

Marital Relationships and Representations of Home: Multiplicity and Mobility as Key Elements in the Construction of Self-Identity

Lien conjugal et représentations du chez-soi : la multiplicité et la mobilité comme éléments de construction identitaire

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Résumé ❖ En explorant les différentes représentations du chez-soi des étrangers en couple mixte installés au Maroc, cet article poursuit l'objectif d'enrichir la réflexion sur la mouvance de l'identité contemporaine en répliquant aux métaphores du migrant et du nomade et ce, par une inversion métaphorique, celle du « home » (chez-soi). Cette métaphore, qui fait davantage écho à la construction identitaire des individus concernés par cette recherche, contribue à l'avancement d'une rupture épistémologique en introduisant l'idée d'attachement et de continuité dans les parcours de mobilité et de mixité. Cet article montrera en effet que le projet de construction de soi de ces individus n'est pas synonyme de déracinement, comme nous le dépeignent certaines métaphores postmodernes, mais qu'il réfère à des liens d'attachement mobiles et pluriels. Cet article montrera également que la multiplicité et la fluidité des représentations du chez-soi permettent à ces migrants en couple mixte de maintenir une continuité dans leur parcours de mobilité.

Abstract ❖ By exploring the different representations of home of foreign-born partners in mixed couples residing in Morocco, this article aims to enrich the reflection on contemporary identity by countering migrant and nomad metaphors through the that of «home». This metaphor, which corresponds more closely to the process of identity construction among the interviewees, contributes to an epistemological rupture by introducing the idea of attachment and continuity within the trajectories of mobility and mixedness. I will demonstrate that, for these individuals, the construction of self-identity does not entail being uprooted, as is often depicted in postmodern metaphors but instead refers to mobile and plural bonds of attachment. I will also show that the multiplicity and fluidity of these representations of home allow these migrants in mixed couples to maintain a sense of continuity despite their mobile trajectories.

Mots clés ❖ Mixité, identité, chez-soi, migration, Maroc.

Keywords ❖ Mixedness, identity, home, migration, Morocco.

*"I do not like the word 'roots,' and even less the image it evokes. Roots bury themselves in the ground; they keep the tree captive from birth and nourish it at the cost of a blackmail: 'You free yourself, you die.'
Unlike trees, roads do not emerge from the ground at random, scattered by seeds.
Like us, they have an origin."*

— Amin Maalouf, *Origins* (2004), Preface

One of the aims of the doctoral research¹ on which this article is based was to enrich reflection on the changing nature of contemporary identity by responding to the metaphors of the migrant and the nomad as propounded by certain authors (Bauman 1996; Chambers 1994; Fernandez 2002), and to do so by proposing a new metaphor that better suits the representations of the individuals involved in this research: that of home, evoked by the concept of “home”. This metaphorical inversion shows that, while anchored in a path of mobility, the self-building project of these migrants in mixed couples carries with it the idea of attachment and continuity. Indeed, one of the innovative elements of this research lies in the proposal to substitute the concept of “home” for that of roots, which makes it possible to go beyond the ideology of an identity- territory (rooted/ uprooted), while at the same time taking into account the fluidity of identity revealed in contemporary literature (Appadurai 1996; Bauman 2012; Meyer and Geschiere 2003). This article explores the different representations of home among mixed race foreigners living in Morocco, arguing that the narrative identity (Ricoeur 1993) of these individuals is linked to a central pillar, the “home”, which refers neither to the idea of fragmentation nor uprooting, but to that of attachment and continuity.

The first part of this article, which briefly sets out the theoretical framework, will show that the concept of “home” contributes to an epistemological breakthrough by introducing the idea of attachment and continuity into these paths of mobility and mixedness. A brief discussion of the methodology will highlight the research's interest in the personal aspect of identity, and the choice of a narrative approach to data collection. The analysis will focus on two specific narrative aspects of the identity construction of foreigners in mixed marriages: migratory paths and representations of home. The first section will focus on the particularities of these migratory paths, while showing the importance of the transnational links maintained and forged by these migrants. The analysis of representations of home, the subject of the second section, will show that these links maintained and woven in several places contribute strongly to the reconfiguration of an affective, plural home, detached from any territorial anchorage, and that the desire for “elsewhere” that most of these migrants carried even before their amorous encounter, sheds light on both the migratory motives and the experiences and projects of these migrants.

