

The Dynamics of Localizing Home in Foreign Territories. Perspectives on Home-making and Media-related Practices among Migrant Households

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Abstract

This article explores perspectives and concepts for examining processes of migrant home-construction and meaning-making, and the role of media technologies in these dynamics. The household figures as the main locus of orientation, while theoretical perspectives on domestication and practice provide novel frames for understanding migrant everyday living and media relations, reaffirming a *place-based* analytical orientation. The justification for focusing on homes and local places, and on anchoring experiences in daily household activities and routines, is not to avoid aspects of distant connectivity, symbolic attachment and cultural identification to other spaces. Rather, the perspectives employed anchor these aspects in situated, place-based practices and orientations, and the analysis empirically grounds a multi-dimensional understanding of home-construction. In brief, the article argues that any apparent disconnection from place is still heavily entangled in place-based practices, contingencies, moralities and constraints. Implied in this reorientation is a suggested movement away from methodological nationalism towards everyday perceptions and practices, avoiding a bounded, essentialistic and conflated conception of identity, community and culture. The theoretical and empirical investigation suggests opening up the proposed conceptual apparatus in order to better encapsulate the complexity and multi-dimensionality of migrant everyday living.

Keywords: Media technology, migrants, household, domestication, practice, place

Introduction

Modern migration has directed academic attention to transnational physical and communicative spaces, to ethnically-based group consciousness, and to the challenges of migrant minority inclusion in majority culture and social life (Clifford, 1994; Cohen, 1997; Gilroy, 1997; Anthias, 1998). With the diffusion of modern media and communication technologies, the potential for further mobility of body and mind, for new ways to communicate and consume, and for multiple symbolic identifications beyond the national "imagined community" (Anderson, 1983) has led to examinations of the multifarious spaces that migrants are or may be part of in their everyday lives (Karim, 2003; Christiansen, 2004; Georgiou, 2006; Bailey et al., 2007). This has often come at the expense of attention to immediate *place-based* experiences and notions

of belonging among migrants, at least beyond studies of diaspora-specific local community building (although attended to more generally by e.g. Appadurai, 1995; Morley, 2000; 2001).

This article works from the assumption that any attempt at understanding the complexity of migrant existence needs to anchor its analysis in the immediate local routines, experiences, perceptions and understandings that are developed and negotiated "in place". By the same token, this grounding of meaningful activities (tied to local and distant spaces), as well as identifications and attachments (both practical and symbolic), necessitates an *in-depth empirical exploration* if we are to grasp these multifaceted and often contradictory experiences, activities and social connections. This article therefore also argues that *locality attention* (to specific neighbourhoods) rather than *ethnic attention* (to specific ethnic or diasporic groups) will allow for a more open interpretation of regular practices and perceptions. This aspect is particularly pertinent when studying co-ethnic and multi-generational households, where the "purity" of the ethnic dimension is challenged.

By examining the empirical diversities of placed-based activities and home construction, and the role of media technologies in these dynamics, this article places itself in the revisionist continuum of previous migration literature, which proposes moving beyond methodological nationalism and opening up the analytical apparatus. In this way one may capture wider transnational and local dynamics than when attending to a bounded orientation of cohesive host-national and ethnic community units of study (see Glick Schiller, 2007; Wimmer, 2007). Hence, the idea is to search for ways of and tools for analysing transnational experiences that allow for hybrid orientations, intra-ethnic divergence and multiple senses of identification and belonging – which still have *local place* and *the household* as starting-points.

This article draws on two theoretical inspirations that have been used traditionally, but not exclusively, in studies of Western behaviours; the *domestication theory* perspective and a *practice-oriented* perspective. These two frameworks accord with the article's ambition of examining the *enculturation* of media technology within domestic value systems (domestication perspective) and the *embedding* of media technology in recurring and routinized activities (practice perspective). This analytical positioning posits media engagement and domestic practices as *mutually constituting* in producing and localizing the migrant home.

The article is inspired by the shedding of the classic boundedness of identity, culture and community (see section below). Rather than attending to individual or ethnic group identities or community-formation, it looks at various ways of creating belonging and a sense of home and community through a *place-based orientation* (the local living area). The article further examines three household cases, taking the *household unit* as a departure point, suggesting a multi-dimensional approach to migrant home-making. In order to

position the argumentation and the ensuing analysis within a migration/transnationalism framework, the article first runs through a re-assessment of some conceptual understandings.

Transnational Perspectives

The classic orientation in migration research has implicitly been that of *methodological nationalism* (Brubaker, 2005; Glick Schiller, 2007; Wimmer, 2007), studying immigrants and ethnic minority groups in an oppositional relation to the incumbent majority population of the host society. This approach considers relevant social processes to be contained within the borders of individual nation-states, inhabited by a population that shares common values, norms, customs, institutions and history. This systems theory, or "container theory" of society, conflates the society and nation-state concepts (Glick Schiller, 2007, p. 50), while migrants are categorized as separate ethnic groups and as bearers of discrete cultures. This perspective reproduces assumptions of cultural differences and social incompatibilities that "must" be overcome in order to enable full integration or assimilation of migrants/ethnic minorities within the social structure and cultural system of host nations. Within such a classic Herderian approach (Wimmer, 2007, p. 8) it is assumed that ethnic category/identity, community and culture are all collapsed into one social phenomenon.

Consequently, immigrants face a "total" and simultaneous identity-culture-community transformation in order to "fit into" host societies. Disregarding this problematic conflation, the *ethnic group* still figures as the primary unit of analysis in studies of migration settlement, transnational migration and diaspora, notwithstanding extensive research on the *constructed nature* of ethnic identities and group boundaries, and on the *internal divisions* of class, gender, generation, religion, region of origin, etc. (Glick Schiller, 2007, p. 51). In this way identifications and modes of settlement become *predefined* rather than seen as a result of critical investigation into the potentially heterogeneous identities, practices and social ties of migrants/ethnic minorities.

