

Permanent Temporariness, Rootedness and Home-making Among the Migrants in the Gulf Cities: Insights from Bahrain

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Abstract

Migrants in the Arabian Gulf are temporary workers and do not have offers of permanent residency. Opportunities to assimilate and become Bahraini citizens are available only to a selected few. Nevertheless, a large population is migrants and many have chosen to live there for very long periods of time. Their homes thus appear to be permanent, yet a sense of impermanency lingers and this duality of existence affects the ways in which sense of home is constructed and nurtured. In this context, this paper examines the nature of rootedness and making homes among the migrants of Bahrain.

The paper subscribes to the emerging questioning of the popular idea of the existence of home as a permanently geographically anchored entity and argues that for some, it is more conceptually defined, lightly rooted, and movable. Frequent mobility of 'homes' however demands that its culture connects the meanings and materials loosely and allows movability, transformations, transfusions and replacements.

The research employs four techniques for gathering data: a survey of narratives in blog sites, a questionnaire survey, case studies and observations of spaces and things in houses of the migrants. First, 58 blog entries were collected and analyzed to distil the references made in relation to sense of home and its manifestations among the migrants. These insights gained were followed with a structured questionnaire employing a Semantic Differential Scale aimed at ascertaining how the residents evaluated Juffair as a good place to make home. In-depth interviews were conducted with three selected respondents with families followed by the observations of spaces and things in the homes.

The findings show that the migrant families are home-content and do not feel a strong sense of homelessness, often associated with the migrants in the West. In this context 'sense of up-rootedness' may be an outcome of expectations. Although sense of belonging is visibly absent, sense of home prevails raising questions about the usual links made between the two. This suggests that homes can indeed be constructed and nurtured in several ways and several locations. There also exist different homes; some more permanently meaningful and fixed and others more immediately meaningful yet movable. Underlying however exists a structure that is rudimentary and constant in terms of places.

Keywords: Sense of home, uprootedness, migrants, Bahrain, Permanence

Introduction

Dominant literature on 'home' pre-supposes that dwelling and anchoring is synonymous with making home and that sense of belonging generated from its material and non-material contents is a pre-condition. Derived from rootedness (Heidegger, 1971), migrant research suggests that uprooted migrants are desperate to re-root in order to make home. However, Mugerauer (1997) argues that the humans have fundamentally been mobile beings and thus questions the link between home and rootedness. With people trotting the globe as modern nomads under ever-increasing globalization, the contemporary global cities are occupied more by migrants who make temporarily homes, often ready to move. That state of being remains less-explored and un-articulated and rootedness manifested in the home cultures of migrants warrants re-examination.

In fact, this 'mobile sense of home' is not peculiar only to the migrants. In the developed West, Bell (2001) points out that in the West, more than the developing countries, moving homes is a more common-place activity. The real estate markets there are geared to and actively support the movement of families from regions to regions (Beaverstock, et.al.,1992). In Australia for example, a culture exists where houses may be moved across a region taking many of the material denominators of 'home' and together with them, the cherished memories. Families often forgo all other considerations when it comes to finding work and hence re-location is taken as a given. As Bell (2006) says, often, children are uprooted from schools, household materials disposed of and new homes established without hesitation. Although the same cannot be said about many of the Asian cultures, the modern, westernized 'states of being' seem to be compatible with the idea of loosely-anchored homes and the movable and mobile sense of home.

In fact, as Oliver (1987) points out, homes moved often even in the traditional societies. Hasan Uddin Khan describes the 'development of two distinct shelter elements in the process of moving goods around Pakistan, known as the *adda* or the modern *caravanserai* and the trucks which have become homes for the driver and his assistants' (1975:184). The diaspora and the globalized modern families now live across continents with homes in more than one place, constructing and maintaining sense of home lightly anchored to any given place. Despite these, much of our understanding of home comes mainly from the rooted state of being against its opposite that romanticizes its wholesomeness as the homes to be aspired to. Undeniably, there remains a need to understand the complexity of the relationship between home and rootedness particularly in the context of globalization. In this context, the aim of this study is to investigate the ways in which sense of home is constructed and nurtured by the migrant communities in Bahrain.

Its objectives are:

- (1) To ascertain how migrants construct sense of home in 'impermanant houses.'
- (2) To establish the relationship between home and rootedness.
- (3) To identify strategies employed by the migrants to manage the duality of permanence and temporariness.

Theoretical Background

Home, rootedness and mobility have received increased academic scrutiny for quite some time. From Bachlard (1964) who sees it as 'our corner of the universe', and Porteous (1976) who defines it as 'the territorial core' and 'a preferred space and fixed point of reference' to Dovey's (1977) definition of 'an ordering principle', home offers multiple layers of meanings that overlap yet differ. In writing on 'Housing Dwellings and Homes', Lawrence (1987) demonstrates the complexity of these meanings and argues that in fact, the notion of dwelling signifies these differences and that spatiality of home is not as important as the

meanings themselves. A number of distinctions are clear; that of the differences between house and home and between being and becoming which is embodied in home.

