Italo-Australian Transnational Houses:
Critical Review of a Qualitative Research Study

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Abstract   The research study aimed to understand how first generation Italian migrants in Brisbane have influenced the form of a specific typology of dwelling, the archetypal 'house on a quarter-acre block', in the post WWII period. In order to understand the forces behind and outcomes of migrants' influence on the form of their Italo-Australian transnational houses, qualitative data collected from the testimonies of Italian migrants in conjunction with evidence left from four houses were analyzed. The findings revealed that the architectural form of the house was influenced by architectural traditions, socio-cultural factors and urbanization patterns. It was shown that the form of the transnational house mirrored the cultures derived from the ways of life belonging to two societies. Therefore, the form of houses built by Italian migrants in post WWII Brisbane is the manifestation of the Italian and the Australian cultures. The purpose of this paper is to discuss and critically review the qualitative methodology adopted for the study, the limitations of the study and the recommendations for further exploration and development of both theoretical and applied areas of research.

Keywords   Built Form, Italo-Australian Transnational Houses, Socio-Cultural Factors, Qualitative Methodology, Case Study, Qualitative Methods

1. Background: The Journey from Italy to Australia

Italian migrants revealed that the main factors, which affected Italians decisions to temporarily leave Italy in the post WWII period were (1) the poverty due to the pre-war fascist dictatorship and the ruinous outcome of the war; (2) the lack of working opportunities caused by the Italian government's policy of unequal distribution of agricultural land; (3) the phenomenon of overcrowding in the big cities; (4) the loss of or damage to the family house; (5) the scarcity of food. In addition their will to leave Italy was facilitated by (6) a favorable bilateral migration policy agreed by the Italian and Australian governments. The literature shows that in the 1950s the Italian government realized that a migration policy would relieve pressure on the Italian economy caused by overcrowding and unemployment. On the other hand, in the same period the Australian government adopted a policy in order to attract a workforce due to a chronic shortage of labor. As a result, through these migration policies both governments aimed to give the unemployed and poverty stricken Italian population hope for a more prosperous future. These factors finally persuaded a great number of Italians to leave their homeland and migrate to Australia (Baldassar, 2002; Baldassar & Pesman, 2005; Bosworth, 1996; Bosworth & R.Ugolini, 1992; Castles, 1992; G. Cresciani, 1985, 2003; Gianfranco Cresciani, 1988; Ginsborg, 1990; J. L. Harper, 1987; Panucci, Kelly, & Castles, 1992; Randazzo & Cigler, 1987; Rosoli, 1978; Ruzzene & Battiston, 2006).

In the early 1970s, due to the favorable economic circumstances in the homeland - the so-called 'Italian economic miracle' - many migrants attempted to take advantage of the favorable economic conditions in Italy and returned to their homeland. While many of them successfully settled in their native land, others could not cope with the Italian way of life, which had inevitably changed after their departure twenty years previously, and therefore returned to Australia. In the late 1970s and early 1980s Italian migrants decided to build their own houses to maximize, through the form of the house, the metaphysical idea of stability, success and wealth.

2. The Research Design

The research study addresses the case of a specific typology of house: the dwelling built by Italian migrants on a quarter acre block in Brisbane in the post WWII period. The objective is to identify the way Italian migrants influenced (A) the architectural form, refer to the structure, the façade, materials and construction technique, and (B) the spatial form, refer to the spatial distribution and utilization of space,

of their dwellings.

This section justifies the choice of research methodology, strategies and methods that characterize the empirical part of this investigation. The methodology, strategies and methods are based on a number of theoretical and philosophical principles. This section also highlights the crucial role of selecting a methodology in relation to the purpose of the study.

2.1. Qualitative Research Methodology

Throughout the research study the term 'methodology' refers to show the theoretical approaches that underpin this research study. The term 'strategy' is used to refer to the choice of the case-study method. Additionally, the term 'methods' and 'techniques' are applied equally in reference to particular ways of gathering data, such as interviews, field observations and visual material. All of these terms are subcategories of the adopted qualitative research approach.

