Transnational Repertoires: making yourself at home on the move

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Introduction

In Anne Tyler's poignant novel, *The Accidental Tourist,* the protagonist Macon Leary struggles with the uncertainty that travelling brings about and, thus, as a travel writer with a difference pens guidebooks for those who are similarly challenged. The *Accidental Tourist* guidebooks are for businessmen (typically) who are reluctant to engage with any differences that they may encounter on the move, hence seek security in American-style restaurants and hotels wherever they may be. American-style coffee, apple pie and hotels that do not feel foreign are the landmarks that he identifies for his readers, fellow reluctant travellers, as havens of security amidst the uncertainty that travelling and its associated unwelcome encounters with strangers on the move (Tyler 1992: 36). Macon's everyday life in Baltimore is marked by his compulsive dependence on routines and reluctance to engage with strangers. In contrast, the transnational professionals who are the focus of that chapter are people who routinely engage with difference. They take on the challenges that working in global organisations necessitate – namely, intercultural communication and intensive work-travel regimes – with relative ease and competence.

Through their heightened mobility and connections across borders these transnational actors become channels for the flows of capital and information that constitute globalization. Their identities and biographies are often described as being *disembedded* from the specificities of place. Yet this account of disembedding has been challenged, more recently, by analyses which recognise how transnational actors are *emplaced* in particular settings and countries through their everyday engagement with the places where they live, institutional

arrangements and employment (Favell et al 2006; Conradson and Latham 2005). In this chapter I examine how – and whether – actors who are required to relocate transnationally for their jobs make sense personally of their geographical disembedding. Do they make themselves at home on the move? *Living the Global City* acknowledged that London residents' spheres of action and community are not geographically contained. In this chapter I draw on Dűrrschmidt's concept of 'extended milieux' to explore how transnational professionals actively construct a sense of being at home whilst on the move. They self-consciously develop – what I call – *transnational repertoires* which are situated in specific places, initially, yet become transferrable. This chapter draws on analysis of survey data and interviews with transnational professionals in two organisations – a multinational corporation and a UN agency – to identify the practises that sustain extended milieux and enable the construction of home on the move.

The delinking of local and milieu

In *Living the Global City* Jőrg Dűrrschmidt (1997: 65) notes that: 'home is not about origins but depends on the person's capacity to generate a special relationship to a place'. He contends that these special attachments to place develop through events of biographical significance and social ties. As such, Londoners' biographies do not typically centre on one place that is designated 'home', but are increasingly 'polycentred'. Dűrrschmidt (1997: 63-4) calls this the 'delinking of locale from milieu' – where milieu is the familiar context that used to be territorially fixed yet now for many Londoners is stretched across space, encompassing 'extended fields of action'. For the London residents in Dűrrschmidt's (1997: 64-5) analysis, Streatham is a node amongst many places that does not in itself signify home; instead, it is a person's 'ability to generate a special relationship' with particular places and their social networks with 'like-minded people' that informs their sense of belonging. These Streatham

residents have, nonetheless, made London their home for the time being; their biographies and milieux differ from the transnational actors examined in this chapter, as I will discuss in the next section.

What *Living the Global City* added to our understanding of globalization was an emphasis on the ways that everyday practises are shaped by global interconnections. Similar to Doreen Massey's (1991) theorization of a 'global sense of place', LGC's approach challenges the opposition of global versus local cultures, instead recognising that these are inevitably intertwined, and often mutually constitutive. Dűrrschmidt, in particular, accentuates how biographies are shaped and actively constructed through connections with distant places, as well as neighbourhoods within London. Places acquire meaning through the active construction of biographical relevance. Dűrrschmidt's account illustrates how actors who are differentially placed – due their age and length of residence in Streatham – encounter mobility and transience within the city as disconcerting or life enhancing (for example: see Nicos and Barbara's accounts, respectively, 1997: 65-9). Yet acknowledging these differences does not adequately take account of how these actors' social positions and situations inform their capacity to comfortably inhabit an extended milieu. The examples of London residents who feature in Dűrrschmidt's analysis as embracing the ongoing construction of home in several places – the *polycentredness of extended milieux* – are retired expatriates (Ulla, a British citizen and Barbara, a US citizen) and young British upwardly mobile professionals (Sarah and Ira). These feature as case studies to illustrate how they can craft their social lives and pathways across the city to reflect their interests, social and biographical ties, as well as their preferences in terms of neighbourhood. Their life situations, citizenship and the context of the global city empower them to make choices about everyday matters, such as, where to live, eat and socialise. More recent research has documented spatial inequalities and urban change within London, most notably through a conceptual

