MIGRATION, SETTLEMENT AND THE CONCEPTS OF HOUSE AND HOME

Dr Iris Levin
The Brotherhood of St Laurence
14 April 2016
Settlement and belonging, home and house

The research

Houses of migrants from Italy and China in Melbourne

The role of housing form in migrants’ settlement
WHAT IS THE ROLE OF HOUSING FORM IN MIGRANTS’ SETTLEMENT?
CRITICAL URBAN STUDIES ON THE MIGRANT EXPERIENCE

The city-wide scale
The neighbourhood scale
The house scale
SETTLEMENT AND BELONGING

Settlement is a practice without firm boundaries, its enclosure is never complete and its boundaries are infused with an enduring and unsettling tension. This tension is between being, and being otherwise (Ilcan 2002: 2-3).

Belonging and longing are feelings that may connect one with a people, a place, a home (Probyn 1996: 6).
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 2006).

The home is ‘an affective edifice constructed out of affective building blocks (blocks of homely feelings)’ (Hage 1997: 102).

**Home-building practices** are the building of the feeling being ‘at home’.
HOME BUILDING

THE MIGRANT HOME
The dynamic nature of home
The gendered home

THE MIGRANT HOUSE
The everyday, taste and the house
Cultural capital and the house
Materialities of home
## THE RESEARCH

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DESTINATION / PERIOD OF TIME</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 the former Soviet Union</td>
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MIGRATION ROUTES

1950s-1960s

1990s-2000s

Destination city
QUALITATIVE EXAMINATION

46 in depth semi-structured interviews with migrants.

10 short questionnaires with real estate agents in both cities.

Discourse analysis

Visual analysis

Thematic analysis

**Performativity** (Butler)

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 (Fortier 1999: 43).
Houses of migrants from Italy and China in Melbourne

Migration background
Past homes
Current houses
Settlement: constructing the house
Home-building practices and representations
Between the homeland and the host land
AUSTRALIAN MIGRATION POLICY POST WWII

‘Populate or perish’

Australia committed to a sustained immigration program.

Allowed European migrants to migrate.

Between 1945 and 1975 Australia’s population almost doubled, from 7½ million to 13 million.

Bonegilla reception centre

‘Late 20th century immigrants’ nostalgic 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 (Apperly et al. 1989: 270-1).
PAST HOUSES

Lorenzo’s photo of past farmhouse

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.
PAST HOUSES

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....

Rita’s drawing of past farmhouse
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.

Laura’s drawing of house
CURRENT HOUSES: SETTLEMENT

We didn’t design, we just saw what we wanted in other houses…

Laura’s building permit of the house (1956)
Then the dream of everybody that you want a new house, you want something nice...

Rita’s house
HOME-BUILDING PRACTICES AND REPRESENTATIONS

Laura's house
HOME-BUILDING PRACTICES AND REPRESENTATIONS

Donna's lounge
HOME-BUILDING PRACTICES AND REPRESENTATIONS

Carmen’s house
HOME-BUILDING PRACTICES AND

Loretta's house
HOME-BUILDING PRACTICES AND REPRESENTATIONS

Tania's house

Otto's house
BETWEEN ITALY AND AUSTRALIA

Tania's house and garden
BETWEEN ITALY AND AUSTRALIA

Bruno’s house and front yard
‘Late 20th century immigrants’ nostalgic house’
HOUSES OF ITALIAN MIGRANTS IN MELBOURNE
Italian current houses worked as mediators between participants and their Italian past, and between participants and the Australian environment surrounding them.
‘White Australia’ policy was abolished in 1975.

Australia committed to a non-discriminatory migration policy.

Four broad categories.
MIGRANTS FROM CHINA IN MELBOURNE

‘Monster-house’ (Mitchell 2004)

(Source: The Globe and Mail, Vancouver 2015)
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
bookshelf and even a washing
machine. So as you can imagine
we didn’t have that much space to
walk through… shocking (Jane).
CURRENT HOUSES: SETTLEMENT

I can’t believe it, and now every room in this house is bigger than 11 sq metros. We have like ten of them. It’s just shocking.
CURRENT HOUSES: SETTLEMENT

David's house
CURRENT HOUSES: SETTLEMENT

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, … 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.

Jin’s house
CURRENT HOUSES: SETTLEMENT

Yeah, we were told we are very fussy, and because we want first public transport, ... 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...

Hui’s house
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.

