Chapter 1
Introduction: Stranger, Guest, Researcher – A Case for Domestic Ethnography in Migration Studies

Paolo Boccagni and Sara Bonfanti

1.1 From Researcher *vs* Informant to Guest *vs* Host: An Emerging Research Perspective

Is there anything like "domestic ethnography"? There is, in a way there has always been, and yet it requires specific elaboration to fully reveal its epistemological potential. This is particularly the case in migration studies, with a view to producing knowledge that bridges across divides such as *us* vs *them* and *native* vs *immigrant*, but also *public* vs *private* and, more fundamentally, *host* vs *guest*. This is, in a nutshell, the substantive and methodological message at the core of this book.

Being invited into the home of someone else is not a random or ubiquitous experience. The status of guest displays a significant relationship between two or more people, on which a remarkable tradition in social sciences has coalesced over time (Herzfeld, 1987; Candea & Da Col, 2012). Being let in the home of someone else, however, is not only an experience with a relational and emotional significance of its own. It is also an occasion on which something new is learnt with, and about, the host. It is likewise, potentially at least, a setting that nourishes a deeper interpersonal relationship between host and guest. Both developments, with the attendant downsides and dilemmas, have long been central to the ethnographic endeavour. Both developments, and the very experience of *guesthood* as a form of (and way into) fieldwork, have however been marginal in migration studies thus far. It is from this marginality, and from a recent comparative study aiming to address it, that this book begins.

What does home mean and entail, the initial research question was, for people on the move such as international migrants and refugees? How much does home have to do with their housing and dwelling arrangements? And what do dwellings reveal

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about people's life stories, everyday routines and lifestyles, as well as their societal conditions and prospects? *Migration and domestic space* illustrates the benefits of extending the scope of fieldwork in migration and refugee studies accordingly, from the bottom-up and from "within". This is meant to achieve a threefold aim: (i) get attuned to the day-to-day built environments in which migrant personal lives unfold, as individuals and members of more or less supportive and unequal household arrangements; (ii) explore how people relate with their dwellings along their migration and housing pathways, and draw out of them diverse and often contrasting emotions – from estrangement to safety, from vulnerability to some sense of being at home; and (iii) understand how migrants' dwelling conditions articulate, and to some extent shape, their attitudes towards majority societies, the (dis)continuities with their earlier lives and the perceived life horizons ahead of them.

None of the fundamental functions and meanings associated with one's dwelling place is unique to people on the move (Carsten & Hugh-Jones, 1995; Cieraad, 1999, 2018; Miller, 2001). None of the inherent tensions between a place being, at the extremes, a basic shelter and a full-fledged home is a migrant prerogative. Quite the opposite – dwelling makes for an obvious and yet remarkable commonality across national boundaries, social divides and cultural backgrounds (Oliver, 1987; Buchli, 2013; Hentschke & Williams, 2018). The need for some shelter at the very least, and arguably the search for a place to call home, is a rather generalizable trait of the human experience (Tucker, 1994; Heller, 1995; Barrie, 2017; Boccagni, 2022a). However, after displacement, mobility and (re)settlement, dwelling conditions and arrangements – including those of "nonmovers" that are involved in migrants' transnational relationships – make for a significant and under-appreciated research field. Based mostly on qualitative case studies within the ERC HOMInG and MIUR-HOASI research projects, this book advances an original research agenda on the substantive, methodological and practical significance of fieldwork in the housing, domestic or dwelling spaces of individuals and families with a migrant background. We are interested in learning more of people's lived experience from within these settings, including the most precarious ones. As we aim to illustrate, a respectful and sensitive way of being within them marks a critical threshold for ethnographic engagement, and for a more fine-grained understanding of everyday life, material cultures and intimate relations. By domestic space, here, we mean and compare a whole range of housing infrastructures, not all of them overlapping with an ordinary dwelling place (Briganti & Mezei, 2012; Kusenbach & Paulsen, 2013; Miranda-Nieto et al., 2020).

Each chapter in the book starts from a reflexive analysis of *home encounters* in distinct housing settings, with different social actors and groups having a direct or indirect experience of international migration. These configurations include multi-ethnic condominiums (Cancellieri, Vietti), multigenerational households in co-living arrangements (Bonfanti), shared flats on rental (Miranda-Nieto), asylum reception centres (Boccagni), immigrant informal settlements, urban (Giudici) and rural (Fravega), houses of worship (Bonfanti and Bertolani), dwelling places of left-behind family members (Pérez-Murcia), including in-laws of researchers themselves (Bertolani), and so-called remittance houses (Boccagni and Echeverria). The

