

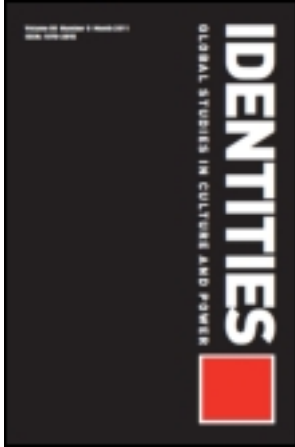
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The Power of Imagination in Transnational Mobilities

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At the roots of many travels to distant destinations, whether in the context of tourism or migration, are historically laden and socioculturally constructed imaginaries. People worldwide rely on such imaginaries, from the most spectacular fantasies to the most mundane reveries, to shape identities of themselves and others. These unspoken representational assemblages are powerful because they enact and construct peoples and places, implying multiple, often conflicting, representations of Otherness, and questioning several core values multicultural societies hold, by blurring as well as enforcing traditional territorial, social, and cultural boundaries. What are the contours of power, agency, and subjectivity in imaginaries of transnational mobility and the intersecting social categories those visions both reify and dissolve? Ethnographic studies of human (im)mobility provide an innovative means to grasp the complexity of the global circulation of people and the world-making images and ideas surrounding these movements. As a polymorphic concept, mobility invites us to renew our theorizing, especially regarding conventional themes such as culture, identity, and transnational relationships. This article critically analyzes some preliminary findings of an ongoing multisited research project that traces how prevalent imaginaries of transnational tourism to and migration from the “global South” are (dis)connected. I suggest anthropology has unique contributions to make to the current debate in the social sciences by ethnographically detailing how mobility is a contested ideological construct involving so much more than mere movement.

Key Words: Mobility, immobility, imagination, ethnography

Anthropological “culture” is not what it used to be. And once the representational challenge is seen to be the portrayal and understanding of local/global historical encounters, co-productions, dominations, and resistances, one needs to focus on hybrid, cosmopolitan experiences as much as on rooted, native ones (James Clifford 1997: 24).

Historically laden imaginaries—socially shared and transmitted (both within and between cultures) representational assemblages that interact with people’s personal imaginings and are used as meaning-making and world-shaping devices—are at the roots of many travels, whether

in the context of tourism (Salazar 2010) or migration (Appadurai 1996). The motivations to cross borders are usually multiple but greatly linked to the ability of travelers and their social networks to imagine other places and lives. People hardly journey to *terrae incognitae* anymore these days but to destinations they already virtually “know” through the widely circulating imaginaries about them. Empowered by mass-mediated images and discourses, such imaginaries have become global and have changed the way in which people collectively envision the world and their own positionalities and mobilities within it (Morley 2000). Imaginaries travel through a multitude of channels and provide the cultural material to be drawn upon and used for the creation of translocal connections (Römhild 2003). Even when a person is place-bound, his or her imagination can be in movement, traveling to other places and other times (Rapport and Dawson 1998). By extension, it could be argued that even when one is in movement, one’s imagination can be focused on a singular place (e.g., people in the diaspora recreating their imagined “homeland”) and that these imaginaries of fixity can influence one’s experience of mobility (Easthope 2009). Studying and questioning imaginaries of (im)mobility offers us a novel way to grasp ongoing global transformations.

The focus on imagination as a major source of relating people across territorial and other boundaries productively challenges basic assumptions of, and the divisions between, previously separated research fields such as tourism and migration studies (Benson and O’Reilly 2009; Coles and Timothy 2004; Hall and Williams 2002). Contrary to the fragmentary way in which human mobility is approached in mainstream academic research, tourism and migration studies intersect and overlap in terms of interdisciplinary debates, key concepts, and the lived experiences of their respective mobile subjects (Gogia 2006; Gössling and Schulz 2005; Noussia 2003). The identities of tourists, intermediaries, and locals are pliable, with a multitude of crossovers as tourists stay and become local and local people emigrate and become tourists. Local particularities, cultures, and identities are always juxtaposed with extra-local influences, producing unique outcomes. Universalism and particularism need to be conjoined to better comprehend how tourism and migration as complex phenomena can influence specific identifications that crosscut, complement, and trouble one another, and in themselves become influenced in a highly interconnected world.

Earlier research on mobility also tended to separate the imagination, as being an external impact, from practice. Yet imagining is an embodied practice of transcending both physical and sociocultural distance. Appadurai’s (1996) work, for example, focuses largely, though

not entirely, on the more positive possibilities of human mobility becoming embodied in the acting out of global fantasies (imagination at play). Other research (e.g., Smith 1994) suggests that global imaginaries also have their dark side. During my own ethnographic fieldwork in Indonesia and Tanzania, I gathered ample evidence of how the lives and practices of people in both countries are shaped by any number of imaginative as well as real links to “Other” worlds near and far.¹ Of course, these connections are not necessarily new. Over time, and in different places, mobilities have taken a number of forms, including internal, regional, and transnational movements. They have cut across class and skill boundaries and exist in widely different demographic contexts.

The different patterns, directions, and motivations of human mobilities were severely affected by colonialism. Colonial imaginaries about horizontal (geographical) as well as vertical—economic (financial), social (status), and cultural (cosmopolitan)—mobility still have a huge influence over contemporary European imaginaries of post-colonial countries such as Indonesia and Tanzania. These imaginaries come to the foreground not only in the context of migration but also of tourism. The resulting expanding interconnections have not only helped to detail a vision of the world at large, they have reciprocally promoted an awareness of Indonesia and Tanzania as nested within the transnational nexus of places. Increasingly, people in those countries are beginning to imagine the possible lives that might be available “out there” because they are often convinced that life is “better” elsewhere. Being exposed to media, goods, and ideologies never before available, people are dreaming the signs and styles of a global order, while facing ever-narrower means by which to satisfy them. At the same time, imaginaries are not simply imposed on them in a one-way direction, but appropriated and acted on in terms of co- and counter-imaginaries (cf. Römhild 2003). In this article I describe and ethnographically illustrate how widely circulating imaginaries of (im)mobility play out in the context of transnational tourism (Indonesian case study) and migration (Tanzanian case study) in remarkably similar ways.

