

## Chapter 2

# Typologising Cross-Border Movements in Post-Migration Life



The women and men I met in the course of this study told me extensively about the ways they do or do not move, the places they have been to (or would like to go to), their activities while in those places and, when they are not travelling, the people who are important to them and whether these people live with them or elsewhere. This chapter describes and discusses the varied “post-migration mobility practices” that respondents have allowed me to see. As a reminder, cross-border mobility is defined in this book as all cross-border movements undertaken by settled migrants from their main country of residence that are significant enough to induce changes in their lives.

The main purpose of this chapter is to develop a novel and comprehensive typology of the post-migration cross-border mobility practices by bringing different types of cross-border movements into a single analytical focus. The various types of activities that mobile people undertake while on the move and the (constructed) places that their mobility practices link together are also examined. As a conceptual introduction to these empirical sections, I first review the literature that has dealt with various types of cross-border movements.

### 2.1 An Overview of the Literature

The mobility practices explored here are not new, and they have been observed and discussed by social scientists in the past. However, the literature tends to discuss each of these types of movements separately. Two strands of the literature in particular examine cross-border mobility with a perspective similar to the one I adopt. First, scholars interested in transnational practices have studied various kinds of movements that migrants may undertake after they have settled. Second, the idea of mobility is fundamental to many studies about cross-border “circulation”. These two strands are discussed separately.

### 2.1.1 *Transnational Studies*

Transnational studies have illuminated various types of movements that migrants might undertake after their initial migration. They emphasise that some migrants maintain connections with places other than their place of residence, moving in transnational social fields (Glick Schiller et al. 1995; Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004). Although transnational practices, networks and identifications are not necessarily grounded in cross-border movements, the reverse is not also true. The mobilities that the respondents develop necessarily build on different kinds of transnational practices and connections.

Scholars have developed several typologies of migration patterns, focusing mostly on migrants' intentions to stay in the destination country and/or on the types of transnational connections that certain forms of migration may lead to (see for instance Engbersen et al. 2013; Düvell and Vogel 2006; Dahinden 2013). In a study on migration patterns between Italy and Australia, for example, Hugo (2013) illuminates the variety of direct or indirect movements that may be followed by settlement or further mobility. While these typologies mostly aim to characterise types of *migrants*, however, mine focuses on the types of *mobility practices* that people on the move may undertake at some point in their lives. Different types of cross-border mobility practices do not characterise migrants per se, but may become a defining element of their lives for a period of time in their biography.

Jeffery and Murison's (2011) introduction to a special issue of *Population, Space and Place* on return and "onward migration" (their term for post-migration mobility) is an exception to the lack of comprehensive analyses of migrants' mobility practices. These authors examine how incorporation into the country of residence may be combined in various ways with diverse forms of return, relocation or circulation. Their welcome conclusions, based on the case studies included in the issue – and not on a single case study, as in this book – show how the transnational perspective illuminates the relevance of mobility in some migrants' lives.

Confusion may emerge because different terms have sometimes been used to describe similar phenomena, and because the same term has sometimes been used to refer to different types of practices. These overlapping conceptualisations indicate that there is a continuum between different types of cross-border movements. In some cases, it is difficult to make clear-cut distinctions between different forms of mobility. This point will be further discussed later in this chapter, when I present my own typology, but first I present an overview of different strands of the literature that focuses on single types of post-migration movements: return (in its different forms), to-and-fro movements (or pendulum-like movements) and secondary migration. All of these movements reveal that migrants are involved in transnational social fields; in other words, that they move between – and connect together – different localities that influence their lives.

### 2.1.1.1 Return

Return to the country of origin, in its various forms, is the type of movement that has been of most interest to transnational scholars. Return exists on a continuum between, at one end, visits to the country of origin, for instance during holiday periods, and, at the other, definitive return followed by settlement in the country of origin. Return is a process rather than an event, as in many cases it is made of multiple repeated movements whose nature may evolve over time (Black and King 2004; Stefansson 2004; Oeppen 2013). Return should not be understood as the final step of a migration trajectory, but rather as part of global mobility practices (Jeffery and Murison 2011). In fact, return is often treated in the literature in terms of transnational movements and mobility rather than a specific moment in a biography. As Hansen (2007) has argued, return should not be understood as a “sedentary concept reflecting an understanding of identity that does not capture the mobile practices of today’s world transnational flows” (131).

Processes of return have been researched empirically with varied focuses, but most studies reveal that returns are strongly influenced by the social position of those who undertake them. For instance, returning to the place of origin holding a Western passport implies the possibility of moving back to the country of migration if necessary, or of developing to-and-fro movement strategies between the two locations (Fink-Nielsen et al. 2004; Kleist 2007; Ley and Kobayashi 2005). This situation creates a radically different experience than that of rejected asylum seekers or undocumented migrants who are deported, who often return “with nothing but an empty bag” (Kleist 2016); (see also Drotbohm 2015 on the topic of return upon deportation).

Furthermore, return is often linked to specific moments and events in migrants’ lives. Ley and Kobayashi (2005) show how middle-class migrants from Hong Kong in Canada strategically design their to-and-fro movements between the two locations depending on their life stages. Each place offers specific opportunities that may be valuable early in one’s career, when children are born and raised or after retirement (see also Oeppen 2013 for a similar argument). Recently, scholars have also shown an interest in the movements undertaken by migrants’ children to their parents’ country of origin (King and Christou 2010; Darieva 2011; Bolognani 2014). Since “return” does not adequately describe such a move, King and Christou (2010) suggest referring to it as “ancestral return” or “counter-diasporic migration”. Studies indicate that young adults undertake such a move for different reasons, including the wish to participate in the future development of their ancestors’ country (Darieva 2011) and to enhance their social status while downplaying the discrimination they face in the country where they used to live (King and Christou 2010; Bolognani 2014). These young people move to a country where they have never lived but with which they have maintained transnational connections through

their biography. Through such mobility practices, they build on diverging social hierarchies and opportunities in two places, challenging ethnicised/racialised identifications and categorisations.

Issues of recognition and achieving a better social status through movements to the country of origin pervade much of the literature on (voluntary) return. Hansen (2007), for instance, demonstrates how male migrants who return to Somaliland attempt – often with little success – to regain the social recognition they have lost and to reconstruct positively valued versions of masculinity. Regular return visits may also become moments where social status in the country of immigration is performed and established through symbols of consumption, gifts and contributions (Salih 2003; Nieswand 2011; Sagmo 2015). However, while return may serve as a display of a comparatively better social status, it might also reveal pressures and anxieties. Against celebratory visions of transnational practices as necessarily emancipatory and mobility as intrinsically good, return is experienced by some migrants as a burden. In a study on Senegalese migrants in Italy, Sinatti (2011) explores how permanent return, although the ultimate aim, is constantly deferred because of the pressure to remit. Mobility in this case becomes an unwanted constraint that forces migrants “into the role of ‘mobile transmigrants’ in a continuous effort to negotiate between the benefits offered by staying in migration and sustainable permanent return” (ibid: 164).

This last point further demonstrates that the realities of return are also shaped by the transnational relationships that constitute migrants’ networks. Carling (2008) argues that relationships between migrants and their non-migrant significant others in their country of origin are shaped by “transnational moralities” based on asymmetries in power. Migrants’ economic power goes hand in hand with moral obligations if they want to maintain and enhance their role and social status among their social networks in the place of origin. Other studies have also revealed the tensions and conflicts that arise between “returnees” and those who have never left their country of origin (Dahinden 2005a, b; Bolognani 2014).

This (necessarily selective) overview of the transnational literature on return demonstrates that return, as a mobility practice, is shaped by the social location of those who move, with regard to both the different localities at stake and the significant people to whom the migrants are connected. Return and the specific forms it takes are based on specific assets that make it worthwhile, economically, socially, politically and morally. This book will empirically demonstrate how being able to undertake such a move relies on specific conditions of unequal power relations.

### 2.1.1.2 Pendular Migration

Pendular migration, regular movements between two places, can be seen as a specific form of return when one of those two places is the country of origin. Duany (2002) argues that to-and-fro movements are a way for migrants to construct “mobile livelihoods” by extending the means of subsistence across borders when

economic opportunities are unequally distributed in space. Work and other economic opportunities, family life and children's education and political involvement constitute important motivations to spend some time in a given place: moving to and fro may be a convenient way to take advantage of the assets localised in those multiple residences (Duany 2002; Ong 2003; Morokvasic 1999). Hammond (2013), for instance, argues that a significant number of elite Somali migrants (businesspeople and politicians in particular) hold multiple passports and divide their lives between their country of migration, where their family resides, and Somalia, where some of their professional activities are based.

To-and-fro movements between two places have been given different names, including "circulation" (Duany 2002), "shuttle migration" (Ong 2003; Morokvasic et al. 2003) and "commuting" (Nowicka 2013; Morokvasic et al. 2003). I opt for the term "pendular migration". "Incomplete migration" has also been used to refer to pendulum-like mobility (Fihel and Grabowska-Lusinska 2014): I do not endorse this terminology because of its normative implications, and because it misses the entire point of the idea of transnationality.

Literature on migrants' retirement also includes pendular mobility patterns: for instance, Bolzman and his colleagues discovered that travelling to and fro between the country of origin and the country of destination was the preferred option for labour migrants from Spain and Italy who had settled in Switzerland (Bolzman et al. 2006). Fokkema and de Haas (2009) also observed the increasing tendency of (predominantly male) retired Moroccan migrants to adopt "pendular migration" strategies between Europe and their country of origin (see also Hunter 2011).

Pendular migration follows an initial phase of sedentary migration and is based on some kind of settlement in the country of migration. People who move between two places spend some time in both places, whether it is with their families or for social, work or other purposes. In other words, they are not "visitors" in those places, but have developed specific relationships with them that allow for some kind of belonging. The notion of "dual residence" (Duany 2002; Hammond 2013), which focuses on the places that are linked rather than the movements between them, demonstrates this idea well.

While the literature reviewed here focuses exclusively on to-and-fro movements that link the place of migration with the place of origin, my own study illuminates the possibility of pendular movements that do not include migrants' country of origin.

### 2.1.1.3 Secondary Migration

Another type of post-migration movement that has interested some scholars has been referred to as "secondary migration", "secondary movement" or "onward migration". People who undertake such moves leave the country of residence to which they had first migrated for another place that is not their country of origin, where they also settle. Some scholars describe this phenomenon as "onward

movement” in order to emphasise that migration is not necessarily linear (Lindley and Van Hear 2007). Paul (2015), in a study on Filipino migrant domestic workers, analyses their trajectories as “stepwise” migrations, highlighting the intentional character of each planned step towards a final destination.

I choose the term “secondary migration” to indicate that the centre of gravity changes from a first place of immigration to another one following a movement defined as migration (based on the idea of Hägerstrand 1969 on the distinction between migration and mobility).

As has been discussed earlier, European policymakers have promoted the mobility of EU citizens between countries, primarily with highly skilled professionals in mind. What had been less foreseen (or in some cases wished for) is that new European citizens would grasp this opportunity to move to a country where they feel they can find more favourable living conditions. Research shows that significant numbers of migrants of Somali origin have undertaken such moves, mostly to settle in Britain from Continental European countries (Lindley and Van Hear 2007; Bang Nielsen 2004; Van Liempt 2011a, b; Ahrens et al. 2014; Mas Giralt 2017). Somali migrants in North America have made similar moves, either from one state to another within the US, or between the US and Canada (Horst 2007).

While onward migration in these examples is based on international agreements and legal rights by European or North American citizens to settle in another nation-state, secondary movements can also be undertaken irregularly, i.e. in ways that are unauthorised by states. So-called “irregular secondary movements” have attracted the attention of policymakers, who are concerned that refugees are circumventing international agreements requiring refugees to stay in the country where they first arrived (Legomsky 2003; Moret et al. 2006; Zimmermann 2009).