Literature articulates two significant aspects of the concepts of home: spatial and social. However, these two facets are not mutually exclusive of each other and cannot be separated. In essence, home is a rudimentary 'place' in human life. Home making is a fundamental human activity which anchors an individual in the world within the universe of spaces, things, people and events among which one exists (Bachelard, 1964). It enables an individual to establish a point of reference to the rest of the world and organize social and spatial relationships around a referential geographical location in space (Tuan, 1977). Home is considered to consist of the history and memories of the family and is a storehouse for the physical, social and psychological or emotional wealth of its occupants (Lawrence, 1987, 1991). Indeed, home is thus made in the process of living wherever one lives and is in a constant process of consolidation and transformation (Habraken, 1983).

Literature overwhelms with understandings of home mostly as a static sense of being often also connected with families. For example, Despres (1991) in a review of literature on the meaning of home published between 1974 and 1989 in disciplines investigating person-environment relationships points out that home has been defined mostly for traditional households living in single-family detached houses. Studies about non-traditional populations and settings are scarce, and home as a process of becoming is even more so. Nevertheless, the fundamental associations between persons and their homes are now understood since the writings of Bachelard (1964) who shows how our perceptions of houses shape our thoughts, memories and dreams and of Cooper (1995) who presented the view of the house as a symbol of Self. Bachelard (1964) showed how home experiences are interwoven with personal narratives of searching for a place for the soul, and express bonds of feelings to the places in which one has dwelled. Cooper argued how our becoming, and psychological development is tied with significant places and things in them. Homes often reflect self-images, relationships with others, conflicts, and how we appropriate territories to control, and derive privacy for our own being.

Home is constituted of places; well defined rooms and a multitude of nooks and corners in them which constitute the memories and cherished experiences of having lived in. Longer one lives with a 'system of such places,' the more such places become ingrained in the deep consciousness generating a sense of attachment and a sense of belonging to the places and the structure of their existence. In this sense, any place where one dwells could indeed 'become home'. Home is thus an experience embedded in the material structure at one level, in one's own memory and dreams at another and in one's relationships with others with whom one has dwelled together. In a study unraveling the meaning of home, Sixsmith (1986) concludes that different types of homes exist while different meanings of homes also co-exist; physical homes, personal homes, and social homes.

Home and rootedness have often been bundled together. Presented as the central notion of home, it is believed to signify the degree to which one is attached to the place of dwelling (Godkin, 1980); often to an 'original place' where one grew up. This rootedness to the places of the past is so dominant in our perceptions and interpretations in that those 'up-rooted' are said to be unable to re-root unless the associational meanings of the original places are not reconstructed. In this regard, Terkenli (1995) writes "the notion of rootedness is important in understanding how home contexts expand spatially as a person's distance from home increases".

Despite these theoretical articulations that assert a strong relation between rootedness and home, contemporary ways of living as migrants as well as the earliest forms of nomadic living have raised questions about the degree of validity of this link: it remains to be re-investigated certainly in the context of modern nomads.

Review of Literature

Scholars across architecture and social theory consistently point out that home is a central place of a Man's system of places, and there is an abundance of literature that examine the differences between houses and homes. Among them, Dayaratne and Kellett (2008) stand out. This view has recently been contested. Morely (2000) for example offers an analysis of the varieties of rootedness that manifests through dwelling as exile and as diaspora, which involve displacement, connectedness and/or mobility. Ahmed et al. argue for shifting our focus from home and rootedness to uprooting and re-grounding in order to explore these relationships as plurality of experiences, histories and constituencies. "Being grounded is not necessarily about being fixed, being mobile is not necessarily about being detached" (Ahmed, et.al, 2003:2).

Indeed, Jacobs (2004) extends this further when he explores the interface between the emotional experience of feelings at home and the architecture materiality of the house as framed through the drama of mobility. Adding to this, Webner (2000) argues that diaspora produce and reproduce themselves socially culturally and politically in a multitude of ways through strategies that are embedded in cultural technologies and underpinned aesthetically. The complexity of multiple homes and multiple roots is beginning to gain attention especially through studies focused on transnational families. Mand (2011) for example points out that experiences of 'home' for British-born Bangladeshi children who are mobile between Sylhet and London, identify both Sylhet and London as 'homes', and that the experiences of these places differ in accordance with the different social relations, practices and material circumstances through which they experience them. Leung et.al. (2003) offer compelling evidence and new insights into the multiple meanings of home and how the muted cultures of migrants manifest through their homes in different geographical and social settings. These raise the question if one can be 'rooted' in more than one location and even more than one culture.

Despite these new arguments and findings however, there is a paucity of literature that examine the nuances of the manifestations of sense of home among the migrants particularly living in the Gulf region. In this context, this paper adds a new direction of inquiries into the complex issue of home making in the contemporary societies and particularly those who are constantly on the move.

Research Methodology

This research was carried out from 2023-2024, among the migrants living in the expatriate (defined as skilled professionals residing and working in a country away from their fatherland,) enclaves of Bahrain. It was prompted by the experience that many white-collar expatriate workers of Bahrain had lived in a number of countries, yet appeared to be highly content living there which they call 'home.' They also had one other home (or homes) somewhere else which was more or less permanent but they also considered their living places in Bahrain, permanent-yet temporary homes. They were permanent in the sense of being the places where they had lived the longest and continue to live, and temporary given the fact that their contracts may be terminated at any time in which case, the places were to be vacated.

