

3 Research Questions and Outline

While ethnographic fieldwork commonly starts with the idea of 'being somewhere', it is less clear what and where this 'somewhere' is when we talk about the "field" (Hannerz 2003), especially in a cosmopolitan city such as Montreal. Tracing the importance of place and understanding spatial practices as well as unusual dwellings is insightful when studying the everyday lives and practices of immigrant women and their connections and experiences with particular sites of a large urban area. In her comparative research (in the 1950s/ 1960s) in London and New York City, Nancy Foner (2005: 174) states "place matters" when researching Caribbean women's lives. Therefore, the relevance of this study bases on the lack of qualitative data concerning Jamaican women's practices and strategies of 'being and belonging' in/ to Montreal. Even though an extensive scholarly discourse about transnational migration exists, which introduced as Duany states "productive" (2011: 17f.) working concepts, it is relevant to provide more empirical data to examine the effectiveness of these ideas.

In the context of female Jamaican migration to Montreal, a lack of ethnographic data concerning return migration, mobility and transcultural enactment makes this research even more relevant. Therefore, my leading question, which helped jump-start the entire study, asks, "*How is cultural diversity and difference in Montreal mediated and translated in the context of Jamaican women's migratory and cross-border activities?*" Diversity as a commonly used concept to describe contemporary, urban societies can here be best understood as a continuous process of mediation and translation in which socio-cultural interaction and power relations transform potential differences into socially effectual indicators (Lehmkuhl 2019). These indicators have socio-cultural relevance in the construction of specific physical and symbolic spaces that change over time. Hence, the relational structure between space, place, and diversity can be debated through the meanings that social actors attribute to them. Here, mediation and translation serve as fruitful categories of social action, e.g., practices that structure interactions in spaces of diversity (ibid.). Therefore, it is also valuable to analyse how immigrants overcome or deal with socio-cultural differences and misunderstandings (mediation) in the context of changing locations, immigrating and integrating.

While approaching the “field” in Montreal as an ethnographer, I experienced several stages of getting closer and delving deeper into the life worlds of the interlocutors of this study. Accordingly, the following research questions arose inductively as sub-inquiries that evolved over the course of fieldwork. The first sub-inquiry focuses on my initial approach to the field, to the city of Montreal as such, and asks about general settlement structures and historical accommodation strategies of Jamaicans in the metropolis. Moreover, the encounters with Jamaican men and women of different age groups and immigrant generations sharpened my focus to female experiences, practices and biographies of the second and third generation (see further chapters four and six). Concerning Jamaican women’s immigrant experiences in the city it is relevant to inquire, *“Why is the city of Montreal an important historical contact zone for Jamaican women? How do Jamaican women enter Montreal and how do they settle and accommodate themselves in this diverse city?”*.

Mediating belonging and negotiating connection to a specific place over time requires constant translation work across and beyond real and imagined borders. The concepts of space and place, meaning the focus on specific interconnected localities in the case of Jamaican migration, must be explored not only through the lens of historical immigration waves or new technological possibilities of globalization, but also in the cultural context of social actors. In particular, the appropriation and creation of specific communal institutions is relevant while living in Montreal. Searching for Jamaican-inspired places in the city raises further questions about women’s experiences and values (across generations) and, e.g., their reinterpretations of gender roles or social power relations. Specific diasporic places in a city can hereby offer evidence about migrants’ relations to new, former and present dwellings. Interactions in Jamaican female public, semi-public, and private spaces tell as much about the experiences with the urban environment and the host society as with the ongoing, dynamic cross-connections to other prominent diasporic localities. Therefore, intersections between the place of origin, new dwelling-places, and continuous interconnections with other sites simultaneously shape an individual’s progressive identity construction. Analysing physical-material experiences in particular places in Montreal provides the contextual knowledge necessary for understanding later-life return aspirations. Being locally connected through a social network is an important part of living in Montreal, which leads to the second sub-inquiry of this study: *“In what ways do Jamaican women appropriate specific physical social spaces in the city of Montreal?”*. As much as the interlocutors in this study are trying to create or re-establish “homes away from home” (Clifford 1997: 244) the processes of translating home into a new locality demands discussions with the former ‘home’. In this dynamic, dialogic and overlapping process, both ‘new’ and ‘old’ notions of home change over time. Already in the 1940s, Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz coined the term “transculturation” (2019 [1940]) as a transfer process that leads to cultural re-configurations. This transfer is ongoing and triggered

through the intersection of various socio-cultural contributions. Therefore, actual social practices on the micro-level shed light on the constant negotiation, mediation, and translation of cultural identities. In literature, there is still less qualitative data concerned with women's interpretations of motives, practices, and perspectives in the migratory process compared to men's. Hence, the women's individual identity constructions and representation mechanisms became important components of this study's analysis.