Some recent revisions have attempted to shed the dominance of methodological nationalism in transnational, diaspora and global city studies by moving towards, for example, a notion of *transnational social fields* (Glick Schiller, 2007, p. 53). These attempts to go beyond "national boundedness" have identified the multiplicity of connections and mediations within and between migrant and diasporic communities, and their multiple senses and constructions of belonging (Georgiou, 2006, p. 137). Notions such as creolization, hybridity and multiple identities have overcome the conjecture that ethnic groups reside in and identify with specific territories (Glick Schiller et al., 1995; Vertovec, 1999; Wimmer, 2007).

Others have advocated *active, regular* and *sustained* social connectivity across national borders as the main characteristics of modern transnationalism (Garret, 2011, p. 5).

The concept of *diaspora*, figuring as an intermediate concept between the local and the global (Gillespie, 1995; Georgiou, 2006), is used with reference to migrant people who stand between (or within) two or more cultures (Hall, 1990; Anthias, 1998). Diaspora scholars have produced a re-orientation away from fixed identities and national orientations, to focus on dynamic identifications and transnational connectivity (Cohen, 1997; Tsagarousianou, 2004). Still, diaspora studies have been critiqued for a certain analytical boundedness that results from defining the unit of study as people who share an ancestry and whose unity persists despite dispersal (Glick Schiller, 2007, p. 54). Hence there is a conceptually taken-for-granted commitment to transnational *connectedness* inherent in this perspective – an understanding that diasporas form “natural communities” based on ancestral, ethnic bonds.

There are also other pre-given assumptions in the conceptual apparatus, either that diasporas are forcibly expelled from their homeland and socially marginalized in their host countries (Garret, 2011, p. 6), or that they have succeeded in opposing assimilation without losing cultural particularity (Georgiou, 2006, p. 4). Although these conditions may be empirically true in many cases, Brubaker (2005, p. 12) contends that migration scholars should not use the term diaspora in such a substantialist manner, as a bounded entity or typology for measuring empirical findings against, but rather as a category of analysis (a way of formulating the identities and loyalties of a population). Speaking of *diasporic stances, projects, claims* and *practices* is more fruitful than studying the degree or form of support for a diasporic project among a constituency (Brubaker, 2005, p. 13).

To counter these substantialist concepts and analytical pitfalls of methodological nationalism, Wimmer (2007) proposes, in relation to migration studies more generally, a comparative analytical approach and the study of *subjective perceptions* of cultural coherence or difference by actors rather than of objectively defined cultures. In this way any assumption of cultural difference between minority and majority groups (and of intra-ethnic diversity) becomes an *empirical question*, rather than being based on *a priori* assumptions. Hence, the analysis must distinguish between ethnic *identities/categories* and *cultures*, and must enable the study of their *interrelationships* (Wimmer, 2007, p. 16). One alternative direction in this “de-ethnicizing” design is a *locality orientation*, where immigrant neighbourhoods, rather than specific ethnic groups, become central to the study. Thus, notions of belonging and community can be defined in cross-ethnic terms (Wimmer 2007, p. 28) and migrants can be seen as constitutive actors in multiple social settings (Glick Schiller, 2007, p. 64). This leaves the orientations towards homeland, transnational groups, diasporic networks (or host nations) as potentially relevant to the construction of home and belonging. The degree, intensity and direction of such relations are, however, tasks for empirical investigation.

Theoretical and Methodological Perspectives

Theorizing migrant homes

It is claimed that forces of globalization, migration and technology dissolve identity as well as place, enabling variations in identity negotiation and eventually fragmenting families and homes (Cohen, 1997; Putnam, 2000; Georgiou, 2006). Castells (1996), however, claims that, even though the role of place may gradually decrease in our modern technology-infested world, most people will perceive their everyday lives to be place-based. And place is lived space, not dead space, implying that people *construct* their own places, which cannot be conceived of simply as "settings for social action" (Rodman, 1992, p. 652) – they are meaningful in manifold ways. The notion of home as a construct is furthered by Silverstone (1994, p. 26), who claims, like Rodman, that home is only relevant in terms of *what people make of it*.

Morley (2001) speaks of home as both a physical place and the symbolic idea of "Heimat", the spaces of belonging. Ward (2006, pp. 147-148) also speaks of home as symbolic and material, a place constructed by the respective members of the household through their *interactions*. This coincides with Garret's (2011, p. 48) position that the construction of home is a *group effort*. Of all social relations, the one with immediate family and the home can be considered central to the lives of most people. This is where people experience physical co-location over extended time, and where a sense of stability in a life full of changes is provided. Home becomes a synonym for familiarity, intimacy, security and identity (Georgiou, 2006, p. 85). Consequently, home (private/domestic space) can be considered a highly crucial departure point where individuals start developing a sense of being and a position in the world.

In terms of migrant households, Sarah Ahmed points out that home-construction for migrants involves a combination of the *original home* as a major reference point and the *new home* as an everyday sensory experience (Ahmed, 1999, p. 341). These multiple references potentially imply complex domestic meaning-making processes, fluctuating and permeable boundaries and multiple spatial connectivities; in other words, some sense of *mobility* and *impermanence* (Garret, 2011) and of *ambiguity* and *incompleteness* (Georgiou, 2006, p. 99). There has also been a focus on the *threats* or *pressures* related to migrant homes and their boundaries, where the home is perceived as the primary bulwark against the influences of the host culture (Morley, 2000, p. 52), and where media destabilize the home in its attempt to achieve *ontological security* (Giddens, 1990; Georgiou 2006, p. 85). However, in relation to the media, there has also been a considerable focus on how they can assist the migrant home, in terms of maintaining transnational ties and spaces (Glick Schiller, 1995), in creating multiple and hybrid identities and presences of home (Naficy, 1993; Georgiou, 2006), and in sustaining local home-life and managing experiences of cultural separation (Karim, 2003; Aksoy & Robins, 2003).