Survey of Narratives

In order to better understand the nature of experiences of home among the expatriates in Bahrain, a number of overlapping methodologies were employed. These included collecting narratives of expatriate communities in Bahrain freely expressed in their blog sites meant to share their feelings; frustrations, joys and everyday emotions, followed by structured interviews and ethnographic investigations (White and Jackson, 1995; Lawson, 2000). First, from January 2023 to September 2024, 58 blog entries were collected and analyzed to distil the references made in relation to home and its manifestations. The expressions of conceptual constructions of places and experiences were rich, varied and were natural; expressed without coercion, compulsion or outside researcher's prompts. The

conceptual unpacking of the social constructions of place; one of the most useful research methods could thus be applied to freely expressed feelings. Discourse analysis often confined to few literary and narrative texts rather than a wide array of individual expressions was possible with the emergence of the web-blogs.

A Questionnaire Survey

These insights gained were followed with a structured questionnaire employing a Semantic Differential Scale aimed at ascertaining how the residents of Bahrain evaluated the degree to which Juffair was a good place to make home and how the villas and apartments contributed to making home. The respondents were asked to rate to what extent they were happy and settled, and which facets of the home-base and the home itself contributed to the fulfillments of making home. The facets were derived from a previous, ground-breaking socio-anthropological study (White, 1943) which had articulated the fact that as human beings, people are generally engaged in doing similar kinds of things; making a living, engaging in leisure, getting material goods for their existence, socializing etc. the availability of facilities for which would contribute to their sense of well-being and sense of anchorage in a given place: making of home.

Case Studies

To gain deeper insights, personal interviews were conducted with three selected respondents with families and the observations of their physical spaces of dwellings for in-depth study. The respondents involved a university professor, an engineer and a quantity surveyor. They ranged in their age groups from late thirties to early fifties and had lived in Bahrain from seven to twelve years. Interviews were conducted in English as most spoke English as their second language. The interviews focused on the ways in which they perceived Bahrain as a place of living, the sense of attachment / detachment, and the contrast of sense of home that they could attribute to their earlier places of residences; the homes. Within the case studies, analysis were done reading space as text examining respondent's home experiences generated from the contents of the houses.

Observations of Things and Places

A complimentary technique adopted was the observations of things and places in the houses. Much like behaviour mapping, this involved mapping of objects present in the houses and identifying which of these 'things' contributed to the making of 'places' in the homes. This is based on the notion that it is the things and nothings that defined each other: the anchors and places. Some places of course may not have things but may be bounded by things. In this connection the idea of the variety of places such as 'on places,' 'in-places,' 'side places,' 'between places,' 'under places,' and around places was employed to identify the places. The observations were mapped in two-dimensional plans based on larger places such as rooms. Relations between these places were noted and how they contributed to the making of homes was identified.

Findings and Analysis

The Migrants of the Arabian Gulf: An introduction

Recent cities of the Arabian Gulf are unique; occupied largely by migrant workers who are engaged in the production of their spaces and contribute immensely to the making of their cultures. Migrants in the Gulf are different from the other migrants around the world who are often referred to as diaspora; meaning scattered people, banished from their homelands or have abandoned their homelands. According to literature, the term diaspora was originally used for the Jewish people who had been banished from their homelands and the term subsequently has gained currency in referring to people such as the Armenians and

the Palestininas who had been in exile. More recently, those who have willingly left their homelands to live in other lands are also being referred to as Diaspora, who by these definitions are seen often as victims or sufferers.

The foreigners living and working in the Gulf region in that sense are more of migrant-expatriates who have willingly come to the region in search for better economic opportunities and living conditions with little intention to permanently settle down there. Since many such migrants live and work there for very long periods of time, raise children and often enjoy better opportunities and status than the locals, they are also part of that society and its geographical space. In fact, many such migrants are unwilling to leave, even to return to their homelands where similar economic opportunities and status are unavailable.

It is undeniable that their sense of home is generated from the spaces and places in which they dwell. Despite the absence of opportunities for establishing deep-roots; permanent visas, guarantee of citizenships or authority to freely reconstruct culture, they dwell there as well as in their homelands. The temporary nature of ‘being’ however also becomes the permanent one for the life-time residents giving rise to a state of ‘permanent temporariness’ that impinges on the sense of home.

Sense of Home and Rootedness of the Expatriate: Insights

In this paper, the term expatriates is used to distinguish the white-collar migrants of the Gulf, who enjoy higher levels of quality of life, have been warmly welcome and were being well looked after by their employers. Most such expatriates came from the western countries and the Middle East and less from the Asian regions. This can be contrasted with the migrant workers; the low-paid blue-collar and labour-intensive workers came almost exclusively from the Asian region. As to be expected, the blog sites were generated by the expatriates to share their understandings and knowledge about the local conditions with the newcomers and also to communicate their experiences and exchange information amongst themselves. In the process, they tended to express their ‘states of being’, remarkably candid and with finer details. Of the sites examined, four particular sites were noteworthy for their lucid and candid expressions about Bahrain and their everyday life, while others generally discussed other issues, of work conditions, settling in, culture, people, shopping and leisure experiences.

