

# Chapter 4

## Materialities of Home in Migration



### 4.1 Introduction

Contemporary debates on home in migration have taken a new exciting path towards understanding the material aspects of home, although the intersection of migration studies and material culture studies requires further research. Basu and Coleman (2008) argue that objects form an important part of migratory journeys. Here we focus on understanding the materiality of migrant homes and the relationship between objects and migration as a personal as well as a social process. Understanding the importance of objects, particularly for migrants who have limited means to physically move objects with them across transnational borders (such as refugees and undocumented migrants), is important and there is much room for exploration here (Neumark, 2013; Giorgi & Fasulo, 2013).

It is important to stress that a home is not just about its material and structural boundaries (as this book overall attempts to demonstrate), but, acknowledging the deeper meanings in relation to home, we focus here on the physical facets of home that present themselves as vital in relation to its social and symbolic components. By doing this, the intention is not to isolate the space of home in migration from its wider social order or structures of im/possibilities; instead, the chapter considers how material aspects of home have meaning in relation to memory and nostalgia, everyday life and identity categories of gender, age and race, among others and in relation to social and emotional structures of migrants' lives. Materialisation here means the process of translating meaning into objects and structures and, vice versa, using objects by attributing to them significant underlying meanings beyond their immediate physical and instrumental use. This chapter presents a discussion of the existing scholarship on materiality of migrant home, first highlighting the importance of objects in migration narratives before moving on to present a categorisation of objects in migrant home-making around which the rest of the chapter is structured.

## 4.2 Importance of Objects in Migrants' Lives

Woodward (2001, p. 132) argues that 'the aspiration people have for their home, and their ideal ways of presenting and talking about their home and the objects inside it, are just as important as how they might actually live in their home'. The reason this relationship (between the notion of home and objects) is important is because the structure of a dwelling or other physical space where practices of home-making take place cannot be conceived of without the objects that occupy and constitute the space and, if we are interested in the spatial meanings of a home, then objects play a vital role in this interplay. Miller (1998) argues that our social worlds are constituted through materiality. As we live with an array of objects, and at some stages, we decide what to do with things that surround us, we are making decisions to re/construct our homes that impact our sense of who we are. Miller (1998) argues that practices of decoration, using ornaments or specific items to transform an inhospitable dwelling into a meaningful place, can have deep impacts on our core beings and sense of belonging that are central to identities and the sense of who we are.

We understand materiality to refer to a variety of tools, aesthetic objects, ornaments and everyday goods such as food that can sustain routine life, give meaning and provide comfort (both mental and physical) to a person. This chapter offers a discussion about the materiality of migrants' lives and its significance in understanding home in the contexts of mobility and resettlements.

Pérez Murcia and Boccagni (2022, p. 590) recently endeavoured to present four functions that objects have in a migrants' home: '1) embodying collective backgrounds and identities, 2) affording migrants to feel at home, 3) encapsulating their biographical memories and ties, 4) eliciting connections with settings and events that meant 'home' over their life course'. This categorisation, based on their fieldwork with Ecuadorian migrants in Italy, although useful in understanding the different functions that objects can have, particularly when migrants settle in host societies, remains somewhat limited in scope. There are many similarities across the different categories. For example, categories one and four are very similar and it is not clear how collective backgrounds and identities can be separated from events and settings that have been shared with others.

It is clear from the literature on materiality in home that the use of objects is linked to three major and overarching factors. Firstly, the majority of the literature in this area links past lives including biographies to larger cultural and social contexts of past homes and argues in depth that these relationships are encapsulated in objects. The second aspect is that objects that are taken with migrants have an everyday use aspect. They are functional and instrumental in the everyday lives and home-making practices of migrants. In this sense the significance of objects in the migrant home lies in their practicality and their role in facilitating everyday life as a migrant. Finally objects that are related to individualised identities such as class and gender are used as vehicles of identification and recognition.

We all like to define spatial territories around us to designate what belongs to us and not to others, demarcating the boundaries of home and outside. An important

aspect of what marks these spaces as one's own are the physical markers through activities as well as use and repurposing of tools and objects that allow us to 'use' but also to 'control' our environments. This territorial interpretation of home (Després, 1991) is directly linked to the sense of satisfaction from owning a space. Additionally, the desire to modify a place that seems 'out of character' or empty, by giving meanings to specific aesthetic properties around the home is a universal experience. This is what Becker (1977) calls 'personalization'. Personalisation as a practice of ownership (Wells, 2000) and attachment is a gendered act, particularly in turning non-home environments into some form of home (see Dinç, 2009). This phenomenon is discussed later in the chapter in relation to refugee camps and the empty and soul-less spaces of shelters and other migrant accommodations. Here we focus on another type of object personalisation, that is, the role of materiality in mobile life.

