

## **Travelling Towards Home: mobilities and home making**

**23-24 June 2011**

### **Abstracts**

**David Crouch** (University of Derby)

A Reflexive Consideration of Space, Belonging, Disorientation and Identity

**Megha Amrith**, University of Cambridge

Home in the transit city

That “there is no place like home” is a comment widely uttered by Filipino medical workers in Singapore. They refer nostalgically to the Philippines. Yet the reality of their lives as migrants in Singapore challenges this unproblematic construction of home.

Filipino medical workers in Singapore live in what they see as a transit city – a place in which to gain temporary work experience before moving on to Europe and North America. This transit city is in-between a Philippine home ‘left behind’ – for its lack of promise and security – and a home imagined, and aspired to, in the West. What are the dilemmas and opportunities that questions of home raise for migrants in a transit city?

The spatial and temporal orientations of migrants are salient and affect the rhythms, priorities and preoccupations of their everyday lives. Migrants find a home in online media as they use social networking and chat technologies to communicate with their Philippine homes. Simultaneously, they plan a new home elsewhere, doing visa applications and discussing opportunities with friends and family across the world. Migrants are thus physically in the transit city, but living elsewhere. Yet plans to move on are often postponed or halted; migrants never realistically consider returning to the Philippines once overseas; and relationships gradually develop in the transit city. I thus consider what happens when the transit city, unexpectedly, becomes a home. This ethnographic case suggests that what and where home is are questions that permeate, often with anxiety, the lives of aspiring migrants.

**Anna Arnone**, University of Sussex

Eritrean diasporic tourism

Many researchers analyse the Eritrean Government’s strong hold over the diaspora and explain how forms of forced remittances and other transnational political systems of control have recently disempowered Eritreans abroad. In the DPhil thesis (2010) about Eritreans in Milan I showed how Eritrean transnational politics controls the diaspora and its social spaces. However the diaspora is also developing discourses and practices of negotiation around this structure. For instance, the diaspora is engaged with types of investment in Eritrea, which not only concern money. The present difficult economic and political situation in Eritrea and the stability reached in Milan has diminished the probabilities of returning to Eritrea to live. Nevertheless many people return for holidays at least every two years. Therefore the Eritrean summer returnees are investing in their home country by becoming its tourists. Diasporic tourism is a lively example of how the diaspora is not only victim of the nation state, but plays a great role in wider transnational social and cultural dynamics of change. The returnees perform a Milanese-Eritrean diasporic identity and through this social persona they imagine Eritrea as a space in mind. This paper looks at the narratives of Eritreans in Milan around going to Eritrea on holiday, and questions the impact of their imaginary of Eritrea as a place for leisure and cultural tourism.

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**Iride Azara**, University of Derby

Mobilising identity and 'the sense of home' at the festival: an exploration of La Cavalcata Sarda, Sardini

The concept of mobility has been amply explored within contemporary literature (Baerenholdt and Simonsen, 2004; Kellerman, 2006; Sheller and Urry, 2006). Furthermore, the concept of mobility and how it relates to and potentially re-drafts the feeling of 'home' and identity has been addressed (Morley, 2000; Baerenholdt and Granas, 2008; Bonnet, Collet and Maurines, 2008 and Nyman, 2009). This paper aims to further explore the tenets and applications of the concepts of mobility, identity and the feeling of home within the context of everyday practices such as tourism (Baerenholdt, Haldrup, Larsen and Urry, 2004; Hall, 2005; Bennett, 2005; Burns and Novelli, 2006; Hannam, 2006; Edensor, 2007). It focuses on data collected at La Cavalcata Sarda, a regional tourist festival annually held in Sassari, Sardinia through the means of a longitudinal and ethnographic study (Azara and Crouch, 2006). Part of a larger doctoral research, the study aimed at identifying how Sardinian culture and identity is articulated among three broad working categories, namely locals, tourists and local cultural intermediaries. The data set collected reveals how within each category there exist infinite and often overlapping sub-categories, whose sense of 'home' and personal, social and cultural identity is activated, contested and redrafted through the festival a space of encounter (Crouch, 2000; 2001; 2002; 2003 and 2009).

