the feeling of 'home' is closely linked, but not limited, to that of feeling welcomed and accepted in the country of reception.

What is 'home'?

In studying the trajectories of mixed couples in Morocco, Therrien argues for the use of the concept of 'home', instead of botanic metaphors such as, being rooted and uprooted, which convey a sense of anchoring to the ground. She presents home as attachment poles rather than an attachment to roots and a geographical space. Since mobility leads to an identity reconfiguration, identity becomes deterritorialized.[222] Home is thus linked to an attachment towards people, memories, and future plans.[223] Another characteristic of Therrien's home is its plurality. The migrants, in her study, had multiple attachment poles in several places. Indeed, thanks to their privileged status, these migrants were able to maintain heavy physical and technological ties with their countries of origin, while establishing a new home in their country of reception.[224]

Catherine Therrien conceptualizes the 'home' as an imaginary center that reflects the home of one's childhood and the home of one's adulthood. While the former raises the individual and lets him or her go, the latter is slowly constructed by the individual. Since the second home is

---

[222] Catherine Therrien, "Des repères à la construction d'un chez-soi : Trajectoires de mixité conjugale au Maroc" (Ph.D., Université de Montréal, 2009), 263. https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/55646043.pdf.
[223] Ibid.
[224] Ibid., 264.

acquired voluntarily, not imposed, it denotes the possibility of choice.[225] In fact, these two homes are inseparable; they create an imaginary center that allows migrants to carry their references with them, while constructing new ones.[226] In other words, the concept of home conveys a sense of attachment and continuity in the construction of the self, rather than a fragmentation or an uprooting.[227]

Etsuko Kinefuchi argues that 'home' cannot be separated from migrant identity formation. People who migrate because of wars, poverty and climate change, among other factors, witness a strong need to find a "home space and cultural belonging." Home space could be understood as more than just a geographical space; it also has a spiritual aspect.[228] It refers to "not only national, cultural and social belongings, but also a sense of self, of one's identity, which corresponds to various conceptualizations of home."[229] Consequently, how people perceive, construct, and experience home produces an imagination and expectation of past, present, and future versions of themselves.

It is also the daily struggle of creating a home in a mobile and fragmented world, which implies the existence of a 'not home', that is the world that is unfamiliar, unknown, and strange.[230] For a migrant, this 'not home' is associated with a society whose rules and cultural references are different from the ones he is accustomed to. This implies that he needs to make an effort to adapt to this new model, which is not an easy task.[231] Moreover, home is the result of the interactions of

---

[225] Therrien, *op. cit.*, 23.
[226] Ibid., 271-272.
[227] Ibid., 21.
[228] Etsuko Kinefuchi, "Finding Home in Migration: Montagnard Refugees and Post-Migration Identity," *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication* 3, no. 3 (August 2010): 230.
[229] Ibid., 231 ; Nadje Al-Ali and Khalid Koser, "Transnationalism, International Migration and Home," in *New Approaches to Migration?: Transnational Communities and the Transformation of Hom*, ed. Nadje Al-Ali and Khalid Koser (London: Routledge, 2002), 7.
[230] Kinefuchi, *op. cit.*, 231.
[231] Therrien, *op. cit.*, 257.

people's relationships. It is not fixed or confined to a place; it is the outcome of people's practices, social relations, and material culture.[232]

Where is 'home' ?

Transnational scholars argue that technological advancements and social media, as means of communication, allowed transnationalism to exist and to grow outside of a physical world.[233] However, sub-Saharan migrants cannot always afford or know how to use this new technology.[234] Because of the high costs of physically travelling to their countries of origin, their legal statuses (refugees, irregular migrants), and their social and financial situation in their countries of reception[235], transitional objects, which include telephones, are the only kind of means available and relatively affordable to sub-Saharan migrants to maintain transnational links.

For the migrants I interviewed, it was not always easy for them to understand what I was referring to when I asked about their representations of 'home'. While for some 'home' is without question *le pays*, for others 'home' is where they are free, welcome and respected. There are also the migrants who understand 'home' as an 'imaginary center'.[236] For sub-Saharan migrants, their sense of 'home' is closely linked their past (home country, family, familiar landmarks) and to their feeling of acceptance in their host country.

---

[232] Alison Blunt and Ann Varley, "Geographies of Home," *Cultural Geographies* 11, no. 1 (2004): 3.
[233] Inka Stock, "Transnational Social Fields in Forced Immobility: Relations of Young Sub-Saharan African Migrants in Morocco with Their Families and Friends," *Identities* 23, no. 4 (July 3, 2016): 5.
[234] Ibid., 6.
[235] As Stock highlights in her article, the sub-Saharan migrants she interviewed could not contact their families because they lacked the know-how and the literacy necessary to use the new communication technologies, Others refrained from contacting their families because they lacked privacy to talk. There is also the need of these migrants to maintain a certain image, that of a "socially upwardly mobile individual" while relying on the financial help from home. All these are reasons that can prevent migrants from maintaining transnational ties with their countries of origin.
[236] Ibid., 271.

