

Chapter 1

Conceptualising Home in Migration: An Introduction



1.1 Introduction

Migration and home-making are both integral to the history of human settlement. In order to secure livelihoods, find new partners, form families, educate ourselves, flee from war, violence, climate or freedom of expression, as humans, the quest to find another place in which to live is as old as human settlement itself. However, the extent to which the multiple locations in which we live can be referred to as *home* varies and is context-dependent. Home can be regarded as a core part of the human condition. Indeed, according to the United Nations, shelter, alongside adequate nutrition and education, is considered a basic human need (King, 1998). However, we know that home is about much more than simply a place of shelter: ‘home’ encompasses deeply personal feelings about the places and spaces of the intimate spheres of our lives.

As such, home is a significance source of identification for migrants. Mobility does not erode processes of identifying with or attaching to place (Cuba & Hummon, 1993) and in fact can bring questions of ‘home’ into sharper focus than in contexts of immobility. In an era of unprecedented global mobility, the idea of ‘home’ has particular resonance in debates surrounding questions of migration and border-crossing. Public and political concerns have crystallized around the figure of the migrant, imagined as a person ‘out of place’, triggering international policy concerns about migration management, increased securitisation of borders, as well as rising xenophobia in many contexts, reflecting anxieties that are, at their core, about ‘who belongs where’ and ‘who *can* belong where’. At the same time, migrants and diasporic communities develop individual and collective strategies for remembering past homelands, shaping new homes or making home in mobility itself. In other words, migration triggers questions, narratives and discourses about belonging/not-belonging in and through places and spaces, provoking reflections on the notion of home and what it means.

Hence the idea of ‘home’ is a powerful, yet contested, one in scholarship on migration. Geographers, sociologists and anthropologists have grappled with this idea of ‘home’, with its deeply emotional, yet ambiguous, resonance for migrants and those close to them (Ahmed et al., 2003; Blunt & Dowling, 2006; Boccagni, 2017; O’Connor & Crowley-Henry, 2020; Pink, 2004; Ralph & Staeheli, 2011). Migration highlights the complexities inherent in the idea of home as a place or space of belonging in contexts of mobility and border-crossing where home can be a place that is lost or mourned, that is constantly being made, that is imagined, or that is found in the in-between spaces of here and there (Ahmed et al., 2003; Brah, 1996). Most migration scholarship on home views it as a phenomenon that has a much wider and deeper meaning than simply a domestic place of dwelling (Boccagni, 2023; Mallett, 2004; Fox, 2016; Miranda Nieto et al., 2021) and instead looks at structure, biographical significance, and feelings associated with home in contexts of migration (Mitchell, 1971; Myers, 1989; Cuba & Hummon, 1993; Altman & Werner, 1985; Ahmed et al., 2003; Mallett, 2004; Fox, 2016). Home, as a space that is associated with strong emotions (Svašek, 2012), is not just a space to which one resorts from the outside world; it becomes a site from which people understand their place in the world.

As such, home has been associated with a range of (mostly) positive feelings and experiences of belonging, such as security, familiarity, control, comfort, familial and caring relationships, intimacy, place embeddedness and hope (Ahmed, 1999; Boccagni, 2017; Boccagni & Duyvendak, 2019; Hage, 1997; Ralph & Staeheli, 2011). For example, home is usually associated with meaningful relationships such as those with one’s children, spouse/partner, parents, siblings, extended family, flat-mates, friends, neighbours and wider (imagined) communities. However, it is important to recognise that sites deemed to be ‘home’ can feel unhomely and be associated with negative and ambiguous feelings, as ‘home’ is always saturated with power relations (Ahmed, 1999; Brickell, 2012). Discussions revolving around ideas such as non-home (Boccagni & Miranda Nieto, 2022), critical geographies of marginal home (Brickell, 2012) and unhome (Fathi, 2022a), refer to a range of negative feelings that challenge the positivity so often associated with the concept of home. Sometimes, notions of homeliness or home-likeness are more relevant than the idea of a singular complete home. The idea of feelings of homeliness can capture the ambiguities of home by recognising how homes can be more or less home-like, shifting with changing circumstances. In this way, the idea of ‘a home’ can be distinguished from the more complex and ambiguous qualities associated with ‘making home’ (Fathi, 2021). In other words, it is recognised that home is in some ways an ideal, something that is worked towards, rather than a fixed place.

However, the vast and rich social-scientific literature that exists on home and migration from various perspectives needs a thorough theorisation that could be of use for scholars across several disciplines. In this book, we delve into the existing scholarship on home and migration, in doing so drawing on our own experiences as migration researchers, to present this Short Reader. However, we do so through a theoretical lens that incorporates the concepts of intersectionality and structural im/

possibility in order to ground migrant homing and home-in-migration in debates on power, privilege and precarity.

In this opening chapter, first we outline some of the key conceptual principles, or tenets, that have emerged from contemporary social-scientific literature on home and migration, then moving on to build on these key principles to present an intersectional and structural conceptual framework for reading migration-and-home scholarship. In the final part of the chapter, we reflect on the implications of our own home-in-migration biographies and positions for our reading of this literature and present an overview of the structure of the rest of the book.

