

Materialities and imaginaries of home: geographies of British returnees in later life

Article (Accepted Version)

Walsh, Katie (2018) Materialities and imaginaries of home: geographies of British returnees in later life. *Area*, 50 (4). pp. 476-482. ISSN 0004-0894

This version is available from Sussex Research Online: <http://sro.sussex.ac.uk/id/eprint/75062/>

This document is made available in accordance with publisher policies and may differ from the published version or from the version of record. If you wish to cite this item you are advised to consult the publisher's version. Please see the URL above for details on accessing the published version.

Copyright and reuse:

Sussex Research Online is a digital repository of the research output of the University.

Copyright and all moral rights to the version of the paper presented here belong to the individual author(s) and/or other copyright owners. To the extent reasonable and practicable, the material made available in SRO has been checked for eligibility before being made available.

Copies of full text items generally can be reproduced, displayed or performed and given to third parties in any format or medium for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge, provided that the authors, title and full bibliographic details are credited, a hyperlink and/or URL is given for the original metadata page and the content is not changed in any way.

WILEY

AREA

Royal
Geographical
Society
with IBG
Advancing geography
and geographical learning

Materialities and imaginaries of home: geographies of British returnees in later life

Journal:	<i>Area</i>
Manuscript ID	AREA-SI-Apr-2017-0045.R1
Manuscript Type:	Special Section
Keywords:	Ageing, Return migration, British migration, Home, Domesticity, Interviewing
Abstract:	This article explores home materialities and home imaginaries in later life, to provide insight into the dialectical relation between the spatial processes of ageing and migration. The article draws on empirical research with British return migrants in older age. The analysis purposively selects four participants from among a wider sample of interviewees to highlight some of the diversity among British returnees and their varied experiences of remaking home upon return. The article explores both the privilege and vulnerabilities of all British returnees as the meaning of home transforms in later life.

SCHOLARONE™
Manuscripts

Materialities and imaginaries of home: geographies of British returnees in later life

Abstract:

This article explores home materialities and home imaginaries in later life, to provide insight into the dialectical relation between the spatial processes of ageing and migration. The article draws on empirical research with British return migrants in older age. The analysis purposively selects four participants from among a wider sample of interviewees to highlight some of the diversity among British returnees and their varied experiences of remaking home upon return. The article explores both the privilege and vulnerabilities of *all* British returnees as the meaning of home transforms in later life.

Key words: ageing, return migration, British migration, home, domesticity

In line with the aims of this Special Issue, in this article I explore how geographical perspectives might contribute to a burgeoning interdisciplinary concern with the ageing-migration nexus (e.g. Horn and Schweppe 2015; Karl and Torres 2016; Näre et al 2017). There are, of course, numerous ways in which the 'geographies of ageing' might be conceptually pursued but, in their extensive review of two decades of research on ageing in Human Geography, a productive area of enquiry identified by Skinner et al. (2015, 782) is a focus on home, which they understand and situate as part of a broader orientation towards place, embodiment and the life course. Indeed, geographers have explored the significance of home in older age as a site of care provision (e.g. Dyck et al 2005) and in relation to notions of ageing-in-place (e.g. Milligan 2009), retirement transitions (Varley and Blasco 2001), illness and impairment (Mowl, Pain and Talbot 2000; Varley 2008) and grandparenting (Tarrant 2016). In this article, I contribute to these broader debates by engaging with Alison Blunt and Robyn Dowling's (2006) theoretical development of the 'critical geographies of home', demonstrating how this might re-animate our understanding of the geographies of ageing in efforts to understand the everyday lives of migrants in later life.

Blunt and Dowling suggest that a critical geography of home is a *spatialized* understanding of home that recognises home as simultaneously material and imaginative: '*both a place/physical location and a set of feelings*' (2006, 22, *emphasis* in the original). It is important to note that *critical* approaches to the geographies of home, understand home as porous and multi-scalar, collapsing notions of home as a purely 'private' space and politicising the ideologies through which home is imagined and lived (Blunt and Dowling 2006, 26-29, drawing on Massey's *relational* theorisation of place). With this approach, the article contributes to wider geographical literatures exploring the domestic space of home as a site for identities to be produced and intimate relations lived (e.g. Dowling and Power 2012; Gorman-Murray 2006; Morrison 2013; Rose 2003; Tarrant 2016; Walsh 2011).

Existing interdisciplinary research demonstrates that the meaning of home for migrants is frequently transformed in later life (e.g. Buffel 2015; Gardner 2002; Meijering and Lager 2014; Ní Laoire 2007; Walsh and Näre 2016). As such, we might anticipate that exploring the materialities of home can further illuminate the ageing-migration nexus. Indeed, the dialectical relationship between the materialities of domestic space and imaginative dimensions of belonging has already caught the attention of migration scholars, but rarely those researching older migrants (except see Seo and Mazumdar 2011). Approaching home critically then, in this article, I examine the stories of British return migrants to consider the multiplicity and ambivalence of home, exposing the privilege inscribed in dominant ideologies of home (Blunt and Dowling 2006; Young 2005). Wider literatures suggest that returning to the 'homeland' is often marked by ambivalence (Vathi 2017; Hall et al 2017). I show how social processes of class, heteronormativity, and ageing intersect to inform British migrants' subjectivities and, consequently, the agency they can demonstrate in relation to home unmaking and remaking (Brickell 2012). I demonstrate how the study of home is productive because, as a site through which ageing subjectivities are produced, it enables insight into migration and ageing as inter-related processes. In doing so, I emphasise that there is no typical materiality to the homes of British returnees and that the spatial project of home is a key space in which the complex and ambivalent process of return migration is played out.

Methodology: materialities of home for British returnees in later life

The empirical research I draw upon in this article is an ongoing study with British return migrants, focusing on home. In their early sixties to early nineties at the time of the research, the twenty individuals and couples who have participated in this research project so far, are encompassed by the vast life stage descriptor of 'later life', but reflect its immense diversity in terms of their ageing subjectivities. Indeed, a critical understanding of 'ageing' recognises age as relational and spatially contingent (e.g. Hopkins and Pain 2007). Recruited via snowballing methods through contacts suggested by family, friends and colleagues, all the interviewees have lived outside the UK at some stage in their lives. However, the sample has been selected across the diverse biographical experiences of residence and mobility that this broad definition of a return migrant might encompass: some 'returnees' have lived most of their lives in the UK with smaller episodes of international migration in childhood, retirement, or during their working lives, while others have lived most of their lives overseas, having settled in one place or taken a series of career postings, and returned more permanently only in retirement or even in later older age. Recounted in their life stories, therefore, are periods of residence outside the UK, but these might have been variously perceived (at the time) as episodes of emigration, expatriation, or secondment. The destinations of their outward migrations frequently include Australia, India, Zimbabwe, Malaysia, Cyprus, Spain, Singapore, the UAE, and Hong Kong, many of which remain notable

1
2
3 destinations for British migrants (Sriskandarajah and Drew 2006). British migrants are
4 relatively privileged, due to their class and lifestyle (Benson and O'Reilly 2009), as well as
5 their nationality and whiteness enabling social mobility through global mobilities (Knowles
6 2008; Leonard 2010). Those in my sample of returnees are also all white British and would
7 be understood as 'middle class' by such indicators as profession, lifestyle, and economic
8 resources, even while, as will become apparent, their circumstances and experiences are
9 highly diverse.
10
11