“Reverse migration”, a term coined by Al-Sharmani (2010), constitutes a specific type of secondary movement: it takes place when migrants relocate to a country that is not their country of origin but which they perceive as culturally, economically and geographically closer to “home”. In this sense, the processes involved are quite similar to those related to return. In Al-Sharmani’s study (2004, 2006), Somali migrants move from industrialised countries (mostly in North America) in which, despite their being naturalised, they are marginalised, to Cairo, where they can expect, thanks to their Western citizenship, to enhance their social status and live a middle-class life.<sup>1</sup>

Another reason for undertaking secondary migration relates to cross-border marriage. A cross-border marriage involves one of the spouses leaving their first country of migration to join their partner who lives in another country that is not the country of origin. These “offshore marriages” (Voigt-Graf 2005) remain understudied, although they are part of migrants’ transnational marriage practices, as becomes apparent in my empirical data.

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<sup>1</sup> Although Al-Sharmani does not define the term, “reverse” could refer to either going in the direction opposite to that of the initial migration or reversing a marginalised socioeconomic situation thanks to the new move.

Transnational scholars have thus explored a vast array of mobility practices that occur in transnational social fields, practices that simultaneously reinforce those fields. Varied forms of return, to-and-fro movements and secondary moves build on migrants' connections with different localities across borders as well as on their identification with those different places, as this book will discuss.

### 2.1.2 *The Literature on Circulation*

Mobility has also been widely discussed in a strand of literature focusing on circulation as a form of mobility alternative to (sedentary) migration. Many studies reveal how some women and men regularly cross borders to engage in economic activities, circulating between different places and coming back on a more or less regular basis to their place of residence. Already in the 1970s, Zelinsky (1971) contrasted migration to circulation practices: while the former was defined as “any permanent or semipermanent change of residence, [...] a spatial transfer from one social unit or neighbourhood to another, which strains or ruptures previous social bonds” (225–6), circulation “denotes a great variety of movements, usually short-term, repetitive, or cyclical in nature, but all having in common the lack of any declared intention of a permanent or long-lasting change in residence” (226). Like Zelinsky, Chapman and Prothero (1983) do not differentiate between cross-border movements and movements within nation-states: they analyse circulatory patterns in so-called “Third World societies”, demonstrating how such practices may be part of long-term strategies to benefit from resources located in different places (see also Chapman 1979).

Since the 1990s, scholars in different parts of the world have approached circulation empirically, finding similar patterns despite the variety of economic activities in which mobile women and men are involved. The seminal work of Alain Tarrus (1993, 2000, 2002) and other (mostly French) scholars (see among others Peraldi 2001; Morokvasic 1999; Schmoll 2005; Tarrus et al. 2013; Morokvasic et al. 2003) has challenged the traditional understanding of migration and the ideas of integration, sedentariness and ethnicity that went with it. This strand of literature, which is interested in individual mobility practices as well as larger mobility systems, has fostered a fundamental renewal of the theoretical, methodological and epistemological premises in migration studies (Cortes and Faret 2009). These scholars further emphasise the existence of territories of circulation (*territoires circulatoires*) that do not follow the borders or logics of nation-states but have their own hierarchies and forms of sociality (Tarrus 1993).

Women and men on the move engage in varied economic activities based on their ability to cross borders regularly. Those who are involved in “suitcase trading” around the Mediterranean circulate between different countries, crossing borders and buying and selling products mostly in informal markets (Peraldi 2001, 2007; Schmoll 2005, 2006; Morokvasic 1999, 2007). Marques et al. (2001) analyse similar patterns of transnational informal trade carried out by former Cape Verdean migrant women

who have returned home: they circulate between Cape Verde, Portugal (where they used to live and have kept social networks they continue to mobilise in their business) and other places, generally bringing back goods they sell in Cape Verde. Some women active in the sex industry develop similar strategies of circulation, working in different countries but more or less regularly going back to their country of origin, where they expect to live in the future – as for instance with cabaret dancers in Switzerland (Dahinden 2009, 2010; Thiévent 2010), Filipina entertainers in Japan and elsewhere (Parreñas Salazar 2010) and sex workers from North Africa or Eastern Europe who develop trajectories crossing different countries in Europe before possibly going back to where their families reside (Tarrus 2011; Tarrus et al. 2013). Potot (2007) studied the circular routes taken by Romanian migrants who work in diverse odd jobs in the formal and informal labour markets of France, Spain and Britain and regularly go back home and undertake new circular journeys. Finally, Poland's accession to the EU has facilitated circular movements: women and men develop flexible forms of mobility, accessing consecutively different national labour markets and regularly returning to their place of origin (Gozdziaik 2014).

Whether circulating for business, petty jobs, manual labour or sex work, these women and men have developed strategies that rely on a specific resource: their mobility and the skills that go with it. In this sense, mobility becomes a fundamental asset, and their "*savoir-circuler*" (Tarrus 2002) involves skills in crossing borders, carrying and smuggling goods, navigating between different cultural and legal systems and developing useful social networks in the places they reach (Peraldi 2007; Schmoll 2005; Dahinden 2010). Mobility is not simply a means to link one place to another: it constitutes a central element of individual and collective livelihood strategies. Improving their living conditions does not imply a long-term change in their place of residence, as in traditional forms of migration, but instead requires the development of sophisticated strategies based on circulation and regular border crossings (see Zelinsky's definition above).

Most studies on circular mobility describe it in terms of strategies developed as an alternative to sedentary migration: those involved in this type of mobility do not envisage long-term settlement except in their place of origin. In this sense, circulation does not constitute post-migration mobility practices as they are understood in this book. Recently, some scholars of circulation have accounted for similar mobility practices by former migrants. Based on two studies in France and Italy, Schmoll and Semi (2013) demonstrate how some settled migrants from North Africa engage in cross-border trade activities based on circulation. They analyse how these activities contrast with the classic ethnic business entrepreneurship that researchers and policymakers alike usually focus on. A recent book by Tarrus et al. (2013) illustrates through different case studies how migrants or their descendants may start practising circulation after periods of sedentariness. Using the term "career", Tarrus and Missaoui describe how migrants' sedentary children, who are in regular contact with circular migrants because they participate in the same economy, start embracing mobile lives themselves, leaving traditional paths of integration. In the same book, Qacha examines migration trajectories composed of stages ("*parcours par étapes*"): stages of sedentariness allow migrant women to consolidate local

knowledge and social networks and acquire residency rights, which may later be used to develop circulation practices within Europe.

My study includes similar mobility practices developed by migrants who have acquired residency rights (mostly through naturalisation) in the country where they initially settled, and shares these scholars' interest in cross-border mobility as an ensemble of skills that some people may mobilise strategically.

## 2.2 Post-Migration Mobility Practices: A Typology

Specific types of cross-border movements have been described and discussed extensively in the literature, as the previous section has shown. My aim now is to develop a comprehensive perspective on the “post-migration mobility practices” that take place across borders, and to systematically analyse these practices as coherent wholes within particular biographies. Examining mobility as a system makes it possible to understand that different types of movements are interlinked and have different effects depending on the representations and meanings that are attached to them (Stock and Duhamel 2005). In this light, individual systems of mobility can be thought of as representing the ensemble of the places an individual goes to and the types of movements she undertakes to link them (ibid). The comprehensive approach and typology I adopt here should not, however, overestimate the strategic dimension of the development of such practices. Mobile women and men generally start crossing borders without a clear plan of how they will (or even may) further develop their mobility “career” in the future. Opportunities and chances arise, obstacles force them to modify their plans and others' successes or failures give them ideas from which they develop their projects. “Systems of mobility” relate to ever-evolving practices, often built step by step, abandoned, adapted and improved depending on the structural conditions under which they develop (Moret 2017).

Post-migration mobility practices take multiple shapes. The frequency of movements, their geographical locations, the length of the stays in the different places, the reasons for which they are undertaken and the collective arrangements they implicate combine in various ways. Six ideal types of post-migration mobility practices are described in this section (they are visualised later in Fig. 2.1):

- Star-shaped mobility
- Pendular mobility
- Secondary migration
- Temporary visits to the place of origin
- Definitive return
- Immobility

These ideal types should not be regarded as describing social reality accurately, but as abstract constructions of this reality. They are tools to analyse complex social phenomena – in this case geographic mobility practices – and to think of them in a coherent way (Weber 1965). While these ideal types are related to existing categories

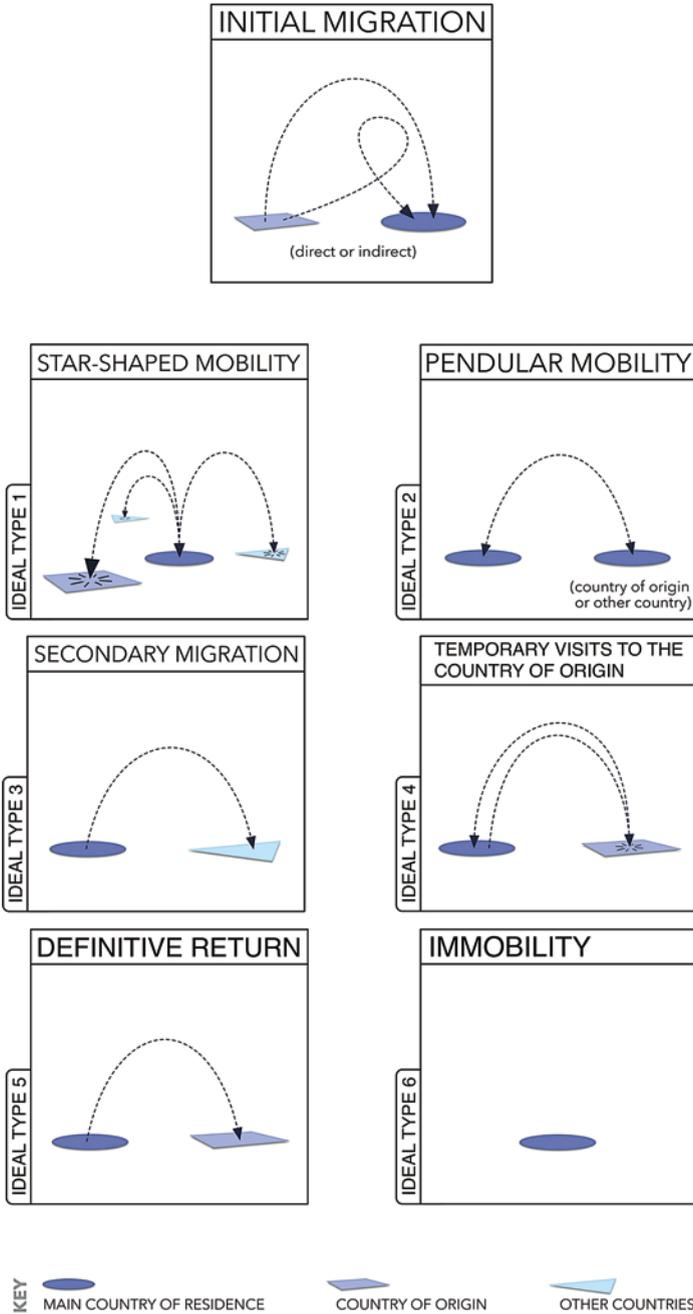


Fig. 2.1 Post-migration mobility practices: a typology

of mobility – most of which have been discussed in the previous section – they have emerged from my empirical data. Specifically, the ideal types build on the frequency of the cross-border movements, the duration of the stay in the different locations, the locations themselves (i.e. whether they include the country of origin and/or third places) and whether the movement entails a change in the main place of residence. Table 5.1 in Chap. 5 details these dimensions.

Because social reality can never be fully contained by the categories social scientists create to describe it, it is impossible to definitively situate each respondent in one or another of the ideal types. Most biographies include elements of more than one type: practices change over time, and they combine in different ways. Different mobility types can therefore be found at different points in a single respondent's story, and sometimes, although less often, even simultaneously. However, the specificity of each ideal type is based on distinct criteria. For all but one, I have selected one or two life stories that are particularly illustrative of the type of mobility discussed.

### ***2.2.1 Star-Shaped Mobility***

“Star-shaped mobility” refers to practices involving regular movements to different places, always for short periods of time, before coming back to the main place of residence. The main place of residence constitutes the centre of the star, while the destinations of the movements are its tips.

It has similarities with circular forms of migration as described, for instance, by Tarius (2002), Dahinden (2010), and Thiévent (2010) with regard to the frequency of movements and the diversity of the places of destination. There are at least two major differences, however: first, in star-shaped mobility, movements are undertaken from a country that, in contrast to most circulation practices, is not the country of origin, but the place to which the person has migrated and in which she or he has settled. The second difference lies in the importance of the main country of residence to the mobility practices. Although people leave their main country of residence on a regular basis, they spend most of their time there, where they are generally strongly anchored. This local incorporation is evidenced by the migrants' work, social life, political or associational involvement and family.

