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**Home Remaking: An architectural study of home in diaspora  
in contemporary Britain with particular reference to the lives  
of Iranian women**

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## **Abstract**

This research explores the ways in which Iranian women make their diasporic home in the context of the Great Britain. It sheds light on a rarely discussed area of Iranian diaspora in the UK and particularly of their home. At the meantime through the study of home in diaspora, it points out the lack of architectural discussions in the current home literature, urging for investigations that situate homemaking, memory, identity and gender within the spatial dimensions of home. Therefore, this thesis aims to fill the gap between the studies of home in architecture and humanities, emphasising on developing a framework for the study of home with an interdisciplinary approach to examine the ways in which Iranian women situate their identity by the way they make their diasporic homes. The everyday space of the Iranian home, as well as the Iranian diasporic home, is analysed with a particular focus on the ways that these spaces accommodate cultural/religious modalities. Additionally, the importance of this study is designated by highlighting the lack of studies on Iranian female interactions with their home spaces, specific to their homemaking approaches.

The transient nature of these diasporic homes as an embodiment of female identity provides a unique situation to be examined in relation to the notions of gender, culture and homemaking. To address this complexity, with the help of the theoretical studies, home is described as a place that embodies dialectic notions of real/ideal, one/other and tangible and intangible. Therefore, to be able to study home within those contradictory notions a theoretical framework is developed that responds to the necessity of examining home within an interdisciplinary study in relation to gender and identity conceptions. Hence, a combination of feminist and phenomenological theories are applied to deconstruct the conventional dualistic conceptions employed in current home studies by defining home as a space of in-between. As a result, a framework of tangible, intangible and the in-between elements is proposed for the formulation of an architectural methodology to provide an understanding of the making of Iranian home in diaspora. It is within this framework that the atmosphere of home is discussed across different disciplines and is examined as a possible approach to homemaking in diaspora. The research is developed through a phenomenological study of Iranian home that introduces hierarchy, hospitality and cleanliness as spatial/cultural themes under the dialectical notions of Zaher and Baten in Iranian culture. The feminist and phenomenological theories were incorporated into mixed qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews, focus groups and visual analysis.

Ultimately, the contribution of this thesis is a proposed architectural methodology for the study of home and homemaking that is incremental as well as holistic. The formulated framework is a combination of tangible, intangible and in-between elements that encompasses spatial/cultural elements of Iranian home. The contribution is two-fold one being, the substantive aspects: that contribute to the topic of inquiry by developing a theoretical framework, representing a deeper understanding of home, the concept of home in diaspora and particularly the experience of Iranian home. And other contribution is the methodological aspects proposing a framework of methodology for the study of home that can be replicable and scalable. It is concluded in this thesis that the study of home with an architectural evaluation is achieved, only if it is situated in a context that acknowledges subjective experience, memory of space, identity and gender while signifying its indispensable tangible aspects.

# Table of Contents

## Volume 1

<b>Abstract</b> .....	<b>i</b>
<b>Table of Contents</b> .....	<b>ii</b>
<b>List of Figures</b> .....	<b>vi</b>
<b>List of Tables</b> .....	<b>xi</b>
<b>Acknowledgments</b> .....	<b>xii</b>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>1</b>
Existing research gaps and the contribution of this thesis .....	5
Research aims and objectives.....	7
Research methodology.....	7
Thesis structure .....	9
<b>Chapter 1 : Architectural study of home, In-between space of tangible and intangible</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<b>1.0 Introduction</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<b>1.1 Theories of home</b> .....	<b>12</b>
1.1.2 Being in the world, living the space .....	13
1.1.3 Social construction of home.....	17
1.1.4 Temporality of space and identity.....	20
1.1.5 Feminism reading on space.....	22
<b>1.2 Capturing the atmosphere of home</b> .....	<b>26</b>
1.2.1 Philosophy of atmosphere .....	27
1.2.2 Atmosphere and architecture.....	29
1.2.3 Atmosphere of home.....	34
1.2.3.1 Sensory experience of home/ the representation of identity.....	35
1.2.3.2 Gender identity; women experience of home .....	37
1.2.3.3 Home possessions .....	41
1.2.3.4 Spatial arrangements of home .....	43
1.2.4 The architecture of the everyday.....	45
<b>1.3 Home in Diaspora</b> .....	<b>50</b>
1.3.1 Diaspora: history and definitions .....	50
1.3.2 Diaspora and Transnationalism .....	52
1.3.3 The diasporic home .....	54
Summary .....	57
<b>Chapter 2 : A methodology for an architectural research study</b> .....	<b>60</b>
<b>2.0. Introduction</b> .....	<b>60</b>
<b>2.1. Evolving architectural methodology through feminist phenomenology</b> ... <b>60</b>	
2.1.1 Phenomenological methodology.....	62
2.1.2 Feminist Methodology.....	64
2.1.3 Feminist Phenomenology.....	66
<b>2.2 Introducing an in-between methodology and the qualitative methods: ....</b> <b>72</b>	
<b>2.2.1 Interviews</b> .....	<b>77</b>

2.2.1.1 Both/and as opposed to either/or: feminism and phenomenology in interview .....	80
2.2.1.2 Location .....	82
<b>2.2.2 Focus groups .....</b>	<b>86</b>
<b>2.2.3 Visual Methods .....</b>	<b>90</b>
2.2.3.1 Photographs .....	90
2.2.3.2 Drawings.....	91
Summary .....	94
<b>Chapter 3 : What makes a home Iranian? A phenomenological study of the Iranian home .....</b>	<b>96</b>
<b>3.0 Introduction.....</b>	<b>96</b>
<b>3.1 Phenomenological study of home .....</b>	<b>96</b>
<b>3.2 <i>Zaher</i> and <i>Baten</i>, traditions of hierarchy, cleanliness and hospitality in the Iranian home.....</b>	<b>100</b>
3.2.1 Hierarchy .....	104
3.2.2 Hospitality .....	108
3.2.3 Cleanliness.....	110
<b>3.3 Phenomenological study of the Iranian home.....</b>	<b>112</b>
<b>3.3.1 Life in the country: Grandparents farmhouse (1986-1995).....</b>	<b>116</b>
3.3.1.1 Hierarchy (Grandparents farmhouse) .....	118
3.3.1.2 Hospitality (Grandparents' farmhouse) .....	121
3.3.1.3 Cleanliness (Grandparents' farmhouse).....	123
<b>3.3.2 Urban Living: The childhood house (1986-1998) .....</b>	<b>125</b>
3.3.2.1 Hierarchy (The childhood house) .....	126
3.3.2.2 Hospitality (The childhood house).....	127
3.3.2.3 Cleanliness (The childhood house) .....	129
<b>3.3.3 Urban Living: Grandparents' house (1992-present) .....</b>	<b>131</b>
3.3.3.1 Hierarchy (Grandparents' urban house).....	132
3.3.3.2 Hospitality (Grandparents' urban house).....	133
3.3.3.3 Cleanliness (Grandparents' urban house).....	135
<b>3.3.4 Urban Apartment life: The current parental home (2002-present).....</b>	<b>138</b>
3.3.4.1 Hierarchy (the current parental home).....	139
3.3.4.2 Hospitality (the current parental home).....	140
3.3.4.3 Cleanliness (the current parental home).....	142
Summary .....	143
<b>Chapter 4 : Iranian women and their diasporic homes; Remaking of the Iranian home .....</b>	<b>145</b>
<b>4.0 Introduction.....</b>	<b>145</b>
<b>4.1 The respondents.....</b>	<b>145</b>
Shadi .....	147
Negar .....	150
Leila .....	152
Elaheh.....	154
Azar .....	157
Hoda.....	159

Sahar .....	161
Mina.....	164
<b>4.2.1 Tangible .....</b>	<b>168</b>
<b>4.2.2 Intangible .....</b>	<b>182</b>
4.2.2.1 Sensory experience of home: food.....	183
4.2.2.2 Daily routines/calendar of events .....	188
<b>4.2.3 The in-between .....</b>	<b>191</b>
4.2.3.1 The spatial qualities: light/nature... ..	191
4.2.3.2 The spatial/ cultural elements: Hierarchy, hospitality and cleanliness... ..	195
4.2.3.2.1 Hierarchy .....	195
4.2.3.2.2 Hospitality.....	199
4.2.3.2.3 Cleanliness.....	205
<b>4.3. A framework for the study of the Iranian home in diaspora.....</b>	<b>217</b>
Summary .....	221

## Volume 2

<b>Chapter 5 : Focus groups analysis .....</b>	<b>222</b>
<b>5.0 Introduction.....</b>	<b>222</b>
<b>5.1 Ethical Procedure.....</b>	<b>224</b>
<b>5.2 Introducing the focus group to the participants.....</b>	<b>224</b>
5.2.1 Activities.....	224
<b>5.3 Focus Groups Analysis.....</b>	<b>227</b>
5.3.1. First Focus Group .....	228
5.3.1.1 Tangible.....	229
5.3.1.1.1 Objects .....	229
5.3.1.1.2 Tangible architectural elements of home .....	234
5.3.1.2 Intangible.....	234
5.3.1.3 The in-between .....	236
5.3.1.3.1 Spatial qualities.....	236
5.3.1.3.2 Spatial/cultural elements (Hierarchy, Hospitality, Cleanliness).....	239
Hierarchy .....	240
Hospitality .....	240
Cleanliness .....	242
Summary.....	242
5.3.2 The second and the third focus groups .....	244
Second focus group .....	244
Third focus group.....	246
5.3.2.1 Tangible.....	246
5.3.2.1.1 Objects.....	246
5.3.2.1.2 Tangible architectural elements of home .....	251
5.3.2.2 Intangible.....	254
5.3.2.3 The in-between .....	260
5.3.2.3.1 Spatial qualities.....	260
5.3.2.3.2 Spatial/cultural elements (Hierarchy, Hospitality, Cleanliness).....	262
Hierarchy .....	263
Hospitality .....	263

Cleanliness .....	265
Summary .....	266
<b>Chapter 6 : Concluding discussion and recommendations .....</b>	<b>273</b>
<b>6.0 Introduction .....</b>	<b>273</b>
<b>6.1 Thesis contribution .....</b>	<b>275</b>
6.1.1 Data analysis and validation .....	279
6.1.2 Thesis main findings .....	280
<b>6.2 Recommendations .....</b>	<b>283</b>
<b>6.3 Limitations .....</b>	<b>284</b>
<b>6.4 Future work .....</b>	<b>285</b>
<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>286</b>
<b>Appendix 1. The interview transcripts.....</b>	<b>301</b>
Interview no 1: Azar .....	301
Interview no 2: Elaheh .....	306
Interview no 3: Hoda.....	312
Interview no 4: Leila.....	317
Interview no 5: Mina .....	322
Interview no 6: Negar .....	330
Interview no 7: Sahar.....	334
Interview no 8: Shadi .....	339
<b>Appendix 2. The Focus group transcripts and activities.....</b>	<b>346</b>
Focus group no 1: Shadi, Elaheh and Negar .....	346
Focus group no 2: Paniz and Shirin.....	370
Focus group no 3: Ziba, Maral and Shideh .....	393

## List of Figures

<b>Figure 2.1</b> How a feminist phenomenology accommodates notions of space and identity within an in-between framework. ....	72
<b>Figure 2.2</b> The development of qualitative methods. ....	86
<b>Figure 3.1</b> <i>Zaher</i> and <i>Baten</i> in Iranian culture and the embodiment of hierarchy, hospitality and cleanliness. ....	100
<b>Figure 3.2</b> The evolution of courtyards in houses, from traditional houses until today. ....	103
<b>Figure 3.3</b> The Boroujerdis house's courtyard, 18th Century, Qajar Era, Kashan (Charmchi 2018). ....	103
<b>Figure 3.4</b> The Evolution of Iranian houses in relation to the position of women in the society. ....	106
<b>Figure 3.5</b> An overview of the phenomenological study of four Iranian homes. ....	114
<b>Figure 3.6</b> Boroujerdis house (Charmchi 2018) ....	117
<b>Figure 3.7</b> Abyane Village, a Village in <i>Kashan</i> , in central Iran, close to deserted areas (Latombe 2014). ....	117
<b>Figure 3.8</b> Shabandar Village in the same state (where my grandparents' house was located), having houses with the same property, in west Iran, photo courtesy of Somayeh Rouzbahani (Rouzbahani 2014). ....	118
<b>Figure 3.9</b> The exterior of the farmhouse within the compound surrounded by the relatives' homes. My grandfather's brother was living right behind this house and my aunt's home is depicted on the right. The small pool was uses for washing dishes and clothes. ....	119
<b>Figure 3.10</b> The house position with the other houses, the garage, the stables and the route to the garden. ....	119
<b>Figure 3.11</b> The plans of home depicting the divisions of space in terms of hierarchy. ....	120
<b>Figure 3.12</b> The plans of home in relation with the other buildings. ....	120
<b>Figure 3.13</b> Grandparents' room with a view to the garden from the window; the bakery and the barn could be viewed from this room. ....	122
<b>Figure 3.14</b> The spatial movements of the guests and the hosts in the home. The guests had access to all parts of the house. Their only limitation compare to the hosts was movements. However, the hosts were more comfortable moving around the house as they were serving the guests and performing daily tasks. ....	123
<b>Figure 3.15</b> The drawing room with the view to my aunt's house. ....	124
<b>Figure 3.16</b> The plans of home depicting the divisions of space in terms of cleanliness. ....	125
<b>Figure 3.17</b> The divisions of space in terms of hierarchy for the occasion of hosting guests. ....	126
<b>Figure 3.18</b> The exterior of the childhood home; on the right side our neighbours' home and the wall where she used a ladder to come up and communicate with us in the evenings can be seen. ....	127
<b>Figure 3.19</b> The drawing room where a combination of modern furniture and floor sitting furniture was applied to host the guests. ....	128
<b>Figure 3.20</b> The host-guest spatial movement. ....	129
<b>Figure 3.21</b> The divisions of space on the occasion of hosting guests. ....	130
<b>Figure 3.22</b> The living room and the patio. The decorated shelf on the left and the bedrooms on the right are depicted. ....	130
<b>Figure 3.23</b> The exterior of the grandparents' urban home. The transition of the Iranian home can be seen in the Roman architectural elements; having several floors has separated this home from the rest of the homes in the neighbourhood. ....	131
<b>Figure 3.24</b> The back entrance and the view to the park. ....	132
<b>Figure 3.25</b> The spatial division in terms of hierarchy and privacy in the home. ....	133

