In the memory of Suzy Azriel,
who emigrated some sixty years
ago from Istanbul to build a new
home in Tel Aviv.
MIGRANTS’ HOUSES:
THE IMPORTANCE OF HOUSING FORM IN MIGRANTS’ SETTLEMENT

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ABSTRACT

Literature on the built form of the house and its meaning for migrants’ home-building has been inadequate and scarce. In order to address the insufficiency in the literature, this thesis constructs a theoretical framework based on various fields of study, in addition to existing critical studies concerning the immigrants’ experience in the city in various scales. These fields are the notion of home-building practices and the concepts embedded within it of home and house. The theoretical framework provides a tool for the examination of different migrant groups and their ways of home-building, through which each migrant group can be examined and discussed.

The research examines four migrant groups in two metropolitan cities (Melbourne and Tel Aviv) in two countries of destination (Australia and Israel) and two periods of time of migration (the 1950s-1960s and the 1990s-2000s). The four groups are Italians and Chinese in Melbourne, and Moroccans and Russians (from the FSU) in Tel Aviv. Qualitative data from forty-six in-depth interviews with migrants in their home-environments, and a short survey of real-estate agents in the two cities have been gathered to answer the research question: what is the role of housing form in the process of migrants’ home-building?

This thesis argues that the built form of the house is meaningful in a range of diverse ways during the process of home-building, and that each migrant group fosters one key feeling over other feelings in their home-building (Hage, 1997: 102). Italians in Melbourne enhance the feeling of familiarity by bridging their Italian past and the Australian environment through their home-building, while Chinese in Melbourne maximise the feeling of sense of possibility in their home-building to improve their situation in Australian society. Moroccans in Tel Aviv foster the feeling of community in their home-building to assist them with educating the next generation and Israeli society about the rich past of Moroccan Jews, and Russians in Tel Aviv, who appeared to be more diverse than other groups, develop the feeling of security in their home-building to either integrate in the Israeli environment or replicate past life through the reproduction of past home-environments. The way groups differ in their specific home-building depends on their specific circumstances of migration, namely the origin country, country of destination and period of migration, as well as the historical, economic and social contexts around migration. Yet, it is argued that the importance of the house is influenced not only by the ethnic origin of its dwellers, but
also by other identity lines of the migrants, such as their age at the time of migration or their origin and class in the homeland.

The thesis argues that houses of migrants do not always represent the ethnic origin of their dwellers, as has often been suggested in the literature. But they do represent the relationship their owners have with the dominant society, which influences the level of visibility of the migrant’s presence and the extent to which it is conveyed through the house. It is also argued that migrants’ houses are imagined in a gendered view, though this appears diverse and complicated. Another finding is that migrants’ houses are understood as dynamic, although in a different way for different groups. They are transnational homes in many senses, although the way migrants regard their house depends on their age and their ability to adjust to recent technological and global changes that also affect housing. Another finding is that houses of migrants are forms of cultural capital through which power relations between migrant groups and members of the dominant society are being constructed and contested. Houses of migrants are also sites of the everyday, where some resist these capital forces through the creation of an everyday environment. Finally, materiality appears to be significant in the migrants’ house with the abundant presence of objects denoting nostalgia such as souvenirs and collections inside the house, but this also differs among different ethnic groups and different age groups among participants.
DECLARATION

This is to certify that

i. the thesis comprises only my original work towards the PhD,

ii. due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used,

iii. the thesis is less than 100,000 words in length, exclusive of tables, maps, bibliographies and appendices.

Melbourne, March 2010

Iris Levin Azriel
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PART I

BODIES OF KNOWLEDGE
1 CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Houses of immigrants in the city

Walking in the streets of Fawkner, a northern Melbourne suburb, it is hard to feel it is part of the same city which, depending on the distance from the city centre, is predominated by Victorian terrace-houses, Federation and Californian bungalows, 1950s DIY brick homes and more contemporary forms of suburban living. In Fawkner, as in some other suburbs around the city, a strange hybrid building style prevails, combining Anglo-Australian dominant culture of detached houses, blended with a Mediterranean influence of arches, dark brown bricks, white concrete balustrades, terrazzo tiles, and other ornamental features around the house. Consider Figure 1.1:

Figure 1.1 – Typical houses in Fawkner, Melbourne.
Fawkner is one of the most ‘Italian’ suburbs of Melbourne, which means that Italy-born persons form around 30 percent of its population. With this in mind, these kinds of houses, which appear to be quite distinctive to some areas of the city and can be easily identified, evoke some fascinating questions: To what extent does the physical shape of the house help immigrants in their home-building in the city? Does the house have an important role in this process? Can it only ease this process or also hinder and delay it?

In this thesis I wish to closely explore these questions. Societies of the 21st century are becoming increasingly diverse, as waves of migration flow around the world more easily than ever before. Migrations have been part of human history since the earliest times, yet international migration has grown in volume and significance since 1945 and most particularly since the mid-1980s (Castles and Miller, 1998; Jupp, 1999; Massey et al., 1998; Toro-Morn and Alicea, 2004). During this period, known as the post-industrial period, migration has become a global phenomenon (Toro-Morn and Alicea, 2004) and has affected almost every corner of the globe. There is hardly any society that has not gone through a change in the past twenty years, either because it has been a destination for, or a source of, massive migration.

In the past twenty years or so this phenomenon of migration has been studied extensively in a wide range of disciplines, from anthropology, sociology and human behaviour to geography, planning and urban studies. The studies mostly uncover reasons for migration and its effect on sending and receiving societies. As a geographical phenomenon, one of the most discussed topics is the influence of migration on the physical appearance of the urban environment, as it has been acknowledged that immigrants tend to settle in urban environments (Hugo, 2004; Ley, 1999). There are three scales that are prominent in the exploration of the immigrants’ presence in the city: the house scale; the neighbourhood scale; and the city-wide scale. All three scales study the way immigrants cope and manage their home-building processes within the urban environment. The first scale, the house, looks at how immigrants utilise their domestic environments and the built form of housing to help them ease their home-building in the city. These studies are interested in the singular unit of the city and the way this unit has been modified in order to support its residents in feeling more at home in their new urban environment. The neighbourhood scale investigates how immigrants transform the visual appearance of established neighbourhoods in the city and in doing so generate conflicts with local residents who approve or oppose these changes in their local environments. Lastly, the city-wide scale explores how immigrants are being received and handled through sometimes
national but mostly urban policies and regulations that may enhance or diminish their chances for a smoother integration in the city.

It seems that the first scale, the house, has not been adequately researched. This body of literature consists of a number of scattered studies, mostly undertaken in Australia and Canada, two longstanding immigration countries. The studies apply diverse approaches, both social and spatial, but appear randomly in various fields and do not form a comprehensive body of knowledge. Thus, the role of the built form of the house in the settlement process of immigrants has tended to be poorly understood. Much of this literature makes claims that immigrants use their housing as a symbol of their ethnicity or immigrant status, but this has not been fully addressed, and there is a need for more complex investigations regarding the ways immigrants employ the built form of their housing to help them settle in the city.

1.2 The aim

Therefore, the aim of this study is to come to a better understanding of the role of the built form of housing in immigrants' home-building in urban environments. The phrase ‘built form of housing’ refers to all types of residential housing (from detached houses to apartment buildings), and includes interiors, revealing the everyday spatial practices of the inhabitants (space organisation, furniture, decoration etc), as well as exteriors and facades, the private immediate surrounding of the house (front and back yards, entrance and parking), and the semi-private space between the house and the public domain (fences, footpaths and gates).

The research wishes to achieve that understanding by exploring how the built form of housing is utilised to support immigrants’ home-building in urban environments, and specifically the way domestic environments have been transformed and altered by the presence of immigrants in the city. It hopes to investigate different forms of housing, both in the homeland and the host land, and track connections between these forms of housing that might influence this process of home-building. Throughout this thesis the terms ‘settlement’ and ‘home-building’, which will be conceptualised in Chapter 2, will appear alternatively.

1.3 Overview of the study

To achieve the above aim, the thesis contains two main parts. The first part presents bodies of knowledge that are required for this investigation, while the second part consists of the analysis of findings, discussion and conclusion. Chapter 2 provides a
theoretical background in regard to the presence of immigrants in the city, starting with a short remark on ethnicity and essentialism. It then looks into the existing literature on the immigrants’ experience in the city in the three scales noted above, and points out the lack of a comprehensive body of research that is focused on the house. The Chapter then conceptualises the notion of home-building, and goes on to discuss the two concepts comprising this term of ‘home-building’: the home and the house. ‘Home’ discusses issues of difference in the home and the dynamic nature of home, while ‘house’ explores matters of cultural capital, the everyday, and materiality in the home. The concepts of home-building, the home and the house constitute a theoretical framework that then allows each of the empirical chapters to be examined through its lens. Chapter 3 describes the structure of the research and its design. It explains the choice of two sites of investigation and four groups of immigrants, the qualitative methods that have been used, and the comparative analysis. It concludes with a discussion on the place of the researcher within this kind of examination. Based on the previous chapter, Chapter 4 presents the social and physical situations in the two metropolitan cities that are the focus of this examination, Melbourne and Tel Aviv. It also answers what it means to be an immigrant in these particular urban environments, presents geographical and historical context, and examines the very different housing stocks and styles available in the two cities.

The second part of the thesis is concentrated on the empirical research and its conclusions. The first four chapters (5, 6, 7 and 8) discuss the role of the built form of housing for four different migrant groups within the two sites of study. Chapter 5 investigates the Italian group in Melbourne, highlighting their particular use of their houses as familial spaces that connect both their past homes and the present environment. Chapter 6 studies the Chinese group in Melbourne, presenting their use of their houses to advance and situate themselves within the Australian environment. Chapter 7 explores the Moroccan group in Tel Aviv, outlining the educational role of the house as part of their collective process of home-building, and finally, Chapter 8 studies the Russian group in Tel Aviv, discovering that this group is more diverse than other groups and thus findings are less homogenous. The four chapters lead to Chapter 9 which queries the use of place of birth as the favoured organising category for studies of migrant home-building, and explores other forms of comparison based on identity features from across the sample of participants. Finally, Chapter 10 reflects back on the research process and the theoretical framework, draws some conclusions, and makes suggestions for future research. It concludes that the role of the built form of housing in immigrants’ home-building in the city differs between
groups and location. As will be discussed shortly, the notion of ‘home-building’, defined as ‘the building of the feeling “being at home”’ (Hage, 1997: 102), is crucial for the understanding of home-building practices migrants perform in their houses. This feeling, according to Hage, is built out of affective building blocks of four key homely feelings. It is argued in this research that each group builds its home through a combination of these four feelings, but more importantly, each group emphasises a different feeling that dominates its home-building. Thus, Italians in Melbourne give emphasis to the key feeling of familiarity in their home-building practices, while Chinese in Melbourne foster the key feeling of sense of possibility to achieve their home-building. Through their home-building practices Moroccans in Tel Aviv enhance the key feeling of community, when Russians in Tel Aviv maximise the key feeling of security in their homes. The following chapter, Chapter 2, discusses the theoretical framework that will enable the examination of the role of the housing form in home-building process of diverse migrant groups.
CHAPTER II: LITERATURE ON IMMIGRANTS IN THE CITY AND THE CONCEPTS OF HOME AND HOUSE

2.1 Introduction

Literature on the immigrants’ experience in the city has long neglected the residential built form. The majority of urban studies on the topic focus on the metropolitan or the neighbourhood scale, while studies that have concentrated on the built form of housing and its role in the immigrants’ process of settlement are scarce. Until now, there has been little consideration of the way immigrants actually utilise their immediate domestic environments in the city in order to feel more ‘at home’. Aspects of home-building, feelings of belonging, memories of the homeland, expectations from the host society (e.g. the need to assimilate and to adopt the dominant culture), and most significantly, the way these aspects contribute to the visual appearance of the urban environment in regard to migrants’ housing, are chiefly ignored.

Recognising the lack of a comprehensive body of literature on the built form of immigrants’ housing has led to the statement of the research question: What is the role of the built form of housing in the process of migrants’ home-building?

The literature review presented in this chapter seeks to propose and construct a critical theoretical framework that will enable addressing this research question. This framework is designed to encompass the full facets of migrants’ experience in and around their home in the city during years of settlement in a new country, and may help to better understand the ways home-building processes are taking form in immigrants’ housing.

Thus, the literature review consists of three major sections. The first section is an examination of critical studies undertaken on the immigrants’ experience in the city. This is presented through three different scales of the city as noted in the previous chapter: the house scale; the neighbourhood scale; and the city-wide scale. Recognition of a theoretical gap in the literature about migrants and the importance of their housing in their home-building has led to the conceptualisation of the notion of home-building. Consequently, two categories are explored: the home and the house. The home is theorised through two concepts: difference in the home and the dynamic nature of home. The house is theorised through three concepts: cultural capital, the everyday, and materiality in the home. With the understanding of home-building practices, the two categories of home and house construct a theoretical framework
that allows the examination of the empirical chapters in this thesis. Each of the empirical chapters is investigated with some of these concepts in mind, and each shows how different practices of home-building are emphasised. But before delving into the immigrants' experience in the city, issues of recognition and essentialism deserve a preliminary discussion.

2.1.1 A note on recognition

The matters of recognition and essentialism should be discussed with explicit attention because this thesis deals with groups of migrants of different ethnicities. So it is necessary to explain that I do not believe there are essential differences between groups of people only because of their different countries of origin. It is also important to clarify that I do not perceive these groups as homogenous or monolithic, with members comprising similar essential characteristics. On the contrary, I see these groups as diverse and heterogeneous with fluid boundaries.

Indeed, Fincher and Iveson (2008: 84) have argued that the recognition of some forms of diversity should be a guiding principle for efforts to shape cities. They differentiate between two ways of framing models of recognition: an affirmative model of recognition and a relational model of recognition. The affirmative model understands different identities to be the product of pre-existing differences between those who belong to certain groups, and thus interprets recognition as the task of defining, acknowledging, and/or protecting group distinctiveness. The authors criticise the affirmative model of recognition because it is based on the understanding that groups are homogenous or self-contained, while it is clear that different identity groups contain within themselves vast internal differences and 'have unstable rather than immutable boundaries' (Fincher and Iveson, 2008: 92). The relational model of recognition is a response to these essentialist understandings of identity and their associated affirmative model of recognition. This model recognises that groups are formed through the politics of identity, and do not exist prior to it. That is, the politics of identity are an influential force in shaping the boundaries of identity groups.

Similarly, Ong (1999: 111) discusses these issues in her study of Chinese migrants in North America. Ong states that the notion of Chineseness continues to shape the scholarship because of the Chinese past, history or other cultural characteristics. But, she asserts, the Chinese population is almost one-quarter of the world’s population, and it is impossible to define Chineseness as one distinct identity.

This is an important understanding that does not relate only to the Chinese but to practices of essentialism that often surface in discussions about immigrants. It is
crucial to understand the complexity that arises with the definition of a group of people - who happened to be born in the same country of origin - by the name of this country (e.g. Italians, Chinese etc.), as if they are all alike, sharing the same essential characteristics. This often leads to a mistaken fixed identity attached to each migrant group. As Fortier (1999) explains in her study of Italian immigrants in London, in many cases 'cultural practices are reified and naturalised as 'typical expressions' of ethnic identity; they are seen as resulting from that identity rather than performing that identity' (1999: 43, my emphasis). The issue of the production of ethnic categories through specific practices is critical for the investigation of the role of the built form in the process of migrants' home-building. Following Fortier's understanding, it is necessary to remember that practices migrants undertake in their homes are not resulting from their specific identity; rather, they are performing that identity. More on this matter will be further considered in the methods discussion in Chapter 3.

2.2 Critical urban studies on the immigrants’ experience

Critical urban studies of the immigrants' experience in the city deal with the way urban environments affect immigrants’ lives in the city on the one hand, and the way immigrants influence the shape and form of urban environments on the other. The presence of immigrants in cities has generated a great deal of writings on various scales. Particularly, as explained in Chapter 1, three scales have been identified. The first scale explores the built residential form in the city, where immigrants spend most of their time. It explores how these domestic environments participate in the process of migrants’ settlement and assist in - or sometimes hinder - their settlement in the city. The second scale looks into the neighbourhood, where it examines conflicts taking place in immigrants’ neighbourhoods and often criticises the way local residents react to the immigrants’ presence. The third scale studies the metropolitan area, focusing mainly on planning policy decisions that are taken at the city-wide level and addresses issues of housing distribution and immigrants' integration or segregation in the city.

The neighbourhood scale and the city-wide scale are the prominent ways in which scholars, urban planners and policy makers are accustomed to think of the presence of immigrants in multicultural western societies. These two scales are mostly heard in discussions concerning immigrants on the media and are first to come to mind when immigrants are at stake. Yet, the house scale is where everyday life occurs and as such is most influential on the success or failure of immigrants’ settlement in the city. This scale of the immigrants' urban experience has been
underrepresented in literature. Studies on the house scale are randomly located and do not form any comprehensive body of literature. Most of them have been undertaken in Australia, describing fragmented images of domestic environments of immigrants in the city. They do not provide broad understanding of the part the house plays within settlement processes of immigrants. The following sections review the three scales of critical urban studies on the immigrants’ experience as explained above, and identify the gap in the literature regarding the migrants’ built form of housing. Firstly, the house scale is presented, demonstrating the scattered nature of this body of literature. Then, the neighbourhood and the city-wide scales are briefly examined only to provide sufficient background for the focus of this research’s examination.

2.2.1 The house scale
This section presents critical studies that have focused on the built form of the house and its place within the immigrants’ experience. This means houses of all kinds, and their role in the migrants’ lives during years of settlement. As mentioned before, there are a small number of studies on this topic; oddly, all of them have been undertaken in Australia. This might be partly explained by the multicultural nature of Australian society.

One issue explored is the relationship between past homes and current houses. Jacobs (2004: 165) investigates the boundaries between the two, exploring how architecture is implicated in the processes of feeling at home in a mobile world, as they occur in relation to the Chan family who belong to the Chinese diaspora, as it is shown in the Australian film Floating Life. Jacobs analyses a number of houses in different places and countries, as well as different times and cultures, as presented in the film. She contrasts the ancestral homes with the modern Australian ‘monster-house’ (this term will be explained shortly), and searches for the way ‘migrant senses of ‘homeliness’ are made and remade’ (2004: 181). Jacobs demonstrates her ideas through analysing architectural features within the houses, explaining by way of dramatic events and social interactions between family members. She examines the home-making of one diasporic family, trying to give ‘a sense of how we dwell in a mobile world’ in the peculiar condition of migrancy (Jacobs, 2004: 181). This is one possible way of analysing housing forms and their role in migration and home-building processes.

Other works have examined similar notions such as the contradiction between the house in the homeland and the house in the host land. Thomas (1997), for
example, in her study of Vietnamese migrants in Australia, studies the different conceptions of home as well as different physical house forms in the two cultures, and points out the tension arising from those differences. She explores strategies adopted by Vietnamese migrants for dealing with the mismatch between their conception of home and the available Australian housing. Likewise, King (1997: 77) observes how the traditional bungalow has been adapted by Chinese immigrants in Sydney’s neighbourhoods. The bungalow has been transformed into ‘an ordinary ‘Chinese’ house’ as shown in real-estate advertisements.

A different focus is provided by Lozanovska (1995; 2008), who explores the relationship between migrants’ housing and the dominant culture. First she investigates the role that migrant houses, as spatial zones, play in deconstructing the hegemonic culture in Australia and constructing the identity of the migrants (1995: 108). The migrant houses’ decorations of eagles and lions are, according to Lozanovska, mythical and masculine symbols of war and defence, and its architecture is dubbed by her ‘wall of war’. A recent work of Lozanovska (2008) explores three migrants’ houses in Melbourne through psychoanalytic theories, while seeking to understand the role of the houses for their owners. She shows how these houses’ aesthetics is a mode of resisting assimilation, and argues that the common perception that migrants’ houses are different from other houses is a strong myth. The house is an important mode of assimilation in Australia because its way of life is inherently set by this suburban paradigm. But at the same time, asserts Lozanovska, the Australian house has become a contested terrain in relation to immigration, because it generates fears that immigrants would compete for housing stock or that their houses would produce a different aesthetic and a different way of life. In both her works Lozanovska interprets the changes migrants make to their houses as manifestations against the dominant culture, diverting the gaze from the private to the public. This is another possible way of interpreting housing forms as visual representations of the relationships between migrants and the dominant culture of their host country.

The backyard of suburban Australia has been another site of exploration focusing on migrants and their physical environments. Armstrong (1999), for example, examines different types of gardens created by different migrant groups in Australia, including Mediterranean Europeans, Eastern Europeans, migrants from the Middle East and migrants from Asian countries. Armstrong claims that creating a garden in the host country is an early stage of accepting the new country. Not only does it make the unfamiliar feels familiar, but it also helps heal the experience of war and repression, especially for refugee migrants. Likewise, Head, Muir and Hampel (2004)
examine backyard gardens of three contemporary migrant groups (Macedonians, Vietnamese, and British-born) and a group of first-generation Australians with both parents born overseas, in suburban Australia. The research uses both qualitative and quantitative methods, with semi-structured interviews and a survey of the gardens’ vegetation. In contrast to the previous study, Head at al.’s work highlights the differences between the three immigrant groups’ backyards, seeking to explain them with reference to the rural background of some of the groups.

A similar research has used different methods to unpack the role of backyards in migrants’ lives. Morgan, Rocha and Poynting (2005) explore migration stories and examine the ways migrants use their gardens as sites of cultural practice in the Fairfield municipality of western Sydney. In this research the authors used life-history methods based on open-ended, semi-structured interviews with 17 residents of Fairfield, conducted in and around their gardens. They were selected from a list, compiled by the local museum, as having backyards that displayed interesting transplantings and hybridisation of homeland and other Sydney suburban culture. Morgan et al. (2005: 93) argue that many migrant gardens are places in which creative labour is expended to symbolise connections not only to homeland but also to Australia and other cultures. Against the official display of carnival and festive occasions of immigrants in Australia, they show a diverse everyday lively practice that is evident in garden and backyard creativity. This suburban creativity produces at the same time symbols of homeland blended with symbols of Australia and other cultures.

The diverse approaches applied in the examination of the role of housing in the process of home-building demonstrate the importance and relevance of this inquiry. Yet they also highlight that there is still a need for research to further explore this topic. All these studies organised their research according to the migrants’ ethnic origin as the most important characteristic of the informants, and none of them have explored other identity components of the migrants (e.g. age, gender, etc). In order to be dealt with in an adequate way, the house scale needs to be investigated with a consideration of the role of the house in the process of home-building as the main objective, and it appears that not many studies have actually done so. I wish to provide this study a more wide-ranging and systematic engagement with the research question by focusing on not only one but four different migrant groups, and by considering a range of identity features within these groups. The next section outlines the body of literature that deals with the neighbourhood scale, providing the necessary background for the house scale.
2.2.2 The neighbourhood scale

The neighbourhood scale often serves urban planners when they deal with immigrants in western multicultural societies. ‘Immigrants’ neighbourhoods’, a term that indicates specific neighbourhoods containing a fair percentage of immigrants, are where the presence of immigrants is mostly felt and perceived (Qadeer, 1997) and where their visual appearance is usually noticed. It is also the place where the urban landscape has mostly been influenced by the immigrants’ presence, sometimes through the construction of public ‘ethnic’ buildings, business signs in foreign languages, or the extensive use of public services and transport. This section examines studies that focus on the immigrants’ experience in neighbourhoods in various cities, mostly in Australia and Canada. Two main related issues are presented in this body of literature. The first and the most relevant is the way ethnic concentrations have changed the physical appearance of the neighbourhoods, generating reactions from local residents to that change. This issue is strongly linked to the house scale, because although physical changes sometimes happen through the construction of public ‘ethnic’ buildings (e.g. Beynon, 2005; Harney, 2002), in most cases they appear in housing forms. The second issue is the discourse around discrimination and racism in everyday life emerging from the presence of immigrants in the neighbourhoods, including the significance of the local level in the implementation of everyday multiculturalism.

The first issue is the changing face of the neighbourhoods (or suburbs) that occurs as a result of immigrants’ presence. This is of particular interest to this thesis because understanding the conflicts that arise from the immigrants’ presence in the public sphere - that is public buildings or housing stock - may shed light on the tensions that exist around the private sphere, the immigrants’ homes. A number of studies have shown how established neighbourhoods became arenas of conflict as newcomers purchased residential dwellings and altered the visual look of the existing housing stock. Sometimes, it is the issue of the old character of the housing stock that is at stake (Allon, 2002: 101). In the case of Earlwood, a suburb of Sydney, Australia, residents have opposed the physical changes that have taken place there, after the experience of post-war immigration has resulted in the rise of hybrid styles, and a style in particular which has been named ‘Mediterraneanisation’. Local residents have considered transformations of these houses as ‘inappropriate’ and ‘unsympathetic’, and have formed a historical society to maintain ‘heritage’ and cultural uniqueness and authenticity in their neighbourhood. As Allon argues (2002: 108), it is through the ‘Mediterraneanised’ houses that the migrant ‘residents evoke their translated identities
and multiple belongings’ and thus it is an essential part of their settlement process. This study supports Lozanovska’s (2008) observation that migrants’ houses pose a threat to the dominant aesthetics and values.

Another case of Shaughnessy Heights, a wealthy suburb of Vancouver, Canada, demonstrates the same concern (Ley, 1995; Mitchell, 2004; Qadeer, 1997). The architecture of this suburban landscape has generated a public debate after many of the dwellings were purchased by a wealthy group of migrants from Hong Kong, who entered Vancouver as business migrants with capital which they have desired to invest in housing and commercial buildings in the city. The extra-large houses they have built, termed ‘monster-houses’ by the local residents, offered a noticeable demonstration of the economic and cultural changes then under way in Vancouver, most of them associated with transnational flows of capital, culture and people from Asia (Mitchell, 2004: 145).

Be it ‘monster-houses’ or ‘Mediterraneanised-houses’, both terms construct a negative depiction of the immigrants’ presence in the neighbourhoods, portraying them as abnormal and illegitimate. Mitchell suggests that transnational flows of capital and culture characteristics of global restructuring have opened new spaces of negotiation around the shaping of the suburban landscape. These struggles are ‘not merely over particular landscape and spaces, but over the ideology of the ‘public sphere’ itself’ (2004: 157). Is this always the case, as in the studies described above, that the migrants’ ethnic origin is visible through their housing? Or perhaps these cases are exceptional and do not represent the majority of migrants’ housing? These questions need further investigation.

Sometimes it is the matter of public spaces and buildings that are the focus of examination. These studies present transformations of the built environment with struggles over the public sphere in its traditional sense. One example is the construction of a mosque in Sydney where national ideologies were reinforced, challenged, and made to have a material effect through ‘everyday land-use politics’ (Dunn, 2005b: 46). Another example is the development of an ‘Asian-theme’ mall in Richmond Hill (Preston and Lo, 2000), or in Agincourt (Qadeer, 1997), suburbs of Toronto. Beynon (2005) discusses another aspect of the same matter, examining what he dubs ‘Third-World-looking architecture’ in Melbourne. A survey he conducted in 2002 revealed over one hundred buildings that represent ethnic or religious communities in the city, such as temples and mosques. But despite their large number and often unique architectural attributes, they are located in fringe areas and are absent from local architectural literature. Beynon (2005: 80) argues that ‘their diversity
is an embodiment of Melbourne’s diversity. They represent the desire and compromises of everyday immigrant life’. Another study that reveals immigrants’ representations in public buildings is the study of Harney (2002: 43), who explores Italian ethno-regional community centers in Toronto. Harney sees them as physical representations of Italian Canadianness used by Italian Canadians to create meaningful spaces, to generate collective sentiment and to locate themselves in the land of immigration. Harney describes how the design of Casa Abruzzo, which represents the Region of Abruzzo, had architectural characteristics that recalled the architecture of cities in the region and several architectural features reminiscent of the geography of the region, such as stone supports that had resonance with the medieval aqueduct in the region and expanses of stone cut to create the feel of a piazza. These ‘ethnic’ buildings convey representations of the migrants’ ethnic identity against the dominant culture.

The second group of studies looks into the discourse around race and discrimination in everyday encounters in the neighbourhoods. Firstly, the academic discourse has been criticised. According to these studies, it tends to assume that inter-ethnic relationships and ethnic divisions between local residents and migrants in urban neighbourhoods are binary, while in reality they are much more complex and ambivalent (Blokland, 2003; Dunn, 1998; Rose, 2001). Moreover, ethnicity is the main reference point of derogatory designations in semantic and social uses of ‘negative classifications’ of different social groups who encounter one another as neighbours, as happens, for example, in disadvantaged neighbourhoods in German cities (Sutterluty and Neckel, 2006: 798). Indeed, multicultural agendas and national celebrations have been often criticised as rarely leading to daily social encounters between long-term residents and newcomers (Ray et al., 1997). Other studies criticise the discourse concerning ethnicity that circulates among developers involved in the planning and construction of the newly built high-rises for ‘ethnic’ newcomers in inner Melbourne, Australia (Fincher and Costello, 2005: 201), or perceive the media and policy-makers as generators of negative discourse (Dunn, 1998: 503), arguing that there has been an assumption in many urban studies that ‘ethnic concentrations were manifestations of societal malady’, based on the idea that social distance is equal to spatial distance.

In contrast, different writings emphasise the positive manner in which immigrants are perceived at the very local level of the neighbourhood (Wise, 2005; Wood and Gilbert, 2005). Because of the specifics of its landscape, the urban is viewed as the significant realm of negotiation of cultures, knowledges and powers between immigrants, member of cultural groups and dominant groups (Wood and
Gilbert, 2005: 685). In the suburb of Ashfield in Sydney, Australia, for example, the local level is where people exist, and where everyday encounters form a significant additional layer of belonging to other forms of ‘care’ (Wise, 2005). Indeed, Uitermark, Rossi and van Houton (2005: 625) describe a shift in discourse of multiculturalism in which the challenge of accommodating ethnic diversity needs is expected to be met on the urban rather than on the national level, and urban life is viewed as the context in which identities are being formed through their everyday spatial practices. Yet, their study on urban citizenship and ethnic diversity in Amsterdam does not support this optimistic vision. They highlight some of the problems that may be encountered when ideas about intercultural dialogue and culturally inclusive democracy are actually implemented. These studies examine discourses evolving around relationships between ethnic groups in the neighbourhoods, arguing that everyday life and encounters in the neighbourhoods are stronger than any influence of institutional norms or multicultural agendas experienced at the national scale. Attitudes towards newcomers are influenced mostly, these studies agree, by academic discourse, local economy and politics, and the media.

In sum, these studies have dealt with the presence of immigrants in the local level of the urban experience - the neighbourhoods. They have examined the way transformations of the built environment wrought by immigrants have been accepted or opposed by long-term residents, and the consequences of that on the social integration and relationships between local residents and immigrant groups. They have also focused on discursive practices that affect immigrants’ everyday life in their neighbourhoods, and on the significant role of everyday encounters and cross-cultural interactions between people of diverse ethnicities in constructing their everyday reality. The neighbourhood scale illuminates discourses and practices among the general public around the migrants’ presence in the neighbourhoods and is relevant to the discussion of the migrant’s house because this house is not located in a vacuum. It is located in a residential environment that influences and reacts towards its presence.

2.2.3 The city-wide scale
A number of studies explore immigrants’ experience in the city-wide scale from a critical standpoint. Most of them concentrate on western European cities, investigating how different policy programs have designed the distribution of immigrants in cities, mainly locating immigrants in remote suburbs of metropolitan areas, leading to social isolation and ethnic discrimination in the labour market, the education system and the
housing market. In particular, two kinds of examinations have been identified. The first focuses on urban policies and the second on national policies. The issue of spatial distribution of immigrants in the city is one of the most significant factors that determine whether the immigrants' integration is successful. These studies examine the macro level of the city, dealing with questions around the location of immigrants' neighbourhoods, the reasons behind their development, and the social consequences of their spatial concentration in the city. A good example for that is the comprehensive study of Burnley, Murphy and Fagan (1997), which provides an examination of urban outcomes and policy implications of Australia's immigration program.

Some investigations explain immigrants' social and spatial segregation in the metropolitan area as caused by urban policies that treat immigrants in a misguided manner. This may be caused by a lack of understanding of how to plan for immigrants and how to accommodate their needs in the city, and by planning and local policies that are not oriented towards immigrants, like in the Danish case of Turks in Aarhus, the second largest city in Denmark with the largest Danish 'ghetto' located within its borders (Diken, 1998: 3). Others see it as caused by the identification of specific neighbourhoods and certain groups of residents as the targets of certain policies, as in the case of a Swedish area-based policy report called ‘Divided Cities’ (Andersson, 1999). Some writers interpret the social and spatial segregation as caused by specific urban policy programs conceived to address specific social problems, as in the case of the French banlieues (suburbs or outskirts in French, usually used with a negative connotation) of French cities (Dikec, 2007). In a different context, Andersson (1990; 1991) has argued that ethnic concentrations such as Chinatowns in Vancouver, Sydney and Melbourne have been constructed by the dominant society rather than the ethnic group in question. In the City of Santa Ana, California, the spatial segregation is seen as affected by land-use regulation and control, as well as urban revitalisation in the city (Harwood and Myers, 2001). These studies investigate how urban policies have led, unintentionally perhaps, to harmful spatial segregation and social isolation of immigrants in the metropolitan area.

Another focus of enquiry looks into national immigration policies and perceptions of immigrants in the host society as key determinants of the success of immigrants' integration in the city. As in the urban case, these policies may support and even construct attitudes of xenophobia and neo-colonialism, as occurs in French society mostly around the banlieues (Body-Gendrot, 2002), as also has been shown by Dikec (2007), and in particular in the case of the cités (Haddad and Balz, 2006). The cités are suburban housing projects (located in low-income banlieues), built from
the late 19th century to post Second World War, to accommodate immigrants in suburbs around central Paris. The cités have a negative connotation of exclusion in French society and today suffer from crime, unemployment and poor education. This study shows how the French society has maintained and intensified problems of immigrants in the cités through policies, with the support of the media and the political arena.

These studies illuminate the maltreatment of immigrants in urban and national policies alike in western societies. The studies also shed light on the way these policies construct the everyday lives of immigrants outside the physical and social centres of cities, and how they reinforce negative attitudes towards immigrants in cities. For this thesis it is important to acknowledge that immigrants' distribution in the city is determined not only by the immigrant's own will, but also - and perhaps mostly – by national and urban policies that design and advance quite successfully the congregation of immigrants in specific neighbourhoods.

To recap, the body of literature of critical studies about the migrants' experience in the city as shown in the house scale appears to be limited and partial. In order to develop a conceptual framework that will enable the examination of home-building processes of different migrant groups, the following section presents the notion of home-building. This concept is vital to the understanding of migrants' settlement processes in the city, and as will be revealed soon, will become a major tool for the analysis of the empirical findings.

2.3 Home-building practices

In his paper *Multiculturalism, Ethnic Food and Migrant Home-Building*, Hage (1997) discusses ‘home-building practices’ that are focused on the production and consumption of food of Lebanese migrants in Parramatta, Sydney. This examination draws attention to the importance and the vitality of migrants' attempts at making themselves feel at home in Australia, the host land. Hage defines home-building 'as the building of the feeling being “at home”' (1997: 102). In this sense, the home is considered ‘as an affective edifice constructed out of affective building blocks (blocks of homely feelings)’. To be constructed, the home must be built with affective blocks that provide either in themselves or in combination of others, four key feelings: security, familiarity, community and sense of possibility.

The feeling of security means that one feels empowered to seek the satisfaction of one's needs and to remove or exclude threatening otherness. The
home, thus, is a place governed by what we consider to be 'our law'. The feeling of *familiarity* means the home is where one possesses a maximal practical spatial knowledge. This sense of familiar knowledge linked to a spatial and practical control in turn creates a sense of security. The feeling of *community* means living in a space where one recognises people as 'one's own' and where one feels recognised by them as such. It is a feeling of shared symbolic forms, shared morality, shared values, and most importantly, shared language. Lastly, the feeling of *sense of possibility* means that a home has to be a space open for opportunities. It has to be open enough so one can perceive opportunities of 'a better life': the opportunity to develop certain capacities and skills, the opportunity of personal growth, and the availability of opportunities for 'advancement' whether as social mobility, emotional growth, or in the form of accumulation of symbolic or monetary capital (1997: 102-3).

Homes are homely, asserts Hage, because they provide intimations of those feelings, and the possibility for more. Through the building of the home these feelings are fostered and maximised. Hage shows how Lebanese migrants in Sydney create for themselves homely feelings in their new homes and try to foster positive intimations through the use of 'effective building blocks' as part of their settlement strategies (1997: 104). Hage analyses migrants’ experiences of food production and consumption around the home through the four key feelings he defines. In this research I aim to follow Hage’s assertions and analyse the immigrants’ experiences around their homes through these same four key feelings. Similarly to Hage, I believe that different migrant groups emphasise different feelings in their home-building processes, and thus create different kinds of home-building practices.

Somerville (1992), in his influential analysis of the meaning of home and homelessness, develops a conceptual construction for home as a multidimensional concept. According to him, home can be argued to have at least six or seven dimensions of meaning, identified as ‘key signifiers’ of shelter, hearth, heart, privacy, roots, abode, and possibly paradise (1992: 532). Mallett (2004), in her critical review of the meaning of home, agrees that the home is multidimensional and defines a number of themes through which its multidimensional nature is reflected. These are house and home, ideal house/home, memory and home, home as haven, home and family, home and gender, home/journeying, being at home, and home and the self. While Somerville constructs a conceptual analysis of the meaning of home - in a similar way to Hage - Mallett organises the literature of home under several themes. Both frameworks (and especially Somerville’s) share some common ground with Hage’s (1997) four feelings. The feeling of *security* correlates with Somerville’s key
signifier ‘privacy’ which involves the power to ‘control one’s own boundaries’ (Ryan, 1983 in Somerville, 1992: 532) and with Mallett’s ‘home as haven’ which sees it as a refuge, where people can relax. The feeling of familiarity correlates with Somerville’s key signifier ‘hearth’ which connotes the warmth and cosiness the home provides to the body, causing one to relax in comfort and ensuring a welcoming and homely atmosphere for others. The feeling of community correlates with Somerville’s key signifier ‘roots’ because it provides a source of identity, someone who is grounded in a wider web of cultural and linguistic meaning, and finally, the feeling sense of possibility correlates with Somerville’s ‘paradise’ which is an idealisation of all positive features of home fused together, and also correlates with Mallett’s ‘ideal house/home’. These conceptual categories help to understand the complex meanings of home as being socially constructed both as an imagined ideal and as experienced in reality.

‘Home-making practices’ is another parallel concept that has recently been defined by Blunt and Dowling (2006: 23). According to the authors,

[home does not simply exist, but is made. Home is a process of creating and understanding forms of dwelling and belonging. This process has both material and imaginative elements. Thus people create home through social and emotional relationships. Home is also materially created – new structures formed, object used and placed.

Blunt and Dowling touch here on the essence of the home-making (or home-building) concept. It is its duality, the fact that the home is made of a physical structure and at the same time of an imaginative, emotional and social form, that makes the notion of home so complex and intriguing. In my discussion, though, I prefer to use Hage’s term of home-building (and not home-making), especially because it implies an action of building that might be misinterpreted as mere physical building, though I am aware that it is not only physical building that is involved in the construction of the home. Yet, I believe that the term ‘home-building’ conveys this duality of meaning with all its intricacy.

Home-building practices can be performed in various scales of the home, which may mean the house, the neighbourhood, the city or the nation. Blunt (2003), for instance, explores home-building practices related to the national scale, showing how memory and nostalgia shaped homemaking practices of Anglo-Indians in McCluskieganj, Bihar, in the 1930s. She demonstrates how a gendered and racialised home was constructed out of what she terms ‘productive nostalgia’. Home-building practices of Anglo-Indians were performed through a productive nostalgia that was
oriented towards the present and future as well as towards the past, exposing an attachment to both India and Britain as home (Blunt, 2003: 717).

Home-building practices are often a significant part of the settlement of immigrant women, as the possessors of this domestic terrain. Migrant women in Western Australia, for example, construct their home through their kitchen by negotiating the kitchen space to ensure the kitchen and their central place within it produce a ‘feeling of being at home’ (Supski, 2006: 133). The women shape the architecture and design of the kitchen through the use of colours and favourite decoration, but also through their own understandings of the discourses of efficiency and domesticity. Similarly, Italian immigrant women in North America produce the feeling of home through the construction of two kitchens in their homes (Pascali, 2006: 685). For Italian American women the basement kitchen is a liberating space, free from the constraints of formality and traditional room divisions that exist in the formal kitchen on the ground floor. Here, the migrant women use the kitchens as their building blocks to construct their home, to use Hage’s metaphor.

Another dimension of home-building is presented in the meaning of home-ownership for post-war Italian immigrants in Australia (Pulvirenti, 2000). Pulvirenti shows that home-ownership for Italian immigrants was conditioned by agrarian histories, economic aspirations and other factors, within the broader process of migration. The concept of sistemazione (settling down) is embodied in home-ownership and is explained by way of gendered relations as the most important goal of Italian immigrants in Australia (2000: 237). Thus, home-building processes are evident here through the achievement of home-ownership.

The next sections discuss the two notions that are involved in home-building: the ‘home’ on the one hand, and the ‘building’ - that is the house, on the other. As Blunt and Dowling (2006: 22) state, ‘[h]ome is both a place/physical location and a set of feelings’. It is emotional, social and personal, but at the same time it is physical and material. I have chosen to refer here to the imaginary aspect of the home through the ‘home’ category, and to the material aspect of the home through the ‘house’ category. Understanding what each of these terms means and entails, as well as understanding the relationships between them – the house as a physical structure and the home as a metaphysical idea – and how both of them jointly create a sense of belonging in a new land, may allow the construction of a conceptual framework for the analysis of the empirical chapters of this thesis.
2.4 Home

In the last two or three decades there has been an influx of literature exploring the concept of home. It has been addressed by a diverse range of disciplines, from psychology, sociology and anthropology, to philosophy, history, human geography and architecture (Mallett, 2004). The diversity of themes and ideas represented in the literature of home is broad and as Mallett explains, most of the researchers generally limit their analyses to the particular dimension of home that falls within their own disciplinary field. There have been few attempts to identify and categorise those ideas and themes (Despres, 1991; Mallett, 2004; Somerville, 1992, 1997), or to present the home from different perspectives (Cieraad, 1999; Miller, 2001; Miller Lane, 2007). In particular, Blunt and Dowling (2006) provide a comprehensive review of critical literature about the home. Doing so, however, is beyond the scope of this thesis. Here I will focus on two notions that are relevant to this exploration within the home category: difference in the home, and the dynamic nature of home. These concepts are focused on diverse meanings of the home in its symbolic form and are linked to feelings towards the home and to its social and imaginary nature.

2.4.1 Difference in the home

Various readings of the home in the last three decades have seen it as a site of diverse identities and power relations. One important framework has been developed by feminist scholars who emphasised gender constructions as crucial in lived experiences and imaginaries of home (Blunt and Dowling, 2006: 15). Feminist thinking has criticised former understandings of home by asserting that gender is critical to the experience of home and that home is a key site in the oppression of women. Other cultural readings have contributed to this framework by adding matters of race, sexuality, age and class, as experienced in the home. Different accounts of home as perceived by children and the elderly have been a subject of inquiry (e.g. Lewin, 2001; Varley and Blasco, 2001), as well as narratives of gay men and lesbians and their homes (e.g. Fortier, 2001; Gorman-Murray, 2006; Valentine, 1993). These topics, however, will not be discussed here due to the limited scope of this work.¹ In this section I will chiefly focus on the gendered home.

The home, as an intimate and domestic space, is often understood through its familial-based gender relations (Blunt and Dowling, 2006: 110). The suburban home, in particular, has long been associated with ideal depictions of the home and thus is

¹ To get a broader view on these issues see Blunt and Dowling (2006).
where women are seen as mothers and as those responsible for the management and everyday conduct of the domestic sphere. The gendered domestic division perceives women as responsible for the day-to-day running of the household and the creation of ‘home-like’ environment. According to that view, women are more likely to engage in domestic works such as cleaning, taking care of the children and cooking, while men usually take care of the outside (e.g. the garden, the garage) and are involved in do-it-yourself projects. Home-building practices of the kind described in the previous section, and specifically domestic labour and mothering, ‘simultaneously cement, contest and extend this gendered vision of home’ (2006: 110).

In her discussion of the question of home, gender and modernity, Johnson (1996) challenges the view that sees the suburban home as a place that stands in opposition to women’s emancipation, and argues against utilising a concept of home that retains the gendered dichotomies characteristic of modernity. Instead, she asserts, in the Australian context of the 1940s and the 1950s, the home represented a site of the women’s agency. In Johnson’s view, the home was not a place separate from everyday life to withdraw into, as in many other feminist accounts of the 1970s and the 1980s, but a place to be created and through which women could participate in the life of the nation. They believed that the capacities and responsibilities in the domestic sphere gave them a stake in the building of a modern life in Australia.

Against common feminist perceptions of the suburban home that see it as the place in which women are trapped and from which they need to escape (e.g. Wilson, 1991), Johnson’s analysis provides a more complicated view of the home with its multifaceted layers of meanings. A similar view is held by Dowling, who explores two suburban neighbourhoods in Vancouver (Dowling, 1996). Through a non-essentialist analysis Dowling shows how suburban homes and suburban women are not homogeneous categories, but instead they are diverse, fluid, contradictory and dynamic (1996: 85).

Indeed, gendered relations are also evident in other forms of living such as apartments in high-rises in Melbourne, as explored by Fincher (2004). The developers of these inner-city high-rises envisaged the future occupants as children-less couples leading an urban lifestyle. The high-rises are considered by these developers to be in opposition to the suburban home, and women are seen as potential victims requiring the security this lifestyle is assumed to offer (2004: 325). This partial and essential imagining of who lives where in the city, says Fincher, has led to the lack of facilities for children in many of the high-rises precincts. It can be seen, thus, that gendered
constructions of home not only affect the distribution of services, but also influences the way homes of different sorts are imagined and shaped.

Home-building practices of sorting, decorating and storing are almost always under the woman’s control. In her study, Rose shows how a group of middle-class white English mothers use family photographs in their homes in order to create a feeling of home (Rose, 2003). Rose argues that the viewing of family photographs by this group of mothers stretches their domestic spatiality beyond the walls of the home by the centrality of both present and absent family members (Rose, 2003: 15). Another aspect of materiality in the gendered home is focused on the open plan suburban home (Dowling, 2008). Dowling demonstrates how the open plan home in contemporary suburban Sydney is the material and imaginative setting of both aesthetic considerations and materiality and anxiety produced by children (2008: 536). She further emphasises the relationship between the ideal home, modernism and women. These women actively embraced modernist open plan and shaped these spaces with a modern aesthetic, becoming ‘respectable’ citizens. But at the same time the open plan induced anxiety among them, confined them to the kitchen, and committed them to domestic work.

Women of colour have contributed to the discussion on home, saying that the home for them has not been a space of oppression but sometimes a site of resistance. As bell hooks states (2007 [1990]: 69),

[d]espite the brutal reality of racial apartheid, of domination, one’s homeplace was the one site where one could freely confront the issue of humanisation, where one could resist.

For her, the home was a safe space where black people could escape and support each other, healing many of the wounds caused by racial domination in their everyday life outside the home.

Another line of diversity is gender in the migrant’s home. In contrast to some depictions of the gendered home as outlined above, Thomson (1994) argues that the home has the ability to empower immigrant women. The home, for immigrant women in suburban environments in Australia, provides the opportunity to appropriate personal power, as opposed to the past view of the suburban home as controlling women, separating them from societal power and reinforcing their domestic position (Thompson, 1994: 37). For migrant women, ‘home is a site of power in the otherwise alien culture, a form of atonement for the losses associated with migration and a mark of success in the new world’. Another study shows that for immigrant women in
Toronto, Canada, settlement processes were experienced through social and political processes and relations operating at different geographical scales, but mostly through the local scales of body, home and neighbourhood (Dyck and McLaren, 2004).

To conclude, diverse identities and in particular gender relations in the home construct a complex and multilayered understanding of home. Despite past views that perceived the home as a place that often traps and weakens women, many accounts read the gendered home as a source of power articulated in diverse ways for both women and men, of different race, class and age. Throughout the empirical chapters I will follow traces and highlight instances of home-building practices that reinforce and support, or in some cases stand against, the gendered interpretation of home.

2.4.2 Dynamic nature of home

The second concept that is most relevant to this inquiry is the home’s dynamic nature. This perspective, which stands in contrast to traditional understandings of home, often perceives it as a dialectical place that entails notions of belonging and memories. This dialectic perception opens up conventions about home and migration and challenges the notion that home is always about being grounded and migration is always about being detached (Ahmed et al., 2003; Rapport and Dawson, 1998a). It is possible, thus, to rethink home and migration beyond oppositions such as stasis versus transformation or presence versus absence (Ahmed, Castaneda et al., 2003: 1), and to see the home as a mobile habitat and not as a singular or fixed physical structure (Rapport and Dawson, 1998). Ahmed, Castaneda et al. (2003: 2) comment that home and migration might be considered in terms of ‘a plurality of experiences, histories and constituencies, and the working of institutional structures’. The home, these researchers agree, is much more than a mere structure located in one specific location. It is increasingly not a dwelling but ‘the untold story of life being lived’ (Berger, 1984: 64 in Rapport and Dawson, 1998: 27).

A different perspective emphasises the meaning of home in the globalised world and the dialectic relationship between the two. It has been the focus of attention of humanistic geographers, in particular, who were chiefly concerned with the meaning of place in the globalised world long before it has developed into what we know today, and who perceived the home as the locus of sense of place (e.g. Relph, 1976; Tuan, 1977). Appadurai (1990), for example, focuses on the tension between homogenisation and Americanisation of the world on the one hand, and indigenisation on the other. He proposes five dimensions of global cultural flow, among them ‘ethnoscapes’, which is ‘the landscape of persons who constitute the shifting world in
which we live: tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guestworkers and other moving
groups and persons constitute an essential feature of the world, and appear to affect
the politics between nations to a unprecedented degree’ (1990: 297). Through
analysis of the five scapes and their interrelations, Appadurai demonstrates that the
global cultural process is affected by a mutual contest of sameness and difference in
the backdrop characterised by disjunctures between different kinds of global flows and
landscapes. Indeed, it seems that globalisation has turned the world into a universal
network, where between its different regions there is a flow of meanings as well as of
people and goods (Hannerz, 1990: 237). Hannertz names this ‘new’ world a ‘world
culture’, in which cosmopolitans feel much at home. Both cosmopolitans and locals,
however, have common interests in the survival of cultural diversity which means that
‘there can be no cosmopolitans without locals’ (1990: 250).

More recently, other cultural studies have also focused on the relationship
between the global world and the most intimate space, the home. Massey (1992;
1994) argues that we are living in an age of time-space compression and even though
the flows of capital, goods and people have created a new global space through the
use of new technologies of communication, the old sense of a ‘place-called-home’ has
not disappeared and we have not been left placeless and disoriented as many seem
to believe (1992: 8). For her, identities of places are inevitably unfixed, and that lack of
fixity has always been so also in the past. The identity of any place, including the
place called home, is in one sense forever open to contestation and it is made out of
positive interrelations with the surroundings, in contrast to other interpretations of
place as a secure and stable home. Similarly, Rapport and Dawson (1998a: 26) argue
that while there is globalisation and movement across the world, there is also “cultural
compression”: an insistence on socio-cultural difference within the “same” time and
space’, which they interpret as a dialectic between global movement and local
compression. These researchers refer to a multi-scalar home that is not necessarily
the dwelling and/or household home but can include also the neighbourhood, the city
or the nation (Blunt and Dowling, 2006: 27). The perceptions of home as an unfixed
entity that is forever open to change may shed light on immigrants’ desires to
construct their new homes according to their past experiences of home.

The locus of the home in the global world is also explained by Hage (1993:
102), who stresses that ‘even though this era could be that of nomadism, this does not
make it in any sense an era where people stop yearning for home’. Dovey (1985)
notes that the dialectic between home and journey is also dialectic between two kinds
of experiences of home: being-at-home and yearning-for-home. For migrants that are
at the centre of this study, this dialectic experience might play an important role in the creation of their homes in the city. But what exactly does a home in a global context mean? The tension between global flows and local homes is presented clearly in what has been understood in recent years as a new kind of migration, transnationalism, and might be best explained through an investigation of the transnational home.

In their broad consideration of the home, Blunt and Dowling (2006: 197) argue that transnational homes are ‘shaped by the interplay of both mobile and located homes and identities and by the processes and practices of home-making both with particular places and across transnational space’. The home may be understood not as a fixed location but as a set of relationships, to both humans and non-humans, as in the case of transnational professionals who best represent cosmopolitans in the global world (Nowicka, 2007: 69). For them, there are elements of spatial proximity, but at the same time homes involve spatial gaps, and ‘is therefore territorially defined but only as an extended network rather than a bound location’. The home may be developed, as for transnational New Zealanders in London, around interrelated themes such as its symbolic or political nature, the importance of family and familiarity for a sense of home and the role of physical material objects and places (Wiles, 2008: 116). The home can also be understood as a dynamic place with blurred boundaries, first located in the home country but when the decision not to repatriate occurs it shifts to the host country, as in the case of Italians in Perth, Australia (Baldassar, 1997), or as a concrete reality and a symbolic reference point that moves beyond territorial boundaries, as in the case of the Lebanese diaspora (Abdelhady, 2008). In this case, home is imagined and reconstructed through various practices and relationships, in order to provide a sense of home in the new setting. Most of these conceptions of home see it as an abstract idea, without its tangible quality that constructs it as a specific, physical place of dwelling.

A few works do discuss the place of the physical form of the house within transnational communities. Fletcher (1999) investigates a transnational community in the suburbs of Los Angeles, which comes originally from a rural village in central Mexico, to build their casa de sueños (house of dreams), back in their home village. She explores the influence of transnational migration on the imagined homes and already built houses in the village. Transnational migrants from that village try to reassert themselves in place, even from a distance, by building houses in the village. Building these houses became an important activity of transnational immigrants, even if the houses are never to be inhabited by their owners. Through the construction process they create tangible linkages between their present location and their desired
past ‘home’. Another consideration of home and housing of transnational migration is the work of Thomas (1997), focusing on homes of Vietnamese migrants in Australia. She investigates the home in the homeland against the available houses in Australia, and points out differences between the two and the difficulties that arise. These two examples demonstrate the importance of the physical form of housing for transnational communities. The physical structure of the house may bridge the two cultures involved, and may reduce, or sometimes increase, as in the case of Vietnamese migrants in Australia, difficulties arising around the settlement process. These studies show that the transnational home is one expression of the tension between the global and the local that is generally focused on the relations of the home with the homeland, whether these are conceptual or material.

2.5 House

The architectural form of the house has been explored since the 1960s, when the search for the authenticity and knowledge of primitive cultures has lead to the examination of organic built forms and vernacular dwellings (e.g. Faegre, 1979; Oliver, 1969, 1987; Rapoport, 1969, 1982; Strauven, 1998). Since then the house as a built form has been discussed through various perspectives, among them cultural (Altman and Gauvain, 1981), phenomenological (Heidegger, 1971), psychological (Cooper, 1974) and others. The scope of this work, however, does not allow the exploration of all of these themes. Instead, all three concepts which will be examined have to do with corporeal, tangible character of the dwelling, whether it is its physical appearance, its material value, its location or the objects around and inside it. The concepts - cultural capital, the everyday, and materiality - offer a view of the layers of meanings behind the physical appearance of the house, paying attention not only to emotional, social and imaginative understandings of the home as presented in the previous section, but also to its material existence and what it communicates through a range of interpretations.

2.5.1 The house as cultural capital

In various writings, sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1977; 1984 [1979]; 1990 [1980]; 2005) has developed a theory of human social practice based on the notion that individuals act in the context of a structured framework of evaluations and expectations which lead to the conscious or intuitive prioritising of certain dispositions and practices, which he names ‘habitus’. The habitus of an individual is a subjective but non-individual system of internalised structures, common schemes of perception,
conception and action. The habitus of a group is a set of practices of members of the same group or, in a diverse society, the same class, which are all the 'reasonable' 'common-sense' behaviours for this group (Friedman, 2005; Kelly and Lusis, 2006: 833). A habitus is expressed in what Hage (1997: 103) calls the feeling of familiarity in the home, because a habitus will aim at home-building: the creation of the space in which its strategic dispositions can be maximised.

Capital, for Bourdieu, is power - both the possession of capital and the ability to influence its value. Bourdieu identifies three types of capital: Economic capital refers to the assets and financial worth of an individual which can be directly converted into money and may be institutionalised in the form of property rights. Social capital is found in the networks and connections that can be mobilised to generate advantages or benefits. Cultural capital refers to the symbolic assets that a person posses. This might be in the form of institutional cultural capital (e.g. university degrees), embodied cultural capital (e.g. accents, comportment, and 'race'), or objectified cultural capital (e.g. dress, physical equipment, or an art collection). All three forms of capital may also contribute to an individual's stock of symbolic capital, depending on how each form is socially evaluated. But these forms of capital may change their value depending on the particular social and spatial context, while the habitus is the framework within which the value associated with these forms of capital is established (Kelly and Lusis, 2006: 834).

A number of writers have found Bourdieu's ideas useful for the investigation of immigrants in western cities. In the studies of Bauder (2005) and Kelly and Lusis (2006), for instance, the concept of habitus explains the worlds of transnational migrants in Canada in the labour market. Waters (2006) applies the idea of cultural capital in the study of education and family strategies among Hong Kong immigrants in Canada. Other studies have looked into the role of the migrant's house and the notion of capital. Ong (1999) uses the concept of symbolic capital to demonstrate how for Chinese emigrants operating in western metropolitan circles, symbolic values are set by major European and American cities. Asian immigrants are seeking to acquire the kinds of cultural capital that are determined in Europe and America in order to be sufficiently adept within the social arrangement of the new country. As Ong (1999: 89) clearly explains,

Euroamerican cultural hegemony determines and judges the signs and forms of metropolitan status and glamour. Hong Kong emigrants seek the kinds of symbolic capital that have international recognition and value, not only in the country of origin but also in the country of destination and
especially in the transnational spaces where the itineraries of travelling businessmen and professionals intersect with those of local residents.

Ong further explicates that in upper-class social settings such as Hong Kong, Singapore or Bangkok, guests frequently display the latest fashions of certain international brands. One of the main sources of the acquisition of cultural power is by holding a western university degree. Therefore, many Asian immigrants acquire a western university degree as cultural capital in order to gain a certain social class status in their country of origin as well as in their new country (Ong, 1999; Waters, 2006). The location and the house are forms of symbolic capital, thus they contribute to the fostering of the feeling of sense of possibility, according to Hage (1997).

Ong expands Bourdieu’s concept of symbolic capital by proposing two additional kinds of cultural capital, one of which is location. Location means the specific place in which the residence is located. For Hong Kong emigrants, fengshui is extremely important and they are concerned with the importance of location. A specific location has a revealed value of real-estate, but a hidden value is a convergence of good fortune and social power. According to Ong (1999: 92), since placement is a form of spatial power, choosing a location is part of strategy for cultural accumulation. The location, as the house itself, is part of the cultural capital immigrants accumulate.

Bourdieu also develops the notion of taste culture in his seminal book Distinction: A Critique of the Judgment of Taste (1984 [1979]). He understands tastes to function as markers of ‘class’ and explains that the manner in which culture has been acquired lives on in the manner of using it. The different modes of culture acquisition - early or late or through domestic or scholastic education – distinguish and rank individuals and their classes. Bourdieu outlines the differences between aesthetic theory that regards the detachment and disinterestedness as the only way of recognising a work of art, as opposed to ‘popular aesthetic’ which ‘ignores and refuses the refusal of simplistic involvement and ‘vulgar’ enjoyment’ (1984: 2). In fact, says Bourdieu, the different ways of relating to realities and fictions are very closely linked to the different possible positions in social space, and consequently, bound up with the habitus of the different classes. According to him, ‘taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier’ (1984: 6).

Lozanovska (2008) applies Bourdieu’s ideas in her study of three Macedonian houses in Melbourne. She clarifies that according to Bourdieu, social actors (such as historians, practitioners and concerned citizens) impose their symbolic systems and reproduce social structures of domination in the interest of a particular aesthetic. This is what Bourdieu calls symbolic violence. Lozanovska notes how one of the houses
she examined was sold after her study for a relative low cost. Within two years after its sale, it was stripped of all details of its migrant aesthetic, including colours and textures. The house appeared back on the market, considered as heritage renovation. This time it was sold at twice the price. This process represents the symbolic violence Bourdieu has identified, because the dominant aesthetic has transformed the house from its original migrants’ aesthetic into a dominant form of aesthetic, a heritage building.

The two examples above - the experiences of Hong Kong immigrants in North-American metropolitan cities, and of Macedonian immigrants in Melbourne - show how the form of the house and its location can be considered as cultural capital that may transform into social status as in the case of Hong Kong immigrants, or may signify the presence of immigrants through their houses as a form of an undesirable aesthetic, and thus exclude their owners from a certain social status, as in the case of Macedonian immigrants.

A different examination of cultural capital around the construction of houses is undertaken by Dovey (1999). He examines the advertising discourse for display houses in residential estates in Western Australia and California, through an analysis of brochures and visits to display houses. Dovey argues that both Australia and the United States are immigrant societies, where the quest for status and identity is particularly focused on the housing market. Thus, model houses are powerful mediators of class relations. They are organised in a ladder of models in which each one marks a different social rung of its owner. Dovey (1999: 147) states:

As one climbs this social ladder, the house signifies the social values of the class immediately above the subject: ‘Invite your boss to dinner he’ll feel right at home’. The dream becomes a progressively elaborate lure which remains one rung higher as one climbs in social status.

The house, in that sense, is a symbolic package that both establishes status and communicates it to others through the impacts it makes. It is symbolic capital that can be interpreted by visitors as social status class.

To conclude, these studies show that the notion of cultural capital is clearly conveyed in the physical structure of the house. The house with its location, its aesthetics and its visual appearance, is a symbolic form communicating information about the owners and their social status.
2.5.2 Everyday and the house

The everyday and its convergence with architecture have produced, during the mid 1980s, a new discourse among architecture scholars that was based on French thought developed between the 1930s and the 1970s. The consideration of everyday life as a critical construct, according to Harris (1997: 3), represents an attempt to suggest an architecture resistant to the paradigm of consumption that has become so dominant in contemporary architectural practice. Consideration of the everyday in architecture is seen as potentially able to resist the forces of late capitalist economy and their governmental authority. The resistance as advanced by Henri Lefebvre’s work is positioned in the focus on the quotidian, the repetitive, and the relentlessly ordinary.

