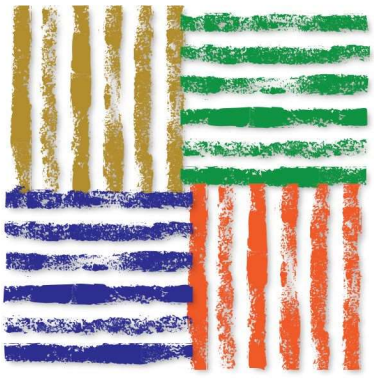

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'THE CAKE IS IN ACCRA': A CASE STUDY ON INTERNAL MIGRATION IN GHANA

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'The cake is in Accra': a case study on internal migration in Ghana

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Abstract
What are the motivations for internal migration and what role does the social network of migrants play in the process of moving to a different place? In this paper, we focus on internal migration to Accra, the capital of Ghana. Previous literature has focused on either livelihood or lifestyle approaches to migration but failed to show how these dimensions are intertwined. We conducted semi-structured qualitative interviews with twenty migrants in different areas of Accra and analysed the interviews using a relational analysis. We find that livelihood and lifestyle dimensions matter in tandem. While the main reasons for moving to Accra are related to livelihood strategies, they are reflected and performed in culturally bound lifestyles of city-life. Furthermore, we find that different ties – such as emotional or economic ties – are differently meaningful across members of the migrants' social network throughout the migration process. Such heterogeneity appears to depend on gender and socioeconomic status.

Keywords: urbanisation; migration; social networks; youth; Ghana

Résumé
Quelles sont les motivations de la migration interne et quel rôle joue le réseau social des migrants dans le processus de déménagement vers un autre lieu ? Dans la présente étude, nous nous concentrons sur la migration interne à Accra, la capitale du Ghana. Les travaux antérieurs ont porté sur les approches de la migration liées aux moyens de subsistance ou au mode de vie, mais n'ont pas réussi à montrer comment ces dimensions sont entrelacées. Dans le cadre de notre étude, nous avons mené des entretiens qualitatifs semi-structurés avec vingt migrants dans différents quartiers d'Accra et analysé les entretiens à l'aide d'une analyse relationnelle. Nous constatons que les dimensions « moyens de subsistance » et « mode de vie » sont intimement liées. Si les principales raisons de s'installer à Accra sont liées aux stratégies de subsistance, elles se reflètent et se réalisent dans des styles de vie urbains liés à la culture. En outre, nous constatons que différents liens - tels que les liens émotionnels ou économiques - ont une signification différente selon les membres du réseau social des migrants tout au long du processus de migration. Cette hétérogénéité semble dépendre du sexe et du statut socioéconomique.

Mots-clés: urbanisation; migration; réseaux sociaux; la jeunesse; Ghana

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Ekro do sua, yentena faako gye animguase
There are many towns, do not stay long in a place and disgrace yourself
(Akan proverb)

Introduction

A few weeks into fieldwork, we are sitting in the car of an Uber driver from Volta region who, despite his bachelor's degree in marine engineering could not find a job. When asked why he decided to stay in Accra despite the adversities he exclaimed: "The cake is in Accra!". In fact, he argued that in the Volta region he would neither have access to higher education nor would industries that provide employment exist at all. Instead, he juggles short contracts at the Tema harbour (Ghana's main port located a few kilometres from Accra) with his job as Uber driver.

By interviewing 20 other migrants in Accra, we learnt that the 'cake' that is supposedly to be found in the capital city is both an economic (livelihood) and a socio-cultural (lifestyle) objective for migrants. Most importantly, social relations determine migrants' ability to obtain a 'slice' of the so-called cake. In this paper we dive into the socio-economic reasons for migrating to Accra with a particular focus on the social relations that shaped migrants' journey, livelihoods and lifestyle in the capital city, thus addressing the following research question:

> *How do social relations shape the livelihood and lifestyle dimensions of internal migration in Ghana?*

This research question positions us at the nexus of two rather overlooked bodies of literature: first, internal rather than international African mobility; second, a holistic focus on internal mobility in Ghana as both a livelihood and lifestyle strategy. The disproportionate focus in recent policy and academic debates on international mobility (Smith & Schapendonk, 2018) suggests that migration mostly happens from the Global South to the Global North (Schans et al., 2018). However, the great majority of African migrants move within their country borders (FAO, 2017) or region (UNDESA, 2019; United Nations, 2017). This study contributes to the growing yet limited body of literature on internal mobility (Egger & Litchfield, 2019) (Awumbila, 2015). We focus on internal mobility in Ghana, a country that is both exceptional and typical to other countries in sub-Saharan Africa: on the one hand, it is one of Africa's exceptional success stories in terms of economic growth; on the other, it has undergone a process of structural adjustment, democratisation and

decentralisation that is common to many countries on the continent (Diao, Hazell, et al., 2019). Furthermore, Ghana is also typical for its "urbanization without industrialization", which results in insufficient employment despite its rapid economic growth – particularly in the cities (2019, p. 144). In terms of migration, Ghana is also a typical case study since the majority of its migrants are internal to the national borders (IOM, 2020; Skeldon, 2018). In fact, considering the last census (GSS 2013, p. 208), 35% of the Ghanaian population was living away from their place of birth, and 90% of all migration is internal to the national borders (Awumbila, 2015, p. 133).

Urbanisation and internal mobility are not interchangeable; while urbanisation refers to the rapid (and uncontrolled) expansion of the urban population, it is not a given that the main cause for rapid urban population growth is internal mobility. Few decades ago, more than half of all Ghanaian internal migration was rural-rural (Van Dijk et al., 2001, p. 11). According to the latest Ghana Livelihood Standard Survey (GLSS), in 2017 about half of urban residents in Greater Accra were born in another region (or country) (GSS, 2019). Therefore, internal migration and urbanisation are closely intertwined in the case of Accra.

Scholarly literature is divided into studies focusing on migration as a livelihood strategy (Ackah & Medvedev, 2012; Alhassan, 2017; Awumbila, 2017; Bezu & Holden, 2014; de Brauw et al., 2014a; Marfaing, 2014) and research focusing on the socio-cultural or lifestyle dimensions of mobility (de Bruijn et al., 2001; Boesen, et al. 2014; Gladkova & Mazzucato, 2017; Langevang & Gough, 2009; van Geel & Mazzucato, 2018; Wissink et al., 2017). Considering the divide in the academic debate between livelihood and lifestyle approaches, we (1) show how these two dimensions of mobility are intertwined in Accra and (2) focus on the role of migrants' social network in the process of moving to Accra. We do so by applying qualitative research methods, specifically semi-structured interviews and a relational analysis. In the relational analysis, we examine the types and strength of relations of migrants with people in their social network.

We find that seeking employment and better education are, for our informants, the main reasons for migrating. However, their post-migration lifestyle is strongly influenced by culture-bound imaginaries of Accra as migration destination suggesting that the 'Accra-lifestyle' was an additional motivation for migrating to the capital. Thus, lifestyle and livelihood motivations go hand in hand. While relations are rarely the main motivator to migrate, our relational analysis shows that the social network of migrants constitutes an important enabling factor in the process of moving to Accra. Therefore, it is not necessarily those with the strongest 'push' or 'pull' motivations who move to the capital but rather those people who have a social network they can rely on and who have peers inspiring them to move.