<b>Figure 3.26</b> The separated patio between the public and the private spaces of the home. A curtain can be seen in the background that is applied to give more comfort to the household (especially women) on the occasion of hosting. ....	<b>134</b>
<b>Figure 3.27</b> The spatial movement of the guests and the host.....	<b>135</b>
<b>Figure 3.28</b> The spatial division of grandparents’ urban home in terms of cleanliness for hosting. ....	<b>136</b>
<b>Figure 3.29</b> Photos from the movie recorded on 2009, correlated with the plan. ....	<b>137</b>
<b>Figure 3.30</b> The division of spaces in terms of public and private on the occasion of hosting others. ....	<b>139</b>
<b>Figure 3.31</b> The spatial movements of the guests and the host.....	<b>140</b>
<b>Figure 3.32</b> The interior of the flat, showing engaging with the floor and modern furniture in the daily setting. ....	<b>141</b>
<b>Figure 3.33</b> This photo depicts the open kitchen that is a common trend in the current Iranian flats in contrast to the isolated hidden kitchen of the past homes. ....	<b>142</b>
<b>Figure 3.34</b> The division of spaces in terms of public and private and cleanliness on the occasion of hosting others. ....	<b>143</b>
<b>Figure 4.1</b> Guest and host movement in Shadi’s home. ....	<b>148</b>
<b>Figure 4.2</b> Shadi made her home with the furniture she bought in the UK. However, Iranian objects are also applied in her home decoration. The objects and their locations are shown in this figure.....	<b>149</b>
<b>Figure 4.3</b> Guest and host movement in Negar’s studio apartment.....	<b>150</b>
<b>Figure 4.4</b> Different corners of Negar’s studio flat are given different characters through the application of objects and the furniture arrangement.....	<b>151</b>
<b>Figure 4.5</b> Guest and host movements in Leila’s flat. ....	<b>152</b>
<b>Figure 4.6</b> The location of Iranian objects in Leila’s home. Her concern with the floor cleanliness can be understood by the shoe storage she had placed in the corridor. She had also prepared sweets and fruit for hosting me. ....	<b>153</b>
<b>Figure 4.7</b> Guest and host movement in Elaheh’s home. ....	<b>154</b>
<b>Figure 4.8</b> Despite the limitations of living in a shared house, Iranian ingredients and Iranian inspired duvet cover can be identified in Elaheh’s home.....	<b>156</b>
<b>Figure 4.9</b> Guest and host movement in Azar’s home. ....	<b>157</b>
<b>Figure 4.10</b> The location of Iranian objects in Azar’s home. ....	<b>158</b>
<b>Figure 4.11</b> Guest and host movement in Hoda’s home. ....	<b>159</b>
<b>Figure 4.12</b> Hoda hosted me with Persian food and tea. Her sensitivity to cleanliness was perceptible as her home was extremely clean. Besides, the shoes were taken off before entering her bedroom. There were also minimum objects displayed; only a few religious books and Iranian handcraft could be identified implying Iranian culture in her home. ....	<b>160</b>
<b>Figure 4.13</b> Guest and host movement in Sahar’s home.....	<b>161</b>
<b>Figure 4.14</b> Sahar was also prepared in advance for hosting me for the interview. There were traces of her life in Iran that could be observed through her family photos and the gifts in her home decorations. Besides, I noticed rugs that were applied to cover the floor that were very similar to the ones in Azar’s home. ....	<b>163</b>
<b>Figure 4.15</b> Guest and host movement in Mina’s home.....	<b>165</b>
<b>Figure 4.16</b> A variety of Iranian handicrafts and objects were noticeable in Mina’s home. There were also traces of celebrating Iranian traditions as painted eggs for the <i>Haftseen</i> table was recognisable in her home decoration. ....	<b>166</b>
<b>Figure 4.17</b> Mina’s bedroom is decorated with a British flag duvet cover and an Iranian handmade craft.....	<b>169</b>
<b>Figure 4.18</b> The living room is decorated with Iranian crafts and Iranian and religious books including Hafiz Poetry (the book on the second row on the left) and the Quran (the book	

on the first row on the left). Mugs with the sign of the university and the Peak District are located on top of Iranian objects. ....	170
<b>Figure 4.19</b> Decorated eggs that were used for Mina’s Iranian New Year table are placed in her British mugs, she stated that in this way she can use them next year without displaying them all year. ....	171
<b>Figure 4.20</b> Mina’s home was decorated with different kinds of Iranian handicrafts. ....	172
<b>Figure 4.21</b> The colourful, delineated cushions in Shadi’s home. ....	173
<b>Figure 4.22</b> Elahah’s duvet cover is shown in this photo. She also has posters of the Beatles and a map of the world on her room’s walls that she explains are not hers and they belong to the previous tenants and that she did not have anything against them so she kept them. ....	174
<b>Figure 4.23</b> The Kilims in Leila’s living room and bedroom. ....	175
<b>Figure 4.24</b> The decorations on the walls in Azar’s living room including “The Scream” .....	176
<b>Figure 4.25</b> The decorations on the walls in Azar’s living room. ....	176
<b>Figure 4.26</b> The corridor walls (the left picture) are decorated with paintings and souvenirs that Azar brought from Iran for her boyfriend. The right picture shows the bedroom walls where the Iranian evil eye and more paintings are displayed. ....	177
<b>Figure 4.27</b> The receptacle on the left is a device to burn <i>Esfand</i> , a seed that is believed to send away the evil eye and negative energy. Shadi mentioned that this is a gift from her husband’s father from one of his trips to Iran. The small colourful bowl is also a handcraft from northern Iran that Shadi’s friend gave her when she was leaving Iran. Both objects are located next to the TV and when I was asking about them she specified that she didn’t buy them and if she was in Iran she wouldn’t display them in her home. ....	178
<b>Figure 4.28</b> The Persian Carpet is a gift from her husband’s parents; her husband’s grandfather originally owned it. She specified that she didn’t like it at the beginning and couldn’t imagine her house with a colourful carpet, but her husband loved it and as time passed she started to like it too. ....	178
<b>Figure 4.29</b> The Quran and religious texts placed on Hoda’s bedside table. ....	179
<b>Figure 4.30</b> A drawing of Bahauallah displayed on the living room wall in Sahar’s home. ....	180
<b>Figure 4.31</b> A drawing that is a gift from the grandmother of Sahar’s husband on the living room wall. ....	181
<b>Figure 4.32</b> An overview of the tangible elements and their relationship in the Iranian diasporic homes. ....	182
<b>Figure 4.33</b> Shadi hosted me with an Iranian dish accompanied with different types of Iranian pickles she bought from an Iranian store in her neighbourhood. ....	184
<b>Figure 4.34</b> Hoda hosted me with rice with saffron and barberries and chicken. ....	185
<b>Figure 4.35</b> Rice cookers in Sahar’s (left) and Azar’s (right) kitchens. ....	186
<b>Figure 4.36</b> Shadi’s dining area. ....	187
<b>Figure 4.37</b> An overview of intangible elements and their relationship in the Iranian diasporic homes. ....	191
<b>Figure 4.38</b> The picture of an L-shaped home that Shadi found closest to the image of her ideal home. She checks the photo every day and always looks around in different neighbourhoods in London, in case she finds it in reality. However, she is not planning to purchase a house right now. ....	193
<b>Figure 4.39</b> Shadi draws her own plan for her ideal home. The right drawing is the first floor plan and left is the second floor. ....	194
<b>Figure 4.40</b> The public and private division in Leila’s home. ....	196
<b>Figure 4.41</b> The public and private division in Elaheh’s home. ....	197
<b>Figure 4.42</b> The thresholds of public and private in Azar’s home. ....	198
<b>Figure 4.43</b> The thresholds of public and private in Hoda’s home. ....	199

<b>Figure 4.44</b> Thresholds of public and private in Negar’s home. The right diagram shows her home on the occasion of hosting. ....	<b>200</b>
<b>Figure 4.45</b> The thresholds of public and private in Mina’s home. The second figure depicts her home on the occasion of hosting others. ....	<b>201</b>
<b>Figure 4.46</b> The thresholds of public and private in Sahar’s home. ....	<b>203</b>
<b>Figure 4.47</b> Thresholds of public and private in Shadi’s home. ....	<b>204</b>
<b>Figure 4.48</b> The intensity of cleanliness and the spatial division it creates in Elaheh’s home. ....	<b>206</b>
<b>Figure 4.49</b> The intensity of cleanliness and the spatial division it creates in Mina’s home. ...	<b>207</b>
<b>Figure 4.50</b> The intensity of cleanliness and the spatial division it creates in Leila’s home ...	<b>207</b>
<b>Figure 4.51</b> Hoda’s home was tremendously clean and neat with no extraneous objects and with no trace of how she accommodates her daily activities within her diasporic home. She mentioned that the dining table is usually where she works and stated that she removed her laptop and her papers and books from the table and placed them in the storage area in her living room because she was hosting me that day. ....	<b>208</b>
<b>Figure 4.52</b> The intensity of cleanliness and the spatial division it creates in Hoda’s home...	<b>209</b>
<b>Figure 4.53</b> The intensity of cleanliness and the spatial division it creates in Azar’s home...	<b>209</b>
<b>Figure 4.54</b> The intensity of cleanliness and the spatial division it creates in Sahar’s home..	<b>210</b>
<b>Figure 4.55</b> The intensity of cleanliness and the spatial division it creates in Shadi’s home.	<b>211</b>
<b>Figure 4.56</b> The intensity of cleanliness and the spatial division it creates in Negar’s home.	<b>212</b>
<b>Figure 4.57</b> Hoda’s bedroom is the only carpeted area in her home where she sometimes sits on the floor in order to tackle her daily activities more comfortably. ....	<b>213</b>
<b>Figure 4.58</b> The carpet that Azar sits on while working. ....	<b>214</b>
<b>Figure 4.59</b> The corridor and even balcony are fully carpeted in Azar’s home. ....	<b>215</b>
<b>Figure 4.60</b> An overview of the in-between elements and their relationship in the Iranian diasporic homes. ....	<b>217</b>
<b>Figure 4.61</b> The development of the methodological framework.....	<b>218</b>
<b>Figure 4.62</b> The categorisation of data generated from the interviews into three areas of tangible, intangible and the in-between. ....	<b>219</b>
<b>Figure 4.63</b> The detailed categorisation of themes to be examined in the focus groups derived from comparing and analysis of figures 4.32, 4.37 and 4.60. ....	<b>220</b>
<b>Figure 4.64</b> The detailed themes fitted into a structured format to be examined based on the level of importance. ....	<b>221</b>
<b>Figure 5.1</b> The photos presented to the participants that were chosen in regard to the mentioned themes. Photo number 1: "An ordinary family" in <i>Iranian living room</i> by Mohammad Mahdi Amya/Fabrica (Bossan 2013), Photo number 2: "Life as an elderly person" in <i>Iranian living room</i> by Hamed Ilkhan/Fabrica (Bossan 2013). Photo number 3: Photo courtesy of Chidaneh (Aghazadeh 2016). Photo number 4: photo by Mohammad Reza Hossein Nejad and Mohammad Zadeh ("Caspiancover" 2015). ....	<b>225</b>
<b>Figure 5.2.</b> The spread sheet examining the categories concluded from the interviews analysis. ....	<b>226</b>
<b>Figure 5.3</b> The development of the proposed framework of themes through each step .....	<b>228</b>
<b>Figure 5.4</b> The top photo depicts the tray Shadi brought from Iran. And the bottom photo shows other decorative objects she has in her home brought from her trips back home: the golden birds, painted clay pomegranates and the decorative bowl. ....	<b>230</b>
<b>Figure 5.5</b> Shadi’s completed spread sheet.....	<b>231</b>
<b>Figure 5.6</b> Elaheh’s completed spread sheet .....	<b>231</b>
<b>Figure 5.7</b> Negar’s completed spread sheet.....	<b>231</b>
<b>Figure 5.8</b> Carpets in different spaces in Shadi’s current home. ....	<b>232</b>
<b>Figure 5.9</b> Persian carpet in Elaheh’s living room.....	<b>233</b>

<b>Figure 5.10</b> Photo from Elaheh’s living room.....	235
<b>Figure 5.11</b> The themes discussed in relation to spatial quality in the focus group no.1. ....	236
<b>Figure 5.12</b> Shadi’s private back garden that could be accessed directly from the kitchen. ...	238
<b>Figure 5.13</b> Photos that were discussed by the participants in the focus group. The first one was chosen to raise discussions on hierarchy, the second one cleanliness/hospitality, the third one hospitality and the last one cleanliness., Photo number 1: "Life as an elderly person" in <i>Iranian living room</i> by Hamed Ilkhan/Fabrica (Bossan 2013). Photo number 2: Photo courtesy of Chidaneh (Aghazadeh 2016) Photo number 3: "An ordinary family" in <i>Iranian living room</i> by Mohammad Mahdi Amya/Fabrica (Bossan 2013). Photo number 4: photo by Mohammad Reza Hossein Nejad and Mohammad Zadeh ("Caspiancover" 2015). .....	239
<b>Figure 5.14.</b> The spatial/cultural elements of home categorisation in diasporic home of Iranian women, showing how the hospitality is in primary presence and the other two elements of hierarchy and cleanliness work as complementary elements to hospitality.....	242
<b>Figure 5.15</b> The important elements of homemaking for the first focus group. ....	243
<b>Figure 5.16.</b> A handmade tribal rug brought from Iran in Maral’s home. She mentions this carpet was ideal for her as it was easy to carry due to the small size and lightweight....	249
<b>Figure 5.17</b> The furniture that Maral has bought for her flat.....	252
<b>Figure 5.18</b> Living room in Maral’s flat. She mentioned that the lamp and the steel chair were given to her by a friend who was living in the same block after he moved out from his place. ....	253
<b>Figure 5.19.</b> Maral stresses the lack of storage area in her home to store kitchen utensils and ingredients, hence she had to buy storage shelves.....	256
<b>Figure 5.20.</b> The kitchen in Maral’s flat. ....	257
<b>Figure 5.21.</b> The food related themes in focus groups no.2 and no.3.....	258
<b>Figure 5.22.</b> Homemaking elements in diasporic home of Iranian women in focus group no. 2 .....	267
<b>Figure 5.23</b> Homemaking elements in diasporic home of Iranian women in focus group no. 3 .....	267
<b>Figure 5.24</b> The Tangible themes of making home in diaspora and their relationship highlighted from the focus groups.....	269
<b>Figure 5.25</b> The intangible themes of making home in diaspora and their relationship highlighted from the focus groups.....	270
<b>Figure 5.26</b> The in-between themes of making home in diaspora and their relationship highlighted from the focus groups.....	271
<b>Figure 5.27</b> The evolvement of themes concluded form the interviews and focus groups, the final framework is emerged highlighting the themes for the study of Iranian home in diaspora and their relationships. ....	272

## List of Tables

<b>Table 3.1</b> The important annual events that represent the co-existence of Iranian and Islamic culture.....	<b>115</b>
<b>Table 3.2:</b> The themes emerging for the study of Iranian home in diaspora.....	<b>144</b>
<b>Table 4.1</b> Information regarding the respondents' diasporic home, their length of stay in the UK .....	<b>146</b>
<b>Table 4.2</b> The themes which emerged from the phenomenological studies under the evolved structure.....	<b>168</b>
<b>Table 4.3</b> The cooking habit of the respondents .....	<b>183</b>

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## Introduction

This thesis examines the meaning of home in diaspora by focusing on the diasporic home of Iranian women in the UK. This study is grounded in proposing an architectural methodology for the study of home through the application of feminist and phenomenological theories and methodologies. It examines the ways in which these Iranian immigrant women situate their individuality through the making of their diasporic homes and in particular, the ways in which their conception of the home is recreated and adapted to its new diasporic environment.

Home for Iranian women is a particularly charged place and is therefore, ripe for study. Iranian women's identity has been associated with home for a very long time; indeed, only a few decades ago they used to be referred to by their husbands as '*manzil*', the Persian word for 'house' (Najmabadi 1998: 91 and Najmabadi 1993). Their relationship with the home is bound up with political change and the identity of Iranian women has been associated with the space of home being recognized as the second citizens. It was only by the end of *Qajar* era (1785 to 1925) and during the political and social reforms during the *Pahlavi* reign (1925-1979) that women began to claim political and social space. During this time Iranian women became the face of the country's modernisation encouraged to unveil, while after the Islamic revolution of 1979, veiling was valued and women had a strong presence in the representation of the ideal Islamic society (Naghbi 1999, Najmabadi, 1998 and 2005). Home for Iranian women is a contradictory space; on the one hand, it is a place of freedom and autonomy and on the other hand, it is a place that can be limiting and restrictive. These contradictions have influenced women's position and their engagement in the society over different political periods. Referring to the high rate of literacy and women's attendance in college, Shahla Haeri (2009) claims that women in Iran have faced a paradoxical situation during the post-revolutionary period.<sup>1</sup> She specified that, although women's education is widely supported by the government, the educational achievement does not always result in women's employment. Contradictions of these kinds have increased women's awareness about their rights with the result that they seek a more autonomous life elsewhere (Haeri, 2009: 127). Struggling with this paradoxical approach, migration has been considered by women as a journey to expand their opportunities and to experience a more independent life. Furthermore, over the last decade, Iran's economy was destabilised, mainly because of the political sanctions. High unemployment rates, mega inflation and social and political dissatisfaction have led young Iranians to consider migration as a solution to their situation in order to broaden their opportunities and to improve the quality of their lives.