2.1.1. Housing Research Approaches and Methods of Study

Three different theoretical approaches applied by social researchers are here presented (Chapman, 2005; Clark, Deurloo, & Dieleman, 1984; Littlewood & Munro, 1997; Saunders, 1989; Smith & Bugni, 2002a; Sommer, 1983): (1) quantitative economic or demographic studies on housing and moving patterns; (2) a qualitative approach to understanding the cultural meanings of the home to its occupants; and (3) a quantitative approach to understanding cultural differences in housing consumption and preferences.

The research study draws upon the work of Chapman (2005). He shows that quantitative housing research uses rationalistic criteria focusing on the size and installations in the house in order to understand housing choices and consumption. However, he argues that this is not the most appropriate criterion with which to understand the cultural influences on the form of the house by its occupants. According to Clapman (2005), the cultural influences on dwellings need to be investigated through research based on qualitative methods, in order to capture and understand the way of life of occupants. Smith and Bugni (2006) also argue that the form of the house is difficult to understand outside the context of its cultural settings.

Therefore, in attempting to gain insights into the relationship between the form of Italian migrants' houses and the users' cultural forces, the study employs a predominantly qualitative methodology. This is because insights into the cultural meaning that a material form has for individuals within a given social context can best be gleaned from the individuals themselves, and by exploring the rich symbolic universe within which individuals exist. This study, then, is based on a symbolic interactionist perspective (Blumer, 1969).

2.1.2. Qualitative Methodology

Creswell and Morse (2003b, p. 181) argue that there are a number of assumptions that underpin the design of all appropriate qualitative studies. These assumptions can be applied to this research study to demonstrate the appropriateness of a qualitative methodology to the current study. These assumptions are:

1 - Qualitative research uses an inductive approach;

As Warren and Karner (2005, p. 8) highlight, most qualitative researchers use an inductive approach in which key concepts are derived from the data collected in the field. This current study aims to investigate how Italian migrants influenced the form of their houses. I collect and analyse oral and visual data in order to answer the research question. The concepts derived from the findings are then used as the basis for the development of a theory.

2 - Qualitative research is emergent rather than tightly prefigured. A phenomenon must be explored and described in order to develop a theory;

According to Warren and Karner, when the concept under exploration is 'immature' due to a conspicuous lack of previous research, qualitative researchers need to adopt an exploratory strategy of enquiry in order to develop concepts from the data gathered (Warren & Karner, 2005, p. 8). Additionally, Morse (1991) argues that a qualitative enquiry is needed when the topic under investigation is new, has never been addressed with a certain sample of people, or existing theories do not apply to the particular sample under study. As Marshal and Rossman (2006, pp. 57-72) also highlight, when the topic is new or little research has been done on it, qualitative researchers explore complex phenomena rather than measure findings. The adoption of a qualitative approach is appropriate for the subject of vernacular housing because it has yet to gain much academic attention.

3 - Qualitative data collection and qualitative data analysis are likely to be generated concurrently;

According to Merriam and Silverman (1998; 2000), since qualitative research's focus is on process, qualitative data generation and qualitative data analysis are likely to be generated together. Throughout this current research project, data analysis has been progressively developed as oral and visual data were collected. The data collection helps the theory to emerge and develop into broad themes and categories.

4 - Qualitative research is fundamentally interpretative;

According to Merriam (1998), the key philosophical assumption in qualitative research is based on a constructivist set of beliefs about truth, claiming that there are only constructed realities. Additionally, Merriam states that a qualitative approach is also underlined by an epistemology, or a set of beliefs about knowledge, arguing that knowledge clearly emerges from reality. Consequently, he argues that qualitative research is broadly 'interpretivist' because its concern is to understand how an event is experienced and produced by its participants (1998). As a result, qualitative researchers are committed to an epistemology and an ontology that respectively adopt

