

## ***HOMInG:*** **displacement, suspension, projections and achievements in making home on the move**

Dept. of Sociology and Social Research, Trento, June 3-4 2019

The mid-term symposium of the ERC-StG funded research project *HOMInG – The home-migration nexus* was a gathering of international and interdisciplinary scholars at Trento University to discuss the preliminary findings from different contexts all around the world on the topic *HOMInG: displacement, suspension, projections and achievements in making home on the move*. HOMInG project launched in 2016 addresses the central questions about “how home works in the life trajectories of those who left it behind, and what the search for home says of immigrant integration and of the influence of mobility on domesticity”.<sup>1</sup> This symposium, however, was convened by the joint efforts of HOMInG and HOASI (Home and Asylum Seekers in Italy) project teams, the latter being a corollary project started in early 2018 with an exclusive focus on the local reception and home views among refugees in Italy. The conveners had made substantial advances and contributions in the current debates on home and migration, framed by Paolo Boccagni’s widely recognized analytical framework *Migration and the Search for Home* (2017, Palgrave). The two-day symposium fostered fruitful exchanges among scholars from various disciplines and across diverse themes and attested to the growing interest to the home lens on migration.

The introductory remarks by **Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo** (University of Southern California) and Paolo Boccagni offered a critical review of the emergent debates in the home and migration studies and heralded the project-related forthcoming publication (*Shifting Routes*, Bloomsbury Press). Hondagneu-Sotelo pointed out that the current moment where the call for border walls is getting louder where detention centers and new forms of punishments, like isolation camps emerge it is important to counter these movements also by engaged and profound migration research. **Boccagni** being the principal investigator of the project presented an overview of the main assumptions underlying the HOMInG research questions, namely the distinction between

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/rcn/204103/factsheet/en>

homemaking and homing: While the homemaking indicates how people engage with the material environment to make it a “special” place, homing is about how people try to attach a sense of home to their conditions. He introduced HOMInG as a large-scale comparative collaborative multi-method project on home and migration. The team members covered the crosscutting themes of the projects by shortly introducing their research.

## I.

The first session *What moves and what stays put or behind. Revisiting the portability of home* (chaired by **Nicholas Harney** University of Trento) focused on what used to be home and what migrants or refugees literally, metaphorically or virtually can carry along.

**Emma Duester** (University of Roehampton, London) addressed how the visual, conceptual artists from the Balkans negotiate their movements and belongings in the face of the constraints and compulsions to move due to the larger structures of the global art market. Furthermore, she described the different perspectives and strategies to tackle the issue of constant motilities and also the social consequences of these working conditions.

**Miquel Martorell Faus** (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona) addressed the phenomenon of homing narratives of (im-)mobile children in Barcelona in the context of schools. Here he focused on how the children perceive and negotiated multilocality and the centrality school in their everyday lives. Furthermore, **Faus** presented in detail the strategies marginalized children develop in order to cope with immobility and exclusion.

*This is a home, but it's not my home* was the title of **Isobel Ward's** (King's College London) presentation in which she addressed how people express the possessions of home, in the form of actual enjoyment. In London she conducted research in the quarters Tottenham and Kings Cross and investigated how possessing home, also in hostile environments, is possible, when even displacement and poverty can become a form of home.

**Plamena Slavova Stoyanova** (Bulgarian Academy of Sciences) addressed the questions of identity and social interaction of internationals in Bulgaria, such as high-skill employees, their partners, people who wanted to change their life (after a personal crisis), and students. She showed that even when these migrants adapt the language and some elements of Bulgarian cultural, most of them remain foreign citizens and do not stay in the country permanently.

Panel convenor **Paolo Boccagni** addressed the portability and circulation of home in the context of international migration, drawing on the preliminary results of the HOMInG projects. Here,

origins (ascribed), places (literal and physical), and settings (conducive to feeling at home) are the three core meanings of home, respectively highly portable, unportable (or portable only by proxy) and partially portable and reproducible characteristics. These forms of home (un)portability may range from an embodied home (individuals being aware or not) to a fixed, untransferrable, or denied home, from an estranged home to a remote-control home.

## II.

***HomING in unhomely contexts. Studies from the margins*** (chaired by **Giuseppe Sciortino**, University of Trento) was the title of the second panel, in which **Chiara Janssen** (United Nations University (UNU)-Merit) presented her findings on home-making of Liberian refugees in the Buduburam Camp in Ghana. In this unhomely context of long-term displacement, she addressed the coping mechanisms of (mainly female) dwellers who counter their harsh living conditions by domestic customization, establishing social relations, and distraction; many are not able to create a sense of home.

