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Return Visits as a Marker of Differentiation in the Social Field

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ABSTRACT *This article sets out to examine how differences within a migrant community are expressed through return visits, and particularly through visitors' narratives about their country of origin. Drawing on semi-structured interviews with Burundians living in Norway and the UK, I argue that the Burundian social field is characterized by two opposing positions regarding the possibility of return, and that the political field in the country of settlement plays an influential role in how those two positions are defined. Two narratives called 'instability and alienation' and 'progress and opportunities' from return visits are used to express support for one or the other of these two positions. I also argue that Bourdieu's conceptualization of social practice is highly relevant for migration research because it allows for analysing differences within a migration community, and that the advantages of combining habitus, capital and field should be further explored, both theoretically and comparatively.*

KEY WORDS: Return visits, Return migration, Social practice, Field, Capital, Habitus

Introduction

The purpose of this article is to examine how differences within a migrant community are expressed through return visits, and particularly through visitors' narratives about their country of origin. Terms like 'migrant community' and 'diaspora' have traditionally been used to describe a group of people who are perceived as being more or less homogeneous because they originate from the same country or ethnic group. Such a perception continues to dominate the public debate both on integration and on migrants' transnational practices, such as remittances. Research on immigration, in contrast, has increasingly focused on the existence of diversity within migrant groups in an effort to understand why people relate differently to society in the country of settlement. Here, the focus is often on the role of different types of capital – such as networks and education – or on variation in the strength and direction of migrants' identities and attachments. Individuals' multiple relations to their country of origin are also covered by the literature on diaspora and transnationalism,

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but few studies have attempted to understand the links between divergent opinions on the country of origin and the practices of return visits and return migration. This is particularly true for the literature on forced migration. This article accordingly aims to help fill the knowledge gap identified above through a focus on Burundian migrants in Norway and the United Kingdom, and their divergent understandings of the socio-political situation back 'home', and thus on the possibilities for return. In trying to make sense of the diversity of opinions among the migrants I have met, I especially rely on Bourdieu's work on social practice. The latter's notion of the social field, according to which social relations are understood as being structured by power, allows for an understanding of how the differentiated and politicized nature of return migration influences social practice, and of how social practices such as return visits influence the structure of the field. Bourdieu's combination of capital and habitus, thus, provides a framework for understanding the narratives produced from the return visits and their role in the social field. Hence, the main focus is on the narratives in the social field rather than the individuals producing them.

In this article, I will use the term 'return visit' to describe sojourns to Burundi made by people who were either born in Burundi or are of Burundian descent and who are currently living in Europe. The visit may be viewed as a vacation, may be motivated by a specific family function (Baldassar 2001, 1995), or may be carried out to assess the opportunities for a permanent return (Duval 2004; Muggeridge and Dona 2006; Conway, Potter, and Bernard 2009). It can also be multifunctional (King and Christou 2011), combining family obligations with return assessments. Return visits can be repetitive and regular, or they may be one-off events.

There are two main findings in the article. On the empirical side, the article shows that the Burundian social field is characterized by two opposing positions on the possibility of return, and that the political fields in the Norway and the UK are highly influential in defining those two positions. Narratives from return visits are used by actors to support one or the other of these two positions. On the theoretical side, the article finds that Bourdieu's conceptualization of practice is highly relevant for migration research, and that the advantages offered by combining the concepts of habitus, capital and field should be furthered explored, both theoretically and comparatively.

The following section provides a brief introduction to the Burundian context of migration, and to the methodological approach adopted in the present study.

Context and Method

The first Burundians arrived in Norway and the UK in the late 1990s. Their flight was caused directly or indirectly by the political crisis of 1993 that was instigated by the killing of the newly elected Hutu President Melchior Ndadaye in an attempted military coup. Years of political instability, communal violence and civil war resulted in a total of 300,000 casualties (Lemarchand 2009) and caused a massive population movement. Some fled because of direct threats or attacks on themselves or their families, which were mostly on the grounds of their ethnic affiliation. Others fled because of the protracted nature of the generalized violence. Around 700,000 people fled to Tanzania, Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Reyntjens 1995; Lemarchand 2009). Several hundred thousand were also displaced within Burundi itself. Less than 50,000 Burundians found their way to Europe (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees July 1, 2012). A small fragment was

resettled through UNHCR, while others applied for asylum upon arrival in Europe. Peace talks with some of the protagonists started in 1998 and culminated in 2001, when the parties agreed on a settlement known as the Arusha accords (Chrétien 2003). The first election after the civil war was held in 2005, when the Hutu-dominated Conseil National pour le Défence de la Démocratie–Forces pour la Défence de la Démocratie (CNDD–FDD) took power. The same political party won the most recent election in 2010.