Tolia-Kelly (2004) in her research with South Asian women shows that material culture is important in shaping diasporic homes by evoking pre-migration memories and the status associated with lives before displacement. By talking about photos, and meaningful objects that moved with Indian women migrants in the UK, she shows how identities of self and other were constructed through materiality and 'lifestyle' (Tolia-Kelly, 2004). Here materiality in mobile lives refers to how different forms of objects are used in the structures of homes as part of everyday life. In what follows, we present a framework for understanding the role of materiality in migrants' home lives.

Whilst much of the current literature discusses the importance of objects of the past (Christou & Janta, 2019; Edwards, 2010; Fathi, 2020; Golovina, 2018), there is still much to be learned about the material traces migrants leave behind and what they take and carry with them along their journeys to be used in their immediate and future lives. Objects can serve an instrumental purpose as well as having deeper meanings and can convey messages about the collectivities and individual lives of which they have been part. The following categorisation by no means aims to place each study into one of the three overarching categories we identify above but instead to elucidate the distinct significance of each one. As such the rest of this chapter is divided into three sections:

- Objects and memory (linking past to present)
- Objects and instrumentality (practicality, ordinariness, everyday use, mostly linked to present lives)
- Objects of identity: classed, gendered, national identities (lifestyles, consumption patterns and visions about future life)

### 4.3 Objects, Memories and Nostalgia

The first category refers to objects that capture symbolic historical meanings. Several scholars show that artefacts can evoke strong emotions (Navaro-Yashin, 2009; Svašek, 2008). Objects of memory refer here to those items that are not used

on an everyday basis, but on reflection, they mean more than a mere tool or an ornament and there is a particular biographical history attached to that object. They evoke a variety of feelings, that are remembered, cherished and reflected upon with the work of memory. As such these objects are always imbued with emotional attachments that are associated with a particular event, ceremony, relationships or person(s) from the past. These objects could evoke individual or collective memories fuelled by reflective nostalgia, glorifying the past homes. Emotions generate knowledge about oneself and one's surroundings (society) (Svašek, 2012), which can establish, sustain or challenge power relations, influencing one's subjectivity. As such objects of memory, due to their emotional load, are very important in the process of home-making after displacement.

Encapsulating memories of past lives, and in particular of relationships with 'dear ones', we try to keep creating links to what makes us feel wanted, belonged, warm and emplaced, such as to objects that remind us of these connotations. This is particularly true for forcedly displaced people for whom longing and belonging become an everyday emotional experience. These warm feelings can be individual or collective. Turan (2010) focuses on the significance of objects for the Palestinian diaspora from a psychological and material perspective. She discusses how objects help to form collective identity and memory. Turan (2010) calls these objects (that bring a sense of collectivity) 'objects of legacy' and argues that they provide a form of 'transition' between homeland and the lives of migrants of first generation, but turn into 'objects of legacy' for the following generations as the direct link between the migrant and homeland does not exist in younger generations, but objects remain an important part of this legacy (Turan, 2004).

So, some objects provide a 'sheltering and nurturing' environment in diaspora groups (Turan, 2010, p. 53), but we need to remember that not all memories of home are as positive and nurturing due to past events that can bring a sense of loss, detachment and sorrow. However, what people tend to 'keep' as a method of survival are those objects that bestow a happy feeling, a positive attribution and those that create a strong sense of attachment to important people such as the mother, what Winnicott (2001) called transitional objects: transitioning from one mode of attachment to another, replacing their primary care giver with an object of comfort. Here, objects of memory facilitate the environment by helping the transition from one home to another. As such this first category is related to those material tools that elicit and create emotional connections between us and places, settings, as well as collectivities and significant others that give a feeling of home to one's life. It is noteworthy that the literature, in discussing materialities of migration, tends to focus on objects of memory that link migrants' lives strongly to their past homes, homeland and transit spaces. One of the areas that needs fresh investigation is how objects of the present shine a light on the current lives of migrants.