**Chand Basi and Kaveri Qureshi**, University of Sussex

'Is Jalandhar really a cruising ground?' Queer diasporic homes and journeys

This paper considers the experiences and narratives concerning home of a group of gay-identified male Asian 20-somethings in London. Having all grown up in urban Britain, they related narratives of homes that were unhomey, in which the workings of heteronormativity alienated them from their families and "Asian culture", which they judged to be "more homophobic" than white/majority British culture. Journeys through youth culture and into the queer scene provided an ambivalent space for an unfurling of sexual difference. Whilst liberating from the pressures of home, the racial coding of the mainstream homonormative gay public required them to rework and create a "gay Asian scene" involving the renegotiation of cultural icons such as Lata Mangeshkar and Benazir Bhutto and the production of a new sense of home. The paper also explores imaginative and touristic journeys to India in pursuit of a differently-constructed homeland. There, they encountered another India where same-sex desire was an everyday reality hypocritically denied by public morality, where metropolitan elites had created queer publics that were more heavily politicized than those in which they engaged in Britain. The encounter with India was marked also with exotic sexual intrigue and real fear. These were journeys of self-discovery, but following a different trajectory from the standard 'second-generation visits homeland' trope as they were negotiating more complex terrain. Ultimately, their inability to reconcile their sexual selfhood with the expected life course of marriage and children was irresolvably unsettling as they sought to either disavow their same-sex desire or were unable to accept themselves as subjects with 'no future'.

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**Philippa Chandler**, Curtin University of Technology, Perth

Home and away: young Australians in London

The colonial relationship between Australia and Britain has required/enabled a history of cross cultural traffic between the two countries and the trip to London has become a 'rite of passage' for young Australians. As a result of this cultural ritual over 250,000 Australians currently live in the city. The Australian diaspora in London is vast, vocal and engaged in a process of self-representation and negotiation of national identity. This is conducted through print media, online communities and performance and cultural practices such as attendance at Australian-themed events and venues. This paper argues that these young travelers inhabit hyper-Australia, an idealized version of their 'home' country that is constructed through nationalistic myths and symbols. Hyper-Australia is a liminal space that allows the diaspora to glorify an imagined Australia while simultaneously asserting a national identity marked by its difference to British identity. The creation of hyper-Australia, while challenging the traditional hegemonic relationship between Britain and Australia, perpetuates a conservative and exclusive version of Australian national identity.

**Fateme Etemaddar**, University of Otago, New Zealand

Domestic trips in diaspora: a coping strategy for home making in another land

Over the history of migration Diasporic lifestyles have been regarded as stressful and challenging ways of life. Moving to a new culture and living in locations other than their country of origin causes many Diasporas to encounter significant difficulties including the feeling of being alien and changes in sense of belonging.

Travelling back to the home countries of Diasporas has been regarded as one of the main strategies Diasporas utilize to maintain their cultural ties with home and to cope with homesickness and nostalgia. However, extant scholars have ignored the proportion of Diaspora populations who are not able to travel back to their home countries, although these cultural and emotional needs do exist and need to be fulfilled in Diaspora. This paper, through studying an Iranian Diasporic trip within New Zealand explores this gap. The research examines one of the ways the Iranian Diasporas in New Zealand create a territory of belonging. Through performing the reproduced culture of home they deal with their homesickness within the boundaries of Diaspora. This case study challenges understanding of Diaspora tourism and home making.

**Nicola Frost**, SOAS Centre for Migration and Diaspora Studies

Remembering Maluku Manise: Moluccans in Australia and the violence of representation

In 1999 the region of Maluku in Eastern Indonesia entered a period of serious and prolonged violence, which killed thousands and displaced hundreds of thousands more. Moluccans living at that time in Sydney, Australia, watched in horror as their image of home as idyllic island paradise was dramatically reconfigured, and as their voluntary migration became indefinite exile. This paper explores the ways in which migrants reconciled competing representations of Maluku. It shows how certain situations throw into relief the disjuncture between individual experience and collective memory, through an account of an immigration tribunal hearing. At the same time, the paper considers concepts of family in the context of a Moluccan migrant organisation. This strikingly non-organic 'family' transgresses ethnic, religious and

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national boundaries, yet functions as an effective vehicle for political solidarity and personal support. Finally, the paper comments on the use of ideas of 'home' and 'family' as both vernacular mechanisms and analytical categories.