12
13 Skinner et al. (2015, 785) point to oral histories as a productive method of collecting
14 biographical material about older people and their lives (not only those of 'elite' influential
15 historical figures, but also the 'insights of "everyday" older people regarding both their past
16 and current experiences and circumstances') and they have been previously adopted in
17 research with migrants in later life (e.g. Ni Laoire 2007). The primary method employed in
18 this study is a related 'narrative methodology', but perhaps better described as in-depth
19 repeat interviewing, akin to 'subject-oriented' life stories in which narration is understood
20 as a practice of self-construction in the present, rather than a simple description of the past
21 (Hollway and Jefferson 2000). In focusing on home, the narratives performed share much in
22 common with the 'residential histories' collected by Mason (2004, 162) which, she argues,
23 are 'fundamentally about identity and agency.' However, my interviewing method gathered
24 retrospective life stories as well as reflection from my participants on their current sense of
25 home and home-making practices using photo elicitation and attention to their domestic
26 material culture. Anthropological work has long recognised the significance of materialities
27 in understanding home (e.g. Miller 2001) and Janet Hoskin's (1998) notion of 'biographical
28 objects' convinced me of the productiveness of allowing people to tell you about
29 themselves through the significant things in their lives. Materialities have also become an
30 important part of geographical theorisation of the home as a spatial project of identification
31 and relationality (e.g. Gorman-Murray 2006; Morrison 2012; Tarrant 2016; Tolia-Kelly 2004;
32 Walsh 2006, 2011), as well as literatures on migration and home (e.g. Brun and Fábos 2015;
33 Dudley 2011; Gram-Hanssen and Bech-Danielson 2012; Law 2001). Direct focus on domestic
34 possessions has also been significant in a number of studies with older *non*-migrants, arising
35 from the significance of 'downsizing' and 'divestment' events (e.g. Johnson and Bibbo 2014;
36 Luborsky et al. 2011; Marcoux 2001; Nord 2013). In my interviews, more specifically, I asked
37 about moving home and recreating it, about treasured furnishings and decorative items,
38 and about meaningful domestic possessions used in home making practices.
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47

48 While my methodology should not be confused with longitudinal research of the sort
49 described by Neale et al (2012) (not least because it differs in respect to the relatively
50 irregular and condensed nature of the interviewing), like their *Timescapes* project my own
51 repeat interviewing has produced complex qualitative data that brings ethical and
52 representational challenges (Henderson et al 2012). My participants need to remain
53 anonymous, yet their stories, arguably, should be presented with a detail that reflects their
54 commitment to the interviewing process and the biographical depth of the data collected.
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 As such, I have chosen here to focus on four participants of the research only. These cases
4 are selected carefully from the larger sample to explore in more detail in this article because
5 they provide highly contrasting examples in relation to home, return and subjectivity. As
6 such, they help us to resist homogenising the figure of the British migrant and complicate
7 our understanding of home-making processes in relation to migration and ageing. What
8 they share, however, is a recognition of ageing as a process that intersects with class and
9 heteronormativity in the making of migrant identities. On their return to the UK, older age
10 shapes their navigation of the dominant ideologies of home based around home ownership
11 and home as a site of family. As such, these four narratives complicate our understanding of
12 the meaning of home among British returnees by highlighting vulnerabilities associated with
13 later life, including: bereavement, illness, unemployment, loneliness, and even the
14 contemplation of death.
15
16
17
18
19
20
21

22 **Migration return(s) and home in later life**

23
24 The relationship between migrants and home is not fixed across the life course and often
25 reconfigured in older age in relation to 'return' (Gardner 2002; Oliver 2016; Vathi 2017;
26 Walsh and Näre 2016). To explore these assertions, I begin with Kenneth and Irene, in many
27 ways a couple who exemplify typical British professional or highly skilled returnees. In a
28 large four-bedroom apartment on the south coast of England, packed full of furnishings,
29 possessions, and artefacts collected from over four decades of working overseas, they
30 narrated the migrations and settlements of their life stories as part of the shared project of
31 making a life *together* (Mason 2004). I learnt that when they returned to England in their
32 mid-fifties for Kenneth to take up a new job, they were not returning 'home' as such, having
33 both left from Scotland, and having no family or friends in the area, except some fellow
34 returnees they had known in Guinea:
35
36
37
38

39 Kenneth: 'Bangkok was home. At that time, we wouldn't have seen England as home.'

40
41 Irene: 'Well, home is where we are.'

42
43 Kenneth: 'In fact, we had no intention of coming back. We almost went to New
44 Zealand, you see, almost, that close, it was that close [illustrating a small gap
45 between his index finger and thumb].'
46
47

48 Together Kenneth and Irene had lived not only in Bangkok, but also Hong Kong and
49 elsewhere in Asia, a visitors' book held a photo of each residence in turn. Yet, while they
50 had been provided with rental housing through their overseas employment, the successful
51 international professional careers had enabled them to invest in several properties in the UK.
52 In the interview, Kenneth and Irene noted their resistance of normative ideas about the
53 'proper' kind of home for older age as being a compact dwelling, reflecting that their choice
54 of homes was related to the lifestyle and status they had enjoyed as British migrants:
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 Kenneth: 'After having lived as an expatriate, you need space, you're used to space
4 and we found that a lot of the houses were quite claustrophobic for us.'

5
6 Irene: 'We liked this place because of the space and we like the house we're going to
7 because it's got space.'

8
9 Kenneth: 'You'd find it bizarre maybe that a couple our age is not downsizing'

10
11 Irene: 'Everybody does.'

12
13
14 Kenneth: 'But that does relate to the fact that we're used to a lot of space. Gradually,
15 the places we've stayed have got bigger and bigger, and we had a huge flat in Hong
16 Kong, and the house in Bangkok. I think, on reflection, looking back it was a very
17 privileged lifestyle. We were incredibly lucky.'

18
19
20 Home ownership and living in a spacious home are recognised as ways of performing middle
21 class identities (Dowling and Power 2012; Forrest and Hirayama 2015). Kenneth and Irene's
22 narrative of domesticity allows them to do the identity-work of home as a shared 'couple'
23 project (Gorman-Murray 2015; Mason 2004; Morrison 2013), but they are reflexive about
24 their lifestyle and use their privilege to resist normative conceptions of older age.
25

26
27 Kenneth and Irene were now excited about their imminent move to Scotland, in a way, the
28 real 'return'. Large collections of Latin American and Asian artefacts (weavings, silver boxes
29 etc.) filled the dining room, hallways, and office, documenting their lives spent overseas as
30 highly skilled migrants, but Kenneth spoke sentimentally about a large photograph framed
31 above their living room fireplace:
32

33
34
35 'We've had the picture now for 16 years, and we're going to live on the other side of
36 the Highlands now so, I don't know, whether there is any symbolism. I just liked the
37 photograph, because when I was a child I was allowed to sale a boat, two boats, all
38 over that loch.'

39
40
41 This move would bring them closer to their daughter, and it highlights other corporeal,
42 emotional, and practical concerns relating to home in later life (Buffel 2015; Oliver 2016;
43 Walsh and Näre 2016):
44

45
46 Irene: I didn't want to die in [name of English town removed], so we had to go
47 somewhere else. It was a question of where to?

