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ARTICLE

Home-making practices and social protection across borders: an example of Turkish migrants living in Germany

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Abstract This article explores how Turkish migrants in Germany turn their physical houses into homes through actual day-to-day practices. It does so by drawing on participant observation and qualitative interviews. Rather than referring to home merely as a physical place, this article investigates in detail migrants' home-making practices, particularly those activities related to social protection. In making their homes, migrants simultaneously make reference to multiple locales, material artifacts, and social relationships in countries of emigration and immigration. Through the examination of home-making practices, this article is an attempt to portray the symbolic and material expressions with transnational elements of the home unfolding in migrants' everyday life.

Keywords Home-making practices · Social protection · Migration · Transnationalism · Qualitative methods · Turkey · Germany

1 Introduction

In 1978 at the age of 31, Nilgün[1] came to Germany with some of her children to live with her labor migrant husband. During one of their family breakfasts, with all of her children and grandchildren present, they discussed their home at length. Everyone had their own imaginations, expectations, and concerns about home. Nilgün's husband was worried about the upcoming renewal of their house's roof in Turkey. Their oldest son was explaining which materials they used in Germany for repairing their house, while the younger one was trying to calculate the costs and whether and how the payment could be shared among all

[1] All names are fictitious to assure the anonymity of participants.

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the children. Nilgün was complaining about the fact that she does not receive any retirement benefits from either Turkey or Germany. She has been living as a housewife, her husband's pension was not that much, but she was nevertheless quite content to have many children surrounding and helping her at all times with things like roof repairs. Her daughter Fatma and her son Bora were talking about arranging their holiday plans in Turkey and whether they would all make it to their parents house. They also discussed when to go there, i.e., the best time to renovate the roof. Bora's wife was rather concerned, as newly weds Berrin was willing to spend their holidays in Germany together and search for a house to buy in the near future. While refilling the teacups and bringing more food from the kitchen, Nilgün's granddaughter Özlem looked at me with bored eyes and whispered:

> They talk about the house in Turkey when they are here [Germany] and the one in Germany when they are there [Turkey], and they talk, plan and plan, and I am always the tired one afterwards [because of the serving, organizing, and cleaning during the long chats as one of the youngest female in the household with such responsibilities].

Nilgün's family is only one example among many migration stories from Turkey to Germany. Most of these are born out of the *en masse* migration to Europe in 1961 with the guest worker program.[2] This example illustrates three major issues that will be addressed in this article. First, home is a web of spatial, temporal, and social relationships where informal social protection takes place. Examples include daily domestic living and care relations. Second, due to migration, a bounded or singular conception of home is challenged, and in its place a rather simultaneous existence of homes in plural locales needs to be taken into account. Third, home is constituted through home-making practices, which are composed of a wide spectrum of mundane daily activities of domestic life and the meanings attached to them by different individuals.

Despite the interest in the nexus of home and migration, there has relatively been little examination among studies which have been more disposed toward the concepts of identity and belonging as their main object of research (for exceptions see, Boccagni 2014; Dayaratne and Kellet 2008), leaving the complexities of home-making mostly underdeveloped. However, I argue that the empirical investigation of migrants' home-making practices, with special attention paid to aspects of social protection (which might well be stretched across several nation-state borders), enables us to place the home and migration nexus within a wider landscape of activities and locales. Furthermore, it allows us to link allegedly distinct realms of protective activities, which are generally investigated separately including care, education, and health. All of these diverse realms contribute to migrants' and their significant others' social protection, which might be organized differently depending on a variety of individual heterogeneities such as age, gender, ethnicity, legal status, as well as general well-being. Nevertheless, people generally migrate to protect their families and enhance their life chances in the first place, and this is closely tied to (re)making and owning homes. Therefore, the main goal of this article is to lend insights into these home-making practices.

To this end, the next section investigates the idea of home and home-making practices with respect to migration and social protection. After outlining the previous literature, the second section introduces the qualitative study conducted with Turkish migrants in Germany. The third section explores in detail the home-making practices and meanings attached to them. Finally, the concluding discussion calls for an understanding of home-

[2] According to recent estimates, there are currently four million Turkish citizens living in Europe. Of these, 80 % reside in Germany (Abadan-Unat 2011: xxii).

making practices as (re)producing symbolic and material expressions with transnational elements.