Objects and material structures act as bridges between the home now and the home in the past. The bridge is the work of memory. In relation to how cities retain elements of past systems such as colonisation, Ley (2004, p. 155) argues that memories of home are recharged through preservation of such material fields but at the same time they transfer home into 'unfamiliar and distant territory'. We also argue

that memory objects have the capacity to open space for people to adapt to their surroundings; in other words, their main application is a facilitation of the present home. This happens through shared memories that lead to collective narratives and discussions around how material structures and objects are used and understood. These similarities in the practice and acts of remembering are what brings people of the present time closer to each other as well as to their shared past. So, objects of memory act horizontally in time and rhizomatically in their social networks. Equally, shared memories make stronger and more frequent transnational connections to others easier within the contemporary digital world. Pérez Murcia and Boccagni (2022) argue that objects can create emotional connections to past homes and contribute to 'home reproductions' or make a positive connection to their current life environments as a form of 'home making' (p. 589). It can also be added that it is through this bridging to the past, and past homes, that one can make a home in the present time (Povrzanović Frykman, 2016; Povrzanović Frykman & Humbracht, 2013).

The place that is called home includes objects and things that facilitate the process of living, increase the sense of comfort, and finally facilitate emotional attachments to places. The 'feeling at home', which is usually associated with safety, security and control (Ahmed, 1999; Boccagni, 2017) is often conveyed through how we create these attachments to spaces, people and to times. Much of the literature on material cultures and migration focuses on objects' roles in recreations of home-country homes: either creating a material house in the home country (country of origin) or using objects from there in the migrant home in the host society. For example, in an ethnography by Boccagni (2013) and Boccagni and Pérez Murcia (2021) about Ecuadorian migrants living in the north of Italy, it is evident that migrants engage actively in a process of sending remittances to their home country of Ecuador. They do this in order to create a home over 'there' by building 'better' houses that would differentiate them from other Ecuadorians who stayed put. The study also shows that they persist in constructing their modest homes in Italy in order to resemble 'home in Ecuador' (Boccagni, 2013) as this resemblance acts as a form of memory card to connect them across the two worlds. Boccagni and Pérez Murcia (2021) argue that 'remittance houses' (Lopez, 2010) (houses that are rebuilt materially using remittances), negotiate class, status and belonging and act as 'agents' of social change in their own right.

The narratives that give life to these connections are of course important as they shape the stories that provide 'cultural continuity' between the host country and the home and over a long period of time for displaced people (Turan, 2010, p. 45). As Woodward (2001, p. 132) argues, narratives about objects are 'carefully constructed texts' that are 'embedded within a wider discourse about taste, the home and the family, which serve to make accountable everyday aspect of people's reality'. Thus, the meanings and intentions that are attached to material components of making a home are fundamental to understanding home in migration. In the above example, sending remittances is done in order to create an image of a life that distinguishes the migrant character from those who did not migrate. Here the object of *everyday use* (the house) becomes an object of *identity* (class and consumption). It must be

noted that these categorisations are never clearly divided and are co-constitutive of each other, but their individual meanings are uniquely distinct.

The relationship between objects and migration experiences is nuanced and complex. Fox (2016) notes that there is a common assumption of a difference in the meaning of objects for those who live sedentary and nomadic lives. The former tends to accumulate objects throughout their lives (even those that are not instrumental) whilst the latter group tend not to have possessions (carrying only objects necessary for survival). He argues that this is a misunderstanding of how we live with materiality whilst on the move. As we study materialities within migration, we need to move past objects as 'necessary' for survival and look more carefully at how survival is intersected with other necessities of our human condition such as 'biographical continuity' (Alonso Rey, 2016). This line of thinking has been taken up in studying photographs in mobile lives and how they act as 'multi-sensory objects' (Edwards, 2010) in creating a sense of stability in migrants' lives as well as using them as a method of narrating migration stories (Edwards, 2012; Kuhn, 2007; Pink, 2001; Rose, 2003; Yefimova et al., 2015 to name a few). In studying photographs that were sent between Ukrainian migrant mothers in Italy and their transnational families, Fedyuk (2012) shows that photographs can illuminate the emotional labour within transnational families mostly done by mothers living far away from their families. Tolia-Kelly (2004) argues that photographs symbolise relationships with colonial landscapes in South Asia and East Africa and connect South Asian migrant women in Britain to their past homes, nature and family life, connecting pre-migration life to post migration life. Smith and Pitt (2009) and Chuck et al. (2005) argue that there is a strong link between mental/physical wellbeing and personalisation of living- and work-spaces and photographs are one of the main tools to transform these spaces. Closely related, White and Beaudry (2009) and Rechavi (2009) argue that objects such as photographs can be used as a marker of identity and reflection on past decision making.

