Home and Migration: Mobilities, Belongings and Identities

David Ralph* and Lynn A. Staeheli
Institute of Geography, School of Geosciences, University of Edinburgh

Abstract

Geographers deploy a panoply of theories and techniques to effectively study the meanings that migrants attach to their mobility and settlement experiences. In particular, the emergence of transnationalism as a major analytic tool offers scholars fresh insights into the ways in which migrants maintain ties to their places of origin, while simultaneously adapting to their new environments. Surprisingly, what remains assumed, more often than interrogated, in much writing on migrants' transnational settlement experiences is how they make sense of the concept of home. This is perplexing, given the centrality that questions over home's meaning occupy in the migration process, as well as the importance of home as a focus of geographical inquiry. Our review focuses on recent migration research that examines migrants' engagement with the notion of home. We suggest that in the rush to conceptualise novel transnational configurations of people–place relationships, some researchers overemphasise the shifting and mobile meanings that migrants give to home, while underplaying the resilience of its stable, bounded and fixed interpretations. We contend that the challenge for those studying migration today is to conceptualise together this tension between home's mobile and sedentarist aspects.

Introduction

In the 1939 film *The Wizard of Oz*, Dorothy runs away from home and is later swept away to the land of Oz. In that fantastical place, she encounters many perils, but also makes new friends. Together, each of the friends overcomes their fears, learns to recognise they already had the skills they desired, and understands that they have the power to shape their own futures. While the film is often described as a coming–of–age story, it is also a story in which migration and attachments to home play central roles. For all of Dorothy's experiences in Oz, as wonderful and frightening as they might have been, she is reminded, 'There's no place like home'.

Dorothy, like other migrants, has a complicated relationship with home. She needs to escape it, in part to save her dog, but also to develop into an adult. Yet she is loathe to break ties completely for fear of losing her sense of self and for fear of losing touch with the people closest to her. But looming over the entire film is also the question of whether Dorothy ever left home. Dorothy's Aunt Em, for instance, tries to convince Dorothy it was all a dream, that she had been hit on the head by a storm window, and that she had been in Kansas the entire time.

Contemporary migrants may be much like Dorothy in the way that home is dreamt, conceptualised and experienced. Scholars have often relied on the notion of 'transnationalism' to understand migrants' entangled connections and the networks and social formations that link homes in their place of origin and in the places to which they move. In highlighting the shifting and mobile meanings that migrants give to home, however,

there has been a concomitant tendency to underplay the resilience of its stable, bounded and fixed interpretations. The challenge, we argue, is to conceptualise the simultaneity of home as sedentarist and as mobile. We use a review of recent literature on transnational migration to advance the claim that home must be conceptualised as both dynamic and as moored in order to reflect the complexity and ambivalence that makes it such a tricky and slippery concept. In particular, such an approach will help to enrich research that explores the ways in which home is experienced both as a location and as a set of relationships that shape identities and feelings of belonging.

As these comments suggest, home contains variegated and overlapping aspects that are intimately related, yet at the same time distinct. Blunt and Varley (2004), for example, analyse home from the perspective of its dominant dimensions: namely, home and its relationships with place, identity and belonging. Yet each of these dimensions, we argue, must also be understood as embedding the tension between home as mobile and home as stable. While this adds a level of complexity to the understanding of home, it also better describes the ways in which home is conceptualised by migrants and the ways that it is experienced and given meaning.

In the first section of the paper, we review existing literature that examines the dimension of place in relation to migrants' homes. Following this, we examine further strands of migration scholarship that examines the relationships between migrants' homes as an expression of identity and with the closely allied notion of belonging. We conclude by suggesting a conceptualisation of home as being accordion-like, in that it stretches to expand migrants outwards to distant and remote places, while also squeezing to embed them in their proximate and immediate locales. In this way, home seems to extend outward and to be mobile, but also to be grounded and sedentary. Such a conceptualisation better reflects the ways in which many migrants understand and experience home. In the final section of the paper, we draw together the ideas to outline a way of approaching home that combines its sedentarist and mobile aspects. While we use the transnationalism and international migration literatures, with their emphases on crossing and reimaging international borders, we argue in the final section that even people who do not cross such borders live in homes that are experienced in many of the same ways – as locations, as relationships, as simultaneously fixed and fluid. In this way, the migrant serves as a figure through which we can understand home, its definition, meanings and its implications for the ways we live our lives.