From uprooting to home ports

The metaphors of the migrant and the nomad

Highlighting the mobility and shifting identities of today's world through the metaphor of the migrant has led some authors to draw a parallel between mobility and uprooting. According to Chambers (1994), for example, the migrant is the figure who best represents the movement of today's world. According to this author, we have all become “migrants” moving through a system too vast to be our own, beings in search of places to cross. Movement has not only become a way of being in the world, it is also associated with a sense of uprootedness. For Chambers, this feeling of living between several worlds, of no longer having roots, is the most apt metaphor for the postmodern condition. For Bauman (1996), if the modern activity of identity construction could be compared to a pilgrimage

(to an ordered, determined, predictable and secure path), the postmodern subject's quest for identity corresponds more to that of the loafer, the vagabond, the tourist or the gambler, for whom the experience of identity reflects a feeling of strangeness, instability, alienation, fragmentation, homelessness and uprooting.

To reflect on the question of identity, Fernandez (2002) proposes the metaphor of the nomad, which brings an important nuance: the nomad always travels with his home; he is always at home. His identity, his point of reference, is his home. A home that may move around, but which remains a secure place where he can recognize himself and find himself. While this metaphor is appealing for its reminder of the link to home (being at home), it has certain limitations. Although Fernandez underscores the complexity of contemporary identity by anchoring his metaphor in a nomadic/sedentary tension rather than establishing an irreversible break between these two conceptions of life - positing the sedentary as dreaming of elsewhere and the nomad as connected to a territory - this metaphor does not allow us to move beyond the idea of an identity-ground, a territorial anchoring, a rootedness.

While the metaphors of the migrant and the nomad help to illustrate the mobility that characterizes the contemporary world, their association with the idea of uprooting or territorial anchorage poses certain limitations for illustrating the journeys of the mixed-couple migrants we interviewed. In the light of our analysis of the narratives collected, the metaphor of "home" seems more appropriate to illuminate these journeys.

Putting "home" in the place of roots²

While botany offers many metaphors for those interested in the link between identity and migration³, these attribute to migration the idea of uprooting. In their book *Uprootings/Regroundings: Questions of Home and Migration*, Ahmed et al. they aptly challenge the presumption that associates mobility with uprooting and fixity with rootedness - "Being grounded is not necessarily about being fixed. Being mobile is not necessarily about being detached" (2003:1) - but their thinking remains trapped in botanical metaphors. If, as they rightly point out, movement does not necessarily imply non-attachment, any more than being sedentary implies a certainty of anchorage, why not free ourselves from the botanical metaphors that link to a soil-identity and a blood-identity?

Some authors have questioned the use of botanical metaphors to address the question of identity. Maalouf (1998), for example, suggests speaking of origin rather than roots to support his argument of the multiplicity of identities. Alonso (1994), for her part, points out that botanical metaphors have helped to associate identity and territory, suggesting that each nation is a great genealogical tree rooted in the soil that nourishes it. Friedman (2002) also warns against using the metaphor of roots, which, when juxtaposed with the nation, conjures up ideas of closure, essence, limit, frontier, territoriality, homogeneity and therefore exclusion. These various texts, as well as the data collected during the ethnographic fieldwork, inspired me to replace the metaphor of roots by that of home, in order to move away from representations that are tied to an identity-territory that leaves no room for multiplicity (critiqued by Maalouf 1998 and Varro 2008), or movement (Therrien 2009), or that of a blood-identity, which often refers to an essentialist imaginary (critiques by Alonso 1994 and Friedman 2002). Since the narratives collected spoke of mobile, multiple and deterritorialized ties of attachment, the concept of "home" gradually took hold.