Table 1: The blog-sites and their references to positive and negative feelings of home

Blog Sites	Positive entries about Home	Negative entries about Home
http://Bahraintaxi.wordpress.com	14	None
http://lostinbahrain.wordpress.com	11	None
http://www.expat-blog.com/en/blog/middle-east/bahrain/www.expats-in-bahrain.over-blog.com	12	1
http://www.expat-blog.com/forum/profile.php?id=7636	18	2

Of the many positive expressions of home, many bloggers talked of the Arabic hospitality, warmth of the people, and the easiness of settling down in Bahrain with the provision of ready-made houses; villas and apartments fully furnished with the modern conveniences in fine localities. The bloggers also liked the availability of choice; the employers offering more than one house to choose from by visiting them, comparing their locations, décor, gardens and other facilities such as swimming pools etc. The location of the villas often in enclosed compounds was seen positively as an ‘identifiable and safe enclosure’ in an unknown land. They

also ensured opportunities to share space with other families in similar situations, whose cultural inclinations were seen as compatible. Many bloggers exclaimed their joy of 'large villas' with huge spaces and volumes, in comparison to their 'homes' in their countries of origin.

What was most noteworthy among the blog entries was the absence of either the longing to return home or difficulty of 'making home' in Bahrain. This was to be unusual particularly for western expatriates whose home landscapes and cultural landscapes are very different from what exists in Bahrain. Although, there were intermittent comments about missing the parties during Christmas or the companionships with the friends, no comments were made about being unable to settle down quickly and comfortably. The warm and 'sunny' atmosphere was welcome with the cool interiors of air-conditioned comforts, while familiar cultural contexts appeared to have been re-constructed in small enclaves, clubs and other places of western expatriates.

For those from the neighbouring Middle Eastern countries, none of the issues even existed because the landscapes were familiar while the cultures were the same (This information was not extracted from the blog sites: Neither the Middle Eastern nor the Asian expatriates participated in the blog sites at all). The ease at which some of the British expatriates found the spaces and places in Bahrain, familiar and amenable is clearly seen in the blog entry as follows.

"We also went to our first bar here in Bahrain. It was awesome! It's weird because Muslims in traditional dress are not allowed in! The bouncer at the door is a scary dude, and only allows in people with western style dress. Cory and I felt like we were transported to Europe as soon as we walked in. Though there are people of many backgrounds in this pub (it's called JJ's Irish Pub), the atmosphere is completely European. We got there just in time too, because they had a giant pull down screen to project the England v. Netherlands game, which started about 15 minutes after we sat down! They had a really wide selection of beers, pretty much anything you'd find in the UK or Ireland. And everything is the same price – expensive.

British Expat:

<http://www.expats-blog.com/forum/profile.php?id=81367>

Accessed on 09th July 2024

As was seen from the entries, many of the western expatriates found the areas they lived; particularly the public social spaces had been exclusively created with the 'transnational' expatriates in mind. To begin with, Juffair is a city on the eastern edge of Manama, the capital on a reclaimed land. This has enabled the construction of 'another world' there for the expatriates away from the traditional Islamic city and its modern transformations. The highway separates the land from the main city and this also literally disjoins itself from the city although the expatriate enclave borders the traditional village of Juffair. Western styles bars and discos exist there albeit in secluded locations and generally within the hotels on the edge of the main street located deep inside. The atmosphere and the places created are unique with the street being constituted entirely of eating houses and small groceries and mini super markets that cater to the transnational community and celebrate the western culture at the core of that transnationalism. Along the stretch of about .5 km distance, 80 establishments produce the presence of a multitude of cultures mainly through eating places from European to Indian and Chinese cuisine offered in a modernist ambience. The street, a narrow drive way with wide open

pavements on either side is reminiscent of the boulevards in Europe with open air restaurants under canvass.

Unsurprisingly, the expatriates felt ‘at home’ in these settings populated by a transnational expatriate population. A kind of ‘Disneyland’ experience, there is no re-rooting possible here but a sense of familiarity with space and a rejuvenation of a known sense of being. The expatriates are re-located in an imaginable place in an otherwise unknown landscape into which they arrive with anxiety and nervousness and it is perhaps this known-ness that helps them make home there despite not being able to construct deeper roots.

The structured questionnaire administered among a random group of expatriates explored this relationship further in terms of the home-base; the city of Juffair and the apartments and villas in which they dwelled. While the degree to which the respondents were able to feel ‘happy and settled’ was the aim of the questionnaire, it probed further into what facets of the home-base and home itself contributed to this sense of contentment. The outcomes of the responses to the evaluations based on a 5 point Semantic Differential Scale were as follows.

Table 2: Evaluations of Juffair as a place for making home and the apartments as homes.