These aspects call attention to how we ought to analytically approach and represent the home/family and its boundaries in order to avoid essentializing the home as a consistent and cohesive unit prior to analysis. This includes perceptions of standardized household membership, clearly defined boundaries between private and public, and seeing the domestic home as a *micro-social replica* of the larger national socio-culture in which the household is embedded. This is particularly pertinent when focusing on migrant homes which are potentially stretched between various cultural reference-points and subjected to intra-ethnic and intra-household gender, generational, and ethnic dynamics.

Domesticating media technology and practicing the everyday

The domestication theory perspective accords with the previous argumentation. It provides concepts that enable critical involvement with the *internal dynamics* and *meaning-making processes* within the domestic sphere (Silverstone & Hirsch, 1992; Silverstone, 1994; Lie & Sørensen, 1996; Berker et al., 2006). It addresses grounded *empirical research* on individuals and households and the ways in which everyday lives are actually *lived, perceived* and *articulated*. For this purpose the *household* is considered a highly relevant unit of analysis, being the most common social and economic entity in society and the main container of everyday social life. This is the place of families, of child rearing, and of safeguarding against public intrusions. The theoretical framework of domestication also strives to understand the role of a variety of *media technologies* and the ways in which households relate to and make sense of these – the processes of “taming wild things” and of bringing these (machines, ideas, values, information) home and bringing them under control.

This engagement involves appropriating, incorporating and redefining things and meanings in accordance with household values, interests and projects. In this sense media technologies are *doubly articulated*: as physical objects that need to be integrated into a *place*, and as messages that need to be acceptable and to fit with household temporalities and values. Through these articulations, households are seen to relate their domestic and private doings to public systems and discourses (Silverstone, 1991, p. 135). Hence the household must always be understood *relationally*, as dependent on the juxtaposition of inside and outside (Silverstone, 2006, p. 233). Consequently, domestication theory is not only preoccupied with domestic dynamics, but also highly sensitive to *micro-macro relationships*, seeing households as part and parcel of the larger transactional system of economic and social relations (Silverstone et al., 1992, p. 16).

This activates challenges of *boundary maintenance* between the private and public realms, and addresses the often *paradoxical relations* formed with media technologies as these enable public transgressions of domestic boundaries. In these transgressions the *moral economy* is activated. This concept explicates how

relations and practices are guided within the family, containing values that may shift or become contested depending on life phase, family power relations, gender or generational issues. The moral economy is signified by *routine and ritualized* household behaviour (Silverstone & Hirsch, 1992), and *everyday practices* are the moral economy's most prominent form of expression (Hartmann, 2006, p. 84). The appropriation of media and technology makes explicit potentially contradictory relations between distinct moralities valorized within the families, and these constraints and possibilities work themselves out over time given the moral economy in which such relationships exist (Hirsch, 1992, pp. 209-210). The domestication perspective further claims that different households in contemporary society *share elements* of their moral economies, according to their positions within the social structure, but also reveal particular and *unique cultures* (Silverstone et al., 1992, p. 18).

In brief, the domestication framework can be perceived as a way of conceptualizing the "enculturation" (Strathern, 1992) or the "contextualization" and "taming" (Helle-Valle & Slette-meås, 2008) of media technologies, bringing out meanings that are mediated and negotiated between the public and the private/domestic. This perspective is promising in the context of the present analysis. However, the challenge of applying the perspective to migrant/ethnic minority households is that it was originally intended for Western contexts and household situations, although claiming to be open to a variety of social congregations. However, assumed binary distinctions inherent in the conceptual framework – of what is perceived to be private/public, home/away, near/distant and familiar/foreign – do not necessarily correspond to the experiences of migrants. The same is true in relation to the partly conflated relationship between micro-social culture (family) and macro-social culture (nation), where the media play a crucial role in the assumed creation of an *imagined community* (Anderson, 1983).

Now, the point of introducing a *practice-oriented perspective* as an inspiration for analysis is that it enables analytical systematization of articulated actions, routines and rituals within the household by bringing these into a wider conceptual framework. In this way we can look beyond particular acts and behaviours and interpret these, at a more generalized level, as *recurring practices* where meanings are shared and identified across cases and at various levels, even though they do not necessarily consist of identical behaviours or motivations for action. This emphasis on practices may strengthen the already implicit practice-orientation of the domestication theory. It may also deepen the attention to routinized action, as well as identify any shared practice relations between domestic and public realms.

The practice-theoretical orientation has been re-introduced recently within consumer studies (Shove & Pantzar, 2005; Warde, 2005; Halkier & Jensen, 2011) and within media studies more specifically (Coudry, 2004; Bräuchler & Postill, 2010). The main theoretical inspirations for these developments originate in the more recent works of Schatzki et al. (2001) and of Reckwitz (2002). Reckwitz defines practice theories as a

diffuse range of perspectives that share a label, but which are not unified into a coherent theory. The turn to practices in social theory, according to Reckwitz, is linked to a more recent academic interest in the "everyday" (Reckwitz, 2002, p. 244). Practices imply *ordinary and routinized* behaviours and *shared ways of ascribing meaning* to the world by a community of subjects, while people are seen as "carriers" of such practices. The justification for attending to mundane and repetitive behaviours is that this is *what people do* in their everyday lives, what occupies their *time and space*, creates *reassurance and predictability*, and that it must therefore be reckoned to be both *relevant and meaningful*. The turn to practice (at least in consumption research) is also a critique of the dominant schema in much research that focuses almost entirely on *symbolic meanings* and *identity formations* in consumption, leaving practical, routine and mundane aspects out of the analysis (Warde, 2005; Halkier & Jensen, 2011). Turning to empirical and methodological concerns, practice theory can be viewed as a more *holistic and grounded* approach than other cultural theories (Hargreaves, 2011), enabling several perspectives and dimensions to be included in the analysis and favouring the *ethnographic approach*.