2 Home-making, social protection, and migration

'Home is considered to consist of the history and memories of the family and is the storehouse for the physical, social, psychological, or emotional wealth of its occupants' (Dayaratne and Kellet 2008: 54). The abundance of research on home across disciplines points to the closely knit nature of the concept's spatial, social, and temporal aspects. Others acknowledge that home is made through certain daily practices (see, for extensive discussions, Blunt and Dowling 2006; Deprés 1991; Mallett 2004).

2.1 Making homes across borders

Home has often been acknowledged as an architectural container where social ties, emotions, and symbolic elements intersect. This goes beyond the material reality of a physical house or land (Easthope 2004; Saunders and Williams 1988; Scott 2009). Home-making practices are those actual day-to-day domestic living experiences that transform a house into a home. Similarly, Blunt and Dowling (2006) argue that home is a process that is dependent upon regular daily maintenance, which they refer to as home-making practices. Those practices do not only include daily domestic activities but also material and symbolic processes that enable the continuation of human life over time. Home is not a static entity—it needs renewals, alterations, (re)creations, and thus, it is in a constant *making* process (cf. Dayaratne and Kellet 2008).

Mobility and migration challenge the idea of home and its manifestations by rupturing the landscape of continuous daily domestic living. When people change their geographical location for any reason, they might relocate their house or even duplicate as in Nilgün's case above. Or they simply try to find ways to settle and live where they feel comfortable.[3] This spatial aspect is particularly relevant for migrants since they cross nation-state borders, which expose them to different systems of law, regulations, ways of living, and environmental surroundings with a variety of sounds, smells, emotions, people, and artifacts. In that respect, urban and housing studies have extensively studied the living conditions of migrants, their identities, house ownership, and neighborhoods as both controversial and desirable locales (Aytar and Rath 2012; Ehrkamp 2005; Fortuijn et al. 1998; Münch 2009). Nevertheless, it has also been advocated that for transnational cosmopolitans, home represents set of personal relationships rather than a fixed locale (Nowicka 2007).

It has been argued that, for many migrants from Turkey, the acquisition of a house in their country of origin was the key motivation to migrate (Van der Horst 2010). In addition, the meaning of home ownership is usually attached to success and power in the place of origin, symbolizing economic improvement and hard work. Hence, migrants invest in the house located in the countries of emigration (Smith and Mazzucato 2009) and immigration (Myers and Woo Lee 1998). Nevertheless, it is questionable whether the notion of home as

[3] Certainly, the idea of comfort at home is problematized. For instance, home can be a location of violence, sexual abuse, rejection, hostility, anger, isolation, trauma, and fear particularly for asylum seekers, gay, and lesbians (i.e., Gorman-Murray and Dowling 2007). Likewise, home can also be conceptualized 'as a space of tyranny, oppression or persecution' (Mallett 2004: 64, see also Crenshaw 1991).

a dichotomized entity between countries of immigration and emigration truly grasps migrants' experiences and practices (Ahmed 1999). Rather, studies with a transnational lens illustrate continuity and simultaneity of migrants' lives stretched across several state borders (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004).

Previous studies indicate the simultaneous existence of homes and migrants' attachments to both countries of immigration and emigration. This occurs not only through localized practices but also through social, cultural, political, and religious ties. This notion of synchronic lives constituted by cross-border ties and practices has been termed transnationalism (Basch et al. 1994; Faist 2000; Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004). Studies with a transnational lens investigate the ties and practices at manifold levels such that of individuals, families, communities, wider social networks, and civil society organizations, all of which operate within different nation-state structures. With a transnational lens, for instance, Levin and Fincher (2010) investigate Italian houses in Australia and understand homes as material links between the countries of emigration and immigration by paying special attention to their physical aspects.