The paper is in four main sections. First, we show the divided focus of migration studies on either the livelihood or the lifestyle dimensions of mobility. We then describe the main insights of the literature on the importance of social relations on migration processes. Second, we describe our research context, taking into account data from the latest round of

GLSS. Third, we develop the main qualitative component of our analysis. The main part of our qualitative analysis is constituted by relational analysis. Finally, we conclude the article by discussing our results in light of our theoretical framework and give recommendations for further research.

Literature review

Mobility vs migration

Mobility refers to a change in residence, either for a short or long period of time. In migration studies, different types of mobility are analysed – where the concept of 'mobility' is often used interchangeably with 'migration', and the criteria for defining the different types of mobility are seldom clear (de Bruijn et al., 2001, pp. 3–13). Mobile individuals in West Africa fall under different categories (e.g. nomad, labour, legal) and have different reasons (e.g. religious, economic, social) for moving, which may change over time or come together. We understand migration to be a type of mobility that involves the crossing of political or administrative borders (de Bruijn et al., 2001, p. 3). In this study, we refer to mobility and migration interchangeably.

Discussions of internal mobility are often confused with discussions on urbanisation. However, it is important to note that urbanisation is not synonymous with rural-urban migration (Potts, 2013). In fact, as explained by de Brauw et al. (2014a, p. 34), "Urban population growth is the sum of four components: net fertility, where net fertility is the birth rate less the death rate; urban expansion or reclassification of areas from rural to urban; rural–urban migration; and international immigration." Thus, rural-urban migration makes up only one of four components of urbanisation. Indeed, scholars (Beauchemin, 2011; de Brauw et al., 2014b; Potts, 2012) have shown that in sub-Saharan Africa the majority of migration is actually not directed to urban centres. Yet, the past century in Ghana has seen a great transformation in the residence of the population, which generally shifted from rural to urban residence (Yankson and Owusu cited by Gough & Langevang, 2016, p. 94).

With regards to the process of urbanisation to Accra, we refer to 'internal mobility' as either a livelihood or lifestyle strategy and to the people engaging in such mobility as 'migrants', as they cross regional administrative borders. In fact, our way of sampling our informants is based, among others, on the simple criterion of 'change in residence' from regions out of Greater Accra, to the city of Accra. Furthermore, considering that the sampling of our informants has been carried out only in the destination, we observe social and economic aspects of mobility only at a particular point in time.

Livelihood vs lifestyle approaches

Academic literature in migration studies is often divided between two main foci of analysis: mobility as a *livelihood* strategy, or mobility as a *lifestyle*. Research focusing on *livelihood* strategies commonly understands mobility as a response to systemic 'push' and 'pull' factors which aim at improving livelihood opportunities. Specifically, migration studies that take a livelihood perspective on mobility consider mobility as a strategy to improve one's livelihood, by responding to economic, political as well as environmental push and pull factors (Ackah & Medvedev, 2012; Alhassan, 2017; Awumbila, 2017; Bezu & Holden, 2014; de Brauw et al., 2014a; Marfaing, 2014). Factors that are categorised as push factors include a lack of natural and financial resources in the location of origin (e.g. Marfaing, 2014; Bezu & Holden 2014). Pull factors include higher urban wages especially as returns to labour in the agricultural sector tend to be low (de Brauw et al., 2014), education and higher flexibility (Bezu & Holden 2014). Research on internal mobility in Ghana stresses employment opportunities (pull factors) in urban centres and a lack of economic resources (push factors) in poor regions (often rural areas) (Alhassan, 2017).

Studies on the connection between internal migration and livelihood improvements come to mixed results; Ackah & Medvedev (2012) find increased economic empowerment of sending households. This effect might occur as there remains an important connection between urban migrants and rural sending communities through remittances that migrants send home (de Brauw et al., 2014). This can result in the economic empowerment of sending communities, and a strong (economic) connection between urban and rural areas through migrants. On the other hand, when it comes to urban immigrants, Adjei et al. (2017) demonstrate that the improvement in income of urban immigrants "does not necessarily translate into improved access to vital social services particularly decent accommodation, health and general well-being". In fact, from their study on the impact of migration on poverty reduction, the authors show that instead, migration to rural areas has a stronger effect on economic empowerment (ibid). In a counterintuitive way, de Haas and Fransen (2018) address the livelihood literature on push and pull factors of migration and show that development is directly proportional to migration. In other words, development can even increase migration – and factors such as "economic, technological, political, demographic and cultural change shape patterns of emigration and immigration in complex – and sometimes counterintuitive – ways" (ibid, p. 33).

Migration studies that take a *lifestyle* perspective on migration are generally qualitative and focus on the social and cultural aspects of mobility (de Bruijn et al., 2001; Boesen, et al., 2014; Gladkova & Mazzucato, 2017; Langevang & Gough, 2009; van Geel & Mazzucato, 2018; Wissink et al., 2017). When considering the different types of mobility in West Africa (e.g. cattle herders, nomads, traders, healers etc), Boesen et al (2014) refer to mobility as a 'culture of travel', 'cultures of migration' or 'mobile way of life'. Rather than rational calculators of livelihood opportunities lifestyle-focused studies understand migrants as agents responding to factors such as critical events (Wissink et al., 2017), chance

(Gladkova & Mazzucato, 2017) or their social network (Awumbila et al., 2017). Jarawura and Smith (2015) study climate-induced migration, and argue that even what decisively seems a livelihood strategy responds to cultural lenses of interpretation. In fact, they show that certain members of the household who ought to remain immobile by socio-cultural norms, see events such as a climate change-induced drought as a 'happy moment' that allows migration (ibid 258-259). Since mobility is a movement across time and space, it is important to consider mobility in a longitudinal perspective. Yet, a longitudinal perspective also reveals how mobility is not a linear movement from origin to destination (van Geel & Mazzucato, 2018), but an endeavour full of detours, pauses and setbacks.

Considering that the majority of the migrant population in Ghana is youth, their internal mobility is relatively understudied with the important exceptions of Langevang & Gough (2009) and Ungruhe (2010), who show the importance of mobility for young people to obtain social status. Langevang & Gough (2009) demonstrate that migrant youth living in the suburb of Madina in Accra consider mobility a way 'to become a somebody' and "Moving around is equated with being active, making something of one's self, going places and acquiring knowledge." (ibid, p. 745). Ungruhe (2010, p. 260) shows how migration helps to reach social adulthood. Both of these studies show how the identity and social status of the youth are shaped and negotiated in relation to their social network and peers. At the same, they point at the importance of lifestyle as a motivation of moving.

How social relations matter

There is one missing dimension in the push and pull factors described above: the role of the social network of migrants. On the one hand, social relations can also constitute a push or pull factor, e.g. when migrants are 'pushed' by family members to move to the city in the hope of remittances flowing back to the origin; or when migrants are 'pulled' to a different place to join another family member, e.g. their spouse. On the other hand, social relations *facilitate* migration processes; social networks play a role when it comes to access to *material* resources in the destination such as information about jobs, accommodation, access to credit and resources as well as access to *psychological* and *emotional* resources (Mani & Riley, 2019; Zaami, 2020, p. 23). Awumbila et al (2017, p. 991) stress that social networks are particularly important as social capital for those migrants who lack economic capital, confirming findings on the role of social capital in the social network of non-African migrants' (Sue et al., 2019).

Social network analysis assumes that individual actors' identities and roles in society are defined in relation to others and their environment, making the social network an interdependent and relational operational unit in society. Social order is thus the sum of social networks (since all individuals are potentially connected), and changes over time (temporal dimension) and space (context). Social networks are constituted by ties (or relations) between nodes (people), and may vary in strength (weak or strong), type (e.g. emotional, economic) and duration (Boyd & Nowak, 2012; Williams, 2006). Usually, the idea

is that material and emotional support is more likely if strong ties exist. An (interpretative) analysis of social networks leads to inductive theorisation on the embeddedness of mobility in larger social structures. Importantly, in social network analysis the agency lies with the nodes in the network, yet the relations themselves have also an influence in shaping the role that nodes play (de Bruijn & van Dijk, 2012, p. 4; Williams, 2006).

