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# Routledge Handbook on Consumption

Edited by Margit Keller, Bente Halkier, Terhi-Anna Wilska  
and Monica Truninger

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*Edited by Margit Keller, Bente Halkier,  
Terhi-Anna Wilska and Monica Truninger*

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and *Generational Identity. ICT Usage Across the Life Course* (Routledge, 2017), and also co-edited a special issue: *Environmental governance and communication meet everyday life: the (im)possibilities of sustainable consumption in Europe*, in *Environmental Policy and Governance* (2016).

**LiAnne Yu.** PhD Anthropologist and independent consumer research strategist. Author of *Consumption in China: How China's new consumer ideology is shaping the nation*, and has published widely in areas of technology, business, and culture for various publications including *Hawaii Business Magazine*.

## Preface

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This book was born out of a need to combine within a single volume answers to one main question – what is the state of the art in consumption studies? Consumption research is a burgeoning, yet a fragmented terrain. This handbook is a comprehensive edited collection, a “one-stop shop” and a benchmark for readers interested in social scientific consumption studies, featuring authors from all over the world.

The handbook's objective is to give a thorough and nuanced overview of the cutting-edge research and recent debates of the field. We believe that a critical review of consumption studies is timely in terms of the burning issues societies face globally: climate change, economic crisis, sharpening inequalities, population ageing, obesity epidemic, food insecurity and poverty as well as the strengthening foothold of digital technologies in everyday lives. One of the major goals of the book is to unpack the latest knowledge on how consumers' everyday practices of consumption are enacted within the complexities and conundrums of today's world, where clashing forces (e.g. commercial marketing and behavior-change campaigns; contradictory medialized environmental and health messages; the lethargic impacts of policy interventions to change consumers' practices given the time pressures posed by the challenges of climate change) often draw people, markets and governments schizophrenically in opposing directions. The handbook surveys existing work in the field, also raising new and emerging topics and approaches, thereby providing a solid grounding for future progress.

We invite a worldwide audience of scholars and students interested in research on consumption, with varying disciplinary backgrounds from sociology to marketing. The work also caters for a wider readership outside academia, namely marketers, educators, policy-makers and various intervention programme practitioners.

This book has been a joint effort of many people. The initial idea came to life in a fruitful conversation between professor Alan Warde and the Routledge editor Catherine Gray. We wish to thank them for setting the ball rolling and helping at different stages of the book. Also, Gerhard Boomgarden and Alyson Claffey at Routledge have been most supportive in making this volume happen. The editing work of post-graduate student Benedicta Ideho Omokaro at the University of Jyväskylä, Finland, was invaluable at the final stages of preparing the manuscript for submission. Credit is also due to an inspiring and relaxing spa weekend of brainstorming ideas and chapters' revisions in the fabulous landscape and surroundings of Laulasmaa in Estonia.

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Margit Keller wishes to thank her colleagues and postgraduate students of the Institute of Social Studies at the University of Tartu, Estonia, with whom ideas in this book have been

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Finally, we want to thank our brilliant and enthusiastic authors for all the time and effort they gave for this book. Without your insightful and impressive contributions this *Handbook on Consumption* would never have been materialized and enacted.



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# Materiality, migration and cultural diversity

Marta Vilar Rosales

## Introduction

Contemporary social sciences define consumption as a complex and fascinating activity which encompasses a diverse set of practices, tastes and values (Brewer and Trentmann, 2006). If this feature makes it a vital and challenging object of research and reflection, it also poses significant challenges in terms of the best and more productive ways to address it. Given the great variety of practices and settings contemporary consumption entails, and the prolificness of existing theoretical frameworks at use in the social sciences, researchers are often confronted with the need to make choices which necessarily have great impact on their research and, most importantly, on how consumption is acknowledged in the wider spheres of public discussion.