Measures of the Semantic Differential Scale 5: Excellent, 4: good, 3: OK, 2: Poor 1: Very poor					Making home in Bahrain Juffair as a home place							The villa / apartment as a home				
ID	Country of Origin	age	Living with F: family A: alone P: partner	Settled and happy	Location	Shopping	Dining facilities	Socializing	Access to Work	Opportunities	Neighbourhood	Space	Arrangement	Furniture	Possibilities	Transformation
A1	Iraq	40	F	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
A2	Iraq	43	A	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	4	3	3
B1	Egypt		F	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	3	5	4	4	4	4
B2	Egypt		F	4	4	4	5	5	4	4	3	4	3	5	4	4
C	Jordan		F	5	4	3	5	5	4	5	3	4	3	5	5	3
D	Lebanon		F	5	5	4	5	4	4	5	3	5	3	4	3	4
E	Syria	51	F	3	4	4	4	1	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	3
F	Philippines	35	F	4	4	2	4	4	3	4	4	4	3	3	4	4
G	Sri Lanka		F	5	4	5	4	4	5	4	3	4	4	4	5	4
H1	India	39	F	4	4	4	4	3	3	2	3	4	4	3	4	4
H2	India	40	F	5	5	3	3	3	3	3	2	4	4	4	4	3
H3	India	49	F	5	5	3	5	2	4	1	4	5	3	3	4	4
J1	Pakistan		F	5	4	5	4	4	4	4	4	5	5	5	4	4
J2	Pakistan	44	F	4	5	5	4	4	4	2	5	2	5	5	5	5
K	Bangladesh	28	A	5	5	5	4	4	3	4	3	4	4	4	3	3
L1	USA	30	A	5	4	5	4	4	4	5	5	4	4	4	5	5
L2	USA	33	A	5	4	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	5
L3	USA	20	A	5	4	4	5	5	4	2	5	4	4	4	5	4
L4	USA	35	F	5	5	5	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3
L5	USA	27	A	5	4	4	5	4	4	2	4	4	4	4	4	4
L6	USA	30	A	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	4
L7	USA	23	A	5	4	4	4	4	4	2	3	3	3	3	3	3
L8	USA	28	A	5	4	4	4	4	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	4
M1	UK	41	P	5	4	4	5	5	4	2	3	4	4	2	3	3
M2	UK	44	F	5	4	4	5	5	5	4	4	4	5	5	4	4
M3	UK	40	P	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	4	4	5	5	4	4
M4	UK	51	P	4	4	5	5	4	4	5	4	4	5	5	4	4
N1	Scotland	38	P	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	5	5	4	4
N2	Scotland	30	P	4	3	4	5	2	2	2	3	3	4	3	4	4
N3	Scotland	43	F	5	4	5	5	4	4	5	4	4	5	5	4	4

As can be seen, the respondents were a culturally mixed group, but were constituted of Europeans, Asians and others from around the region. Generally middle-aged, most lived with their families while some lived with partners. Interestingly, most respondents had lived in a number of other countries both in the region and outside and have had the experiences of being away from home-countries and re-settling in other lands. Thus, the responses can be assumed to have come through comparisons with such other experiences. They provide insights into how the expatriates felt their needs for making home were fulfilled by the geographical settings in Juffair and by the ways in which the dwellings existed. The responses to these facets have revealed a generally 'rounded' satisfaction with home with the few exceptions of an inadequacy of places for leisure in the home-base. This can be clearly seen in the satisfaction profiles as follows.

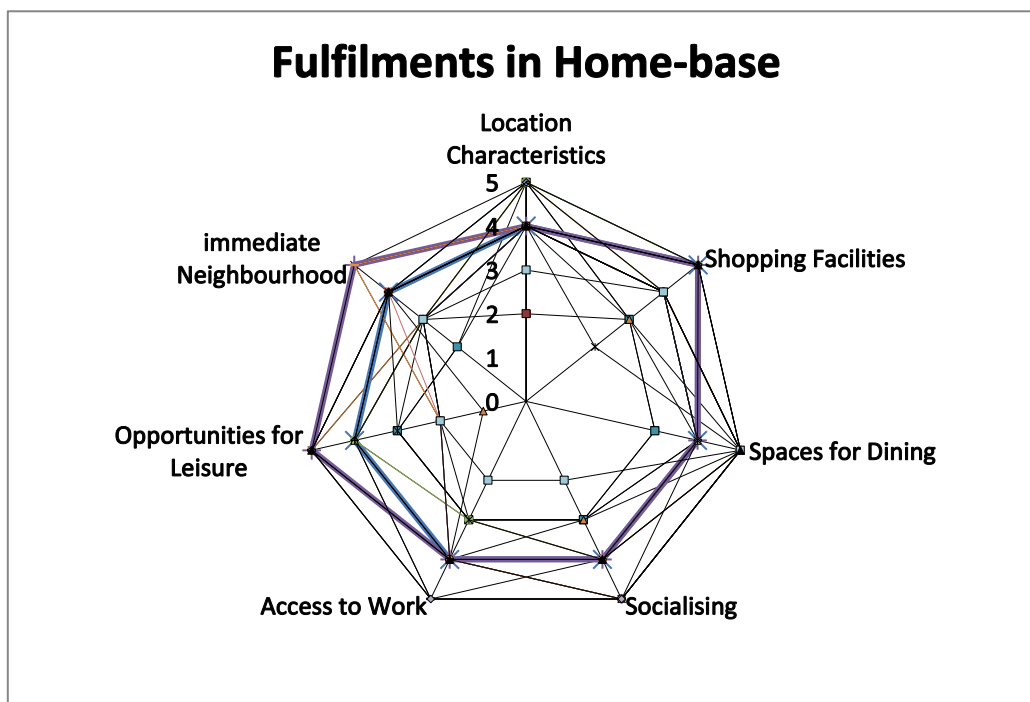


Fig.1: Satisfaction profiles of Juffair as a place to make home (N=22)

The satisfaction profiles of the respondents show that, apart from 8 respondents who have responded as poor with regard to the opportunities available for leisure in Juffair, all other facets have been very positively evaluated. Each individual satisfaction profile is relatively rounded and not skewed inward suggesting that the respondents are happy with the significant facets of home the fulfillments of which are generally derived from the 'home-base'. This is also confirmed by the fact that the overall evaluation of 'being happy and settled', had received mostly scores in the ranges of 5 and 4, and only a few had scored them at 3 which still means generally acceptable.