This article builds on 30 semi-structured interviews and three focus-group discussions conducted among Burundians living in Norway and the UK,¹ along with a number of informal conversations, interviews with key informants and observation. These two countries were selected due to their similar history of receiving Burundian migrants, the relative small size of the Burundian migrant group and the similar policy on return. The interviews were conducted between 2011 and 2012. The article is also informed by my fieldwork in Burundi in 2012.

The informants were recruited through numerous entry points, including different types of organizations in addition to personal contacts, to ensure a variety of experiences and opinions. Interviews were conducted in multiple cities in the two countries. The majority of the informants arrived in the country of settlement as an asylum seeker or quota refugee, are in the age group of 20–40 and have residence permit. Both Hutus and Tutsis are included, however the exact number of each group is not known due to the sensitivity of the subject. Variations in socio-economic status (before and after migrating) and return intentions were also secured. The small numbers of Burundian migrants living in Norway and the UK represented a challenge in terms of anonymity. In order to safeguard the anonymity of the informants, limited personal details are therefore linked to the specific quotes included in the article. Since the majority (60%) of the informants in the sample were male, I have given all the informants that I quote directly a masculine name.

Return migration is very often a sensitive and a politicized topic to discuss with migrants. Negotiating my position as an independent researcher was something of a challenge. Different theories regarding my intentions, my background and my relation to the Norwegian government flourished, particularly among Burundians living in the UK. It became essential not to be associated with the Norwegian government in order to avoid the traditional outsider perspective where ‘researchers are assumed to be connected with the authorities or other powerful institutions, potential informants can see them as sources of either assistance or insecurity’ (Carling, Erdal, and Ezzati 2013, 6). A lot of time was therefore spent on discussing the nature of the research, and my own background, in particular my experience from working in Africa, in order to move towards an ‘explicit third position’. This position is defined as a recognizable identity that is clearly neither part of the migrant group nor of the majority population (Carling, Erdal, and Ezzati 2013, 14).

The article continues with a brief introduction of Bourdieu’s theory of practice, focusing on its three main concepts: habitus, social field and capital. Following from this, the main part of the article analyses how and why the experiences of return visit are framed within two divergent narratives.

Conceptualizing differentiated social practice

Bourdieu’s theory of social practice provides a useful framework for any attempt to understand why intra-group differences arise and how they are expressed through

social practices such as return visits. The development of this framework was inspired by the perceived need for a social theory capable of bridging the divide in the debate over the primacy of either human agency or social structure in understanding the individual's behaviour. Instead of granting primacy to either of these factors, Bourdieu's theory views social practices as being generated by the interplay between dispositions (*habitus*), resources (capital) and spaces (fields) for acting (Bourdieu 1990b). Their interrelation is visualized in the equation: (*Habitus*Capital*) + Field = Social Practice (Bourdieu 1986, cited in Maton 2008, 51). In the following subsections, then, I will present each of these three thinking tools in turn.

Habitus

Social practice is bound by rules and regulations. Some are formalized through legal instruments, while others are internalized through the process of living and become part of people's *habitus* – which is defined as ‘the durable and transposable systems of schemata of perception, appreciations and action’ (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 127). Thus, *habitus* provides the framework within which types of capital are valued, transformed and converted (Bourdieu 1990b). This framework influences what one does and how one feels about it – whether one feels at ‘home’ in a given place and/or with the people with whom one is interacting (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). Another central aspect of *habitus* is the mutual relationship between *habitus* and field. The field structures the *habitus*, but the *habitus* also influences the dynamic construction of a field.

Despite the emphasis on the generative nature of *habitus*, however, Bourdieu has been criticized by late-modern or postmodern scholars of being too structuralistic and deterministic (Adams 2006). Even though Bourdieu understands *habitus* as a fundamentally embodied and an unconscious formation, he argues that flexibility and a certain degree of reflexivity are already inherent properties of *habitus*, since it is transposable and adaptive. He suggests that people will become more reflexive in times of crisis, meaning that they are more open to questioning their own dispositions at such times (Adams 2006).

In this article, mobility is considered ‘a time of crisis’. Return visits in particular have a strong effect on reflections on identity and belonging (e.g. Baldassar 1995, 2001, Baldassar, Baldock, and Wilding 2007; Hyndman-Rizik 2008; Haikkola 2011; King, Christou, and Teerling 2011; Ruting 2012). Bourdieu's *habitus*, focusing on the reflexive aspect, represents therefore a useful concept with which to theorize the sense of belonging to a group, a place and/or a country (Howard and Gill 2001), which is a central aspect in the narratives on return visits examined here.

Capital

Bourdieu (1986) distinguishes between three main types of capital: economic, social and cultural. What defines particular resources as capital lies in their ability to convert into other resources to secure an advantage or overcoming disadvantages. The particular form of capital that is considered important in a given social field is defined as symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1986). An important implication of Bourdieu's argument is that capital is not fixed, but context-dependent (Cederberg 2012).