As we see, objects represent a much wider world in relation to what migrants lose by leaving homes behind and gain through setting up new homes. Objects' roles in this way need to be regarded in relation to identity expressions and cultural survival (Trabert, 2020). Ballinger (2003, p. 220) in her research with Italians living in post-Yugoslavia argues that in her participants' opinion, they had a sense of 'interior displacement, an exile of the heart and mind, if not the body'. These Italian migrants took with them a variety of objects and images, such as fragments of a home's foundations or vials of seawater to stay connected with those physical structures that they were forced to leave.

Most of the literature discussed here argues that migrants use material possessions, objects, food, within the structures of their dwellings as these materialities can create links between personal biographies of migrants and those of their significant others set within larger social, historical and cultural contexts within which they make new homes. Material homes as such offer novel spaces that create a link between biography and macro structure (Miller, 1987). For example, Tolia-Kelly (2004) shows how nation is linked to objects as mundane as photographs. Objects from homeland gain significance within a new context that accentuates their role in

home-making and conveys a sense of belonging and attachment to the past life and homes. Whilst ‘bridging’ these two life worlds (homeland and host) is facilitated through objects (Povrzanović Frykman & Humbracht, 2013), by reflecting on how objects can evoke memories, we can understand the larger contexts around materialities. Svašek (2012) argues that materialities from homeland can trigger a sense of belongingness. Objects help migrants to preserve and negotiate bonds in their native country and the country in which they now reside. The socio-economic status of migrants also influences such negotiation and preservation. The reason for this is that migratory circumstances can vary greatly; political and economic hardships often prevent poorer migrants or refugees from carrying excessive possessions and lack of time impacts their engagement with objects and images, while affluent migrants are less likely to be subjected to these situations, often allowing continuous movement between homeland and new residential location. Thus, materiality in migration is closely bound up with migration regimes and the structural im/possibilities of home.

#### 4.4 Instrumentality and Everyday Life

Migrants, on one hand, have complex biographies due to the transnational movements and different spaces they call home. Moving from one context to another means going through difficult pathways and transiting through various countries, making the process of taking and maintaining physical objects between homes more difficult than when one is sedentary. So, a lot of investment and energy is demanded on the part of migrants to physically move home and the objects within it, so that decision-making about objects is a more rigorous process than in a sedentary house. On the other hand, migrants’ lives are no different to non-migrants’ in terms of the importance of memory objects, the necessity of having objects to facilitate everyday life, to connect one to the surrounding and to express ethnic, classed and gendered identities. In order to feel at home, one needs to be living the everyday, which relates to another categorisation of material life, that is, the instrumentality of objects in migrants’ lives.

One line of inquiry in relation to materiality of home and instrumentality of objects in everyday life explores the role of food in migration. Povrzanović Frykman (2018) draws attention to food-related objects as everyday but important tools that can facilitate continuity in migrants’ lives. She refers to the significance of a coffee pot from Italy for an Italian migrant in Sweden and argues that objects of this sort help create ‘continuity in transnational lives’ (p. 41) whilst at the same time, the use of some objects from home is more conditioned towards a routine practice and becomes part of the everyday life of a migrant. She argues that if we focus on the individuals and journeys, we enable understanding of how belonging can turn into ‘ways of being’. It means that although we tend to attach meanings to objects that are symbolic in relation to the wider socio-cultural contexts within which they are produced and consumed, their use and role in facilitating our everyday life becomes part of our simple being.