knowledge and social constructivism as meaning in context, which is achieved by social interaction (Williamson & Bow, 2000, p. 73). Notably, for this research, events and testimonies are studied in order to interpret the meaning developed by participants who play a central role (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Hassard (1990) also states that a qualitative methodology requires a research problem involving people's constructions of meanings which have not previously been explored. For Creswell (2003a, p. 181), qualitative researchers look for the involvement of their participants while seeking to build rapport and credibility with them in the study. An interactive dynamic exists between the qualitative researcher and the subject and/or participants. Qualitative research involves fieldwork rather than work done in a laboratory, such as in experiments (Marshall & Rossman, 2006, p. 10) (Yin, 2003, p. 72). In contrast, quantitative research uses a deductive approach, which is more appropriate when there are historical precedents, theories or predictions which the researcher seeks to test (Warren & Karner, 2005, p. 8). Such theories would provide an explanation for the variables in questions and hypotheses (Creswell, 2003a, p. 119) and contribute to the advancement of knowledge in the selected field of study (Thomas, 1997). A quantitative approach would not suit this research study, for it is dealing with rich 'textual' material and, as intimated above, the conceptualisation cannot be fully determined until after the empirical data has been gathered.

For this study, the inquirer is involved in a sustained and intensive experience with participants and their self-built artifacts. Furthermore, the researcher analyses data for themes and categories and finally makes an interpretation or draws conclusions.

5 - Qualitative research uses multiple methods that are interactive and humanistic

In Creswell's view, in order to generate rich empirical data, qualitative researchers must rely on a variety of techniques or qualitative research methods, including personal experience and interviews, as well as field observation and visual material that can be used to further explore the experience of the participants (Creswell, 2003a, p. 76). Therefore, the data collected involves oral and visual data. In the current research study, various methods are employed and combined with the objective of exploring a case from different perspectives. This process, defined as triangulation, or the combination of different techniques, methods and strategies is the essence of the case-study strategy for this research study.

6 - Qualitative research takes places in natural settings;

This current research study was conducted at the site of the participants. This enabled me to become more familiar with the experiences of the participants and to develop a level of detail about the place to be investigated. Also, I spent considerable time with participants discussing personal and often emotionally charged topics.

2.2. Qualitative Research Strategy

As highlighted, the qualitative research methodology is considered the most appropriate one to apply in the current study. Additionally, it is necessary to choose between a number of qualitative research strategies. Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p. 14) stress the importance of choosing 'a flexible set out of guidelines that connects theoretical paradigms to strategies of enquiry and methods for collecting empirical material'. They identify four sub-categories of research inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Silverman, 2000): (1) phenomenology may be chosen when the subject of the research examines a deep, underlying reason for a person to believe a particular thing, or to act in a particular manner; (2) ethnography may be employed if the study is based on cultural values; (3) case study may be used when the study is of a particular person or clearly defined group; (4) grounded theory is appropriate when the researcher has no clear theory on the subject of investigation. A qualitative research study can be developed by adopting any, or a combination, of these strategies (Creswell, 2003a).

2.2.1. The Case-Study Strategy

In the context of this study, it is important to define 'case study' and 'case'. Researchers agree that a case study is a research strategy based on an in depth investigation of a 'case', which can be an individual, a group, an object or event (Gillham, 2000; Merriam, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Stake, 1994). Ragin and Becker define the 'case' as an object bounded by a period of time and space or a process that may be theoretical and/or empirical (Ragin & Becker, 1992; Stake, 1995). As Yin (2003) argues, the purpose of a case study is 'to portray, analyse and interpret the uniqueness of individuals and situations through accessible accounts; to catch the complexity of behavior and to represent reality' For Yin a case study is defined as 'an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, namely when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident' (Yin, 2003, pp. 13-14).

The case study design was selected to address the main and the supplementary questions for this study. As De Vaus (2001, p. 223) highlighted, the use of a hypothesis building approach, starting with specific questions and expectations, explores actual cases in order to construct a hypothesis. As a result through this approach, the cases will be used to develop conceptual generalizations. Through an analysis of the case study it will be possible to explore and understand commonalities among cases to reach these generalizations. In this research study, the strategy of case study was selected because there is a need to produce context-based knowledge about the way Italian migrants influenced the form of their houses in a host country. Multiple cases were selected under the case study design because data from multiple cases can strengthen the findings (Yin, 2003, p. XV).

Furthermore, it is also important to point out that this

research is exploratory. Due to the multiple cases consisting of only a small sample of participants selected through limits based on date of birth, date of arrival in Australia, social class and their physical artifacts limited to geographical terms, this study is a hypothesis-generating instead of hypothesis-verification.