Return visits take various forms and are made in a range of different ways within the Burundian social field owing to the uneven distribution of different types of

capital. Economic capital influences the timing and frequency of return visits. Travel to Burundi is expensive due to the ticket fee and the expectations from family and friends in terms of gifts. The existence of friends and family (social capital) in Burundi might also influence the motivation for the sojourns. Visits may also be used as arenas for the display of acquired economic and cultural capitals (Hemming 2009), and thus give individuals an opportunity to enjoy their upward social mobility in Burundi. The important role of cultural capital such as citizenship in enabling mobility is also essential (Ley and Kobayashi 2005; Carling 2008; Ley 2010).

In this article, I discuss how people evaluate the possibility to convert acquired capital from abroad to resources in Burundi and how the evaluation is linked to their position in the Burundian social field in Norway and the UK.

Field

A field is defined as a relatively autonomous social network structured around different positions (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). Such positions can be considered as conflicts to which the members of a given field relate through their social practices (Sestoft 2006). Bourdieu often used the analogy of a 'card game' to explain how the volume and composition of an individual's various forms of capital act as a set of 'cards' that define 'her relative force in the game, her position in the space of play and also her strategic orientation towards the game' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 99). Bourdieu also points out that the players in a particular game can work to change the value of what is regarded as capitals and the exchange rate between the different forms of capital (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 99).

Since my point of departure is to understand diversity among Burundians living abroad, I apply the concept of the social field to assist in the analysis. The Burundian social field in those two countries is structured around two divergent positions: negative and positive attitudes towards returning to Burundi. These two positions are built on migrants' memories from living in Burundi, current analyses of the economic, social and political situations in that country and individual experiences from return visits. These positions influence the social practices that take place within the field. Some Burundians are not engaged in transnational activities directly, but are still involved in the field through cultural activities and receiving and assisting Burundian nationals in the country of settlement. Others are involved in transnational activities, such as sending remittances and travelling to Burundi. This article will focus on how experiences of visiting Burundi are used by actors in the field to relate to the two opposing positions on return migration. Hence, the main focus is on the narratives in the social field rather than the individuals producing them. The structure of the social field is the result not only of internal dynamics within the field, but also of the political context in the migrants' host countries. An elaboration of the role of the political field in the country of settlement is therefore included in the analysis.

Narratives of Return Visits

The Burundian social field in the UK and Norway is characterized by divergent understandings of the situation in Burundi. Opinions range from total despair and a resolve to never return, to optimism and a declared interest in returning. Sharing anecdotes from their return visits often substantiates individuals' opinions. Experiences from these visits can be categorized in terms of two main narratives. The first

of these, which I call ‘progress and opportunities’, emphasizes the positive developments in Burundi and the duty of individuals to contribute to this trend. In the second narrative, which I call ‘insecurity and alienation’, descriptions of physical insecurity, unemployment and disassociation with the people and country of Burundi are key elements.

From my qualitative material, it is not possible to extract clear links between individual socio-economical characteristics and the narrative they express. The focus is therefore not on the informants composition of capitals, but rather on their perception of the capitals that are valuable in Burundi in addition to their assessment of the possibility to convert acquired capitals from abroad. It is the sum of their perceived capitals together with their habitus that decides which position they support in the social field.

By describing their views about the situation in Burundi, the informants situate themselves in the social field. By supporting of the positions on the possibility to return they also related to the other position, by giving direct or indirect comments about ‘the others’, thus clearly showing the existence of a conflict in the social field. The two ‘groups’ accuse each other for ‘playing politics’, meaning that their opinions are shaped to score a political point in the country of settlement. Individuals in the first narrative accuse the other group for not being patriotic and only focusing on increasing their own wealth. Individuals in the second narrative believe, on the other hand, that it is not possible to survive in Burundi without succumbing to corruption and nepotism, thus questioning the moral standard within the first group. The relationship between the two narratives is important to keep in mind when I now move on to describe the optimistic narrative.

Progress and Opportunities

The first narrative emphasizes positive developments in Burundi, such as increased political stability and economic opportunities. This narrative describes a country that is in the process of rising from the ruins of a devastating civil war. As evidence of such positive developments, reference may be made to the holding of democratic elections, the implementation of democratic institutions, Burundi’s membership of the East Africa Community and the reduced tension between the Hutus and Tutsis in the country. The informants who express this narrative underscore not only the possibility of contributing to the development of Burundi, but also their strong sense of duty to do so. I will present this narrative by first focusing on security, followed by economy and belonging.