1.2 Key Tenets of Home in Migration

We present here some key tenets of the existing social-scientific scholarship on home in migration – some conceptual principles around which much of the literature has evolved in recent decades and which provide underpinning core principles to the subsequent discussions in the rest of this book.

- (a) *Home in migration as multi-scalar*: Home is an inherently spatial phenomenon as it reflects how feelings of belonging/not-belonging are experienced in relation to particular places and spaces. While conventionally ‘home’ might be understood simply in terms of a domestic dwelling space, or as a series of nested spatial belongings (for example, domestic space – local community – nation), contemporary scholarship questions this neat characterisation and highlights the complexities of multi-scalarity in constructions of home in migration (Blunt & Varley, 2004; Staeheli & Nagel, 2006). Migrant home, it is argued, can span or traverse household, community, city and nation (Blunt & Dowling, 2006) and can encompass spaces from the domestic to transnational spheres (Al-Ali & Koser, 2003; Pérez Murcia & Boccagni, 2022). In other words, home is often experienced and imagined at scales and frames of reference beyond the domestic. However, as Miranda Nieto (2021, p. 17) points out, ‘scales are not concrete spaces, places or locations, but ways of framing social activity’. For example, discussions of how urban space can be experienced as home (or unhome) are not just about the space of a city; they are also about the meaningful activities taking place within that space that associate it with home (Fathi & Ní Laoire, 2023). Similar arguments can be made about nation or homeland (see for example, Nash, 2003).
- (b) *Home as multilocational*: Furthermore, much literature points to the possibilities of home as a multi-locational, multi-focal, scattered or even ‘stretched’ phenomenon, that is, not tied to one fixed location but understood more as a sphere of meaningful connections and attachments at different scales and involving different places (Brettell, 2006; Ralph & Staeheli, 2011). Thus, home is on one hand about emplacement, localisation and attachments to places, and on the other about connections, relations and attachments between places

(Ahmed et al., 2003). Indeed, in this way, home is understood as intimately bound up with mobility and border-crossings, or, as being shaped through the experience of migration, but also in the sense that home itself is always changing and characterised by porous boundaries (Ahmed, 1999; Ahmed et al., 2003).

- (c) *Home in migration as process*: As a counterpoint to traditional understandings of home as a fixed and bounded place that one either leaves behind or stays in, current thinking, located in a more constructivist ontology, emphasises the processual, fluid and dynamic nature of home (Boccagni, 2017; Ralph & Staeheli, 2011). Home is understood through a range of concepts such as *homing desire*, *homing* and *home-making*, denoting home as a process encapsulating those practices, performances, desires and acts through which home is lived, felt and done (Ahmed et al., 2003; Boccagni, 2017; Brah, 1996; Tolia-Kelly, 2004; Walsh, 2011). While the three concepts have certain aspects in common, they are not exactly the same.

The concept of homing desire is usually attributed to the work of Black feminist writer, Avtar Brah, for whom the desire for home is inherent to diasporic identities, and which she distinguishes from the more essentialist idea of desire for a homeland (Brah, 1996). This idea of homing desire suggests an ‘almost out of reach’ quality to home, acknowledging the ways in which ‘homes’ (domestic dwellings, homelands) have not always been places of safety, comfort and belonging for those on the margins and challenging nativist and essentialist constructions of place and belonging. Brah (1996, p. 192) makes a distinction between feeling at home and claiming home, recognising that the idea of home is integrally bound up with ‘the social regulation of belonging’, wherein for some, the feeling and claiming of home overlap easily and for others, they are out of step. Hence, embedded in the idea of homing desire is a rejection of the idea of fixed origins and recognition of the multi-locality and contingency of home in diaspora (Brah, 1996).

More recently, from a sociological perspective, Boccagni (2017) has developed the concept of homing which similarly captures the processual and unfinished nature of home. He uses the concept to denote a lifelong process of ‘attaching a sense of home to [...] life circumstances’. In Boccagni’s (2017, p. 26) theorisation of the term:

Homing [...] is a range of *spatialized social practices through which migrants – as exemplary of people who went through extended detachment from their earlier homes – try to reproduce, reconstruct and possibly rebuild meaningful home-like settings, feelings and relationships.* (italics in the original)

In this sense, homing is viewed as an individual-level biographical process, though with a political aspect, involving an ongoing search for home, and with normative, emotional and practical dimensions, in which home in migration is more an ideal than a reality.

Finally, the concept of home-making emphasises that home is made up of practices of inhabitation at the micro level. There is not a fixed thing that is called home. Home is composed of repetitive, routine, quotidian practices, performances and acts that are done, with or without a purpose of making a home, but that function as

makers of a home. This is what can be called home-making – a process that through habitual acts, produces particular meanings, places and identities (Muñoz, 2018). The concept of home-making has been adopted widely in recent years in the home and migration literature as a valuable way of connecting the micro-level, material and everyday practices of doing home to wider social and cultural processes (Boccagni, 2014; Meijering & Lager, 2014; Walsh, 2011; Wilkins, 2019).