2.3. Qualitative Research Methods

In adopting a 'qualitative' methodology, this research study inevitably draws upon multiple qualitative research methods (Creswell, 2003b, p. 181). One of the most significant aspects of case study strategy is that varied methods are employed and combined, or triangulated, with the objective of exploring a case from different perspectives in order to ensure the validity of the case study research (Denzin, 1978). This process, defined by Johansson as triangulation, or 'the combination of different levels of techniques, methods, strategies, or theories, is the essence of case study strategy' (Johansson, 2003, p. 8). Therefore, to validate the findings within the current study, 'triangulation' from different sources (Yin, 2003, p. 159) is adopted. The methods employed in the research study enable the researcher to collect (1) oral data, through digitally recorded focus groups and in-depth interviews, and (2) material or visual data through photo elicitation, site visits, field observations and visual materials including drawings and photographs (Creswell, 2003b).

2.3.1. Focus-Group Interviews

According to Smith, Bugni (2002b) and Creswell (2003b), focus group interviews are usually employed when the group of people is smaller than six to eight. Usually the interviewee is asked to respond to unstructured questions, focusing on a specific topic. As Creswell stresses, this method helps the researchers to involve their participants and seeks to build rapport and credibility with the individuals in the study (Creswell, 2003b, p. 181).

2.3.2. In-Depth Interviews

In architectural sociology, two active social researchers, Smith and Bugni, originally proposed this method. While discussing data collection qualitative methods applicable to architectural practice (Smith & Bugni, 2002b), such as the interview and the field observation method, they noted that the interview can range from entirely structured, with fixed questions and response categories to completely unstructured. This method was adopted so that the interviewee could speak freely, and the interviewer could guide with key areas and questions to be covered while trying to give the interviewee as much freedom as possible. This enables all parties at the interview to raise issues that they see as important. Also, this method gives the interviewer opportunities for in-depth responses, which can help the researcher to capture the participant's perspective (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 5).

2.3.3. Site Visits and Field Observation/Notes

Site visits and field observation enable architectural sociologists to directly observe groups, or individuals within groups, in relation to their natural or built environment. In choosing this method, the researcher should directly inform the participants of their role and purpose and generally observe how participants behave within their space and physical objects. Smith and Bugni (2002c) state that observing the artifacts and behavior of individuals within the artifacts can provide clues for the researchers. These clues enable them to understand the occupants' needs, which have influenced aspects of the house design such as space configuration/location and façade.

2.3.4. Visual Material and Documents

Visual materials, which can be generated by the researcher or by the respondents, are: diaries, field notes, written stories, biographies, videos and movies, pictures and photographs, sketches, architectural drawings, newspapers and magazines, charts, tables and lists (Mason, 2001). According to Mason, the collection and analysis of visual material and documentary sources is a major method of social research (Mason, 2001). This view is also shared by Harper and Faccioli, stating that they '… believe that photographs can describe social life and that visual sociology is a legitimate cousin to documentary photography and photojournalism' (D. Harper & Faccioli, 2009, p. 23). Furthermore, according to Mason (2001) photographs have tended to be seen as the primary form of visual data because photos show what the eye can see.

The importance to use visual material, namely drawings and photographs, for a better understanding of vernacular architecture is also emphasized by Oliver (1997) in his Encyclopedia of Vernacular Architecture of the World. In his words:

Drawings can often be far more eloquent than paragraphs of text in describing terms and techniques…Architectural conventions of plan, section and elevations are understood by those within the profession…Drawings are important in EVAW in providing a variety of graphic means of presenting technical information and field data, not normally available in anthropological sources. Some are drawn precisely to scale, others are sketch plans, while still others arre diagrammatic.

...

Photographs have been used where they best portray the building, especially in its environmental and cultural context ... though the aesthetic qualities of vernacular buildings in many traditions can be expressed by photographs, their value in conveying information has been a prime consideration in their selection (Oliver, 1997, p. xxviii).

Visual data, then, is useful to this research study because it can be used to prompt the respondents to share their views, which are then recorded as text.