Tourism fantasies of immobility

The tourist thought about how wonderful a picture he had taken—a dirty, scrawny, Balinese woman who was once a famous dancer . . . but now with her basket on her head, her skirt hitched up to her knees, her swollen feet, wearing an old t-shirt with the printed message: ‘Paradise’ (Sukanta: Luh Galuh 2000: 30).

When I set out to study tourism discourses and practices on the island of Java, I did not at all frame my research in terms of (im)mobility (Salazar 2005). However, it is not difficult to see that transnational tourism in general includes huge movements of people (tourists as well as tourism workers), capital (investments, tourist dollars, and remittances), technologies of travel, and the circulation of closely related tourism media and imaginaries (Burns and Novelli 2008; Hall 2005; Sheller and Urry 2004). Yogyakarta is the name of one of Indonesia's 33 provinces and its capital, situated in central Java. Tourism to the region was first developed under Dutch colonial rule and continued after independence. By the mid-1990s, *pariwisata* (tourism) had become Indonesia's third most important source of foreign revenue. Before the Asian financial crisis of 1997, Yogyakarta received ten percent (300,000) of Indonesia's foreign visitors (three million). Since then, tourism development halted and there have only been small increases. In 2005, for example, the number of foreign tourists in the province was down to 115,000, a mere two and a half percent of Indonesia's total five million tourists, and receiving a similar small fraction of the 4.5 million USD in national receipts (UNWTO 2006). After actively participating in mass tourism for over thirty years, Yogyakarta has become a major gateway to central and east Java. The most loyal tourist markets are from the Netherlands, France, Germany, and Japan. Repeated travel warnings keep numbers from Australia, the United States, and the United Kingdom low. Targeted new markets include China, India, Russia, the Middle East, and Eastern Europe.

The majority of tourists visiting the central part of Java, whether they are backpackers traveling through Southeast Asia or people on a typical Bali-Java package tour, come to witness the region's breathtaking world heritage sites, which are in themselves great markers of human mobility. Others are in search of their own ancestry (so-called "roots tourism") or come looking for the roots of humankind at archaeological sites such as Sangiran Early Man Site. The earliest signs of habitation in these fertile volcanic lands are, indeed, prehistoric. From the seventh century, the area was dominated by Hindu and Buddhist kingdoms, giving rise to the eighth-century Buddhist shrine of Borobudur, the ninth-century Hindu temple complex of Prambanan, and many other sanctuaries and palaces, including Ratu Boko, Kalasan, and Sambisari. Islam, coming mainly via India, gained ground in the inner areas of the island during the sixteenth century.² The Dutch began to colonize the archipelago in the early seventeenth century. The British established a brief presence on Java under Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles (1811–1816), but the Dutch retained control until Indonesia's independence 130 years later. When the Dutch

reoccupied Jakarta after the Japanese occupation of Java during World War II (1946–1949), Yogyakarta functioned as the stronghold of the independence movement by becoming the provisional capital of the newly declared Republic of Indonesia. In return for this unfailing support, the first Indonesian central government passed a law in 1950 granting Yogyakarta the status of Special Province and making its Sultan, Hamengku Buwono IX, governor for life. To varying degrees, all these foreign passages have left their mark on the region (Salazar 2010).

Visits to central Java's architectural heritage are often combined with village tours, giving tourists the chance to sample some of the region's rich intangible heritage too (Salazar 2005). *Desa wisata* (tourism villages) invite visitors to see and experience the daily life of the villagers: the cycle of a rice field, home industries that produce local food and medicine, and artisans who make souvenirs. By rethinking what counts as cultural heritage to include the everyday, the alternative, the intangible and that which has not yet been memorialized in guidebooks and official histories, another kind of Indonesian experience becomes available to tourists. Different villages have different grades of tourism involvement, depending largely on their physical and nonphysical characteristics and their proximity to nearby attractions. Some offer a home-stay experience; others are only places to stop over. I joined guided tours to all the villages mentioned below during my fieldwork in Indonesia.

On World Tourism Day in 1999, the then Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture, Marzuki Usman, inaugurated Tembi as model *desa wisata* (*The Jakarta Post* 1999). Over the years, this project received many national and international awards for sustainable tourism. The man behind tourism development in Tembi was an Australian entrepreneur who had chosen the picturesque village as the base of his lucrative export business of high-end handcrafted products (James 2003). His renovation of some of the village houses in Dutch colonial style had fascinated many of his visiting expatriate friends from Bali or Jakarta, and this is how the idea developed to let (foreign) visitors stay overnight for 200/300 USD per night. During the day, the guests could relax around the swimming pool, enjoy the local food, visit the nearby school for dancing and *gamelan* performances, pass by the craft workshop, and buy souvenirs at the gallery. To guarantee the "authentic" (unchanging) view, the owner bought the rice paddies surrounding his houses. Word-of-mouth led to a rapid increase in visitors, and after a couple of years, the foreigner finally decided to make his model houses private again, thereby virtually stopping all tourism development.