This research targets the recent migration flows happening among young Iranians who pursue their education abroad. The study focuses on the homes of Iranian women who have left Iran for educational purposes and have continued to live in the UK. In the current literature the immigration of Iranians has been categorised within three main phases; before the revolution (1950-1979), after the revolution (1979-2000) and the recent flow from 2000 to

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<sup>1</sup> Women's literacy rate is 97 percent among Iranian women between 15 and 24; also women occupy 65 percent of places in college (Haeri 2009: 127).

present (Khodaviren 2015:14). The first phase was mostly shaped around male students migrating to study in developed countries (Yarshater 2002). The second wave was when the massive flow of Iranian migration occurred due to the events and circumstances prior and after the revolution of 1979. This has caused the formation of an Iranian diaspora around the world with the estimated population between 4 and 6 million who are mainly settled in the United States ( Malek 2015:24, Vahabi 2012). The political and social reform after the revolution have been a great catalyst for keeping the immigration from Iran an on-going process. In the first two phases many migrants consider their life in diaspora as temporary waiting for the eventual return (Khodaviren 2015:32). The last wave of migration however, is shaped by skilled professionals who are seeking a better life abroad mainly for educational purposes (Khodaviren 2015:24). Mehrdad Darvishpour (2013) categorised the migration flow in recent years as “optional”, distinguishing it from the migration flows happening after the revolution of 1979 and the Iran-Iraq war. For Darvishpour, migration during the 1980s was the aftermath of the Islamic Revolution with no focus on individuals’ desires and ambitions. More recent migrations are by professionals who are aiming to find a place in the host country; they try to be prepared for the destination country in advance, working hard to learn the language and so on. They have had a better financial situation prior to their migration in comparison to the ones who went into exile in the 1980s, and benefit from their family’s support in the host country (Darvishpour, 2013, also see Change Institute 2009).

According to an International Monetary Fund (IMF) report, among 91 developing countries, Iran ranks first for its brain drain. It also estimates that one in four Iranians with a college education live and study outside of Iran (Carrington and Detragiache, 1999). In the last decades, regardless of the reason for migrating, the identity of Iranian diaspora has been always in constant connection with the political and social events in the homeland. Iranian diaspora has been discussed as a result of “(conflictual) processes of identification that are being shaped equally by the social and political dynamics of the «old» and the «new» home country”(Mohabbat-Kar 2015: 11). Therefore, being Iranian in diaspora or “Iranian-ness” has been a very complex subject to define. Sonja Moghaddari (2015) discusses ethnicity towards defining the notion of Iranian-ness. She describes ethnicity as the product of social interactions that is constantly created and recreated within fluid processes. Therefore, she concludes that “there are no objective features that qualify someone as Iranian” and Iranian-ness is achieved through situational meaning making processes (Moghaddari 2015:106-107). Ramin Jahanbegloo (2015) however, talks about the existence of a duality in the core of what we can call Iranian-ness, reminding that in the current Iranian society there is this contradiction between the traditions and modernity that puts the society in a “limbo position” (Jahanbegloo 2015:76). Therefore, he illustrates Iranian identity within three layers of “pre-Islamic Persian, Islamic and modern dimensions” (Jahanbegloo 2015:78). According to these discussions, the identity of Iranians in diaspora has been discussed as “hyphenated” due to the “multiple sources of belonging” that are “co-existing productively” rather than conflicting each other (Naficy 2001: 16 and Malek 2015:28).

In contrary to the literature in the United States, there has been a few research focused on the Iranian diasporic experience in the UK (Khodaviren 2015: 7). That could be due to the size of the community in compare to other migrant communities that is recorded around 84,735 in 2011 census records (Sreberny and Gholami 2016:6). However, recording the accurate number of Iranians in the UK has been discussed to be unlikely for several reasons, firstly because “Iranian” is not recognised as an ethnic category by UK government (Sreberny and Gholami 2016:6). Secondly, because the population does not reside in a specific area in the country, and also because they are not under the public eye and lastly they may not appear on the records because they hold British citizenship (Change Institute 2009: 26). Although Iranian diaspora in the UK as whole and as a community has been understudied, some recent research highlighted interesting information about its members. In their research about the Iranian community in Britain, Reza Gholami and Annabelle Sreberny (2016) interviewed more than 250 Iranians from different ages settled across the UK. The result highlighted that the majority of the participant believed that there is in fact an “Iranian community” in the UK but only half of them felt connected to it (Sreberny and Gholami 2016:9). They also addressed a lack of unity among the Iranian diaspora members (Sreberny and Gholami 2016:12). However, they stay connected with other Iranians through private parties, cultural events and cultural spaces, for example Persian restaurants were among the most common ways of interacting with other Iranians (Sreberny and Gholami 2016:11). Additionally, the participants were asked about the challenges of living in diaspora in the UK and the three main challenges were language, job (being unemployed or not being able to get the desired job) and discrimination mostly being generalised with other middle eastern countries, and issues such as the difficulties of obtaining tourist visas for family visits (Sreberny and Gholami 2016:12). Lastly, when the participants were asked to describe Iranians in the UK the most acknowledged quality was “hardworking” and second was “educated” followed by “successful” and “lonely” (Sreberny and Gholami 2016:12). These figures show different dimensions of the Iranian diaspora, the challenges they face and the perceptions they have about their diasporic community. It shows that the Iranian diasporic experience may seem contradictory or fragmented but it is mediated through the constant contact with other Iranians through cultural events and spaces.

In her research on the Iranian women in the UK, Maryam Khodaviren (2015) highlights the majority of Iranian women in her project have a higher education degree as they believed it increases their chance of employment and consequently their empowerment within their family and the host country (Khodaviren 2015: 65). Khodaviren categorises two main intentions for these women to leave homeland and settle in the UK: first to benefit from the living in a less patriarchal society and second to seek better opportunities (Khodaviren 2015: 6). Similarly, in her research on the impact of education on shaping Iranian women’s perceptions of family and gender roles in Canada, Shiva Sadeghi (2006) highlights that Iranian women in Canada value education for various reasons as they are coming from different demographics in Iran. However, she mentions the participants of her research see education as an empowering tool towards financial autonomy and consequently their emancipation and empowerment that helps to shape an independent life (Sadeghi 2006:47).

The life of women in diaspora and particularly the diasporic experience of Iranian women in diaspora have been overshadowed by other topics such as the intentions behind leaving the country and the alteration of gender roles in family after migration. Minoo Alinia (2004) in her study on Kurdish diaspora in Sweden finds diasporic studies to be mostly masculine and urges for the possibility of bringing female experience of diaspora to the current diasporic discussions. "Diaspora in itself is not gender-specific but it is rather the political projects, around which diasporic movements are mobilised, as well as the social and political context within which diasporas are acting, that determine their gender dimension" (Alinia 2004:271). Alinia addresses a series of struggles that Kurdish/middle eastern women face above all the challenges on displacement. The dominant stereotypes of middle eastern women create a double racism that they need to face in the host countries that is rooted in the experience of being a woman, an immigrant and being from the middle east (Alinia 2004:273 and 280). She implies that the women of the third world are mainly portrayed as "passive victims" of the violence and domination of their patriarchal societies that leads to their further marginalisation. In order to have a more realistic understanding of the life of these women their struggle must be contextualised (Alinia 2004:273-274). This is true for the case of Iranian women in diaspora as well, particularly in relation to the socio-political changes of the 1979 revolution. These ongoing changes have affected the female body the most and divided the Iranian female experience into "before" and "after" the veil. Because of that Iranian women had to deal with a type of "prevalent religious symbolism" as something that overshadows their womanhood. (Albrecht 2015:47). Judith Albrecht (2015) in her study of Iranian women in Berlin illustrates that Iranian women freed themselves from being seen as the national icons, "the symbols of the memories". The imposed stereotypes both in homeland and the host country, have led these women to develop their own ways to represent their identity. "These women reject being seen as "Muslim" still they do not want to be perceived as just an "identical copy of a Western woman" either. Consequently, most of the women I spoke with had developed a strategic way of dealing with such categories."(Albrecht 2015:51). Therefore, although Iranian women within the portrayal of "Muslim women" have been introduced as "passive victims" but the narratives of their migratory life shows they have used their migration as a tool for empowerment.

The main focus of this research is to highlight these narratives with a particular focus on the spatial strategies that are applied by Iranian women at their home within negotiating identity processes. Through the study of home in diaspora the hybrid processes of being and becoming between the locality of "here" and "there" is examined. This is important because it reminds that diaspora is where these identities are reconfigured in response to "geopolitical and cultural shifts through practices and the experience of belonging" (Malek 2015:29). Diasporic homes for the recently migrated individuals are charged spaces that embody different aspects of diasporic experience. For that purpose, the participants are chosen among the women who are recent migrants and are dealing with the struggles of settlement in the host society while still having fresh perspectives on the homeland socio-political situations. This provides the possibility of comparing the experience of home in the two contexts and ultimately the making of home in the new country. Hence, this study aims to

answer the following research question: “How is the identity of Iranian women situated at their diasporic home through the process of homemaking?”

Developing the research methodology to answer this question results in acknowledging different theoretical areas, such as the notion of identity at home, for women, the meaning of diasporic home and the study of homemaking that will be addressed with an architectural perspective in this research.

### **Existing research gaps and the contribution of this thesis**

The research question involves three main areas of research: the meaning of home for Iranian women, the Iranian home and the making of home (in diaspora). Focusing on the Iranian diasporic home for women brings these different areas under one roof while addressing the gaps in each of these realms in terms of both theoretical and methodological studies.

Iranian women have been the subjects of numerous studies in different social, political and economic aspects. Women’s movements and their struggle to achieve equal rights have received considerable scholarly attention within political and feminist discussions (Gheissari 2009, Sedghi 2007, Paidar 1997, Najmabadi 2000). These studies have addressed the changes during the last few decades, mostly regarding the role of women during the constitutional revolution and the 1979 Islamic revolution (Afary 2009, Naghibi 1999). Women’s economic situation in Iranian society (Bahramitash and Esfahani 2009), their social and political movements (Bāmdād and Bagley 1977, Sanasarian 1985, Haeri 2009 ) and their conditions in the family and in the society (Fathi 1985, Najmabadi 2005), have been examined extensively.

Iranian women and domestic space studies, however, are very limited and are mainly focused on the social and political aspects and the evolution of unbalanced gender equity at home over different time periods towards more equal relations (Rahimieh 2010, Ansari, Martin, Ireland 2002, Karimi 2013, Karimi 2009 and Francis-Dehqani 2002), or the current representation of domestic space in media that is serving political and Islamic codes (Dempsey 2012 and Moruzzi 1999). Therefore, this thesis aims to shed light on this untouched area to provide a view of Iranian women's perception of home and the ways they interact with their domestic space.

Additionally, the current literature on the Iranian home is discussed from different viewpoints. There is a broad discussion on Iranian traditional homes, analysing their well-responsive socio-cultural, architectural and sustainable elements while taking critical approaches towards the current Iranian home designs, seeking to propose strategies that could be adapted to the current conditions (Memarian 1994 and 1998, Memarian, Hashemi Toghr oljerdi, and Ranjbar-Kermani 2011, Salamati 2001). Other studies include the Iranian domestic home specifications during different eras (Kateb-Valiankoh 1997) or the vernacular Iranian homes in different regions and climates (Ghobadian 1998, Haeri Mazandarani 2009 and Pirnia 2010). There are few studies on the spatial dynamics of current Iranian homes examining their

architectural transformation during the modernisation of the country or addressing the ways in which they inhabit Iranian traditional and religious routines (Vaziri Tabar 1990, Molki 2017, Karimi 2009 and Mirmoghtadaee 2009). However, there is a lack of study of the contemporary Iranian home itself, how it is lived and organised on an everyday basis, especially in relation to women's interactions with space.

In terms of the diasporic life and diasporic home, there are studies that address the life of Iranian migrants and Iranian refugees in diaspora in relation to social, economic, family and identity aspects (Moghissi 1999, Aidani 2007, Alghasi 2009), Malek 2011). Women's issues and their notions of the diaspora have been examined extensively, in studies that are focused on the post-revolutionary immigration flow and discuss narratives of displacement in relation to notions of identity and diasporic experience (Dossa 2004, Moghissi 1999). Additionally, considerable research has been done with respect to notions of memory, nostalgia and how migration has actually empowered Iranian women (Naghbi, Khorrami, and Vatanabadi 2001, Ghorashi 2005). However, the more recent migration flows and the Iranian diasporic home itself are seldom the subject of discussions (Ziabakhsh 2000, Bailey 2008). Additionally, most of the existing literature on Iranian diaspora is grounded on Iranian diaspora in the United States. Iranian diaspora in Europe or the UK specifically is rarely discussed. The above-mentioned omissions reveal the existing gap in the current literature in regard to the study of Iranian home, Iranian diaspora and Iranian women at home.

This thesis aims to address this gap between the studies on home in the social sciences (humanities in general) and the architectural studies of home by proposing a methodology for the study of home. The home has a multitude of different dimensions, both as a physical entity and as a concept. Home has been analysed as a "socio-spatial" space of production (Saunders and Williams, 1988), a place of resistance (Blunt 2012, and Hooks 1990), and an idealised place of safety and one's haven (Jung 1961, Bachelard 1958 and Rykwert 1991, Cooper Marcus 1974). Through reviewing the current literature in these areas, I argue that the architectural studies of home mainly address the two tangible and intangible aspects of home within a wide distance. In other words, the experience of home is architecturally discussed within phenomenological frameworks, and the tangible elements of home are examined within the areas of "housing" studies with a strong focus on housing policies, the technical aspects of home including the technology, sustainability and low-cost housing. Therefore, the experience of home from a practical point of view that examines the spatial interaction and the reality of the experience of homes by the users within everyday routines is extensively discussed by the social sciences and the humanities in general (Kemeny 1992, Lawrence 1987, Ernest 2012). There is, however, remarkably little cross-over between architecture and the social sciences in the study of home (Rapoport 1969, Massey 1994, Schneider and Till 2007). This thesis proposes to blend the current literature in these realms, narrowing down the gap by developing an architectural methodology through the application of a theoretical framework developed based on the feminist and phenomenological theories. In that sense, the meaning of home, the experience of the Iranian home, the Iranian diasporic home and the identity embodiment through the space of home, are examined in different facets.

### **Research aims and objectives**

This thesis aims to develop an interdisciplinary methodology for the study of home that blends architecture, phenomenology and feminism theories, seeking a mutual space that can improve the current perceptions of the meaning of home and the experience of the diasporic home. Whilst the objective of the thesis is to shed light on the role of home in the creation of diasporic identity, the underlying aim ultimately is to develop an architectural model for the study of home with the potential for wider application.

The study of the diasporic home of Iranian women, as a transitory space, a site of identity struggles and the domestic sphere of gender representation reveals multiple dimensions of home. It brings a variety of arguments together that have seldom been the centre of discussions:

- Representing an architectural study of home bringing spatial and humane aspects of home together.
- The experience of the Iranian home and its spatial dynamics-specifically on an everyday level- and how that is accommodated within the confines of the diasporic home.
- Situating female identity at home, through homemaking in the transitory space of the diasporic home.
- Representing an interdisciplinary study of the atmosphere at home highlighting its spatial nature and its role in the process of homemaking.

Therefore, within these four ranges of research different crucial aspects of the Iranian home in diaspora for women are addressed that bring the experience of the past and present together while proposing a vision for future homes. These highlighted areas are essential for representing a better understanding of home in diaspora in general and specifically for the Iranian home in diaspora.