"Home" as an imaginary center

Exploring Bachelard's (1957) poetics of space, we see that the image of home refers, in a phenomenology of the imagination, to our corner of the world, our first universe. For Fernandez (2002), Bachelard's house, which refers to the foundation of human psychic equilibrium and to the family universe, offers the sedentary lifestyle essential to the development of the human being, to the foundation of his or her foundations. It's from our place of origin that we forge our vision of the world. Home also refers to the concepts of cultural model (Schütz 2003) and cultural pattern (Lustig and Koester 2012; Samovar et al. 2010), that is to say, to that familiar universe of cultural references in which each of us has been socialized, which helps us to orientate ourselves in the social world, the lens through which we look at the world in order to interpret and interact with it⁴. For Hoffman (1999), the notion of “home” refers to an imaginary center that links two different homes; the initial one, our childhood home, which laid the foundations for our socialization, and the adult one, which is acquired through a voluntary act of possession (or construction, I'd add). If we link these different images, we can say that the concept of “home” refers not so much to the physical place(s) where we have lived (in the sense of “house”) but to “at home” as a socialized topos (“home”) which is, as Begag and Chaouite (1990) put it, much more than the walls of a foyer. The first home is the one where we grow up and then see ourselves leave. The second is the one we build little by little. The two homes are indissociable. They constitute the totality of being; home as a reference point and home as a trajectory, a world to be invented (Therrien 2009).

A meaning to the quest for self

The notion of post-modernity challenges the idea of coherence and continuity (Corin 1996). Some authors argue that the contemporary world (in its postmodern condition) is characterized by a decline in collective references and identities (Boisvert 1997; Corin *ibid.*; Taylor 1998). Grand theories no longer provide guidance. There is no longer a unitary history that conveys meaning, but an infinite number of references from which the individual in postmodern societies tinkers with his identity, inventing his own. Faced with this emptiness or overflow of meaning, faced with this movement of references, the individual is torn apart: identity is divided and fragmented (Corin *ibid.*). The concept of the “moral horizon”, which ran counter to the idea of a drift in postmodern identity, also guided the theoretical perspective. In contrast to contemporary texts that speak of collapse, drift and the loss of frames of reference, Taylor's *The Sources of the Self* (1996) emphasizes the notion of frame, which in his view forms the fabric of our existence. For him, identity is what situates us in the moral space (landscape). Our identity is the horizon within which we can take up a position, and it is in this sense that Taylor insists that it is absolutely impossible to do so without frames. We inevitably move through this space of questions. Identity plays an orientation role by providing reference points, the framework within which things make sense to us. For Taylor, the human being is always committed to a certain ideal (understood as a direction, as a project).

A metaphorical inversion

In contrast to the migrant metaphor, which represents the contemporary individual as a lost, fragmented and uprooted being, the concept of “home” and that of the moral horizon inspired me to question the *chez-soi* (“home”) as a possible thread of self-narratives. By inverting the leitmotiv of contemporary literature, which associates mobility and uprootedness, this concept of “home” contributes to the advancement of an epistemological break⁵ by introducing the idea of attachment and continuity into paths

of mobility and mixedness, but without sweeping aside the idea of movement and fluidity that links this research to certain postmodern approaches.

The importance of transnational ties in the reconfiguration of the space of home

It seems important to stress that the notion of transnationalism (Glick Shiller et al. 1995; Vertovec 2001) is also at the heart of this research. It is because ties of attachment are woven and maintained in several places that home takes on an affective configuration, plural and detached from a territorial anchoring. In an article, Le Gall (2002) points out that the analysis of migrant populations has been influenced by representations of space dependent on images of rupture. In these images, the world corresponded to a space fragmented into distinct territories. Migration was conceived as a linear process that automatically led to a break with the country of origin. The concept of transnationalism, defined as the weaving and maintenance of ties (networks) between the migrant's society of origin and the host society (Glick Schiller et al. 1995), has enabled researchers to approach migration in a different way. For Nina Glick Schiller's team (ibid.), immigrants can no longer be characterized as uprooted. Most are transmigrants, rooted in the host country, who maintain ties with their country of origin. Migrants construct a space that is no longer circumscribed to the simple territory and which, thanks to transnational links (familial, economic, symbolic), now transcend borders; this is a reconfiguration of space. Focusing on the different representations of home by foreigners in mixed couples, this research uncovers a contemporary example of this reconfiguration of the space of home.