**Narmala Halstead**, University of East London

'Outside stigma' and the local: 'chaste brides', multi-skilled experts and others

This paper examines social interactions vis-à-vis outward migration in Guyana where certain local people experience what is perceived as an 'outside stigma'. This stigma, as the opposite of the status obtained by migrants and successful global networkers, is now being publicly upset with the advent of increasing temporary migrant workers, and local 'experts,' who find ways to demonstrate their agency. This upset rebounds the local and unveils specific persons in ways which interrupt and set limits to a 'global network'. In these interruptions, the network is stilled as a particular local which is sought by some returned migrants, for instance, in their focus on the 'pure village bride,' and which is emphasised by residents in the ways they *become* experts.

**Madeleine Hatfield**, Royal Holloway

Return migration, home and family: theories, relationships and contributions

That migration research often fails to question notions of home and family is an assertion that is perhaps even more readily made when it comes to return migration. Here, the relationship between home and migration in particular is distinct and all-pervasive but little interrogated despite the taken-for-granted understanding of home as the place *to*, rather than or as well as *from*, which migration is understood as occurring. Further, familial reasons are often thought to be primary motivations for return but tend not to be examined beyond these assertions. Commonplace understandings of return migration as occurring to home and family are often the reasons why these migrations are overlooked, rather than being an incentive for their further interrogation because of these interesting relationships.

This paper considers the legacy of connections between return migration, home and family, which are usually implicit in research but which mark their deep rooted interrelationships. It then draws on grounded empirical research on the everyday lives of British households returning to the UK from Singapore to demonstrate the relevance and operation of these concepts in this context and in return migration more generally. This illustrates the centrality of home and family while also recognising the richness of their simultaneous ubiquity and diversity, providing greater insight into a neglected but common type of migration while also advancing conceptualisations of home and family more broadly.

**Alistair Hunter**, University of Edinburgh

Home as Inclusion in social systems

This paper seeks to contribute to the ongoing debate about the reappraisal of the concept of home which has been taking place in the social sciences in the last two decades. It will proceed initially by drawing on the work of anti-sedentarists such as Malkki, with their insistence that home can be multi-locational. Alongside this, I will examine Jackson's thesis that being 'at home in the world' is less about place and more about the social relations that occur in a given place. I seek to develop this latter insight by introducing (what I believe to be) a novel way of theorising home which transcends conventional

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definitions. Drawing on the work of Niklas Luhmann, I will argue that to be 'at home' can also mean to be 'included' in different social systems. One clear example of this from the political system relates to fiscal *domicile*, but I will argue that such inclusion extends to other social systems, such as law, economy, welfare, health, and education. Crucially, the fact that many of these systems are becoming less and less constrained by nation-state boundaries means that 'home as inclusion' no longer necessarily occurs in one locale only. To illustrate these theoretical points, I will briefly present some of the key findings from my soon-to-be-completed doctoral thesis entitled *Retirement Home? France's migrant worker hostels and the dilemma of late-in-life return*.

**Aroosa Kanwal**, University of Lancaster

Constructing cyber-identities: transnational diaspora linkages in Kamila Shamsie's *Kartography*

Home, in Kamila Shamsie's *oeuvre*, whether it is a geographically defined place or a state of mind, is a consolation not only for those who dream of returning home, but also for those prepared to embrace hyphenated identities in a new land. As a diasporic South Asian woman writer, Shamsie is distinctive in making dislocation an experience that does not threaten her characters' sense of identity. Rather, dislocation inculcates, in her characters, a strong sense of affiliation with the homeland. But the notion of homeland in Shamsie's *oeuvre* tends to suggest deterritorialisation of world borders so as to reconnect members of same community. The concepts of internet and cognitive mapping in *Kartography* challenge the territory-determined concepts of culture. This metamorphosis of static geographical maps into processual mapping suggests various kinds of reterritorialisation efforts which involve direct attempts to extend national maps outward to follow diasporic communities. The memory maps provide vectors of a new geography, in redefining the spatial and social boundaries. In my paper, I will discuss how interactive mapping challenges the static territorial conception of nation and helps to renegotiate and reconstruct identities by rerouting roots; by opening up a space for collective restoration and peace. Shamsie, with her practical and pragmatic disposition, looks for a third space for authentic identities of her diasporic subjects without conflating the cyberspace and the real world.