A number of studies have used the lens of the everyday in the analysis of various architectural forms, among them the house as a distinctive everyday-life form. Horn (1997), for instance, examines the caravan park as a site of the everyday, while Ruddick (1997), a landscape architect, looks into her neighbour’s (Tom) garden of his house, on the eastern end of Long Island. Ruddick describes how amid the very aware-of-themselves houses of this affluent neighbourhood, Tom’s house and garden look very different. Instead of a designed garden, where people do not exist as part of the place but as something that is added later on, Tom has created a garden that embraces the everyday. It is a landscape that is the product of tinkering, of adding and adjusting, and it may suggest ‘the possibility that design can be the product of many confluences, in three dimensions, of many different streams of life’ (1997: 112).

Ruddick details her own set of values, constructed through her social and cultural capitals that has led her to appreciate art (or landscape) that ‘involves manufacturing the appearance that nothing has been done, acquired, or forced’ (1997: 113). She eventually recognises that the native plantings she has put in her garden over the years are signs that communicate a certain message to her visitors (that it is better to enhance what is already in place), as much as the banners that decorate Tom’s deck – the American flag, the Irish flag and the Scottish flag, are messages about Tom. In the upper-middle-class culture of that area, it is considered inappropriate to expose one’s roots and personal history. When doing so, one risks to be perceived as someone who had arrived very recently, perhaps even an immigrant. Ruddick touches skilfully on questions around the individual and the community, the creation of an everyday landscape, and the way it enables its owner, even if unconsciously, to resist the forces of a wealthy community that knows what good taste is.
The exhibition *Signs of Life, Symbols in the American City* by Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown, exhibited in 1976 in the Renwick Gallery, Washington, was another display of the everyday (Fausch, 1997). The exhibition presented the ordinary urban landscapes of mid-twentieth-century America: the suburban home, the highway with its commercial strip, and the traditional city street. Venturi and Scott Brown’s search for architectural forms adequate to everyday life was framed in terms of the vernacular, like modern architects who were occupied with this search since the late 1950s (e.g. Rapoport, 1969). But unlike their contemporaries, Venturi and Scott Brown placed a positive valuation on contemporary forms of urbanism and suburbanism, and thus challenged their colleagues’ well-intentioned but, as they believed, somewhat nostalgic project. Other influences on Venturi and Scott Brown’s work were photographers Edward Ruscha and Steven Shore. Shore’s laconic images of gas stations, main streets, building signs and tract houses were presented in the exhibition. Ruscha’s images of the Sunset Strip in Los Angeles, parking lots and real-estate opportunities were also a big influence. These photographers were almost anthropological in their search for the ordinary elements of the urban experience of Los Angeles. Figure 2.1 displays the Sunset Strip streetscape shown simultaneously on two sides of the road (therefore the inverted bottom part of the picture) as a continuous strip that depicts every building in it.

**Figure 2.1 - Sunset Strip in Los Angeles, Edward Ruscha 1965 (Source: [http://mastersofmedia.hum.uva.nl/tag/edward-ruscha/](http://mastersofmedia.hum.uva.nl/tag/edward-ruscha/)).**

The everyday and the way it positions the house as an ordinary, everyday architectural form, may provide the examination of the migrant’s house with another meaning of a structure that resists capital forces such as social class status (as seen in the previous section) on the one hand, and common aesthetics of the dominant culture (e.g. Lozanovska, 2008) on the other.
2.5.3 Materialities of home

Materialities of home, namely the objects and possessions people have in their houses, have been the subject of inquiry for the last two decades and more. In his edited book *Home Possessions: Material Culture behind Closed Doors* (Miller, 2001), Daniel Miller has collected ethnographic encounters that took place in the home and discussed ‘the processes by which a home and its inhabitants transform each other’ (Miller, 2001: 2). Miller states that the home is ‘the single most important site for material studies’ (p. 3), though it does not mean that this constitutes a simple dichotomy between the private and the public. In that sense, Clarke sees the home as a mediator between the dwellers and their aspirations in relation to others (Clarke, 2001). She presents a number of narratives of women who all wish their house would become something else, while paying attention to how it should look like, even though it is rarely looked at by strangers. These women have an image of ‘ideal’ homes (as manifest in a man, class aspiration, the kids, immigration or home creativity) and it is as if these ideals judge their houses instead of actual visitors (2001: 41). Another issue that is explored is the process of moving home, when one has to decide what should be brought to the new home and what should be discarded (Marcoux, 2001). This confrontation between people and their possessions, believes Marcoux, is an opportunity to reconstruct their own personal biography and also the way their relationships to others has formed part of this biography. The act of moving a home is not as difficult as the act of sorting things and making decisions as to their future. These decisions become ‘the active management of one's own externalized memory’ (Miller, 2001; 8). Finally, the home is examined as a source of stability that needs to be created by mobile people. Another study examines Greek students in London (Petridou, 2001) and discusses their use of food as the building blocks of their feeling at home (Hage, 1997). Food from home, for these Greek students, evokes many associations between values and practices (such as cooking, cleanliness, family, sociability, care) all subsumed within the idea and the ideal of home. In this case food which has itself become mobile can in turn be mobilised in the defensive constitution of identity (Miller, 2001: 9).

An emerging body of research emphasises aspects of materiality as part of diverse meanings of the migrant’s home. Datta (2008: 518), for example, studies three types of homes of Polish builders in London, and examines how the actual act of building homes for others constructs cultural differences and otherness. Former homes in Poland, homes the builders build for others in London and the future homes that they aspire to, suggest how material differences in the way these homes are put
together ascribe cultural meanings of dwelling that are inherently corporal. Datta argues that ‘the significance of the home lies in the act of building it, which allows its socio-technical nature to acquire an increased meaningfulness to those who engage in this activity’ (2008: 529). Thus the three different homes are connected through the building acts, which construct binary differentiations of Polish homes as ‘superior’ to English homes.

Other works have focused more on national belongings and sense of home. For instance, Tolia-Kelly (2003) examines artefacts in homes of Asian women in Britain. In particular, she looks at what she names ‘precipitates of re-memories and narrated histories’, namely souvenirs from the traversed landscapes of the journey, which are part of the diasporic community’s re-memories. Re-memory is, according to Tolia-Kelly, an alternative social narrative to memory that is not an individual, linear, biographical narrative but is a conceptualization of encounters with memories, stimulated through scents, sounds and textures in the everyday (2003: 314). Tolia-Kelly traces religious and cultural artefacts in the women’s homes, sees them as echoes of other textures of landscapes, narratives and social histories, and argues that they help situate diasporic groups politically and socially in relation to their national identity (2003: 326-7). In another study, Tolia-Kelly (2004) explores visual representations of landscape in South Asian homes in Britain. These objects are valuable beyond the framed text, and are experienced in the everyday lived environments of the home ‘as essential nodes of connecting South Asian women to lived landscape of the past, pre-migration’ (2004: 685). Tolia-Kelly argues that these non-elite representations, in the form of family photographs, prints and landscape photographs, operate beyond the mode of the visual, incorporating embodied memories of past landscape and relationships with pre-migratory lives in colonial territories.

Likewise, Walsh (2006: 123) looks at different objects in the expat’s home as signs of processes of belonging. She explores mobile homes of British expatriates in Dubai through the analysis of three belongings (objects) in the homes, arguing that even though belonging is often experienced as intangible, expatriate home-building clearly presents a mutual constitution of imaginative and materialised belonging. Interconnections between lived home spaces and a sense of belonging are revealed through domestic material culture.

Another aspect of materiality in the home is shown in the work of Wilson (2005), exploring the notion of nostalgia and its meanings. Wilson (2005: 120) investigates the meaning of objects in the homes of sojourners, i.e. those who are
between cultures/countries. She wishes to understand how individuals who are not currently living in their homeland experience and deal with homesickness, and what is the symbolic significance of the objects they have in their homes. Her interviews with sojourners from a variety of countries reveal nostalgia as having both negative and positive attributes. For some of the sojourners, having such objects in the home is troubling and they try to avoid them, as they trigger memories and feelings of homesickness. Others embrace and seek refuge in particular objects. Rather than triggering homesickness, these objects appear to help one to cope better with these feelings. An informant from Romania describes the house she and her husband recently purchased in the United States:

We have just bought a house which reminds me somewhat of my grandparents’ house, not because of any concrete similarities, but rather because it has a large yard and a vegetable garden and is not in the city. The objects that are most special to me in this house are memorabilia from my parents’ house and things that my husband and I bought when we were engaged or soon after getting married. To be without some of these objects would cause me a serious sadness (quoted in Wilson, 2005: 125).

Wilson notes that for individuals who choose to have objects in their home which remind them of their native country, it is clear that the objects help to facilitate continuity of identity by keeping the individuals connected to home and the past while in a foreign land. She concludes that for both groups of respondents, the antique collectors and the sojourners, the objects placed in their homes are not meaningless or chosen by coincidence. They are selected by conscious choices which reflect one’s identity, connection to the past, and connection to others.

The souvenir and the collection are examples of the way nostalgia dominates homes of immigrants and non-immigrant alike. As Stewart (1984: 151) argues, the souvenir involves the displacement of attention into the past. It is not simply an object appearing out of context; rather, its function is to envelop the present within the past. As she comments,

the souvenir speaks to a context of origin in a language of longing, for it is not an object arising out of need or use value; it is an object arising out of the necessity insatiable demands of nostalgia (1984: 135).

In contrast to the souvenir, the collection offers example rather than sample, metaphor rather than metonymy. It does not displace attention to the past but the past here is at the service of the collection. Thus, we may understand the souvenir and the collection as means to reconnect with the past, either by the displacement of attention into it or
by utilising it as a source. In that sense, the souvenir and the collection are embedded in the migrant’s home, because its conceptualisation is framed around a continuous connection with the past.

Another aspect that is worth considering is materiality in homes of non-migrants as opposed to migrants. Another study (Noble, 2002) of possessions in working- and lower-middle-class households in Sydney, has found that icons and images of Australia pervaded the homes under study, and yet this issue was rarely discussed in the interviews he conducted. He suggests that people are making themselves at home, ‘at ease’, not only in the specific, domestic context of their homes but also in a larger social space of the national imagery. Noble (2002: 55) argues that

[the extent to which we furnish our house and make it our home, our own, entails in part weaving into everyday experience objects of personal and familial significance which also carry, in often submerged ways, a national experience - as ornaments, memories of childhood, photos, touristic memorabilia, aesthetic artefacts, and so on. This constructs the nation not so much as a project of active affiliation and identification but as the furniture of everyday life, or what we might see as a ‘very banal nationalism’.

Noble further states that for the nation to exist as an ‘imagined community’ it has to be embodied as a lived materiality. The materiality of non-migrants, so it appears, is in many ways similar to that of migrants, who might include in the everyday objects they present in their houses those of the two (and sometimes more, e.g. Tolia-Kelly, 2003) countries involved.

Lastly, another layer of nostalgic feelings materialised in the house is exposed in Gans’s (1979; 1994) term ‘symbolic identity’. Gans argues that houses of immigrants (or those of the following generations) can express ‘symbolic ethnicity’, trying to enhance the feeling of belonging to a certain ethnicity. According to Gans, symbolic ethnicity is characterised by a nostalgic commitment to the culture of the old country, a pride in a tradition that can be felt without having to be incorporated in everyday behaviour.

To sum up, the concept of materiality in the home appears to be significant in home-building processes and in the act of making the house a home. Materials and objects in the house can be interpreted in various ways but they are always utilised in the house to make the house a more homely space. As has been presented above, these objects provide the house with different meanings varied between the continuity
of personal identity, a sense of national belonging, and a connection between past, present and future homes. In the analysis of the empirical chapters I will track this concept to show how different groups utilise the materiality of their homes as part of their home-building. The following concluding section will shed light on how the conceptualisation of the notions of home and house will assist in the analysis of the empirical chapters.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter presented a theoretical framework for the search of the meaning of the built form of housing in immigrants' processes of home-building. After a quick note on recognition and the importance of avoiding essentialism in a research on migrant groups, the chapter opened with a review of critical urban studies on the immigrants' experience, via three different scales of the city: the house scale; the neighbourhood scale; and the city-wide scale. Examinations of these scales have shown that the first scale has been underrepresented in the literature and that not much has been written on how the built form of housing contributes to the process of migrants' home-building in the city. This lack of theory has been recognised as a gap in knowledge that needs to be addressed. Thus, the notion of home-building has been conceptualised, with an exploration of a number of concepts under its two components: home and house. The concepts of gendered homes and the dynamic nature of the home have been explored under the category of home, while the concepts of cultural capital, the everyday and materiality have been examined under the category of house.

As mentioned before, in the following empirical chapters I will apply Hage's (1997) notion of home-building, in which the home is built of affective building blocks which provide - either in themselves or in combination with others - four key feelings: security; familiarity; community; and sense of possibility. Based on this, my aim in this research is to explore differences between home-building practices of different migrant groups and the various ways in which migrants of different ethnicities foster these key feelings to build the feeling of being at home. I presume that different migrant groups give priority to different feelings (out of the four, and of course to others as well) as part of their specific home-building, as a result of different circumstances around their migration, and thus these differences in home-building practices may be traced through the analysis of the four key feelings. Since I found these categories useful for interrogating the empirical material, I aim to do that in a similar way to what Hage has done in his analysis, where he showed how the four key feelings have been enhanced by home-building practices related to the production
and consumption of food. But instead of focusing on home-building practices related to food, I will focus on home-building practices related to the built form of the house itself, that is, the embodied, tangible form of home-building practices as they appear in their physical form in and around the house.

Throughout the investigation, I will show how the conceptualisations of home and house as discussed above are evident in particular ways for each group as part of its home-building practices. Each concept under the two categories of home and house will be identified in the empirical chapters with an emphasis on the way it shapes the exact home-building practices that are taking place for the migrant group under examination. In particular, each of the concepts is utilised in a different way, so it is believed, for each migrant group, and this will be shown through the analysis of the key feelings. Figure 2.2 illustrates the theoretical framework presented in this chapter.

Figure 2.2 – Theoretical framework of the research.

In sum, the concept of home-building with its two components of home and house provides this research with a set of handy tools for the analytical investigation of the empirical findings. In each of the empirical chapters these ideas will be exposed, with a particular emphasis on the specific ways they appear and on the priorities each of the groups have set in its own journey of home-building. The next chapter, the
research design and its methods, explains the exact approaches this study has taken in order to effectively understand the importance of the built form of migrants’ housing in their home-building.
CHAPTER III: REVEALING TERRAINS OF MIGRANTS’ DOMESTICITY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the design and the methods of the research, while focusing on some methodological difficulties and complications of different kinds. There are six subsequent sections following the introduction. The first deals with the research question that triggered this exploration, and then with the expectation that is the basis of the research. Three themes have been defined under the main question, according to which a number of supplementary questions are outlined, to help answer the main research question. The second section explains why a ‘case study design’ was chosen to answer the research question, and how four ‘instrumental cases’ were chosen. The third section explores some methodological issues related to the comparison of the four migrant groups. First it clarifies matters of terminology and essentialism, regarding the study of ethnic groups. Then it identifies the research as cross-cultural research and specifies the responsibilities of the researcher in such a study.

The fourth section deals with the qualitative examination that has taken place in this research. It outlines the exact ways of collecting the data and explains problems that arose during the data collection. The fifth section discusses the specifics of the qualitative examination done throughout the thesis, with its main interpretative approach of discourse analysis used to interpret migrants’ narratives and visual representations. It also explains how the NVivo software was used to help with the managing and analysis of the interviews’ material. Lastly, the sixth section presents the issue of me as the interviewer, and how my personal position and identity have influenced the interviews and their interpretations. It illustrates how the interviews have evolved to be an arena of intimacy and trust between the interviewees and me. The section also elucidates how my intersectionality affected the relationships between the interviewees and me, inevitably influencing the way interviewees responded to me.

3.2 The research question and expectation

As we have seen in the previous chapter, the issue of the migrant’s house in urban environments has not been adequately addressed in the literature on migrants’ experience in urban environments. The aim of the research, thus, is to elucidate how
home-building processes of migrants in western societies may include a focus on the physical forms of housing environments. So, the main question of this research is: What is the role of the physical form of housing in the migrants’ process of home-building?

The expectation of the research is that depending on the origin country of the immigrant group, the situation they came from and the political and social circumstances (as they see it) around their arrival in the receiving country, their actions in changing their home environments or not could be greater or lesser, as part of their settlement process. This has been hinted at by the few studies which have examined different aspects of this question, such as Thomas (1997), studying housing of Vietnamese immigrants in Australia, or Lozanovska (2008), examining houses of Southern European immigrants in Australia.

Three themes that seem to embrace different facets of migrants’ settlement processes regarding their houses have been identified: 1. past houses in the homeland; 2. current houses in host lands; and 3. the dominant culture in the host land. In order to answer the main research question in a comprehensive manner, a number of supplementary questions have been developed under the themes presented in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 - Supplementary questions under the three themes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THEMES</th>
<th>QUESTIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Past houses</td>
<td>What made past houses ‘homely’ homes?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What were the building materials of past homes?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What were the housing typologies of past houses?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current houses</td>
<td>How do migrants make their current homes more homely?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What are the building materials available to the migrants when designing their homes?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What are the planning regulations restricting migrants when designing their homes?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What are the local design standards that concern migrants when designing or buying their homes?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What are the home-building practices of migrants in their current houses?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominant culture</td>
<td>How do migrants’ current houses communicate the relationships between the migrants and the dominant culture?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What is the level of visibility of the migrants’ home-building practices?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What is the local public opinion about changes in migrants’ houses?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How does the local built environment influence migrants’ decisions about their form of own housing?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These questions have been designed to break down the main research question into simpler questions which will be answered during interviews with migrants, and will be addressed in the empirical chapters.
3.3 Case study research: four immigrant groups

The ‘case study design’ has been chosen to address the questions listed above. Following de Vaus (2001: 223), it is the use of a ‘theory building’ approach which begins with a question and a basic expectation, examines real cases and ends up with a more specific theory or set of propositions as a result of examining actual cases. It is an approach that is theory centred, in that the goal is to use the case(s) to test, refine and develop theoretical generalisations. The analysis of each case in this approach would aim to highlight differences between cases and to identify commonalities among cases. A case study design is preferred when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context (Yin, 2004: xiv). According to Flyvbjerg (2006), the case study produces concrete, context-dependent knowledge that is more valuable than the vain search for predictive theories. A case study can also produce generalisation, though in conventional thought this is often underestimated. Thus, a case study is useful for generating hypotheses in the first steps of a total research process, but also for hypothesis testing and theory building that is taking place later in the process (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Yin, 2003). In this research, the method of case study was chosen because it seemed that there is a need to produce concrete, context-based knowledge about the role of the house for migrants.

Multiple cases were chosen under the case study design, because data from multiple cases can strengthen the findings and make them more vigorous (Yin, 2004; xv). Here, the multiple experiences and circumstances of migration recorded enabled the study to proceed beyond the available knowledge about the physical form of migrants’ housing, and to deepen the understanding of the importance of the physical form of the house for migrants. But it is important to note that due to the multiple cases approach, this research is an exploratory research, where each case consists of only a small sample of participants. Thus, it is a hypothesis-generating research instead of hypothesis-confirming, because of its small size of samples and also its geographical and temporal spread, which will be discussed shortly.

This research includes four instrumental cases – each case is an immigrant group. Four groups of migrants in two metropolitan cities in two different host countries were selected, in order to enrich the study through various settlement experiences. It was preferred not to choose one specific migrant group because of the wish to avoid studying the particulars of such a group, with its specific circumstances of migration and settlement, but rather to gain knowledge of various circumstances for case process and outcome. So, this research looks at four cases that vary on one significant dimension: country of origin. Other dimensions vary between two of the...
groups at a time, but not between all four. These are country of destination and time of migration. The complexity of dimensions and circumstances is intended to provide more depth in the examination, and to allow the distillation of the role of the built form of the house through its examination in various situations, places and periods of time.

Thus, I have taken advantage of my personal familiarity with two migration countries, Australia and Israel, and in particular two multicultural cities, Melbourne and Tel Aviv. These two cities share some commonalities: both are large metropolitan cities situated on a waterfront, sharing a temperate climate, and are perceived as multicultural and cultural hubs in their countries. In the two cities selected, each of the groups came from a different country of origin and at a different time period. This achieved a more complex view of the role of the built form of housing in the process of settlement, because in this study there are four discrete processes of settlement, all related to different circumstances of migration and also to various social and political situations in the host countries at two different periods of time. This plurality of circumstances facilitates the focus on the settlement process and the place of the house in it, instead of delving into the details of one migrant group’s story.

Therefore, this study contains four cases; each case is a different migrant group. Criteria for the selection of the migrant groups were:

1. The migrant group must play a significant role in the social setting of the host country/city.
2. One group in each country must be an established migrant group, who arrived in the host country during the early post Second World War period.
3. Another group in each country must be a recently-arrived migrant group, who arrived in the host country during the 1990s and onwards.
4. Each group must represent a different country of origin.

In Melbourne were chosen migrants from Italy who arrived in the 1950s and the 1960s during the post-war period, and migrants from mainland China (PRC), who arrived in the 1990s and 2000s. In Tel Aviv were chosen migrants from Morocco who arrived in the 1950s and the 1960s during the post-war period, and migrants from the former Soviet Union, who arrived in the 1990s. All groups meet the criteria listed above as they play a significant role in the social setting of their country, mostly due to their migration numbers. Table 3.2 illustrates the complexity of cases and circumstances chosen.

---

2 I was born and lived in Israel, and came to study in Australia.
Table 3.2 - Four instrumental cases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PERIOD OF TIME / DESTINATION</th>
<th>MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA</th>
<th>TEL AVIV, ISRAEL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1950s – 1960s</td>
<td>Migrants from Italy</td>
<td>Migrants from Morocco</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990s – 2000s</td>
<td>Migrants from mainland China</td>
<td>Migrants from former Soviet Union</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In each group a sample of twelve participants was preferred, for lengthy qualitative interviews. Despite the accumulated number of forty-eight participants, this is quite a small sample of participants for each group. This issue will be discussed later in the chapter.

3.4 Comparative research and the relational model of recognition

This section looks at methodological difficulties related to the comparative study of the four migrant groups. But first, a few words on the future use of terminology. In order to simplify the naming of the four groups throughout the thesis, and also to highlight differences between them during the investigation, I have chosen to name each group in a single word that derives from its country of origin. Therefore, migrants who arrived from Italy will be named from now on ‘Italians’, though the word ‘Italians’ does not specify in this context much more than the basic fact of their coming from Italy. Migrants who arrived from mainland China will be named hereafter ‘Chinese’, despite the fact that this word does not provide more knowledge than their very broad origin. Migrants who arrived from Morocco will be named henceforth ‘Moroccans’, though again, this only points to the fact that they migrated from Morocco, and migrants who arrived from the former Soviet Union will be named from now on ‘Russians’, even though some of them did not come from Russia at all but from neighbouring countries within the former Soviet Union. Yet, this name was chosen because of the desire to have a singled-word name for all groups, and because Russian is the common language of all ‘Russian’ participants.

It is necessary to stress here that I do not believe there is an essential way of being ‘Italian’, ‘Chinese’, ‘Moroccan’ or ‘Russian’. Each of these ethnic groups is not a monolithic, univocal entity. Furthermore, the concept of ethnicity seeks clarification. Banks (1996: 186) suggests that ethnicity is ‘an analytical tool devised and utilised by academics to make sense of or explain the actions and feeling of the people studied’. That is, ethnicity is not located as an essential inner-self of the subject, but is located in the observer’s head. It is a tool that helps me, the analyst, observe different groups that are categorised according to their ethnic origins. This does not mean that it is the only or the most important category they are associated with. There could be other,
even more important categories. But for the purposes of this research this category is useful, though I acknowledge it is problematic.

The reason I did prefer to use these superficial categories, is that these categories are convenient to use mostly because national statistics are organised according to them. Migrant groups are usually described according to their common country of birth and not other variables, such as their specific region of origin or their age at time of migration. This makes it easy to categorise migrants according to their various countries of origin and not other features of their identities. But I do realise that this way of seeing large populations as monolithic groups with essential characteristics is problematic and I recognise that groups are diverse and their boundaries are often fluid (Fincher and Iveson, 2008).

As will be seen in the following chapters, other lines of difference have been recognised throughout the investigation of each group. Identity features such as gender, age at time of migration, education, class or religion, for example, have been sometimes more important to individuals in their home-building than their ethnic identity. It can be asked, hence, whether it is legitimate to classify the four groups according to only one characteristic of their complex identities. I believe the answer is that as long as one acknowledges the existence of other lines of difference that are as important as the country of origin if not more so, and recognises the shortcomings of this classification, it is legitimate to use this category with the appropriate awareness and caution. Thus, and only for reasons of convenience, from now on I will not use apostrophes around the groups’ names, despite their false generalisation.

The nature of comparative cross-cultural studies also needs to be discussed. Hantrais (2009: 2) explains that in the social sciences, ‘international comparative research’ is the term widely employed to describe studies of societies, countries, cultures, systems, institutions, social structures and changes over time and space, when they are carried out with the intention of using the same research tools to compare systematically the manifestations of phenomena in more than one temporal or sociocultural setting. Broadfoot (2000) notes that cross-cultural studies pose sociological and technical difficulties, such as interviewing in a different language or the mutual construction of understanding across cultures. The cross-cultural context is referred to as an arena of ‘respectful listening, difficult and challenging engagements, careful attention to nuances in the lives of ‘others’, and a critical, long-term consideration of the implications of methods in the construction of meaning’ (Broadfoot, 2000; Howitt and Steven, 2005: 30). Howitt and Steven (2005: 31) note that most human geographic research is ‘cross-cultural’ because it involves thinking
about other people’s constructions of place. Hence, the researcher has to be very careful about issues of difference of all kinds.

From these accounts it seems that this research is both cross-cultural and international comparative research. Yet, the issue of comparison is not solely based on the two different countries, Australia and Israel, but is based on four ethnic groups; thus it has more of a cross-cultural nature. But even more, the comparison is based on individuals. As explained above, some identity lines found throughout the investigation were more crucial to the settlement process than the primary category of comparison – the ethnic identity line, or the country of birth. This finding, which will be discussed in the findings chapters (Chapters 5-8) and chiefly in Chapter 9, made me realise that the focus of the research could perhaps equally have not been the four ethnic groups as has been presented thus far, but the forty-something diverse participants, each one of them unique in their identity construction. Furthermore, instead of dividing them into four ethnic groups, it would have been possible to divide them into other groups that share the same identity lines, such as age at time of migration (e.g. those who migrated as young children, those who migrated as young adults and those who migrated as mature adults), or class and origin in the homeland (e.g. those who came from urban, central environments and those who came from rural, provincial environments). Valentine (2007: 10) explains that the concept of intersectionality is used to theorise the relationship between different social categories such as gender, race, sexuality and so on. Taking Valentine’s approach to intersectionality, I hope to unravel in this thesis the relationship between the participants’ different social categories, and how they influence the creation and the utilisation of the house as an essential part of their home-building.

Hence, the four findings chapters (Chapter 5, Chapter 6, Chapter 7, and Chapter 8) emphasise each group with its own shared character and nature, as interpreted according to its shared ethnic identity and as appeared in regard to the role of the house in the process of settlement. Only then, Chapter 9 takes the findings out of the comfortable, four ‘clear-cut’ groups, and blends them together. This chapter emphasises similarities and differences among the groups and between them, as well as differences within each group. It presents other ways of seeing differences within the large one group of nearly fifty participants. This chapter seeks to question the use of place of birth as the favoured organising category of studies of migrant home-making, and to ask if such an organising category can be replaced by exploring migrant home-making through other identity features from across the whole sample and from other points of view. It provides another way of seeing the four ethnic
groups, this time not according to the convenient ethnic category but according to other, less common ways of seeing and categorising groups of migrants. Nevertheless, this thesis has taken the birthplace category as very central, along with much migration and transnationalism literature, even as it understands and criticises the essentialism of doing so.

The purpose of this ‘unsettling’ chapter is two-fold: first, in this way I had the chance to ‘shake’ former conventions in the literature about the importance of birthplace identity for the role of the house within migration processes, especially in comparison with other identity lines. As we have seen in the previous chapter, there are claims in the literature that immigrants use their houses as a symbol of their ethnicity and their status which are relatively unsubstantiated, and to which this thesis needs to respond. By looking at the four groups from other perspectives in addition to the ethnic one, this issue might be examined. The second reason is that since the sample size in each group is small, some questions about how much one can actually generalise from such a sample to a whole birthplace group are sensible. So the chapter tries to establish a small critique of, or reflection upon, my own method of choosing four distinct ethnic groups with a small sample of participants, because as explained above, seeing migrants through their birthplace alone might be convenient because of administrative reasons, but might lead to the construction of unproblematic identity, which I wish to avoid. The following section demonstrates the specifics of the examination of the four groups.

3.5 Qualitative investigation

This research employed a qualitative examination as the main method of investigation. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000: 3), qualitative research studies use collection of a variety of empirical materials, among them case study, personal experience, interview, cultural texts, and observational and visual texts. These materials (and many others) describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in people’s lives. This is why qualitative research frequently deploys a range of different interconnected interpretive practices; each providing a different angle with the hope to get a better understanding of the subject matter at hand. This research deploys discourse analysis as a method of interpreting practices. There are two methods of data collection: semi-structured, in-depth interviews, and short standardised survey interviews.
Thus, the data is of two kinds: 1. data gathered from in-depth interviews with migrant participants; and 2. data gathered from short standardised survey interviews with planning officials and real-estate agents. The first set of data is the largest and most important part of the data collection, involving in-depth interviews with migrant participants. As mentioned above, this set of data aimed at interviewing 48 migrant participants, twelve for each group, but due to difficulties with recruiting participants, only 46 migrants were interviewed. The second set is a smaller collection of data from a survey of planning professionals and real-estate agents in the two cities. This was a supplementary source of data, gathered to support the main set of data and to provide an external (outside of the migrants’ self world) view of the research question at stake.

Interviews are used for four main reasons, according to Dunn (2005a: 80). The first reason is to fill a gap in knowledge, where other methods such as census data cannot be useful. This is indeed the only way one can gain knowledge of people’s perceptions and understandings of the role of the house for migrants in their settlement process. The second reason is to investigate complex behaviours and motivations. In order to understand the complex feelings and behaviours that influence the creation of the home, interviews with home-owners help to elucidate the practices people undertake in their homes. The third reason is to collect a diversity of meanings, opinions, and experiences. During the interviews, participants provided insights into their opinions, reasons and motivations that could not be gained out of the observational evidence. Lastly, interviews are chosen when a method is required that shows respect for and empowers those people who provide the data. In fact, in the interviews the participants’ point of view was valued and treated with much respect. I was interested in their experiences and opinions, and was happy when some of them were interested not only in participating in the research, but also in the final results of the thesis.

Semi-structured interviews with migrant participants were conducted during 2007 and 2008. Two criteria were set before recruiting participants: 1. they had to be born and live a number of years in the group’s country of origin; and 2. they had to own their house, where they currently reside. The assumption was that changes and modifications of the home-environment are less likely to happen in rented houses because of the greater restrictions posed on tenants, whereas in owned houses the freedom to modify the house is higher. People who lived in their home country a significant number of years and consequently migrated as young adults were preferred, but this was not always possible due to difficulties with recruiting participants.
The interviews took place in the participants' homes and sometimes also involved the interviewee's partner or other family members. They were conducted in line with a set of questions, reflecting the three analytical strategies discussed earlier in this chapter, but were open-ended and participants could take the conversation to different directions as they wished (see Appendix A). Participants were asked to tell their stories of immigration and settlement in Melbourne or Tel Aviv, to describe their previous homes in their country of origin, and to draw sketches of both past and current homes. They could draw whatever they liked (a plan of the house, a façade, or a mental map of how they perceived the home). The interviews included a tour of the current house and yard, and photographs were taken by me. Photographs of the interviewees' former houses in the homeland, if they were available, were also collected as well as architectural schemes of the current house. The interviews took around one hour on average, though some were considerably longer while others considerably shorter. The number of interviewees was indeed twelve for each group, except from the Italian group, in which only ten participants were found. Therefore altogether 46 migrant participants were interviewed. The specific complications of the recruiting processes for each group are detailed in each group’s chapter (Chapters 5-8). The interviews were digitally recorded and then transcribed verbatim.

Standardised surveys with planning professionals and real-estate agents in Melbourne and Tel Aviv were also conducted during 2007 and 2008. Around five planning professionals and five real-estate agents were approached in each city. In Melbourne, a number of local councils were contacted by telephone in order to find planning officials who agreed to take part in the survey. This, however, proved extremely difficult because as became apparent, planning officials do not have any effect on the design of immigrants' homes or neighbourhoods. I was transferred between several departments in each local council, before I realised that perhaps this is because planning officials do not participate in the design of the physical built homes of migrants. Those who deal with building permits do not and cannot know which application belongs to whom because of discrimination laws. Those who deal with social welfare do not have any connection to building processes. Local plans do influence the design of the built environment, but cannot discriminate between people who migrated and people who did not. The same was the situation in Tel Aviv, despite the different administrative and organisational structure of the planning system there. In Tel Aviv I contacted several planning officials in various local councils and asked them a number of questions (see Appendix B), to discuss the involvement of the planning system in the physical creation of migrants' homes. As in Melbourne, it
became clear that planning officials in Tel Aviv metropolitan area do not take part in the specific design and creation of migrant homes. Although this process is influenced by local plans, there cannot be any discrimination between people who migrated and people who did not, and therefore there is no institutional knowledge of this matter.

However, in both cities the contact with real-estate agents was successful. Five real-estate agents were contacted in each city and meetings were organised. These agents were selected randomly, if their offices were located in areas with a major immigrant presence, mostly around suburbs or neighbourhoods where at least a few of the participants resided. In the meetings, a short questionnaire (similar to the one designed for planning professionals - see Appendix B) was discussed and I filled in the answers based on respondents’ replies to my questions, as well as some advertisements which were collected. The surveys took around fifteen minutes on average. This was a minor source of data collection, as opposed to the major source of migrants’ interviews. It was intended to supplement the migrants’ view and provide a complete understanding of the role of the built form of housing for migrants from the point of view of the external planning system and/or market forces. The findings of the surveys are presented within the findings of the migrants' interviews, in the following four chapters. The rest of this chapter details some of the problems I have encountered during interviews and their analysis.

3.6 Interview analysis: contents and technologies

This section outlines the methods used to interpret the data gathered from the main set of data – the migrant interviews. The first part describes the exact ways used in interpreting the narratives the migrants shared with me during the interviews. The second part details how the pictures and drawings collected during the interviews were analysed, and the third part explains the technical use of the NVivo software, designed to manage and analyse the interview data.

3.6.1 Interpretations and understandings

The interpretation of participants’ stories in interviews is based on discourse analysis. In contrast to other methods of interpreting the meaning of language, texts, and visual representations - such as content analysis, semiology, and iconography - discourse analysis is able to move beyond the text, the subtext, and representation, to uncover issues of power relationships that inform what people think and do (Waitt, 2005: 165). The term discourse is now widely employed in human geography and is influenced by the work of the French philosopher Michel Foucault. Foucault conceptualises
discourse within a theoretically informed framework that explores ‘the rules about the production of knowledge through language (meaning) and its influence over what we do (practice)’ (Waitt, 2005: 164).

Contrary to the common use of discourse analysis in planning, where most analysts address policy documents, statements or views (Fincher, 2007), this research focuses on personal narratives of migrants in various locations and circumstances. Still, these stories are located within certain discourses that surround the interviewees and affect their ways of seeing things and making sense of the world around them. These might not be ‘official’ discourses (as in the planning field), but nevertheless they are dominant and powerful discourses that influence what participants say about and do in their homes. The analysis of the in-depth interviews, thus, tried to reveal the discourses which produce understandings about the world that participants accept as ‘truth’ (Foucault, 1980 in Waitt, 2005: 168).

Issues of different terminologies between the two languages in which the interviews were conducted (English and Hebrew) should be noted. One striking difference lies in the meaning of the words ‘home’ and ‘house’. In English, the two words are separated: there is one word for ‘home’, which mostly refers to the emotional meaning of the place, and another one for ‘house’, which refers to the built structure in which the home is usually situated. By contrast, in Hebrew there is one word (Ba’it) that refers both to the home in its emotional, spiritual understanding, and at the same time to the physical built structure of it. When Hebrew-speaking participants mentioned the word ‘home’, I was often not sure whether they referred to the emotional or the physical meaning of this word. This problem is presented only to reveal the difficulty of interviewing in another language (Broadfoot, 2000). It is also crucial to remember that despite the fact that the interviews were conducted in only two languages, there were actually four other languages involved, mostly behind the scenes. All participants delivered their stories in a second language, expressing their thoughts, opinions and feelings not in their mother-tongue. This effort should be valued, because it is not always simple to get one’s thoughts conveyed satisfyingly in a second language. Throughout the thesis, the exact words participants used are delivered (or were translated from Hebrew), despite inaccuracies of grammar, because I believe the manner participants converse and articulate their ideas is meaningful and should be fully presented (Thompson, 1994).

Lastly, a question that needs to be addressed is who the audience of the interviewees’ stories is (Waitt, 2005: 187). Was the audience of the interviews’ texts me, the interviewer? Was it family members or friends? Was it the academic world? I
believe that the audience, in the case of these interviews, was (and still is) the social world around the interviewees, be it their family members, their circle of friends, their ethnic and religious communities with which they interact on a daily basis, but also the dominant community that surrounds them. My role in the interviews was complex. I was definitely an audience, but depending on the interviewees’ country I was sometimes a representative of the dominant culture (in Tel Aviv), while in other times I was another, unknown party (in Melbourne). This issue will be discussed in length later on at the section about my place within the interviews.

3.6.2 Observations and representations
This section presents the analysis of visual materials collected during interviews and surveys. By the end of the interviews and surveys I had collected a large number of photographs from current houses; a number of old photos from past houses; a number of architectural schemes of several houses; a fair number of drawings of past and current homes; and a number of advertisements from different sources. All these visual materials supported my analysis of the texts conveyed by participants. The analysis of the visual representations was similar to the analysis of the transcribed text of the interviews, and was based on discourse analysis.

The photographs produced by me during interviews were used to illustrate and describe the text, and also to document the interviewees’ houses as the main focus of investigation (Banks, 2001: 115). This can be shown in the findings chapters, where photographs illustrate the text and give it a much more tangible and concrete meaning. Dealing with the tangible aspect of the home, it is important to show visual representations of specific objects in and around the home. These photographs are a digital recording of the visual characteristics of the house, just like the digital recording of the participants’ voices (while delivering texts). They helped in tracking inconsistencies and gaps between people’s language, opinions and beliefs (meaning), and what they actually do in their homes (practice). In that respect, the photographs extend the interview beyond its temporal boundaries and help observe not only during the interview what was really happening in the participants’ home-environments.

Other visual representations (photographs and architectural schemes) were obtained from private collections of participants. Advertisements from newspapers and real-estate firms were also collected. Throughout the findings chapters, selected

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3 Mostly from Italian participants and a few from Moroccan participants. Chinese and Russian participants did not have any old photos, perhaps because the main form of housing in both countries was apartments which they did not tend to photograph.
quotes of texts are presented, alongside selected images from all the different kinds of visual representations. My aim was to analyse and interpret these materials in a cohesive manner, because all of them are components of the discourses participants are surrounded by and engaged with. Each of these quotes and images provides different knowledge on the way participants see the world and understand it.

Participants were asked to make drawings of their former and current homes. This tool has enabled the participants to reflect upon their past and present homes during interviews and enhance their verbal explanation. Mental maps are maps people draw without the help of formal maps, to indicate their image of the environment (Gould and White, 1986). Interest has focused on the way in which people perceive certain landmarks, boundaries and districts in urban environments (e.g. Lynch, 1960). But unlike this common interest, in this research mental maps were used to portray images of past and present home-environments. Using mental maps, participants could visually describe former houses where there are no photographs available, but also could express through visual tools their feelings and perceptions towards the home (Haynes, 1981). When I asked them to do so, I deliberately did not say exactly what to draw or how to draw. I used very general terms such as 'draw your home/house'. For some of the participants this was very difficult. Some resisted the notion of drawing, saying they do not know how to draw. I explained there is no need of 'correct' drawing or any former knowledge, but what I would like to see is just what they thought would express their homes best. If they still resisted I did not push further. It was soon discovered that when most participants drew their current house, they looked around and measured in their minds distances and sizes of rooms. The result was that most current houses' drawings were mere illustrations of the current structure, without much added value. In contrast, some former houses' drawings were loaded with emotional expression and context. These drawings actually manage to express the feelings the houses convey to their former residents, and were usually made without any skill at drawing.

Because I only used a small number of images taken by me from current houses, I have decided to employ the rest of the images for the production of two artworks for each group, appearing at the end of each of the findings chapters (Chapters 5-8). Here I use methods deployed by photographers such as Edward Ruscha and Steven Shore, whose laconic images of gas stations, main streets, building signs and tract houses have influenced the work on the everyday, and were presented in the exhibition *Signs of Life, Symbols in the American City* by Venturi and Scott Brown, discussed in the previous chapter (Fausch, 1997). Since I believe
migrants’ homes are ideal arenas for the exploration of the everyday, I wished to demonstrate the characteristics that make them such. The first artwork at the end of each Chapter portrays the exteriors of the group’s houses and the second depicts the interiors. Both provide a symbolic representation of the common characteristics of each of the groups’ ‘collective’ home.

3.6.3 The technical side of NVivo

The analysis of interviews was undertaken with NVivo software, designed for the analysis of qualitative data (Bazeley, 2007), particularly texts of in-depth interviews. The software allows the coding of a large number of texts according to codes set thematically in advance, and helps in analysing and managing a large amount of qualitative data (Bazeley, 2007: 3).

After transcribing the interviews, creating a digital database of 46 files, a large number of themes (consequently codes) for each of the groups were identified. These were based on the questions of the interview, and therefore were mostly similar for all four groups, with only minor variations between them. In the software, these codes can be organised in a ‘tree structure’, where some codes appear under and/or beside others (an example of one group’s code structure appears in Appendix C). After setting up the codes, each of the transcribed interviews was coded into them. Consequently, each code included everything that was said by participants of the same group in relation to its theme. This feature has simplified the analysis of the interviews, because it provided a complete view of everything that has been said by all interviewees on a certain matter, enabling the comparison and discussion of the themes identified.

For example, one main code was ‘the house in the homeland’ and another was ‘the current house’. Under both codes appeared sub-codes such as ‘the most important room in the house’, ‘the organisation of the house’, and ‘what made the house a home’. A third main code was ‘circumstances of arrival’ and a fourth one was ‘ethnic identity’, which had sub-codes such as ‘relationships with neighbours’ and ‘ethnic representations’. Through the identification of codes, namely major themes that were prominent throughout the interviews, it was possible to recognise the discourses that surround the participants and their cultural world.
This section illuminates my role and position within the interviews. It traces the ways my specific identity influenced the interviewees and their answers, as well as how my position affected my interpretation of the interviews. There are a number of issues that will be discussed in this section, through which I wish to portray a reflexive and critical analysis.

First, the location of the interviews was always the participants' homes. This was one of the criteria and was very important as the home was indeed the arena of examination and not only the setting of the interview. Thus prospective interviewees who wished not to be interviewed in their homes were not interviewed at all. This has led to a forced intimacy that could not have happened in any other location because by intruding into participants' homes I literally forced them to accept me as a guest, while in another location – a more 'objective' one such as a nearby café perhaps - this sort of relationship could not have existed. Herzog (2005: 25) argues that interview location plays a role in constructing reality, serving simultaneously as both cultural product and producer. Thus, the choice of interview location (where and who chooses) is not just a technical matter, but should be examined within the social context of the study and analysed as an integral part of the interpretation of the findings. In the case of this research, the location was imposed on the participants by me and they could not suggest another location because it was conditional to the investigation. Participants who did not want to expose their homes could choose not to participate, but once they agreed they were subject to quite a deep exposure on their part. This was often expressed by some participants in sayings such as 'you can take photos – I've got nothing to hide'. This, to my surprise, was said quite often by participants from all groups. My humble request to take photos of the interior and exterior of the house, which I often sensed was obtrusive in some ways – was always welcomed and approved. In only two cases participants asked not to be recorded during the conversation, but let me write down my notes. Yet all participants allowed me to take pictures in their homes, and although I did not ask to do that in private areas (bedrooms and bathrooms), most participants let me into the most private areas of their house. I appreciate the generosity of the participants in letting me take these photos. But the quote above positioned me as an investigator who, without saying it explicitly, suspects that her interviewees do have something to hide. One can oppose having their house being photographed without hiding anything, and I always felt uncomfortable when these kinds of phrases were said.
A second significant related issue appeared to be my position in the interview, or as many feminist geographers have called it, my positionality or my situated knowledge (Rose, 1997). Reflexivity, another common term, has been advocated as ‘a strategy for situating knowledges: that is, as a means of avoiding the false neutrality and universality of so much academic knowledge’ (Rose, 1997: 306). These theorists believe that the producers of the knowledge dictate the sort of knowledge being produced, and that as researchers, we ‘have the final power of interpretation’ (Gilbert, 1994: 94 in Rose, 1997: 307). Indeed, as the researcher I have had an all-inclusive power to control not only the interview location and topics of discussion, but also the interpretation of data. In that sense, I have sometimes felt during the interpretation of materials that I could have interpreted some material in a completely different way, and that it is my choice to understand it and read it in the specific way I did. Perhaps another researcher could have interpreted the data in a totally different way? Therefore, I perceived this task as my sole responsibility as the researcher and as my duty to be honest and direct with my interpretations of data.

My position as the researcher was influenced by my personal intersectionality (Valentine, 2007) as a (relatively) young, educated, middle-class, white, Jewish and Israeli woman. I will discuss now all these categories, focusing on the way they affected my position in relation to the interviewees, as well as the way they influenced relationships of power between us (Mullings, 1999).

The first category is age. I was younger than all members of the two established groups (Italians and Moroccans) and could be their daughter in most times. This was reflected by some of the women participants’ attitude of taking care of me. One Italian participant, Tanya, even gave me fresh eggs from her backyard to take home. In other houses it was important to women participants to make sure I am married and have children. They wished to see me as their daughter, and to see that I fit into their conception of a young woman of my age. This is similar to the experience of Ann-Marie Fortier, who, while researching the Italian migrant community in London, was expected to posses certain characteristics (such as a certain age and family status) by her interviewees (Fortier, 2000: 8). As to the other two recently arrived groups (Chinese and Russians), I was around the same age of most of them. This, together with the category of class - the fact that most Chinese and Russian participants have some kind of academic background as either academics or professionals, and were of a middle-class background like me, created a more equal relationship between us during the interviews. They knew what I was going through and could relate themselves to my position, especially the Chinese group members.
One participant, Hui, was actually undertaking PhD research at the time of the interview, and so we could discuss our shared experiences. In contrast to Chinese and Russian participants, most Italian and Moroccan participants came from a working-class background and had never studied at university (with the exception of some younger participants). Thus, as a young educated woman I was very different from them, though again, some compared me to their sons and daughters who also studied at universities. But, it is important to say that the participants in this research did not belong to poorer or underprivileged populations, unlike the situation reported in much of the work of human and economic geography (Mullings, 1999). Thus, issues of power relations were not as central as they would have been in such cases.

The third category of my intersectionality is gender. From some reason, most participants were women. It is not clear why that is, except that perhaps women are still considered as the dominant person in charge of the day-to-day running of the home and the creation of the ‘home-like’ environment (Blunt and Dowling, 2006), and thus have taken the role of representing it and communicating about it. Also, I have noticed that for me it has been easier to establish contact with women who, in most times, were more open and flowing in their conversational manner. In some cases I interviewed widows or just women alone, and in other cases both partners were present. Only a few interviews were of men only without their partners. I always felt better in the presence of women because it often eased the conversation and made me feel more comfortable (perhaps – more at home?) in the house.

The fourth and fifth categories of my identity are ethnicity and nationality, which in this case are mixed together. This is more complicated than it seems because of the four different countries of origin, the two different settings and the two languages of interviews. In Australia, as a white person I do not look much different from Anglo-Australians, so I could belong to the dominant culture, but when I explained about the research I identified myself as an international student, a stranger and not a local, with my strong accent revealing that as well. Both Italians and Chinese could not think I am one of them because I could not ‘pass as an Italian’ (Fortier, 2000: 7) or Chinese, but I did gain their cooperation by not being a representative of the dominant culture. I could identify with their feelings of being an ethnic minority, and they could feel at ease with my second-language-English (Thompson, 1994). Whiteness could have been an issue with Chinese participants though during the interviews they all declared they do not feel they are any different from the Australian majority. Also, it might be that because I do not belong to the Australian dominant culture I was not perceived as holding the same attitudes as
those Anglo-Australians might hold. This does not mean Anglo-Australians hold racist attitudes, but the discourse of race is as active in Australia as in Israel, and in the past Chinese-Australians have been racially discriminated against (Jupp, 2002: 6).

In Israel this cooperation did not exist because there I did represent the dominant culture with my accent-less Hebrew, even if unintentionally. My Whiteness was present when I met Moroccans, who have been long discriminated against by Israeli administrations (which have always been represented by Israelis of western origin, like me). But after so many years since migration, most Moroccans have reconciled with the past and except one participant's son who resisted some of my questions, I did not feel much different from them, especially considering that most of them have already lived in Israel for more years than I. Despite the fact that I might look Russian (and my origins are rooted in the Poland and Lithuania of today), no one from the Russian group suspected me to be one of them, perhaps because of the lack of Russian accent. But as we all shared a similar origin they saw me as somehow similar to them.

Finally, the last category of my identity that is relevant here is my Jewish religion. In Australia I was different, as most Italians were practicing Catholicism, though they never questioned my religious identity. Moreover, one Italian participant, Laura, even agreed to be interviewed because her daughter is married to a Jewish man of Russian origin, wanting to help me because of this indirect relation. So in that case my religion has actually helped me forming an alliance with one participant. In contrast, some Chinese participants were recruited at a Chinese church, where I participated in one of the masses in order to be introduced to other prospective interviewees. There I was under pressure to abandon my religion and join Christianity, although this was not my interviewees’ attempt but that of other people of the community. Indeed, I felt a bit uncomfortable to come to the mass without a real intention to practice the religion but with other, hidden goals. In Israel the issue of religion was hardly mentioned because there I was part of the dominant religion. But, as will be discussed in Chapter 9, some Moroccan participants were more religious than me in their everyday practice, while two Russian participants demonstrated some links to Christianity. Nevertheless, and despite the fact that Israel is partly dominated by religious administration, with both groups I did not feel different and I believe this issue did not stand between participants and me.

To sum up, this section outlines a number of identity lines in my own personal identity, which might have affected the relationships between the interviewees and me and the way the interviewees responded to my questions, and also might have
influenced my interpretation of interviews. Of course, these are only some sections of my identity and not all, because identity is comprised of the relationship between different social categories (Valentine, 2006: 10), and is not a series of separate parallel identity lines, as might be understood from the discussion above.

### 3.8 Conclusion

This chapter focused on the exact ways I have dealt with the investigation of the research question throughout the thesis. It also explored methodological and ethical problems that arise from such a comparative investigation of four different ethnic groups. This chapter helped me to respond to the research question through the designing of a multiple case study research which includes multiple experiences and narratives of migration as seen in relation to the house. Then, the chapter enabled me to recognise the problematic nature of essentialism and in consequence, to build up two kinds of examination. The first and most central examination was constructed on an ethnic-based exploration of each of the migrant groups, conducted according to the birthplace organising category that is so common in migration literature. This examination produced four findings chapters, one for each of the migrant groups. But the second kind of examination looked at the four groups of migrants from other points of view, bringing to the front other identity lines of participants instead of focusing only on their ethnic identity, lines that may influence as well the role of housing form in migrants' settlement. Indeed, this examination questions the common traditional examination of migrants according to their ethnic identity, but does not seek to invalidate the central organising framework of this thesis, which is a research of multiple cases of four groups of migrants organised according to their birthplace. The next chapter outlines the setting of the specific places of investigation, and in particular the urban environments of Melbourne and Tel Aviv.
4 CHAPTER IV: TWO SITES OF EXAMINATION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter explores the two sites in which the examination took place. These are the metropolitan areas around the City of Melbourne, Australia and around the City of Tel Aviv, Israel. Its purpose is to understand what makes these two cities suitable for the particular examination of processes of migrants’ settlement, despite - or perhaps because of - the very different character of the countries and the cities.

The chapter has three major sections. It opens with an overview of the dissimilar natures of Australia and Israel as two immigration societies, but also of the similar outcomes of continuous immigration histories in the two countries. It is argued that despite the vital differences in immigration policies and motives of the two countries, as well as differences in the presence of multicultural agendas in the national settings, the inevitable outcome of a very diverse society is almost similar. The chapter then proceeds to detailed investigations of the two different urban environments. The geographical, demographic and historical aspects of each city are explored, followed by the examination of housing and architectural characteristics in each city. This provides a background of the actual social and physical settings in which the migrants’ groups explored in this study construct their homes.

As soon will be revealed, the urban environments of Melbourne and Tel Aviv are very different in their social and physical disposition, providing a physical dimension on top of the already complex structure of four ethnic groups and two periods of time. This chapter looks at what it actually means, as a migrant, to live in Melbourne or in Tel Aviv, and how the two opposing places might influence, each in its own way, how migrants experience the process of settlement in the city. It is argued that each ethnic group had to adjust to the dominant way of living in its city, including the adoption of the majority's preferences for housing. Only then could migrants modify their home-environments as part of their settlement process in the city.

4.2 Australia and Israel as immigration societies

Australia and Israel are countries in which immigrants comprise a significant portion of the total population. They both have consciously engineered their societies according to their desires by using immigration as a tool (Jupp, 2002: 18). There is a crucial difference between them, however, in regards to their immigration policies. While in
Australia today immigrants from all over the world are welcome as long as they meet the selection criteria, which are mostly based on their professional skills, their age and their English language proficiency, or less often on the financial resources they possess (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2007). In Israel immigrants are welcome as long as they belong to the Jewish people, regardless of their age, their proficiency in the Hebrew language, their economic situation and their professional skills. Despite these major differences in the role of immigration and immigrants for the two countries, and despite different immigration policies, the eventual outcomes of continuous immigration are in many ways similar. Both countries have multicultural societies with citizens coming from many different countries of origin, comprising many languages and cultures. The detailed history of immigration and immigration policies of each country will be presented in the following sections.

4.2.1 The Australian experience
Since white settlement, Australia has always been an immigrant society, and has always also been a product of conscious social engineering (Jupp, 2002: 5). Since the first settlers and convicts arrived at the end of the 18th century, most immigrants to Australia have come from the British Isles. During the 1850s, the Australian gold-rush brought thousands of settlers, fortune hunters and labourers from Europe, America and Asia, including large numbers of Chinese. This large and continuing inflow of people of many races brought the population to over three million by 1900, but also produced tensions and problems (Hawkins, 1974: 23). The labour movement’s fear of working conditions and wages, together with attitudes of racism and xenophobia, have led to immigration control through a policy known as White Australia, designed around the 1880s, which banned immigration from non-British countries. When the Commonwealth was founded in 1901 this control was passed by the new government as the Immigration Restriction Act, which remained in force until replaced by the Migration Act in 1958 (Jupp, 2002). By 1947 the non-European population, other than Aborigines, was measured by the Census as 0.25 percent of the total. Australia had become one of the ‘ whitest’ countries in the world outside north-western Europe (Jupp, 2002: 9).

4 Unless they migrate through family or humanitarian eligibility categories, which are not the main categories of migration. In the year of 2005-06, for example, 26% migrated through the family category, 9.2% migrated through the humanitarian program, and 45.2% migrated through the skills category. The rest 19.1% migrated through a non-program migration (residents of New Zealand and others).

5 Or they are family members of a Jew.
The Second World War was a turning point in Australia’s immigration policy, when its leaders realised it needed a larger population and that it was under-protected and vulnerable (Jupp, 1991: 71). A major source of immigrants became displaced persons from European camps and Southern Europeans, who were largely banned from the United States until 1965. Many of these immigrants, as well as some from other European countries, were deliberately attracted by the government through assisted passages, propaganda and recruiting drives. This immigration laid the foundation for a multicultural Australia, even while official policy still favoured assimilation, which was seen as necessary to full acceptance into society. It meant the adoption of majority culture, which was assumed to be uniform and self-evident. This included the adoption of the English language, which was most important, as well as English values and lifestyle. An example of assimilation from the early post-war years was the official advice not to behave in any way which would attract attention (Jupp, 2002: 19).

By the late 1960s assimilation policy was increasingly becoming untenable because many non-British migrants still maintained their culture and language and segregated in ethnic neighbourhoods (Zappala and Castles, 2000: 50). Finally, in 1972, one of the first acts of the Whitlam government was to declare that race, colour or creed would no longer be a basis for immigration control. Multiculturalism was declared as the official policy instead of assimilation, and ethnic minorities were supported to preserve their cultural identities. Together with the abolition of the White Australia policy, there has been another change of approach to populating Australia. Since the 1980s no incentives have been offered and entry has become more difficult. Rather than engineering society by subsidising arrivals as was the case until the 1970s, it is now engineered by selection and exclusion. English proficiency is still an important qualification to gain points for admission, while age, disability and unemployability are all barriers to admission, as they were for assisted immigrants from the 1830s (Jupp, 2002:19). In contrast to the mass migration of the 1950s and 1960s, the slower and more controlled intake of the 1980s and 1990s did not create a new multicultural working-class to the same extent. In many cases, recent and mostly Asian immigrants have higher levels of qualification and of occupational status than of Australia-born (Jupp, 2002: 37).

The makeup of Australian population has changed dramatically throughout the years. While the majority of those born overseas still come from the United Kingdom, people from Asia now form a large portion of all immigrants, and are now in second
place after the United Kingdom. Table 4.1 illustrates the change between the years 1971 and 2006.

Table 4.1 - Immigrant population of Australia by birthplace.

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>2,197</td>
<td>2,233</td>
<td>2,300</td>
<td>2,217</td>
<td>1,879</td>
<td>1,826</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia (with Middle East)</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>372</td>
<td>822</td>
<td>1,007</td>
<td>1,057</td>
<td>1,081</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>276</td>
<td>291</td>
<td>352</td>
<td>389</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>America</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other and not stated</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>1,605</td>
<td>2,057</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2,591</td>
<td>3,005</td>
<td>3,751</td>
<td>3,908</td>
<td>5,085</td>
<td>5,782</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The table shows that the intake from Asian countries (including the Middle East) has grown significantly between 1981 and 1996, while the intake from European countries has slightly decreased. According to the 2006 Census, those born overseas consisted of around 29 percent of the total Australian population (ABS, 2007).

4.2.2 The Israeli experience

Since white settlement, Israel, as Australia, has always been an immigration society. Jewish migration to Palestine has existed since the second half of the 19th century. Around the 1890s, the national Zionist movement was starting to build in Europe. In the early decades of the 20th century racial prejudice was increasing in Europe and the Zionist movement had begun supporting a homeland for Jews as an escape from discrimination and persecution in Christian-dominated lands. By 1914 there were 90,000 Jews living in Palestine, of whom 75,000 immigrants who arrived in two waves mostly from Russia and Romania (Gilbert, 1999: 30). Between 1919 and 1939, there were three more waves of around 360,000 persons arriving in Palestine. Most of them emigrated from Eastern Europe and Germany during the last wave, between the years 1933-1936. After increasing restriction of immigration by the British authorities, immigration to Palestine became illegal until 1948 (Gilbert, 1999: 76-7).

When Israel was established in 1948, it absorbed the remnant Jewish communities of Eastern Europe and the Balkans, largely composed of refugees and displaced persons, as well as entire Jewish communities from Arab countries in the Middle East and North Africa, whose existence had become precarious (DellaPergola, 6)

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6 The discussion above refers only to the Jewish majority in Israel and not to the Arab minority. This research deals with two Jewish ethnic groups and thus it is the relevant context. This is not to say that the Arab minority’s history is of less importance in any way.
Between 1947 and 1951 around 690,000 Jews arrived in Israel, mostly by sea, from seventy different countries. Israel made large efforts to bring Jews from Arab countries, as well as from communist countries, where hostility had risen after Israel’s independence (Gilbert, 1999: 260). In the next two decades until the 1970s, immigrants from different countries kept arriving in Israel but to a much lesser extent. In the 1970s there was a first wave of immigration from the Soviet Union, comprising about 250,000 immigrants. A second wave took place during the 1990s, comprising about 800,000 immigrants (Mesch, 2002: 917).

Since the 1950s and up until the 1980s, the Israeli government had intervened directly and vigorously in all aspects of immigrant absorption. New towns were built and new factories were opened to give newcomers homes and jobs; most of these were on the periphery, in the northern and southern districts of Israel (Lipshitz, 1997: 471-2). The Israeli government did not let market forces absorb the immigrants, disperse them spatially and find them jobs, as mostly has been the case in Australia. During the end of the 1980s and mostly through the 1990s, there was a shift in Israeli immigration policy and instead of intervening in all aspects of the immigrants’ lives, the policy is known now as ‘direct absorption’, where immigrants receive an ‘absorption basket’ from the government with a certain amount of money meant to last for a limited time (Lipshitz, 1997: 473).

In contrast to the Australian case, in Israel immigration serves as an important strategy in the project of nation-building and as a means to affect the demographic balance between Jews and non-Jews occupying the land. The unique nature of Israeli immigration policy lies in its expanded state membership to any person who is entitled to the ‘right of return’ that is codified in the 1950 Law of Return (Shachar, 2000: 387). According to this law, every Jew and eligible non-Jew (a member of a nuclear family of a Jew), has the legal right to assisted immigration and settlement in Israel, as well as automatic Israeli citizenship. This is considered one of the most fundamental rights in Israeli law and is described as its ideological foundation. The act of Jewish immigration has a special ideological position within Zionism which is reflected in the word *aliyah* (translated as ascent), which has a particular and strong connotation of self-fulfilment in the Hebrew language. Immigrants who are claiming the right of return are entitled to a host of benefits such as language training programs underwritten by the state, tax breaks, employment training courses, and housing subsidies (Shachar, 2000: 390). All other immigrants who are not Jewish and wish to establish citizenship
in Israel need to go through a relatively rigid naturalisation process (Shachar, 2000: 389).  

It is important to understand that as opposed to Australia, and in the context of Jewish-Arab relations, no multicultural policy actually exists in Israel (Al-Haj, 2002b). The Jewish-Arab conflict in fact hinders the creation of a multicultural, civic society in Israel, because instead of the strengthening of the many ethnic communities from various countries of origins, the state prefers to emphasise a united bloc of Jewish majority against the Arab minority. Thus, in education for example, a priority is given to the story of the Jewish people as a nation over the particular stories of the many ethnic groups of which it is comprised. Though Israel is a multicultural society de facto, consisting of a large number of different ethnic origins from both Jewish and Arab ancestries, Israel has not yet chosen to emphasise its multicultural nature through education or other national means. Though the state has officially recognised specific festivals of both Jewish and Arab ethnic groups, as well as many ethnic organisations, and is officially bilingual (Hebrew and Arabic), there is no official recognition of a multicultural policy which also includes the Arab minority in its agenda. In this, Israel differs significantly from Australia, where a multicultural policy aims to treat all citizens equally.