Food production and consumption in migration and displacement may be seen as a form of expression of gender, ethnic, cultural or national identity but studies that have focused on this topic show that the importance of food lies also in everyday and quotidian practices (Christou & Janta, 2019; Gregory, 1999) as a ‘normal’ and routine practice rather than an extraordinary ethnic experience (Kershen, 2017). At the same time, we need to remember that food as an essential object and cooking as an everyday practice, can have deeper meanings (as we mention, these categories do overlap) (see Law, 2001). But we argue that in large part food production/consumption does remain a simple act of everyday home-making when it is done as a form of sustenance other than anything else and this dual representation of food remains quite strongly in some studies. For example Mata-Codesal and Abranches (2019) in studying food production, consumption and transportation among migrants argues that these practices evoke sensorial re-creations of home but on an everyday platform. It means that although items transported across borders have specific meanings, they are consumed with the purposes of a quotidian aim. Brown and Paszkiewicz (2017, p. 62) focusing on British Poles who bring food from their homeland to Britain describe through the words of their participants that this act of transportation is like ‘bringing back a little bit of paradise’. Sending and receiving food parcels containing industrially produced material and home-made edibles is a typical migrant homemaking process (Povrzanović Frykman (2019) and way of making intimate transnational connections (Mata-Codesal & Abranches, 2018). These narratives about the particularity of food as a piece of the past or left-behind homes as well as an essential everyday item for life, can place food in the category of everyday objects.

Rabikowska (2010) for example shows that food contains emotional and mnemonic significance that can facilitate that sense of belonging whilst helping with the routinised life of a migrant. Walsh (2006) on a similar terrain focuses on everyday and mundane objects such as the role of an ‘orange plastic bowl’ in the life of Susan, a British ‘expatriate’ living in Dubai. Susan argues:

I bought [sic] a plastic container with me, the awful orange one at the back that I had when I first got married. I very rarely use it. I should chuck it away and get a new one I suppose, but it was a set. (Walsh, 2006, p. 134)

Later Walsh (2006) argues that the bowl contributes to Susan’s sense of identity and how she sees herself as a ‘kitchen person’ and provider of food for the family. In a more recent study and through exploring different home activities with a group of Italian families, Arcidiacono and Pontecorvo (2019) argue that a family’s identity can be studied through their everyday interactions with each other and with the materiality of their home. The experiences of those living together in a space are entangled with connections they make to objects within those spaces. In migrants’ lives, similarly, Povrzanović Frykman (2016) argues that it is not true that migrants keep using only objects that remind them of their homeland. When migrants use objects other than those brought from their home country, they can continue their lived experiences across time and space (transnational social fields) by making new objects part of their own familiar array of objects. The continuation of those



practices helps migrants to exercise their very being regardless of geographical location, which ultimately enhances their sense of belonging. The sense of belonging must be understood, not in the context of cultural representation (like feeling that you belong as an ethnic minority), but as more of a belonging to the routinised life surrounding one or what Christou and Janta (2019, p. 657) refer to as ‘material consciousness’ or ‘embodied, emotional, performative and narrated accounts central to the notion of practice in everyday migrant lives’. However, because the things we do on an everyday basis unconsciously enable us to continue our habitus without interruptions, we feel ‘normal’ because we do things as normal. Everyday simple materialities such as a plastic bowl or a coffee pot here provide deeper meanings whilst being used as everyday items. But it is their everyday functionality that is at the heart of why those objects are important.

What is important is that whilst it is tempting to give deeper meanings to everyday materialities, in the end, many objects in a migrant home are functioning instruments as they would be in any home setting. Scholliers (2001, p. 4) questions whether stuff like food would be the ‘sole factor of identification of a group or an entire nation?’ The answer is no. We cannot add symbolic meanings all the time to objects that are simply instrumental in facilitating everyday life. But at the same time, we need to remember that instrumentality is not a shallow reading of objects; it is central to an everyday sense of belongingness to our material worlds. We need to ‘use’ the objects we buy or are given as gifts. And thinking about the different functions of an object will help to understand and categorise objects better if we want to realise the true potential of material possessions and the worlds of migrants.