48
49 Kenneth: The older you get, you want to be able to speak to your doctor in your own
50 language. When we came back here to Britain and for the first time, in decades, I felt
51 that I couldn't be thrown out. They can put me in prison, but they can't throw me
52 out. This is my country, I'm a British passport holder, I can't be thrown out. Nothing
53 to do with home, but it was an issue of belonging.
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 While the relationship between ageing and return is complex, among my sample of Britons
4 who had already returned, access to the National Health Service and the security and
5 permanence associated with a national 'homeland' were frequently noted. The uncertainty
6 of home becomes evident in older age when bodily changes, impairment, and perhaps even
7 recognition of mortality can shape international mobilities (Oliver 2016).
8
9

10 Generated by the career trajectories of the (usually male) lead migrant, the circular mobility
11 of Kenneth and Irene from one British community to another, characterised by
12 impermanent settlement and continued transnational connections, is common among
13 highly skilled British migrants (Walsh 2011, 2016). However, this does not lead to
14 homogeneity in the materialities or narratives of home among British returnees, given the
15 diversity in routes, temporalities and circumstances of residence and return, as well as
16 people's varying home making practices. In the next section, then, I turn to the narratives of
17 Barbara and her mother Jane, whose domestic materialities contrast vividly with those
18 described above.
19
20
21
22

23 Barbara, now in her late sixties, returned reluctantly to the UK in her mid-fifties when she
24 became redundant, as part of widespread job losses arising from the global financial crisis of
25 2008. She decided that she should take advantage of this unexpected return and buy
26 property in the UK near her mother. A decade previously, Jane, Barbara's mother, had
27 travelled back with her and her husband from Hong Kong to the south coast of England
28 when they retired. Now bereaved, Jane was navigating living alone as a widow and had
29 moved into a one-bedroom flat in a block of sheltered accommodation. With minimal space
30 for storage and display, this flat forced her to be 'ruthless' in further divestment, a common
31 experience of homing in later life (Luborsky et al 2011). Nonetheless, like other participants,
32 she had managed to archive the multiple homes of her life course through meaningful
33 paintings, furnishings, photographs, and the memories that unfolded in stories through
34 these domestic materialities. Like Barbara and Kenneth, therefore, Jane's home making
35 efforts resonated with the wider literatures on the desire of migrants to recreate home in a
36 material fashion (Law 2001; Gram-Hanssen and Bech Danielson 2012; Tolia-Kelly 2004).
37 Interview narratives and the photo elicitation method demonstrated the ongoing
38 significance of some of her souvenirs as 'biographical objects' (Hoskins 1998), helping Jane
39 to construct a mobile subjectivity long after return; for instance, a Camphor wood chest
40 from Malaysia, carved 'opium table' used as a television stand, bookcases, ivory carvings,
41 and ornaments. Yet, on my later visits, Jane was more enthused to demonstrate new
42 gadgets making her everyday routines a little easier - a light-weight Hoover and an
43 electronic seat to lower her into the bath, for example - as she began to navigate bodily
44 ageing and its impact on dwelling (Mowl et al 2000). Jane felt further isolation in her home
45 when her friend in the block, another British returnee, was moved by her family to a nursing
46 home to receive specialist dementia care. Yet, while Jane was clearly ambivalent about
47 return, her daughter Barbara's narrative evoked a much stronger sense of displacement and
48 unhomeliness through the materialities of her residence.
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 Barbara had spent her early life in Malaysia and then Hong Kong with her parents, and then
4 continued to live in Hong Kong until she was twenty-eight. This biography of settlement as a
5 child, as well as subsequent work migrations to Taiwan and Bangalore, led to a rather
6 different sense of the location of home for Barbara than her mother:
7

8
9 'I am much more comfortable with Asian people. I immediately feel at home. When
10 I'm with westerners I feel more reserved. I feel much more relaxed and accepted
11 with Asian people. And whenever anyone asked me where I was from, I'd kind of go
12 into a melt-down about that. And then I'd say I was from Hong Kong because that
13 was my home town and I'd lived there for more than twenty years so I really
14 identified with that place: my first job was there, my son was born there, all the firsts
15 happened there.'
16
17

18
19 Returning in her mid-fifties, Barbara found UK property much too expensive and her
20 linguistic and international business skills devalued by an ageist UK labour market. Live-in
21 care work allowed her to live inexpensively in other people's homes, but she described
22 these four years in England as 'miserable.' Upon retirement, Barbara moved back and forth
23 in a seasonal transnational living arrangement, spending winters in Taiwan and returning to
24 her mothers' home for the summer in England, echoing the climatic mobilities of some
25 British retirement migrants in Southern Europe (O'Reilly 2000). Unfortunately, Barbara felt
26 her home in Asia was irretrievable without permanent residency. She returned permanently
27 to England, but recounted her struggle with re-envisioning home in her rented social
28 housing:
29
30
31

32
33 'I was flummoxed by this place, needing to buy carpet and curtains. And what I
34 found really difficult was, it wasn't that I didn't have money, because I had kept
35 money aside knowing that this would happen one day, but what I really disliked
36 about it was spending my money. I had a really hard time – the idea of spending [so
37 much] on carpet, I couldn't get my head around it. I kept thinking, 'for less than that,
38 I could get myself to Taiwan, you know.' I really had to talk to myself and say, 'you've
39 got to think in terms of investment, it's not just for one year, you're going to have
40 that carpet for five years, ten years.' I was over-whelmed. And then other thing I
41 noticed was that I don't want a lot of belongings, I don't want to own things. I really
42 like travelling light through life... Everything I have in this home, nothing is
43 unnecessary.'
44
45
46
47

48
49 There were no treasured souvenirs or 'biographical objects' (Hoskins 1998) to be used as a
50 tool for selfhood in Barbara's flat, nor the objects displaying couple and family relations that
51 are evident in existing geographical research (Gorman-Murray 2006; Morrison 2013; Rose
52 2003; Tarrant 2016; Walsh 2011). As such, Barbara resisted using her domestic space to
53 display gender, class, nationality or relationships in socially proscriptive ways. Feeling at
54 home is thought to be important for the wellbeing of migrants in older age (Meijering and
55 Lager 2014), but it is less accessible to British returnees who, like Barbara, move without a
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 company repatriation package to cover the cost of container transportation and have not
4 had the financial resources to invest in UK property during their working lives (see also Hall
5 et al 2017). Home may be further undermined for those who feel displaced or live alone. A
6 sub-group among my sample shared Barbara's experience and approach to home making.
7 Her story challenges the dominant ideologies and exclusionary geographies of home more
8 widely and reminds us of the importance of not taking intimacy and materiality for granted
9 in explications of home, ageing and migration.
10
11
12
13
14

15 **Thinking through home – migration – ageing**

16
17 In this article, I have examined the material and imagined geographies of home (Blunt and
18 Dowling 2006) in the life-story narratives of four British return migrants. In doing so, I have
19 demonstrated that there is no typical materiality to the homes of the British returnee: some
20 of my interviewees are multiple home-owners while others rent; some live in grand and
21 expensive properties, others in one-bedroom sheltered housing; some have few possessions
22 they care little for, others have some especially treasured belongings or large collections of
23 souvenirs. Likewise, their emotional experiences of imagining and recreating 'home' on
24 return are similarly diverse and often ambivalent. The narratives also show how the
25 domestic site of home is a spatial project in which the identity-work of home-making
26 privileges some and not others (Gorman-Murray 2006; Morrison 2012; Dowling and Power
27 2012): the dominant ideologies of class, heteronormativity, nationality, and age are
28 accomplished through materialities of home ownership, dwelling size, object collection,
29 furnishing, and display. At the same time, the illustrative accounts from these four
30 respondents remind us that ageing, and the associated experiences of illness, impairment,
31 bereavement, and living alone, complicate the experience of home and migration. This is
32 evident here even among British migrants, relatively privileged by the intersections of
33 whiteness and nationality both during their migration and upon their return (Knowles 2008;
34 Leonard 2010).
35
36
37
38
39
40