focus on 'gentrification' processes and lives of middle-class 'gentrifiers' (Butler 2003; Butler and Robson 2001). This work has been criticised for omitting working-class residents' perspectives on their neighbourhoods in the city (Slater 2006). For a project I conducted in north London as part of a larger comparative European study, *LOCALMULTIDEM*, we countered this tendency by examining different ethnic groups' perspectives on the city (Morales and Guigni 2011). This project included a survey of 1200 residents of north London about living and working in the city, as well as their attitudes to their neighbourhoods. We found that British Bangladeshi residents were significantly less likely to express a sense of belonging to London, in comparison with their white British and British Indian counterparts (Devadason 2010). Yet this low identification with the capital paradoxically coincided with an unwillingness to leave it – as demonstrated through analysis of residents' responses two questions about *willingness to move to another city* within the country and *willingness to move to another country* (Devadason 2010: 2955-61).[i] Clearly, the 'delinking of locale from milieu' and an associated broadening – perhaps even *globalizing* – of 'horizons of action' is not accessible to all, even *within* the global city (Hodkinson *et al* 1996 cited by Ball 2000). The concept of 'horizons of action' is helpful here as it denotes what Stephen Ball (2000: 39) describes as people's awareness of 'what is not possible in a world of possibilities'. Dűrrschmidt's (1997: 70) emphasis on 'competence' towards the end of his chapter highlights that the delinking process places a greater onus on an individual's ability 'to create and maintain a spatial and social order in an ephemeral world of time-space compression'.

The next section turns to the homemaking practises of transnational professionals and local residents to explore the parallels and differences between them.

Homemaking practises and mobility

'Home can be at the same time an emotional place of origin, the place one grew up in a family, and a point of departure for the rest of one's life' (Nowicka 2007: 77)

Here Nowicka (2007: 77) recognises the 'dualism' in the way that people think about and describe 'home' in their everyday lives. In the case of the latter, she continues, homemaking is a work in progress, an 'entity in becoming'. The slippage between home as a place of birth or country that has been left behind, and home as a place to live in everyday speech highlights inherent ambiguities in the meaning of home for many. In her research on mobile UN professionals she suggests that 'home' is not territorially defined but rather socially informed by relationships with people, objects and infrastructure. She defines infrastructure as the presence of amenities such as schools, parks, restaurants and cinemas – 'places to practise one's hobbies' that contribute to feelings of security and familiarity (Nowicka 2007: 80). Homemaking in these accounts is an active and self-conscious process, rather than an inevitable emotional connection to a place of origin. Nowicka's account resonates with Katie Walsh's (2005: 126) analysis of home-making practises of the British in Dubai. Walsh underlines how for these expatriates being 'at home' depends on a *dynamic process* rather than being embedded in a particular place. Walsh's analysis centres on the use of particular objects in the home – a painting, bowl and DVD – that signify belonging and home to their owners in different ways. These practises arise through living outside the 'home' country – in this case, England – yet they do not simply involve the reproduction of domestic activities abroad that formerly took place *back home* but rather everyday practises that constitute 'active claims to belonging'(2005: 138). Walsh underlines how dwelling and mobility are not opposed in expatriate lives, but can be mutually constitutive. She succinctly captures the intertwining of the two as follows:

> …expatriate homemaking involves the connection of past, present and future homes
> through domestic practises (Walsh 2005: 138).

Belongings in this context, and decisions about what to do with them – their transport, display and storage – are critical since they become symbols of memories – of people, places and lives that have been left behind. Walsh concludes:

> Belonging is challenged by mobility so belongings are often carried with expatriates in anticipation of a desire for mnemonics in a situation of disorientation (Walsh 2005: 138).

Conversely, research on housing, homes and homeownership examines the place of home in the construction of 'ontological security'. Historically, this literature has focused on home as a relatively fixed and distinct place. Peter Saunders' (1989) influential study examines a number of propositions about the meaning and importance of home in contemporary English culture. He analyses the meanings of home for women and men in different occupations, comparing homeowners with council tenants, in order to interrogate assumptions about class, community, belonging and home. He contends that as a site of constancy amidst uncertainty, home is a locale where actors can achieve a sense of control and be 'free from surveillance' (Saunders 1989: 184). Whereas Saunders' English study suggests that ownership does not necessarily strengthen attachment to home, Dupuis and Thorns (1998: 31) find that the homes of home-owners in New Zealand provide the 'material environment most closely associated with permanence and continuity'. Both studies suggest that age is a significant variable as older homeowners are more attached to homes that they have lived in for longer and are less likely to be anticipating future moves.