The makeup of the Israeli population, like Australia, has also changed dramatically throughout the years, especially in regard to its Jewish population, which has been most affected by immigration. Table 4.2 illustrates the change in the Jewish population between the years 1948 and 2007, while Table 4.3 presents the makeup of Jewish population in 2007, according to country of origin.

Table 4.2 - Immigrant population of Israel by birthplace.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asia (and Middle East)</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>297</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>349</td>
<td>322</td>
<td>326</td>
<td>318</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe, America and Oceania</td>
<td>393</td>
<td>672</td>
<td>750</td>
<td>802</td>
<td>1,231</td>
<td>1,392</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>463</td>
<td>1,202</td>
<td>1,415</td>
<td>1,421</td>
<td>1,810</td>
<td>1,916</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


---

7 This process is not rigid compared to other developed countries, such as Australia, in terms of residency or language proficiency requirements, but unlike most countries Israel permits an unrestricted entitlement to membership for a particular group of persons: anyone entitled to the right of return (Shachar, 2000: 389). This thesis's focus is on two Jewish ethnic groups within the total Israeli population; hence the immigration process for non-Jews will not be discussed any further, despite its significance and implications for Israeli society.
Table 4.3 – Jews in Israel by country of origin, 2007.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PLACE OF BIRTH (THOUSANDS)</th>
<th>2007 PLACE OF BIRTH (THOUSANDS)</th>
<th>2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asia (Total)</td>
<td>205.2 (3.8)</td>
<td>1,143.7 (21%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>26.4</td>
<td>696.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>65.7</td>
<td>54.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yemen</td>
<td>30.3</td>
<td>95.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>47.8</td>
<td>17.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India and Pakistan</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>26.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syria and Lebanon</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>21.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>37.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa (Total)</td>
<td>305.2 (5.6)</td>
<td>United Kingdom 20.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>151.9</td>
<td>Europe, other 29.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algeria and Tunisia</td>
<td>39.3</td>
<td>North America and Oceania 84.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libya</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>Argentina 35.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>Latin America, other 24.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>66.2</td>
<td>Israel born 3,781.7 (69.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>Total 5,435.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The tables show that the intake from Middle Eastern and North African countries has grown significantly between 1948 and 1961 but since then it has been stable. Intake from European countries increased mostly between 1983 and 1995, with the large wave of former Soviet Union immigration. Until 2007, the majority of Jewish immigrants came from European countries. Jewish immigrants consisted of 26.5 percent of the total Israeli population (CBS, 2009). The rest of this chapter elucidates the migrants’ experience in the two sites of examination.

4.3 Migrants in metropolitan Melbourne

Melbourne and its surroundings is a major Australian gateway which attracts thousands of immigrants a year. Between 1995-96 and 2005-06 almost 300,000 people arrived in Victoria with an average of almost 21,000 a year (Department of Immigration and Citizenship, 2007). It is reasonable to assume that the majority of the people have settled in the Melbourne metropolitan area. The section outlines these geographical, historical and demographic characteristics of Melbourne, followed by a demonstration of the city’s housing and architecture, as the setting required for understanding the empirical evidence presented in the findings chapters.
4.3.1 Geography, history and population

The Melbourne metropolitan area\(^8\) is situated around Port Phillip Bay, on the south-eastern shores of Australia. It is the urban area that surrounds the City of Melbourne and is the second most populous city in Australia after Sydney. Melbourne is the largest city and the capital of the State of Victoria. Figure 4.1 depicts the metropolitan area within the national setting.

The Melbourne metropolitan area includes a core, three rings and a greater area, with a total number of 31 local government areas (State Government of Victoria, 2009). The core is located within the inner-ring in the City of Melbourne and is known as the CBD (Central Business District), while the other two rings and the greater area include a number of local government areas each. The greater area comprises most of the area with ten governmental areas, where most of the settlements are rural and small, with the exception of a number of large towns situated on the edges of the metropolitan area (ABS, 2009). Between the three first rings (the inner, middle and outer rings) there is no spatial division and the metropolitan area is one large, dispersed city, despite being administrated by separate municipalities. Figure 4.2 demonstrates the physical structure with its division of rings of the Melbourne metropolitan area.\(^9\) (For a detailed map of the municipalities within the Melbourne metropolitan area, see Appendix D).

Melbourne was founded in 1837, with five pieces of land sold at an auction in Sydney. In 1851, the main settlement covered about 14 square kilometres. Between 1837 and 1883, the city’s area expanded six fold. In the next most rapid expansion, between 1971 and 2004, the city almost doubled its size. In 2004, the urbanised area was approximately 2,100 square kilometres (State Government of Victoria, 2006).

In 2006, the total metropolitan area’s population was 3,592,591 persons. The 2007-08 population growth rate was 1.8 percent, higher than the average annual growth rate (1.5%) for the five years to June 2008 (ABS, 2009). Table 4.4 demonstrates the countries of origin of residents of the Melbourne metropolitan area. Figure 4.3 shows visually the breakdown of the metropolitan area’s population in 2006.

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\(^8\) Also known as Greater Melbourne.

\(^9\) There is no official division of the rings in the metropolitan area, thus this division is based on my own analysis.
Figure 4.1 - Melbourne metropolitan area in the national setting.

![Map of Australia showing Melbourne metropolitan area in the national setting.]

Figure 4.2 – Melbourne metropolitan area (Based on ABS, 2008).

![Map of Greater Metropolitan Melbourne with different rings and areas highlighted.]
Table 4.4 – Population in the Melbourne metropolitan area by region of origin, 2006.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PLACE OF BIRTH, 2006</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>2,306,102</td>
<td>64.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Oceania and Antarctica</td>
<td>67,543</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North-West Europe</td>
<td>216,218</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern and Eastern Europe</td>
<td>262,835</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Africa and the Middle East</td>
<td>68,922</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South-East Asia</td>
<td>158,736</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North-East Asia</td>
<td>88,179</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern and Central Asia</td>
<td>95,486</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Americas</td>
<td>36,085</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
<td>41,429</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3,079</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country of birth not stated</td>
<td>248,067</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3,592,591</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, Census of Population and Housing 2006, based on Country of Birth (Region) of Person by Age by Sex.

Figure 4.3 – Region of birth of population of the Melbourne metropolitan area, 2006 (Source: ABS, 2006).

The table and diagram show that 65 percent of the Melbourne metropolitan area’s population in 2006 were born in Australia, while 35 percent were born overseas. Of them, seven percent were born in Southern and Eastern Europe, seven percent were born in Southern and Central Asia and six percent were born in North-West Europe. The rest, 15 percent, were born in different regions.
4.3.2 Housing and architecture in the city

The Melbourne metropolitan area, as all Australian cities, is mainly comprised of low-density residential housing. Compared with most other cities in developed countries, Melbourne is a dispersed, low density city (ABS, 2009). Table 4.5 presents some of its physical characteristics.

Table 4.5 – Physical characteristics of the Melbourne metropolitan area (ABS, 2008, 2009).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE MELBOURNE METROPOLITAN AREA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area in square kilometres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Density in persons per square kilometre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of homeownership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of detached dwellings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Despite the decrease of the average number of people living in each household, dwellings have been increasing in size. This increasing consumption of housing space is driven by greater affluence, technological innovation in construction and changing lifestyles (ABS, 2009). Existing lot size patterns reflect the era in which the suburb was developed. The myth of the ‘quarter acre block’ is embedded in the Australian traditional concept of suburban life, but most blocks of land are smaller, between fifth and sixth of an acre (Lewis, 1999: 66).

Suburbia has become, in Melbourne as well as other Australian cities, closely identified with popular conceptions of the good life (Davison, 1993: 1). Suburban living\(^\text{10}\) has been the common way of life for Australians, and during the first decades after the Second World War, with the growing population and prosperity, Australian cities chose to expand their suburbs and not to build upward as other nations have chosen (Britain, for example). During the 1950s and the 1960s Melbourne, too, expanded and more and more suburbs were built on the city’s edges. This was accompanied by the proliferation of the automobile.

The pursuit of home-ownership has often been referred to as the Great Australian Dream, in which one owns a detached house with a backyard. Magazines

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\(^\text{10}\) In Australia, the word suburb denotes a residential area. It usually means that the area possesses the characteristics classically associated with suburbia, such as detached houses set in their own garden, though this is not the case with inner-city suburbs, where flats and terrace-houses are also common. There is no sense of a suburb being something outside and apart from the city, as in the case of the United States (Dingle 1999: 199).
such as *Home Beautiful* flourished to promote the home, while government policies favoured home-buyers (Davison and Dingle, 1995: 5; Lees and Senyard, 1987). Because of housing scarcity after the War, many young couples, including immigrants, built their homes themselves. Perhaps a quarter of the houses built in the decade after the Second World War was owner-built. Building one’s home became part of the life-cycle of many young Australians as well as the migrants who were flooding into the city in increasing numbers (Davison and Dingle, 1995: 11). During the 1960s and the 1970s, another form of home-building was developed. Building firms started to build display-homes that were ready to be occupied by their buyers. The project house became more popular as society grew wealthier, often becoming a vehicle for Australian social and stylistic influences (Davison and Dingle, 1995: 13).

According to Dingle (1999: 194), one of the striking features of Australian suburbia is its uniformity. In any locality, block sizes and houses and styles tend to be similar. Building regulations encouraged houses to set back a uniform distance from the street and from neighbouring blocks, and also led to uniformity in types of roofs and windows sizes. People on similar incomes have tended to gather together, affording houses of similar size and with the same range of equipment. House styles change according to the period of time in which they were built and consequently, their distance from the city core. Figure 4.4 illustrates a number of suburban streets in Melbourne’s middle-ring suburbs.

The streetscapes shown in these photographs, taken in various suburbs around Melbourne, demonstrate the conformity and uniformity of the city, as well as the low density of its urban environment. All these streets comprise mostly one-storeyed, brick-veneered, pitched-roofed detached houses, with a nature-strip separating the house and the road. The houses are usually adjacent to quiet roads and public spaces, due to the dispersed and relaxed nature of the city.
4.4 Migrants in metropolitan Tel Aviv

Tel Aviv and its surroundings is a central Israeli city which attracts thousands of immigrants a year. However, since the end of the large wave of immigration from the former Soviet Union in the beginning of the millennium, the numbers of immigrants to Israel and to Tel Aviv have dropped significantly. Between 2002 and 2006 almost 35,000 people arrived in the Tel Aviv area with an average of almost 7,000 a year (CBS, 2008). In Tel Aviv, as opposed to Melbourne, migrants have not always settled according to their own desire. In the post-war years they were settled by the government in remote areas, mostly away from the central location of Tel Aviv or on its edges, contributing to the national task of shaping the Israeli territory (Kallus and Law Yone, 2002: 765). If they were wealthy enough migrants often moved to the Tel Aviv area, but in most cases they were poor with few possessions. Immigrants who have arrived in the past two decades, though, were able to choose where they would like to settle and consequently many have chosen the Tel Aviv metropolitan area,
Israel’s economic and cultural centre. The rest of the section sketches the geographical, historical and demographic characteristics of Tel Aviv and then continues to present the city’s housing and architecture, as a backdrop necessary for the understanding of the chapters of research findings.

4.4.1 Geography, history and population

The Tel Aviv Metropolitan area\textsuperscript{11} is situated on the Mediterranean coastline. It is the urban area that surrounds the City of Tel Aviv-Yafo and is the second most populous city in Israel after Jerusalem. Yafo (Jaffa) is the ancient Arab port city adjacent to the Jewish city of Tel Aviv, and the two municipalities were officially joined in 1950 (Municipality of Tel Aviv-Yafo, 2009). Figure 4.5 depicts the metropolitan area within the national setting.

The Tel Aviv metropolitan area includes a core, three rings and a greater area, with a total number of 255 municipalities. The core is located within the inner-ring which is the City of Tel Aviv-Yafo. The other two rings and the greater area each contain a large number of municipalities. The middle-ring contains 17 municipalities, while the outer-ring contains 31 municipalities. The greater area contains 206 municipalities, most of them rural and small though a few are urban and large (CBS, 2009). Figure 4.6 demonstrates the physical structure and division of rings of the Tel Aviv metropolitan area. (For a detailed map of the municipalities within the Tel Aviv metropolitan area, see Appendix E).

The Tel Aviv metropolitan area consists of 1,458 square kilometres with an average population density of 2,119.7 persons per square kilometre. Density values vary significantly between localities: while the inner locality of Bat Yam’s density is over than 15,000 persons per square kilometre, the outer locality of Rishon Letzion’s density is less than 4,000 persons per square kilometre (CBS, 2009).

\textsuperscript{11} Also known as Gush Dan, meaning Dan Bloc, named as such because it was the territory of the tribe of Dan in the ancient Kingdom of Israel.
Figure 4.5 - Tel Aviv metropolitan area in the national setting.

Figure 4.6 - Tel Aviv Metropolitan area (Based on CBS, 2009).
Tel Aviv was established in 1909 on the outskirts of the ancient port of Yafo, by a lottery of plots of land. By the time Tel Aviv gained municipal status in 1934 its population had increased to 72,000 inhabitants, in contrast to Yafo’s 65,000 residents. Between 1932 and 1940 many immigrants from central Europe settled in the city, boosting the economy significantly. By the 1940s, the city’s population reached beyond 150,000. In 1951, the population numbered 345,000 people (Efrat, 1984: 67). By the end of 2007, the total metropolitan area population was 3,154,100 persons. The annual population growth of the metropolitan area’s population is 1.8 percent (CBS, 2009).

The population of the Tel Aviv metropolitan area comprises people who came from many different countries of origin. However, the latest data on the exact make-up of the metropolitan area’s residents were collected in 1995. Also, the data contains figures for each of the metropolitan settlements but not as a united entity. Table 4.5 demonstrates the countries of origin of some of the Jewish residents of the Tel Aviv metropolitan area. The table presents selected data from only large settlements (ignoring small settlements) in the metropolitan area, providing only a partial view of the population. Figure 4.7 shows visually the breakdown of (some of) the metropolitan area’s population in 1995.

Table 4.6 – Jews in the Tel Aviv metropolitan area by country of origin, 1995.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PLACE OF BIRTH</th>
<th>1995</th>
<th>PLACE OF BIRTH</th>
<th>1995</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asia (Total)</td>
<td>150,404</td>
<td>Europe, America and Oceania (Total)</td>
<td>457,840</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>23,501</td>
<td>USSR (former)</td>
<td>220,418</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>50,041</td>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>63,205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yemen</td>
<td>26,096</td>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>63,980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>31,120</td>
<td>Bulgaria and Greece</td>
<td>19,552</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>19,646</td>
<td>Germany and Austria</td>
<td>16,808</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa (Total) (7.8%)</td>
<td>91,610</td>
<td>Europe, other</td>
<td>38,525</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>41,779</td>
<td>North America and Oceania</td>
<td>17,964</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algeria and Tunisia</td>
<td>11,195</td>
<td>Latin America</td>
<td>17,388</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libya</td>
<td>9,841</td>
<td>Israel born</td>
<td>490,123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>12,869</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,189,977</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>10,634</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>5,292</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table and diagram show that while forty percent of this partial population in 1995 were born in Israel, a majority of sixty percent were born overseas, of them over thirty percent were born in Europe (including the former USSR), and over twenty percent were born in Asia and Africa (mainly in Arab countries). This only includes major towns within the metropolitan area, and does not include small settlements. Many of the residents of the established towns and cities (such as the core city of Tel Aviv) are aged-persons born overseas.

### 4.4.2 Housing and architecture in the city

The Tel Aviv metropolitan area, as with most of Israel, is mainly comprised of high-density residential buildings of several storeys. The majority of the population resides in apartment buildings due to many cultural and historical reasons as well as the lack of land in Israel. Table 4.7 presents some of the physical characteristics of the area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TEL AVIV METROPOLITAN AREA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area in square kilometres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Density: persons per square kilometre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of home-ownership</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tel Aviv was born during the development of the philosophy underlying both modern architecture and town planning in Europe, and was seen as having a fundamental role in the realisation of a Zionist homeland (LeVine, 2005: 158). During the 1930s and the 1940s many European Jewish architects, who studied in the famous Bauhaus school in Germany and fled Europe during the 1930s, arrived in the country. They built numerous buildings along the lines of the International Style in the city, which represented the Modern Movement. The city has been often dubbed ‘The White City’, due to the large number of white-plastered modern buildings (Azaryahu, 2008: 313).

During the 1940s Tel Aviv continued to expand, especially along major traffic routes where high quality housing was built. During the first years after 1948, immigration added greatly to the city’s population. In response, the government released agricultural land for construction purposes, particularly between Tel Aviv and its eastern suburban nodes. This action began a trend of infilling the open areas between the settlements of the region, resulting in today’s continuous urban development of the first two rings (Efrat, 1984: 67).

Jewish middle-classes in Israel had long preferred residential locations offering proximity to the many economic, social and cultural opportunities in the centre of the city. During the first decades of development in the twentieth century, the middle-classes did not rush to the suburbs to build spacious houses, as occurred in Australia and in North America, but chose to live in urban residential centres as in Europe. The urban fringe was left to households of low and low-middle income who could not afford the high residential values of the inner urban areas and had no choice but to move to remote residential locations (Gonen, 1995: 27).

From the 1950s until the 1970s, and especially during the first decade of the formation of the state, the Israeli government built countless apartment blocks for the large waves of immigrants (Kallus and Law Yone, 2002). The immigrants were settled all around the country, including in specific neighbourhoods of Tel Aviv-Yafo and various other localities around the metropolitan area. Public apartment buildings were mostly built in settlements which absorbed large number of immigrants, and today they can be found in numerous neighbourhoods around the metropolitan area.

Today, the Tel Aviv metropolitan landscape is largely formed of dense areas of apartment buildings, with little pockets of more spacious suburban residential areas in the inner and middle rings, and larger neighbourhoods of suburban housing around the fringe of the metropolitan area. Figure 4.8 illustrates the kinds of streets that comprise most of the urban environment of the metropolitan area.
The streetscapes shown in these photographs, taken in various municipalities around Tel Aviv, reveal various housing typologies in the city, all of them of medium to high densities. All these streets comprise apartment buildings of several storeys, usually adjacent to busy roads and public spaces. It is clear that the level of autonomy and capacity to influence the physical form of the house one has in such an environment is significantly less than that provided by Melbourne’s built residential environment.

4.5 Conclusions

This chapter has outlined the different circumstances of Australia and Israel as two major countries of migration. It has also focused on the different ways the contrasting experiences of migration have shaped Melbourne and Tel Aviv, the two cities under examination.

The first section sketched the Australian and Israeli immigration histories and immigration policies, with the social outcomes brought about by their two very different
conditions. It discussed how despite the varied situations of Australia and Israel, multicultural societies have developed in both countries, comprising people of diverse ethnic backgrounds. While multiculturalism in Australia means that diversity is encouraged in all aspects of life, in Israel there is no official multicultural policy despite its diverse population, due to its geopolitical context. The consequence is, thus, that attitudes of assimilation are more present in Israeli Jewish society, and many immigrants see themselves belonging to a Jewish majority and not to an ethnic minority. The second and third sections dealt with the social and physical forms of the two cities, and how they accommodate migrants both socially and physically. Despite the differences in the way migrants have been accommodated throughout the years in both Melbourne and Tel Aviv metropolitan areas, the presence of a high percentage of migrants in the two cities has affected the cities’ development and physical form in different ways.

The Melbourne metropolitan area has expanded massively in the post-war years in its built-up area and in the number of residents. Many migrants who came to live around Melbourne in the 1950s and 1960s could not find housing and had to build their own houses in the suburbs, while others were lucky enough to find already built houses and settled in them. Most of them, who initially resided in inner-city suburbs, eventually moved to new suburbs on the edge of the city, expanding the city’s boundaries. Migrants who came to Melbourne in the past two decades did not have to deal with the shortage of housing, but they, too, were quickly aligned with the mainstream, finding a house and a backyard in the suburb.

The Tel Aviv metropolitan area has also been significantly affected by the settlement of migrants. In the post-war years many new towns were built around the fringe of the metropolitan area, as well as new neighbourhoods in existing towns. The Israeli government provided housing to hundreds of thousands of migrants who arrived in the country, building numerous new neighbourhoods of apartment blocks with public services around Tel Aviv. Since the 1950s and 1960s migration policies have changed and today migrants can choose where to settle. Many migrants who arrived in the last two decades chose to settle in metropolitan Tel Aviv, attracted to employment and housing opportunities provided by the major urban and economic city of Israel.

In spite of clear differences in the ways Australia and Israel utilise migrants as part of their nation-building projects, whether they let them settle on their own or provided assistance in their migration process and their first years, migrants who came to live in both cities had to adjust themselves to the mainstream form of life and
accept the norm of living in their host country. They had to adopt the dominant way of living and become part of the majority. Whether they live in detached houses in the suburbs, or in apartment blocks in the neighbourhoods, they had to accept the existing situation in the host land, and to find ways to make the most of it.

This chapter is essential to the exploration of this research because it sheds light on two essential differences of the two societies and built environments under investigation. The first is the different nature of the multicultural societies of Australia and Israel, where the former applies a policy of multiculturalism as part of its societal structure whereas the latter does not. This difference affects the extent to which participants are expected to assimilate and to take up values of the host society in each of the countries. The second difference lies in the built environments of the two cities; in Melbourne most of the population lives in detached houses in suburban environments, whereas in Tel Aviv most of the population lives in apartments in urban environments. This difference influences, inevitably, the nature of modifications and alterations that can be made to these home-environments.

This chapter concludes the first part of the thesis which discusses the bodies of theoretical, methodological and contextual knowledge. The second part contains the findings chapters, the discussion and the conclusions chapters. In the four following chapters the various migrant groups will be explored, with their specific histories and circumstances of migration. With a clear understanding of the existing situations of the built environment in Melbourne and Tel Aviv, the different ways in which each group of migrants alters their home-environments can be examined in detail.
PART II

THE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH AND ITS CONCLUSIONS
CASE STUDY I: THE ITALIAN GROUP IN METROPOLITAN MELBOURNE

5.1 Introduction

This chapter investigates the role of the physical form of housing in the process of settlement of ten Italian participants in various suburbs of Melbourne. A number of works have already commented on the importance of the home for Italian (and other South European) immigrants. Lozanovska (1995), for example, interprets the role of South European migrants' houses in Melbourne as a deconstruction attempt of the hegemonic culture in Australia and the construction of the migrants' identity. Allon (2002: 108) analyses the physical changes that have taken place in Earlwood, a suburb of Sydney, by South European immigrants, and argues that through the 'Mediterraneanised' houses the migrant 'residents evoke their translated identities and multiple belongings'. Baldassar (2001) presents two Italian houses in Perth that are taking part in their owners' home-building through the use of specific materials or a name tag, and Pulvirenti (2000: 237) discusses the significance of home-ownership for Italian Australians. These works are important for the understanding of various facets of Italian migrants' settlement, but not many of them have concentrated on the physical characteristics of the home as an architectural form and its importance in immigrants' home-building. This chapter will try to fill this gap.

Through an analysis of findings from interviews with the participants, the main argument presented here is that Italian participants attempt to enhance mostly the key feeling of familiarity in their home-building (Hage, 1997: 102), together with all other feelings. They do so through the construction of a gendered home, similar to what they had in Italy, and through the materiality of the house. Italians try to foster the feeling of familiarity through the utilisation of their interiors and exteriors alike. They utilise their backyards, front yards, furniture inside the house as well as collections of objects, to facilitate their home-building in Melbourne, and connect them with both their past lives in Italy and present lives in Melbourne.

The chapter reveals how this occurs through two main sections. The first section provides the historical, demographic and social background of the Italian immigration to Australia, with a focus on the Italian presence in Melbourne. It also tracks evidence of Italian character in housing in Melbourne, as has extensively been described in literature. The second section comprises findings from interviews with
their analysis. The main goal here is to explore the ways in which housing of Italian immigrants has played (and still plays) a role in their home-building in the city. The premise laid out here is that past homes in Italy influence, perhaps architecturally or at least conceptually, current houses in Melbourne. To explore this premise, analyses of two different houses are presented. The first house is the participants’ childhood houses in Italy. It is argued that these houses represent past times of familial morals and virtues. The second house is the participants’ current houses, which they occasionally call the ‘Dream House’. Links between these two houses are explored, in order to understand the role of the physical form of housing in the Italian immigrants’ home-building, from the early days before migration until this current day. The chapter begins with a background of the Italian immigration to Australia and to Melbourne.

5.2 Italian immigration to Australia

The Italian group is significant in Australia in both the social and the physical dimensions. This section explains how Italian Australians still form, in many senses, a united community in Australia and particularly in Melbourne. During the 19th century there was a small but steady flow of Italian immigrants to Australia. Since then, chain migration has always been a feature of that migration. Those already established helped recently arrived families from the same village or town to settle. Two important waves of Italian immigration took place, first in 1920s and then in the period following Second World War. The second wave was the most significant one, when thousands came to work in the newly industrialised cities and on massive engineering projects of the Australian government (Gobbo, 2005).

In the first two decades of the post-war period, the growth of the Italy-born Australian population was astounding. According to Census data, it increased nearly nine-fold between 1947 and 1971 (from 33,632 to 289,476). During the same period of time the number of overseas-born persons in Australia tripled (Ruzzene and Bastinston, 2006). The Italy-born population was heavily concentrated in blue-collar occupations, as both unskilled and skilled workers whose Italian-awarded qualifications were not recognised by Australian authorities, entered the labour market at the lowest point and in typically labour-intensive industries as manufacturing and construction (2006: 45).

Since this large-scale immigration ended in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the population of Italy-born Australians has aged significantly. Together with a dramatic decrease in Italian migration to Australia, this has directly affected the age
structure of the population of Italy-born Australians over the last three decades, since the 1980s. In the 2001 Census the Italy-born population still formed the largest NESB\textsuperscript{12} group and was fourth under ‘Country of Birth’. However, in the 2006 Census Italy was the second large NESB group (after China), and fifth under ‘Country of Birth’ (after Australia, England, New Zealand and China) (ABS, 2006).

The distribution pattern of the Italian-Australian population has changed significantly between 1947 and 1971. The majority now lives in Melbourne and Sydney due to the heavy concentration of unskilled migrant labourers in urban and industrial areas of the two cities in the post-war decades (Ruzzene and Bastiston, 2006). According to the 2006 Census there were 199,123 people from Italy in Australia, which represents 1.0 percent of the total population and 852,417 people with an Italian ancestry, which represent over 3.3 of the total Australian population. Melbourne is the capital city with the largest population of Italy-born persons, as shown in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1 – Italian Australians’ distribution in Australian capital cities (Source: ABS, 2006).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CAPITAL CITY</th>
<th>NUMBER OF PERSONS</th>
<th>% OF ALL ITALIAN AUSTRALIANS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Melbourne</td>
<td>73,081</td>
<td>37.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sydney</td>
<td>44,563</td>
<td>22.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adelaide</td>
<td>20,878</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perth</td>
<td>18,815</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brisbane</td>
<td>6,706</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The social status of Italian immigrants in Australia has also changed throughout the years. When the Australian government realised British migration proved unattainable, it aimed at Southern European migration, with policies designed for complete social and cultural assimilation ‘so that the immigrant would become indistinguishable from the Anglo-Australian population’ (Castles, 1992: 51). Government policies included the provision of initial accommodation, generally in hostels and camps, as well as help in finding work. Good Neighbour Councils were set up to create goodwill between migrants and Australians at the local level. Apart from these efforts to help, however, there were also signs of discrimination. Non-British migrants had to register their addresses with the police. Assimilation policies supported a total immersion of the newcomers in Australian society. There was public discrimination against people speaking other languages, who were expected to speak English or nothing at all in public places (Castles, 1992). This was linked to the prevailing idea that only the

\textsuperscript{12} Non-English speaking background.
Anglo-Australian culture was legitimate, while all other cultures in Australia should disappear. But by the 1960s, with the influence of international movements, the Australian assimilation agenda started to be questioned. During the early 1970s a reform that included new policies towards migrants was introduced, together with non-discriminatory immigration rules. The multicultural agenda has changed the social status of Italian immigrants in Australia and they became more received by the Australian society. Other influences, including new appreciation of foods, sports and design, have contributed to the change in social attitudes towards Italian-Australians, and their contribution to Australian society gradually seemed invaluable (Pascoe, 1992).

5.2.1 The Italian presence in Melbourne

Historically, the inner suburb of Carlton has long been associated with Italian immigrants, since they first began arriving around mid-19th century. Carlton and North Carlton were working-class suburbs from the 1880s until 1960s, and therefore attracted many Italian immigrants because of cheap housing and close proximity to factories in nearby suburbs (Sagazio, 2004: 74). It is not only those two reasons that attracted Italians to Carlton, however, but also the hostile reception that Southern Europeans in general received from the wider Anglo-Australian community. Also, the need to share a home in the inner suburbs was a necessity in the first years of settlement for most Italian immigrants. During the 1960s Carlton became known as 'Little Italy', with its own Italian cafes, shops, schools, newspapers and social and welfare organisations. This enabled Italian-Australians to keep links with their community of origin and to maintain their dialects and cultural practices (Sagazio, 2004: 85). Thus, before and during the 1960s Italian-Australians formed a distinct group within the Australian society, with its spatial concentration, own organisations and support network.

From the mid-1960s and mainly during the 1970s a large number of Italian and other Southern European migrants moved out of the central area of Carlton to the surrounding suburbs, especially to northern and western suburbs of Melbourne (Castles, 1992: 51), chasing their dream of larger houses with gardens (Sagazio, 2004: 92). As of today, Italians have the highest rate of home-ownership of any ethnic group in Australia (Pulvirenti, 2000; Sagazio, 2004). This may reflect their peasant origins and quest for security for old age (Sagazio, 2004: 90), or may be understood within a broader sense of Sistemazione or 'settling down', which means having a place and a sense of belonging in Australia (Pulvirenti, 2000: 248).
Today, there are 73,801 Italy-born persons, which form 2.1% of the total population in metropolitan Melbourne (ABS, 2006). According to the 2006 census, Italy is placed third under ‘Country of Birth’ in Melbourne (after Australia and England). Table 5.2 shows the decreasing rates of the Italy-born population in Melbourne.

Table 5.2 - Number of Italy-born persons in Melbourne (Source: ABS, 2006).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>1996</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2006</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of persons</td>
<td>88,127</td>
<td>80,649</td>
<td>73,801</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of total population of Melbourne</td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>2.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth rates</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the 2001 census, the highest concentration of people born in Italy was in the northern and western suburbs of Melbourne, and there were also high percentages in some eastern, south-eastern and southern suburbs of the city (ABS, 2003). Figure 5.1 clearly demonstrates this distribution, where darker red areas signify a stronger presence of Italian population. It is evident that even though Italian-Australians have moved out of Carlton, they still tend to concentrate in specific suburbs of Melbourne.

Figure 5.1 - Distribution of Italy-born persons in Melbourne (Based on ABS, 2001).

Of the four groups examined in this research, the Italian group is definitely the most documented. It has generated a large amount of local literature regarding its architectural influence on the urban landscape of Melbourne. The next section explores the character of Italian housing as presented in this literature.
5.2.2 Italian housing in Melbourne

Throughout the 19th century, admiration for Italian symbols and architecture was reflected in attitudes of middle- and upper-class Australians. The bourgeoisie learnt Italian and merchants and farmers built their houses in ‘Italian-Style’, decorating them with Italian statues, marble and furniture (Borgo, 2006: 2; Boyd, 1952: 51). In their identification of Australian architecture, Apperly et al. (1989: 70-73) present a style named ‘Victorian Italianate’, mostly evident in the second half of 19th century, as an illustration of the Italian influence on upper-class Australians. This happened when Italian immigration to Australia was only at its beginning. After the second large wave of Italian immigration, during the post-war period, the Italian presence became more noticeable in Melbourne’s landscape. The physical transformations wrought by Italian-Australians, however, have been described in great details in other works (see Borgo, 2006; Willingham, 2004) and will be briefly illustrated here.

During the 1950s and 1960s, with the second immigration wave from Italy, newly arrived Italian migrants found accommodation in Carlton’s many boarding houses run by fellow migrants. They were willing to share their rooms and to sacrifice their privacy in order to buy, in relatively short time, their own homes. The homes purchased by Italians were terrace or small Victorian and Edwardian-style cottages in inner suburbs, often rundown (Borgo, 2006: 4). The modifications of these houses consisted both of exteriors and interiors. The new residents chose not to restore the rundown properties according to their original style, but instead to modernise and set up their own understanding of what an Italian home should look like. Exterior walls were painted with cheerful colours, porches were repaved with tiles, wrought-iron friezes were removed from the front porch and picket or wrought-iron fences were replaced with rendered concrete or exposed bricks. Columns and posts decorated the exterior, and front porches were decorated with flowers grown in pots. Pergolas were built in backyards which were usually reserved for cultivation of vegetables, grapes and olive plants. Interiors were also transformed from the dark wooden Victorian style to become light-filled and minimalist. Wooden floors were replaced with tiles or linoleum, aluminium window frames replaced timber sash windows and windows were protected with roller-shutters that were unfamiliar to local homes at that time (Borgo, 2006: 4; Church, 2005: 70).

Most of these signs of Italian presence are no longer visible in Carlton’s streetscape. During the 1970s and the 1980s young middle-class Australians came to live in the inner suburbs, filling the vacuum left by Italian and other South European immigrants who moved to outer suburbs of Melbourne. They purchased many of the
once Italian dwellings and ‘set about undoing what they perceived to be aesthetically unacceptable aspects of the Mediterranean idiom in Carlton’ (Willingham, 2004: 483). Willingham provides a detailed account of what he dubs ‘The Mediterranean Idiom’:

The Mediterranean idiom or sub-style in housing in Melbourne is characterised firstly by the heavily modified facades of suburban housing in the inner suburbs, and then by the grandiose pseudo-Italianate villas erected on standard building lots in the outer suburbs in the late twentieth century (2004: 473).

Likewise, Apperly et al. (1989: 270-271) identify their second ‘Italian’ style which they name ‘Late Twentieth-Century Immigrants’ Nostalgic’. They explain that when Italian and Southern European immigrants were in the position to build houses for themselves, they wanted the building to express two things: ‘the fact that they had ‘made’ it in a new country and a recollection of the culture from which they had come’. The resultant houses usually made loose references to the architecture of Southern Europe. The broader appearance was more important than the accuracy of details. The researchers provide a detailed portrayal of the typical house:

[It] was two-storeyed and symmetrical, with central external stair and verandah edged with bulbous Baroque balusters of precast concrete. The front elevation featured walls of buff or brown face brickwork pierced by large arched openings.

The same treatment was often used to transform old houses in established suburbs. Apparently, this architectural style generated some denigration from non-immigrant architects during the 1970s and 1980s. Figure 5.2 illustrates the kind of house described above.

None of the participants of this research resides in the kind of house depicted by Apperly et al., but some of the unique details appear in many of their houses. In addition, most of the participants clearly follow the path of the Italian-Australian group in Melbourne, moving from inner-city suburbs to outer suburbs.
5.2.3 Characteristics of Italian participants in this research

Ten Italian participants were interviewed in this research in September and October 2007 and July 2008, of them six women and four men. Seven migrated to Australia during the 1950s and three migrated in the 1960s, but all migrated at a relatively young age: two when they were still young children (under ten years of age), one as an adolescent and the rest as young adults. Now the participants’ ages vary between 60 and 85 years old. All of them except one came from northern regions of Italy, around Venice or near the border with what was Yugoslavia at the time. Only one migrated from a southern region of Italy. This does not represent Italian immigration to Melbourne, where the majority migrated from Southern Italy (Ware, 1981: 28). Most of the participants came from villages; only three came from cities and one from a small town. This does represent Italian immigration to Australia as the majority came from rural areas (Castles, 1992; Church, 2005; Sagazio, 2004). Not all of the participants’ families owned their place of residence in Italy. Most farmers owned their farmhouses, while most urban residents lived in rented apartments. They comprise six married couples, three widowed women, and one divorced man. All married couples are both Italians except one Italian man who is married to an Anglo-Australian woman.

Recruiting participants was not easy. Having no previous relations with Italian-Australians forced me to search creatively in Italian organisations and associations. Finally, the Veneto club in the eastern suburb of Bulleen was reached. Thus, seven of
the participants were approached in a monthly lunch of senior citizens from the Veneto region of Italy. One participant was found through another Italian club of the south region of Calabria. The other two were found through work connections. The participants’ dwellings are spread around the eastern, northern and western middle- and outer-ring suburbs of Box Hill, Bulleen, Kew, Reservoir and Deer Park, with two exceptions in the inner-ring suburbs of Collingwood and North Fitzroy, as can be seen in Figure 5.3.

Figure 5.3 – Participants’ distribution around metropolitan Melbourne.

The interviews took place in the participants' current homes, and in the case of the couples, sometimes involved more than one participant. They were semi-structured and the participants were asked, apart from telling their stories of immigration and settlement in Melbourne, to describe their past homes in Italy, as well as to draw a sketch of both past and current homes. No instructions were given and they could draw whatever they liked (a plan of the house, a façade, or just a mental map of how they perceived the house). The interviews included a tour in the house and backyard, with photographs taken during it. Other photographs of the house in Italy, if they existed and were available, were collected as well. The following sections discuss two houses in different times and places (e.g. before and after migration and in Italy and Melbourne) of Italian participants. To get a clear picture of the participants' names and main characteristics, see Appendix F. The names given to participants and listed in Appendix F are pseudonyms.
5.3 Former home in the homeland: memories of a previous house

This section discusses the participants’ former houses in Italy, in order to understand what these past houses mean within the process of migration, settlement and building a new home in Melbourne. The houses discussed here are located in Italy of fifty or sixty years ago. This section follows the participants’ narratives through their memories and reminiscences. Nostalgia has various definitions, and can be understood as a type of autobiographical memory (Wilson, 2005). It is important to remember that people do engage in selective memory and it is hard to determine if memories are complete or form only part of the picture. But, I do not seek any absolute truth. For me, the picture participants chose to share in their interviews is the complete picture, even if something was missing or something did or did not occur exactly the way it was described.

In this section I argue that past houses of Italian participants in this research are looked upon as a symbol of rich community and family life, representing family ideals and values. Taking that role, past houses are chiefly understood as the goal for which one should aim, something that needs to be achieved and reconstructed in the new country. The physical structure of the house is perceived as the backdrop of happy memories, and thus is always considered well designed and satisfying. Because participants relied on their memories it was difficult sometimes to discuss material aspects of the house. They often drifted towards emotions generated by the task of describing the physical form of their childhood house.

The young age of the participants when migrating to Australia might explain the nostalgic manner and positive memories regarding their former housing in Italy. They fondly recalled the house of their childhood, whether it was a rural villa or an urban apartment. The organisation of spaces in the house was always described in great detail and a vivid manner. Most of the farmhouses had a courtyard, both for the animals and the children to play. John, coming from a medium-sized city of 250,000 inhabitants, notes his apartment was located in ‘the best part of town’ and contained everything they needed at that time, including a radio, and its organisation was the best for their requirements. It is not only the organisation of spaces but also the location of the house which reminds the participants of happy times. Most of the farmhouses were located near the centre of the village, or were close enough to get to by bicycle. Laura still misses the proximity to the beach of her family’s urban apartment because she could see the beach from the fifth floor and used to go swimming. Here, she reflects, she misses the beach even though she has a caravan.
by the beach just two hours away, because there ‘we could just open the window and see the water’. When asked about the arrangement of the apartment Laura states:

Yeah, I loved it because it was very cosy and when the family was coming we were a lot of people, we used to go to the corridor too, it was very cosy. To me it was very nice. It’s better than what it is now, they have big places and you’re not allowed to touch this or... at this stage it was just family together. Now the family is not together like it used to be. There, everybody is for himself. When you are going there, yes, they are with you, but if not they don’t see each other for years. And they are living about five minutes away so... you know.

Laura, like other participants, equates the house to the family and adds a moral value to it when she contrasts it with the way the physical structure has become more important than the family in Italy of today. Laura feels that her once-shared values with her past community and family no longer exist, and that current homes in Italy do not provide, thus, the feelings of familiarity and community (Hage, 1997).

For the participants, the childhood house symbolises family ideals of sharing quality time together, before the modern era of television and other technologies. When asked what the most important space in the house was they all agreed it was the kitchen. The kitchen, in Italy of post Second World War, contained a fireplace and thus was warm. Loretta remembers the kitchen as the warmest room of the home and where the family spent most of the time. Donna agrees:

Well, there was the kitchen, well, that’s how it was, you know, the kitchen as I remember, yeah, it was the kitchen, we had nice cooking things and it kept you warm because, you know, in those days it was wooden and we had a table in the middle alright? That is we were eating and the little sink but the kitchen was the most important in those days because everybody was gathering in the kitchen for the meals and everything, it’s not like here you have the lounge, you know there was no TV in those days so my uncle used to come to my place and my father and my two brothers and my uncle used to play cards you know, just typical family you know like that.

In Donna’s account the family is divided along traditional gender roles, as the men play cards after dinner while the women (most likely) take care of the cleaning. Indeed, family life in the pre-modern house is often mentioned and linked to the way family is perceived, within a gendered view of the home. Gendered roles were very clear, before modernity has brought modern systems and technologies (such as having a toilet in the house) as common feature in the houses.
It seems that modernity has introduced not only technological improvements to houses but also vast changes to the way families are perceived regarding time spent together. In the pre-modern era time spent among family members was valued for its togetherness, whereas today a few of the participants emphasise how they view contemporary family life as alienated and isolated. The reason for that is perhaps not only technology and modern life but also changes in familial structures and arrangements, with relatives who do not live in close proximity as has been the case in the past. Many participants criticise this change, expressing reminiscence of past times of family gatherings in the house.

To the question of what made this house a home, the participants respond that this is where their family was, the only place they knew and where they felt safe and secure. Rita explains:

I mean, we didn’t have the luxury that we’ve got these days, but we had this big kitchen, we had a nice bedroom, […] I don’t know, you were born and lived in a farm area all the time and you don’t know the difference, you know, yeah.

Rita contrasts luxuries of today with past modest homes, yet does not suggest it has affected the feeling of home as the only familiar place for a child. The home, to her, was the best place to be and in fact the only place she knew at that time. Figure 5.4 illustrates the way she perceives her past farm house in Italy.

In Rita’s drawing the home appears complete and full. It has a cheerful character, perhaps implying a jolly life taking place in it, with its large yard in the middle, a massive structure overlooking the yard and a smaller stable at the back in the left-hand side. In the right-hand side adjacent to the central yard is the animals’ yard. The yard links to the main road with a narrower pathway that starts from a gate in the yard fence. It has a quality of wholeness, as if the house is the world and nothing more is needed.
Lorenzo describes his childhood in a farmhouse, after his father had already migrated to Australia and before the rest of the family joined him:

It was a home in the sense that although we didn't have my father, my mum was there, my aunts, other relatives visiting, my grandfather lived in the next village - my mother's father - he would come and visit and we visit him, I mean it was a community. We went to school, we went to church, it was part of, the village is very small, six hundreds people, we were part of that, everyone knew us, we knew everyone else. It was very safe and secure, we were incredibly happy, even though my father wasn’t there. But I didn’t feel this huge, sometimes, but not constant missing him, we were busy growing up.

As a young child growing up in that house, Lorenzo highlights the significance of social relations of extended family and community life in a small village. Lorenzo’s farmhouse is shown in Figure 5.5.
It is apparent that the house is very large, solid and massive and thus may symbolise the extended family that lived in it, and the solid structure of social life and community networks within the village. This social aspect of life in Italy is important as much, if not more, as the physical structure of the house. The community life, with its shared values and symbols (Hage, 1997), will always be something participants will try to regain.

Laura, too, stresses the meaning of her social life as an adolescent growing up in a city apartment:

...[T]he window was one in the garden because we had a public garden, each flat got a public garden so we can play with the kids, you know in Europe you play [until] eight at night after dinner you go there and you play, when it's summer. In the back my mother had her bedroom, we used to have, just to see the beach and everything, [...] flowers but the flowers not like here, just in the windows, and I used to have a lot of friends there, so we used to have 4-5 flats, each flat got 5 storey thing, so it was kids everywhere, it was an ordinary flat, it wasn't a big deal like now.

Like Lorenzo, Laura misses not only the physical structure of the apartment but also the social life which revolved around it with children playing together. She contrasts her playful life with her new life in Australia, where, she implies, children do not play outside after dinner. By that she loads the house of her childhood with another set of
emotional meanings of vitality and vibrant social life, added to the presence of community, compared to, perhaps, loneliness and dullness of her new house(s) in Australia where she had no community in her first years. Laura came to Australia at the age of fifteen and believes that her childhood ended then with the need to go to work and help her parents financially. Before emigrating she would go to school, roller-skate with her brother around her building and life was full of joy:

Yeah, I remember everything, it was nice there, I mean it was school and swimming, roller-skate, this sort of things. When I came here I had to go to work because it wasn’t enough money and you had to go to work so fifteen and half going to work and come from doing nothing and washing my clothes by hand and everything, it was bad, I was crying all the time.

The joyful life ended with the move to Australia. In Figure 5.6, illustration of Laura’s apartment block includes not only the building but also the words Terrace and Rolling-skate, to emphasise the importance of these two elements within everyday activities around the apartment (another feature in the drawing is a fountain that will be discussed shortly).

Figure 5.6 - Laura’s drawing of past home in Italy.

Another example of the importance of the physical structure of the house in the life of the participants is presented in Figure 5.7, showing Bruno’s large farmhouse near Venice. He lived in a community of 45 families called Contrara, which is smaller than a village. As Bruno describes, this community comprised different families that were joined together over the years. Bruno’s house was located at the right-hand side of the image, behind the wall. One can see evidence of social life taking place in the public realm of this settlement, the pathway, with children riding bicycles and chatting. Again, the structure is massive and represents the strong social structure of the place. According to Bruno, when the Germans invaded Italy, they came to this settlement
and were scared to get in through the gate and thus stayed outside. Hence, the physical structure not only comprises social virtues but also stood against evil forces, resisting the Nazi invasion.

Asked about building materials of the house, some mention it was built with ‘real’ stones and not brick veneered, as is seen in Lorenzo’s and Bruno’s houses. They also mention that tiles, the symbol of Italian buildings, were often used. Sometimes the tiles were marble, as Laura states, ‘because there marble doesn’t cost much’, and often the floor was parquetry (mostly in urban apartments and not in farmhouses), as in Australia, but they also note the time-gap of more than 50 years, and the fact that everything, in terms of building materials and techniques, has changed since.

**Figure 5.7 - Bruno’s farmhouse, 1961 (Source: Bruno’s private collection).**

Discussion of what is left from the house in Italy evokes memories and sometimes sad feelings of loss. Some of the old villas had been sold and renovated by new owners. Letting go the family property and erasing completely all physical ties to the homeland is heartbreaking, but retaining the old house would have involved investment of a great deal of money that is not possible for many. Valerie, Lorenzo’s Anglo-Australian wife, beautifully describes this process:

> And the family inherited, Lorenzo and his brothers and sister inherited this house, could be, could have been magnificent but you would have to spend a lot of money to renovate it and now, and now you have to live quite close to it and all those things and none of us could get the time to go over there
and stay there enough to want pouring money into it. [...] Because it's not, you know, probably in 50 years it'll be a sought after private little thing and be worth a lot of money but in our life time it's not worth doing that to it. However, some, a young couple, an artist and I don't know what she, I think, I don't know, maybe she was even an architect, bought the house for a small amount of money but has spent three years renovating it, absolutely exclusively. So this has happened in our absence but the next time we will go we will take photographs of the house because [...] So anyway, that it's a joy for us to know that it's been loved and looked after and brought back to life so…

This paragraph demonstrates the strong connection with the physical structure of the old house and the emotions it still carries. It is not only family gatherings but the physical form of the house that evokes memories and recollection. It was at the backdrop of happy times and thus carries powerful emotions. Not only that, it is expressed by Lorenzo's wife who did not spend her childhood there, and who is familiar only with the physical form of the house.

Italian participants of this research recall their houses as part of a joyful childhood. It was a symbol of rich family life, albeit lacking luxuries of modern societies but consisting of warm social relations among extended families and community. They believe the location and organisation of spaces were suitable for their needs at that time, and emphasise how life was good at that house in those times. As Rita comments: ‘Oh yes, we were happy there, brought up in that house…’.

The house, in their view, is very much connected with family and community values and ideals. In fact, it seems that in many times the house is actually the family. When family cracks and spreads around the world, when life changes and stability no longer exist, the house shatters too. Then participants look for another house to reconstruct, this time one of their own. This supports Pulvirenti’s (2000) understanding of sistemazione, of the search for a feeling of belonging in Australia.

Italian participants love and cherish what they have built in Australia, yet enjoy visiting their past homes in their thoughts and recollecting some of their most hidden memories. Some find it disturbing to revisit the past, as Tanya observes while looking at old photographs of the house (referring to her late husband): ‘…oh so many memories Iris, so many memories…see the house, this is one of the last [works] that he’s done’. But nevertheless, she finds it pleasant after all. Tanya was ready with a big pile of photographs when I came to interview her and was anxious to share them with me.
In conclusion, the participants warmly recall their childhood and the house in which they grew up. They remember it as a perfect place to spend one's childhood and love the way life took place in the house, treasuring family memories it evokes. Through analysis of interviews, it is clear that Italian participants link their past homes in Italy with joyful memories of early family days of togetherness. In the next sections it is argued that the past house, as a symbol of community and family ideals, stands always at the backdrop of the current house. The participants try to promote the feeling of familiarity through the use of their former ‘Italian’ practices (Fortier, 1999). They are not trying to replicate this house in a physical manner, but it is there as a social and familial reference. In that it seems to help them settle in the new country, connects them with past and present communities, and provides a sense of familiarity with the unknown.

5.4 Making a new home: the current house

The main focus of this section is the current houses in which interviews took place. The houses were both the setting and the centre of conversation. Participants could actually describe their surroundings and explain its development and improvement throughout the years. They could also point to specific material objects in the house to better explain their thoughts, look around and discuss what they saw, as opposed to the past house where they conversed relying almost solely on their memory, sometimes with the help of the photo album. One couple, Rita and her husband, had already moved from their big suburban house to a small nearby suburban unit, but all other participants were interviewed in the house where they have spent most of their years, or at least a significant number of years, in Melbourne. The section discusses three aspects of this house: 1. the construction of the house; 2. home-building practices; and 3. the hybrid existence of its dwellers.

5.4.1 Constructing the house

After renting small flats in inner-city suburbs, most of the participants purchased their own plot of land in outer suburbs of Melbourne. Only one couple and two families (of young participants) stayed in inner-city suburbs. The reason for moving to outer suburbs was the search for a large block of land and the relatively low cost of land in outer suburbs. As Loretta puts it when talking about her late husband:

Then he bought the place […] my husband, he came from the farm in Italy, he liked working in the farm, he missed the farm because in here he worked in the factory, so he wanted a block of land to have something to
do when we came. And the block was big enough, the house was terrible, it is no beautiful now but it was that time, it was terrible.

The importance of the big block of land is to enable the reproduction of farm life. Laura, too, mentions that the reason for choosing their location was that it was a farm area and they had horses in a nearby block. They liked the ample land, where they could have chickens and dogs and some of the spirit of Italian farmhouses. Although Laura came from a city, her husband was a village man.

Four of the participants built their own house in outer suburbs. The other six bought a house already built, three in outer suburbs and three in inner-city suburbs. Those who built their own home did it themselves with the help of Italian friends. Rita explains that process:

Then the dream of everybody that you want a new house, you want something nice, ah, in ’75 I think, yeah, ’75-’76 we sold that house and we bought a land in [an eastern suburb], and my husband, he was working for the builder [and] without help he built his own house, so we sold the house and with the money of that house we bought the land and we waited for a few months until the other house was ready and then we moved in, we stayed there for 23 years I think…

Rita interprets the building of this house as the achievement of ‘the dream’, and not only her dream but everybody’s. For her it was the third house they owned, following a flat in an inner-city suburb that paved the way to a weatherboard house in another outer suburb. Thus, this ‘dream house’ forms the top of the ladder where one can build and express his most secret desires and wishes (Dovey, 1999). For Rita, this house enhances the feeling of a sense of possibility (Hage, 1997) with its embodied cultural capital, which serves Italian immigrants to establish social status in the new society (Ong, 1999).

Dream houses were built slowly, bit by bit. Most of the construction work was done by the man of the house, and in more difficult cases (for example when concrete floors needed to be laid out) there was help from the community. It then became a kind of an Italian festivity (Church, 2005): on Saturday and Sunday everybody came to the house, and while the men worked together from sunrise to sunset the hostess cooked and kept everything in order. The next weekend they would all go to help another family. In this ritual, gendered constructions of the home are evident. Both women and men have their own separate roles in the process of building. Most of the northern Italians worked as builder’s labourers for Italian contractors (Sagazio, 2004), so they knew something about construction. This brings to mind Polish migrants in
London who build homes for other people, while aspiring to build future homes in Poland (Datta, 2008). The experience of building a home, a deeply masculine act, ascribes cultural meanings of dwelling that are inherently corporal. Just like Polish builders who see Polish homes as ‘superior’ to English homes, so did Italians feel their ‘Italian’ ways of buildings were better. Even if they did not know how to do the job, they would learn it in order to save money, as Laura notes:

…they used to learn how to do [it] because they couldn’t afford anything, so everybody was doing, they used to learn concreting and fencing, they used to do gardening, because they couldn’t afford it and they used to have two jobs so, you know... it’s not [like] that now.

Similar to the case of Polish builders in London, the significance of the home for Italian families lies in the act of building it and thus the home becomes personalised and meaningful (Datta, 2008). For the Italians, there was also the added value of community support and maintenance, embodied in the act of building. The construction of the gendered home was done through its materiality. The feeling of familiarity in the house (Hage, 1997) was enhanced through these acts of building according to the ‘Italian ways’ of building.

Questions about the design of the houses generated some laughs. According to the participants, nobody designed at that time, they just built. Design is something people do nowadays, but in those days they simply built their houses. If there was an architect involved, it was certainly an Italian, and building materials were also not a part of any design aspirations. They just used everything that was available and affordable, thus the choice of material was not an issue. They saw houses around them and duplicated what they liked. Some of them had no idea of how to build, so they used material that was in the market and was cheap enough. Bruno, who purchased a house in an inner-city suburb, made some renovations to make it suitable for a family, as before them it was occupied by three families, comprising three kitchens and three chimneys. Tanya describes the way they altered the house to create a more inhabitable dwelling, because before ‘it was a pig sty’! But everything was done because of necessity rather than the sake of beauty desires.

Figure 5.8 shows architectural schemes of Laura’s house, drawn for a building permit. The house’s structure is simple, built with the available knowledge and material in Melbourne at the time. It is a typical house of the 1950s, with the timber structure, brick veneer and an elevated element, a representative of the DIY period caused by housing scarcity of the time (Davison and Dingle, 1995). Other participants who purchased already built houses fixed them according to their needs. Carmen’s
house, for example, was a weatherboard house but soon after purchasing they changed the wooden window frames to aluminium to alleviate maintenance work. Tanya and her husband did the same and also replaced the weatherboard walls with bricks to keep maintenance low.

Figure 5.8 – Building permit for Laura’s house, 1956 (Source: Laura’s private collection).

It seems that these houses were not physically designed to be the ‘dream houses’ they were perhaps meant to be, mostly because of lack of financial resources and time. They were not luxurious houses or exclusively designed. They were built with modest resources and means, as fast as was possible in order to be occupied by the families, and were modest in their character. To their inhabitants, however, they did not need to be special. In their existence they were fulfilling this dream by simply being owned (Pulvirenti, 2000), built or renovated in specific ways to provide a familiar place, a sense of possibility and a link to community through their existence (Hage, 1997).

5.4.2 Home-building practices

Once the houses were built or renovated to serve the needs of the new families, they became homes. All the participants love their house and feel at home there, because they built it or renovated it according to their own needs. They like the house because it suits them, and they feel comfortable there. An important issue that was emphasised
in four of the interviews, especially by women participants, was that even though the house is comfortable, it is not luxurious. Tanya mentions and Rita agrees that their house was simple but comfortable. They had exactly what they needed to make their lives comfortable but nothing more, according to Rita:

[I]t was a nice new home but not a luxury home like a lot of people had, we had always been normal working people, nothing special. Nothing, we didn’t have a lot of money to be…

It is important to Rita to stress that they belong to the working-class and it seems that this is a defined attribute in her self-perception, seeing herself and her husband as immigrants with no spare resources. Nevertheless, Rita’s husband installed some features in the house that helped her to handle the household chores, such as a laundry ‘tunnel’ to connect the ground floor and the basement. In that sense the house became even more practical and well-suited to their needs. It was adapted and custom-made by the handy husband, thus becoming a unique house that perfectly serves this specific family. Many other houses were continually adjusted by their dwellers. While gendered views of family relations were presence, houses were positioned as elements of the everyday: they became products of tinkering and adjusting, of everydayness, like Tom’s garden (Ruddick, 1997), perhaps resisting the dominant aesthetics (Lozanovska, 2008). The houses supported the feeling of familiarity through these minor adjustments, making them more convenient and well-suited to their inhabitants.

Rita and her husband are the only couple who had left their dream house and moved to the next stage, the retiree house. They decided to ‘be prepared for the old age’ rather than wait until they are too old to make a change. They purchased a unit in a nearby suburb, closer to a shopping centre and are quite happy with the move. Despite its being much smaller, they have found that this unit is serving their needs while alleviating the need to take care of the back and front yards as before. They still have a very small backyard which gives them great pleasure, and have managed to relocate almost all their furniture in the new place, having enough room to host Christmas family gatherings. They chose a two-storeyed unit despite their wish to move to a one-storeyed unit, because this one was available and they could move in straight away. But they have detailed plans for future days in case they will not be able to use the second floor. Again, Rita mentions the financial factor when she describes her choice to live in the two-storeyed unit without living temporarily in a rented flat or with the children: ‘we’re not people with money, we’re just pensioners and live the best way we can’. The desire for home-ownership, even after so many years of living in
their own home, supports Pulvirenti’s (2000) notion of sistemazione and also can point to Rita’s and her husband’s wish to enhance the feeling of security (Hage, 1997), by living in a house where they govern and rule.

The decision of Rita and her husband to move to a smaller house reflects a phenomenon discussed in some of the interviews with real-estate agents in Melbourne. Damian, himself of Italian origin, notes in his eastern suburb office that many European migrants with big homes and big families are selling their houses...

...because they are getting in their 60s perhaps even 70s and the room is not necessary, they don’t need a house with a swimming pool and a tennis court and a big garden to maintain, and they are downsizing to homes such as the one [in Fig. 5.9], which is still grand in the way the house, because I guess lack of a better term there is a bit of ego in the home if you like, still, they come from such a large home but not necessarily with maintenance, they can lock the door and go to Queensland for three months and come back and the house is exactly the same.

The house is still a source of pride and pleasure as it has been in the past and Damian uses the word ‘ego’ to denote its significance to migrants in Melbourne. It is still an important source of ‘objectified cultural capital’ (Bourdieu, 1984 [1979]). ‘Dream houses’ of Italian (and other Southern European) migrants, according to the professionals, would have large backyards for vegetable gardens and large lounges for entertaining big families. These are no longer needed and thus new houses are still large but are more practical and easier to maintain. This type of housing is called by these professionals ‘smart living’ or ‘smart blocks’, meaning large structures on small blocks. Figure 5.9 illustrates a brochure obtained from Damian’s office of this kind of home, targeted specifically at retirees.
All other participants are still residing in their dream houses (except the two younger participants, Lorenzo and John, who moved out from their parents’ dream houses). All of them see it as a home in the sense that it is very comfortable and they feel free to do whatever they want and to be whoever they want. These houses increase the feelings of both familiarity and security, because participants possess maximum spatial knowledge of it and can do whatever they want in it. As Tanya explains:

I like about this house, I like it because we fixed it up at least more decent than what we found and for me I wouldn’t change not for a way in the world because I feel more comfortable here, if I want to lie down with the shoes I lie down with the shoes, if I want to take it off I take it off, you know, if I want to go bare nude I can go you know? For me my house is everything Iris, I like to go out but I like to come back home, you know?

It is clear that the house serves, in some aspects, as a haven or a refuge from the outside world (Dovey, 1985). This is almost always true but this function of the house is even more important for immigrants, who sometimes find life outside the home a constant everyday struggle (Thompson, 1994). Laura says her house is a home for her because it entails all her memories and she feels comfortable in it. It might be that the notion of comfort was raised because sometimes the participants felt uncomfortable outside the house, in the very different Australian society. But it is important to remember that the participants have been living in Australia for fifty or
sixty years, so this issue is not very acute today. The house is where Italian participants can perform their habitus and ‘Italian’ practices to the maximum (Bourdieu, 2005; Fortier, 1999).

The spaces participants use mostly in the house vary. Four participant women said they mostly use the kitchen, as the locus of gendered practices, because it still plays a central role in family gatherings today. The kitchen is the place where migrant women in Western Australia construct their feeling ‘at home’ by their central place in it (Supski, 2006: 133). Thus, for some immigrant women, the kitchen is the building block for constructing their home (Hage, 1997: 102). This is also where Italian food is prepared and the children with their own families come to eat. As food has a significant value in Italian culture, it is understandable why the kitchen is so crucial to the feeling of home in Italian houses. It produces the feeling of familiarity through the cooking of familiar foods and the preservation of familiar rituals around meals. But not all cook only Italian food, as many families have inter-married between ethnicities. For instance, Laura’s son-in-law is a Russian Jew and she cooks also Russian and other kinds of food.