substantive and methodological commonalities across chapters are eventually revisited in an afterword (Harney). All authors, in conducting their respective fieldwork, have followed the ethic codes and procedures of the universities employing them. All their informants, participants and interviewees have been anonymized throughout the book in order to protect their identities. The bulk of the relevant fieldwork was conducted between 2016 and 2019, aside from some cases in which ethnographers revisit older studies (Cancellieri, Pechurina, Bonfanti and Bertolani) or extend their research up to 2022 (Boccagni, Fravega). The ethnographic material underpinning the book covers a variety of immigrant national backgrounds – Latin America, North and West Africa, Western Europe, South Asia – and an equally diverse range of housing, household and legal arrangements. Regardless of the target population, all chapters articulate a productive tension between methodological issues – access, relationships, positionalities, boundary-making – and substantive findings regarding the lived migration experience and the attendant social, political and cultural developments. In-depth fieldwork in these settings is instrumental to innovate and enrich the repertoire of qualitative research in migration studies. However, it is also a way to produce substantive and original knowledge in several respects. Likewise, it has meaningful implications at a practical and experiential level, as we illustrate below.

1.2 Why Domestic Ethnography, Why with Migrants and Refugees: Four Research Directions

Qualitative research on the lived and embedded experience of home has grown significantly in the last two decades, at the intersection between anthropology, cultural geography, housing studies and architecture. A number of ethnographies have been done by valuing the potential of "ethnographic encounters" (Lenhard & Samanani, 2020) "behind the closed doors of domestic homes" (Miller, 2001: 1). Fieldwork within the home can serve a number of analytical purposes (Ochs & Kremer-Sadlik, 2013; Pink et al., 2017). Among the others, it illuminates the biographies and life conditions of those living there, as well the interdependence between different time spaces (past/present, host/home countries) that leave meaningful traces in domestic material cultures (Noble, 2002; Tolia-Kelly, 2004; Levin & Finchner, 2010; Miranda-Nieto et al., 2020; Pérez-Murcia & Boccagni, 2022). For sure, this approach raises practical and ethical issues that should not go unnoticed, on which all contributors to this volume reflect. Nonetheless, the attendant research agenda does justice to a dimension of the everyday – what happens in the mutual interaction between people and their dwellings, and what that means and entails – which is as invisible as constitutive of the ordinary existence.

In principle, there is nothing inherently distinctive in a migrant dwelling in these regards, unless for the possibility that its infrastructure and interior lay-outs and decorations reflect non-local domestic cultures and building styles, especially in

post-migration and multi-ethnic societies (Lozanovska, 2019). However, little of the domestic ethnographies done so far has concentrated on migrant or refugee dwellings, even less so in a comparative optic (see, however, Levin, 2015; Beeckmans et al., 2022; see also, on refugee "shelters", Scott-Smith & Breeze, 2020). In fact, domestic ethnography is also a way to expand the scope of research on home and migration in several directions. Four of these cut across the chapters of this book and can be briefly summarized as follows.

1.2.1 Entering into the Domestic and Its Faceted Interaction with the "Outside"

For one thing, the book feeds into the burgeoning interdisciplinary literature on domesticity and the home, with a privileged focus on the dwelling conditions, histories, aspirations and trajectories of international migrants and refugees. As an emerging research perspective, *home studies* engages with the diverse places, settings and material arrangements in which people articulate and tentatively enact a sense of home (Kusenbach & Paulsen, 2013; Lloyd & Vasta, 2017; Bahun & Petrić, 2018; Blunt & Dowling, 2022). Home is understood as a contested, relationally based question of place attachment and appropriation. Forms of homemaking can occur on any scale across divides like house vs neighbourhood (Blunt & Sheringham, 2019), private vs public (Boccagni & Duyvendak, 2021), local vs transnational (Rapport & Dawson, 2023) or lay vs sacred (Bertolani et al., 2021). All this being said, the domestic built environment remains the basic unit of everyday life for most people. For sure, this is nothing natural or "given". The unequal ways in which people on the move negotiate access to decent housing or are marginalized from it, at different stages of their migration trajectories, make for a societal and political question in itself. Indeed, housing may effectively operate as an internal, and highly discriminatory, border (Lukes et al., 2019; Bonizzoni et al., 2023). That said, their ways of seeing, using and reshaping the domestic space accessible to them are by no means an epiphenomenon. Rather, they deserve specific investigation. By looking at how people interact with(in) the domestic realm, we gain a better understanding of their lived experience and of their social position, i.e. the structure of opportunities available to them and their ways to cope with it.