Methodological landmarks

Faced with the observation that the old theoretical framework surrounding marital mixedness leaves too little room for the individual (Therrien and Le Gall 2012), this research took the decision to explore the personal aspect of identity by paying particular attention to self-narratives and placing the subject at the center of its analysis. The narratives of 33 Moroccan-foreign couples living in Morocco were collected using a narrative approach. I collected the narratives of 52 individuals: 31 foreigners who had been socialized in a country other than Morocco (25 women and 6 men) and 21 Moroccans⁶ born and socialized in Morocco (6 women and 15 men). The relative-to-relative recruitment method (from a first diversified core of contacts) enabled me to meet these couples in their place of residence most of the time. In order to diversify the sample, I met couples whose experience was diversified according to the nationality of the foreign partners (from 15 different nationalities), the number of years spent in the host country (between 3 and 56 years), the age of the individuals (from 27 to 69), their religious denomination (Muslims, Christians, atheists, Baha'is), the length of their married life (between 3 and 35 years), their living environment (6 Moroccan cities and 2 rural communities), their social status (married or not, separated, divorced, widowed), their family situation (with or without children) and their socioeconomic and socioprofessional background. Compared with the Moroccan population in general, it is clear that with the exception of a few individuals, the majority of research participants belonged to the middle or well-off social class - which corresponds to a relatively privileged background in the Moroccan context. It is important to note, however, that many Moroccans had grown up in a relatively modest environment - in some cases, within a rural, illiterate family - and that it was their path of mobility that enabled them to acquire intellectual and social capital and access a social class different from that of their milieu (Therrien 2014).

Migration trajectories

Voluntary, amorous migration linked to a desire for elsewhere

It's important to specify that this study focused on a particular kind of mixed marriage, i.e. Moroccans in couples with foreigners who had left their country of origin - immigration countries for the most part, or at least prosperous countries (Germany, France, USA, Canada, Spain, Austria, Russia, Japan, etc.) - to settle in Morocco. Contrary to studies that focus on Morocco as a country of emigration or transit, this research uncovers a much lesser-known facet of migratory trajectories: the migration of foreigners in mixed unions to Morocco.

The migratory experience of the foreigners concerned by this research can be described as “voluntary” migration, not economic migration. The suspicion of “white” or “grey”⁷ marriages, so prevalent in the French context for example, did not exist in the context of the marriages in this study, where the couples had deliberately chosen to settle in Morocco. It should also be noted that the migratory experiences discussed in this article are positively connoted in the Moroccan context. The link between my proposal to create a dynamic and contemporary theoretical framework that values the positive aspects of conjugal mix and the socio-political context of the migratory experiences I have studied, has been set out in a recent article (Therrien 2012).

24 of the 31 foreign participants in this study had moved to Morocco as a direct result of their love encounter and went there to settle down with their spouses. It is therefore also possible to describe these migrations (for the vast majority of foreigners in mixed couples) as “love” migrations, which is not insignificant.

My move to Morocco is totally linked to my love affair with Inès (François⁸, 27, Franco-American, married to Inès, Moroccan, 46, married for 5 years. Inès has a child from a first marriage).

No! I came here because I loved him. We started our home. I came here simply because he said to me: “You're coming with me, we're going to live there, we're going to live together there”. That's all (Katia, 60, Russian, widow of Ahmed, Moroccan, married 30 years, 2 children).

A closer analysis of the stories clearly shows that behind this impulse from love often lay a strong desire for “elsewhere”. Some foreigners, like Katia, followed their partner without ever having considered the possibility of leaving their country before they met. Such cases are exceptional, however. Long before their amorous encounter, most foreigners had already been planning or dreaming for several years of going “somewhere else”, as shown by Anna's and François' answers to the question “Have you ever considered making your life with a foreigner?”

I have, because I never really wanted to stay in Germany. I've always wanted to travel and meet other worlds (Anna, 63, German, married to Slimane, Moroccan, 61, 33 years married, 1 child).

I've always been attracted to foreigners. I've always travelled. Already in my life, I saw myself living abroad, because I was studying to work abroad (François, 27).

The majority of the foreigners interviewed for this study had this desire to see something different, to experience a new adventure. Several of them had traveled or spent time outside their country of origin before meeting their partner; four of the foreigners had already settled in Morocco. While this meeting strengthened their ties to the country, it was in no way linked to their initial migration project. Their plans to study or work in Morocco had been stimulated by a strong desire to live elsewhere. This desire would also explain, in part, the fact that some foreigners (divorced or widowed) remained in Morocco after their divorce or following the death of their husband.

It's important to mention that if most of the couples had made the choice to settle in Morocco, it was because the context (their network, their family, their economic and professional situation) offered them the opportunity to live well or even better there. So, behind the foreigners' call to "elsewhere" and behind the Moroccan migrants' return project, there is a joint decision based equally on advantageous economic or professional conditions⁹.