Trying to trace home-building practices, participants were asked if they can think of any special ‘things’ that they do to help them feel more at home, perhaps similar to ‘things’ they did in Italy. Most of them said they do nothing at all that reminds them Italy or what they did in Italy. For example, Laura says she is different from other Italian immigrants because she ‘does not care for any Italian things’. She buys what she likes, especially as opposed to her mother who was very sentimental. Laura migrated when she was fifteen and might have distanced herself from Italian practices and performance of identity. Yet, there were many signs of ‘Italian’ home-building practices, even in her home. Laura has two pictures of Italian cities on her lounge’s wall. These pictures might be interpreted as links to past places and communities in Italy. Loretta, who is older and arrived in Australia as a young adult, believes she decorated her house according to ‘Italian taste’, with family pictures on the wall, flowered curtains and wallpaper, as shown in Figure 5.10, even though her furniture and wallpaper were purchased in Melbourne. She also mentions the shutters in the house were done in the ‘Italian way’ and not in the ‘Australian way’. The ‘Italian way’ was what they knew from Italy, and thus it supports the argument that Italians seek to enhance the feeling of familiarity in their houses.
Four other participants have numerous souvenirs and knick-knacks from Italy in their homes. They did not see it as home-building practices but it is hard to ignore this domestic materiality. The souvenir can be understood as if it speaks in a language of longing, because it is not an object that was purchased out of need or for use value. Its value arises from its nostalgic quality (Stewart, 1984: 135). In these cases it is not only Italy that is the origin of the souvenirs, but other countries where the residents or other relatives have visited in the past. Souvenirs are often found in the kitchen, with the collection of fridge magnets or plates on the wall. Others locate their family photographs in great density on the lounge walls. When showing these objects, the participants were often very proud of their collection, as evidence of the trails they have left around the world. Figure 5.11 shows Loretta’s collection of souvenir magnets. Loretta says:

I’ve been everywhere, with this, I’ve been… everywhere! Tasmania, everywhere! Everywhere I went. This is the Italia, my daughter she brings me this one. That’s Buffalo, Mount Buffalo, Lakes Entrance, Fairy Creek, a lot of places I’ve been all over the place, everywhere, yeah. Switzerland, yeah, I’ve been in Switzerland, I got my sister-in-law living there.
According to Tolia-Kelly (2003: 314), these souvenirs and artefacts help situate diasporic groups politically and socially in relation to their national identity. Indeed, many of the objects depict places in Australia as well as other places in Italy and its surroundings. In this mixture of souvenirs from Italy, Australia and other places, participants create their own journey where they travel freely with a total understanding and control. This, in a sense, demonstrates an ability to control both a spatial dimension around them (the world at large), and a temporal dimension. The participants remember every instance and every object with its origin, where it was purchased and in what circumstances. Four participants are also collectors of personal medals or military antiques. Wilson (2005: 119) argues that the collections may be drawn upon one's presentation of the self, but they can also enable the collector to escape the self, to escape the present time. This is, too, the nature of the souvenirs, which take the observer to other places that are not here and now.

Other ways of home-building is the use of paintings or photographs from the old and the new countries, similarly to Italian-Australians’ practices in Perth (Baldassar, 2001). Tanya, for instance, has a painting of her old childhood house, but also a painting of a Koala on a gum tree. Hanging together, they form a link to their Italian community of family and friends, but at the same time to Australian community
around. Loretta has two framed pictures of landscape around her village in Italy and her house is full with flowers of all kinds and shapes, mixed with family photos, images of places in Italy and also religious icons, mostly in the bedrooms. Carmen is the only participant who came from southern Italy. She presents in her home two religious shrines with sculptures of the Virgin Mary, pictures of Jesus, and electronically-lit candles. She has a golden replica of Michelangelo’s *David* in her house, shown in Figure 5.12.

Figure 5.13 depicts Donna’s lounge with walls full of pictures of family members from past and present times, and a small cabinet with a collection of medals of Donna and her husband, who moved to Melbourne from Perth because of the Olympic games of 1956, and as Donna explains, they were of ‘a sporty type’. For the non-Italian observer it all seems to add a strong sense of ‘Italian’ aroma to the interior, with practices performing an Italian identity (Fortier, 1999), as Figures 5.12 and 5.13 clearly demonstrate. This kind of space appears in all the houses, except those of younger participants such as Laura and Lorenzo. Laura does have a number of paintings from her late husband’s hometown, but she does not have knick-knacks. But John, the third participant who migrated as a child, has a collection of antiques and some old Australian advertisements in his kitchen.

*Figure 5.12- David in Carmen’s house, 2008.*
The utilization of numerous objects that evoke past times and places is not unique to immigrants only. Wilson (2005) suggests that these objects help to facilitate continuity of identity by keeping the individual connected to home and the past while in a foreign country. Indeed, it seems that these objects capture something that is missing in the participants’ lives. The materiality of these objects is very apparent. Perhaps the objects assist participants to hold on to their land of origin while living very far away, bringing other textures of landscapes to connect them with their collective histories (Tolia-Kelly, 2003). The visual representations of landscape, in particular, which have been explored by Tolia-Kelly (2004) in South Asian homes in Britain, may form a similar link to participants’ past lives and relationships pre-migration.

Lorenzo is exceptional not only in not having Italian mementos in his house but in other ways as well. He migrated when he was eight and is now married to an Anglo-Australian woman. They both live in an inner-city suburb, in a Victorian renovated house to which they moved four years ago. Lorenzo explains the choice of that house:

Ah, because it suited us, it has a bit of space, lots of light; of all the houses I’ve lived in this is the one that is more like the first house, where I was born, the one in Italy, in that it’s got high ceilings, big rooms, lots of light […], just the feeling of space.
This house is not similar in any sense to the great Italian farmhouse of Lorenzo’s childhood. But Lorenzo senses the same feeling of space, without any tangible spatial similarities.

A significant part of home-building practices is the construction of a garden that reminds participants of their childhood farm (Head et al., 2004; Morgan et al., 2005). For example, Tanya has a big farm sixty kilometres away from Melbourne, but she also maintains a big backyard with chickens, ducks, vegetable garden and a small winery in the granny-flat. Her son produces salami in the small basement. She would have bees and honey and prepare different kinds of jams. When asked how they know how to produce all that she answers: ‘Eh, because we are Italian, we know everything!’. Of course, this is not an inherited characteristic of all Italian people. This is how Tanya chose to perform this side of her identity (Fortier, 1999; Valentine, 2007).

A vegetable garden in the backyard is one of the well-documented characteristics of the Italian presence in Melbourne (see Church 2004; Sagazio 2004). Not only Tanya but Loretta too has her own garden which she has cared for since her husband passed away 25 years ago. Laura works in her backyard as well, and so does Otto. They are all experiencing difficulties because of the drought and water restrictions, and some had to uproot old trees, with a great sense of loss. It might be that this action reminds them of their own uprooting, leaving their country behind to start anew.

5.4.3 Hybrid existence: Italian or Australian
When asked whether the past house of their childhood was somehow similar to the current house, all the participants answered negatively. But there were glimpses where they could not avoid the comparison. Tanya notes it is very different because in Italy she lived with 24 people of her extended family in the same house and nothing reminds her of that. But she says: ‘Well, I go back to my own tradition, […] even when I got to do something I try to work out the easiest way or the better way, you know’, meaning by this that she still performs her Italian practices even if the houses are very different. Laura describes her backyard and the way they paved it with stones just like in Italy, from her husband’s region of origin. The use of bluestone in the construction of the wall around the house, she says, is a common practice in Italy. This brings to mind the way Italian Canadians from the region of Abruzzo constructed their community centre with material references to Italian architecture of their region (Harney, 2002). It seems, thus, that Italian participants employed what they
considered to be ‘Italian’ building materials in their process of home-building. Similarly, in her garden Laura followed an Italian custom and planted the Azalea flower. When she draws her Italian house, she suddenly realises:

Well, that’s... I, we had a balcony, that’s a window, up here was a terrace, here the beach and here was a fountain, oh gosh, that’s a fountain... actually it’s nearly what I got there! My kids gave it to me.

It may be a coincidence, but it is reasonable to assume that her children, who gave Laura that fountain, know her well enough to give her something she would appreciate, even if they have never seen the Italian fountain. This fountain is drawn in Laura’s drawing of her house in Italy (Figure 5.6).

But on the other hand, Rita relates to the question whether the current house was built with an Italian character:

I don’t know – no, no, the house was built with Italian fantasy? You know...we just put it all together. Ah no I don’t think we built with an Italian mind, design, you know? We see friends here and looking at the outside of the other house, we said: we want this and we want that and we put together things...

The house, as described by Rita, is a product of the everyday, ignoring conventions of taste (Ruddick, 1997). Bruno asserts that nothing is similar to his Italian house, where the windows were much smaller and methods of construction were different. But for Anna, Bruno’s wife, the fact that it was a double-storeyed (Victorian) house reminded her of the two-storeyed farmhouse back in Italy and that is why she was so happy to move in. They also bought not long ago a new bedroom manufactured and designed in Italy; it is a material object which gives them a sense of belonging (Walsh, 2006).

This issue of Italian design was raised also in a discussion with Lorenzo and Valerie. Italian design can be regarded as cultural capital. It is a cultural advantage that is embodied in the ‘racial’ facet of being Italian, sometimes considered as equal to having good taste. One of the questions was whether the participants feel their house expresses, in some ways, their Italian identity. Lorenzo answers positively to that question; even though, he says, ‘I don’t consciously go out of my way to put the Italian flag but...’ he does feel the house expresses this part in his identity. Valerie strongly opposes and says their house, which contains a lot of marble, Italian floor tiles and an Italian dining table in the middle of the dining room, does not represent ‘the Italian sensibility’, which she considers as displaying numerous knick-knacks in the home, as in some homes of family members. She believes Lorenzo and she share unique taste.
and unwillingness to compromise and this is why they bought their Victorian terrace house with its new ultra-modern extension. Figure 5.14 depicts Lorenzo’s kitchen.

**Figure 5.14 – Lorenzo’s ultra-modern extension, 2007.**

Still, Lorenzo thinks this house was chosen - perhaps not only but also because it comprises some of the Italian spirit. Valerie agrees Lorenzo maintains an Italian lifestyle, but does not concur that the house has an Italian character as well. There is no clear answer to the question whether the house has an ‘Italian spirit’, but what is important is that Lorenzo feels this way even if Valerie does not, because Lorenzo is the one to determine what would help him feel more ‘at home’ and what would enhance the feeling of familiarity in his home (Hage, 1997). In this case, Italian furniture and design and the feeling of a large space help Lorenzo develop that feeling.

Maintaining Italian identity is not the only thing that matters to the participants (Morgan et al., 2005). Many of them also perform their Australian identity through their house as well. Some do that in the interior of the house with pictures of Australian native animals or places, as discussed before, while some utilise the exterior of the house and the yards. For instance, Tanya was very proud to show her native plant Banksia in her garden, which according to her was brought to Australia by Captain Cook. She also showed another plant, a Bottle Brush, which, as she proudly announced, is depicted sometimes on Australian stamps. This tree was planted next
to her verandah, which is one of the ‘Italian’ marks described in the literature (e.g. Borgo, 2006; Willingham, 2004). Tanya has many features in her house that bring to mind the Australian bush: a stuffed fox, a stuffed Cockatoo, and two large cow skins carpeting the floor. Both Tanya and Loretta have an Australian barbecue placed at their backyards. In placing an Australian barbecue near the vegetable garden they show their Australian and Italian facets of their identity side by side (Valentine, 2007). These home-building practices encourage the feeling of familiarity with their past and present worlds (Hage, 1997).

When asked if the house is more Australian or Italian, they all say it is more Australian. Laura thinks her house was a ‘real’ Australian house, because at the time of construction in the mid-1950s it was very fashionable (see Figure 5.8). They actually saw it in another place and built just the same. Rita believes her house was also more Australian, again because of lack of capital:

Yeah, more Australian I would say because we didn’t have money to make luxury marble here and marble there and no… we had a nice bathroom, really nice, so, and you know ensuite, that's what we had, a little bit of extra luxury…

It is interesting that Rita links her fantasies and the fulfilment of her dream with being wealthy, as if it is impossible to have a house with an Italian character without being affluent. Her sense of belonging to the working-class defines her reasoning for actions and decisions she and her husband have taken over the years. John says his house is ‘nothing special, just a roof over my head’. But his house was formerly owned by Italians, who had a classic column and a concrete precast balustrade on the entrance verandah, so its materiality plays a part in providing the quality of shelter he attributes to the house. When talking about other Italians John mentions another practice he is familiar with:

You know, they sent – this is one of the things as well, they take photos of the houses and they send them back to Italy or whatever, wherever they come from, you know, I do nothing to show off. It’s the mentality, the mentality of the people.

John distances himself from this practice, because for him, he states, the form of the house does not matter at all. He sees himself as different, with a different mentality. This practice is probably what those who resided in the ‘Late Twentieth-Century Immigrants’ Nostalgic Style’ (Apperly et al., 1989) would do, and what is expected from their ‘Italian’ character. But none of the participants resides in this kind of house and they are all happy with their ‘more-Australian’ houses. The reason for the
Australian influence of the house can be merely because at the time of construction of most of the houses, in the 1950s, availability of Italian goods and building materials was very limited, in addition to the limited means of the newly arrived immigrants (most of whom were working-class people), and therefore they used the available vernacular of local materials and methods of construction.

In this regard, Damian, the real-estate agent, discusses the presence of lions and eagles in front of houses of European migrants who had moved from inner-city suburbs to outer suburbs. He sees it as 'a fashionable thing to do at the time...in the 1970s, typical brown brick, brown windows...' and does not believe it has correspondence in Europe. Differently to Lozanovska (1995), who interprets the use of lions and eagles as 'wall of war', Damian agrees with John and sees this as a practice of showing off, demonstration of the migrants' success and the fact 'they had made it in the new country' (Apperly et al., 1989: 270).

Those who reside in inner-city suburbs (Bruno and Lorenzo with their wives) live in Victorian houses that represent almost nothing but their old English character. Bruno and Anna do have a small front yard with pots of flowers, brown tiles at the entrance, and two lemon trees, as shown in Figure 5.15, while Figure 5.16 shows the front façade of the house. The total appearance of the house is definitely Victorian, but it is hard to miss the performance of Italian adaptations in the front entrance (see Sagazio, 2004 for a discussion of Italian modifications of yards).

Loretta lives in an established middle-ring suburb, in a weatherboard house with a classic Anglo-Australian front yard. There is no doubt about the importance of gardens in the formation of the Anglo-Australian national identity. Around 1880 the lawn-mower was introduced in Australia, and suddenly the lawn became a standard feature of the Australian home (Boyd, 1952). Italian immigrants, however, use their yards differently – they cultivate vegetables or raise small livestock and farm produce. At the same time as Southern European migrants were using the gardens in this productive way, backyards of the Anglo-Australians were moving away from such functions, and this became a mark of distinction between local Australians and immigrants (Holmes, 2000: 179). Loretta’s front façade corresponds perfectly with the Australian setting in which it is located, whereas her backyard consists of an Italian vegetable garden, enhancing Italian practices and thus represents another facet of her identity (Valentine, 2007), as is depicted in Figures 5.17 and 5.18.
Figure 5.15 - Italian spirit at Bruno’s entrance, 2007.

Figure 5.16 – Bruno’s Victorian house, 2007.
Figure 5.17 - Loretta's Australian front yard and façade, 2007.

Figure 5.18 - Loretta's Italian backyard, 2007.
Other houses located in outer suburbs have given themselves the freedom to express their Italian side of their owner’s identity a bit more, though not to the full extent of the ‘Immigrant Nostalgic’ house. Donna and Otto live in the same street of an eastern suburb, and their houses resemble some of the Italian features described above. This was a street with many Italian-Australians that is now changing and new neighbours are coming in, many of them of Chinese origin. Otto’s workshop and house are illustrated in Figures 5.19-21.

Otto was a carpenter (now retired) who built a number of houses before he built his own. He has a workshop in his garage with photographs of these houses, and other photographs of himself and his then girlfriend (now his wife) before leaving Italy. They both came from a rural area near a small town, shown in a big framed aerial photograph placed on his lounge’s wall. Otto’s workshop is the place where he spends most of his days, and is probably where he feels much at home. Figure 5.19 shows a wall full of images in his workshop of buildings he has built. This demonstrates the importance of the physical form of housing in Otto’s life, as he keeps the images as a constant reminder of the homes he has built, from his very first house to the second and the third.

Figure 5.19 - Otto's wall of images in his workshop, 2007.
Figure 5.20 – Otto’s house, 2007.

Figure 5.21 - Otto’s workshop, 2007.
In Otto’s house, shown in Figure 5.20, it is almost clear the owner is of Italian (or at least South European) origin. The house is double-storeyed with brown bricks, not symmetrical but has the typical staircase leading to a verandah with a wrought-iron white balustrade. Another typical feature is the concrete floor near the entrance, which replaces the large lawn edged with roses typical of Anglo-Australian houses, as in Loretta’s house. Unlike the case of Earlwood in Sydney, where residents have resisted housing transformations of South European immigrants and dubbed them ‘Mediterraneanised’ houses (Allon, 2002), it seems that in Melbourne housing transformations have not generated such resistance. It may be because Otto’s house and his neighbouring houses, which can be named ‘Mediterraneanised’ houses as well, have been built in new suburbs and have not transformed the existing housing stock. In discussions about relationships with neighbours many participants note that their relationships have always been good, regardless of ethnic origins. Rita even preferred to live next to Anglo-Australians, because it helped them improve their English. They did not feel they had to hide their ethnic identity, even though they acknowledge past times when ethnic relations in Australia were more tense.

To conclude this section, it is clear that Italian participants use their current houses to promote the four key feelings of Hage (1997), and most significantly, the feeling of familiarity. The common perception of the gendered home and the use of materiality in the house are also part of the home-building process of these participants. For example, the materiality of Otto’s house, together with the materiality of his workshop, is an important facet in Otto’s process of home-building. The materiality in the house helps participants spend their lives in a supportive and familiar environment, and surround them with familiar objects and atmosphere. The objects, being photos, souvenirs or even furniture, are all gathered for the same purpose – to create comforting surroundings that connect them with their past times and places. At the same time, the houses connect them with Australian everyday and help participants live in the present with objects and paintings that resemble the Australian nature and wildlife. In most of the houses there were not any significant modifications of the visual appearance of the house. Most of the houses are part of a continuous development of streetscapes in Melbourne, thus they do not stand out and wave an Italian flag, in contrast to the common literature which presents Italian migrants’ houses as representations of Italian culture (e.g. Apperly et al. 1989; Willingham, 2004). Nevertheless, houses in Melbourne do represent their residents’ ethnic identity through a combination of both Italian and Australian characteristics, which makes them familiar and recognisable for their dwellers.
5.5 The role of the house for the Italian group in Melbourne

This chapter's main concern was the role of the physical form of housing in the process of home-building of ten Italian immigrants in Melbourne. It analysed two home-environments of participants both in Italy and in Melbourne. The premise laid out in the beginning of the chapter was that there are links between past houses in Italy and current houses in Melbourne. Indeed, it seems that these links are not merely conceptual understandings of the meaning of home (Ahmed et al., 2004; Rapport and Dawson, 1998a). All houses explored in this chapter show that Italian participants utilise their home-environments to surround themselves with a familiar space that not only reminds them of their life back in Italy, but also supports their life in Australia.

In order to facilitate their home-building in their current houses in Melbourne, Italian participants aim to enhance mostly the key feeling of familiarity (Hage, 1997: 102), together with all other key feelings. This perception of the home sees it primarily as where familiar practices of past life can be maintained. Past houses symbolise homes where rich family life was lived and hence are looked upon as the perfect setting for the creation of new family lives, imagined with a strong gendered view of what a family should look like. In addition, Italian participants make use of familiar physical features in their home-environments to assist them with their home-building, but they often do so in an everyday, trivial way. In contrast to the common perception (e.g. Apperly et al., 1989; Willingham, 2004), which presents significant modifications of Italian houses in inner-city and outer suburbs of Melbourne, findings suggest this is not true in the case of this group of participants. Some of their houses do not have 'Italian' characteristics and cannot be easily identified with their Italian residents.

But, Italian participants use the materiality of their houses to make themselves more at home. Most significantly they modify their interiors, with the use of furniture, paintings or pictures, knick-knacks and collections. But also exteriors are being altered with the use of ‘Italian’ building materials, plants and trees. Alterations also consist of links to past homes, such as pictures of the childhood house in Italy, hometown or familiar landscape hung on the lounge wall. Others are a collection of magnets on the fridge door with Italian (and other countries) illustrations and symbols, or an ‘Italian’ stone used in the wall around the house. All of them link current houses to their past houses in different ways. They remind participants of their place of origin while constantly surrounding them with familiar objects (Tolia-Kelly, 2003, 2004; Walsh, 2006).
These material objects not only help these migrants to deal with their past, but also with present everyday lives. They alter their home-environments to assist them to live their lives within the Australian context. The use of local furniture, ‘Australian’ plants in the backyards or a barbecue, is grounding participants in their local environment while achieving a sense of familiarity, of a well-fitted habitus with the house and its surrounding.

The physical form of housing plays a significant role in Italian participants’ lives, even if they are not always aware of it. The current houses (their ‘dream house’) are taking an active part in their home-building process. My argument is that through the construction of homes in Australia, Italian participants wish to develop the feeling of familiarity, through the utilisation of Italian and Australian features, in a gendered, material environment. Though it is hard to point a finger to physical or architectural similarities between past and present houses, past houses are always present as a reference, either in their physical sense or in their social-familial sense, but a reference that definitely influences the shape and form of the present house.

Following this chapter are two artworks that illustrate the collective ‘Italian house’ of the Italian group in this research. The first portrays exteriors of Italian houses while the second depicts their interiors.
6 CASE STUDY II: THE CHINESE GROUP IN METROPOLITAN MELBOURNE

6.1 Introduction

The focus of this chapter is the role of the physical form of housing in the process of settlement of twelve Chinese participants in various suburbs of Melbourne. Studies that have dealt with this issue have already been discussed in the previous chapter. Other works that have focused specifically on China-born migrants explore variations in ways of life and housing structure. Jacobs (2004) examines the relationships between past homes and current houses of a mainland Chinese family in Australia, while Ley (1995) and Mitchell (2004) look into differences in conceptions of homes of migrants from Hong Kong in Vancouver. These studies, however, have not examined the physical characteristics of the house in depth.

Through an analysis of findings from participants’ narratives, the main argument presented in this chapter is that Chinese participants attempt to develop the key feeling of sense of possibility, as the most important feeling of Hage’s four key feelings (Hage, 1997: 102-3), through their home-building practices. They do so through the understanding of their homes as dynamic on the one hand, and as cultural capital on the other. In contrast to the Italian immigrants, who have extensively transformed their houses (exteriors and interiors alike) to foster the key feeling of familiarity in their home-building, it seems that Chinese participants utilise their houses as a means to advance themselves in an individualistic manner within local Australian society. Chinese participants only transform their houses’ interiors, keeping the exteriors untouched or even enhancing ‘Australian’ existing characteristics of the house. It is argued that this is done in order to gain maximal competency in Australian society, because participants see their houses as a means for advancement, opening for them future opportunities in various ways.

The chapter explains how Chinese participants achieve that in two major sections. The first section offers historical, demographic and social background of Chinese immigration to Australia, with a focus on their presence in Melbourne. It also gives details of past and present Chinatowns, their role in the construction of Chinese otherness in western cities, and their new forms in recent times. The second section comprises findings from the analysis of interviews. The premise laid out here, as in the preceding chapter, is that past homes in China influence, in one way or another, current homes in Melbourne. Similarly to the previous chapter, analyses of two kinds
of houses are presented. The first analysis looks at the childhood house, through narratives of participants regarding their past homes in China. Here it is argued that Chinese participants do not attach emotional significance to their former houses in China (in contrast to Italian participants). The second analysis investigates participants’ narratives around their current houses, tracking links and relations to former homes in China.

The term ‘Chinese group’ is an unclear categorization that demands explanation. The Australian Bureau of Statistics’ definition of Chinese is mainland China excluding Taiwan province and SAR of China (Hong Kong). This research follows that definition in order to simplify the use of statistics and also to limit – only a little – the wide range of Chinese origins that exist within the Chinese diaspora in Australia. It seems that this group in Australia is underrepresented in literature. Often, what has been written refers to Asians as one entity, including other Asia-born immigrants. This is why the historical outline in this chapter sometimes uses the general term ‘Asians’, without any distinction between specific countries of origin. This is done despite the understanding that ‘Asian’ is too general a term that comprises diverse cultures.

6.2 Chinese immigration to Australia

Asians were an important part of Australia’s history of British settlement (Ip et al., 1992: 5). The first attempts to import Asian immigrants began with the ending of the convict system, around 1840, when Chinese labourers were first brought to Australia (Jupp, 1991: 42). Some were sent into the bush as shepherds and handy-men, while others were employed as coolies. It was the discovery of gold in New South Wales and Victoria in 1851 which led to the first major wave of Asian immigration to Australia. In 1854 there were about 2,400 Chinese in New South Wales (Ip, Bethier et al., 1992: 9).

The number of Chinese labourers is estimated at its peak, around mid-19th century, to be 50,000, almost all of them male adults (Choi, 1975: 27; Ip et al., 1992: 6). In the second half of the 19th century Chinese migrants presented a threat that the half-million British inhabitants of Australia might be outnumbered, even though the latter doubled in numbers during the 1850s (Jupp, 1991: 43). Chinese labour was restricted in South Australia, New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia during the 1880s. Only those occupations that were less attractive to Europeans were opened for non-Europeans (Ip, Bethier et al., 1992: 9).
This prohibition of Chinese immigration to Australia, extended to all non-Europeans, was approved by Intercolonial conference in 1896. By 1901, at Federation, the restrictive Commonwealth laws practically barred all non-European immigration to Australia. Those who were not able to acquire citizenship had very limited rights and could be deported (Ip, Bethier et al., 1992: 10). As a result, the number of Chinese migrants in Australia declined from 37,000 in 1891 to 29,627 in 1901, and further declined to 6,404 in 1947 (Jupp, 1991: 50). Only with the end of the ‘White Australia’ policy in 1973, Asian immigration to Australia increased (Ip, Bethier et al., 1992: 12).

During the 1990s the immigration program experienced changes that favoured skilled and business migrants. Hence, the recent waves of Asian immigration to Australia are significantly different from the early ones (Dharmalingam and Wulff, 2008: 45). A large proportion is business migrants who come with capital for investment in Australia, as well as professionals and urban people (Nieuwenhuysen, 1994). Recent migrants also have higher educational qualifications and higher incomes than the Australian average (Jupp, 2002: 35).

According to the 2006 Census, there were 206,589 people from mainland China in Australia, comprising 1.04 percent of the total Australian population (ABS, 2006). Melbourne is the capital city with the second largest population of China-born persons, after Sydney, as presented in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1 – Chinese Australians’ distribution in capital cities (Source: ABS, 2006).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CAPITAL CITY</th>
<th>NUMBER OF PERSONS</th>
<th>% OF ALL CHINESE AUSTRALIANS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sydney</td>
<td>109,142</td>
<td>52.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melbourne</td>
<td>54,724</td>
<td>26.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brisbane</td>
<td>11,418</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perth</td>
<td>7,684</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adelaide</td>
<td>7,639</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Among Chinese migrants who arrived before 1996, 86 percent have taken up Australian citizenship, a percentage that is higher than other migrant groups. Since home-ownership in Australia is highly valued and has been dubbed the ‘Australian Dream’, it is surprising that the rates of home-ownership of Chinese immigrants are even higher than those of Australia-born. For Chinese migrants who arrived in Australia prior to 1996 the rate is 75 percent, while for Australia-born the rate is 72 percent. Those who migrated in the last 10 years are more likely to be renting, but with a bright future to eventually attain home-ownership, given the example of their older, more established cohort (Dharmalingham and Wulff, 2008: 43).
6.2.1 The Chinese presence in Melbourne

Chinatown, the ‘ethnic enclave’ in the CBD of Melbourne, has long been associated with Chinese immigration to the city. Chinese businesses, societies, churches and residents have clustered around the eastern end of Little Bourke Street and its lanes since the gold rushes of the 1850s (Couchman, 2004). Despite the high concentration of Chinese migrants in the area, non-Chinese businesses and residents also settled there at the end of the 19th century. In 1901 the Chinatown area would have been home to an estimated 1,200 Chinese people (2004: 172). Around that time, Chinatown has held the image of a hideous place that stains the city, particularly in the eyes of visiting foreigners and their local hosts (McConville, 1985).

Today, Melbourne has the second largest share of Australia’s China-born population, after Sydney. There are almost 55,000 China-born persons in Melbourne, which represents 1.5% of the total population of the city (ABS, 2007). Most of them migrated in the last ten years and this is reflected in the age structure. Unlike the Italian group in Melbourne who migrated mainly in the post-war era and since then has significantly aged, the Chinese population in Melbourne is much younger. Almost 60 percent of those who arrived in the last five years are aged 15 to 29 years, against one-quarter of Australia-born (Dharmalingam and Wulff, 2008: 43). This age structure can be explained by the majority of young families and also the significant number of Chinese students who arrived in the last few years to study in Australian universities. Table 6.2 displays the increasing numbers of China-born persons in Melbourne since 1996.

Table 6.2 - Number of China-born persons in Melbourne (Source: ABS, 2006).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>1996</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2006</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of persons</td>
<td>27,355</td>
<td>35,739</td>
<td>54,724</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of total population of Melbourne</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth rate</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>1.53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the 2001 census, people of Chinese origin were highly concentrated in the eastern and south-eastern suburbs of Melbourne (ABS, 2003). Figure 6.1 clearly demonstrates this distribution, where darker red areas signify strong presence of China-born population. As opposed to Italians in Melbourne, even areas with a strong presence of China-born persons do not consist of more than 20 percent of the total population. This means that Chinese population is more dispersed around Melbourne than the Italian population.
It is hard to locate written material on Chinese-style architecture in Melbourne, especially when compared to the extensive literature on Italian-style architecture in Melbourne. This is probably because the Chinese presence is not as visible as the Italians', in the sense of housing transformations. In the past, however, the Chinese presence had been visible through the construction of Chinatowns. This aspect of the Chinese presence has been documented through examinations of the social and physical character of Chinatowns in Melbourne, Sydney, and other western cities.

6.2.2 Chinese housing in Melbourne
A number of studies have examined different geographical and architectural aspects of Chinatowns in locations other than Melbourne. Nonetheless, these studies can be useful in understanding the processes that Chinese migrants have been going through since the 19th century in other western societies, and may shed light on similar processes in Melbourne.

Early settlement of Chinese immigrants in western cities has concentrated on Chinatowns in inner-city areas. Chinatowns became the physical manifestation of the ‘Chineseness’ formalised by European immigrants in western cities, as Anderson clearly demonstrates in Vancouver as well as in Sydney and Melbourne (Anderson, 1990, 1991). In North America, Chinatowns have dominated Chinese settlement until the 1960s, while stimulating social cohesion and ethnic solidarity (Li, 2005: 31). From
an architectural perspective, the establishment of the Californian Chinatowns did not involve a simple transplantation of traditional Chinese buildings, but included environments in which the common North American building types were transformed to meet a new set of needs (Yip, 2001: 67). This happened mainly due to the need of the new immigrants to fit into a relatively hostile society and their wish to assimilate. Yet, the reason behind their strong visual identity in the urban fabric was that in the early years of their foundation within the first half of the 20th century, Chinese migrants could not disperse into suburban and residential neighbourhoods and therefore lived in communities that were often 80 or 90 percent Chinese (Yip, 2001: 81). It is reasonable to assume that the same attitude has kept Chinese migrants in Australia congregated in ethnic enclaves such as Melbourne’s Chinatown. Throughout the years traditional Chinatowns have been stigmatised and the host societies have imposed a full range of negative connotations on them (Li, 2005: 31; McConville, 1985; Melbourne, 1985).

Around the 1970s redevelopment schemes of Chinatowns were undertaken in many western cities, including Sydney and Melbourne. In Melbourne, the upgrading scheme of Chinatown of the mid-1970s was supported by class-based alliances of Chinese and non-Chinese. This scheme suggested building pagodas as the entrances of the district. It was resisted, however, by a small organisation of Chinese shopkeepers who interpret the plan as an insult to the Chinese community and wished to be treated with dignity as Australians (Anderson, 1998: 210). Their voices were heard and the pagodas were not erected after all. Nevertheless, Anderson criticises Melbourne’s Chinatown development for its emphasis on its ‘difference’, its uniqueness and its ‘contribution’ to multicultural Australia, in order to fit the eyes of white Australia in particular. Anderson further argues that attitudes of multiculturalism and discrimination, though different in intent, share the same assumptions of classical racism that genetic and cultural differences exist naturally and eternally, and that they inevitably prompt social tensions (Anderson, 1998: 152).

A phenomenon that has recently generated discussion is the emergence of new suburban Chinatowns. Chinese settlements in western receiving countries undergo major changes, as a result of increasing globalization and the rise of newer Chinese immigrants with abundant capital (Luk, 2005: 2). The term ‘ethnoburb’ was coined to illustrate a new type of settlement of suburban clusters and economic activities of Chinese immigrants (Li, 1998). These American ‘ethnoburbs’ emerged as ‘ports of entry’ for new immigrants instead of the traditional Chinatowns (Li, 2005: 36). Since the 1990s, the trends of settlement in ethnoburbs have increased. Li argues that
these suburbs are not Chinatowns or traditional ethnic enclaves, as many new immigrants now settle directly in the suburbs, often with decent housing and superior school districts. In these areas, chain migration plays an important role in further agglomerating immigrants and the ethnic economy. The ethnic economy is illustrated clearly in the case of ‘Asian theme’ malls in Toronto and other Canadian cities (Preston and Lo, 2000; Qadeer, 1997). It can be argued that the eastern suburb of Box Hill in Melbourne is an ‘ethnoburb’ due to its high percentage of China-born residents.

Similar to the US, also in Australia new immigrants in the past would concentrate first in ethnic enclaves and move to better neighbourhoods only after they improve their socio-economic position in the host society (Zang, 2000: 109), as is the case with the Italian group. Conversely, recent Chinese immigrants tend to concentrate in good neighbourhoods in Sydney and Melbourne shortly after their arrival in Australia. There is not much research on Chinese ‘enthoburbia’ in Australia, apart from a study focused on Brisbane. Here, Chinese immigrants from Hong Kong and Taiwan settled around the 1990s in suburbs around the suburb of Sunnybank and formed what can be called an ‘ethnoburb’ (Ip, 2005: 71). This area is indeed affluent in terms of household income, occupational status and the level of education of its residents. It also has a good reputation for education, and at the same time pockets of relatively ‘affordable’ housing. These features have attracted new middle-class Chinese immigrants to this area, and led to a progressive influx since they first settled there in mid-1980s.

The following section examines narratives of Chinese immigrants who were interviewed for this research. As will soon be revealed, all participants reside in outer and middle suburbs of Melbourne, where there are extensive concentrations of Chinese immigrants, while none of them reside in the traditional Chinatown or in inner-city suburbs. Thus these outer suburbs may be referred to as ‘ethnoburbs’, like their counterparts in North America and Brisbane.

6.2.3 Characteristics of Chinese participants of this research
Twelve China-born participants were interviewed for this research between August 2007 and March 2008, of them nine women and three men. Of the twelve participants, five migrated to Australia during the 1990s and the other seven migrated in the first half of the 2000s. All of them migrated as young adults and today have relatively young families with children. The participants came from various regions and cities around China. All of them had experienced city life before migrating, as the majority
lived all their lives in urban environments and only one participant grew up in a small rural town and moved to a big city in adulthood. This supports statistics indicating that recent Chinese immigrants in Australia have been mostly urban in China (Nieuwenhuysen, 1994). All participants who came from cities lived there in apartments. The participants comprise twelve married couples who are both of Chinese origin and all couples but one have children.

As in the case of the Italians, recruiting participants for this group was not a simple process. Originally I was looking for Chinese participants who migrated between five to fifteen years ago and currently live in their own home. These criteria have become flexible in order to include other participants who have arrived in Melbourne more recently, since I could not find enough participants. The first contact was with an academic of Chinese origin who, knowing the difficulties of finding participants in this kind of qualitative research, kindly agreed to assist. His help was indeed invaluable and he provided five contacts. I then went to search other sources such as a Chinese study group at the University, where I found one participant, and a Chinese church, where I recruited two more. Another contact was provided by one of my fellow students, and three more through a snowball method by previous participants. This method was more successful here than with the Italian group, perhaps because participants were younger and agreed more easily to be interviewed without meeting the interviewer face to face before the interview. Many of the participants have some sort of connection to academic life, either by being an academic, a partner or a friend of an academic. Others hold professions requiring academic qualifications such as engineering. This also supports findings that emphasise the high qualification of recent Chinese migrants (Nieuwenhuysen, 1994; Jupp, 2002).

It is important to note that the twelve interviewees presented in this chapter are a relatively homogenous group that can be classified as middle-class young professionals, and do not represent the entire China-born persons in Melbourne, being probably more affluent than the average China-born population. Participants’ dwellings are concentrated around middle- and outer-rings eastern suburbs of Box Hill, Doncaster, Templestowe and Glen Waverly, and the south-eastern suburb of Burwood. These are established and wealthy suburbs of Melbourne and this sustains the premise that Chinese migrants tend to settle in good neighbourhoods shortly after arrival in Australia (Zang, 2000). Figure 6.2 shows the participants’ distribution around Melbourne.
The interviews took place in the participants’ current homes and always involved only one participant. They were semi-structured and consisted of the same features as in the Italian group (drawing former and current homes, collection of old photographs if existed and were available and a tour in the house and yards while taking photographs). The following sections present the two kinds of houses of these participants, in China and Melbourne. To get a clearer picture of the participants’ names and main characteristics, see Appendix G. The names given to participants and listed in the appendix are pseudonyms. Those who anglicised their names have been given English names, while those who kept their Chinese names have been given Chinese-like names.

6.3 Former home in the homeland: memories of a previous house

This section analyses participants’ narratives of former houses in China, in order to understand their relationships with current houses in Melbourne. All former houses of Chinese participants are apartments in Chinese cities, except two - one participant lived in a small town in an old ancestral home and another lived in a suburban house in the city. Most narratives show that these apartments did not hold the same emotional meanings as the Italian former houses in Italy. The Italian houses, mostly big farmhouses but some urban apartments as well, were depicted in a much-loved manner and were the centre of happy family memories and nostalgia. As opposed to
that, urban apartments in various cities of China were illustrated simply as places of dwelling, without significant emotional attachment. These apartments were located in large apartment blocks, owned by the workplace (as will be discussed shortly), without the history of past generations and family ties to the buildings themselves. This difference can also be explained by the young age of participants and lack of time gap between their life in Melbourne and in China, sparing them from recalling their childhood with nostalgia as the Italians.

Most of these apartments were perceived as being quite small by the participants. They usually contained three bedrooms, and the participants portray them as simple and basic. Jane, for example, notes: ‘[t]he apartment was very small, a bird’s nest’. Nevertheless, most of them enjoyed their homes at the time of dwelling. After living in Australia and being exposed to other standards of housing, some feel that their Chinese apartment was too small and was not wisely organised, as Julie explains that the living area was very small and was not designed properly. Actually, she comments, it was more like a hall and they could not even fit the television into it. The television, instead, was located in the master bedroom. The actual size of these apartments, according to other participants, varied between 75, 100 and 130 square metres.14

One important aspect was that the apartment was part of a building, a fraction of a bigger structure that included many other similar apartments. In many of the drawings the apartment block was drawn as well, as a significant aspect of the apartment itself, and the floor level was always mentioned. Lara’s drawing in Figure 6.3 illustrates that the building holds at least the same significance as the apartment’s interior. Lara drew both of them with the same rough manner, without providing many details, not even where the apartment was located in the block. But the fact that the block was drawn shows that the apartment was not isolated in space – it was part of a larger configuration that held a meaning as a whole and not only as numerous singular units. Lara notes that she liked living there because even though she and her husband lived in a very small apartment in university’s dormitories, they had other staff as neighbours so social life was quite satisfying. Thus, the apartment block was essential as a container of social life.

14 The average suburban house in Australia in 2004 was larger than 150 square metres (Blunt and Dowling, 2006).
Most of the participants were content with this sort of living at the time. Annette liked her apartment complex, built in 1986, because it provided many facilities and services, was newly designed and served as an example for the city with its modern organisation and management. Many other participants liked their apartments’ location because it was conveniently located near their workplace and shops. Indeed, the enjoyment of urban life with nearby shops and markets was often mentioned.

The nature of the housing market in China was frequently discussed. As participants explained, before the housing market had been commercialised in the last decade, apartments were allocated according to academic qualifications or professional status. Before embarking on a series of housing reforms in the past two decades (Huang, 2004), Chinese dwellings did not belong to their dwellers but to their workplaces. Normally, the apartments were allocated by the workplace and were usually located in proximity to it. Since the market had been commercialised, people can now buy another apartment and keep their allocated one as well, until they finish working for that workplace and then they need to return that property. These allocated apartments were bought by their dwellers at a lower price than market price, but they could not leave these properties to their children and grandchildren. When they return the property to the workplace they are paid back the amount of money they paid originally. This has led to different relationships between Chinese dwellers and their homes, and it is understandable that dwellers do not develop attachment to their houses, in order perhaps to protect themselves emotionally in future displacements.
Some of the participants were allocated very small apartments because they were still young and thus their professional status at that time was relatively low, or they were students or young lecturers and lived in dormitories on campus. These campus apartments were particularly small, and in the case of Jane and her husband, consisted of one room in a shared apartment with two other couples, where they had to share their kitchen and toilet:

So basically our room is 11 sq metres, and we have to fit everything, like a double bed, and a small couch and a desk and a book shelf and even a washing machine. So as you can imagine we didn't have that much space to walk through… shocking. [...] I can't believe it, and now every room in this house is bigger than 11 sq metres. We have like tens of them. It's just shocking.

Jane's words demonstrate her realisation that before migrating to Australia she had lived in very different living conditions; the kind, perhaps, she could not have accepted today, and that Australia offered her broader housing options. It is clear that her perspective had changed as a result of living in Australia and she even implies that at the time of living in China she was ignorant of other housing possibilities. Moving to Australia has opened Jane to more possibilities than she could ever imagine. Some of these are the opportunities of advancement as related to the house (Hage, 1997: 103). Just like Julie, who feels now that her apartment was not designed properly, Jane recognises that there are other ways of living distinct from the common Chinese apartment.

The organisation of the house was often described in a laconic manner, but for most of the participants the matter of sunlight was essential. The most important space was often the most lighted room. When asked what made their apartment a home for them, quite a few answered they loved its orientation and the way the sun filled it during weekend mornings, as portrayed by Julie:

...because two bedrooms are south faced it's quite sunny, you know because here it's north, there south is better. Very sunny, very bright, and not the flat itself but the location is very handy, we got market downstairs, you see, it's very handy. Yeah, but the house itself is OK, is nothing like fabulous or nothing.

The issue of light might be explained by the lack of direct sunshine in the extremely urban Chinese environments. Light is indeed a vital component of apartment living, as there is no backyard for an immediate contact with the sun on a sunny day. As can be understood from Julie, the location was always well appreciated. Jin explains that she
loved her apartment because she renovated it with her husband when they bought it in 1996. Back then, upon purchasing an apartment the purchaser had to install the entire internal features such as floors, bathroom tiles as well as a kitchen bench, cupboards and appliances. This renovation process had led Jin to feel attached to her apartment, despite the fact that she had sold it before migrating to Australia. David notes it was his first property, and as such it conveyed special feelings. Although these apartments were basic and simple, they still generated warm feelings from the participants, even if not to the same extent as is the case amongst Italian participants.

The question of ordinary ways of Chinese living was also mentioned. Cathleen notes that China is more crowded than Australia and everybody lives in apartments there. As Julie and Jane before, Cathleen explains her satisfaction with the apartment by her limited knowledge of other options at the time. The fact that ‘everybody lives like that’ has probably made apartment-living look like an acceptable option, without questioning whether it needs to be pursued or not. Indeed, there was not much room for questioning due to house prices and availability. In Australia, however, suburban living is the norm, thus choosing to live in a suburban house— as choosing to live in an apartment in China - means to conform to the mainstream (Lozanovska, 2008). Hui observes the status of private-house owning in China:

…we have [a] very few houses in China, they are called ‘Villas’, normally people just live in apartments. The house is called a villa because [it is] very big and beautiful and very different from normal common apartment, so we call them villas.

Hui explains how ordinary people live in apartments and ‘villas’ are only for the very few, probably economic or political leaders with a powerful position. However, there were two exceptional cases of ‘villas’ among the participants. One was the case of Miles, who lived in a small town in North China. The other was the case of Jane, who grew up with her family in a suburban house in a large city. Jane explains her unique situation:

Actually, I’m from the suburbs of the city, so our house kind of little bit spacious than the rest of the people. We did have a little yard. I remember Dad like had flowers and some veggies and some even vines, grapevines. I spent my childhood there, yeah, and I still miss it because it gave children some running space and…

Jane illustrates the correlation between different houses and social classes in China of that era, explaining that her father was a principal engineer and thus the house was fully funded by the factory. When asked if she has any old photographs of the house,
Jane answers: ‘Gee, not really, we kind of don’t take photos of the house…’. This is an interesting remark, and in fact none of the Chinese participants had old photographs of their houses. The reason, it could be assumed, was that most of them lived in apartments to which they did not feel strongly connected; hence they did not take any pictures. But Jane’s house was not an apartment and it is clear she still has strong sentiments to it. Perhaps taking photographs of houses is a cultural practice that is not part of Chinese culture, or it might be that because houses did not belong to their dwellers but to the government, they were not perceived as one’s asset of which one is proud. This attitude seems to influence the way participants perceive their Australian houses, as will be shown shortly.

The other case of house living was Miles. He grew up in a very old family house in a small town. According to him, this house was probably 300 years old, built in a traditional North Chinese architectural style. The house consisted of a number of connected buildings built around a courtyard. Miles’ family lived in one of these buildings, while in the rest lived his extended family. Miles describes his former home with great details. The most important feature of that house for him was the courtyard. He fondly recalls the close relationships that revolved around this courtyard:

See, the good thing of this house if you’re a big family, not if you’re a small family, if you are a big family all here, so everybody has a close relationship so if you… not like here, you live here you only know your left hand side neighbour and the other neighbour, you see him probably once in a week or in the weekend, sometimes you don’t see them for… at all you know, […] and also you don’t rely on the neighbours much, but here [points to the drawing of the former house] you’ll rely on each other, you have a problem they will come to help you, they have problem you come… sometimes we cook a meal and, not invite them to the house but you’ll probably bring some to the neighbours, that’s a good thing, you have a very close sort of interaction or relationship.

Miles also mentions the negative aspect of this sort of living, when quarrels among family members occur. This house stands as the contradiction of modern suburban living and of the current way Miles has chosen to live his life. He understands that he cannot duplicate this kind of rural pre-modern living, yet when he describes his childhood house he does it with a sentimental tone. His drawing of that house stresses that affection even more, with the beautiful elevation and section, as depicted in Figure 6.4.
Figure 6.4 - Miles’ drawing of his house in a rural town in North China.

The element drawn in the bottom of the drawing is a brick ‘cave’ which is a warm room that comprises inside a Cum. Cum is a traditional family clay bed attached to a stove, where the pipes run up to the chimney through the bed to heat it up. This was how the family dealt with the very cold winters of North China. It is clear that this house, with its history and its ancestral significance, conveys much meaning to Miles. Unlike the common Chinese apartments, Miles describes it in a vivid fashion and explains every architectural and constructional aspect of it, familiar with the topic as an engineer. The house was built of timber and clay brick and has typical Chinese ornaments such as dragons on the tops of the roof and tiles with tiger heads.
As in many of the Italian participants’ narratives, this house has been left abandoned and no one from Miles’ family lives there anymore. According to Miles, the house needs to be refurbished because of its poor condition. He visited this old house a number of years back, but he does not intend to go back to live there and repair it. At least, he says, it is now under heritage listing so it cannot be demolished as other adjacent houses have been. It is obvious that Miles recalls his childhood as part of tradition and continuity, with community life and extended family connections that he still misses. It seems that if he could, he would have lived in this type of familial living even today. Thus, the feeling of community (Hage, 1997) might be a feeling that Miles would want to regain in the current house, in order to foster his home-building. Yet it is important to remember that Miles is an exceptional case within this Chinese group.

In conclusion, most of the participants consider their former apartments in Chinese cities as quite utilitarian – places that provided them shelter and were organised to assist them with their everyday lives in the intense urban environment. Most of the apartments were located conveniently near shopping centres and public facilities and hence were most appreciated. It is clear that most of these apartments did not hold significant emotional meanings to their dwellers, but nevertheless were thought about with affection, in retrospect, despite being a necessity rather than a luxurious dwelling. In the next sections it is argued that these apartments did inspire current ways of living of Chinese participants in Australia, with the common desire to live in large detached houses.

6.4 Making a new home: the current house

This section deals with current homes in which interviews took place. As with the Italian group, the house was both the setting of the interview and its subject. While talking, the participants could look around and converse on what they see around them. All interviews included a tour in the house and yards, with photographs taken during it. This was accompanied with explanations about unusual objects, furniture or areas in the house. Of the twelve participants, ten live in detached houses and two live in units, while none lives in an apartment. For three of the participants this house was the second owned house in Melbourne, while for the rest it was the first. One participant has just moved to a new house, building on the original block where her old house was located.
6.4.1 Constructing the house
After renting houses or apartments for a few years after arrival in Melbourne, most participants wished to move to their own home. Most of them started to look for a house in their immediate surroundings, sometimes in the middle-ring suburbs in which they were living in rented houses, before they extended their search to outer-ring suburbs due to increased housing prices. None of them has used the services of a Chinese real-estate agent but either local agencies or the internet. This is probably because the participants use the English language well and do not need translation services. They are also relatively young, a factor that is most likely to have a direct correlation with their internet usage. Non-Chinese real-estate agents interviewed confirmed that their firms spend a great deal of money on advertising in Chinese newspapers. Damian’s firm, for example, spends two-thirds of their advertisement space in Chinese newspapers in Melbourne.

Discussing issues around the choice of the house, Hui clarifies why Chinese immigrants buy a house in a short period of time after arrival. According to her, the recent Chinese migrants arrive with enough money to make the down payment within a year or two, as they are skilled and tend to acquire good jobs in the Australian market. Not only that, she explains, it is also important culturally:

Second thing in Chinese concept a house is an important part of home, if you have no house you have no root. […] just to own a house, that was what my husband was thinking about so we started looking for a house as soon as we arrived here, and for many Chinese people to buy a house, even a unit or an apartment is the most important thing for settling down. […] and a second thing for, that’s what I think and some Chinese people think the bigger the house is the better because they have a strong tendency to have a land, that I saw the concept of root, we want the root to be deeply down in the size of land, then we want a big house but then we have a dilemma, we are not good gardeners, Chinese people, so I’m having big trouble with the garden and so… (laughs).

As discussed before, Chinese participants perceived their houses in China in a utilitarian way. The above quote explains that for them, Australian houses are also looked upon in a similar manner, because it is important to own a house as part of home-building and settling down. The form of the house (whether it is a unit or apartment) or its materials do not play a part here, but only the fact that a house is owned. The ownership of the house opens for Chinese participants a range of opportunities through the accumulation of symbolic or monetary capital or the
advancement of social mobility. In that, it promotes the feeling of sense of possibility (Hage, 1997: 103).

Hui perceives the Chinese home as about being grounded and rooted, as in traditional conceptions of the home and in contrast to recent perceptions (e.g. Ahmed et al., 2003; Rapport and Dawson, 1998a). But in other narratives of this group which will be discussed shortly, the home appears in a much more dynamic and fluid way. The importance of home-ownership for Chinese migrants is parallel to the idea of Italian settling down (Pulvirenti, 2000), and it is interesting that the desire to settle down through home-ownership may be a concept that relates to immigrants of different origins. It also supports findings that Chinese home-ownership rates in Australia are even higher than those of Australia-born (Dharmalingam and Wulff, 2008: 43). This issue of land size and garden is important and will be soon considered.

The most important features desired in a house for Chinese participants, as has been also observed in Brisbane (Ip, 2005), were not its size or garden but the high quality of education in the suburb, public transport and proximity to shopping centres and workplaces, and only then was the house itself considered if it were within the price range. In that sense, houses in Melbourne resemble houses in China because they are seen as practical means for achieving goals such as social mobility or the accumulation of cultural capital (Hage, 1997; Ong, 1999), and less as a material structure of a certain kind. This supports the argument that Chinese participants wish to foster the sense of possibility through their home-building (Hage, 1997: 103), because gaining social mobility and cultural capital make the home open to new opportunities. In addition, apartments in China were appreciated because of their location and close proximity to urban facilities such as shopping centres and public amenities. It seems that this pattern has been preserved in Melbourne, where houses were chosen for and foremost due to their location.

Many of the participants, as educated professionals, did serious research before buying a house. Jane, for example, explains that before choosing the suburb they had read statistics that around 70-80% of the residents in that specific suburb have a Bachelor’s degree. Some of their friends were already living in that suburb and houses were still affordable. Of course, she says, they wanted to stay in the very affluent and well-serviced middle-ring suburb in which they had rented before, but could not afford it. Lilly, as well, explains her choices:

Because [this suburb] is quite convenient, it has a shopping centre, train station and many facilities around and so before we looked for houses for
buying we did a lot of research. [...] so finally after about half a year of hunting, finally we found the house here so this is the current house, so this is quite a good house that meets our requirements. Like close to public transportation and quiet and nice area and house you know with plan quite generous with land size and the house itself not so big, 3 bedrooms, but still quite ok for us because we are still a couple here, so yeah, in the near future it still fits our needs so that’s why we chose that.

In her list of demands for the house, it is clear that for Lilly the house itself (its size and land) is of least importance while other considerations come before. To most of the participants it is more important that the house will be located in a ‘good’ suburb with ‘good’ schools, near a shopping centre and with good transportation, than the characteristics of the house as a built structure. Indeed, Lilly and her husband are happy with the house’s location as well as with its generous block size. They have a nice backyard that Lilly takes care of, with the help of her father who visits them from China every so often. She notes that the large backyard actually hindered them from buying the house, as they are both working and do not have the time to maintain the garden (and probably without any previous experience, coming from apartment living). The agent advised them, however, that the best would be to embrace the Australian lifestyle if they chose to live in a detached house, and obviously, they accepted this suggestion. This contrasts the Italians’ experience, where the choice of the house has mainly been made on the basis of its abundant land. Hui’s list of demands also supports the notion that the house comes last of all. She declares that they have been told by local agents that they are very picky about their requirements:

Yeah, we were told we are very fussy, and because we want first public transport, so we have a bus stop just outside the garden, we need a primary school within a walking distance, we need a shopping centre nearby, and we need [...] a double-storey house. So with all these requirements, and around the price range, ah, yes, so it’s not easy at all...

The desire to live in an area with good schools enhances the sense of possibility through the accumulation of cultural capital in the form of education, as also discussed by Waters (2006).

When asked why they wanted a double-storey house, she answers, laughing: ‘we think it looks fancier’. She explains, however, that they wanted a large house because of their former experience in China, living in a small apartment. Jane, too, clarifies relations between former and current houses, when asked if finding a house has been a difficult process:
Not really, because with that prior experience we don’t expect too much, everything bigger we are happy, I know because we compare and we have to appreciate the current situation, how lucky we are now.

She notes that they chose that house mainly due to its location in that specific suburb, it being near a freeway, its orientation and the garden. It is apparent that the first on the list are location and transport considerations, and only then the house. As she says, any home would have been better than their previous experience and they would have been easily satisfied.

Most interviews indicate that Chinese participants desire to live in large houses as a result of their former living conditions in China, where they could only live in small apartments. This finding matches other studies that suggest that Chinese immigrants often build or purchase large houses with larger built areas and small gardens, which have often been dubbed ‘monster houses’ in Canadian cities (Jacobs, 2004; Ley, 2004; Mitchell, 2004; Qadeer, 1997). This notion was also raised by the local real-estate agents interviewed for this research. They pointed out that Chinese migrants look for larger built structures with minimal open land. The reasons, according to them, are their lack of interest in gardening, their desire to live in large houses due to their experience in China, and the need to accommodate family relatives such as parents or students who temporarily stay in their homes. This is supported by a section of a Chinese real-estate newspaper, shown in Figure 6.5, which was obtained in one of the real-estate offices and presents mainly ‘monster houses’.

Indeed, both David and Hui accommodate their relatives in their homes, living with their parents-in-law. But a few others maintain large gardens and this does not support the premise that Chinese immigrants purchase only big houses with small backyards. For example, Jane has a large backyard with many fruit trees and so do Jan, Jin and Lilly. This might be explained by the strong desire of Chinese participants to adapt themselves to local ways of living, even if that includes gardening works. This adaptation is perceived by themselves as improving their prospects in Australian society and thus enhances the key feeling of sense of possibility which they foster through their home-building.
Jin explains how she sees the different home-ownership experiences in China and Australia:

The way it is here, I mean you come here you have to be adjusted to this environment, so yeah, this is very different like in the apartment in my hometown, we bought like some cheap stuff because we didn’t have much money back then, […] but here we chose like good quality stuff that are expensive but I think that was worthwhile, and the difference is that in China, the house like the apartment you bought does not belong to you, it will be taken away by the government after 70 years. You pay a lot of money but it doesn’t belong to you. […] But the house you buy here belongs to you forever! If you don’t sell it you can give it to your children, your grandchildren, whatever. That’s the difference and that’s why we put a lot of energy in this place, a lot of like effort to make it right, like comfortable. Comfortable and up-to-date, I mean if we try to sell it we can still make money of it.

Jin clearly clarifies why she did not want to pour money into her Chinese apartment even though she did renovate it back then, whereas in Melbourne she feels very much connected to her new home in which she invested a great deal of time and money. The house, with its built form, is conceived as cultural capital that may be transformed into monetary or social capital one day, opening future opportunities to gain social
status (Bourdieu, 1984 [1979]; Dovey, 1999; Hage, 1997). Jin agrees that the matter is chiefly related to adjustment to the local society. It seems that houses of Chinese participants serve as a tool for improving their social and financial position, and in consequence their sense of possibility, within Australian society.

Of the twelve participants, only one has built a new house while the rest have moved into existing houses. Some have made minor renovations such as Julie and Jin, although others wish to do so but at present cannot afford it. In fact, Julie is the only participant who lives in a weatherboard house she would like to rebuild in the future. Weatherboard, she notes, is hard to maintain, but at the moment rebuilding is out of the question. Annette lives in a unit where she feels very happy, especially because this unit does not comprise a large area of land and is easy to maintain. It is obvious that the issue of maintenance (the garden as well as the house) is important for Chinese immigrants, especially in contrast to the Italian’s experience, where some of the participants were skilled builders and gardeners.

Lara is the only participant who built her own house after demolishing her old house and rebuilding on the same plot of land. The former house was formerly, before Lara and her husband purchased it and moved in, occupied by an Italian couple. Lara and her family loved this previous house from first sight, because the house and the garden looked ‘very nice’ and felt ‘like home’. Its homely and cosy character can be seen in the auction brochure advertised before Lara and husband purchased it, in Figure 6.6.

The brochure presents images of the street façade as well as interior and backyard. In the front façade the house is hardly seen behind a screen of greenery. The interior is warm and simple and the backyard is well-maintained, dubbed in the brochure ‘magic English gardens’. The house is one-storeyed and is blended with its environment.
Despite its homeliness and affectionate character, after living in this house for eight years Lara and her husband decided they wanted a larger ‘activity space’, as their children had grown up and had different needs. Since housing prices have increased, buying another house would have cost more than rebuilding the house. In order to simplify the process of building, Lara and her husband decided to use the services of
a building firm and choose a house from a display-home catalogue. They chose one of the available designs but made some changes, for which they needed to pay a considerable amount of money. The building process was long and frustrating at times, but also satisfying and enjoyable, according to Lara. They had to rent another nearby house for the construction period, which made the process even more complicated, but eventually, it was a great pleasure to move into their new home which they helped to create. The family moved to its new home just recently, but ‘there is still a lot of work to do’. The new house is larger, double-storeyed and occupies most of the land area. Explaining why they decided to rebuild and not to invest money in another property, Lara points to their desire to enjoy the investment in their life time. Again, utilitarian considerations seem to be most important here – it is a financial and practical decision that is not influenced by the desire to design a house in a particular form or according to a certain fashion. The new house provides Lara and her family with a set of new opportunities – stepping up the social ladder (Dovey, 1999; Hage, 1997), or accumulation of monetary capital, for example. Figures 6.7 and 6.8 present the front façade and front yard of Lara’s newly built house.

It is interesting to note that despite what some of the real-estate agents have mentioned as the preference of Chinese migrants to buy brick and not rendered houses in order to lessen maintenance work, Lara’s house is coated with light-coloured render. It may be because currently, this seems to be the trend in contemporary Australian display-homes and it is difficult to find new brick home designs. This house may be considered a ‘monster house’ by some (Ley 1995; Mitchell 2004), because it is a large double-storeyed structure that does not leave much space for a garden. The front yard is very different from common English-style front yards that include lawns and flower-beds of roses (as Loretta’s front yard - of the Italian group). Lara’s front yard, designed by her husband, is mainly paved, leaving small beds for gravel, rocks and fruit trees. There is a Chinese-style statue in the left-hand side (between the two bottom windows), as seen in Figure 6.7.
Figure 6.7 - Lara’s new front façade, 2009.

Figure 6.8 - Lara’s new front yard, 2009.
The house brings to mind the case of Earlwood, Sydney, where local residents opposed new housing constructions by European immigrants that have transformed the housing stock and have been considered ‘inappropriate’ (Allon, 2002). The newly designed house seems, too, to transform the character of the existing housing stock in this established suburb. The former house was modest, whereas the new house stands out with its massive structure. Lara stresses, however, that there have been no complaints by neighbours. Actually, she maintains, they benefit from the new house as it increases housing prices in the street. Despite the presence of the same phenomenon as in other western cities such as Vancouver or Sydney, these transformations of houses - assuming Lara’s house is not the only house that has changed its character so drastically in Melbourne’s suburbs – do not generate the same disapproval from local residents.

6.4.2 Home-building practices
All participants love their homes and feel good and comfortable in them. Mostly, it is because they feel the house suits them and meets their needs. When asked about what makes this house a home for them, David comments: ‘Home is where the heart is’. In fact, the doormat of David’s house repeats this saying. This is one way of thinking of home that sees it as a mobile habitat that is not fixed in one location (Rapport and Dawson, 1998a). Conversely, Miles emphasises the importance of the house’s built environment:

…we quite liked this house, a house like this is quite cosy, yeah, I like here, Australia is a good place to live, quite peaceful, quite calm… […] I like the environment.

Miles likes his home because of his satisfaction with the Australian environment around him. Jin, on the other hand, understands the home as the only place that belongs to her: ‘Oh, it’s my place in this country, so I can’t love anywhere else you know’. It seems that for Jin the home is a refuge from the outside world (Dovey, 1985; Thompson, 1994). Each of the three participants, David, Miles and Jin, interprets differently meanings of home, but all agree they feel at ease and relaxed in their homes.

