

## Olga Tkach

**Paolo Boccagni. Migration and the Search for Home: Mapping Domestic Space in Migrants' Everyday Lives. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017. 136 pp. ISBN 978-1-137-58801-2.**

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For decades, home studies has been developed across a wide range of disciplines, including ethnography and anthropology, human and cultural geography, history, and social research in architecture and design. Transnational migrations also found their own specific niche in this multidisciplinary research area. Still, in migration studies of home numerous localized but isolated case studies predominate. This book by sociologist Paolo Boccagni is a long-awaited first attempt at generalizing, systematizing, and conceptualizing more deeply existing scholarship on the migration-home nexus. It “revisits home as an experiential dimension of migrants’ everyday life,” based on “a critical inquiry into the theoretical, methodological and empirical literature available” (p. xxiii) across various disciplines, including the author’s previous works. This does not mean conceptualizations in this area have never been undertaken before. Nonetheless, this is the first separate sociological monograph fully devoted to it. Previously, conceptual remarks on the migration-home nexus either prefaced or concluded volumes of empirically based chapters (e.g., Olwig 1998:225–236; Rapport and Dawson 1998:19–56; Al-Ali and Koser 2002) or occupied one chapter in more general textbooks on home (e.g., Blunt and Dowling 2006).

*Migration and the Search for Home* is a textbook-like collection of seven chapters, including an introduction; each chapter with its own separate abstract and keywords. Its author reviews relevant works published since the mid-1990s, suggests his own interpretation of the current state of affairs, picks up particular focuses, and elaborates a conceptual framework applicable to migration and home research, with a particular focus on “so-called low-skilled migrants from labour-exporting countries” (p. xxiv). This book review will not do a chapter-by-chapter summary. I will instead highlight the novelty of this monograph in terms of its contribution to the conceptual framework of migration and home research.

Trying to sketch out “a conceptual map of home as a subject of social research” (p. 3), Boccagni argues that contemporary home studies is a bit too enthusiastic about solving definitional issues. Regardless of the obvious complexity of the phenomenon, the field of home studies tries to develop a fixed definition of home. However, homes, especially migrants’ homes, are everyday relational open-ended social processes reflecting everyday interactions and referring to all sorts of social environments that embody people’s belonging and identification with a variety of places (pp. 9, 21, 34, 106). In order to describe this process and refine the conceptual bases

of the migration-home nexus, Boccagni comes up with the book's key concept: homing. This concept, elaborated from the homing pigeon metaphor, has already been used in diaspora studies and research on return migration, where the search for home basically means aspirations of return to ancestral home or homeland. The author defines homing as migrants' abilities to reproduce, reconstruct, and possibly rebuild meaningful homelike settings, feelings, and relationships through a range of specialized social practices (p. 26). Chapter 1 contains analytical figures that graphically revisit homing in terms of the theory of structuration and a biographical approach. It seems that Boccagni adapted the quite descriptive and widely used term homemaking and reformatted it as homing, infusing it with an analytical stance. Although the link between homemaking and homing is not clarified, in the book the terms are used as synonyms.

The author makes a significant contribution to systematization of methodology in research on home and migration with a matrix that shows the multiple facets of home at the intersection of levels of analysis—views, practices, and places (first axis)—and conceptual dimensions—domesticity, materiality, spatiality, and temporality that emerge in the individual's homing (second axis) (p. 34). Each cell of this comprehensive table displays what home is like empirically and how its numerous aspects can be studied. Homing in spatial and temporal perspectives is considered in greater detail in chapters 3 and 4 respectively. Boccagni introduces the terms portability and (re)producibility to investigate migrants' abilities to reattach or reemplace meaningful senses of home to a variety of locations across space and over time. Depending on one's personal situation, some dimensions of home, such as materiality or place identity, may be more or less portable and reproducible than others. Also, the ability to engage in homing is shaped by several forms of inequality that characterize migrants' social position—age group, gender, class, educational background, length of stay, labor inclusion, as well as housing arrangements in sending and receiving societies. One of "the most tangible and elusive manifestation[s]" (p. 58) of transnational homing from a spatial perspective—and a very topical research terrain—are remittance houses. Much attention has been paid to homing as seen through remittance houses with regard to "the nexus between (housing) integration and transnational engagement at large" (p. 62)—complex systems of social inequalities to which transnational migrants belong and the creation of multiple senses of home in both sending and receiving societies.