This chapter addresses consumption as an aspect of material culture (Miller, 1987). It aims to challenge the perspectives that undertake consumption as synonymous of modern mass consumption and deal with contemporary uses of things as intrinsically different from use in prior times.

I will argue that a material culture approach to consumption constitutes a fundamental academic tool. Such approach privileges the analysis of the specificities of all objects, including mass-produced objects, in order to create a more profound understanding of a humanity which, as Miller states (2006), is inseparable from its materiality. It will be argued that such an approach brings light to the processes through which things are produced and appropriated, as well as to their contributions to the creation and recreation of social life (Mauss, 1924; Douglas, 1979). By turning away from too-broad approaches and towards the specificity of particular forms of consumption, that is the relationships of people with their things, material culture approaches become powerful and productive lenses (Rosales, 2010) to address the super diversity (Vertovec, 2007) that characterizes contemporary social and cultural life, as well as the communality which permeates it (Glick Schiller, 1995). The chapter will explore this main feature by focusing on the intersections of the movements of people and things. In fact, and even if most approaches tend to privilege other key aspects of contemporary global migration experiences and mobility policies and trends (e.g. positioning, belonging and integration strategies, networking practices, transnational practices and ties, border policies, diversity of push-and-pull factors at work in different parts of the world), all migrations are necessarily embedded in materiality (Basu and

Coleman, 2008). Migrating inevitably involves carrying, sending and receiving, as well as expropriations and appropriations, desires and expectations regarding a plural set of things which, in turn, are called to shape and actively participate in the migrants' daily experiences and are used as evaluation tools of what was accomplished during their migratory trajectories.

In fact, most contemporary objects are at least as potentially mobile as people. Things move or are moved from one location to the next, following, accompanying or being followed by people, and motion inevitably affects their social lives (Appadurai, 1986), value and cultural biographies (Kopytoff, 1986). The impacts of movement on material experiences reach further than attachments to objects from home. Migrants are constantly confronted with new material items whose processes of categorization, evaluation and domestication usually integrate their strategies for dealing with their new context. And if materiality can work as a significant stabilization device and promote security and recognition by means of dealing with familiar things, it can also change migrants' perceptions of themselves, restructure their patterns of social interaction, disrupt a sense of existential permanence or open space for a new sense of self through the introduction of new or unfamiliar objects in their daily routines and practices of consumption.

The chapter is organized in three parts. The first part summarizes a set of significant contributions which frame contemporary consumption practices as material culture. The second explores the intersections between migration and materiality and the third and concluding part examines the importance of this particular approach to explore the increasing specificities and complexities of contemporary global movements.

## Consumption as material culture

The assumption of the term *consumption* as an alternative for *modern mass consumption* is fairly common. However, people have always consumed goods created either by themselves or by others. This is why consumption is emerging also in archaeological studies, which are more generally associated with material culture, as an increasingly significant research topic (Mullins, 2011). Crucial to this discussion is the question as to whether modern consumption is actually a different kind of activity in intention and nature from merely the use of goods in prior times.

Anthropological and sociological theories contributed to the debate by way of introducing alternative perspectives which stress the importance for observing what people do with the things with which they interact. In order to unfold and explain the present-day relationships between people and objects it is crucial to research, as it was in prior historical and cultural contexts, what part materiality plays in human interactions and rituals; how consumers appropriate, transform, and domesticate objects and attribute them meanings; and to what extent things integrate contemporary cosmologies; i.e. why and for what do people want their stuff?

Particularly important for the consolidation of a material culture approach to the study of contemporary consumption were the works of Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood (1979) and Pierre Bourdieu (1979), followed by the seminal contribution of Daniel Miller (1987) and the noteworthy book *The Social Life of Things* edited by Arjun Appadurai (1986), both published one decade later.