Lilly’s house
CURRENT HOUSES: SETTLEMENT

Lara’s house
CURRENT HOUSES: SETTLEMENT

‘Monster-house’?

Lara’s house
HOME-BUILDING PRACTICES AND REPRESENTATIONS
HOME-BUILDING PRACTICES AND REPRESENTATIONS

David’s house
HOME-BUILDING PRACTICES AND REPRESENTATIONSS
HOME-BUILDING PRACTICES AND REPRESENTATIONS

Annette’s house
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].
I don’t know - what do you think? Looks very European don’t you think?

Hui’s living room
BETWEEN CHINA AND AUSTRALIA
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.
HOUSES OF CHINESE MIGRANTS IN MELBOURNE

"Home is where the heart is"
Chinese current houses helped participants to blend into the local environment and become Australians. Participants did not try to hide their ethnic identity but did not feel the need to maintain it through their houses.
DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES ACROSS GROUPS

Exploring common characteristics of the role of the house in the process of settlement:

1. Settlement: constructing the house.
2. Home-building practices and representations.
3. Between the homeland and the host land.
LINES OF DIFFERENCE WITHIN GROUPS

Questioning the use of birthplace as the favoured organising category (Valentine 2007):

1. Age at the time of migration.
2. Gender.
3. Class and origin in the homeland.
4. Religion.
TO CONCLUDE...
TO CONCLUDE...

• The built form of housing is meaningful in a range of ways during the process of settlement.

• Yet, the importance of the house is also influenced by other identity lines of participants (Valentine 2007).

• Houses do not always represent their dwellers’ ethnic identity or migrant status, but they do represent the relationship between their owners and the dominant society.
TO CONCLUDE...

• Houses are forms of symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1984; Lozanovska 2008) seen in furniture in the house or in its mere existence (Dovey 1999).

• Migrants’ houses are sites of the everyday (Berke 1997; Harris 1997; Ruddick 1997). Objects denoting nostalgia (Stewart 1984; Wilson 2005) are more significant in houses of the two established groups.

• Houses are transnational homes but in contrast to the literature (e.g. Nowicka 2007; Wiles 2008), they are transnational because of their materiality.
THANK YOU

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Research & Policy Centre, The Brotherhood of St Laurence
## THE RESEARCH

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>AUSTRALIA</th>
<th>MELBOURNE REGION</th>
<th>ISRAEL (Jewish population)</th>
<th>TEL AVIV REGION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>23,408,505</td>
<td>3,999,982</td>
<td>6,219,200</td>
<td>3,374,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of overseas-born</td>
<td>5,786,000</td>
<td>1,479,993</td>
<td>1,534,100</td>
<td>944,860</td>
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<tr>
<td>Percentage of total population</td>
<td><strong>30%</strong></td>
<td><strong>37%</strong></td>
<td><strong>25%</strong></td>
<td><strong>28%</strong></td>
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# Migrants from Italy in Melbourne

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Migrated In</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Came From</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bruno</td>
<td>1951</td>
<td>Young adult</td>
<td>Village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carmen</td>
<td>1955</td>
<td>Young adult</td>
<td>Town</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donna</td>
<td>1950</td>
<td>Young adult</td>
<td>City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>1954</td>
<td>Child</td>
<td>City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laura</td>
<td>1956</td>
<td>Adolescent</td>
<td>City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lorenzo</td>
<td>1956</td>
<td>Child</td>
<td>Village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loretta</td>
<td>1951</td>
<td>Young adult</td>
<td>Village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Otto</td>
<td>1950</td>
<td>Young adult</td>
<td>Village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rita</td>
<td>1962</td>
<td>Young adult</td>
<td>Village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanya</td>
<td>1965</td>
<td>Young adult</td>
<td>Village</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Migrants from China in Melbourne

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Migrated In</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Came From</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Annette</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Young adult</td>
<td>Large city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cathleen</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Young adult</td>
<td>Large city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Young adult</td>
<td>Large city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hui (f)</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Young adult</td>
<td>Middle size city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jin (f)</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Young adult</td>
<td>Large city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jun (m)</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>Young adult</td>
<td>Large city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Young adult</td>
<td>Large city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julie</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Young adult</td>
<td>Middle size city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lara</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Young adult</td>
<td>Large city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lilly</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Young adult</td>
<td>Large city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miles</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Young adult</td>
<td>Small town</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shu (f)</td>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Young adult</td>
<td>Large city</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>