3. Data Collection

The data to be gathered is oral data (collected from oral stories from Italian migrants living in Brisbane through focus groups, in depth interviews and photo elicitation) and visual data (gathered through site visits, field observation, visual material and photographs). The aim of this section is to discuss the limits for the selection of the cases and the procedure chosen to collect the data.

The process started with the selection of Italian migrants, followed by the selection of the artifacts. The persons and the artifacts were selected according to specific criteria. The theories of Creswell helped me to set the boundaries and limits for the selection of the participants and their artifacts. According to Creswell (2003b) the idea behind qualitative research is that participants and sites or artifacts must be purposefully selected, as opposed to a quantitative study in which participants and sites can be selected randomly. Creswell (Creswell, 2003b) states that the selection should include four aspects: (1) the location where the research will take place; (2) the respondents who will be interviewed and the artifacts that will be observed; (3) what the actors will be doing during observation; and (4) the process that will unfold during the research.

3.1. Oral Data

Interviewees were limited to migrants born in Italy during the 1930s and 1940s, who are referred to in this study as 'first-generation Italian migrants'. All selected first-generation migrants had migrated to Australia in the 1950s and 1960s, after WWII reconstruction in Italy. As all interviewees were approximately 20 to 30 years old at the time of their arrival in Australia, I assumed that people who lived in their homeland for several years and migrated as young adults were preferable as subjects because they had spent enough time in Italy to assimilate a way of life belonging to a cultural group. Additionally, social class is a 'limit' that must also be taken into account. Pierre Bourdieu (1992) argues that domestic behavior and cultural priorities differ according to the social class people belong to. Those selected for interview can be broadly classified as working class people. They constituted the majority of Italian immigrants migrating to Australia in the post–WWII period (G. Cresciani, 1985, p. 95). In order to simplify the naming of working class 'first generation Italian migrants' selected for this thesis I chose to use the term 'Italian migrants'. Accounting for the criteria listed above, the case study included 40 Italian migrants (20 male and 20 female) and four self-built houses, whose criteria for selection are defined in the following section.

3.2. Visual Data

After gaining insight into Italian migrants' oral histories, attention focused on their houses. The criteria for the selection of the houses were that the artifact had to be a single detached house built by Italian migrants in the Brisbane metropolitan area in the post-WWII period.

Another criterion was that the house be on a quarter-acre block or, alternatively, a 'single front block'. The assumption was that rented or renovated/extended houses are more limited in terms of modifications because of the restrictions posed by the owner, if rented, or by the configuration of the existing house, if owned. However, if built on a single front block, the freedom existed to build a new house as desired and as per their needs. Moreover, since the size of the lot has an impact on the size, structure and typology of the house, I limited my research to houses on a single front block.

4. Findings: The Form of Italo-Australian Transnational Houses in Brisbane

The summary of findings is structured into two themes: the architectural and the spatial form of the house.

4.1. The Architectural Form

The architectural form of Italian houses refers to its structure, materials, construction techniques and the decorative features visible on the main façades.

In relation to the structure of the house, despite the commonality of single storey houses in Brisbane, Italian migrants opted to build a spacious two-storey house. This choice was influenced by two main factors: (1) this type of building allowed the users to have more space to be used to carry out specific daily activities and (2) it would have recalled the tradition of the extended grand family house in Italy. The large house was the manifestation of their wish to continue the old tradition of the grand family house.

Most detached houses in Brisbane up to the 1970s were built by the use of two different construction systems. These were the weatherboard and brick veneer techniques. Italian migrants wanted a house constructed using a system called cavity brick, which, as reported by the interviewees, was a technique not commonly used in the construction of dwellings in Brisbane. All interviewees stressed that the distinctive cavity brick construction technique was chosen for traditional reasons that is because Italian migrants in Brisbane were acquainted with this construction technique as it was commonly used in Italy. Interviewees pointed out that the houses in which they lived in Italy before their departure were traditionally constructed using the cavity brick construction system. They chose to build a cavity brick house as a manifestation of physical stability, solidity, durability and also for thermal insulation. Therefore, cultural traditions, memory and migrants' housing experiences, both in the homeland and in the host land prior to construction of their present houses, influenced the way Italian migrants built their own houses in Brisbane.