Geographies of Home and Migration: A Question of Place

One recurrent and dominant strand of research on home relates it to a fixed, bounded and discreet place. Inspired by philosophical writings on the power of place–attachments (Bachelard 1958; Casey 1993, 1998; Heidegger 1971), this approach examines the ways a sense of home plays an important role in grounding people to a particular place, a place like no other. Yet in recent years, scholars have begun to problematise the 'sedentarist analytic bias' (Chu 2006, 397) that sees home as a fixed, bounded and enclosed site, as the analytical focus shifts to the threshold-crossing capacity of home to extend and connect people and places across time and space (Brettell 2006; Datta 2010; Nowicka 2006). This is especially the case in research on migrants' homes, because the very act of moving throws into question the ability to locate people in specific places, specific homes (Staeheli and Nagel 2006). The increasing speed, intensity, frequency and volume of human mobility and migration around the globe is sometimes claimed to saturate all facets of contemporary life (Urry 2000). In particular, migrant transnationalism, and the rise of a

transnational paradigm in migration studies, often provides a theoretical framework for analysing the location-spanning social, economic and political ties that migrants sustain across borders and emphasises the 'bifocality' (Rouse 1991), the 'dual frame of reference' (Guarnizo 1997) or 'binationality' (Kyle 2000) that migrants create and maintain. Both place of origin and destination influence migrants' routine practices and everyday lives, leading to their effective refusal to simply be located in just one place (Al-Ali and Khoser 2002; Baldassar 1997; Basch et al. 1994).

It is in this context that many commentators challenge the way home is often imagined as bounded, and instead offer a conceptualisation of home as messy, mobile, blurred and confused (Ahmed et al. 2003; Nowicka 2006, 2007). From this perspective, it is important to examine the ways in which migrants continue to 'ground' their lives in multiple locations and to consider how home is already inflected with mobility – and conversely, with the ways mobility is inflected with gestures of attachment (Easthope 2009; Flynn 2007; Lamb 2002). In response to this, a number of geographers investigate mobile geographies of home, looking at the ways in which migrants dwell through travel, and vice versa (Blunt and Dowling 2006; Blunt et al. 2007; Fortier 1999, 2001). These studies suggest that mobility *and* stasis, displacement *and* placement, as well as roots *and* routes go into the making of home (Clifford 1997; Gustafson 2001). In other words, in order to grasp the empirical reality of contemporary meanings of home and home-making practices for migrants, it is necessary, as David Morley (2000, 41) argues, to reconceptualise 'the conventional contrast between traditional, place-based notions of home … and the contemporary experience of globalisation in such a way that we might see this not as a contrast between presence and absence of an experience of homeliness but rather as two different modalities of this experience'.

One particularly detailed examination of this reworking of the relationship between place and mobility is Magdalena Nowicka's (2006, 2007) research on the experience of home for United Nations staff members. Given that their roles periodically place them in new countries, Nowicka examines specifically *how* homes are localised and territorially pinned down for her respondents. She finds that her respondents construct a sense of home around people and objects that are emplaced, but it is an emplacement that revolves around mobility. Thus, refusing to assume that home is a stable physical place where domestic life is realised, Nowicka examines home as the emplacement of practices and objects that are attached, yet mobile. Home, she argues, is built through a dynamic process of localising particular sets of relationships that do not necessarily depend on the essential qualities of a particular place. Home, in other words, is a process involving both the people we share home with but also the material objects therein.

The importance of material objects in creating a sense of home and of sustaining relationships that help to constitute home can hardly be overstated. Possessions, Tolia-Kelly (2004, 317) argues, 'are connective markers to geographical nodes of identification. Through their prismatic nature, ''other'' lives, lands, and homes are made part of this one'. She continues that such material objects serve to both buffer individuals from the pressures of outside cultures, but also help to forge a feeling of identity and belonging somewhere, if not necessarily in the particular place they may occupy at a given moment. In this way, people and material objects can form the basis of home, establishing sets of relationships before these sediment to become what we have traditionally called 'place'. For Nowicka (2006, 82), the implication is that home is 'a space in-becoming'. The construction of home is thus not necessarily tied to a fixed location, but emerges out of the regular, localising reiteration of social processes and sets of relationships with both humans and non-humans (Jacobs and Smith 2008; Miller 1998,

2001). Home is thus located, but not limited to a particular locale; it is sedentary and mobile.