The work of Mary Douglas (1921–2007), an English anthropologist, directly addresses the topic of the so-called distinctive nature of consumption in modern capitalist societies by exploring the concept of 'need'. In *The World of Goods. Towards an Anthropology of Consumption* (1979), Douglas and Isherwood call attention to the fact that economy seems unable to respond to the question of why people want things in industrialized capitalist societies. According to her, this happens because economy has cut off the social dimension off that critical concept for the study of contemporary consumption, an error that needs to be amended since consumption decisions



have always constituted a vital source of culture in all times and contexts. According to Douglas, decisions involving things are the mainspring of culture and consumer choices, and activities are fundamental to one's own life, given that they necessarily reflect who consumers are and how they relate to others. In the end, consumption is a social and cultural activity of production of a universe of values. Then, instead of thinking that goods are, or once were, primarily needed for subsistence, Douglas asserts that they are fundamental for making visible and stable the categories of culture. Though some things sometimes serve physical needs, they also serve to communicate with others and to relate to them. People actively have been using them to speak about themselves and to learn things from others. Hence goods are for making sense, and consumption is about finding consistent meanings made visible through physical things. The objective of consumers today, as in the past, translates a concern for information about the changing cultural scene. In Douglas' words, in a finite social world, securely bounded, meanings echo and reinforce one another. Despite the differences in terms of the intensity of the changes happening in the market, the same is true in economies of scale. Consumers have to gain or keep control of the sources of information so that their interpretations, their cosmological synthesis, are consistent and secure.

Mary Douglas brought light to the complex connections and interdependences between the materialization of social life and the processes of exchange, acquisition and use, both in industrialized and non-industrialized societies. One of the most significant quests of collective life is the stabilization of meanings, i.e. the existence of a minimum consensual basis of shared meanings, for a certain period of time. Research approaches to consumption therefore allow the depiction of the mechanisms (their similarities and originalities) through which different societies produce shared meanings by using material culture.

Even if not primarily focused on contemporary consumption, the contributions of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu to the study of contemporary consumption as material culture are also substantial. In *La Distinction. Critique Sociale du Jugement* (1979), Bourdieu explores the main mechanisms of stratification and reproduction of social distinction in France. Through an extensive approach to the patterns of consumption of all social classes he makes clear how everyday trivial consumption practices reflect and materialize the stratification system. Things actively participate in the maintenance of social order, and the different social groups strategically use things to materialize their positions in the overall social structure. Unlike Douglas, Bourdieu does not explore the existent similitudes between the social and the cultural work performed by material culture in pre-capitalist and capitalist societies. Still, *La Distinction* contributed significantly to unfold the plurality of social and cultural uses that different social groups could ascribe to ordinary mass consumption objects.

English anthropologist Daniel Miller's work constitutes a critical contribution to the rehabilitation of contemporary consumption as a major research field in anthropology. Miller's extensive production not only permanently places mass consumption in context of material culture studies but also, and most importantly, illuminates the scientific significance of everyday regular and ordinary human practices and the significant role materiality plays in them. His earlier research (1987) calls the attention to the fact that it is imperative to recognise industrialized mass consumption objects as one of the most significant features of contemporary material culture. Mass-produced things actively participate in the production of social and cultural life. Far from being neutral, they engage in meaningful relationships with subjects and participate in the making of the contexts which they inhabit. Furthermore, they still are one of the most significant tools to manage social relationships and belongings, as well as to appropriate and domesticate the increasingly global and potentially unfamiliar contexts in which we live. *Stuff* (2009), therefore, has got great cultural power, a power that resides in its ability to frame, in a very discrete though effective manner, one's daily practices and social relationships.

*The Social Life of Things* (1986), an edited volume by Arjun Appadurai (born 1949) constitutes another influential example in the field of anthropological theory of how the dichotomy which opposes pre-industrial (gift) societies to industrialized capitalist (commodity) ones failed in contributing to unfold the social role of contemporary consumption. Appadurai's introduction to the volume and the chapter by Igor Kopytoff (1986) explore the ability things have to move in and out of different contexts and identifications during their social lives in diverse historic settings. According to the authors, the biography of things discloses how material culture is subjected to constant change in terms of value and signification, how things adjust their performances according to the contexts they enter and the effectiveness of their work as carriers of identity markers and interpersonal power subjectivities. The trajectories of things, therefore, illuminate the contexts in which they circulate, influencing and directing beliefs, practices and obligations.