**Saffron Karlsen**, UCL

European identities and feeling at home in Europe among Muslims living in England, Germany and Spain

Debates regarding the attitudes of Muslims towards their lives in Europe never seem far from public or media agendas. Concern is voiced that different Muslim groups wish to live their lives separately from the rest of European society. Despite little empirical evidence to support, or refute, such concerns, prejudice against Muslims is on the increase and appears to be considered more acceptable than other forms of racism.

The 'Muslims in Europe' study, conducted in 2004, provides a unique opportunity to explore these issues with Bangladeshi Muslims living in England, Turkish Muslims living in Germany and Moroccan Muslims living in Spain, who were asked about the extent to which they felt British, German or Spanish, whether they felt at home in their country of residence, and how this had been affected by the events of, and related to, 11 September 2001 and 11 March 2004.

Place of birth, citizenship and perceptions of racist social exclusion, religious identities and connections with pre-migration locations have an important influence on (feeling able to access) forms of European

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national identity. Feeling at home in your country of residence, and feeling less at home since 9/11 and 3/11 appear driven by, specifically, holding citizenship of or having been born in your country of residence and reported experiences or perceptions of victimisation. This work provides important indication of means by which European societies themselves may engender an improved sense of engagement among Muslim groups, rather than simply insisting on greater assimilation by them.

**Maja Korac**, University of East London

Remaking home in exile: challenging notions of territorially bound places and identities

Home is a concept closely linked to the notion of place understood as a meaningful location that provides a sense of attachment to it. Places are produced and made into meaningful locations through social activity and daily practice characterised by the intersection of structure and agency. As social actors, refugees are actively engaged in confronting uncertainty and insecurity linked to the severely limited options and choices available to them. Negotiating entry into a new society as well as the adjustment to unfamiliar socio-cultural settings and their structures is an integral part of refugee experiences. The process of negotiating entry is about the right to establish a 'home' in the receiving society, while negotiation of the series of changes and adjustments to the new socio-cultural setting is about the process of creating a 'home' and becoming 'of place'. This paper points to the complexity of interrelationships between different and dynamic social interactions and exchanges that shape the material, moral and representational daily practices of refugees through which they create home that is meaningful to them. It argues that when place (and home) is understood as a process marked by openness and change, rather than is rooted in notions of security and authenticity marked by permanence and boundedness, it is possible to envisage a variety of meanings of home and sense of place created and developed by refugees. Thus, to understand and conceptualise the processes of home-making in a mobile (modern) world it is critical to decouple home and homeland, understood in the territorial, nation-state sense, as well as to deconstruct refugees as people 'out of place'.

**Kanwal Mand**, University of Brighton

Travel, home and the lifecourse

Travel to and from places is an inherent aspect of South Asian transnational mobility. However much of the literature on migrants fails to account for travel beyond through the lens of 'departure', 'return' or circulation between host society and the 'homeland'. Significantly there is an assumption that the travel undertaken by migrants is, exclusively, related to their migrancy, which is more often than not, formed of a desire to return to the 'homeland'. Linked to this is the notion that 'home' is unequivocally located elsewhere. As a result, little attention is given to the dispersal of diasporas and travelling practices that bypass the 'homeland', or the collapse of dualisms of 'home' and 'away' (Mand 2010; Falzon 2003). Based on interviews and travel stories produced by 9-10 year old children, this paper proposes going beyond deterministic notions of travel and 'home'. Therefore, although children's travel is closely related to their membership in transnational families and the Bangladeshi diaspora, the paper argues we need to be more flexible by highlighting the significance of the life course. This it is proposed enables an understanding of travel which is multi-faceted and draws attention to the connections between tourism and consumption.