As has been argued elsewhere (Dayaratne,2008) although in a different context, the ability to construct home is either facilitated or hindered by the presence or absence of the aforementioned facets, and the research clearly shows that the expatriates were in fertile grounds in Juffair in making home.

In terms of dwellings themselves, the satisfaction profiles were even more rounded. Most evaluated the spatiality of the houses, the arrangements, the furniture, the possibilities for adaptations as well as the transformations they could affect as

being good with smaller variations in the level of satisfaction among them. The profiles were either smaller or larger but remained always rounded. This means that the sense of home was holistic although the degree of their manifestations was different. Given the fact that the houses and apartments came furnished, with no possibility of ownership, this is a remarkable expression of a sense of home acquired without owning and belonging. As have been indicated, the respondents felt that the transformations were possible with the personal belongings being embedded into the collectivity of the ‘things’ in the houses; the furniture, utensils, and the in-built décor of the houses. This suggests that sense of home is not necessarily significantly linked to being rooted with sense of belonging instrumental in anchorage.

The satisfaction profiles of homes were as follows.

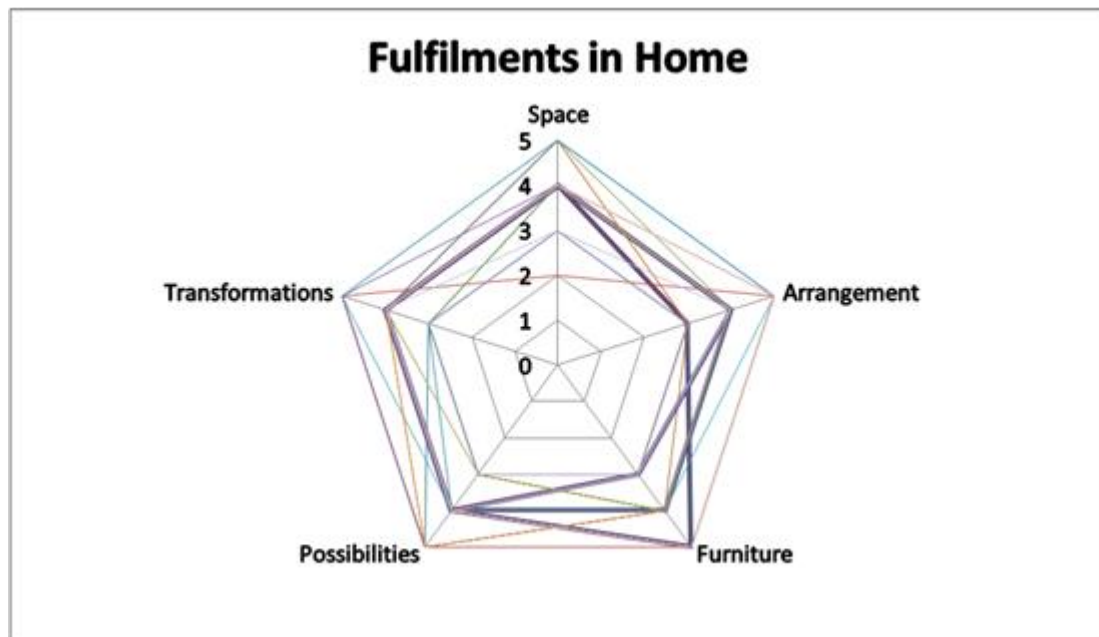


Fig. 2: Satisfaction profiles of homes made from the furnished houses (n=22)

The close-encounters at the one to one interviews conducted with a small number of (n=8) expatriates was revealing. The respondents were randomly picked up; some were acquainted at the ‘restaurant-street’ in Juffair, where most of the expatriates come to hang around, and some were contacted at lobbies of their apartments. However, the interviews could be conducted with only a limited number of residents from the apartments, who were willing to be interviewed. Nevertheless, many responded to the structured questionnaire. One theme was clearly reverberating often: the fact that sense of home prevails where one currently lives no matter if it is temporary or permanent. As the following two respondents claim:

“As a child, home was the place I lived with my parents, so as my parents moved, so did home. I grew up with the idea that home is the place I am currently living. However, when I was studying in England, I always returned ‘home’ to Bahrain to my parents for the holidays. During that time, I really had two homes – the boarding facility in England, and my parent’s home in Bahrain. Now I live in Bosnia, I still have two homes; one here and one there”.

Djan, House 45: Aáli compound

“To me, ‘home’ is the house where I live. I have lived in lots of houses in Bahrain, and they have all been home. It is the place that I come back to. The place where I sleep. It is the place where I feel safe, secure, and most like ‘me’. It is where memories are made, and held. It is warmth. It is the shell that protects those inside. It is the place where my partner and our daughter dance and sing and nobody is watching! It is the place where we belong at a given time even if we live there temporarily”.