A local NGO selected Candirejo in Magelang, nearby the heavily visited shrine of Borobudur, as one of ten villages to develop so-called community-based tourism. The village was chosen for its original architecture and traditional daily life, beautiful rural scenery, and natural resources—all heritage deemed worthy to be preserved. Financially supported by the Japan International Cooperation Agency and UNDP, and technical expertise provided by UNESCO, Candirejo village was prepared to receive international tourists. This included the development of micro enterprises, such as the rental of bicycles and horse carts (no motorized transport, which most of the locals use) and local accommodation structures. The whole process involved multiple workshops, panel discussions, and community group meetings. In 2003 Candirejo was officially inaugurated as *desa wisata* by I Gde Ardika, the then Minister of Tourism and Culture. Given its proximity to a World Heritage Site, the village has attracted far more international tourists than domestic visitors. Also here, the representational emphasis is more on the (imagined) past than on the present or the future. Although the intentions are different, the work of cultural preservationists and the interests of government and private entrepreneurs clearly overlap in the development of village tourism.

The tourismification of actually existing villages is both a consequence of the recent decentralization of power (whereby tourism is seen by local authorities as a quick and easy way to earn money) and a response to the increasing international demand for experiential tourism, often based on the temporal as well as spatial “Othering” of those living in rural areas (cf. Fabian 2002). The tourism theming of otherwise lived environments strategically makes use of three recurring imaginaries in tourism to developing countries: the myth of the unchanged, the myth of the unrestrained, and the myth of the uncivilized (Echtner and Prasad 2003). A visit to the countryside is told and sold (often by the villagers themselves) as an exotic journey to the past, drawing on widely distributed imaginaries of orientalism, colonialism, and imperialism, to feed romantic and nostalgic tourist dreams (Salazar 2010).³ Importantly, villagers are very proud of their village heritage and are usually happy to guide visitors around and narrate the (hi)stories of the village. It is interesting that the present village life is represented to tourists as time-frozen and premodern. Villagers are presented and choose to represent themselves as unique, separate, and fixed, and, ironically, this is happening at the same time that the world seems to be moving toward more mobile subjects, border crossings, and vast population movements (Bruner 2005: 212).

Even though some scholars have hinted at the mobility of people living and working in tourism destinations (e.g., Adler and Adler

2004; Bianchi 2000; Lenz 2010), others seem to silently reinforce the false binary between mobile tourists and place-bound locals, echoing the earlier dichotomy in anthropology, whereby “‘Natives’ are incarcerated in bounded geographical spaces, immobile and untouched yet paradoxically available to the mobile outsider” (Narayan 1993: 676). Locals, in this conceptualization, have a strong local identity and local “roots.” Their cultural capital is tied to local culture(s), whereas cosmopolitans possess “cosmobility capital”—resources, knowledge, and abilities that facilitate social as well as geographical mobility. Tourism marketers borrow from traditional ethnology an ontological and essentialist vision of exotic cultures, conceived as static entities with clearly defined characteristics (cf. Lien and Melhuus 2007). Ideas of old-style colonial anthropology—objectifying, reifying, homogenizing, and naturalizing peoples—are widely used by a variety of tourism shareholders, staking claims of identity and cultural belonging on strong notions of place and locality (read: immobility). While the tourismified world is represented as borderless, in reality travel-for-leisure is heavily regulated and monitored on local, national, regional, and global levels, and this affects tourists as well as tourism workers (Salazar 2010).

Thus, while global tourism has helped tear down certain borders, it has erected new boundaries too. The multiple inequalities entrenched in transnational tourism between tourists, tourism intermediaries, and local people serve as a reminder that boundaries do not exist naturally but are (re)made in social practices (cf. Bruner 2005). Divisions can occur along lines of social class, gender, age, ethnicity, race, and nationality. As Lévi-Strauss (1961 (1955)) already noted in the 1950s, tourism is not only about movement on a time-space scale but also mobility on a scale of social hierarchy. Travel often serves to heighten the appreciation of one’s own social status (Bourdieu 1984), and this is particularly pronounced in tourism to developing countries. Tourists can be transformed by their experiences abroad, even though not all of them necessarily seek understanding (Bruner 1991). With accelerating mobility and intensifying connectivity, both tourists and locals are transformed in conjunction with the movements of the world economy. With Appadurai, we have to acknowledge “the transformation of *natives* into cosmopolites of their own sort” (1996: 57). The tourism encounter, together with other (physical or virtual) border-crossing experiences, transforms all parties involved, changing their conceptions of who they are, what they know, and how they live in the world.

However, this reality is masked in most tourism discourse and practice. The more locals are perceived to be immobile—true “natives” (living in the place where they were born)—the more they must be

authentic, so the stereotypical tourism thinking goes. This mental connection between immobility and authenticity fits the generally accepted characteristic of mobility as involving change. The discrepancy between tourism imaginaries and the reality on the ground comes clearly to the foreground in the figure of local tour guides, who are positioned in the liminal space between mobile tourists and locals, and who are represented and imagined as being immobile (Salazar 2005).⁴ Knowing perfectly well that in many developing countries the guide, as much as the sites seen, are part of the attraction, successful guides are projecting themselves into immobile (and, by association, more authentically local) roles. This makes them complicit in the perpetuation of biased global tourism imaginaries of time-frozen social identities and cultural traditions (Salazar 2010).

These processes are nicely illustrated in the work of village guides in central Java. There is some variation depending on the context, but in general, these guides are relatively young (because they are the ones who best speak English or other foreign languages). As others of their age around the globe, they are very much into global popular culture and new information and communication technologies and gadgets. However, little of this is visible during the village tours, when tourists are presented a mythologized, nostalgic version of premodern rural life (often exactly what they expect) instead of life as it is currently being lived. The guides facilitate the tourist experience, which includes not only seeing but also doing and feeling things, by themselves blending in with the tourism imaginaries that are being enacted. This includes changes in how they dress, how they behave, and how they talk (Salazar 2010). For instance, during the tours some of the guides wear a traditional conical straw hat that also the villagers working in the fields wear (but which is attire that guides would never wear when they are not guiding). Keeping a “local” profile, they will also seldom mention their own travel experiences abroad, although they do strategically use the knowledge gained on these trips.