Yet in localising homes, the relationships that constitute home may subtly change, and there is frequent dissonance between the lived and the ideal aspects of home. 'Re-memories of home' (Tolia-Kelly 2004) through objects, for instance, can lead to a romanticised, nostalgic view that is often in tension with day-to-day experience (Moore 2000). Some aspects of this tension reflect the intersectionality of migrants' experiences and the power-laden relationships that are part of home's construction. So for instance, while home may be (some) men's castle, it is a castle riven with inequality and power, as well as love and care. Class, 'race', gender and various other power relations remain important forces shaping the experience of home for migrants, as research by Pratt (2004) in collaboration with the Phillipine Women's Centre of British Columbia has demonstrated.

The challenge, therefore, is not only to examine migrants' articulations of mobile/grounded homes, but at the same time to interrogate the ways in which various power geometries influence such complex registers of home. For example, while they may share some common characteristics in terms of how they understand home, a refugee's experience of home is likely to differ from that of an elite business traveller's, the political exile's from the non-domiciled tax exile's, the asylum seeker's from the tourist's and so on. In heeding the intensely political significance of home, feminist contributions to thinking on home highlight that much of the domestic and emotional work involved in the making of that place we call home is performed by unpaid, unrecognised female migrant labour (Espiritu 2003; Pratt and Yeoh 2003). Scholars influenced by post-colonial and post-structural perspectives further unpack some of the power structures governing migrants' attempts to fashion home in their new environments (Blunt 2005; Dwyer 2003; Legg 2003).

In these efforts to understand home, the importance of power and the ways it influences home's relationships are central. It seems likely, for instance, that migrants with legal permission to be in the countries to which they have moved might find it easier to reposition themselves in the spatialised relationships and networks that sustain and embed home. Similarly, migrants with access to material resources might also be better able to negotiate the power geometries that are part of home. Yet ethnographic work on migrant survival strategies has demonstrated the variety of ways in which undocumented and desperately low-income migrants also sustain senses of home that are spatially extensible, even as grounded (e.g., Levitt 2001; Mahler 1995). It is therefore important to be attuned to the different ways in which migrants, with different resources and different social locations, negotiate the extensibility and fixity of home.

As may be becoming clear, conceptualisations of home as simultaneously mobile and sedentarist and as constructed through spatialised networks can be related to broader debates about the relationship between place and space. Massey (1994), for instance, describes a 'global sense of place' characterised by relationships and networks that expand outward, but that are rooted in (without being limited to) specific places. Nowicka's (2007) discussion of the ways in which home is localised and is a space in-becoming is clearly influenced by such notions. It seems important, as Massey does, to apply the logic about the relationships that construct and embed what we call 'place' to 'home'. In this way, home becomes understood as both mobile and sedentary, as embedded but also as extending outward through relationships with humans and non-humans.

Geographies of Home, Identity and Belonging

Those relationships and processes that construct home are also involved in creating identities and feelings of belonging. In this way, dimensions of home seep into one another, and maintaining analytical distinctions between them is difficult. And just as home should not be presumed to be singular, migrant identity should not be presumed to be singular or fixed to a singular home (Blunt and Varley 2004). It is therefore important to consider the ways in which a loosening of identity moorings and markers allows for a fluid model of identification with various places, various homes, whereby many migrants articulate a multilayered, 'hybrid' identity that reflects (and perhaps shapes) their experience of home, self and belonging (Brubaker and Cooper 2000; Walter 2004, 2006; Yau 2007). In this section of the paper, we explore the relationships between home, identity and belonging, showing how the conceptualisation of home as simultaneously mobile and grounded intersects with identity and belonging. The decentring and destabilising of identification away from the notion of a singular, authentic home is, arguably, more evident for migrants than for those people who do not migrate and who remain in their original place of residence (Paspastergiadis 2001). As we will argue, however, people who do not migrate are also embedded in the relationships that construct home. As such, we use experiences of transnationalism to explore relationships between home, identity and belonging, but will later argue that these relationships are not necessarily specific to transnational migrants.