From a temporal perspective, homing means that every time they get a roof over their head migrants have to somehow "domesticate" even temporary—and in many regards unhomey—dwelling places. This presumes making up a sense of home and integration into the receiving society at large through elementary routines of interactions and the day-to-day chores of domestic life. Two main coexisting drivers—a claim to belong and a claim to exert control—motivate homing, where the latter seems more problematic and demanding for migrants (pp. 106–107). The question raised is how and to what extent it is possible to maintain security, familiarity, and control related to a sense of home within multisited life courses that defy residential continuity. Boccagni assumes that with international migrants it works the same way as with people

who have never migrated and whose residential biographies can be also far from linear. In turn, migrants always overcome this apparent discontinuity through the reproduction of relational, emotional, sensorial, and cognitive aspects of their past home experiences. Just like their sedentary counterparts, they use memories of the past dwelling place (or their parents' home) both practically, as a residential pattern in the course of homing, and emotionally, as a source of strength and a point of potential return. In this regard, it remains unclear from the book what makes migrants' homing practices so specific or even unique, if we consider that their home experiences were similar to those of nonmigrants. From my point of view, the argument that "migrants go through extended detachment from their earlier homes" (p. 26) devalues their transnational efforts at homing, revives the old view of migration as loss of home, and to a certain extent idealizes the homes left behind by migrants. Not all of these houses "emit positive memories of the past" (pp. 70–71), especially if migration was an escape from the (home)land for reasons of hardship or conflict. In this regard, migrants' homing in a new environment might be aimed at breaking with their previous home experience at all costs, rather than its reproduction.

The message of the book that seems more important is that in migrants' lives fixity and mobility of home, and related identities, coexist and interact. The complexity of their coexistence—their alternation, duration, transience, and prevalence one over another depending on migrants' biographical situations and dominant political discourses—interest Boccagni most of all. In fact, the coupling of these two existential triggers—immobility and movement, or roots and routes (see Christensen and Jensen 2011)—in homing can be seen as the very everyday, mundane life that we always try to capture in research on migration. In this regard, one of the smartest conceptual findings of the book is its application of the notorious word "procrastination" to describe migrants' home experience of temporal displacement that may end up differently. In fact, in many cases they neither go back to their premigration "normal" home, despite reproducing a myth of return, nor invest in a given place in the receiving society to make it more homelike. Sometimes procrastination creates an effect of connection to, a sense of home in many places simultaneously, where some are "more home" than others and the statuses of different homes change over time. It all depends on the migrants' position within structures of inequality, the resources available to them at particular points in their life course, the thickness of their family networks, long-term trajectories of immigrant incorporation, and so on. Procrastination in homing can be both involuntary and strategic, of which the above-mentioned remittance houses are brilliant examples. For instance, Caroline Melly's research (2010:52) on remittance houses in Dakar, Senegal, showed that their construction is not a linear process but instead involves many stops and starts, simultaneous creation and deterioration, revised histories and fantastic ideas of future possibility. Half-built—in Boccagni's terms, "procrastinating"—remittance houses symbolize the socially valued act of building and a migrant's successful career in the host country (p. 59).

Another significant contribution is made to the methodology of empirical studies of the migration-home nexus, with a brief but comprehensive overview of appro-

appropriate research methods with a bias towards qualitative approaches (chapter 2). Boccagni's ideals are mixed-method and longitudinally oriented techniques, including biographical and other types of in-depth interviews taking place in, or as close as possible to, the settings that research participants frame as home; go-alongs and follow-ups based on walks together in the everyday life environments of research participants; ethnographic engagements and immersions in home-interior spaces and related interpersonal relationships and emotions. It is obvious to the author that for migrants home overflows the physical walls of a dwelling and goes into semi-public spaces such as squares, streets, parks, street corners, shops, and markets. So in order to study the homelikeness of external environments and shared situated sense of home, observations can and should be carried outside where migrants hang out together. The more rarely used methods of home drawings and pictures, filming of domestic routines over time, written and video-recorded diaries and reports, and video and audio tours are also mentioned.

Overall, Boccagni has made a serious contribution to the systematization and schematization of the current dispersed knowledge of home in migration. Sometimes the monograph seems perhaps too general and abstract. More relevant empirical examples presented in detail in the research boxes would allow the reader to better trace the relationships between the conceptual and fieldwork findings. Nonetheless, for the beginner *Migration and the Search for Home* provides a conceptual map that is definitely needed in order to not get lost in such a wide, blurred, and heterogeneous research field as the migration-home nexus. Senior researchers, I presume, will perceive the book as a milestone in the development of the discipline and an inspiring benchmark for further international comparative studies. The extensive bibliography provided by the author is also a gift to both, as well as to readers who teach in migration and home studies.

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