41 Drawing on mobility and life course theory, Findlay et al (2015, 391) remind us that we
42 should understand migration 'as something that is structured by wider processes shaping
43 society'. As the examples in this article have demonstrated, ageing is one of these significant
44 processes, clearly shaping experiences of migration and return. One already productive area
45 of analysis in studies of ageing, including geography, is a focus on home (Mowl et al 2000;
46 Tarrant 2016; Varley 2008), but I would urge geographers to consider how this could be
47 developed further to more broadly encompass the meaning and significance of home in
48 relation to later life mobilities. Outlined in this article, British returnees have talked about
49 their home making not only in terms of more personal and corporeal experiences of ageing,
50 but also in reference to the collective cultures of ageing they encounter and navigate
51 around them. Adopting critical perspectives on home (Blunt and Dowling 2006; Young 2005)
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

helps us to develop a deeper understanding of home materialities and imaginaries as home is made and unmade through migration in older age.

For Peer Review

Acknowledgements

I am thankful for the time and generosity of my interviewees in enabling me to collect their stories of return and for the feedback of two anonymous referees.

References

- Baxter R and Brickell K** 2014 For Home *UnMaking Home Cultures* 11, 133-144
- Blunt A and Dowling R** 2006 *Home* Routledge, London
- Brickell K** 2012 'Mapping' and 'doing' critical geographies of home *Progress in Human Geography* 36 225 – 244
- Brun C and Fábos A** 2015 Making homes in limbo? A conceptual framework *Refuge* 31 5-17
- Buffel T** 2015 Ageing migrants and the creation of home: mobility and the maintenance of transnational ties *Population, Space and Place*
- Dowling R and Power E** 2012 Sizing home, doing family in Sydney, Australia *Housing Studies* 27 605–619
- Dudley S** 2011 Feeling at home: Producing and consuming things in Karenni refugee camps on the Thai-Burma border *Population Space and Place* 17 742–755
- Dyck I Kontos P Angus J McKeever P** 2005 The home as a site for long-term care: meanings and management of bodies and spaces *Health and Place* 11 173-185
- Findlay A McCullum D Coulter R Gayle V** 2015 New mobilities across the life course: a framework for analysing demographically linked drivers of migration *Population, Space and Place* 21 390-402
- Forrest R and Hirayama Y** 2015 The financialisation of the social project: Embedded liberalism, neoliberalism and home ownership *Urban Studies* 52(2) 233-44
- Gardner K** 2002 *Age, narrative, and migration: the life course and life histories of Bengali elders in London* Berg, Oxford
- Gorman-Murray A** 2006 Gay and lesbian couples at home: identity work in domestic space *Home Cultures* 3 145-167
- Gram-Hanssen K and Bech-Danielson C** 2012 Creating a new home. Somali, Iraqi and Turkish immigrants and their homes in Danish social housing *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment* 27 89-103

- 1
2
3 **Hall K Betty C and Giner J** 2017 To stay or to go? The motivations and experiences of older
4 British returnees from Spain in Vathi Z and King R eds *Return migration and psychosocial*
5 *wellbeing: discourses, policy-making and outcomes for migrants and their families* Routledge,
6 London 221-239
7
8
9 **Henderson S Holland J McGrellis S Sharpe S and Thomson R** 2012 Storying qualitative
10 longitudinal research: sequence, voice and motif *Qualitative Research* 12 16-34
11
12 **Hollway W and Jefferson T** 2000 Doing qualitative research differently: free association,
13 narrative and the interview method Sage, London
14
15 **Hopkins P and Pain R** 2007 Geographies of age: thinking relationally *Area* 39(3) 287-294
16
17
18 **Horn V and Schweppe C** eds 2015 *Transnational aging – current insights and future*
19 *challenges* Routledge, New York
20
21 **Hoskins J** 1998 *Biographical objects: how things tell the stories of people's lives* Routledge,
22 London
23
24
25 **Johnson R and Bibbo J** 2014 Relocation decisions and constructing the meaning of home: a
26 phenomenological study of the transition into a nursing home *Journal of Aging Studies* 30
27 56-63
28
29
30 **Karl U and Torres S** eds 2016 *Ageing in Contexts of Migration* Routledge, Oxon
31
32 **Knowles C** 2008 The landscape of post-imperial whiteness in rural Britain *Ethnic and Racial*
33 *Studies* 31 167-184
34
35 **Law L** 2001 Home Cooking: Filipino Women and Geographies of the Senses in Hong Kong,
36 Ecumene (now: Cultural Geographies) 8 264-83
37
38 **Luborsky M Lysack C and Van Nuil J** 2011 Refashioning one's place in time: stories of
39 household downsizing *Journal of Ageing Studies* 25 243-52
40
41
42 **Marcoux S** 2001 The 'casser maison' ritual: constructing the self by emptying the home
43 *Journal of Material Culture* 6 213-235
44
45 **Mason J** 2004 Personal narratives, relational selves: residential histories in the living and
46 telling *The Sociological Review* 52, 162-179
47
48 **Meijering L Lager D** 2014 Home-making of older Antillean migrants in the Netherlands
49 *Ageing and Society* 34 859-875
50
51
52 **Miller D** 2001 *Home Possessions: material culture behind closed doors* Berg, Oxford
53
54 **Milligan C** 2009 *There's no place like home: people, place and care in an ageing society*
55 Ashgate, Aldershot
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 **Morrison C** 2013 Homemaking in New Zealand: thinking through the mutually constitutive
4 relationship between domestic material objects, heterosexuality and home *Gender, Place &*
5 *Culture* 20 413-431

6
7 **Mowl G Pain R and Talbot C** 2000 The ageing body and the homespace *Area* 32 189-197

8
9 **Neale B Henwood K, Holland J** 2012 Researching lives through time: An introduction to the
10 timescapes approach *Qualitative Research* 12 4-15

11
12 **Ní Laoire C** 2007 The 'green green grass of home'? Return to rural Ireland *Journal of Rural*
13 *Studies* 23 332-344

14
15 **Oliver C** 2016 Ageing, Embodiment and Emotions in Orientations to Home: British
16 Retirement Migration in Spain in **Walsh K and Näre L** eds *Transnational migration and home*
17 *in older age* Routledge, London 188-98

18
19 **O'Reilly K** 2000 *The British on the Costa Del Sol: Transnational identities and local*
20 *communities* Routledge, London

21
22 **Percival J** 2013 *Return Migration in Later Life: International Perspectives* Polity Press, Bristol

23
24 **Rose G** 2003 Family photographs and domestic spacings: a case study *Transactions of the*
25 *Institute of British Geographers* 28 5-18

26
27 **Schwanen T, Hardill I and Lucas S** 2012 Spatialities of ageing: the co-construction and co-
28 evolution of old age and space *Geoforum* 43(6) 1291-1295

29
30 **Skinner M W, Cloutier D, Andrews G J** 2014 Geographies of ageing: progress and
31 possibilities after two decades of change *Progress in Human Geography* 39(6) 776-799

32
33 **Sriskandarajah D and Drew C** 2006 *Brits Abroad. Mapping the scale and nature of British*
34 *emigration*. UK: IPPR.