As long as domesticity lies at the core of the life experience of most of us, it is a privileged entry point into debates of larger significance. One of them regards individual and household social reproduction; put differently, homemaking in the literal sense of relational, practical and emotional activities for the maintenance and care of the home and its members, with the underlying tensions and inequalities across genders and generations (Kofman, 2012; Kofman & Raghuram, 2015). In this respect, *staying in* unpacks the external and normative image of the home as a

necessarily warm, protective and safe space. For sure, this may not be enough to capture the roots and developments of intimate family conflicts and tensions. Nonetheless, it does afford us the opportunity to embody people's self-accounts into the constellation of everyday spaces, objects and thresholds that household members negotiate between them. This holds true in the domestic space of migrants or refugees, we argue, as much as in any other one. Consistent with this, domestic ethnography is also a valuable option to delve into the subjective meanings of dwelling and the material affordances and culture on which it relies (Miller, 2001; Povrzanovic-Frykman, 2019). This has to do with interior decoration and "beautification" as, among other things, an everyday statement about taste, alignment, status and aspirations (Clarke, 2001; Woodward, 2001; Dibbits, 2009; McMillan, 2009; Savaş, 2010). However, as the chapters in this book show, there is a broader range of ways in which dwellers inform the domestic space with their presence, connect it with significant others (including people who passed away, or moved to live elsewhere) or, instead, neglect to invest in their dwellings.

In the third place, domestic conditions and arrangements in the here and now are the starting point to explore questions of housing marginality, informality and exclusion (Giorgi & Fasulo, 2013; Darling, 2017), and to reconstruct migrant housing pathways over time. In that respect, the present dwelling conditions may embed significant traces of past-related memories and lifestyles, and possibly articulate future-oriented concerns and aspirations (Bolt & van Kempen, 2002; Robinson et al., 2007). Furthermore, the domestic space is a key infrastructure and affordance for boundary-making, relative to the outside world – inside vs outside, private vs public. As important are its internal forms of boundary-making, thresholding and affective and functional differentiation (Gauvain & Altman, 1982; Lawrence, 1987; Garvey, 2005; Martsin & Niit, 2005; Hadjiyanni, 2019).

All this being said, the lived experience of any home shows how blurred and permeable the boundaries are, all the more so under disadvantaged or "mobile" housing arrangements (Jansen & Löfving, 2009); in fact, how external or internal thresholding ends up in a selective, situated and ongoing endeavour – an open-ended social field which has little of the apparent stability of the bricks and mortar (Boccagni & Brighenti, 2017; Rapport & Dawson, 2023). Put it otherwise, the domestic experience is typically an ongoing matter of home unmaking, as much as home-making (Baxter & Brickell, 2014; Bertolani & Boccagni, 2021). Last, domestic interiors as a research setting are fundamental in order to advance empirical research on hospitality and host-guest relations – a basic foundation of home, and yet a relatively unexplored one through the categories of home studies (see, however, Herzfeld, 1987; Lenhard & Samanani, 2020; Harney & Boccagni, 2022).

Once again, none of these debates is unique to migration or refugee studies. Nevertheless, approaching them through the experience of people on the move, in a comparative framework, helps us to move beyond any monolithic and sedentary approach to the home.

1.2.2 Tackling Societal Questions from the Bottom-Up and from the Inside-Out

Home matters, societally speaking, because it holds public and political dimensions that are as constitutive of it as the private one, as decades of critical research have shown, in feminism and beyond (Price, 2002; Kaika, 2004; Brickell, 2012). More fundamentally, each home can be approached as a societal unit which (re)produces, at a grassroots level, questions of larger societal import. This is part and parcel of its promise as a research site. Doing ethnography within people's domestic space, as ethnographers and guests, is also a research strategy with a significant external potential and relevance: enable a micro, fine-grained understanding of questions that are relevant at a macro level, well beyond a particular case study. Again, this has long been an aspiration for ethnography as a means to generate and communicate knowledge, behind its seemingly descriptive simplicity (Burawoy, 1991; Fitzgerald, 2006; Atkinson, 2015). However, it is a knowledge-building process for which the domestic has a profound and relatively under-studied significance. All contributors to this book aim to develop further, for the benefit of migration and refugee studies, a crucial point that has long been made within the social study of the home: the lived space of a house is also a microcosm of societal constellations of identities, values and inequalities. This is substantiated in the internal organization of the home environment, including the division and allocation of domestic space along gender(ed) and generational lines (Bourdieu, 1970; Carsten & Hugh-Jones, 1995; Birdwell-Pheasant & Lawrence-Zúñiga, 1999). It is at a house(hold) level that ethnographers can capture the bases and mechanisms of reproduction of societal orders and inequalities.

This is particularly visible and striking under substandard or marginalized housing conditions, such as those experienced by a number of migrants and refugees. And it has become even more powerful after the covid-19 pandemic has led to unprecedented forms of "enforced domesticity" whereby, under institutional lockdowns or unremitting *stayhome* appeals, the domestic space is over-inflated with tasks and expectations. This makes the inequalities that inform its access, use and ownership still more critical, less visible and harder to contrast for public policy (Hadjiyanni, 2023).