As migrants maintain contacts across international borders, their identity is not necessarily tied to a unique home (Lam and Yeoh 2004). One implication is that migrants continuously negotiate identities between 'old' and 'new' worlds, forging novel configurations of identification with home in both places (Appadurai 1996). Rather than movement from one place to another uprooting or deterritorialising migrants' identities – as has been intimated – what scholars witness among contemporary migrants is a strengthening and deepening of ties to multiple places. Numerous recent studies, for instance, suggest a general and durable re-orientation of the migrant *habitus* whereby old- and new-world values are conceptualised together to transform identities, transform homes (Haller and Lanholt 2005; Levitt and Waters 2002). One revealing example of this is Salih's (2003) research on Moroccan women living in Italy. Focussing on their cooking practices, Salih shows how these women fuse elements of both countries' cuisines to symbolise their double identities in homes 'here' and 'there'. When in Italy, the women mix traditional Italian recipes with imported Moroccan ingredients to enliven the dishes; and conversely, returning to Morocco for holidays, Italian goods are used in the preparation of local Moroccan meals. Rather than seeing the women's identities in relation to specific homes as mutually exclusive, Salih demonstrates how the meaning of home is defined through interactive transnational identifications with homes stretched across geographically remote places.

This research on migrants' transnational identities shows how home is simultaneously lived both 'here' and 'there'. However, a singular focus on migrants' border-spanning linkages that maintain multiple identities to more than one home tells only part of the story and runs the risk of overlooking the complex ways in which migrants negotiate identities. Steven Vertovec (2009) points out that much of twentieth-century migration scholarship concentrated on the ways in which migrants adapted to their new environments, a process variously labelled as assimilation, integration, incorporation or insertion. Vertovec (2009) argues that early work on transnationalism often emerged as a response to the dominance of the assimilation paradigm, and therefore focused on the previously

neglected cross-border aspects of migrants' everyday lives and selves. For Vertovec and others (Ehrkamp 2005; Morawska 2004; Nagel 2002; Nagel and Staeheli 2008; Portes et al. 1999; Staeheli and Nagel 2006), this early work on transnationalism – while offering a productive way of engaging with migrants' powerful attachments to homes and selves elsewhere – resulted in a lack of attention to migrants' struggles in their new homes. In this light, more recent research aims to consider how migrants build homes and identities through complex relationships that are plural, extensible, but nevertheless localised.

A number of studies show that maintaining contact with places of origin – through travel, communications or through material objects – in some instances serves as an adaptive response to the hostile or unreceptive context in which migrants often find themselves. In these circumstances, migrant identities often incorporate strong attachments to the home of origin. Such attachments and identities, however, need not be enacted in the *place* of origin, but instead may be recreated in the places to which they have moved; Tolia-Kelly's (2004) arguments about the importance of material objects from previous homes are relevant here. And sometimes, these identities are enacted and reinforced in living arrangements and neighbourhoods in new places. An example of this is given in Cohen and Sirkeci's (2005) account of Turkish-Kurds living in Germany. The authors argue that Turkish-Kurds have limited interaction in Germany with either Germans or with non-Turkish-Kurds. This results in the formation of Turkish-Kurd ethnic-enclaves or ghetto-like neighbourhoods. But the question remains *why* there is so little interaction. Phillips (2008) argues that in Britain and with respect to Muslim immigrants, the creation of such enclaves reflects hostile attitudes on the part of white British people as well as the comfort that comes from living with others who share Muslim faith and often a common national background. Much of the public debate in both contexts centres on whether such enclaves hinder or facilitates integration. The point we wish to make, however, is that these enclaves – which manifest practices and relationships from multiple homes – may create home spaces in which it is possible to sustain identities as both the same and different from the 'host society' (Nagel 2002) and in which a sense of belonging can be forged.