### **Research methodology**

The study of home and homemaking with an architectural approach, with emphasis on identity, is complex and multi-dimensional. Such a study requires an approach that is flexible and helps to simplify concepts without reducing the study to a single perspective. On the other hand, analysis of the Iranian home in diaspora requires focusing on different areas such as: the dynamics of current Iranian society, Iranian culture, architecture and, more specifically, the notion of current Iranian home. These are aspects that are all charged with interesting contradictions, yet complicated to study. In that guise, the approach for developing the methodology has been based on the acceptance of home as an ambiguous notion that encompasses a series of spatial and social dialectics (Dovey 1985: 43). Consequently, an evolving methodology is developed through a combination of architectural research, phenomenology, and feminist theories by creating an in-between space that brings both Architectural and Humanities approaches together. For that a fourfold qualitative methodology is implemented to enrich the study: phenomenological study of home, interviews, focus groups and visual methods. These theories and methods have been used as complementary tools, that evolved during the study and each contributed to the development of the

methodology. This is achieved by proposing a framework of tangible, intangible and the in-between with the spatial/cultural elements of the Iranian home for the study of home in diaspora.

This methodology is achieved by first discussing how a common ground could be found among these theories to help the study of home, developing a conceptual framework. The architectural research (along with the study of the atmosphere at home), phenomenology and feminist theories are brought together to define complex notions such as space, identity and gender within the space of home. Then, these theories are applied to shape a framework that suggests useful threads for studying different facets of home, each adding a different dimension to the study of the Iranian home in diaspora. The study of the existing theories examines the notions of space, identity and gender, and the experience home and homemaking, by emphasising phenomenological and feminist theories to attain the framework of tangible, intangible and the in-between.

The phenomenological study of home, additionally, is employed to examine the experience of the Iranian home through the analysis of its cultural and spatial dynamics. By the application of visual methods (drawings and photographs), an architectural dimension is added to the phenomenological study. Consequently, the spatial/cultural elements of Iranian homes: hierarchy, hospitality and cleanliness under the duality of *Zaher* (appearance, exterior, outer layer) and *Baten* (interior, inner purity, inside) are introduced and linked to the framework of tangible, intangible and the in-between. In the meantime, by situating my experience within this phenomenological study of the Iranian home, notions of reflexivity and the feminist theories are addressed, as I share my experience of Iranian homes.

The framework of tangible, intangible and the in-between, and the spatial/cultural elements of Iranian homes, are examined through the interview sessions that were conducted in the homes of Iranian women in diaspora. The interviews are developed based on a combination of feminism and phenomenological methodologies within the notions of reflexivity, open-ness and addressing the experience of the other. Consequently, through the analysis of the interviews, the spatial/cultural elements of Iranian home are evaluated in diaspora while more themes are added to the framework of tangible, intangible and the in-between. Similar to the phenomenological study, visual methods (drawings and photographs) are applied to represent a spatial analysis of these homes combined with the narrated text addressing architectural notions.

The proposed framework that is concluded from the interview analysis is examined through the focus group examination, testing and validating the emerged data. The interviews, the focus groups and the visual methods are used as different media to be able to represent a comprehensive study. Hence, a methodology for the study of home is developed by a combination of methods that are employed to increase our understanding of Iranian homes in diaspora.

### **Thesis structure**

Chapter 1, examines the theories of home in the current literature in relation to the notions of space, identity and gender to formulate an interdisciplinary conception for the study of home. It addresses the ambiguity of home and urges the need to look at home and homemaking within alternative approaches that can include architecture. In this chapter, home is defined as an in-between space that embodies the dialectics of being and becoming, tangible/intangible, real/ideal. It is concluded in this chapter that a comprehensive approach to studying home is achieved through defining home as an in-between space of becoming that is embodied through enfolding processes of tangible and intangible. This hybrid conception of home is examined further in the second part of the chapter through the study of the atmosphere at home, across different disciplines. Hence, the possibility of studying home spatially and within an architectural framework is acknowledged. The atmosphere of home, as an embodiment of the in-between state of home that is created through the most intangible, illusive and ambiguous elements of home, is discussed as a spatial entity within this framework. Consequently, making atmosphere is acknowledged as an approach for the making of home. Additionally, the notion of everyday architecture and socio-spatial practice of space and particularly, domestic space is examined and is discussed further in the specific context of middle east. The chapter finishes by discussing diaspora, diasporic identity and home in diaspora. By examining the theories on diaspora and transnational community, I clarify what diaspora means for this thesis, how diasporic identities are defined and how the diasporic home might be understood in that regard.

After providing an analysis of the different theories of home in the current literature, Chapter 2 examines the possibility of a hybrid and evolving methodology that blends phenomenology and feminist theories. It addresses the contradictions between the two disciplines and argues that a mutual framework could be developed for the study of home in diaspora for Iranian women. Therefore, the possibility of a feminist phenomenology is introduced that settles both the subjective experience and the situated-ness of the female identity at home. Ultimately, the development of a mediatory space between these theoretical approaches is paralleled by the notion of home as an in-between space of tangible and intangible. Consequently, the applied qualitative methods in terms of data collection, testing, validating and analysis are introduced while being linked with the grounds of theory and the progress of methodology. Emphasising both/and approaches as opposed to either/or, combined with the notion of *bricolage*, a series of methods are shaped that all contribute to the study of home on different levels. Interviews, focus groups, and visual analysis (photographs and drawings) are introduced as the qualitative methods that each bring a specific dimension to the studying of home.

Chapter 3, aims to provide an understanding of the Iranian home by emphasising the significance of providing a phenomenological study. The analysis of the Iranian diasporic home, how it is made, and how it is influenced by the homeland experience, is bonded with understanding the characteristics of an Iranian home. The notion of 'contemporary Iranian home' is a very complex issue and having the ability to represent and define 'current Iranian home' requires extensive research, which is out of the domain of this research. Consequently,

this chapter stresses the necessity of a phenomenological study of the Iranian home to provide a better understanding of the Iranian home itself. Then a spatial/cultural framework is developed for the phenomenological study of the Iranian home by introducing the dialectics of two concepts of *Zaher* (appearance) and *Baten* (inner purity) that represent a significant duality in Iranian culture and is embodied through an in-between state of hybrid processes. According to the duality of *Zaher* and *Baten*, I suggest that the public and private in the Iranian home represent a dualism, parallel rather than contradictory. It is under this category of *Zaher* and *Baten* that the other significant themes of the Iranian home such as hierarchy, hospitality and cleanliness are introduced as important elements of Iranian homemaking and the making of atmosphere. Based on this framework, the Iranian home and the ways in which it is lived on the basis of everyday life are examined with a phenomenological approach. This chapter is an introduction to the experience of the Iranian home and the way it is spatially organised within cultural, social and religious interactions. In this chapter, the contemporary Iranian home, its spatial arrangements and its dynamics are introduced through my personal experience of changes in the Iranian homes. First, I give an account of my grandparents' old farmhouse that represents a traditional home for an expanded family. This is followed by the study of my childhood home that shows a typical house in a city in that time. The third example is my grandparents' urban home that highlights the juxtaposition of modern architecture and traditional habits, and the last one is our current apartment flat that is a representation of the majority of city flats in Iran. Also, through my subjective experience, I highlight elements of Iranian homes that have not received scholarly attention in the area of Iranian studies, Each home is analysed within the framework of spatial/ cultural elements of *Zaher* and *Baten* in Iranian culture and the ways in which the Iranian homes are spatially organised under the influence of these dualistic elements. In the meantime, this chapter examines the possibility of a feminist phenomenology introducing the Iranian home based on my personal experience of four Iranian homes I have lived in. In that sense, subjective experience and reflexivity are employed for the process of knowledge production. The themes that are developed in this chapter are employed for the interview discussion for the study of the diasporic homes of Iranian women in the UK.

Chapter 4, begins with an introduction to the case studies in relation to their experience of home in Iran and in England, their notion of home and their idea of diasporic life. Then, the interview discussions and the outcome of the visits to the diasporic homes are discussed within the category of tangible, intangible and the in-between. Each category includes a series of themes that emerged from the theoretical studies on home: the phenomenological study of the Iranian home, the study of the atmosphere at home, and the process of interviewing. Therefore, an evolving methodology is developed within a series of categories to represent a framework to study homemaking in different dimensions. The data in this chapter is presented through text and visual methods (drawings and photographs of Iranian diasporic homes). After representing the interview analysis, the necessity of validating the data that leads to the formation of the proposed methodology is addressed.

## *Introduction*

In Chapter 5, focus groups are proposed as a method of validation, and the reasons for its appropriation for the research are examined. Through the validation analysis, the themes within the categorisation of tangible, intangible and the in-between are re-examined towards the formulation of a comprehensive methodology for the study of home and homemaking in diaspora.

Chapter 6, is the conclusion and discussion; the outcomes of this thesis are discussed in relation to the existing limitations. The proposed methodology is examined, remarking on the ways in which this thesis contributes to the current knowledge in the realm of home studies. Finally, the potential future research based on this study is proposed.

# Chapter 1 : Architectural study of home, In-between space of tangible and intangible

## 1.0 Introduction

One of the main contributions of this thesis is to draw attention to the charged possibilities of looking at home within the architecture discourse and narrow down the gap between studies of home in architecture and humanities. Here, I will try to explore approaches that can mediate this gap and build the basis for an interdisciplinary study of home. I examine the studies of home within sociology, philosophy and architecture discourse and aim to develop a conceptual tool based on the theories that I found important and applicable for the study of home as a place that is compressed into different binarised notions of public/private, ideal/real, atmosphere/ material. An interdisciplinary approach could benefit the formation of a flexible methodology suitable for the ambiguous multifaceted subject of home. In order to provide a narrower representation of the conceptual basis derived from the first half of this chapter, in the second part, which is concerned with the study of atmosphere, I will define the atmosphere of home as a spatial character that embodies the interconnected flows of tangible and intangible elements at home and argue the possibilities of the ways in which an architectural perspective can be added to the study of home. The chapter will finish by examining the notion of diaspora, and diasporic home, to clarify what 'diaspora' means for this thesis. In that guise, different theoretical threads that are necessary for the study of home in diaspora are assessed.

## 1.1 Theories of home

I refer to Kim Dovey's (1985) way of defining home as a series of dialectics as I believe this will help to achieve a coherent basis for the study of home. Dovey defines the ambiguity of home through spatial and social dialectics that are interconnected. These dialectics are concerned with the dynamics between inside and outside, order and chaos, public and private. According to Dovey, the spatial dialectics are essentially grounded on the dynamics between home and journey.

... it is important to recognise that the dialectic between home and journey is also a dialectic between two kinds of experiences of home, between that of being-at-home and that of yearning-for-home. Yearning-for-home is "about" being-at-home; it occupies a different level of logical type. Whereas being-at-home is unselfconscious and taken for granted, the experience of yearning is idealised and self-conscious. The two experiences should not be confused (Dovey 1985: 10).

I borrow Dovey's definition of home as a series of dialectics to develop my discussion of home moving across disciplines. Examining home as a place of dynamic movements of becoming provides the flexibility to bring architecture to the discussion of home. By the end of this chapter, I specify what I mean by architecture and how I aim to provide a study that regards the importance of architecture for the study of home. I start by considering ideas that are rooted in phenomenology. I continue by addressing ideas of temporality (of space and

identity) and I end my discussion by examining home in feminist discourse. Given that identity and home are in inevitable juxtaposition, I explore how the definitions of identity are settled in each of these approaches.

### **1.1.2 Being in the world, living the space**

Within the dialectics of body and mind, phenomenology centres on challenging the absolute power given to the rational mind and draws attention to the effectiveness of producing knowledge through (bodily) experience. Husserl (1859-1938) first elaborated ideas as such to claim space for 'experience' in conjunction with the objectified, taken for granted, common sense framework of thinking (Kruks 2014: 76). Consequently, through phenomenology the focus is given to explaining one's existence through the way meaning is given to one's life in interaction with the world. For Heidegger, this meaning-making process is achieved through dwelling. In his essay 'Building, Dwelling Thinking' (1971) Heidegger related 'being' with 'dwelling', specifying that to be human means to dwell. He specifies the urgency to restore the human and space relationship, looking at space not as an external, separated element but as more inclusive and bonded with human existence (Heidegger 1971/ Hofstadter, 1971: 154). Heidegger describes dwelling within the fourfold of being that includes the earth, the sky, the divinities and the mortals, meaning that a successful dwelling through the fourfold defines human being. Finding meaning for life or coming into being through these constant interactions with the environment is read by Dovey as the "dialectics of appropriation". It represents a two-part process; how we care for a place and how we influence the environment to create a place of our own (Dovey 1985: 11).

Heidegger's theory has been very influential within architectural discourse. In fact, a considerable number of the architectural studies on home are based on his definitions of being through dwelling and experiencing space. However, Adam Sharr (2007) describes that Heidegger chose the words 'building' and 'dwelling' over 'architecture' because he found the word 'architecture' problematic. He believed that historians and philosophers put more focus on the aesthetic part of architecture and saw it as an art, which made the humanitarian aspect of architecture less visible. Sharr explains that for Heidegger this conception of architecture did not embody all the significant aspects of human inhabitation and, therefore, by using 'dwelling' and 'building' a priority was given to inhabitation and experience over aesthetics (Sharr 2007: 38). Heidegger described building as construction and dwelling as nurturing: they are interconnected and give being to each other. "Building responds to dwelling and dwelling requires building" (Sharr 2007: 42).

The focal point of phenomenologists' arguments on home is to draw attention to the urgency of bringing meaning to human life. This is explained by considering that the modern era has caused a sense of homelessness or 'placelessness' that can only be cured by an inward journey towards subjective experience rooted in history. This often results in romanticising the past (Sharr 2007: 3). For Heidegger, dwelling is a result of meaningful interaction of humans and space, and is a way of resolving human homelessness created by modern life. Through dwelling, humans find their home in the world and the sense of belonging is created through the process of 'dialectic appropriation' with the environment (Heidegger 1971: 152).

Defining human existence through dwelling and finding a located territory called home has been the subject of Bachelard's (1958) representation of home through a poetic standpoint based on memory and imagination. His poetic perspective defines home as the centre of the world, one's haven and a place that helps to understand self and the world. Here are echoes of Plato and the Platonic ideal of home. The relationship between the imperfect now and an idealised perfection of life with the gods pervades discussions of the home and has its origins in Plato's philosophy of attainment of perfection. In it, the home becomes a place of individuation - a place where you achieve your full potential. In his book *The Republic*, Plato argued that the notion of reality may be misinterpreted. He believed that the real world is something different from what we observe with our senses, therefore, depending on our personal senses to understand the reality is not enough and our subjective experience does not provide a truthful understanding of reality. He talked about an ideal world beyond our senses that will be understood once we start to rethink that our understanding of our surrounding is not the absolute reality. He explained this through the allegory of the cave that suggests the platonic ideal (Plato 380 BC/ Bloom 1967: 193). This nostalgia for a better world to truly be at one with the gods permeates discussions of home, the ideal being different to reality. In this guise, the real/sensible world is a reflection, a "copy" of the ideal world. Additionally, in *Timaeus* Plato speaks of *Chora* as a womb, or place of transition, that connects the sensible/tangible world to the ideal/intangible world. This is a space that connects the world of being with the realm of becoming. This division between the dialectics of ideal and real, being and becoming, has been the basis of western thought until Derrida's reading of Plato's *Chora* that questioned this division (Awan 2003: 14). "All really inhabited space bears the essence of the notion of home" (Bachelard 1958/1994:5). Building on the ideas of Plato, Bachelard defined the position of the human soul by centring one's universe on home. He described home as the manifestation of the soul through a poetic image and defined reality as a notion that can be altered by imagination and memory. He argued that home, as the first place to be known by the human soul, should be explored by being experienced in every space and in every corner. Hence, this is the mode to understand the surrounding world (Bachelard, 1958: 58).