Moreover, recent studies investigating transnational home-making practices usually refer to notions such as belonging and identity as they are interconnected with places located in different nation-states. As advocated by Boccagni (2014), 'migrants' domestic spaces are worth exploring both as a major source of belonging and as a mirror of their changing belonging' (p. 279). Home consists of imaginations, experiences, memories, symbolic meanings, and feelings of attachment, belonging, and identity. According to Young (2005), home is a crucial site where 'the construction and reconstruction of one's self' (p. 153) can be continuously observed. For instance, based on the qualitative research with Turkish migrants in Marxloh, Germany, Ehrkamp (2005) argues that as a result of transnational connections as well as belonging and local attachments to their neighborhood, migrants construct a new place-based identity. Equally important is the need to investigate migrants' homes—ideally all of them—as a place where protective activities are carried out.

2.2 Social protection and home

The situated nature of home is crucial not only to understanding the context of transnational ties of migrants, which represent their daily parallel lives, but also to investigating homes as the bedrock for informal social protection activities, i.e., care relations, and financial and informational exchanges. Social protection involves a variety of tangible and intangible resources and activities that reduce social risks or that which might impede the realization of life chances, e.g., unemployment, lack of care, or malnutrition (Bilecen and Barglowski 2015; Faist et al. 2015). It is composed of both formal and informal elements and therefore enables us to investigate a wider landscape of activities that seem to exist and is analyzed separately, but are in fact actually tightly connected. Informal social protection is usually composed of family or community-based systems. Most of the existing literature on migration focuses on family and ethnically based community networks or religious communities (see, e.g., Reynolds 2006; Glick Schiller 2005). These informal network-based protective resources play a particularly crucial role in the lives of migrants who are ineligible for or excluded from access to formal welfare schemes (Sabates-Wheeler and Feldman 2011). In addition, formal social protection refers to the nation-states' welfare provisions.

Migration also challenges the way social protection is organized. It is not only the geographical distance between family members that is negotiated, but also the division of

labor within families, which is subjected to different rules and regulations. For example, previous studies investigate the gendered dynamics of care arrangements across borders (Baldassar and Merla 2014; Byrceson and Vuorela 2002) as well as the process of financial remittances (Boccagni 2011). Migrants' protective activities usually take place at their homes—an area which has been overlooked so far. Another strand of research, particularly in the field of geographical gerontology, addresses the issue of elderly home care by migrant workers (Walsh and Shutes 2013). Meanwhile, caring for ill and elderly parents has been recognized as a key motivation for return migration (King et al. 1983). However, this leaves the topic of the home as a place of protective activities unexplored. Through informal socializing events such as breakfasts or get-togethers with friends and family members at home, migrants can exchange important information—for example employment opportunities. It has been argued that those events serve an important base for Turkish migrants in Germany from which they can learn about regulations in health care and their reforms back in Turkey as well as the ways in which retirement benefits can be arranged between two countries (Bilecen et al. 2015).

I argue that transnationalization of migrants' lives leads to an increasing amount of negotiation regarding their and their families' social protection across borders, whether it be about caring for children and the elderly, or ordinary day-to-day maintenance, nurturing, or organizing activities. As migrants try to secure their livelihoods and protect themselves and their families (regardless of their location in emigration, immigration, or other countries), they engage in home-making practices (across borders), (re)producing symbolic and material expressions. I explore this below in further detail.

3 Methodology

As part of a large-scale project[4] that explored informal social protection and inequalities in Germany, this study consisted of 20 semi-structured interviews with migrants from Turkey. Interviewees had an equal gender distribution and were between the ages 25 and 85. The Table 1 summarizes the information of the participants. The sample included both Turkish and Kurdish ethnicities. The interviews were conducted in two middle-sized cities (with around 300,000 inhabitants) in northern Germany in 2011 and 2012. The interviewees were recruited using snowball sampling, starting with randomly selected religious (e.g., Alevi organizations, mosques) and non-religious entry points (e.g., integration courses) into the field. The table below displays the characteristics of the participants including gender, age, marital and migration status, years spent in Germany as well as whether and where they have real estate.

The interviewees were invited to talk about their experiences with mobility, social protection, and various other aspects of living in Germany. This included speaking about their everyday activities in private and public domains, housing situations, and their personal and social ties with those who live in Turkey and elsewhere. They discussed at length the implications of their mobility on their daily lives and social protection, stressing the transformation of their relationships with family and friends, and comparing their lives before and after migration.

[4] The name of this project is 'Transnationality, the Distribution of Informal Social Protection and Inequalities'. Funded by the German Research Foundation, it also collected data from migrants with Polish and Kazakhstani origins as well as data from various sources, such as document analysis, expert interviews, and matched interviews with interviewees' significant others in the respective emigration countries.