In their review, Mani & Riley (2019) describe that, particularly in developing countries, social networks often consist of strong ties with people who are quite similar to one another, but are less reliant on weak ties — therefore making access to new ideas less likely. The theory of 'cumulative causation' states that "as migratory experience grows within a sending community, the likelihood that other community members will initiate a migratory trip increases. This diffusion is expected to vary across time and place according to differences in the mechanisms guiding this behaviour." (Fussell, 2010, p. 162). In reference to this theory, the behaviour of migrants in relation to their social network with sending and hosting communities seems determinant for their mobility – whether explored under a livelihood or lifestyle perspective. In support of this, studies by Chen et al. (2010) and Foltz et al. (2020) find that internal migration in China becomes more likely if fellow co-villagers have also migrated. Mani and Riley (2019) explain this cumulative causation by referring to an "aspiration window": when one's social network consists of (strong or weak) ties with migrants, particularly with people who are seen as role models, migration becomes a real option. Having migrant role models can lead to a desire to share their lifestyle — by also migrating and thus living a specific capital-lifestyle.

Migration networks are highly flexible (Boesen et al., 2014, p. 6), adjusting to opportunities, circumstances and location. In fact, migrants gain access to different social resources depending on their affiliation with local, regional, ethnic or religious networks (Rossi, 2014). Furthermore, there are important gendered differences in the way in which men and women make use of social networks; women seem to invest more in networks for the purpose of socialisation, and men more for utilitarian purposes of job seeking (Zaami, 2020, p. 25). The presence and type of people in a social network as well as the intensity of interaction can change over time and space (Wissink et al 2017).

Scholars in migration studies have, to our knowledge, elaborated a social network analysis that is focused on examining the relations of an individual migrant with his/her social network in a uni- or bilateral way – rather than examining the dynamics existing between all the nodes in the social network (Awumbila et al., 2017; Boyd & Nowak, 2012; Li & Wu, 2010; Suter, 2012). For this reason, we refer to our analysis as *relational analysis* rather than *social network analysis*, adopting a computational analysis that does not map the network but rather analyses the type and strength of relations.

The goal of this study is to reconcile the divided academic debate in migration studies that so far has focused either on the livelihood (economic) or lifestyle dimensions (socio-cultural) of mobility with a particular focus on the role of social relations in the migration process and as "aspiration window". We aim to answer the following research question:

How do social relations shape livelihood and lifestyle dimensions of internal migration in Ghana?

In the section below we explain how the use of mixed methods will allow us to answer our overarching research question.

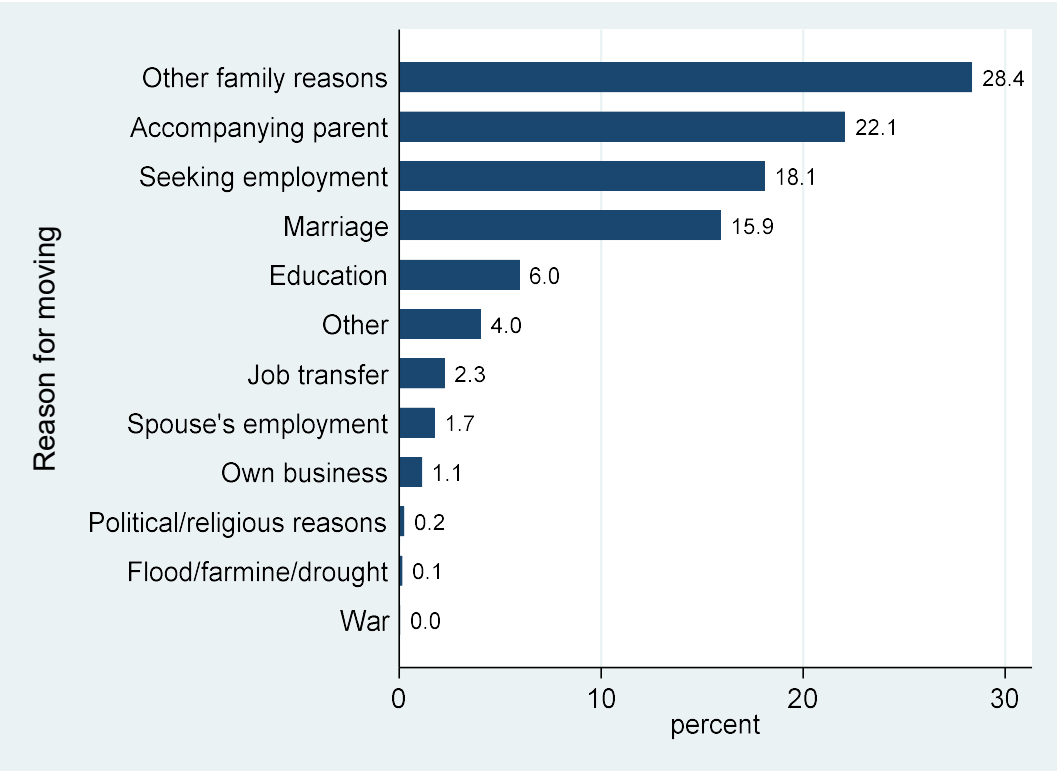
Context: internal migration in Ghana

We conducted our fieldwork in Accra, the capital of Ghana. Ghana consists of sixteen regions with the Ashanti and Greater Accra regions being the most populated ones. Within Greater Accra, the city of Accra is the main hub with about 3.2 million inhabitants in 2019 (World Bank, 2021). The Greater Accra region is the most urbanised region of Ghana, with 90% of its population living in urban as opposed to rural areas according to GLSS (GSS, 2019).

Internal migration has a long history in Ghana and Greater Accra is outstandingly the main receiving region; about 50% of its inhabitants are born in a different region. The regions with the lowest proportions of incoming migrants are Upper East, Upper West, and Northern region. The low migration rate into the northern regions of Ghana does not come as a surprise as it reflects differences in "agroecological conditions, population density, rural infrastructure, and levels of urbanization" (Diao, Magalhaes, et al., 2019, p. 144), making the north potentially less appealing for migrants. As the Greater Accra region attracts most individuals who move to urban areas, we focus on this region.

The majority (66%) of the migrant population in the capital is below 35 years of age, with the largest group being within 15 and 35 – the age category defined by the Ghanaian constitution as 'youth' (Ghana National Youth Policy, 2010). Among the migrants, there are nearly as many men as women. According to GLSS data (GSS, 2019), the first two motivations for migration are either "other family reasons" (28.4%), or accompanying a parent (22.1%) – while seeking employment comes as a third motivation, with 10 percentage points of difference from the first motivation. As the categories "*other family reasons*" and "*accompanying parent*" are not very specific and could refer to a variety of motivations, it is difficult to make a general statement of social vs. economic motivations of migrants when considering GLSS data. Furthermore, GLSS does not include information on *lifestyle* as a potential motivation for moving to the capital region. To better understand the process and motivations of internal migration to Accra, we carried out in-depth interviews with migrants in Accra. As we show in the following parts, social, livelihood and lifestyle motivations work in tandem. As urban Greater Accra is the region attracting most migrants, we conducted our field research here. We aimed at interviewing migrants coming from the Eastern, Volta and Central regions as these are – besides Greater Accra – the regions where most migrants have been living before coming to Greater Accra.