#### **2.2.1.1 Nuur**

Nuur is a man in his late twenties who arrived in Switzerland at the age of 14. Thanks to uninterrupted studies before his arrival and his willingness to learn, he managed to integrate into the local school system, catch up with other pupils, obtain further education and secure a stable, skilled job. He became Swiss at the age of 22 and decided to serve in the army, taking this duty of young male Swiss citizens

seriously. He has also set up and/or been involved with several migrant (sometimes Somali) associations and is an active member of a local political party. Nuur's local incorporation and participation in the economic, cultural, social and political life of his city is thus important.

In parallel, Nuur has become increasingly mobile. The first time I interviewed him, he told me, "You know, since I got the Swiss passport, I have been travelling all the time". I met him several times over the next 2 years and learnt more about his diverse mobility practices and how he manages to be mobile and simultaneously have a full-time job in Switzerland.

We Somalis are not like you: you plan your holidays three months ahead, six months ahead. It's enough if I sleep tonight and tomorrow I wake up and I say, "But wait, next weekend I might just hop over to London. I'll leave on Friday and come back on Sunday". That's it. Or just by chance I realise that Monday is Whit Monday, it's a public holiday. [I tell myself:] "Why don't you take a long weekend off? Oh I'm going to leave". [...] And sometimes, as there are many women who have children [who work with me], I am the one who is on duty, which means more extra hours. And the problem is that my colleagues are used to planning their holidays six months ahead, while I don't even know what I am going to do three weeks ahead! [Semi-structure interview, recorded]

While he stresses the cultural differences between "We Somalis" and "you" (referring, it appears, to me as well as to his Swiss colleagues), he also acknowledges his situation as a young single man (at the time of this interview) working mostly with mothers of young children. These gendered differences are part of his mobility strategy: while his female colleagues find it more difficult to organise their lives and work schedules, Nuur finds advantages in taking more than his share of work. It allows him to work extra hours when he is in Switzerland – which is not a problem, given that he has few domestic responsibilities – and to "bank" time to maximise his travels.

Nuur thus travels regularly, but mostly for short periods (a maximum of 3 weeks in a row, but mostly just a few days). His travel has multiple purposes that sometimes overlap. One involves his business activities, mainly in relation to his aunt's transnational trade. For instance, before the war started in Syria he travelled to Dubai and Damascus to bring back jewellery, gold and furniture that his aunt then sold, mostly to Somalis who live in Switzerland.

Nuur also travels for reasons having to do with political activities related to his region of origin in Somalia. In 2010, he spent 3 weeks in the US as a representative for Switzerland at the annual gathering of a diaspora association that supports the political and economic development of a region in Somalia.<sup>2</sup>

A third reason for Nuur's travels is that he recently set up a transnational humanitarian project to support poor people in his region of origin in Somalia. Nuur told me that he initiated the project in Switzerland with a few other people there and then

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<sup>2</sup>The use of "diaspora" in the name of this association shows that this term has been appropriated by Somali intellectuals who live in Western countries and want to stay or become politically involved in their region of origin, as Kleist (2008a) has demonstrated.

contacted people to join it, either directly or through people he knew. This network extends in particular to the Netherlands, Great Britain, the United States and the United Arab Emirates. Because he needed to establish a “strong” and “reliable” network to carry out the project in Somalia, he actively involved people from his extended kin group who, unlike him, had contact with influential people in the region, “elders who are there and through whom we can intervene and settle problems”. He recently travelled to Somalia for the first time since he had left the country when he was a child to witness the progress of the project for himself. I know from email exchanges that he has been back there at least a couple of times since then.

Last but not least, mobility is a way for Nuur to maintain and reinforce his family and kin networks. He regularly visits members of his family who live in different places in Europe and North America. Furthermore, at the beginning of the 2010s he married a Somali woman from his extended family who was living in London: I had the opportunity to meet his wife, Mulki, and interview her during one of my stays in Britain. When they married, their plan was that Mulki would join him in Switzerland, but for various reasons she was only able to do so 2 years later. During that time, Mulki became pregnant and had a child, which created an additional reason for Nuur to travel to London frequently.

Nuur’s experience of star-shaped mobility is varied and allows him to develop economic, political and social activities and networks, and to navigate in a transnational space that involves four continents while maintaining a strong anchorage in his city of residence. Importantly, his mobility is characterised by an embedding in strong and extended kin (clan) networks. This is not the case for all mobility practices, as Aman’s biography shows.

### 2.2.1.2 Aman

Aman is a woman in her early forties who lives in Switzerland with her husband and their five children. She left Somalia at the beginning of the war and arrived in Switzerland in 1990 at the age of 20. Although she was about to study medicine when she left Somalia, she was unable to pursue that goal in Switzerland and now works as a freelance interpreter. This professional situation is quite precarious because it does not guarantee fixed employment or income, but its flexible character gives Aman more freedom to travel. She was naturalised in the mid-2000s, and having a Swiss passport has given her greater freedom of movement. She started to visit close family members and friends who live in different places, some of whom she had not been able to visit before she became Swiss:

The first time I travelled [after obtaining Swiss citizenship], I went to the United States, to visit my brother and my mother, whom I had not seen for 17 years. It was the first time that my kids met her. I saw the entire family, people I used to know who now live there. Then I went to Dubai to visit my brother, whom I had also not seen for 17 years. I did not know his kids, only by phone and from pictures. And yes, I took the opportunity – I went to Holland to visit my cousin. [Semi-structured interview, recorded]

Star-shaped mobility is a strategic way of conciliating transnational activities with domestic or work responsibilities in one's main country of residence. Aman plans her travels according to school holidays and her own professional duties. When I met her, she always travelled with her children, but not systematically with her husband, who was still in the process of becoming naturalised. Talking about her first trip to the US, she recalls:

It was the first trip I made, but I was lost. You lose the sense of travelling when you don't travel. It had been 17 years since I had left. At first it was a little hard, but good. [...] But it's a long way from here to the United States, it's an eight-hour time difference, and with three children, and a change in New York, where there are so many people, it was... [she stops. J: "It was a big trip..."]. Yes, a very big trip [laughs], and it was the first time. Everyone told me: "You're brave, [to do that] with young children!" [Semi-structured interview, recorded]

However, while travelling with her children is difficult, she mentions that it also has advantages, since it allows her to bring additional luggage, which she sometimes uses to carry goods for other people. Indeed, while she stresses the social dimension of her mobility (visiting family and friends), she concedes that she brings social and material goods with her and her children. Travellers are often asked by less-mobile Somalis to bring gifts, letters and even small amounts of money (although Aman refuses to carry money) to their kin members or friends who live in other parts of the world. Information is another important good circulated by mobile people. Aman recalls having reconnected cousins who had lost touch after leaving Somalia. These kinds of services, performed through mobility, contribute to establishing wider local and transnational networks and thus transform mobility capital into social capital. Aman told me how being in other countries created opportunities to meet with new people:

What is good is that people invite you. When you do these little favours, they thank you and invite you for dinner. And that creates new connections. [Semi-structured interview, recorded]

But Aman, like other women, does not limit what she transports to non-economic goods. On her return trips to Switzerland, she uses her luggage allowance to bring products she sells to her network of mostly Somali women. Her informal business activities involve items desired by Somalis that are hard to find in Switzerland: traditional clothing for everyday life or special events such as weddings, jewellery, decorative objects, curtains or food. But they may also involve global products such as electronic devices or computer games. Although her business activities remain limited and do not constitute her main source of income, Aman's transnational star-shaped mobility contributes to her economic strategy.

In sum, star-shaped mobility practices are characterised by frequent to very frequent travels to a multiplicity of places, which sometimes include the country of origin. While Nuur's mobility practices seem to increasingly include a particular region in Somalia, both his and Aman's travels take them to a variety of other places. Furthermore, this first ideal type, unlike some of the others, does not involve a change in the main place of residence. For both Nuur and Aman, their city of resi-

dence constitutes the centre of the star: they have resided there for a long time; their close family lives there; they are employed and earn money there. However, they undertake regular trips out of the country, which connect them to places and networks and allow them to develop activities in parallel to those they are committed to in their main country of residence.

### 2.2.2 *Pendular Mobility*

The second ideal type of mobility is constituted of regular to-and-fro movements between two countries, with medium to long stays in each. Each of the meaningful places is characterised by some kind of local anchorage and associated with specific spheres (for instance, family, education, work, political activities). Pendulum-like mobility practices have attracted the attention of many researchers (see above), who have shown that people who move to and fro between two locations can benefit from opportunities located in two different places.

In many cases, pendular mobility takes place between the country of migration and the country of origin, either as a form of mobility *alternative* to permanent migration, as with the Polish women who commute to Germany studied by Morokvasic (1999, 2003), or as a strategy developed *after* sedentary migration, for instance after retirement. Given my theoretical interest, I have focused here on the second type, which involves people who can be thought of as having a “dual residence”. In the literature, the country of origin is almost always one of the involved countries – and I have indirectly heard of such cases in my study as well. However, Farhan’s pendular mobility practices demonstrate that such is not always the case.<sup>3</sup>

#### 2.2.2.1 **Farhan**

Farhan is a man in his forties who resides part-time in Switzerland, part-time in Britain. Coming from a middle-class family in Mogadishu, he interrupted his tertiary education when he left Somalia 20 years ago. He arrived on his own in Switzerland and became a Swiss citizen some 15 years later. After his arrival as a young and single man, he made a point of investing in higher education: working in an unskilled job, he first took private French lessons he financed himself, and later, thanks to his savings, entered a private school for 2 years to obtain his *maturité* (upper secondary diploma needed to pursue tertiary education). After 4 more years of working part-time and studying at university, he got his degree and found a job in the field he graduated in.

In the early 2000s, he married a Somali woman living in London with whom he has since had four children. Since his marriage, to-and-fro movements between Britain and Switzerland have shaped his life. During the first 8 years, Farhan kept

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<sup>3</sup>Farhan’s biography is analysed in further detail in Chap. 4.

studying and working in Switzerland, spending as much time as he could with his family in London. Finishing his studies and obtaining a Swiss passport facilitated his regular movements: together, they meant increased financial means and the end to visa requirements. During this period, he worked long shifts (including night shifts) for 3 weeks and spent every 4th week in London.

In 2008, he moved to London to live with his wife and children. Despite his happiness at being reunited with his family, his working conditions and career prospects, which were constrained by his limited knowledge of English, never satisfied him. A couple of years later, he started penduling again, dividing his life between a job in the same Swiss institution he had been at 3 years earlier and his family in London, spending about half of his time in each location. Furthermore, although he admits that commuting between the two countries is sometimes demanding, he also repeatedly told me about projects he had in mind that would require him to travel between Europe and Africa in a similar way, but with longer stays. For example, during one of our discussions while he was living in London, Farhan told me:

F: But I also had the idea of having a job for a few months in Europe, and then for a few months in Africa because I felt... I still feel that I owe something to my country.

J: By Africa, do you mean Somalia?

F: For me, Africa is Somalia. But it is also the neighbouring countries. Maybe Kenya. Or Ethiopia, but I don't feel much about it. Or Djibouti. But mostly Kenya. So I sent an application to the International Red Cross, but I was turned down. So I think that if I had a master's, I would have more chances. But I did that when my youngest son was two months old, so I think that was a disadvantage too.

J: But did you have the idea of going there with your family?

F: No. Even if I left on my own, and came back....

J: So penduling between here and there....