Maintaining ties that reconfigure the space of home

Most of the migrants involved in this research maintain intense and frequent transnational links (in the private or professional sphere) with their country of origin. Accessible transport and contemporary means of communication obviously play a decisive role in this ease of contact. Most foreigners communicate regularly with their families by telephone or Internet. Some, as the following interview excerpt shows, even claim that distance has helped to intensify communication with their families:

My parents go on the Internet, so we often talk on the Internet. I talk to my mother a lot more than she talks to my sister, who lives five minutes away. She says, "I know a lot more about what's going on at your place than what's going on at your sister's." They call me quite often. They call me quite often. We talk maybe five or six times a week (Patricia, aged 31, Canadian-Haitian, married to Younès, aged 32, Moroccan, 11 years of married life, 1 child).

Transnational links are not only maintained by means of communication. Many of the couples we interviewed regularly visit their foreign spouse's country, or receive foreign family members. Many were keen for their children to develop ties with their "other" country, so they spent their vacations in the foreign spouse's country. A few couples spoke clearly of their plans to spend part or all of their old age in the foreigner's country of origin. Some of them were already receiving medical treatment during regular visits. It should also be pointed out that several Moroccans considered their spouse's native country as a second home, since they had lived there for several years, sometimes long before their romantic encounter. These individuals had formed bonds with their spouse's family, but also with friends whom they met again during each of their visits.

In the next section, we'll see that these various transnational ties contributed significantly to the reconfiguration of a plural, deterritorialized and mobile "home". We'll also see that the desire to be elsewhere that most of these migrants had even before meeting their partners not only sheds light on their reasons for migrating (and thus the impetus for leaving) as we've just seen in this section, but also explains the fact that many of these foreigners imagined living, dying and being buried elsewhere than in their country of origin.

Representations of home

Mobile and plural ports of attachment

This research looked at the link between the migratory experience and the identity trajectory of foreigners in mixed unions, by examining their representations of home. During the interviews, I asked these migrants to tell me where they felt at home and what made them feel that way, which enabled me to gather relevant clues about their identity construction process. When it was appropriate, I also asked them to tell me where they would like to be buried. The answers to this question also revealed some very interesting clues as to how these individuals conceive and construct their home - and therefore their identity. An analysis of the representations of home shows that the foreigners questioned do not see it as linked to fixed, exclusive, territorial roots, but to mobile, plural ports of attachment.

For these migrants, home is represented primarily in terms of attachment ties (affective bonds) and not in terms of territorial anchorage. As highlighted in Gupta and Ferguson's article (1992), data collected in Morocco show that mobility leads to a reconfiguration of identity, and that identity is deterritorialized. Mobility, the maintenance of transnational ties and the establishment of new links in the host country have led foreigners to no longer conceive of their home in terms of a territory, which has given way, in the imaginary of home, to ties of attachment (people, memories, projects), as the following excerpt testifies:

When we say "chez moi", it's not a question of land or country, it's the attachments, there's something that binds us to this country, to the place where we are. [...] Here, there are memories. That's what counts. It's not a question of buildings, but of what binds us to a country; it's the people, this love, there are emotional ties... (Shiraz, 50, Iranian, married to Hassan, Moroccan, 63, 30 years of married life, 2 children).

This excerpt shows the importance given to the notion of attachment (*to memories and people*) in representations of home. Home is first and foremost linked to an affective aspect (it's about the connections with people, love) and not territorial (*it's not the country, nor the buildings*). As it is not linked to a territory, home becomes displaceable, as the following comments illustrate:

Question: *What about your roots?*

Rosalie: *I don't have any. I can't say my roots are there. And that doesn't bother me. I'm not sad...*

Question: *If I understand correctly, your roots aren't necessarily associated with one place, or with several places?*

Rosalie: *Yeah... It's not fixed to one place, I'd say. Or to several places: I'm practically mobile. I don't have deep roots anywhere, let's say (Rosalie, 64, German, married to Mohamed, 65, Moroccan, 42 years of married life, 5 children).*

For these migrants, home is also conjugated in the plural. "Home" is not exclusive. These migrants have several homes, several points of attachment, in several different places. The following excerpt illustrates this plurality of home:

Home really is here [referring to Morocco]. In Austria, too, it's my home. Both are home. It's weird though, because as soon as I'm there, it's like I've never lived in Morocco. I adapt from one minute to the next. As soon as I open the apartment door, my friends are already waiting for me. I'm very, very comfortable. And when I'm here, I'm fine too. In the end, I feel at home both here and there (Karla, 73, Austrian, widow of Eussa, Moroccan, 20-year married life, 2 children).