For all of the attention to hybrid identities, pluralised homes and so forth, it must be acknowledged that some migrants do desire to pin-down their identities in a discretely defined home, and this desire is often expressed in a desire to 'return' home. Conway (2005), for example, argues that the much-discussed 'myth of return' is a symptom of some migrants' ongoing search for a stable sense of self in a world often characterised as in flux. In a series of papers, Christou (2002, 2004, 2006a,b) demonstrates that the continuing instability of identity while living away from an ancestral land – an ancestral home – underlies the quest for an authentic sense of self allied to the act of 'coming home' (see also Ralph 2009; Wessendorf 2007). Such yearnings require an explicit appreciation that migrants' multiple, hybrid and dynamic identifications with home may continue to idealise a stable identity with a fixed home (Pratt 1999; Tolia-Kelly 2006). In this sense, home incorporates both a lived and longed-for state. The articulation of a fragmented, partial and fluid identity does not preclude the yearning for an integrated, whole and stable identification with home (Varley 2008; Young 1997).

Yet homecoming rarely seems to fulfil that search for a singular home and stable identity; instead, migrants often express a continued ambivalence on return, recognising that they have changed, as has the place they had imagined so unproblematically as 'home' (Constable 1999, 2004; Ní Laoire 2007, 2008a,b). As a number of studies demonstrate, returnees often consider the possibilities of re-emigration once the complex reality of returning is recognised, suggesting a revision of the idealised model of homecoming as

restoration of a fixed identification with home (Abdelhady 2008; Ley and Kobayashi 2005; Tsuda 2001, 2003). The gap that emerges between the dream and the reality of return results in disenchantment among many returnees, leading some to revise their self-identities and articulate a liminal status as both insiders and outsiders. Through the interplay between home's mobile and moored features, returnees begin to articulate the disjuncture, and even antagonism, between the actual and the idealised meanings with which they had imbued home and their identification with it (Ralph 2009). For these migrants, a return to a home for which they have yearned and to which they identify can be *un*settling. For while they have returned, they often feel they no longer *belong* in their home place. Thus, while seeking to stabilise an identity, they encounter the complex relationships between identity and belonging.

These relationships are at the core of belonging. While belonging is a subjective feeling held by individuals, it is also socially defined. The subjective side of belonging is in many respects synonymous with aspects of home's dimensions of place and identity. The ways in which migrants describe a sense of fitting in 'at home' shares several characteristics with their sense of place (Anthias 2001, 2002, 2008). However, there is an explicitly social element of belonging that conditions home and identity. This social element speaks not so much to the feeling of identification and familiarity as it does to experiences of inclusion and, very often, of exclusion. Belonging, therefore, does not simply invoke warm feelings of fellowship to various peoples, places and cultures, because it depends on, or takes its meaning from, the inability of some people to participate in mainstream societal practices. As such, belonging always prompts awkward questions about affiliation and membership in neighbourhoods, communities, cities and nations (Hedetoft and Hjort 2002). This experience of exclusion is often pointedly the case for migrants' encounters with members of the places to which they have moved, irrespective of whether it is a return to another home (Bauman 2001; Bromley 2000; Kristeva 1991).

Social processes of inclusion and exclusion depend critically on the categorisation of people as belonging and not belonging, and so numerous studies have focused on the ways in which members of dominant groups impose categories of belonging on migrants (Ehrkamp and Leithner 2006; Nash 2008; Yuval-Davis 2006). These studies foreground the issue that belonging is never entirely about migrants' subjective feelings of 'fitting in' or not, but also relates to how (powerful) others define who belongs to home according to specific spatial norms and expectations (Castles and Davidson 2000; Crowley 1999; Ilcan 2002). Thus, while individual migrants may identify and define themselves as feeling at home, or as belonging in a particular place or places, such definitions of belonging are partly dependent on being recognised by others for their legitimacy (Valentine et al. 2009). It is not sufficient to claim membership of a particular home; membership must be validated by the wider community or group to which one aspires to belong. As such, belonging to home emerges out of entwined social processes of incorporation and exclusion that are partly self-defined, partly other-defined (see Young 1990).