Dupuis and Thorns (1998: 27) define ontological security, simply, as 'a sense of confidence and trust in the world as it appears to be'. Houses, belongings and to some extent

infrastructure can serve to anchor people amidst otherwise shifting circumstances. Relationships with people and things underpin a sense of being at home for those Nowicka (2007) identifies as 'mobile professionals' – yet, I argue, this sense can be geographically fixed or mobile depending on a person's biography and aspirations. How then do transnational professionals go about achieving ontological security? Do they instead carry a sense of being displaced wherever they go? Or do they cultivate particular strategies that enable them to make themselves feel at home on the move?

In this chapter my analysis centres on transnational practises on the move; that is, how professionals who relocate and engage in intensive business travel make it work for them. These practises therefore do not necessarily involve 'homemaking', but may instead centre on hotels, shopping malls, offices and other so-called 'transnational spaces' that are intended to make the Western traveller 'feel at home' (Hannerz 2006: 107). My analysis suggests that these actors – depending on their age, relationship situation, occupation and their histories of mobility – cultivate different *transnational repertoires*. Transnational repertoires involve practises that are emplaced as well as mobile. That is, they can be both *emplaced* within a particular locale and *mobile* in the sense that they can be repeated elsewhere, hence routinized. These practises are about making oneself at home in a specific locale as well as maintaining a sense of biographical continuity regardless of the geographical context. In that sense they resonate with Walsh's account of homemaking practises.

Theorizing routine, reflexivity and repertoire

A repertoire is a set of practises that through repetition on different occasions and in different contexts reflects a degree of skill and competence. Routines are therefore integral to the establishment of competent repertoires. In this chapter I identify three case studies of

transnational repertoire that illustrate how transience is 'managed' by those who work transnationally. These cases are not exhaustive, they simply serve to illustrate how mobility is handled by those who undertake it, and the everyday practises that make it sustainable for individuals and their families. The narratives of transnational professionals highlight different dimensions of that process – these include coping with isolation and loneliness, being unfazed by encounters with strangers, to the practises associated with relocating a household with children and homemaking in the conventional sense. Transnational repertoires therefore become necessary in order to *make globalization work* for individuals and families on the move, as well as organisations.

Theorizing the relationship between routine and reflexivity scholars have argued that routines lead to the development of habitual (non-reflexive) practises and dispositions (Sweetman 2003), whereas obstacles that disrupt routines foster reflexivity (Archer 2007; 2010). What happens when routines become transnational is a key question here. If disruptions themselves become routine could, as Paul Sweetman (2003: 528) puts it, 'reflexivity itself have become habitual?' Margaret Archer questions the validity of 'disposition' as a concept *per se* in the era of late modernity. She contends that 'reflexivity' is a promising way of investigating the globalization of practice, instead, since everyday lives are being transformed by encounters with novelty. She observes:

> '…especially over the last quarter century, socialization has been decreasingly able to prepare us for occupational and lifestyle opportunities that had not existed for the parental generation: for social skills that could not become embodied (stock market trading or computer programming) or needed continuous upgrading, and readiness to relocate, retrain, and re-evaluate shifting *modi vivendi*' (2010: 297).

Indeed the transnationals in this study seem not to be reproducing a parental milieu but rather are actively engaged in creating novel careers and lifestyles.[ii] It therefore appears that early life has less of an impact upon their orientations towards home amongst transnationals than we might predict. Nonetheless, in practice, being a transnational professional is often less about the multiplication of *real* choices and more about relinquishing a degree of autonomy about *where* that may be, having opted to 'go international' within the infrastructure of an organisation (Devadason 2012; Devadason and Fenton 2013).