**Yelis Erolova** (Bulgarian Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Studies) addressed how refugees in Bulgaria try to establish a home in the face of strong political counter movements, discrimination, exclusion, legal and economic precarity. The ethnographer conducted research in a refugee detention center, where inmates establish temporal zones of comfort, for instance, by shared meals by food from outside the camp.

Home-making practices of children in their asylum procedures in Bretagne (France) was the topic of **Elise Reslinger** (Bath University) paper. The social scientist addressed how infants in these accommodations appropriate space, by decoration, for example, daily routines, and by welcoming and being welcomed by children and families (also from outside the camp) and creating a homely atmosphere despite all constraints, like scarce financial resources and residence obligations.

**Hatice Pinar Şenoğuz** (University of Osnabrück), drawing on the idea that unhomely (uncanny) places stem from a collapse of the border between world and home (Bhabha 1992) addressed how seeking normalcy emerges as a common everyday strategy among the asylum seeking women in Germany in tackling the lack of ontological security. She offered a nuanced meaning of “unhomely” among refugee women, indicating to the women’s capacities to aspire for the future and homing desire in a German reception center affording a feeling of security. Moreover, she drew attention to the volatile conditions of displacement and asylum threatening these women to turn their camp settings into unhomely (in the sense of uncanny) places again. Panel convenor

**Aurora Massa** (IRPPS-CNR) and **Milena Belloni** (University of Trento) pointed out that (forced) migration is not simply a process losing and reestablishing home. Drawing on their research on Eritrean migrants, they argued that certain macro dynamics lead to a chronic crisis, what can be considered as an ‘accumulation of homelessness’. This concept can provide a new glance on refugee journeys and the transnational conditions, which prevent security, familiarity, and control, as well as the consequences of these negative accumulations of home.

### III.

The third panel *Home, Kinship and Sexuality on the Move. Forms of relatedness in times of mobility*, chaired by **Ester Gallo** (Trento University), focused on the question whether the use of kinship language within refugee/migratory experiences might articulate forms of relatedness or if it makes others invisible.

**Olga Tkach** (Centre for Independent Social Research (CISR), St. Petersburg) addressed the topic of Student Tenancy in Russia. The social researcher analyzed how this process, and the different forms of homing related, are interwoven in different stages of a rite passage from childhood to adulthood and provided insights into intra-Russian middle-class mobility and migration.

**Karim Zafer** (University of Cologne) addressed new forms of social and kin relations of Arab unaccompanied minor and youth refugees in North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany. The anthropologist, by referring to the concept ‘voluntary kin’ (Braithwaite et al., 2010), addressed voluntary engagements in supplement families, and how gender roles and family ties shift in forced migrations, bi-cultural marriage, and family reunifications, and relations with professional case managers.

Thematically related yet in a different context **Angelie Marilla** (LAMC, Université Libre de Belgique) addressed how home is renegotiated by the mothering at a distance of transnational Filipino migrant workers in the Czech Republic. She addressed the everyday digital routines yet also issues of remittances and gift circulations. The arrival of a *Balikbayan* box in a family’s place, for instance, is being seen as a homecoming in this context.

**Barbara Bertolani** (Independent scholar, Italy) presented how kin-networks in the case of Indian Punjabis in Italy are redefined. She addressed the richness and complexity of Punjabi kinship ties and how social relations are expressed in kinship terms. She showed how lineage, cast, yet too geographical origin and neighborhood in India leads people to define them as siblings abroad and provided insights into diasporic family events.

**Sara Bonfanti**, who convened the panel with **Ilka Vari-Lavoisier** (both University of Trento), addressed family relations in the diaspora by the example of Hindustani aunties in Europe. Diasporic aunties, therefore, inhabit particular shifting social positions, which are characterized by ambivalence, since they are considered to be weavers of social ties yet too as persons of social control and gossiping; which finds expression an aunty-mania in popular culture, in comedy yet also pornography.

#### IV.

*Home and the senses* was the subject of the fourth panel of the symposium, which was chaired by **Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo**. Inside was given into the sensory, material, and affective dimensions of homing.

**Ann Cathrin Corrales-Overlid** (University of Bergen) provided insight into how the Peruvian women entrepreneurs in Southern California negotiate home and belonging. By selling food in their homes to passer-bys they create a Caribbean atmosphere, which is produced and negotiated in these semi-public homes. Corrales-Overlid showed the intra- and extra-diasporic tensions which arise around Caribbean food cultures and economies and moreover depicted experiences of transnational estrangement.