In terms of media studies more specifically, the "practice turn" came with Couldry's (2004) call for a new paradigm within media research, taken further in Bräuchler and Postill's 2010 anthology *Theorising Media and Practice*. In the introduction, Postill (2010, p. 19) addresses the need for more *practical and empirical* research, while mediated processes and attention to media text is discounted relative to the practical ramifications of *media-related* practices. Bird (2010, p. 86) supports this direction, emphasizing that a focus on practices helps with the conceptualization of what to study *in relation to the media* in everyday life – beyond media texts. Hence, the rather abstract orientation of Reckwitz (2002) gives way to a more pragmatic orientation (see Warde, 2005; Couldry, 2010).

The challenge of applying a practice-type perspective to media-related activities within migrant households is that meaningful collective and social performance is often *culturally specific* (Rouse, 2006). This begs the question of what are considered to be shared, meaningful and familiar practices, in particular among people who migrate to new cultural settings, who establish homes in potentially "foreign" environments, and who incorporate routines that need to accord with both domestic and (various) public temporalities and moralities. These issues must be addressed when drawing on a practice perspective in media/migration research.

Methodological positioning

The data to be analysed here is of a qualitative character, being *ethnographically informed* in response to the call by Walcott to distinguish between *doing ethnography* and *borrowing ethnographic techniques*

(Walcott, 2008, pp. 43-44). Hence the main bulk of data consists of in-depth, semi-structured interviews (including some observation) with 19 migrant/ethnic minority families living in urban areas in the Eastern part of Norway. The studies were conducted in three locations (Kvale, 1996; see also Lull, 1990 on the internal validity of ethnographic analysis).

A key point is that the interviews and observations were carried out in the *actual homes* of migrant families, providing settings that eased reflection on home-bound activities and orientations, including mental cues and references to daily routines, local and distant relationships, and media and communication practices. Hence, specific types of media were not singled out *a priori* as central or meaningful. Their relevance appeared through the actual presence of the technologies in the homes, and through the various discourses and daily routines tied to their uses. In this way attention was given to the *internal dynamics of domestic units*, implying a variety of articulations depending on household composition, presence of household members in the interviews, their language competence, technology ownership, as well as gender and generational factors.

Most of the households consisted of typical "core" families, while some could be termed "single" households and others "extended" households. Differences also existed in terms of country of origin; while some interviewees were born and raised in Norway, others were born in non-Western countries. Finally, some households were either co-ethnic or differed in terms of length of time living in Norway.

In terms of sites/subjects, the central idea was to embed the research in *specific urban areas* where migrant/ethnic minority density is substantial, rather than to focus on particular ethnic groups. A primary focus on ethnic categories is often critiqued for reproducing essentialist interpretations, inscribing cultural and biological characteristics on individuals which subsequently provide explanations for behaviour (Gilroy, 1997). Country of origin is, however, used as a categorizing label in the analysis (see Rydin & Sjöberg, 2008; Nikunen, 2008).

This grounding of data in *place* rather than in *social categories* implies the facilitation of a primary focus on common, recurring or divergent migrant experiences as they unfold and are understood from a place-based perspective. Hence, the households in each location were constrained by the same material structures, constraints and demographics, although these may have been *perceived* differently by the household members.

A primary horizontal examination of all 19 households¹ (not presented in this article) was conducted in order to identify and categorize aspects that could inform the analysis of migrant home-making and belonging. This investigation, revealing five dimensions relevant to home-construction, provided a

¹ To appear in a forthcoming publication.

foundation for the analysis in this article of three case studies.² Of the interviews related to the three cases, the first was conducted in 2004 and the other two in 2009. The various dimensions will be presented briefly in the next subsection, before being collated and analyzed in the three case studies.

Conceptualizing “home” through five dimensions

Acknowledging the complexity of migrant homes, it is argued here that the dynamics of home-construction should be approached through several different perceptions. Consequently, a set of five dimensions that practically, symbolically and emotionally encapsulate such processes was developed:

The locality dimension

The first operational category or dimension addresses the perceptions held by one or several members of a household in terms of the *social and material conditions of the local neighbourhood* (or housing cooperative, more specifically). These perceptions may be formed through practical engagement with the locality or through negotiating stereotypes and reputations present in local discourses. They may involve senses of familiarity or foreignness, of inclusion or alienation. These perceptions ground the daily material and social sense that migrants make of a diverse local and cultural environment. They are the *perceived physical and social context* for practicing daily activities which may facilitate or constrain the various dreams or projects of households and their members.

The local network dimension

The second category focuses on the perceptions of who the household members *feel connected to* in the local environment, and who they *actually engage with* in social practices. The perception and practicing of social relationships in the locality may include relatives, cultural/diasporic groups from the homeland, or neighbours more generally. These provide different connections that give information on the immediate social environment of migrant homes and indicate the degree of social activity or isolation that single members or households experience. The way families connect and maintain local social relationships can be interpreted as *place-based practices of communication*.

The dimension of belonging

The dimension of belonging is a concept addressing identifications and feelings of connection and belonging in both a *symbolic* and a *practical* sense, and these aspects can be both *local* and *distant* in

² See Flyvbjerg (2006) on the value of case studies

orientation. This dimension poses no *a priori* "belongings"; rather, these appear through respondents' articulation of what belonging means to them. As such, belonging can manifest itself in practical ways (e.g. where children grow up or where job opportunities are) or in symbolic ways (e.g. pride in the motherland or identification with Western democratic values), or they may appear in various combinations of these. These senses of belonging are considered foundational, as well as fluctuating, in terms of home-making dynamics.

The distant network dimension

This dimension focuses on the actual practices of communication regularly performed with distant networks. It involves reaching out to *other communicative spaces* than the local ones. Still the communication acts are "performed in place" (by the use of communication media) and hence need to be incorporated into the temporal and spatial structures of migrant domesticities. Such practices may provide information on the need of households to maintain contact with relatives and friends, either to sustain social ties and language skills, to be "culturally informed" and updated, or to alleviate longing and compensate for any lack of local social engagement.