35
36 **Tarrant A** 2016 The spatial and gendered politics of displaying family: exploring material
37 cultures in grandfathers' homes *Gender, Place and Culture* 23 969-982.

38
39 **Tolia-Kelly D** 2004 Locating processes of identification: studying the precipitates of re-
40 memory through artefacts in the South Asian home *Transactions of the Institute of British*
41 *Geographers* 29 314-329

42
43 **Varley A** 2008 A place like this? Stories of dementia, home and the self *Environment and*
44 *Planning D: Society and Space* 26 47-67

45
46 **Varley A and Blasco M** 2001 Exiled to the home: masculinity and ageing in urban Mexico
47 *The European Journal of Development Research* 12 115-138

1
2
3 **Vathi Z** 2017 Introduction. The interface between return migration and psychosocial
4 wellbeing in **Vathi Z** and **King R** eds *Return migration and psychosocial wellbeing: discourses,*
5 *policy-making and outcomes for migrants and their families* Routledge, London 1-18
6

7 **Walsh K** 2016 Expatriate belongings: traces of lives 'abroad' in the home-making of English
8 returnees in later life in **Walsh K** and **Näre L** eds *Transnational migration and home in older*
9 *age* Routledge, London 139-50
10
11

12 **Walsh K** 2011 Migrant masculinities and domestic space: British home-making practices in
13 Dubai *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 36(4) 516-529
14

15 **Walsh K and Näre L** eds 2016 *Transnational migration and home in older age* Routledge,
16 London
17
18

19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

For Peer Review

Geographies of ageing and home: listening to British return migrants

There is now a burgeoning interdisciplinary literature on ageing and migration (e.g. Daatland and Biggs 2004; Horn and Schwegge 2015; Karl and Torres 2016). However, in line with the aims of this Special Issue, in this article I explore how *geographical* perspectives on ageing more specifically might contribute to our understanding of the ageing and migration nexus. Seminal disciplinary interventions into broader debates on ageing suggest there are numerous ways in which the 'geographies of ageing' might be conceptually pursued (e.g. Laws and Harper 1995; Skinner et al. 2015). In their extensive review of two decades of research on ageing in Human Geography, one productive area of enquiry identified by Skinner et al. (2015, 782) is a focus on home, which they situate as part of a broader orientation towards place, embodiment and the life course. Indeed, a small body of work within interdisciplinary literatures of ageing and migration has already focused on home (e.g. Gardner 2002; Meijering and Lager 2014; Ní Laoire 2007; Walsh and Näre 2016). In this article, I suggest that engaging more deeply with a set of theoretical perspectives on the 'critical geographies of home', outlined first by Alison Blunt and Robyn Dowling (2006) and later extended by Katherine Brickell (2012), can re-animate our understanding of the 'geographies of ageing' and the ageing-migration nexus. Given the constraints on the length of the discussion, I organise the analysis to focus on two examples that offer insight into the unmaking and remaking of four people's homes across the life course, especially as oriented around experiences of 'returning' to the UK in older age. Using extracts from interviews with Barbara and her mother Jane, and with Kenneth and Irene, a married couple interviewed together, I demonstrate how the study of home is productive because, as a site through

1
2
3 which ageing subjectivities are produced, it enables insight into migration and ageing as
4
5 inter-related processes.
6
7
8
9

10 11 **Some critical geographies of home** 12

13
14 As Skinner et al. (2015) recognise, Geographers have begun to explore the significance of
15
16 home in older age as a site of care provision in particular, both among family members and
17
18 by (often migrant) care workers, and in relation to notions of successful ageing,
19
20 independence, and ageing in place (e.g. Dyck et al 2005; Milligan 2009). Processes of ageing,
21
22 including the renegotiation of gendered subjectivities and experiences of bodily decline,
23
24 have also been shown to have an impact on how older people inhabit the domestic site of
25
26 home (Tarrant 2016; Mowl, Pain and Talbot 2000; Varley 2008; Varley and Blasco 2001).
27
28
29

30
31 Blunt and Dowling suggest that a critical geography of home is a *spatialized* understanding
32
33 of home that recognises home as both material and imaginative: '*both a place/physical*
34
35 *location and a set of feelings*' (2006, 22, *emphasis* in the original). They argue: 'Home is a
36
37 material dwelling and it is also an affective space, shaped by emotions and feelings of
38
39 belonging' (Blunt and Dowling 2006, 22). The dialectical relationship between the
40
41 materialities of domestic space and imaginative dimensions of belonging has already caught
42
43 the attention of migration scholars, but rarely those researching older migrants. An
44
45 exception, and one that demonstrates the rich potential of such an approach to
46
47 understanding ageing, is Seo and Mazumdar's (2011) study of Korean-American seniors and
48
49 their adaptations to US public housing apartments in order to bring generational notions of
50
51 Korean home cultures into their current residence.
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 In further identifying *critical* approaches to the geographies of home, Blunt and Dowling
4
5 (2006) draw on Doreen Massey's *relational* theorisation of place. Relational thinking is also
6
7 increasingly central to theories of ageing (Hopkins and Pain 2007; Skinner et al. 2015) and
8
9 stresses the emergence of space and places through connections, in this case connections
10
11 that highlight the porous boundaries and multi-scalar nature of home that collapse notions
12
13 of public and private space (Blunt and Dowling 2006, 26-29). For Blunt and Dowling (2006,
14
15 26), relational explications of the spatialities of home are also helpful because they highlight
16
17 power relations, revealing dominant ideologies of home in relation to gender, sexuality, and
18
19 class (e.g. home ownership). A focus on home can, therefore, help us to examine more fully
20
21 how ageing intersects with other aspects of our social locations and subjectivities, thereby
22
23 responding to an agenda set by Hopkins and Pain (2007) a decade ago.
24
25
26
27

28
29 In an important intervention, Katherine Brickell (2012)¹ extends Blunt and Dowling's
30
31 concern with home as a politicised space by arguing that critical geographies of home might
32
33 more productively focus on *negative* experiences of home, encompassing both extreme
34
35 domicile and more everyday disruptions and discontinuities (after Porteous and Smith).
36
37 Later, in a later collaborative *Special Issue of Home Cultures*, Baxter and Brickell (2014, 134)
38
39 put forward the notion of home *unmaking* to capture the breadth of these experiences:
40
41 'Home unmaking is the precarious process by which material and/or imaginary components
42
43 of home are unintentionally or deliberately, temporarily or permanently, divested, damaged
44
45 or even destroyed.' Given this wide definition, they go on to acknowledge that 'home
46
47 unmaking is part of the life course of all homes and is experienced by all home dwellers at
48
49 some point in their housing biographies... home unmaking is also associated with more
50
51 mundane and unreported happenings of domestic life and times passing' (Baxter and
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 Brickell 2014, 135). They further complicate the concept of home unmaking by noting that it
4
5 can sometimes be simultaneous with home making, or in symbiotic relation with, home
6
7 remaking. Brickell (2012) suggests that life-course transitions in older age are frequently
8
9 experienced as dislocations from, or disorientations with, home, especially when they
10
11 involve 'home transitions' into smaller or more institutionalised dwellings. It is not
12
13 surprising, therefore, that beyond Geography a few studies have productively focused on
14
15 these 'downsizing' events or the divestment of personal (domestic) possessions in older age
16
17 (e.g. Johnson and Bibbo 2014; Luborsky et al. 2011; Marcoux 2001; Nord 2013). As I discuss
18
19 in the next section, a focus on materialities is also part of my methodological approach to
20
21 understanding home un/remaking.
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29