This first narrative emphasizes that Hutus and Tutsis are no longer in conflict, and that durable peace and stability have now been secured in Burundi. Return visits by both Hutus and Tutsis are pointed to as an evidence of this improvement: ‘Everyone goes back in the summer time, but we don’t talk about it’, said Frederic who suggested that other people believe it is in their interest to maintain an image of Burundi as an unstable country. Theodore warned me about the existence of opposing views:

And when you talk about war and instability ... you travel down there and you don’t find anything. We know what it is all about, but we don’t care about it. That means that many people among the Burundians that you will meet will only talk about what they read from the webpages and only that. You will hear

about the insecurity and that they are killing people ... but we all meet in Burundi when it is summertime.

Security was assessed to be of no greater challenge in Burundi than in other countries. The continued existence of minor rebel groups was not denied, but their effect on the general security level was thought to be significantly less than what most people believe. It was also claimed that the mobilization of or commission of attacks by these groups were no longer based on ethnicity, but rather on economic and political grounds. Security was therefore no longer linked to people's ethnic affiliation, which I class as a form of social capital. This development was seen as a step in the right direction. The prospect of a return to civil war was seen as highly unlikely, and the circulation of rumours about a possible *coup d'état* was portrayed as a strategy by the political opposition both inside and outside Burundi to destroy the image of the current government. It was pointed out that while there may be some persons currently in exile who would face security challenges owing to their past and present political involvement, for the general population security was not a major impediment for visiting Burundi, or even for returning on a more permanent basis.

After visiting Burundi, Valentine claimed that social life in the country is no longer structured around ethnic affiliation. He said that,

many people have started to think that there has to be a way to live together without including ethnicity all the time, to use ethnicity in defence. Both among the Hutus and Tutsis there are many people who are trying to spread this kind of topic.

The existence of such an attitude was confirmed by Theodore, who reported that ethnicity was no longer a contentious topic but rather a source of entertainment. He claimed that when people from both ethnic groups met up in bars in Burundi, they laughed about their misguided ignorant past and cracked jokes about the stereotypes attached to their ethnic affiliations. Thus, ethnicity was no longer considered the dominant form of symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1986) influencing people's security, social status or, as discussed below, their access to cultural and economic capitals. Social capital remains highly important, but was assessed differently, as an influential network now cut across the ethnic divides of the past.

Increased security and the devaluation of ethnicity as a form of symbolic capital were among the factors thought to have contributed to the economic progress that has taken place in the country. Valentine travelled regularly to Burundi and claimed that positive trends in official statistics are visible on the ground. He commented:

I can see the evolution. It is a very great evolution, but people ... people see that the country is growing up but they don't want to say it. They are just playing politics. You know, they don't mean what they say. But the country is growing up. They are trying to fight corruption too. Trying to fight corruption is not easy, but they are trying to do it. You cannot expect miracles.

The private sector was perceived to be operating with a merit-based recruitment system in which institutionalized cultural capital (Bourdieu 1986), such as academic qualifications, was considered more valuable than ethnic affiliation. One informant who had worked in Burundi for a while before returning to Europe highlighted one

of the effects of this system, noting that one of the more positive experiences he had had in Burundi related to the unproblematic nature of professional interaction with people from both ethnic groups at the workplace, which he believed was a result of the introduction of a more professional recruitment system. Acquired cultural capital from abroad, such as a degree, is considered to be convertible into social capital in Burundi and resulted in easier access to people in powerful positions. Even the president himself was seen as prioritizing a meeting with a potential returnee with economic and cultural capitals from abroad over a meeting with a local Burundian. The regular visits to Europe and the USA by politicians from Burundi's ruling party as well as its opposition parties were a sign of their acknowledgement of the influences migrants have on Burundi through remittances and political activism, both in Burundi and in the country of settlement.

The experience of living in Europe, and particularly obtaining citizenship of a European country, may in itself lead to elevated cultural capital in Burundi. A degree from Europe together with proficiency in English would further increase an individual's chances of securing a suitable job within Burundi's private sector. The challenge with the private sector in Burundi is, according to Clement, its inability to compete with European salaries. However, Clement, who was considering returning, commented that 'we are not going to Burundi to make money, we are very conscious about that. We are not getting any material benefits by living there, but we might obtain something greater in the long run'. A return to Burundi may therefore be considered more of an ideological matter than a strategic decision aimed at accumulating economic capital. Nick expressed his sense of duty very clearly when he said that 'you shouldn't ask what Burundi can do for you, but what you can do for your country'. Feelings of duty are closely linked with a sense of belonging, which will be discussed in the next section.

