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Investigating the role of transnational networks on migration decision timing: the case of immigrants in the Johannesburg inner-city

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Dedication

To my Generous Sponsors, the Institute of Catholic Education,

To my Beloved Family,

I gratefully dedicate this Work

Acknowledgements

I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to my supervisor, Professor L Landau for his tireless guidance and support throughout this work. I thank you very much Prof for the time and energy you spent reading my drafts and for the ever useful feedback and advice.

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Declaration

I declare that this work is the fruit of my own effort. It is a research report submitted for the Degree of Masters in Demography and Population Studies in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted for any other degree, diploma or examination in any other institution.

Abstract

It is no longer contested that migrant transnational linkages are becoming a replacement social organization where nation-states' institutions and regulatory capacities are increasingly failing to guarantee decent livelihoods or, at least peace, to their citizens, and where potential destination countries' policies are restrictive of immigrants. This essay explores the patterns and correlates of the contemporary migration decision-making and its timing, focusing on the role of transnational networks in that process. It is a quantitative study that uses a comprehensive dataset that Forced Migration Studies Programme collected in 2006 on the South African, Mozambican, Congolese and Somali immigrants residing in the Inner-city of Johannesburg. Based on personal experience of 594 international immigrants among those, the study challenges the well established argument in international migration theories that position economic opportunities as the primary explanatory factor underlying the contemporary migration decisions. While the study recognize the importance of economic factors, the study reveals that the entrenched history of migration between countries of origin and destinations and the resultant web of transnational ties explain better than economic factors the contemporary African migration decisions and their timing. With its relatively new approach to analysis of the patterns and correlates of migration decision timing, the study manages to position the importance of transnational ties in migration decisions and to show how they command the swiftness of migration decision-making processes.

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