30 **Methodology: listening to British returnees in later life**

31
32 In their recent and comprehensive review in *Progress in Human Geography*, Skinner et al.
33
34 (2015) reflect that two decades of geographical scholarship on ageing have left us with
35
36 some way to go in fulfilling the potential contribution of 'geographies of ageing' highlighted
37
38 by Harper and Laws (1995) two decades previously. They suggest that it might be productive
39
40 to explore the biographies of the older person, not only those of 'elite' influential historical
41
42 figures, but also 'the contributions and insights of 'everyday' older people regarding both
43
44 their past and current experiences and circumstances' (Skinner, Cloutier and Andrews 2015,
45
46 785). The research I draw on in this article fits within this broad agenda and is an ongoing
47
48 research project with British return migrants. In their early sixties to early nineties at the
49
50 time of the research, the twenty individuals and couples who have participated in this
51
52 research project so far, are encompassed by the vast life stage descriptor of 'later life' and
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 reflect its immense diversity in terms of their ageing subjectivities. Recruited via snowballing
4
5 methods through contacts suggested by my family, friends and colleagues, the sample has
6
7 been selected for their diverse biographical experiences of residence and mobility: some
8
9 have lived most of their lives in the UK with smaller episodes of international migration in
10
11 childhood, retirement, or during their working lives, while others have lived most of their
12
13 lives overseas, having settled in one place or taken a series of career postings, and returned
14
15 more permanently only in retirement or even in later older age. The journeys recounted in
16
17 their life stories also follow different routes, but they frequently include India, Zimbabwe,
18
19 Malaysia, Cyprus, Singapore, the UAE, and Hong Kong.
20
21
22

23
24 Skinner et al. (2015) point to oral histories as a productive method of collecting biographical
25
26 material about older people and their lives, including migrants (e.g. Ni Laoire 2007). The
27
28 primary method employed in this study is a related 'narrative methodology', but perhaps
29
30 better described as in-depth repeat interviewing, akin to 'subject-oriented' life stories, in
31
32 which narration is understood as a practice of self-construction in the present, rather than a
33
34 simple description of the past (Hollway and Jefferson 2000). Where I depart most
35
36 significantly from oral history methodology is that my 'interviews' included more direct
37
38 questions on choices and experiences of international mobility and settlement, photo-
39
40 elicitation methods, as well as attention to domestic material culture. This latter approach is
41
42 something I utilised in my doctoral research, inspired by Janet Hoskins' (1998) thesis about
43
44 the role of objects in helping people to tell you about their lives (and see also Marcoux 2001;
45
46 Miller 2001; Tolia-Kelly 2004). With my initial five interviewees I managed to meet each
47
48 participant five times or more but, for logistical reasons, in the later stage of the project I
49
50 have rarely managed to conduct so many interviews with each person. Nevertheless, I have
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 incorporated the same methods and worked more intensively, with each interview lasting
4
5 around two hours in length and most interviewees agreeing to two interviews in total.
6
7
8
9

10 11 **Migration return(s): home un/making across the life course** 12

13
14 Baxter and Brickell's (2014) notion of home unmaking captures the dynamic of unmaking
15
16 and remaking home across the life course. As they suggest, 'peoples' domestic lives are
17
18 rarely fixed or predictable, but rather dynamic and varied' (Baxter and Brickell 2014, 135). In
19
20 this discussion section, I draw on interviews with British returnees to explore these intimate
21
22 processes in relation to ageing, paying attention to the dismantling and re-envisaging of
23
24 home in later life.
25
26

27
28
29 Barbara's story demonstrates this home unmaking and remaking evocatively. Now in her
30
31 late sixties and settled back in the UK, Barbara spent her early life in Malaysia and then
32
33 Hong Kong, living there until she was twenty-eight. She explained her affinity to Asia in
34
35 relation to home:
36
37

38
39 'I am much more comfortable with Asian people. I immediately feel at home. When
40
41 I'm with westerners I feel more reserved. I feel much more relaxed and accepted
42
43 with Asian people. And whenever anyone asked me where I was from, I'd kind of go
44
45 into a melt-down about that. And then I'd say I was from Hong Kong because that
46
47 was my home town and I'd lived there for more than twenty years so I really
48
49 identified with that place: my first job was there, my son was born there, all the firsts
50
51 happen there.'
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 In 2008, Barbara was living and working in Bangalore, but was made redundant as part of
4
5 widespread job losses arising from the global financial crisis. Offered a choice of returning to
6
7 her old job in Taiwan or a lump-sum payment, Barbara thought that it might be time to
8
9 return to the UK and buy a property near her mother who was becoming more elderly and
10
11 had recently been bereaved. Returning 'home', however, it was her own ageing that she
12
13 encountered as difficult: now over fifty, Barbara found her language skills and experience of
14
15 international business of limited use in the UK job market and could only find low-paid care-
16
17 work. She lived in people's homes in order not to have to pay rent, but described these four
18
19 years in England as 'miserable.' Consequently, Barbara retired and began to move back and
20
21 forth in a seasonal transnational living arrangement: for three years in her early sixties, she
22
23 spent six-months in Taiwan and returned to her mothers' home for the summer in England.
24
25
26
27
28
29 Unfortunately, as Barbara's account reveals, it can be difficult to remake home and Barbara,
30
31 now in her early sixties, felt that her home in Asia was irretrievable:
32
33

34 'I was already retired and they don't really want old teachers. I could have probably
35
36 still got a job, but it would have meant, well I would have had to dye my hair. In
37
38 Taiwan the retirement age for women is 58. Everything changes and even there had
39
40 changed... and the last time I was there I left early. It had changed and I didn't have
41
42 the same feeling. It was fun, but it was different when I wasn't working and I thought,
43
44 'well, ok, but what am I actually doing here?' I mean, ok, I'm going for my motor-
45
46 scooter rides down the coast and it's all lovely, and I've got my friends, and.. Still I
47
48 loved it, but I didn't have the same sense of purpose that I'd had before. And I left.
49
50
51
52 Last time I left, and I left quite quickly... ultimately you are a guest, and I just felt I
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 was living out a fantasy in the end. I think it would have been different if I'd actually
4
5 become a permanent resident.'

6
7
8 Returning once again, this time with the aim of settling down permanently, Barbara
9
10 recounts her struggle with re-envisioning home in England:

11
12
13 'I was flummoxed by this place, needing to buy carpet and curtains. And what I
14
15 found really difficult was, it wasn't that I didn't have money, because I had kept
16
17 money aside knowing that this would happen one day, but what I really disliked
18
19 about it was spending my money. I had a really hard time – the idea of spending [so
20
21 much] on carpet, I couldn't get my head around it. I kept thinking, 'for less than that,
22
23 I could get myself to Taiwan, you know.' I really had to talk to myself and say, 'you've
24
25 got to think in terms of investment, it's not just for one year, you're going to have
26
27 that carpet for five years, ten years. You spend that money on a blind, but it's going
28
29 to be something you keep and it's going to be there.' It took me nearly three months
30
31 from moving in here until I wasn't over-whelmed. I was over-whelmed. I had to buy
32
33 everything. Everything. Vegetable peeler, can opener. And then other thing I noticed
34
35 was that I don't want a lot of belongings, I don't want to own things. I really like
36
37 travelling light through life... Everything I have in this home, nothing is unnecessary.'