These processual aspects of home, as homing desire, homing and home-making, together point to three further important observations: (1) That home is a *yearning for something that is out of reach*. Even when we think we have achieved home, there is always something that reminds us that the feeling of comfort or safety is only temporary. (2) Home lies in the *constant and ongoing attempts* towards those desires for home. It is shaped within the desire for home and through the efforts and practices of working towards making home. (3) Finally, the processual aspect of home shows us that achieving home is a *process of the imagination* in that it comes into being through our longings and desires. The spaces and places of our lives become home through the meanings that we give them. These insights remind us that home is an ongoing process that is constantly under construction through everyday practices as well as enmeshed in longer-term projects of desire.

(d) *Home and the boundaries between outside and inside*: Home is understood as an oft insecure phenomenon, incorporating strangeness and difference within it (Ahmed, 1999). The stranger is always in proximity, and as Ahmed (1999, pp. 21–22) argues:

Strangers are not simply those who are not known in this dwelling, but those who are, in their very proximity, already recognized as not belonging, as being out of place. Such a recognition of those who are out of place allows both the demarcation and enforcement of the boundaries of ‘this place’, as where ‘we’ dwell.

What Sara Ahmed means here is that by recognising the stranger as a character who does not belong to this place, we are facilitating the (re)production of social, political and geographical boundaries that demarcate places as homely or unhomely. The one who belongs may find the former to be valid whilst the alien, the stranger and the one who is placed outside of these boundaries, is the one who feels the latter. In fact, the idea of home is often deployed in popular or political discourses of ‘community’ and ‘nation’ that seek to draw boundaries between those who belong and those who do not. Thus, home is integrally bound up with the politics of bordering at different scales.

(e) *Home as temporal*: Understood in the sense of an ongoing process, home can be seen as composed of a set of practices and feelings that tie the past, present and future together. Home in migration is shaped in relation to memories of the past, practices in the present and hopes for the future (Boccagni, 2017; Fathi, 2021). Migrations can result in ruptures in life histories, separating migrants from their familiar social worlds, from a feeling of home that is in the past. For some, this is experienced as loss, but home may be re-created in the present

through remembering, maintaining transnational ties or carrying elements of past homes into the present. For others, who might have felt like strangers in their past homes, home can be re-constituted through migration, creating a new home in the present or working towards a home in the future (Fortier, 2003). The temporality of home is also bound up with biographical temporality, whereby certain life stages are normatively associated with aspects of home-making/homing, such as leaving a parental home or setting up a new home. However, the ruptures produced by migration can complicate this association and challenge homing expectations (Fathi, 2022b; Sirriyeh, 2016).

- (f) *Home as everyday experience.* If home is not just about a house, a geographical location, a country or nation, then what is it? Much of the recent research focuses on the everyday as a valuable lens through which to grasp less visible aspects of homing in migration (Bocagni, 2017; Hatfield, 2010; Fathi & Ní Laoire, 2023). Removed from its fixed elements, home is about the everyday lived and felt experience. Home is what we do on a daily basis to feel embedded in our personal lives and the social world. What we do make sense to us. It is done with an aim and it serves a purpose. This could be mundane and not reflected upon, such as turning on the kettle, cleaning the toilet or watering the plants, or playing, but these are important in how we make connections to the worlds around us. So, when we talk about home as experience, in a way, we are talking about the sense of fulfilment we achieve through placing ourselves within the dynamics of our home space (whatever that is). For example, one important aspect of everyday experiences of home-making is that of personalisation, which is addressed in Chap. 4, which looks at how personal touches can be added to even the most unhomey environments.
- (g) *Home as sensorial.* Our last tenet of home refers to embodied experiences. Senses are important in the construction of the space we call home (Hamilton, 2017; Mata-Codesal, 2023). The phrase ‘feeling at home’ is directly related to this, that after all, home is about how our bodily senses, such as smell, colour or sounds, relate the dynamics of a space to our core sense of self (Fathi, 2021). Our emotions about a place of home are always entangled in what it reminds us of (past), what is meaningful to us (present) and what new opportunities of connection it will bring (future). Thus, embodied and sensorial elements of home are also connected to temporality. Placing body at the heart of discussions on home in migration is also about how bodily presence in social and public spaces can evoke feelings of homeliness or unhomeliness. In our earlier study, we found that young migrant men in Cork, Ireland, who were mostly visibly different to the Irish white population, were aware of their bodily presence in public and felt less at home compared to when they were in their domestic spaces (Fathi & Ní Laoire, 2023). Not feeling at home in public spaces can be directly tied to experiences of racialisation and exclusion (Lloyd & Vasta, 2017), which points to one of many ways in which home is bound up with wider social structures and processes.