The internal–external dialectic that conditions belonging to home, moreover, is in many cases predicated on an interplay of 'sameness' and 'difference' around the boundaries of who belongs to home, and who does not (Benhabib 1999; Madsen and van Naerssen 2003). This means that part of the reason a person may be incorporated into any particular group or community stems from the fact that s/he shares certain criteria of similarity or 'sameness' with other members of that collectivity. Conversely, part of the reason a person may be excluded from belonging to the group results from in-group members categorising her/him as different (and often inferior) and thereby not the same as 'them' (Pred 2000). This process of recruiting and excluding based on the perceived

sameness and difference of in- and out-group members respectively works both within and between groups (Jenkins 2008). In other words, similar processes of belonging occur in intra-group as well as inter-group incorporation and exclusion. While everyone is subject to processes of categorisation, incorporation and exclusion, these processes are arguably more evident for migrants, as they negotiate belonging intersubjectively in multiple homes (Paspastergiadis 2001).

Individual migrants often fail to meet normative expectations of behaviour, language, appearance, dress, eating habits, and countless other materialities and context-dependent etiquettes, and are in consequence perceived and discursively constructed as a group as being different to dominant others (Favell 1998; Noble 2002, 2005). A migrant's difference or foreignness excludes her/him, while simultaneously evoking and reinforcing the shared similarities between members of the in-group (Koefoed and Simonsen 2007). A number of studies show how various techniques and tactics of categorising and labelling migrants positions and marginalises them as alien to and outside the boundaries of belonging to 'us', which at the same time brings the host communities' shared commonalities or sameness into focus (Ehrkamp 2006; Neal and Walters 2006; Yeoh and Huang 2000).

Other studies, however, examine the ways in which migrants are understood as the same as 'us' (Braakman and Schlenkhoff 2007; Devlin Trew 2007). Rather than focusing on migrants' alleged difference, the emphasis falls on their degree of similarity to members of the dominant societal group. Numerous studies examine how migrants, based on a perception of sameness, are recruited to the in-group and are understood as assimilated and belonging within the boundaries of the host society (Germann-Molz 2008; Germann-Molz and Gibson 2007). In many such cases, the onus falls on migrants to blend with the host society's normative expectations, and through the adoption of language, accent, dress, intermarriage with the dominant group and so on, are gradually said to 'belong' to their countries of settlement (Alba and Nee 1997; Gordon 1964; Gray 2006; Kivisto 2003). In this view, by shedding particular mannerisms and practices, migrants come, by degrees, to belong in their new homes in a teleological fashion. But this attention to particular outward characteristics and practices, however, addresses only the social element of belonging, and not necessarily its subjective experience.

Belonging thus incorporates the subjective feeling that one's identity is 'at home' in a place, but also the awareness of how social relations and categories position individuals and members of social groups. In this process, the construction of sameness and difference work together in order to position migrants as belonging or not to home. Yet one analytical difficulty is that it is often difficult to avoid falling into languages that construct belonging as an either/or condition, an all-or-nothing state; the previous sentence is but one example. Discussion of migrants' feelings of belonging and home often fails to examine how individuals move between sameness and difference precisely to challenge those constructions. It is undoubtedly the case that the ways in which dominant others label migrants as the same as or different from mainstream society may be internalised by individual migrants in whole or in part. At the same time, such external categorisation of migrants' familiarity to or strangeness from dominant social groups may provoke resistance on migrants' behalf. Acts of non-conformity to norms of belonging are important because they foreground migrants' own practices of belonging that may emerge in the interplay of sameness and difference.

Probyn (1996) argues that this interplay is reflected in two interrelated states that together define belonging: that of 'be'-ing, and that of 'longing'. Any number of scholars have taken up the challenge to think of belonging in these terms (e.g., Bell 1999; Feldman 2008; Mee and Wright 2009; Savage et al. 2005), yet the focus of many studies is

on the latter aspect, the longing that belonging implies. While the be-ing element of belonging focuses on the performance and reiteration of normalised codes of belonging, migrants' longings suggest an alternative mode of membership that goes beyond rigid categories of belonging and non-belonging (Moreton-Robinson 2003; Walsh 2006a,b). As such, many migrants articulate an idiom of inclusion that begins to resist demands to look, behave and speak in ways that conform to dominant cultural expectations of migrants as either the same as or different from the mainstream population, thus minting a novel grammar of belonging to home in the process.