The cultural consumption dimension

This last dimension involves practices of cultural/symbolic consumption (leaving aside mediated social communication which is addressed in the context of the distant network dimension). These practices often involve media technologies, whether directly for the sake of personal gratification, as a social requisite joining or separating family members, or as a constituent part of wider household practices. This dimension accentuates the internal meaning-making dynamics of the households and the relevance and role of technologies in sustaining daily routines and temporalities. It sheds light on the need to access local, distant, historic or new cultural spaces. These (often media-related) practices of cultural consumption may also provide information on internal social divisions (gendered, generational and ethnic) within the households.

Together these dimensions represent different (and occasionally conflicting or supplementary) angles on understanding the processes of domestication and home-construction. The analyses of these dimensions in the three cases do not provide an exhaustive picture of the households investigated. Instead, they offer some insights into how the households navigate and identify with various spatial and temporal domains, including their multi-faceted cultural connectivities.

The Uni-culturally Oriented Household

The co-ethnic family, consisting of an Iranian father and a mother from a former Soviet republic,³ lives in a suburb outside Oslo. Their only son, aged six, was born and raised in Norway. On the subject of local conditions the father stated: "Yes, we like it here. There are many foreigners living here. There are fewer drug addicts and alcoholics than in central Oslo". He also referred to the many "poor people" living in the area, people they identified with. The parents' dominant project, and their aim of providing the best possible upbringing and future opportunities for their son, becomes visible in the following statement by the father: "I believe it is a good environment for children, that is the most important thing to me, to grow up in a good environment and have a good upbringing". Hence the parents' perception of the present living environment coincides with their vision of a sound area in which to establish a home (*the locality dimension*).

The family has no other relatives living in Norway. In terms of local network and socializing opportunities, they depend on good relations with neighbours and on meeting people through their son's school and leisure activities. Apart from such socialization, the parents' articulations sustain the impression that they have established highly family-centric practices. Everything they do they do together: week-end television, local trips, library excursions, and family swimming trips. When the local library closed down they lost a major local source of cultural consumption (Internet access, books and electronic media, and free children's activities).⁴ The family's constrained economic situation forces the parents to set priorities, justifying their lack of broadband connection: "When he [the son] goes out [to the swimming pool] and wants a hot dog, I cannot say no. I need money to buy this. I cannot tell him I have paid for the Internet or for my mobile phone", the father maintained. The parents often prioritize leisure experiences and cultural activities, which again confirms their attentiveness to family socialization and to their son's cultural learning (*the local network dimension*).

Due to the father's political views, he cannot travel to his home country of Iran. Occasionally they visit the mother's home country. Although coming from different cultures, the parents seem to nurture the same ideas and values, in particular regarding their son. They seem to have constructed their *moral economy* and cultural values anew, basing these on local values, rules and customs. Although they both miss their home countries, they do not allow this to interfere with their project of adjusting to Norwegian society: "Sometimes I fall asleep and miss my country (...) but I cannot miss it because he [the son] cannot be there", the father said. He continued: "He's growing up here. He's learning rules, laws and customs and these things here. And I cannot go there... one heart here and one heart there. It is difficult for us." The

³ This latter country of origin has been abstracted to region for the purpose of anonymization. The same has been done in the next case.

⁴ Tufte and Riis (2001) address the importance of local libraries in multi-ethnic environments, both in terms of access to services, socialization, and generally as an element in producing locality.

father dwelt on this aspect of his son's smooth "assimilation" into Norwegian culture and society: "Yes, that is the most important thing for us... everything we do in Norway, we started anew in Norway, we are new people and (...) everything for the child, everything for the child". In this way their home-construction is greatly informed by the strategy of creating a sense of belonging to *one place*, the host nation (*the belonging dimension*).

Being mostly oriented towards Norwegian culture and values, the main connection to their respective homelands is sustained through communicating with family members. Like most other families in this study, they use phone cards purchased at "immigrant shops" to make phone calls abroad. Even though it is more expensive for the mother to call home, they allocate conversation time on the phone evenly. This regular practice of calling relatives appears to be highly important for the parents in order to compensate for, and to balance and sustain, their "uni-cultural" project (*the distant network dimension*).

In terms of cultural consumption and media-related activities the family only has cable television to negotiate and incorporate into their domestic culture. They have no satellite channels or Internet connection. Due to their preoccupation with host-country norms and rules in their child-rearing project, they are attentive to any television channels that do not correspond with their new and emerging moral economy. Hence, several channels have been physically removed, including children's channels such as the Cartoon Network. This is due to the parents' disapproval of bad language, violent content, and the 24-hour scheduling of programs. They also regulate the son's TV behaviour to avoid television dependency (see Livingstone, 2007). The mother argued that children's TV from the Norwegian national broadcaster was excellent, both for the son and for the parents, assisting their cultural learning. This indicates that television is not "naturally" domesticated in the family, but contingently negotiated and regulated.

In terms of the parents own home-cultural or "ethnic" media consumption, they sometimes watch Swedish channels that broadcast Iranian movies, or a Turkish cable-channel that provides music. Occasionally they rent VHS tapes and watch Iranian movies. Furthermore, the father engages with local diasporic radio programmes for Iranians, participating in debates on current issues discussed within the Iranian community. Once he stated on the air that religion should be a private issue, arguing for individual freedom and religious privacy. He said that: "You [the Iranian migrants] cannot decide over me here [my religious practices in Norway]." He did not want the local ethnic group to override his family's newfound individuality and freedom. In this way the cultural consumption and media-related practices of the family mirror their highly localized life-project, as well as addressing intra-diasporic disputes and value negotiations (*the cultural consumption dimension*).