1.3 Structural Im/Possibilities: A Theoretical Framework for Understanding Home in Migration

The above seven tenets of home in migration are well-recognised in the existing scholarship. However, we suggest that a stronger social and political framing is needed to contextualise home within the wider power relations and structures that shape where, when and for whom home in migration is more or less possible. There is an understandable tendency for studies on home and migration to focus on the small scale, intimate and personal level at which home is experienced. Many of these valuable studies (which we discuss throughout this book) do reveal the ways in which these small-scale experiences are underpinned by, and constituted through, wider structural and political processes of migration and settlement. However, there is a need for a coherent and comprehensive theoretical framework of home in migration that recognises this structural and political underpinning and puts power at its heart. Here inspiration can be taken from scholars of home in migration such as Ahmed et al. (2003), Blunt and Dowling (2006) and Brun and Fábos (2015), who have made significant contributions in this respect. Drawing on existing scholarship and wider literature, we propose here a conceptual framework for understanding home in migration that focuses on what we call the structural possibilities and impossibilities of home.

In conceptualising how migrants imagine and do home/homing, it is important to acknowledge the wider structural contexts in which desires and imaginations are formed and the *possibilities* of home are opened up or closed off. Such an approach would integrate an understanding of the everyday lived and felt aspects of home-in-migration with a critical analysis of the structural contexts in which ‘living and feeling home’ is made possible. Home is inherently about the politics of belonging and bordering (Mitzen 2018) – about who can belong where and the role of boundary construction, maintenance and contestation in lived experiences of home and homing (Brah, 1996; Yuval-Davis, 2006; Yuval-Davis et al., 2018). As Moore (2000) argues, home is as much about exclusion as inclusion. While home-in-migration is about the everyday and personal lived experiences of home-making and homing, it cannot be separated from questions about the resources available to migrants with which to do home. As Ralph and Staeheli (2011, p. 520) point out, it is necessary to ‘be attuned to the different ways in which migrants, with different resources and different social locations, negotiate the extensibility and fixity of home’. They suggest that it is likely that migrants in different legal and social positions, with different levels of material or cultural resources, will imagine and ‘do’ home differently.

We understand this to have two key co-constitutive dimensions. First, social location/position is about the *intersectionality* of experiences of home, recognising that home is experienced differently by people in different social positions. Home is gendered, classed, racialised and marked by axes of social difference and power. Secondly, *transnational migration regimes* play a key role in how migrants imagine and do home, not only in terms of the influence of laws and regulations but also as mediated by economic and political regimes of migration. Together these two

dimensions structure the possibilities and impossibilities of home in migration – via the boundaries and borders of belonging and the access to resources with which to make and imagine home. If home is a site of safety, security and belonging, then it is essential to think about it in relation to the power relations that circumscribe and delineate who can feel safe, secure and that they belong, and where and how these feelings are more or less possible. We refer to this as the *structural im/possibilities of home in migration*.

These two dimensions of intersectionality and migration regime cannot be easily disentangled from one another as migration regimes are themselves inherently racialised, gendered and classed (as well as intersecting with other categories that for the sake of concision, are not mentioned here). However, we foreground these as two core concepts that together aid an understanding of the social and political nature of home in migration. The following sections detail how each concept can contribute to understanding the structural im/possibilities of home in migration.

1.3.1 Intersectionality, Identity and Home

Home is ‘situated’ and should be analysed with an awareness of, and identification with, the interrelated dynamics of gendered, classed, aged and racialised relations and systems (Crenshaw, 1989, 1991). Home as a social and individual process is always underpinned by circuits of power and networks of people. We argue that the ways in which migrants understand home and identify with a home are always linked with the intersectionality of their identities: gender, social class, the method/route of migration, their migration status, their language skills, sexuality and age among others. As such, home is intersectional.

Intersectionality has been taken as ‘the most important theoretical contribution that women’s studies, in conjunction with other fields, has made so far’ (McCall, 2005, p. 1771). Indeed, intersectional analysis can be traced to multiple movements oriented to equality, human rights, feminism, and development (Cho et al., 2013). Given its history, intersectionality is not a unified body of theory, but it has spanned different disciplines that are concerned with multiple axes of power relations and how systems of oppression and marginalisation reinforce and constitute each other (Crenshaw, 1991). Each of the social categories, although related to each other, ontologically is independent and has distinctive meanings. However, they are co-constitutive, that is, their meanings are always constructed in relation to others in their ontological bases.

It is this aspect of intersectionality (the co-constitution of systems of power and marginalisation) that makes it a useful tool to understand how home-making is rooted in differential positionings across axes of power, that is, how some people are able to make a home and other are not. Whilst categories of class, gender, race, age, sexuality, ability and others are important for analysing the degree to which a migrant feels at home, intersectionality allows for an understanding of how the underlying power relations intersect each other to constitute one another and once

different systems of marginalisation are compounded, they impact individuals' abilities and chances to feel at home, belonged and wanted in a society. For example, intersectionality reveals how racism constitutes classism (and vice versa) and how patriarchy operates hand-in-hand with racism and ableism. In other words, by focusing on power relations that define and value certain individuals, groups and ways of living and thinking (Yuval-Davis, 2006), we can see how one form of home-making in migration is valued and enabled over another.