Table 1 Characteristics of the participants

Name	Gender	Age	Marital status	Migrant status	Real estate ownership	Years spent in Germany
Ali	Male	21–30	Married	Second generation	None	11–20
Ahmet	Male	21–30	In a relationship	Second generation	TR	21–30
Ömer	Male	31–40	Married	Second generation	TR	21–30
Lale	Female	41–50	Married	Labor migrant	TR and DE	31–40
Faruk	Male	31–40	Married	Labor migrant	TR	11–20
Süleyman	Male	61–70	Married	Labor migrant	TR and DE	41–50
Adnan	Male	71–80	Married	Labor migrant	TR	41–50
Murat	Male	31–40	Married	Second generation	TR	31–40
Nilgün	Female	61–70	Married	Family reunification	TR	31–40
Berrin	Female	21–30	Married	Second generation	DE	21–30
Münevver	Female	51–60	Widowed	Family reunification	TR	31–40
Hülya	Female	41–50	Single	Second generation	None	31–40
Mustafa	Male	31–40	Single	Asylum seeker	TR	11–20
Aylin	Female	61–70	Married	Family reunification	TR and DE	41–50
Bora	Male	31–40	Married	Second generation	None	31–40
Berna	Female	41–50	Married	Second generation	TR and DE	21–30
Elif	Female	61–70	Single	Labor migrant	None	41–50
Sema	Female	41–50	Single	Asylum seeker	None	11–20
Selda	Female	41–50	Married	Asylum seeker	None	11–20
Cemil	Male	31–40	In a relationship	Second generation	None	21–30

Participant observation was carried out for more than a year at irregular intervals. This lasted at least 1 h at a time during different times of the day, during different days of the week, and with a variety of different people presence in the houses. There were also some occasions, which included birthdays of children and spouses, religious festivals, family breakfasts, get-togethers with extended family members, and women's *altın günü* (golden day)[5] (Bilecen 2013). The interviewees chose the place of the interviews themselves and fifteen of them were conducted in their houses,[6] which gave me the possibility to enter to their houses and become a participant observer. There, I could observe their daily lives in their own spaces. I could witness discussions among many different people on issues such as house acquisition and maintenance (both in Germany and Turkey), practicing of household chores, division of labor within households, and family dynamics and their meanings attributed by different participants. All interviews were transcribed verbatim and merged with field notes from participant observations, which in different intervals spanned

[5] *Altın günü* ('golden day') generally refers to a group of women who meet once a month to pool their resources in the form of golden coins.

[6] Participants had the opportunity to choose the location of the interview and I invited them for a tea. Ahmet, Faruk, Murat, Mustafa, Cemil chose to have interviews conducted either in my office at the university, at their working places, or at cafés. My gender could have played a role insofar that they did not want to invite me to their homes as a lone woman. All of the other interviews I conducted with the remaining five men at their homes were with their wife's presence. Nevertheless, there might be other explanations as well—such as their living situations. For instance, Ahmet was staying at a dormitory, Mustafa was staying at a 'heim' for asylum seekers, and Cemil's father had a chronic illness and as he told me had intensive home care.

2 years in total. I have translated the interview quotes in the text from Turkish, which is the mother tongue of the participants and myself. The interviews and the field notes were analyzed based on elements of grounded theory (Corbin and Strauss 1990). Social scientific hermeneutic analysis was performed in order to understand underlying meaning patterns (Reichertz 2004; Schröer 2009).

4 Migrants' homes in the making

Because I was invited to the homes of the participants for interviews, before we started to have a recorded interview, they usually offered food and drinks. They usually talked about their homes as a way to break the ice. I followed their lead and we had conversations about the material objects they brought from Turkey. Much of the conversation focused on the delicious food they prepared and of course the Turkish tea they served. Evil eyes[7] on Berna's coffee table were impossible not to notice, as were the custom-made lace curtains and matching tablecloths of Lale or portrait of Atatürk in Cevdet's living room. Although they are rather common objects to be found in houses in Turkey, observing these material objects in the houses located in Germany was rather interesting and comforting for me.