F: Yes, exactly, penduling. Because now, I don't feel.... Yes, I am Somali deep down, but I am not only Somali. I am also European, I am also Swiss, and I don't want to lose all these links. In fact, I would like to keep them and develop them more. It would give me more opportunities, but more work is needed for that, more flexibility. [Semi-structured interview, London, recorded]

This quotation illustrates Farhan's utilitarian approach to mobility, which enables him to take advantage of two places, both of which require his physical presence if he wants to attain his various goals. The transnational field in which he navigates offers him several diverse opportunities, and only by travelling to and fro can he make use of them. The Swiss labour market offers him better opportunities in terms of income and working conditions, while London is in his eyes a better place for his family: his wife finds herself in a familiar environment, which allows her to manage their children's activities; his children have access to the kind of education he wants for them, which includes the Somali language and religious education. Britain also represents a way for Farhan to, in his own words, "get closer to Somalia": in the last couple of years, he has come into contact with a few highly educated Somali men who live in London with whom he holds regular intellectual discussions about global political issues, especially the situation in Somalia. He mentions missing such debates in Switzerland and hopes that his participation in this informal group will eventually lead to future concrete projects in Somalia. Although he is in close contact with his sisters, brothers and other family members

in Somalia, Farhan has never returned there in the 20 years since he left, and he does not intend to return permanently. Yet he repeatedly mentioned his wish to “contribute” to his country of origin, to be involved in its development in some way. His two cities of residence, one in Switzerland, the other in Britain, have become places with specific meanings for Farhan: while he speaks the local language, has developed work-related networks and has a skilled job in Switzerland, much of his social life is now located in Britain.

Farhan is the only person in my sample who systematically undertakes pendular mobility (although I have heard indirect accounts of others who do so). His story demonstrates particularly well the characteristics of this type of cross-border mobility, which involves regular movement between two places and, generally, medium stays in each one. While to-and-fro movements typically link the individual’s country of immigration and country of origin, Farhan’s movement demonstrates that they can also involve a location other than the country of origin. The distinctive feature of this type of movement is that it adds to a first main place of residence a second one, and that social actors are strongly anchored in both places at the same time.

### 2.2.3 *Secondary Migration*

People who undertake secondary migration – the third ideal type – leave a first country of residence to which they had migrated and in which they had settled for another one that is not their country of origin, where they also settle. In other words, “secondary movers” change their main place of residence. In many cases, they retain some kind of connection with their previous country of residence, which they may visit regularly. Secondary movements may thus lead the previous country of residence to become part of an individual’s mobility system.

As already mentioned, a significant number of Somali migrants is known to undertake regular or irregular secondary movements from a first country of arrival in Europe to another one (Van Liempt 2011a; Lindley and Van Hear 2007; Bang Nielsen 2004; Ahrens et al. 2014). In Switzerland, this phenomenon is rather rare: among my respondents in Switzerland, for example, a small number had lived in Italy before moving onward. Among my respondents in Britain, in contrast, about half had lived in another European country (Italy, the Netherlands, Denmark, Norway, Switzerland or France) before moving on to Britain. Furthermore, I heard of many cases of transnational marriages, sometimes among my informants, sometimes among their relatives or acquaintances. In most cases, these marriages included the secondary migration of one of the spouses (not necessarily the woman). In Switzerland, I met two women who had left Britain to join their husbands.

Hani’s story below is not totally typical of European Somali movers: while, like many, she moved from a first country of residence in mainland Europe to Britain, her trajectory included an additional secondary move to a non-European country in between.

### 2.2.3.1 Hani

Hani is a woman in her forties who had been living in London for 5 years when I met her. She has five children and is separated from her husband. When she fled Somaliland in the late 1980s with her two oldest children, she settled in Denmark, where she gave birth to her other children, started university and became involved in an association that supports migrants. As a member of one of the first Somali families to settle there, she soon became, in her words, “the Somali women community leader”. In 2002, however, she decided to move with her children and husband to the UAE, to pursue her academic education. Hani explained that she had had some difficulties in completing her studies in Denmark, where she did not have any relatives, while having to look after five young kids. But she had cousins in the UAE who could help her. In other words, the UAE offered her some opportunities Denmark did not. Her secondary move, although intended to help her graduate, was sustained by a transnational gendered arrangement.

After having obtained an MBA, her life took a new turn because she decided to come back to Europe, but to use her EU citizenship to settle in a new place: London. Here too, specific motivations guided her decision to leave her place of residence and choose Britain as a new place to settle:

Education was expensive there [in the UAE], and I couldn't afford the education fees for all my children. And it was not easy to get visas to stay, and it was difficult to find a job too. But the main reason was that my mum was very old, and she was living here in the UK. Actually, I came to visit my mum here, and I saw she was in bad health and very lonely. I saw some opportunities here, free education for my children, and I decided to come here. [Semi-structured interview, notes]

After 3 years in the UAE, Hani's resources were insufficient to allow her to remain there: among other things, the cost of private education, the lack of a stable legal status and – perhaps relatedly – difficulties in accessing the labour market despite her diploma pushed her to re-evaluate her situation. In the meantime, visits to Britain opened some new doors for her, as these cross-border movements allowed her to perceive new “opportunities” as well as her mother's needs. Hani's sister, who had been living in the Netherlands until then, also undertook a secondary move to be near their mother and benefit from opportunities offered by London, including, according to Hani, the freedom to practice Islam, the availability of Somali food and other things “from the homeland”, the proximity of other Somali people and the opportunity to practice English, an international language perceived as useful anywhere in the world.

Hani was very keen on presenting herself as a “very active” woman involved, in particular, in associational activities aimed at other migrants. As with other respondents, while her activities in her first (European) country of residence addressed migrants in general, she later came to focus specifically on Somalis – in her case Somali women – when she settled in Britain. The large Somali population and Britain's multicultural policies (which focus on ethnic groups' rights) certainly constitute part of the explanation. Hani also undertook a couple of visits to Somaliland after having relocated to Britain: she states that those visits have allowed her to

identify the needs of vulnerable women “there and here”, reinforced her commitment to this particular population and led her to take new initiatives. After her first visit, she enrolled in courses for “community interpreters” and “health advocates”. After the second one, she decided to open up her own organisation, active in both Somaliland and London.

Hani has retained strong connections with her first place of residence in Europe, Denmark, where she lived for 13 years. In particular, she is in close contact with many of her friends there, whom she visits regularly. Furthermore, her children’s father returned to Denmark after their stay in the UAE, and she foresees that some of her children may want to go back to their place of birth at some stage. The links she has created with different places over the years emerged in the spatial interview, when I asked her to comment on the places she had mentioned as important (i.e. Somaliland, Denmark and Britain):

Hopefully, I will go back to Somaliland one day when my children are grown up. I could settle there. Or I don’t know, settle there and come back to visit them. Or I could also maybe stay with them here [in London] or in Denmark. I don’t know. Because my children might choose to live here or in Denmark. [Spatial interview, notes]

In sum, the main characteristics of this type of post-migration mobility are a single move away from the main place of residence, followed by a long stay and a concrete anchorage in the place of destination. Furthermore, the move involves two countries, neither of which is the country of origin: if the change of residence involves the country of origin, we are then dealing with return, discussed below.

### ***2.2.4 Temporary Visits to the Country of Origin***

The fourth type of mobility consists of regular movements to the region of origin in order to visit relatives, check on one’s property, carry out business or work, be involved in local politics or implement a humanitarian or development project. The regularity of the movements and the length of the stays in the region of origin may vary, and they also change over time. This definition is consistent with the growing body of literature on migrants’ return to their country of origin, which has grasped the complex and diverse processes involved, including, in many instances, repeated or circular movements (see for instance Stefansson 2004; Black and King 2004; Sinatti 2011; Sagmo 2015; Oeppen 2013). King (2000), for example, acknowledges that migration and return are increasingly seen “as part of wider ongoing processes of global mobility”. In a study on Somalilanders who returned to their country of origin, Hansen (2007) refers to these movements as “revolving returns” to capture their mobile character.

Among my respondents were people who either regularly visit their place of origin or have undertaken longer but temporary “returns”. Most of them return to Somaliland, in rarer cases to other parts of Somalia. For all of them, obtaining a passport from their country of residence was a prerequisite to being able to travel

there. Awa's story illustrates how regular returns may strengthen social and symbolic links to the "homeland".

#### 2.2.4.1 Awa

Awa is a 35-year-old woman who lives in London and describes herself as an "activist". She was a teenager when she arrived in the Netherlands with her family. In Amsterdam, she studied, worked and became involved in refugee and integration issues.

She had travelled to Somaliland a couple of times before, but a specific trip in 2001 (to participate in the making of a documentary) took on a particular meaning for her: she recalls that having been away from her main place of residence for 2 months changed the perception she had of it and of her life there, allowing her to "have some distance" from it. That is when she made the sudden decision to move to London and settle there. This particular trip to Somaliland – which would be followed by others – set the ground for her decision to use her European passport to undertake a secondary move to London. Since this move, Awa has been a part-time teacher, but most of her time is dedicated to organising important cultural events in London and Somaliland (and sometimes the Netherlands) through the association she set up. She is involved in many associational activities in Britain, but also in the Netherlands, where she still feels her friend, work and political networks are strong, in some cases even stronger than in Britain.

In recent years, she has been travelling to Somaliland (and sometimes to neighbouring countries) more and more regularly, and always for long periods of time (1–2 months). In 2010, a Dutch media organisation commissioned her to travel there to explore the possibility of setting up a Somali "diaspora radio" network composed of local Somali radio stations in the region. She also went to Somaliland during the recent elections as a member of a team of international observers. But the most important reason for her travel to Somaliland over the last few years is the organisation of a yearly cultural event. This event is transnational in many ways: it targets the local population, but also Somalilanders who live abroad: as Awa told me, it is held in the summer so that the "diaspora can easily come". The festival is organised jointly by Awa's London-based organisation and a Norwegian-based organisation of a friend of hers, and with the funding support of organisations based in different European countries.

However, although Awa sometimes refers to Somaliland as "home", she has never permanently lived there, even though part of her family was originally from there. Before leaving for Europe in the late 1980s, she and her family had lived in different places in southern Somalia. To her, returning to her "place of origin" is thus more about building a different future than re-enacting some kind of lost mythical past (see Stefansson 2004 on that topic; Darieva 2011). When I mentioned the fact that she has never lived there, she answered:

Eh, no, but I think the last eight years that I've been working here and there, especially the last two or three years that I have been going more often, I have felt a sense of injustice dumped on these people. So I think that has influenced me a lot. [...] I think many people go there and see that's what the country is like, and they come back and think, "Oh my God, I haven't been advocating enough for them, so who am I to blame anyone else?" I think that going back and forth has shaped people's identity. [Semi-structured interview, recorded]

Later on in the same interview, I asked her if she thought she would 1 day live permanently in Somaliland. She answered:

Again, I'm not from there. So no, no. [...] If I feel I can't do this in Hargeisa anymore, for me it's not interesting to live in Hargeisa. It's about: what can you really contribute? And really, increasingly, for me, Somaliland youth and Somaliland are becoming a priority in my life, in one way or another. It's the most important thing for me now, at this particular moment. And they are really amazing kids. But so few opportunities, so few opportunities. [Semi-structured interview, recorded]

Awa's "revolving return" practices illustrate that regular visits or temporary returns to one's homeland can take many forms, and that they are complex and often ambivalent processes. Moreover, as with the other types of mobility practices, temporary visits to the country of origin exert a (sometimes powerful) influence on present and future life conditions and projects in the individual's main country of residence. Despite the multiplicity of forms this type of post-migration mobility practice can take, its distinctive feature is the frequency of the moves, which are always to and from the country of origin, and without a change in the main place of residence. Although the country of origin may become increasingly meaningful in the lives of migrants who practice regular returns, as is the case for Awa, the country of immigration remains the place where they live and work most of the time.

### 2.2.5 *Definitive Return*

My sample has been designed to include only people whose main country of residence at the time of the interviews was either Switzerland or Britain. For this reason, I have not been able to meet anyone who had definitively returned to their country of origin after having lived in Europe for some time. The literature on Somali (and other) migrants describes this practice (Fink-Nielsen et al. 2004; Hansen 2008; Kleist 2007), and I have indirectly heard of people returning "for good" during my fieldwork, especially in Britain. Whole families may return, but the splitting of the family in different places and a "staggered return" (Fink-Nielsen et al. 2004), i.e. the move of only some members at first, are common practices. For instance, a respondent told me about her brother's wife and children, who had returned to and settled in Somaliland, while their husband and father had stayed in Europe and provided for them economically. A socioeconomically satisfying return was rendered possible by splitting the family up, which allowed them to benefit from the varied opportunities offered by different contexts: economic means in Europe and educational opportunities for the children (according to my respondent's account) in Somaliland.