Intersectionality then offers an understanding of knowledge as situated, which challenges the positivist view of knowledge which sees everything from the position of nowhere (Stoetzler & Yuval-Davis, 2002). Yuval-Davis (2015, p. 95) argues that:

Situated intersectionality analysis, therefore, in all its facets, is highly sensitive to the geographical, social and temporal locations of the particular individual or collective social actors examined by it, contested, shifting and multiple as they usually are.

So in this view of intersectionality, we are always positioned along an axis of power, and have a standpoint that we do not share with others. For example, as an Iranian migrant woman, or as an Irish return-migrant woman, we share some but not all understandings of home with other people with the same intersectional identity categories. While intersectionality and migration regimes structure the possibilities of migrant home, it is imagination that gives lived experiences their particular meaning. We understand who we are and we make sense of the world through the power of imagination. Imaginations are the bedrock of identities and practices and play an important role in how home is experienced and its meanings are developed. Indeed, everyone has an 'ideal home' in mind that for the present time is only achieved through imagining it. But the extent to which this ideal is understandable by others comes from the situated positioning of the person. The concept of 'situated imagination' is useful here (Stoetzler & Yuval-Davis, 2002). It recognises that no one imagines from a position of nowhere. We are always situated in how we understand the world around us and this situation has a determining effect in how we construct imagination about self and others. According to Stoetzler and Yuval-Davis (2002), imagination is the corporeal, impulsive and creative force within us that makes sense of lived experience but is always grounded in intersectional social positioning. Through our situated imagination, we construct an image of an 'ideal' (possible) home and a 'non-home' (as the two extremes) and direct our attempts towards achieving the former and distancing ourselves from the latter, that is, we imagine home and act on this basis in doing home.

These perspectives are beneficial for thinking about how contemporary migrants understand and imagine home (in ways that span temporal and spatial imaginaries), what home means to them, and how they put this understanding into practice (at multiple geographical scales from the domestic and local to the translocal). For example, how do feelings of at-homeness or out-of-homeness articulate emotionally and materially in migrants' lives? And how do ideas about past, present and future home/s form part of migrants' imaginings and how these imaginings are articulated and put into practice in their everyday lives? These are questions about home-making processes and homing desires.

In order to understand home in migration intersectionally, we must consider how a person's social location, which is intersectionally experienced, shapes the possibilities and impossibilities of home creation, maintenance and feelings. For example, home is inherently a gendered phenomenon and may be experienced very differently by migrant men and migrant women. Additionally, social class, which intersects closely with migrant status, shapes material possibilities of home-making in terms of access to housing, ability to establish comfortable surroundings and lifestyles and ease of transnational mobility. In the rest of this book, we tease out these structural im/possibilities of home in migration and we draw particular attention to the ways in which different axes of power intersect with each other.

1.3.2 Migration/Citizenship Regimes and Bordering

The concept of migration regime is increasingly being discussed and adopted in migration studies (see Cvajner et al., 2018, for an overview). While the concept is understood in a number of different ways, with different theoretical inspirations (Horvath et al., 2017), the term is used here to refer to a constellation of regulatory influences, practices and power relations that impact on the formation of migration and migration-related social processes in any particular migration context (Bernt, 2019; Horvath et al., 2017; Williams, 2012). These influences can include immigration and citizenship policies, regulations, histories of migration, discourses of migration, labour market dynamics, care cultures and family cultures in societies of destination and/or origin (Amelina, 2017; Lutz, 2017; Williams, 2012). This understanding of migration regime recognises the role of (powerful) non-state actors, such as business interests, in shaping migration processes, and also acknowledges that while the nation-state is a very powerful player in migration regimes, many constellations of influence also operate across national borders.

Regimes of citizenship are closely intertwined with migration regimes. Erdal et al. (2018) argue that citizenship (understood in a formal legal sense) matters for migrants and non-migrants in relation to feeling secure and recognised in society. In effect, citizenship, as Yuval-Davis (2006) argues, is a method of governance that regulates 'the politics of belonging' in a given nation state. The politics of belonging is regulated through a series of policies used to govern and control populations, demarcating boundaries between majority and minorities and defining the boundaries of who belongs and who does not. Erdal and Sagmo (2017) argue that citizenship, as a vertical relationship between the state and individual, grants membership of this collectivity in a way that allows members to define themselves in relation to their belonging to it. We argue in this book that citizenship and the right to stay in a host country for a migrant is an important part of feeling at home. It is not the only aspect, but is structurally very important for the foundations of making a home. The legal right to stay is a key part of what we call *spatial security*, or the feeling of secure inhabitation in a place, which comes about when the right to stay is

accompanied by meaningful place attachment (Fathi & Ní Laoire, 2023). Spatial security is an essential prerequisite for home in migration.