In this case we can distinguish a clearly articulated project of creating opportunities for the child by simplifying cultural references and available connections. This involves active reflection on media behaviour

and on the internalization of local norms, values and rules through domestic practices. Consequently, the parents have to be pragmatic and yield their own cultural nostalgia and longing, sustaining this primarily through contact with relatives and sporadic home-cultural media consumption. Their domestic practices and orientations reveal a complex boundary-maintenance project, in terms of which ethnic/cultural aspects and values are to be welcomed and incorporated into domesticity, and which are to be rejected. There appears to be sparse "host-local" socialization, while the inclusion of host-national culture/values seems formidable.

The Pluri-culturally Oriented Household

The co-ethnic couple, consisting of a Turkish man and a South-East Asian woman, live in a suburb outside a major Eastern Norwegian city. The man recently moved into the woman's apartment. They have no children and the woman is temporarily on sick leave awaiting a major operation. When she moved to the area she did not know anyone. Due to a bad experience with her first (ethnic Norwegian) husband, she was determined to become independent and hence bought an apartment in the only affordable area (the present one) so that no one "can throw me out", as she put it. At the time of purchase the reputation of the area was bad, and her friends told her not to move there because there were "only foreigners" living there, to which she had replied, "I am a foreigner myself". Both partners are satisfied with the area, emphasizing the attempts by the local housing cooperatives and the district administration to upgrade the area to get rid of the bad reputation (*the locality dimension*).

However, there is a difference between the two in terms of local social connectedness. The woman does not have much contact locally. She stays at home a lot and has friends mostly in other areas. There is a local South-East Asian community, but she is not actively involved with this group. The Turkish man, on the other hand, claims to know "about a hundred" people from the large Turkish community. However, he feels unconnected to a large proportion of the local group since they originate from rural conditions, live in a traditional way and are highly religious (while he asserts a more urban and secular affiliation). In a sense, the man and the woman both seem to stand a little outside their respective ethnic communities, and they both demonstrate a strong sense of independence and common direction (*the local network dimension*).

In most of the other households studied, the sense of belonging was partly tied to the practical aspect of children's whereabouts. With no children, this couple relate spontaneously to another practical aspect that indicates a sense of belonging: their future *death and burial*. The woman would prefer to die and be buried in Norway, while the man intends to live in Norway until his death, but would prefer to be buried in Turkey, where his family is located. This shows how the woman is fully connected and determined to belong to Norway, while the man has a more "practical" connection to Norway, whereas he is more "emotionally" and

culturally tied to Turkey. The woman further introduced a *bodily element* to the sense of belonging: the way she has slowly been conditioned by local circumstances in Norway in terms of temperature (becoming less heat-tolerant) and food culture (becoming intolerant to spicy food from her homeland). In general, the partners have the same idea of where they will live in the future, although the man is more connected to the local *ethnic community* (including social arenas like the café), while the woman is more strongly tied to the *domestic premises* (the physical apartment figuring as a strong symbol of home, safety, and future opportunity) (*the belonging dimension*).

Considering the woman's limited local social network, she partly compensates through weekly phonecalls with her mother. She also sends remittances home to help out, a common tradition among migrants from her country. If she occasionally maintains a long conversation with her mother (using phone cards) she "feels near" as they share details of everyday life. Hence, phone-based conversations are more intimate, but in order to reduce costs she would prefer MSN-chat as a supplement. The Turkish partner also calls his family on a regular basis. The Internet and social services like Facebook, MSN and Yahoo are used extensively, but only to communicate with friends locally and globally (*the distant network dimension*).

The woman is highly dependent on PC and broadband connection at home to enable the consumption of web-TV from her home country. The Internet is also used as a resource to gain access to Norwegian laws and regulations and to send documents to government officials. In this way the home has become a hub for connecting to, and fighting, public bureaucracy. She is not interested in technology *per se*, but it gives her *control and independence*. In a *domestication* sense there is a strong notion of *conversion* – where she utilizes the domestic appropriation of technology to access public arenas and display competence beyond the domestic realm (Silverstone et al., 1992, p. 25). She spends a lot of time on her own during daytime, being mostly online. The routine in the morning is: "He goes to work, I go to the Internet", implying that they both depart into non-domestic spaces, although she anchors her practice domestically. In addition to online search, she consumes home-country web-TV channels, since the daytime cable television supply is meagre: "I am home all the time, so the only thing I can do to pass time – because I am alone and he is at work, right – is to watch South-East Asian television".

In terms of television consumption, they generally watch a lot of regular (non-ethnic) programmes together, such as movies and soccer matches. However, the consumption of ethnic content from their respective home countries is highly individual and private. They still attempt to make ethnic TV viewing a *simultaneous* activity, not to infringe on the scarce resource of communal (non-TV) time. Nevertheless, ethnic television consumption appears to be a *temporally coinciding*, but still *spatially separated* practice; the husband watches Turkish cable channels in the bedroom and the woman watches South East Asian web-TV content in the living room. To the Turkish man, television consumption is not only a domestic

practice. He often goes down to the local Turkish café to watch soccer matches from his home country on big-screen satellite TV, simultaneously socializing with the primarily male Turkish community (*the cultural consumption dimension*).

This couple displays a similar outlook on life: the focus on future prospects of living locally as well as the diverse orientations that emerge from local and distant connectivity and from culturally oriented (and media-related) practices. Their domestic situation as a co-ethnic couple leads, on the one hand, to social activities and identifications, and, on the other hand, to private and dissimilar practices of media domestication. This exemplifies the complexity and multi-dimensionality of home-making processes in co-ethnic households.