The qualifying term “definitive” is not meant to suggest that returnees do not visit their previous country of residence: they often do visit their previous country of residence, where they may have family and friends, to spend time with them. “Definitive” refers instead to a change in the main place of residence: the country of origin becomes the main place of residence of returning migrants.

Even though no illustrative case studies can be used here, definitive return constitutes a specific type of post-migration mobility practice that cannot be left out of the typology. It consists of a single move to a new place of residence (as in secondary migration), but the destination is the country of origin.

### **2.2.6 *Immobility***

Even though this typology is about mobility practices, it is necessary to include a sixth ideal type, which concerns people who do not cross borders, or who do so only rarely. In short, their everyday lives and socioeconomic conditions are not conditioned by present or future individual mobility practices. This does not mean, however, that they are not influenced by others’ mobility or that they are not anchored in transnational networks. One of the powerful contributions of the idea of the “transnational social field” is that it connects migrants with people who have never moved, i.e. who have stayed in the country of origin (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004). This study shows that mobility is also not a necessary condition for remaining part of a transnational social network for people who have migrated.

Immobility may be the result of a constraining legal status in the country of residence: depending on their legal situation, migrants may be forbidden to leave the territory of the nation-state in which they live, or asked to request visas to enter other countries (which nationals would not need to do). Furthermore, refugee status comes with a restriction against travelling to the country of origin. Yet there are other reasons for people to remain immobile, and not all of them are a result of constraints on movement. Avoiding the sedentarist bias should not lead researchers to the opposite extreme of considering immobile people as exceptions whose sedentariness must be justified. Some of my respondents simply told me that they had no reason or desire to move, which is sometimes a sufficient explanation. The two following life stories are very different from one another, yet both are characterised by sedentariness.

#### **2.2.6.1 *Imaan***

Imaan left Somalia in 1990 with her parents and siblings to settle in neighbouring Djibouti. Her eldest sister found a way to move to Europe, and in 1996 she financed Imaan’s journey to join her in Switzerland, while the rest of the family stayed in Djibouti, where they still live, sustaining themselves with the sisters’ remittances.

Imaan's sister has three children and receives social assistance, as a result of which she has not been able to apply for naturalisation. Expectations of Imaan were therefore high, and as soon as she was allowed to work (after completing a year at school, i.e. the last year of compulsory schooling in Switzerland), she started to do so as an unqualified nursing assistant. She tried to pursue further education in nursing but soon gave up, because it meant lowering her income, and perhaps – although she did not mention it explicitly – the economic support she could give to her family. When I first met her, she was eagerly waiting to become naturalised and visit her parents in Djibouti. She became Swiss soon after that meeting, but because she was pregnant, she decided to postpone her travel. She married a French Muslim man and gave birth to her first child. When I last met her a couple of years later, she was pregnant with her second child and not planning to travel to Djibouti for at least 2 more years.

However, since her arrival in Switzerland, Imaan has not been totally immobile. In 2004, she received a temporary residence permit (B Permit), which allowed her to travel to European countries, but only with a visa. In her narrative, crossing borders has been a painful and humiliating experience. When she held this permit, she went to France with friends twice but without a visa; she got caught the second time and was brought back to Switzerland by the police, a situation that infuriated her and made her cry at the time. She also went to London a couple of times to visit one of her good friends who had left to and settled there. She recalls:

I went to Britain in June, but it was really complicated to get the visa. It has become much more complicated than it used to be: they take your fingerprints, photos. I told them I was not going to file an asylum claim there, I don't want to live there, but I had to go through all this. And you need to fill in a form from their website, everything is in English, so you need to find someone who understands. And then you get an appointment, and you cannot change it; you have to go on the day they tell you. Otherwise you need to start everything over again. And despite all this, every time I arrive there [at the airport's customs], they search me. Once it took me an hour to go through customs there! I had arrived at 10 p.m. and when I got out it was midnight! I'm fed up with this; it really is too difficult. I am looking forward to going through customs with a Swiss passport. [Semi-structured interview, notes]

In 2011, she, her husband and their baby went to New York on a 2-week holiday because, as she told me, her husband “really wanted to travel” and “had always dreamt of going to New York”. She recounts a very difficult trip, partially because she found that travelling with a toddler was not easy. But she again emphasised how difficult it was to go through customs even with a Swiss passport, contrary to her expectations. Imaan believes she was treated differently from other travellers, including her husband – she was searched more thoroughly and asked to go through special x-ray scanners – because of her appearance:

I told my husband, “You see: they are racist”. I am Somali. Is it only Somali people who do silly things [*faire des bêtises*]? I am veiled. Is it only Muslim people who do silly things? I'm off to a bad start! [*Je suis mal barrée*] [She laughs] [...] In the end, we went through, but it was not easy. [Semi-structured interview, notes]

Imaan's husband's professional situation is quite precarious at the moment. Although she hopes it will improve and would like to reduce the amount of time she

works, she works full-time at a clinic and tells me how hard things have become, stressing the fatigue, stress and general lack of time to do the things she used to do before she had a child. When I met her the second time, I asked her about the people she had mentioned when I had met her before her marriage: it appears that she is finding it hard to maintain her social relationships, both in her city of residence (not finding the time to see her friends and acquaintances) and transnationally (calling her family in Djibouti and her close friend in Britain less frequently). Imaan finds herself in a situation in which she provides economically for her parents in Djibouti and for her family in Switzerland and is responsible for most of the domestic duties. This situation, related to her gendered and classed position in Switzerland and transnationally, also influences her relationship to mobility. Imaan has never had the resources necessary to be mobile, because of her legal status, a lack of money and time and “technical” reasons (due to her pregnancy and young child). Her recurring negative experience in crossing borders and travelling also influence her relationship to mobility. Stuck in a position where managing her life (and that of her family) is a difficult enough challenge, she does not see mobility as something she could benefit from.

### 2.2.6.2 Nadifa

Nadifa is a woman in her forties who arrived in London with relatives 25 years ago and has remained there since. She had studied computing science and become a college teacher before she met her British husband and became pregnant:

And when I had my first child, I couldn't work so I started helping Somaliland. [Semi-structured interview, recorded]

From then on, she became involved in many different “diaspora organisations”, as she calls them, that support development projects in Somaliland, organise conferences in London with representatives from the Somaliland authorities and advocate for the international recognition of an independent Somaliland, but also for the recognition of a specific Somaliland identity in Britain. Over the years, she has also developed a very strong discourse regarding the specificities and importance of her “homeland”, its “people”, “history”, “traditions” and above all “culture”. During our two encounters, Nadifa offered me a homogenising, often essentialised, vision of Somaliland and Somalilanders, maybe thinking that that was what I was expecting. For instance, she often used the pronoun “we” even to answer personal questions. However, when I insisted on knowing more about her personal trajectory, a different picture emerged. This is illustrated in the next two quotations about mobility. The first time I met Nadifa, it was during a joint interview with her and Cabdulah, a man who is also very involved in activities that address London’s Somaliland population. We were discussing return.

N. It's a bit like Israel; you know, all Israelis want to go back. It's a bit like that for us: everybody thinks about home in Somaliland.

J. Do you think you will go back one day?

N. We all do, it's amazing. But for me, my husband is from here, so I won't be able to go back, but I hope to have, you know, half-half, but I don't know about the situation, the political [...]. But we all dream about it. It's our home, so.... [Group interview, recorded]

The gap between her discourse of a collective “we” and her personal relationship with return is striking, as she is a counter-example to the romanticised picture she paints. The second time I met her, we had more time to talk about her personal trajectory. At some stage, I asked her how often she travelled back to Somaliland, assuming that, because of her daily involvement with issues related to Somaliland and Somalilanders, this was a more adequate question than the more simple “Have you ever been back to Somaliland?” I was stunned by her answer and my false assumptions:

N: I haven't gone back, because, you know, with the war, it wasn't safe before, it was only the last three years that it became safe, but I had the children so....

J: Oh, so you've never been back?

N: I haven't been back, no [laughing].

J: So you're so involved in what's happening there, but you haven't been back!

N: Yeah. I could go but the problem is my husband won't come.

[...]

J: So couldn't you go back with your children, for example? I have heard that lots of people go back to Somaliland for holidays or....

N: Yeah, I can, but my husband is scared, kind of: “Oh, there's no proper connection there” and I don't feel like it. [...] You know, you have to go and change at Dubai, or somewhere, in the Emirates, and stay there for two nights, and then go. A big shock, isn't it? We've been away for too long. And my husband's like, “No” [laughing].

[...]

J: And so you never went back to Somaliland, but did you travel to other places in the last ten years, to visit friends or family, or...?

N: I haven't. I have been here for a long time, isn't it? It's ridiculous. [Semi-structured interview, recorded]

My clumsy insistence made Nadifa feel embarrassed and attempt to justify her non-mobility. The discrepancy between her highly transnational identification, connections and practices, on the one hand, and her sedentary lifestyle, on the other, illustrates that the former do not necessarily go hand and in hand with mobility. While Imaan's transnational networks and commitments are very limited, Nadifa's constitute an important part of her activities. However, both women have organised their lives without cross-border mobility. Interestingly, these women are among the few people I met who are married to people who are not originally from Somalia. While no conclusion can be made from this similarity, it is interesting that both women partially justify their lack of mobility through their gendered responsibilities and implicate their husbands in (some of) their decisions not to travel. Nadifa's transnational involvement grew stronger when she became a mother, but getting married and having children have kept her from visiting the country she still calls “home” after 25 years. As for Imaan, she has kept postponing her trip to Djibouti, where her parents live, because of her pregnancies and the difficulties of travelling with a toddler, but also her husband's wish to travel to the United States.

Immobility constitutes a peculiar type in the typology: it is characterised by very few to no cross-border movements, and, for people who are legally able to travel, by the absence of a desire to be mobile. A sedentary lifestyle, however, does not exclude the possibility of strong transnational connections to places and people across borders.

### ***2.2.7 A Visual Recap and Concluding Remarks***

From the short biographies in this chapter, it is clear that the mobile women and men I met do not correspond specifically to any single ideal type. Indeed, the typology I have developed does not correspond to types of people, but to types of practices. Migrants may practice different types of movement at different points in their lives. From some of the stories above, it also appears that one type of movement often sets the basis for other types of mobility. For instance, a secondary movement from Continental Europe to London may involve a stronger connection and identification with the country of origin, leading to the start and intensification of visits there. In other instances, one type of mobility may transform into another type: this is the case, for instance, when people regularly visit their place of origin, each time extending their stay, until the point where they divide their lives between the two places, regularly moving to and fro: they have shifted from the “temporary returns” type of movement to “pendular mobility”.

These six types of mobility differ in terms of: (1) the frequency of the movements undertaken (from the absence of cross-border movements to a single move to very frequent moves); (2) the duration of the stay(s) in the destination (from short stays to settlement); (3) the places to which people move (only the country of origin, only a third country, neither of them or both of them); and (4) whether they entail a change in the main place of residence for the mover. A table summarising these dimensions is included in Chap. 5. Figure 2.1 presents a visual recap of the six ideal types.

## **2.3 Activities on the Move**

The descriptions of different types of mobility practices and the illustrative case studies indicate that repeated border crossing is far from unusual among many of the respondents. Awa’s words about “people [who] move for reasons” (in the Introduction) resonated in my head for a long time. She was referring in particular to Somalis’ propensity to undergo secondary movements (a topic that was being discussed in academic and political circles in Britain at the time), but her comment fits any of the types of mobility described above. In this section, I want to focus on the different types of activities that migrants may undertake through transnational mobility. While the focus remains on individual motivations, I also acknowledge some of the structuring institutions and contexts within which those activities take

place. Local and global economies, labour markets and political environments intervene in shaping opportunities and constraints for people on the move. So do extended transnational families.

Several authors discuss different areas of transnational practices, distinguishing in particular between sociocultural, economic, political and, more recently, religious practices (see for instance Al-Ali et al. 2001; Levitt and Jaworsky 2007; Vertovec 2009). There are obvious similarities between their categories and my own, but they do not overlap entirely.