**Ayşe Hilal Tuztaş Horzumlu** (Yeditepe University) addressed the sensation of home of the *Sarıkeçili* a group of pastoral nomads in Anatolia. To feed their cattle, these people move up to 90 days with their herds and shelter themselves in a black tent, made of goat hair, which they set up in 'Konalgas', the resting place along their route. Here, geographical and beliefs play an important role. The tent becomes a window to the world; the home stays the same and only the world outside changes, as the anthropologist illustrated.

How can psychology contribute to the research on home and home-making in the migrant and non-migrant contexts, was a question addressed by **Ekrem Düzen** (University of Bielefeld). In his research sketch, he proposed to understand the feeling of being at home as affect without encounters. Combining psychological approaches with theories of home in social science, he stated that home could be analyzed in similar manners as the self since both highly depend on familiarity and mastery.

**Mina Hristova** (Bulgarian Academy of Science) portrayed the lifestyle migration of Russians in Bulgaria and its entanglement with geopolitics. Many Russians purchased houses in the seaside of the country and developed a broad diaspora culture. Though, this process changed when

tensions between Bulgaria and Russia aroused over political interventions, which also influences the transcultural relations in everyday life.

Panel convenor **Alejandro Miranda-Nieto** (University of Trento) outlined his methodological reflections on researching home through the senses in migratory contexts, which he addressed by referring to three case studies in Madrid, Milan, and Amsterdam. By the example of cooking smell, and how it is related to feeling at home, he outlined the potential of a somatic and multisensory ethnography.

## V.

### *Architectures of displacement: material forms of refugee accommodation and its implications*

was the title of the fifth panel, convenor **Daniela Giudici**, chaired by **Andrea Brighenti** (both University of Trento), which addressed asylum seekers' housing arrangements in contemporary Europe.

Initially, **Marco Mogiani** (University of Vienna) focused on migrants' spatial occupations in Patras, Greece, and the interconnection between settlement, mobility, and the European border regimes. In a historical perspective, different forms of housing emerged by spitting of urban green spaces in the 1990s to the occupation of remote industrial complexes by refugees in 2011. Mogiani talked about the different forms of accommodations that emerged and the struggles of refugee dwellers with local inhabitants, as well as authorities.

Here, **Laura Ferrero** (University of Turin) showed how in a legalized Italian squat, called *La Salette*, refugees and social workers seek to gain housing stability through collective action. In a space that is inhabited by people from different backgrounds but who are in similar situations, due to their asylum procedures or residence status. Unlike state institutions, *La Salette* provides a flexible and reliable shelter for people with specific needs, like seasonal workers, for instance.

**Giulia Storato** (Franco Demarchi Foundation) and **Giuliana Sanò** (University of Messina and Fondazione Alsos) focused on the relationship between of avant-garde urban architectures and interstitial housing arrangements for refugees in Trento. Refugees and asylums seekers who are out of the reception system, seek shelter in different places in the city. Storato and Sanò showed the places in the closed factories, underground parking, the avant-garde *Le Albere* quarter, which serve as precarious and transient accommodations at the margins of Trento.

The *Salem Palace* in Rome was delineated by **Fabiola Midulla** (University of Turin) who focused on the informal practices of homemaking practices in the precarious conditions of this

large-scale squat, which nevertheless allows refugees to exercise self-insuring practices of performativity. Even though the building complex is a result of failed policies, it is also a basis for civic organizations, which provides the squatters access to social welfare, healthcare, and to the city by urban citizenship.

*The ashes of the Balkan Route* was the heading of **Andrea Mignogna's** (independent photo reporter, Italy) photo presentation, which stem from his travel along the Balkan route between December 2016 and March 2017. The photographer covered the situation of refugees on the Balkan route and requested, by an urgent appeal to the scientists gathered, to speak out against hostile migration politics publicly.

## VI.

***Housing pathways and housing temporalities: homemaking practices through displacement and time*** was the sixth panel, convened by **Enrico Fravega** (University of Trento), where crisscrossing of both linear and cyclic temporalities as well as the connection of different types of home in migratory contexts was touched upon. Chair: **Alejandro Miranda-Nieto**.

**Livio Amigoni** (Università degli Studi di Genova) made provisional transit dwellings alongside the French-Italian border subject of his paper. By the case of Ventimiglia informal refugee settlement, he dealt with the agency of camp inhabitation, like smuggling and border crossings, and the reactions of border and humanitarian politics to the formation of this camp by migrants and its societal effects.

The distinction between waiting and homing of asylum seekers waiting on their decision on asylum was covered by **Raffaella Greco Tonegutti** (Belgium's Development Agency, Enabel). In her paper, she stated that loss of home in such times of insecurity produces liquid temporalities which can become even worse than the negative decision itself. However, camp inhabitants also develop poetics of purposeful waiting by which they can even unfold their personal agencies and create spaces of familiarity in refugee centers.