Moreover, it is necessary to extend the spatial approach and look into women's bodily practices that imply meanings and constructions about socio-cultural interactions between female bodies and the city of Montreal. Understandings and representations of beauty ideals can answer questions about the negotiation and mediation of cultural identity and feelings of belonging to Jamaica. Bodily modification, stylization practices and female communion through 'bodywork' reconstruct not only a familiar 'home-space', but also counteract experiences with racism, discrimination and feelings of exclusion as well as 'othering'. Therefore, the third sub-inquiry of this study asks, "*How do Jamaican women's bodily practices in Montreal reconstruct feelings of socio-cultural belonging to Jamaica and to Montreal? How does the stylization of the body counteract experiences with racism and othering?*".

Beyond the analysis of bodily practices, the concept of space is again relevant when discussing women's personal reasons of yearning for the Jamaican 'home-land'. In the historical overview of Jamaican migration to Canada, various immigration waves give rise to the assumption that mobile, cross-cultural activities are not a new phenomenon. Since the mobile lives of the study's interlocutors' are tied and embedded in several localities and diverse transnational spaces, it is even more relevant to show that the places in Montreal actively interconnect with sites and bonds elsewhere in the diaspora and Jamaica. Hence, the anthropological notion of the "field" as a clear-cut, distinct site of enclosed research is as Clifford states, disputable (1997: 54f.). Since the field is not a static, 'spatially bound place' (Appadurai 1991: 191f.), it is crucial to understand the ongoing presence and dynamic influence of narratives in daily interactions. These are, for example, discussions about memories of Jamaica, perpetually evoked through ongoing social connections to family left behind and sensual experiences such as food or music.

Hence, Jamaican culture is a fluid and changing concept that has become strongly affected by different, multi-sited external forces and exchanges throughout the centuries. Therefore it is relevant to understand how migration has become "deeply embedded in the psyche of Caribbean peoples" (Thomas-Hope 2002: 2.1.2) and hence how stages of migration (e.g. leaving, staying, returning) are narrated via intergenerational articulation. Women's intergenerational narratives nurture individual images, memories, and viewpoints about life in Jamaica as well as in Montreal. Hence, these imaginaries and expectations of the homeland often influence the aspiration and yearning to reconnect with the homeland. In this

sense, imagined and “real-life” spaces are interrelated and intersected by the social actors who move through or with(-in) them. Narratives of the past, handed down by mothers and grandmothers as well as the women’s own childhood memories of the Jamaican homeland are the bedrock of their identity constructions and aspirations of return. Therefore, reinterpretations and imaginations of Jamaica and Jamaican life are mental preconditions of planning and executing return migrations and often contrast with unexpected and different realities upon arrival in the homeland. This practice of ‘being mentally mobile’ leads to the fourth sub-inquiry of this study, which asks, “*How do intergenerational narratives affect Jamaican women’s reconstructions of the homeland? Which images and memories are important in the process of aspiring return migration?*”. In this study, travel, mobility and migration through different geographical localities and life worlds demonstrate the field as an interconnected, ambiguous “location-work” (Gupta/Ferguson 1997: 105). According to Gupta and Ferguson,

“Fieldwork reveals that a self-conscious shifting of social and geographical location can be an extraordinary valuable methodology for understanding social and cultural life, [...]. Fieldwork, in this light, may be understood as a form of motivated and stylized dislocation” (1997: 136f.).

Consequently, a decentred analysis that takes various movement strategies of migrants into account highlights processes of transcultural exchange and interconnection. Therefore, it was necessary to accompany Jamaican women on their travels between Canada and Jamaica to detect how mobility after initial migration works in practice. Being mentally mobile through memories and imaginaries of the past and present set certain aspirations and expectations free and strongly enhance the women’s plans for actual physical mobility. Being virtually mobile through modern communication tools such as instant messengers, Skype, WhatsApp, and social media channels helps staying in daily contact with the island and support planning travels, seasonal trips and return migration to Jamaica. Information and support via social networks and connections to local Jamaican friends and family should not be underestimated as they precondition physical mobility to the island. Moreover, physical mobility to Jamaica raises questions about migratory patterns or routes. Whether women are wishing to travel to ‘paradise Jamaica’ seasonally, attempting to make the best of their retirement payments or fulfilling the desire of their ancestors to return home, aspiring and actual returnees offer an unprecedented spectrum through which Jamaican culture can be analysed. Throughout the study and in the title of this book, I use the term life worlds in the sense of an ‘existential anthropology’ as described by Michael Jackson (2012). Jackson shows that existentialism, far from being a philosophy of individual being, enables the ethnographer to explore issues of social existence and coexistence in new ways. For example, to theorize events as sites of a dynamic interplay between the finite possibilities of

