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Migration and the search for home. Mapping domestic space in migrants' everyday lives

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Title Migration and the search for home. Mapping domestic space in migrants' everyday lives (book review)

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Migration and the Search for Home. Mapping Domestic Space in Migrants' Everyday Lives. Paolo Boccagni. New York, Palgrave Macmillan US, 2017, 136 + xxviii pp., €53.49 (hbk) ISBN 978 1 137 58801 2

The home as a spatial and social setting is a key-concept in housing studies. In *Migration and the Search for Home*, Boccagni outlines a research agenda that aims to foreground the biographical and societal consequences of international migration in relation to experiences of home. The book is primarily theoretical and conceptual in its contribution, which lies in the introduction of the concept of 'homing' to studies of home and migration. Homing is defined as "people's evolving potential to attach a sense of home to their life circumstances, in light of their assets and of the external structure of opportunities"(p. 23, original italics). At a more general level, the novelty of the book lies in its investigation of the nexus between experiences of migration and home, through connecting the fields of housing and migration studies. The theoretical framework is presented in Chapter 1 (A New Lens on the Migration-Home Nexus), which draws on different disciplines, including sociology, geography, housing studies and migration studies and begins with two insightful vignettes illustrating two real migrants' experiences of home.

Chapter 2 (Researching Migrants' Home) focuses on the methodologies that are suitable for studying the homing practices of migrants. Boccagni argues that ethnographic and longitudinal approaches are most appropriate here, because the home-making process is subject to change over both place and time. The methods that he discusses are relevant, but fairly traditional, and more attention could have been paid to newer methods relevant to studying homing, such as walk-along interviews (in- or outside the house), and GPS- or indoor-tracking. Combining the use of such methods, that make use of technology, with methods centering around narratives and observation, would enable researchers to link practices that happen in home-places to the emotions that people attach to these places.

The methodological observations pave the way for Chapters 3 and 4, which discuss the spatial and temporal characteristics of homing respectively (Migration and Home over Space; and Migration and Home over Time). Boccagni emphasizes that the distinction between time and place is artificial, and created for argumentation purposes. Home is advanced as a special kind of relationship with place, at different spatial scales. What seemed lacking here, was a further unpacking of the home into the smaller places that it consists of, and the possibly different

feelings, relations and practices that happen in these different component places (experiences of one's kitchen may be different from those of one's living room). As a result, the home remains something of a black box, which future scholarship should certainly seek to open. In the same chapter, Boccagni asserts that it is important to retain a focus on the relational basis of the home, underlining the social dimension of 'homing'. How maintaining the relational basis of the home works for people such as refugees, who may have lost important social relations, could have been explored in more depth. In addressing the temporal dimension of homing, the importance of the search for home is discussed. Here, the potential gap between the real and aspired home is addressed, a theme that can fruitfully contribute to a better understanding of not only migrants' experience of home, but also those of non-migrant groups.

Chapter 5 (Migrants' Home as a Political Issue) sets out to link home as a concept, with public debate and policy-making with regard to immigration. Here, the question of whether different groups of immigrants engage in home-making in different ways, or to different extents, is relevant. Such differentiation may occur according to country of origin and/or ethnicity, but also along lines of class, gender, age group and other social stratifications. How homing (potentially) works for these different subgroups could have been explored more and is certainly a topic worthy of further exploration in the future.

The concluding chapter (Chapter 6) summarizes the research agenda on the home-migration nexus, and provides a number of relevant and promising directions for future research, especially experiences of home among international migrants. This chapter's focus on home as a process, that consists of the specific social relationships that are negotiated and reproduced over time and against a variety of backgrounds, is particularly valuable.

The original contribution of the book is in my opinion, threefold: 1) it provides a theoretical account of how we can better understand migrants' search for home, including methodological considerations; 2) it emphasizes both the spatiality and temporality of home; 3) it acknowledges the gap between the real and aspired home. In so doing, it largely builds on sociological and cultural geographical theories of the home. Two limitations of the book are perhaps worth highlighting. First, despite the use of vignettes in Chapter 1, discussion of the lives of actual migrants through empirical research is largely absent. Though this reflects the book's focus on sketching a research agenda, it is also a missed opportunity. Incorporating concrete examples of feelings, practices and relations of home, from the author's own or

others' previous research would have made it even more compelling, for instance, Levin's (2016) book on settlement and home of immigrants in Australia and Israel, and Cancellieri's (2017) work on home-making of migrants in Italy. Second, the language used in the book is at times overly complex, meaning that the main message does not always come across as clearly as it might have. Despite these limitations, *Migration and the Search for Home* sketches the exciting potential for new research on the home-migration nexus and will be of particular interest to scholars and students in home and migration studies across the globe, and of specific utility in framing empirical research exploring migrants' experience of home and 'homing' practices.

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