Home as an imaginary center: I am also home in Morocco

Sandi[237], a refugee from Central Africa, finds a sense of 'home' in both Central Africa and Morocco. Central Africa, as her *pays*, is where she grew up and where her family and friends are. It is her home. She also considers Morocco to be her 'home' because the country welcomed her. "I was welcomed here, so it is home."[238] Now, she is used to Morocco where she feels at ease and free. Although she misses her family sometimes, she remembers that she would not be enjoying as much freedom *au pays* as she is now. To feel closer to her family and her *pays*, she talks to them through Whatsapp or on the phone once or twice a week, looks at her family photos, and cooks food *du pays*.

> "Food *du pays*, when I eat it, I am not in Morocco, I am *au pays*."[239] (Sandi, female, 24, Central African, refugee, student)

For Sandi, her transitional objects (phone, photos, food) allow her to maintain a link with her childhood home, one that raised her and made her a social being; while, at the same time, constructing a new home.[240]

The example of William, a student from Congo, echoes Sandi's experience when it comes to feeling at home in Congo and in Morocco. For him, home is where he has everything and he does not need to do anything. In his country of origin, he has people who cook for him, clean his space, and do his laundry; chores that he has to do by himself in Morocco. Yet, he still feels at home in Morocco because he has spent a few years there and he got used to it. He also has Moroccan friends with whom he gets along. So he feels at home: "It is my second home." Although

---

[237] This is a pseudonym. All the subject-participants' names that will appear in this chapter are pseudonyms.

[238] Translation of "on m'a accueilli ici, c'est chez moi." Taken from my notes since Sandi refused to be recorded.

[239] Translation of « la nourriture du pays, quand je mange ça, je ne suis pas au Maroc, je suis au pays ». Taken from my notes.

[240] Therrien, op. cit., 271-272.

he misses the ambiance of the pays (going out, drinking and dancing), he adapts to the culture and social codes of Morocco and uses his transitional objects (rosary ring, telephone, music) to hold on to *his* cultural references. Indeed, migration leads to a reshaping and reaffirmation of one's identity. The contact with other cultures enriches the person but also makes him or her question the 'normal' way of doing things.[241] So, the paradox of migration is to become someone else while remaining true to the original self.[242] Therefore, regardless of all the cultural and social differences, William is able to call Morocco his home because he feels welcomed and accepted by his Moroccan friends and classmates, as well as by the people surrounding him in his everyday life.

Noah, a South Sudanese refugee, understands 'home' as a place where he is at ease and free, and where his family is, including his uncles, aunts, and cousins. In Morocco, Noah found a new family in the people he lives and associates with. He says:

> The contacts I have here in Morocco, it is these people who are now my family. It is with them that I hang out. It is with them that I share my problems, and we share ideas to find solutions. This counts too. I have my biological family that I do not find here in this territory, so those who stand by me are my family too. (Noah, male, 33, South Sudan, refugee)

And regarding the link he creates between his transitional objects and his home, Noah discloses that having his objects always with him, generates a sense home because he feels that his parents are always there with him. He says:

> By having these small things with me at all times, I feel home. Because these are things that my mother offered me, and things that my father offered me. So having things from both parents, *both parents*, it reminds me of the old souvenirs. It is really important for me. Even if sometimes I have nothing to eat,

---

[241] Malkki, "Refugees and Exile: From 'Refugee Studies' to the National Order of Things," 508–509.
[242] Therrien, *op. cit.*, 259.

> I look at these objects and I reminisce, and it automatically makes me sleep. (Noah, male, 33, South Sudan, refugee)

He considers Morocco to be his home because:

> I can walk freely. I can go to a café, and have coffee. I have Moroccan friends, right, I have never had a problem here in Morocco. So that's that. Home is where family is, and in Morocco, I have found another family. (Noah, male, 33, South Sudan, refugee)

Through these three excerpts from Noah's interview, we can see that his sense of home is deterritorialized and plural. Indeed, his attachment is not to place, but to moving and plural attachment poles.[243] It is linked to the people and to the experiences that helped make him.[244] Besides, he uses his transitional objects to find strength and comfort, and to connect to his home, i.e. his family. The fact that he considers his friends (sub-Saharan and Moroccan) in Morocco to be his family, and thus his home, shows that 'home' is not necessarily linked to a place or to blood ties. As such, a movement is allowed to take place and home becomes mobile.[245]

By leaving their countries of origin, Noah, William and Sandi opened themselves up to meeting the unknown and discovering new ways of life. In doing so, they allowed a continuity in their identity construction, which was boosted by the fact that their attachment was not towards a place, but towards people and feelings (freedom).[246]

Like the migrants in mixed couples interviewed by Therrien, Sandi, William and Noah have an affective, deterritorialized and plural sense of home.[247] First, their transitional objects help them with nostalgia and the maintenance of transnational links with their countries of origin, where

---

[243] Therrien, *op. cit.*, 261.
[244] Ibid., 266.
[245] Ibid., 270.
[246] Ibid. ; Milligan, "Displacement and Identity Discontinuity," 382.
[247] Therrien, *op. cit.*, 262-266.

they were socialized and where they received their cultural references.[248] Second, because their conception of home is deterritorialized and attached to people and feelings, they are able to construct a second home in their country of reception.[249] As a voluntary endeavor[250], the creation of an adulthood home is heavily related to being welcomed (or not) and even integrated (or not). Indeed, all three examples (Sandi, William, and Noah) felt at ease, accepted and welcomed in Morocco because they had friends and people who support them during the good and the bad days.