These employees are often constrained in their choices; they find themselves living and working in places that they would rather not be. For many transnationals, the places that they live and work are determined by the geography of their organisations, rather than their own reflexive judgements or tastes. A quarter of executives and UN professionals report having limited choice about where they relocate to (Devadason 2011). Is it possible, under these circumstances, to construct *biographical significance* through work? Whilst Saunders (1989: 177) argues that the realm *outside work* is far more important for shaping a sense of self, cultural identities and values than occupation, for transnational actors that may not be the case. The transnational executives and professionals in this study, as intra-corporate transferees and highly skilled migrants, have options which at the same time as encompassing a number of 'far-flung'[iii] destinations – Singapore, Dubai, Johannesburg and New York to name but a few – are often constrained by the geographies of their organisations and a narrowing of opportunities that are offered to them, as they progress in their respective fields. The process actively constructing a sense being at home on the move – despite these constraints – forms the focus of the analysis that follows.

Researching mobility from a desk in Bristol

This research was conducted between 2009-2011 for a British Academy fellowship at the University of Bristol. An online survey was launched in two global organisations – a UN agency and *Cartwrights* Global Bank in 2010.[iv] The survey was designed to address the following themes: employment, mobility and work history; family, friends and social networks; and, identity, attachments and values. This data thereby provides evidence about multiple social fields and the interplay between personal and professional facets of employees' lives. Participants were recruited via an invitation email that was circulated to 230 'international assignees that were either currently, or had recently been, working away from the headquarters in different country offices (n=138). The corporate executives were located in a number of *Cartwrights'* offices, globally, including London, Madrid, New York, Dubai, Johannesburg and Hong Kong as well as less prominent regional offices in Northern European and African countries. The UN international staff were located in 16 countries including the headquarters in Geneva, regional bases in Jordan and Kenya, as well as 'hardship duty stations', Afghanistan, Pakistan and Sudan. These bases did not necessarily delimit the geographical parameters of professionals' work, however, since some jobs based at the headquarters (in London and Geneva) and other offices often required regular travel to further sites, typically in the Global South.

Subsequently, 17 biographical interviews were conducted with professionals – who had taken part in the survey – based at four sites: London, Geneva Dubai and Johannesburg. 15 interviews were face-to-face and two were conducted by telephone. Interviewees were selected to represent the range of transnational professionals in the organisations by age, gender, citizenship and employment experience. Since these interviewees were purposively selected, depending on their willingness and availability to participate, I do not claim that their experiences are statistically representative of the entire sample. Nonetheless, their

accounts serve to illustrate patterns that resonate across both organisations, and hence suggest generalizability to a wider set of transnational actors.

I'll begin by introducing the basic demographic information about the participants in this study. These transnational actors represent groups of highly educated and skilled workers since two thirds have postgraduate or professional qualifications, and a remaining quarter have first degrees. The gender balance is even in the UN agency (n=47) whereas in the multinational corporation two thirds of the transnationals are men (n=87). There is a wide disparity between the age-profiles of transnational staff in the two organisations since almost three quarters of the UN staff are in the 40-60 age-category, whereas only a third of the corporate executives are in the older age-category. Fifty per cent of women in both organisations are single, whereas less than a quarter of the men are single. Three-quarters of the male transnationals in both organisations are in a relationship, although a high proportion of the male UN professionals are living apart from their partners due to the insecure locations in which many of them work (e.g. Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iraq). Sixty-three per cent of the UN professionals have children in comparison with forty-five per cent of the corporate executives, probably due to the different age profiles of the two samples; just under a third of transnationals in each organisation have dependent children living with them.

Table 1 shows the number of relocations of three months or more that these actors had undertaken for work, either in their current organisation or for a previous employer. It highlights the difference between the two groups, since UN professionals had on average engaged in many more relocations than the corporate executives. This variation is in part due to the age profiles of the two samples, as two thirds of the executives were aged under 40, whereas almost 80 per cent of the UN professionals were aged between 40-59. In addition, it is also due to the fact that relocation is mandatory for international staff within the UNHCR under their system of rotation (see Devadason 2012).

Table 1: How many times have you relocated for your job?

	Corporate executives		UN professionals	
	No.	*%.*	*No.*	*%*
1-2 relocations	28	32	5	11
3-4 relocations	38	44	3	6
5-9 relocations	18	21	26	55
10 or more relocations	3	3	13	28
TOTAL	87	100	47	100
Median no. of relocations	3		8	

Disembedding, emplacement and transnational repertoires

Here I put forward four propositions that may result from the heightened mobility of transnational workers. Firstly, they maybe disembedded from their 'roots', namely their countries or places of origin, through successive relocations and struggle to find themselves at home *anywhere*. Secondly, transnational actors – like some migrants – continue to long for a home that they have left behind. They miss the milieu of their country of citizenship or birth yet may feel 'trapped' – as one UN professional put it – in the particular career pathway they have chosen whereby their employment and progression within their organisation requires mobility. Thirdly, their journeys and successive relocations have been transformative, and they construct new homes, attachments and a sense of belonging somewhere other than their country of origin. Fourth, and finally, they cultivate – what I call – transnational repertoires, the capacity (and practises) to make themselves at home anywhere that they are living and working, as well as on the move. Thus, whilst the first two propositions suggest negative outcomes, as a result of mobility, the third and fourth encompass hope and ways of achieving ontological security through mobility.