Asked about the most important space, most participants refer to the kitchen or the lounge. Many compare the old kitchen in China with the Australian one, always in favour of the latter. Jane explains that she likes her open kitchen and has recently had a birthday party of 50 guests in her house, enabled by the open space seen in Figure 6.9.
The issue of open plan in the home has been referred to by several authors. Attfield (1999; 2002), exploring open plan domestic spaces in Britain, interprets it as part of the modern project of the mid-20th century to free the home and democratise it, against the old separation of rooms according to class and gender divisions. In Australia, ‘open plan is accepted as the natural domestic support for family living’ (Dowling, 2008: 536). According to Dowling, newly built houses in Australian cities have become increasingly open plan and increasingly focused on living spaces, which are considered as the heart of family life. In contrast, the common fashion of interior design in China when many of the participants lived there was still focused on different enclosed rooms, including separation of the kitchen and the living room. There, women participants cooked in a space that concealed the cooking, chaos and smells from guests and other family members. Thus, upon migrating to Australia, participants had to compromise and either change their habits and cook within an open kitchen, or seek a similar enclosed kitchen in less up-to-date Australian houses.

Contemporary display homes most likely include only open plan designs, as in Lara’s case. Here, the woman’s domain had turned into the family’s domain, and the cooking process is no longer under the undeniable control of the woman. This approach is usually being interpreted by the real-estate agents interviewed as a
modern and improved way of living which attracts immigrants, and in particular those who come from non-western countries and wish to become more 'westernised'. Despite these changes in the kitchen’s perception, it seems that Chinese women participants still dominate their kitchen and control it. The kitchen appeared as a significant space for Italian women in the previous chapter as well as in the literature (Pascali, 2006; Supski, 2006), but it seems that for Chinese women too, the kitchen is one of the most important spaces of the house. This may be encouraged, interestingly, by the open plan, which locates the kitchen at the centre of the house where everyday life and entertainment (as in Jane’s case) are taking place.

The kitchen was often mentioned because most participants stated they have either installed a powerful range hood instead of the existing one, or wish to do so. The need for a strong range hood was explained with ‘Chinese cooking’ that involves stir frying and cooking with oil. Both Cathleen and Shu believe that an enclosed kitchen that keeps the smell out of the lounge is best for Chinese cooking, as Shu states:

…many houses have open kitchens but people adapt their habits and don’t hit the oil so much. This is what I do – and then keep the open plan. The kitchens here got more space than in China. People normally install a powerful range hood that takes the smell out like in China. But I guess most of the people adapt themselves to the environment, because open kitchens look nicer to them than the closed ones.

Why, then, do participants prefer an open plan design if it is inappropriate for Chinese cooking? It might be because they have already adopted Australian norms of design and family values. Jane, Jin and Lara are pleased with their large kitchens and the big range hoods they contain. The new open plan kitchen of Lara consists of all the ‘Chinese’ essential appliances: a very large range hood that dominates the space and a rice cooker in the left-hand side corner of the bench top, as shown in Figure 6.10.

Jin’s kitchen, in Figure 6.11, is another good example of a typical ‘Chinese’ kitchen, with brand new appliances and Chinese cooking pans. Here, too, the rice cooker is at the corner and the stove is big and spacious. Jin explains that she favours the open plan kitchen because she likes big spaces, and she does ‘not feel squeezed’ when she invites friends over.
Figure 6.10 - Lara’s new kitchen, 2007.

Figure 6.11 - Jin’s new kitchen, 2007.
Figures 6.10 and 6.11 illustrate nicely the vital components of a typical Chinese kitchen, as revealed from this Chinese group. In many ways it looks like a standard western kitchen designed according to contemporary interior design vogue, but the Chinese presence provides it with another subtle layer of their own practical daily use.

When asked about building materials, Jun notes that in China materials are very cheap but of poor quality. Apartment buildings in China are made of concrete, and as such resemble nothing of the common suburban Australian houses. Asked if Australian houses remind her of houses in China, Jin asserts that they are very different because

[t]he size as well as the, I think the structure, you know like the houses in Australia are like brick veneer right? […] plaster inside and I've got brick outside, but the apartments in China are all concrete. They are all concrete, like it's very hard, the wall is very hard, and so it's quite different.

Perhaps the rigid concrete Chinese apartments symbolises the harsh life there that could not be adjusted, as compared to Australian houses and life. Since participants perceive Australia and China as so different, it seems that with migration to Australia they must change their conception of ways of living. Hui becomes accustomed to the Australian style of design of local stone and brick, but has to overcome resistance from her husband and son. In her house, the entrance is paved with slate and the adjacent wall is made of bricks. She comments:

Slate is Australian right? But Chinese never use it, they don’t like it, it’s too natural. So [my husband and son] were trying to do something but I stopped them. They don’t like this and that. They want to cover it, cover it with a carpet, yeah but I think that’s the original style…

Hui defines a ‘Chinese taste’ that is different than ‘Australian taste’ in regard to the use of natural materials in the house. It might be that Chinese preference of large houses with small gardens stems from their relative lack of bond with nature. According to Wang (2005: 73), Chinese gardens in the past were embedded in the social and aesthetic life in China not only of the elite but others as well, but it seems that this practice of gardening has long been forgotten amongst Chinese urban dwellers. Hui currently has a large backyard with a fountain and vegetable garden, a legacy of the former owner, as depicted in Figure 6.12. Hui employs a gardener to maintain it, mentioning she loves and wishes to keep the garden but sees herself as a bad gardener. This somewhat Chinese-style fountain was installed by the previous owner of the house, who was of a Greek descent. Yet Hui clearly mentions she has
been attracted to this backyard because of this fountain, and thus it might have played an important role in choosing this particular house.

Figure 6.12 - A fountain at Hui’s backyard, 2007.

A number of the participants refer to Bunnings Warehouse, the Australian chain-store of home-maintenance that has a large number of stores spread around suburban Melbourne. Jin renovated her home with the help of Bunnings, Jan bought there building materials for his backyard, and Shu obtained her patio fountain there. Jane also bought a fountain, located now in front of her house, but at another similar store. Indeed, the role of backyards in immigrants’ lives has been explored in Australia before (Head et al., 2004; Morgan et al., 2005), but none of these studies has focused on Chinese immigrants and their attitudes towards backyards. As the maintenance of backyards and front yards is a very important aspect of suburban Australian living, and the role of these stores is quite substantial within Australian society, it seems that Chinese participants in this research adopt these common Australian practices that are focused on and around the house. The desire to become ‘like Australians’, which was also shown in Lilly’s choice of house, coincides with Chinese participants’ desire to enhance through their home-building practices a sense of possibility in the house. That is, their house allows Chinese participants the opportunities for a better life: the opportunity to develop certain capacities and skills and the opportunity for personal growth (Hage, 1997: 103).
Even so, these Australian practices are blended with Chinese practices that are related to *fengshui*. This is a Chinese ancient practice that is rooted in the action of ‘sitting and situating a building’, that is choosing an auspicious location - a spatial setting that involves the actual space occupied by the structure, as well as the location of the site in relation to its broader surroundings (Knapp, 2005: 99). Indeed, as Ong (1999) has observed in California, all the real-estate agents have mentioned this as a determinant aspect influencing migrants of Chinese origin when buying a house. They mentioned issues as the position of the house, the location in relation to the road, and the house number, as some numbers are considered ‘better’ than others. None of these issues were mentioned by participants.

Fengshui was mentioned in relation to the organisation of rooms, furniture and elements in the house and around it, with the aim of improving energy flow. None of the participants declared they believe that designing the house according to fengshui principles is imperative, but nonetheless some have taken them into account in organising the space or locating furniture. Perhaps there were other considerations but these were not expressed to me. As explained by the real-estate agents, fengshui principles are chiefly important for elderly people and those who do not speak English well. This might explain why participants do not place a great weight on these practices. However, Cathleen states that in terms of fengshui she does not like the fact that the bedrooms are located upstairs and the living areas downstairs, but this is not so important and the house has a nice view which is, fengshui-wise, more significant. Jane comments that according to fengshui it is good to have a water feature in front of the house or inside it. She, in fact, has both, a fountain in front of the house and a small wooden dog-sculpture with running water in the house. Other principles may be that the front and back doors are not located in a straight line, to prevent the fleeing of energy. Figure 6.13 illustrates the front façade of Jane’s house, with the fountain in the right-hand side of the big double-storeyed house. These kinds of fountains are very popular around Melbourne and installing them in the front yard is likely to point to a profound adaptation of Australian cultural practices. As has been noted before, the adaptation of Australian practices signifies a desire to gain, through the house, cultural capital that will improve Chinese participants’ advancement in Australia.
Other more material signs of home-building practices are the presence of Chinese decorations and traditional artefacts inside the house. Many participants, for example, place Chinese red knots around the house. They also display Chinese calligraphy or Chinese-style illustrations of landscape on their walls. Another common practice is the display of Chinese-language religious sayings, since a number of participants are Christians. David, for instance, has in his lounge a print with Chinese-language words meaning ‘Jesus is the Master of the house’. These religious and cultural artefacts are what Tolia-Kelly (2003: 314) names ‘precipitates of re-memories and narrated histories’ that help situate Chinese participants politically and socially in relation to their national identity. They connect them with others like them and make them feel part of a community. But it is important to note that they do it within their homes, in a concealed manner. Another practice is to locate a shoe-stand near the front entrance, following the Chinese tradition that considers taking off shoes inside the house an appropriate routine (for residents as well as guests). Figure 6.14 shows David’s entrance door with a red and gold fish, one of the Chinese symbols.
The presence of a piano in the house of each of the participants was astounding. In most cases it is the children’s duty to learn how to play it, as it stands in the lounge with family photographs on top. According to many of the participants the role of education in Chinese culture is important and the teacher is a role model. The presence of the piano seems to indicate the importance of that aspect: learning the piano is a necessary component of Chinese education, perhaps because it requires discipline and obedience. The piano requires a modestly-sized room, and thus fits in all of the houses, sometimes in the lounge or in the bedroom. In its very nature the piano is a bourgeois domestic instrument (Weber, 1978) and thus might be another sign of capital accumulation, to establish a desired social class (Ong, 1999). The piano was found in all the houses, as if there is an unspoken rule that every Chinese house must be anchored by a piano. Family photographs always accompany it and are often very formal, portraying children in ceremonies linked to their education path. Both the piano and the desire for better education signify the sense of possibility the house provides, through the accumulation of education and skills that are perceived to be valued in Australian society. Figure 6.15 depicts a piano with photographs, while Figure 6.16 shows a shoe-stand, both in Annette’s house.
The two images clearly show the considerable space the piano and the shoe-stand both acquire in almost every house of this group. These kinds of adaptations are apparent almost entirely inside the house. In contrast to the Italian group’s experience that has involved the extensive transformation of backyards into vegetable gardens.
and the common addition of the verandah – two ‘Italian’ markers – Chinese participants do not tend to transform the external appearance of the houses. This might be because to advance their position within Australian society, that is to foster the feeling of sense of possibility produced by the house, Chinese participants wish to keep their houses’ exteriors as they found them, or even to enhance their Australian character. The only apparent sign of being Chinese, as Lilly nicely puts it, is the satellite dish, as seen in Figure 6.17: ‘...this is a traditional Chinese house decoration, the satellite. I think 90% of Chinese people when they buy a house they like to install a satellite’.

Figure 6.17 – Lilly’s satellite dish, 2007.

6.4.3 Hybrid existence: Chinese or Australian

When asked if the house reminds them of their apartment in China, all participants agree that there are no similarities at all. Apparently, there are some links between the two different types of residence and consequently ways of living, but these are hidden. Shu, for instance, loves her current house because its internal patio, depicted in Figure 6.18, reminds her of famous Chinese gardens. She explains:

When I first came I saw the windows and I liked it because of the windows they look like Suzhou Gardens in Jiangsu Province near Shanghai, like Venice with a lot of water, a lot of buildings built on water, and it’s famous
because of its gardens and I liked those windows [around the patio]. And the sculpture we bought in Bunnings. In the gardens it’s not straight forwards, it’s not full view from the start, you go and there is a pond and there is a fountain, and then there is a view. It is very famous, go to the internet and see.

Figure 6.18 – Shu’s patio and fountain, 2007.

Even though there are no obvious links between the former apartment and the current house, the house did remind Shu of past familiar landscapes and hence gained her appreciation. Other links are even less apparent. When asked whether his house has more Chinese or Australian character David insists that houses around the world are all the same. They are all meant for residents to inhabit and therefore must have a toilet, a bathroom and bedrooms. David believes it does not matter where you live:

…all the furniture we bought in Melbourne alright? But of course it’s made in China alright? Now everything is made in China alright? So it is the same thing, the quality is different, the name is different, but anyway, it’s from China! Go to your house, everything is from China. I can’t say 90% but at least 60% alright is from China! (laughs).
David’s remark may be linked to issues of globalization. The ‘time-space compression’ (Massey, 1994) or ‘cultural compression’ (Rapport and Dawson, 1998a) and globalization processes mean that there is a mutual contest of sameness and difference at the backdrops of global flows and landscapes around the world (Appadurai, 1990; Hannerz, 1990) and one can find the same furniture in China as in Australia. Still, this does not make homes identical around the world. Massey (1994) argues that identities of places, including the place-called-home, are made out of positive interrelations with their surroundings. It seems that David disagrees with this conception of home because he understands the home as identical everywhere in the world, whether it is located in China or in Australia.

Figure 6.19 – Hui’s lounge, 2007.

For other participants design and uniqueness is essential, as is the case for Hui. She bought her furniture in China since in Melbourne all she could find was ‘expensive and not good enough’. On one of her visits to China she went to a famous place ‘with the best furniture’, where she ordered the furniture for her new home in Melbourne. It took a month to make and another month before it arrived. Hui and her husband had a lot of trouble getting it from the port as it was very heavy, and then they discovered everything was huge and could not get into the door, so they had to reassemble everything inside the house. When I asked if her lounge, depicted in Figure 6.19, is Chinese in character, she notes: ‘I don’t know - what do you think? Looks very
European don’t you think?’ The bed, she laughs, is dubbed by her friends ‘a Chinese queen’s bed’, and certainly looks like a royal bed.

The notion of European design presented here by Hui signifies a shift from Chinese taste towards western taste. It is hard to tell whether this lounge is furnished according to Chinese or European style, but the fact that Hui believes it has European aesthetic speaks for itself. This kind of taste shift can be explained as a strategy of accumulation in both economic and cultural senses, as Ong (1999: 89-109) clarifies in her research of Hong Kong immigrants in California. Hui’s desire to have European furniture in her home might be interpreted as cultural accumulation, as it helps immigrants to rebuild their social status in the host country. Europe and America are setting the standards of international middle-class style and Europe, in particular, is located at the top of hierarchy as the origin of fine design (with Italy as one of the leading countries, as discussed in the previous chapter). Thus, by displaying European-style furniture and consequently European taste, Hui joins herself to an international middle-class.

Other participants agree that they do nothing special to show or hide their ethnic identity. Most of them do not transform the exterior of the house, aside from Jin who decorates it only around the Chinese New Year. Again, this practice shows that for Chinese participants it is important to keep their houses’ exteriors without any identification of the ethnic origin, not because they are embarrassed by it but because they do not feel the need to do it. They desire to become Australians in order to open themselves to maximal opportunities in their new homeland.

The relationships with neighbours were always presented as good, even if not so warm. Hui reports that upon moving in, she wrote letters to the neighbours introducing her family and they all came to say hello. Julie mentions that her Greek neighbours are the friendliest of all, while ‘Aussies keep their privacy’. Lilly comments that she was inspired by her Greek lady neighbour with her front yard decoration. Similar to the Greek neighbour, Lilly put in various small decorations in her own backyard which she obtained at the local second-hand market.

Lara’s house comprises some ‘Asian decorations’, as she notes, but the main impression of the house is of western design. Figure 6.20 portrays the main staircase as seen from the entrance door of the house, with the large chandelier above. This flight of stairs brings to mind an old Victorian mansion with a formal level of entertainment and second level of private areas. The existence of a chandelier and the mirror on the wall may have significance in terms of fengshui principles, as glass is
believed to divert good energy flow into the house, but this was not expressed by Lara. She states she does not try to show her Chinese identity in the house:

I just do what I like you know, sometimes I’m probably unconscious of Asian taste or something, like I like bamboo, I put bamboo for the decoration of something, but it’s not in the purpose of that. But we do have you know Asian decorations.

Indeed, Lara’s house comprises many Chinese artefacts and decorations that perform their Chinese identity, even if unconsciously (Fortier, 1999). These are contrasted with the western design of the house at their background.

Figure 6.20 – Staircase and chandelier in Lara's house, 2007.

Annette lives in a unit and is satisfied with its small area and especially lack of a backyard. She notes that at first they searched for a detached house but now, after buying this unit, she is happy with its good condition and the fact she does not need to maintain a garden. On one of the walls of her lounge there are four framed pictures with images of large houses, taken from the property section of the local newspaper:

These photos are from local newspaper. […] Yes, I look at, I think that is beautiful, I enjoy looking, but I think if I have this [house], first thing, it costs a lot of money, another thing, you have to keep the house and do a lot of housework, everyday, I’m lazy.
The pictures, in Figure 6.21, show affluent houses with swimming pools and plentiful space. It is understandable that Annette would not want to live in such a house, defining herself a lazy person, yet what is the reason for displaying these houses on her lounge wall? Is it only because they are beautiful? Whatever the reason might be, the inclusion of the very Australian houses in her home supports the premise that for Chinese participants the house opens opportunities for a bright future in Australian society.

Figure 6.21 - Pictures of houses on Annette’s lounge wall, 2007.

In conclusion, Chinese participants in this research treat their houses as a means for advancing their position in their new homeland, doing so in a very individualistic way. They see the house as an opportunity to develop their future and improve their social status by gaining cultural capital through the house. Their practices of home-building foster their sense of possibility as embodied in the house. As Shu clearly summarises:

> We basically quite adapt to this country, we don’t really buy something particular to China. We left [China] in 1999, I don’t think those building apartments – a low structure – those have any effect on me. I don’t think so.

But these low-structure apartment buildings have influenced, indirectly perhaps, the choice Shu and others have made to live in spacious suburban dwellings in Melbourne.

6.5 The role of the house for the Chinese group in Melbourne

This chapter dealt with the role of the physical form of housing of Chinese participants. As opposed to the Italian group in Melbourne, the Chinese ways of using the built structure of the house are more hidden and subtle. Most twelve houses show how Chinese immigrants keep their exteriors untouched and only add practical appliances
and decorations to their interiors. It seems that the actual physical appearance of the house is of less importance and does not perform a recognisable form of Chinese identity. Moreover, it seems that participants try to blend into the built environment; some of them even accept unfamiliar cultural practices such as gardening. Yet, it is not to say that Chinese participants forgo their cultural identity when they adopt Australian practices. They do not try to hide their ethnic identity, but they do feel they do not need to sustain it through the exteriors of their houses; hence they do not transform the houses or their backyards into environments that remind them of their past homes. They do not use ethnic symbols to declare their ethnic identity (Gans, 1979, 1994).

Chinese participants resided in apartment blocks in China and it is obvious that there are no direct links between these relatively small apartments and current suburban houses in Melbourne. None of the participants hangs a painting of their former apartment in their Australian house, as some of the Italian participants do. These apartments, being part of Chinese housing system, and often associated with workplaces, did not convey much meaning to their dwellers. Although most participants have positive memories of their past homes, they do not wish to replicate their former environments. On the contrary, most of them have chosen a larger house because of past experience in their former comparatively small residences.

Chinese participants’ preferences clearly show that for them it is most important to reside in an affluent suburb with a good reputation for education, transport and a nearby shopping centre. The house as a built structure is of least importance, and this maybe resulted in their tendency to keep the house as it is because the built structure of the house does not play a significant role in home-building processes. What seems to play a role is the conception of the house as a means of advancing themselves within Australian society in terms of cultural or monetary capital, and the list of preferences in choosing a house demonstrates this too. The house is conceived in a dynamic way, viewed as something that could have been anywhere in the world. It is appreciated for its metaphorical qualities (as providing shelter and social gain) and less for its material, physical qualities. The house is a tool for opening opportunities in the local environment because Chinese participants feel they can improve, through its ownership, their social status and position.

The very different experience of Italian participants, who immigrated fifty years ago and at first were expected to forget their own cultural identity and language, might explain their adherence to preserving cultural practices in a more visible manner.
around their homes. But the case of Chinese participants is completely different because since the 1970s Australia officially adopted a multicultural policy which welcomes ethnic diversity. Recent Chinese participants feel comfortable to be what they are and not to hide their ethnic identity, although they do not feel they need to expose it either. They just want to live their lives in the Australian way, with a large house, plenty of space and a backyard, preferably small. No-one mentioned the ‘Australian Dream’ as a target to pursue, but it is obvious that the Australian Dream of a detached house in the suburb is prevalent within current perceptions of home amongst Chinese participants in this research.

Fengshui principles shape some of the homes consciously as well as unconsciously. These minor adaptations of the home to ‘Chinese taste’ resemble Italian practices as well, but owners of Chinese houses do not alter their exteriors. Instead, they try to adjust to the new demands the house imposes. Despite other studies that present Chinese houses as ‘monster houses’ with large structures and small backyards, some of the houses of this group comprise large backyards, which their dwellers do their best to maintain, adopting this Australian practice that is very different from their past experience in urban Chinese apartments. These findings support other studies that have focused on immigrants’ backyards, but it is important to note that Chinese migrants take care of their backyards in a different way than rural migrants and do not utilize these spaces to continue a rural tradition of the past, as other rural migrant groups tend to do (Head et al., 2004; Morgan et al., 2005). Gardening is yet another means of home-building that is meant to promote the feeling of sense of possibility (Hage, 1997) the house has to offer. Adopting the social dominant order that emphasises values of outdoor living and abundant suburban space contributes to the social position of Chinese participants.

To conclude, for Chinese immigrants the role of the home is concealed and not as visible to the public eye as in the Italian case. From the outside, houses of Chinese participants would be seen as ordinary Australian houses, and Chinese identity is mostly performed inside. Two artworks revealing Chinese houses are presented next. The first artwork shows exteriors of Chinese houses, while the second exposes interiors of Chinese houses. Together they portray the collective imaginary ‘Chinese house’ in Melbourne.
CASE STUDY III: THE MOROCCAN GROUP IN METROPOLITAN TEL AVIV

7.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the Moroccan group in Tel Aviv metropolitan area. It traces the role of the built form of housing in the home-building process of twelve Moroccan participants in various municipalities of the region of Tel Aviv. Moroccan immigration to Israel has always been the symbol of a discriminated ethnic group that faced hardship in the first years of settlement, and has always been dealt with in the Israeli discourse from a sociological perspective. The exploration of their specific houses has never been done before, unlike the case of Italians in Melbourne.

Through an analysis of findings from participants’ accounts, it is argued that Moroccans utilise their houses and apartments in Tel Aviv as a means for fostering the key feeling of community, as the most significant feeling of Hage’s (1997: 103) four key feelings. This is done through the preservation of their origins and history, in order to both maintain family ties and togetherness and to educate the following generations. They do so with a gendered construction of their homes and the use of the everyday as a means of resistance against the dominant Israeli order. None of the participants have modified their exteriors at all. The extent to which the interiors are altered ranges between those who hardly modify their houses to those who construct a Moroccan room – an overt reproduction of a Moroccan house. In contrast to Italians, who wish to preserve their everyday ‘Italian’ practices and thus to foster the feeling of familiarity in the house, Moroccans preserve tools and artefacts from their past life, but do not maintain many of their ‘Moroccan’ practices. This happens mainly due to differences in circumstances around the two groups’ migration.

The chapter reveals the process of Moroccan home-building in two main parts. The first, as in previous chapters, outlines the historical background of Moroccan immigration in Israel and the physical presence of Moroccans in the Tel Aviv region. It sketches the complex paths of Moroccan immigrants in Israel, and traces their diverse forms of housing. The second part consists of findings from interviews and their analysis. The main objective is to discover whether houses of Moroccan immigrants in Tel Aviv play a role in their residents’ home-building. This is done by investigating the ways in which houses in Morocco may have influenced current houses in Israel. Again, the premise laid out here, as in preceding chapters, is that past houses do influence the physical form of present houses of Moroccans in Israel. In order to
unpack this matter, analyses of two different houses are presented. The first analysis studies the childhood house in Morocco and argues that these houses were significant as part of a larger structure of Jewish life in a Muslim country, holding meaning of togetherness and familial relationships. The second analysis focuses on current houses and their links with past houses in Morocco. Connections between the two kinds of houses are explored in order to better understand the role of the physical form of the house for the Moroccans’ process of settlement in Tel Aviv.

7.2 Moroccan immigration to Israel

Prior to the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, there were no more than 900 persons from Morocco and other North African countries in Palestine, according to official figures of the British Mandatory (Tsur, 1997: 73). Most of these immigrants of 19th century settled in existing cities and towns. As this immigration stopped around the turn of the 20th century due to political and safety problems, the presence of Moroccans in Jewish settlements has decreased. During the first two decades after 1948, Israel received a large number of immigrants from Arab countries in North Africa and the Middle East; of which the major were Morocco and Iraq (CBS, 2006b; Levy, 1997).

There were three main immigration waves from Morocco to Israel in the first two decades of the post Second World War period (Mey-Ami, 2005). The first spanned over eight years between 1948 and 1956 and consisted of more than 85,600 immigrants. It was due to the rising levels of tension in Morocco after the establishment of Israel, leading to pogroms against local Jews. In 1956, when Morocco gained its independence, Zionist activities were forbidden and emigration to Israel became illegal. Thus, between 1956 and 1961 the second wave comprised 30,000 Jews who migrated illegally to Israel. The third and last wave occurred between 1961 and 1964, when 80,000 Jews migrated through an unofficial agreement with King Hasan II and his government. The King wanted to improve Morocco’s image in the eyes of the west and knew he should be more tolerant of Jewish emigration. The total number of Moroccan immigrants who arrived in Israel from 1948 until today is almost 250,000, the largest number of immigrants from any Muslim country to Israel (Mey-Ami, 2005: 3).

Since the third wave ended in the mid 1960s, the population of Morocco-born Israelis has aged significantly. Today there are 156,600 persons living in Israel who
were born in Morocco, who represent 2.16 percent of Israel’s total population, of them 90.6 percent are above the age of 45 (141,800 persons) (CBS, 2006a).

The distribution pattern of Morocco-born persons in Israel is very different from that of the Italian immigrants in Australia, who migrated around the same decades. The Italians and other immigrants to western countries tended to settle in large cities in order to find employment (Hugo, 2004; Ley, 1999). In contrast, the majority of Moroccan immigrants and other migrants from Muslim countries in Israel were sent to inhabit urban and rural settlements that were established in the country’s peripheral regions in the mid 1950s. Twenty-eight settlements, dubbed ‘development towns’, were established in remote areas of Israel and other neighbourhoods were founded on the outskirts of existing towns and cities. Other rural semi-cooperative villages were also established in peripheral areas. All of them received a large number of immigrants from low socioeconomic background (Yiftachel, 2000: 420). Due to this unique distribution pattern, the percentage of Moroccan immigrants in the four major cities in Israel is relatively low, and their presence is much stronger in small towns in southern and northern regions and in towns around major cities. The distribution has also been strongly affected by the location of temporary housing camps, in which many of them were settled when they just arrived.

In the city of Tel Aviv-Yafo (the metropolitan core) there are only 5,468 Morocco-born persons who represent 3.49 percent of all Morocco-born immigrants in Israel and only 1.42 percent of the city’s population (CBS, 1995). In the city of Bat-Yam (an adjacent locality with population of about half the size), however, there are 4,909 Moroccan people who represent 3.13 percent of the total Moroccan population and 3.6 percent of the city’s population, and this share increases in direct relation to the geographical distance from the centre of Israel. Thus, for example, there are 4,225 Moroccan people in Dimona, a development town in the southern region of Israel, who represent 2.69 percent of all Morocco-born immigrants in Israel, yet 13.73 percent of the town’s population.

The social status of Moroccan immigrants in Israel has been a source of great pain throughout the years. In a similar manner to the Italian population in Australia, Moroccan immigrants in Israel were asked to assimilate in the Israeli society and to blend into the Israeli melting pot. They were expected to forgo their traditional values

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15 The last census in Israel was conducted in 1995. This is the most updated cross-tabulated information about ethnicity and location. More recent data on established immigrants (with the exception of migrants from the former Soviet Union) can be found with no relation to their place of settlement. The next census was conducted in December 2008 with results available not before 2010.
and symbols and to adopt Israeli western values. Coming from a Muslim country, they were seen by the western Jewish majority as primitive and inferior to the western culture (Levy, 1997). The implementation of the assimilation policy led to an intensive interference in all areas of life, including settlement, employment and even personal hygiene. This attitude has led to the breaking down of the traditional familial order and the weakening of the patriarchal authority in Moroccan families (Mey-Ami, 2005). In Morocco, Moroccan Jews lived in multi-generational patriarchal family formation and value was placed on having a large number of children. The receiving society was, in those years, essentially western-oriented, innovative and secular (Glassman and Eiskivoits, 2006). Moreover, Moroccan communities were separated from their spiritual leaders. In most times these leaders stayed in Morocco but even communities whose leaders migrated were spread around the country according to arbitrary decisions of the settling institutions (Portugali, 1993). Immigrants left all their assets and belongings in Morocco and arrived in Israel with no financial means. Some of them were villagers, but many others were urbanites who lived in large cities and were accustomed to urban life. But everyday life in the pre-modern Moroccan city was very different from life in the new modern state. Their trading skills and crafts were not appreciated anymore and instead they were sent to live in small towns, facing unemployment or labour-intensive work (Levy, 1997; Portugali, 1993). Tsur (1997) argues that Moroccan immigrants stood at the centre of what came to be known as an ‘ethnic problem’ from a very early stage after the establishment of the state. This happened due to tension between two conflicting societies (western and non-western Jews), caught between the generative orders of colonialism and nationalism.

In the 1960s, Moroccan Israelis were in the lowest stratum of the Israeli Jewish society, and had high levels of unemployment and illiteracy. A group called ‘Black Panthers’ was established in 1971 by second generation Oriental Jews (most of them of Moroccan origin), demanding their voices be heard by the establishment, which until then comprised only western Jews. This plea for social justice has led to the gaining of political power by Oriental Jews for the first time in Israel. The Likud party won the political election of 1977, representing a large number of Oriental Jews (Levy, 1997; Mey-Ami, 2005).

Today, Moroccan-Israelis have largely integrated into Israeli society. Since the late 1980s, with a modest but systematic improvement in the socioeconomic status of

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16 Jewish immigrants who emigrated mainly from Europe before 1948, Ashkenazim in Hebrew.
17 People of Middle-Eastern or North-African origin, Mizrahim in Hebrew.
18 Led by Menahem Begin (who was of western origin himself), the Likud was a right-wing party that came into power after almost thirty years of left-wing leadership in Israel.
many of them and the rise of some to positions of power in the socio-political structure, many of the adversities of the early days have been eased, though not entirely removed (Levy, 1997: 28). As in the Italian case in Melbourne, so have Moroccans in Israel been accepted and embraced by the official authorities with the gradual end of the melting pot ideology. As a sign of this diversity, a Moroccan traditional celebration became an official Israeli holiday (the Mimuna). As a study on Moroccan immigrants in Israel and The Netherlands shows, Israeli-Moroccans experience little prejudice in Israel in comparison with their Dutch counterparts, whether they keep their ethnic identity or not (van Oudenhoven and Eisses, 1998). Yet, Israelis of Moroccan origin are still overrepresented in the lower stratum of Israeli society (Levy, 1997), and a large share of them still live in isolated, stigmatised and deprived urban areas, thus marginalised both geographically and socially (Yiftachel, 2000: 434).

7.2.1 The Moroccan presence in Tel Aviv

The presence of Moroccan Israelis in the Tel Aviv region is not very prominent due to their scattered settlement history in peripheral towns around the country. In Jaffa (Yafo), the 1905 census counted Morocco-born persons as 20 percent of the Jewish population of the city (Portugali, 1993). The percentage of Morocco-born immigrants in Jewish settlement, however, decreased until 1948. Since then, Moroccan immigrants have inhabited new modern towns mostly in the country’s physical and social periphery. Therefore, their presence is obvious in less affluent neighbourhoods and municipalities around the centre of Tel Aviv. The highest concentration of people born in Morocco was in the southern and eastern suburbs of Tel Aviv (CBS, 1995). Within the boundaries of Tel Aviv-Yafo locality itself, Moroccans mainly dwell in less-wealthy southern neighbourhoods of the city. Figure 7.1 demonstrates their distribution in the city and its surrounding localities.

Today, as noted above, the percentage of Moroccan-Israelis in the Tel Aviv region is not significant compared with other peripheral towns in Israel. According to 1995 census, there are 63,587 Morocco-born persons, which form 2 percent of the total population of Tel Aviv metropolitan area (CBS, 1995).

Moroccan character of housing in Tel Aviv has never been explicitly documented in Israeli literature. It is not the big city that stands as a symbol of Moroccan presence but the isolated development town. Thus, documentations which deal with the Moroccan or Oriental presence are largely found within discussions of these remote, often deserted (also literally because a number of them are located in
the midst of the southern region of Israel, the Negev desert) towns, as discussed in the following section.

7.2.2 Moroccan housing in Tel Aviv

The current Moroccan character of housing has only developed since 1948, with the establishment of the State of Israel. Prior to 1948 there have been neighbourhoods built by Moroccan immigrants with relation to Moor architectural style, such as in Jerusalem and Tiberias (Portugali, 1993: 160), but these did not gain a prominent recognition. When Moroccan and other North African immigrants arrived in Israel in the 1950s and 1960s, they were sent to settle new towns. The state provided them housing in new apartment blocks that were built chiefly for them. Hundreds of thousands of immigrants were housed in the first decade (after 1948) in apartment blocks all around the country. This was the Modernity project of Israel – settling the people as a tool for the appropriation of the national space (Kallus and Law Yone, 2002).

The massive apartment blocks (dubbed ‘trains’ due to their length), could be found not only in each of the development towns, but also in large cities, where they
were mostly located in marginalised poor areas. The buildings, built with the Modern vision of turning the immigrants into western ‘new’ Israelis, were constructed with the best intent in mind according to the Modernist international architectural style of the time. They were not designed for the distinctive population that was about to inhabit them (Kallus and Law Yone, 2002). The buildings were often depicted in national documentaries without the presence of humans, as pure architectural forms. Such perceptions are demonstrated in Figure 7.2, showing new apartment blocks built for new immigrants in suburbs of the Tel Aviv metropolitan area.

Figure 7.2 – Housing in the Tel Aviv metropolitan area. Photographs: Rudi Weissenstein, 1962 (Source: Wigodar, 2000: 202).

But, these pure architectural forms changed their character in the national imaginary soon after they were inhabited by Moroccan and other Oriental immigrants. They became the symbol of Oriental everyday life in Israeli peripheral towns. Today, they are at the centre of the discourse around Oriental Jews, and are often represented in films, literature and popular culture (Yacobi, 2007: 188). Many of these new housing environments are disadvantaged due to years of neglect by Israeli governments. In the 1980s, some of them were part of the neighbourhood upgrading program, having a cosmetic face-lift. Figure 7.3 depicts the cover of the academic book *Mizrahim in*
Israel\textsuperscript{19} (Hever et al., 2002), with an image of an upgraded apartment block in a deprived neighbourhood in Jerusalem. As can be seen, these buildings, as representatives of Oriental Jews in Israel, are often linked with signs of nationalism (in this case Israeli flags).

**Figure 7.3 - Mizrahim in Israel (Source: Hever et al., 2002).**

Only a few of the participants in this research reside in this kind of housing. Nevertheless, many of them still live in different forms of housing provided by the state soon after they arrived in Israel. Others have upgraded along the years and moved to ‘better’ housing in ‘better’ locations.

### 7.2.3 Characteristics of Moroccan participants in this research

Twelve Moroccan participants were interviewed for this research between November 2007 and January 2008, among them seven women and five men. Of the twelve participants two migrated to Israel in 1948, nine during the 1950s and one migrated in 1962. All of them migrated at a relatively young age: four when they were still young children (under ten years of age), four in their adolescence, and the rest as young who.

\textsuperscript{19} Oriental Jews in Israel.
adults under twenty years of age. Now, the participants’ ages vary between 60 and 75 years old. All of them came from various cities around Morocco, where Jewish communities could be found. This represents Moroccan Jews who mostly lived in large cities (Levy, 1997). In Morocco, all the participants lived in rented urban residences since most Jews did not own their houses. The participants comprise eleven married couples and one widowed women. Only seven of the couples are both Moroccans. Others are married to persons from other ethnic backgrounds of which three are Oriental Jews and two of western origin. Of the twelve participants three practice regularly the Jewish religion while the rest are secular.

As in the Italian and the Chinese groups, it was not easy to find participants for this research, even though as a local Israeli I have more personal contacts that I could use for this search than in Australia. Indeed, eight of the participants were recruited through personal contacts of family and friends. Through the snowball method I contacted two more participants. When I could not find anyone else, I approached a Moroccan organisation in Tel Aviv, where I was given two contacts. These contacts were given to me because of their unique characteristics. This means that they are not ‘ordinary’ participants that were randomly recruited, but represent an explicit Moroccan character, as will be shown later in the chapter. The participants’ dwellings are concentrated around the southern and eastern localities of Bat Yam, Rishon Letzion, Ramla and Givata'im, with three exceptions in the inner-city neighbourhoods of Yafo, Neot Afeka and Shikun Dan. Figure 7.4 shows the participants’ distribution around the Tel Aviv metropolitan area.

The interviews took place in the participants’ current homes and sometimes involved the company of other family guests. They were semi-structured and the participants were asked to tell their stories of immigration and settlement in Israel, to describe their past homes in Morocco, and to draw sketches of both past and current homes. As in the other groups, no instructions were given and they could draw whatever they liked. The interviews included a tour in the house with photographs taken during it. Other photographs of the house in Morocco, if they existed and were available, were collected. The participants’ names and main characteristics are presented in Appendix H. The names given to participants and listed in the appendix are pseudonyms.
7.3 Former home in the homeland: memories of a previous house

This section focuses on former houses in Morocco, where participants spent their childhood before migrating to Israel. This examination seeks to understand the importance of past houses within processes of migration and the influence they have on current houses in Israel. As in the Italian case, these houses are located in the Morocco of 50 or 60 years ago. Many of the participants rely only on their memories to illustrate them, recalling these houses from a child’s viewpoint. The houses and the urban environments in which they were located were always described in great detail and in an affectionate manner. They remind participants of their vibrant family and community lives, which revolved around common areas in the built structures.

In this section I argue that past houses of Moroccan participants are understood in their broader sense, as one component of a major network of the Jewish neighbourhood in the city. They consist not only of the family dwelling but also a complex housing structure that links each family house to others and thus creates an inclusive communal and social life. This also affects their perception of their current houses, as will be exposed shortly.
Most Moroccan Jews lived in big cities, where they could be involved in city life and rent houses in the Jewish ghetto, the *Mellah*. Jewish communities have lived in the *Mellah* for many years, having their kosher butchers, grocery stores and other everyday needs nearby, as renters in houses owned by Muslims. These houses were courthouses, comprising a large number of rooms around a big central yard and arranged mostly in two storeys (but sometimes reaching up to four - the number of storeys varied in different cities). The open courtyard contained a common well and one or two staircases to the upper levels. Each family typically had one or two rooms around the courtyard, and the common kitchens and toilets were located in the corners of each floor. In some cases the Muslim owner lived on the top floor but in most times the building was solely occupied by Jewish families.

All the participants describe their childhood house as simple and basic, like life in Morocco of those days. Unlike Italian apartments which consisted of a number of bedrooms and a kitchen, Moroccan urban apartments contained only one or two large rooms. The big common kitchen was shared by all families of the same floor; each family with its own corner. The rooms were extremely large with high wooden ceilings and in the case of the upper levels, were linked to an open corridor that was formed around the central courtyard. Despite their simplicity, the houses were very clean and neat. As many participants emphasise, houses of Moroccan Jews were very well looked-after, even if their dwellers were poor. Rachel stresses:

> Houses in Morocco are often, of Jews yes? Look like Spanish houses, there were nice tiles and in most times [the Jews] liked to take care, even the poorest, they liked a nice house, say, even if it was one room apartment, but there is no such thing to get up and to see a mess. The tidiness was an important thing. You get up in the morning and organise everything.

The neatness of the house was first to come to Rachel’s mind when describing her family house, but others remember the material appearance of the house. Due to variations between different *Mellahs* (Jewish quarters) in various cities and between families’ wealth, building materials varied. As Rachel mentions, some of the houses had illustrated, tiled, carpet-like floors, while others had simple plastered floors that were repainted every Friday. A few of the houses also had tiles on walls of public spaces. In some of the houses there were painted glass domes above the central yard, but they were the houses of wealthy relatives and none of the participants actually resided in such a house. In most houses the yard was open to the sky. The entrance gate of the building was often a big timber door, and there was no way one
could see what was happening inside the building from the street. The streets were as narrow as corridors between high walls to protect from the sun, as is typical of a Muslim city (Whitcomb, 2007). Only when one entered the gate and the following internal corridor, did the large courtyard become visible.

Regardless of their simplicity, for Moroccan participants these houses were the centre of a rich community life. For them, their home was not only the family's apartment, but the entire structure of rooms around the courtyard. Most of them felt they were part of a community, knowing all other children and having close relationships with other families. Haim explains it well when asked what he loved about this structure:

What I liked is that [in the] first floor [there are] six neighbours, everybody has children, so the children sit at one family, play at another, the next day play at a second family, and everybody goes to school together, everybody knows everyone, and in summer, especially in summer… in Sukkoth\(^{20}\) for example, where would they build the Sukkah? In the same vacant place where you enter, this is where they built the Sukkah…

As can be understood, Jewish holidays played a significant role in everyday life in these houses. Neighbouring families celebrated holidays together as one big family. Everybody knew each other and the children felt comfortable to freely visit other houses. This specific configuration of housing with shared facilities (common kitchen and toilets) probably created an intimate sort of living, where everybody was involved in other families’ lives. Everyone knew what the other family was having for dinner, and the central courtyard was the setting of Jewish celebrations. Figure 7.5 portrays the way Haim remembers his house.

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\(^{20}\) A Jewish holiday celebrated around September each year. Families build a simple temporary structure (the Sukkah) and eat and sleep in it for eight days.
It is clear from Haim’s drawing that his house is not merely the one room his family lived in, but the whole structure built around (in a similar way to the Chinese apartment blocks of the previous chapter). His actual house is only one fraction of this structure, and in fact, in his drawing he did not even mention where it is located. Perhaps it is because Haim moved with his family during his childhood between around twenty rented apartments; all of them were part of this same structure. But he does not recall this experience negatively. Apparently, finding an apartment to rent was quite easy, as he explains:

There, we were living in rent, not like here, and then let’s say we live two-three years, we don’t like it – the apartment, the neighbours or something – we move to another house. Someone would sit in the middle of the street, he had keys, like in jail, he wasn’t the owner; he was the agent. He had keys to all the apartments, two-room apartments, four-room, upstairs, downstairs, everyone who wants to rent would go to him, he would show the apartment, you like it – give me a deposit, no lease nothing. No lease agreements. Pay rent every month, he comes over - you give him rent. Sometimes you meet, you pay two months rent, next month he won’t come. Not only, they were Arabs, house owners were mostly Arabs, and they, in order not to pay the agents, they would come and sit themselves in the ground floor. […] Everybody, every woman comes downstairs and he
writes down and doesn't make mistakes, and if she has no money to pay he says never mind, next month.

The manner in which Haim refers to his past houses is very detailed and warm. He describes the simple procedures of renting an apartment as another positive feature of the simple life in the Moroccan city that has been lost in Israel. Another lost quality is the good relationships with the ‘Arabs’ (Muslims as they were called there) in Morocco. Haim portrays the Muslim landlord in a very positive light, as human and considerate of renters’ needs. This is in sharp contrast to the everyday reality in Jewish Israel, where Muslims are usually depicted in the political discourse with a negative view.

Like Haim, Avraham emphasises the importance of this central space to the whole Jewish community. He elucidates how his family rented an entire floor at a very low rent from a Muslim owner. The internal courtyard was very large and many families would ask his mother to use this space for celebrations:

There was a huge courtyard, big enough for a party. The stairs, this was for the band sometimes. In our neighborhood there were special things. Sometimes, people that didn't have a stage, in those days there weren't function halls and all these things that there are today in the world. In those days there were no such things. They would bring an Arab band, Jews that sing, and they would make the food for weddings and Bar-Mitzvahs in the houses, they did everything, Moroccan people. So they would ask my mother and she would give with nothing in return, nothing. They ask and she gives, like that, good deeds for wedding, Bar-Mitzvah, Brit[h]21 also sometimes.

Being a Jewish minority in a Muslim country has most likely contributed to the harmony and closeness among Jewish families in the Mellah. Even though relationships with Muslims were very good at that time (before 1948), Jews still formed a minority and sometimes were treated by the authorities with suspicion (Levy, 1997). Almost everybody around the neighbourhood was Jewish and the community was extraordinarily united.

Another important aspect that was often mentioned in interviews was the unique materiality of the buildings and furniture in the houses. Most of the participants described these simple houses with great detail, illustrating on the one hand their modest character, but on the other hand their unique colourful details. Sonia recalls a house of a distant relative, which she describes as a paradise:

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21 Jewish rituals.
...again these wooden doors, you open and suddenly you see a different world, a paradise, it's this patio, full with vegetation, full, and I still remember it was geranium. And the house was big and they were really wealthy.

This feeling of a hidden space out of the public sight appears in many of the narratives. Figure 7.6 shows Yehuda and his best friend, both at the age of 16, in front of the timber door at the entrance of his house, in a photograph taken two years before he emigrated. Other architectural details in Yehuda's house, for example, were colourful tiles, mosaic on the walls, high ceilings, arched windows and beautiful curtains that maintained a feeling of home. Like this image shows, Muslim architecture is prevalent with motifs of arches, mosaics and the fortress-like building (Prochazka, 1986).

Figure 7.6 - The entrance door of Yehuda's house in Morocco, 1946 (Source: Yehuda's private collection).

Participants frequently described Moroccan furniture as multifunctional and very typical of Moroccan houses, symbolising another side of the simple life there. It was made of a wooden frame and a thick mattress on top and served both for daytimes as a couch and night times as a bed. Each house contained a number of these couches/beds. Many of the participants also refer to the strong influence of French rule on Moroccan design. Both Margaret and Rachel mention the French windows that they loved so much, and Rachel describes how her father, who admired sophisticated
French-stylish furniture, would purchase every so often a piece of French furniture such as a buffet or a dining table.

The family house itself was commonly talked of as a representation of family warmth. When participants were asked what made them feel at home, most of them referred to the warmth of their families and to the intimate daily life with the neighbours. Most houses contained two rooms, but in some houses the family had only one room, therefore everybody lived together. This word, ‘together’, was often mentioned. Sonia states:

…and this, what I’ve always loved and until today I keep telling the young children, that we lived together, the children lived together, like we slept in one room, ate in one room, we were all the time together. For us, I don’t know if that was the only thing that contributed, the family also contributed to it, the parents and so, but I think it contributes a lot to the family that the children sleep in one room. I think it contributes more than if everybody is locked in their own room and… that’s ok, today it’s modernization but in my opinion it contributes more. That you live together. […] I don’t know, it was this kind of unity.

And Rica, when asked what gave her the feeling of home, comments:

Look, as for my childhood I loved everything, I grew up there, the friends, school, everything… the holidays, the family that we were together, we were sitting together. It’s not like here that everyone has their own room, it was, the siblings slept together, everyone together, the siblings were together. Slept together, there was this kind of warmth in the home, not like here that everybody is in their room; it was something that we still have. The holidays, that feeling of holidays, I’m telling you.

The actual space and number of rooms was not important as much as family togetherness. The merits of the space are not only described on their own but in comparison and criticism of the ways families live today, with a surplus of rooms that promotes estrangement among family members. This attitude is similar to that of Laura, an Italian participant, who criticises the way Italian families are living in Italy today. Despite major differences in their past houses’ organisations, both Italians and Moroccans glorify the old days as encouraging family togetherness, as a collective past (Wilson, 2005). The reason, they all agree, is not only the tight living space in which they all lived, but also the pre-modern everyday living, which brought families to spend more quality time together. This is presented in contrast to today, where vast space and modern technologies bring family members to spend time either in their
rooms alone or watching TV, an activity perceived as estranged as well. In their current houses, as soon will be revealed, participants wish to preserve this feeling of community and family togetherness.

Other significant features of the house, like in past Italian houses and apartments, were open spaces around it. These spaces were the roof of the building, the open corridor between the family rooms, and occasionally the terraces. The roof was important not only socially, as a place of gathering, but also practically. In hot summer nights everybody would sleep on the roof to avoid bedbugs in the rooms. The timber ceilings and bed frames attracted numerous bedbugs in hot weather, and so the roof offered a great relief. The open corridor connected all family rooms around the open courtyard in the middle, and on rainy days there were curtains that kept it dry.

Some of the houses also contained terraces, which were considered to be another roofless room. According to Sonia’s description and drawing, her house is different from the common courtyard house. In her drawing, depicted in Figure 7.7, her house looks dynamic and vibrant. Sonia remembers how the terrace provided them a view to the street, and how they could jump from one terrace to another to move between families, something the thieves also took advantage of. This structure, just as with court houses, supports the spatial and social links between families.

In the drawing, the main focus is on the family house, with its two rooms and terrace. Sonia’s mother was an haute-couture tailor, who worked in the main room. In the middle of this room stood a massive table on which she would work during the day. The room was the centre of family life, and everything was happening there, despite the need to be very careful at all times, in order not to stain any of the fine cloths the mother used for her tailoring. The table in the drawing is occupying much of the main room’s space. At night the room was converted to a big bedroom, with many beds around the table. There was a shared kitchen in this building but Sonia’s mother did not want to use it so her father improvised a temporary kitchen near their terrace.
It is clear from both Haim’s and Sonia’s drawings (Figures 7.5 and 7.7), that even though the houses were different in character, they were both part of an arrangement of neighbours’ houses and open spaces. Sonia emphasises more her family apartment, but still relates to other adjoining family houses. Her drawing conveys a feeling of fluidity that provides a sense of easy movement between the families' houses, a feeling she also stresses when explaining how they would move as children between families through these open terraces.
Some memories of the houses, however, express more complex feelings. When asked whether he felt at home in his house, Morris asserts:

One has one room, one has two, one three, a shared kitchen, yes but life was hard, not easy, not like here – [here] it is much easier. [...] Of course it’s not good, of course it wasn’t good, all the women in the kitchen, a shared kitchen, everyone looks at each other what she cooks. You enter the house - say five-six women cook, so the smell, surely the smells are good but... [...] The shared toilets, the shared tap, the shared kitchen, there are no qualities in that.

Morris presents a multifaceted view of this everyday reality, and reveals other streams hidden under the surface of a cheerful childhood. In contrast to other participants, he applies the point of view of an adult rather than a child, who might have been unaware of the social difficulties of sharing the house.

Despite Morris’ observation, it seems that houses of Moroccan participants in Morocco are perceived in a very positive view, symbolising not only close and warm family life but also a very intimate community relations and ties. Family houses generate a strong sense of affection and care, brought about not only by the parents but also by the tight space and the pre-modern living style. But the family house was only one component of a network of houses that has spread around the Mellah like a spider’s web. Many houses were both physically connected around shared open spaces and socially linked by acquaintanceships of Jewish relatives and friends. The intimate relations between neighbours and relatives were strengthened through special occasions of holiday celebrations on the one hand, and the need to sustain everyday life of a religious minority on the other. In many ways this intimate structure reflects the familial togetherness of Italian participants in this research, but here there is an added aspect of a religious minority that underlines the importance of community life. In the rest of this chapter it is argued that this feeling of warmth and sharing lives together has led participants to emphasise the feeling of community and to create a space that preserves their ethnic history through their home-building in Israel. In contrast to Italians, who wish to maintain their Italian (active) practices, Moroccans preserve Moroccan artefacts in order to be able to pass, mainly verbally, the story of their migration on to the following generations.

7.4 Making a new home: the current house

This section deals with the current houses in which participants live today. This is the same house where interviews took place, which were also the centre of conversation.
As with other groups, Moroccan participants could look around and describe their current houses in detail. As opposed to the Australian stock of housing, and as discussed in Chapter 3, the majority of Israeli stock of housing population is urban apartments. Of the twelve participants, eight live in various forms of apartments and four live in detached or semi-detached houses. Obviously, interviews which took place in apartments did not comprise a tour outdoors but instead were focused solely on the interiors of the house. Most participants were interviewed in the house in which they had lived a significant number of years.

7.4.1 Constructing the house
Stories of settlement of Moroccan participants are not as homogenous as in previous groups. Each of the participants has their own unique route that finally brought them to live in their current house. Many of them had lived in other localities and neighbourhoods before moving to their current home, and their stories present diverse forms and places of living. Interviews with real-estate agents around the metropolitan area did not shed much light on housing needs of Moroccan immigrants, mostly because they have migrated many years back, are currently considered as established Israelis and do not seem to have any particular needs as a group in the eyes of these agents. This is also the common view of Moroccan participants themselves regarding their migrant identity, as will be explained shortly.

Of the twelve participants, three live in typical apartment blocks (‘train’) of the kind described earlier, built in the 1950s or 1960s in inner-ring localities of Tel Aviv. Two participants live in allocated detached prefabricated houses that were built in the early 1970s, in an outer-ring locality. Five participants live in more recently-built apartment blocks, of the late 1980s and the 1990s. Only two of the participants have built their own houses in northern inner-ring neighbourhoods of Tel Aviv.

Some narratives are quite complex and include many housing changes throughout the years. For example, after migration Haim lived for a couple of years in a hut in an immigrant camp in an outer-ring locality, until he saved enough money to buy his first home from an Arab owner.22 He lived there for five years and then moved in 1959 to his current home. He purchased his apartment after a new neighbourhood was built to house prospective Romanian immigrants who failed to arrive. Consequently, these apartment blocks were allocated cheaply to recent immigrants.

22 There are seven ‘mixed towns’ that comprise both Arab and Jewish populations in Israel, three of which are within the metropolitan area (Yafo, Lod and Ramla). Haim lives in one of them.
Haim among them. Likewise, Rachel moved to her current house, in an apartment block in an inner-ring locality, after numerous changes of houses and localities.

Both Sonia and Alisa live in their detached house in the same locality as Haim. Their houses do not fit the traditional conception of Oriental housing (i.e. apartment blocks) as they are prefabricated detached houses built in the 1970s. Both of them have gradually renovated and extended these houses over the years. Sonia had lived for ten years in France before coming back in 1970 to live in Israel permanently. As a ‘returnee immigrant’, the Jewish Agency\(^{23}\) provided her a home that she could choose from three localities around Tel Aviv, and since her sister already lived in one of them she preferred to join her. Margaret lives in her apartment, situated in a neighbourhood of Yafo, in the second level of an old two-storey building with external stairways.

Avraham first lived in an outer-ring town in the Tel Aviv region, and then moved to his current home, closer to the core city of Tel Aviv. When asked why he chose this location, he answers that since he does not drive a car he wanted his house to be positioned near good transport, and indeed his neighbourhood is well serviced. Morris, who lives in the same high-rise as Avraham, built in the early 1990s, also emphasises the importance of transport links. Not only is their nine-storey high-rise located near internal transportation within the city, it also sits near a major arterial road that links it to other cities in Israel. Other considerations were the close proximity of essential services such as a shopping centre, and the beach nearby.

Three other participants reside in newer apartment blocks, like Avraham and Morris. Rica, for instance, moved to an inner-ring locality after her son was killed during his military service. At that time she had been living in Ofakim, a development town in the southern-west desert region of Israel, and after her son's death she wanted to move away from painful memories. Yehuda had been the Mayor for almost 20 years of the same town, Ofakim,\(^{24}\) before he moved to a high-rise in an affluent inner-ring locality near Tel Aviv. Rosa lives in a new apartment estate which was built near her older apartment in an inner-ring locality.

Lastly, only Yosef and Violet have built their homes themselves. Yosef, who immigrated at a young age, describes how after getting married, he and his wife moved from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv to study, living in an apartment block 200 metres away from the current house:

\(^{23}\) The Jewish Agency is a non-profit global organisation that is committed to bring Jews to live in Israel. (http://www.jewishagency.org/JewishAgency/English/Home).

\(^{24}\) I was given Yehuda’s contact details by a Moroccan organisation. Only when I interviewed Rita it became apparent that she and her husband know Yehuda quite well.
And I, in apartment blocks always felt suffocation, truly, I said I must move to a detached house, because in [a former house in Jerusalem] it was a detached house, in Morocco it was a detached house, and then we bought this place sharing [the land] with the neighbours. [...] We did the planning, including the permit from the local council, we did everything alone, except the signature of an engineer or something like that, everything was our planning and construction, and also the physical building of most of the house was mine. I’m talking about physical labour that I took Arabs to help me and all the family participated in building the house, all the kids.

Yosef explains that his father was a builder and he used to help him during summers as a teenager. In addition, after he finished his military service he had worked for one year as a labourer. He feels familiarity with the building art and materials and thus was confident enough to build this house himself. Like Polish builders in London (Datta, 2008) and Italians in Melbourne, Yosef and his family gained an intimate knowledge with the house and the building process. But unlike Polish builders who contrast the English housing with Polish housing and Italians who contrast Australian building to Italian methods of construction, for him it is not a binary comparison of Moroccan versus Israeli, because he adopts indigenous ways of buildings (‘Arabs’) which he sees as the correct way of building. But in a similar way to Italians in Melbourne, Yosef utilises himself and his two sons in the building of the house, as part of a gendered domestic division of roles where men are involved in housing construction (Blunt and Dowling, 2006).

Due to financial limitations Yosef and his wife built the house in three stages in intervals of about seven years, each stage included another storey or another new extension. Similarly, Sonia’s husband has constantly altered and renovated their house throughout the years. She explains why she cannot live in an apartment block:

...I’m happy, I get up in the morning, I can’t go to live in a shared building, I can’t. I don’t know, I’m used to wake up in the morning, in the summer I wake up, make my coffee, I’m outside. [...] So in a closed apartment there is maybe a balcony that is like a small lounge, like a couch that you can sit on, but we can’t live in a house with a number of storeys.

Quite the opposite from other participants, Yosef and Sonia both stress how significant for them is living in a detached house. Yosef relates it back to Morocco and his first detached houses in Israel, all designed according to Muslim-style architecture. Though houses in Morocco typically comprised several storeys, Yosef does not remember that. For him, it was impossible to live in any other form of housing that is crowded and small like an apartment living. Sonia also notes that she has always lived
in detached houses, in Morocco, France and Israel, and that was very important for her. This kind of discourse is similar to what Drazin (2005) calls ‘an opposition between house and apartment block’ in urban Romania, that reveals complex local struggles involved within the social order. Apart from them, Violet and Alisa also live in detached houses. Nevertheless, all other eight participants feel quite content with their apartments, whether they were built recently or 50 years ago and have been renovated throughout the years. This is the norm in Israel and they were happy to adopt it, to belong to the Israeli community and live according to the dominant custom.

### 7.4.2 Home-building practices

When asked about what makes their house a home, most participants reply they love their house and are used to it. The lounge is the most important room for most of them because it is where guests sit and the family gathers after the Sabbath dinner. As Haim illustrates: ‘The lounge, when everybody finishes eating they come here and tell their stories - what happened, what they have done, what they will do...’. Haim and his wife further explain that every Friday night all their children come over to their house for the blessings and the company of each other. In this way Haim’s family preserves family togetherness and continues, mainly verbally, to inform each other with their everyday events. The feeling of community is enhanced here through the preservation of familial religious rituals.

But it is not always the lounge that is most important. For Sonia, the verandah is more important than the lounge. She does not like her indoor lounge due to its long shape which makes it hard to furnish, thus her verandah is her favourite space in the house, where she can relax and quietly have her coffee. In a sense, it is an outdoor lounge, covered with a wooden pergola which is most valuable during long summer and mild winter months. She has a backyard as well, but the verandah is situated in front of the house beside a front lawn.

Yosef too, as others, highlights the importance of the house's outdoor space in the family's everyday life, when he answers the question about the most important space:

> Our life actually takes place here; the food in the kitchen and we are outside, you’ll see later that we have a verandah, a pergola that we ordered from Italy, furniture we ordered from Italy, and we spend a lot of our time there in autumn, spring, summer - we utilise the garden.

The Italian furniture and pergola are depicted in Figure 7.8. Yosef himself takes care of the garden, and just in the same week of the interview he finished planting a new
lawn in an empty space that became visible after he uprooted an ill Mango tree. It is interesting to note the similarity between Yosef – who emigrated at a young age from Morocco to Israel – and Lorenzo - who emigrated at a young age from Italy to Australia – and their mutual desire for fine design from Italy. If one could explain Lorenzo's desire by the fact his origins are rooted in Italy, such an explanation is not valid in Yosef's case. Here, the choice of Italian outdoor furniture might be interpreted as cultural accumulation through an appreciation of fine design as opposed to 'popular aesthetic' (Bourdieu, 1984 [1979]), in order, perhaps, to acquire a better social status (Ong, 1999).

Figure 7.8 - Yosef's verandah, 2007.

For Morris, the most important feature of his apartment is its orientation and the air coming from outside. Likewise, Margaret states that she loves the fact that her house has always been open to the outside world and that she had never shut the entrance door until the 1980s: 'winter, summer, everything was open. You could see every passer by. That's why I love it here'. Rachel's favourite room is her indoor balcony, where she would sit and watch the Mediterranean Sea every morning, as Figure 7.9 shows. She notes it was a Moroccan practice to sit near the French window:
What I like the most is a bit of sunlight in the winter but that's it. [...] Even breakfast I love eating here. Now it's closed because it's winter, in summer it's open and I sit on that couch, go and see the sea from there. That's all; this is all I've got... I sit on the couch and lift it up; in the evening at sunset it's...

Figure 7.9 - Rachel's indoor balcony, 2007.

This is the kind of space Sonia referred to in her comment about the inside balcony used in apartment living. But it seems that even for those who reside in apartments, like Morris, Margaret and Rachel, the most important features in their houses are linked with the outside world – the air and daylight for Morris, the instant link with outside for Margaret, and the view outside for Rachel, just as it is for Sonia who loves her verandah most of all. Rachel also explains that the reason she chose to live in this apartment was its fully lighted kitchen. It appears that the house fosters the feeling of community (Hage, 1997: 102) through these visual and sensual links to the outside.