Structures such as international and national migration and citizenship policies as well as the dynamics of global labour markets and globalised imaginaries produce different migration regimes, which differentially facilitate or restrict migration and settlement, or possibilities of spatial security, according to migrants' social positions. These structures include forces such as the demand for cheap labour in the global North as well as the politics of immigration and legal frameworks that define who can move where and who belongs where. These forces determine material aspects of home-making of migrants, such as their access to housing, work and social security. Beyond the immediate material aspects, how might the macro-level structures of global migration make it possible, or impossible, at the micro-level, to feel at home, to make home and to imagine home? For example, to what extent are European migrants in EU member states made to feel like migrants compared to migrants from Yemen, Algeria or Afghanistan? While some of the bordering mechanisms at work are subtle, others are less so. In very obvious ways, asylum regimes in many destination countries deliberately seek to restrict migrants' possibilities of home-making (Howlett-Southgate, 2021). Migration policy is replete with the symbolism of home/not-home, evident for example in the language of 'home affairs' and 'homeland security' that reflects a view of the state and its territory as a 'home' to be protected (Walters, 2004) or diaspora policies that seek to encourage return migration of those deemed to be 'coming home' (for example, the Irish government's #hometowork campaign in 2015–2016). The powerful forces that shape regimes of home and migration also encompass the role of media, for example, in re-producing constructions of home, host and newcomer, as one element of the apparatus of bordering that works to define belonging/not-belonging in contemporary migration and citizenship regimes. For example, the use of ambiguous language in inflating migrant identity and the 'skilled or non-skilled' distinction has been a tactic used in showing the UK as not a homely place for migrants in general in the UK government's Brexit campaign (Parnell, 2023).

In the twenty-first century, we are witnessing regimes of bordering becoming ever more present in our lives, as everyday bordering introduces rationalities and regulation of inclusion/exclusion into spheres of everyday life (Yuval-Davis et al., 2018). This means that structures of im/possibility can permeate everyday life very quickly and easily, limiting the possibilities of feeling at home. Recent immigration and refugee policies (such as Dublin Regulation III, 2017, new deportation practices and relocation of borders to outside the EU borders) are central to migration regimes within the European contexts. These policies pose a potential reconfiguration of what constitutes home as part of a broader shift towards migration/citizenship regimes that are more complex than in the past. The growth in 'proliferation of migrant statuses' that means that immigrants may find themselves constantly moving in and out of more-or-less 'legal' or documented situations over time, points to the increased fragility and temporariness of immigrant statuses (Gonzales & Sigona, 2017). As a result, migrants may become immobile in migration for long periods of time, stuck in legal/policy limbos and separated from family members, unable to

return to a past home, move on to a new home or build a home in the place where one is stuck.

This situation can be contrasted with the EU policy agenda of ‘free movement’ which allows EU citizens² to live and work in other EU countries with little restriction or regulation (though in ways that are contingent – see Parker & Catalán, 2014), thus distinguishing between EU and non-EU citizens in terms of their structural possibilities of home in migration. Lulle et al. (2018) refer to the privilege of EU citizenship in enabling fluid mobilities among EU citizens in pre-Brexit UK. Correspondingly, the rupture of Brexit, in removing the right to free movement between the UK and the EU, has been experienced as an affective event by EU citizens living in the UK, threatening their future stability (Lulle et al., 2018) and disrupting their dynamics of belonging (Ranta & Nancheva, 2019). Similarly, Miller (2019) refers to the ‘unsettling’ effect of Brexit on the sense of home among older British migrants living in Spain, which she relates to the uncertainties and questions raised by Brexit about where home is now and where it will be in the future. What this research on Brexit highlights is the unsettling effects of shifting borders of citizenship, but more importantly, the emotional effects of such changes, which can be related to how people feel about where they live and have made home/s (Guma & Dafydd Jones, 2019; Lulle et al., 2018; Miller, 2019; Tyrell et al., 2019). Thus migration/citizenship regimes not only shape the im/possibilities of home through rights of residence and citizenship but also through how they make people feel about where they live.

1.3.3 Home as Intersectional and Bordered

Therefore it is important to pay attention to the migration regimes within which migrants’ lives and movements are regulated – the laws, policies, labour markets, citizenship regulations, institutions and borders that prescribe and proscribe the possibilities of emplacement, belonging, autonomy and social connection – in short, that frame the socio-political-economic context in which home is imagined and practiced. However, it is important to emphasise here that migration regimes, as underlying power relations that regulate migrants’ lives, do not in themselves make or unmake home, but it is only as places and spaces are endowed with meaning by migrants that they can become homely or home-like. Emotions can be seen as a ‘constitutive part of transnational family experience’ (Skrbiš, 2008, p. 236), part of the belonging process (Yuval-Davis, 2006) but also, importantly, linked to imaginations about what home may look like in future. We argue that home and emotional attachments in migration need to be understood intersectionally in order to tease out the multiple experiences of migration within which people feel excluded, included, privileged or marginalised simultaneously.