38
39
40
41
42
43
44 For Barbara, the process of home making is a daunting one on her return: the anchoring of
45
46 material possessions which some find reassuring can also be perceived as threatening in
47
48 their restriction on alternate possibilities of older age. Feeling at home is thought to be
49
50 important for the wellbeing of migrants in older age (Meijering and Lager 2014), but it may
51
52 be more challenging for those who feel affiliations with more than one place or, as Barbara,
53
54 feel displaced in their country of residence and supposed 'homeland'. While individually
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 navigated and narrated, Barbara's experience resonates with many who find their mobile
4
5 subjectivities continue to shape their sense of home in older age and complicate ageing and
6
7 return (e.g. Percival 2013; Walsh and Näre 2016).
8
9

10
11 In a separate set of interviews, Barbara's mother Jane told me she had always thought of
12
13 England as 'Home' and had known, while living in Hong Kong, that she would one day return
14
15 (see reference removed). In some respects, Jane also had an unconventional 'expatriate' life:
16
17 though initially a 'trailing spouse' as a young, newly married mother, Jane later divorced,
18
19 remarried, and forged her own career in Hong Kong. In contrast to Barbara, however, her
20
21 domestic home un/remaking practices were more typical of British migrants who often
22
23 recreate a sense of their previous residence through the transfer of furniture, objects, and
24
25 domestic practices. Souvenirs were important to Jane, evidenced in her flat by the
26
27 belongings that had travelled back with her from Hong Kong to the south coast of England
28
29 when she and her husband retired. Furthermore, she explained how, in spite of the need to
30
31 be ruthless in downsizing to her sheltered accommodation apartment, some of the furniture
32
33 and decorative objects had made this onward journey with her, for instance: a Camphor
34
35 wood chest from Malaysia, a carved 'opium table' used as a television stand, bookcases,
36
37 ivory carvings, ornaments, and photograph albums. Of additional significance as a reminder
38
39 of her late husband, among these objects was a barometer that he had had in Hong Kong.
40
41 Showing me some photograph albums, Jane came across a photo of the inside of her flat in
42
43 Hong Kong and she laughed as she recognised the objects that she still lived among. Yet, her
44
45 flat also required continual adaptation to maintain its homeliness in older age, as Jane
46
47 began to navigate the bodily changes of her own ageing and their impact on home
48
49 un/remaking. On later visits, Jane demonstrated new gadgets to make everyday routines a
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 little easier (a lighter Hoover, an electronic seat to lower her into the bath) and talked with
4
5 me about the difficulties of coping with various illnesses and the medications proscribed as
6
7 treatments.
8
9

10 In a larger four-bedroom apartment on the south coast of England, packed full of furnishings,
11
12 possessions, and artefacts collected from over four decades of working overseas, I met with
13
14 Kenneth and Irene who had 'returned' in their mid-fifties from Bangkok. For Kenneth,
15
16 Glasgow had been 'home' throughout his childhood, but he hadn't considered whether he
17
18 would return or not when he embarked at twenty-one on a migrant ship to Canada for
19
20 postgraduate study. Independently, after going to university in Scotland, Irene left for a job
21
22 in New York as a translator, she reflected: 'Coming from an Army background... For me, a life
23
24 moving around was normal. This is the longest I have spent anywhere, 16 years.' Irene was
25
26 referring to the couples' apartment in a city on the South Coast of England that they had
27
28 bought to be located close to Kenneth's new and final employer before his recent
29
30 retirement. They had always done a tour of relatives in Scotland and England during their
31
32 home leave, initially every second summer and later, as their parents and grandparents
33
34 grew older, every summer. Yet, they were not returning 'home' as such, having both left
35
36 from Scotland, and having no family or friends in the area, except some fellow returnees
37
38 they had known in Guinea:
39
40
41
42
43
44

45 Kenneth: 'Bangkok was home. At that time, we wouldn't have seen England as home.'

46
47
48 Irene: 'Well, home is where we are.'

1
2
3 Kenneth: 'In fact, we had no intention of coming back. We almost went to New
4
5 Zealand, you see, almost, that close, it was that close [illustrating a small gap
6
7 between his index finger and thumb].'
8
9

10 Irene emphasised this at the end of the interview when she reiterated: 'I hope you've
11
12 understood that, for us, our home is where we happen to be.'
13
14

15
16 For Kenneth and Irene, their choice of dwelling type back in the UK was related not only to
17
18 their privileged class status and dual-income professional careers, but also their desires for a
19
20 particular type of domestic space to inhabit:
21
22

23 Kenneth: 'After having lived as an expatriate, you need space, you're used to space
24
25 and we found that a lot of the houses were quite claustrophobic for us.'
26
27

28
29 Irene: 'We liked this place because of the space and we like the house we're going to
30
31 because it's got space.'
32
33

34 Kenneth: 'You'd find it bizarre maybe that a couple our age are not downsizing'
35
36

37 Irene: 'Everybody does.'
38
39

40 Kenneth: 'But that does relate to the fact that we're used to a lot of space. Gradually,
41
42 the places we've stayed have got bigger and bigger, and we had a huge flat in Hong
43
44 Kong, and the house in Bangkok. I think, on reflection, looking back it was a very
45
46 privileged lifestyle. We were incredibly lucky.'
47
48
49

50 Kenneth and Irene noted their resistance to the idea that older age requires a more
51
52 compact dwelling and, with it perhaps, their resistance of some of the cultural tropes of
53
54 ageing and later life. Since Kenneth had only recently retired at seventy, they did not feel
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 ready to move to a smaller home as many of their contemporaries had done, let alone the
4
5 kind of sheltered accommodation that Jane embraced when her husband passed away.
6
7

8 Interestingly, though their house was packed with collections of artefacts from their
9
10 international residence, Kenneth and Irene had relatively few souvenirs or objects from
11
12 their previous homes displayed in their living room. Collections of Latin American and Asian
13
14 artefacts (weavings, silver boxes etc.) filled the dining room, hallways, and office, originally
15
16 bought to decorate their homes overseas. They were now made more meaningful because
17
18 of the couple's awareness that these handicraft traditions had since been lost as these
19
20 societies modernised. In contrast, Kenneth spoke sentimentally about a large photograph
21
22 framed above their fireplace:
23
24
25

26
27 'This is very early in the morning... you're looking across this part of the Lowlands,
28
29 central lowlands of Scotland, across a Highland boundary fault, and into the
30
31 Highlands. I'm a Lowlands Scot, but we're, interestingly, we've had the picture now
32
33 for 16 years, and we're going to live on the other side of the Highlands now so, I
34
35 don't know, whether there is any symbolic. I just liked the photograph, because
36
37 when I was a child I was allowed to sale a boat, two boats, all over that loch.'
38
39
40

41
42 Kenneth and Irene were now excited about their imminent move to Scotland, in a way, the
43
44 real 'return':
45
46

47 Irene: I didn't want to die in [name of English town], so we had to go somewhere
48
49 else. It was a question of where to?
50
51

52 Katie: People are retiring in Thailand now, you didn't consider that?
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 Kenneth: The older you get, you want to be able to speak to your doctor in your own
4
5 language. When we came back here to Britain and for the first time, in decades, I felt
6
7 that I couldn't be thrown out. They can put me in prison, but they can't throw me
8
9 out. This is my country, I'm a British passport holder, I can't be thrown out. Nothing
10
11 to do with home, but it was an issue of belonging. And we know the difficulties. The
12
13 last thing I would want to do is retire to one of these British communities in
14
15 Southern Spain. Oh I can't imagine anything worse. [Irene nods in firm agreement].
16
17
18 And it would be hard, you'd have to learn to live in another language.
19
20

