Chapter 6
Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

At some point in life, people call a place, or multiple places, home. In fact, we may inhabit many types of spaces, but they are not home until we ascribe meanings of home to them. What makes a space a home, or home-like, is the emotional meaning it carries, which is bound up with the social relations and material things that comprise it. For migrants who experience departure from one home and the process of making another in a different country, having crossed borders, home becomes a complicated matter. In this book we have tried to offer an opening into what home in migration means, considering the different identity categories and positions one may have and the different types of spaces that can become home/s, or like home/s, in migration. We discuss how gender, age, generation, objects, class, race and migration status can have long-lasting impacts on how home is understood and experienced.

The aim of this book was to offer firstly an understanding of home in migration from the perspective of a micro and macro level of analysis, by looking at how 'structural im/possibilities' impede or facilitate the processes of homing and home-making. In other words, we look at home from a structural perspective, taking account of the role of migration regimes, gendered politics of home, age and the life-course, material cultures and migration status, in how people can think of a place as a home or not. Secondly, the book seeks to do this from an intersectional perspective by not simply looking at these questions as if structural aspects of home were experienced in the same way by all migrants, but by organising the analysis around different social positionalities in relation to structural im/possibilities of home. Lastly, this small volume aimed to further expand the ways in which each area of research on home in migration could be expanded and how boundaries could be pushed further in order to provide a more sophisticated perspective on home in migration, home-making and homing.

6.2   Home in Migration at a Glance

The first chapter outlines a theoretical framework of structural im/possibilities of home in migration, referring to the social and political structures that frame home-making by individuals. These structures incorporate migration regimes and inter-sectional social relations. Migration policies, political decisions, systems of bordering and population control and politics of belonging, all of which bestow settlement rights on some and push out those who are deemed outsiders, frame the structural possibilities of home through different types of migration regimes. These increasingly volatile and changeable migration regimes together provide unstable and temporal larger infrastructures that make it possible for some migrants to make a home or to feel at home while making it impossible for others. We argue, throughout this book, that what makes having a home, making a home and feeling at home possible is not simply an individual or personal matter. It is always contextual and embedded within a set of power relations that inform and facilitate such possibilities and impossibilities. For example, the deportation of hundreds of asylum-seekers from European countries by force each month to a variety of Global South countries, where their return poses serious threats to their lives, is an example of how structurally making a home becomes impossible. Another example is the extent to which a migrant student can make a decision to remain and make a home after their study is completed, navigating their residency journey through a myriad of bureaucratic processes to facilitate the possibilities of making home. We argue that home as a place of safety, security and control needs to be about both legal rights *and* feelings of belonging, the combination of which can be called 'spatial security', an essential element of feeling at home in migration. The intention here is to emphasise how certain groups of migrants have the capital in its different forms, and to different degrees, that makes home-making in migration possible, whilst others do not. Further, different groups of migrants may have access to different types of home-making capital and these capitals are not just contingent on migration status but are racialised, gendered, classed, abled and aged (among others). This framework as such emphasises how the intersectionality of home combines with transnational migration regimes to shape im/possibilities of home. The relationship between these, although manifest in most migration scholarship, needs to be foregrounded more in analysis of home in migration.

Chapter 2 addresses the importance of gender in understanding home in migration. Drawing on feminist scholarship on home, the chapter shows how the gendered construction of space, based on economic, racial and patriarchal power relations, is essential to understanding the meanings of home in migration. The chapter shows how the association of femininity with private spaces of home can be both challenged and reinforced by women's mobilities and by migrant border-crossings. Whilst much of the existing literature looks at experiences of women migrants in relation to domestic spaces of home, the chapter also shines a light on emerging research on migrant masculinities and home. However, although studies point to new and alternative femininities and masculinities, there is much evidence that traditional gender roles at home before, during and after migration, still persist.

The next chapter, Chap. 3, highlights the significance of an age and life-course perspective in understanding of migrant home. In particular more attention needs to be paid to children's perspectives on home in migration. Through a focus on three distinct life-course stages of childhood, young adulthood and older age, the chapter provides an in-depth discussion of the ways in which the structural im/possibilities of home in migration present different types of challenges and opportunities for migrants at different life-course stages. This age-related focus also illuminates the ways in which home is integrally about family and other social relations, even as these can be ruptured and created through migration. The role of age in migrant homing then is a rather complex matter, being bound up with temporalities, biographies and relationalities, and as such merits greater attention.

Chapter 4 turns to materialities in migrant home by analysing objects in migrants' lives as not only facilitators of their home-making practices but also as tools for invigorating their memories and reinstating their identities. In order to better understand the role of objects in migration, the chapter proposes a framework for analysing the scholarship on materialities of migration by distinguishing between objects of memory, objects of use and objects of identity. This framework is useful in capturing the nuances in the growing scholarship in this area, particularly in terms of avoiding the temptation to ascribe meaning 'beyond' their immediate use to all kinds of objects in migrants' homes. In this way it is important not to construct migrants' lives as extraordinary and unusual in relation to home-making. After all, home-making is about living what one views as a normal life, where one is happy and feels belonging, but objects can play a key role in this process and can help in creating a nest where people feel comfortable with their surroundings.

Finally, Chap. 5 focuses on migration status, class and race as interconnected factors shaping the structural im/possibilities of home in migration. Nation-states are still key players in creating unequal positions for migrants by encouraging, facilitating, limiting and banning certain groups, nationalities, and communities. Systems of bordering (such as immigration and citizenship policies, and how these are classed and racialised) position some who move as privileged while others who move do so in precarious conditions where making a home becomes impossible. For example, shelters, refugee camps, and communal living arrangements for temporary migrants for short or long periods become places of unhome that add to the feelings of being in limbo. Examining how migrants make home in circumstances of privilege and precarity illuminates the complex ways in which these circumstances are bound up with migrant status, class and race.

The field of migration studies has expanded rapidly in the last two decades (Levy et al., 2020) and it is important to critically analyse how knowledge has been, and continues to be, produced within this field. The sub-field of 'home and migration' is a rich one, with potential for further development in the future, and hence it is important to take stock of where we are now in terms of what is known and how it is known. We hope this Short Reader helps to achieve this goal by taking a journey through the current social-scientific knowledge on home in migration. We look forward to seeing how this field emerges as one of the key sub-disciplines of migration studies.

Reference

Levy, N., Pisarevskaya, A., & Scholten, P. (2020). Between fragmentation and institutionalisation: The rise of migration studies as a research field. *Comparative Migration Studies, 8*(1), 1–24.