There is more at play in tour guiding than a mere replication of global tourism imaginaries of local immobility. While on the discursive level, local guides are (re)producing globally dominant images and ideas, on the metadiscursive level they seem to be conveying a surprisingly dissonant message. There are many instances during guided tours where shifts of role alignment occur, and the common asymmetry between immobile guides and mobile tourists is blurred or temporarily interrupted. Two different logics are at work simultaneously: a provincial logic of differentiation that creates differences and divisions and a cosmopolitan logic of equivalence that subverts existing differences and divisions. In some instances, guides find creative ways to

distance themselves from local people and align themselves on the side of the tourists. This is achieved through the subtle use of contextually dependent references such as personal pronouns. Guides will, for example, talk about how “we will visit the villagers at the market place.” By doing so, guides performatively resist stereotyping themselves by concealing that they, as locals, shop at the market too. Such acts of differentiating by indexing difference linguistically may be a performance of resistance or a subtle contestation even if, at the same time, it perpetuates stereotypes of immobility.

In-depth interviews with local guides confirmed that they sometimes prefer to position themselves as different from the represented locals and more similar to their foreign clients in a bid to enhance their own cosmopolitan status and to gain symbolic capital, using their privileged contact with foreigners to nourish their utopias of escape from the harsh local life. The guided tour is the setting where not only much of the guide’s cosmopolitan mobility is accrued but also tacitly used to better serve foreign tourists. Cosmopolitan tour guides often use transcultural frames of reference to translate the perceived strangeness of their own culture into an idiom familiar to the tourists, finding connections between what is being experienced and what tourists already know. However, the guides’ display of transcultural knowledge often stays at the metadiscursive level. This is to avoid tensions because, as my informal debriefings with tourists after village tours revealed, the majority exactly expects guides to be local experts, granting guides their authority based on their expressions of nativeness. The explicit display of their cosmopolitan aspirations and lifestyle thus needs to happen elsewhere. They can brag to their relatives, friends, and colleagues about how much they are up-to-date with trends in global popular culture and modern technology. Experience has taught them that bringing too much of this into the encounter with foreign tourists would disrupt the magic of the tour.

No matter how hard they try to be “cosmopolitan,” giving evidence of their cosmopolitan mobility on an imaginative level, the post-trip questionnaires my research assistant and I collected from participants confirm that many tourists continue imagining Indonesian guides as “local,” in part because tourism imaginaries create a kind of economically driven denial of mobility (similar to Fabian’s (2002) “denial of coevalness”). Thus, they need to constantly (mis)translate culture and (re)negotiate positions and imaginaries. To avoid too much friction, guides must learn to position themselves in a transitional or liminal space that facilitates shifting between frames. In the words of Tsing, various “kinds of ‘friction’ inflect motion, offering it different meanings. Coercion and frustration join freedom as motion is socially informed”

(2005: 6). This illustrates the complex entanglement of the politics of mobility and the politics of difference (cf. Cresswell 2006). The way in which (im)mobility in the context of transnational tourism is enacted and given meaning is intimately tied to widely circulating imaginaries of sameness and difference.

These dynamics are not only at play in tourism villages but at cultural heritage sites too, where well-trained Javanese guides share mesmerizing stories about the beauty and ingenuity of an ancient Asian civilization, something Edenic, in its distance from the tumultuous present. In my research at Borobudur, the world's largest Buddhist sanctuary, I became not only fascinated by what the local guides told the visitors but also by what they consciously chose not to communicate. Multiple elements within the Borobudur compound (including the Borobudur Ship Museum and reliefs on the main monument), for example, point to the age-old trading route between Indonesia and East Africa. Such a journey formed part of the ancient Cinnamon Route, which developed after 600 BCE, and along which daring seafarers brought spices from the Indonesian archipelago to East Africa and then onto Egypt and Europe. Asian merchants brought to Africa many spices and the living shoots of banana and coconut trees, rice plants, and various types of yams. They returned with ivory and rhinoceros horns, tortoise shells, animal skins, and African slaves. The on-site museum contains a replica outrigger sailing vessel that was used in 2003 to make the crossing and sail as far as Ghana (a scientific project known as the Borobudur Ship Expedition).

Of course, the local Indonesian guides know about the museum and probably they know some of its history and background. However, they do not to share this information with visitors. The long and rich history of human mobility and cultural contact between Africa and Asia is the type of narrative that currently fares extremely well in the social sciences (including anthropology), where it is fashionable to imagine today's world as being in constant motion, with people, cultures, goods, money, businesses, diseases, image, and ideas flowing in every direction across the planet. In globally circulating tourism imaginaries, however, ideas of cultures as passive, bounded, and homogeneous entities prevail because it is widely assumed, by marketers and service providers alike, that it is precisely this what tourists want to see and experience. Even if the Indonesian guides at Borobudur are aware of the long-standing Africa-Indonesia ties, they deem such information is not useful to be incorporated in their guiding narratives. As some of my key informants explained, this may be because the idea that Javanese "high" culture might have been socioculturally influenced by "underdeveloped" Africa(ns) is not a popular one.⁵

Migration dreams of mobility

Cool guy, don't lie to yourself. Don't run off to Europe, you can also be successful here, even by growing tomatoes. It's best to know what you are doing. Cool men haven't gone to school. They don't even know English, just two words: 'yes' and 'no'. Is that all you are able to say on the street? What will you be speaking there then? Think first before going, so that you won't drool that day. Will you not be a mute person where you are going? The problem is that you don't want to work, that you want to go with the times, but what times are these, cool guy? You don't even have a tartan to wrap yourself in, your shirt is worth ten thousand shillings, your trousers are worth ten thousand shillings, and your shoes are worth twenty thousand shillings. Will you cover yourself with your clothes at night? Take any kind of job [here], so that you earn some money (John Walker featuring Ras Lion, Bitizi; my own translation from Swahili).