How home-making in a context of multigenerational diasporic communities by Norwegian of Turkish decent takes place was discussed by **Karolina Nikielska-Sekula** (Universitetet i Sørøst-Norge) drawing on a situational analysis (Clarke, 2005) basing on in-depth interviews. The social scientist depicted notions of kinship and food cultures, yet too the associations with cities in Norway and Turkey and the social contestations and rejection they experience in both countries, which diminishes their sense of belonging.

The subject of transient homes of globally mobile professionals was addressed by **Anna Spiegel** (Universität Bielefeld) who portrayed how belonging and home-making is shaped by mobility and by the expiration dates of employment contracts. These transient conditions character new relations to domestic items and create forms of evacuation (everything can be left behind), nomadic (permanent provisionality), flexible (permanence is irrelevant), and local (as if permanent) homes.

**Michael Thompson** (University of Leeds) addressed post-Brexit anxieties among the German and Polish Ethnic Minority Communities in the UK who are directly affected by Britain leaving the EU. While there is a long-established link between government agencies and austerity, immigration-related tensions arise in public space, which Thompson described by a counter-topography of anxiety-inducing experiences within these communities.

## VII.

The last session ***Lost homes? Investigating homing for refugees in Europe and their families back home***, chaired by **Giuseppe Sciortino**, investigated whether or not the legal, political and social position occupied by refugees in the new country of arrival towards their homeland has specific implications for their homemaking practices and feelings.

**Anna Di Giusto** (Independent scholar) presented a case study of homemaking in a shantytown in Puglia in southern Italy receiving the refugees. She explored the refugees' place-making, including places of worships, restaurants, and nightclubs amid indigenous criminal systems, imported mafias of traffickers and exploitation of asylum seekers in the "caporalato" system based on seasonal and precarious employment in tomato harvesting.

**Sahizer Samuk Carignani** presented a collective study conducted with her colleagues **Derya Acuner**, **Yesim Tonga Uriarte** (IMT, Lucca) on a thematic analysis of an interactive project "Face Forward" and revealed the attachment to the homeland as a persistent theme, indicating to the "rooted mobilities" among the participants.

**Meral Gezici Yalçın** (Bolu Abant İzzet Baysal University) in her paper focused on homing of Syrian refugees in Turkey, drew on a survey conducted in the southeastern border city of Mardin. Their findings pointed to a divided home feeling between the private and public spheres, segregation in the neighborhoods of settlement, and an impasse regarding their right to the city.



**Friedemann Yi-Neumann** (University of Göttingen) in his paper asserted three different forms how people translate home cultures into refugee camps, with reference to the notion of “disculturalization” (Goffman,1961) and “translation” (Latour,1999) to explore homemaking as a process of ‘untraining’ and adjustment, as well as event and rearrangement. The three forms of home cultures, namely the translational of arrangements, the translation of domestic and family practices, and the translation of individual skills and practices allow for transient and constraint zones of protection and ‘coziness’ for camp dwellers.

Finally, **Milena Belloni** and **Luis .E. Pérez Murcia** (University of Trento) offered an alternative conceptual framework for comparative research on home, bridging the gap between the studies on forced migrants and those on non-migrants.

**VIII. Final remarks by Giuseppe Sciortino, Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo, Nicholas Harney, and Paolo Boccagni.**

The speakers elaborated on the various use of home by the participants on a wide range and scale, pointing yet to the need to bring these scales up and down together. They also drew attention to the risks of adopting theoretical approaches totalizing the mobility experiences and rather underlined the migrants’ abilities to jump through different places across networks that cannot be read as grid-like state structures. The symposium papers reveal not only homemaking but also dwelling, inhabiting and transiting in uncommon homelike settings, revealing “home” as an ambivalent notion capturing both its positive and negative aspects (Boccagni and Kivisto, 2019), and extending home studies further to the newly emergent areas of study, e.g., climate change migration. The conference showed that homemaking by far does not focus on the micro-practices in the domestic sphere. Affects, sensations, and everyday practices can be understood as the bedrock of research on home. Nevertheless, many scholars who presented on this conference have addressed broader social, political, and economic conditions under which homemaking in the context of (forced) takes place. The issue of how homing individuals, families, and groups reconstitute security, familiarity, and control needs to be discussed by also considering border and admission politics. Hence Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo rightly points out that it is necessary to focus on what the utopian home can look like to develop new visions of the future in the face of the global right-wing movements.