On the one hand, I observed that some of the participants seemed embarrassed—they excused themselves for their homes not being well organized or not big enough. Or they would pardon themselves that they could not do enough grocery shopping and offer me more food. On the other hand, other participants were very proud of their homes. They were attributed as spacious. I was offered tours. Those homes were very clean with big-screen TVs. They prepared huge meals for my visit and also stated that they felt privileged to be in a scientific study. Once they thought that I had gained an idea about their lifestyles, social positions, and living conditions, the participants also gave me an account of their everyday living routines, and the ways they organize their homes in both Germany and Turkey. These accounts and observations drew my attention to the main questions of this article: the ways in which migrants make their homes (across borders), the practices they are engaged in, and the meanings they give to such practices.

Without being prompted, participants talked firstly about the physical aspects of home including its size, location, the ways it was furnished, how the household work is organized, and ownership. Although there were only four participants who had houses in both Turkey and Germany, the existence of two homes simultaneously was one of the main issues discussed by all participants. Even though in most of the cases they did not personally own houses in either of the countries, their parents and extended family members did and they would visit or stay with them. The ownership of a house within the family represents an attachment for the participants. For example, Cemil who was born in Germany was living with his parents in Germany, while they also had a house in Turkey, where he spends his summer vacations with his cousins. He referred to Turkey as his *memleket* (homeland, place of origin, village). Not only having a physical house or having friends and relatives in Turkey, but also the symbolic attachment to the homeland that was considered by participants contributed to a carrying out of parallel lives in both countries of immigration and emigration. In this sense, feelings of belonging and the idea of return become prominent.

[7] Talismans in the shape of eyes usually used to protect their owners from curses and misfortune through believing its symbolic protection from the malicious thoughts of others.

The interviewees reflected on how daily material artifacts accentuate the feeling of one's home and belonging. For instance, according to Berna, 'home reflects the identity of those who live there.' When further asked about her home and the ways in which she reflects her identity in relation to her home, she said: 'I try to take out the German ambiance at my home. Because we already live here, on the streets, at work, so at home I want to be me. I am Turkish and I want to live that at home, so I always bring some things when I go to Turkey like this [pointing to a traditionally designed silver sugar bowl filled with Turkish delight] or have you seen my evil eyes? [they were scattered around her home].' Thus, material objects at home constitute the feeling of home and pertain to the imagination of home. The symbolic constitution of the homeland is enacted through material artifacts usually brought back from the country of origin. The sugar bowl and evil eyes are the main examples of such material and symbolic expressions. Furthermore, not only inclusion of certain elements constitutes what a home is, but also what is and/or should be absent defines it (cf. Nowicka 2007). In that case, it is 'German ambiance'—be what it may.

The country of origin was often referred to as an idealized and consequent place of return. The idea of return is present for most of the participants. One of the main reasons for home ownership in Turkey has been the planned return. However as time passed, many of the migrants did not return from Germany to Turkey permanently. The general practice among my younger interviewees[8] was to go for vacations; for the retired population, it was a circular life between the two countries. For that reason, most of the interviews had their own houses—either their parents' houses or ones they built themselves. As Fatma (daughter of Nilgün) indicated during one of my visits:

> My father built a house there [their village in Turkey] as did his two other brothers right next to it. It was kind of a will of my grandmother when they all came to Germany to work. She wanted the chimney to keep giving out smoke. So, it is about not breaking the ties with there, and they all thought one day we would all return […] even if we do not return, the idea of having a home there is comforting.

Nilgün and her husband were living in a three-bedroom flat in Germany, whereas the house they built and spent half of the year living in 'is a two-story huge house, like a palace,' as Fatma indicated. Interviewees constantly compared both of their houses across the borders and sometimes showed me the pictures of their houses in Turkey to explain the physical differences. The ones in Germany were usually smaller than those located in Turkey. While the one in Germany is usually referred as 'a necessity,' 'a shelter,' 'a place to cry,' 'an anchor of being Turkish,' the home in Turkey was the one longed for or the reward for 'all the hard work all those years and living in *gurbet* (abroad).' Nevertheless, most of them commented on how it is a demanding task to maintain both of them simultaneously. For instance, Berna works part time at a department store and at the age of 44, has a rented flat in Germany, and owns a three-story house at the seaside in Turkey. She visits her parents at least twice a year in another Turkish city, where she refers to as home, and goes to her home at the seaside around three times a year. According to her:

> I like to have two homes, actually one would not be realized without the other, but imagine you need everything twice and need to make sure that you clean all around and keep everything intact […] for example, my plants need constant attention, I usually make arrangements with my neighbors so that they will be watered […] I

[8] Those interviewees in the age range of 21–30 and 31–40 as indicated in Table 1.