Like tourism, transnational migration is an ongoing process, involving the continuous circulation of people, social interactions, and cultural expressions. People who migrate do so for a number of reasons, a mixture of pressures from the social environment, market and immigration conditions, and personal as well as cultural traits and attitudes. The explanations of migration as a response to experiences of hardship or imaginaries of pots of gold (El Dorado), which inform traditional push-pull theories, are no longer sufficient to explain current migratory movements. Livelihood practices quite commonly engage people in extensive mobilities at local, regional, national, and transnational levels (Sørensen and Olwig 2002). Such mobile lifestyles evolve not just to explore economic opportunities not available locally but also to pursue particular types of culturally and socially desirable livelihoods (Benson and O'Reilly 2009). Research on various forms of mobility—from the paleoanthropological Out-of-Africa hypothesis and pastoralism to the slave trade and labor migration—has long been at the centre of African studies, not the least because mobility is a fundamental social and historical aspect of African life (de Bruijn et al. 2001). This suggests that migration mobility does not necessarily entail an abnormal interruption in “normal” sedentary life but is an integral aspect of the life trajectories of many individuals and groups.

In the cultural logics of migration, imaginaries play a predominant role in envisioning both the green pastures and the (often mythologized) memory of the homeland. Migration is as much about these imaginaries as it is about the actual physical movement from one locality to another and back. The images and ideas of other (read: better) possible places to live—often misrepresented through popular media—circulate in a very unequal global space and are ultimately filtered

through migrants' personal aspirations. Migration thus always presupposes some knowledge or, at least, rumors of "the other side." Although global capitalism may accelerate flexible mobility, imaginaries of such movements play out in uneven and even contradictory ways in the desires of people. Capital, gender, and age largely determine the access potential migrants have to geographical mobility. In some cases, the dream of cosmobility works like a kind of opium; reality is no longer confronted and fewer people undertake concrete steps to migrate. The creative construction of this imaginary, as a state of mind, is one important factor leading some to even accept long-term unemployment as they anticipate an eventual opportunity to journey abroad. Actual migratory movements often occur in phases, the geographic mobility being paralleled by mobility between different migration statuses (Schuster 2005).

In Tanzania, most migratory mobilities are internal and rural-urban, favoring circular mobility as well as permanent migration to commercial attraction poles like the coastal city of Dar es Salaam. Emigration is not exceeding 1 percent of the population, with most migrants moving to nearby East African countries and only a very small group journeying all the way to Europe, the United States, or the Middle East (Prinz 2005). In the global field of voluntary border-crossing mobilities, Tanzania is thus an extremely marginal player. (It is a major actor, however, when it comes to welcoming refugees from neighboring countries.) Despite the remarkably low rate of emigration, mobility imaginaries, especially of "the West," are shared by large parts of the Tanzanian population.⁶ As Moyer (2003) notes in her research on the prevalent imaginaries among youth in Dar es Salaam, in many ways temporary emigration out of Tanzania is imagined as a mode of looking for a (better) life.

Dreams and imaginings of emigration were not limited to the United States. Europe, Asia, particularly Pakistan and India, and South Africa figured prominently in such discourses as well. All such foreign lands of economic opportunity are collectively referred to as *majuu*, a noun formed by placing the lexeme for 'up on top' into the *ji/ma* noun class, again a class for unusually large and out of proportion things. Alternatively, people may use the word *ulaya* to refer to Europe and the West as a whole in more concrete terms, but when referring to a geographic imaginaire, a place of hopes, dreams, and possibilities, people are more likely to use the term *majuu*. One might purchase a plane, boat, or train ticket to travel to Italy, India, or South Africa, but in many ways the specificity of the destination is irrelevant when it comes to imagining what economic opportunities such a trip might provide. The way one enters into the individual economies of these destinations

is entirely dependent on specificities of course, but such details should not get in the way of material longing before one even sets out on one's journey (Moyer 2003: 271–272).

Many Tanzanians share stories about other people's mobility experiences. Though few have actually travelled outside of the country themselves, nearly all have close relatives or friends who have. As a result, many of the tales told about *majuu* are actually interpretations of other people's movements.⁷ Such tales, sometimes mere rumors, are usually intertwined with discussions about possibilities for earning a living abroad. This became particularly clear to me when overhearing conversations at various *mama lishe* (women preparing and selling lunch at food stalls; literally 'mother nutrition') that my research assistant and I frequented in Dar es Salaam and Arusha. While waiting for the food to be served, people would often comment on other people (whether relatives, friends, or distant acquaintances) who had migrated. Most stories told about *majuu* centre on the United States, Europe, South Africa, or Asia. It is interesting that the European continent is not perceived as a geographic unit, but rather as a list of countries associated with certain features such as high level of development, wealth, social security, and political power. The cosmopolitan West is a dream, an act of imagination, and an aspiration. For its imaginative features it is not only socially and economically appealing but also fascinating because it points to a utopia, to a product of fantasy. The images and ideas of migration to the West derive from and are perpetuated by information from two main sources: mass media and migrants or returnees.