It is also important to recognise that imaginaries of home are bound up with wider discourses and norms relating to gender, social class, ethnicity or sexuality. Gray (2000) shows how gendered discourses of nation and family shaped the

contours of the landscape within which Irish migrant women in England in the 1980s navigated expectations and im/possibilities of home and belonging. Therefore, it is important to pay attention to the wider collective discourses that migrants engage with, such as the nostalgic discourses that construct myths of return to a remembered homeland (Christou 2006), or the discourses of cosmopolitanism that drive mobilities, or the gendered heterosexual norms that dominate imaginaries of home. Thus, home as a site of belonging is about personal feelings and attachments to spaces, people and objects, although at the same time these feelings are embedded in wider collective discourses and regimes of inclusion and exclusion. Home is integrally tied up with the personal and intimate lived experiences of relationality, emotion and materiality (dimensions discussed throughout this book) while being permeated by power relations. Therefore, migrant homing and home-making can be viewed as negotiated and practiced in the context of intersectional power relations and powerful transnational migration regimes. This raises a key question that is at the heart of this book:

How are intersectionalities and migration regimes understood, felt, experienced, lived and navigated by migrants, who are differently positioned, in various contexts, in the making and imagining of home?

Foregrounding this question illuminates the role of intersectional power relations at both macro and micro levels in shaping the possibilities of everyday homing practices and of dreams of imagined home. Thus, home in migration can be explored through the lens of migrants' own imaginings and practices of home and homing. However, this analysis can be deepened by paying particular attention to the power relations that shape the possibilities of imagination and practice and the ways in which migrants navigate these possibilities. Such epistemology of home allows us to think critically about how mobilities, settlement, practices and ruptures are shaped in current debates on home and migration, focusing more on intersectional elements of home and how migration regimes limit and expand the boundaries of these imaginations and practices.

Studies of home in migration draw our attention to everyday acts of home-making, practices to belong, feelings and emotional attachments to places, the daily routines and ruptures of life as a migrant. The role of mobility as well as fixity, of past as well as present and future, in making sense of these practices and feelings, is emphasised. However, it is important to acknowledge the ways in which wider power relations make those practices and feelings possible, understandable, reproducible, and transmittable. Intersectional power relations frame emerging, continuing, and reiterating imaginations of home. This is the space in which conflict between movement and settlement can be teased out and that shapes the meaning of home as, for example, a gendered identity, as a memory of the past, as a generational practice, as practices of the present, or as a racialised space. An analytical framework of imaginations interconnected with im/possibilities allows us to examine the role played by rules and regulations, policies and politics, discourses and memories, in migrants' different forms of identity construction, practices and expressions of feelings in relation to home. Such an approach would foreground

migrants' own narratives and imaginations of home, homing and home-making and, importantly, would set these in the context of structural possibilities that frame and condition imagination. Looking at home through this framework, this book provides a reading of existing scholarship that seeks to disentangle multiple layers of power relations that are in place when we discuss home and home-making in migration, presenting a uniquely intersectional and transnational theoretical perspective on migrant homing and home-in-migration.

1.4 Positionality, Reflexivity and Our Homes-in-Migration Biographies

We started our conversation about writing this book as an endeavour to discuss our own understandings of home, in Cork, Ireland, as two women working in academia, one a sociologist, the other a social geographer by background. One of us, Fathi, is a woman of colour, a new migrant to Ireland, and the other, Ní Laoire, is a returned Irish migrant. Although in principle, our lines of thinking are very similar in relation to questions of belonging and the politics of belonging, and how Cork and in general Ireland, as a new destination country, is positioned in our theorisation of migration, we realised that we come to these questions from different situated understandings. We thought it important to lay out our situated positioning here to set in context some of the decisions we have made in relation to what to include in this book and what to leave out.

Our biographical histories, coming from two different worlds, Iran and Ireland, and both subsequently living as migrants (though with very different migrant statuses) in Britain, inform quite a lot of our political understanding of migration. Whilst Fathi, now a British citizen, came to Ireland with rights of entry, living, even voting when she settled in her new home, feelings of estrangement from the surroundings marked her experiences of home-making in Cork. Contrasting to this, on Ní Laoire's much earlier return migration to Ireland from Britain, she found that even though she had to re-settle, find new accommodation, navigate different administrative systems, and so on, doors were quite suddenly opened to her after initial feelings of being a complete newcomer, once people realised she was 'one of them'.

More recently, we were collaborating on a project called Youth Home (2019–2020) on young male migrants' home-making practices in Cork. Our extended conversations about what it feels like to interview young (male) migrants about home and being a (female) migrant or resident, shaped much of this understanding: home is intersectional, it is temporal, and it is bound by spatial and legal power relations. Fathi wrote in one of her fieldnotes:

I tend to forget that, I, after all have the right to live in Ireland, for an unlimited time due to my Britishness (second citizenship), that puts me on a different scale of migrancy compared to my participants who are refugees and international students on short term visas.