Material culture approaches to contemporary consumption fostered research out of the industrialised capitalist Western world, hence contributing to the debates on globalization with original theoretical and methodological approaches. In fact, all social sciences, and anthropology in particular, have been developing consistent research on the topic in other regions of the globe, analysing the impacts of capitalism, comparing its expressions and outcomes and exploring the originalities and contradictions, consistencies and inconsistencies, connections and disruptions of contemporary materiality. One of the most influential examples of these studies is the work of Sidney Mintz (1922–2015), *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (1985). His research, which inspired many others in different cultural contexts, explores how the production of sugar in one region became linked with consumption in another cultural and spatial setting, emphasizing the complex interplay between the growing heterogeneity and homogeneity in these encounters.

This line of work also contributed extensively to the consolidation of the *consumption as material culture* approach. It stressed further the main theoretical principles previously presented which conceptualized consumption as a complex activity that transcends purchase and involves the productive appropriation of objects and consequent creation of collective life. It also contributed to emphasizing the importance of cultural diversity in consumption studies, without overemphasising the subject or the object in their relationship. Following Miller (2006), a material culture analysis allows humanity back into consumption studies, without losing the focus on the object. It promotes an understanding of consumption practices as expressions of social relationships with others and with goods and validates the idea that people actively and strategically use objects for the production of meaning, as well as to mark their social actions and positioning strategies. By focusing on the cultural uses of things rather than in the political and economic mechanisms beyond the relationships amongst production and consumption, this framework situates the study of contemporary consumption in the realm of everyday naturalized practices and calls the attention to the constitutive and expressive potentials of ordinary and humble stuff.

## Materiality and migration

Despite the intensity of the debate it has generated in the last decades, contemporary consumption is a relatively discrete research topic if compared with other major social sciences' topics, such as contemporary migrations. In fact, and according to the report of the UN Rio Summit of 2012, human mobility is at its highest levels in recorded history. And if in recent years international and internal migration has been recognized as a positive force for development, as migrants transfer knowledge and skills to both receiving and origin locations, channel investments and remittances, and foster economic linkages and business opportunities

between countries and regions, it has also been increasingly acknowledged as a critical and potentially disruptive, if not a menace, to the western, richer and more stable regions of the world. Contemporary migration is under strong public scrutiny and all the visibility and passionate debate it generates at the present is matched by equally intense analysis and debate within the social sciences.

Many of the most influential references in the field point toward the necessity of thinking about the consequences of migration in terms of its macro and micro impacts in collective life. Structural dimensions as diverse as the impact of movement in cultural diversity, social reproduction, community life, economic stability and growth, transfer of knowledge and skills, economic linkages, border supervision and demographic management occupy a prominent position in the research agendas and are scrutinized by diverse theoretical and methodological lenses and perspectives. Even if occupying a less prominent position in the picture, research on micro topics directly focusing on the migrant and on the migration experience such as identity and belonging, aspirations and evaluations, positioning and negotiation processes have received considerable attention from all disciplines too and has generated significant contributions to the field of study.

In spite of its visibility and intensity, contemporary mobility does not necessarily entail fluidity, cosmopolitanism and openness. If for some groups, movement and transnational circulation are experienced as an enriching experience, the fact is that for most migrants movement is based on inequality and discrimination, is controlled and limited by states (Castles, 2010) and leads to confinement and exploitation (Portes and DeWind, 2004). Likewise, awareness of complexity, diversity and significance of context does not stand for postmodern fragmentation. Contemporary circulations of people present great diversity, but this diversity unfolds within increasingly universal relationships of power, translating the existence of global structures which Richard Wilk (2005) accurately describes as structures of common difference. Moreover, contemporary movement creates integrated systems, which should be addressed at a range of different, even if complementary, scales: the personal, the familiar, the communal, the national and the transnational scale formed by the constellation of countries linked by the ongoing migration flows and routes.