> bring back and forth some branches from different plants between my two homes to remember both.

This quote illustrates the dependency of both homes on each other; they represent both physical dwellings and their respective countries of emigration and immigration. Transportation of plant branches between the two homes is about remembering both places and about memories collected at home (cf. Hondagneu-Sotelo and Ruiz 2014). Moreover, living across borders has implications on the division of household tasks. Likewise in the case of Berna, who is the one 'keeping everything intact,' 63-year-old housewife Aylin also indicated:

> We also have a big house in *memleket*. We usually stay there six months and here in this house [in Germany] six months. I really like to spend time in both places; we usually spend time there [Turkey] with our siblings and their children and grandchildren, while here [Germany] with our children and grandchildren. Once a year we all meet there as a big family, this is usually summer time […] It is difficult to live like this for sure, for example, I do not know whether I have this or that in the kitchen, I need to organize things constantly, but luckily I don't deal with the bills, my husband and children take care of them, while I am mostly in charge of daily housework.

Hence, the house in Turkey is not considered only a vacation house but also a house in need of constant maintenance. While home can be a symbolic place and a marker of belonging, interviewees also mentioned material expressions often. In fact, furnishings and designs of households might act as cultural modes of belonging between people and places (Mallett 2004: 66). In the case of Fatma, she associates their physical house in Turkey with a comforting place, where the family members get together to eat. A separation from home is an important moment of realization of its meaning, a point of appreciation, and perhaps what makes the past nostalgic and idealized. However, the idealized home is also closely related to the idea of the future, in this case a planned return. Certainly for some like Berna or Fatma's father, home as country of origin is filled with joy and associated with one's identity, positive feelings, and childhood. This might not always be the case, for example, when one considers refugees. Sema, who came to Germany as a political asylum seeker, had the opposite point of view. She did not want to associate herself with Turkey, but referred to herself as someone from Turkey, born in Tunceli (a city in the southeastern region, highly populated with Kurdish origin persons) with an Alevi background:

> I am Alevi but also I am far from that, *only* that aspect does not describe me […] Türkiyeliyim [an ethnic neutral expression to indicate a person is from Turkey]

Sema's father migrated to Germany in 1968 as a guest worker, and her mother joined him in 1975. She is the oldest of five children. She visited her parents once in the 1980s when she was 16. She was never interested in living in Germany and stayed in Istanbul. She was educated in Turkey and became a journalist with a left political orientation. During the political turmoil in Turkey in the 1990s, the newspaper she was working for was banned and the police searched for her. She mentioned that at this time, she had to abandon her home and live at her friends' houses for about 6 months. Although she wanted to go to Italy or Greece, one night in 1997, she decided to escape to Germany where her parents were. During the interview, she was living in a city close to her parents and rented her own home, where she invited me. Her home was designed with second-hand wooden furniture, which could be described as 'Indian-ethnic' in style with handmade patchwork fabrics,

dark green painted walls, scented candles, and small wooden animal ornaments. This is far from what might be called 'Turkish' or 'Kurdish.' This way of design might be of course a personal taste, or a result of detaching the self from any identity markers in terms of everyday materials in a new place, a way to start over a new way of life, fled from cultural, religious, and political oppression.

5 Home as bedrock of informal social protection

During the interviews, I asked participants about their family life and the ways in which care relations and financial facets were organized. They told me about the division of tasks within their homes in Germany: for instance, who is responsible for picking up the children from kindergarten, cooking, arranging the daily needs of inhabitants, and deciding whom to invite as guests. They all reflected on their personal relationships and social life taking place at their homes. Engaging in informal socializing events, including weddings and circumcision ceremonies, family dinners, and breakfasts, as well as religious festivities with their significant others, was all referred to by interviewees as the real meaning of life (see also Bilecen et al. 2015). As interviewees often stressed, home is a physical place to be lived in, with family members, social relationships, and memories as crucial elements to the home-making feeling. For example, Lale is 46 years old with two children (11 and 15 years old), working part time at a family-run café. She thinks that her family—in particular her children—are important in deciding where to live. In her own words:

> What do I do there [Turkey] with a house when my children will be here [Germany]?

