Reading the Routes: Exploring Experiences of Place-Making Through Refugees' Photographs, Walks, and Narratives in a Swedish Town

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Introduction

This chapter focuses on processes of home-making in the context of temporary staying permissions. During the autumn of 2015, the number of refugees and migrants to Europe was high, causing headlines and prompting stormy political debate. This was also the case in Sweden, where initial public engagement and support was soon followed by demands for limitations on the number of refugees granted asylum and shelter; in the end, this came with great changes in migration policy. In Sweden, in 2016, a change came to residence rights, making temporary residence permits the norm (Governmental Proposition 2015/16:174) and with this change Sweden's refugee regime has moved from having one of the most generous migration policies to the minimum EU level (Hudson et al. 2020). This causes uncertainty and limited decision-making possibilities since the refugees are at the mercy of state institutions and court decisions. In the wake of these changes, we study which strategies refugees actively apply as they make a new home while having only a temporary permit of residence in Sweden. Since previous studies have revealed that asylum seekers often have embodied experiences of, and relate themselves to, the legislation of the country they are currently staying in (Kymäläinen and Nordström 2010), it is important to focus on the setting with temporal staying permits. How does one make a home when your legal status of residence is temporal? In addition, having fled from somewhere or being a refugee often also includes having lived at many places and in many countries, which means that the current place might just be one of many where the refugee will be engaged in the processes home-making.

In this context, the purpose of the current chapter is to explore the ways in which temporal migrants interact with the spatial possibilities of a city in the processes of (temporal) home-making. Drawing on critical refugee studies, using the theoretical concept of home-making, the chapter explores the processes that migrants use while inhabiting their new (possibly temporal) town of residence as 'their' space. We use a walk-along-mapping photo-elicitation method, which provides insights into the texture ofspatial practices by revealing the subjects' engagement in their town environment and the way in which their new temporal place of residence is articulated in its (dis)connection to their individual stories. Inspired by Robertson et al. (2016), we use the photographs taken by the participants when out walking to train our focus on their ways of seeing, experiencing and understanding their surroundings. In what follows, we present the study's background and the theoretical concepts that guide the analysis. We then discuss the method and empirical results and conclusions of the research project.

Refugees, place and home-making—research background and theoretical starting points

> Where is home? On the one hand, 'home' is a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination. In this sense, it is a place of no return, even if it is possible to visit the geographical territory that is seen as the place of 'origin'. On the other hand, home is also the lived experience of locality, its sounds and smells. (Brah 1996, 192)

Transnational processes such as migration have helped change the idea of a stable relation between people and place, which has led to the development of new understandings of individuals' connections to place and home (Butcher 2010, 24). To understand how someone who has not chosen their place of residence makes a new temporal place their home, it is necessary to problematise what home is and how it is related to place. In the quote above, Avtar Brah raises the question, "Where is home?" by arguing that home is not necessarily connected to a physical place where you live or have lived: it can also be a part of the imagination of a community or an origin from somewhere, as in diaspora contexts. Most people who move internalise their home, taking it with them, and in the new setting, they reach out to connect to their surroundings,

adopting strategies that ensure each place is either "being at home" or "not at home" (Brah 1996).

Previous studies of refugees' home-making strategies have shown that the participants used strategies to integrate their past lives and places into their new settings (Risbeth and Powell 2013; Williamson 2016). Using participatory methods, one study (Robertson et al. 2016) focusing refugees' home-making practices finds that the search for the familiar in a new material setting was the usual strategy for remaking, reimagining and reconstituting places to make a home. Many of the photographs the participants generated in that study were concerned with bringing familiarities and characteristics from the participants' past into their present (Robertson et al. 2016). Indeed, people become attached to new places and make sense of them because of personal memories and past meanings. Similarly, in their study of young asylum seekers, Kymäläinen and Nordström (2010, 82) show that there is a "fluid space between the past and the future" that ensures that the familiar—the things that have been seen, heard or felt before—is significant in the construction of a daily life somewhere new. Despite calls to focus on the "politics of dislocation", the temporary aspect and "what it means to be situated in a particular place", the ways in which refugees position themselves in the "here and now as well as the far away" have not been addressed much at all (O'Neill and Hubbard 2010, 46). Following Butcher's lead (2010), we argue that living in a particular place is no guarantee of a sense of that place being your home or that it is in any way essential or a stable condition; rather, we think of it as something that has to be achieved and practised (see, e.g., Raffaeta and Duff 2013). This means that we understand efforts of making something home as a process where refugees use their own agency, experiences and strategies.