Furthermore, as the case studies in this book show, the interdependence between the domestic and the societal illuminates the everyday life of immigrant or refugee newcomers in two major respects. The first has to do with the process of hospitality in which the home plays a central role. Importantly, hospitality operates on and across multiple scales – not just the domestic one. The inside/outside and host/guest divides that the domestic space embodies are frequently scaled up, as metaphorically as effectively, to non-domestic scales – the neighbourhood, the city, even entire nation-states (Walters, 2023). However, what hospitality means and what it should imply out of a narrowly domestic domain is a question on which ideological and principled accounts outnumber empirical studies. This is possibly the reason why hospitality is both intriguing and elusive as an analytic (Harney & Boccagni,

2022). In this optic, host-guest relationships, including informant-researcher interactions in a domestic setting, are but micro iterations of ingroup-outgroup relations that operate at a systemic level, often borrowing the moral and affective repertoire of the home for political, mostly exclusionary purposes (Duyvendak, 2011). "Domestic ethnographers" should be fully aware of this background, as well as of the interlocking axes of power inequality that often separate them from their interlocutors in terms of legal status and possibly of class, race, gender, education and thus forth. While such inequalities are embedded in migrant dwelling conditions and tend to reproduce them, it is worth remarking that fieldwork power relations are not unidirectional, even less so within a domestic setting. Like all ethnographers, researchers-as-guests are fully dependent on their interlocutors' protracted disposition to host them, and on negotiating the underlying mutual interests and expectations. This is not to dismiss, of course, the power inequalities that are part of each ethnographic encounter, and the range of obligations and responsibilities that come along with that. Starting from the bottom line of providing rich, respectful and potentially transformative accounts to a broader audience, all ethnographers, including the contributors to this volume, address this delicate point in their own ways.

In the second place, the significance of home in the public sphere has multiple and ambiguous implications. One of them, of course, is the question about "whose home" the public actually is (Koch & Latham, 2013). This creeps across majority-minority relations, with native or long-resident groups being often in a position to define it in their own terms (Boccagni & Duyvendak, 2021). At the same time, the public space may end up being a source of appropriation and attachment, if only due to a lack of alternatives, for all those whose housing circumstances are poor and unsatisfactory, up to having little to do with a normative idea of home – once again, a rather frequent development among vulnerable migrants, as in some of the chapters that follow. The literature in migration and refugee studies is dotted with examples about this, generally among people with similar national, ethnic or religious backgrounds (Law, 2001; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2017; Damery, 2020). For sure, this extra-domestic scalarity militates against any automatic conflation between domestic space and home. Relative to the former, home as a concept encompasses many more dimensions, sites and scales. And yet, it is only from the domestic space that an in-depth understanding of home, and of migrant's struggle for better living conditions, can actually start.

1.2.3 Advancing Reflexive and Qualitative Research on Migrants and Refugees

Visiting the domestic space of one's informants has historically been a central way for ethnographers to develop rapport and trust in the field and gain greater insight into the lives of those they study. In a sense, then, this book is an invitation to make the most of what many ethnographers already do to some extent. At the same time,

we aim to show the potential of a systematic approach to the domestic environment to delve into the diverse alignments, attachments and material living conditions associated with a migrant background.

The preparation of this book followed an exploratory and comparative design. Broadly similar research questions and methodological options were used across different housing and dwelling contexts, on multiple scales. All contributors draw on home visits that were meant as entry points into broader research concerns and ended up being meaningful in themselves. Such home encounters are a challenge to set in advance. They typically come after in-depth fieldwork engagement with the relevant informants, or at least some of them. Research within the domestic space makes sense and works out in the moral economy of broader relations of hospitality and possibly of friendship, with all the promises, dilemmas and tensions this entails.

In practice, the underlying research design includes occasional visits, related to the collection of interviews or life histories in a private space, and far more extended stays; ordinary ways of being with one's participants in the everyday; and home tours with an explicit observational purpose. The latter may involve pictures, maps or drawings, instrumental to discuss the functions, meanings or memories associated with certain domestic objects or spaces. This inevitably requires a participatory orientation, which can be made explicit and generated through techniques like photovoice, elicitation from objects or images, self-diaries, sketches of home and other "creative" options (Ratnam, 2023; Ratnam & Drozdzewski, 2020; Pink, 2020). Consistent with this orientation, all chapters consider the joint contribution of researchers and participants to make sense of otherwise intangible and sensorial dimensions of domestic space.

In certain settings, such as informal settlements and squats, researchers may be unable to move beyond the doorstep – of an occupied building, a make-shift shack or a slum. This requires them to engage in a delicate balancing act between contrasting positions and expectations. Fieldwork in precarious and fragile dwelling arrangements raises practical, relational and ethical intricacies. It also testifies to meaningful forms of resistance – less to a researcher per se, than to forms of external knowledge production and media overexposure that may fuel infantilizing, sensationalist and stigmatizing accounts. Whether in these cases or in more ordinary housing arrangements, domestic ethnography demands that researchers be sensitive in negotiating the reach and implications of their access to the field, in order to appreciate migrant ways or attempts of making themselves at home.