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**Colin Murray**, University of Manchester

Anecdotes of movement and belonging: the professional and the personal

Much of my own professional work over thirty years, as an anthropologist who has strayed into social history and sociology and political economy, has related to the themes of this conference: migration, home, loss, identity. In retirement now I can indulge only the projects that engage my interest, and I find much relief in having wholly escaped the institutional pressures to bring in money and produce 'policy implications'. My principal present project is deeply and explicitly personal; it likewise relates closely to the themes of the conference. My fields of investigation have changed (from southern Africa to Scotland in its many relations to a much larger world); but my intellectual interests have remained broadly the same (family histories in macro-contexts of change); my methodological habits have remained the same (first-hand fieldwork and insistence on the complementary value of oral and written evidence); and my moral commitments have remained broadly consistent. Present personal preoccupations are of course deeply rooted in past professional ones. This must be true for all of us.

It follows, in my view, that any effort to distinguish in other than an institutional sense between the professional and the personal in approaching the themes of the conference is both arbitrary and unconvincing. Participation in it, for me, is an opportunity to reflect briefly on my experience of their necessary interconnection. In offering such reflection I refer selectively to four of the many different contexts of research in which I have been engaged at different times, to be outlined in the presentation: 1) the southern African labour reserve, 1970s; 2) forced relocation in South Africa, 1980s; 3) the inner and outer lives of the anthropologist, 1970s-1990s; 4) the Island Project – extended family histories around the world, 2005 to the present.

**Shantini Pillai and Sharenee Paramasivam**, University of Kebangsaan, Malaysia

Transnationalism, memory and new Malaysian diasporic writings

The focal point of this paper is the concept of the transnational and the blurred and fluctuating boundaries of ties with the nation that was once home as depicted in the works of the emerging community of new Malaysian diasporic writers. New Malaysian diasporic writers in the context of this paper are taken to refer to writers who were born in Malaysia and who are now settled elsewhere in the globe, and yet are recognisably transnational in that their writings focus on the older country and memories of family, community and a nation that once was home. Notably this transnational community of writers exists within the intersections of an outsider-insider perspective of the nation and their writings draw largely from recollections that are often rooted in folk memory and most significantly in the stories inherited from family. This paper will present a discussion of the dialectics of this perspective by interspersing concepts of 'fort/da' (Bhabha), the 'synchronic warehouse' (Appadurai) and various theories of re-memory. It ultimately argues that memory and material culture undergo various transformative shifts through transnational voyages, multiple passages through immeasurable borders and portals until ultimately the creative space becomes the space where both the voices of the past and the present intersperse, much like the notes from Keat's darkling thrush rising above the straggling branches of its perch. Within that single space, the writer is both insider and outsider, included yet excluded, with every ordained arrival and departure of migration, emigration or trans-movement.

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**Pratima Sambajee**, University of Sunderland

'Home'-making in postcolonial contexts: on the spatial reconstruction of 'home' among the Indian diaspora in Mauritius

Post-colonial contexts are distinct by the diversity of diaspora constituting their spaces. These contexts not only become the 'Home' of those who have travelled from their homeland to foreign land but also the 'Home' of subsequent generations who continue to occupy those spaces. In post-modern debates, the definition of 'Home' has been dissected and analysed by many in order to accommodate for the changing face of 'Home'. Recent mobilities have brought about new ideas of 'Home'. While modern discourse on diaspora and post-colonialism has moved towards concepts of hybridity, creolization, heterogeneity and multiplicity, the idea of 'Home' has been insufficiently linked and discussed in relation to these concepts. The paper looks at the case of the Indian diaspora in Mauritius and how this community re-instated their identity through the reconstruction of a 'Home' away from 'Home'. The paper departs by explaining how members of the first generation diaspora spatially created a 'Home' based on their imagined 'Home' in India upon their arrival on the island in the eighteenth century; it then follows on to discuss how 'Home' for members of subsequent generations of the diaspora underwent multiple transformations as hybrids are formed with the 'Home' of other diasporas occupying the same space. The discussion draws on multiple theories addressing the process of 'Home'-making. The turning point in the paper is where the reconstruction of 'Home' is analysed through the lens of hybridity to give an elaborate understanding of 'Home'-making in post-colonial contexts.