Home is where I am free, welcome, and accepted – so it's not Morocco!

For Florent, refugee from Cameroon, and Tome, migrant from Central Africa, 'home' refers to "where I am free." Tome, for instance, said that home is a place where he is free to do as he pleases. It is a place where he is responsible for himself and free to do what he wants. Florent shares this point of view but in a much broader sense. He believes that 'home' is a place where he is free to circulate, he is treated with respect, and more importantly accepted. He gave me the example of a violent interaction of his with a Moroccan that dates back a few years.

As he recalls, he was walking down the street when a Moroccan, who might have been on drugs, started insulting him and spat on him. Through this whole 'interaction', Florent did not say a word, and just went on his way. All of a sudden, he heard rapid footsteps behind him. When he turned around, he saw that same man coming at him with a knife and aiming for his neck. As a reflex, Florent put his hand between him and the knife. The result was a deep three-centimeter scar on the bottom of his palm. At that moment, after feeling not only unwelcomed but also threatened, Florent decided to react: he destabilized the guy through a punch, picked up his attacker's knife

---

[248] Ibid., 271,
[249] Ibid., 263.
[250] Ibid., 23.

and carved a letter 'E' (Florent's last name's initial) on the back of his attacker to teach him a lesson he would always remember.

It was not until Florent reacted that the bystanders watching the scene started shouting and getting ready to attack him. When the police arrived, they were going to take both men to the police station. However, thanks to the testimony of an old man who owns a store on the street where the incident happened, the police decided to let Florent go for self-defense. For him, "how do you want me to feel at 'home' in a country that does not accept me and where I am not free to walk around in all carelessness?"[251] Although he admits that he witnessed a real change through his 12 years in Morocco, he still cannot feel at 'home' in this country.

Florent's conception of home is also deterritorialized. His main pole of attraction is his need to feel safe, comfortable, and free. From his account, we can see that he is certain that Morocco is not a home for him. It is a brutal, strange and unwelcoming environment with a society that values different cultural references. Indeed, for Florent, Morocco, as a 'not home', represents a society whose rules and references are different from his. Not only are they different, but they are violent towards his person and anyone like him.[252] And because creation and feeling of home depends on the interactions of people's relationships, a bad interaction could lead to a rejection of Morocco as an adulthood home. Understandably, the implied voluntary nature in the construction of an adulthood home offers a choice to the migrant; the choice of building a new home, which he or she can refuse.[253] So, Florent, with his deterritorialized sense of home, was ready to create a second home in Morocco. However, he did not do so because he could not find the right conditions

---

[251] Translation of « comment veux-tu que je me sente chez moi dans un pays qui ne m'accepte pas et où je ne peux pas sortir et marcher sans souci ? », from Florent's interview.
[252] Kinefuchi, *op. cit.*, 231.
[253] Therrien, op. cit., 23.

for him to feel at home. As a matter of fact, he was a victim of attacks by Moroccans and subject to their demeaning looks. Therefore, he cannot feel at home if he is not even accepted in the public space.

For Matisse as well, a migrant from Congo, 'home' is not Morocco because he does not feel welcome and is often subjected to verbal abuse. He considers Morocco as a temporary stop, where he has been for three years. For the time being, he is not considering staying here permanently.

Me: do you consider Morocco as your 'home'?

Matisse: Honestly, no. I will give you a lot of reasons why. Honestly, no. First, I cannot talk to Moroccans peacefully. Most of them speak their language, which is something I don't know. So it is a barrier. Second, civilization. It is very rare to see Moroccans, like you. Very rare. If I am mistaken, you need to stop me because a lot of Moroccans when they meet an African like them, and who has a different skin color, meaning black, they leave. Even sometimes when they talk to you badly, you know it… the upside is that we don't know what you're saying. They critique you even if you have nothing in common, you don't even know each other. The advantage is that we don't hear you. We know you are talking badly, but I don't understand. I can even smile and leave, it will not affect me because I don't understand. So how will I feel at home in a country where I am not accepted… it is very rare to find nice Moroccans. And that is everywhere, even in the labor market, there is always a distinction (between Moroccans and sub-Saharan Africans). So it is not easy to consider Morocco as my home… All that I like in Morocco is maybe the peace. Aside from that, the behaviors: zero.

Me: do you plan on staying in Morocco or do you want to go to Europe?

Matisse: Since I already don't consider Morocco as my home, I cannot stay! Unless the mentalities change, there might be a possibility to stay, why not, but from what I see now, I don't think so.[254] (Matisse, male, 30, DRC, migrant)

Just like Florent's case, Matisse's highlights the unwelcoming environment of the Moroccan society towards sub-Saharan migrants. As someone who embarked on a migratory journey to seek adventure and discover the world, Matisse's sense of home is also deterritorialized and plural. Yet, because home is the result of interactions among people's relationships and practices, the process of constructing a second home gets interrupted and does not happen.