The material utilized to build the external walls of the house, that is, the bricks, dictated the most common external decorative features visible on all the façades, the face brick finish. Italian migrants revealed that this was not a feature

visible in the houses in which they lived in Italy before migrating to Australia, since houses in Italy built using the cavity brick technique were usually rendered and painted. Therefore, in this case they were not influenced by cultural traditions. On the other hand, they were influenced by Australian brick veneer houses, where the external wall always had a face brick finish. This did not require plastering and/or painting as happened in Italy, and consequently was maintenance free.

Other features highlighted by respondents and quite evident on all the main façades of Italian migrants' houses investigated are the porch and the balcony, the brick arches, the balustrade situated on the balcony on the first floor, differentiated by stainless steel patterned or solid white concrete columns, and the Roman pillars supporting the overhanging slab on which the balustrade sits. The first architectural element, the porch and the balcony were not recognized as elements visible in previous Italian houses. On the other hand, forms visible in Australian houses influenced these architectural elements. The other features listed above were all influenced by architectural traditions learned in Italy. Interviewees explicitly pointed out the reasons for having these features on the main façade. They still wanted to maintain an 'Italian flavour' on the main façade through the use of architectural elements, which, are recurrent on the façades of many residential buildings in Italy. By utilizing traditional architectural elements visible in the built form in their native country, they wanted to create a façade reminding them of their origins.

4.2. The Spatial Form

The typical two storey Italian house allowed for more space to be used by the family to perform activities in response to their specific needs. Therefore, the influence of the internal mechanism and organization of the activities performed by family members was the leading factor in decisions regarding the division and utilization of domestic space in these houses. More specifically, the activities performed by family members could be subdivided into two main groups: working and social activities.

The pattern showed that working activities could be further divided into two sub-groups comprising domestic and income generating activities. The findings revealed that most domestic activities within the house were in turn related to food preparation and storage. These included making tomato sauce, pasta, gnocchi, lasagne, wine and other traditional foods and also the annual slaughtering of the pig and preparation of small-goods. This occurred since (a) after their arrival in Australia, Italians could not find the types of food that they were accustomed to in Italy, (b) producing and storing food were activities performed within the extended family in Italy, and (c) Italian migrants were influenced by the memory of scarcity of food in Italy in the post war period.

The domestic activities related to food preparation and storage were carried out on a daily basis in the kitchenette and in the back multi-use rooms located on the ground floor, near the backyard. This was influenced by a spatial tradition assimilated through the extended family house experience in Italy. The house of the extended family in Italy enclosed multi-use rooms on the ground floor, close to the kitchen used for the preparation and storage of food.

In addition, food preparation was related to the cultivation of vegetables. As a result, the backyard was used to plant agricultural species, not for aesthetic appeal, but for cooking purposes. In turn, these products were exchanged with other Italians who also cultivated vegetables. Italian migrants wanted to create space within the outdoor area of the house to cultivate food in a more private context. This occurred because Italian migrants were influenced by their way of life in Italy. Even before leaving their native country, interviewees stated that, besides producing and storing food within the extended family in Italy, they also grew vegetables and fruit trees in the gardens.

If on one hand, the activity of food preparation and cooking was informally performed on a daily basis in the kitchenette located on the ground floor, on the other hand cooking was also performed in a second formal kitchen located on the first floor. This occurred especially on weekends and in preparation for special events, and was related to social interaction. The kitchen, dining and living area on the first floor formed one large open space used mainly for formal events. The conformation of this space was partially influenced by the extended family house configuration where the dining and kitchen areas were unified. In the case of Italian migrants in Brisbane, they linked the living area to the dining and kitchen area, creating one large open space. In turn, this was influenced by migrants' way of life in Italy, that is, by their need to enhance social interaction in a host environment.

The need to perform income-generating activities, which were mainly related to food distribution, the building industry and the manufacture of clothes, also played a relevant role in the spatial distribution of the house. In turn these activities were influenced by the way migrants lived within the extended family in Italy, and by the need to make a living in Australia. The findings reveal that these activities were carried out on a daily basis in the multi-use rooms located on the ground floor at the back of the house.