In accordance with previous research, which investigated Antillean migrants' home-making in the Netherlands, the findings of this study confirm that 'home-making turned out to be something highly defined by the presence of significant others' (Meijering and Lager 2014: 870). In other words, social ties and informal socializing at home are fundamental elements of home-making practices for participants. Moreover, the above quote also illustrates the important impact that intergenerational relations can have on the location of the home. Although Lale repeatedly stated her aspirations of return, she narrated that her children's education, future, and life chances are 'better' in Germany. If they decide to continue to live in Germany, she also has to spend more time in Germany during her retirement. Similarly, 58-year-old Münevver also stated that although she is retired and wants to return to Turkey, she is still living in Germany most of the time because of her daughter, who married and in her 30s. Thus, although the age of children might influence the decision of locating the home, it is not necessarily the only factor. It is also about maintaining local family ties—and not only the transnational ones. Whether translocalism is sustainable in the long run still remains an issue to be unsolved by the interviewees, but one major strategy to overcome that situation has been frequent travels between countries.

Through social gatherings, a familiar environment is being (re-)created where the recipes and other everyday life realities are being interchanged, and informal exchange of social protection resources takes place. Those are the times when migrants and their significant others talk about, for example, the latest healthcare reforms in Turkey, the ways in which they access to formal schemes such as public kindergartens and universities, or where to find necessary information about the job market or a 'better' doctor or hospital. Thus, through informal socializing, individuals sustain, widen, and deepen their social ties so that they tap into other protective resources (Bilecen et al. 2015).

Care relations including general health care as well as child and elderly care might take place in home settings. For example, in this study those who had children relied mostly on the formal childcare arrangements offered by states and cities. But they still mention the importance of informal care at home provided by family members—preferably grandparents. Especially those who are working, like Ömer (32 years old) and his spouse, mentioned how the care provided by grandparents is ‘irreplaceable by state institutions, because they are the real loving and caring ones, who would teach Turkish, traditions, and customs of home.’ Here Ömer refers not only to the physical home where they live, but also to as Turkey the symbolic homeland, its ethnic, religious, and cultural practices.

Similar to childcare, elderly care was also mentioned during interviews. This is another crucial aspect, which all of the interviewees discussed at length. In the sample, not everyone had children, but all had elderly and care arrangements for them. Care was a topic of great concern because it involved decisions about the persons to care for, the location, and thus the nature of care itself. Most of the interviewees mentioned that elderly should be cared for at home, where they are loved and understood. Usually daughters or other female members of the family took care of the elderly. This filial care at home has been attributed as something ‘cultural’ and ‘the right way to do it.’ Of course, there were some exceptions, such as Elif who at the age of 67 was dealing with diabetes. She mentioned that she had to admit her mother (100 years old) to a nursing home, where she regularly visits her. She expressed that fact with great pain. While she was grateful that the state financially covered most of the expenses, she also hired a private caregiver to visit her mother three times a week. The caregiver visits when she is not able to so that her mother does not feel alone and has someone to talk to. Therefore, in some exceptional cases, elderly are admitted to nursing homes, but still the common practice of my interviewees, regardless of their location in Germany or Turkey, was to take care of the elderly at home. As Ömer said:

> It feels right and also to be fair to him [the grandfather of his spouse]. He did all of this, came Germany, worked hard, bought everything he could and a house in Turkey, and now you cannot just throw him outside of his own home and say live there because you are sick and old, so of course it is the family’s responsibility to take care of him no matter what.

Therefore, social protection in a variety of areas—in this case more prominently in care relations—is usually taking place at home. Those care practices are crucial to understanding the home, because after all, the ways in which a home is physically, emotionally, and symbolically shaped and reshaped is embedded in who is living in it. In other words, in a home, presence of a child, an older person, or someone who is sick changes the home and home-making practices. This occurs not only in regards to how furniture is organized, but also how the division of labor and emotional work is organized.