Like many of the migrants we met, Karla feels as much at home in Morocco as in her native country. Although she has always maintained close ties with Austria, these have intensified since her children became adults, as this transnational migrant now spends half the year in Austria and the other half in Morocco. The ties she has created in Morocco are also very important, enough for her to have decided to stay in this country after her husband's death.

While the transnational ties maintained enable migrants to keep in touch with their country of origin, the ties created in the host country (friendship, love, family and work) contribute to the establishment of another home that is not exclusive either, as Manon testifies:

Manon: "Home" isn't an important concept for me... There [in Morocco], I'm at home, it's my house... We had a lot of fun getting it, we worked hard for it and... But in Canada, when I'm at my parents', it's also my home.

Question: Why isn't "home" an important concept for you?

Manon: Because it can't be exclusive, I think... [...] I live here, it's my home, but I also have a little home in Canada when I'm with my parents... (Manon, 41, French-Canadian, married to Chakib, 45, Moroccan, 25 years of married life, 2 children).

Conceiving home in an exclusive way would force these migrants to disregard some of the ties of attachment they have established in different countries. The links and projects they have created in Morocco are significant: this is where their main living and working environment is (although most maintain transnational professional links), where their children have been socialized (for the most part), where they have forged friendships, where they interact with their in-laws, etc. The home of their childhood (which corresponds to places, memories, but also landmarks they carry with them) is no less significant in their representations of home. As evoked in the interview excerpt above, the exclusive home has no meaning in these journeys; it is the link (the imaginary center) that unites different ports of attachment.

The concept of "home" as landmark and trajectory: echoes from the field

It should be remembered that the concept of "home", which was inspired by the intersection of several texts, refers to an imaginary center that links both the childhood home (landmarks to refer to) and the adult home (trajectory to build), two inseparable homes that constitute, in Hoffman's (1999) view, the totality of being. Once this notion of "home" had been theoretically constructed, my analytical work consisted in verifying the echoes it found in the narratives collected. This enabled me to establish that this "home", conceived as the imaginary center of self-construction, made sense in the narratives of the individuals I interviewed. For these migrants, home referred both to their initial dreams and to the trajectory they were building (the creation of a new home).

Rosalie: *It's already a very difficult question for me. When people ask me where you're from, I firstly have to ask: "What do you want to know? Where was I born? Where did I go to school? Where do my parents live? Where do I live? What do you want to know?" Ah, it's so difficult.*

Question: *And what makes it home for you?*

Rosalie: *Here, because I have my house here, I have my husband here; it's here that the children come regularly, and when they come back, the grandchildren...*

Mohamed: *You know, what's home? It's a collection of memories...*

Rosalie: *It's where you made your nest.*

Mohamed: *What's a bird's home? It's its nest. Where it comes back to, where it feels safe.*

Question: *Germany for you, I imagine, is full of memories too?*

Rosalie: *Yes, but there are several places, there are already several apartments, several places. There are memories everywhere (Rosalie, 64).*

This excerpt from an interview, which interweaves the different conceptions of home evoked in the “home model” (landmarks and trajectories), shows both the multiplicity of referents mobilized in the construction of identity (mobility paths, childhood places, memories, where you live, projects, where you meet people, attachment bonds) and the unifying potential of this imaginary center (the “home”). The home as an imaginary center opens up the possibility for these foreigners to give meaning to their entire journey.

The fact that several migrants spoke of Morocco as “chez-moi” (home), without referring solely to their place of residence (house, apartment), shows that these individuals had established new attachment bonds in the host country. These data run counter to several studies on trans-nationalism, which highlight the fact that transnational ties weaken the integration of immigrants in the host country (Vertovec 2001).