Not only our memories, but also the things we have forgotten are "housed".  
Our soul is an abode; and by remembering, "houses" and "rooms," we learn to  
"abide" within ourselves. Now everything becomes clear, the house images  
move in both directions: they are in us as much as we are in them (Bachelard  
1958/1994: xxxvii).

Bachelard noted that the experiences and the memories of home are much richer than those in the outside world. This richness is a product of the poetic nature of home. "Memories of the outside world will never have the same tonality as those of home and, by recalling these memories, we add to our store of dreams; we are never real historians, but always near poets, and our emotion is perhaps nothing but an expression of a poetry that was lost" (Bachelard 1958: 6). The childhood memories of home, the emotional attachment with home and experiencing everyday life in the secure place of home makes Bachelard's romantic understanding of home very evocative. Relating being with dwelling and living in a home by

leaning on its poetic nature and personal imagination may seem rather bold but it reveals the importance of home at personal and social levels. Experiencing a home, the memories built in it and the emotional attachments are undeniable aspects of human life and are the poetics of being and becoming.

Heidegger's perception of phenomenology involved regarding human experience with space and finding meaning through dwelling. For Bachelard, this meaning is found at home, as the first place that humans encounter, and a place that shapes memory and ideas of reality. These philosophers' approach to reading space and home has been the ground for architectural phenomenology. According to Jorge Otero-Pailos (2012), architects looked into philosophy, and more particularly phenomenology, at first to reconcile modern architecture with its history through examining the authenticity of experience. Architects such as Dalibor Vesely (2004), Christian Norberg-Schultz (1979 and 1987), Kenneth Frampton (1985) and Joseph Rykwert (1991), have used their reading of phenomenology to provide a comprehensible scheme to modify and develop historically- rooted architectural forms in a way that fulfils experiential modalities. Therefore, architectural phenomenology was an attempt to provide meaning for the principles of modern architecture while bringing the value of individual experiences to the discourse of architectural theory and history.

Architectural phenomenologists defended the uniqueness of the architect's individual experience, yet they also resisted the idea that experience was purely individualistic. Believing that architects should retain commitments outside the self, architectural phenomenologists pined for a community of shared values and beliefs in which to ground self-expression (Otero-Pailos 2012: 147).

Additionally, Otero-Pailos explains that although the primary intention of Architects' debating phenomenology was grounded on validating the modernism agenda, it has eventually resulted in providing a coherent discourse that regards "what matters" in terms of aesthetic experience, intellectuality and history. Christian Norberg-Schulz, for example, as one of the pioneers of phenomenology of architecture, designates the significance of producing meaning through form by talking about the issue of being homeless in the world as a consequence of modern life. In "On the way to figurative architecture" he discusses the rise of postmodernism and talks about the necessity of an architecture that reflects the importance of everyday life and the complex memories made by them. He argues that the essential argument of postmodernism was based on "the need for general *intangibility*" (Norberg-Schulz 1987:18). Based on the notion of archetypes<sup>2</sup> as the "basic interhuman figures" he suggests the necessity of recovering modern architecture's figures by producing forms that are familiar and rooted in human memory and its intangibility. He explains that to be able to produce 'Human' architecture, it is necessary to return to the concept of dwelling. He describes dwelling as "the establishment of a meaningful relationship between man and a given environment- the purpose of architecture" (Norberg-Schulz 1987: 20). For him, it is

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<sup>2</sup> The analytical psychologist Carl Gustav Jung took Freud's idea of unconsciousness further and suggested the notion of a universal unconsciousness, a pattern that could not be defined only by individual unconsciousness and links humans to their primitive past. In that sense archetypes are "basic and timeless nodes of energy" (Cooper 1974: 130-131).

through the process of dwelling that a sense of belonging to a certain space is achieved. The sense of belonging is developed by a series of elements. The first one is *settlement*, as “the primary goal of existential space and the place where the life of community may take place” (Norberg-Schulz 1987:20). Additionally, he introduces the concept of collective dwelling, public and private dwelling as “various modes of dwelling”. He argues that urban space is where the collective dwelling occurs and through public dwelling a set of values and beliefs are embodied that makes the common world visible. At a personal level, the private dwelling happens when the personal identity of an individual is defined within a house as place of refuge from the outside (Norberg-Schulz 1981: 20). He suggests that the key to restoring the purpose of architecture is to resonate these elements.

To recover the language of architecture, thus, we do not primarily have to recall stylistic elements but study those figures that make the archetype manifest. The figures are concrete entities that “are” in space in a certain way and “as something”. They have to be understood as manifestations of dwelling and explained in terms of built form and organised space. The archetypes are the essence of architecture, corresponding to the names of spoken language. They appear over and over again in different contexts and are given ever-new interpretations (Norberg-Schulz 1981: 21).

For Norberg-Schulz, the idea of “human” space is created through interconnection of figure and archetype. Although figure is a physical matter, it carries meanings that are rooted in archetypes. Architect Clare Cooper Marcus (1974) has taken this idea further by analysing this notion of home not only as a place but as a symbol of self. She tries to define the dialectic of the tangible and intangible of home based on Jung’s idea of symbol and archetype. She relates the experiencing of home to the archetypes by declaring that the intangibility of home exceeds our conscious experiences; therefore, it should be explained within broader parameters.

If we can think of archetype as a node of psychic energy within the unconscious, then the symbol is the medium by which it becomes manifest in the here and now of space and time. Thus a symbol, although it has objective visible reality, always has behind it a hidden, profound, and only partly intangible meaning which represents its roots in the archetype (Cooper Marcus 1974: 131).

Grounded on these definitions, she tries to settle the complexities of defining home as a space that proceeds beyond its physical dimension and is charged with intangible facets of human life. Based on Bachelard’s notion of home as an embodiment of how one sees oneself, she describes home as an “an almost tangible reflection of our self” that “expands to embrace the house we have designated as ours” (Cooper Marcus 1971: 131, see also Després 1991). This idea of home as a symbol of self is comprehensively discussed by Carl Gustav Jung in his autobiography *Memories, Dreams and Reflections* (1961). He talked about his memories, particularly that of home, to describe the formation of his identity. In narrating his childhood memories, Jung’ describes how his “self” developed through the

experience of home and spaces; he wrote about “the tower”, a house he built for himself at Bollingen on the lake near Zurich. He takes us through the process of material selection and construction decision-making, in relation to his self and his experiences. The tower was a place for him to relax and to think, while it was also a place to represent his ‘self’. (Jung 1961: 224). Jung linked the process of building completion with his feeling of incompleteness, as although each section of the building represented some part of him, but his desire to feel complete led to the construction of more towers until the last central tower was added to the house.

I felt an inner obligation to become what I myself am. To put it in the language of the Bollingen house, I suddenly realised that the small central section, which crouched so low, so hidden, was myself! I could no longer hide myself behind the "maternal" and the "spiritual" towers. So, in that same year, I added an upper storey to this section, which represents myself, or my ego-personality (Jung 1963: 225).

Therefore, he described how the tower is a material representation of his “self” (Jung 1963: 225). There is a strong bond between the home and Jung’s individuality. Home is a materialisation of the on-going process of identity, the identity that is developed through home and is embodied by home. Jung’s ideas are of course underpinned by a quasi-spiritual belief in individualisation, that each of us has the potential to be our true self and to realise our true identity; life and school friends can provide a distraction from this pursuit. They are also underpinned by the idea of the archetypal home, a sense of home passed down to us via our ancestors since time immemorial through the most ancient parts of the psyche. In this model, temporary identities are only useful inasmuch that they help achieve the final true identity.

Looking at space, home and identity through phenomenology and the way we settle our ‘self’ in the world is valuable as it reminds us of the importance of experience. It challenges the dialectic of mind and body, and defines the inside outside relationship as a constant interaction that results in a dwelling. However, the essentialist roots of these theories can raise complexities in regard to social construction of space and identity. Through these theories, a place is defined as an ontological location that is based on pre-given and precognitive sense of space, and meanings are added by the process of dwelling. Nonetheless, this could be distant from the real experience of space and everyday life (Dovey 2010: 4, and Malpas 2008).

### 1.1.3 Social construction of home

One of the significant studies on home that highlight the dialectic of home dynamics is Pierre Bourdieu’s notion of *habitus* (1977). Through the concept of *habitus* and practice he designates a dialectics which highlights the role of social practice on the arrangement and transformation of domestic space. Bourdieu introduces the concept of *Habitus* as

The product of dispositions which, being the internalisation of the same objective structures, are objectively concerted that the practices of the

members of the same group or, in a differentiated society, the same class are endowed with an objective meaning that is at once unitary and systematic, transcending subjective intentions and conscious projects whether individual or collective (Bourdieu 1977: 81).

He illustrated *Habitus* as a social schema that has been survived from the past and has secured its presence in the future by being integrated in the practices of today (Bourdieu 1977: 83). Through developing the theory of practice, he underlined how elements of everyday life and social practice are mutually organised by temporality and spatiality, rather than being only formed through structural categories (Silverstein 2004: 554). Bourdieu examines the notion of *habitus* in his ethnographic research on the Kabyle house in Algeria and focuses on the social construction of space and the representation of cultural relations through symbolic binary oppositions. "The house is organised in accordance to a set of homologous oppositions-fire/water, cooked/raw, high/low, light/dark, day/night, male/female..." (Bourdieu 1979: 140). Bourdieu first illustrates a typical Kabyle house with measurable and quantitative scales in a materialistic way, illustrating the size of the space and its spatial arrangements. Bourdieu then continues the study of the Kabyle house by describing how the house design responded to cultural traditions and routines. He notes the role of the dividing wall in reflecting the binarised dynamics and regulations of the house. This wall defines the boundaries between "the human beings' house" and "the animals' house", the dark side from the bright side, and the female side from the male side. Bourdieu's focus was not on the individual and subjective interaction with space but rather on the social and cultural representation of the user through space (Noble 2004: 237). Helena Webster (2011) stated that Bourdieu's research on the Kabyle house is significant because of the focus on domestic bodily activities and domestic artefacts. Here "building, objects and actions were part of the same symbolic system" (Webster 2011: 22).

By defining the Kabyle house as a reflection of the oppositionally structured society of Kabyle, Paul. A Silverstein (2004) explains it as "a site of inverted privacy that simultaneously opposes the public and natural world and embodies its basic values and hierarchies. The symbolic structure of its objects and spaces hence reflects a particular *habitus* and reproduces its constitutive elements for its inhabitants (Silverstein 2004: 560). Hence, the Kabyle home is not defined as territorised space as much as it is defined as an extension of the same symbolic system of the society.

For Bourdieu, the function of the house does not define its form. Instead, the house form is determined by a combination of beliefs and practices bonded with the mythico-ritual system of Kabyle society, which also forms the heart of social regulations and structure (Webster 2011: 24). Consequently, the social and cultural norms define individual interactions with domestic space and its manifestation. It can be concluded that home is formed through a mutual relationship between society's traditions and expectations and individual responses to their domestic space. Home is where such cultural and traditional rituals are embodied through the socially and culturally-influenced identity of the user.

Home as the socially-constituted unit of society is at the centre of Peter Saunders and Peter

Williams' (1988) study. In "The constitution of home" they define home as a socially constituted *locale*. They illustrate their notion of home as a unit of society constitution, "the home is at the hub of a whole complex of relationships and in many ways is the crucial medium through which the society is structured. It is the crucible of the social system" (Saunders and Williams 1988: 84). Therefore, the way they define home, as socially constituted, is rooted and fixed, with the result that it does not take into account the dynamic nature of home dialectics. Somerville (1989) criticises the way that Saunders and Williams (1988) defined home and household as a *unit* of society or the stress that is given to the physical aspects of home. Somerville emphasises that in the study of home we must draw attention to the other dimensions, such as the idealisation of home or the power relations in the household (Somerville 1989: 113).

Somerville (1997), later proposes social phenomenology as an approach to the study of home, suggesting that it can be applied as a mediator between the social and phenomenological studies of home (Somerville 1997: 230). It can settle the challenges of studying home in both the phenomenological (as notions that are rooted in pre-given, unconscious and based-on experiences that are shaped through internal forces) and social (as objective, and based on predefined socially constructed notions that are shaped through external forces) approaches by being a mediator between the two. "Social phenomenology, therefore, will look at domestic entirely constituted by experience and action, and vice versa, domestic experience viewed as issuing from the material and social realities of domestic structures" (Somerville 1997: 237). However, he mentions that his proposed analysis is not as simple as combining the two approaches as the theories of social sciences and phenomenology do not always overlap and the theories from each discipline that can respond to each research objective must be chosen selectively. He compares the ways in which identity is defined in each of these discourses, highlighting the necessity of bringing new perspectives to this matter. By referring to Heidegger, he argues that phenomenology theories are grounded on the dialectics of appropriation and procurement of meaning over time, through dynamic processes that can resemble identity. In this sense identity is grounded on the conscious subject. While for sociologists, identity is defined through "deferential dialectics" and is achieved through power relations; therefore, identity is constituted through prior, pre-given social relations (Somerville 1997: 237). Although Somerville attempts to highlight the necessity of refreshed ways of looking at space and identity, his proposal struggles to provide an alternative that responds to the issues he addressed, and therefore does not exceed beyond the principals of those theories. However, the idea of framing a conceptual tool within a selection of theories through different disciplines is taken further in a comprehensive manner in the following chapters to propose a methodology that is flexible and relevant for the study of home.

Although each of these different theories is influential in understanding the dialectic of tangibility and intangibility of home, studies such as Somerville's draw attention to the importance of exploring other possibilities. This has been addressed by studies such as those by Marxist philosopher Henry Lefebvre (1991), in *Production of space*, and Marxist

geographer Edward Soja (1996) in his book *Third space*. Their notion of space as a socially produced element has been the ground for studies that are discussed in the next sections of this chapter. Each of these ideologies promotes the necessity of examining space as dynamic and beyond the conventional mind-set of binary opposition.

#### 1.1.4 Temporality of space and identity

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari are some of the most well-known authors proposing alternative perspectives on identity. They argue that they did not aim to define identity but to challenge its existing definitions (Ballantyne 2007: 4). Their argument is important as it is based on the binary of being and becoming. It challenges the essentialist thoughts on notions of identity (and consequently space) and explores other possibilities and sets of thinking. They draw attention to the formation of identity as temporary political and situational processes that represent one's subjectivity. "An identity is essentially fortuitous, and a series of individualities must be undergone by each of these oscillations, so that as a consequence the fortuitousness of this or that particular individuality will render all of them necessary" (Deleuze and Guattari 1972/2004: 21 ). They discuss identity in order to break it down by speaking of the "becoming subject" as a political process as oppose to the idea of identity as a fixed notion. Deleuze and Guattari (1980) in *A thousand a thousand plateaus* explained subjectivity as a fluid concept that is a frequent journey through territories; therefore, although the territories are broken constantly, new ones are being created. Through these journeys new territories are explored and inhabited (Deleuze and Guattari 1980/1987: 322). Therefore, what is valuable is the journey itself (Dovey 2010: 10).

Ballantyne (2007) describes Deleuze and Guattari's concepts of de-territorialisation and re-territorialisation in relation to identity, space and architecture. He uses an example of "hefted sheep" to explain their theories. Hefted sheep have lived on the same land for countless generations; they know the area and their path, and they do not wander around. They are given absolute freedom because they have no use for it. They are "territorialised sheep" (Ballantyne 2007: 10). In this case every person is territorialised, but by being deterritorialised, other territories can be experienced. Deleuze and Guattari explain the on-going identity journey between deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation by referring to the writings of philosopher David Hume. For Hume (1739) uncertainty was a catalyst for his constant journey between his social and philosophical identity (Ballantyne 2007: 12). In here, his social self is the territorialised, the "hefted sheep", while his philosophical self is the deterritorialised, the "wandering sheep", that goes beyond the defined territory of common sense.