Based on their studies of the ways in which refugees build up a sense of home, O'Neill and Hubbard (2010) suggest that it is relevant to ask questions such as the following: When is a place at home? What is the difference between "feeling at home" and claiming a place as one's own? Indeed, finding home in a new city is not limited to finding a residence; it is as much about making a home because it requires strategies to make a place familiar, understandable and connected to one's self. The home-making processes that enable refugees to replace home also help generate new spaces for them. In previous studies, the ability to appropriate place has been shown to go hand in hand with spatial divisions, where power structures are reproduced and experienced in what are often contradictory ways (e.g., Giritli Nygren and Schmauch 2012).

Theoretically, we draw on the theories focusing on place and home-making from the field of critical spatial theory. We take our cue on how to understand home from writers such as bell hooks' (1990) "homeplace", Sara Ahmed's (1999) "being at homeness" and Avtar Brah's (1996) "being at or not at home". Following their thoughts, we understand home as something more than a material object: it comprises imagination, routinised everyday practices, relationship networks and a representation imbued with social meaning, cultural ideals, memories and values.

This requires us to take the meaning of making home as a relational entry point, meaning that we understand the informants' involvement in locality as not simply a question of inhabiting an existing space; rather, it is also about taking an active part in the making of that space (see Ahmed 1999). The investment of self in a locality, according to Ahmed (1999), is not limited to inhabiting a space that is already constituted by others it is a process where the refugees use their own agency. For Ahmed (1999, 341), the lived experience of "being at home" implies that subjects develop in a space that is anything but extrinsic to them; being at homeness suggests that the subject and space leak into each other, and so, they inhabit each other. Hooks (1990) uses the concept of "homeplace" to link issues of marginality and identity to the issues of space and place; she defines homeplace as a site where one can freely confront issues of humanisation and can strive to be a subject. "Homeplace" is used to describe potential sites of resistance—places where non-white, racial bodies can occupy space—and in her account, this task of making "homeplace" is all about the construction of a safe place. We use this notion of homeplace and at homeness as an analytical handle.

Walking and talking place—walk-along photo elicitation

Earlier research has shown that photographing places where everyday activities are situated can add significantly to our understanding of how place is related to experience. According to Guillemin and Drew (2010, 177), participant-generated visual methods have benefits for researchers because they broaden the range of data that can be accessed and can act as a medium of communication between the researcher and participant (Clark-Ibanez 2004, 1512). Because we are exploring place-related experiences in an urban setting, we also find a visual ethnographic approach (Pink 2007) to be relevant. Thus, our chosen method combines participant-generated photos with the research tech-

niques of photo-walking, mapping and interviewing, bringing us to a more meaningful, diverse understanding of each participant's sensation of space and place. As Guillemin and Drew (2010, 177) note, these methods also have an empowering function because they tease out stories about place that are rarely told otherwise.

The study took place in the city of Sundsvall, which is (in a Swedish context) a medium sized city with approximately 96,000 inhabitants. Its heritage builds on the Swedish forest industry but is now a university city. The city is located in the northern parts of Sweden, along the coast. Like almost all cities in the northern parts of Sweden the region is struggling with population decline.

To generate visual participatory and narrative data, we charted how the movement-based data related to the participants' physical experience of walking around town by combining walking and mapping. This method can find some of its origins in Kusenbach's "go-along" (2003), a hybrid form of interviewing and participant observation where "fieldworkers accompany individual informants on their 'natural' outings, and—through asking questions, listening and observing—actively explore their subjects' stream of experiences and practices as they move through, and interact with their physical and social environments" (2003, 463). Inspired by those who have found that moving around gives the researcher a better understanding of the places visited during such walks (e.g., Fink 2011; Evans and Jones 2011) one of the authors of this chapter, who was new to Sundsvall, asked in her apartment building for interested participants to the study. The apartment building was designated for students and migrants. The researcher recruited the participants by informally asking if anyone would like to participate in the study, three persons said yes. Following this up with formal, written information about the study in both Swedish and English, that is, informed consent. We asked the participants to show us "their Sundsvall" and then one researcher took individual walks with the participants through "their city" encouraging them to take photos during their walks—photos of places important to *them*. Here, walks mean that the researcher can observe the participants' physical experiences in conjunction with their place-related narratives. Therefore, the current study's material are participatory photo walks, including maps of the walks, and photo interviews in English (in one case with an interpreter present) with the three refugees that accepted our invitation to participate in the study. In total, the participants took 68 photos during the walks in Sundsvall, they then selected which photos to use during the interviews leaving us with 28 pho-