A major home-building practice that correlates with Hage’s own study is the food preparation. Like Italians and Chinese who cook their own ethnic food, Moroccan women participants cook Moroccan food. This does not require any special arrangements in the kitchen, and food can be cooked with modern kitchen utensils, though most of the participants still hold traditional utensils brought from Morocco by their mothers, mostly kept in the kitchen cupboards and are not for display. Figure 7.10 shows a painting Violet made of her mother, dressed in a traditional costume,
cooking the Moroccan dish couscous. The traditional costume locates the woman in the painting within its Moroccan community and signifies that she belongs to this specific ethnicity. Cooking couscous and dressed as she is, she performs her Moroccan identity to full extent (Fortier, 1999). By that she (or her daughter) communicates that she does not hide her ethnic origin, an important practice in the Israeli dominating society. In most of these houses, a gendered view of the division of domestic roles is apparent, as women are always in charge of the cooking and preparation of food, while men are in charge of the garden, as in Yosef’s case, or the building of the house and its furniture, as in Sonia’s case.

Figure 7.10 - Violet's painting of her mother cooking couscous, 2008.

Other Moroccan ‘authentic’ kitchen utensils that are not for everyday use, such as a teapot and ornamented glasses on a metal plate, are often displayed in glass cabinets in the lounges. An example of that is Sonia’s glass cabinet in Figure 7.11, which displays these tools side by side various religious and secular books. Eight of the participants have a similar cabinet with these traditional features, located in a central place in the house. In two of the houses a traditional bellows hangs on the wall. This
exhibition of Moroccan tools and utensils is part of the story participants articulate to family members and guests. This can be seen as part of the participants’ ‘precipitates of re-memories’ that connect them with their collective history and past (Tolia-Kelly, 2003: 314). Belonging to the Moroccan community is perceived as invaluable. There is a silent resistance in their everyday display (Harris, 1997), allowing participants to oppose years of concealed oppression that was forced upon them by Israeli western-oriented authorities, which expected Moroccan (and other oriental) migrants to forgo their cultural identity within the Israeli melting pot of the early years after migration.

Figure 7.11 – Sonia’s sets of Moroccan glasses and teapot, 2007.

Another common feature in many of the houses was the abundance of sacred Jewish symbols and artefacts. Some of them contain blessings (of which the most popular was the ‘Blessing of the Home’, mostly located near the main entrance) and some contain other kinds of blessings and signs. A very popular symbol is the hamsa, a sign of a palm that is known for its good luck. This is an icon derived from the Arab culture that has been fashionable in the last decade in Israel and is similar to the Chinese good-luck signs.

Moroccan participants’ houses present many of these signs and symbols, though today they can be found in almost every Israeli house, as will be also discussed in the following chapter about the Russian group in Israel. Nevertheless, these symbols in Moroccan houses hold a religious meaning and are very visible, as
depicted in Figure 7.12 of Avraham’s entrance door. Near Avraham’s door there are both a typical *hamsa* with the twelve breastplate stones (symbolising the twelve Jewish tribes), and an octagonal framed ‘Blessing of the Home’.

**Figure 7.12 – Avraham’s entrance hall, 2007.**

Other similar items are the souvenirs, found in some of the Moroccan houses in a similar way to their presence in Italian houses. Some of these houses contain decorative plates hung on the kitchen walls or magnets and souvenirs from other countries. Alisa’s house, in particular, is an extensive exhibit of such objects. She is an obsessive collector, who filled her house with numerous items and knick-knacks. She states:

…whenever I go overseas I bring souvenirs and hang them up here, everything, Italy, Turkey, Bulgaria, I have been in Holland, in Thailand, Italy, Spain, everything, everything. This is Spain, this is Cyprus, you see? All of them. […] This is my taste, not anyone else’s - not the kids’ or somebody else’s. This is my mind and my… this is how I like it.

Her story is parallel to Loretta’s narrative (of the Italian group), both sharing a desire of displaying traces of their trips around the world in their homes, and mostly in their kitchens, which might be considered as signs of globalisation in the home (Appadurai, 1990). The fact that most of this display occurs in the kitchen, though not all of it, supports Supski’s (2006) observation about the importance of the kitchen for immigrant women in Australia, and suggests that Moroccan women feel very much at home in their kitchens. Alisa is an extreme example of this, but other women as well
share the same aspiration of decorating their kitchens with Moroccan and other objects which foster the feeling of (belonging to a) community in their homes.

Alisa’s house is full with artificial flowers, painting of flowers, countless family photographs, decorative plates, *hamsas*, blessings, pictures of saints, and souvenirs from various countries. Every corner has its own designation – be it plates, *hamsas*, Jewish saints, blessings or vases and serviette holders in the kitchen, as in Figure 7.13. Alisa is a combination of both a collector and sojourner. She concurs with Wilson (2005) when she notes that the objects placed in her home are not meaningless or chosen by coincidence. As Wilson argues, they are selected by conscious choices which reflect her identity (e.g. flowers, plates), connection to the past (e.g. Jewish saints and *hamsas*), and connections to others (e.g. family photographs).

Figure 7.13 - Alisa’s kitchen wall, 2008.

Yosef, who built his house by himself, declares it does not represent Moroccan design or taste, because he emigrated at a very young age and does not remember much. But his kitchen has an arched window (which used to be an entrance door in an earlier stage of the house), and he displays Moroccan teapots and spoons he brought from his parents’ home, as demonstrated in Figure 7.14. Yosef, like other participants, does not only collect and present objects in his houses, but also adjusts the house to his needs, making it more homely and fit with his conception of home, just like Tom’s
garden, resisting through that common perceptions of home in his surrounding (Ruddick, 1997).

**Figure 7.14 - A kitchen window in Yosef's house, 2007.**

Lastly, Yehuda has a different approach to home-building. Like Yosef, he is married to a wife of western origin, and his house does not show any signs of Moroccan presence, except his own domain - his study. Yehuda was the Mayor of the town of Ofakim for almost 20 years, and now he lectures at the Tel Aviv University and is busy with documenting his life. I was given his contact details by the Moroccan organisation as a fine representation of Moroccan migration. When I arrived he did not want to speak much but printed out a number of pages from his recently-published biography. He also showed me computer presentations he had made for special family occasions that summarise his life story with images and sound. He comments:

> This is my home, this room. I spend most of the day in it, not most of it but a lot. I write, make presentations, record, as you can see I record the whole story. Not only the immigration [story] but the entire story from Morocco until today, in pictures, presentations and more. This is for the children, the
grandchildren and... all their friends, family and everyone, when they learn about their roots they can use it.

On the wall in his study, as Figure 7.15 illustrates, there are a number of documents from different stages in Yehuda’s life, including a framed newspaper article from the late 1950s at the bottom left-hand side, where Ben-Gurion\textsuperscript{25} praises him for his hard work, and a hand-written letter he received from Ben-Gurion, located above. The picture in the middle is a framed \textit{ktubah}\textsuperscript{26} of his great grandfather in Morocco.

\textbf{Figure 7.15 - Yehuda’s study, 2008.}

The fact that Yehuda presents letters from a leader, who has for years been the symbol of discrimination against Moroccan and other Oriental Jews by the (western) Ashkenazi authorities in Israel, shows a desire to become part of the establishment, of the Israeli community. But he also presents his roots and implies that he belongs to the Moroccan community. In the corner of that wall there are some Moroccan traditional copper utensils such as a mortar, pestle and candlesticks. It seems that for Yehuda, this room is where he spends much of his time and thus where he feels much at home. For him, as a scholar who has written books and feels most comfortable in

\textsuperscript{25} The first Prime Minister of Israel, who was himself of western origin.

\textsuperscript{26} A Jewish marriage contract signed by both fathers of the couple before the marriage ceremony.
an office environment, this is the ultimate place to present his life story and his Moroccan past. Whether it is their study, kitchen or verandah, Moroccan participants wish to foster the feeling of community through their home-building practices.

7.4.3 Hybrid existence: Moroccan or Israeli
Participants were asked whether their houses resemble anything of Moroccan houses. Most of them, like in other groups, answered negatively. Avraham, for instance, is determined that there is nothing left from his Moroccan past: ‘No, no, everything has been erased. Yes, I don’t care, my wife also doesn’t care’. In contrast to Italian participants who maintained their ‘Italian ways’, Avraham insists that he does not ‘do’ things in the Moroccan way, namely he does not perform his Moroccan identity (Fortier, 1999). This may be because the pressure to assimilate in the Israeli society in the early days after immigration was very strong, and eventually led to this partial denial of Moroccan identity. It seems that Moroccan participants feel now they became Israelis a long time ago.

Furthermore, Avraham does not see any physical relations between his current and past houses. His apartment is modest and lacks decorations, except for the hamsa and the blessing shown in Figure 7.12. He practises the Jewish religion and therefore has a whole room devoted to his religious books, with pictures of saints decorating the walls. Among Moroccan Jews saint worship is a highly important cultural characteristic, present in all strata of population (Ben-Ami, 1998: 13). Even secular people of Moroccan origin tend to adopt these rituals of visiting saint’s tombs on the anniversary of their death, and having a celebration (hilulah) there. Figure 7.16 portrays one of the most prominent Moroccan saints, the Babbah-Sally. His tomb, located in Netivot, a development town in the south of Israel, is the focal point for pilgrimage from all over the country. Participating in these celebrations around saint’s tombs has become a distinct way of performing Moroccan identity.

Margaret, too, insists that apart from the sunlight in her current house which reminds her of the Moroccan light, there is nothing similar between the two houses. Similarly, Morris asserts that there are no features that the two houses share, because ‘we don’t have a courtyard here’. He further explicates that in Morocco they would build the Sukkah for all the neighbouring families, as described earlier by Haim, but here they build their own familial Sukkah on the ground level of the building. This means that his current house lacks the key feeling of community, and that he might try to enhance it through his home-building.
Rachel also resists any suggestions of Moroccan spirit in her apartment. She states: ‘Nothing can remind me of [my Moroccan house]. Besides, everywhere I go it will be the same’. She further explains that Moroccan women invested a lot of energy in home decoration. For example, the design of the dining table of the Sabbath dinner and holidays was very important. Her mother would put many hours into tiny details such as the tablecloth or flowers around the table in preparation for the Passover feast. Today, Rachel continues, she does not have the energy to do that any more and her husband always tries to persuade her ‘not to kill myself for these things - it’s not necessary and no one appreciates it’. In fact, she has done it for many years and quite successfully, according to her daughter-in-law who was present at the interview. This reflects Tanya’s words of her ‘Italian way’ of doing things. Again, Rachel performs her Moroccan identity in these practices that are focused around the dinner table (Fortier, 1999, 2000). The gendered conception of home is evident in these houses, where women are perceived as those responsible for home-decoration and the making of ‘homely homes’, while men are engaged in the physical building of the houses (Blunt and Dowling, 2006).

Yehuda states that there is nothing left from his Moroccan past, and he does not wish to have anything that reminds him of his past house: ‘After 60 years, 60 years I’m in Israel, so I have been there twice but I visited the house only once’. This shows that Moroccan participants feel more Israeli than Moroccan, as opposed to Italian participants in Melbourne.
A few other participants, however, do try to present their Moroccan origin in their houses. Though Sonia asserts that her house does not resemble a Moroccan house but is designed solely according to her and her husband’s taste, she displays a number of traditional Moroccan glasses and a teapot in her bookcase (as depicted in Figure 7.11). Rosa, too, does not think her house is designed according to Moroccan flavour, but she brought decorations and cushions from one of her last visits to Morocco, as portrayed in Figure 7.17.

Figure 7.17 - Rosa's lounge, 2008.

Rosa notes that there were sumptuous furniture and home wares in Morocco, but they could not carry most items back home due to luggage limitations. As can be seen, the lounge has a classic appeal, with the plaster ceiling decoration, the chandelier and the picture with the golden frame on the wall. Rosa notes she saw this ceiling decoration - which has not been popular in Israeli homes until recent years (due to the Modernist influence of minimal and clean design) - in her daughter’s American home and loved it. She comments:

I love this house, I’m used to it. The things on the ceiling have nothing to do with Morocco. The cushions’ cloth is from Morocco, and the teapots. We were limited, so many beautiful things. This house is not [designed] in a Moroccan style. We lived in America and I had a friend who brought
everything from [Morocco], all her walls were [covered with] mosaic art, this is a Moroccan style. [...] Moroccan style is ornamental walls; we too had it in our house [in Morocco].

This particular style of design brings to mind Lara’s new house in Melbourne. Like Lara, Rosa moved to her newly-built apartment only four years ago and has not undertaken many changes to the interior design. Both homes contain chandeliers in an outstanding location in the house. It seems that this genre of French lamp is one of the symbols of western aristocratic luxurious design (Anderson, 2006: 93) that cannot be ignored by visitors. The French rule in Morocco has brought many changes to the Muslim country, and Jews have embraced it with a strong determination to become western and modern (Mey-Ami, 2005). Thus, it is clear why homes of Moroccans in Israel comprise symbols of French design, along with other Moroccan-style features. In this case, though, the design has also been influenced by American design, which might be perceived here as part of cultural hegemony of design and the accumulation of cultural capital through furniture in the house (Ong, 1999). It also supports the notion of ‘cultural compression’ (Mache, 2003; Massey, 1994; Rapport and Dawson, 1998a) which means a dialectic between global movement and local compression that has influenced the ways houses are designed all over the world, sometimes sharing similar features while also preserving cultural differences.

An issue that appeared in many of the interviews was the return visit. This is a visit immigrants pay to their former country (O’Flaherty et al., 2007), and is very common among Moroccan immigrants in Israel. Apparently, both Italian and Chinese immigrants visit their homelands regularly as well (see Baldassar, 1997), but most participants did not discuss this issue during interviews. Since the late 1980s relations between Israel and Morocco were established and Moroccan immigrants could visit their homeland for the first time. This became a growing industry, comprising not only Moroccan immigrants but also family members and friends (Levy, 1997).

Of the twelve participants, nine have visited Morocco at least once or more. All of them found it a way to connect back with their origins, bonding with their families and past. All of them tried to visit their family houses, though it was difficult sometimes because most of these trips are organised by travel companies and thus are not flexible enough. Some were astonished by the changes that have occurred after the French rule came to an end, but some loved revisiting their childhood and past.

Avraham, for instance, was part of a trip that was devoted to saint tombs visiting. He states that his house, formerly a beautiful house situated in the Jewish neighbourhood, turned ugly because it is now surrounded and inhabited by Arab
residents who do not maintain it well. Rosa was very disappointed because she could not visit her past home due to road repairs that kept the bus out of the way. She is determined to come back again without an organised tour, to be able to visit her family house. Rica comments that she visited her family house after 52 years but could not recognise it because the place has changed significantly. She brought home only one tray with glasses and teapot: ‘there are lots of beautiful things there, but I went to see, is there something missing here? I didn’t want to carry stuff, I came to tour and observe’. Yehuda, as noted above, visited Morocco twice but was only once in his past house. Yosef, who went on a trip with the same group of Haim’s son and daughter-in-law, visited his past family house to find that the house has been converted into a hotel. He does not remember much from times before emigrating, but he assumes the house was big enough by its large size and its current street façade, which is quite impressive. Rachel did not visit Morocco but did send a relative to see the house with exact instructions. For most of the participants, thus, the return visit offers a means of retelling their stories and sharing their personal and collective history with family and friends, in a similar way to their home-building process. Sometimes their expectations regarding their past house were not fulfilled, but nevertheless they were content visiting their childhood landscapes. They do not visit relatives who were left behind (as Italians and Chinese might do) because all the Jewish population has left Morocco long ago, but they visit their own past.

The return visits seem to have a significant meaning for Moroccan participants. Most of them maintain their reminiscences through periodical visits to Morocco, which lead to family reunions and enable tracking lost roots, while creating new family memories that connect at least two generations together, as in the case of Haim’s son and daughter-in-law. Today, as noted above, not only Morocco-born immigrants visit Morocco but also other Israelis from various origins. After years of occupying the scapegoat role within ethnic groups in Israel, Moroccan immigrants gradually gain recognition from the dominant culture. Israeli society now acknowledges that Moroccan Jews have a rich culture, thus it is worthwhile tracing its history through a visit in Morocco. The houses record these visits through objects on display, facilitate story-telling practices and connect participants to the Moroccan community. The visits also serve as a tool for integrating in the Israeli society, while creating openness towards the Moroccan immigration narrative. This experience is similar to the experience of Italians in Australia, who had difficulties being accepted in the first decades after immigration occurred, but are now embraced by the Australian dominant culture.
Violet, who travels to Morocco very often, is an exception. She is an artist who painted the Moroccan King and exhibited extensively in Morocco and in Israel. I was given her contact details by the Moroccan organisation because in her home she has a ‘Moroccan room’ and hence is perceived as a fine representative of Moroccan character. Indeed, she has created an entire room in her house, decorated and designed solely according to a guest room in the Moroccan Palace. The issue of the Moroccan room has come up in a number of interviews. Rosa wanted to design such a room but eventually did not, and Rachel elucidates:

We were in Los Angeles at my husband’s brother and his wife was Moroccan and she had a large house, really, so there she designed a Moroccan room. So a Moroccan room is a table say round and low with a copper tray and above it you have the coffee tools, the teapot, the place mat, arranged in such a way and you also see a perfect order, and these are closed rooms waiting for a guest to come, but in order to have it you must have a large house, and it doesn’t suit everyone.

Rachel refers to Moroccan Arabs when she describes this Moroccan room. It is interesting to note that this Moroccan design was not part of Jewish everyday life in Morocco; it was part of Moroccan Muslim culture. Figures 7.18 and 7.19 portray details of Violet’s Moroccan room.

Violet has dedicated an entire room of her house, but the rest of the house has similar colours and flavour. She is an artist and her paintings and works of art decorate the house, including the Moroccan room. She states that she has always dreamt of having a Moroccan room so her children and grandchildren would learn about their roots. Now she often takes all her family to Morocco. In the last and a half year, she comments, she has been to Morocco 19 times with 19 exhibitions. Her house has seen a number of curious journalists and reporters and she is used to be interviewed in relation to it.
Figure 7.18 - Violet’s Moroccan room, 2008.

Figure 7.19 - Violet’s Moroccan room, a view from outside, 2008.
Violet further explains the Moroccan character:

A Moroccan house has a lot of faith, and there is a lot of... I don’t know how to tell you but Friday night means *kiddush*,²⁷ it's very important the family and the *kiddush*. [...] Everywhere I can - I give Moroccan form. I haven't seen anyone who has done a Moroccan room. [...] Because it’s a lot of thought a Moroccan room – the floor is from glass, the ceiling is from glass. The Moroccan curtains, the Moroccan cloths.

Violet’s room was inspired by the King’s Moroccan room, which is a proper guestroom in his palace. Again, it is interesting to ask why this construction is so important to Violet, as it does not represent the everyday lives of Moroccan Jews in Morocco. Houses like these were extremely affluent, and most Jewish families did not have this kind of wealth. By designing it according to the Palace’s room, the room reflects elite design and taste. Perhaps Violet adopts this kind of design in order to accumulate cultural capital and belong to the Moroccan elite and social class (Bourdieu, 1984 [1979]). But it might also be that Violet feels the room represents the richness of Moroccan life, which she wishes to communicate to successive generations.

The dominant colours in the Moroccan room are yellow and blue, and so are the colours in the rest of Violet’s house, as seen in Figure 7.20. It has the same arrangement of built-in couches with thick mattresses on top and many cushions. The colours are warm and according to Violet symbolise the deep faith.

Alisa, too, has a Moroccan room in her house, similar in its concept to Violet’s, though smaller and not as fancy, as seen in Figure 7.21. This room has different tones and a totally different character. Traditional Moroccan tools and carpets are hung on the walls and the room looks much more representative of Moroccan Jews’ lives than Violet’s room. Alisa even showed me a tool that was used for spraying scented water before Jewish celebrations.

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²⁷ Jewish ritual that includes benediction over wine.
Figure 7.20 - Violet's lounge, 2008.

Figure 7.21 - Alisa's Moroccan room, 2008.
In sharp contrast to other home-building practices, these Moroccan rooms do not imply Moroccan presence in the houses but state it explicitly. But, unlike some of the Italian houses in Melbourne which present ‘Italian’ symbols to the public (Gans, 1979), these Moroccan signs are invisible from the outside and can only be located inside the house. Though both Violet and Alisa live in detached houses, their exteriors say nothing about their owners’ ethnic background. In this sense the Moroccan presence in Tel Aviv is similar to the Chinese presence in Melbourne, which does not stand out in its environment. It seems that the need to assimilate in the Israeli society has led to the lack of ethnic allusions in exteriors of Moroccan houses.

When asked about his family house in Morocco, Yosef explains:

I have also never investigated and asked my parents. I don’t know if you are aware of psychology of immigrants, that they come and want to, not everyone but want to become like locals. To assimilate and become like locals, and I think there is a sort of mechanism of denial, of forgetfulness of what was there in order to survive. This I’ve learnt from many people I’ve spoken to that also immigrated at a young age from a number of countries.

Despite the fact that Yosef believes his house does not resemble his Moroccan origin, it does convey a feel of tradition and warmth, with the abundance use of timber and warm colours. It seems that home-building practices are stronger than any mechanism of denial.

To sum up this section, findings suggest that Moroccan immigrants in this research do not try to show their ethnic identity in the Israeli surroundings, but they do not try to hide it either after so many years since immigration, as they might have done in the early years. They utilise their houses to build their Moroccan feel in it by placing Moroccan tools and artefacts, but most of them do not modify their houses in a more explicit way. Even with the two extreme examples of Moroccan rooms, these rooms are separated from the house and its everyday routines, and are mostly designed as a mini-museum in the house, preserving past life. These rooms and other tools and artefacts that are on display help the dwellers to foster the key feeling of community (Hage, 1997: 103) in their home-building. They allow participants to share their stories of migration with their family and friends, emphasising their community values and culture, while resisting, silently, the Israeli dominant culture with its oppressive power.

Different to the Italian experience in Australia, exteriors of Moroccan houses do not participate in their home-building and do not communicate Moroccan presence. This may be explained by the character of apartment buildings, which is the dominant form of living of Moroccan participants, but it is also apparent in other forms of housing.
that allow more flexibility of their exteriors. It seems that Moroccan participants feel more like established Israelis than migrants, and their assimilation in the Israeli society is so intense, that they do not feel the need to communicate their ethnicity with any ‘ethnic symbols’ (Gans, 1979). They only do so in the intimate space which is under their full control – inside their homes.

7.5 The role of the house for the Moroccan group in Tel Aviv

This chapter has focused on the role of houses of Moroccan immigrants in the Tel Aviv metropolitan area. It followed past and present houses of Moroccan participants both in Morocco and in Israel. The premise laid out in the beginning of this chapter was that houses in Morocco have influenced the design of current houses in Israel. Indeed, houses in Israel share links with houses in Morocco, but these are complex and mostly invisible.

In a similar way to both the Italian and the Chinese groups, Moroccans locate ‘ethnic’ objects and artefacts to feel more connected with their past and roots. The main difference lies in the kind of objects that are displayed and what these objects serve. In contrast to the use of paintings and pictures of past homes and hometowns of Italian participants, or Chinese-style landscape paintings in the case of Chinese participants, Moroccan participants mainly use kitchen utensils and tools, which are taken from pre-modern life before immigration occurred. It is assumed that these tools would not be found in everyday use in Morocco nowadays, because they are outdated and are probably not needed anymore. They might be found in exotic markets for tourists.

The reason behind the display of these features is chiefly to preserve the Moroccan rich tradition of Jewish life, in order to promote the key feeling of community through home-building (Hage, 1997: 103). All other Hage’s three key feelings are important, but it seems that the feeling of community is the one Moroccans try to foster the most in their homes. The issue of Jewish life is crucial, because the main difference between Moroccan participants and Italian participants appears in the character of their receiving societies. Moroccans who arrived in the post-war period in Israel were very different from the dominant culture by their language, their appearance and their religious practices, just like Italians in Australia. Yet, the Jewish state was determined to absorb Jewish immigrants from all over the world. Thus, the Jewish religion was a unified factor that helped bridge enormous gaps between different ethnicities and united them against the neighbouring Arab countries. Due to
assimilation policies in the early years after migration, Moroccans in Israel of that period did not feel they need to preserve their culture. On the contrary, they desired to become Israelis. They fought discrimination at all levels of life and insisted they deserved the same treatment as western Jews, who enjoyed a better attitude from the establishment, and in consequent, they wished to fully assimilate and become similar to western Israelis. Hence, it is clear why they did not want to perform the Moroccan ways of living (Fortier, 1999) and display their cultural difference and uniqueness in the exterior of their house. It is also clear why most of them do not feel they are immigrants anymore, and why they all said there is hardly anything left from their Moroccan identity after so many years in Israel (this is unlike the Italians, who insisted they still ‘go their own Italian way’). Today, with the rise of multicultural attitudes in the Israeli society, Moroccans regained their culture, but they still feel they are Israelis alongside their Moroccan identity. They wish to teach the Israeli community about the richness of their long forgotten culture. The objects they display inside the homes help them situate themselves as an ethnic group that shares many attributes with the dominant society but also is distinct and unique in many ways (Tolia-Kelly, 2003).

Most Moroccan participants keep these Moroccan objects in order to preserve the sense of Moroccan community through the education of the next generations and the dominant Israeli culture. They do so through the construction of a gendered home and the use of the everyday as a mode of resistance to Israeli dominant culture, even if they are not aware of it. For Yehuda, the best way to do that is by publishing his biography, preparing computer presentations for family events, and displaying landmarks of his life on his office wall. For Violet and Alisa, the best way to do so is to devote a whole room to the Moroccan spirit, in order to bring Moroccan life into the house and to show and explain, even if not for everyday use. But for all the rest, displaying Moroccan tools and artefacts in their lounges enables them to reflect upon past Moroccan everyday practices among family members and friends, even if not to perform them themselves. While for Italians, the performance of their ‘Italian ways’ is crucial for the maintenance of everyday life, Moroccans choose to perform their ‘Moroccan ways’ only on special occasions, holidays and family gatherings. In their everyday life they preserve their cultural history through the display of objects in the house, reflecting about past life to gain a sense of familial continuity and Jewish community life.

This chapter is followed by two artworks. The first shows Moroccan houses’ exteriors, and the second illustrates Moroccan houses’ interiors. Together they present the participants’ collective ‘Moroccan house’.
8 CASE STUDY IV: THE RUSSIAN GROUP IN METROPOLITAN TEL AVIV

8.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with the Russian group in the Tel Aviv metropolitan area. It traces the role of the physical form of housing, and the way it eases their home-building in various suburbs and localities of the Tel Aviv region. There is quite extensive literature on Russian migration to Israel, but none of these studies has focused on the physical form of the house as an influencing factor in migrants' home-building. Thus, the understanding of the physical form of the house in the process of Russian migrants' home-building in Israel is somewhat limited.

Through an analysis of findings from participants' accounts, the chapter's premise is the Russian participants foster in their houses the key feeling of security (Hage, 1997: 102), as the most important feeling of Hage's four key feelings. They do so through the utilisation of the houses as capital cultural, and the understanding of home as dynamic and fluid. As will be soon revealed, security in the house means for Russian participants both stability and sense of continuity, but its meaning differs for different participants. But all of them purchase their apartments not so much because of their physical or architectural merits, but because these apartments offer them a secure place in the new world around them. In a similar way to Chinese in Melbourne and Moroccans in Tel Aviv, they do not change their houses extensively but modestly alter these houses to fit their needs. They decorate them and make minor adjustments, usually regarding building materials, but mostly keep the houses without major changes. This also supports the argument that these homes are meant to provide the very basic shelter.

This argument is presented in two major sections, as in previous chapters. The first section explores historical, demographic and social background of the Russian immigration to Israel, with the focus on their presence in the Tel Aviv metropolitan area. The second section contains findings from interviews with participants, aiming to examine the place that the housing of Russian participants plays within their process of home-building in the city. The premise laid out here, as in previous chapters, is that past homes in the homeland influence, in one way or another, current homes in Tel Aviv. To explore this argument, analyses of two kinds of houses are presented. The first analysis illustrates the childhood houses in the homeland, where participants resided before immigrating to Israel. Here it is argued that former houses provided
their dwellers a sense of stability that was essential for their lives in the Soviet Union. The second analysis follows common practices in current houses of Russian participants and investigates links between current and past houses.

The ‘Russian group’ is an unclear definition that needs to be clarified in the same manner as the Chinese group. The proper name of the origin country of people in this group is the former Soviet Union (FSU), but since other groups hold one-word names representing their country of origin, since Russian was the official language of all countries that comprised the former Soviet Union, and since this is how they are dubbed in Israel by both local Israelis and themselves, I decided that ‘Russian’ is an appropriate name for this group. Their countries of origin, though, are diverse and vary from Russia and Ukraine in the European part of the FSU, to Georgia and Uzbekistan in the Asian part of the FSU.

8.2 Russian immigration to Israel

Immigration from the former Soviet Union to Israel took place in two waves. The first was during the years 1968-1979, when 200,000 Soviet Jews arrived in Israel. At that time, the Soviet government was hostile to the attempts of its Jewish citizens to maintain their Jewish nationality and culture in the Soviet Union. The result was a selective migration of cultural and political leaders of the Jewish community there. Then, during the 1980s, only 29,000 Jews from the USSR immigrated to Israel. The second large wave occurred between the end of 1989 and 2001, starting after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the change of the regime there. It is estimated that more than 900,000 immigrants from countries of the FSU have arrived in Israel during this wave (Al-Haj, 2002a; CBS, 2006c; Mesch, 2002).

In 2005 there were 938,000 persons living in Israel who were born in the FSU. Of them, 805,000 persons immigrated between 1990 and 2001, which represent 12 percent of Israel’s total population (CBS, 2006a). This immigration was characterised by an older age composition in comparison with the Israeli population, with 24 percent of immigrants above the age of 55 while only 19 percent of the Jewish population. Today, 47.1 percent are between 25 and 54 years of age (557,400 persons), 33.6 percent are above the age of 55 (314,800 persons), and 19.3 percent are between 0 and 24 years of age (182,000 persons) (CBS, 2006a).

The distribution pattern of Russian immigrants is different than that of the Moroccans in Israel. As outlined in Chapter 3, during the 1990s a new immigration policy relying on the free market was set, and instead of directing immigrants where to
settle and work they were now able to choose for themselves. Immigrants from the FSU received an ‘absorption basket’ with which they could do whatever they liked: housing, employment, education, consumption, etc (Lipshitz, 1997: 473). In addition to this short-term assistance, the government also provided long-term assistance through favourable mortgages for housing purchase (Lipshitz, 1998: 272; Mesch and Mano, 2006: 429). Consequently, most immigrants chose to settle in the central and urban districts of Israel.

According to a CBS report (CBS, 2006c), 37.6 percent of Russian immigrants settled in Israeli national periphery in the northern and southern regions, 55.7 percent settled in the districts of Tel Aviv and Haifa metropolitans, and 5 percent in the Jerusalem region. This resembles a common international trend of migrants who settle in large cities in order to find employment, as in the case of Italians and Chinese in Melbourne.

The average household size of Russian migrants is almost similar to that of the Jewish population in Israel (2.9 and 3.1 respectively), but the share of single-parent families and families without children is greater, however, than that of the Jewish population. The average number of children in Russian families is lower than that of the Jewish population (1.5 and 2.1 respectively for families with children younger than 17 years old), but many households comprise more than one nuclear family. Russian elders tend to live in households with other family members more often than the rest of the Jewish population. Therefore, despite the smaller family size, the average household size is almost the same as the Jewish population (CBS, 2006c).

Before this large wave of immigration occurred, Jews were scattered all over the Soviet Union. Most of them resided in big industrial cities but they could also be found in mountainous areas of the Caucasus, in Central Asia, and even settlements of the tundra and the Far East. They lived side by side with Christians and Muslims and spoke various languages and dialects, though Russian was the mother-tongue of most. As a result of urbanisation and the policy of massive secularisation, intermarriage was commonplace. Naturally, close contacts with other ethnicities and cultures had an impact on the identity of several generations of Soviet Jews coming from different areas; consequently, the patterns of their adaptation to life in Israel differ depending on their previous experience (Yelenevska and Fialkova, 2005: 1). Immigrants from the FSU were de facto refugees, who escaped threats to their personal safety, political instability, economic hardship and anti-Semitism on the falling apart of the Soviet Union. They immigrated to Israel quite reluctantly because other western countries did not open their doors at the time of departure (Smooha,
There were high percentages of around one-fourth of non-Jews among them. This population has a much higher percentage of persons with university education than the rest of the Israeli population, and the proportion of highly-qualified professionals among them, such as scientists, doctors, engineers and others, was extremely high. Although they came from the post-communist bloc, they saw themselves westerners in many aspects, and even felt superior to local Israelis whom they saw as infected with strong Oriental influence (Menahem, 1999; Smooha, 2008).

The integration of Russian immigrants in Israel has been the focus of interest of the Israeli scientific community and since the early 1990s many studies have been dedicated to various aspects of that immigration. Yelenevska and Fialkova (2005: 1-2) state that most researchers agreed that this group of immigrants were the first ethnic group who migrated to Israel and openly refused to suppress the culture and language of their country of origin. Despite a more tolerant attitude to multiculturalism and multilingualism that has developed in Israel since the 1980s, this persistence causes concerns among various government organisations and is a source of social and ideological conflicts that frequently overflow into the media. Al-Haj (2002: 49) asserts that immigrants from the FSU form a distinct group within the Israeli social and cultural fabric, and this is reflected in their closed social network, ethnic information sources, and strong desire to maintain ethnic-cultural continuity, among other factors. Smooha (2008) claims that in many respects Russian immigrants had advantages over the Mizrahi (Oriental) immigrants who arrived in Israel in the 1950s. These are their higher human capital, the fact that the state was more affluent, that the society was more culturally open and socially tolerant, and that their proportion in the total population was much smaller and thus less intimidating: ‘Whereas Mizrahi immigrants lost their culture and ended up in the lower strata of society, Russian immigrants are in the process of entering the middle-class and in control of the pace and rate of their assimilation’ (Smooha, 2008: 1). This explains some of the major differences between the Russians and the Moroccans, who were the focus of the previous chapter.

8.2.1 The Russian presence in Tel Aviv
The presence of Russians in the Tel Aviv region is prominent in less affluent localities around the core, where many of them could find affordable housing. The largest share of home-buyers of the Russia-born population, about 40 percent, chose to purchase their dwellings in the central area of metropolitan Tel Aviv, while those who live in peripheral areas are more likely to rent (Lipshitz, 1998: 274; Mesch and Mano, 2006: 430).
In a similar manner to the Moroccan presence in Tel Aviv metropolitan area, the presence of Russian immigrants is stronger in surrounding localities around the core, because these localities were more accessible to the newly arrived immigrants, comprising affordable housing but still located close enough to sources of employment. Thus, in 2001, there were 33,000 Russian people in Tel Aviv-Yafo (the metropolitan core), who represent 4.1 percent of all Russia-born immigrants in Israel and 9.9 percent of the city’s population (CBS, 2006c). In the city of Bat Yam (an adjacent locality which its population is about half the size), however, there were 38,400 Russian people who represent 4.8 percent of the total Russian population but 28.3 percent of the city's population.

Today, the Tel Aviv metropolitan area has the largest share of Israel’s Russia-born population. In 2007 there were 261,800 Russia-born persons in Tel Aviv metropolitan, representing 8.5 percent of the total population of the metropolitan area. Table 8.1 shows the growth rates of Russian population in the metropolitan area and the decrease in numbers of Russia-born persons since 2001. This may be explained by the aging of some of the population, in addition to a large number of Russia-born immigrants who departed from Israel to other western countries (Source: CBS, 2006c, 2009).

Table 8.1 - Number of Russia-born persons in Tel Aviv (Source: CBS, 2006c, 2009).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>1996</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2007</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of persons</td>
<td>218,300</td>
<td>307,400</td>
<td>261,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of total population of the Tel Aviv region</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth rate</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

High concentrations of people born in FSU are found all around the metropolitan area. Figure 8.1 demonstrates their distribution in the city and its surrounding localities. It is clear that the presence of Russians in the city resembles that of the Moroccans. This can be explained by the low position of Russian immigrants in their first years in Israel, who left their homeland with no financial means. As noted above, their human capital (e.g. education) is much higher than that of the Moroccans, thus it is expected that in the future they will move to more advantaged localities (Smooha, 2008).
Russian presence or Russian character of housing in Tel Aviv or any other city in Israel has never been explicitly documented in Israeli literature. Nevertheless, the next section exposes some of the 'Russian' environments around Tel Aviv.

### 8.2.2 Russian housing in Tel Aviv

In the first years, temporary neighbourhoods made of portable caravans were constructed in many cities around Israel, usually on the outskirts and on public land. The Israeli government and the planning authorities needed to find a quick solution to settle the vast number of immigrants arriving every day (Alterman, 2001). These neighbourhoods were inhabited by the new immigrants in their first years, providing them temporary housing. Eventually, these neighbourhoods were taken apart and Russian immigrants settled around the country. Those who had more financial means moved to the metropolitan areas of Israel, while those with less financial means tended to stay in remote areas.

Today, Russian houses and apartment buildings spread around the metropolitan area cannot be distinguished from the public sphere. In many localities
they reside next to Moroccans and other Oriental Jews, sharing the same apartment blocks. But these blocks are not perceived in the public imagery as ‘Russian’ in particular. In some localities such as Bat Yam, the Russian presence is strongly felt around the city through the often heard Russian language and the many Russian businesses, catering for the specific needs of the Russian community and communicating with Russian signs. Figure 8.2 depicts a Russian-Hebrew sign of a real-estate agency in Bat Yam.

**Figure 8.2 - Russian presence in Bat Yam: ‘The real-estate heart’, 2008.**

These kinds of signs are evident in every corner of numerous cities, decorating the everyday of Israeli cities since the early 1990s. Real-estate agents that were interviewed confirmed that during the 1990s every business in the city had to have Russian signs in order to survive, but now (late 2000s), they say, immigrants know the Hebrew language better and since immigration from the FSU has significantly decreased, there is no need for Russian-language signage anymore.

### 8.2.3 Characteristics of Russian participants in this research

Twelve Russian participants were interviewed for this research between November 2007 and January 2008, among them nine women and three men. Of the twelve participants nine migrated to Israel during the first half of the 1990s and three during
the second half. This ration represents this immigration wave, of which the majority immigrated in the first half of the 1990s. In contrast to all other groups in this research, not all of the participants migrated at a relatively young age: three as teenagers, six as young adults and three as mature adults. Now the participants’ ages vary between 35 and 70 years old. All of them came from various cities and countries around the FSU: seven from Ukraine, three from Uzbekistan, one from Russia and one from Moldova. They represent Russian immigrants who mostly lived in urban environments and of which one-tenth came from the three metropolitan centres (Moscow, St. Petersburg and Kiev), and one-tenth came from the Asian part of the FSU (Smooha, 2008: 14).

Seven of the participants lived in apartments and five lived in houses, but both kinds were allocated by the government. The participants’ marital status comprises ten married couples, one single-parent woman and one widowed woman. All couples are both Russians and all of them but one are secular and do not regularly practice the Jewish religion. Of the twelve participants, one has a Jewish father and a Christian mother.\(^{28}\) This does not represent the immigration, of which one-fourth were non-Jews (Smooha, 2008: 13).

Compared to the other groups, finding participants was less difficult. Since the share of Russian immigrants who arrived in the 1990s is high, reaching 12 percent, almost all my friends and relatives know someone from a Russian origin, either as a neighbour or service provider, though familial relationships are not yet common between local Israelis and recent Russian immigrants. Indeed, eleven of the participants were recruited through personal contacts of family and friends. Through the snowball method I contacted one more participant who is a father of one of the participant. The participants’ dwellings are concentrated around the southern and eastern localities of Yafo, Bat Yam and Rishon Letzion, and the northern suburb of Kfar Saba. Figure 8.3 shows the participants’ distribution around the Tel Aviv region.

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\(^{28}\) This means that according to Jewish law she is not Jewish. Apparently, non-Jews who arrived in this immigration wave received the same citizenship rights as Jews.
The interviews took place in the participants’ current homes and sometimes involved the company of other family members. They were semi-structured and the participants were asked to tell their stories of immigration and settlement in Israel, to describe their past homes in the FSU, and to draw a sketch of both past and current homes. The interviews included a tour in the house with photographs taken during it. Other photographs of the house in the FSU, if they existed and were available, were collected as well. The participants’ names and main characteristics are presented in Appendix I. The names given to participants and listed in the appendix are pseudonyms.

8.3 Former home in the homeland: memories of a previous house

This section examines past houses of Russian immigrants in the FSU. These houses included two distinct types. The first was a city apartment, often described in a laconic manner as a necessity for living. The second house was a detached or semi-detached house, built with traditional building methods and materials, and was considered as a fine building that suited both the physical environment (e.g. weather, environmental conditions) and lifestyle of its dwellers.
In this section I argue that both kinds of houses were regarded as a source of stability and continuity in the unstable political climate that surrounded Jews in the FSU before its dissolution. These houses and apartments, no matter whether they were large or small, were always perceived as a secure place that belonged to its residents. It did not matter that it was government-owned and was in fact on a life-term lease. The most important feeling participants felt in regard to their past houses and apartments is that they were their haven from the outside world, providing them refuge and protection.

Seven Russian participants lived in apartments and five lived in detached or semi-detached houses, all located in cities of different sizes. Four participants came from Uzbekistan and Georgia, countries on the cultural margins of the FSU. Three out of four houses were located in these countries. The remaining eight participants came from countries located in the western part of the FSU, considered as the cultural centre, Russia, Ukraine and Moldova. All but one of them lived in apartments.

All of these past houses, and mostly apartments, were perceived as very well located in the city by the participants. Maxim, who lived in an urban apartment, notes: ‘the place was good, in the centre of [the city], and it was green, lots of greenery’. Most participants agree with Maxim that their apartments were located in a good location in the city. The location was extremely important in the economical configuration of the city. Irena explicates:

Look, we were in a very good position, considered in a good position because it’s the location and the size of the apartment. You must also understand that you weren’t able to live in every city as you’d like, you had to register in the ministry of interior of the city and they simply wouldn’t register you, no, no, only if you get married or if you have a profession that is in demand in this city, [...] and there, it was like a closed city, no new residents. [...] So we were in a great position, great, great, relatively [laughs].

Irena further explains that having an apartment of one’s own was considered to be ‘the main goal in life, the main achievement in life’. Young couples did not usually get an apartment of their own and had to wait around ten years on average (and sometimes even 20 years) until they were eligible to receive an apartment from their workplace. In the meanwhile they would live with their parents, sometimes in a small apartment of two or three rooms. That is why, she comments, people in the FSU would not have more than one child – there was simply not enough room for more. Also, the market was so restricted that there were no goods in stores and it was
extremely hard to find clothes or shoes for children, as well as furniture and home
ware for the apartments.

Olga was lucky enough to live with her grandmother after her marriage, and
when the grandmother died she and her husband registered as the residents of this
apartment. After having a daughter, they swapped their apartment with another one
that better suited their needs, located near Olga’s parents. Swapping is costless,
unless one of the apartments is bigger or better located, and then its owner receives
compensation from the other owner. As in the Chinese case, these apartments
belonged to the government and the rent was trivial, ‘symbolic’ as Maxim puts it. Olga,
who lived in Ukraine, comments:

I know, it wasn’t mine but I knew that all my life until retirement and my kids
could live there without any problems. […] I renovated it, I had a right to do
everything, everything, what, if it doesn’t bother the neighbours, as long as
I don’t knock the walls down, don’t do…

Olga describes how hard it was to find home wares and furniture in the market, and
how they had to travel to adjacent countries of the SU to find them. It is clear that
despite the lack of furniture and home wares, the apartment was a secure component
of her life where she felt safe and protected. She could renovate its interior as she
liked, making the apartment her home. This nature of the apartments repeated in
other narratives as well. The place was secure and offered stability in the participants’
lives in the FSU. When asked if they owned the apartment Galina asserts: ‘Yes, of
course. Actually, it was a governmental lease, we couldn’t sell it but it was an eternal
lease’. So despite the fact that they did not own their apartments, participants felt the
apartments completely belonged to them, providing them the desired security.

The organisation of the apartments was always considered standard and
elementary, but none of the participants complained. Most urban apartments were
part of an apartment building of a number of storeys, similar to Chinese apartment
buildings, and participants usually remember their apartments as very ordinary, noting
they were ‘nothing special’.

Some of these apartments had communal gardens attached to them, which
were located on the ground floor next to the building, where all the residents could use
it communally. Mostly it was utilised as a public garden, and in Galina’s building it
comprised outdoor furniture, plants and trees. But it seems that Russian participants,
similar to Chinese participants, did not feel much connected to these gardens. Galina
even notes that she is ‘indifferent to these things’. When asked about the most
important space, most participants answer that it was the lounge, as Alla states: ‘the lounge, as in all houses’. She further describes her communal garden outside the building, which consisted of an orchard and flowers. But she would not sit there, she states: ‘I personally not, I’m not one of those who like it...I didn’t have much time because I was busy studying’.

Alla was still young, but the above remark seems to demonstrate the urban character of the majority of the participants, who resided in their apartments, were happy with their small size and limitations, and did not use outside facilities very often, even if they were available. Not exactly like Chinese participants in Melbourne, who finally came to realise that their former apartments in China were very small and unsatisfying, Russian participants believe these apartments were quite good and fulfilled their needs at the time. Perhaps the main difference here lies in the housing stock of the two host countries; in Australia, Chinese found themselves surrounded with large detached houses as the common norm, and therefore could become familiar with other options of housing, whereas in Israel, Russians were surrounded with apartments as the common norm, thus they did not change their lifestyle and family values in regard to housing.

Elena holds warm feelings towards her apartment, which was the first of hers and her husband and thus was special for them. Despite being very small, the apartment was well organised and served their needs, located in the city centre. Just like Olga, Elena feels this apartment was their special place, despite its small size and lack of space. It was not only the organisation of the space that made these apartments so precious for their dwellers, but also the complex ethnic situation of Jews in the Soviet Union. Olga further illuminates:

Every year I renovated, every year I replaced something, it was the goal of everybody, I don’t know. Perhaps because we couldn’t get out, so all our energy we put in our apartments.

Olga means that Jews in the FSU could not travel overseas and were under strict surveillance. She further explains that her apartment was the only place where she could practice the Jewish religion and feel safe. Only two participants refer to the hardship of maintaining Jewish life in the FSU, but all of them did believe their apartments were the only place where they could feel most comfortable and relaxed, away from the sometimes hostile crowd outside and from the harsh restrictions that affected their everyday life in the SU. Apartments and houses were thus seen as a place that provides security and safeness in participants’ life.
All the participants had an enclosed kitchen in their apartments, in a similar fashion to Chinese apartments in China, and just as Chinese participants, they loved it and were used to it. For Elena, an important part of the apartment was the entrance hall, where they could store the winter clothes and accessories upon entering the house. She mentions that in Russia they sell specific furniture for this special room, to accommodate winter accessories. But Elena understands it was a necessity in the cold weather and this room is not really needed in a warmer climate.

This was also the case with many of the apartments’ building materials. When discussing this issue, most participants mention their timber floor as an essential component of their apartments due to the cold weather. A number of the women mention the abundance of wallpapers, which they deeply loved. Others recall the use of carpets, where instead of carpeting the floors they would be hung up on the walls, so the carpets would not be ruined since it was impossible to get new ones. The issue of the houses’ warmth (literally - its temperature) was very important, understandably. As Maxim states:

In Russia, we loved the most those houses that were built with red bricks. It was very hot inside the house. In our kitchen the wall was almost one metre [width] and it was very hot, we did like an oven. Almost every house had a sun balcony.

This issue of building materials was mentioned even more frequently in the discussions of participants’ detached houses. Of the twelve participants, five resided in detached houses, of which three were located in eastern countries of the FSU and one in Ukraine (since two of the participants are father and daughter, they shared the same house prior to migration). House living was extremely uncommon in urban centres of the FSU and only the very few rich could afford living in such a lifestyle. But in other countries such as Uzbekistan, it was easier to live in a house in the city, where detached houses comprised about 30 percent of the housing stock. Uzbekistan has a majority Muslim population and Russian Jews that live there form a distinct ethnic group within the entire Jewish population. They are named Bukharian Jews and have their own dialect. Their customs and practices bring to mind those of the Moroccans in many ways, presumably due to the Muslim influence.

Andrey and Dasha, a father and daughter, describe their past house with bright eyes and passion. Andrey was an architect in the FSU but in Israel he has worked as a gardener for 14 years and even though he is retired now, he still

29 Bukhara is the name of a central province and its capital city in Uzbekistan.
searches, unsuccessfully, for a job in his profession. Their past house contained a large main room, another smaller room and a large terrace. Andrey portrays:

It was larger [than here] there. Around five by five [metres] one room, the second one was smaller, a large terrace, lots of space there, lots of room. One room was almost 40 sq. metres. [...] For us everything was good there. There was a big yard, animals, hens, here a lot of mortgage, a lot. [...] It was mine, it was mine. The government said it was mine, the mayor said it was mine. It’s a house, a real house, not a faked one. Real that I knew it’s mine because no loans, no mortgage. [...] It was the government’s but I paid around 2 shekels\(^{30}\) a month.

Andrey compares life back in his homeland with the privation he faces now in Israel, where he must pay the mortgage, a concept he was not familiar with in the FSU. Like many other houses in that city of Uzbekistan, it was built, according to Andrey, 80 years ago with traditional materials and methods and was very strong. The walls were of one metre width with large windows that brought inside plenty of air and light. The floor was timber as in all other houses, and the walls were covered with carpets.

Figure 8.4 illustrates Andrey’s drawing of his house. It was a large one-family house that had been divided into units for a number of families. With the word ‘building’ Andrey indicates the rest of the building that was not part of the family house. The yard was shared among all neighbours. Andrey emphasises the large windows near the footpath, and the heating system in each room with the circles in the corner which he dubs a ‘Dutch chimney’. Notably, Andrey knows his past house very well and feels very much connected to its methods of building, its specific design and its history. This is probably due to his profession, architecture, and also because Andrey had lived in this house for many years, unlike other Russian participants who emigrated younger.

\(^{30}\) Israeli currency.
Dasha, Andrey’s daughter, notes that in the middle of the main rooms of both her parents’ and grandparents’ houses stood a big table that was the focus of family gathering every Friday night and holidays. Figure 8.5 depicts this large table in Dasha’s grandfather’s house, arranged with local and traditional foods and drinks. As can be seen, the table was the centre of familial gatherings and celebrations. Behind, traditional carpets decorate the walls together with portraits of deceased family members. Both Dasha and Andrey agree that their house generated warmth. It was traditionally designed with hand-illustrations on the walls, and photographs of deceased relatives, which gave it a sense of continuity and connection with past generations.
Yulia describes a similar house in Uzbekistan, comprising five large rooms and high ceilings. Her house also contained hand-illustrations on the walls, drawn by three professional men for almost a year. Her parents built it just before she immigrated to Israel, but now when she visits her parents who still live there, she and her son greatly enjoy it. She portrays the same traditional building methods and design, and links the furniture to Moroccan style. In her house, most walls were covered with wallpapers and with large wooden cabinets to display religious books, and the windows were very large. The outdoor terrace was significant for the domestic everyday life, where meals and celebrations took place.

Lastly, Lev came from a city in Georgia, where he had a two-storey house comprising eight rooms, built with red bricks and wide walls of one metre width, as was customary. The house had a large yard around it with citrus trees, but Lev had to abandon it when the war between Georgia and Russia started. Figure 8.6 presents his drawing of the house, which looks steady and sound, surrounded with a yard and wall. It looks like it is a safe place and indeed is described as such by Lev. He notes that the house is 40 years old, but ‘in Georgia a house is still a house [even after] 40 years’. In that he criticises Israel’s quality of buildings, opposing the two different kinds like Polish builders in London (Datta, 2008).
In conclusion, there were two distinct types of houses of Russian participants. The first was a city apartment, where most participants felt it was suitable for their needs and well located in the city, providing them protection from the difficulties of the Soviet reality. These past apartments seem to be perceived as a necessity, where one simply resides without deep emotions attached to them, in most narratives. The second type of house was a detached house in eastern countries of the FSU, which participants describe with great emotions and admiration of their building methods and materials. It is clear that both types of houses provided Russian participants stability in their life, something that obviously was very important in the harsh reality of everyday life there, especially as they belonged to a Jewish minority. Participants always knew they have a place where they could feel safe and secure. This was extremely crucial as an ethnic minority in the FSU, and steadfastness was very much appreciated. These apartments were often regarded as a nest, relief from the outside world, where one can rest and do whatever one likes, and thus were frequently the focus of material improvements and alterations. In the next section it is argued that these apartments and houses inspired current ways of living for Russian participants in Israel, with the common desire to purchase apartments soon after arrival in order to replicate the feeling of security, stability and safeness.
8.4 Making a new home: the current house

This section is focused on the current residences in which participants now live. As in former groups, these apartments and houses were both the location of conversation and the subject of it. Of the twelve participants only one resides in a semi-detached house and the remaining eleven reside in city apartments. This semi-detached house is located in an outer-ring locality, where housing prices are lower than the high prices of inner and middle-ring localities of the metropolitan area.

8.4.1 Constructing the house

Most participants purchased their own home an average of three years after arrival, though some purchased within only a year. This brings to mind the Chinese group in Melbourne, despite assumed differences in financial capital brought by the two groups. For Andrey, for example, it took no longer than nine months until he purchased his first apartment which was very small. After he decided to purchase a second bigger apartment, Dasha, his daughter, bought his first apartment. I first interviewed Dasha in her apartment, and then interviewed her father in the presence of his wife, Dasha and her brother, in their second-owned apartment. Dasha explains that as the head of the family, her father felt he needs to take care of the family and provide a steady home. This is also related to tenure-type, because for Andrey, who previously had a life-long right to stay in his governmental-owned house, paying rent to a landlord would not seem appealing due to perceived lack of stability and security.

Maxim lived in two rented apartments before he purchased his first apartment. Then, after a number of years, he purchased a larger one. From his narrative, it is apparent that finding a home to buy was not a difficult process, though it did take a while to purchase the first apartment, and that Maxim accepts the difficulties of the beginning. Elena and her husband went through the same process, buying a first smaller apartment in a disadvantaged neighbourhood of Tel Aviv, and then, after having their child born and realising that they would not want him to go to school in
that neighbourhood, they purchased a bigger apartment in an advantaged inner-ring locality. This process is reasonable, especially for immigrants who need to get enough funds for the mortgage downpayment, but it differs from most of the Chinese participants in Melbourne, who only purchased one house and have not upgraded it yet. Both groups entered their host society as middle-class, with high levels of education and qualifications, yet it seems that Russians had less available funds with them, thus it is surprising that Russian participants have purchased and moved between more houses than Chinese participants. It might be that since Chinese in Melbourne brought with them larger capital they could purchase a larger house from the start, or because most Chinese arrived in the last five to ten years and some even more recently, whereas Russians in Tel Aviv arrived more than 15 years ago and have had more time to upgrade their housing since. But, it might also suggest that for Russian participants home-ownership and the security it provides is extremely important.

For singled-parent women it took more time to get their own place, as expected. Olga lost her husband in the Chernobyl disaster eleven years before she emigrated with her daughter and elderly parents. She had lived for five years renting in an inner-ring locality before buying her own apartment. Everything was well-planned in order to survive. Olga studied Hebrew in the FSU in order to be well prepared for the hard times in the new country, after realising she has to leave her homeland. She studied other subjects that she knew would help her getting into the Israeli educational system and finding a job more easily. Her narrative demonstrates how she carefully planned every move in order to be able to obtain a place of her own after a number of years, and achieve the desired security and protection the home may provide. Like in Olga’s case, the location of current apartments is usually in near proximity to the first rented apartments. Olga explains how much she loves her current apartment’s location:

I love the location very much. The location, because there is transport, the shopping mall, and the sea. There, in my city, there was no sea. To go to the sea it took a day and a night to Odessa. So the sea is a gift, you see, it’s a feeling of freedom, this feeling and suddenly it’s free!

The presence of the sea suddenly became a major factor for Olga’s decision, as a mark of freedom and lack of restrictions, in contrast to the constrained everyday life in the FSU. Olga also mentions how hard it was to go outside after dark in her home city, where there were no street lights and she could easily harm herself by falling over in the snow. When she arrived by a ship in the middle of the night on Israel’s shores, and
saw the lights of the port city of Haifa, she felt she ‘arrived in heaven’. Olga lives in the same locality as some of the Moroccan participants, who also appreciated the immediacy of the sea. Living by the sea is probably a universal desire, but past experience of life in the FSU surely intensifies that desire.

Irena found her first owned apartment in an outer-ring locality, which was the only place where they could find a big enough apartment for their seven persons' household within their budget. It was a four-room apartment with a yard. After a number of years her grandmother died and her parents moved out to live in a place of their own, and then Irena and her husband sold their apartment and bought a piece of land not far away, and with some extra money built their own semi-detached house. Luckily, they did not have to rent a place while waiting for the house to be built and they also did not pay childcare expenses since Irena’s parents took care of her two young children at that time. This is a common practice in Russian households, where the old generation take cares of the young generation, while the middle generation goes out to work.

Most participants used the services of Russian real-estate agents, because when the second wave of immigration commenced in the beginning of the 1990s, many long-term Russian immigrants used their Russian-language proficiency, setting up new agencies or joining existing ones around the Tel Aviv region. A number of real-estate agents interviewed mentioned they either speak Russian or used translation services during the 1990s, when immigration was at its peak. Local Israelis, they say, do not come to agencies but use the internet to find housing. Today, since Russian immigrants speak good Hebrew and Russian immigration ceased, there is no need for such a service anymore. Asked if the fact that the agent spoke Russian helped her parents with finding their current apartment, Dasha agrees:

Yes, because anywhere they’d go they would usually look for someone who can help them because [Andrey] is a very wise and intelligent man and in Hebrew it’s a little stressful so it’s important to have someone to talk with. And besides, it helped, it helped, [the agent] is from a Bukharian family.

Dasha’s last remark shows that the agent’s similar origin made the settlement (finding this specific apartment) less stressful. Her account demonstrates only a few of the major difficulties Andrey and his wife have experienced since they immigrated. For them, who immigrated in their 50s, it was not easy to learn a new language and find a job that suits their qualifications. The home-building process is far more difficult for older people than young people (Lewin, 2001), and Andrey’s difficulties clearly
illustrate that. The fact that the agent was from the same background definitely helped him to better appreciate his clients’ needs but despite that, Andrey criticises the architectural design of his apartment. As an architect, Andrey cannot agree to the architectural design of his new apartment, which consists of some strange angles and a toilet without a window and internal ventilation. When asked to draw a sketch of the house, he states: ‘I feel ashamed that they built like this’, and that the design ‘is a joke’.

Andrey’s apartment was built in 2001 and is very well-preserved. On the one hand, Andrey complains that his current apartment - and the former one as well - are poorly designed, but on the other hand, no-one forced him to buy this particular apartment and he could have searched longer to find another one that, in his opinion, is better designed. It seems that both his apartments in Israel were purchased hastily, due to urgent needs. Thus, it can be said that despite his complaints, Andrey prefers to find stability and security through home-ownership, at the expense of their architectural merits.

The organisation of the current apartments is chiefly considered satisfying for the participants’ current needs. Some apartments have been renovated by the new owners before they moved in. Olga, for instance, renovated her apartment and designed an extra room in order to accommodate her daughter and her parents in two different rooms. Her apartment was built in 1963 and was designed ‘like the old architecture’, and that is why she liked it. She does not like the ‘new designs’, where the lounge is large and the bedrooms are too small. Elena, too, extensively renovated her apartment, joining together two bedrooms to create a large master bedroom and replacing the tiles.

The issue of building materials that suit the Israeli weather was often raised. Many participants mentioned they prefer having tiles instead of parquetry like in Russia, because of the Israeli weather. Anna, Elena and Olga show their flexibility and ability to adjust to the Israeli climate conditions. In contrast, Andrey dislikes the tiled floor and insists that a timber floor is better. Dasha acknowledges that for the Israeli warm climate tiles might be more compatible, and a timber floor might need more maintenance in a temperate climate near the sea. Most other participants accept the different building materials they have faced in their Israeli apartments and live with them happily. They treat their past building materials, such as timber floors, double-glazed windows and wide walls, as warm memories that relate to past constraints of the cold weather, memories of something which is not required anymore.
Irena, who built her own semi-detached house in an outer-ring locality of the Tel Aviv region, states:

So we’ve been living here for five and a half years and every time we add more and more things. We are that kind of people that, maybe it’s the old education, but, and maybe it’s not always true, but we’ve tried to borrow as less as we could from the bank. Minuses and loans and all these things, so slowly, slowly, only a year ago, after living in the house for four years, we did the lightings, just like that. Curtains we did only after a year or so, a pergola we did six months ago…

It is clear that for Irena and her husband financial stability and independence was a major factor while building their house, and they would rather wait until they have enough funding to complete their house decoration instead of taking loans from the bank. Building a house is a significant commitment and Irena and her husband wanted to do it the best they could, even if that meant to have many expenses, as long as they stay within their planned budget. This may relate to the feeling of security and stability the house has to foster for Russian participants. In that sense, it is easy to understand Irena’s wish to keep their financial expenses under control.

8.4.2 Home-building practices

All the participants feel content in their houses which they see as meeting their needs. When asked what makes this house or apartment a home, most participants answered that they like the way it is designed and decorated. Irena clarifies:

Why do I love the home? Because it fits my taste, I go inside and I feel the warmth and I feel good and also aesthetically it matches my senses.

For Irena, the only participant who built a new house, home is created through her employment of taste. But for others, such as Elena and Maxim, the home is embodied in the existence of the entrance hall. Elena explains that she does not like it when there is no entrance hall in the apartment, and that this is her preferred room. As explained before, the entrance room was a necessity in the cold weather of the FSU, and this was where residents and visitors would keep their winter gear upon entering the house. But even though this space is not essential in the warmer climate, Elena has chosen to have such a space, as it seems that for her it holds other meanings such as the homely character of the apartment. Maxim, too, explains that they chose their apartment partly because of this entrance hall, which made the apartment feel a bit more like in the homeland.
As opposed to all other groups in this research, Russian women participants do not explicitly mention the kitchen as the most important space of the house. On the contrary, Alla even laughingly notes that she does not like to be there, and Elena states she has no time for cooking, just like in the past. But the kitchen did generate some debate regarding its enclosed or open nature, similar to the Chinese case. In apartments in the FSU, most kitchens were enclosed and separated, as the standard way of design. But in Israel, newly designed apartments and houses always comprise open plan kitchens as a sign of modernity and progress, similar to Australian contemporary housing stock (Dowling, 2008). Some of the Russian participants approve this change while others oppose it. This depends mostly on their age: younger participants would love to adapt to Israeli customs, whereas older participants would stick to their old habits of cooking in an enclosed room. Andrey's wife, for instance, cannot get used to this new design. Asked if the open plan kitchen suits them, Dasha's brother thinks that this kind of design 'is not common in our community', but both Dasha and her father support it because it creates one bigger space. Changing previous habits and preferences can shake feelings of security and familiarity in the home, and thus can be resisted.