With these precautions and ambiguities, the substantive yield of this approach can hardly be underestimated. At a cumulative and comparative level, it allows an in-depth view of the spatial organization of home spaces, and hence a unique understanding of migrant attitudes and expectations towards receiving and sending communities. What is displayed in the domestic space, where and why; how people orient functionally and symbolically the interiors; how such spaces are differentially occupied and experienced along gender and generational lines; what kind of memories are displayed, and what specific rituals are performed – on these micro-underpinnings of post-migration everyday life, little insight can be gained unless through ethnography across domestic settings.

Along these lines, the book advances an extended research programme in which domestic fieldwork is both a source of micro-data and of macro-insights replicated across multiethnic societies. This holds a promise to expand and refine the remit of qualitative research with migrant populations (Zapata-Barrero & Yalaz, 2018). It can also enhance a critical conversation between migration studies and research into housing, social reproduction and material culture, even within sub-standard or utterly marginalized dwelling arrangements.

1.2.4 Getting Closer to Migrant Life Conditions and Prospects, Both "Subjective" and "Objective"

Overall, this book is an invitation to acknowledge the significance of the lived domestic experience for researchers and practitioners concerned with migration, housing and home. All the case studies that follow show migrant domesticity to be a complex, critical and inherently meaningful matter. Studying it, however, cannot be reduced to formulaic indicators of residential or housing satisfaction. For sure, access to decent housing is a critical and far from obvious or irreversible step in migration pathways (Eurostat, 2021; Fravega & Boccagni, 2023; Skovgaard-Nielsen & Skifter-Andersen, 2023). That said, a dwelling as such has more than an instrumental value. It is worth investigating in light of the ways and extents to which it operates as a proxy of home in a normatively positive sense, thereby illuminating a repository of reactions, tactics and adaptations. In this optic, the domestic space is revealing both of migrants' agency and of the structural exposure of many of them to poverty, marginalization and discrimination. It reveals both sides of the same coin, which should be equally taken in earnest at a policy level, for housing and social welfare provision.

In-depth research on how people engage with the material and symbolic aspects of their living spaces – given the resources available to shape them, their housing tenure and their long-term life projects – provides valuable data and advice for local policy-making in several fields: housing, social and health care, diversity management and community development, among others. How people are oriented (or not) to take care of, and invest in, the built environments accessible to them is a major question, for policy no less than personal purposes. In a research domain, moreover, the personal constructions of housing and of the distance between experienced and ideal arrangements illuminate the subjective dimension of migrant integration, away from the lures of prescriptive, ideological or essentialist accounts. While migrant housing may have a transnational side that sits along with the local one, sometimes uneasily as some contributions in this book show, it is from dwelling circumstances in the here and now that a more profound understanding of migrant conditions can, and should, begin.

1.3 Twelve Ways to Enter Migrant Homes: An Overview of the Book

The twelve case studies in this book unveil dwelling arrangements that can mark migrants' housing pathways and biographies at different stages, not necessarily in a linear or sequential way. Migrant ways of dwelling may be based on individual accommodation, a household one, or one shared with strangers. They may be formal or informal, as well as autonomous or "heteronomous" (e.g. in refugee camps). They may be on rental or possibly, over time, shifting to homeownership. In short, the book takes fully into account the variety of housing arrangements associated with migration. It also looks at the influence of the houses of their non-migrant counterparts (including properties built with migrant remittances) and at the domestic significance of semi-public infrastructures such as places of worship. This enables an unprecedented scope for comparative analysis of the potential of different and unequal dwelling arrangements to make for home-like spaces, given dwellers' demographics, their backgrounds, their (over)exposure to discrimination and racialization and their position in the life and migration course. All the contributions that follow combine methodological reflexivity with theoretical and societal relevance. All contributors, moreover, show the value of an intersectional approach in exploring disadvantaged housing conditions, to find out how migrant/ethnic background interplays with variables such as class, length of stay, education, legal status, density and distribution of informal social networks.