Karen, Flat 23: Building 999 Juffair

However, there were also others who had a strong sense of belonging to the homes of origin and did not feel ‘that sense of home’ could be placed alongside what one feels at any temporary home anywhere else. The two are entirely different although we have still not found a different way of expressions of the two situations. Multiple meanings of home were quite apparent in their sentiments.

“I’m a migrant from the UK who has moved back and forth between the UK and Bahrain several times. I now have strong loyalties to both countries. For a migrant who came here by choice, although now settled into the expat way of life in Bahrain with friends and a good lifestyle, I know that my heart lies back ‘home’ in Manchester. It is definitely the connection to my family, friends and community back there which I miss terribly and don’t think I can ever replace”. Still, for the time being, Bahrain is my home.... A home of a different kind.

Elaine, Flat 12: Mannai Apartments

In fact, there were still others who felt that they did not have such strong sense of home anywhere they lived because they were ‘born migrants.’ Appeared to be in a state of flux, they demonstrated that for some perpetual migrants, home was always temporary without an anchor. Nevertheless, as the responses to the questionnaire indicated, they claimed that they were settled and happy, without the need for rooting, and a sense of belonging so generated to either place: the place where they were born and raised or the place where they lived.

... because of my particular personal situation where, being black and being British, in British society, you never truly feel at home. But by the same token if I was to go back to where my parents are from, I wouldn’t feel truly at home there either. So, you get into the situation where home to you doesn’t really have the permanence of going to your place of origin because my place of origin is a foreign country.

Sommerville,

And again,

Where I was born and raised, I don’t necessarily feel at home because I’m an immigrant’s son, so to speak, the son of an immigrant, so home for that reason doesn’t have the sense of permanence. I can’t feel at home in Scotland because I haven’t spent any length of time there, I don’t know the place. By the same token, I can’t feel at home here because I’m not truly Bahraini, as it were. So, home doesn’t really mean anything permanent, I’m afraid.’

Peter, Flat 45, One Pavilion

Indeed, these narratives demonstrate that multiple homes can exist for a migrant, ranging permanently been anchored as much as being temporarily situated.

Case Studies

More probing case studies were conducted with 3 respondents which enabled the observations of the spaces and places of the homes to delve further into how this permanent-yet temporary sense of home manifests through the material culture. Of the three case studies, one was particularly noteworthy because it divulged how constructions and re-constructions of home in different places take place.

Ananda is a long-term migrant who lives in Juffair. Born in Sri Lanka, he has lived in Bahrain from 2000-2004, migrated to Australia in 2004 and returned to Bahrain in 2006. Typical of the modern-day migrants having multiple homes, he has three homes: one in Sri Lanka where he had made his family, one in Melbourne where part of his family currently lives and one in Bahrain where his whole family lived until recently. Ananda travels and lives in and between these homes annually, although 10 months of the year, he lives in Bahrain. In response to the structured questionnaire, he had expressed a high level of satisfaction of his having been 'settled' in Bahrain, despite not being a Muslim and hence not able to participate in the mainstream culture. In fact, like most expatriates in Juffair, he remains a part of the transnational community sharing in with the anxieties and joys of being there temporarily but for a long period of time. Two of his homes show both the lightness of the rootedness of their being in different places and the degrees to which they have been personalized, transformed and made into personal spaces. Their similarity with the original home in Sri Lanka shows how they corroborate closely in the structuration of places within them.

Ananada's family lives in a 4th floor flat in an apartment building in Bahrain that is exclusively occupied by the expatriates. Located among many other apartment buildings of similar nature, the apartment including the furniture has been provided by his employer. Comprised of two large bedrooms, two toilets, a modern pantry and a living dining space, the apartment is well-designed with a central passage that provides access to the bedrooms.

His home in Australia appears to be different. Located in a large garden, in a suburb of Melbourne, it is a single-storey detached building elevated from the ground and comprises three bedrooms accessed through a small passage, a single toilet and a living dining space. Furniture there are their own, but the house is rented by the family and is not owned.

Despite these differences however, there seem to exist remarkable similarities in the ways in which the physical homes in the two places exist. Most notable among them is the absence of any significant artifacts and memorabilia in either place that distinctly connect them to their origin except a traditional lamp and a sculpture apparently present in both houses. In both living rooms, Ananda said that they have displayed small flags (It could be seen in the house in Bahrain) of the three countries in which they have predominantly lived (the family had also lived in England but that connection is absent here). In both living rooms, there also seem to exist a small corner-cabinet in which a Buddhist statue, a small oil lamp, some decorative wooden elephants, and few ornaments from Sri Lanka were kept. There were also a writing desk and a place for work in the living rooms of both houses.

Most significantly, many of the memorabilia that had found places in the living rooms in both Bahrain and Melbourne had come from many other places to which they had travelled around the world; from India, France, Thailand to UK. Ananda's family seems to celebrate their existence as travelers and migrants in as much as their roots in their country of origin and the affinity to Buddhism.