Figure 1 Main motivation for moving to place of interview (n= 2,129)



Field sites

We carried out fieldwork in March 2020 in six locations in Accra: Dome, Nungua, Adenta, Madina, Maamobi, Tesano and on the campus of the University of Ghana. The majority (14/20) of interviews were conducted in Adenta, Madina and Maamobi. Even though these three areas show large differences (the first is a residential area, the second one a trading hub, and the last one a slum), they are emblematic of the process of urbanisation in Accra.

Adenta is a municipality of the city of Accra that is also known as 'the dormitory of Accra': a largely residential area that hosts almost 80,000 inhabitants, Adenta offers affordable housing for workers in Accra (Poku-Boansi & Kwafo Adarkwa, 2016, p. 781). "The municipality has a very large economically active labour force" (ibid, p. 783), mainly constituted by migrant settlers (ibid, p. 786). We interviewed informants who were relatively highly educated (completed senior high school), and whose employment placed them in a middle-low socio-economic status.

Madina is a vibrant trading hub, with one of the biggest market areas in the Ghanaian capital. We conducted the majority of interviews around the market area, a hectic and rich field site that reflects the heterogeneity of the population living and working in this area. Madina is also home to almost 80,000 inhabitants (Ghana Statistical Service (GSS), 2013, p. 228) – an heterogeneous population comprising a considerable (yet unquantifiable) amount of migrants, particularly from the northern part of the country (Zaami, 2020, p. 5).

all over Ghana and neighbouring countries" (Langevang & Gough, 2009, p. 744). The informants we interviewed in this area were working (and some also living) in Madina, were all of a low socio-economic status and mostly had a low level of education.

Maamobi is a maze of narrow streets, mostly pedestrian, that challenges the sense of orientation of any wanderer. It is a town in the district of Accra Metropolitan Area, and comprises mostly informal settlements – making the count of its population defiant and arbitrary. According to Markwei and Appiah (2016), in 2016 approximately 49,000 people were living in Maamobi, and "their living environment is characterized by poor drainage, inadequate housing, and haphazard development. Buildings include poor-quality material such as mud walls, zinc roofing sheets, and untreated timber." Maamobi is principally a residential area, and home to a community of mostly Muslim inhabitants. It has a vibrant informal economy, with "many different types of businesses operating from homes, in alleys, around and in the traditional market area, as well as in shops and stalls along the main road linking it with the surrounding neighbourhoods and the rest of Accra" (Yankson and Owusu cited by Gough & Langevang, 2016, p. 97).

Fieldwork

We carried out 20 semi-structured interviews, following an interview guideline covering three main themes: (1) identity (generalities, occupation and background); (2) migration process, motivations and aspirations; and (3) social network before, during and after the migration process. In this way, we are able to examine how social network influences the (understanding of) migration processes, and how that varies depending on identity. Considering that the majority of internal migrants in Ghana are youth (below 35 years), we sampled the adult population in this social group (18-35) – with the exception of one lady aged 36. We were careful to sample our informants[1] around two main characteristics: gender and socio-economic status as we understand these to be particularly determinant in the migration process (Awumbila, 2015). Table 2 below summarises the main characteristics of our sample.

[1] We interchangeably use the terms informant and respondent to refer to a person we interviewed.

Table 2 Main characteristics of sample of informants

Age	18-36
Sex	10 males, 10 females
Socio-economic status	11 low, 9 medium
Residence	5 Adenta, 6 Madina, 3 Maamobi, 2 Dome, 2 Nungua, 1 Circle, 1 Teshie
Origin	3 Eastern, 6 Ashanti, 4 Volta, 3 Central, 1 Nigeria, 3 Northern
Religion	5 Muslim, 15 Christian

While the majority of our informants spoke fluent English, an interpreter assisted us in carrying out interviews in Twi and Hausa where necessary, in helping us to find suitable informants and in interpreting puzzling circumstances during participant observations. Each semi-structured interview took about an hour, or slightly longer when a translator was intermediating.

Qualitative Analysis

In the following section, we unpack the black box of the relation between the livelihood and lifestyle dimensions of internal mobility to Accra – from the perspective of 20 young migrants, male and female, low economic status (LES) and middle economic status (MES). Via the lense of a qualitative analysis, we analysed semi-structured interviews collected during fieldwork in Accra in early 2020. In order to understand the process of internal migration and urbanisation to Accra in terms of the meaning that mobile people bring to it, we carry out qualitative analysis of our interviews. We use the Atlas.ti (version 8) programme to segment the interviews and attribute them codes (Boeije 2010). Subsequently, segments of data with the same attributed codes are categorised in groups of codes (see table 1 & Annex), while documents of interviews transcriptions are grouped with other categories (Fischer 2003). The transcription documents are grouped by gender (male/female) and by economic status (low/middle) – where the threshold for the middle economic status is set at GHS400 (the middle monthly income of a teacher in Accra).

Considering that the guideline of the interview and the scope of the study is targeted at understanding social relations, the process of coding highlights the nodes (members of the social network, e.g. mother, father, friends, spouse etc.), ties (types of relations) and the mobility process. Below is a brief definition of the codes that are most relevant to the qualitative analysis.

Table 1 Definition of codes

CODE	DEFINITION
Economic tie	Relation that involves money (e. g borrowing, lending, salary)
Emotional tie	Relation with someone the informant calls or sees regularly, and/or feels close to (despite distance)
Facilitation tie	Relation with someone who helped in facilitating job, education, migration process
Housing tie	Relation with someone who offered housing upon arrival in Accra
Information tie	Relation with someone who gave information about job in Accra; Accra as a destination in the migration process
Remittances	Relation of economic responsibility that involves regularly sending money *to* members of the family in place of origin (unidirectional, unlike economic tie)
Migration plan	Relational process or time in which the elaboration of the plan of moving, which involves making contact with members of the social network, collecting money, discussing the trip
Moving	Relational process of moving along the trajectory from origin to destination, which may involve members of the social network
Reason for migrating	(Non-relational) motivation for starting the migration process
Obstacle to migration	Relation with someone who is in disagreement or opposition to the migration plan, or actively played a role in opposing mobility