Social theory presents us today a multitude of concepts to capture and describe those on the move which stand as possible alternatives to the *migrant*. However, and despite the term in use, all migrants (and travellers, expatriates or cosmopolitans) as well all migrants' aspirations, beliefs and practices integrate multiple spatial networks and temporal linkages. This fact underlines the complexity of contemporary migrations' multiple layers and dimensions and calls the attention to the importance of the specificities entailed in each particular experience. In reality, all migrations are grounded on details with reference to who travels and who stays, when, how and in which circumstances the first journey occurs as well as the others that follow; what historic, economic, political and cultural conditions mark the spaces crossed and the trajectories traveled; what the impacts of the journey are over time on personal biographies; or how to characterize new and old relationships and networks, as well as the managing and displaying of belonging and affection.

The "transnational turn" (Vertovec, 2007) introduced significant changes in the debate about the articulation of these multiple dimensions of migration. It called attention to the fact that migrants maintain and manage their lives in spaces that go beyond national borders (Glick Schiller, 1995; Feldman-Bianco and Glick Schiller, 2011), and how institutions and states incorporated these movements and relations in order to control and manage them. Family and family ties emerged as especially significant in the structuring of transnational networks and relations. Transnationalism pulled research away from the approaches that portrayed those who migrated

as passive reactors to the contexts and events that framed their journeys, and instead focused the research agenda on migration's lived experiences. Today there are numerous authors who call attention to crucial aspects of these experiences, and most particularly to the importance of exploring the disconnections between the ideal and the actual experiences in contexts of migration. Tackling and comparing the imaginaries and expectations of migrants with their narratives of concrete daily life experiences became a major topic of analysis and, this chapter argues, material culture and consumption practices can be a particularly productive lens to explore and analyse it. In fact, most modalities of migration are related to aspirations of a *better life*, a loose concept that integrates many dimensions and angles. Imaginaries may be defined as culturally shared. They are socially transmitted representational assemblages that interact with people's imaginings and expectations. Imaginaries are often used as meaning-making devices, as significant constellations of representations and values that work to justify and trigger migration. And even if most migration experiences fail to match the aspirations and imaginaries about the journey, the new context of living, the new daily routines or the relationships held with those who did not travel, they nonetheless work as important references to the evaluation of the outcomes of all effective migration experiences.

While human migration, movement and mobility, in general, and the migrants' lived experiences have most definitely caught the attention of all social sciences, their intersections with the movements of things, as well as the material dimensions involved in all migration process, are still underexplored. Yet, and as Paul Basu and Simon Coleman rightly state in the introduction of a thematic issue of the journal *Mobilities* (2008) dedicated to the theme, all migrations are highly embedded in materiality since they necessarily involve carrying, sending and receiving things, as well as expropriations and appropriations, desires and expectations regarding material items. Moreover, objects are at least as potentially mobile as people, and independently of whom they travel with or whom they encounter in their journeys, movement will always necessarily affect their social lives, their value and their cultural biographies.

As recent research demonstrates (e.g. Rosales, 2010, 2012; Parrot, 2012; Horst, 2011; Miller, 2008; Burrell, 2008; Sväsec, 2012; Povrzanović Frykman, 2009), ethnographic insights into mobile selves achieved through objects can work as particularly productive conceptual lenses. The impacts of movement on material experiences reach much further than attachments to objects from home. They also promote encounters with other and new material realities structured by original frames of values and rules, which necessarily affect the uses of things. Things from diverse cultural, spatial and temporal contexts establish complex relationships, not only with migrants, but also between themselves, creating new cosmological orders and dwelling contexts. Furthermore, things perform an important role in the management of relationships with those who stayed and with those whose daily lives also take place in the same context. They can materialize significant relationships with the past – the appreciation and recognition, or the abandonment of things "from home"; with the present – the incorporation of new things and/or the reconfiguration of patterns of consumption and with the future – access to more diverse/valued material universe or the inability to accomplish it.