**Anna de Santos**, SOAS

Returning home – What home? Where is home? Post-war return and resettlement in northern Mozambique

The Mozambican civil war ended in 1992 with the signing of the General Peace Agreement in Rome. Mozambique had its first multiparty national elections in 1994 and continued its transformation into a neo-liberal state. As peace became established, and the country was deemed 'safe', many people who had taken refuge in neighbouring countries moved back to Mozambique. The return 'home' of refugees and internally displaced persons was accomplished either with the help of NGOs or individually.

I will trace the post-war return of refugees and migrants from Tanzania to northern Mozambique and their resettlement in Mocímboa da Praia, while discussing its implications. As elsewhere in the country, the return of large numbers of refugees and migrants had a significant impact on the already changing social landscape of northern Mozambique. I explore what happens when people move back to their areas of origin ('home'), or resettle elsewhere and the ways in which this is expressed in the use of space and the changes to the landscape. I will look at the interaction and connection between mobility, the establishment of social and personal relationships and the bearing that ideas of home had in the process. I aim at problematizing local ideas of movement and consider the diverse experiences of those who moved and those who stayed 'home'.



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**Marina Sapritsky, LSE**

Building a home in the diaspora? Jewish returnees and transmigrants in post Soviet Ukraine

This paper addresses the re-migration of Russian speaking Jews from Israel to the former Soviet Union and analyzes the actions and discourse of returnees, transmigrants and long-term visitors in Odessa who choose to leave Israel and come back to Odessa both as an old place of roots and familiarity and as a new centre of professional activity and personal growth. There is a variety of motivations for this recent re-migration and ways in which returnees define their solidarity with local Odessan Jews, both those who have remained and those newly arrived (including members of international Jewish organizations and religious emissaries and other returnees).

Using the case of Odessa this paper demonstrates that the projects of return are characterized by considerable complexity and ambivalence. On the one hand, returning from Israel to Odessa often signals that it is Odessa that ultimately counts as home. On the other hand, some returnees are following their families or seeking to enhance their chance of prosperity. For others it is not a matter of either or: life of today's Russian speaking Jewish transmigrants includes multiple locations of belonging. In turn, the actual experiences of returnees display a mosaic of different orientations, attachments and associations where "homeland" and "diaspora" are not absolute givens.

**Katie Walsh, University of Sussex**

Expatriate belongings: older people remember diasporic homes

This paper will explore narratives, practices and memories of residence in the British diaspora, focusing on the meaning of home across the life-course. I draw on an emerging set of interviews with older people currently living in the UK who have previously lived abroad as 'expatriate' migrants. One of the central questions is how migration and return migration are understood by older people in the context of their own moving and making of homes. The methodology being used is in-depth repeat interviewing, including an analysis of biographies of residence and mobility, as well as attention to domestic material culture, places and spaces of residence, and practices of dwelling, moving and making home. This focus gathers rich memories of lives lived and speaks to current debates on cultures of home in migration. Engaging with socio-cultural theory on diaspora and expatriate home-making, the research seeks to explore how older people's current belongings and home-making are shaped by past experiences of residence and mobility. The findings suggest that we cannot understand older people's identities and sense of belonging without recognition of the way in which memory of past homes helps shape current and future homing practices.

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**Susanne Wessendorf**, Max-Planck Institute for the Study of Religious and Ethnic Diversity  
'Roots migrants': the second generation 'returning' home

It is common for members of the second generation, the children of migrants, to have nostalgic relations to their parents' place of origin, particularly if they have grown up in strong transnational social fields. These nostalgic relations motivate some members of the second generation to relocate to the place where their parents are from. They expect to find an ideal homeland which provided them with a strong sense of belonging during their transnational childhoods and adolescences. This paper develops the concept of 'roots-migration' to describe the migration of the second generation to the parents' homeland. Drawing on fifteen months of ethnographic fieldwork among second-generation Italians in Switzerland and southern Italy, it describes how members of the second generation deal with the discrepancies between their images of the ancestral homeland prior to migration and the actual realities they meet once they settle there. These discrepancies particularly relate to issues surrounding gender relations and social control. Furthermore, the paper explores how notions of home and 'roots' can be constructed and reified by nostalgia for another place, and how 'roots' can be lost when this other place is transformed from imagined to real.