Relational analysis

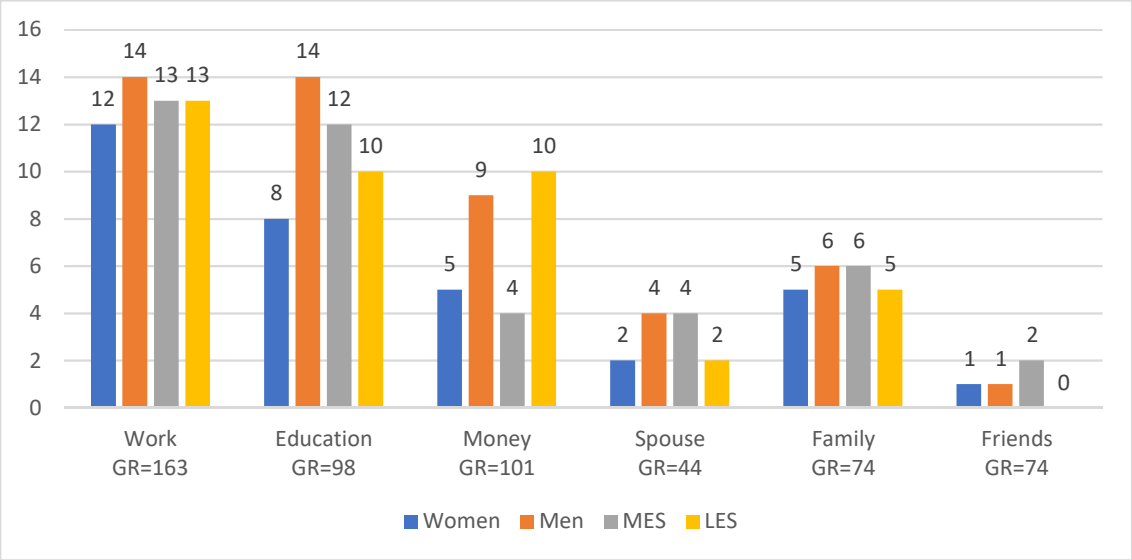
We define relational analysis as the examination of the type and strength of ties between nodes in a social network. In our analysis, we use the types of ties described above and consider nodes to be part of a social network that is not bound to a specific place (i.e. origin, destination, elsewhere) or time (present, past). The strength of the ties is measured in terms of instances in which a given tie is mentioned in relation to a given node (co-occurrence). We use the software R to compute and represent the strength of ties between nodes, using the representation of a circos graph. Originally elaborated to represent genomic data, the circular layout of the circos graph was ideal to represent and explore the relations between nodes. To the best of our knowledge, a relational analysis described in this way – with the use of circos graphs – has not yet been used in migration studies, making this the first study to elaborate and use this method of analysis.

Results

Livelihood reasons: work and education

Seeking employment is the most important reason for migrating for all groups of respondents, in line with the importance of 'money' (namely economic empowerment), particularly for low economic status (LES) respondents. Advancing education is the second most important reason for migrating for all groups of informants. The general category 'family' is relatively less important than 'work' and 'education', and more specific relational categories like 'spouse' and 'friends' are rarely mentioned as reasons to migrate. These results, despite not being representative of the wider migrant population in Accra, are in contrast with the results emerging from the GLSS (see Figure 2) where social relations seemed to constitute an important motivation to migrate. We can assume that the 'family reasons' reported in GLSS also included an economic dimension, like for instance a family business.

Figure 2 Reasons for migration by gender (women/men) and economic status (MES/LES)



These findings can be best demonstrated by referring to a specific example: Paul[2,3], an accountant from the Volta region, attempted to move to Accra twice before succeeding in his ambition to complete his degree. One of his brothers was already living in the capital, while another had moved to France. The brother in Accra discouraged him from coming since he was not in the position to help him – yet Paul moved to Accra all the same, and stayed with some high school friends, moving frequently and hustling to find a job that could earn him enough to get into university. However, he failed to find employment and returned to his parent's place. The second time, his brother in Accra was able to host him and together with the other brother in France they paid for his university fees. Paul's

[2] This interview was carried out in Tesano, Accra, on 10.03.2020.
[3] All references to names of interviewees are fictitious in order to protect their anonymity.

account shows his motivation to move: completing a university degree in the capital. In contrast, his family (in this case his brother) was not a major reason to migrate but probably inspired Paul to move to the capital by opening up an aspiration window for Paul.

Lifestyle: big girls, big boys and social status

Beyond the reasons to migrate which we identified above, we show in the following how the *lifestyle* associated with living in the capital contributes as an additional important factor of the migration decision.

Accra life

An Uber driver (LES), Kofi[4] from the Eastern region also insisted that he would not migrate elsewhere nor return to his village, despite elaborating at length about the struggles that come with life in Accra: "when you're broke and owe to many people, you know you're in Accra". Yet, he enthusiastically reflects about his post-migration life:

> **Interviewer**: Okay. Eerrm…and other than Accra, would you like to stay here or would you like to move somewhere? Would you like to go to another city, or return to your village. How do you feel?
> **Respondent**: Ooh you know for Ghana, Accra is the "ish"
> **Interviewer**: Accra is the what?
> **Respondent**: Accra is the thing. Like, Accra….
> **Interviewer**: The "ish" *(Everyone laughs)*
> **Respondent**: Yeah. That's the street language.
> **Interviewer**: Accra-is-the-ish.
> **Respondent**: *("R" laughs)*. So, eerrm…as you are in Accra, it's like America controlling the world. (…) That is what I believe. That America controls the world. In a way, okay. That is what I have learnt. But in Ghana here, Accra is where everything happens.

The analogy between Accra and the USA spontaneously emerges also from interviews with LES male respondents in Madina, who also refer to an implicit step-wise hierarchy in the migration destinations: the lowest step is referred to be mobility from rural to urban within the region of origin, followed by mobility to a major city (Accra, Kumasi, Takoradi) – of which Accra was the highest-status destination; besides Accra, only international destinations would exceed the capital city (the most often mentioned destinations were the USA, Canada and Germany).

[4] This interview took place on the campus of the University of Ghana, Accra, on 5.03.2020.

Social status

Moving to Accra is associated with the possibility of increasing one's social status by improving one's livelihood but also by being exposed to a more varied reality as compared to village life. Social status is in fact associated with both livelihood and lifestyle dimensions of mobility: on the one hand the economic empowerment that derives from increased income, on the other the USA-like imaginary associated with the capital city. Furthermore, social status is associated with fighting for one's future and living a better life, and success is something to show for recognition during visits to the place of origin. Evidence of success is based on one's clothes, hair style and even body weight: to say "you became fat" is, in this context, synonymous with success.

Simon[5], a 19-year-old respondent we met in Madina hails from Cape Coast but moved to Accra to make a living baking bread. He reflects on the impression that he makes on his mother and friends back in Cape Coast, when he goes to visit:

> **Respondent**: When I came to Accra I wasn't big. But when I go back to Cape Coast maybe my mother will say I have gained weight. Maybe if I come to Accra and I don't live a better life, they will say that "when he went to Accra, he didn't go and live any better life". And when I go and live a better life too, they will say that "when he went to Accra, he went to live a good life. He did go there to live a bad life but he went to fight for his future.

Simon's mother, when seeing him for the first time after moving to Accra exclaimed: "you've become fat!". Having met Simon as a thin boy, we consider such an observation to be a way of expressing appreciation for the social status acquired by moving and working in Accra. As we discuss in the sections below, there is an important gender difference engrained in the improvement of social status: with a higher social status, males become 'big boy' or 'big man', while females become 'big girl'.

Big boy

Marc refers to 'big boys' as 'US boys' and refers to the way in which big boys go about spending money that they are yet to earn: he's still "chisel" (stingy), despite having changed "papa" (a lot). Marc continues by making the example of drinking water: if you're a 'big boy' you will drink bottled water (more expensive), while he still drinks 'sachet water' (less expensive drinking water packaged in little plastic bags).

Besides purchasing power, a 'big boy' is also considered an independent man. Fabian[6], an MES respondent we spoke with in Adenta, considers himself a big man since he lives in Accra, working as elementary school teacher. He explains that

[5] This interview was carried out in Dome (at the house of our translator), Accra, on 20.03.2020.
[6] This interview was carried out in Adenta, Accra, on 6.03.2020.

> **Respondent**: Being a 'big man'…okay you can be an adult though. But you may not be a 'big man'. When you say somebody is a 'big man', it's like you have your own car, you have your houses, you have family, you have children. That one they will regard as a 'big man'. But you can still be an adult with family but maybe without a house or with a car.

Interestingly, Fabian makes a distinction between being a 'big man' and being an adult, which is associated to moral behaviour, besides economic power. In fact, he insists that "you can be a big man with a lot of money but still be stupid, you're not an adult".