The adoption of various other personae were various reterritorialisations, as these characters were grounded in ways of thinking that belonged somewhere or other. It is as if our 'sheep', having by chance or through temporary madness wandered away from the 'flock', had been able to fall in with a new 'flock' and become hefted in the new place, some lunar landscape (Ballantyne 2007: 13).

Dovey states that Deleuze and Guattari's discussion on identity is rooted in the notion of desire by taking Foucault's notion of power further: "it is not pre-existing beings who hold power or are subject to it, rather power is linked to flows of desire and processes of becoming. For Deleuze, desire is the primary force of life; it is immanent to everyday life and not limited to the human world" (Dovey 2010:14). Because of the desires, the process of becoming is prioritised to being and identity. It is through the process of becoming that "coded desires" embody one's subjectivity, happening within creative territories that is a way of becoming at home in the world (Dovey 2010: 16-17).

The spatial facet of Deleuze and Guattari's concepts of becoming is discussed in *Nomadology: the war machine* that contrast chess moves with those of the Chinese game of Go to explain nomadic movement: "The movement is not from one point to another, but becomes perpetual, without aim or destination, without departure or arrival. The 'smooth' space of Go, as against the 'striated' space of chess" (Deleuze and Guattari 1980/ 2010: 5). Based on the notion of *rhizome* as opposed to tree-like thinking they introduce smooth and striated space. They defined the "smooth" and "striated" spaces based on the relationship between occupation and the factual measurements of a space. "It is the difference between a smooth (victorial, projective, or topological) space and a striated (metric) space: in the first case "space is occupied without being counted," and in the second case "space is counted in order to be occupied" (Deleuze and Guattari 1980/ 2010: 18). Doina Petrescu (2012) defines how the relationships and social interactions form in a space based on Deleuze and Guattari's idea of rhizome. "Making rhizome represents the political and poetic dimension of a relational practice: the invisible collective effort (social, political, emotional) to create networks and spaces, to challenge new imaginaries, to invent new discursive practices" (Petrescu 2012: 138). Space in that sense is an embodiment of nomadic movements and its boundaries are defined according to the fluid territories of nomadic relationships. Furthermore, Rosie Braidotti (1992) explained nomadic consciousness by comparing, exile, migrant and nomad. For Braidotti, exile involves a sense of "foreignness" and the feeling of "hostile" from the host country. A migrant is in a better position in terms of being involved in the host country but is trapped "in an in-between state" and for him/her, the present can change based on what occurs in the origin state (Braidotti 1992:30). The nomad on the other hand does not understand "homelessness or compulsive displacement; it is rather a figuration for the kind of subject who relinquished all idea, desire, or nostalgia for fixity" (Braidotti 1992:23).

These notions of smooth and striated space can be simply read as two types of space encompassing the intangible and tangible, the immaterial and material space. However, Dovey explains that they are more about "spatial properties" and so can be applied as conceptual means to thinking about space. In that sense, every space is a combination that is a result of mutually 'enfolding' relations.

These are not different types of space so much as spatial properties. Striated space is where identities and spatial practices have become stabilised in strictly bounded territories with choreographed spatial practices and socially controlled identities. Smooth space is identified with movement and instability through which

stable territories are erased and new identities and spatial practices become possible (Dovey 2010: 21-22).

Consequently, he draws attention to a place *in-between* that is a result of dialectics of difference -not oppositions- enfolding into each other and giving being to each other.

### 1.1.5 Feminism reading on space

The dialectics of difference, the one and the other, is the main ground for feminist theories to seek space for the other and examine new possibilities of being and becoming. Doreen Massey (1994) criticises the pre-given, taken for granted, ways of examining identity and space. She suggests that they represent space as a bordered, rigid entity and consequently identity as a fixed notion that disregards the temporary processes of becoming. Through exploring the notion of time-space compression<sup>3</sup>, Massey concludes that the idea of defining the desire for fixity and identity as an attempt to settle and to find refuge from the outside world is problematic.

A 'sense of place', of rootedness, can provide - in this form and on this interpretation - stability and a source of unproblematical identity. In that guise, however, place and the spatially local are then rejected by many progressive people as almost necessarily reactionary. They are interpreted as an evasion; as a retreat from the (actually unavoidable) dynamic and change of 'real life', which is what we must seize if we are to change things for the better. On this reading, place and locality are foci for a form of romanticised escapism from the real business of the world. While 'time' is equated with movement and progress, 'space'/'place' is equated with stasis and reaction (Massey 1994: 151).

Consequently, she draws attention to the necessity of looking at space in a more global way. She argues that if we can look at identity as temporal and as a process of becoming, then it is time to recover the idea of a fixed identity associated with space. She illustrates four progressive ways of looking at space: First a place that is not static and is a process. Second, spaces do not need to have boundaries in a dividing sense, meaning space should not be limited to a dividing factor between inside and outside, since the boundary of space can be seen as a linkage to outside that consequently helps to define what constitutes space itself. Third, spaces do not have one, single, identity but encompass a series of "internal conflicts", and finally, space can be seen as a process of interaction with a local and global context (Massey 1994: 155-156). Therefore, she defines a 'place' as a series of borderless social relations that are extrovertly charged with spatiality.

In terms of home, she finds the idea of homelessness as a condition of living in the modern world troubling and questions the arguments that emphasise community as a factor that gives a single identity to space, as even communities are not representative of a single idea and encompass a series of complexities (Massey 1994: 163). She argues that *placelessness* as

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<sup>3</sup> This is a notion first discussed in *The Condition of Postmodernity* as a series of processes that alter the relationship between time and space (Schneider and Harvey 1991).

the modern world problem is an irrelevant notion, as such ideas are debated on the disturbance on the identity and sense of place though the presence of others. However, she argues that this is not the only time that the sense of oneness has been threatened by the presence of the other, as women have been for long the other in this mode of thinking (Massey 1994: 165). Following Bell Hook's concept of home, Massey defines home not as a fixed locality or one place but a place of possibilities of becoming. She examines how these notions of yearning for the past and being concerned with the openness and the limitless movement of the new era is a masculine concern and it is time to look at place and particularly home as a potential space that creates different possibilities and realities, that settles differences within and is a dynamic embodiment of who we are (Massey 1994: 172-173).

In addition to these ideas, the notion of *nomadic consciousness* is proposed by Braidotti (1994) as a solution to become an active "other" and to change the perspective on who is the "other" and who is the "one". In that regard, by discussing "altering practices", Doina Petrescu (2007) mentions that the space in the feminist point of view is initiated on the ideas of "mobility", 'nomadism' 'positioning' and 'situatedness'" (Petrescu 2007: xviii). Therefore, based on Deleuze and Guattari and Braidotti's idea of space, she suggests that the understanding of space is based on the constructed activities that are situational; hence, architecture could be perceived within the networks of everyday activities and as an act of resistance.

Luce Irigaray (1993) debates the notion of "other" by questioning the dualisation of reality discussed by essentialists. She states that the notion of the binary opposition does not embody two independent, opposite, entities rather one of them only is a resonance of the other, a complementary element rather than autonomous entity.

There is not one term, *man*, and another independent term that is denigrated, *woman*. Rather, there is only one term, the other being defined as what it is not, its other or opposite. Irigaray's claim is that woman is erased as such within this logic: there is no space for women because taking their place is the spectre or simulacrum of woman, man's fanciful counterpart, that which he has expelled and othered from himself. There is no woman in this structure, only the formula of a woman that would complement, supplement, and privilege masculinity (Grosz 2000: 94)

Irigaray (2000) also refers to the ways in which women settle otherness within self and bring it into appropriation and into their property (Irigaray 2000: 65). Irigaray states that the binarised ideology created through this masculine framework of thinking suggests that this attempt to create an intelligible world excludes the body; hence, it merely mutes women. She examines dwelling as a process for women to claim space and for men to fill in the hollowness created by them through the ignorance of body and materiality (Grosz 2000: 218-219). Irigaray, based on Plato's notion of *chora*, argues that domestic space is not "home" for women as it is an attempt to create their "fatal dwelling". It is a place of "male nostalgia". Therefore, home is a place of embodiment of lost memories for men, and women are the

victims of this process of re-imagination of memories as the powerless heads of the domestic domain (Findlay 2009: 136). “The result is a gendered divide whereby women become ‘the living representatives of corporeality, of domesticity, of the natural order that men have had to expel from their own self-representations’ in order to become self-determining subjects” (Irigaray 1987: 121, cited by Findlay 2009: 136). However, Grosz takes a less critical stance towards this matter, defining *chora* as an ideal place of possibilities and a place of shifting powers.

Based on Plato's notion of *chora* and Derrida's interpretation of it, Grosz explores the notions of femininity, space and home. Plato introduces *chora* as an eternal place that gives being to everything, it encompasses every space and being, but it is a placeless space that connects the sensible and intelligible world (Plato 1977: 71-2). Derrida interprets *chora* as a third element/kind, a void space that contains everything, a place of encompassing differences. (Derrida et al. 1997: 10). Based on this, Grosz argues that the idea of the *in-between* is the space that helps the other- to the one- to become an independent of its own.

The in-between is what fosters and enables the other's transition from being the other of the one to its own becoming, to reconstituting another relation, in different terms...The in-between, formed by juxtapositions and experiments, formed by realignments or new arrangements, threatens to open itself up as new, to facilitate transformations in the identities that constitute it (Grosz, 2001: 94).

Consequently, bringing an in-between/third space into the discussion can settle the binarised notions of ideal and reality, identity and subjectivity, and one and the other within.

In order to explain my standpoint and my purpose in addressing these theories, I return to Bell Hook's notion of home as a place of resistance. It is important to highlight that home has not always been addressed as realm of oppression for women in feminist studies. For example, Hook (1991) in her study on the role of African American women in the apartheid period in the United States argues that seeing home only as a place of female oppression is rather degrading. Referring to her own experience, she recalls the significant role of women in creating a safe place, “a place of resistance” in their home space (Hooks 1991: 383). Therefore, home is a place of becoming, through processes empowered by resistance against the mode of thinking that promotes binary oppositions of one and other.

The ideologies provided previously each contribute to the understanding of home in different aspects. The main concern is to develop a combination of these theories through an architectural framework that coherently implements the study of home. Although in essence these theories are addressing different grounds, an analysis that comprehends these contradictory-looking theories is achievable. For example, feminists have had difficulties with the grounds of phenomenology, noting that it solely establishes masculine experience that is based on the idea of “authentic experience”; therefore, by bringing the experience of some women, the others may be muted (Kruks 2014: 76). Nonetheless, Kruks, for instance, by referring to Iris Marion Young, finds the solution in using Phenomenology as a tool to regard

experience not merely as subjective but as “constitute” as well (Kruks 2014: 84). Additionally, Deleuze and Guattari’s ideas have been criticised by feminists as not regarding the role of the other in their proposed framework. However, authors such as Grozs (1994) assert that their ideology goes beyond and overcomes the platonic binarised reality (Grozs 1994: 247, see also Rendell 2000: 19). In that guise, they are not speaking within a dual framework and therefore towards reversing it, they speak of a model that is based on the ‘other’ itself (Awan 2003: 36).

For understanding how any of these theories can be applied to the study of home, I return to Dovey’s approach in the study of place in architecture and the way in which identity and subjectivity are located within this concept. Dovey (2010) alludes to a different way of looking at space by comparing two main dominant approaches in defining a place, one as a pre-given entity rooted in essentialism and the other grounded on defining place as a socially constructed entity. His idea blends the theories of Deleuze and Bourdieu that help to define space as a platform of becoming (based on Deleuzian theory) more than being (based on Heidegger’s ontology of being in the world). In that respect, he states that, through this approach, the danger of minimising space to a fixed notion is put into relief. He proposes the application of Bourdieu’s notion of *habitus* “as an embodied world” to replace the ideas that promote division between the dialects of subjectivity-objectivity or people-environment (Dovey, 2010:6). He summarises how the space can be studied and how we can learn from those studies to design a place. He alludes to Deleuze and Guattari’s idea of *assemblage* as an entity that is material and expressive at the same time, is a result of overlapped connections between striated and smooth space. Then he returns to Deleuze’s idea of ‘being through desires’ and defines design as a desire for future and highlights the urge to rethink the relationship between diagram, mapping plan and design (Dovey 2010:30).

A house design is based on desires for privacy, security, amenity and aesthetic experience. The concept of place-as-assemblage enables us to overcome simplistic divisions between design and planning, form and function, diagram and design. It enables us to develop a sophisticated approach to concepts of territory and spatial structure, and to see all places as embodying twofold concepts such as rhizome/tree, difference/identity, but also global/local and open/closed. Most importantly it enables us to encounter and understand the sense of place as an everyday experience rather than either an essentialised ‘*genius loci*’ or a myth (Dovey 2010: 30).

Dovey applies the idea of *assemblage* by Deleuze and “*habitus*” by Bourdieu to his definition of place applicable for architectural understanding of space. Although their theories may be understood vastly differently, both acknowledge the importance of social production of space and, consequently, the ideal of division between subject and object is disregarded in both theories. By understanding a place as an *assemblage*, the meaning and material are integrated in an in-between state that is the embodiment of enfolding processes of giving being to one another. In this sense, Dovey argues this approach brings into relief the complexities in architectural thinking that involve the question of materiality and expression (Dovey 2010: 17). Based on a combination of these theories, a conceptual tool can be

created to understand the dialectics of home, such as tangible/intangible, material/atmosphere, real/ideal, not as binarised but as enfolding hybrid characters. Within this framework, Dovey manages to borrow the aspects of each theory applicable for architectural study of space without highlighting their contradictions. Although Deleuze and Bourdieu may represent different grounds of theory, by having an inclusive approach, a coherent methodology can be developed. It is with such a scheme that I believe the study of home as a multifaceted, ambiguous entity becomes possible. The mentioned theories in this chapter will shape the framework for my empirical work to answer my research questions:

- If we should look at identity -and home- as socially and dynamically constituted, what happens in the relocation to a new society? What are the challenges -both in terms of social and identity issue- and how are they resolved? This addresses the issue of otherness and ideas of space as socially constituted matter.
- Can home be seen as a place that interfaces these challenges and helps to reform and situate identity and how is this embodied within home?
- Lastly and most importantly, how can architecture be brought into this discussion without being minimised to merely the materiality and physicality of home?

Therefore, I endeavour to articulate a hybrid approach for examining home -architecturally- and based on a combination of phenomenology and feminism schemes in respect to post-structuralism theories on identity and space.

With the flexibility provided within this framework, the analysis of home as a complex matter becomes more feasible in terms of the dialectics tangibility and intangibility of home as hybrid, transforming matters that produce a third spatiality, an in-between space. In that guise, the contradictions of home become hybrid inflections that give being to its spatiality. To clarify what I mean by studying the dialectics of home within an in-between articulation, I endeavour to examine the atmosphere at home as the most intangible aspect of home, arguing its spatial character and its relevance to the architecture of home. This is presented in the next part of this chapter designating the interconnectedness of tangible and intangible at home and the way they are being applied to the creation of atmosphere and ultimately the making of home as a place of becoming.

## **1.2 Capturing the atmosphere of home**

Through the study of atmosphere, I aim to illustrate the ways that the frequent enfolding of tangible and intangible at home is spatially embodied. First, I will begin by looking at philosophical and architectural perspectives on atmosphere and I will finish by discussing the atmosphere of home. This chapter reveals the very different ways that atmosphere is approached across different fields of study. Building on the ideas of philosophy, architects describe it subjectively in relation to material and architectural qualities and social scientists examine it within the context of everyday practice in places like home. At the same time, this chapter highlights the need for architects, philosophers and social scientists to work together

to develop a comprehensive understanding of atmosphere within a spatial sensory experience of home.