Two nuances of habitus are expressed within this narrative. One emphasizes its durable aspect (Bourdieu 1984). Informants view their strong feelings of attachment to Burundi as being natural and unproblematic, and report that they feel at home in Burundi. Return visits are therefore not seen as being necessary for reinforcing any sense of attachment, as the ties to the country of origin are regarded as durable regardless of the length of physical separation between the individual and Burundi. Theodore said that 'I love Burundi just as I did before. It is my country and I am very proud to be a Burundian'. The other nuance, on the other hand, emphasizes that the habitus has evolved over time (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992; Adams 2006). Years of physical separation from one's original home and exposure to a society with very different sets of rules can be considered to be a situation of 'crisis' as Bourdieu calls it (Adams 2006). This situation has given rise to a degree of reflexivity both on Burundi as a society and on the changes that have taken place within their own dispositions. As a result of comparing the society in which they currently live with the society they left, some now question their feelings of attachment to Burundi. This was viewed as problematic by individuals who wished to maintain an unshakeable attachment to Burundi. Clement said that,

I had the need to make a visit quite often. There is always a danger that you lose an understanding of the reality. And then you have a problem. I am always on guard in order to avoid becoming too much Norwegian. I have my roots and I always have to remember them and return to them.

Both migrants living abroad and Burundian society have changed over time. Return visits were therefore seen as being the only way of ‘staying on top of things’, as Clement put it. Maintaining a feeling of belonging required constant interaction with individuals in Burundi to enable the informant to understand the rapid evolution taking place within Burundian society. Repeated visits to Burundi were considered to be an important strategy for maintaining the feeling of being Burundian.

Individuals expressing this first narrative maintain a positive position on return. They argue that return is possible and that regular visits are important when one is planning a more permanent return. Securing economic capital, for example, requires being present in Burundi. Return visits are therefore used to develop business ideas through the assessment of gaps in the market, or to enable migrants to follow up on existing investments or house-building projects. Those who have tried to establish a business report that frequent visits are necessary to keep enterprises running smoothly. Anecdotes describing failed investments initiated by Burundians abroad, and involving family members in Burundi, are often told. The challenge of long-distance investment is also confirmed in other studies (e.g. Van Hear 2004).

Other migrants, who may be looking for employment in Burundi, have used return visits to assess the available opportunities within particular sectors. Informants have concluded that their cultural and economic capitals will be sufficient to enable them to establish themselves successfully in Burundi, and to have an impact on Burundian society in terms of economic or social change. Citizenship in Norway or the UK is an important resource that would allow them to return to Europe if their specific plans in Burundi fail. Tresor told me that he was encouraged by the return visit and that he was planning to go back to teach. He said that,

Things will work out, I think I will be going at least for a month or two to teach and then come back. Maybe, finally I can go back completely. Because now I think the situation has improved. It has improved, but it is not safe. It is still all this political things I don't like. It is still there. But people are surviving and they are doing well, very well.

This narrative builds on strong feelings of attachment to Burundi and a sense of duty to contribute to the country's development. These individuals accuse the opposite group for not being patriotic and that they are ‘going home just to show off’. Freddy believes that the lack of interest in returning is linked with the main reason for leaving Burundi. He claims that the initial migration was not first and foremost individual persecution, but lack of opportunities caused by the protracted state of insecurity in Burundi. He says,

Unfortunately, from what I have seen here, unless patriotism increases ... I don't think many of them want to go back. They have reasons for not going back of course, and they can justify it, but at least right now ... the problem is that the reason why they left Burundi influences very much the motivation why they should go back. And it will take a very bad economic situation for them here, to decide to go back.

I turn now, then, to the second narrative, which I have called ‘instability and alienation’.

Instability and alienation

The second narrative describes a deteriorating security situation, with increased unemployment, poverty and moral degradation. Here, the cautious optimism that existed before the last election in 2010 has disappeared, and individuals have no faith in the ability of the existing political leadership to improve the situation for the general population. The second narrative describes a country without a future for Burundians abroad, partly because cultural capital from abroad is not valued or rewarded satisfactorily and partly because the social capital they possessed before the war is no longer relevant, owing to emigration and the complete overhaul of the country's governmental system. A new party now leads the country, and most people in the system have been replaced.

Individual experiences from the war have a direct impact on transnational activities such as return visits. The past interplays with the present and influences patterns of social practice. Returning to Burundi is too problematic for a number of Burundians in exile. Blaise had travelled back a few times, but his wife was not willing to join him. He says that 'she has been experiencing so much horrible. After 20 years, it still hurts so much'. Others feel that their family obligations force them to travel to Burundi once in a while. Floribert commented that he would rather not travel to Burundi since nothing has changed since the time of his flight. He added:

I didn't like it [the visit]. I don't like my country ... It is difficult to live there. You can go somewhere and get shot. We can't trust our neighbours and friends. They take your money and threaten you. You pay 2000 francs and they kill you ... They [Tutsis in general] are discriminated and killed.