It is not surprising that television is the most influential source, followed by the Internet, newspapers, and radio. My repeated observations at *mama lishe* made me aware of how images of the United States, for instance, are largely transmitted through hit television series. Some depict the dream lives of multimillionaires, others the relaxed atmosphere of American college campuses, still others invite the viewer to enter the warm and cosy world of affluent African American families. As much as basketball and rap music, these images over the past few decades have helped turn the United States into a virtual reality for a large segment of the Tanzanian population. While Tanzania is one of the world's poorest countries, the television soaps depict a world of flat screen TVs, gated houses, servants, and expensively decorated rooms—clearly offering an aspirational lifestyle, suggesting the distance between Tanzania and the West is smaller than it is. Sometimes spectators do not realise that they are actually watching Latin American *telenovelas*. For them, all stories take place in an imagined *majuu* world.

The consumption of these televised fantasies facilitates the imaginative construction of overseas migration as a solution to all their problems. It allows for “skipping one or several steps” (Ludl 2008), various obstacles and efforts but also risks. They think of migration not merely as an economic promotion but also as a specific strategy of upward cosmopolitanism, conferring an extraordinary status in Tanzania. Similar to the role of tour guides in tourism (see above), migration middlemen (most often male), brokers, and gatekeepers play an instrumental role in reifying the myth of dichotomy between here and there and profiting from it—legally or in the shady business of trafficking. These Janus-like figures are often returnee migrants. Youngsters share rumors about how these people come back refined, sophisticated, educated, and always well dressed. The perceived new authority and cosmopolitan identity acquired through the Western experience has a huge effect on the migration imaginary: Here things are bad; there things are better (at least so it seems). The West does not merely stand for a better education and more money; it also means fame, victory, respect, and admiration. Young Africans in general have a strong desire to belong to this fantastic cosmopolis, to the promising world out there (Ferguson 2006; Jónsson 2008).

Remittances and (conspicuous) consumption by migrants can easily increase the feeling of relative deprivation among non-migrants and increase their aspirations to migrate as a way to achieve upward socioeconomic mobility. Through the exposure to migrants’ (perceived) relative success, wealth, and status symbols (international) migration has almost become an obsession as it is perceived as the main or only avenue of vertical mobility, in which ambitions, life projects, and dreams of people are generally situated elsewhere. The fact that migrants often have a tendency to present themselves as successful and to conceal their economic and social problems further fuels the culture of migration. Both potential migrants and those who stay behind, however, often perceive economic opportunities and quality of life “out there” as greater than they actually are (Pajo 2007; Small 1997). Television, newspaper, and personal accounts of destitution by African immigrants abroad are no deterrent (Hahn and Klute 2007), because every potential migrant either hopes to be luckier or to embrace the hardship which, by the standards of life in Africa, is thought of as paradise. The imagined foreign worlds of those who have never migrated can be viewed as the ideological concomitant of transnational dependency and their ambivalent relationship with the homeland, a key element in the cultural contradictions of migration (Gardner 1993).

In the context of West Africa, no project has ever fed so many dreams, phantasms, and imaginaries as the plan to migrate to Europe. The

longing for mobility is an irresistible desire turning into a true emigration virus. The low Tanzanian emigration rates, however, stand in striking contrast to the thousands of other Africans trying to make the journey to Europe each year as illegal migrants—risking people smugglers, deserts, sea crossings, and the possibility of being sent home, all for the dream of a better life. This is remarkable because, after all, there are a whole series of harsh realities—governmental policies, impoverished soils, drought, famine, and so on—that could compel Tanzanians to move away. Besides, most Africans rely on comparable migration rumors and entertainment media representations to build up imaginaries of mobility—some of which is real and most of which is dreamt up (cf. Jónsson 2008). Why, in a poor African country like Tanzania, do migration imaginaries hardly generate excursions out of the homeland, but do they merely encourage their emulation?

Apart from obvious reasons (e.g., the lacks of capabilities, means, and support to actually migrate), there are some other processes at work here. Few Tanzanians fancy calling another country their home. Although they imagine *majuu* as a place preferable to their own country in terms of economics, they also offer critiques that illustrate that overseas migration is best envisioned as a temporary endeavor, undertaken mainly to improve one's life at home. In practice, the discourse of cosmobility often remains just that, a discourse. While dreaming of migration is very important for young people's day-to-day life, travel abroad will not be a reality for most. Besides, the majority now doubts that the greater part of African migrants in the West stand good chances to get a job with decent working conditions. Somehow, people start acknowledging that the spaces of marginality they want to escape from will reappear abroad, in the peripheries of European towns, in the social marginality most African migrants are doomed to live and work. In earlier times, people may have greatly overestimated the impact of migration movements and conceptualized these in their worldview and expectations for their future. Nowadays, things seem to have changed. Youngsters are better informed and have a more critical mindset than before.

Remarkably, the people I interviewed about their ideas on migration—ten highly skilled Tanzanian migrants in Belgium and fifteen returnees of various occupational backgrounds, ages, and migration experiences in Tanzania—all echoed similar explanations: "Migration is not a very Tanzanian thing to do . . . After all, it's a nice country to live in"; "Going far away isn't a thing to do . . . Maybe it all has to do with tradition"; "Tanzanians are not the most ambitious people and they usually have a family they can rely upon"; "Tanzanians are

fearful, we don't have a mentality of conquering." Many returnees have a clear message for those who contemplate making the big move. Victor, for example, was already working as a judge before going to the United Kingdom for further education. There, he had to work at a gas station to make ends meet. Upon his return to Tanzania, he wanted to share his sobering experience with as many people as possible. Binadamu migrated to the United States in the hope of realizing the American dream. It all turned out very different from what he had expected. Like many others of his age, once he had finished Form 6 (secondary school), he wanted to go to the United States. In his words: "I had watched MTV and wanted to become like them." The little money he had saved in Tanzania was quickly lost in university tuition fees, and he had to take two or even three jobs to survive economically. His experience has made him realize that life in Africa is better, but that you need a working spirit.