While some migrants have tried and failed to create this second home in Morocco, others have not even attempted to create it due to their migration plans. They were either transit migrants who never know when they would have to leave, or students planning on going back to their countries after getting their degrees. Either way, they considered Morocco to be a temporary destination. Both Diane, a Central African refugee, and Isaac, a South Sudanese refugee, have a very territorialized conception of home. For them, home is without question their country of origin.

Home means my country, my house. It is where I used to live *au pays*. Because where I am right now, I am not home. So home is my country […] Sometimes, I try to pretend that (in Morocco) I am home, but it is very difficult, I cannot do it. I don't speak the language, I make efforts to meet new people and have friends and all, but that doesn't happen. And that's what makes life difficult. It is like a barrier to feel at home. But if I ever have that chance, maybe I can feel at home. It will be better since now the conditions are very hard for leaving. I am here, I wait, I don't know when. All I want is to feel at ease, just like home.[255] (Diane, female, 26, Central African, refugee, student)

---

[254] Excerpt from Matisse's interview, translated from French.
[255] Excerpt from Diane's interview, translated from French.

Diane's account shows that her conception of home is her *pays*. However, she does admit to trying to create an adulthood home and a willingness to accept unfamiliarity. Unfortunately, the Moroccan social references and the Moroccan language prove to be a strong hindrance to her integration. As a result, she feels like an outsider who can only be comfortable in her childhood home, which means in a place surrounded by social references she is familiar with and comfortable navigating. Diane tried to nurture a continuity in her identity construction, but it was disrupted for a second time because of a lack of integration. The first disruption in identity being her displacement from her *pays*. What is more, since she feels stranded in a country that is not her home and without any clear view of the future, her transitional objects help her maintain links of attachment to her family and her past, and strengthen her belief that home is *le pays*. Indeed, when she interacts with her objects (Bible, photos), she is taken back to her poles of attachments where she feels welcomed and at home.

For Isaac, home is his country of origin, not Morocco nor any place else. He understands it as a territorial space, and specifically connects it to his place of birth.

> Here, I have to finish my studies as fast as possible to return home and help my family. This is what I think about. So home is my country, my family, my neighborhood. You know, back there, with my mother and my younger brother, we would always butt heads. It used to annoy me so much. But now, I really miss it. […] home is related to where I was born, where I am free, comfortable. In Morocco, it is not the case. Morocco is my neighbor's home; it's close, but it's not home.[256] (Isaac, male, 26, South Sudan, refugee, student)

Isaac's migratory project is to return home after his studies to help his family. His migration journey had a specific purpose: get a degree and go back home. Besides, since the construction of

---

[256] Excerpt from Isaac's interview, translated from Arabic.

the adulthood home is voluntary, Isaac does not seem interested in such an endeavor since his goal is to go back to South Sudan. As a result, Isaac's conception of home is only his childhood home.

As the cases of Diane and Isaac indicate, the construction of the second home (the adulthood one) cannot be attained if the migrant has a clear plan of going back to his or her country. As a result, the construction of home stops at the first step, which is the childhood home that carries the familiar and the 'normal' social references. The interruption of the second home's construction also takes place when integration in the society of reception is difficult, thus reinforcing the outsider feeling within the migrant.

Bringing nuance to the concept of 'home'

Catherine Therrien's concept of 'home' emerged out of a specific context and theoretical framework, which aimed at studying migrants from the Global North who are in a mixed couple in Morocco. Since these migrants are part of a mixed couple, this means that they are settled in Morocco where they have spouses, most of the time children, and a family support system around them. They also have active professional, economic, and social lives. Because they didn't really have experiences of racism and discrimination, and were instead welcomed by the society, they were able to feel at home. By creating affective ties, finding jobs, and being quite well integrated in the Moroccan society, they were at home in both their countries of origin and reception. This is crucial because it shows that they are not alone in their country of reception. If we take this concept and place it in a new and different context and theoretical framework, i.e. sub-Saharan migrants in Morocco, an important nuance needs to be brought to it.

The migrants I interviewed, however, are from sub-Saharan Africa, and have to deal with instances of racism and discrimination on a daily basis, on top of being robbed, harassed and

sometimes even violently attacked. Consequently, the majority of them does not feel at home in Morocco. They feel at home mainly in their countries of origin, or in places where they are free and accepted. Their transitional objects help them maintain transnational ties with their countries of origin and provide them with the emotional support to live in a society where they do not feel at home. For the few migrants who feel at home in Morocco, they use their transitional objects to keep transnational links, but also to help guide them in the construction of a second home. This means that the feeling of home is clearly connected to that of being welcomed and integrated in the society of reception.

The migrants Therrien interviewed and the ones I interviewed both maintained transnational links with their countries of origin. Yet, both had very different experiences regarding the creation of a second home in Morocco. While Therrien's interviewees could easily feel at home thanks to the welcoming they received and the affective ties they created, the majority of my interviewees struggle to create this sense of home because they do not feel welcomed and accepted. However, three of my subject-participants shared that they considered Morocco as their home. The question that arises then is: if sub-Saharan migrants face discrimination and racism constantly in Morocco, why do some of these migrants feel at home in Morocco while others do not? On top of feeling and being accepted, there are also factors that impact the decision to construct a second home, such as the migration project of the migrant and the efforts they are willing to make to feel at home and be part of the Moroccan society.