tos that were used in the photo interviews. During the walks the researcher took field notes, and the interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Due to the different lengths in walks two participants took two walks with the researcher and the third only one, all of the participants did two follow up photo-interviews. The walks and interviews were conducted during late summer and early autumn, when there was still daylight and the ground was free from snow[1]. We now turn to presenting the backgrounds of the participants—two men and one woman, all anonymised.

Registered refugees in Sweden are entitled to a monthly allowance and housing paid for by the state. However, it is the authorities' decision where they are housed; those who wish to choose must make their own arrangements and will receive no housing benefits. Of the three participants, Omar was placed in Sundsvall by the Swedish Migration Agency, while Hawa and Ali chose to move there. All three have temporal staying permits; they are attending the official Swedish language course, the Swedish for Immigrants (SFI) programme, provided free to immigrants by the local authority. They also spend time at the town's 'house of culture'—a free public library and museum that charges no admission—where they can come into contact with Swedes and attend informal conversation classes with native speakers.

Omar, 26

In 2015, Omar fled Syria for Sweden. He has been living in the accommodation in Sundsvall since 'he got his papers'; he was placed in Sundsvall by the Swedish Migration Agency, and at the time of our interviews he said that he wanted to stay in Sundsvall. Omar lives with his younger brother, but their parents are still in Syria. When he first arrived in Sweden he was placed in a refugee camp located in a small village on the Swedish countryside. During his time there, a place where he did not want to stay, he made some friends who he has been holding on to even after they left the camp. He hopes to learn Swedish as quickly as possible to fulfil his dream of becoming an art teacher. In his free time, Omar makes paintings and hangs out with his friends.

1 In the region where the study was conducted the winters are cold and snowy and has Nordic light, which means there is close to no daylight during the winter but almost endless daylight during the summer.

Hawa, 22

Hawa was born in Eritrea, but she has no memories of her life there because her parents emigrated to Saudi Arabia when she was young, living in refugee camps. She does, however, speak her language of origin. Hawa fled to Sweden with her sister and arrived in 2016; the sisters are unified, and both live in Sundsvall after having been apart for some time. Hawa was placed by the Swedish Migration Agency at refugee centres and then in a temporary accommodation in the south of Sweden. When she was given the chance to choose where to live, she chose Sundsvall. Having grown up in refugee camps, Hawa now wants to live beyond such premises and talks a lot about feeling ready for living her life in Sweden. In her free time, she likes to hang out with her friends, go out for coffee or go clubbing.

Ali, 34

Ali is from Syria, but before he came to Sweden, he was living in Jordan. He arrived in Sweden in 2015 and was placed in Sundsvall in early 2017. He has no family in Sundsvall, and his mother and brothers are still living in Syria. Ali has a university degree in business and administration, and his goal is to open his own business in Sundsvall. He is very focused on developing his Swedish language skills and finding all the help he can get with learning the language. He has an active social life and spends much of his time in central Sundsvall; however, he feels that he has no friends who can hang out with him.

Ali, Omar and Hawa took Rozalie through their day and city. All the routes are framed by the town's location between a harbour, the forest and the two hills surrounding the city. The routes started from the same location—the apartment building where the participants lived—taking them across the river to the town centre, where various locations were passed, photographed and talked about. Ali took the longest route, passing shops, night clubs, the cinema, the mosque and his school, while Hawa's and Omar's routes were shorter and did not connect to as many places as Ali's.

Home-making in a temporal setting

Our methodological approach of walking and mapping required one of the authors to accompany the participants, listening to them and exploring how they experience the town as they moved through their physical and social envi-

ronments (see Kusenbach 2003). When we asked Ali, Hawa and Omar to show us 'their Sundsvall', they highlighted numerous places to which they had already formed a connection during their time living in the city. They not only showed how they walk through their town but also 'through their day' because they had different reasons for going to the various places and for their choice of route, depending on what they had in store for their day. They have routes they take when they are going shopping, routes when they are going for a walk and routes when they are going to study. As will be shown, as Easthope (2014) explains, finding one's route is also an act of active place-making that can connect and replace former homes. Our study shows how the participants are involved in city-making as they engage in the daily life of the city, as previous shown by Çağlar and Glick Schiller (2018), but our analysis also shows how the participants are actively creating their home-making processes.