When I confronted interviewees with the fact that many West Africans still try to migrate to Europe, they explain the difference by referring to cultural roots (West Africans are more aggressive; Tanzanians have learned from their first president, Mwalimu Nyerere, to "live in a culture where life is easy and good") and opportunity (West Africa has fewer resources to be shared among a better educated population; in Tanzania many opportunities are not yet taken). Although partially influenced by the relatively peaceful and stable political history of Tanzania, which stands in marked contrast to most other African countries, the relevance of such testimonies lies in the very images and categories people use to describe and situate themselves and their fellow citizens within changing social worlds. They reaffirm that all (im)mobilities are "imaginatively crafted through particular cultural lenses" (Sanders 2001: 27). Similar ways of thinking are reflected in the messages spread around by the increasing number of Tanzanian media productions (produced locally or in the diaspora), which are very influential in shaping imaginaries, especially among young Tanzanians. While conducting fieldwork in Tanzania, my local research assistant and I collected popular songs and movies that address the topic of migration.

John Walker's song *Bitozi* (slang term to denote a cool person), mentioned above, is a perfect example. In *Uhamiaji* (Migration), on the other hand, Dr. John criticizes the bureaucracy in Tanzanian migration offices. One fan of the song left the following telling comment on its YouTube site: "Yes man, I am in Europe, in the United Kingdom. It's up to the Tanzanians to build their home in Tanzania. I'm a Somali but born in Tanzania. Europe, Europe, Europe, it's a gamble . . . not all people can be successful" (own translation; <http://www.youtube.com/>

watch?v=GK2oh1qPsEU). Similarly, in Mkoloni's *Tajiri na Masikini* (Rich Person and Poor Person), a poor person is not at all impressed by a rich guy who brags about his children studying in Europe and he himself often travelling there. Ally Kiba's song *Mac Muga* tells the true tale of a fellow Tanzanian singer, Mr. Nice (alias Lucas Mkenda), who wasted his fame and millions, moving to South Africa and the United Kingdom squandering his money on women and the high life. Now the man is back in Tanzania and has nothing to show off. Some of the YouTube comments on the lyrics are revealing: "This is about reality and responsibility"; "So simple yet so real. . . hope people in the diaspora are listening"; "The Mac Mugas of USA and Europe should listen to these lyrics . . . Nyumbani ni nyumbani jamani. Hebu mrejee b4 it's too late!" (Home is home friends. Well, come back before it's too late!; <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=93b1NB5XrKE>).

Locally produced Tanzanian VCD films (sometimes dubbed Tollywood movies) increasingly address the issue of mobility imaginaries too. The Swahili comedy *Welcome Back*, for instance, tells the story of a Tanzanian businessman coming back from Europe with a German girlfriend (played by a German PhD student in anthropology). However, it's hard to keep up appearances when the woman discovers that he has a Tanzanian family and that he lives far more modestly than he claimed. In a similar vein, *Yebo Yebo* (slang denoting a combination between hallo and yes) is a comedy about a Tanzanian migrant returning from the United States, while *The Stolen Will* handles the theme of Tanzanians relying on relatives in Europe or the United States. In *Dar 2 Lagos*, a Nigerian-Tanzanian coproduction (combining Nollywood and Tollywood actors), a Tanzanian goes to Nigeria searching for relatives who migrated there. One of the most remarkable Tanzanian VCD productions so far is the recently released Chinese-Tanzanian coproduction *From China with Love* (parts 1 and 2). It tells the unlikely tale about a Maasai businessman who falls in love with a Chinese girl he meets on a business trip to Hong Kong. He brings the girl back home to marry her, but the couple faces many problems, many of which have to do with cross-cultural communication difficulties.

Despite some exceptions, and notwithstanding increasing opportunities for Tanzanians to migrate to Uganda, South Africa, India, the Middle East, and Egypt, the predominant migration imaginaries remain remarkably centered on "the West" as the preferred locus to accrue symbolic capital and cosmopolitan status. While Tanzanians travel increasingly east, and despite the popularity of media productions such as *From China with Love*, China and the Chinese are viewed rather negatively.⁸ In other words, the mainstream imaginary of cosmobility, the desire to belong to a global cosmopolis, has to be

qualified because it is clearly directional. As indicated above, some of the Tanzanians I interviewed suggest there is a growing category of young people, mainly informed by migration narratives and rumors from returnees and new entertainment media representations, who do not really want to go abroad, but merely dream about the possibility. Yet the recent Obama-mania (which hit Tanzania as much as it did many other parts of the world) shows that drawing such a conclusion might be precarious. It is not unlikely to suspect that Obama's election as president of the United States has reinvigorated the imaginary that the American dream can also be realized by African migrants: "Yes we can!"

Implications for practice

No one lives in the world in general. Everyone, even the exiled, the drifting, the diasporic, or the perpetually moving, lies in some confined and limited stretch of it - "the world around here". The sense of interconnectiveness imposed on us by the mass media, by rapid travel, and by long-distance communication obscures this more than a little. So does the featurelessness and inter-changeability of so many of our public spaces, the standardisation of so many products, and the routinisation of so much of our daily existence (Clifford Geertz 1996: 262).

