

# Expatriates` Identity: Rootlessness or the road back to yourself?

Today I like to share an article written by my Argentinean colleague Natalia Sarro about the change of identity when going abroad. Enjoy reading!

When I ask expatriates how they are adapting to their new life in Argentina, I often hear a subtle message hidden behind their words. When they complain, I can tell it is not about the bureaucracy of local Government. And it is not the dirty streets of Buenos Aires or the too-emotional style of Argentines that creates all that frustration. There is actually a powerful, unsaid feeling that creates all the fear, anger and uncertainty. Did you guess?

Bingo. It's about **identity**. It's those invisible roots, that make you know exactly **who** you are, **where** you are and where you're going **next**, along the path of time and space.

So, when you move to a new country, far from loved ones, transitioning from the known to the unknown, the journey is longer than you think. It's more than a couple of thousands kilometers that you are leaving behind. Rather than that, you are creating an endless distance between you and your sense of belonging. You feel homeless. Detached. In-between worlds. Did you ever hear that popular saying in Spanish "No soy de aquí ni soy de allá?" ("I don't belong here or there")... Well, I guess it summarizes it all.

Ok, is there a way out? I would say yes. The common belief behind this sense of rootlessness is thinking of identity as a fixed, rigid structure that we were given when we were children: your hobbies, your possessions, your family traditions and habits, your neighborhood, etc. From this perspective, we get only one precious identity in life, so we can't afford to lose it.

Now... What if you could think of **identity** and **home** as concepts under construction? What if **identity** was something you create and re-create every single day of your life, and it is up to you to become the person you want to be? If it was up to you to choose the puzzles of your identity every morning, making it the most majestic artwork of a lifetime, then there would be no need to miss home anymore. **Because home is simply where you are.**

When you start to believe your identity is in continuous evolution and it transforms as you grow and make decisions, then the big monster or rootlessness doesn't make sense anymore. Rather than a physical place, I invite you to perceive home as something you do (by yourself and with others), and therefore it can change because you are doing new things all the time.



You are not the same person you used to be yesterday, but you forget. You can change jobs, but you think it is impossible. You can move to a new country, learn a new language, wake up in a different place every day, but it is too scary for a well-established adult like you. You can give up old activities that you don't enjoy anymore. You can start a new career or live in a different way, but your family and friends say you are crazy, so you better stick to your routine.

„Home is simply where you are and what you do!“

What new possibilities would you give to yourself if you dared to think of **home** as an action, rather than a noun? What if your life in a new country was the perfect excuse to take on that forgotten hobby of your childhood? Then, maybe the dusty dream of becoming a writer, an artist or a musician could become reality. Maybe, then the freedom to reinvent yourself during your experience abroad would be present in every step of the journey.

So... what underlying beliefs and old stories are preventing you from having the type of experience abroad you would like to have? What fixed identity is making it impossible to experience the new YOU that you want to become? If George Eliot was right, then you could start to believe that...

„It is never too late to become what you might have been“.

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