Naturally, a given move is often motivated by more than one reason: people travel, cross borders, settle in the destination or not, while carrying on multiple activities. Moreover, while some activities are carefully planned, others are the result of opportunities that may not have been foreseen. The sections below describe the main activities respondents carry out while moving, describing the specificities of each one. Based on illustrative quotations from respondents, they illuminate the fundamental importance of physical presence in other places for transnational activities to be successful. Mobility is not essential to transnational practices, but, as this study demonstrates, cross-border movements are an important asset for those who wish to fruitfully mobilise transnational connections and identifications.

### ***2.3.1 Maintenance and Reinforcement of Personal Social Networks***

The desire to maintain or foster personal social networks, in particular those involving immediate or extended family members, is an important reason for people to undertake cross-border movements. Aman mentioned her wish to see her mother, brother and cousins after 17 years of separation. Nuur travels to different places to “recreate” kin networks with the aim of supporting his transnational projects. Farhan spends half of his time in London, where his wife and children live. Secondary movements are also often motivated by the wish to reunite with close family members. Many of the people in this study are members of transnational families, with parents, siblings, children, cousins and grandparents who live in different parts of the world, and they have often kept in touch with them (see also Horst 2007; Al-Sharmani 2010).

People visit each other during holidays or long weekends, and hospitality is emphasised by respondents, who nonetheless often have ambivalent feelings about it: visitors are expected to stay at their relatives’ place, sometimes at the expense of their own autonomy, while local families are expected to host visitors even when it is sometimes difficult and costly to do so, especially when large families are travelling. Weddings are central events in the lives of many transnational families, since they are opportunities for people who are in a position to travel to meet with each other: Abdulkadir, a 30-year-old man who lives in Switzerland, told me about a

recent trip he made to the Netherlands with his wife to attend a relative's wedding. I asked him whether it was important for him to be there:

Eh, yes, important. Because we got the invitation, and that's usually the only time you can meet your relatives. We can all be in the same place, families from Denmark, families from Holland, from Britain. And we are from Switzerland and we also came. [...] That's why I say weddings are good, but they are also good for meeting with others. So you go there, there are 200 people, and that's what gives you the opportunity to meet each other. [...] My wife didn't want to come, but I encouraged her to look at things from this angle, that we go there for a wedding, but that we also participate in this annual meeting. Even though it can be twice or three times a year. [...] Personally I try to see a little beyond [...] and ask myself about the impact that being there at the wedding might have, what information we could deploy, what encounters we could have, what matters we could discuss. [Spatial interview, recorded]

Abdulkadir's comments demonstrate that family and personal networks are flexible rather than static: they are evolving, expanding and retracting structures rather than bounded ones (Brettell 2000). Further, social actors actively participate in shaping their personal networks, maintaining or reinforcing links, creating new ones and letting others weaken. Although recent communication technologies (such as the Internet and Skype) are increasingly used, being able to physically meet with other people is an important way through which social actors "manage" these networks and negotiate their positions within them, as Abdulkadir's emphasis on weddings as an opportunity for physical encounters shows. For Aman too, mobility is a way to expand her transnational social networks: while travelling, she meets new people, does them favours and adds them to her list of potential future contacts.

Family gatherings are also valued because they transmit existing networks to the next generation. Some respondents emphasised the importance of passing on some aspects of Somali "culture" or "tradition". In our discussion about the importance of weddings, Abdulkadir said:

When we arrive there [at the wedding], when we bring our children along, they also learn the tradition, how it works and how it happens at a big party. And many children, if you don't have them participate at these gatherings, then they might be put off by those things. They might say, "Yeah, you always do it the same way. Somalis, you yell, you do those things. Weddings here are not like that. Why don't you do it like it's done here?" And that is what I didn't want. When I grew up here, I thought like that: I would never have gone to a Somali wedding. But now that I am on the right side, I want to tell them, "This is how it is". And when I talk with my circle of relatives and friends, with my wife, I tell them that this is also what we gain from it. [Spatial interview, recorded]

Abdulkadir spent his adolescence in a Swiss foster family and learnt only later about the Somali "traditions" he refers to, and he feels he missed something he doesn't want his own children to grow up without. Attending family gatherings is thus also a way to reinforce identities based on people's place of origin, and to make sure that part of it is also passed on to the next generation.

Physical mobility allows people to meet with those they love, to create or recreate emotional as well as utilitarian ties and to negotiate their positioning in complex transnational power hierarchies. However, the relationships in transnational families involve tensions and conflicts as well as obligations and reciprocity. Collective

decisions, for instance, are made regarding the financing and arranging of family members' mobility (see also Al-Sharmani 2010). Nuur described himself as being largely involved in those transnational discussions regarding relatives' migration out of Africa. He told me, for instance, about a cousin whose migration to Europe was being debated within the extended family:

He has been waiting for many years; the family has imposed an embargo on him so he could not get out. This means that no one will give him the money to leave. The money to feed him, yes, but not the money to leave the country and come to Europe. [Biographical interview, recorded]

Those members of the family who have migrated and obtained a high position within transnational networks have the power to impose decisions on others' ability to cross borders. According to Al-Sharmani (2010), these (gendered) transnational family arrangements are based on financial resources, parental authority, considerations regarding family-care responsibilities and knowledge regarding how to facilitate movements (see also Engebrigtsen 2011). The desire or need to maintain and reinforce family bonds (and sometimes non-familial ones) thus constitutes an important incentive for people to move. Simultaneously, extended transnational families – and the internal power hierarchies within them – act as structuring elements of both mobility and immobility.

### 2.3.2 *Business Activities*

Respondents who engage in cross-border mobility practices are also sometimes involved in transnational trade. Aman's and Nuur's involvement in informal business activities is based on their star-shaped mobility, which allows them to buy products in other places, bring them back to Europe and sell them on the informal market there. Their activities are based on global economic disparities, as well as on the demand created by migrants settled in Europe.

There are important differences regarding entrepreneurial possibilities between Switzerland and Britain related to both national legislation and tax regulations and the pool of potential customers. In London, I met a couple of women who own small shops that sell mostly food and/or women's fashion, and a man who had opened a restaurant. They all cater mostly to local Somalis. Only Aziza's entrepreneurial activity (she owns a small fashion boutique) is based on her own regular cross-border mobility practices. She told me that she usually travels to Dubai twice a year to choose the products for her shop:

A: It's something that I love. I really like it, I like people dressing up, I like making them.... Especially young girls that live in this country, they want to wear the hijab but don't want to wear the traditional veils. And at least I can understand what I want for me, and for my girls, and that's what I want. I know the fashion I get, and then they use it. And they come to me: "Aziza, what do you have?", or "What can we have?"

J: So you sell mostly clothes?

A: Yeah. Clothes, perfumes, everything, henna, all the things that you cannot find in the shops that are traditional.

J: And where do you get them from?

A: Dubai.

J: You go there and buy them, or do you have them sent?

A: Mh, sometimes I go. I like to go twice a year. So I can see what's coming [...]. Because if you leave it too long and you don't go there, you don't know. People will tell you, "Oh, this is that, and this is that", but you don't know what the feel is, and I don't like that. So every six months I try to go [...], to see what's new and what's not new; then I know. [Semi-structured interview, recorded]

Aziza is clear about the benefit of travelling personally (rather than choosing her goods online or through intermediaries): it allows her to stay informed about the latest fashion and to bring back the best products for a particular segment of the population in London: young girls who want to dress differently from their mothers, but also from other young Londoners. In this sense, Aziza's mobility is a fundamental aspect of her business strategy.

Other respondents told me about their ideas and projects to set up a transnational business. In their accounts, cross-border mobility is also important in helping them make appropriate contacts and acquire first-hand information about opportunities, competition, obstacles and potential business partners. New information and communication technologies open up various business opportunities, but they cannot replace face-to-face contacts, in particular in the early stages of business projects. Shariif, a man in his mid-thirties who lives in London, has travelled to China "at least five times" in the last few years in order to find out about opportunities and make contacts to set up a transnational business specialising in beauty products:

China, I'm thinking this place to start some trading. I'm thinking about this, so that's important. I was considering this place, because this is going to be the most important country in the world. That's what I've seen. I was there three weeks once. I've seen it, all Western factories, business, manufacturing, they make it all in China. From now on, you will see, everything is from China. [Spatial interview, recorded]

He told me that these trips have opened many possibilities, but he made a first attempt by bringing back about 500 units of hair extensions he then sold on eBay. Shariif also spent a few days in Paris with a friend from London to meet with business partners from Dubai, all of whom were originally from Somalia. The transnational nature of this business network is obvious. Shariif's business plans were at a very early stage, but the point here is that they depended on his regular movements to different places.

In sum, mobility is not necessary for all business activities, but it is an important part of some informal or formal transnational trade. Although the Internet is now widely used, some informants told me that they needed to physically travel to obtain information and contacts. Learning about opportunities, acquiring knowledge about products and opportunities and fostering business contacts all require some degree of mobility and face-to-face contact.

Mobile business activities are based on opportunities and constraints situated in local and global economic contexts. Some places are particularly attractive for trade activities – Dubai as a meeting place for businesspeople and a crossroads for

trade, or China as the world's (future) dominant economy, for example. Transnational trade is partially structured by informal economic markets with their own rules and hierarchies (Tarrus et al. 2013; MacGaffey and Bazenguissa-Ganga 2000), but it is also shaped by customers' demands for specific products and/or cheaper goods. Mobile businesspeople need to compete in these dynamic economic and political contexts for their activities to become profitable.

### 2.3.3 *Work-Related Activities*

As is true for many other people in the world, several respondents cross borders regularly for work-related reasons. On the one hand, people may be attracted by better working conditions or career opportunities in another place, which prompts them to undertake a secondary movement or develop pendular mobility practices. Farhan is in this situation: moving to and fro between London and Switzerland allows him to have a more interesting and better-paid job in Switzerland.

On the other hand, some employers and/or specific types of jobs may require workers to be mobile. These opportunities almost always involve migrants' country or region of origin. For instance, Awa was commissioned by a Dutch organisation to set up and eventually manage a Somali "diaspora radio" (in the end, she refused the job): her task was to travel to Africa and talk to different potential media partners and stakeholders based there and then report to the Dutch organisation. Her involvement in the project, had she stayed, would have required her to travel regularly to Kenya and other places in the Horn of Africa.

In Awa's case, regular temporary returns are a strategy to pursue activities in Africa while living in Europe most of the year. Other respondents had been hired or were actively developing a résumé to fit employment opportunities in what Hansen (2007) critically calls the "development industry". Post-conflict situations often create work opportunities for migrants who have a Western education and work experience along with cultural and linguistic knowledge related to their region of origin (Oeppen 2013; Sagmo 2015). Some of my respondents were well aware that international organisations and NGOs (I have heard in particular of the International Red Cross, the International Organisation for Migration and the United Nations Development Programme) were recruiting people with such profiles.

Yet work-related mobility practices are more often than not based on precarious, temporary contracts with organisations that find an advantage in employing migrants with dual linguistic and cultural knowledge. Hansen (2007) has also found that Somalilanders employed in the "development industry" are often hired on short-term contracts, although they might cumulate those contracts. Furthermore, the strategic decisions of the international organisations involved remain in the hands of Western professionals, while migrants are generally asked to adhere to the principles of those organisations (Horst 2013; Sinatti and Horst 2015). Mobile migrants who work in post-conflict areas thus face obstacles similar to those they encounter

in local labour markets, and they often find themselves in the most precarious and less prestigious levels of these institutions' internal hierarchies.

### ***2.3.4 Voluntary Involvement in Humanitarian and Development Projects in the Region of Origin***

There is often a fine line between work-related activities and other types of involvement in reconstruction, development and humanitarian support in the region of origin. For my purposes, I draw the line between employed and voluntary activities. This section refers to activities aimed at humanitarian relief or development of the country of origin (or a region within it) based on projects developed by the mobile actors themselves, either individually or within a collective unit. Although these projects often benefit from various kinds of funding, the funding cannot be considered to constitute employees' salaries.