The Culturally Ambivalent Household

The Tunisian household consists of a father, a mother and four children (three boys and a girl). The father is temporarily disabled and stays at home with the youngest child while the mother is working. The father came to Norway 22 years ago and the mother 12 years ago. They married in Tunisia and moved to the area, in the centre of Oslo, six years ago. When discussing the local neighbourhood the father stated that: "It varies, sometimes there are conflicts, sometimes you manage... there are many traditions". He articulated a challenging and dialectical relationship between Muslims (the family's own religious orientation) and other religious groups, manifested in local misunderstandings and mistrust of customs. In terms of children playing outside he finds the fenced-in backyard space convenient. The children are pragmatic in terms of play, but the social aspect is somewhat problematic since the children speak different languages. Hence the local "multi-culturality" (or "multi-religiosity") brings both advantages and disadvantages, in the father's view (*the locality dimension*).

The family is surrounded by a fairly small Tunisian community and they do not have extensive contact with this group. The father claims to be highly family-centred and content with this situation. The family regularly attends Friday prayer at the local mosque, which stands out as their main social arena. In a way it seems that the local Muslim bonds are stronger than the ethnic Tunisian relations for this family (*the local network dimension*).

Looking beyond local perception and identification, the father appears to be highly satisfied with "living in Norway", abstracting his sense of belonging away from immediate (and locally anchored) social, cultural and material aspects. He refers to Norway as his "second country" and values the freedom that social democracy grants him and his family. This enables them to be "independent all the time" and not harassed by the government. His sense of local belonging is thus signified by a strong *symbolic attachment* to

democratic values rather than by emotional ties to local customs and people. Apart from this symbolic link, he anchors his belonging in the *practical condition* of his children's whereabouts and where they can make a future.

What works against these notions of belonging are the potential conflicts that multi-culturality poses in terms of socialization and communication, as well as Norwegian customs leading to practical challenges for them as Muslims. The father constantly has to negotiate and justify to his children why they cannot engage in certain activities or eat certain foods. He would prefer his children to live more according to his own cultural mores, but acknowledges that they need to be both "a part of Norwegian culture and a part of my culture. They cannot live only according to my culture". He is ambivalent, but realistic, admitting that this process is necessary in order for the children to access Norwegian society and related opportunities, and to foster cultural reflection and critique (*the belonging dimension*).

In terms of contact with distant relatives, new means of communication make the father feel "present" (*sur place*) at all times, reducing the sense of physical distance between the family and their relatives: "I am informed all the time on how they are doing and everything, I feel I have an overview". The father has one sister in France, three brothers in Switzerland and one brother in Tunisia. They keep in touch several times a week. Since he became disabled, there has been a change in temporal routines and they now communicate more during the daytime, using IP-phone, Skype and MSN. Occasionally all five siblings communicate simultaneously and they include a web-cam in the practice. The brother who has remained in Tunisia uses his children's Internet connection, which he can only access at the weekend. Hence this *trans-domestic* communication routine is temporally dependent on the Tunisian-based brother's Internet availability (*the distant network dimension*).

In terms of (mediated) cultural consumption the family enjoys cable TV, satellite TV, and the Internet. They can access everything they need from the web and "all over the world", the father stated enthusiastically. The father also endorses his children's Internet usage because it increases their competence. But at the same time he feels a need for strict control in order to ensure safe and proper conduct. As a consequence, all Internet consumption has to be performed in the public areas of the apartment, and is thus regulated through transparency.

Regarding television, the father revealed a strong interest in news and soccer, in particular Middle-Eastern politics as presented by Al Jazeera. He does not watch the large global channels like CNN, which is a reflection of his poor English skills rather than a result of ideology. However, he watches Norwegian newscasts "almost all the time". His concern with the cultural diversity that his children can access through the media has made him remove all unsuitable or "unpleasant" channels from the satellite package. This reflects a tactic of *non-appropriation* through exclusion rather than a *taming* of technology. Conversely, he

is very keen on getting all available children's channels: "Yes all children... I need all children's channels". He has a strong belief in "proper" television as something that the children will benefit from. In terms of TV facilitating domestic sociality, there is only moderate communal TV-time in the household. The mother and the children watch soaps on Turkish or Middle-Eastern channels, while they show no interest in the programmes that the father watches, such as news and soccer (a typically gendered variation, see Gillespie, 1995).

Generally, the father stated a profound need for transnational television. A main reason for moving to the current apartment was the ability to acquire a satellite antenna in order to access foreign media: "I cannot live without satellite and the media. I cannot. It is not enough for me with cable TV. I need to look out into the world and see what happens", the father alleged. He even stated (laughingly) that it was better to be informed and hungry than to be uninformed and full. Actually, in this case satellite access partly determined the physical location of the family apartment. Hence, media technology appears to be an "existential" or ontological need for the father, something he cannot live without. One could claim that media technology in this case has become fundamental to the construction, or even the *domestication*, of home and locality (reversing the original domestication logic of technologies being moulded by domesticity), at least as seen from the father's vantage-point (*the cultural consumption dimension*).

To sum up, this case draws attention to the often ambivalent notions that households, or household members, may experience in new cultural locations. The practical, sensory and symbolic ties that are made with local and distant spaces may pull in different directions, creating a state of indetermination or uneasiness. Still, like other families with children, the overriding concern appears to be the practical project of creating opportunities for the children in the new host country. This determines much of the daily routines, even though "cultural conflicts" (also constituent in media-related practices) create ambivalence and constant negotiations within the moral economy. This complicates the notion of boundary maintenance, in terms of what is to be considered private and public, and which socio-cultural reference-points and value systems the household should navigate by.

Home-construction in Practice

In this analysis a set of five dimensions were employed to investigate conceptualizations of home among migrants, presented by way of three household case studies. The analysis focused on the households' interpretations and articulations of local and distant physical environments, social relationships, communication patterns and (mediated) cultural consumption. This examination, partly inspired by domestication and practice-theoretical concepts, reveals: 1) how such a multi-dimensional approach can

provide different access-points to understanding the complexes of home-making, 2) that these dimensions are complementary and not necessarily uni-directional or showing cross-dimensional consistencies, and 3) how the dimensions nevertheless identify diverse "cultural" directions/connections, and how these may operate within the domestic dynamics of households, aligning with practices, life projects, transnational orientations and media relations. These cases, however, are only examples of – and provide limited insights into – the full range of everyday identifications and practices of migrant households.