Amongst us, we also experienced Cork differently in relation to our biographical histories. Both of us had arrived from somewhere else, settled in Cork and started working in the university space. Our understanding of Irish society however was shaped by our personal histories of connections to the place, one having a foreign name and accent, one an Irish name and accent, one being seen as a woman of colour, the other a white Irish woman. Ní Laoire's emotional and biographical connection to Cork was rooted in a personal history of growing up in 1970s and 1980s rural county Cork, with strong family connections and memories of being a university student in the city who went 'home-home'¹ at weekends. Fathi's shorter history of inhabiting Cork shaped a different understanding and lived experience of home-making that was informed by her 'new gaze' at home. Structural possibilities and impossibilities that enabled and prohibited us in making, imagining and feeling Cork as a home were bound by these intersectional biographies. These are the intersectional factors that shape how, as researchers, we understand home as well. We started thinking about personal histories of places, the fresh and accumulated lived experiences of specific places throughout our biographies which shape how we make sense of our own positioning in place and our narratives of homes. This biographical approach to understanding places is related to the notion of 'emplaced intersectionality' proposed by Sircar (2022), which offers a geographical approach to emplacement that can serve to enrich intersectional analysis within feminist geography and entails attending to fields of power that are contextual and place-based. To summarise, our shared and divergent situated positionalities bring us to understand home epistemologically as a fluid, constantly changing phenomenon that is geographically contingent, intersectional and embodied both for us and for the migrants we write about.

1.5 Overview of the Book

The rest of the book provides an overview of the sizeable and rich body of scholarship in the social sciences that explores questions of home and migration and that sheds light on the questions raised above. This overview is framed by the conceptual framework outlined here and by our own situated positionalities as migration researchers. Hence, it is not necessarily a complete or comprehensive encyclopaedia of research on home and migration and we acknowledge that there is a wealth of valuable studies that we have been unable to include. However, the intention of this Short Reader is to provide a pathway through the vast body of work that exists.

Taking seriously the claim that home-in-migration is situated and should be analysed with an awareness of, and identification with, the dynamics of gendered, classed, aged and racialised relations, three of the chapters focus on these categories

¹Home-home is a colloquialism, commonly used in Ireland, that distinguishes between two different meanings of home – the home that is the domestic dwelling where I sleep at night (home) and the real home where my family is (home-home).

of power and identity – gender (Chap. 2), age (Chap. 3), migration status, class and race (Chap. 5). Chapter 4 focuses on materiality, as an illuminating lens through which an intersectional analysis of home in migration can be grounded. Within each chapter, particular attention is paid to the ways in which each axis of difference works intersectionally with others. Space does not permit us to devote as much attention to other axes of difference, such as sexuality (but see: Fortier, 2001, 2003; Waitt & Gorman-Murray, 2011). Chapter 6 is a short conclusion to summarise the contribution of this volume to scholarship on home in migration. Across all of these chapters, the discussions pay particular attention to the role of migration regimes and the ways in which they work (intersectionally) to shape structural possibilities and impossibilities of home.

Chapter 2 analyses gender in relation to home-making and home in migration. Gender is an essential factor that shapes home-making in any context. The chapter sets the scene with a brief discussion of the feminist scholarship on home and goes on to draw on existing literature to explore the relationships between gender, mobility and home. Although the discussion shows that traditional gender roles and normative practices can be challenged in migration, there is still much evidence showing that traditional gender roles are conserved and practised through processes of home-making in migration.

Chapter 3 focuses on the importance of age, generation and life-course transitions in the analysis of home in migration. Home is intimately bound up with lived experiences of age and life-course stage – hence the chapter focuses respectively on home in migration in older age, young adulthood and childhood. The existing literature reveals how meanings of home in migration shift across the life-course and how some age-related understandings, such as those associated with childhood, can be overlooked in mainstream migration/home literature.

Chapter 4 discusses the importance of material aspects of home in migration. The scholarship on materiality of migration, in its limited scope, tends to place the role of objects mostly within the context of memory, overlooking their other functions such as their instrumentality and use as objects to facilitate life. Others seem to locate material objects in relation to identity and processes of identification and their biographical importance. We draw on these differences to offer an analytical framework that focuses on objects in migrant home-making that are reminiscent of memories of old homes, are used as everyday objects or are of importance to one's identity. This chapter offers a fresh basis for further research into the migrant materialities field.

Chapter 5 places migration regimes in the foreground, focusing on the role of migrant status and relatedly, of race and social class, as powerful differentiating forces shaping the structural im/possibilities of home in migration. Migrant status is closely bound up with the racism and classism of contemporary migration regimes, and this entanglement is reflected in the literature. To attempt to disentangle these then seems counter-productive, so in order to navigate the literature, the chapter deploys the concepts of privilege and precarity, both of which are indicative of how migrant status, class and race intersect to position migrants differentially and to shape their im/possibilities of home.

Chapter 6 concludes that although the field of home in migration is expanding in recent decades, there is still much to be learned about it in the mobile world in which we are living. Home after all is what we desire to have, to achieve and to aim for, and the possibilities of achieving it seem to be ever more volatile in the current context of mass mobility. This is a rich and vibrant area of scholarship for migration studies and we hope that this book will offer another drop in the ocean of the research being conducted in relation to migration and home and open up new pathways into further focused research.

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