I will begin by outlining the survey findings that show the extent of each of the four possibilities are amongst the transnational actors in this study before proceeding – in the next

section – to draw on case studies that illustrate how these actors *make transnationality work for them* by deploying particular repertoires

An open question from the online survey was particularly revealing about actors' perceptions of home and home making in this respect, '*Where – if anywhere – do you feel most at home?*'

Table 2: Where – if anywhere – do you feel most at home?

Concept of home		Corporate Executives		UN Professionals	
		No.	%	*No.*	%
Place	by birth/citizenship	40	49	11	28
	another 3rd country	17	21	8	20
People	with family and/or friends	12	15	6	15
Practises	working, living and other activities	10	12	7	17
Nowhere		2	3	8	20
TOTAL		81	100	40	100

The range of responses to this question show that there is significant variation *between* jobs and organisations, and *within* organisations. Moreover, this variation cannot simply be attributed to either age, gender or number of relocations, as one might predict. It is clear, as stated in the first proposition above, that for some a sense of feeling at home eludes them, since heightened mobility has inhibited their sense of feeling at home anywhere: a striking twenty per cent of the UN professionals and, a much smaller proportion of executives' responses (three per cent) indicate that there is nowhere that they feel at home. A UN professional with British citizenship who had relocated eight times in her career, answered as follows: 'Nowhere - that's the problem'. One American executive's response suggests that, having relocated four times, working out where home is presents a challenge for her: 'Isn't that what most people spend their lives trying to figure out? I haven't figured that out yet'.

One UN professional's answer shows the ambiguities that heightened mobility can bring about: 'At this point I don't feel 100% at home anywhere. However, I feel most at home in

Minnesota and Mexico'. As an American citizen, she had relocated twelve times during her career.

A significant proportion of transnational workers define their home fairly conventionally, in terms of a specific place: just under fifty per cent of transnational executives and twenty-eight per cent of UN professionals stated that they felt most at home in their *place of birth* or *country of citizenship*. More clear cut patterns emerge for the executives, than for the UN professionals; executives who had relocated less than five times were more likely to identify home as their country of birth or citizenship, than those who had relocated more than six times.[v] A combination of countries and cities were cited by most of these respondents referencing their country of birth or citizenship, which for most coincided.[vi] The executives' responses include: London, UK, Bombay, India, Madrid, Spain and Rhode Island, USA, for example.

Twenty per cent – in each organisation – identify a *third country*, not their country of birth or citizenship – as somewhere that they either live or aspire to live; examples include: Barcelona, Dubai, Johannesburg, and the Seychelles. Identifying home with a third country, in particular, highlights that for many mobility is not an *end in itself.* Having relocated once, or even several times, has not undermined their attachments to one or two particular places. For those who mention two places, these are sometimes far apart both economically and culturally, such as, Copenhagen and Nairobi, thus providing further evidence of the extension of milieu in keeping with Dűrrschmidt's thesis.

Fifteen per cent of transnational actors felt most at home wherever their immediate family or good friends are. As one UN professional, a Croatian citizen who had relocated six times, emphatically states: 'Where my family is no matter where in the world'. Unsurprisingly, the transnationals with children whom they lived with, in both organisations, were significantly

more likely to respond that they felt most at home with their family, than transnationals without children (p<0.1).

A similar number frame home in terms of *practises*: wherever they work, live or can eat food that they enjoy. These mobile conceptions of home are more-often expressed by UN professionals for whom relocating is a mandatory and fundamental aspect of their jobs. The following responses highlight their flexible orientation to mobility. These responses can be summed up by the following response of a female UN professional who had been working for the organisation for more than ten years: '*Wherever I've been working'*.

An Indian executive expresses a similar ability to adapt to new contexts:

'My home country. However, due to a series of quick moves I tend to get comfortable in any country very soon'.