This grammar of belonging has a spatial syntax. The processes and relationships by which inclusion and exclusion, belonging and non-belonging, the ability to home [in the sense that Brah (1996) writes of 'homing'] operate in a variety of practices and objects and in a variety of mileux. So, for example, our focus on transnational migrants might be interpreted as meaning that home is largely constructed for such migrants at a national level; the homes between which such migrants move might be conceived of as nations. Yet crossing a border – as laden with political, legal and cultural ramifications as it might be – should not be assumed to mean that feelings of belonging or of being at home is somehow specific to a national-level community or entity. In fact, crossing a border might well be incidental to either the reasons people move or to the ways that they forge homes. If we conceptualise home as being constructed through the interactions of relationships and networks that are extensible, that are both place dependent and interconnected with other places, other homes, it follows that identities and feelings of belonging are also likely to be both place dependent, even as not constrained by a specific place or a specific scale. The syntax of belonging, therefore, is structured by relationships and practices in a variety of locations, be they local, national, cosmopolitan or, more likely, a combination of all of those locations, as migrants move through their daily lives. The analytical task in any given case is to understand how they are combined and interact to construct homes and to understand how these homes are interpreted, understood and given meaning by migrants.

Conclusions

We suspect Dorothy never left home, that she was not transported to Oz. But that does not mean she was not changed by her experience, whether a dream or not. In this, she is like any real person. In the course of the film, she changes and establishes a new sense of self, and earlier relationships with other people and with home are stretched and given different meanings. In this way, although a fictional character, Dorothy is like any person, whether a teenager or not, whether a migrant or not. But by telling a story of movement and transformation, it becomes possible to understand home, identity and belonging in a more nuanced way.

We have argued for the importance of understanding home as simultaneously mobile and sedentary, as localised and extensible. In this way, home is like an accordion, in that it both stretches to expand outwards to distant and remote places, while also squeezing to embed people in their proximate and immediate locales and social relations. We contend that the fixed and fluid components of home must be viewed as enmeshed and working together, without marginalising either of these qualities. Recognising home as at once grounded and uprooted highlights the often-overlooked dissonance between the lived and the desired meanings with which people imbue the notion. Our evaluation also softens the hard boundaries between the private and the public aspects of home. It is not enough to approach the concept of home as the product of subjective, idiosyncratic

sense-making efforts, because social meanings and social relationships inflect the ways in which home is understood and experienced. Debates over belonging to home are thus intrinsically debates over power and who controls it. Yet despite this, notions of home are not over-determined by public categorisations that aim to fix its meaning. Efforts to carve out alternative models of home can unsettle normative constructions, and draw attention to the fundamentally fragile and porous nature of reified social representations of home.

Geographers' voices have been crucial in enhancing engagement with complex debates on home and migration; they have also been crucial in theorising the spatiality of social relationships, including those that construct home. In this paper, we have used the figure of the migrant to enmesh the experience of home – with its mobilities and implications for identities and feelings of belonging – with theoretical arguments about place and space. In so doing, we hope to provide a lens by which home can be understood as located in the complex relationships through which migrants and others build and interpret lives.

Short Biographies

David Ralph has just completed a PhD on Irish return migrants from the USA at the Geography Department of the University of Edinburgh. His research interests lie in the area of migration studies, with particular focus on examining how migrants themselves experience and understand their settlement and integration experiences in their new environments. He has recently published an article in *Irish Studies Review*, looking at ideas of home among Irish return migrants. David holds a BA in Philosophy and English literature from the National University of Ireland, Galway, and an MA in European Thought from University College London.

Lynn A. Staeheli is a Professor of Human Geography at the University of Durham. Lynn has published extensively in political, urban, social and cultural geography. Her recent work (with Caroline Nagel) on migration compares the integration experiences and notions of citizenship of Arab-American activists in the USA with those of British–Arab activists in the United Kingdom. Lynn has previously taught at the University of Colorado, Boulder, and at the University of Edinburgh, and holds an MA in Geography from Penn State University, and a PhD in Geography from the University of Washington.

Note

* Correspondence address: David Ralph, Institute of Geography, School of Geosciences, University of Edinburgh, Drummond St, Edinburgh Eh8 9XP, UK. E-mail: davidralph81@gmail.com.

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