### 1.2.1 Philosophy of atmosphere

Atmosphere has been noticeably discussed in philosophy. But the philosophers who are interested in atmosphere are not necessarily the ones that architects look to. Philosophers have studied atmosphere in a broader context, while architects' analysis of atmosphere is generally based on phenomenological ideas, predominantly, focusing on subjective experiences of space, both for the architects (to be used as the design references to create quality spaces) and users (as the perceivers of atmosphere, based on their previous subjective experiences and their memory). However, there is an extensive body of literature within philosophical discourse, which it is important to acknowledge as it provides a deeper scope of theories for the architectural studies of atmosphere. Of particular interest is Gernot Böhme's theory of atmosphere, as he has developed a comprehensive stance in regard to its spatial character while being rarely regarded in architectural analysis of atmosphere. Böhme (2013) has examined atmosphere across a range of different disciplines and perspectives. He defines atmosphere in relation to aesthetics and notes that understanding it through the production of aesthetics is a way to rationalise its intangibility (Böhme 2013: 2-8). Besides, in "Atmosphere as the fundamental concept of a new aesthetics" he criticises past versions of aesthetic theory because of its dubious judgments and its lack of connection to sensuousness and to nature<sup>4</sup>.

The primary task of aesthetics is no longer to determine what art is and to provide means for art criticism. Rather the theme of aesthetics is now the full range of aesthetic work, which is defined generally as the production of atmospheres and thus extends from cosmetics, advertising, interior decoration, stage sets to art in the narrower sense (Böhme 1993: 116).

In this way, it takes on the range of human subjectivity. Böhme borrows Walter Benjamin's (1936) idea of "Aura of the art work" meaning that every artwork has an aura or atmosphere, but what makes it an artwork is not solely dependent on its objective qualities (Benjamin 1936: 221). The aura must be perceived. Böhme explained atmosphere as mediation between subjective and objective. "Aura proceeds from them [objects], if the observer lets them and himself be, that is, refrains from an active intervention in the world, and aura is clearly something which flows forth spatially, almost something like a breath or a haze precisely, an atmosphere" (Böhme 1993: 117). Therefore, the creation of atmosphere is not all dependent on the object, it must be perceived by the subject to come into being.

Atmospheres are neither something objective, that is, qualities possessed by things, and yet they are something thing-like, belonging to the thing in that things articulate their presence through qualities-conceived as ecstasies. Nor

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<sup>4</sup> Böhme discussed this in regard to the issue of *authenticity* in the artwork (Böhme 1993: 115). Walter Benjamin (1934) in his essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", uses authenticity to refer to the originality of the artwork (Clement 2011: 5).

are atmospheres something subjective, for example, determinations of a psychic state. And yet they are subject-like, belong to subjects in that they are sensed in bodily presence by human beings (Böhme 1993: 122).

Böhme's understanding of atmosphere is centred on locating the human body and being perceived with the help of senses. He puts more focus on the spatiality of atmosphere and explained atmosphere as "spatially discharged, quasi-objective feelings" (Böhme 2006: 16). Therefore, he associates the physicality of objects with their existence in space and their capacity to create space through their form, provenance and arrangements (Böhme 2006: 402). He refutes the idea that atmosphere is an independent, subjective entity because then the role of objects in producing atmosphere will be denied. Here, he uses the example of the English landscape garden to describe the contribution of objects, colour and sound in making certain atmospheres. The same way that Dovey proposed to understand space through the idea of *assemblage*, or becoming dialectics, Böhme's idea of atmosphere describes the dialectics of atmosphere of space. Atmosphere is neither subjective nor objective, it is something in-between that is embodied spatially and is perceived sensually. It expands across time and it is rooted in memory and the history of the ones who perceive it. Furthermore, Böhme defines atmosphere as the character of space that defines our sense of "whereness". Böhme's atmosphere is an entity that creates a certain mood that can be shared regardless of cultural and social differences.

They do not exist as entities, which remain identical over time; nevertheless, even after a temporal interruption they can be recognised as the same, through their character. Moreover, although they are always perceived only in subjective experience ... it is possible to communicate about them intersubjectively (Böhme 2013: 4).

Hence, atmosphere can be repeated over time and can be recreated according to the subject's previous experiences. In terms of making atmospheres, Böhme suggests atmosphere, as "a floating in between, something between things and perceiving subjects", is a result of conditions that can be reproduced according to experiences. He refers to those conditions as generators and states that the production of atmosphere is dependent on the production of conditions of perception (Böhme 2013: 4).

The creation and experience of certain atmospheres through the object-subject relationship is also the focus of Ben Anderson's (2009) work. He introduces atmosphere as a "singular affect" that happens between dualities of absence and presence, subject and subject/object and between definite and indefinite, and notes that "Atmosphere occurs beyond, around and alongside the formation of subjectivity" (Anderson 2009: 77). The possibility to go beyond, to be unfinished and indefinite, defines atmosphere as an entity that is elusive and is connected with previous experiences. "Atmospheres are unfinished because of their constitutive openness to being taken up in experiences" (Anderson 2009: 79). Additionally, the subject-object relationship and the idea of perceiving and producing atmosphere is taken further by Tim Flohr Sørensen (2015) in his study on the archaeology of atmosphere. Sørensen notes that prehistoric atmospheres are not narrated based on experiencing subjects; therefore, they

can only be read through the materials that remain. He suggests that movement acts as a catalyst to experience atmosphere beyond the subjective experience. He argues that moving through archaeological sites provides a subjective experience of extracting atmosphere from the existing materials; hence the atmosphere is produced by a combination of material culture and architecture. "The challenge is thus to negotiate the clause of subjectivity so as to accommodate the possibility for understanding past atmospheres by appreciating them as constituting through material culture in the absence of a directly observable experiencing subject" (Sørensen 2015: 2). Sørensen concludes that the perception of archaeological atmosphere through the "ecstasies of things" requires a wider outline of subjective experience of phenomenology. It is a blend of spatial choreography of movement, personal experience and material arrangement (Sørensen 2015: 8).

Examining different definitions of atmosphere mainly by philosophers, I defined that atmospheres are created with a combination of certain conditions: the subjective experience and personal history, architectural elements and objects and their arrangements. Architecture is brought to the discussion of atmosphere because it explains the spatial aspects of it.

### 1.2.2 Atmosphere and architecture

Defining atmosphere without studying it in an architectural realm is inevitable as atmospheres happen within a space, create a space and set spatial boundaries. The aim of this section is to address architects' perspective on atmosphere and deliberating the ways in which it is studied as an architectural matter. Atmosphere as an entity that settles architecture and phenomenology within itself is the centre of Paul James' (2008) argument, as he specifies the spatiality of atmosphere as "a form of horizon" and as "physical phenomenon" and speaks of architecture as a medium that connects the inherent cultural capacity of the site that consequently unravels the atmosphere interior through reflective experiences (James 2008: 61).

James' introduction of atmosphere shows why architects examine atmosphere with a phenomenological stance. In the field of architecture, Marcus Vitruvius was one of the first to draw attention to the human body as a source for architectural measurements and spatial quality (Vitruvius, 15B 1956). In his book *The Ten Books on Architecture* under the category of *venustas* (beauty), he introduced six basic concepts that distinguish between the art of architecture and the art of aesthetics. Robert Scranton has interpreted them as: *ordinatio* (preparing specifications), *dispositio* (designing the forms) and *distributio* (allocating the costs). The art in the building includes *eurythmia* (dynamics), *symmetria* (commensurability) and *decor* (functionalism). The last three elements are interpreted differently in relation to aesthetic qualities, and often *eurythmia* is vaguely described as the atmosphere of the space. Scranton notes that Vitruvius is more clear about the elements in the art of architecture than the art of aesthetics because, firstly, he considered himself an architect and engineer and, secondly, an aesthete (Scranton 1974: 499).

Juhani Pallasmaa (2005) in *The eyes of the skin: architecture and the sense*, discusses architecture within a phenomenological context that brings about notions of self, body in

space, multi-sensory experience, memory, imagination and atmosphere of space. He defines a timeless task for architecture, that is “to create embodied and lived existential metaphors that concretise and structure our being in the world” (Pallasmaa 2005: 71). Pallasmaa provides a study drawing attention to the significance of producing architecture not as a merely visual craft but as a platform that aims to produce spaces that engage and stimulate all senses (Pallasmaa 2005: 39). Grounding on Merleau-Ponty’s philosophy that places the body in the centre of experiential world, he explains that sensory experiences become an inseparable part of human experience and being. “There is no body separate from its domicile space, and there is no space unrelated to the unconscious image of perceiving self” (Pallasmaa 2005: 40). Hence, he argues that what is missing from today’s architecture is the transaction between body, imagination and environment. Accordingly, what makes a place to be remembered in addition to its uniqueness is the “affect it has on our bodies and generated enough associations to hold it in our personal worlds” (Pallasmaa 2005: 41). He argues that every memorable architectural experience involves all the senses interacting with the qualities of space, matter and scale. Hence, architecture enhances existential experience and “one’s sense of being in the world” and enforces the experience of self (Pallasmaa 2005: 41). He claims that architecture functions as a medium between the senses and the body: “the making of architecture calls for clear thinking, but this is a specific mode of thought that takes place through the senses and the body, and through the specific medium of architecture” (Pallasmaa 2005: 41). This is the focus in this chapter, to draw attention to the sensory experience of space and its atmospheric qualities within cultural and social context while positioning architecture as a significant factor that embodies the atmosphere of space.

Curating the atmospheric qualities of space remains an important challenge for architects. Even ‘Modernist’ architects such as Le Corbusier were concerned with the relationship between architecture and atmosphere. Building on the ideas of Plato, Le Corbusier believed that the primary means to influence thought was by influencing the body at a subconscious level, the “joys of the body” being “interdependent to intellectual sensations.” In this way the “emotion leading to action” could then be felt in “our inner depths, before even the formulation of a theory” (Le Corbusier, 1925, cited in Samuel 2010: 27). This is an aspect of architectural history that was very much repressed by ‘Modernist’ historians such as Nikolaus Pevsner and others who took a more functional view of what architecture should be.

Immateriality and the quality of space is often the victim of architecture’s inability to define itself as a science or as an art. It seems to be a concern thought too artistic to be discussed in scientific terms. However, with the late twentieth century, enthusiasm for phenomenological theory reached a climax with the publication of Juhani Pallasmaa’s (1996) *The eyes of the skin*, when subjective perceptions of space became the main focus for architects such as Stephen Holl and Peter Zumthor. Coming from a phenomenological point of view, Pallasmaa has also argued that architectural education is focused on the conscious eye. This leads to undervaluing of the role of emotions and the unconscious, which often produce the most comprehensive judgments (Pallasmaa 2014: 2). In his opinion, architecture’s focus on visual qualities has devalued the importance of other senses in

perceiving atmosphere as a non-directional, embracing character (Pallasmaa 2014: 12). He also discussed the importance of unconscious and embodied processes that we are not aware of. Pallasmaa (2014) states that the focus on rationalised and logical mind has limited our creativity and our trust in our emotional judgment. He applies this to introduce atmospheric intelligence and defines atmosphere as an imaginative experience that becomes real with the help of architecture. "Atmosphere is similarly an exchange between material or existent properties of the place and our immaterial realm of imagination" (Pallasmaa 2014: 3). By referring to Alvar Aalto's notion of "universal substance" he explains atmosphere as a unifying entity that can be observed as a shared experience. Pallasmaa's approach in defining atmosphere involves personal imagination and sensory experience of space and is centred on architecture as the embodiment of immateriality of atmosphere.

The production of atmosphere through architecture links to Jonathan Hill's (2006) discussion of "immaterial architecture", which he believed to be "the perceived absence of matter more than the actual absence of matter" (Hill 2006: 54). Hill mentions that the immaterial architecture as opposed to the material architecture is ephemeral, subjective, unpredictable and porous and challenges the stability in architectural disciplines. Nonetheless, he argues that this is a positive matter because it provides flexibility and openness in creating and experiencing space (Hill 2006: 54). Nonetheless, drawing a distinct line between the materiality and immateriality of architecture may seem troubling to the ways that atmosphere is defined in philosophical discourses; Hill's definition highlights the interconnectedness of the two.

Julieanna Preston (2008) explains atmosphere through the example of mist in different layers. She states that mist is located in, while not being limited to, certain geometry; it is a physical figure represented by transparency. "Mist is a physical phenomenon, a weather pattern dependent on local, intimate and precocious spatial ... is site specific and yet geometrically formless. Its visible presence measures a spatial threshold of saturation; water literally falling out of thin air (Preston 2008: 7). Atmosphere is made visible by saturation and refers to political and cultural references to create mood. Preston suggested that atmosphere has a spatial character and is an occupied figure within surfaces that is influenced by culture and is perceived based on an 'affect-subject' relationship.

One charged by the intensification of enveloping surfaces, the confluence of multiple inhabiting bodies, the spurious conflation of cultural attitudes towards decoration and ever-changing paradigms of spatiality. In these terms, interiors are understood to be ambient environments delimited by the aura of affect and subjectivity (Preston 2008: 7).

The space of atmosphere created by human occupancy is also the main focus of Mark Wigley's essay 'Architecture of Atmosphere'. He states that atmosphere is the "central objective of architecture" and is a phenomenon that is the production of physical form and starts once the construction of the building finishes. "It is a sensuous emission of sound, light, heat, smell and moisture; a swirling climate of intangible affects generated by a stationary object" (Wigley 1998: 18). Wigley refers to Frank Lloyd Wright's projects as a good

representation of atmosphere in architectural design. He reproduces Wright's argument that "a good atmosphere is produced by integrating every single detail according to a singular vision" (Wigley 1998:19), achieving in this way a consistency of experience. Wright introduces atmosphere as a powerful and sensuous entity that is created by architects.

Architecture itself is nothing but atmosphere, writes Wigley: "The building is seemingly moulded in atmosphere than the other way around" (Wigley 1998: 20). Architecture is a platform that produces "sensuous atmosphere". Wigley refers to Gottfried Semper's introduction that "the true atmosphere" of architecture is "the haze of carnival candles" (Wigley 1998: 20). He declares that, for Semper, architects are special effect experts who are capable of creating atmosphere through a thin layer of decor. For Wigley, atmosphere occupies the space between the building and the context. Considering that the context already has a certain atmosphere, the production of atmosphere in building is like having atmosphere within atmosphere. For Wigley, changing spaces means to change atmospheres and he notes how Guy Debord and the Situationists tried to create and redefine spaces according to atmosphere. "If new psychogeographic architecture is to be imposed on the traditional city, the lines that define its space would be completely different than the ones that define buildings, streets and so on. The goal, as Guy Debord put it later, is to "'redesign architecture' itself by exploiting the radical potential of atmosphere" (Wigley 1998: 24). Wigley takes his idea of atmosphere as architecture, which is a sensuous entity that embraces space, further, by stating that the architecture design itself is a product of atmosphere. He states that previous atmospheric experiences of architects help them to apply materials and sensuous experiences to produce and repeat certain atmospheres.

Atmospheric perception was at the heart of the design process developed by Dalibor Vesely over decades of teaching at the University of Cambridge School of Architecture in the late twentieth century. For Vesely (2004), architectural representation was closely linked with other arts such as painting and poetry (Vesely 2004: 367). He discusses the importance of architectural drawings in the design process and their similarity to reality. He analyses the poetics of architecture represented in drawings with atmospheric qualities and proposes a new way of thinking for design that is not based on casual thinking and is achieved by "accepting the role of similarities, analogies, and metaphors in understanding the visible world" (Vesely 2004: 388). Meaning that the overall design emerges from the experience of atmospheric fragments pieced together in the form of collage.