Interestingly, no corporate executives mention work in reference to where they feel most at home, whereas three UN professionals stated that they feel at home *wherever they are working*. There is evidence to suggest that UN professionals have a strong sense of identifying with the UN, and their UN agency, hence this attachment to the organisation in itself provides continuity across contexts (Devadason 2012).

Other practises that enable feeling at home are revealed in responses about types of places that signify particular leisure activities and relaxation, for example: on 'the beach', 'on a yacht' and 'in a place that has open spaces'.

Case studies

The following biographies are used as case studies to illustrate how different ways of being transnational, and making yourself at home on the move, are narrated and experienced by the participants in my study. Case studies here can be thought of as 'ideal types' not to suggest that they represent an exhaustive typology but rather that they serve to exemplify key patterns

that resonate with different transnational actors positions depending on their jobs and organisational context, as well as their relationship situation and experience of mobility.[vii]

The Virtual Repertoire

Adeyemo, 31, is an ambitious Zimbabwean executive who worked in South Africa, prior to his move to the UK in 2005. His job involves extended episodes living and working in different country offices – Dubai, Tanzania, Nairobi, for example – when he is not based in London. Although, he lives in London and considers it home, as he responded in the survey and explained in his interview. His role in the organisation, and his background, means that for him taking assignments in different countries in order to solve problems arising elsewhere in the corporation is an integral element of his job.

He seems to be less at ease with heightened mobility than his biography might suggest. His career requires him to relocate and engage in intensive business travel. He had relocated nine times in his career and reports having undertaken five cross-border business trips in the preceding year. Yet having settled in London he describes how he would rather spend more time there since he feels 'at home' in the city as well as in his apartment. When asked about the most difficult aspect of transnational working, he evocatively describes how he finds the disruptions to his lifestyle and routine particularly disconcerting:

'I've got to say the hardest thing, Ranji, about being out there is how do you live? Because it is nice, we take it for granted, it is nice get home at the end of the day and know there is a certain familiar smell, your favourite soap in a particular corner of the bathroom,…you know who your neighbours are, you know where the grocery store is, which shop has your favourite magazine and your favourite packet of chips. *Now when you move around all of that is shifted every time that you go…'*

He surmises that 'accommodation' and implicitly, culture, are the most important factors for him to feel comfortable on an assignment. The following challenge to his repertoire – when he was on an international assignment in Tanzania – is particularly revealing. Here he describes being put in a hotel at the 'wrong' end of town:

'So I'm looking and thinking, I'm expatriate, largely western background etc, put me somewhere with other expatriates, largely western background – and that's not what happened. I got put in a corner of town that was the exact opposite of that. So you walk out of your hotel room, you don't exactly like your hotel in the first place because the culture of your hotel is totally different, its not this [Radisson hotel] – you walk out into the street and you want to go into a restaurant, and every single menu you pick up is in a different language. The food smells different, tastes different…The people you're trying to interact with are not the same sort of . . . they're not professionals like you.'

I met and interviewed Adeyemo at a Radisson hotel, and for him, like the accidental tourist, his cultural identity and expectations become apparent immediately when he encounters an unfamiliar and an unsettling environment, in this case, on an assignment in Tanzania. His account about how he handles mobility, personally, his transnational repertoire, seems particularly evocative of the current era. I identified Adeyemo's repertoire as virtual for two reasons: firstly, his Blackberry, Mac and other 'toys' – as he calls them – underpin his capacity to make himself at home on the move; thus, wi-fi is central to his repertoire. Secondly, his connections with family, friends and professional networks – through technology – enable him to create continuity in tandem with changing circumstances. He admits:

'It does get lonely…You will make friends, but you do get lonely. You find ways to cope. I mean my Mac and my play station…I invest considerably in technology because my Mac gives me full communication to my family and friends for as long as I have an internet connection – that's the most important thing to me. *Give me an internet connection and I can communicate with whoever I want to communicate with in the world.* When I have my Mac …I've got my photographs since 2005, I've got all of my music, and I've got my instant messages, yahoo, gmail and Facebook, Linked-In, Plaxo . . . so long as I have that I sort of feel like I'm moving around, but something is constant, yeah.'