While southern Somalia is still politically unstable, Somaliland and, to a lesser extent, Puntland are now engaged in political nation-building, as well as economic, social and cultural reconstruction. These regional differences have an important impact on how migrants position themselves with regard to their involvement in their country of origin. In southern Somalia, their contribution at the moment is largely limited to humanitarian relief and political participation in the (difficult) reconstruction of a democratic state.<sup>4</sup> While these processes are also still on-going in Somaliland, further needs have emerged there, and the "diaspora" is increasingly actively involved in developing the region and has high expectations for the future (Hansen 2007; Kleist 2008a; Horst 2017). Furthermore, representatives of Somaliland government and administrative bodies are sometimes present in the countries where members of the "diaspora" community have settled and actively try to reinforce relationships and feelings of belonging, leading to the involvement of "their" nationals settled in the West. Until recently, such outreach efforts from the homeland did not exist simply because there was no state to claim its "diaspora".

My respondents often mentioned their desire or even need to "contribute" to their country of origin. They experience some kind of "moral responsibility" towards their country of origin (Kleist 2008a). The clearest example of mobility related to involvement in the homeland among my respondents is Awa's organisation of a yearly cultural event in Somaliland that aims to improve the wellbeing of local youths. But many of my other respondents are involved in smaller projects to develop their country or region of origin, and many of them use the skills they have acquired in Europe for this purpose. Some people also choose certain career paths in order to develop skills they may be able to use in their country of origin in the future.

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<sup>4</sup>Participation in homeland politics is discussed separately in the next section but has important similarities with involvement in humanitarian or developmental projects.

Jawahir is a 34-year-old woman who has lived in Switzerland since she left Africa on her own at the age of 15. Since 2009, she has travelled to Somalia, Somaliland, Canada and Britain to reconnect with her relatives from both her maternal and paternal sides. She is now a skilled technical assistant with a prestigious medical research team in Switzerland. When she first started her studies, she had to choose the fields she wanted to do short-term internships in. She recalls having chosen them “in relation to what I could contribute upon returning to my homeland [*chez moi*]”. She was disappointed when, for reasons that had nothing to do with her abilities, she was directed towards another field. However, many years later, she still thinks that her professional skills could be useful in her country of origin:

Jawahir. So then you start thinking, what could I do? Maybe my knowledge? So that is when I went to Canada, and I went there and had all my textbooks of haematology, bacteriology, parasitology and clinical chemistry translated into English. And then I suggested that to the Somaliland representative of the Ministry of Infrastructure. Because this country wants to rebuild itself, it creates ministries, it wants to have this image of a democratic state, based on Western countries, and so sometimes they send people to Western countries to defend their cause. And sometimes we, Somalis, we are in direct contact with them. So that is how I suggested that to them. [...] And then he said, “It would be good if you could come one day, if you could go to the ministry or if you could go to a laboratory or one of the schools that the NGOs have opened”. [...]

Joëlle. And so you translated all your textbooks?

Ja. Yes. Luckily, I had cousins who were studying medicine and who could help me. They helped me a lot. On the first day I arrived, I told them about it. So the next morning, we went to take all the books for translation. It took nine days, and I was there for three weeks. [...]

Jo. And now what are you going to do with that?

Ja. Well, go there [to Somaliland] and offer them that. If they want it, I mean. If they don't, well, bad luck.

Jo. And you already have contacts there?

Ja. No, not yet. I need to go there. Oh yes, I need to go, to go into the field. Because if you want something done, do it yourself. I think that if I send people, it's always, “You know, I didn't get to go there, I didn't find the time, I had to meet with relatives” and all that. And I will use the potential that I have there. My relatives can guide me. It's better to use them for something, at least! [Laughing] Not only bring them gifts! So I could use that possibility; it's pretty good to have people who know where you want to go, who come with you, who tell you, “Yes, that works this way, and this is for this, and that is for that”. [Biographical interview, recording]

This extract illustrates different points regarding mobility and the involvement of the “diaspora” in the development and reconstruction of the country of origin. While this involvement does not necessarily require physical mobility, cross-border movements make direct contacts possible, which leads to ideas and concrete projects. First, Jawahir has not planned her project carefully: she develops it according to the various opportunities that arise, including her direct encounter with a representative of the government of Somaliland in Switzerland. Thus, the physical mobility of officials from the homeland – and not only of the migrants themselves – is important in those processes. Second, participation in the homeland sometimes involves travelling there, and mobilising transnational networks that extend beyond the country of origin and the country of destination. In Jawahir's case, her project

involves her cousins in Canada, and she physically brought her textbooks to have them translated there. She could have followed a more rational course: she could have sent her documents to her cousins via email; she could also have found a translator in Switzerland; finally, she could have asked her cousins to find an English version of her course materials instead of having hers translated from French. But that is not what she did, which illustrates that other dimensions underlie her actions. It seems important to her to mobilise her personal skills. Further, physical mobility and direct contacts with her relatives are especially important to her: involving her relatives in her project creates a stronger relationship with them, and this relationship is oriented towards their common country of origin. This illustrates both that mobility generally serves more than one aim and that people's involvement in their homeland is complex and multi-layered.

Third, Jawahir mentions the importance of personally moving instead of counting on others' mobility. This issue came up often in the interviews: while some respondents have no choice other than to ask intermediaries to circulate things, in particular information, for them, some who do have the choice believe they are more likely to obtain what they need if they travel themselves.

### 2.3.5 “*Homeland Politics*”

A major concern in the reconstruction of (the different regions of) Somalia is the development of a political apparatus and sustainable governance. The shape that “homeland politics” (Ostergaard-Nielsen 2003) takes is varied and relates to the situation in the country of origin. Since some parts of Somalia are still torn by war while others are more stable, the roles of the “diaspora” are diverse and often complex. Its efforts can support reconstruction and nation-building as well as “nation-wrecking” (Vertovec 2009) by sustaining the on-going conflict. A significant portion of the Somali population has left the country, and this “diaspora” is very keen on reinforcing its links to its homeland in order to acquire recognition and power (Hansen 2008). This situation is not always perceived positively: for instance, some respondents were critical of mobile political leaders who have Western passports and whose families live in Europe or North America, and they claimed that these leaders do not have any real interest or understanding of the living conditions of people in the country.

There are several ways to participate in homeland politics, from voting from abroad to being involved in elections or constitutional processes (Ostergaard-Nielsen 2003), some of which require physical mobility. Awa's involvement as an observer during the recent election process is one such way of participating. Interestingly, Awa was not involved in the political process directly, but as a member of an international external body whose members were of different national origins.

Nuur's involvement in Somali politics is more direct, but it has evolved in the last couple of years. In 2009, he became involved in an association that supported the

government of Puntland, the self-declared autonomous state he is originally from, in their actions. As the president of an association in Switzerland, he took part in a meeting of a transnational organisation that gathered “Puntland intellectuals” from different parts of the world in the US. Other meetings in London and Puntland were planned, but when I met Nuur a year later, his political interests had narrowed geographically: he told me that he was involved in political processes intended to create a new local government, autonomous from Puntland, and mostly based on a regional (and clan-based) identity. At the time, he was mostly participating in large phone-based conferences to this end. However, at the end of 2011, Nuur wrote me an email to tell me he was going to travel to the region to meet the families supported by the humanitarian project he was coordinating, but also because there was a conference there to set up a local government. He was looking forward to meeting “very renowned and very influential people” there.

In the last couple of years, Nuur has thus taken concrete steps to be involved in political processes at different geographical scales, probably based on how accessible they are to him. As other studies have shown (Kleist 2008a, b; Hansen 2007, 2008), the “diaspora” is heavily involved in homeland politics, but Switzerland, where Nuur resides, is not a place where he can access the necessary social networks to enter the political arena. People who could be influential in Somalia in most cases have not settled in Switzerland – and if they did, they left soon afterwards for other countries where they could exercise their power. Mobilising his transnational kin and clan networks and travelling to different places (the US, Britain, Somalia) where meetings are held are important if not indispensable ways for him to enter the game. Positioning himself in the political arena also means meeting these “intellectuals”, these “renowned and influential” people who live in different places, and getting known by them.

Involvement in homeland politics does not occur only through transnational networks, however. Nuur, Awa and other respondents involved in transnational political activities (in a wide sense) are usually also involved in political and/or associational activities in their main country of residence. This situation indicates that there is a strong relationship between being incorporated in the country of residence and being involved in transnational political activities, as has been reported widely in the literature (Guarnizo et al. 2003; Ostergaard-Nielsen 2003).

Crossing borders allows migrants settled in Europe to pursue different types of activities and to link together different socioeconomic, political and cultural contexts. These activities have been treated separately in this chapter for descriptive purposes. But the case studies demonstrate that there is often a fine line between different types of activities, and that multiple activities are often carried out simultaneously. They also demonstrate that physical mobility is a way for those concerned to circulate various “goods”, and to benefit from this circulation. Transnational traders organise the circulation of the products they sell, whether these are clothing, jewellery, furniture, food or electronic devices. Money circulates, formally and informally. Knowledge, information, skills, ideas and norms are acquired in some places and mobilised in others. As Horst (2007) points out, flows of people, money, goods and information are closely interconnected.

## 2.4 The Places of Mobility

Mobility is necessarily about linking different places in ways that make sense to the people who undertake these moves, and possibly to others around them. Based on a relational and dynamic understanding of space and place (Cresswell 2004; Löw 2006; Massey 1994; Lussault and Stock 2010), this section discusses the ways in which respondents construct, in their discourses, the various places they consider meaningful in their lives.

“Places” are understood here as specific locations to which people give some kind of meaning, to which they are attached in one way or another (Cresswell 2004). “Localities”, in contrast, constitute the contextual background that shapes the opportunities and constraints that migrants face in a transnational social field. Localities provide particular opportunities and create particular constraints to social actors who are differently positioned in transnational social fields (Guarnizo and Smith 1998). Places and localities are closely intertwined, and the relationship between them both is influenced by cross-border movements and further shapes mobility practices.

Stock and Duhamel (2005) distinguish two ways in which people relate to the relevant places in their mobility system: symbolically and functionally. The symbolic dimension involves people’s feelings of belonging to a place, of being part of it, whether they are physically there or not, and identification with it. The functional dimension involves the qualities of the place in relation to the practice of specific activities: places offer resources from which individuals in specific social positions can benefit in their varied activities. In the next sections, I will discuss first the different relationships that respondents in this study have developed with their main place of residence in Europe, and then contrast it to the dynamically (re)constructed idea of a naturalised “place of origin”.

### 2.4.1 *The Main Place of Residence: “Where I Put My Pillow”*

I define the main place of residence as the place where respondents have established themselves and taken up permanent legal residence. Permanency does not mean that a change to the place of residence is excluded in the future; it refers to the length of the stay in one place, reflected for instance in renting an apartment long term, buying property, holding a local job, enrolling children at school or participating in local associational or political life. Not surprisingly, since my sample is constituted of people who have resided in Europe for at least a decade, respondents refer to feeling comfortable in an environment they master, of having acquired the necessary knowledge and connections to move easily and freely in this environment. This feeling of being concretely anchored in their place of residence is also expressed through references to a possible future in this place.

Many respondents define the relevance of their place of residence in a very pragmatic way. Some, for instance, point to their physical presence in this place at a particular time. Nuur describes the place where he lives as “my city, my current life”. Others mention their place of residence as their “base”, which implies that it is a kind of anchorage point in a system that includes other places. Mobility scholars have referred to this anchorage point with terms such as “centre of gravity” (Hägerstrand 1969) and – in French – “résidence-base” (Domenach and Picouet 1987).

This pragmatic and present-based relationship to the place of residence is also illustrated by Safia, a woman in her early forties who lived in other European countries before settling in a suburban area of London: she explained why she considers England an important place:

This is where I am. Someone once said that home is where you put your pillow. Well, [name of the neighbourhood] is where I put my pillow; it is my home. [Spatial interview, notes]

The functional dimension (Stock and Duhamel 2005) of one’s relationship to one’s place of residence is also very present in the accounts of many respondents, who explicitly mention the importance of a place for what it offers them: educational opportunities for themselves or their children, the freedom to live their life as they want, good social assistance and peace, among other things. Jamac is a 55-year-old man living in London who compares his life in the UK with other places he has lived in and liked (Somalia, Dubai and Italy):

London always is my base. Regardless of the weather, or the fact that there’s no nightlife, I cannot run from the truth. At my age, I need the health services, the check-ups. And my children are here: they know more English than Somali. [Spatial interview, notes]

Respondents have also developed (often ambiguous) feelings of belonging and identifying with their place of residence (which Stock and Duhamel refer to as the symbolic dimension). These migrants express some kind of emotional attachment to the place they live in, often stating that they “like” or even “love” it. Like Safia above, some people consider this place “home”, yet in most cases balance these positive feelings either by restricting them to a specific time (“this is my home for now”) or by immediately contrasting this home to another, more deeply meaningful one, mostly the place of origin (for instance by calling it “my second home”).