To capture the bodily dimension of walking together, we took the act of moving around to show how places are created by routes (Lee and Ingold 2006). We understand the place-making act of routes as a process that transforms space into familiar places, it is a process that entails a dialectical relation between self and place that help individuals to make sense of an unfamiliar environment (see also Castillo 2014 for a similar understanding). The connections between routes, places and stories create individual but contextual meanings that are imbued with the participants' memories of their places of origin alongside their new memories and experiences since moving to Sundsvall. Walking with the participants and listening to their stories along the way yielded a great number of places, including those they did not want to photograph or talk about. The places they choose to show us had different meanings: some were for recreation and relaxation, while others were for meeting friends or practicing Swedish. The material shows how all three participants, despite their temporal status, engage in the processes of fashioning individual ways to relate to the town, thus engaging in the act of homemaking (see, e.g., Ahmed 1999). The following result is divided into three narratives: framing and narrating place, the practice of sitting on a bench and home making through place taking.

> … I like this mountain. Because I feel better up here when I see the city, my city here in Sundsvall. When I come up, you can see the Sundsvall; you can see everything. […] You can see my house from there; you can see the church, the centrum, everything. […] Sometimes I feel good when I see the sea and everything. (Ali)

Framing and narrating place

Walking through the forest, getting to the top of the northern mountain and viewing the city, the apartment building and the harbor become a way of relating to the city, of making it 'mine'. The forest, the sea and the hills are central parts of how Ali, Hawa and Omar navigate and relate to Sundsvall, but also in the ways they narrate their home in Sundsvall, as told to relatives and friends 'back home' or in other countries. Ali says that when he phones his friends back in Jordan and Syria, he describes the 'true elements' of his new home, which here refers to the elements of nature, such as the landscape and weather. This reflection on nature as something 'real' is also made by Hawa, who says that she had never seen a forest in Saudi Arabia, and now, walking her way up the mountain connected the experience of being in the forest with being real. She states, 'Now I am living in the reality', which is a statement we connect to her now living outside of the refugee camps.

All the participants refer to the sea and *Norra Berget*, the northernmost of the two hills and nearest one to their apartment building, as places where they like to spend time and relax. Each participant has a story about the beauty of

these places and talks about how much they like to be in the great outdoors. At the top of *Norra Berget*, Omar says:

> I stay here and I open my hands and my arms and breath and I look to the sea. In the summer it is wonderful. And you can see the sea and the bridge and you can see my place where I go to the [bench by the] sea and sit down.

All three participants talk about the feeling they get when coming up at the top of the mountain and viewing the city. The forest, the hill and the sea in Sundsvall are sights associated with the participants expectations of Sweden, what they imagined a Western or Swedish environment would be like, things that Hawa describes as things she had only seen 'in movies before'. She says the following:

> I have never been out around to see the nature. We didn't have those things. […] I have been here for a year, and I am slowly getting used to it, and I am kind of enjoying it. I like seeing the forest and going outside and exploring and everything. I can enjoy it.

In a sense, the participants' experiences of nature[2]—the hills, the forest, the sea and the view of the city—are related to their past experiences, becoming a way of characterising the town as 'something new'. In this way, the present, the past and their imaginings are connected in their place-making strategies. No site can be understood apart from its interconnections through time and space, and these interconnections can be studied in a single space (Feldman 2011). We argue that this practice is the result of places being mouldable, here the opposite from what would be static. The participants use the fact that places are in a constant state of being made and remade also by the people who only temporarily inhabit them, and they use this in home-making processes (for a comparison, see Butcher 2010).

2 The Swedish integration courses, in most cases, also emphasize the importance of nature to many Swedes. This means that they often contain excursions into nature etc, which was also the case for the participants of this study. In Sweden one has Outdoor Access Rights which means the right to walk, cycle, ride, ski and camp on any land with the exception of private gardens, near a dwelling house or land under cultivation.