Adeyemo's repertoire is virtual, because he has limited desire to engage in the distinct locale of different settings beyond the office, hence his preference for what Hannerz (2006: 107) describes as 'transnational spaces' that are designed to make the western traveller feel at home. Adeyemo has relocated for a number of short-term assignments, hence his dependence on hotels and serviced apartments that have perhaps precluded his homemaking in these new settings. Having said that, his resettlement in London and the UK, from Zimbabwe, was in itself a transformative experience, hence perhaps his reluctance to engage with new – particularly short-term – moves (see Devadason and Fenton 2013: 485). The following examples, Alejandro and Annika, illustrate aspects of relocation that stem from long-term assignments and a potentially permanent move, in Annika's case.

The Father's repertoire

Alejandro, 47, had relocated several times in his career with the UN agency. From his home country, El Salvador, to Scotland, Croatia, Georgia and Pakistan, before securing his current post in Geneva. He embarked on his transnational career and moves, alone initially, but later in his career is accompanied by his wife and children. In the survey, he describes where he

feels most at home as 'at my current place of work/living', thereby suggesting that he has a mobile construction of home that may travel with him. Alejandro's repertoire centres on his capacity maintaining a transnational career and a family within the UN system. It becomes clear throughout the interview that the two are intertwined, because of the organisation's rotation policy and that succeeding in the organisation *for him* and many other staff involves making it work for their families too.

In his narrative he recounts how on relocating with his family, the most important priority is finding suitable schooling for his children and housing before he considers the job or the working environment. He usually relocates and begins work before the rest of the family, so that he can arrange housing in advance:

'As a family what we have learned is that again the kids take priority in the sense that when we move from one country to another, in the arriving country we try to get a house as early as we can and then once we get a house and we get to move in, try to have their rooms ready before the rest. Kitchen, and then the children's rooms, and then the rest of the house. Why because especially *with small kids they need to feel a sense of order and a sense of belonging* and the best place where they normally would feel safe is their *own room*, their own bedroom, and if their bedroom is organised pretty similar to how it was in the previous dwelling, then their adaptation to the new location will be easier as well, so it's a mixture of things'.

Alejandro's account of relocating with his family highlights the individual care and attention he pays to making the process work for them, settling the children quickly and making them feel at home by arranging their bedrooms and the house, as well researching schooling is his first priority. His attention to homemaking and their domestic arrangements is encapsulated by his statement '…people tend to store things in our house. I am like a gypsy – I travel with everything'. His experience contrasts with accounts of intra-corporate transferees that seem to

depend more on their wives or relocation agents to manage much of the process (see Walsh 2011). The father's repertoire could equally be a mother's repertoire given the extent of women's and men's mobility, particularly within the UN.

The Friend's repertoire

Annika is a Dutch senior executive, working in the headquarters of the global bank in London. She was headhunted by the organisation to relocate there from Spain in the preceding year. She had extensive experience of working in different countries; and her biography was structured by her mobility – having lived in Chile, Spain and several other countries, prior to her current post in London. Nonetheless, having embarked on her mobile career she still describes 'the Netherlands' as where she feels most at home in the survey, her interactions in the London headquarters of the corporation may have strengthened her national identity as she attributes certain misunderstandings to being Dutch and most of her colleagues being English (Devadason and Fenton 2013). On describing some of the challenges of navigating 'politics' at the headquarters in London, she comments: 'I wouldn't be abroad if I didn't think it was interesting to have that challenge'. Her work history had given Annika a particular approach to living in another country – that contrasts with the more itinerant repertoire of Adeyemo – it involves *engagement* in relationships and with locally embedded communities *wherever* she goes.

Like Adeyemo, Annika engages in networking activities on relocating to a new city, connecting with the existing networks that she belongs to. After dealing with the practicalities of relocating her household possessions, her transnational repertoire involves contacting the Dutch Embassy, to connect with the Dutch expatriate's association: because they're 'everywhere around the world in big cities', and she contacts her MBA network which

enables her to connect with peers wherever she may be. However, in contrast to those whose connections are exclusively with like-minded transnational professionals, and often virtual, she notes:

'But at the same time I think it's very important to actually get down to, [to] get to know, for example, where I live, the village life so…for example, [for] about three, four months I participated in some voluntary work that was done by the whole village to know most of the people that lived there and things like that. So it's kind of, I like to have different groups of people do that I kind of can get to [know]…'

Making local friends outside the workplace – and, notably, outside a transnational network of people with similar biographies – is a defining feature of the friend's repertoire. It reflects a desire to engage with the locale rather than perpetually living in an 'expat bubble' (Fechter 2007: 167). In addition, like Alejandro, she transports her belongings with her to make her feel at home where she is living.