These positive feelings are often mitigated by feelings of not being fully accepted by the host society. As in other recent studies about Somalis in Europe (Valentine and Sporton 2009; Valentine et al. 2009), respondents feel that they are being denied an identity as “Swiss”, “British” or simply European. Faysal, who has lived in Switzerland for more than 20 years and says he feels comfortable in his everyday life, explained how he has slowly pulled back on his effort to fully belong. The increasingly hostile political climate with regard to foreigners in general and Muslims in particular has led him to reinvest in an identification he feels he cannot be denied:

So it’s better to try and go back home before you.... You need to not forget yourself, here or elsewhere. I tell people, you need to not forget yourself here, because... we have this saying: nothing can cover you but your own soil. That means that even if you try to resemble, resemble here, you are always confronted by reality. [Semi-structured interview, recorded]

Expressions of negative feelings towards one's place of residence, largely based on local exclusionary practices, are often contrasted to a genuine belonging to one's place of origin. This is made explicit in the quotation above with terms like "home", "we" (referring to Somalis or Somalilanders) and the very strong "your own soil", to which one wants to return after one's death, naturalising the link between people and their place of origin (Malkki 1992).

### ***2.4.2 The Place of Origin: "Where I Come From"***

For most respondents, their place of origin is an unquestionable and essential (as well as essentialised) component of their identity. In my spatial interviews, some people looked at me with a puzzled expression when I asked them about the meaning of this place for them. The use of terms like "homeland", "mother country" and "soil" further demonstrates this link between themselves on the one hand and territory and ancestries on the other. The importance of keeping these roots alive is also reflected in the attempt to include the next generation in the ancestry line. Some respondents, for instance, insisted on the importance of travelling to their place of origin with their children, of having them learn the language and culture or even of simply, as Abdinur said with regard to his 6-year-old son, knowing "where he comes from" (i.e. Somalia), although his son was born in London and does not speak Somali. The place of origin is thus essentialised in many discourses as a taken-for-granted important place on the basis of ancestral links to this territory. For many, the presence of relatives in the place of origin is another way through which the symbolic dimension emerges: respondents' regular contact with or visits to parents, grandparents, siblings or other relatives contribute to the meaning given to the place of origin. Farhan has not been back to Somalia since his arrival in Europe 20 years ago, yet he said he speaks to his eldest sister, who lives there, two to three times a week.

The place of origin is also sometimes the object of romanticised and idealised memories that are contrasted to either the place of residence or the (negative) image that currently circulates internationally about Somalia. Shariif's memories of Somalia as "paradise" opened the section on the Somali context in Chap. 1: apart from the warm climate and the beaches, he told me about the numerous cinemas where American movies translated into Italian were shown. The Mogadishu of the childhood he described was a lively, cosmopolitan city with a warm and welcoming atmosphere, contrasting sharply with the common image of a violent and devastated city today.

Places are objects of particular, evolving and imaginary constructions, as Shariif's depiction of Mogadishu illustrates. What is regarded as "the place of origin" is also the product of (sometimes changing) constructions. For instance, it is not necessarily the place where one grew up, or it can become more specific – a region within a country, for example. The delimitation of the place of origin is sometimes the result of "choices" stemming from, for instance, political processes, family events or the changing landscape of clanship affiliations. Clans are linked to

ancestral territories, and return may involve choices related to these territories rather than to a place where people actually lived before leaving the country (Bjork 2007). The same is also true of transnational identifications. Awa grew up in southern Somalia, but over the years she has developed a strong relationship to Somaliland, where she has been returning regularly in recent years:

I think, if you asked me five years ago, “Are you from Somalia?”, I would have said “yeah”. Not that I felt I was from Somalia, but I couldn’t be bothered going through that discussion. But if you said to me now, “Are you from Somalia?”, I would say, “No, I’m not from Somalia; I’m from Somaliland”. I would go through the hassle, of one hour [laughs]. So I don’t know; it’s collective madness almost, in that sense. [Semi-structured interview, recorded]

What has changed in recent years is Somaliland’s struggle for international recognition, strongly supported by part of the diaspora. Awa explicitly refers to the collective character of this “madness”, highlighting the relationship between personal identities and political processes.

Events linked to individual trajectories may also modify feelings about the place of origin. Jawahir, like Awa, has never lived in Somaliland, although her mother was originally from there. During our discussion, she recurrently spoke about the tensions between “people from the south” and “people from the north”, as she herself differentiated them. She could feel those tensions early in her life, since some of her father’s relatives have still not come to terms with him marrying a woman “from the north”, even now that both of her parents have passed away. During her migration from Africa to Europe, a smuggler asked her not to mix with the other migrants, fearing that her supposedly “northern accent” might create problems in the group. Jawahir finally mentioned how, during her travels in different countries where she met relatives, she could feel these tensions as “increasingly tangible”. While she was raised in the south of the country and by a southerner father (who died at the beginning of the war), Jawahir increasingly came to identify as a Somalilander because she was constantly referred to as such by others. In 2009, she made her first trip back to Somalia: she did not stay long in the south because of safety concerns and because she could not find any relatives who still lived there, and she ended up spending most of her time in Somaliland. She plans to return to the north in the future, would like to implement a development project there and recently married a man from Somaliland who lives in the same city as her in Switzerland. Her story shows that she slowly reoriented herself towards a particular place of origin over the course of her life.

A person’s place of origin may also provoke increased concern and interest depending on their life stage: transnational studies have shown that young adults and new parents often develop a fresh interest in their place of origin (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004; Jeffery and Murison 2011). Some women, like Nadifa, became “involved” in associational activities related to their place of origin when they became mothers and left paid labour. For some respondents, their place of origin took on a new meaning from the moment they actually travelled there and physically “felt” it. A feeling of concern and responsibility for the place of origin may emerge from this first physical contact. Awa’s statement is especially eloquent in describing

this phenomenon, both for herself and in general: “I think that going back and forth has shaped people’s identity”. The place of origin becomes increasingly important in people’s lives, hers included, when they engage concretely with it.

The wish to contribute to and develop projects in the country of origin, if it is based on a feeling of a shared history, does not exclude more “utilitarian” concerns, especially in terms of career opportunities or involvement in humanitarian or political activities there. Awa’s presence in Somaliland is related to the activities she is able to carry out there. As indicated above, she would not spend time there if she did not have any specific project to carry out there.

Similarly, Abdulkadir, a 30-year-old man who lives in Switzerland, has travelled to Somalia twice in the last few years in the context of a humanitarian project in which he has been heavily involved. Although close relatives, including his father, still live in Somalia and he has always been in contact with them, his reason for travelling there is related exclusively to his voluntary commitment:

Yes, simply that. Otherwise, I would never have returned to Somalia. It was not my intention to return. [Spatial interview, recorded]

These examples show that one’s relationship to one’s place of origin is not necessarily limited to an emotional attachment to the territory of one’s ancestors or mediated through affective ties with relatives who live there. For migrants, their place of origin represents an opportunity to develop personal projects and play an important part in them, a theme that will be further developed in this book.

This section has discussed the dynamically constructed character of the various places people may link together through their cross-border movements. Apart from the country of residence and the country of origin, other places may also be significant at the symbolic and/or functional level for the Somalis in this study. Previous countries of settlement may be regarded both symbolically, sometimes with mixed emotions, and functionally, on the basis of the resources they offer. Other places may play specific functions at particular times without fostering any emotional involvement: this is the case with Dubai, an international business hub, for some respondents involved in trade. Yet other places may only be relevant at the symbolic level: for instance, some respondents mentioned the importance of making a religious pilgrimage to Mecca as a mark of their Muslim identification.

## 2.5 Conclusions

This chapter describes the different types of cross-border mobility practices that European Somalis may develop over the years, highlighting the dynamic character of these (im)mobility trajectories. Migrants engage in a wide variety of activities, including maintaining social networks, carrying out business or other work-related activities and getting involved in humanitarian or political projects through their more or less regular cross-border movements. Mobility necessarily entails linking different places together: the place – or more rarely places – where one legally

resides, the place one considers one's place of origin and other places in the world that people visit for one reason or another. The study shows that people on the move give these different places meanings, whether emotional or functional.

It is not necessary for people to engage in physical movement in order for them to invest places with meanings: the transnational literature demonstrates that mobility is not a prerequisite for participating in transnational social fields (Levitt 2001; Glick Schiller et al. 1995). Nonetheless, this chapter demonstrates that crossing borders enables people to maintain a physical presence in more than one place, which in turn enables them to develop further activities and projects.

Mobility leads to encounters and experiences from which social actors may draw inspiration for new or expanded activities. Physically "being there", rather than communicating virtually or receiving indirect information, has enabled some respondents to expand, recreate or solidify transnational networks, gather information and learn about opportunities. Informal contexts are especially important when it comes to meeting with people who might become important in the future, as Abdulkadir's reflections on weddings has illustrated. Being able to participate physically in those contexts allows migrants to take advantage of "chance encounters" (see Gladkova and Mazzucato 2017 on the role of chance). Moreover, certain matters are better discussed in face-to-face meetings, which are also crucial to building trust, whether to become business partners, pass on or receive information from another part of the world or engage in common political or humanitarian activities. Being on the move also allows for some degree of informality in the transportation of the "goods" that some people circulate through their mobility, as more formal and institutionalised channels are more subject to taxes and monitoring. Finally, physical mobility often entails changes in the ways certain places are regarded and possibly practiced. Visits to friends or family in other places sometimes open people's eyes to new opportunities, which are accessible through mobility (whether it takes the form of a secondary move, pendular practices or star-shaped mobility). Similarly, regular visits to the place of origin may prompt people to make decisions regarding their place of residence or further mobility practices: Awa, for instance, opted to leave the Netherlands and settle in Britain after a visit to Somaliland. Return visits sometimes also change how people identify with their place of origin (and its population) and reinforce their wish "to contribute". A few respondents were explicit about how a return visit caused them to reorient some of their activities towards their region of origin or the Somali population in their place of residence. For these different reasons, the physical presence enabled by physical mobility cannot always be replaced by "virtual and communicative mobilities" (Urry 2007), although these different types of mobility are complementary.

This chapter has focused on migrants' agency in developing various forms of mobility, conducting beneficial activities and appropriating different places while on the move. These migrants, however, are embedded in larger relations that structure the transnational social fields in which they evolve. Their own social locations within these wider contexts – in terms of ethnicity and race, legal status, gender and family situation in particular – influence the opportunities they may be able to seize, but also the constraints they face. In turn, these more or less constraining or enabling

frameworks may act as an incentive to move from or to a specific place or, on the contrary, to stay somewhere. Increasing feelings of exclusion (resulting from xenophobic incidents or public discourses) have, for instance, prompted some of the respondents to leave a first country of settlement in Europe for London. Similarly, this study, like others (for instance Portes et al. 2002; Levitt 2003, 2009), shows that the place of origin often becomes more relevant, and that people start visiting it more often, not only when they are legally allowed to do so, but also when they acquire a higher socioeconomic position in their country of residence and therefore improve their anchorage there.

Social actors' social positions within local economic, political and social contexts – in their countries of residence and origin, as well as in other places – thus contribute extensively to shaping their mobile activities. The migrants in this study often face excluding and discriminating labour markets in their country of residence. While they may be able to make use of some of their professional assets in international institutions, even there the recognition of their assets remains limited. They may get involved in the political and economic reconstruction of their country of origin, but they may be regarded suspiciously there because they have been away for so long. Finally, transnational extended families (and their internal hierarchies) may offer opportunities for mobility, but they often also frame some of their members' (im)mobility regarding who moves or not, where and for what purpose.

As a result, mobility practices should not be romanticised or depicted as a sure way of setting up innovative transnational projects. The case studies above describe relatively successful endeavours, but they have been selected for this purpose and should not be considered representative of all migrants everywhere and in every position. The following two chapters further explore the processes through which the people I met deal with constraining or enabling frameworks when establishing their mobility practices.

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