



Remittances and Migrating Spaces in the Context of Turkish, Vietnamese, and Korean Remigration

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The following visual essay explores the social dynamics of remittances through photographs of transnational houses, interiors, and objects in Turkey (Aksary, Kicilca), South Korea (Dogil Maeul, Namhae), and Vietnam (suburban area of Hanoi). The common thread is that all three countries share a history of migration with Germany. Furthermore, all cases show that remittances shape urban space in multiple ways.

Migration has long been a part of our globalized world. It is manifest in dramatically growing global movements of refugees on the one hand and the increasing demand for extremely mobile, flexible, and internationally trained highly skilled employees along with tourism as a global economic factor on the other. The global movement is expedited by the disappearance of national differences in the Western metropolises and by delocalization through the worldwide availability of internet services and social media. It is precisely for this reason that physical spaces are more

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important than ever for negotiations on belonging and formation of identity.

Migration can be interpreted as a window through which locals can view the world (Flusser 2007). Migrants are pioneers in comparing and combining localities: they know the frictions and contradictions of the experience of migration and have not only integrated these into their biographies, but also into their spatial sense of being-in-the-world (Heidegger 2001, p. 104). When people move and remit, spaces, images, cultural practices, and lifestyles become mobile, too and ignite social and spatial change.

In my interdisciplinary art and research projects I focus on the transformation through migration. Thus, I have been able to open up new perspectives on the “familiar,” the “typically German” by taking a foreigner’s view on my own culture and surroundings.

THE SPATIALITY OF REMITTANCES

The project “Migrating Spaces—Identity through Architecture in the Context of Turkish Remigration” (2013–2016) investigated the apartments and houses of returned migrants from Germany, which were built by former “guest workers” themselves, without an architect. The own house is a main remittances agent: saving money and bearing a modest working life in Germany allows to build a house back in Turkey. Similarly, Vietnamese migrants send back money from Germany to Vietnam not only to support their relatives, but also to commission them with the construction of a house after German architectural models. My projects “Loi chao tu Hanoi” (Bürkle 2006) and “Placemaking” (Bürkle 2009) analyze the translocal or even transnational dynamic between the country of origin or destination—and in the case of remigration—vice versa. The photographs show that the inter- and transcultural realities in migrants’ lives and the question of identity through architecture are very closely linked. These transnational relationships change the image and structure of urban spaces. In the housing projects, physical spaces, financial investment, and construction of identity convene.

In “Migratourispace” (Bürkle 2021) one of the case studies is named *Dogil Maenul*, which means “German Village.” It appears to be made up of German single-family houses from towns in Central Germany. What is translated and taken along are ideas and concepts from the migrants’ own experience: the presence of the labor migration and experiences from

working lives in Germany. These are “diasporic homescapes” (Tschoepe 2016, pp. 418–425), because here they are linked to the migration and remigration biographies of Korean nurses and their husbands, who are often German. Added to this is the role of the village as a tourist attraction in Namhae County, which has meanwhile led to the establishment of tourist infrastructure such as restaurants for day trippers, souvenir shops, and bus car parks on the periphery of the village.

This visual essay illustrates and investigates the aesthetic links between migration, space, and culture. It might also evoke thoughts about the economic aspects of homes. Further questions address the future use of these houses, their inhabitants, and possible renovations: How will these first-generation houses be used once they are inherited by children usually living in Germany? Will the houses be sold to local villagers? Will the houses be renovated or left as they are to be used by family members as holiday homes? In any case, we can assume that issue of space use will remain important for the next generation of users and that the often disproportionately large rooms, sometimes the equivalent or several floors and guest rooms will have to be adapted and updated to suit contemporary requirements.

Using visual field research made it possible to develop a typology of remigrant housing. Furthermore, interviews with the owners gave more insights and information about the design process and the meaning of built space. By intersecting scientific results and spatial aesthetics, the projects are connecting art and academic research through photographs, video stills, and graphic methods of analyzing, uncovering the socio-spatial relations. The pictures do not just illustrate a text, but they are autonomous sources of scientific knowledge. In the following photographs, I have arranged the single images into a series, a continuous band of images. The absence of captions frees the viewers from a purely content-based classification of the images, transforming them into travelers between the spaces. Isolated motifs reappear in the preceding or following image, thus creating new compositional and content-related connections beyond the images. Objects and perspectives link the pictures and form a new visual texture. Connections and transitions are the focus of the observation. Single images become interrupted, only to be continued when flipping to the next page. Hence, this series of images sheds light on the complex spatial overlapping of migration and remittances and their multi-contextuality.





























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Photographs taken in South Korea, Turkey and Vietnam by Stefanie Bürkle © VG Bild-Kunst Bonn

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