According to Floribert, physical security was linked to ethnic discrimination and poverty. Belonging to a minority ethnic group was viewed as a potential liability, since 'there is a feeling of revenge in Burundi, and I don't feel safe at night', as Pierre put it.

Others point out that the root cause of the security challenges is the growing divide between the rich and the poor in combination with the existence of many weapons within the society. They believe that dramatically increased prices for water, electricity and food have created a population that is desperate and would do more or less anything for money. Bernard said that

Life is expensive. People don't have anything to eat ... people eat from the rubbish. I don't want to see such things. I don't want to move back. People who are poor are poor, they don't have rights and they kill people who have stuff. I want my family to move [out of Burundi], but my family doesn't have the money and the possibility to move.

An interesting aspect of this last statement is that it suggests that economic resources are not necessarily convertible into other forms of capital, but may become a liability owing to the link between poverty and insecurity. A similar point was made by Pierre, who had visited Burundi once and did not feel safe there. He claimed that coming from Europe made one more unsafe, because the visitor was the target of attempts to extract bribes and 'you can be killed if you don't have money'. He opted

to hire a bodyguard to increase his security during his visit because he claimed that living abroad has changed his reflexes:

... I have lost my reflexes which helped me to fight back and watch my money. I used to build my life on knowing how to fight back, knowing how to see danger in advance and fear was erased from my vocabulary. Now I don't look for danger as I was used to do. I have become softer and I can feel fear. This makes me feel like a coward.

Burundi is characterized by a very negative employment situation and high rates of inflation. Though informants believed that their cultural capital, in particular their acquired institutional cultural capital such as academic qualifications and work experience could be useful in Burundi, they did not expect to find a job easily. They argued that the government regulated access to the job market. Gervais claimed that the problem of ethnic discrimination and camaraderie was especially acute within the government sector, and suggested that in order to get a job within the government one needed to be a member of the ruling party. 'Parties are still divided along ethnic lines. This system is holding Burundi back. We need a transparent and fair recruitment process which is merit-based', he argued. Laurent described a corrupt system in which social and economic capitals were valued more highly than cultural capital. He argued that when one visited Burundi, this system was clearly visible in the growing divide between the rich and the poor, between insiders and outsiders. He continued:

I barely recognized the place. In fact, I found it terrible: the poverty, unemployed people and the misery. It was terrible to witness. Everything was so expensive. The rent is the same as your salary. How on earth can they expect that you use all your salary on paying rent? It was terrible. That has changed a bit but at the same time, the differences are more visible now I think. The rich are rich and they have a lot. Those who aren't rich, they don't have anything at all. They don't even have food. Others drive around in cars which haven't arrived in Norway yet. They have gigantic villas and pools ... I was totally shocked.

Pascal had been offered a job in Burundi, but after assessing the overall situation he decided to decline the offer. He felt that he would be forced into a corrupt system and that he wouldn't be in a position to exercise any changes or even apply the skills he had learned through his studies. Another reason for not accepting the job was that he would not be able to be politically active. He was a member of an opposition party, and was afraid that his political affiliation would hamper his career and be a source of insecurity. As an ambitious, highly educated person, he wanted to make a difference when he returned to Burundi. However, the current political situation in the country would limit his freedom, he argued, and would not 'allow you to contribute to the society without getting your fingers dirty, and that would be too frustrating. I am not ready for it'. This narrative characterizes the political system in Burundi as a challenging – if not dangerous – system to engage with. Three options were seen as being available in terms of how one might relate to the political field in Burundi upon return. The first was to become a passive member of the ruling political party and to adhere to its rules. The second was to be neutral, to refrain from

engaging in politics and to set up a private business without any links with the government. The third option was to join the opposition – though this was described as being only a hypothetical option, as the consequence of such a move would be imprisonment or even the loss of one's life.

Return visits prompt people to reflect about the meaning and location of 'home' (Hammond 2004; Muggeridge and Dona 2006) and the distinction between home and homeland (Hammond 2004). These reflections highlights how the extent to which a person may feel at home within a particular space is not fixed, but is dependent upon how they are positioned and perceive their position within the given space (Flynn 2007), which can change over time. Bourdieu argues that a person feels at home in a field when he or she is a product of that field. It can be compared to being like a 'fish in water: it does not feel the weight of the water, and it takes the world about itself for granted' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 127). The first return visit in particular was often experienced as an eye-opener by many Burundians, who realized there and then that their dispositions had changed during their separation from their country of origin, and they felt like fish out of water. What distinguishes these reflections about belonging and change from similar elements within the first narrative is that here the change of habitus is not considered problematic, but is rather viewed as a sign of social mobility. Changes in the migrants' attitudes, values, priorities and reflexes give rise to an ambivalent relationship with their network in Burundi. The joy of being back in the homeland is mixed with a feeling of not being at home. Boniface said:

When you have moved somewhere and see something different, your body and mind demand that standard. That is the problem now ... I have a family and I have other standards. The way I think, my values, the way I talk, the way I work, the way I reflect ... and you go somewhere [in Burundi] where you crash. It is tough to live with. You have another culture shock.