The practice of sitting on a bench

While walking with the participants, all three highlighted the importance of being able to claim or inhabit space in the city. One such strategy showed the importance of public benches in the city, especially along one particular street. These are all benches that you may use without buying something and you may sit there for as long as you want. All the participants fill the benches with their own unique stories. Hawa, for example, describes one bench in the town centre as a place of relaxation, a place to sit and have a take-away coffee, while Omar describes one of the benches as a place for social activities. He and his friends use the bench as a place to enjoy time together. Sundsvall's public seating is a site where the participants enact space and their place-making strategies. The benches where the participants would sit and people-watch can be understood as their way of inserting themselves into the town picture. Hawa, who says she is planning for a life in Sundsvall, also expresses this, thinking that she needs to be 'a completely new person' and stating, 'I just said to myself, if you are going to live here, you are going to be like them'. Omar says that the bench is a 'special place' where he can meet friends and where they can 'find each other'—they meet up there and then go somewhere else.

The benches the participants photographed are mostly positioned in similar places. Yet each participant also refers to other benches in the town: they describe how they would sit down there to people-watch, but also how the benches are natural meeting places where they could practice their Swedish with others. Benches located in different places might be associated with dif-

ferent meanings and practices, as is evident in Omar's walk when he explains that he has different benches for different purposes. As he takes the researcher along his route, he showed different benches and the purposes he gives them: the benches in the city centre are social benches for meeting friends. The bench located at the seafront is not a social place but a "very quiet" place that he likes because it gives him "peace of mind". He usually visits this bench when he wants to think of his art or if he is "kind of upset", and it is a place where he can "think of his family". In this way, the benches become part of routinised everyday practices. In addition, these benches also become a place for connecting with memories of homes, both physical and social, and as such enabling place for a space where the past and future can be fluid (Kymäläinen and Nordström 2010).

Ali also links the experience of nature with watching people going about their lives, and he likes using the benches on the seafront and along the riverbank, where he can enjoy the quiet surroundings: "Yes, you can see more people sit down here. You can talk with them, and yes, you can meet other people. I like this place; sometimes I sit here" (Ali). Sitting on the benches in town, whether outdoors or in the library, can be seen as a strategy to actively inhabit a place (see Giritli Nygren and Schmauch 2012). The freedom to sit on a public bench for as long as one wants without having to retreat to a commercial space such as a coffee shop or a restaurant. It can also be viewed through a different lens, where public seating can be seen as a way to connect to their new surroundings; here, the practice of sitting on a bench could also be interpreted using Butcher's framing (2010) of home as an expression of self and evolving together with a place. To follow this line of reasoning (Butcher 2010), public benches can be a way of gaining personal, social and cultural places, hence avoiding feeling out of place. The social act and the bodily involvement of sitting on a bench inhabits the space and transforms the notion of the town. Of course, making your own space in a new town is about finding somewhere to live, but it is also about using one's agency to find and actively create places where one can "fit in".

Home-making through place taking

All three participants have the same "home where one lives" (Brah 1996): the apartment building. Even though none of them own their apartment, they all refer to their room as their "own space" and "home", a place where they can "feel free and be themselves". This echoes Schmauch and Giritli Nygren's finding (2012), which is prompted by bell hooks' concept of "homeplace" (1984), that this is because those who normally occupy the hegemonic position are absent: here Ali, Hawa and Omar are able to be "subjects" in their own right and not (only) be defined by their position as migrants. They described it as being within their own four walls; moreover, they could withdraw from the strange surroundings and be/interact/behave as the persons they used to be in, what they refer to as, the homes from where they come. The fact that their rooms are their own space is partly because it is in these rooms that they are in contact with family members they have left behind. Just as Ahmed (1999) describes, being at home is when the subject and space inhabit each other; indeed, our participants' rooms meld past and present together into a place where they live with places they came from (see Robertson et al. 2016).

For all the participants, to leave their rooms is a chance to explore and interact with the new town and its different social and spatial surroundings, not to mention to search for familiarities and characteristics from the past in their new material setting, much as the participants did in the study by Robertson et al. (2016). Thus, Ali describes one of the "Arab food shops" in town, owned by a Syrian, as one of the places that remind him of where he used to shop before he fled to Sweden. He talks about the similarities to the products he used to buy and the fact that the signs are in Arabic, which he says makes him "feel like you are back home". In this way, the participants carry their homes within themselves, seeking out places in their surroundings that would give them a sense of "being at home" (see Brah 1996). The "Arab shop" and the possible presence of other such places where new residents can stay in touch with old habits gives them a chance to maintain their ties to their past places while at the same time helping to generate new ones. In this way our study highlighting the important role that migrant businesses have as an important meeting place for developing new networks (see Çağlar & Glick Schiller 2018).