Big girl

In much the same way as 'big boys', becoming a 'big girl' for women is associated with improvement in income and lifestyle; in fact, the two reflect each other. During our interview with Claudia and her sister Laura[7], two MES sisters in Adenta, they engaged in a gendered discussion about the social status that comes with becoming a 'big girl'. Claudia made reference to the fact that girls are not allowed to plait their hair while in school, so she had been looking forward to completing high school to come to Accra (where she stayed with her sister's place) and plait her hair – which would make her a 'big girl'.

> **Interviewer**: Wait, wait. Laura what do you think is 'big girl'?
> **Respondent (Laura)**: 'Big girl' as in you are not going to be called to errm, "please do this, do that". Right now you have your own and you can order yourself…you have your own choice to do it whether you like it or not. You can decide oh today you will go out and hang out with friends and have a little chilling and then come back. That one….
> **Interviewer**: Oh okay. So it means you can decide for yourself?
> **Respondent (Laura)**: Yes.
> **Interviewer**: Is this what you mean?
> **Respondent (Claudia)**: When you are in school, they can command you to go and sweep but if you are there and you are a 'big girl' you can say "oh let me sweep and have rest". Or I won't sweep then have rest and go back and sweep.

For the two sisters, becoming a 'big girl' is associated with economic independence as well as with fashionable appearance, and they stress that once the higher 'big girl' social status is obtained, their position in society also changes since they are no more obliged to take orders from anyone.

In sum, we find that livelihood and lifestyle reasons work in tandem; while interviewees often mention that they moved to Accra to pursue their education or to find a job, the lifestyle component of Accra-life makes the capital even more attractive —

[7] This interview was carried out on 6.03.2020 in Adenta, Accra.

becoming a 'big boy' or a 'big girl' makes them potentially a role model for people back home, reinforcing the importance of lifestyle.

Relational analysis: emotional ties and peers

But how exactly do social relations matter? Below, we develop a relational analysis of our 20 interviewees. The results indicate the average results for each group, in order to reduce the sensitiveness of the results to individual differences (we followed the same guideline of questions, but interviews slightly varied in the length of elaboration of each topic).

In our relational analysis we distinguish between *functional* and *non-functional ties*. Functional ties are those relations that were particularly important in the migration process, from the phase of elaboration of the migration plan until the settlement in Accra. Emotional and economic ties as well as remittances are ties that are recorded in our interviews beyond the purpose or event of migration, and are therefore referred to as non-functional ties. Nevertheless, it is important to note that data about both functional and non-functional ties was extracted from interviews with migrants who had already settled in Accra; we cannot exclude that results may differ if data was collected along a longer period comprising before, during and after-migration narratives.

Figure 1 Non-functional ties – whole sample

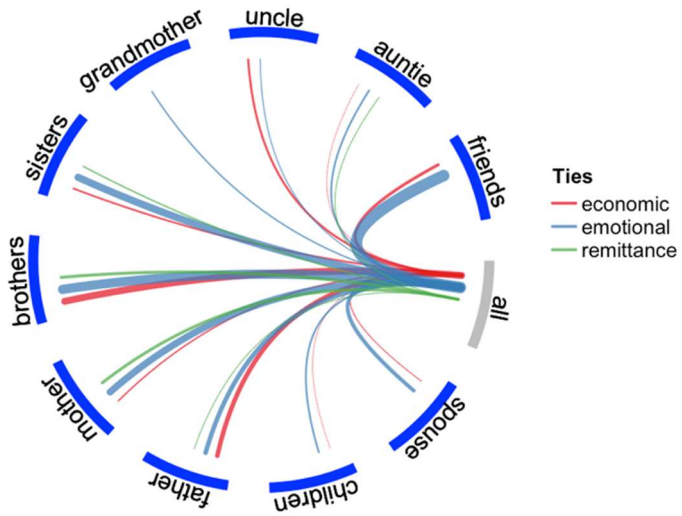


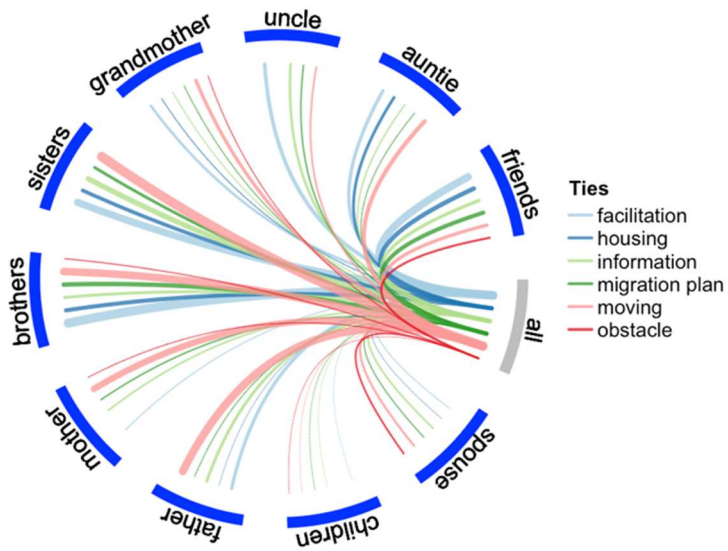
Figure 3 shows that emotional ties are the strongest non-functional tie, particularly emotional ties with friends, siblings and parents. This suggests that while the family in the place of origin might have an interest to send someone to the city in the hope of economic advantages such as remittances, our respondents feel more emotionally connected to their social network back home than they feel obliged to send remittances or give economic support. Family (as a whole) emerges to be an important connection both before and after migration to Accra. Family connections are related to a feeling of belonging that is both transnational and deeply embedded in the place of origin. In fact, they stretch across

regional and national borders – and are still very strong even after more than five years of migration. This is the case for Claudia[8], a teacher (MES) from Kumasi whom we interview in Adenta in the backyard of her home, where she lives with her younger sister. When asked whether she feels close to these family members, she answers:

> **Respondent**: We get very close when family meets. Because recently the very brother in France came, he came down and then got married. Yeah, and then my aunties came all the way from Kumasi and my parents came, we all met at his place, and then you could see the connection, like family coming together. Automatically we saw Kumasi in Accra.
>
> **Interviewer**: Uuh.
>
> **Respondent**: Yes, we felt that thing, yeah we felt that. We felt like we've brought Kumasi here in Accra. We were still in Accra here. After all that those who were had to go to Kumasi went to Kumasi and those who were supposed to stay here, stayed. And the one who was supposed to go back to France went back to France.

Besides speaking of the strong tie that migrants entertain with their family, this extract from the interview with Claudia is also an important example of the most important type of relation: the emotional tie.

Figure 2 Functional ties – whole sample



When analysing those ties that facilitated migration processes (Figure 4), we observe that the functional ties are much more homogenously spread across nodes in comparison with non-functional ties. The ties engaged during moving are the strongest, followed by the facilitation tie. Particularly siblings and friends seem to be important in the process of

[8] This interview was carried out on 6.03.2020 in Adenta, Accra.

migration, be it facilitation, housing, information or moving. When asked whom he turns to when he is in trouble, our interviewee Kofi makes a distinction: "the type of problem determines the type of person you go to". Kofi's brother, Michael is a crucial person in his network because he facilitated his migration by hosting him and finding him an initial job, and because they have an economic relation between themselves (setting up a business) and a remittances relation with their parents – as they send money to their home on a regular basis. But most importantly they have an emotional tie, meeting up on a regular and casual basis – Kofi's brother is the go-to person in Accra; besides him, he only referred to Andrew as an important emotional tie.