Concluding thoughts

This research aimed at studying the objects that sub-Saharan migrants brought with them when they left their countries, as a way of understanding their migratory trajectories, their sense of belonging and their sense of home. I argued that transitional objects allow sub-Saharan migrants to preserve transnational links with their countries of origin, thus ensuring a continuity in the construction of their identity throughout their migratory experience. In doing so, they can remember and connect to their past, find strength and comfort in the present, and create and maintain (or not) a sense of home away from their countries of origin.

In chapter 3, I have shown that migration is attributed to more than just one driver or factor. The motivation of an individual to migrate includes a combination of economic, political, social and psychological variables. Moreover, force and voluntary elements are also added to the mixture regarding the decision to migrate. Very often, migrants experience their migration journey in several stages, which is known as 'fragmented journeys'. They cross international borders and remain in a country for an indefinite period of time, until they get the opportunity to move closer to their final destination. Thus, mixed migration highlights the fluidity and complexity of motivations and trajectories for migration. As a result, during their journeys, people flow through different categories of migrants, making it very difficult to determine who is a refugee and who is a migrant.

In chapter 4, I argued that migrants use transitional objects to help them transition from one country to another by offering them a sense of security and comfort. They also help them maintain transnational links with their families and countries of origin, which generates a feeling of continuity in a place that disrupts their identity. By analyzing the transitional objects of my

sample, there are two conclusions that can be drawn. First, transitional objects can have more than just one function. They can carry sentimental and emotional meanings, as well as a religious and a utilitarian significance. Second, the nature of the objects that were carried shows that the decision to migrate did not take place overnight, even for those who have a refugee status. Although the migrants' journeys were very diverse, the reasons behind the objects they chose to bring with them, and the symbolisms and meanings they represent, demonstrate that their decision was planned long before they left their countries and homes for the unfamiliar and the unknown.

In chapter 5, I used Therrien's concept of home to demonstrated that, although migrants maintain transnational links with their countries of origin through the use of transitional objects, some were able to feel at home in Morocco, others could not. In doing so, I brought a nuance to this concept by arguing that, if put in a different empirical field, the concept of home depends largely, but not solely, on the acceptance and the welcoming of migrants in their country of reception.

To gain all this information, I conducted fieldwork during a very limited amount of time where I did not have full nor constant access to my subject-participants, which constitutes one of the main limits this thesis. However, this subject is worth studying even further, since with the few interviews I conducted, I only scratched the surface and was able to find some fascinating findings. An avenue in which this topic could be led is by exploring the opening question of the last chapter, i.e. why do some of these migrants feel at home in Morocco while others do not? It could also be interesting to compare sub-Saharan migrants and refugees to the Syrian and Yemeni refugees who come and settle in Morocco, in a context of mixed migration.

While studying the sub-Saharan migrants' transitional objects, transnational links and sense of home, we can see that these objects embody the strong love shared for family, friends,

and places considered to be homes. The words of photographer Jim Lommasson perfectly summarize what is at the heart of this endeavor and reveal its unspoken side: "the more powerful understanding is the realization of what was left behind. What was left behind was everything else; homes, friends, family, school, careers, culture and history."[257]

---

[257] "What We Carried: Fragments & Memories From Iraq & Syria", Arabamericanmuseum.Org, http://arabamericanmuseum.org/wwc.

Bibliography

Aboulfaraj, Zainab, and Mehdi Mahmoud. "Les réfugiés peuvent à nouveau obtenir des titres de séjour au Maroc." *Telquel.ma*. Last modified December 12, 2018. Accessed April 13, 2019. /2018/12/12/les-refugies-peuvent-a-nouveau-obtenir-des-titres-de-sejour-au-maroc_1621607/?utm_source=tq&utm_medium=normal_post?fbrefresh=9.

Ackerly, Brooke, and Jacqui True. *Doing Feminist Research in Political and Social Science*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.

Al-Ali, Nadje, and Khalid Koser. "Transnationalism, International Migration and Home." In *New Approaches to Migration?: Transnational Communities and the Transformation of Hom*, edited by Nadje Al-Ali and Khalid Koser, 1–14. London: Routledge, 2002.

Alonso Rey, Natalia. "Memory in Motion: Photographs in Suitcases." In *Memories on the Move: Experiencing Mobility, Rethinking the Past*, edited by Monika Palmberger and Jelena Tosic, 101–126. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

Bachelet, Sébastien. "'Wasting *Mbeng* ': Adventure and Trust Amongst Sub-Saharan Migrants in Morocco." *Ethnos* (October 30, 2018): 1–18.

Bartram, David. "Forced Migration and 'Rejected Alternatives': A Conceptual Refinement." *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies* 13, no. 4 (October 2, 2015): 439–456.

Bell, Taryn, and Penny Spikins. "The Object of My Affection: Attachment Security and Material Culture." *Time and Mind* 11, no. 1 (2018): 23–39.

Berriane, Mohamed, Mohammed Aderghal, Mhamed Idrissi Janati, and Johara Berriane. "Immigration to Fes: The Meaning of the New Dynamics of the Euro-African Migratory System." *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 34, no. 5 (October 2013): 486–502.