Still, the main purpose of this article has been to reassess the transnational perspectives related to media/migration research, as well as proposing a theoretical reorientation emphasizing home, domestication processes and media-related practices in everyday life. This includes closer attention to a *place-based* perspective that is both more practical and more empirical, and that navigates from the *household* as a main locus and starting-point for individual and collective orientations "towards the world". A less bounded, essentialistic and conflated approach to ethnic identity, community and culture is implied when these concepts encounter the complexity of migrant home construction. The *empirical* components of these notions dissolve and recombine within the dynamics of the households. Consequently, this should be reflected in the analytical apparatus with which we map these realities, leaving future analyses open to more flexible and diversified constellations of everyday migrant living.

Conclusion and Future Research

The main ambition of this article has been to address some new theoretical perspectives on media and migration, by focusing on home-making processes (and media-related engagement) among migrant/ethnic minority households. The domestication and practice perspectives provide a conceptual richness and novel tools for studying the multifaceted everyday experiences of migrants. The main idea is to identify concepts and methods that enable the study of *any* transnational experience, while at the same time accepting that most people are confined to some type of *locality* and *household existence* that define their daily lives. Acknowledging the centrality of *place* is also fundamental to this orientation, emphasizing that everyday life is to a great extent *performed and practiced* in place. With the domestication perspective, *media technology* is also introduced as an integral component in the conceptual framework. However, since both the domestication and the practice perspectives have traditionally been applied to Western social phenomena, their inbuilt concepts have not been fully developed to cater for the empirical challenges facing studies of migrant experiences (Helle-Valle & Slette-meås, 2008). Consequently, and to conclude, this article now suggests reinterpreting some conceptual notions for future studies.

First, relating to the *domestication perspective*, the concept of the *moral economy* (see Silverstone, 1991; Silverstone et al., 1992) may have diverse meanings, in particular as the concept refers to both unique (domestic) and partly shared (national/public) value-systems and schemas guiding everyday routines and relations. For migrant/ethnic minority households such value-systems may imply intense negotiations and compromises, since they link to both home and host cultures. Different and often contradictory cultural reference points may appear even more complex when studying *co-ethnic* or *multi-generational* households, and when evaluating the extent to which, and with which groups, the households *share elements* of their moral economies (Silverstone et al., 1992). This is not in itself conceptually problematic, rather the contrary, but it reveals that the moral economy is not something given or stable, or necessarily tied to a predefined, bounded notion of a local/national culture or society. Rather, it should be perceived and used analytically as something processual and flexible, reflecting spatio-temporal negotiations and compromises within the household – and between the household and its immediate and distant socio-cultural environments.

This brings us to the notion of *boundary maintenance/crossing* (Silverstone, 1994), where the *private/public* binary in particular is made relevant. Everyday life in late capitalism is dependent on the (often ambivalent) separation of the private-public relationship, Georgiou (2006, p. 7) argues. However, the domestic sphere is linked to the public for the construction of its social meanings. At the same time the public, in particular through the various articulations of the media, also threatens to dissolve this boundary. In terms of migrant/transnational households, these may rely on not only one but several public spheres – or "*sphericules*" (Cunningham, 2001) – for the construction of social meanings. As such, when studying migrant experiences the boundaries and constitution of what is considered "private" or "public" are not *a priori* given. There may be empirical variations in the articulations of the private/public divide, of the strength or permeability of this boundary, and how it stretches or extends in time and space – something that ultimately should affect how boundary maintenance is to be approached and defined analytically. This logic relates directly to other binary relationships, such as *familiar/foreign* and *near/distant*. These conceptual pairs are often addressed when strange/uncultivated/foreign mediated meanings cross household boundaries (e.g. through the *double articulation* mechanism) threatening the ontological security of the home. Hence, presuming that cultural and social familiarity is located in the physical near-field, while foreignness is located in distant spaces, is not necessarily empirically true. Examinations of actual articulated boundary constructions should reveal the relevance of such claims.

In terms of a *practice-theoretical framing*, this perspective has invited more in-depth attention to practices and routines that define household activities and orientations. The ambition has not been to analyse practices that are "out there", but rather, as a first move, to suggest a practice perspective of sorts to assist the organization of empirical activities into more encompassing routines and shared structures of

meaning. The present analysis has suggested the option of going beyond specific media-centric activities to more general media-related practices, embedding media uses in wider contexts of meaning. A practice perspective, in Bird's (2010) view, is helpful for the conceptualization of what to study *in relation to the media* in everyday life. However, what is to be interpreted as *shared meanings* should in the case of migrant/ethnic minority experience be disconnected from a notion of geographical and cultural proximity. This is particularly pertinent when recalling Rouse's point of *culturally contingent practices* (Rouse, 2006). Rather, *culturally mixed or hybrid practices* that accord with diverse public temporalities and moralities should be explored.

In brief, the main tenet of this article is that any apparent disconnection from place is still heavily entangled in place-based activities, contingencies, moralities and constraints. Everyday life and the *construction of home and locality* are fundamentally tied to household experiences and practices. The household, rather than individuals, (ethnic) groups or nations, is positioned as the main unit of analysis. Applying the notion of *household* also makes it easier to distinguish between this analytical concept and empirical ideas and stereotypes relating to *homes* and *families*. This implies that the home should not be conceived of *a priori* as a stable entity, but rather as an "embryonic community", requiring that the space in which the home is being formed is *brought under control* (Douglas, 1991, pp. 287-288). This has been highlighted through the multi-dimensional analysis of home-making and the re-interpretation of theoretical concepts. Hence, the central argument of the article is also supported: the need to decouple the migrant/ethnic-minority household from a purely bilateral relationship with conflated notions of either host-nation or homeland identity, community and culture.

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