Rachel[9], a LES respondent from Volta region, whom we interview at her workplace at the market in Madina explains to us that her migration started upon the critical event of the funeral of her grandfather – where she was able to re-connect with her grandmother. Since that moment, her grandmother became a crucial figure in her life in various ways: she brought her to Accra, where she hosted her for some time before finding her a job. But most importantly, her grandmother became (and still is) an important emotional tie to Rachel:

> **Respondent:** My mind was not stable (…) What changed me was, my grandmother brought me here. I came to live with my grandmother, and I learnt a lot of things from her. She trained me and taught me a lot of things. If I do something wrong, she tells me it's wrong so I should stop and rather teach me the right thing. It really changed my mindset.

Before moving to Accra with her grandmother, Rachel had already moved to several places; in the absence of her mother who was off to Togo, smuggling goods, her father sold her off to an uncle until she was able to run away and "went astray". Rachel's mobility is repeatedly marked by her family members, and finally she found stability in Accra thanks to the influence of her grandmother. In Madina, she has a stall in the main market, selling flour and grains with her sister, who is the second most important emotional tie.

Distinguishing between gender and economic status: functional ties

While for non-functional ties there were no considerable differences between gender and economic status, functional ties show an interesting parallel between males and MES, and females and LES (see Figure 3-8).

[9] This interview was carried out in Madina, Accra, on 11.03.2020.

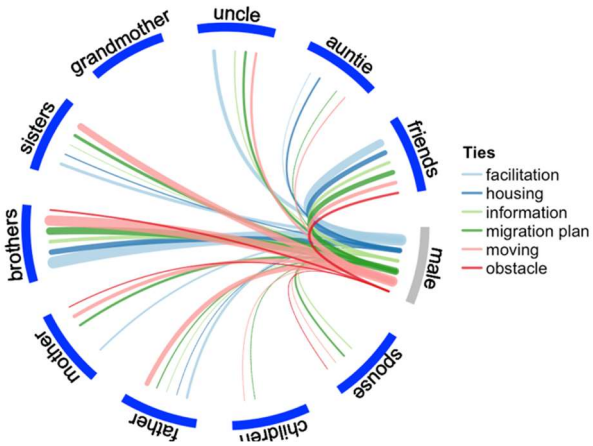


Figure 3 Functional ties – Males

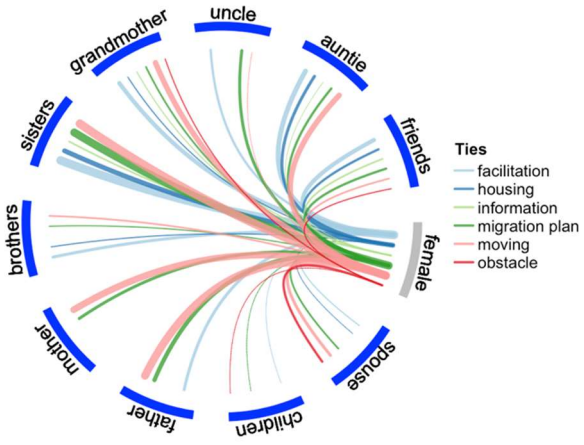


Figure 4 Functional ties – Females

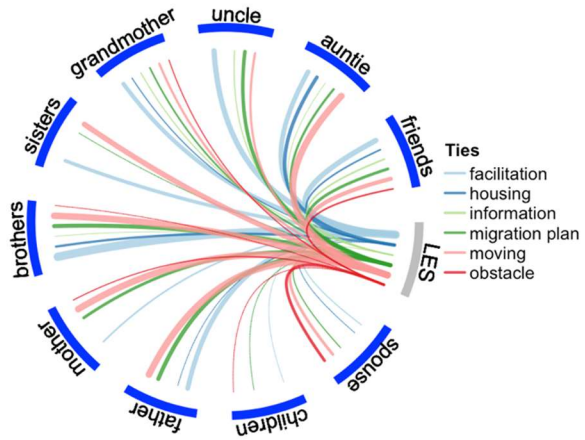


Figure 5 Functional ties - Low economic status (LES)

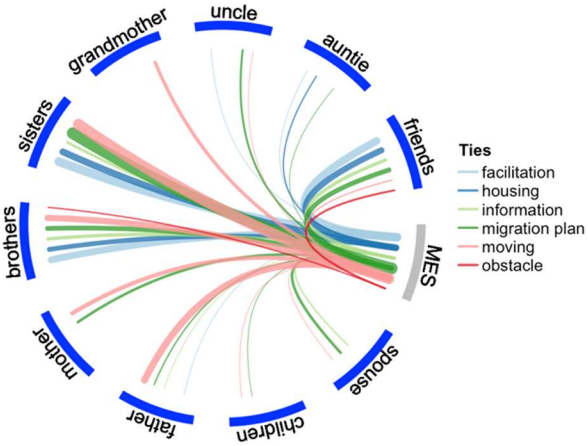


Figure 6 Functional ties - Medium economic status (MES)

It seems striking to notice that LES respondents seem to behave in a similar way to women– in their narratives at least. In fact, in comparison with MES and males, both LES and females have a very spread distribution of functional ties, which are only less strong when it comes to children and spouse. On the contrary, MES respondents are as focused as males in engaging strong functional ties with siblings and friends, and slightly less strong ties with parents. Considering the patriarchal society of Ghana (Bowan, 2013), we take these differences and similarities to be symptomatic of the stronger social status attributed to males and people of medium economic status. In this sense, the difference in engagement with functional ties is to be attributed to both gender and socio-economic status.

Yet from the narrative analysis of the interviews, we observe that the way in which men and women discuss the issue of accommodation upon arrival reveals an important gender dimension to it' while men see the lack of a housing tie as a potential threat, for women a lack of accommodation in Accra is considered both a danger and an inconvenience. Rachel explains to us:

> **Respondent**: Oh if I were to be a man and I didn't know anyone here…a man's hustling is not like a woman.
> **Interviewer**: Why? What is the difference?
> **Respondent**: There is a big difference.
> **Interviewer**: Give me some of the difference.
> **Respondent**: The difference is you the woman, you can't just get up and say you don't know anyone but you will come here. But as for the man he can even sleep here or even someone's…but as for the woman if you don't take care someone can come and rape you. You see, someone can come and rape you. But as for the man it will take long for someone to even hurt him, or anyone who will try will struggle before he can hurt him. A woman's strength is not like a man.

Rachel reports the major difference between men and women to be physical strength, while other female respondents (for instance Claudia) hint at a more cultural understanding of gender role appropriateness. In fact, women's concerns with regards to safety in lack of accommodation is understandable considering the strong patriarchal values that shape gender norms (Bowan, 2013).

To summarise, the relational analysis has yielded three main insights regarding the importance of social relations in the migration process: First, it has shown the importance of *emotional ties* to family and friends. Even if economic ties and ties involving remittances exist, the social network is particularly important when it comes to emotional support. Second, we have uncovered that, functional ties to all actors are important in the migration process, but siblings and friends seem to be more involved here as compared to parents, grandparents, uncles and aunties. Being peers and potentially role models to migrants, they not only inspire when it comes to the decision to migrate, but also help in facilitating the process, giving information and providing housing. Third, we find that gender and economic status have influence on social networks, both in terms of type and strength of ties. Although the limited sample does not allow for generalisation, we find similarities between how females and people of low economic status make use of their network, as well as males and those of middle economic status.