Personalising the interiors of the domestic spaces, as well as its practical and utilitarian elements, has the function of increasing or improving the wellbeing of migrants. The use of personalised items helps migrants to feel attached to the surroundings, even if they have instrumental usage (Hadjiyanni, 2019). A noteworthy example of this is Seo and Mazumdar’s (2011) research with Korean older migrants in California, who changed the interiors of their housing structures to increase their wellbeing through heating a part of the room’s floor to symbolise a traditional Korean concept of ‘hearth’. The participants narrated how a warm spot in the room would evoke feelings of childhood as they had a spot in Korean houses that is meant to be taken as a hearth. A similar point is made in Fathi’s (2023) research with an Iranian asylum seeker in Germany who used plants, photos and traditional Iranian artefacts to change the ‘empty’ dynamics of his room in a *heim* (refugee camp). He (the participant), who actively wrote and thought about the materiality of his surroundings, argued that the emptiness or lack of material details in the housing structure in *heims* where he lived in Germany was intended (in his opinion) to detach the resident from the structures of the house to increase their sense of alienation from where they live (Fathi, 2023). That is, the life of a resident asylum seeker is inseparable from the empty structures of their surroundings whilst at the same time it becomes estranged and detached from this architecture. This duality turns home-making into an impossible act in this setting. In order to tackle this, he used some plants, which he called ‘his children’ in the room, to have another live element in the room. These small and everyday efforts by the asylum seeker in an attempt to

replace what he has lost in the process of displacement and constant movement is reminiscent of Taylor's (2013) argument about 'botanica', belongings of Cypriot refugees in London. As Taylor (2013, p. 150) argues in relation to trees, crops and plants in the lives of Cypriot refugees in London, 'the loss of the material home is rarely recognized in the assessment of the financial, cultural and social impoverishment of the refugee'.

What is evident here is that deeper meanings of everyday objects and their uses are reflected upon when actors are asked about them. In fact, meanings become enmeshed in the everyday contexts of lives and form part of the life and being but are often not articulated as such. This shows the importance of interdisciplinary projects within sociological, psychological and anthropological research and the need for further research in the field of material culture studies to reflect upon the importance but also the instrumentality of objects in displacement.

## 4.5 Objects and Social Identity

Home can be an important symbol of individuals' identities; particularly the interior of a house or a dwelling can be very telling about people's occupations, personalities and lifestyles. Després (1991) writes about the link between the interior of a home (here a dwelling) and identity from a social psychology perspective. She says the home:

[...] plays a crucial role in people's definition of their self-identity, acting as a dialogue between them and the larger community. As a container for the material possessions that are meaningful to each household member, the home provides the information necessary to the development of their self-identity, these objects being concrete embodiments of different aspects of their personality (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981). Acting up and modifying their dwelling through the selection and manipulation of its external appearance, individuals acquire and communicate knowledge about their personal self. (Després, 1991, p. 101)

Fox (2016) argues that since we are born, we accumulate objects that we use to self-identify. These objects usually mark a certain zone, or an 'intimate domain of our being' (p. 71). In this last section, the focus is on research on those objects that convey a form of identity in migration, a sense of self in terms of who we are and who we are not, both on an individual and collective level. Amongst these studies, there are scholars who point to different forms of identification processes. The focus here is on those relating to class, gender and national identity as these identity categories emerge as the most important ones in research examining migrants' lives from an intersectional perspective.

Savaş (2014) in research with Turkish migrants in Vienna discusses how a collective taste about materialities of home is achieved through consumption of the same or similar objects imported from Turkey such as tea glasses and saucers. Savaş (2014) argues that this contributes to a form of belonging to Vienna as a Turkish person. The mass migration of objects from Turkey to Austria produces a form of

collective national identity and taste among Turkish migrants who plan to permanently make Vienna their home. This combination of national and classed identity is an interesting take by Savaş (2014) as it reveals how class can be reproduced in migration through the consumption of certain material stuff from a collective source (homeland). Similarly, Fathi's (2017) research with Iranian women migrants in the UK shows how classed and national identities can be represented through objects that migrants take with them. For example, certain objects have class and status connotations such as Persian carpets, which are transported by Iranian migrants as a common practice (Fathi, 2020). Fathi (2020) argues that carpets have a deep and historical symbolic meaning in the Persian culture. As they are given as an essential item of a girl's dowry in Iran at the time of marriage, they seem to serve a particularly important function in circumstances of migration. They are objects with both national identity and classed status due to their monetary value, rarity and unaffordability for many families. These characteristics make the carpet a valuable identity object and a narrative around its significance is used effectively by migrants to showcase the 'superior' interiors of their homes to other Iranian migrants as well as non-Iranian visitors (Fathi, 2020).