The ethnographic findings of my research on tourism in Indonesia and migration in Tanzania illustrate the various ways in which widespread imaginaries about border-crossing human mobilities are interconnected but also contradicting each other. The case of the Javanese tour guides points to the ironies involved; the more "mobile" they are—having travelled physically or in their imagination—the better guides are at representing and framing the globalized lifeworld around them and themselves as distinctively "local." No matter how hard Indonesian guides try to be cosmopolitan (mobile on an imaginative level), most foreign tourists continue seeing them as "local." Paradoxically, their dreams of moving (geographically) forward and (socially) upward—becoming more cosmopolitan (and more modern and Western)—can only materialize if they represent to tourists the lifeworld in which they live as developing little or not at all, as immobile in space and time. To avoid too much friction, guides must learn to position themselves in a transitional or liminal space that facilitates shifting between frames. One moment guides are enacting the fantasy of the immobile native (forced to be looking culturally inward), and

other moments they are distancing themselves from the locals (dreaming of roaming the wide world out there). At stake here is not simply the impact of tourism on people, but rather how they culturally develop during the dynamic process of making use of tourism to redefine their own identities.

As the data from Tanzania (and the Tanzanian diaspora) show, the Indonesian guides' dreams of mobility tie in neatly with widespread imaginaries of migration. For Tanzanians, such imaginaries serve as an essentially creative act that facilitates their ability to move beyond existing structural imbalances of power and economic constraints. Despite individual creative efforts, which reveal an evident form of agency, the opening of wider horizons and the multiplication of imagined and fascinating life possibilities also makes exclusion and frustration increasingly evident. On the one hand, people witness the widening of their horizons, to new stimuli for the imagination; on the other hand, they suffer from a chronic lack of means (Weiss 2002). People increasingly find their physical and socioeconomic mobility, as well as their identity and way of life, constrained by the reality in which they live. The analysis of locally produced popular culture, however, suggests that predominant imaginaries can and do change, albeit slowly. In the Tanzanians I interviewed, a sense of "at-homeness" is often claimed to be the necessary condition for a robust cultural identity, but "even in places that at first glance are characterized more by homogeneity and stasis than by pluralism and change, cultural circuits facilitating motion are at work" (Greenblatt 2009: 5). One could thus argue that cultures themselves are the product of a wide variety of boundary-crossing processes of exchange, processes that have also triggered countermovements and have led to an increase in displayed cultural difference (Salazar 2010).

This article highlights the potential of a mobility perspective by stressing the relations between embodied practices of mobility and world-shaping meanings of mobility, and between different intersections of the representations of (im)mobilities from different subject positions. Clearly, more fine-grained ethnographic research is needed to offer fresh perspectives on the relationality between mobility and immobility and to complicate the dominant assumptions about who is mobile and about who is kept in place and why. Mobility is not a simple thing undertaken only by a few, but it is present everywhere and may be experienced in many different ways. Most importantly, all forms and types of (im)mobility and their imaginaries are deeply embedded in wider socioeconomic structures and, thus, always need to be analyzed and understood in the specific context in which they occur.

Notes

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1. I carried out fieldwork over a period of 28 months, half of which I was in Indonesia (July–August 2003, January–December 2006) and the other half in Tanzania (June–August 2004, January–August 2007, and February–March 2009). In Indonesia the research mainly took place in the Javanese Special Province of Yogyakarta, supplemented with brief trips to Jakarta, East Nusa Tenggara, Papua, West Papua, South Sulawesi, and Bali. In Tanzania, I focused on the northern Arusha Region, together with shorter periods of work in Manyara, Kilimanjaro, Tanga, Dodoma, Dar es Salaam, and Zanzibar.
2. Indonesia has the largest Muslim population in the world. While most Javanese officially profess Islam as their religion, many are followers of Javanese mysticism and engage in a syncretic amalgam of Islamic, Hindu, Christian, and local spiritual beliefs and practices.
3. Representative examples of existing imaginaries about Java include Rush's *Java, A Traveller's Anthology* (1996), Vatikiotis's *Indonesia: Islands of the Imagination* (2006), Fischer's *Modern Indonesian Art* (1990), Choy's *Indonesia between Myth and Reality* (1976), Koentjaraningrat's *Javanese Culture* (1985), and Pemberton's (1994) *On the Subject of "Java."*
4. The qualifier "local" does not necessarily imply that tour guides are natives of the place where they operate (although they are habitually perceived as such by foreign tourists). In Yogyakarta many were born and raised in the area, but some have roots in other parts of Indonesia. Oftentimes, they migrated to the city to study or look for a job and settled.
5. Recognizing the early cultural influences from India, a "high" civilization because it is complex and literate, Java is rarely represented as primitive or tribal. The civilized image is also due to a concerted effort by national and provincial Indonesian authorities in the 1980s and early 1990s to send *gamelan* orchestras and traditional dance troupes around the world, advertising the country's high culture. During that time, especially Javanese intangible heritage received wide coverage in documentaries and in performances and museum exhibitions abroad.
6. In this context "the West" refers to a widespread imaginary, not to a specific geographic location with homogeneous cultural traits and historical background.

7. *Majuu*, literally “the things up there” in Swahili, is often used as a synonym for Europe (or the West). The “up” is explained by Tanzanians as referring to the high living standard (implying distance from the daily life of most people), the orientation on a map (in the north), or the fact that Tanzanians must fly to get to Europe. Other commonly used terms are *uzunguni* (the land of the white people), *ng'ambo* (overseas, the other or opposite side), and *mtoni* (at the river, referring to the oceans surrounding the African continent).
8. When Chinese President Hu Jintao visited Tanzania in February 2009, a commonly heard rumour in Dar es Salaam was that it was probably not the real president visiting, but a stand-in—in analogy with the cheap Chinese products flooding the Tanzanian markets and shops that look very much like renowned expensive brands but are of a much lesser quality (another, yet negatively valued, form of mobility). People in general feel increasingly cheated and exploited by Chinese products and people. Tanzanians also find it very hard to classify the Chinese because their mobility seems to break all (imagined) barriers of the existing social hierarchy.

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