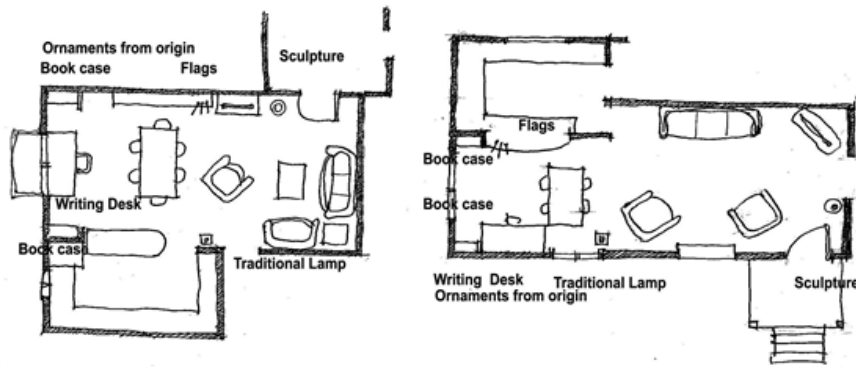


Fig. 3: things and places in Anandas homes in Bahrain and Australia

As can be seen, place-profiles of both dwellings were significantly similar. Although it is to be assumed that a Sri Lankan family with culinary habits of using spices heavily would have preferred a separate kitchen arrangement, the houses in both Bahrain and Melbourne had open-to-living style kitchens that suggested that the food they made were also more westernized than otherwise. Ananda admitted that it was not necessarily so, and that they did make western as well as Asian food, but the possibility of the family being in one place around most of the time was far more necessary than the need to segregate the kitchen to keep the smells away. Most notably, their original home in Sri Lanka had been constructed with similar relationships that seem to linger in their minds and affect their decisions when choosing a house to live wherever they now live.

Sparsely decorated in both instances, the houses had remained untouched in terms of physical personalization although they claimed that the arrangement of and the deco of the furniture itself had expressed their own way of thinking and living, and that was sufficient to feel at home there. The ‘things’ that adorn the spaces and places that have been created there are remarkably similar suggesting that underneath exists a structure of places in the home, the possibility for the reconstructions of which seem important for the reproduction for sense of home.

It is argued that it is through such places that the migrants ‘re-root’ or make home even though they do not contribute to a sense of belonging to the geographical space. The lightness of these transformations and personalizations suggest that they remain detached from the house as an entity despite being engrossed in its spatiality and place.

Conclusions

This paper re-affirms the emerging contestation of the long-held notion of a strong relationship between home and rootedness; particularly to the origins as evident in the conceptions of home among the expatriates in Bahrain. Modern nomadism and migration do not subscribe to the traditional views of home and migrants have come to authenticate a ‘lightly anchored homes’ defined largely by the presence and being in place rather than being rooted as the quintessential sense of home. It seems that the migrant expatriates move rhythmically across a range of landscapes, their routines re-establishing a rudimentary structure of places and meanings that create the archetypal core of home experience. This has been made possible also by the presence of modern technologies that enable keeping the network of social relationships intact, no matter if they were present around the geographical space or not.

It is the entire network of people, things and places that a person dwells in within and how this structure is constructed and constructable that creates a home or homes in the universe and out of the universe.

The empirical observations show that the buildings associated with dwelling and being inhabited, add and remain in a network of places which may generate different senses of home. There is no need for all of them to be constituted to here and now. There is also no need for all of them to have social and cultural roots constantly established. Indeed, dwellings in a series of buildings successively inhabited provide sites of memories of home, among which one remains uppermost and potentially articulated while the others remain dim-lit and in the foreground.

Essentially however, they colour the experience of home and contribute to its imagined or conceptualized as well as physical culture. This study demonstrates that not all unsettled migrants need necessarily be treated as un-privileged, distressed, or distraught in being uprooted from an original home, particularly when that act has been performed willingly and out of choice. Rather, dwelling for them is to construct a location of meaning and everyday anchor from among a multitude of sites in which some sense of home could manifest. Home, it is argued, could thus be understood as resulting from dwelling in places and relations that rekindle past places and relations which need to be constructed and reconstructed on a day-to-day basis to reaffirm one's existential character and form as imagined by oneself.

This paper examined the nature of rootedness and making homes among the migrants of Bahrain. It subscribed to the emerging questioning of the popular idea of the existence of home as a permanently geographically anchored entity and argues that for some, it is more conceptually defined, lightly rooted, and movable. Frequent mobility of 'homes' however demands that its culture connects the meanings and materials loosely and allows movability, transformations, transfusions and replacements.

The findings show that the migrant families are home-content and do not feel a strong sense of homelessness, often associated with the migrants in the West. In this context 'sense of up-rootedness' may be an outcome of expectations. Although sense of belonging is visibly absent, sense of home prevails raising questions about the usual links made between the two. This suggests that homes can indeed be constructed and nurtured in several ways and several locations. There also exist different homes; some more permanently meaningful and fixed and others more immediately meaningful yet movable. Underlying however exists a structure that is rudimentary and constant in terms of places.

This paper is a significant contribution to the studies of home and homelessness among the migrant communities in the contemporary world. It is exploratory and does not generate generalizable conclusions. However, it is novel in terms of being conducted in a country like Bahrain about which very little research insights exist. However, it is limited by the small size of the respondents. Nevertheless, in-depth insights have been generated.

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Availability of Data: Data presented in this research are available for scrutiny if so required. In any case, they were used in this paper with the consent of the owners of that data.

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