For some migrants who have been in Morocco for a long time, like Shiraz, the bonds of attachment established in the host country have become even more intense than those forged elsewhere (even in their native country):

Shiraz: *‘Now, I say: ‘Home is here’. This is where my children were born, this is where I raised my children. I've lived here for 30 years, and it's more like home here than home there. When I'm there, I want to come right back. Because what is home? Where we've had our memories, we've had our children, we've had emotional ties, we've had our friends. After all, there are 30 years of life.*

Question: *But do you have any ties or memories in Iran?*

Shiraz: *Of course it's my childhood, but now here, it's stronger. The links are stronger, it's been 30 years. It's stronger. I got married here. I had my children here, it's not the same thing. The ties are much stronger here than at home (Shiraz, 50).*

Some of these foreigners can no longer imagine themselves returning to their country of origin (or living only in their country of origin). Many of them also imagine themselves growing old and being buried, among other things¹⁰, in this host country.

The place of burial as a reflection of a deterritorialized identity

Since the foreigners in this study had several homes, several ports of attachment, it seemed appropriate to ask them where they imagined they would be buried. As Chaïb (1994), author of an essay on Islam and death in France, argues, death experienced at the crossroads of cultural references takes on a different meaning among mixed couples.

While for some migrants the desired burial place was associated with the idea of a return to their country of origin, the majority of foreigners with whom I spoke imagined themselves to be buried in a country other than the one in which they were born (some in Morocco, others elsewhere). For those whose ties to Morocco were more significant than those maintained with their country of origin, imagining ending their lives and being buried in Morocco was a possibility, and even in some cases - as with Shiraz - a wish:

At home, of course, it's my native country to which I'm attached. I like to go there from time to time to see my family. But here, I'd like to end my life here (Shiraz, 50, Iranian, married to Hassan, 63, Moroccan, 30 years of married life, 2 children).

Whilst having several homes, several people imagined being buried in several places (cremation was the solution envisaged), some even being concerned about offering several places of remembrance to different people who were significant to them. While some answered this question lightly and humorously, others were unable to answer it at all. Their inability to choose between two burial sites (between their country of origin and Morocco) was directly linked to the plurality of their home ports. It can change over time, depending on mobility, experiences and the ties of attachment forged. Rose's answer illustrates this well:

When I first arrived in Morocco, this was often what came into my head: "But I don't want to be buried here! It was clear that I didn't see myself living in Morocco all my life. But today, if I were to die tomorrow, I'd like to be cremated and spread out half in Morocco, near our home on a small hill on the road to the Addarouch ranch, and half in France, on the Cambre d'Azge, a mountain in the Pyrenees, near a small village, Eyne, where I'd have liked to live (at the time of the interview Rose, a Frenchwoman, was 30 and cohabiting with Ali, a Moroccan, 30. They married a few years after this research (in 2008) and divorced (in 2012) after 14 years together, without children).

Since this interview, Rose has divorced and moved to another country. Her desire for her ashes to be spread in Morocco and France has changed. Her attachment to Argentina was still too recent to imagine her ashes being spread there, so she preferred to avoid the question. Her account, collected at two different times (in 2006 and 2013), clearly shows that, being linked to home, the desired burial site is also presented as mobile and therefore relocatable.

These data collected make sense with the journey of these foreigners who, as previously mentioned, were already dreaming of elsewhere, long before their romantic encounter. They also testify to the deterritorialization of home and the distancing of these individuals from the "home" of their childhood (Therrien 2014).

Conclusion

This article has shed light on the link between identity and migration, initially through an analysis of the migratory paths of foreigners in mixed couples living in Morocco. Secondly, our exploration of the different representations of home has shown that the contemporary individuals in this study are not fragmented and dispersed beings, despite their mobility and the plurality of their ports of attachment, since their identity is linked to an imaginary

center, the “home”, which corresponds both to the landmarks to which they refer and to the trajectory they construct.

As we have seen, the individuals in this study do not link their home to a territory, but this does not mean they don't have a place of attachment. The various transnational links they maintain with their country of origin, as well as the ties they have established in Morocco, have contributed significantly to the reconfiguration of a plural, deterritorialized and mobile home. They don't move away from their home simply because they carry it with them, they carry it within them: the home linked to their initial landmarks, from which they certainly move away, but to which they continue to refer, and the home linked to their personal trajectory of mixedness and migration, the one they build every day.