Another striking example is demonstrated by what the participants photographed and the way they talk about their special relationship to *Kulturmagasinet*, the free public library, which all three picked as one of their favourite spots in town, a part of their daily routine. They all refer to individual specific places at *Kulturmagasinet* as 'my place'—a particular table or a particular reading chair.

Much like Ahmed (1999) argues, here, the space that is most like home, the most comfortable and most familiar to the individual, is also the space in which the self is almost at home. Hawa shows this when she says that she leaves the library if "her place" is already taken—she would rather leave than sit somewhere else. The reason she gives is that the arrangement of the bookshelves makes her feel invisible. She often refers to being invisible and connects it with feeling safe: "Sweden is good; Sweden is safe. I am happy here. I have my own rights here. I can work. I can do whatever I want". Hawa associates feeling secure with being free—free to make decisions, free to act on her choice to leave the library instead of taking another seat. The participants insert themselves into the places in the library in various ways, but for two of them, *their place* in the library means a table with chairs and a quiet surrounding where they could learn Swedish. The library, with its many seating areas, is therefore described as a special place in town, one with which the participants feel connected in much the same way as they feel connected with their

rooms in the accommodation. Earlier research (Lofland 1985) has shown how multiple forms of daily activities are based on shared affect, showing how places in the city turn casual informal meetings into ongoing and affective relationships (see also Pink 2012).

Visualising and producing homeness

In this chapter, we have emphasised the ways in which Sundsvall's (perhaps temporal) residents create home while also showing how they actively inhabit spaces in a way that transforms the town and possibly themselves. The point of using the research techniques of walking, photographing and interviewing is to explore how new refugee residents join in producing urban space as a place and in understanding the home-making practices. Departing from the theoretical concept of home-making, the visual empirical material identify the situated life episodes that reveal how the participants engage in the places and how this engagement is a part of the inhabiting space. By their physical presence, they change the space, and this transforms the town, for they do not inhabit a place that is already constitute; rather, they have a hand in the very making of the town's space (see Ahmed 1999). By paying attention to the everyday practices and personal narratives, we can also see the rich and changing social meanings that places and everyday practices have. The home-making strategies in terms of everyday activities on the part of the participants—the routes they walk, the places they visit and even the benches they sit on—can be seen as embodied responses to place. The participants in the present study create their own social and spatial space through the action of their everyday activities. The participants' routes, the places narrated, are different but also connected: they show how home-making is related to former homes and new situations, relations and places. The process of settling is based on multiple new social relations, but also on maintenance of others. Indeed, the places are particular and specific but are connected by similar stories.

These processes enable them to connect with their surroundings, involving them in active home-making. Each of the participants has sites where they could build relations with their surroundings and where they believe they have a chance to integrate into their social environment. The methodology has enabled a better understating of the home-making strategies and how it relates to the institutional structure of the town and how home-making practices, situations, sites, institutions and so on are linked. The visual method-

ology captures the fact that the walks facilitate reflection on the details of the places, connecting them to a sense of past places and former homes and in this way encouraging active consideration of how strange environments can be made familiar (O'Neill and Hubbard 2010). As previous studies have shown, the participants in our study also show that refugees' home-making strategies include ways to integrate their past lives and places into their new settings (Risbeth and Powell 2013; Williamson 2016). The material shows that home-making strategies should be understood as effective, embodied responses to an appraisal of places that are like home—comfortable and familiar (see also Robertson et al. 2016). Returning to what was mentioned in the introduction about recent shifts in the Swedish refugee regime, only allowing temporary staying permits, it is important to illuminate the role of home-making strategies. This study shows how the participants used their own agency for home-making strategies, creating their own familiar routes across their new town, framing a place around them and inserting themselves into these new places to make a home in their new town. Turning back to the concepts of homeness (Ahmed 1999) and homeplace (hooks 1990), asking the informants to show us their town and their places can be understood as an exploration of their being-at-home spaces. These spaces are the ones most like home, most comfortable and familiar to the individual, where one finds the self as almost, but not quite, at home. In this sense, as we cited Avtar Brah previously: home is not necessarily connected to a physical place where you live or have lived, it can also be part of an imagination of a community or about origin from somewhere, as in diaspora contexts (Brah 1996, 192). Home is, as Hooks says, about making a homeplace in the meaning of having a safe site where you can be a subject.

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