Previously in this chapter, it was argued that a material culture approach to consumption was particularly productive to analyse contemporary identities. According to the inputs presented and explored here, things have the potential for and the capacity to promote changes in people's perceptions of themselves, participate in the restructuring of their patterns of social interaction, disrupt their sense of existential permanence or contribute to making space for a new sense of self to emerge. Hence, the complex and intense field of discussion of the impacts of migration and movement on contemporary identities would highly benefit from the inputs of a material culture based approach. Ranging from visual and literary representations of migration to gifts,



remittances or the materiality of the means of transport and borders, things participate in the making, displaying and assessing of migrants' identities and frame migration experiences.

Following Burrell's (2008) contribution to the discussion, materiality is key to explore the intense ongoing relationships between the (changing) identity of places of mobility and the identities of those who travel. Burrell specifically calls attention to the importance of things in travelling experiences. According to her work, travel and border crossing are two key emotional, political, cultural and personal dimensions of all migration processes that are absent from many of the most influential research on contemporary migration. However, people develop in-situ travelling identities and relationships as they go "dwelling-in motion" (Burrell, 2008: 354) which should be integrated in the broader context of their migration experiences and explored as intensely material and used spaces and times. Far from being "in-between" spaces and times, journeys and borders are domesticated and experienced in multiple ways, and strategies and things play an important role in these particular processes. They take part of the migrants' journeys, embody significant aspirations and expectations directly related with migration and work to "customize" impersonal spaces such as transport seats or the waiting rooms of airports and stations.

Other contributions (e.g. Miller, 2008; Parrot, 2012; Rosales, 2012) emphasize the importance of materiality in the strategic processes of negotiation of migrants' identities. All migrations have significant impacts on identity since they necessarily entail a (sometimes major) reconfiguration of self, based on new cultural and social frames and settings. Things not only actively participate in these restructuring processes, but also constitute a particularly fertile terrain to observe how they unfold both in the public and the private spheres of migrants' lives. Moreover, migrants are most of the time confronted with the necessity of learning how to deal with new material worlds, a process which usually brings additional anxiety and difficulty since it implies evaluating not only *new things* introduced by migration, but also the things from the former cultural context. These processes often result in highly creative material environments, subjected to continuous evaluation and scrutiny, in which past and present come together to form new, even if sometimes instable, contexts of identity production and display.

Based on extensive ethnographic fieldwork, the material culture approach to this complex thematic goes beyond the analysis of the things that ground migration experiences, and it explores the diverse forms through which materiality provides ways of indexing the status and/or the agency of the migrant. The work of the authors cited above particularly illustrate the significance of how aspirations, transformations and past and present social positions are differently played and displayed both in the public and private domains of migrants' lives and, more importantly, how they progress and change over time. From contents of supermarket baskets and menus prepared to celebrate significant dates, to wardrobes or items used to set the table, everyday material culture becomes a crucial research site to explore how identity is objectified, produced and reproduced in the routines that form and shape most of what life is about. Things work as negotiation tools to perform these relational and positioning processes, but they can as well be explored as material testimonies of the transformations being performed and/or negotiated. Hence, things become productive translators, materializing different ways of seeing the world and crucially contributing to the management of belonging and *otherness* (and consequently *us*) and *self*.