Berriane, Mohamed, Hein De Haas, and Katharina Natter. "Introduction: Revisiting Moroccan Migrations." *The Journal of North African Studies* 20, no. 4 (2015): 503–521.

Betts, Alexander. "SURVIVAL MIGRATION." In *Survival Migration: Failed Governance and the Crisis of Displacement*, 10–28. London: Cornell University Press, 2013. https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7591/j.ctt32b5cd.6.

Blunt, Alison, and Ann Varley. "Geographies of Home." *Cultural Geographies* 11, no. 1 (2004): 3–6.

Collyer, Michael. "Stranded Migrants and the Fragmented Journey." *Journal of Refugee Studies* 23, no. 3 (2010): 273–293.

Crang, Philip, Claire Dwyer, and Peter Jackson. "Transnationalism and the Spaces of Commodity Culture." *Progress in Human Geography* 27, no. 4 (August 2003): 438–456.

Dankwah, Kwaku Opoku, and Marko Valenta. "Mixed Fragmented Migrations of Iraqis and Challenges to Iraqi Refugee Integration: The Jordanian Experience." *Middle Eastern Studies* 54, no. 2 (2017): 1–17.

Dant, Tim. *Materiality and Society*. New York: Open University Press, 2005.

Dauvin, Pascal, and Johanna Siméant. "Travailler sur l'humanitaire par entretiens — Retour sur une « méthode »." *Mots* 65, no. 1 (2001): 117–133.

Eastmond, Marita. "Stories as Lived Experience: Narratives in Forced Migration Research."

    Journal of Refugee Studies 20, no. 2 (June 1, 2007): 248–264.

Faist, Thomas, Margit Fauser, and Eveline Reisenauer. *Transnational Migration*. Cambridge:

    Polity Press, 2013.

Frederiks, Martha. "Religion, Migration, and Identity. A Conceptual and Theoretical

    Exploration." In *Religion, Migration and Identity: Methodological and Theological*

    Explorations, edited by Martha Frederiks and Dorottya Nagy, 9–29. Boston: Brill, 2016.

    https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1163/j.ctt1w8h267.5.

Freedman, Jane. "Analysing the Gendered Insecurities of Migration: A Case Study of Female

    Sub-Saharan African Migrants in Morocco." *International Feminist Journal of Politics*

    14, no. 1 (2012): 36–55.

Ganguly, Keya. "Migrant Identities: Personal Memory and the Construction of Selfhood."

    Cultural Studies 6, no. 1 (January 1992): 27–50.

Kasraoui, Safaa. "Morocco Establishes Itself as Destination for Refugees and Migrants: UNHCR

    Official." *Morocco World News*, October 28, 2017. Accessed April 13, 2019.

    https://www.moroccoworldnews.com/2017/10/232366/morocco-migration-unhcr-

    refugees/.

Khrouz, Nadia. "Quelle Politique d'immigration ? La Problématique de l'accès Au Marché Du

    Travail." In *Le Maroc Au Présent : D'une Époque à l'autre, Une Société En Mutation*,

    edited by Assia Boutaleb, Baudouin Dupret, Jean-Noël Ferrié, and Zakaria Rhani, 975–

983. Description du Maghreb. Maroc: Centre Jacques-Berque, 2016. Accessed April 13, 2019. http://books.openedition.org/cjb/1147.

Kinefuchi, Etsuko. "Finding Home in Migration: Montagnard Refugees and Post-Migration Identity." *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication* 3, no. 3 (August 2010): 228–248.

van der Klaauw, Johannes. "Multi-Dimensional Migration Challenges in North Africa." *Forced Migration Review*, July 2007.

Koser, Khalid. "Refugees, Transnationalism and the State." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 33, no. 2 (March 2007): 233–254.

Kumin, Judith. "Le Défi de La Migration Mixte Par Voie Maritime." *Revue des Migrations Forcées*, March 2014.

Lahlou, Mehdi. *Morocco's Experience of Migration as a Sending, Transit and Receiving Country*. IAI Working Papers. Rome: Istituto Affari Internazionali, 2015.

Ligabue, Susanna. "Forced Migration and Refugees: Trauma Experience and Participatory Care." *Transactional Analysis Journal* 48, no. 2 (April 3, 2018): 166–180.

Malkki, Liisa. "Refugees and Exile: From 'Refugee Studies' to the National Order of Things." *Annual Review of Anthropology*, no. 24. Annual Reviews (1995): 495–523.

Marschall, Sabine, ed. *Memory, Migration and Travel*. First edition. Contemporary geographies of leisure, tourism and mobility. Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon ; New York, NY: Routledge, 2018.

Maxwell, Joseph, A. *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach*. Third. London:
SAGE Publications, 2013.

Milligan, Melinda J. "Displacement and Identity Discontinuity: The Role of Nostalgia in
Establishing New Identity Categories." *Symbolic interaction* 26, no. 3 (2003): 381–403.

Natter, Katharina. "The Formation of Morocco's Policy Towards Irregular Migration (2000-
2007): Political Rationale and Policy Processes." *International Migration* 52, no. 5
(October 2014): 15–28.