Andrey holds ambivalent feelings towards his past home. On one hand, he acknowledges that the house – that used to be a large one-family house and then was divided to a number of units – was not divided wisely to maintain comfortable life, and hence was not architecturally compatible. But on the other, he insists that this past house was a home where one could live, and this is said in contrast to his current apartment, to which he even expresses feelings of embarrassment regarding its architectural design, and for which he pays a mortgage. Despite these feelings Andrey has purchased this house, and that shows the importance of home-ownership and the secure characteristic of the house for Andrey.

Alla states she prefers the old-fashioned kitchen of her past home, a kitchen with closed doors. Indeed, her kitchen, as depicted in Figure 8.7, is semi-enclosed and is less exposed than Andrey's kitchen.
Olga has a firm opinion concerning the open-plan kitchen. When asked if she has already got used to the different standards of the Israeli design, she states:

To some things yes, some things I said I won’t have it at home. For example, yes, those who have the kitchen inside the lounge, with the kitchen benches, with all the smells inside the lounge, they eat in the lounge and it’s always dirty, it’s always, it’s not aesthetic. For me it’s not aesthetic. And you see in my place everything is covered; everything with curtains, it’s not the norm, it’s Before Christ let’s say, for Israelis it’s not...Well, everyone and the way they are but in principle [it’s not] modern, everyone opens now...

Olga, who also immigrated at a mature age, could not accept this norm and could not become accustomed to the modern open plan kitchen. Her apartment seems, indeed, old-fashioned and not up-to-date with the latest design innovations. Her kitchen is a small and nicely arranged enclosed room. Olga did not want the kitchen to be photographed because it was ‘too messy’, and this signifies how important it is for her to keep a tidy and clean appearance of her home. Likewise, Elena mentions how much she dislikes the open plan kitchen when she explains her future plans for her apartment. Currently she has a semi-enclosed kitchen. Similarily to Chinese in Melbourne, Russian participants change their preferences and habits, adjusting to the current design norms prevailing in Israeli houses.
Irena admits she loves the enclosed kitchen and that she still misses it. Having built her own house, Irena designed a semi-enclosed kitchen. That is interesting because Irena could have designed whatever she liked in her new house, but nevertheless chose to go partly against her will and design only a semi-enclosed kitchen and not a fully enclosed one. It seems that Irena wanted to keep a bit of her kitchen-related lifestyle prior to immigration, but also to combine it with the new Israeli design standards which she embraced, thus choosing to design a combination of both, as shown in Figure 8.8.

Figure 8.8 – Irena’s semi-enclosed kitchen, 2008.

Another common subject of discussion was the use of wallpapers. In apartments in the FSU, wallpapers were commonplace and almost all past houses wallpapered comprised their walls. In Israel, wallpapers are considered old-fashioned and appear only in old apartments which have not been renovated yet. Some of the participants found it hard to omit them from their houses’ decoration. For instance, Elena comments that she wanted to have wallpapers but finally ‘got used to what there is here’. Elena accepts the new vogue in Israel and is not fixed with her old preferences. Of the twelve participants, only Vera decorated her current apartment with wallpapers, as seen in Figure 8.9. Each room of her apartment is covered with different wallpaper.
This is an unusual practice in the Israeli design arena that reveals what can be thought of as ‘Russian’ taste.

**Figure 8.9 - Wallpaper in Vera's bedroom, 2007.**

Another example of a Russian taste is Olga, who bought a glass cabinet, seen in Figure 8.10, from a local Israeli factory which produces this kind of ‘Russian’ furniture, according to her. As noted above, Olga does not like the open plan of modern apartments and prefers that each room in her apartments includes a door that could be shut, including the kitchen. She further continues:

Sometimes I do want to change, sometimes I do want to get rid of everything and make it modern, sometimes it also depends on the money, say, I think that my daughter, when she builds her own home it won’t be arranged that way, and it will be good, more modern, I support it. [I keep it the way it is] also because of [my parents] and because I already brought the stuff.

It is obvious that Olga is trapped between her parents’ and her daughter’s generations. When she and her parents immigrated to Israel, the parents insisted on taking all their belongings with them and she respected that because for them, being elders, it is harder to adjust to the new life, she notes. Now she feels obligated to their taste but also finds it hard to change and take on the Israeli taste, as with the open plan. The issue of belongings that participate in the immigration process is mentioned in the literature as crucial in the making of a new home (Walsh, 2006). It seems that
for Olga and her parents these belongings constitute tangible memories and link them back to their former home in the FSU.

Figure 8.10 - Olga's glass cabinet, 2007.

Olga comments that she brought all her carpets from the FSU. The carpets, as explained in relation to the former house in the FSU, were significant and were perceived as a means of warmth generators, so by bringing her old carpets Olga imported also the sense of a past home.

Irena, when decorating her house, decided to obtain green-coloured carpets instead of the red-coloured carpets that were popular in her homeland, as Figure 8.11 demonstrates. Irena still displays carpets at her home, but she adjusts it to her current – more Israeli perhaps - preferences. In order to do so she utilised a well-known Israeli carpets firm to ground her in the Israeli context. She did not want to replicate the home-environment she had had in the FSU, but she still appreciates the use of carpets at the home. Hence, she tries to adapt to the situation and to create a new design that suits better her current needs and adjusted preferences. This is an example of the way Irena's habitus has changed in the host country (Bourdieu, 2005; Friedman, 2005). Her set of practices and preferences have changed in favour of a more modern design.
A practice that is related to the presence of carpets in past homes is taking shoes off upon entering the house, just like the Chinese practice. Elena states she does not want to locate a special shoe-stand at her entrance of her current apartment, having it in that place before she renovated a while ago. Asked how she manages without a shoe-stand, she asserts:

I’m used to it. I used to have a small cabinet, before the renovation it stood here, and I told [my husband and son] - that’s it. I take my shoes off in my room, I’ve got a few, […] you please go straight to your room to take your shoes off, because I haven’t got space. What will I do with my painting, my beautiful Renoir? They got used to it, they got used to it.

For Andrey and his wife, this issue is essential, relating back to the issue of tiles. The family discusses the different options of flooring:

Andrey: I understand but [if] tomorrow it were minus 15 degrees it wouldn’t be good, the tiles are not good. It’s cold.

Dasha: Even when it’s not minus 15 degrees it’s cold. When it’s raining in winter it’s very cold, in winter it’s unpleasant. We wear two pairs of socks.

Mother: In Russia every room [has] a carpet.
Iris: Why didn't you put a carpet here?

D: They say it's not good, too much dust.

I: And there, is there no dust?

D: There is but there is a yard, you can go outside and shake it up. And something else, without being rude, here, there isn't this culture of taking off the shoes inside the house; there, every room has a carpet and you would take off the shoes at the entrance, even in your own home, this is something that… that's why Mum is…

This discussion presents the deep emotional distress these parents go through and the kinds of difficulties they face, immigrating at a mature age to a very different culture. For them, a basic everyday practice of having carpets all through the house, which is connected to another cultural practice of taking shoes off at home, is essential for the production of home. In the new environment, where the climate conditions are very different, carpets are not as practical, thus this practice is not essential anymore. Andrey and his wife feel that the lack of this familiar practice shakes the stability, familiarity and security the house should produce in order to be a ‘real’ home (Hage, 1997: 102). This explains Andrey’s insistent on the benefits of timber floors, despite the obvious limitations of it in Tel Aviv’s warm and humid climate. Indeed, the home represents for elderly migrants their previous identity. By migrating they have lost not only their homelands and former residence but also their history and past (Lewin, 2001: 366). Notions of what constitutes a home (not merely a residence) for elderly immigrants have been informed in a completely different culture and life situations than those in their host land.

Other home-building practices that are visible in Russian homes are the display of wall plates and other souvenirs from their homeland and other countries. As in some of the Italian houses, two Russian participants display ceramic plates on different walls of their apartments, and another participant displays a wall of artefacts from her homeland. Alla, for example, notes:

This is my weakness; it’s all kinds of plates I’ve collected. Some have been broken; [my son] broke. Porcelain. All sorts of places, Romania, Germany. This is from Thailand, this is from China. I’m not collecting, I’m buying. I’ve got many things I don’t have where to put. [...] I buy only overseas, when we are traveling I buy.

Despite Alla’s remark that she is buying and not collecting, she displays a collection where the past is at its service (Stewart, 1984). Alla’s apartment is full with representations of places she has been to, like Loretta’s house in Melbourne and
Alisa’s house in Tel Aviv. These plates and other paintings at her home do not specifically denote the FSU, but instead represent different cultures. Alla has recently come back from a trip to Thailand and China, and before had visited Kenya, thus there is much Oriental and primitive art in her home. Both the souvenir and the collection are selected by conscious choices, and here they reflect Alla’s identity and her connection to the past (Wilson, 2005).

Similarly, Galina collects plates from different places, mostly from east Europe and the FSU, but there are also plates from Istanbul as well as from Paris, as portrayed in Figure 8.12. Apart from this wall, Galina’s apartment looks like a typical modern Israeli home with popular furniture and decorations. When asked about the style of her current home, she mentions that the design style in the FSU was more traditional, thus it was not something they have tried to duplicate in their current home. Galina migrated at a young age and so perhaps it was easier to adopt design norms of the dominant culture.

Figure 8.12 - Wall plates on Galina’s lounge wall, 2007.

Elena has a wall full of special artefacts from her homeland, as she explains:

This is from where we grew up, yes. Some we brought from the beginning, everything you see here, and all this they make in our region, it’s plating on copper, this [is] stone. This is also on wood and this is on wood. Special things. I wanted to have it, yes, this is a symbol of Russia. […] I’ll tell you, a house like this can be everywhere. We keep our link with Russia. We also
try to keep the language for our son, and these are special things. Here I can also buy it but this is something else, it's from there. It gives me... besides it's very pretty.

The wall, as depicted in Figure 8.13, is a live memorial of the different landscapes and natural environment that occupied Elena’s past. It is clear that by devoting a whole wall only for these artefacts, she tries to preserve the specific landscapes of her childhood in her current home. By that she inserts some homely feelings from the past to her current life. As Tolia-Kelly (2003; 2004) argues, these objects are echoes of other textures of landscapes, narratives and social histories that help situate Elena as part of the Russian community in Israel. These objects on Elena’s wall are indeed material textures of her past landscapes. They connect her with former landscape and hold emotional significance. Elena perceives these objects as a symbol of Russia, and believes they could turn every house into a home for her. This supports the understanding of the home as place of insistence on cultural differences, against globalisation processes (Massey, 1992, 1994; Rapport and Dawson, 1998a), where ‘a house can be the same everywhere’.

Figure 8.13 - Elena’s wall of artefacts, 2008.

Another practice that a number of the participants exercise is a tea ceremony. Every night, before her son’s bedtime, Yulia practices a traditional tea ceremony with traditional teapot and cups, as seen in Figure 8.14. She comments: ‘the ceremony doesn’t belong to the house, here, this really characterises the... this is called a
teapot’s hat; this is how I call it. So that the teapot stays warm’. The hat appears on
the right-hand side of the photograph.

Both Andrey and Irena have the same ‘tea cosy’ on their kitchen tables. Like
Moroccans, who display their traditional teapots and glasses, Russians, too, exhibit
their traditional tools, but in contrast they do make use of them daily. When asked
about the kinds of foods her family eats, Irena notes she does not cook much Russian
food because she does not like that and it takes a lot of time. But she did preserve the
tradition of tea drinking, as she positions it against the Israeli lack of tradition of tea
drinking.

**Figure 8.14 - Tea ceremony at Yulia's house, 2007.**

It seems that for Irena, tea drinking has an important role in producing the feeling of
being at home. She displays three teapots in different sizes, as depicted in Figure
8.15. It connects her with her familial traditional everyday rituals, and also
distinguishes her from the Israeli crowd she meets in her beauty parlour. They,
according to her, do not hold the same preferences as herself. But she states she also
enjoys coffee, even though it was not common in the FSU due to lack of supply. It
seems as if she is trying to adopt common Israeli preferences and habitus, in addition
to her Russian love for tea. Maxim has a set of traditional porcelain dishes displayed
in his kitchen cupboard, illustrated with blue and white colours. This resembles the
Moroccan practice of displaying kitchen tools only for the sake of display, without
actually using them in everyday life, as shown in Figure 8.16.
Figure 8.15 - Teapots in Irena's kitchen, 2008.

Figure 8.16 - Maxim's porcelain set, 2007.
8.4.3 Hybrid existence: Russian or Israeli

To the question whether their apartment reminds them of their past home, all participants but one responded negatively. Maxim, for instance, states: ‘No, three rooms, here [there is] a different kind of building, there [it was] European building’. Elena agrees that in the FSU the building style was more ‘European’, though none of them explain what they actually mean by European style of building. This relates to Ong’s (1999) explanation of an international hierarchy of status, where Europe is at the top. European methods of building are considered by participants as superior to Israeli methods. But the answer is more complicated, as Elena demonstrates:

There’s no difference. I don’t think there’s a difference. Look, I think it’s also related to the person’s character. I, for example, arrived [in Israel], and at the same day I felt at home. I didn’t have any… […]. For [my husband] it was more difficult, but this kind of apartment I would like wherever I’d be, because, I don’t know, I don’t think there’s a difference. I don’t think. Well, in Russia it’s impossible without an entrance room…

Through her home-building practices, this current apartment provides Elena the same feeling of home as her past apartment in the FSU, despite differences of building methods. Again, Elena emphasises the dynamic nature of the home, which can be located everywhere in the world as long as it houses her belongings and she can exercise her home-building practices. But the way the word European is often mentioned by participants implies that Russians see Israelis inferior to them, and that ‘European’ stands against ‘Oriental’, as represented in the Israeli housing stock (as well as in other fields of life). This supports findings that Russians feel superior to native Israelis whom they see as infected with strong Oriental influences (Smooha, 2008: 14).

Irena, in her newly-built house, also refers to the lack of similarity of her new house to her past house:

[The neighbours] said the house is beautiful, I loved the stone coating, I loved, but it’s not that I’ve had it there; I just wandered around in the neighbourhoods and this is what I liked. And I loved, if you noticed, in the windows I’ve got arches I also loved, maybe from books, I’ve read a lot of books, you know, all the childhood books of Dumas, the Count of Monte Cristo and that, all these things. Again, Iris, I’m sorry, it’s not what was there [laughs], it’s to fulfill childhood’s dreams.
Figure 8.17 illustrates the local materials and motifs used in Irena’s house. The stone coating and arches are usually attributed to the Middle Eastern setting, and Irena embraced them in her house design. Another such motif is the perforated wall in the right-hand side of the rear facade. This is a traditional Muslim wall, usually built in hot climates to protect from the sun and allow the wind to come in, but here it hides the washing lines. Irena is happy to adopt local influences, though she does not relate this design to either its local character or her past house, but to influences from children’s books she has read as a child. This means that the current house does represent something from Irena’s past in the FSU, even if not material aspects of her past house. It also seems to be an allusion to her cultural origin of high culture, with references to classic novels. Irena implies that she comes from a high cultural origin, as opposed to the popular aesthetic of the Israeli crowd (Bourdieu, 1984 [1979]).

Later in the interview, Irena explains why she prefers to buy one costly item rather than ten of a cheaper quality:

And also the vase, we brought silk flowers from China and we bought here this vase, we were in China last year, yes, these are very good flowers, it’s not from cloth, it’s real silk, silk, there are no threads, this also annoys me. I’m annoyed by all these cloth flowers with threads, all these flowers from
the market. I'm annoyed, you know, by the kind of furniture of Louis XVI and all that stuff, and usually those who buy them are people who don't really have and they want to be like kings in France, this really emphasises how far they are from that, so why? I don't want silk flowers that look as if [they are from] silk but are actually rags.

From the discussion of silk flowers and their high-quality against cloth flowers, Irena suddenly turns to people who have high aspirations for high culture but are, in her opinion, not deserving to be included among the 'genuine' high culture consumers, as she obviously considers herself. Irena implies that the high culture she belongs to is located above the popular aesthetic taste of the Israeli (possibly Oriental) mob. In contrast to Chinese immigrants in California, who accumulate western forms of cultural capital in order to gain social class status (Ong, 1999), Irena feels she is positioned above sections of the Israeli society who only aspire to become high class like herself but actually belong to a lower class (Bourdieu, 1984 [1979]). It is interesting to note that five of the participants (of which four were from the FSU western countries) referred to issues concerning high culture. Lev, when showing the furniture in his current home, comments:

> It was a special house, had a parquet and handles of ivory and it was a European renovation, it was a house, a house. […] This is [from] Paris. Paris. This painting is [from] Russia […]. This is Holland, 100 years ago. This is from France, this is Russia too, this is Germany.

Lev gives special significance to the origins of his furniture and art works in his home. His apartment presents classic-style decoration, as Figure 8.18 demonstrates. The wooden glass cabinet, displaying porcelain and other chinaware and glassworks, and the curtains that are very prominent in the space, are often present in Russian apartments. Olga has a parallel interior, depicted in Figure 8.19, with a similar wooden cabinet, thick curtains and heavy couches, which bring to mind what Galina referred to as traditional design in the previous section. When Olga was asked whether her apartment is a typical Israeli apartment, she was quite determined:

> No, no, [the house] is quite old-fashioned. If I showed this in the house and a typical Israeli would come in he would say it's not nice here. He would say it's a bit strange for him, he would say that many things were at him mother's or grandmother's, you see? As if it takes him backwards. But for me, everything is practical, reminds me of something, is [related to] something important.
Figure 8.18 - Lev’s lounge, 2007.

Figure 8.19 - Olga's lounge, 2007.
Olga is also the only participant who states that her apartment is decorated in a typical Russian style. For her, the apartment provides security in the way it preserves the ‘Russian’ old taste, without any new changes.

Another sign of high culture is the piano. In contrast to the presence of the piano in every house of the Chinese in Melbourne, here only Elena has a piano in her lounge, where she and her son play. The piano is positioned, as depicted in Figure 8.20, below a Modigliani painting that Elena brought from France, among other European paintings of Klee and Renoir. European paintings represent here the upper class Elena feels she is part of, with her appreciation of fine art as opposed to the popular aesthetic of the lower classes (Bourdieu, 1984 [1979]).

**Figure 8.20 - Elena’s lounge, 2008.**

The piano and the paintings are symbols of high culture in Elena’s apartment. In that sense the house can be seen as cultural capital, communicating its hidden value to guests and visitors.

Another symbol of a different culture is the Christmas tree, which is obviously not very common in ordinary Jewish homes. Elena explains that they like it very much and enjoy from its sparkling lights every year. She notes that it is not linked to matters of belief but to memories of childhood and tradition. This is interesting, because Elena
appropriates a religious symbol in her everyday environment and removes its religious meaning in order to enjoy its beauty and create a homely feeling that recalls her lost childhood past. Here she is not locating her memories within the Jewish collective memory but is referring to another set of references, relating herself to an identity group within this diverse body of Russian immigrants in Israel.

A different issue that was often raised was the different levels of engagement in the Israeli society of Russian immigrants, and the extent to which participants are open to the new circumstances, especially in regards to location of housing. Maxim, for instance, believes that for him and his wife there were no major differences between the two cultures and lifestyles: ‘Perhaps it was more [difficult] for people who came from the Caucasus, places like that, […] we are more open to new things, [it wasn’t] such a dramatic change’.

Irena supports this approach when she discusses the ethnicity of her Israeli architect after being asked whether she wanted to have a Russian architect:

No, no, I really didn’t want it. For me, to stay with the Russians is simply not to go forward, because I - because of my work I know many Russians, Russians that I know from my work are Russians that made progress and integrated in life here, and there is, also when you go south to all kinds of places like Ashkelon, Kiryat Gat\(^{31}\), and… you just see that most of the signs in the city are in Russian and most of the kitchen is Russian, it’s not that it’s negative, it’s just remained as it was, house decor […] We simply are not so typical of Russians. We are not a high percentage.

Irena prefers not to perform her Russian identity in her house and her work environments and on the contrary, it seems that it is important to her to flag the number of local Israeli professionals (an architect, a landscape architect, a construction supervisor etc) she employed in her house’s construction as a sign of integration within Israeli society. She further rationalized this with the fact that she and her husband immigrated at the age of 25, and with having children they progressed and enjoyed learning about the Israeli culture. She notes that her parents brought all their furniture from the FSU and kept their Russian way of life, just like Olga’s parents. She used to see herself, she comments, as a mediator between the old and the new worlds, explaining how everything must have a reason and it is worthwhile to learn and adjust. Elena responds in a similar way when asked if her contractor was Russian:

\(^{31}\) These are ‘development towns’, established in the south of Israel for immigrants in the 1950s, currently comprising high percentages of immigrants from the FSU.
No. No, no, no, we are completely beyond that. I’m not. Now, look, to make it all clear, there are people I suppose in Ashdod, Ashkelon, they have to be all together. No, we became Israelis, that’s why I’m telling you, for me it doesn’t matter where the house is…

So, it seems that for both Irena and Elena being Israeli means development and growth, as opposed to getting trapped in the old world. Their being cosmopolitans living in a big Israeli city distinguishes them from other Russian immigrants of lower classes who stick together and live in provincial towns. And certainly, both of them embraced the Israeli lifestyle, accepting the changes required in their imagining of their new homes. Similarly, Dasha and Olga, both having older parents in Israel, perceive themselves as advanced, especially in contrast to the older generation. Olga regards herself as open-minded, despite her old-fashioned apartment design, which she admits is partly because she shares her apartment with her parents: ‘…I’m quite open to things. If that is, that is how it is supposed to be I accept it, I’m not closed-minded’.

In conclusion, current homes of Russian participants serve in two distinct ways for different participants in this group. For those who emigrated at a young age (as children, adolescents or young adults) it is a means to advance their social status (Dovey, 1999; Ong, 1999), through the perception of the house as cultural capital that positions them in a high class within Israeli society. In contrast, for those who immigrated at a mature age, current houses tend to replicate interiors, providing an essential feeling of stability, which was imperative in their former houses in the FSU. But these two ways of understanding the house intersect because in both of them Russian participants try to emphasise the feeling of security through their home-building practices – whether it is security of social status the house provides or security in its mere existence.

8.5 The role of the house for the Russian group in Tel Aviv

This chapter has explored the role of the physical form of housing for Russian participants in this research. Two significant ways of utilising Russian houses were observed. First, Russian participants wish to enhance the key feeling of security (Hage, 1997: 102), mainly because this relates back to the meaning of homes in the Soviet Union. Past houses and apartments were perceived as secure places, refuge from the harsh daily life under the Soviet regime, which was even more restricted for Jews. They could not travel around freely as others might have, and they could not practice openly their Jewish religion. Moreover, the communist mechanism of housing
allocation provided citizens with almost free housing at a certain stage of their lives, making housing secure and safe also from the economic point of view. They provided a place where one could spend their lives without the need to work and pay the mortgage, as in the capitalist economy. Thus, upon arriving in Israel many participants wanted to secure themselves this aspect of life as the first stage of their integration in Israeli society.

The desire to buy a house is not unique to Russian participants only. Pulvirenti explains the reasons for this desire as it is expressed in the experience of Italian immigrants in Australia, while Chinese participants in Melbourne demonstrate the same aspiration, although in very different circumstances. But what seems to be unique in the case of the Russians is the way they attribute their houses to meanings of security and stability, mostly in an economic sense. Sometimes these features were more important than the actual architectural virtues of the homes, as long as these homes provided the desired permanence in life. Houses in Israel, however, do not offer the same security and stability, because in most times the bank owns the house (by loaning a mortgage). Though FSU houses were not privately-owned but were owned by the government, former homes in the FSU provided a life-long right to stay there, which is not the case with the Israeli free housing market. This aspect was most prominent in older participants’ narratives. For them, who arrived in Israel with a large family they were responsible for, the adaptation to the capitalist ways of thinking and operating (in the housing market for example) was very difficult.

Other younger participants experience their home-building process in a different way. For them, current homes are perceived as a way to situate themselves in Israeli society. Young Russian participants wish to adopt some of the Israeli design standards and mix them with their own preferences and choices. They do not try to show their ethnic identity through their house, mainly because of the nature of the Israeli housing stock that is mostly comprised of apartments, but instead they combine their Russian identity with their new adopted Israeli identity (Valentine, 2007), creating a new habitus (Bourdieu, 2005; Friedman, 2005). They use these houses as markers of cultural capital and understand them as dynamic and fluid: houses that could be constructed everywhere in the world.

Some of the participants use objects from their homeland and knick-knacks they purchased in other places, similar to Italian and Moroccan participants. The floors, for example, or the carpets on them, are very important characteristics of the actual making of home. They are transformed and being altered to the different Israeli climate, methods of building and codes of design. Thus, houses of Russian
participants in this research serve as both producers of security and stability, and as a means to advance their dwellers in their social status in Israeli society, providing cultural capital.

In the following pages two artworks are presented, as in previous chapters. The first describes exteriors of Russian houses, while the second portrays interiors of these houses. Together they depict a view of the collective ‘Russian house’ of Russian participants in this research.
9 CHAPTER IX: A THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF THE MIGRANTS’ EXPERIENCES ABOUT THE HOUSE

9.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses findings of the four groups through comparisons between groups and within groups. It aims to unsettle the previous examination of four ethnic groups conducted according to participants’ birthplaces, through another examination that analyses similarities and differences between groups. It also seeks to question the analysis of the previous four chapters, where I found some coherence in the birthplace groups regarding practices of home-building for each group. As explained in Chapter 3, the reason for this examination is two-fold. The first is that in this way claims made in the literature about the importance of birthplace identity for the role of the house in migration processes can be thoroughly investigated. These claims, which see the house as a symbol of the migrant’s identity and status, are not yet confirmed. By examining the four groups through other identity lines in addition to their ethnic identity line this matter can be better addressed. The second reason for this examination is that since the sample size of twelve participants for each group is small it is hard to make generalisations based on such a sample. So in examining the groups through other identity lines I reflect upon my own methods of investigation and question the common methods in which comparisons of immigrants are usually made, comparisons which often lead to the construction of unproblematised migrants’ identities.

As shown in the four findings chapters, each group utilises the house in a different way in the process of home-building, enhancing mostly one key feeling of the four feelings Hage (1997: 102-3) describes. For Italians, home-building practices promote the feeling of familiarity in their homes, where past practices can be maintained and new practices can be embraced. For Chinese, home-building practices foster the feeling of sense of possibility, and the house is perceived as a means for improving social status and gaining advantage from the local surroundings. For Moroccans, home-building practices encourage the feeling of community, and the house is part of their mission to educate the Israeli community and the next generations in regard to the rich Moroccan history and culture, and for Russians, home-building practices promote the feeling of security in the home, either in the mere existence of the house, or in the way it positions its dwellers within the Israeli society.
But during the analysis of the data it became clear that each group is a diverse group of people which should be examined also in terms of their differences as well as their similarities. Thus, this chapter examines the role of the house from two different perspectives. The first perspective explores similarities and differences between the four groups in regard to the role of the physical form of the house. This is achieved through the exploration of the three themes presented in each of the findings chapters: 1. the construction of the house; 2. home-building practices; and 3. hybrid existence and the relationships with the dominant culture. The second perspective examines findings along lines of difference within groups. Four lines of difference were selected from the empirical data: 1. age at time of migration; 2. gender; 3. origin and class in the homeland; and 4. religion. These lines of difference were found in the findings to be significant in the process of settlement for the participants, and therefore were selected. But these are only a few of many other lines of difference that have not been selected and presented.

Conclusions of the first perspective, dealing with similarities and differences between groups, are that current houses of all groups are not aiming to duplicate past houses, although some small adjustments are made to make these houses more comfortable and supportive in the process of home-building. Also, as discussed in previous chapters, home-building practices serve as the building blocks of familiar feelings in the house for all groups, although differently by each. Finally, the house is a sign of the relationship the owner has with the dominant culture, and in that it expresses the degree to which the owner feels at ease in the host country.

Conclusions of the second perspective, dealing with lines of difference within groups, are that the most important line of difference appears to be age at time of migration. Though gender seems to make a difference in the way women and men use the house, it does not seem to significantly affect home-building processes. Homeland origin is another important line of difference for some participants, and lastly, the impact of religion on the role of the house seems to be in many cases parallel to that of the ethnic origin. It is important to note that perhaps it would not have been possible to analyse the groups in this second analysis, without having done the birthplace-based analysis first, because this first analysis established a basis for the second re-analysis, where I could mix and examine the groups according to other identity lines. Without that, it would not have been possible to compare the importance of the birthplace and the other identity lines as they appear in relation to the house.
9.2 Differences and similarities between groups

This section deals with the most common characteristics of houses of all four groups regarding the role of the built form of the house in the process of home-building. These are organised according to the three main themes discussed in the four findings chapters: 1. constructing the house; 2. home-building practices; and 3. hybrid existence.

9.2.1 Constructing the house

The construction of most current houses in the new country varies between the mere purchase of an already built house, and the long and tedious process of building a house from scratch. In both cases, though, there is an attempt to reconstruct a new home inside the built structure of the house. Most participants purchased their new houses only a few years after migration. It seems that for immigrants in general, and in particular for Italians (Pulvirenti, 2000) and Chinese (Dharmalingam and Wulff, 2008) in Australia, as well as for Russians (Lipshitz, 1998) in Israel, home-ownership is crucial for the process of settlement and feeling at home in the new country. Owning a new house in the host society compensates for the lost past home and is perceived by most participants to be a desire that must be achieved as soon as possible for the sake of both stability and success. As Appley et al. (1989: 270) state, Italians in Melbourne wanted their house to express two things: 'the fact that they had 'made' it in a new country and a recollection of the culture from which they had come'.

Despite the strong value that is given to the construction of new homes, when the interviews took place only a minority of each group had built its own house. This does not mean participants – especially those of the two recent groups - will not build their houses in the future, but that was the situation when the interviews took place. A striking difference between houses’ construction in the two periods of time is that in recent years the house is not only being built but is also being designed, with much thought put into every detail. Fifty years ago the house was built without any consideration for its design and architectural merits. It only needed to accommodate the family in the most immediate, comfortable and economical way. Other houses that were purchased already built have been renovated, sometimes extensively but in most times only modestly, to adjust the house to its new residents’ needs.

One clear similarity among all four groups is that current houses and apartments were not designed or renovated to become replicas of former homes in homelands. Despite the impression that arises from the literature, where migrants’ houses are described as resembling former houses in homelands (e.g. Apperly et al.,
1989; Willingham, 2004), it does not seem to be the case for participants in this research. There is much written material, especially in the Australian context and mostly anecdotal, in which it is clear that immigrants’ houses are typically built and easily recognised and ascribed to their owners’ ethnic identity by their exteriors. The study’s results, though coming from only a small sample of participants, raise important questions about the validity of this received view that seems to exist in the literature. Houses explored in this research were chosen by their occupants according to their suitability to the local surroundings and their suitability to local knowledge and values, as presented in Figures 9.1 and 9.2.

**Figure 9.1 — Participants’ houses blend into the Melbourne environment.**

![Figure 9.1](image1)

**Figure 9.2 - Participants’ houses blend into the Tel Aviv environment.**

![Figure 9.2](image2)

But within the big structure, little adjustments were made to turn these local houses and apartments into homes that are more familiar, recognisable and comfortable. These findings support the understanding that despite this new globalised world, with its new ‘world culture’ (Hannerz, 1990: 250), there is still a desire to preserve the local attributes of place (Appadurai, 1990; Rapport and Dawson, 1998a). Hence, the local stock of housing in each of the case sites (Melbourne and Tel Aviv), has been used by participants in order to fit into the existing order and preserve the local quality of place. Results from the small sample of participants agree with the idea that despite the flows of capital, goods and people and the creation of a new global space, the old sense of a ‘place-called-home’ has not disappeared (Massey, 1992: 8).
9.2.2 Home-building practices

Home-building practices are the everyday tasks and activities that help construct a feeling of being at home in the migrants’ houses. According to Hage (1997), the home - in its conceptual understanding - is considered as an affective edifice constructed out of affective building blocks: blocks of homely feelings. Home-building practices vary between the simple acts of hanging meaningful decorations on walls, or placing a unique artefact on a shelf, through everyday activities such as taking shoes off when entering the house, to unique rituals that are repeatedly done at the same place and time. All participants use their interiors to make themselves feel ‘at home’, but through these home-building practices they foster different feelings in order to make the home more homely. The use of interiors changes between each group, and also within each group, though to a lesser extent. In the following sections I present a series of home-building practices of different kinds that appear in all four groups through a range of examples.

The first kind of home-building practices, and probably the most obvious one, is the displaying of objects and artefacts from the homeland, as seen in Figure 9.3. These are objects that remind participants other times and places, and can also be understood as echoes of other textures of landscapes, narratives and social histories (Tolia-Kelly, 2003: 326). A similar kind of home-building practices, which mainly appears in Italian houses, is the use of photos or paintings of past buildings and landscape in the homeland. This is similar to the first kind portrayed above, but differs in that the objects are not only from the homeland but also depict it.

Figure 9.3 - Displaying artefacts from the homeland.

It seems that for each group the symbols representing the homeland are different. For Italians, these are more focused on urban landscape and pictures of past homes. For Chinese, these are usually articulated through Chinese calligraphy and traditional paintings. For Moroccans, these are in the forms of traditional domestic utensils and tools, and for Russians, symbols of the homeland are mostly represented in traditional
kitchenware (teapots, crystal glasses and chinaware) and in European fine art. Wilson (2005), exploring the meaning of objects in sojourners’ homes, explains that for some, objects in the house evoke difficult feelings of homesickness, but for others these objects help to cope with exactly the same feelings. They help to facilitate continuity of identity by keeping the individuals connected to the home and past while the sojourners are away, in a foreign land. This is the case of Elena, who has objects that represent her homeland both physically (they show images of the landscape) and spiritually (they were handcrafted there with local methods and materials). The findings also support Wiles’s (2008) premise that the home for transnational migrants is (partly) understood as physical objects and places. This premise is supported by the great quantity of artefacts and other objects from the homeland that are presented in so many of participants’ houses. It is clear that their presence in the migrants’ homes eases the settlement process and provides them with a familiar, accommodating environment.

In the Moroccan group there are two extreme exceptions that not only use objects and artefacts from the homeland in a way of home-building discussed above, but explicitly build replicas of Moroccan rooms, which do not only use symbols or artefacts of Moroccan culture, but intentionally imitate a traditional Moroccan space. Their intention is to represent Moroccan life, but it is not clear whose life. It is clear that Violet’s very fancy room does not represent Moroccan Jewish culture of 50 years ago, and probably does not even represent contemporary Moroccan culture. So in constructing them, what are participants trying to achieve? According to other Moroccan participants, the construction of Moroccan rooms is a phenomenon existing also in other western countries, (e.g. the United States, France). Perhaps what lies behind it is the wish to enhance the Moroccan experience, as Moroccan design style is unique. This relates to the Moroccan group’s major project in their house-building, which is to cultivate the feeling of community in the house and to educate, through that, the next generations about Moroccan Jewish life and culture.

Another significant means of home-building practices is the displaying of collections, souvenirs, plates and other objects, collected throughout the years mostly from trips around the world, as shown in Figure 9.4. Both the souvenirs and the collections are the embodiment of nostalgic feelings in the home. The souvenir, as Stewart (1984: 135) argues, involves the displacement of attention into the past. Its function is to envelop the present within the past, because it is not an object arising out of need or use value, but ‘arising out of the necessity insatiable demands of nostalgia’. The collections, as the souvenirs, enable its owner to escape the present
time (Wilson, 2005: 119). Nostalgia, here, appears as a strong force that affects the present everyday of the holder. The souvenirs and collections enable migrants to surround themselves with objects that connect them with the past. For them, who display souvenirs in various forms, the past may be only a hint of a visit and not an active past of living in a place. Surrounding oneself with souvenirs offers a comfortable position within the home. It is the ability to navigate the world that provides the satisfaction of accomplishment, but it is also the assurance in the choice of the home.

Figure 9.4 - Displaying collections and souvenirs.

Souvenirs from different countries and ‘exotic’ artefacts demonstrate how participants see themselves as cosmopolitans who feel at home in the world (Hannerz, 1990: 237), managing to bring part of the world into their homes. The findings also support the idea that the home is a stage of plurality of experiences, histories and constituencies (Ahmed et al., 2003: 1), in that reminiscences from certain events, private histories and segments of life are presented, sometimes even in a systematic manner (as with the collection of souvenirs case). They also support Tolia-Kelly’s (2003: 326-7) interpretation of cultural artefacts of Asian women in Britain, which she sees as resonance of past textures, scents and sounds, that help situate diasporic groups politically and socially in relation to their national identity. Here, too, participants collect and present objects from different stages of their lives or different places they have been to, to connect them with their own personal and collective journey.

Another aspect of home-building practices is the abundant use of good-fortune signs, as presented in Figure 9.5. These are mostly symbols that indicate good fortune or good energy in the house. Apart from the Italians, where only a few display religious Catholic iconography, all other three groups exhibit these symbols. Chinese have red knots or other good-luck objects spread around the house, usually in the bedroom above the bed or on doors between rooms.
In a similar manner, both Moroccans and Russians use hamsas, which is a symbol of palm derived from Arab culture that has been very popular in the past decade in Israel. It is interesting to see that Chinese participants use their own cultural language of typical colours or the practice of fengshui, while Moroccans and Russians use a similar object that is common in the dominant culture of their host land. This may show a profound embracement of Israeli culture by both groups, mainly by Russians who arrived only recently. The hamsa (meaning five in Arabic), emerging from an Arabic background, corresponds with the religious conservatism of many Moroccan Israelis, as some of these hamsas contain blessings or other Jewish symbols. Russian Israelis have adopted this practice of presenting hamsas in their homes, usually without the religious connection that Moroccans show. Many of these hamsas are typically given as gifts upon moving into a new house.

The fact that the hamsa does not have any direct link with Russian background suggests that this object is powerful, not because its origin is rooted in the homeland (as in the Chinese case), but because the hamsa links Russian participants to Israeli culture. Conceptually, the hamsas are linked to ancient Jewish tradition, and thus justify the presence of their owners in the land. Despite these major differences, both the hamsas and Chinese symbols are an important means of home-building, as they decorate and at the same time link current migrants’ houses with either the homeland or the host land and their popular culture. The hamsa and other symbols of good-luck are part of the habitus of these migrant groups. This common understanding that the hamsas and Chinese knots add a significant contribution to the making of a home is part of the common-sense and reasonable practices these groups of middle-class migrants do around their homes, namely their habitus (Bourdieu, 2005).

Another significant kind of home-building practices is focused around the kitchen. The issue of displaying teapots, kitchen utensils and other tools that are related to kitchen work appears in all four groups, as Figure 9.6 show. The kitchen, indeed, is discussed in a number of studies as one of the main realms of home-
building practices for migrants, chiefly women. Australian migrant women use the kitchen space to recreate for themselves a supportive environment which provides a ‘feeling of being at home’ (Supski, 2006: 133), while Italian American women construct two kitchens to be able to move freely away from constraints and formality in their private domain (Pascali, 2006). When asked what the most important space is, most Italian, Chinese and Moroccan women participants answered that it is the kitchen. Only Russian women participants disagreed and clearly stated that the kitchen is not the most important space for them. It seems, thus, that for most women participants in this research (and not only women but also some men) the kitchen holds special feelings and is the place where they feel most comfortable in their homes.

Figure 9.6 - Displaying kitchen utensils.

Apart from its practical, everyday important use, the kitchen in these cases is more than just a place where the preparation of food takes place. It is also where some of the participants spend a considerable part of their days and hence is designed to provide the feeling of home. This is achieved not only by cooking familiar dishes to produce familiar tastes and smells with the help of specific appliances (such as the rice cooker), but also through the setting of objects and artefacts (of which some initially belonged to the kitchen, but some did not) that remind participants of different times and places.

Another issue that has been repeatedly discussed was the way the kitchen is designed and whether it is open planned or enclosed as a separate room. For both Chinese and Russian participants, this issue has been crucial to the way they feel in their homes. Both groups were accustomed to enclosed kitchens that are hidden from visitors and keep smells and mess out of sight in their past homes. In the new host lands the common practice of kitchen design is an open plan kitchen that signifies modern and up-to-date design (Dowling, 2008). Shu explains how most Chinese migrants prefer open-plan kitchens because they think they look more attractive than the old enclosed kitchens in China. It is probably also a matter of availability in the
housing stock that dominates the decision, but according to Shu, Chinese immigrants – as Shu herself - adapt their cooking habits and do not use oil as much as they would do in China. The same question arose in interviews with Russian participants, where many stated they still prefer the old enclosed design, but nevertheless cooked in an open plan kitchen. This is also the common design in Israel and it is hard to find old-fashioned kitchens as in the FSU within new homes. Russian participants, too, adapt their habits and adjust to the new design, with its qualities and shortcomings, as can be understood from Andrey's family’s debate on the topic. These different kitchen styles are seen in Figure 9.7.

Figure 9.7 - Different kitchen styles.

Lastly, a different kind of home-building practices is shown in the way participants give meaning to certain activities (or rituals) they perform in their homes. These activities typically consist of specific furniture or fittings that help create the right setting. For example, almost all Italian houses (except those whose owners migrated at a young age) have a large backyard that is the location of a vegetable garden. Working in the garden is a home-building practice, as it maintains former practices Italians would do around their homes in Italy. Armstrong (1999) asserts that creating a garden in the host country helps accepting the new country. Likewise, Morgan, Rocha and Poynting (2005) believe that migrant gardens are places in which creative labour is expended to symbolise connections to homeland as well as to Australia and other countries. Indeed, Italian and Chinese participants’ practices around their gardens support this idea, with the use of local and foreigner plants and decorations that connect them both to their homeland and host land, as Figure 9.8 demonstrates.
Another example of home-building rituals is expressed in the way Rachel decorates the dinner table before family holidays and dinners. This is a practice that is very demanding and Rachel stopped doing it because of her age, but for Rachel, it used to be a very important component in the creation of the feeling of home, otherwise she would have not done it for so many years. Another example is the piano playing, which is assisted by the presence of a piano in each of the Chinese houses. This suggests that the piano provides participants a feeling of a proper home and that without it the home lacks a significant feature, perhaps even its homeliness. This might be because the piano’s image alludes to bourgeois aspirations (Weber, 1978), or because it is a tool that enables musical education that is much appreciated in the Chinese immigrant culture. The piano’s presence is an example of an accumulation of cultural capital that facilitates migrants’ integration in the host society (Ong, 1999).

A similar example is the shoe-stand in Chinese homes. It is located near the entrance, as family members are expected to take their shoes off upon entering the house. This is a home-building practice that has been imported from past Chinese homes and is preserved in the new environment. The use of carpets in the house, as related to the practice of taking off shoes, is common in Chinese homes as well as in some Russian homes. A few Russian participants who traditionally had the custom of taking shoes off in their homelands, chose to abandon this practice because the presence of carpets in the house does not suit, as they see it, the Israeli weather. So, when a conflict between former habits and local conditions arises, the latter overcomes the former. This sustains the idea discussed earlier, that houses of migrants are not replicas of former houses but are unfixed structures that are for ever open to contestation and are made out of positive interrelations with the surroundings. The home is not a stable or fixed idea; rather, it is in constant change and dynamic (Massey, 1992: 8; Rapport and Dawson, 1998a). The rejection of carpets and the acceptance of external conditions that transform the way the home is perceived by its owners clearly show that.
To conclude, this section illustrated various home-building practices; each has its own unique circumstances and conditions; each appears differently for each group. The common and most important characteristic of all of them, though, is that they all help building the feeling of ‘being at home’ in and around the house. This is done by connecting participants to their personal histories in their homelands or other significant places and times in their past. They do so not only by displaying objects from the homeland or objects that depict the homeland, but also by displaying objects that help the continuation of identity, such as collections, or the maintenance of the same practices that used to be performed in the homeland. All these practices involve the domestic realm as the main stage of their creation. It is exactly where the everyday takes place, with its quotidian, repetitive and the relentlessly ordinary nature (Harris, 1997: 3), and this is what makes these migrants’ houses a perfect arena of the everyday. The architecture, in many cases, brings to mind Tom’s garden (Ruddick, 1997) with the rejection of the demands of what is considered to be good taste. Like Tom’s garden, participants’ houses are, in many cases, a space that is the product of tinkering, collecting, adding and adjusting. It is also what Lozanovska (2008) calls migrants’ aesthetics, which stands in opposition to the dominant aesthetics.

9.2.3 Hybrid existence

Participants’ hybrid existence stems from lives that are being lived with the combination of two cultures, one is the country left behind and a second that is now embraced. This section tries to unpack the relationships of participants with both their original ethnic culture and their newly adopted culture, and the way this influences or is articulated in the house. It also focuses on cultural accumulation and the way houses serve to enhance symbolic capital.

Asked whether they see any links between past and current houses, almost all participants in all four groups answered firmly that their current house does not resemble their former houses in the homeland. But in many cases there were little pockets of resemblance. This does not mean that the house actually looks like the former house, but in some ways it reminded participants of a certain feeling, a certain image, or a certain experience they have had in relation to their former houses or past. This is also the case in Wilson’s (2005) study on nostalgia with the American Romanian interviewee, who bought a house that reminded her of something of her grandparents’ house in Romania, ‘not because of any concrete similarities, but rather because it has a large yard and a vegetable garden and is not in the city’ (quoted in
Wilson, 2005: 125). The parallel lines are not always visible and in most times they only exist in the participants’ mind.

Most Italian participants denied any likeness to former houses in Italy. But when the conversation deepened, some cracks appeared. For example, Laura and her husband used Italian building materials in the construction of their mid-1950s brick-veneer house, in a similar way to the regional community centre of Abruzee Canadians (Harney, 2002). These little pockets of resemblance, seen in Figures 9.9 and 9.10, also appear in narratives of other groups. Most Chinese participants could not see anything similar between the two homes. But Shu, for example, chose to live in her house because its internal courtyard and windows reminded her of famous Chinese gardens. She does not think her old apartment had had any influence on the way she lives and decorates her house, but her house was chosen because it alludes to a certain feeling linked with a familiar landscape in China. It recalls images from her past, and in doing so brings her comfort and ease (Tolia-Kelly, 2003). The home is multi-scalar, hence images from home do not have to be directly connected to a former built structure but can relate to a neighbourhood, city or nation (Blunt and Dowling, 2006), and can evoke other qualities of the homeland.

Figure 9.9 – Pockets of resemblance in Melbourne.

Similarly, all Moroccan participants do not link their current houses with their former ones, as others do. But most of the Moroccan houses have a warm feel with the use of warm colours and materials such as copper and timber (appearing mostly in furniture but also in the house’s structure itself, as in Yosef’s house). This may not be linked only to Moroccan houses, but of all four groups Moroccan houses stand out with their warm character. In the Russian group there were two kinds of responses. Most participants argued that current houses have nothing in common with former houses in FSU. But some apartments look as if they were brought from the old country without any alterations at all. According to participants, these interiors look exactly like former interiors.
These findings support the premise discussed earlier that most current houses in host lands do not attempt to replicate former houses. Nevertheless, they were chosen, renovated or designed the way they were because they correspond with feelings of longing and yearning-for-home in the homeland (Dovey, 1985; Hage, 1993). They were not chosen coincidentally; they were chosen and designed deliberately in this specific way. These houses represent their owners’ habitus, with their cultural habits, preferences, and everyday practices (Bourdieu, 2005). They allow their owners to feel much at home and thus give freedom to hidden or suppressed practices that are not accepted by the dominant culture, where a new habitus dominates (Friedman, 2005). Certainly, the habitus is not static and is going through an ongoing change. It inevitably changes into a hybrid mixture of the two cultures, but the house lets migrants express these hidden parts of their habitus.

Figure 9.10 - Pockets of resemblance in Tel Aviv.

Another chief issue is the way participants transform their houses’ exteriors, how this expresses the relationship between them and the dominant culture (as they perceive it), and the reason behind different levels of visibility of houses’ changes. The level of visibility changes dramatically between groups. Of course, there is an essential difference between exteriors of detached or semi-detached houses as in Melbourne and apartments as in Tel Aviv. But even between Italians and Chinese who all live in houses, there is a major difference in the way the two groups alter their exteriors. It is important to remember that houses are not ‘Italian’ or ‘Chinese’ in character as if they are resulting from that identity. Rather, they perform the ethnic identity of their dwellers and thus participate in the process of building or reinforcing this component of identity (Fortier, 1999:43). Even though most participants do not wish to transform their houses into a replica of their former houses, small adjustments and adaptations of exteriors have been made, especially by Italian participants as shown in Figure 9.11.
Some of these ‘Italian’ marks have been discussed in length in literature (see Borgo, 2006; Church, 2005; Sagazio, 2004). These are the marks Willingham (2004) and Apperly et al. (1989) referred to, when they named their ‘Mediterranean Idiom’ or the ‘Late Twentieth-Century Immigrants’ Nostalgic’ house (respectively), which mostly appear on front facades. Other adaptations of Italian houses mainly exist in the backyards, away from the public eye. In some cases the front of the house has not been changed dramatically, while the back has been modified. This presents a tension between the dominant culture and the Italian ethnic identity, which is chiefly exposed to family and invited guests. The marks are what Gans (1979; 1994) calls ‘symbolic ethnicity’ – ethnic symbols that are presented in order to be identified with a particular ethnicity. Here, Italian participants want to attach themselves to an Italian ethnicity and thus perform Italian practices and alter their exteriors so they would become more ‘Italian’ and be identified as part of this ethnicity. It delivers the message that people of Italian (or at least of southern European) origin live here (Lozanovska, 2008). But for other groups, symbolic ethnicity is less evident. In other cases transformations that appear on the front façade are usually subtle and do not expose much of the owners’ ethnic identity.

In Chinese houses there are hardly any adjustments that are visible to the passer-by. If something has been transformed, it is hidden in the backyard. Most Chinese participants leave their exteriors as they found them, and some even enhance their ‘Australian’ characters. For example, several participants put in fountains and statues in their front yards and backyards, which they obtained in local home maintenance stores. These fountains are very popular in Melbourne, as well as the practice of gardening and maintaining open spaces around the house.

Lara lives in a house designed by an Australian firm, according to common Australian codes of design. Lara’s first old house was demolished in order to build a new, large house. This new house is double-storeyed and does not have much open space. These kinds of houses have been labelled ‘monster houses’ in Canadian cities.
(Ley, 1995; Mitchell, 2004; Qadeer, 1997) but in Melbourne they do not generate the same resistance as in Canada. Both Lilly and Hui adopted gardening, a practice they were not used to in their homeland, which both enjoy very much (though Hui employs a gardener), and Annette displays in her house framed pictures of large houses, taken from the real-estate section in the local newspaper. These practices demonstrate how the Chinese desire not to emphasise their ethnic identity in the form of their houses. Quite the opposite, they prefer to blend in their environment.

The fact that Lara built a new house shows, besides other things (such as financial readiness and changing family needs), that she feels very comfortable in expressing herself in a new house and does not need to hide behind an existing one. But the way she and her husband chose to do that is through the adaptation of Australian values and preferences, with the local building firm which provided the design. It can be explained by the simple fact that as a newcomer, it is easier, cheaper and faster to use the services of a local company who can simplify the process of building. But in choosing a local firm with ready-made designs they actually chose not to express their original ethnic identity in the form of their house, and not to use ethnic symbols in the house (Gans, 1979). This is perhaps because after almost ten years in Melbourne, they feel much at home and do not feel the need to flag their Chinese identity on their house. Nevertheless, Lara and her husband designed a front garden that is different from Australian typical front gardens and thus flag their own ethnicity. It appears, then, that Chinese ethnic identity is better performed and expressed through front and backyards, and less so through the built structure of the house, due to the changeable character of gardens as opposed to built forms. Another significant aspect of building a new house is the social value that accompanies it. The few built houses, and especially the recently built ones as Figure 9.12 shows, signify very clearly the social value of their dwellers, as they symbolically establish status and communicate it to others through the impact they make (Dovey, 1999).

Figure 9.12 – New houses.
Most of the dwellings of Israeli groups are apartments, where it is hard to display ethnic symbols at the outside. But even with the few cases of houses, it is impossible to locate any references to the owners’ ethnic origins. Thus, for example, Irena, who built her own home, used the services of Israeli professionals and adopted in total the Israeli style. According to her, the house does not present Russian symbols or character, but only articulates her childhood dreams. It actually consists of some oriental motifs and thus looks as if it has been influenced by the local Middle Eastern setting. As in Lara’s case, this might be explained not only by Irena’s desire to embrace the Israeli culture, but also by the simple fact that as an immigrant, it is easier to use local professionals who have the local knowledge and can make the process of building easier and quicker. Other Moroccan detached houses do not express in their exteriors much of Moroccan character, though some do have arched or ornamented entrance doors that may be read as ethnic Moroccan marks, but these are subtle. This is perhaps because the owners of these houses wish to assimilate, as Yosef himself explains in regard to himself as a young immigrant. It seems that for most Chinese, Moroccan and Russian participants, it is quite important not to stand out but to be part of the local landscape, at least with respect to their houses.

As discussed in previous chapters, these findings do not support other studies that describe migrants’ houses as manifests of ethnic identity. Willingham (2004: 483) calls the Italian house ‘the Mediterranean Idiom’ and describes it as a typical, recognisable dwelling that consists of certain characteristics. Likewise, Allon (2002) portrays what has been dubbed ‘Mediterraneannisation’ in the suburb of Earlwood, Sydney, where local residents protested against alterations of housing stock by immigrants of Southern European origin. The same resistance arose in the case of Shaughnessy Heights in Vancouver (Mitchell, 2004; Qadeer, 1997; Rose, 2001), where the term ‘monster house’ has been dubbed as a typical Chinese dwelling. Both terms have negative connotations, expressing unrest among local residents who resist changes in housing stock of established suburbs. However, most houses of migrant groups in Melbourne as in Tel Aviv (except perhaps a few Italian houses as mentioned above), are not recognisable by their external appearance and one cannot tell whether their dweller is of Italian or Chinese origin, or of Moroccan or Russian origin. The findings suggest that most participants of this research prefer to conceal their ethnic identity and do not perform it through their houses, thus these kinds of conflicts do not arise.

When discussing the matter of hybrid existence, it is important to refer to cultural accumulation. As Ong (1999: 89) clearly demonstrates, Chinese emigrants in
western metropolitan cities are seeking to acquire the kinds of symbolic capital that are determined in Europe and America in order to be sufficiently adept within the social arrangement of the new country. This issue of cultural accumulation and cultural superiority has often been raised in interviews. Through the use of both verbal and visual means (words as well as home decorations) participants try to express their superiority above or their cultural suitability to the host culture. This mostly occurred with Chinese, Moroccan and Russian participants, as Figure 9.13 show. For instance, Hui states that the furniture she brought from China is European-styled. In this she declares she prefers European design, including this kind of furniture in her house. But why would she prefer European design, having grown up in China and migrated to Australia? It seems that Hui tries to fit herself into the cultural norms and preferences of a western country, where European design is most appreciated. This is also the effects of globalisation, when a ‘world culture’ has created a global world with the flow of meaning, as well as people and goods (Hannerz, 1990). This ‘meaning’ comprises sets of values according to which some goods are more valued than others (for example, European furniture is more respected than Chinese furniture).

**Figure 9.13 - European design influence.**

In other interviews the same subject has also been evident. Both Lara in Melbourne and Rosa in Tel Aviv have in their relatively new homes a chandelier located in a central place. This lamp evokes connotations of French upper-class design and is what Bourdieu (1984 [1979]) refers to as luxury goods and social accessories. Thus, obtaining this kind of lamp may increase one’s symbolic capital and locate one in a higher social status. In Lara’s case it might also be linked to the qualities this glass lamp has according to *fengshui*. Other instances of the same character appear when some participants mention they possess Italian furniture. Indeed, Italian furniture may be of higher quality than Chinese furniture or low-cost firms (and of course, may be not), but it is hard to ignore this common perception of the merits of Italian (or European) design in home decor.
The use of the word ‘European’ when describing features of the home appears often in discussions with Russian participants. This may be understood in the context of European (and especially French) influence on the Russian aristocracy throughout the last few centuries. Some Russian participants insist that their taste signifies higher culture than the dominant popular Israeli culture, which is also supported by Smooha (2008: 14). The most obvious reference to high culture is Irena’s remark regarding silk flowers she brought from China. Irena comments how she dislikes cloth flowers that only ‘pretend’ to be real silk flowers (which, in turn, pretend to be real flowers), and how she is annoyed by people who buy furniture that looks like it is of Louis XVI but is not. What she means is that she belongs to high culture which distinguishes her from other people around her, who obviously belong to a lower, more popular aesthetic (Bourdieu, 1984 [1979]). These practices use the house as a means to construct the superiority of participants in relation to other ethnicities and classes in the host land.

To conclude, the section illustrated the relationship between participants and the dominant culture and how it affects the house in participants’ home-building. The findings suggest that houses of participants convey how their owners feel in their surrounding environment. For some, especially for some of the Italian group, houses reveal Italian marks and perform in a visible manner the ethnic identity of their dwellers. But for most participants, exteriors of houses are not used to display ethnic symbols and perform the ethnic origin of their dwellers. This may suggest that the majority of participants of the four groups chose to blend into the local physical landscape. Also, findings suggest that houses are used for some participants to demonstrate their relative superiority over other groups of the dominant culture, through the accumulation of cultural capital in the form of the house.

The first perspective of this chapter focused on similarities and differences between groups as they are articulated in the construction of the house, in home-building practices, and in relationships with the dominant culture. The next perspective portrays a number of lines of differences within each group.

9.3 Lines of difference within groups

This section looks at differences within each group and similarities between groups. As discussed in previous chapters, it is imperative to understand that each ethnic group is not homogenous or self-contained. Ethnic and other ‘identity groups are understood to be formed through the politics of identity, rather than existing prior to politics’ (Fincher and Iveson, 2008: 92), meaning that each of the four ethnic groups is
simply a group of people who were born in the same country and migrated to the same another. The country of birth is the united characteristic of each group and is why members of that group were selected, but this does not mean they all share the same characteristics. National statistics are organised in national bureaus of statistics according to many variables, and country of birth is one of the most immediate ways to categorise migrants. Hence, migrant groups are usually described according to their common country of birth and not other variables, such as period of migration or age at time of migration.

Yet, it is crucial to understand that behind the seemingly cohesive façade of each group there is a diverse group of people of different ages, education and social backgrounds, origins in the homeland, religions and cultures, dialects and languages and more. It might even be the case that people across diverse ethnic groups share more commonalities than they share with people of the same ethnic group. In the next few sections several lines of differences within groups are presented, revealed in the manner they influence the role of built form of the house in the process of home-building. At least four lines of difference could be identified within the groups, selected based on the empirical data, where they appeared to be the most important lines of difference. These are: 1. age at time of migration; 2. gender; 3. origin and class in the homeland; and 4. religion. But it should be remembered that there must be other identity lines (for example: profession, family status, sexuality), which are not discussed here because of the limited scope. Also, it is necessary to stress that it is impossible to isolate one identity line from the rest and to ignore interconnections of identities (Valentine, 2007). People are not comprised of a fixed set of identity lines that can be examined each in its turn. As can be seen in the following sections, the task of examining only one identity line at a time is almost impossible as these lines are often entangled. Nevertheless, they will be presented here one by one.

9.3.1 Age at time of migration

The first line of difference, and what seems to be a significant aspect that influences migration processes, is age at time of migration. Within the four groups, there are some major differences in participants’ ages at time of migration, varied between young children to mature adults.

First, it is important to address the question of who is a migrant and for how many years a migrant is still considered to be one. Is it something that always remains with one? Can one stop being a migrant? In my view it is impossible to answer these questions because it is a very personal decision that should be made by the migrants
themselves. For example, Loretta, an Italian from Melbourne who migrated around 60 years ago, does not speak English well and still feels very much a migrant. But Yehuda, a Moroccan in Tel Aviv who also migrated around 60 years ago, has not felt he is a migrant for many years. This is why he also does not believe his house plays any role in his home-building. Similarly, Elena, a Russian in Tel Aviv, migrated 15 years ago and feels she is no longer a migrant. Age at time of migration, though, does not refer to the number of years since migration, but to the immigrants’ ages when migration occurred.

For example, most Italians arrived in Melbourne as young adults. Only Lorenzo and John arrived when they were children less than ten years old, and Laura arrived in her teens. It is obvious that for both Lorenzo and John, the house does not participate in their home-building process in the same way it does for other Italian participants. Both of them do not display Italian artefacts or pictures of Italian landscape in their homes, as other participants do. When asked, both of them said they feel very much Italian alongside their Australian identity and speak the Italian language as well. Lorenzo even insists that his house has an Italian spirit despite the lack of Italian ‘marks’ or symbols, and despite his Anglo-Australian wife who thinks otherwise. In contrast, Laura migrated when she was 15. This is most likely a problematic age for migration because it is when adolescents are forming their identity through relationships and interactions with other young people around them (Coll, 1997: 114). The decision to migrate is often made by the parents and the teen is left to accept it. In fact, Laura remembers the experience of migration as traumatic and even states she would have gone back with her mother had she not met her husband. In her house she presents more Italian marks than Lorenzo or John – she has paintings of Italian landscape, for example, in her lounge - and she performs Italian practices in her backyard, but the interior does not look like other older participants’ interiors, with the typical ‘Italian’ aroma that surrounds them. Yet, the narratives show that the house for Laura is an important means that eases the home-building, whereas for Lorenzo and John the house seems to play a smaller part in this process.

In the Moroccan group there are three participants who migrated as children and three who migrated as teenagers. The youngest is Yosef, who migrated at the age of seven and does not remember much of his past home. As opposed to Lorenzo, who tries to maintain his Italian identity in his everyday life and in his house, even if only implicitly, Yosef claims that his past home did not influence the design of his current house, since he does not remember it and has memories only from his childhood houses in Jerusalem. Yosef explains these claims that in order to survive in
the host country he had to assimilate and forget the past. But his house does convey a Moroccan feel, perhaps because of his set of Moroccan copper utensils in his kitchen or the warmth it produces with the abundant use of timber. It is important to note here that both Yosef and Lorenzo are married to local wives. This is another line of difference within the groups, which seems to be correlated with migration at a young age. For children migrants, who acquire the local language and culture much quicker than adult migrants, it is easier to blend into the dominant society, including marrying a local partner. The mixed marriage in both cases, as in the few others, might mean that these houses are not solely designed to facilitate the process of settlement, because one of the adult residents who live there has not experienced migration. Still, it is almost impossible to identify who of the partners has the most influence on the design and use of the house. Both Lorenzo and Yosef say the house has been designed together by their partners and them.

In the Russian group there are also two participants who migrated as adolescents. Both of them do not mention major difficulties with their migration process, and their apartments do not seem to take a major part in the process of home-building. Dasha’s apartment is very small and without much decoration, except some traditional crystal glasses in her kitchen cupboard, and one painting of a Russian urban landscape. Dasha helps her parents cope with their settlement, and serves as a mediator between them and the new culture. Galina’s apartment has modern furniture and decorations, of the kind that can be found in many other Israeli homes, but she also displays a collection of plates and artefacts from other European countries she had visited. This, despite her assertions, points to a need to connect herself with other landscapes, textures and personal history (Tolia-Kelly, 2003: 326).