Migrants revealed that working activities were subdivided by gender. The pattern shows that while wives spent much time in the kitchen preparing, storing and cooking food, husbands were more involved in income producing activities.

After working in the cane fields in North Queensland, many Italians moved to Brisbane driven by the wish to live in a less isolated built environment where they would have more opportunity to socially interact. As a result, the house was configured in order to allow social activities to be performed in a different context. More specifically, social activities were also subdivided into two categories: informal and formal social activities.

The findings revealed that informal activities, such as the daily family dinner, the random meetings of the family and female friends and relatives, occurred in the living-dining

area located on the ground floor, readily accessible through the front door of the house. Formal activities, such as the Sunday, Christmas, Easter and general holiday lunches were carried out in the open space comprising the living, dining and kitchen area, located in the front of the upper level.

5. Limitation and Future Research Opportunities

If we knew what it was we were doing, it would not be called research, would it?
(Albert Einstein cited in O'Leary, 2009, p. 1)

As stated, the selected case study, comprising people and artifacts, was bounded by specific limits. The selection of participants was based on their country of origin, country of destination and period of migration, participants' age at time of migration and finally their social class. The selection of the artifacts was also based on specific limits. They had to be newly built detached single house typology situated on a quarter acre block, not existing, renovated or extended, built in the Brisbane metropolitan area. This suggests that the findings obtained through this exploration are related to a case study selected by restricted and manageable limits. Based on the findings revealed through this study and on the highlighted limitations, some directions for future research can be suggested.

5.1. Urban Sociology

This study intended to use the insights of architectural sociology to explore how human behavior and/or activities influence the built spatial form, with specific reference to transnational houses built by first generation Italian migrants in Brisbane. It was highlighted that cultural patterns, manifested in spatial behavior or activities, are displayed in the spatial distribution of Italian migrants' houses.

An interesting issue raised during this research study is related to urban sociology. This discipline is differentiated from architectural sociology in that it operates at a larger macro-scale of investigation, exploring the extent to which the urban built environment is related to human behavior and/or activities. More specifically, this study shows that for Italian migrants, at a macro-scale level, a public open space such as the town square played a relevant role in supporting social interaction in Italy. Upon their arrival in Australia, migrants realized that town squares were an urban element missing in the built environment and this fact, in turn, did not facilitate social interaction. Consequently, as respondents highlighted, the original function of this public space was initially replaced by ethnic clubs and associations (at a macro-scale level) and later on by the space allocated within their houses for interaction with other people (at a micro-scale level). Both spatial environments were designed and built in order to enhance social interaction.

Two questions arising from this study are: (1) did Italian migrants attempt to modify/change the built environment of Australian cities and suburbs by introducing public urban open spaces such as a town square (for example in North Queensland near the cane fields townships and/or in suburbs of other major Australian cities) and (2) to what extent does an open public urban element like a town square within the Australian built environment contribute to enhance social interaction among community residents? These further topics could be explored from an urban sociology perspective in order to provide a detailed insight into the conceptualisation and development of the Australian built environment.

5.2. Cultural Groups in Australia

This study focused upon the influences of Italian migrants on the form of their detached houses in Brisbane. As Australia is a multicultural society, other cultural groups that have migrated to Australia in general, and to Brisbane in particular, could be investigated. This would provide an understanding of the way other cultural groups influenced the form of their transnational houses, give detailed insight into the Australian built form development, and will also enrich understanding about the relationship of design and culture.

5.3. Social Class

The theories of Bourdier, AlSayyad, Passeron and Thompson (J. P. Bourdieu & AlSayyad, 1989; P. Bourdieu, 1977, 1979, 1983, 1986, 1990a, 1990b, 1992, 1993, 1998; P. Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; P. Bourdieu & Thompson, 1991) highlight that the concept of culture is closely related to a cultural group and to social class. In their view, each social class possessed its own habits, defined as a set of acquired patterns of thought and behavior, and generally of a way of life. Therefore, they stress that the built form is the reflection of culture, as a way of life, of a cultural group and its social class. A house and its appearance can be linked to social identity and therefore can distinguish one social status group, and also one social class, from another. Through functional and decorative attributes, a house can be used as a marker of status and class. As mentioned earlier, this factor was considered in the selection of Italian migrants for this study. All selected participants belonged to a working social class, since participants belonging to this specific class represented the majority of Italians who migrated to Australia. Further studies considering Italian migrants belonging to other social classes than the one selected for this study could be engaged in order to provide a further understanding of the influences of migrants belonging to another social class had on the form of their houses.