These three repertoires do not make spaces or places neutral, that is, devoid of their particularities or character, but they do enable transnational actors to construct a sense of continuity, and biographical relevance, across contexts. The analysis shows that even those who conceptualise 'home' as somewhere that they have left behind, as many transnational actors in this study did, they find ways of relocating themselves personally, as well as professionally.

Having conducted a small number of interviews – given available resources and time – and the geographical dispersal of the sample, relative to the total number of participants in the online survey it is not possible to correlate type of repertoire with one particular perspective on home. Moreover, these case studies illustrate that approaches to relocating oneself and

creating homes elsewhere and do not necessarily reflect responses the survey question about home. The dual sense of the term home – as Nowicka (2007) points about – lends itself to alternative uses. Thus, as Annika's example shows even those who expressed geographically fixed perspective on home (the Netherlands, in her case) demonstrate adaptability to new situations, places and milieux and, moreover, a willingness to make homes in unfamiliar settings.

Conclusion

In practice, making oneself at home on the move, I argue, depends on the individual's capacity to establish a set of practises that create *continuity* across contexts; and through these rountinized practises to defy the disconcerting aspects of a changing environment. It is clear that some transnational professionals establish a transnational repertoire more successfully than others, but what my analysis highlights is that the chosen practises vary significantly depending on life situation – occupation, the organisational context and a person's relationships or family situation – as well as their orientations to home and mobility, which are shaped by any number of less-predictable aspects of their biographies.

As Dűrrschmidt (1997: 66) notes, making the self at home on the move is often dependent on specific routes or pathways within the global city. The same journey to work is ritualised, by reading the paper or doing one's make-up on the tube, thereby occupying space as though it is home. This practice is leaned through repetition, and thereby becomes familiar Theorists of late modernity associate the current era as one characterised by processes of individualization, and the do-it-yourself biography. We are no longer, in Archer's words, able to rely on routine, un-reflexive action due to the sheer number of unfamiliar situations and opportunities we encounter. Thus, even the reproduction of one's natal environment requires

the deployment of reflexivity in her terms. This obligatory reflexivity provokes the question I posed at the beginning, what happens when a person's routines are transnational? Do they, like the *Accidental Tourist* seek out familiar places to eat, sleep and socialise (or not, as in his case). Or do they reflexively engage in crossing borders both physically and emotionally?

Successfully delinking locale from milieu requires competence. The 'competence of a person to handle an extended milieu' depends on their ability to generate and maintain a unique spatial and social order that is biographically relevant (Dűrrschmidt 1997: 70). Yet an emphasis on the individual's necessarily-reflexive competence presumes that these actors move principally at their own volition. Whilst many do embark on their transnational careers inspired by a desire 'to see the world', many – following a series of relocations – express a desire to settle, to re-embed, either in their home country or in another country that they have lived or aspire to living. Yet since their careers – in part – depend on their transnational competence, they also often experience a narrowing of options having embarked on their particular career paths. Transnational repertoires can serve to anchor the self, in otherwise shifting contexts, sometimes even when familiar belongings or people are absent; but many transnational actors aspire to making homes that are fixed, and centred, geographically – albeit as nodes within an extended field of action – rather than embracing transnational itinerancy.

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[i] Research has documented how British Bangladeshis form a 'socially encapsulated' population in inner London, with a greater proportion of endogamous social ties and limited geographical mobility both within and beyond the city (Eade *et al* 1996). The social class profile of Bangladeshis, engagement in working class waged labour and dependence on social housing are cited as indicators of their disadvantaged position relative to other ethnic minorities and South Asians in the UK.

[ii] Of these transnationals thirty per cent had parents who had migrated (either with them or before they were born) in both organisations, yet analysis suggests that having migrant parents appeared to have no bearing on their perception of home as mobile or fixed.

[iii] One senior executive described his working life in these terms (Devadason and Fenton 2013: 483)

[iv] Pseudonyms are used to protect the identities of the organization and individuals here.

ᵛ The size of the UN sample (n=47) precludes more advanced bivariate analysis.
ᵛⁱ The two are combined in table 2, as it was impossible to distinguish which was more important, birth or citizenship, for many respondents since they were the same.
ᵛⁱⁱ Citizenship and country of origin clearly informs the disposition and outlook of transnational professionals. In Devadason and Fenton (2013), we have explored how transnational executives' narratives vary depending on whether they are from the Global North or South, and 'at home' at the headquarters or outsiders.

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