———. "The Formation of Morocco's Policy Towards Irregular Migration (2000-2007):
Political Rationale and Policy Processes." *International Migration* 52, no. 5 (October
2014): 15–28.

Norman, Kelsey P. "Between Europe and Africa: Morocco as a Country of Immigration." *The
Journal of the Middle East and Africa* 7, no. 4 (October 2016): 421–439.

———. "Between Europe and Africa: Morocco as a Country of Immigration." *The Journal of
the Middle East and Africa* 7, no. 4 (October 2016): 421–439.

Ogata, Sadako. "Mixed Migration: Strategy for Refugees and Economic Migrants." *Harvard
International Review* 17, no. 2 (1995): 30–33.

OIM. "Migrations Mixtes et Protection Des Migrants En Afrique de l'Ouest." Organisation
Internationale pour les Migrations - Bureau régional pour l'Afrique de l'Ouest et du
Centre, N/A. Accessed May 6, 2019.
https://rodakar.iom.int/sites/default/files/MixedMigration_FR.pdf.

Parkin, David. "Mementoes as Transitional Objects in Human Displacement." *Journal of Material Culture* 4, no. 3 (1999): 303–320.

Pickerill, Emily. "Informal and Entrepreneurial Strategies among Sub-Saharan Migrants in Morocco." *The Journal of North African Studies* 16, no. 3 (September 2011): 395–413.

Rosi, Angela Li, and Alanna Ryan. *Refugee Protection and International Migration: Review of UNHCR's Role and Activities in Morocco*. Policy Development and Evaluation Service. UNHCR, 2010.

Salih, Ruba. "Moroccan Migrant Women: Transnationalism, Nation-States and Gender." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 27, no. 4 (October 2001): 655–671.

Schapendonk, Joris. "Stuck between the Desert and the Sea: The Immobility of Sub-Saharan African 'Transit Migrants' in Morocco." In *Rethinking Global Migration: Practices, Policies and Discourses in the European Neighbourhood*, edited by Helga Rittersberger-Tiliç, Aykan Erdemir, and Ayça Ergun, 129–143. Ankara: Zeplin IIetisim Hizmetleri Ltd, 2008.

Scheel, Stephan, and Philipp Ratfisch. "Refugee Protection Meets Migration Management: UNHCR as a Global Police of Populations." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 40, no. 6 (2014): 924–941.

Sow, Papa, Elina Marmer, and Jürgen Scheffran. "Between the Heat and the Hardships. Climate Change and Mixed Migration Flows in Morocco." *Migration and Development* 5, no. 2 (2015): 1–20.

Stock, Inka. "Transnational Social Fields in Forced Immobility: Relations of Young Sub-Saharan African Migrants in Morocco with Their Families and Friends." *Identities* 23, no. 4 (July 3, 2016): 407–421.

The UN Refugee Agency. "UNHCR Morocco." PowerPoint, UNHCR Rabat, March 2019.

Therrien, Catherine. "Des Repères à La Construction d'un Chez-Soi : Trajectoires de Mixité Conjugale Au Maroc." Ph.D., Université de Montréal, 2009. https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/55646043.pdf.

———. "Quand Politique Ou Éthique Oblige l'anthropologue à Se Taire : Deux Exemples de Censure Liés à Des Terrains Sensibles Dans Le Contexte Marocain." Rabat: Institut Universitaire de la Recherche Scientifique, 2019.

Thomas, Olivier. "Les Objets et La Condition de Migrant: Une Recherche Auprès Des Exilés à Cherbourg et Sur Les Côtes de La Manche." *Géographie et Cultures*, no. 91–92 (2014): 1–18.

Tilley, Christopher Y., Webb Keane, Susanne Kuchler, Michael Rowlands, and Patricia Spyer, eds. *Handbook of Material Culture*. London: SAGE Publications, 2006.

Turan, Zeynep. "Material Objects as Facilitating Environments: The Palestinian Diaspora." *Home Cultures* 7, no. 1 (2010): 43–56.

Van Hear, Nicholas, Oliver Bakewell, and Katy Long. "Push-Pull plus: Reconsidering the Drivers of Migration." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 44, no. 6 (April 26, 2018): 927–944.

Vullnetari, Julie. "Beyond 'Choice *or* Force': Roma Mobility in Albania and the Mixed

    Migration Paradigm." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 38, no. 8 (September

    2012): 1305–1321.

Williams, Nathalie E. "Mixed and Complex Mixed Migration during Armed Conflict:

    Multidimensional Empirical Evidence from Nepal." *International Journal of Sociology*

    45, no. 1 (January 2, 2015): 44–63.

Woodward, Ian. *Understanding Material Culture*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2007.

Woodward, Sophie. "Material Culture - Anthropology - Oxford Bibliographies."

    Oxfordbibliographies.Com,. Last modified 2013. Accessed May 7, 2019.

    http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199766567/obo-

    9780199766567-0085.xml.

"What Do Objects Do? A Material and Visual Culture Perspective. | Object Retrieval." Accessed

    February 18, 2019. https://www.ucl.ac.uk/museums-static/objectretrieval/node/266.