5.4. Geographical Areas and Historical Period

Italian migrants settled in most Australian capital cities including Brisbane, Adelaide, Sydney, Melbourne and Perth. Moreover, they settled in other countries such as the United States, Canada, Brazil and Argentina, not just in the post-war period, but also in other historical periods. Therefore, this current study could be expanded to investigate migration

flows and their influences on the built form in the other Australian cities and/or in other countries.

5.5. 1960s Renovated, Extended and Refurbished Houses

This study was limited to houses built by first generation Italian migrants. The findings revealed that they occupied existing housing that was designed and built by Australians, and they also renovated/extended/refurbished existing houses before building their own artifacts in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The cultural expression inherent in such housing might be that of colonial Australia, but the way in which it is used and understood might be through an Italian cultural framework. Therefore, this study can also shed light on an exploration of houses renovated/extended/refurbished by first generation migrants in Brisbane. This could provide a further detailed understanding of the ways in which first generation Italian migrants in Brisbane influenced their renovated/extended/refurbished houses.

5.6. Building Typology

The study explored one specific typology of building, which of detached houses situated on a quarter acre block of land. Italian migrants revealed that this was not the only typology of building they developed in Brisbane. They pointed out that in the late 1970s to early 1980s Italians joined their savings to purchase large building plots where they built multi-storey apartment buildings for speculative purposes. Therefore, further research can be extended to the study of how Italian migrants influenced the form of other housing typologies, such as town-houses and multi-storey apartments.

5.7. Material Culture

The study did not focus on decorative and utilitarian objects such as furniture, visual art (photographs, images, maps, paintings and craft objects), books and newspaper articles, crockery and cutlery and sacred objects, visible inside the house, and/or fountains, pottery, ceramics, statues, or wood-burning ovens which are, usually located in the backyards and front gardens.

The literature shows that physical objects left by past cultures or within people's cultural context are defined as 'material culture' (Tilley, Keane, Kuchler, Rowlands, & Spyder, 2006), because it is assumed that humans perceive and understand the 'things' around them as they have learned from their culture. For this reason such objects are expressions of cultural identity after meanings have been given to them. Therefore, a similar study could be conducted to investigate the meaning of material culture within Italian migrants' houses in Brisbane.

5.8. Second Generation Italians' Houses

The link between form, culture and behavior is difficult to explore and to define due to the fact that people's way of life changes and evolves with time. In regards to vernacular houses designed and built by first generation Italian migrants, a question arising from this study would be how second generation Italian migrants, which are defined as *'an ethnic group who is either born overseas and migrates at a very early age (0-7 years) or is born in the host country of first generation migrants' (Rapoport, 1982) (Poulsen & Lange, 1998)*, have influenced the form of their houses. A supposition is that houses built in the late 1970s by first generation Italian migrants have different features compared to those built in the 1990s by second generation Italian migrants. Research could be expanded to study these variations. This could assist in understanding how the houses' features, heritage and cultural influences have changed over time and also to what extent first and second generation Italian migrants have sustained a loss of the native cultural framework and have been absorbed into the host country's framework.

6. Summary

The purpose of this paper is to discuss and critically review the qualitative methodology adopted to study how first generation Italian migrants in Brisbane have influenced the form of a specific typology of dwelling, the archetypal 'house on a quarter-acre block', in the post WWII period. The findings revealed that the form of the Italo-Australian Transnational house was influenced by two cultures: those derived from the ways of life belonging to two societies, Italy and Australia. Critically, the outcomes resulting from this exploration highlighted the limitations of this study. Based on the findings revealed through this study and the identified limitations, the recommendations for further studies and development of both theoretical and applied areas of research have been suggested.

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