In this way objects reproduce various meanings of home in a complex way through value systems and status compositions (Noble, 2012). Noble (2012, p. 435) argues that 'through consumption, people participate in the production of cultural meaning, because they re-signify these objects in ways which appropriate, personalise, and individualise them'. He suggests that by reappropriating objects from the realm of the public domain to the domestic space, people actively assign individualised meanings to objects and make them their own, both 'symbolically and physically' (Noble, 2012, p. 435). As such, objects can offer pathways into individuality. They distinguish their owners from others, an important aspect of class and consumption that has been taken up by sociologists of consumption (Warde, 2015). As concepts of social class, prestige and status are wider than the meanings associated only with socio-economic position (Bourdieu, 1984), the role of objects and patterns of consumption remains highly subjective and complex (Fathi, 2017) and can tell us a lot about how materiality, which is bound up with intersectional power relations, can have symbolic meanings in the lives and homing projects of migrants.

Furthermore, objects that are used to convey a particular form of identity (national, classed, gendered) maintain individuality and a sense of integration within the social arena whilst they are also important for improving mental wellbeing. For example, Smith (2007, p. 417) states that the 'handling of familiar or nostalgic objects whose worth is enhanced for the individual through idiosyncratic memory' is how migrants maintain personal identity and mental wellbeing. Keeping, using and consuming objects at home is a way to demonstrate who they are/not.

In consumption and class scholarship, many consumption practices take place within the private spheres of home. Indeed personalisation of interiors of a house or a dwelling can be a visual expression of the resident's identity and lifestyle as has been found in different contexts and among various age groups (Rechavi, 2009; Shin, 2014). Shin (2014) in studying older residents of care homes, argues that room

personalisation by using ornaments, objects made in arts and crafts activities or lifelong collections of china sets transforms their rooms of residence into their 'homes'. The use of objects in relation to identity is also a topic that has been taken up by scholars writing about refugee camps and shelters. Nabil et al. (2018) argue that in Za'atari refugee camp, the residents use art works and private and public areas of the camp to help them retain their lost identity and heritage. They argue that practices of 'crafting' and 'making', learning DIY techniques and tools can enhance their living conditions, bringing them closer to what can be called or felt like home.

## 4.6 Conclusion

In an era in which we are more connected (physically and virtually) and people move faster and perhaps more easily, the role of objects in the process of home-making along migration routes needs fresh attention. Movement across borders is a physical act that includes movements of subjects as well as certain objects. The material objects, even those that are discarded and left behind, as mundane as a water bottle, or ragged clothes, tell a lot about people's migration and settlement journeys (De León, 2013, 2015). People's possessions remain an important aspect of migrant homing, but to describe, discuss and narrate them, requires reflective action. Studies in the different fields of anthropology, psychology and sociology have delved into how home-migration journeys are affected by what is taken, left, kept dearly or discarded. Migrants continually adapt to their new spaces and to the structural im/possibilities of home, whilst at the same time they change the same space to fit their new lifestyles (Alt, 2006). These residential changes are facilitated in large part by objects that they bring from their homeland, the ones they purchase and acquire and the ones that they discard. Through objects, people on the move reproduce their new lives.

In the first section of this chapter, which focuses on memory and nostalgia, we drew on studies on the importance of personal artifacts and family objects such as pieces of houses in homelands and photographs to show how they can reveal personal attachments. These studies attest to an important fact, which is that although there is much overlap between the three themes relating to objects of migrant home, that is, the memories associated with them, their everyday use and the sense of identity they give to the owner, they are an inseparable part of home in migration and their contribution to the formation of home needs to be considered through the role they play in the personal and wider worlds of migrants. The second part discusses objects that may carry deeper levels of meanings, but their functionality remains with their purpose of acting as an everyday instrument to facilitate life. Some refer to how objects of belonging can facilitate ways of being (Povraznović Frykman, 2011). The final part focuses on objects that would bestow a form of identity that connects migrants to the outside world, placing them as actors that could tell others who they are through consumption of objects. This last group, directly related to intersectionality, then provides avenues through which migrants can reproduce

national, classed and gendered identity affiliations. This offers a worthy route of investigation into new avenues within migration studies.

To conclude, we argue that material components of migration trajectories are important elements in reinstating memories of past homes, the present life and identities that often seem to be lost in the process of forced displacement, asylum seeking, in-between time zones, transit contexts and all other unsettling situations. Material home is perhaps seen as the last issue that migrants who are dealing with unstable situations need to be concerned about. This kind of thinking is reflected in how accommodations and shelters are soulless and empty spaces, but a look at the current state of the art in this area shows how vital objects are in structurally making it possible to call a space home or not.

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