


Luce Beeckmans, Alessandra Gola, Ashika Singh and Hilde Heynen, *Making Home(s) in Displacement: Critical Reflections on a Spatial Practice*, Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2022; 420 pp.: ISBN: 9789462702936, £53.00 (pbk)

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This edited volume opens with a beautiful picture taken in 2015 by photographer Henk Wildschut for his 'Gardens series in the Jungle', a self-built refugee camp near the seaport of Calais. Little gardens started to appear outside the makeshift tents and huts in the Jungle when it became clear to the camp residents that their stay would last longer than planned. By planting little gardens in this unwelcoming setting, the migrants in the sand dunes seemed to be striving to reconcile themselves with the situation. They used plants to create a gentler, more domestic atmosphere. The impersonality of the unofficial camp is to a certain extent diminished by this everyday practice. The photo illustrates very well the tension between the making of home on the one hand, and the displacement on the other. It is exactly this tension that the edited volume centres around.

The book critically rethinks the relationship between home and displacement from a spatial, material and architectural perspective. The two concepts of homemaking and displacement are often upheld as contradictory in the literature, but in our global world these two cannot really go unchallenged. There is a growing field of scholars who focus on people on the move and how they create home (Bocagni and Brighenti, 2015; Brun and Fabos, 2015; Dossa and Golubovic, 2019; Levin, 2016; Motasim and Heynen, 2011). This edited volume adds to this field with an explicit spatial dimension.

Conceptualising displacement as a spatial practice is innovative and shows how displacement intrinsically relates to the fabrication of the built environment worldwide. Assumed assumptions between home and displacement are unpacked and the importance of spatial agency and the impact of global politics are foregrounded.

The book is the result of a doctoral workshop and a conference in Brussels in 2019 entitled 'Displacement and Domesticity since 1945: Refugees, migrants and expats making homes'. It is divided along four spatial sites; camps, shelters, cities and the house and consists of 16 chapters. What all chapters do is show that human displacement and emplacement have long histories, each with particular trajectories. They also show that making a home is universal as well as being social, cultural and place-specific.

The fact that homes may be made in displacement might be difficult to accept for many politicians and policymakers. By putting emphasis on displaced people as actors and as active in the process of homemaking the book problematises and challenges this reductive lens on displacement. It shows how new and alternative meanings are applied to everyday living environments in displacement. Rather than considering displacement a condition of homelessness that is merely associated with loss and passivity, different contributions in the book argue that displacement is a spatial practice through which displaced populations contribute to processes of territorialisation, homemaking on different spatial scales and urbanisation.

The book argues that the construction of any homely environment is a political issue. As such, homemaking in displacement gives rise to new forms and patterns of (spatial) inclusion/exclusion and inequalities as well as geographies of power. By taking a spatial approach the book also emphasises the micro-historical accounts of homing in

displacement as well as the material expressions that are often lost in official accounts, the ones that do not make it into the archives. By making the many presumptions and multiple ambiguities with which homemaking and displacement are laden visible and understandable this edited volume also adds to a broader project of decolonising knowledge production in academia and beyond.

Parts 1 and 2 of the book are framed around the camp and shelter. Their emergence is described as a response to crisis situations, but on a different scale. They are both conceived as institutionalised, typically top-down run and they can provoke tense social and psychological damage. It is shown that camps are sites of exclusion, exception and exhaustion and that they represent a global failure to protect the most severely marginalised by our juridical and political paradigms of state nationalism. The depictions of life as it is lived in such centres and shelters help to explain the inequalities of perceptions and responses to racialised migration. The question raised in these chapters: Is it possible to conceive of such spaces as home? The refugee camp brings to the public imagination an aggregation of tents, ultimately built to be forgotten. It is important to ask the question how are we to understand the life and culture that people bring with them and develop in refugee camps along with the suffering and marginalisation built into these spaces.

Parts 3 and 4 are framed around the city and the house – sites where refugees try to build home on their own initiative, often in severe and precarious conditions, but less restricted than camps and shelters. It is shown that the meanings of home can vary even as they overlap at different axis points contingent on the material and social conditions of a locale or spanning across a number of locales, prompting trans-local and transnational identifications. The manifold spatial relations that surround migrants' and

refugees' daily lives highlight their connections with remote socio-spatial contexts through complex networks that connect the global and the local.


A strong part of the book is the analysis of the destructions of homes, like for example the demolition of Nahr-Al-Barid refugee camp in Lebanon. Destruction here refers not only to destruction of material structures and social spaces, but also to a destruction of a notion of rights and recognition, or even existential legitimacy. In looking to such experiences and the multiple ways in which forcibly-displaced people relate to living in refugee camps, there is an opportunity to broaden our understanding of home and thereby to reflect critically on current discourses which intersect questions of home (and housing) only with those of citizenship and the nation state, as well as with the top down practices of humanitarianism and development.

In sum this book brings together a large variety of material on the making and unmaking of homes in displacement as a spatial practice. Forced displacement is the focus of most chapters of the book, but some deal with a broader set of displaced people. This is an important reminder that there is not necessarily a clear dividing line between the migration of those who seek work and those who seek asylum. Moreover, the book shows the merits of interdisciplinary research. Scholars, activists and architects involved in the (re)thinking of what it means to imagine, design and create 'homes' in contexts of human displacement were brought together. These intellectual conversations around multi-perspectives from urban planning, architecture, anthropology, geography, philosophy, gender studies and urban history all provide new insights. What all authors have in common is that they take a spatial perspective on making homes in displacement. The richness of combining perspectives shines through in the different

conceptualisations of home that are discussed in this volume. There is the broader political and historical configuration that embeds the notion of home in global institutions and nation states. But also the notion of home as representing values, traditions, memories and feelings of home, as well as home as seen in the day-to-day practices of homemaking, gets a lot of attention. The visuals used throughout the book are overall very strong, also the result of an interdisciplinary approach with a strong emphasis on architecture.

Finally, an approach beyond Europe, with contributions on Palestine, Lebanon and South Africa, is also very welcoming after so many contributions on displacement focusing on Europe's 'refugee crisis' and not really paying attention to the global picture. This broader and more global perspective challenges a reproduction of Eurocentric knowledge on the topic of homemaking and displacement.

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