In Chap. 2, *A House of Homes*, Adriano Cancellieri revisits his long-term research involvement with Hotel House. This is an isolated high-rise building inhabited mostly by immigrant households – some would say, a "vertical ghetto" – close to a seaside location in Central Italy (cf. Cancellieri, 2017). Drawing on his past experience as a guest in some apartments, and then on recurrent follow-up visits, the author reconstructs the dwelling history of the building. This is marked by a combination of "white flight", temporary or permanent settlement of residents from dozens of different backgrounds, and an ongoing dialectic between external stigmatization and internal mobilization to improve infrastructural conditions. The building is worth researching as a place in itself and a diverse hub for immigrant communities, thanks also to the ethnic businesses and initiatives it has hosted over time. Cancellieri provides a thick account of the field relationships with his hosts, who enabled him to have an insider understanding of everyday life in the high-rise. Based on this protracted ethnographic effort, the author discusses several forms of "material, spatial and affective everyday homemaking", including their ambivalence. Space attachment and appropriation, as enacted through everyday sociability and meaningful collective practices, may lead to pervasive social control over community members, discouraging those forms of individuation that are critical to their local integration. This leads to a risk of "double closure" – from the mainstream society towards Hotel House, from without; from the hegemonic communities towards individual members, from within. On one hand, residents' ways of homemaking do not necessarily overlap with the brick and mortar of the building, as they

can involve multiple scales at the same time. On the other hand, the homely atmosphere that is nourished in many apartments cannot obscure the reproduction of deep-rooted gender boundaries – "the dark side of home" – inside them. In sum, entering the domestic space of one's informants is a unique research option to capture the tensions and contradictions inherent in their homemaking practices, at the intersection between cultural continuity, shared ways of sociability and variable degrees of openness or closure to the larger society.

In a different perspective, the lived experience of super-diversity on a built environment scale lies also at the core of Chap. 3, *The Next-Door Migrant*, by Francesco Vietti. This is an auto-ethnography of everyday life in a multi-ethnic condominium within the "ethnoscape" of Turin's Porta Palazzo, Italy. With a main focus on the ways of interaction and appropriation in the "liminal" inner courtyard, Vietti outlines another rich house biography. The author privileges the interplay between domestic spaces and semi-public ones, which he reconstructs by means of participant observation and exemplary life stories of native and immigrant residents. Thanks to this combination of personal narratives and reflexive fieldwork notes, categories such as hospitality, conviviality or contact zone lose their abstract or normative connotations and get embedded in the complexity of day-to-day interactions, including inter-group tensions and conflicts. Such interactions are typically shallow, and yet always hold a potential for more profound encounters across ethnic, religious and generational divides. Importantly, Vietti's account shows the relevance of an insider, qualitative understanding to pave the way for community development initiatives such as those presented at the end of the chapter.

In Chap. 4, *Welcome upon Conditions*, Sara Bonfanti explores the domestic homemaking of South Asian diasporas in Britain. In doing so, she builds on Derrida's (2000) conceptualization of "hos(ti)pitality" and draws from anthropological reflections of how the guest-host relationship is foundational to fieldwork as much as to structuring the social world. The chapter proposes an ethnographic tour across London's Black-and-Minority-Ethnic districts, stopping at three addresses where descendants of Bengali, Sri-Lankan and Sikh Indians live. By means of repeated home visits and stays, Bonfanti sieves through the internal diversities of the South Asian collective in order to see how the house is governed (de L'Estoile & Neiburg, 2020), from within and bottom-up. Her observation and analysis shift from the private dwelling to the neighbourhood, interrogating to what extent transnational kinship and ages of migration shape the experience of home and the politics of belonging in the diaspora. With a comparative lens, the author advances parallel considerations on her methodology and findings. As a guest-and-ethnographer, Bonfanti reflects on the conditionality of her status in the houses of her informants, as well as on the conditional *(par)desh* (lit. home away) that South Asian diasporas have pursued since decolonization in their ultimate 'host' country.

In Chap. 5, *Shared Flats in Madrid*, Alejandro Miranda-Nieto gives us an insightful account of everyday life in shared flats in peripheral and multi-ethnic neighbourhoods of Madrid. "Dwelling with strangers", he argues, produces "a peculiar relation between attachment to place and control over space". While some of his informants do connect a sense of home to their dwelling environments, others tend

to discard the question outright. This may be out of nostalgia for the country of origin or, less obviously, due to a deliberate prioritization of other concerns – work, leisure, hanging out with friends – over all that is domestic but, in fact, "non-home" (Boccagni & Miranda-Nieto, 2022). Instrumental needs and functional adaptations, argues Miranda-Nieto, may crowd out normative concerns about home, including preoccupations to make the place a little "better", or more of "one's own". This can also be a tactic that informs the negotiation of common space and the synchronization of everyday routines, as a part of shared living arrangements with strangers.