Appendix A

Summary Table of Subject-Participants

Pseudonym	Sex	Age	Country of origin	Legal Status	Year of arrival to Morocco
Boris	M	Early 50s	DRC	Refugee	2003-2004
Cedric	M	38	Cameroon	Migrant	2015
William	M	28	DRC	Student	2013
Diane	F	26	Central Africa	Refugee, Student	2010
Matisse	M	30	DRC	Migrant	2016
Noah	M	33	South Soudan	Refugee	2014
Jeremy	M	23	DRC	Asylum-Seeker	2015
Sandi	F	24	Central Africa	Refugee, Student	2017
Yann	M	25	Cameroon	Migrant	2018
Isaac	M	26	South Soudan	Refugee, Student	2012
Tome	M	22	Central Africain	Migrant, Student	2018
Florent	M	37	Cameroon	Refugee	2009
Pascal	M	30	Central Africa	Refugee	2017

Appendix B

Interview Guide

Informations Générales

Nom du participant	
Pseudonyme	
Date et Lieu de l'entretien	
Age	
Nationalité	
Année d'arrivée au Maroc	
Statut legal	
Emploi	
Contact	

Thèmes à aborder

Motivations pour quitter le pays d'origine

- Quand as-tu quitté ton pays?

- Pourquoi as-tu quitté ton pays?

- Avec qui as-tu quitté ton pays?

- As-tu un diplôme de ton pays d'origine?

Voyage vers le Maroc:

- Quand es-tu arrivé au Maroc?

- Est-ce que le Maroc était ta première destination?

- Comment es-tu arrivé au Maroc?

- Qui a financé le voyage?

- Qu'est-ce que tu as apporté avec toi lorsque tu as quitté ton pays? (Qu'as-tu emballé?)

A propos des objets (ou de leur absence):

- Pourquoi as-tu choisi cet/ces objet(s)?

- Pourquoi sont-ils importants pour toi?

    o Peux-tu me raconter l'histoire derrière le ou les objet(s)?

- Comment te sens-tu par rapport à cet/ces objet(s)?

- Où es cet objet actuellement (lieu précis)? Est-ce affiché ou caché?

    o Pourquoi?

- Quand interagis-tu avec l'objet (le regarder, le tenir, y penser, l'utiliser…)?

- Ta relation à l'objet a-t-elle changé avec le temps? (c'est-à-dire est-ce que ta perception

    de l'objet a changé par rapport au temps et à l'espace?)

- Y avait-il d'autres objets que tu voulais apporter mais que tu n'a pas pu? Lesquels ?

  Pourquoi n'était-il pas possible de les amener ?

- Si tu pouvais ramener autre chose, ce serait quoi ? Pourquoi ?

- Y a-t-il des objets que tu as apportés mais que tu n'as plus?

    o Si oui, pourquoi est-ce que tu ne les as plus?

A propos de l'idée de « la maison », du « chez soi» :

- Quelles sont les langues que tu parles ?

    o Quand est-ce que tu parles ces langues et avec qui ?

- Qu'est-ce que tu considères être «chez toi»?

- Quel lien fais-tu entre les entre ces objets et cette idée de « chez soi »?

- Que pensais-tu de ton pays d'origine avant de partir?

    o Comment était la vie là-bas avant la guerre / le conflit / l'exil/la situation

      politique, économique?

    o Comment vivais-tu cette situation ?

- Qu'en penses-tu maintenant que tu es au Maroc?

    o Est-ce que ça te manque ? Qu'est ce qui te manque ?

    o Que fais-tu pour te sentir plus proche de ton pays d'origine ?

    o As-tu des projets de retour ?

- Qu'est-ce qu'un jour typique pour toi (la routine)?

- Est-ce que tu cuisines? Si oui, Qu'est-ce que tu cuisines ?

- Est-ce que tu fréquentes des espaces religieux ?

- Est-ce que tu considères le Maroc comme ton "chez toi" ?

    o Pourquoi ou pourquoi pas?

Réseaux et circulation:

- As-tu encore de la famille / des amis dans ton pays d'origine?

    o Qui?

    o Pourquoi est-ce qu'ils sont restés?

    o Que pensent-ils de ta décision de quitter le pays ?

- Es-tu en contact avec eux?

    o Comment? Par quels moyens?

    o A quelle fréquence?

- Est-ce qu'ils t'ont déjà rendu visite?

- Leur as-tu déjà demandé de t'envoyer quelque chose?

    o Si oui, quoi? Pourquoi?

- Comment obtiens-tu des objets / produits provenant de ton pays d'origine au Maroc?

- Quels types de difficultés et de défis rencontres-tu lorsque tu essaies d'obtenir ces objets / produits?

Autre:

- As-tu quelque chose à ajouter ou à me demander?

- Est-ce que tu voudrais parler de / partager quelque chose que je n'ai pas mentionné ?

- Est-ce qu'on peut se revoir pour que tu me montres ces objets?

    o Si non, est-ce que tu peux les prendre en photo et me les envoyer?

- Est-ce que tu connais des réfugiés qui seraient d'accord pour me parler? Est-ce que tu peux leur donner mon contact ou me donner leur numéro ?