All of the family members have certain tasks related to social protection. During the interview, Berna said ‘I am the Minister of Interior and he [her husband] is the Minister of Foreign Affairs’ to give me a better picture of who is responsible at home for what. Similarly, Berrin mentioned a Turkish proverb while depicting her own and her parents’ household maintenance in Germany and Turkey as, ‘Home is made by the female bird.’ This seems to be one of the dominant discourses of home-making in Turkey and among the participants. Raised and socialized within this discourse, the interviewees have certain duties and expectations with regard to certain daily home-making practices that need to be carried out. They include tending the kitchen, decorating, doing the grocery shopping, ironing, and caring for the children and elderly. Those caring and material finishing tasks have been approached mostly as women tasks (cf. Chaplin 1999) because they are the ‘natural things’

for women to do at home. Usually women are responsible for the kitchen, cooking, and home decoration, whereas men are responsible for the construction and material aspects of home-making. The examples of Aylin and Berna indicate that gendered experiences of home-making are spatialized (McDowell 1999). In other words, the ways in which household and care are organized are enmeshed in a gendered cultural script, where those tasks are classified either as feminine or masculine (Bourdieu 1992). Yet, there were certainly some interviewees who carried out tasks that did not fit into 'classical' gendered categories. Although it is an exceptional case, in the home of 30-year-old university student Ali, he is the major caregiver of their daughter, whereas his wife is the breadwinner pursuing a Ph.D. and owner of a local bar.

In addition to the transfer of general discourse of home-making, some practices are also transferred across borders, such as practices related to arts and crafts. Women interviewees referred to the handmade lacework displayed in their homes not only as their free-time activity, but also a way of income. Similarly, another interviewee explained how home-made marmalades and pickles she sells at the weekly open market not only generate income, but are also consumed family goods. They bring back childhood memories from Turkey, where women in the extended family and in the neighborhood used to get together to preserve food for the winter. Those items and practices become essential components in her home-making feeling. She is very proud that her children get a 'taste of Turkey even though they are done with the products grown in Germany.' In that sense, traditional ways of preserving food and cooking at home were recurrent in the home-making practices of participants. Certain smells, food, and tastes are argued to be an influential mode of connection with one another (Sandu 2013; Visser et al. 2015) and with certain places. Going shopping at the local markets, supermarkets, and ethnic stores for certain ingredients and spices, and inviting family members, friends, and neighbors to share a big social dinner or breakfast are fundamental components of (transnational) home-making practices which help them to bridge geographical distances (cf. Nowicka 2007).

6 Conclusion

Based on the analysis of the empirical data collected, this article strives to explore in depth migrants' home-making practices across borders. By investigating home-making practices of migrants that were particularly related to social protection, it seems that migrants make their homes not only through understanding them as physical architectural containers, but also through routinized daily practices, which (re)produce symbolic and material expressions with transnational elements. In so doing, this article contributes to the literature on the nexus of home and migration by focusing on how migrants' home-making practices are coupled with social protection. Thereby, my key concern was the exploration of such practices and their complexity in the context of migration.

Al-Ali and Koser (2002) stress the existence of heterogeneous notions of home is a place where culture, identities, and traditions are re(produced). In this study, I have tried to understand those migrant practices, which constitute their homes through a transnational lens. As architectural containers, homes physically represent simultaneous lives of migrants across borders, enabling transnational linkages as also argued by Levin and Fincher (2010). While the ownership of a house is considered to be a symbol of success among migrants—whether self or family-owned—it also gives the feeling of attachment to certain locales and symbolic spaces—particularly to *memleket*, the homeland. As I have argued, the symbolic constitution of the homeland is also enacted through material objects

in migrants' homes. This article also showed that as much as material objects were important to the construction of home, so were personal relations. Informal socializing in the house was central to the construction of migrants' homes. Beyond making homes in tangible and physical ways, as a crucial site of social protection, homes created an ambiance where social and temporal experiences of migration as well as gendered cultural scripts were entangled. The analysis presented here has also demonstrated the interplay between broader gendered discourse on the ways in which home should be made and personal and familial ideologies enmeshed in daily protective practices, such as in the realm of care relations.

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