21
22 As this discussion reveals, however, the corporeal concerns raised by the ageing body also
23
24 impact on the decision-making process as to where to make one's home in later life (Buffel
25
26 2015), along with the emotional pull of a particular place remembered and projected on a
27
28 living room wall.
29
30

31 32 33 34 35 **Conclusion** 36 37

38 Drawing on mobility and life course theory, Findlay et al (2015, 391) remind us that we
39
40 should understand migration 'as something that is structured by wider processes shaping
41
42 society'. As the examples in this article have demonstrated, ageing is one of these significant
43
44 processes, clearly shaping experiences of migration and return. One productive area of
45
46 analysis in studies of ageing, including Geography, is a focus on home, but this could move
47
48 beyond the home as a site of care provision by family and (migrant) care workers to more
49
50 broadly encompass the meaning and significance of home in later life. Blunt and Dowling
51
52 (2006) urge us to consider the home critically by, firstly, drawing on Doreen Massey's
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 *relational* theorisation of place that would collapse the public/private dualism often over-
4
5 laid onto spaces of home. Certainly, interviewees repeatedly talked about their residential
6
7 histories with a limited sense of agency. The multiple migration(s) and return(s) that led to
8
9 repeated home unmaking and remaking across the life course, were never accounted for as
10
11 a sequence of rational decisions and planned relocations but, instead, as responses to
12
13 political changes and events in the world around them, the practices (sometimes whimsical)
14
15 of an employing institution; or the decisions of a parent responding to moral discourses
16
17 about the best place for a child to be educated. Furthermore, of most interest here, British
18
19 returnees have talked about their home-making in terms not only in terms of more personal
20
21 and corporeal experiences of ageing, but also in reference to the cultures of ageing they
22
23 encountered around them.
24
25
26
27
28

29 Blunt and Dowling (2006) also theorise the home as both a material and affective space. It is
30
31 clear from the examples discussed above that these different dimensions of the meaning of
32
33 home are intimately entwined in how British returnees conceptualise and experience home.
34
35 There is no typical materiality to the homes of the British returnee: some of my
36
37 interviewees are multiple home-owners while others rent; some live in grand and expensive
38
39 properties, others in one-bedroom sheltered housing; some have few possessions they care
40
41 little for, others have some especially treasured belongings or large collections of souvenirs.
42
43 Likewise, their emotional experiences of imagining and recreating 'home' on return are
44
45 similarly diverse. However, what is consistent across the interviewees is that Baxter and
46
47 Brickell's (2014) notion of home un/making is particularly pertinent to explore this domestic
48
49 and emotional process of return. Furthermore, a focus on the stories of 'home lives' has
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 provided significant insights into processes of ageing and migration, leading me to suggest
4
5 that this is an important methodological tool.
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

For Peer Review

References

Baxter R and Brickell K 2014 For Home *UnMaking Home Cultures* 11, 133-144

Blunt A and Dowling R 2006 *Home* Routledge, London

Brickell K 2012 'Mapping' and 'doing' critical geographies of home *Progress in Human Geography* 36 225 - 244

Buffel T 2015 Ageing migrants and the creation of home: mobility and the maintenance of transnational ties *Population, Space and Place*

Daatland S Biggs S eds 2004 *Ageing and diversity: multiple pathways and cultural migrations* Policy Press, London

Dyck I Kontos P Angus J McKeever P 2005 The home as a site for long-term care: meanings and management of bodies and spaces *Health and Place* 11 173-185

Findlay A McCullum D Coulter R Gayle V 2015 New mobilities across the life course: a framework for analysing demographically linked drivers of migration *Population, Space and Place* 21 390-402

Gardner K 2002 *Age, narrative, and migration: the life course and life histories of Bengali elders in London* Berg, Oxford

Hollway W and Jefferson T 2000 *Doing qualitative research differently: free association, narrative and the interview method* Sage, London

Hopkins P Pain R 2007 Geographies of age: thinking relationally *Area* 39(3) 287-294

- 1
2
3 **Horn V and Schweppe C** eds 2015 *Transnational aging – current insights and future*
4 *challenges* Routledge, New York
5
6
7
8 **Hoskins J** 1998 *Biographical objects: how things tell the stories of people's lives* Routledge,
9
10 Londo
11
12
13 **Johnson R and Bibbo J** 2014 Relocation decisions and constructing the meaning of home: a
14 phenomenological study of the transition into a nursing home *Journal of Aging Studies* 30
15
16 56-63
17
18
19
20
21 **Karl U and Torres S** eds 2016 *Ageing in Contexts of Migration* Routledge, Oxon
22
23
24 **Marcoux S** 2001 The 'casser maison' ritual: constructing the self by emptying the home
25 *Journal of Material Culture* 6 213-235
26
27
28
29
30 **Meijering L Lager D** 2014 Home-making of older Antillean migrants in the Netherlands
31 *Ageing and Society* 34 859-875
32
33
34
35 **Miller D** 2001 *Home Possessions: material culture behind closed doors* Berg, Oxford
36
37
38 **Milligan C** 2009 *There's no place like home: people, place and care in an ageing society*
39 Ashgate, Aldershot
40
41
42
43 **Mowl G Pain R and Talbot C** 2000 The ageing body and the homespace *Area* 32 189-197
44
45
46
47 **Ní Laoire C** 2007 The 'green green grass of home'? Return to rural Ireland *Journal of Rural*
48 *Studies* 23 332-344
49
50
51
52 **Percival J** 2013 *Return Migration in Later Life: International Perspectives* Polity Press, Bristol
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

- 1
2
3 **Schwanen T, Hardill I and Lucas S** 2012 Spatialities of ageing: the co-construction and co-
4 evolution of old age and space *Geoforum* 43(6) 1291-1295
5
6
7
8 **Skinner M W, Cloutier D, Andrews G J** 2014 Geographies of ageing: progress and
9 possibilities after two decades of change *Progress in Human Geography* 39(6) 776-799
10
11
12
13 **Tarrant A** 2016 The spatial and gendered politics of displaying family: exploring material
14 cultures in grandfathers' homes *Gender, Place and Culture* 23 969-982.
15
16
17
18 **Tolia-Kelly D** 2004 Locating processes of identification: studying the precipitates of re-
19 memory through artefacts in the South Asian home *Transactions of the Institute of British*
20 *Geographers* 29 314-329
21
22
23
24
25
26 **Varley A** 2008 A place like this? Stories of dementia, home and the self *Environment and*
27 *Planning D: Society and Space* 26 47-67
28
29
30
31
32 **Varley A and Blasco M** 2001 Exiled to the home: masculinity and ageing in urban Mexico
33 *The European Journal of Development Research* 12 115-138
34
35
36
37 **Walsh K Näre L** eds 2016 *Transnational migration and home in older age* Routledge, London
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46

47
48 ¹ Brickell (2012) also urges Geographers to explore their responsibility beyond the
49 documentation of such geographies, highlighting participatory methodologies and activism.
50 I am sympathetic to this argument and it could have a lot to offer to those exploring home
51 and ageing. I do not focus on this part of Brickell's argument in this paper because the
52 British returnees I have interviewed are far from marginalised in her terms but, nonetheless,
53 it would be wrong to consider their privilege as complete or consistent, as becomes evident
54 in the analysis.
55
56
57
58
59
60