The contribution of this article to the theory of conjugal mixedness consists in having added an innovative element, namely the perspective of mixedness in relation to mobility, and this in connection with the notion of “home”, which had not been explicitly taken into account until now. The other original aspect lies in the uncovering of a metaphorical inversion (the replacement of the concept of roots by that of “home”) that enables us to renew our thinking on mobility and places of attachment. Indeed, as has been clearly shown in this article, the metaphor of home, which proposes itself as an inversion of the metaphor of the migrant (largely associated with the image of uprooting), contributes to the advancement of an epistemological rupture by introducing the idea of attachment and continuity into the paths of mobility and mixedness. The concept of “home” makes it possible to show that the self-deconstruction project of the individuals involved in this study is not synonymous with fragmentation and uprooting, as some metaphors depict it, but carries with it the idea of attachment (rather than rootedness) and continuity (rather than rupture and identity fragmentation). Moving away from botanical metaphors has made it possible to account for the plurality and fluidity of representations of home by foreigners in mixed couples.

And to highlight the significant role played by the maintenance of transnational ties and the creation of new ones in the host country in the process of reconfiguring home. It has been shown that, contrary to the results obtained in other research (Vertovec 2001, but see also Roca, this issue), maintaining transnational ties does not weaken the integration of the migrants in this study. The fact of being in a couple and having started a family (in several cases) with a native of the host country is certainly linked to this reinforcement of ties.

In light of these analyses, this article argues that the multiplicity and fluidity of representations of home allow these migrants in mixed couples to maintain continuity in their mobility journey. It also shows that the concept of home – conceived as affective, plural and mobile – constitutes a central pillar of the narrative identity of these individuals.

Notes

1. This article is based on my anthropology thesis in which I was interested in the migratory and identity trajectories of mixed couples in Morocco (Therrien 2009).
2. This title is a nod to Varro's (2008) article, “Putting diversity in place of origin”. Echoing Amin Maalouf's (1998) novel, which prefers to speak of origin rather than roots, Gabrielle Varro (2008) suggests putting diversity in the place of origin in order to open up an identity space that makes room for the heterogeneous, the mix and multiplicity.
3. “The uprooted man”, a term widely used in the literature on migration; the transplanted woman, a concept introduced by Gebauer and Varro (1995) and taken up by Dos Santos (2014), the metaphor of the rhizome by Deleuze and Guattari (1976).
4. Although cultural frameworks (defined as systems of norms, values, social practices and beliefs) are prefabricated and transmitted as a guide valid for all situations that arise in the social world,

they nevertheless leave room for cultural and individual variations (Lustig and Koester 2012; Samovar et al. 2010).

5. Gaston Bachelard (*The Philosophy of No*) studies the notion of “epistemological rupture”. This notion indicates a profound change of perspective in the history of science when a man, not internally convinced by the consensus of his peers regarding a representation, comes to question the commonly accepted vision and proposes a new representation of the phenomena which until then were described in another way. The epistemological break

is therefore a change in the system of representation, a change in the frame of reference of thought.

6. The representations of home (and therefore of the migratory and identity journey) have been explored only with the foreign spouses of these couples. Given that several Moroccan spouses had also had a migratory experience (although these were migrations initially thought of as temporary in the case of the majority of Moroccans), it would have been interesting to question them on their representations of home and their desired burial place(s) in order to see if the observation of deterritorialization of identity also made sense in their journey. I intend to explore this question further in future research.

7. While white marriages are an agreement between the migrant partner and the national partner to unite with the avowed aim of obtaining immigration papers (an agreement often financially compensated by the migrant partner), grey marriages correspond to unions where the migrant person deceives the other about their real romantic feelings with the unavowed aim of obtaining these same papers. See the definition of master Sabine Haddad: <http://www.documentissime.fr/actualitesjuridiques/vie-familiale/blanc-ou-gris-un-mariage-a-la-derobee...1559.html>

8. The first names correspond to pseudonyms.

9. As mentioned previously, several Moroccans had themselves experienced migration before their romantic encounter. They had returned to Morocco to take over a family business or to find a job more easily or more rewarding than abroad. It is also important to specify that the Moroccan context had offered several of them, as well as their foreign partner, the opportunity to start their own business and therefore realize a professional dream.

10. We will see that many of these migrants hoped to divide their time between two or more countries when they retired and were considering being cremated so that their ashes could be spread in different places, all meaningful to them.

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