the situations in which people find themselves in as well as the capacities they yet possess for creating viable forms of social life. Here, the study also seeks to inquire about conflictive aspects and unforeseen difficulties encountered in the event of Jamaican women's 'homecomings'. Here, local 'frictions' seemingly pave the way for new possibilities, for example, new forms of later-life mobility. Hence, the fifth and last sub-inquiry asks, "*How does return migration work in practice? How does being mobile after initial migration affect the women's perspectives about Montreal and Jamaica? Are there any conflicting narratives, interests, or representation mechanisms that occur along their mobile trajectories?*". In the light of current global developments, the focus on the dynamic, inherent meanings of diversity, mobility and cross-border activities as well as migratory experiences are valuable tools to understand migratory agency in a more complex way. Instead of looking into oppositions or binaries, present-day mobile people and societies require the 'exclusion of methodological nationalism' (Wimmer/Glick Schiller 2003) as well as the idea of culture being a container. If we can assume that most Jamaican women have multiple and complex social networks that encompass more than just one place and, as a result, overcome visible borders, we can comprehend these people as social agents who "challenge many long-held assumptions about membership, development, and equity" (Levitt 2004).

Since the past informs the present, historical encounters between Canada and Jamaica were preconditions to deepen the understanding about the contemporary situation. The 'special' position of Montreal in Quebec (in Canada) with regard to immigration and integration policies and resulting internal, nationalist tendencies was hereby of particular relevance. The discussion of the research questions leads now to chapter four that elaborates on methodology and on the 'multi-sited approach' (Marcus 1995) to the field as well as the 'triangulation of ethnographic data' (Denzin 1970) for the analysis of the interlocutors' life worlds in various localities. This triangulation is necessary to compare interviews, informal talks and observation methods with each other to contrast what people say with their social interactions. In addition, the chapter on methodology informs about my positionality in the 'field' and the importance of the anthropological encounters (Spülbeck 1997). Chapter five introduces theoretical key concepts that help saturate the empirical results. Therefore, the theoretical concepts are a reflection of the improvisatory, ethnographic process of data gathering (Cerwonka/Malkki 2007) and are tailored to the ethnographic results. Chapter six to chapter nine illustrate the research partners' individual life worlds, biographies, intergenerational narratives, local practices and experiences in Montreal. The empirical findings show how Jamaican women navigate the challenges of space appropriation, inclusion/ exclusion and identity construction in the city. Here aspects of being and belonging, bodily practices, racial discrimination, yearning for home, memories, imaginaries and the role of women in Jamaican society are reflected.

After the analysis of the Montreal-based results, the study adopts a traveling perspective (chapter 10) that detects and interprets mobility after migration and the challenges of finding ‘new’ routes to approach the homeland. Returning to Jamaica will also highlight the deconstruction of personal imaginaries, and shows emotional aspects such as the feeling of rejection and confrontations with an ‘unknown’ local context or ‘lost home’. Through these frictions (chapter 11), particular previously held expectations about people, places, and life in Jamaica are seen to shift. Finally, the examination of new ways of redefining relationships and re-adaptations to the local environment (chapter 12) highlight the flexibility of Jamaican women throughout their temporal, spatial and socio-cultural relocation processes. These are exemplified through various stages of mediation and negotiation of ‘being and belonging’ in/ to the homeland and in/ to North America and finally mould into individual processes of migratory oscillation. Chapter 13 concludes with the study’s main outcomes and gives an outlook on possible future research in the area of Jamaican migration and mobility.

Over the course of this study, the reader will get to know five different women. Their biographies and family backgrounds stand representatively for typical Jamaican migratory trajectories in Montreal. For a better understanding of who these women are, a short biographical information of each person is given here. Their real names are withheld. I chose typical Jamaican names as pseudonyms that resemble their own or their relatives’ individual age group. Of course, it is challenging to anonymize some interlocutors due to their position in the local community. However, the research partners authorized any information used in this text. The following women guide the reader through the ethnography:

- Elisha: In her late twenties, born in Montreal to Jamaican parents. Severe experiences of racism in school and university made her see Montreal as an oppressive place. After several unsuccessful attempts to get a job in her profession, she now works part-time in her sister’s beauty salon; she longs to leave Montreal and live in Jamaica, where she dreams of belonging and living a better life.
- Debby: In her late thirties, born in Montreal to Jamaican parents, Elisha’s big sister; runs a beauty salon in Montreal that she took over from her mother; does not intend to leave Montreal.
- Ms. Brown: In her sixties, migrated to Montreal as a teenager following her mother in chain migration; works as a geriatric nurse; was married two times, mother of three adult children; invested in a retirement house in Jamaica; wants to re-migrate immediately after receiving her pension.
- Carol: In her late sixties, she intentionally migrated to Montreal as a young woman in order to have a career; has a science degree from Jamaica; worked as a teacher; married in Montreal and is the mother of two adult children; is

retired and recently moved to Toronto; engages on regular biannual travels to Jamaica.

- Josephine: In her late sixties, returned to Jamaica five years ago; initially migrated to the UK; came to live in Montreal in her forties; worked as a domestic and untrained nurse throughout her life; contemplates about returning to Canada or traveling to visit friends and family in North America and the UK.