Even if most research on migration focuses on uses and on the social and cultural work things are asked to perform in support of the migrant, it is important to call attention to the fact that materiality does not always work with subjects, favouring their intentions or helping to materialize their goals. In fact, sometimes things can resist appropriation by subjects, and consumption is experienced as a burden, i.e., a stressful and overwhelming activity which implies

considerable effort and investment (Burrell, 2008, Rosales, 2015). Migrants are often confronted with the fact that some of their material belongings not only don't "fit in" in certain contexts, but are evaluated and/or used in different manners. Also, material culture can work in unexpected ways, exposing features of migrants' lives and identities that were meant to remain out of site, making visible their inability to master certain things and products and, most importantly, testifying the failures and unintended detours their migration experiences suffered (Parrott, 2012, Horst, 2011). Hence, the material realm of migration can also be a particularly useful tool to investigate the less positive, and perhaps more painful and blocked, dimensions resulting from movement and displacement – disruption, fragmentation and loss.

## Conclusion

Even if the social sciences in general, and anthropology in particular, have always acknowledged materiality as a significant field of practice, only recently have objects regained centrality as a result of a set of theoretical productions which, as was discussed previously, emphasized the urgency of rethinking contemporary materiality and its relationships with subjects. Today, the capacity of contemporary materiality and consumption to generate culture and to do social and cultural work through processes of differentiation, objectification and integration is widely recognized and things are perceived as objectification devices, actively involved in processes of evaluation, positioning and mobility. As it was argued, objects participate in the co-production of reality. They compose a familiar frame, a subtle setting for social practice. And since social behaviour is cued by expectations and determined by frames, objects ensure appropriate behaviour without being open to challenge (Miller, 2010). Hence, materiality constitutes a "key-tool", i.e. a socialization device, for the definition of collective identities and ways of seeing the world, and interacting with things can therefore be understood as a learning process of collective norms (Miller, 2010).

Migration is intimately linked to human history. People have always moved, settled in new places and moved again, sometimes with great intensity and impact, causing major historical, political, cultural and social transformations, other times in a more discrete manner, producing perhaps less visible effects and public reactions. Contemporary migrations are at the centre of public debate. They are highly scrutinized by the media, occupy a significant position in academic, legal and political debate and constitute a core area of intervention of today's social institutions. However, and in spite of all this intense debate, migrations and migrants are still seen as problematic, complex and difficult to grasp, as most of social and cultural life dimensions also are. Social sciences have acknowledged by now that migration experiences present great diversity, as well as that many migrant groups are highly heterogeneous. They have also, however, acknowledged that it is imperative to compare migration experiences and bridge them in order to promote a wider understanding of the main outcomes of movement and their impacts on people, contexts and culture. As Glick Schiller's (2011) work amongst others stresses, the study of migration is particularly illustrative of the existing cultural diversity in contemporary urban settings, but it is also a crucial terrain to acknowledge the existing similarities between people, in spite of their migration experiences. So, migration ultimately underlines the "super diversity" of the social and cultural world while simultaneously reveals aspects of commonality and proximity between people. This aspect of contemporary migration needs to be further explored in the future, and material culture and consumption studies can give a solid contribution to the depiction of the existent differences and commonalities between migrants and non-migrants, in general, and how gender, age, class and religion mediate consumption practices, in particular. The analysis of consumption patterns through different migration generations should also be

further explored since they could also bring light to analysis of both planned and unplanned strategies of integration and positioning. Things have the ability to bring people together and set people apart. Therefore, migration studies have much to gain in integrating consumption studies and dialoguing with them in order to address most of the main topics of their research agenda.

One can argue that material culture, in general, and the mundane realm of domestic stuff, in particular, constitutes a positive tool to explore, analyse and discuss these two main dimensions all migrations entail. On the one hand, things participate in migrants' experiences and journeys; work as significant resources and/or pose significant obstacles in the challenging task of restarting a life in a new and unfamiliar context; and constitute a powerful tool in the management of transnational relations and positioning strategies. But things, the movements they entail and the ways these intersect with the movements of people, can also work as a significant field of study to frame migration on a broader-scale analysis, that of the global connections that frame contemporary social life.

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