How fieldwork takes place within the homes of research participants is also discussed, in a more reflexive and intimate guise, in Chap. 6, "*Visiting Home" as a Method and Experience*, by Anna Pechurina. Entering the home of an informant, even only for the purpose of doing an interview, raises questions of positionality as much as of privacy. It is a step that should preferably be taken after a certain rapport has already been built. Even then, it is not exempt from mixed reactions that may have to do with gender, age, class and ethnicity, among other factors. This reveals the need for emotional and relational work to underpin rapport building, and then data collection. Still, being *in* is a requisite to capture the situated interdependence between belonging, migration and cultural identity, in Pechurina's study. Central to this research effort is an exploration of the usages of meaningful objects and of the sensorial dimensions of homemaking, as exemplified by cooking and eating. As the author eventually shows, the host-guest relationship that is embedded in the home – and encompasses ethnographic rapport, as a particular variant of it – is informed by a whole set of implicit expectations and boundaries. These are subject to ongoing negotiation between the parties and require further elaboration, as this chapter does.

In Chap. 7, *Rooms with Little View*, Paolo Boccagni revisits everyday forms of homemaking and the tension between private space and collective constraints and obligations within an asylum centre in Northern Italy. Being in, in this case, means negotiating respectful and empathic ways of access to the residents' own rooms, as "guests of the guests". This enables an ethnographer to make better sense of people's day-to-day routines and material cultures (including memories, tastes and aspirations), as well as of their orientations towards the receiving society, on all scales from the nation to the very building in which they are hosted. While asylum centres are typically associated with liminal temporality and protracted waiting, which may have deeply disempowering effects, they are also safe havens where people strive to invest in new life opportunities despite all constraints and discriminations. Within the life course of young people who have repeatedly risked their lives to reach Europe, living in a shared room in an asylum centre may be more than a short-time parenthesis. This is less a non-place than a meaningful location in which biographically significant things happen anyway. A readapted version of domestic ethnography has to navigate across organizational, relational and ethical dilemmas, and yet proves invaluable in illuminating them.

For a number of migrants and refugees, particularly those with a weak legal status (e.g. asylum seekers and undocumented migrants), suitable housing conditions are often impossible to achieve. This means, among other things, that all that has to do with home and homemaking does not necessarily rely on standard and formal

accommodations. There is no paucity of cases of precarious housing and hidden homelessness, even for people who have settled for several years, as a part of fragmented migration, legal and work trajectories. And there is a promise, we contend, in approaching them through the conceptual and methodological frame of our book. Along these lines, in Chap. 8, *(In)Visibility*, Daniela Giudici reflects on her field relations with activists and residents in a large, highly visible and eventually cleared informal settlement in Turin. There may be little remarkable in the reactions of indifference and suspicion the author notices among several residents, regarding all sorts of outsiders. However, Giudici suggests, such stances point less to an ethnographer's failure than to a form of resistance – a claim of one's "right to opacity" – and indeed of homemaking, however residual. The author's contribution, at the "doorstep" of the squat, illuminates questions such as the meaning of silence and invisibility, the tension between observing and being observed, the impingements of one's positionality and the uncanniness of fieldwork (hence, the deep emotional work it demands). At the same time, Giudici invites fellow ethnographers not to be content with the lures of self-reflexivity, as well as of romanticized or overpoliticized accounts of the refugee plight. Overall, the chapter reveals a genuine appreciation for the forms of space adaptation, appropriation and improvement that occur even inside a provisional, deprived and soon-to-be evicted shelter, as a provisional home for hundreds of asylum seekers and refugees.

In a parallel guise, Enrico Fravega elaborates on *Looking for Home in Migrant Informal Settlements* (Chap. 9). The ethnographic research target, here, has to do with informal rural settlements built up by immigrant workers in areas of strong labour demand and exploitation such as Foggia, Southern Italy. These places often lack access to the infrastructures that underpin the "normality" of daily social reproduction – water, energy and so forth. However, seeing them only through the lens of marginality would be misleading. As the author shows, the harsh living conditions in these settlements do not necessarily result in questions of home being irrelevant or out of place. Emotions and social practices associated with a sense of home do take place in so-called agricultural ghettos, in spite of very poor infrastructures and living conditions. They have little to do with dwelling in makeshift and very basic shelters, though. The latter do not afford the ordinary forms of domesticity, in terms of "specific functions" being permanently allocated "to different regions of the house (i.e. rooms)". Much of people's homemaking is rather oriented towards certain public areas of the settlements. Here, ethnic businesses attend to migrant needs and interests in food consumption, leisure, religious practices and sex, among other aspects. These are all hidden faces of an everyday life that, while being heavily dependent on exploitative work conditions, retains significant if ambiguous aspects of shared sociability. Overall, the "sensuous infrastructures" for homemaking in agricultural ghettos go hand in hand with substantive marginalization and very limited connections with the broader societal environment.