The local population in Burundi recognize visitors from Europe – sometimes because of the way the visitors dress or their hairstyles, but most often simply because they can sense that the visitors are different from them. Feelings of being an outsider is reinforced by being welcomed as a 'muzungu', the Swahili word for white people. Jean Claude reported:

When I come home ... you are not a Burundian who comes home, you are a foreigner, a *muzungu*, from Norway with a lot of money. They look at you and see dollars. Before, this attitude was reserved for the white people, but now you are also from abroad and must therefore have a lot of money.

The status of being a *muzungu* was experienced as a barrier to belonging. Informants questioned the motives of people who wanted to be a part of their social network and felt that they were being exploited. 'People expect me to give money and pay for drinks' said Nick. Living abroad for a long period had a negative impact on social capital in Burundi. Pascal commented that 'leaving was like breaking all the friendship I had in Burundi. I have now lost almost all my friends'. He had visited Burundi since then, but reconnecting with his social network had not proved easy. He stated: 'When I am visiting Burundi, I stay mostly at home. I don't connect with

my friends in the same way anymore'. When asked to give an explanation for this, he commented: 'I have changed. I am liberal and proud of it. I support gay rights'.

Deogratias, another frequent visitor, said that visiting home reminded him that there were some things he could not tolerate, such as 'corruption, the unfairness and people complaining'. When he expressed critical views about developments in the country, these were not always welcomed by local people in Burundi. Sometimes they reacted by saying things like 'you have left only ten years ago, what is wrong with you?' He felt that he was put in a box and forced to be somebody he no longer was, and added:

Everybody complains about the unfairness of the system in Burundi, but nobody does anything with it, and in the end it becomes part of the Burundian culture. People in Burundi do not see this change but when you come from far you see it. You feel it because they make you feel it.

This second narrative is framed in ways that support the negative position on return migration within the social field. In particular, those who left Burundi at a young age are more likely to have developed a reflexive habitus, and they point out that some of the practices and values of Burundian society are not compatible with their new lives in the country of settlement. They feel that Burundi is characterized by moral decline and questionable ethical considerations and priorities. Their attachment to Burundi is weaker than expressed in the other narrative and the sense of a duty to return less prominent. They point out that their cultural capital will not be valued, as Burundi's economic field is structured around the importance of social and economic capitals. Being affiliated to the ruling party is considered the most efficient way of building social capital, which is crucial for finding employment or establishing a business. However, in contrast to the other group, they feel that to make such an affiliation would compromise their values, and are thus unwilling to do so.

Inter-field Relations

The existence of two different narratives from the return visits is a result of the two dominant positions on return migration within the Burundian social field. How individuals relate to these two positions is influenced not only by the internal power dynamics within the field, but also by other fields. Turner (2008, 742) argues that the mutual relationship between the Burundian diaspora and the Burundian political field has changed over time, and that the end of the civil war meant that 'the gravity of the political field has shifted back to the territory of the nation state'. The ability, and even the ambitions, of the diaspora to overthrow the government have declined, but their ambitions to influence the bilateral cooperation between migrants' host governments and Burundi remain high. This section will therefore focus on the relationship between the Burundian social field and the political field in Norway and the UK.

Bourdieu (2005, 30) calls the relation between fields 'the invisible structure which influences the agents to react to these relations of forces, to these structures; they construct them, perceive them, form an idea of them, represent them to themselves and so on'. He has also argued that there exists a hierarchical relationship between fields (see, e.g. Bourdieu 1990a) – that some fields are dominant while others are subordinate. The role of the public sphere has also been highlighted in migration

research. Flynn (2007, 478) claims that ‘the way the homeland is framed through public discourse and policy remains important and formative’. Questions of home, belonging and identity are questions about political and personal struggles over the social regulation of belonging (Anteby-Yemini 2004).

The political field in the host country is seen as autonomous, impermeable and in a dominant position vis-à-vis the Burundian social field. The discourse on return migration within the political field in Norway and UK is dominated by the two countries’ respective ministries of justice and their perspectives on the facilitation of return migration, both voluntary and involuntary. Carling (2008) introduces the concept of *mobility resources* to capture the role of legal status in creating inequalities between migrants and non-migrants. These resources may also yield asymmetries between different legal categories of migrants, which again determine the patterns of their transnational social practices, including return visits. For those Burundians living in Europe who were resettled refugees, granted refugee status upon arrival or given residence permits on humanitarian grounds, a national passport from the host country would represent the only valid travel document for visiting Burundi. This requirement is linked to the cessation clause that a state can invoke if a person has voluntarily re-established himself in the country of origin, which he left owing to fear or persecution (Ministry of Justice and Public Security 2010). The definition of re-establishment is unclear, but the effect of the cessation clause is that a return visit is legally linked to the need for protection, and hence returning to Burundi without a valid document would therefore hamper the process of acquiring citizenship.