The Russian group is the only group that comprises mature adults, due to the specific circumstances of their migration. There are three mature adults who arrived in Tel Aviv when they were around their 50s. All of them have experienced a great deal of misery during their process of home-building. As Lewin (2001: 366) argues, elderly migrants lose not only their homelands and former residence but also their histories and past. They also lose their language and the ability to adequately express verbally. As a result of migration, many of them experience a downward shift in occupation as they cannot find a job that suits their qualifications and skills. This is exactly what happened to Andrey, who could not find employment in his profession as an architect, and has thus worked for fourteen years as a gardener. Andrey does not speak Hebrew well and feels that he cannot express himself as he would have liked. His account reveals great difficulties he and his wife have experienced since they
migrated, and this is also shown in his attitude to his home. Andrey is not happy with his new inner-ring apartment and does not like its architectural design. He and his wife cannot get used to the open plan kitchen and to the tiled, cold floors. For Andrey, it appears that the built form of house is playing a major role in the process of home-building, but in contrast to all other participants, his house does not relieve this process but impedes it. It can be understood from Andrey’s narrative that he believes that had his house been more similar to his past house in the FSU (with carpet all over and an enclosed plan kitchen, for example), his settlement process would have been much easier. Andrey has two grown children (Dasha and her brother) that have settled much more easily. They try to mediate between their parents and the new country, and that is why, perhaps, Andrey’s home lacks rugs and other traditional furniture that might have increased the feeling of a more homely space (Hage, 1997). Hence, it seems that the house is an important facet of the home-building process, even if not always in a positive way, as revealed by Andrey’s case and in the case of Vietnamese in Australia (Thomas, 1999).

Lev, another mature adult from the Russian group, lives with his partner in an inner-ring apartment. He migrated almost at the same time of Andrey but his command of the language is poorer. In his apartment, though very different in its form from his former house, he placed some of his classic furniture that used to occupy his past home. He reports on a very difficult process of settlement, and laughs when he compares his former eight-room house to the three-room apartment, but he also notes that he is happy with its design and location. In his case it is obvious that Lev’s home assists him in this process, and in contrast to Andrey, his home-building practices foster the key feelings that make his apartment a home for him (Hage, 1997).

Lastly, the only group that seems to be more or less homogenous in this respect is the Chinese in Melbourne. All Chinese participants arrived in Melbourne as young adults, even though some arrived more recently than others. Thus, they do have age differences among them but do not have major differences of ages at time of migration. This has probably been caused by Australian migration policies of the last ten to fifteen years.

To sum up, this section presented how age at time of migration plays a crucial role in the process of settlement and drastically affects the role of the house. The experience of participants who migrated at a young age from different groups is similar in that the house does not play a major role in their home-building processes, as it seems to play for other participants in their groups who migrated when older. For instance, Lorenzo and Yosef have experienced migration is similar ways. For mature
participants, the house seems to be central to home-building, even if it is not always in a positive way.

9.3.2 Gender
The second line of difference is gender which appears as another important line of difference within groups. In all four groups, the majority of participants are women. Most of the interviews were conducted with only one partner of the household and only in a few both partners participated. This line of difference seems to influence the way participants use their homes and produce themselves a supportive environment where their daily lives take place.

In the Italian group there are six women and four men. Of them, three women are widowed, three women and three men are married, and one man is divorced. Laura, Loretta and Tanya live alone in the house they have shared with their husbands for many years. Despite traditional conceptions of homes as the locus of gendered domestic division of labour, where women are responsible for the inside and men are responsible for the outside (Blunt and Dowling, 2006: 110), their experience of home-building is focused chiefly on the practice of maintaining – both physically and spiritually - the house and the yards. For them, the absence of their partners has forced them to take on untraditional roles that are usually the men’s. Tanya, for example, takes care of the vegetable garden, the chooks and ducks, as well as the cooking, the cleaning and the washing for herself, her son and his girlfriend. But she is also responsible for home-building and the production of the ‘home-like’ environment in the house, by her use of both Italian and Australian decorations and artefacts. Similarly, Loretta and Laura maintain the house and yards, including the vegetable garden. For both, it seems that the outside is important as much, if not more, than the inside. But at the same time, both of them maintain also family life with the preparation of family dinners and special celebrations. The home, for Italian women, provides the opportunity to appropriate personal power, as opposed to past view of the suburban home as controlling women (Thompson, 1994).

The kitchen for Italian women is also a focus of family-making and preserving, as perceived by recent gender scholarship. As argued by Supski (2006: 133), through the use of colours and favourite decoration in the design of the kitchen, Laura, Loretta, Tanya and Carmen ensure the kitchen and their central place within it produce a ‘feeling of being at home’. This is shown by Loretta’s magnet collection on the fridge door, Tanya’s home-made jams and eggs, and Laura’s and Carmen’s new kitchen from which they control family events and oversee family members and arrangements.
Carmen, though married, also takes care of the vegetable garden and chooks. It might be that this role is an extension of the kitchen domestic chores and the traditional feminine responsibility of food-producing.

Another important issue is the construction of houses by men of the Italian community. Laura explains how her husband, with the help of other Italian fellows, has gradually built their house. As Datta (2008: 529) argues, the significance of the house lies in the act of building it. By building the house and being involved with the building details, male members of the Italian community gained an intimate relationship with and knowledge of the built form of the house. Not only men but also women were involved in the building process through keeping the appropriate environment for the builders to do their jobs (providing meals and moral support), and thus were also part of this intimate relationship with the house. This correlates with the experience of Yosef, of the Moroccan group, which will be shortly discussed.

In the Chinese group there are nine women and three men; all of them are married. Here it seems that traditional roles of domestic labour are still preserved. For instance, most women said that the most important room of the house is the kitchen, where they host friends and guests, cook and engage in societal activities. Moreover, the three men interviewees and also some of the women’s husbands tend to take responsibility for the outside, working in the garden and doing do-it-yourself projects. Thus, for example, Lara’s husband designed and built their well-designed new front and back gardens, as well as Jin’s husband who is in charge of their garden, working there at the time of the interview. Jun, studying to become a builder, is exploring new terrains of garden-building in his backyard. The two exceptions are Hui and Lilly who both, in their own ways, adopt traditional male-practices of gardening. Lilly decorates her large backyard with small decorations she finds at flee-markets, inspired by her Greek neighbour lady. Sometimes her father helps with more masculine jobs, such as tiling. Hui takes care of the garden with the help of a gardener but nevertheless greatly enjoys it.

In the Moroccan group there are seven women and five men, of whom all are married except one widowed woman. Here, as opposed to the two previous groups, the kitchen is not the most important room in the house. For most, the lounge is more significant because it involves family activities. Nevertheless, it is clear that for Alisa the kitchen is significant, with the abundance of decorations and collections that cover every empty corner. Sonia’s kitchen, too, has many symbols and decorations, in a manner that reminds one of the utilisation of the kitchen by Western Australian migrant women (Supski, 2006). Sonia ensures that the kitchen produces a feeling of
being at home as a chief part of her home-building. Rachel mentions her old practices of decorating the dinner table before big family celebrations. Doing that, Rachel is the sole responsible person for the creation of ‘home-like’ environment, even if this happens only once or twice a year and not on a daily basis.

In contrast, three of the five men in this group are engaged with religious practices. For them, the traditional division of labour in the home is very apparent. They do not participate in any food preparation that takes much of the time and focus of family everyday life and special celebrations, because this remains primarily the role of the woman. The two other men are both married to non-Moroccan women and it seems that they are much more involved in the everyday life of the house. Yosef maintains his garden as well as his house. Like Laura’s husband he also took part in the gradual physical building of his house, with the help of his two sons. This allows him to feel very much connected to the specific details of his house and to be part of a male-alliance he shares with his sons, similar to Polish builders in London (Datta, 2008). It seems that for Moroccan women the kitchen is an important space in the house, while men participants of this group maintain male practices (though not always involved with the outside as in suburban homes). Thus, the way the house facilitates home-building for this group is rooted in a gendered understanding of it.

In the Russian group there are nine women and three men. All of them are married except one widowed woman and another singled-parent woman. Similarly to the Moroccan group, most women said the kitchen is not their most important space in the house. But unlike Moroccan women, Russian women explicitly explained that they do not wish to cook and do ‘feminine’ works in the house. Yet, traditional roles are sustained in some of the group’s homes. For example, Irena, who has built her own home, is definitely in charge of the production of home-like environment inside the house. She chooses the kind of decoration to be displayed and is responsible for the design and furniture. Her husband occupies the mezzanine where he works and paints his do-it-yourself projects. During the design process, he created a cardboard model of the house as one of these projects. In most other houses this division was not so clear, as the interview was conducted with the women solely without the presence of the men, and there was no discussion of this topic, except one interview which actually took place in the kitchen, while the woman interviewee cooked dinner for her family.

To conclude, this section illustrated how gender appears in the house and influences its role in the process of home-building. It seems that the two established groups (Italians and Moroccans) share some commonalities between them, as the
importance of the kitchen for women and the involvement of men in practices of house-construction. The two recent groups (Chinese and Russians) do not seem to share many commonalities, as Chinese women declare they like to spend time in their kitchens, while Russian women prefer not to. This difference might be rooted in the different lifestyles in the two cities.

9.3.3 Origin and social class in the homeland

The third line of difference is origin and class in the homeland. This means whether participants came from urban and central environments or rural and fringe areas of their homelands. It also often means whether participants belonged to a working, middle or upper class, and consequently whether their families owned their own houses.

In the Italian group there is a clear division between those who came from cities and those who came from rural areas in Italy. John, Laura and Donna migrated from big cities, while the rest migrated from rural villages or towns. This, of course, affected the type of housing in which they were residing in Italy: urbanites lived in apartments, villagers lived in farmhouses. In discussions of past houses in Italy these differences were very apparent, especially when participants were asked to reflect on their former house and the relationship between it and their current house. It can be assumed that participants who came from rural areas would be more engaged with vegetable growing. But it is hard to say whether this line of difference actually influences the way gardens of Italians assist in their home-building, because some urban participants married Italians who came from rural areas, like Laura and Donna, and so their practices are heavily influenced by their partners. Indeed, most participants do take care of the garden, regardless their origin. This appears to be one of the common ways through which they perform their ethnic identity (Fortier, 1999), no matter if they actually did so in their homeland.

Another division of origin in this group is the region from which participants came. Carmen is different in this regard because she came from southern Italy while the other nine participants came from the north. In her home there is an emphasis on religious practices, but she is not the only one - Loretta’s home is similar in that aspect, which will be soon discussed. In general, it seems that the region in Italy is more important than the rural or urban background for participants in Melbourne, and this can be supported by the presence of many regional Italian clubs in Melbourne, as Harney’s (2002) study also shows.
Another aspect of class is the ownership of the past house. Donna lived in a rented apartment while Laura and John lived in their own-family apartments. Tanya also lived in a rented farmhouse, but in their current houses Tanya and Donna perform practices of gardening and farming in a similar way to others who lived in their own farmhouses, like Loretta and Otto. Donna is the only Italian participant who came as a refugee to Australia, a fact that has definitely influenced her own story of migration. Yet, it is impossible to track and relate these differences to the way they are exposed in the house. Here, for instance, there are three minor lines of difference (status of migration, inter-marriage and past-home-ownership) that are immersed in a major one (class and origin). Hence, variations of the role of the house become blur and lose their clarity because a number of lines of difference are intertwined.

In a similar way, the Moroccan group is divided along people of different classes. While the majority lived in rented apartments, a few lived in their own-family apartments. But in a similar way to the Italians, it is hard to notice any variations in the way current houses are engaged within the process of home-building, which are the results of this line of difference. One obvious difference, though, is presented in the way the two Moroccan rooms are designed. Alisa’s Moroccan room is full with Moroccan decorations, cloths, cushions and artefacts that have been taken from everyday life in Morocco. For example, Alisa has a copper funnel that has often been used in Jewish celebrations for sprinkling scented water during celebrations. Though this room is not used in present everyday life, it alludes to common everyday life in Morocco. On the other hand, Violet’s Moroccan room is designed with much more care for detail, and though it has the same features as Alisa’s room, it conveys wealth and prosperity. She used, for example, glass floors to allow the light to come through from beneath. Violet reveals that she has been influenced by the Moroccan King’s room in his Palace, creating a similar room in her house. Perhaps Violet wishes to be associated with the Moroccan upper class, though the links of both Violet’s and Alisa’s families to the Moroccan monarchy are not clear. It is more reasonable to assume that this difference has originated from Violet’s recent experience in Morocco as an artist, and not from her childhood experiences and family origin.

Chinese participants migrated from different regions of China and it is assumed they came from diverse cultural backgrounds, although in interviews there were hardly any specific mention of this. Two participants were unique in their background. Miles came from a rural area, while the rest came from medium to large

32 It is known that there were connections between Jewish Moroccans and the Moroccan monarchy.
cities around China, and Jane lived in a villa in the city, while all other participants lived in apartments. Both of them left their parents’ home and moved to live in small apartments in the city as students or young professionals. Miles’ current house does not reflect his past experience. He remembers affectionately his childhood traditional home where his extended family lived together, but realises he has chosen to lead a different life in Australia, and consequently, his house is a small typical brick veneered 1960s home in an outer-ring suburb. Likewise, Jane remembers her childhood home with nostalgia and affection, and recalls her father’s grapevines and vegetable garden in the backyard. While Miles lived in a rural town home, Jane’s home was in a city’s suburb, and was more spacious than other typical Chinese apartments. Her father was a factory director and they were allocated their detached house according to his professional status. Though Jane’s current house is big and spacious as well, she attributes it to her experience in the university’s dormitories, where she lived with her husband in a very small room. Jane has in her garden many fruit trees she takes care of, a practice which might be linked to her memories of her childhood house. Both couples migrated between ten to 15 years ago, and purchased their houses after years of settlement in Melbourne. Yet, it is hard to determine whether the difference between the two houses of Jane and Miles – and other participants’ houses as well - originates from their different social class background, or is mostly linked to current situation in life.

Another aspect of origin in China that can be explored in the house is the practice of *fengshui*. According to participants, people who come from southern China are more influenced by this belief. But this is not shown in the houses. For instance, Jane, who came from north east China, explains how her house reflects some of the basic rules of *fengshui*, such as water features in and outside the house, and a plant near the entrance door. Lilly, who came from southern China near Hong Kong, does not mention any connection to *fengshui* and her house has no signs of this practice. On the contrary, her house is full with religious Christian sayings and Chinese red knots, which are not particularly linked to *fengshui*. Thus, these two cases show that the origin in China is not the only determinant that influences the use of *fengshui* practices in the house design.

Lastly, the Russian group is very diverse in terms of origin. This is most evident as some participants came from the cultural core of the FSU (Moscow, Kiev and other cities in the western part), while others came from remote cities (in the eastern fringe), though all came from urban environments. So, for example, Maxim, Irena and Elena, who came from cities in the cultural core of the FSU, regard
themselves as urban cosmopolitans and often compare themselves with migrants from other areas of the FSU. Maxim believes that for himself and his wife, the settlement process has been comparatively easy because they migrated from one big city to another big city. To others who came from the mountains, he says, this process must have been much more difficult. In the three homes of Maxim, Elena and Irena, there is considerable appreciation of fine art. Elena has reproductions of famous European paintings, while Irena displays oil paintings of her daughter. Both of them buy costly home decorations rather than cheap ones. Maxim's apartment is decorated in a minimalistic style, but he also displays a few paintings and some fine china miniatures, depicting scenes of 19th century high society, with the appropriate dressings. These items can be read as a sign of cultural capital, as Maxim, Elena and Irena regard themselves as part of the upper class.

A similar line of difference to which Maxim and Irena refer is the settlement of migrants after their arrival in Israel. They compare themselves with people who reside in small towns in peripheral regions of Israel, and assert that for these people, the settlement process is probably harder and longer, since they do not adjust to the Israeli culture as fast as themselves. Irena feels she and people 'like her' have embraced the Israeli culture, in contrast to people who live in 'migrants' enclaves' in remote towns in the south of Israel. The way both Maxim and Irena speak about people who come from different regions in the FSU or who have settled in different regions in Israel, seeing them as provincial people who are very different from sophisticated urbanites like themselves, demonstrates that they do not feel they have much in common. This means that this line of difference is crucial for some Russian participants.

Other participants such as Andrey, Dasha, Yulia and Lev, who came from the Asian eastern end of the FSU, do not mention this difference. They do not feel they are different from other Russian migrants, and their houses do not look much different as well. On the contrary, Lev’s apartment comprises some fine china miniatures similar to Maxim’s. Both have wooden cabinets on which the miniatures are displayed. Lev has a number of classical European paintings as well as special furniture he brought from Europe and Russia, one of which is a cabinet covered with a tortoise shell. This may point to the European influence that has been present for many years in the FSU and has affected all regions of the FSU. It is the wish to become more European and western and to accumulate necessary cultural capital for a better settlement in Israel (Ong, 1999), that influences how Russian participants see themselves and what they exhibit in their homes.
In conclusion, this section showed how origin in the homeland as a line of difference is central for some participants and at the same time for others is not. While Italian participants vary in their origin, their practices in the house are not influenced by it. But for urban Russian participants this line of difference is crucial, dramatically influencing their perceptions of themselves, other Russian immigrants, and the Israeli society, and as a result, their houses.

9.3.4 Religion
The last line of difference is religion which is often connected with the region of origin. For example, Italians migrants from southern Italy tend to perform more religious practices than people from northern Italy (Bertelli, 1985: 38). Indeed, this has become one of the ethnic symbols of Italians (Gans, 1979; 1994) and what Fortier (1999) understands as practices that seem to be resulting from the Italian identity, though they only perform it. Religion has never been the subject of interviews with Italian participants, and could only be spotted through observations. In the Italian group only Carmen came from southern Italy, while all others came from the north. Yet, two participants have religious icons and images in their homes. The most explicit is Carmen who has a ‘shrine of the deceased’, which is a table with photographs of late family members below a statue of the Virgin Mary and an electronic candle that is constantly lit. Other images of Jesus and the Virgin Mary can also be found elsewhere in the house. Loretta did not come from southern Italy but she, too, has paintings of Jesus and the Virgin Mary above the two beds in the house. For Loretta, this practice seems to be exposed only to intimate guests. It seems that having religious icons and artefacts at home is another kind of home-building practice, which helps facilitate and ease the process of settlement. It connects one with their roots and tradition (Wilson, 2005), and as Tolia-Kelly (2003) shows, it helps to locate diasporic groups in relation to their national identity.

A few participants in the Chinese group declared they are Christians while others did not mention their religion. Also, Anna, Julie and David were recruited at a Chinese church and thus it is reasonable to assume that religion occupies a considerable part of their lives. However, houses of Christian Chinese participants did not differ much from other houses. In both kinds of houses Chinese red knots and Chinese prosperity symbols hang on doors and walls. In the case of Christians, Chinese religious sayings were also present, but these are used in similar ways to other Chinese symbols of good-luck. In both cases they decorate the house and simultaneously connect dwellers to their personal histories and collective trajectories.
All Moroccan participants are Jewish, but Haim, Avraham and Morris are more religious than others. They not only celebrate holidays, but follow the Jewish law in regard to food, prayers and other everyday practices. Their houses vary between representations of their belief and their ethnic origin. For example, Avraham’s apartment is hardly decorated and most of his decorations are related to his religious belief, such as the Blessing of the Home and, a hamsa with a reference to Judaism, and a painting of a Moroccan saint. But these decorations are also closely linked to his Moroccan identity, with the Moroccan saint and the use of the hamsa. Morris’s apartment also consists of a few decorations, all related to his religious practice. Both apartments are modest, a characteristic which can be attributed to the Jewish religion that does not encourage ornamentations as part of its culture. In contrast, Haim’s apartment is warmer and combines both religious and ethnic decorations, such as the Moroccan glasses and teapot presented in a glass cabinet alongside religious books, and the Moroccan bellows on the wall. He also has many family photographs displayed around the home. In general, it can be said that the display of artefacts in homes of religious Moroccan participants is replaced by the display of religious objects. But, as in other groups, these religious artefacts serve the same purpose of home-building, of relieving difficulties in the settlement process, even if it has been many decades since migration occurred.

Lastly, the Russian group also varies in regard to religion. Olga is the only participant regularly practicing the Jewish religion, while Vera, on the other hand, mentioned that her father is Jewish and her mother is not. According to Smooha (2008), there were high percentages of around one-fourth of non-Jews among recent Russian migration to Israel. But Vera says she has not suffered from any discrimination and had she known she would be accepted in Israel as a non-Jew, she would have migrated in the 1970s, when there was an opportunity to do so. In her apartment her religious belief cannot be traced and there is nothing that is related either to Judaism or Christianity. It can be assumed, then, that the religious component of Vera’s identity does not play a major role in her life and thus does not influence her home-building process. But other cases suggest differently. Since interviews with Russian participants took place in December, when both Christmas and Hanukah are celebrated, religious practices that are related to the home could be

33 As explained before, according to Jewish law one must have a Jewish mother to be born Jewish.
34 If Vera were to migrate in the 1970s, she would most probably not have been accepted in Israel, as immigration laws were much stricter then.

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observed. For example, a Hanukiya was displayed in Alla’s apartment, while a Christmas tree stood in the corner of Elena’s lounge. Elena did not explain whether she is Christian or not, but said that she likes the atmosphere the tree produces with its colourful lights. In both cases Alla and Elena use religious symbols to connect them with their identity and tradition, as well as their past practices. Both the Hanukiya and the Christmas tree enhance feelings of belonging to their diasporic communities (Tolia-Kelly, 2003; Wiles, 2008). In that sense, despite the fact that these objects are temporarily located in space, their purpose is similar to other Russian objects and artefacts in the home. They facilitate continuity of identity by keeping the individuals connected to home and the past while in another land (Wilson, 2005).

In conclusion, this section demonstrated how religion as a line of difference is strongly linked to ethnic origin. For those who practice a certain religion, it seems that religious artefacts serve the same purpose as other artefacts that are related to their ethnicity. This can be shown in the examples of Italian participants, as well as Moroccan and Russian participants. It might be said that religion, as an identity line, is parallel and sometimes is merged with ethnicity, in the way both are embodied in the house.

9.4 Conclusion

This chapter examined the four groups of migrants through two different perspectives. The first perspective focused on similarities and differences among and between groups, looking at three themes through the unique characteristics of each group. For the first theme, the construction of the house, the findings suggest that current houses of migrants do not try to duplicate former houses in homelands and are not replicas of them. On the contrary, they take into account local construction methods, local building materials, local climate and physical conditions, and availability of housing stock. But within the big picture, little adjustments and alterations have been made, turning the house into a comfortable, familiar and supportive structure. For the second theme, home-building practices, the findings suggest that an array of different kinds of home-building practices has been used in houses in order to ease the settlement process. These practices appear in different forms for each group, but they all seek to achieve the same aim: building the feeling of being ‘at home’ (Hage, 1997). Through the connection of participants to their own personal histories, familiar landscapes, and significant places and times in their past (Tolia-Kelly, 2003), they manage to create

35 A stand of nine candles that are lit gradually during eight days of Hanukah.
the continuation of identity and to achieve a supportive and secure environment for
participants in their homes. For the third theme, hybrid existence and the relationship
with the dominant culture, the findings suggest that houses of participants are markers
of relationships with the dominant culture. The extent to which the house expresses
‘ethnic symbols’ is correlated with the comfort participants feel in expressing their
ethnic origin in the form of the house. In contrast to other studies, findings here
suggest that the majority of participants do not use their houses’ exteriors to perform
their ethnic identity, preferring to reserve it for the eyes of family friends and guests
only.

The second perspective dealt with lines of difference within groups, the first of
which was age at time of migration. Here findings suggest that age at time of
migration plays a vital role in home-building processes and significantly affects the
way houses are utilised for the assistance of their dwellers. Its importance in the
home-building process can be seen in the fact that houses of participants who
migrated at a young age from different groups tend to share more commonalities than
houses of participants of the same group who migrated at different ages. The second
line of difference was gender, where findings suggest that for the two established
groups (Italians and Moroccans) the kitchen and other feminine roles are seen as
important in the making of the home for women, while men were more engaged in
traditional masculine roles such as the house’s physical construction. That shows both
groups share traditional conceptions of the home in terms of division of labour. The
two recent groups (Chinese and Russians) are more diverse in their attitudes towards
gendered roles in the home and do not share much ground on the subject. The third
line of difference is origin and class in the homeland. Here, findings suggest that for a
few Russian participants this line of identity is central to the use of the house in the
process of home-building. For most other participants, however, the origin in the
homeland does not seem to have a major effect on that process. The last line of
difference is religion, where findings suggest religious practices around the house are
similar in many ways to other home-building practices linked to ethnic origin. Thus,
this line of difference sometimes merges into the ethnic line of identity, according to
which the groups are categorised.

The role of the house in home-building processes has been examined through
lenses of similarities and differences. In contrast to the traditional way of examination,
this chapter offered a different investigation through perspectives that look at the
groups across their ethnic origins. It questioned common methods of migration
research and suggested another way of seeing migrants through other identity lines.
The choice of having a research based on four birthplace groups is justified because this is a convenient administrative way to designate and select groups of migrants, but this does not mean it is also the most effective way of finding similarities between these groups and attributing to them an unproblematic identity. This chapter has shown that some identity lines are sometimes more important than the ethnic identity line that is often seen as the most important feature of migrants' identity. The chapter has also shown that sometimes there are more similarities across groups than within groups, raising some new questions about the traditional way of examination often used in migration studies. This chapter does not invalidate the rest of the thesis by questioning its chosen method of examination and its main analysis of four ethnic groups, but provides an important opportunity to question the existing practice amongst researchers of migration and transnationalism, and to shed light on other attributes of the migrant's identity that are usually concealed and are not often understood to be significant in the settlement process as much as the ethnic identity is. Thus, the chapter had an imperative role in understanding the complexity of the migrant's identity and that immigrants cannot be 'reduced' into their birthplace or ethnic origin, even if it is the most convenient way of categorising them in most times. It does not mean that categorising immigrants according to their birthplaces is wrong—often it will generate meaningful findings, but it is worthwhile keeping in mind that other ways of categorising immigrants (according to other identity lines) can be useful and can lead to new, unpredictable results, as has happened in this chapter.
10 CHAPTER X: CONCLUSIONS

10.1 Reflections on the research process

In this research I have addressed the question of the role of the built form of the house for immigrants in their settlement process. In order to answer this broad question, four migrant groups in two metropolitan cities of two countries, migrated in two different periods of time, have been studied. Depending on its circumstances, each group has experienced migration and settlement differently, and together they provide a rich view of the settlement process. This is exploratory research, using four diverse ethnic groups, each of a small sample of participants, in order to gather a diverse collection of experiences and narratives, to enable the understanding of the role of the house in diverse processes of settlement. This exploratory approach has been chosen because it allowed the investigation of the meaning of the house from many different viewpoints, instead of one-ethnicity research that investigates one ethnic group in one location and one period of time. As an alternative, a complex and multifaceted image of the settlement process has been presented throughout this thesis, with its four ethnic groups, two cities, and two periods of time of migration. This wide and exploratory view of the role of the house in the settlement process has been felt as necessary to enable me to make broad and substantiated claims about this matter, given that the literature commentaries on it are sporadic, scattered and relatively narrow.

To investigate the role of the built form of the house for migrants, two kinds of houses have been explored: the past house in the homeland, a house that has been significant in the participants' lives there; and the current house in the host land, a house in which participants reside a considerable number of years and which they own. Participants were asked to describe these two houses, to draw their sketches, and to explain why they felt these houses were/are their homes. They were also asked to tell their stories of migration, including the departure from the past house and the settlement in the new house. This was done in order to sustain the assumption that the built form of the past house in the homeland influences the built form of the current house in the host land, and that there may be visible links between the two built forms. The assumption was that even if there are no links of that kind, understanding the nature of past houses and their significance in the lives of the participants may shed light on the nature of choices participants make when constructing their new homes in the new country.
Variation of narratives and experiences appeared in all four groups, but throughout the analysis of data, a similar pattern was usually found among members of each migrant group. Due to somewhat similar experiences (as seen in regard to the past house) in the homeland and similar reasons for migration, as well as similar characteristics among members of most groups (e.g. age, class, education, family status etc), and consequently similar experiences in the host land and in the current house, participants' narratives could sketch a cohesive experience for most groups. Thus, it can be said that the Italian group ways of home-building emphasises the feeling of familiarity in the home to connect both their Italian past and the Australian culture around them. It can also be claimed that the Chinese group means of home-building mainly fosters the feeling of sense of possibility in their homes, advancing their social situation in Australian society. It can be further argued that the Moroccan group methods of home-building enhance the feeling of community through the education of the second generation and the Israeli community about the rich culture of Moroccan Jews. For these three groups an imaginative common house could have been drawn, despite differences of characteristics of group members that have led to minor differences in attitudes towards the house. But during the analysis of findings of the Russian group it was impossible to draw such a firm conclusion for this group. The Russian group appeared to be significantly more diverse than other groups, where it seems that commonalities among group members exceeded their diverse nature. For example, age differences among participants of the Chinese group were not large and did not seem to affect the way Chinese participants used their house in the process of home-building. Or, class differences among participants of the Moroccan group were not large and even if they existed, they were not found important enough to influence the experience of Moroccan participants around their houses. In contrast, the Russian group consisted of participants of different ages at the time of migration, an attribute that seemed to extremely influence the way they treat their house in their home-building process.

This diverse nature of the Russian group has led me to understand that twelve participants for each group is a very small sample that does not allow any generalisations to be made. Upon discovering that the unified façade of each group may not be as cohesive as it seemed at first glance, I have decided it is necessary not only to examine the participants' use of the house through the lens of the initial organising framework, namely according to their ethnic origins as I originally thought to do, but also to investigate their use of the house according to other attributes of their identities. That is, to problematise their unfixed identities and to bring into
question the common practice that prevails in migration studies: exploring immigrants according to their common birthplace as the most important and definite attribute of migrants' identities. Is this truly so? Does the birthplace turn out to be the only – or most central – part of their identity once migrants arrive in their host country? I was not so sure anymore, now that I have encountered cracks in the seemingly solid image of the small groups involved in this research.

The next stage was, then, to look for other commonalities between groups that cut across the ethnic division of the four distinct groups, and to explore whether there are some other identity lines that are significant enough to influence the use of the house in the process of settlement more than the participants' ethnic identity. I have found, through that exploration, that indeed there are many commonalities that participants of diverse groups share among themselves, such as the physical experience of the construction of the house in the first years of settlement, the use of home-building practices of different kinds, or even similar ways in which the house is used to signify attitudes towards the dominant culture in the host land. Nevertheless, many differences were found as well within each group and between the groups. Each group has its own ways of practising home-building, emphasising different practices such as the utilisation of landscape paintings, souvenirs or religious objects. Each group has its own distinct links between the two kinds of houses explored.

Moreover, each group has many lines of difference within it, seeking exploration. Identity lines such as gender, origin and class in the homeland, religion and age at time of migration have been found important in different degrees in the settlement process of migrants around their houses. Shifting the gaze towards these identity lines has set the study in a different direction that unsettles the initial chosen method of examination and the foundation underpinning the thesis. As a result, the study both examined the four ethnic groups through a separate examination of each, but also looked at them as one, large and very diverse group of migrants, a group which involves various birthplaces, various sending and receiving countries, and various periods of time in which migration occurred. This investigation of a large group of people generated a number of conclusions and suggestions for future research which will be discussed in the next sections.

10.2 Reflections on the theoretical framework

This section explores a number of points. First, a set of conclusions will be drawn in relation to the theoretical framework presented in Chapter 2. This framework
discussed different scales in studies of the immigrants’ experience in the city, and then focused on the notion of home-building and the concepts of home and house as embedded in it. This will be followed by a discussion of the meanings of home, and then the aspect of materialities of home will be explored. Finally, the issue of comparison between Australia and Israel will be discussed.

The first point presents a set of eight conclusions drawn from the theoretical framework. The first conclusion refers to the meaning of the house in migrants' home-building. This body of literature seems scattered, fragmented and studies appear randomly in various fields. Some studies have examined the current house in the host land as opposed to the past house in the homeland (Jacobs, 2004; Thomas, 1997), or focused only on the built form of the current house (Lozanovska, 1995, 2008), while others looked at backyards and gardens of migrants (Armstrong, 1999; Head et al., 2004; Morgan et al., 2005). Findings of this research confirm that the built form of the house is meaningful in a range of ways during immigrants' home-building, and each ethnic group utilises the house differently and emphasises a different key feeling to construct homely feelings in the home (Hage, 1997). The way groups differ depends on their specific circumstances of migration, namely the origin country, country of destination and period of migration, as well as the historical, economic and social contexts around migration. Yet, findings also suggest that the importance of the house is influenced not only by the ethnic origin of its dwellers, but also – and perhaps even more – by other identity lines of participants, such as their age at time of migration or their origin and class in the homeland. Indeed, none of these studies mentioned above, addressing the question of the role of the built form of the house in migrants’ settlement, has referred to the issue of other lines of difference within the migrants’ complex identity. This examination has always been undertaken through the common approach of seeing migrants with their ethnic identity as the main point of reference. It is imperative to remember, though, that this research has examined only a small sample of participants for each group, hence it is hard to make any generalisations for each ethnic group based on this examination. There are many variations of experiences and practices within each group, as well as many similarities. And as Chapter 9 demonstrated, there are other similarities cutting across the groups that are based on other shared characteristics which are not necessarily the ethnic identity line.

The second conclusion is that houses in this research do not always represent the ethnic origin of their owners. Studies that have examined the neighbourhood scale of the immigrants’ presence in the city explore relationships between immigrants and
their neighbours of the general public (Dunn, 1998, 2005b; Ray et al., 1997; Rose, 2001; Sutterluty and Neckel, 2006). In particular, the issue of the changing face of the suburbs has been presented as a major obstacle to migrants’ settlement, where established residents of neighbourhoods in western cities resist visible changes to housing stock caused by immigrants’ presence (Allon, 2002; Ley, 1995; Mitchell, 2004; Qadeer, 1997). Results of this research, however, do not agree with these common accounts. In the two metropolitan cities explored, immigrants did not report any conflicts regarding modifications they have made to their houses. In Melbourne, where the housing stock is not very different to that of Vancouver and Sydney, two cities in which these conflicts occurred, there has been no opposition by established residents to changes in existing houses as well as the construction of new houses, according to both participants and local real-estate agents. The housing stock in Tel Aviv is comprised mainly of apartment buildings, thus external modifications are minor. This conclusion is significant because it challenges the general impression provided by the literature discussed above that houses are marks of the ethnic origin of their dwellers and thus the residential built environment is one common arena in which relationships between migrants and established residents are contested. It seems, however, that in Tel Aviv as in Melbourne this is not the case. Moreover, all the participants described good relationships with their neighbours, and this finding supports other studies that have seen the local scale as the place where everyday encounters are taking place, and where members of cultural groups and dominant groups negotiate cultures, knowledges and powers (Uitermark et al., 2005; Wise, 2005; Wood and Gilbert, 2005).

The third conclusion is that houses represent the relationship between their owners and the dominant society. This issue has been discussed by Lozanovska (2008), who states that the migrants’ houses are an important mode of assimilation in Australia, but at the same time, she shows how these houses’ aesthetics are a mode of resisting assimilation. The findings of this research provide a complex set of interpretations of the house that vary between different groups, but it can be said that for most participants the house signifies a representation of their social status within the dominant society, and even if they do not explicitly say it, through their home-building practices around the house it is clear whether participants wish their house to stand out and be noticeable, or to assimilate into the dominant built environment. It seems that Italians in Melbourne tend to show their ‘ethnic symbols’ (Gans, 1979, 1994), more often than Chinese in Melbourne and Moroccans and Russians in Tel Aviv. But, while Chinese in Melbourne and Russians in Tel Aviv prefer to conceal their
ethnic origin and blend into the built environment, Moroccans feel that they do not differ from the rest of Israeli society and hence do not need to show any signs of ethnicity. Thus, for the two more established groups the house is perceived as an integral part of their identity, and thus reflects their perception of their ethnic character, while for the two more recent groups the house is perceived as a means of integrating into the dominant society. Hence, from this small sample of participants, it becomes clear that it is not always the case that houses of migrants represent their owners' ethnic identity through ethnic symbols and markers, as is often implied in the literature (Apperly et al., 1989; Willingham, 2004) and as explained in the previous conclusion.

The extent to which houses of migrants represent their owners' social status and migrant identity differs significantly and depends on circumstances of migration, and most importantly, on the built environment in which the houses are located. This is important because the limited literature that deals with housing form of migrants alludes to a very black-and-white interpretation of the role of the migrant's house, whereas in reality this role appears to be much more complex and grey-shaded. Thus, this conclusion agrees with Lozanovska (2008) in highlighting the multi-faceted nature of the relationships between migrants and their houses.

The fourth conclusion is that home-building practices have been observed in all four groups. These home-building practices facilitate the process of settlement and help participants build their sense of home in their new houses through various means (Hage, 1997; Pascali, 2006; Supski, 2006). It is argued throughout this thesis that each group constructs this feeling of 'being at home' (Hage, 1997: 102) out of affective building blocks of homely feelings, which are, according to Hage, the four key feelings: security, familiarity, community, and sense of possibility. The findings show that these four feelings are indeed vital in the home-building process for all groups, but each group fosters and maximises one feeling in particular in this process. Thus, Italians foster in their home-building practices the feeling of familiarity above all other feelings, while Chinese enhance the feeling of sense of possibility more than other feelings. Moroccans maximise the feeling of community over other feelings, and Russians foster the feeling of security more than the other three feelings. Each group does so in different ways, according to the feeling they wish to foster and to their specific circumstances of migration and history. Some display objects, artefacts and souvenirs from the homeland and from other lands. Other kinds of home-building practices are the display of good-fortune signs of all sorts or the performance of rituals around the home. As has been suggested in Chapter 2, different migrant groups emphasise
different feelings in their home-building processes, and thus create different kinds of home-building practices.

The fourth conclusion is that gendered homes emerge in diverse forms in different groups' home-building practices. Findings demonstrate that for the two established groups a gendered view of home shapes their practices and constructs their use of the home. For example, for both the Italians and the Moroccans the home is perceived to be under the woman’s control. The woman is responsible for the food preparation and the actual making of the home, while the man, in both groups, is responsible for the outside. In many cases the man is responsible for the physical building of the house and for do-it-yourself tasks that take place outside the home. But even in these groups, it can be seen that some women have extended their control over the interior of the home into the open space around it. This can be explained by the fact that some widowed women have taken over their late husbands' roles of maintaining the garden, but some have done it without being a widow. Thus, it might be that the outside, and especially the garden, is perceived as an extension of food preparation via vegetable growing and producing. A gendered view of home has also formed the perception of houses of the two more recent groups, though differently. Chinese imaginaries of homes have coincided with the gendered view of home, as the women mostly engage in the making of the home, practices of caring for children and food preparations. Most Chinese women enjoy spending time in the kitchen, while Chinese men take care of the garden and other outside tasks. But, here too, this dichotomy breaks down when some women are responsible for the garden and enjoy maintaining it. This may be because maintaining the garden is perceived as part of the making of the home, and less so because it is an extension of food preparation (as with some Italian women). Despite the fact that most Russian women do not enjoy spending time in the kitchen, it does not mean that their homes are experienced not in a gendered way, because most Russian women are responsible for the making of the home and for the caring for the children. Their view of the home is gendered still, though perhaps to a smaller extent. So, it appears that the gendered home is present in various forms in different groups' imaginaries of home, as well as in different forms of living such as apartments (Fincher, 2004) or suburban houses (Dowling, 1996; 2008). This is an important conclusion because it contributes to the growing understanding that the gendered home is not a homogenous entity and it can also empower migrant women (Dowling, 1996; Johnson, 1996; Thompson, 1994), and that migrant of different ethnicities experience the gendered home in different ways.
The fifth conclusion is that the dynamic nature of the house is also understood differently among different groups. In general, for participants of established groups the home is seen as a unique place that depends upon its local environment (Massey, 1992), while for participants of recent groups the home is seen generically, a place that can be reproduced everywhere in the world (Hannerz, 1990). But this is not always the case and it is more accurate to say that the determinant is the participants’ age. This may be related to the incapacity of older participants to use recent advanced technology, as will be discussed in-length shortly, which leads to their perception of the home as a stable, fixed idea, whereas younger participants who are more capable of using technology are not intimidated by the mobility and fluidity of the home in the global world (Ahmed et al., 2003; Rapport and Dawson, 1998b). Thus, the difference may be rooted in the tendency of older participants to feel uncomfortable with change as opposed to younger participants. It may be that the difference here does not stem from different ethnic origins of participants or from their period of migration, but from their stage in the life-course and their capacity or incapacity to embrace changes generated from processes of globalisation in housing and technology. It appears, thus, that only some participants perceive the home as dialectic between global movement and local compression (Massey, 1992, 1994; Rapport and Dawson, 1998a), while others do not. This conclusion is important because it presents discussions on the nature of the global home in a more nuanced light and makes connections between the migrants’ attitudes towards change, technology and globalisation and their perception of the dynamic home.

In addition, houses can be interpreted as transnational homes. But, in contrast to other considerations of the transnational home that often see it not as a bound location but rather a set of ideas, a symbolic reference point or a dynamic place with blurred boundaries (Abdelhady, 2008; Baldassar, 1997; Nowicka, 2007; Wiles, 2008), findings support studies that see the transnational home as primarily material (Fletcher, 1999; Thomas, 1997) and suggest that houses are transnational through their materiality, because they construct a material bridge between two cultures through their physical forms (Levin and Fincher, forthcoming). This conclusion is vital to the understanding of transnationalism and the way it is embedded not only in economic, cultural or organisational links but also in physical, material links.

The sixth conclusion is that houses of migrants are forms of cultural capital, usually seen in the presence of different kinds of furniture that migrants possess in their homes, or the mere existence of the house. Symbolic capital is embodied in the physical form of migrants’ housing, through its location, its aesthetics or its
undesirable aesthetics (Bourdieu, 1984 [1979]; Lozanovska, 2008; Ong, 1999). Migrants’ houses are also powerful mediators of class relations (Dovey, 1999). The desire to have ‘European’ or ‘Italian’ furniture or upper-class furniture and lighting in the house demonstrates that for some participants the house holds ‘objectified cultural capital’ that might be translated into symbolic capital, evaluated through the habitus as the framework within which the value associated with these forms of capital is established (Kelly and Lusis, 2006). For a fewer participants, the simple fact that their house has been built signifies the social values of the class that are involved, as the house marks the social rung of its owner (Dovey, 1999: 147). This conclusion is significant because it adds to this small body of literature that attributes cultural meanings to the migrant’s house (Dovey, 1999; Lozanovska, 2008; Ong, 1999) and sheds light on this often neglected aspect of the migrant’s house.

The seventh conclusion is that migrants’ houses are sites of the everyday (Fausch, 1997; Harris, 1997; Horn, 1997; Ruddick, 1997). This means they are an arena of resistance to the dominant culture or the dominant taste. They are sites of the everyday due to its migrant’s aesthetics (Lozanovska, 2008), tinkering and adjusting (Ruddick, 1997) and the never-ending modifications that are made to the space, in order to create a better environment for the dwellers no matter how it is perceived by the surrounding environment. This appears mainly in houses of Italians in Melbourne and Moroccans in Tel Aviv, where some participants tend to constantly modify their houses and make them more comfortable. In the case of Moroccans, it seems that participants wish to resist the perceived Israeli superiority through the creation of an everyday environment that delivers their cultural story and enhances their sense of community, passing it on to the next generation and the community at large. It seems that both Chinese in Melbourne and Russians in Tel Aviv do not attribute the same meanings to the everyday character of their houses, and do not seek to change them in the same way. They are happy with what they have and do not wish to continually alter and improve it. This may be linked to their wish to keep their ethnic presence in the house more concealed, as argued above, thus they do not want to change much the physical appearance of the house. Their houses are not seen as a mode of resistance but on the contrary, they are understood as cultural capital, a concept which stands in opposition, in some senses, to the notion of the everyday. This conclusion is significant because it brings to the front the ordinary, everyday nature of the migrant’s house with the use of photographs to highlight its vernacular character (Fausch, 1997). It also shows that depending on circumstances
of migration, the extent to which the house is used as a means of resistance varies, and this issue has never been discussed before.

Finally, the aspect of materiality seems to be most significant in the process of home-building (Datta, 2008; Tolia-Kelly, 2003, 2004), as it appears in all houses of all four groups, regardless of their housing form (detached house or apartment) or ethnic origin. Cultural and religious artefacts in the home are perceived as echoes of other textures of landscapes, narratives and social histories (Tolia-Kelly, 2003), and material belongings play a significant role in the construction of the transnational home (Walsh, 2006). Findings show that houses of established and recent group members contain elements of the two cultures involved, and through the display of objects and other means of home-building they construct a transnational space that links the homeland and the host land. Most evident are religious and cultural artefacts, as described above, but some houses of Italian participants display architectural details reminiscent of houses in their homeland (Harney, 2002). This practice appears solely in Italian houses, and this may be because Italian participants see the house as a space that enhances the feeling of familiarity and encourages, through everyday practices, the connection between the Italian and the Australian cultures. This conclusion supports other studies that have explored the importance of material objects in the migrant’s house and contributes to a greater understanding of diverse meanings different ethnic groups attribute to objects in the home.

Material nostalgic objects such as souvenirs and collections (Stewart, 1984; Wilson, 2005) are also more significant in houses of the two established groups. Though these objects appear in houses of all four groups, they are considerably more evident in houses of Italians and Moroccans. This may be linked to the fact that for these two groups migration occurred some sixty years ago, when communication was not advanced as it is today. Hence, it is possible to assume that these objects played a vital part in the home-building of migrants who migrated in the post-war era, when connections with family members and friends in the homeland were significantly more difficult to maintain. These objects provided the continuation of identity (Wilson, 2005) and the revitalization of past memories that are no longer needed in recent times due to advanced means of technology, and in particular the relatively immediacy and low cost of airfares, low cost of telephone calls and wide use of the internet, including on-line social networks. These contemporary tools help to preserve memories and maintain long-distance connections through everyday on-line conversations and encounters, instead of the once essential souvenirs and collections.
The physical form of the house takes a significant part in the process of home-building, especially if it does not fit with certain expectations based on the physical form of housing in the homeland (Thomas, 1997). The analysis of data confirms that for most participants the built form of the house is used to facilitate this process, except for one participant, for whom the facilitation of home-building could not be achieved because of his inability to bridge the significant gap between the two forms of housing involved, which can be attributed to his mature age at the time of migration. Other participants who migrated as mature adults tend to transform their houses into replicas of past houses in the homeland, a strategy that helped them in reproducing the feeling of home in the new house.

The second point that is worth discussion is the meanings of home. Two aspects are explored here. First, the meanings of home as related to Hage’s (1997) four feelings of home. As we have seen throughout the empirical chapters, each migrant group fosters all these four feelings, but each emphasises one of them in particular. As Somerville (1992) and Mallett (2004) stress, the home is multidimensional and consists of a large range of meanings. Hage’s fourfold feelings of home are perhaps only part of the full meaning of home as articulated by Somerville and Mallett. But these feelings are well designed to capture the essence of the migrant’s existence around their home. The feelings of security, familiarity, community, and sense of possibility, though being sometimes without clear boundaries, encapsulate many aspects of home-building of someone who has gone through the experience of migration.

Another issue is the difference between meanings of home for migrants and for local residents, or whether the home is perceived differently among migrants and local (Australia- or Israel- born) residents. As argued by Noble (2002), non-migrant households in Sydney furnish and decorate their homes in order to feel at ease not only in the domestic space but also in the social space of the nation. Through the examination of the four groups it appears that migrants, too, furnish their houses with the use of decorations and objects that symbolise and in many cases even depict the national landscape. Migrants build their homes through weaving into everyday experience objects of personal and familiar significance which also carry national experience. But here the experience is not confined to one nationality and if it is, it is usually that of their homeland. It can be said that the experiences of migrants and non-migrants around their home-building are not vastly different. In both groups the nation is imagined and referred to, but while for non-migrants there is no question about the nation, for migrants this might include the two nations involved, or only that
of the homeland. This may vary according to the number of years in the host land and to circumstances of migration. For example, while in almost all Italian homes there is a clear reference to Italy as a national space, in Moroccan homes there is a strong presence of objects of everyday life in Morocco and not so much of Morocco itself, as a nation. So, it seems that meanings of homes include not only feeling at ease, at home in the domestic space, but also feeling at home in the national space, which ever it is.

The third point is materialities of home. As we have seen in the theoretical framework, home materialities are explored through various lenses, where objects and possessions in the home receive the focus of attention. Some studies look at homes as an ideal against reality, while others explore the creation of home through objects or food. In the discussion of the migrant's home, materiality definitely plays a major part in the creation of the home. This thesis engaged with materialities of home through a detailed exploration of home interiors and objects, as well as the actual materials the home is made of, and this is done mostly through the objects' and materials' documentation in texts and photographs. This focus on the 'material side of things' in the homes seems to be essential to this research. It has been extremely useful to examine various objects and materials in the home and to attribute meanings to them, most often with the help of the participants themselves who interpreted them in the context of migration and home-building. Despite the fact that everybody, and not only migrants, attribute meanings to their home possessions, it is nonetheless useful to analyse what the objects in the immigrants' homes convey, because this is another layer where connections between past homes and current home, or homelands and host lands, exist. Objects in the home are not there just because they are there. They all have meanings and hidden purposes, even if not always stated or acknowledged. But, one of the limitations is that it is hard to separate objects that are presented in the migrant's home as part of the home-building process (as influenced by migration) from objects presented because of the migrant's identity. This is because migration is a life-forming event and surely has major effects on the migrant's identity. But it is impossible to know what the migrants would have presented in their homes had they not migrated.

Finally, the issue of comparison of the two countries should be discussed. This investigation of the two very different contexts of Australia and Israel contributed to the study as much as it also imposed on it some limitations. The significance of this comparison lies in the notion that despite cultural, historical, and sociological differences between the two host countries, processes of home-building are for the
most part universal and appear, albeit with variations and nuances, in similar ways within very different contexts. The two countries have never been compared before in the context of migration, despite being the countries with the highest percentage of immigrants in the world. And it appears that despite diverse personal histories of the participants, who migrated from various countries of origin and in different periods of time, and despite diverse national histories of their host countries, processes of home-building and settlement and the experience of migrants around the home are, by and large, similar. These experiences could be discussed and analysed through the same methods, using the same language and tools of investigation (e.g. discourse and visual analyses), and be understood through the same theoretical framework, regardless of these vast differences noted above. Although multicultural and religious policies are immensely different, it is possible to draw some lines of comparison between the national backgrounds of the two countries. Both of them are a product of modernity, and both considered as ‘settler societies’ where immigrant settlers have occupied the land appropriated from its indigenous inhabitants. In both countries, national imagery is enhanced through various means common to the nation-state project. Thus, the integration of immigrants has always been and still is a vital objective in the national agenda of both countries. This means that despite differences in the multicultural nature of the countries, immigrants in Australia as well as in Israel are officially encouraged (if not always in everyday life) to feel at home within the larger structure of the nation. This, in turn, might enhance experiences of home-building, even if only in the domestic realm of the house.

The limitations the two cases impose on the findings are that experiences about the home are definitely subjected to the social and political structure of the country, and as discussed in the previous section, the national imagery has a large influence on home-building processes. Also, the built environments in the two countries, with their very different make-up, place another set of limitations on the actual physical opportunities as related to home-building that each group has had in its host country.

10.3 Directions for future research
To recapitulate, the four ethnic groups of this research contain many variables. They vary in their time of migration, country of origin, and country of destination, as well as participants’ age at time of migration, their gender, social class and religion. These variables play a crucial part in the way participants regard and use the physical form of the house within their home-building and, as seen above, it is sometimes unclear
which characteristics influence this process more. It is clear that the physical form of
the house has an imperative role within various experiences of settlement and that
each ethnic group has its own particular approach of utilising the house for its own
purposes. It is also clear that other lines of identity that crosscut the groups have
sometimes a stronger effect on the way participants utilise their houses in the
settlement process than their ethnic identity. That is, sometimes participants share
more commonalities with members of other ethnic groups than with members of their
own ethnic group.

Yet, the cross-section exploration that questioned the choice of the research to
look at four ethnic groups was only an exercise that meant to unsettle common ways
of investigation, but did not attempt to replace the main ‘traditional’ examination of four
ethnic groups. When thinking of directions for future research, it might be worthwhile
to explore other lines of identity of migrants, beside their ethnic origin. For example,
this research’s results suggest that it might be the case that the exploration of
migrants according to their age at the time of migration will lead to more significant
results than that of migrants according to ethnic origin, because age at the time of
migration appeared to be an important identity line that affects severely the act of
home-building. Other examinations could focus on other identity lines that have often
been neglected. Some accounts have looked at various identity lines of immigrants
such as gender (Thompson, 1994), or gender and ethnicity (Pascali, 2006), while
others have explored social class in the host country (Ley and Smith, 2000). But there
is still an urgent need to investigate more in this direction.

Other possible directions for future research may include the examination of
refugees and their home-building practices, as opposed to migrants who are not
refugees. Do people who have left their homes because they were forced have
different ways of home-building than people who voluntarily left their homes to
construct a new home in a new country? Does the reason for departure make a
difference? These questions are particularly relevant today, when countless refugees
are looking to building their new homes in many countries, including Australia and
Israel.

Another possible direction for future research is to explore differences in
home-building practices according to where immigrants have settled in the city. It is
interesting to investigate whether these practices differ and correlate with the location
of immigrants’ houses – whether they have settled in a segregated neighbourhood
with a high percentage of people of their own ethnic group or other ethnic groups, or in
an established neighbourhood with a majority of local residents. It is also interesting to
see whether differences in home-building practices appear in correlation with various sorts of living, such as inner-city living in apartment buildings or suburban living in detached houses, as has been hinted in this research. Another related issue may be that of the host society and its influence on the kinds of home-building practices that are performed. These topics have been discussed throughout this research but they did not form the organising framework according to which the selection of immigrants has been done.

In this research I have chosen to explore the question of migrants’ houses through diverse ethnic origins as the organising framework. Thus, despite the recognition that different locations of migrants’ housing can make a difference in home-building practices, or that members of the same migrant group include many differences among them, the ethnic origin is still the main point of reference and the starting point of the research. I believe that this framework, nevertheless, allowed me to explore the role of the house in the process of migrants’ home-building through a multilayered and rich investigation, which has produced some complex and interconnected conclusions, sometimes regarding each migrant group as a separate entity, but at other times regarding other cross-section groups within the one large group of forty-six participants involved in this research.


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APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

Migrants’ interview: A semi structured in-depth interview

Past housing and story of migration

- What have been the background and reasons for migration (age, family circumstances etc)?
- What was your housing (e.g. house, apartment, unit etc.) form in your homeland? Do you have photos that I can see and replicate?
- What kind of spaces and organisation has your past home had?
- What, in your opinion, were the features that have made this house a home for you (the arrangement of spaces, looking inward or outward etc)?
- What are the memories you preserve from your past houses in your homeland? What emotions do they evoke?
- Can you draw a sketch of your past home (what were the most important spaces of it)?

Current housing and story of resettlement

- Could you share with me the story of your settlement in Melbourne / Tel Aviv?
- Were there any difficulties associated with housing in the process of displacement and resettlement (i.e. for you to find housing you feel was ‘homely’)?
- Where was your first house? Have you moved many times since then?
- What, in your experience, is important to make a house more ‘homely’?
- Do you have any special practices and ways you practice in your home?
- What, in your opinion, makes your house a ‘home’ for you (the arrangement of spaces, looking inward or outward etc)?
- Can you draw a sketch of your current home (what are the most important spaces of it)?
Supplementary questions

- What kinds of building materials have you used in your housing back in your homeland?
- If relevant, how did you choose the house when you purchased it?
- If relevant, how did you design the house? Have you used the service of an architect or have you got it from a custom homes firm?
- If relevant, have you renovated the house? What kind of changes have you made?
- Why did you use these particular building materials?
- Have you got the architectural scheme of the house?
- Have you had any problems with planning regulations when building or buying your new house?
- Have you had any problems with the local standards of design (e.g. size and arrangement of rooms, kitchen or bathroom)?
- What was the reaction of the local neighbours when you first arrived in the suburb? How are the relationships with them today?
- Do you feel like you have an ordinary Australian / Israeli house?
- In your house, do you try to show or hide your ethnic identity?
APPENDIX B

Professionals structured interview: providing housing for migrants

1. Where do you work and for how long have you been working there and in other places?

2. To what extent are migrant groups part of your business or work?

3. Could you give me an example of migrant groups that emphasise certain things in the house they want?

4. Could you give me an example of any different housing styles since different immigrant groups have settled in the area?

5. Do you have any examples of migrant groups that have different needs to local people in their housing? If yes, what kind of needs?

6. Have you tried to adjust your services according to some of these specific needs? In what ways? (language on signs etc)

7. Have you encountered any difficulties that have resulted in complaints from neighbours associated with changes to housing stock?
APPENDIX C

NVivo codes – an example of tree nodes of the Italian group
APPENDIX D

Map of municipalities in the Melbourne metropolitan area
APPENDIX E

Map of municipalities in the Tel Aviv metropolitan area
APPENDIX F

Italian participants in this research

Bruno – migrated in 1951 as a young adult from a village, married to Anna, lives in a detached Victorian house in an inner-city suburb.

Carmen – migrated in 1964 as a young adult from a small town, married, lives in a detached house in an outer-ring suburb.

Donna – migrated in 1950 as a young adult from a big city, married, lives in a detached house in an outer-ring suburb.

John – migrated in 1954 as a child from a big city, divorced, lives in a detached house in an outer-ring suburb.

Laura – migrated in 1956 as an adolescent from a big city, widowed, lives in a detached house in an outer-ring suburb.

Lorenzo – migrated in 1956 as a child from a village, married to Valerie, lives in a detached Victorian house in an inner-city suburb.

Loretta – migrated in 1951 as a young adult from a big city, widowed, lives in a detached house in a middle-ring suburb.

Otto – migrated in 1950 as a young adult from a village, married, lives in a detached house in an outer-ring suburb.

Rita – migrated in 1962 as a young adult from a village, married, lives in a unit in an outer-ring suburb.

Tanya – migrated in 1965 as a young adult from a village, left Australia and came back in 1973, widowed, lives in a detached house in an outer-ring suburb.
APPENDIX G

Chinese participants in this research

Annette – migrated to Australia in 1995 from a large city in China, moved to Melbourne in 1998, married with children, lives in a unit in a middle suburb.

Cathleen – migrated in 2004 from a large city in China, married with children, lives in a detached house in an outer suburb.

David – migrated in 2001 from a large city in China, married with children, lives in a detached house in an outer suburb.

Hui (f) – migrated in 2005 from a middle size city in China, married with one child, lives in a detached house in an outer suburb.

Jin (f) – migrated in 2004 from a large city in China, married with one child, lives in a detached house in an outer suburb.

Jane – migrated in 1993 from a large city in China, married with children, lives in a detached house in an outer suburb.

Jun (m) – migrated in 2005 from a large city in China, married with children, lives in a unit in an outer suburb.

Julie - migrated in 2002 from New Zealand but originally from a middle size city in China, married with children, lives in a detached house in an outer suburb.

Lara – migrated in 1996 from Canada but originally from a large city in China, married with children, lives in a detached house in an outer suburb.

Lilly – migrated in 2004 from a large city in China, married with no children, lives in a detached house in a middle suburb.

Miles – migrated in 1999 from Singapore but originally from a small town in China, married with children, lives in a detached house in an outer suburb.

Shu (f) – migrated to Australia in 1993 from a large city in China, moved to Melbourne in 2002, married with children, lives in a detached house in an outer suburb.
APPENDIX H

Moroccan participants in this research

Alisa – migrated in 1954 as a young adult from a big city, married, lives in a detached house in an outer-ring locality.

Avraham – migrated in 1962 as a young adult from a big city, married, lives in an apartment in an inner-ring locality.

Haim – migrated in 1950 as an adolescent from a big city, married, lives in an apartment in an outer-ring locality.

Margaret – migrated in 1951 as an adolescent from a big city, widowed, lives in an apartment in an inner-ring locality.

Morris – migrated in 1951 as an adolescent from a big city, married, lives in an apartment in an inner-ring locality.

Rachel – migrated in 1948 as a child from a big city, married, lives in an apartment in an inner-ring locality.

Rica – migrated in 1956 as a child from a city, married, lives in an apartment in an outer-ring locality.

Rosa – migrated in 1956 as a young adult from a city, married, lives in an apartment in an inner-ring locality.

Sonia – migrated in 1956 as a child from a big city, married, lives in a detached house in an outer-ring locality.

Violet – not known when migrated as an adolescent from a big city, married, lives in a detached house in an inner-ring locality.

Yehuda - migrated in 1948 as a young adult from a big city, married, lives in an apartment in an inner-ring locality.

Yosef - migrated in 1951 as a young child from a big city, married, lives in a detached house in an inner-ring locality.
APPENDIX I

Russian participants in this research

Alla – migrated in 1997 as a young adult from a medium-size city in Ukraine, married, lives in an apartment in a middle-ring locality.

Andrey – migrated in 1993 as a mature adult from a big city in Uzbekistan, married, lives in an apartment in an inner-ring locality.

Anna – migrated in 1992 as a young adult from a big city, married, lives in a penthouse in a middle-ring locality.

Dasha – migrated in 1990 as an adolescent from a big city in Uzbekistan, married, lives in an apartment in an inner-ring locality.

Elena – migrated in 1991 as a young adult from a big city in Russia, married, lives in an apartment in an inner-ring locality.

Galina – migrated in 1990 as an adolescent from a medium-size city in Ukraine, married, lives in an apartment in a middle-ring locality.

Irena – migrated in 1990 as a young adult from a big city in Moldova, married, lives in a detached house in an outer-ring locality.

Lev – migrated in 1992 as a mature adult from a big city in Georgia, married, lives in an apartment in an inner-ring locality.

Maxim – migrated in 1992 as an adult from a big city in Russia, married, lives in an apartment in an inner-ring locality.

Olga – migrated in 1997 as an adult from a small town in Ukraine, widowed, lives in an apartment in an inner-ring locality.

Yulia – migrated in 1996 as a young adult from a big city in Uzbekistan, single-parent, lives in an apartment in an inner-ring locality.

Vera – migrated in 1994 as an adult from a big city in Ukraine, married, lives in an apartment in an inner-ring locality.
Migrants' houses: the importance of housing form in migrants' settlement


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