Interestingly, the interplay between homemaking in domestic and larger spatial regions does not pertain only to deprived housing environments. The tension between private and semi-public environments can be revisited also among relatively well-settled immigrant groups, as constitutive of their sense of home on

extra-domestic scales. In this vein, Sara Bonfanti and Barbara Bertolani explore, in Chap. 10, the potential and constraints of *Attending Houses of Worship as Homes Out of the Home.* Religious infrastructures, the authors contend, can be affordances for homemaking – or domestic space writ large – in multiple senses: as social milieus that facilitate the retention of meaningful traditions, values and rituals from the communities of origin; as locations that, while pertaining to the public domain, provide a deep sense of intimacy, communion and protection to the believers; as societal institutions and built environments that make visible migrants' claims for recognition and continuity – in a way, their claims for home as a question of both appropriation and attachment (Boccagni et al., 2020). Drawing on extended fieldwork in Sikh and Hindu temples in Italy, the authors advance a critical and original reflection on their own positionalities. They also reveal the reach, as well as the functional and symbolic limitations, of the analogy between a private house and a semi-public house of worship.

Starting from Chap. 11, by Luis Eduardo Pérez Murcia, our collective conceptualization and application of domestic ethnography take still another bent. This is towards the transnational set of ties, attachments and very concrete practices, including house-related ones, which connect labour migrants with their dear ones left behind. Central to the author's argument is the study of the *Transnational Circulation of Home Through Objects.* While visiting, in Peru, the domestic space of the kin of his research participants in Europe, Pérez Murcia finds himself in lively and deeply evocative milieus. These are far more than backgrounds for his in-depth interviews. Rather, the spatial organization and material cultures of the dwellings in which he is hosted reveal the protracted influence of international migration; or, to be precise, of the emotional and practical connectedness between people on the move and their significant others. A range of rather simple and everyday objects, including a baby Jesus statue, a childhood cloth or certain pictures set up in particular ways, emerge as powerful elicitors of mnemonic and emotional connectedness with those living elsewhere. Once again, such connectedness may yield an ambivalent impact over time, if people find out that they are not in a position to engage in more "tangible" co-presence through mutual visits, occasional at least. Nonetheless, the intimate and profound role of these materialities gives further evidence of the importance of domestic ethnography, even within transnational family networks that tend to multiply, and possibly blur, the meanings and locations of home (Boccagni, 2022b). As Pérez Murcia powerfully shows, a visit to migrants' kin can end up in an immersive ethnographic experience in itself. Once researchers are in and have sensorial access to the everyday life world of migrants' kin, they may themselves act as physical mediators – or metaphorical bridges – between separate home spaces. What an ethnographer is then expected to bring back (to the immigrant), literally or symbolically, matters as much as what he/she is bringing into the home of the family members left behind.

In the following chapter, *Migrant Domestic Space as Kinship Space*, Barbara Bertolani enriches the study of transnational homemaking with yet another dimension –transnational kinship and kin work. The author revisits her fieldwork in Indian Punjab, as well as in Italy, within the homes of informants who are also family

members. In a deeply relational, emotional and moral sense, the researcher herself is part of the field she is approaching as a guest and a family member. This reveals significant intricacies and a unique knowledge potential, which Bertolani disentangles by revisiting her home visits and stays. Her multiple positionality enables her to have a very close experience of migrants' domestic space, including in the countries of origin, while certainly affecting the kind of data she collects – and the circumstances under which she does so. Drawing on a range of vivid examples from everyday domestic life, Bertolani analyzes the interplay between differently situated ways to define the same social settings and the roles of different family members and dwellers inside them. She also unveils the "relational thresholds", as constraints and opportunities related to role and belonging, that her positioning work brings into data co-production and analysis.

Last, in Chap. 13, *Whose Homes?*, Paolo Boccagni and Gabriel Echeverria revisit their long-standing research experience in Ecuador, including recent stays in the places of their friends and informants, through the emerging literature on remittance houses (Lopez, 2015; Boccagni & Bivand-Erdal, 2021). What does *entering home(s)* mean, and what does it enable a researcher-as-guest to understand, when a house embodies migrants' efforts to improve their life conditions and "remit" this into their communities of origin? By comparing a range of housing arrangements, the authors discuss several questions of broader interest, including hospitality, the (in) visibilization of the absent ones through material cultures, the transnational negotiation of family and house work, and the tension between the exceptionality of migration and the autonomy and continuity of everyday life in the communities of origin. In all these regards, a house is like a palimpsest to reconstruct and make sense of individual and family life courses, through their mutual influence and feedback.

Much of these methodological and conceptual remarks are relevant for the book as a whole, rather than only for this chapter. Expanding further upon them, Nicholas Harney, in his *Afterword*, invites us to appreciate the full potential of ethnography for an aptly "expansive" understanding of home, along with the negotiation of key boundaries such as host vs guest and domestic vs public. Altogether, these tales from the (domestic) field are themselves an invitation for researchers to take home and hospitality seriously – as a site of social analysis and understanding no less than a place for protection, reproduction and intimacy, or at least as a struggle towards it.

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