Discussion on return migration in the political field is therefore understood by some actors within the Burundian social field as a discourse on the nuances of deportation. Such an understanding was voiced particularly by informants who supported the second narrative called ‘instability and alienation’. The existence of a return agreement between Norway and Burundi was referred to by a number of informants in both Norway and the UK as evidence of a lack of knowledge of the socio-political realities in Burundi. Fears of deportation were mentioned as being a matter of concern not just for people without citizenship. Even some Burundians who had obtained citizenship from Norway or the UK questioned the validity of their documents if the international community ‘got the wrong impression’ about the situation in Burundi. As stated above, the making of return visits is a social practice that is regulated by national legislation linked to the issue of protection. This regulatory framework has accordingly created a situation in which migrants need to legitimize their need for protection in Norway and the UK. Stories from return visits are therefore used to support the negative position on possibilities for return migration within the social field.

In contrast, the first narrative discussed above, which I have called ‘progress and opportunities’, gives expression to a desire to influence the political field in the host country by focusing on the need for more international engagement in Burundi. Individuals who express this narrative understand that return migration may inspire public and donor confidence in the reconstruction and peace-building process in Burundi. They want the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and/or the UK Foreign Office to shift the emphasis from humanitarian assistance to long-term development assistance or, in the case of UK, to re-establish development aid.² Such assistance should be used to support Burundians who are willing to return to Burundi with the aim of contributing to the country’s further development. They also want to encourage international business investments and believe that returnees

could be vital actors in establishing business cooperation owing to the social and cultural capital they possess. Their narratives from return visits are therefore framed in ways that support a positive attitude towards return migration.

A return visit to Burundi may therefore have implications on several levels. First, experiences from the visit are communicated in the social field, and may influence people's plans regarding a possible return. Experiences from visits are also communicated to the domestic political field in the host country, with the aim of influencing the nature and the volume of bilateral cooperation between the two countries. The two main narratives from the Burundian social field can therefore be viewed as a response to the political field, communicated through a researcher who is perceived to be linked to or, at least able to influence, the Norwegian and British political field.

Conclusion

Return migration can no longer be characterized as the 'great unwritten chapter in the history of migration' (King 2000). The special issue in *Mobilities* on return mobilities (edited by King and Christou 2011) makes an important contribution to increase our understanding on return migration by seeking to differentiate between various types of return mobilities. However, the existence of diverse attitudes towards and practices of return mobility within a migrant community remains unexplored, but will need to be examined if we are to increase our understanding of the nature of these types of mobilities. In this article, I have focused on the Burundian social field in Norway and the UK, which is structured around diverging views on return migration. In communicating their experiences of visiting Burundi, people position themselves in relation to these two views. Burundians who believe return is feasible and desirable believe that their social, economic, cultural and legal capital will facilitate a successful return. They also emphasize their strong feelings of attachment to Burundi and the existence of a duty to return. Burundians who believe that they cannot return without risking their lives, on the other hand, argue that they lack the social capital needed to succeed and that their existing resources are not convertible into useful forms of capital within Burundi. Even though Burundi is their homeland, their habitus has evolved and many of them no longer feel at home in Burundi. As a result, many feel socially and morally disassociated from the local population.

When studying politically sensitive topics such as return migration, it is important to consider the power dynamics at play among the various actors within a field and to explore how and why these were created. In the case of the Burundian social field, the two positions on return migration exist side by side, and in supporting one of the two positions people automatically relate to the other. In efforts to promote one view of the reality in Burundi, a powerful technique that is sometimes used involves accusing the opposing position as a political construction aimed at manipulating the 'true' reality for the sake of personal advantage. For efforts to understand why such complex dynamics are created and who the actors are, Bourdieu's notions of habitus, capital and field have proven useful. The combination of these notions provides a complex theoretical framework that enables a comprehensive analysis of social practice as a result of internal and external dynamics. Or, as here, the framework can be used to examine the narratives that originate from social practices. Narrow definitions of the transnational social field that focus on migrants in the host country and their networks in the country of origin exclude the importance of the political field in the host countries in shaping people's attitude and practice. A return to the

original understanding of field may therefore provide new and useful insights into the issue of differentiated forms of social practice.

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Notes

1. The Burundian case study is part of an international cross-disciplinary project entitled 'Possibilities and Realities of Return Migration' based at the Peace Research Institute Oslo (PRIO).
2. The UK Department for International Development decided to cancel the bilateral aid programme in Burundi in 2011.

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