Conclusion and discussion

In this paper, we examined the lifestyle and livelihood dimensions of youth mobility to Accra using qualitative methods. We conducted in-depth interviews with 20 migrants to learn more about their motivation to migrate and about the importance of their social network in the migration process in order to address the following research question:

> *How do social relations shape the livelihood and lifestyle dimensions of internal migration in Ghana?*

We find that *livelihood* and *lifestyle* dimensions are – in the post-migration life experiences of our informants – strictly intertwined. There is a shared imaginary of Accra as being an expensive destination, even potentially dangerous–yet "Accra is where the cake is". 'Accra life' is associated with an increase in social status that makes migrant males into 'big boys' and migrant females into 'big girls'. Such change in social status is part of the common imaginary associated with the lifestyle in the capital city, as well as being a status earned with improved economic conditions. In fact, we show that while the main reasons for moving to Accra are related to *livelihood* strategies (work, education, money) – they are reflected and performed in culturally bound *lifestyles* that are showcased during visits to the community of origin. These findings suggest that the push and pull factors described in academic debate on migration as a livelihood strategy (Ackah & Medvedev, 2012; Alhassan, 2017; Awumbila, 2017; Bezu & Holden, 2014; de Brauw et al., 2014a; Marfaing, 2014), are actually experienced and enabled in the frame of the urban lifestyle of migrants (Awumbila, 2017; de Bruijn et al., 2001; Boesen, et al., 2014; Gladkova & Mazzucato, 2017; Langevang & Gough, 2009; van Geel & Mazzucato, 2018; Wissink et al., 2017). In fact, it is their social network that allows migrants to fulfil both their economic and socio-cultural aspirations (Jarawura & Smith, 2015); the 'cake' is layered with both livelihood and lifestyle dimensions, and can be accessed through social networks.

Our findings confirm that migrants experience and express both economic and socio-cultural ties through their social networks (Fussell, 2010; Mani & Riley, 2019; Zaami, 2020). However, from our relational analysis it emerges that emotional ties to family members are very strong beyond the purpose of economic relations or expectations of remittances. While emotional relations are strong for both family and friends, it is particularly peers (i.e., siblings and friends) who are important in the process of migration. Migrants express their agency through social networks (de Bruijn & van Dijk, 2012; Williams, 2006), while at the same time their capacities to access the cake are shaped by their networks (Foltz et al., 2020; Mani & Riley, 2019). They help in organising the migration process but also serve as role models, representing the Accra lifestyle. We also find some evidence that economic status has an even stronger impact than gender on the type and strength of ties of our informants with members of their social network. Culture-bound gender and economic status are strongly intertwined–showing that the economic dimension of mobility is deeply engrained in socio-cultural understandings of gender (Bowan, 2013).

We have four main suggestions for further research. First, a bigger sample of informants would allow to understand the gender dynamics within the groups of MES and LES respondents, and how socio-economic differences compare with gender differences. Second, it would be interesting to have a control group of non-migrants in the origin to understand whether their relational behaviour is (any) different as compared to those people who move to Accra. Third, further research could go beyond interviewing migrants

but additionally interview their social network to learn more about their motivations of facilitating migration processes, as well as analysing their influence on migration decisions in more depth. Finally, a longitudinal analysis of social networks would allow for a deeper understanding of how the use of social network evolves, thus testing differences between functional and non-functional ties.

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Annex

Code groups

CODE GROUPS	CODES IN THE GROUP
Family	1. auntie 2. brother(s) 3. children 4. family 5. father 6. grandmother 7. mother 8. siblings 9. sister(s) 10. uncle
Identity	11. adult def 12. age 13. big boy 14. big girl 15. education 16. gender 17. identification status 18. religion 19. social status 20. youth def
Migration	21. Accra 22. ambition/plan 23. critical event 24. incentive migration 25. migration plan 26. migration stories/ideas 27. moving 28. obstacle migration 29. origin 30. post-migration life 31. reason for migrating 32. remittances 33. social status
Relations	34. economic tie 35. emotional tie 36. facilitation tie 37. friend(s) 38. housing tie 39. information tie 40. polygyny 41. responsibility 42. spouse

Breakdown of non-functional ties by gender and socio-economic status

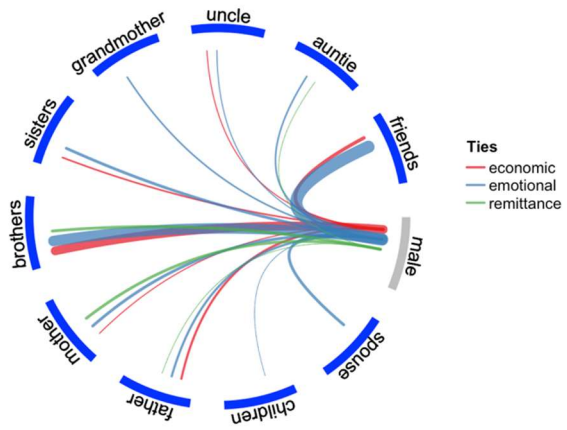

Figure 7 Non-functional ties – Males

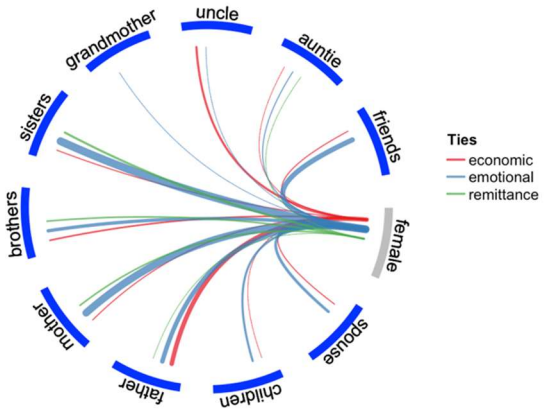

Figure 8 Non-functional ties - Females

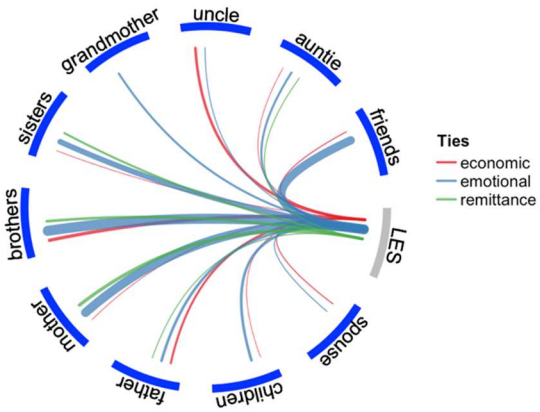

Figure 9 Non-functional ties - Low economic status (LES)

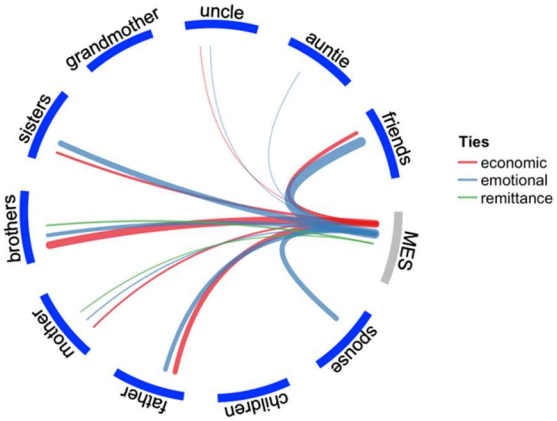

Figure 10 Non-functional ties - Medium economic status (MES)

Biographical notes

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