Additionally, the architectural atmosphere has been examined from a different angle in Anthony Vidler's (1992) book, *The Architectural Uncanny*. Based on Freud's idea of "uncanny" or "unhomeliness" and Heidegger's idea of dwelling as a response to human "unsettledness" in the modern world, he introduces the atmosphere of uncanny at home. Vidler (1992) states his interest in the presence of an uncanny and strange subject in the familiar and secure place of home (Vidler 1992: 3). He defines the relationship between the feeling of homely (*Heimlich*) and unhomely (*Unheimlich*) as: "the *Unheimlich* seemed to emerge beneath the *Heimlich*, so to speak, to rise up again when seemingly put to rest, to escape from the bounds of home" (Vidler 1992: 26).

Architects Herzog and de Meuron have compared the performance of atmosphere with that of perfume. They remind the significance of smell and scent as temporalities that evoke experiences and the memory of the past. Herzog and de Meuron, link atmosphere to the “element of elusive emotions that define the aura of a place” (Herzog and de Meuron 2006: 365). They note that the way a space is understood is not only dependent on its design but also on the way it is experienced. Thus, regardless of design, atmosphere is what shapes our perceptions of architecture. “We can certainly design better or poorer, more pleasant or less pleasant architecture, but like perfume, it is the experience associated or not associated with it that is decisive. There is a difference between experiencing a victory or a defeat in a football stadium” (Herzog and de Meuron 2006: 365).

Another Swiss architect who tries to define atmospheres, and the process of creating it by the help of sensuous experiences, is Peter Zumthor (2006). For Zumthor, atmosphere is an aesthetic figure. He states that “quality architecture” for him is when one is moved by a building design. He describes nine effective elements in creating architectural qualities that evoke emotional responses and result in reproducing atmosphere.<sup>5</sup> They range from “the body of architecture” to “the light of the thing” and form a spectrum from the materiality of architecture to the immaterial figures in production of atmosphere.

The combination of sensory and spatial experiences is also considered by Peter Zumthor (2010) in his essay ‘thinking architecture’ in which he shares his very first architectural experiences from his childhood in order to explain the roots of his understanding of architecture.

Sometimes I can almost feel a particular door handle in my hand, a piece of metal shaped like the back of spoon. I used to take hold of it when I went into my aunt’s garden. That door handle still seems to me like a special sign of entry into a world of different moods and smells, I remember the sound of the gravel under my feet, the soft gleam of the waxed oak staircase, I can hear

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<sup>5</sup> The first element is “the body of Architecture” and the second one is “Material Compatibility”. Zumthor explains that the material flexibility in terms of combination and compatibility with other materials helps architects to create uniqueness and to process atmosphere (Zumthor 2006: 23). In the third category, “The Sound of a Space” he not only talks about the sound that people add and design within space but also the sound of space itself, which is dependant of shape, scale and material (Zumthor 2006: 29). In the fourth, “The Temperature of a Space” Zumthor draws attention to the temperature of the building, which is a result of design and use of material. This results in physical and psychological sense of space (Zumthor 2006: 33). The fifth element in creating atmosphere is “Surrounding Objects”. He specifies that for him a successful design is when the things (objects) of the users find their place and their meanings in space, although they have nothing to do with the designer (Zumthor 2006: 37). In the next item, “Tension between Composure and Seduction” he addresses atmosphere by movement in space and he argues that some level of freedom must be given to people to decide their movement within space (Zumthor 2006: 45). The seventh element is “tension between interior and exterior”; he introduces “the imperceptible transition between the inside and outside” and refers to façade as the mysterious threshold between inside and outside. He mentions how façade is a representation of inside while not telling too much about the interior (Zumthor 2006: 47). In the eighth parameter “Levels of Intimacy” he talks about proximity and distance in spaces to create atmosphere, and in the last subject “The Light on Things” Zumthor explains the light of things and their shadows and the different atmospheres the natural and artificial lighting produce (Zumthor 2006: 59).

the heavy front door closing behind me as I walk along the dark corridor and enter the kitchen, the only really brightly lit room in the house (Zumthor 2010: 9).

Zumthor explains atmosphere using architectural and sensory elements that are based on the common sense between the designer and people. For him, the success of architecture is highly dependent on the feelings it evokes. Zumthor's memories of his architectural experiences are strongly combined with sensory engagement with space such as feeling the door handle or the sound of walking. Additionally, in his book *Atmospheres*, Zumthor (2006) states that his sensory experiences of home were imbued with atmospheric qualities, gave him a happy mood and a secure feeling of being at home. "What always comes first to my mind are the sounds when I was a boy. The noises my mother made in the kitchen. They made me feel happy if I was in the front room, I always knew my mother was at home because I could hear her banging about the pots" (Zumthor 2006: 29). Zumthor's ideas are also connected to those of phenomenology theories discussed previously.

Architects look at atmosphere in a different way compared to philosophers and social scientists. Utilising phenomenology as their theoretical backbone, these architects apply subjective approaches to the creation of atmosphere, narrating their personal architectural memories and experiences to explain atmosphere and hope to be understood by the help of shared, common experiences of atmosphere. Jan Smitheram and Simon Twose (2009) state that among all the different architectural perspectives on atmosphere there is one thing in common, the focus on occupation over form (Smitheram and Twose 2009: 3). Consequently, the main issue with these approaches is the absolute, subjective ways of addressing atmosphere. The challenge here is to propose an approach that comprehends both the subjective attitude of the architects and the arguably more rigorous methodological approaches of social sciences in the study of atmosphere of space.

By discussing the architectural perspective on atmosphere and including architects' experience of atmosphere, I address the significance of architecture in producing spatial qualities that can be representative of identity. Juhanni Pallasmaa (1995), for example, in 'Notes of phenomenology of home' stated that as architects we are unable to trace the emotional and fluid aspects of home and argues that home is more a notion of psychology and sociology than architecture and "is an expression of personality and family and their very unique pattern of life. Consequently, the essence of home is closer to life itself than to artefact" (Pallasmaa 1995). The aim of discussing architects' perspective on atmosphere, as one of the most diffuse aspects of home, is to highlight the mutual relation between architecture and home. The entity of home is a representation of individualisation and each home is unique in its own way because of the household it accommodates, but architecture is the element that is capable of enhancing the individual interactions with home. Therefore, it should be brought to the discussion of home.

### **1.2.3 Atmosphere of home**

In the previous section, I discussed atmosphere as a sensory experience that, combined with

architectural elements, helps to perceive and understand the nature of a place. Atmosphere is an ephemeral, elusive, entity that surrounds us and can be understood and be recreated over time. In this section, I examine atmosphere with a particular focus on home, discussing it as an intangible spatiality. Since it is an ephemeral spatiality created by the movements of tangible (home possessions and its spatial arrangement) and intangible (memory and sensory experiences), it embodies the complexity of studying home and it also helps to bring an architectural perspective to this matter. The atmosphere of home is analysed in relation to the issue of identity and the ways it is represented, such as cultural elements, social relations, sensory and gender elements. Therefore, in the following sections I will examine the intangible and tangible aspects of home, first in terms of representation of one's identity and then how these elements can be applied to create a sense of homeliness through creation of atmosphere.

### **1.2.3.1 Sensory experience of home/ the representation of identity**

Our senses play a great role in observing and recreating a particular atmosphere at home. Feeling and experiencing home is highly dependent on the application of senses. The way we see our home, hear it, smell it and feel it, is a result of our sensory engagement with our home spaces. The application of our senses creates embodied memories of home. Therefore, senses have a great influence on the ways in which the experience and the memory of home is shaped and remembered. Sarah Pink (2006) has done much to promote studies of the sensory home. She discusses how our sensory experience of home varies for different individuals and in different cultures. For Pink, smell, touch, sound and vision create a personal understanding of home. She argues that, although experiencing home has the potential of engaging all the senses, our interactions with home is limited since vision is the prioritised sense in the majority of the interactions with home. "The home is certainly a sensory domain and approaches that depend predominantly on the visual are surely inadequate for researching how home is experienced" (Pink 2006: 60). She explains this contradiction as a way of resistance to full communication with surroundings. Similarly, Paul Stoller (1997) introduces the concept of "sensuous body" meaning that an experience should involve all the senses. "In many societies these lower senses, all of which cry out for sensuous description, are central to the metaphorical organisation of experience; they also trigger cultural memories" (Stoller 1997: xvi).

Pink also declares that the visual elements in the house, including object and decoration, depict the user's values. Nonetheless, people have their own personal way of engaging with their homes with the help of their senses that make each home living experience unique. Thus, examining the everyday experience of the users discloses different layers of home notions that are beneficial for the study of home. Additionally, she suggests that the cultural context influences the way in which the home is sensed. In *Home Truths*, Pink (2004) illustrates this through an examination of household activities at home. The way people perform their household tasks reveals many sensory interactions with home; hence, the way people apply their senses in doing their household activities is representational of their culture. For example, she elaborated the matter of culture by comparing Spanish and British

household perceptions of dust. In a Spanish household, dust is believed to be dirt because it is from outside, while for British households it is not assumed to be dirty because it is seen as something accumulated from inside the home (Pink 2004: 77). This cultural perception then influences the cleaning regime. In a Spanish household there is a constant war against dust while in a British household it is not the primary consideration for constant cleaning. She also argues that, at a personal level, the necessity for cleaning is recognised through the senses as the cleaning time, for some it is defined based on when the dust becomes visible, while for some it is being observed by the tactile experience. The example of dirt and cleaning expresses different types of sensory engagement with home. The dirt itself is recognised through various senses like vision, smell and touch and the cleaning process involves other sensory experiences like the feeling of cleanliness and the smell of freshness (Pink 2004: 69).

One of the household tasks that intensify sensory interaction with space is the process of cooking and food preparation. It involves different senses, like smell, touch, vision and taste. Elia Petridou (2001), in her research on Greek students in England, has argued that food and cooking is a way of experiencing home. Studying home through food and the fact that food involves different senses gives the ability to examine home as a totally sensory space (Petridou 2001: 88). Petridou highlights how the Greek students perceive the differences between British and Greek houses by their sensory experiences happening through cooking and cleaning. The British home, where ready meals and microwaves are believed to be commonplace, is specified as a place of alienation, while the Greek home is understood to be a place of process that brings people together. The Greek understanding of home involves the process of cooking followed by cleanliness, which is a representation of “caring” for the traditions (Petridou 2001: 94). Hence, Petridou explains that the processing time in cooking for the Greek students was a reflection of their Greek home. The general sensory observations of the environment in relation to food, like “the lack of smell” in ingredients and criticising their perfect appearance in comparison to the ones in Greece, represent the Greek students’ longing for their original home via their sensory reflections.

The sensory experience of home is not just through certain household activities. A certain song can be a reminder of a certain moment in home or a specific smell can be a remembrance of a whole spatial experience. The ways we remember our home represents another layer of sensory experience. Jung (1961/1989) in his inward autobiography takes the reader back to his very first childhood memories as the start of sharing his memories and experiences in regard to his identity formation analysis.

I am sitting in our dining room, on the west side of the house, perched in a high chair and spooning up warm milk with bits of broken bread in it. The milk has a pleasant taste and a characteristic smell. This was the first time I became aware of the smell of milk. It was the moment when, so to speak, I became conscious of smelling (Jung 1961: 7).

Remembering the smell of milk and how it tasted, while having a vivid image of location in the house, is a great example of how the sensory and spatial experiences are combined even in

the very first understandings of our home. This is a memory of the located sensory experiences. The memory loses its value if any of the sensory or spatial experience is missing. The interaction of senses with home reveals different aspects of cultural and personal life. The sensory experiences of home build our future home experiences and are connected with our memories of our past home. Although everyone's sensory engagement with home and surrounding spaces is different and is dependent on the cultural and social contexts, it is very helpful in understanding the shared experience of space. It helps to describe the mood and feelings in spaces and occasions and the intangible matters that are very hard to describe in any other sense.

In regard to atmosphere and capturing the intangible at home, Pink's argues that senses that are often transient might produce different atmospheres. She specifies the role of sound and smell in the creation of atmosphere at home. Additionally, she refers to the participants of her research, stating that: "The use of sound to create particular atmospheres of home that are expressive of both mood and self-identity and are consciously used to create moods and inspire particular activities" (Pink 2006: 3) was common among all of them. Then, she discusses how certain devices produce different atmospheric experiences within home. "Radio sound also forms an important part of the home, sometimes including music, but usually offering a different type of 'atmosphere' and sentiment" (Pink 2006: 71).

Trying to understand space with the help of atmosphere and its role in making a sensory experience or a memory is important in the study of home spaces because it reveals the crucial role of the occupants. Creating atmosphere is one of the human sensuous interactions with space that in places such as domestic spaces can reveal noticeable features about culture, history and traditions of the user. My perspective on atmosphere is close to that of Joseph Clement (2011) who describes it not merely as a bodily-related experience but also a unique spatial quality that evokes individual responses. According to Clement, it is only through atmosphere that the present experience is linked to the experience of the past.

The desire to understand the presence of history in the present is a desire to have a culturally relevant perspective that isn't based on what is happening yesterday, right now, or tomorrow, but rather an interest to develop a broader understanding of where we as individuals situate ourselves and are situated by the current world that we are living within (Clement 2011: 5).

Therefore, looking at atmosphere as a spatial quality is important as it reminds us that the making of home and the reconfiguration of identity occurs within a constant journey between the memory of the past and the experience of the present while being linked to the future home. Accordingly, atmosphere in this thesis is introduced as a significantly influential constituent in the process of homemaking.

### **1.2.3.2 Gender identity; women experience of home**

The study of sensory engagement with home and the representation of identity through ephemeral practices is incomplete without looking at experience of home in regard to gender. Therefore, first it is important to examine how women interact with their space, how they

respond to social expectations penetrating into their home and how they can change the outside world through home.

Rosie Braidotti (1993) addresses feminist philosophies to answer issues of gender identity in relation to 'political subjectivity' (Braidotti 1993: 3). She proposes a framework of thought beyond the binarised reality and seeks an alternative that regards the "differences".

The task for feminist theory is how to think of identity as a site of differences: women occupy different subject positions at different times; the task is how to think through this multiplicity. In turn, this puts a great deal of emphasis on the question of how to rethink alterity and otherness (Braidotti 1993: 10).

She has made a distinction between "women" and "real women" who are different from the model that is culturally shaped for female identity by society (Braidotti 1993: 8). Her understanding of feminism, political subject and female identity reveals the significant impact of social expectations in developing and complicating female identity. This is valuable because it reminds us of the role of society in construction of female identity.

Domesticity, in essence, has received extensive attention in feminist theories where home was primarily analysed as a place of oppression for women (Friedan 1963), mostly by Marxist feminists focusing on household as unpaid labour (Dalla Costa 1975, see also Federici 2004, Marks, Delphy and Leonard 1987). However, later studies such as Hooks' (1991) draws attention to the other dimensions of home discussions, centred on women by highlighting their indispensability in regarding race and class differences (Hooks 2000, see also Talpade Mohanty 2002).

In terms of architecture, the feminist studies are categorised by a range of ideas such as: what space means for women; how the female body experiences the space, and the possibility of creating a space that is made for women; and what ultimately are the challenges women architects face in the architecture profession. Joan Rothschild and Alethea Cheng (1999) in their book *Design and Feminism* address different ways in which feminism is influenced by architecture and is studied in this area. They encompass different areas of studies that examine feminism and architecture. The first is the view of urbanism focusing on "redefining and reclaiming urban and suburban environment", the second one, concerns "arrangements of dwelling and neighbourhood"; this highlights the ways in which women interact with space. The third area of studies is dedicated to "product design" claiming space for women in the design world. The last part is a discussion of "process", examining the role of feminist theories in architecture education (Rothschild and Cheng 1999: 4-5, see also Rendell et al. 2007). The second part specifically is "spatial arrangement", which highlights women's interaction with space, how they live, and experience and use spaces. Two interconnected ideologies are addressed in this area, "women and domesticity and the ideology of separate spheres" (Ahrentzen 2003: 183). This approach is the centre of this research, examining women's perceptions on their domestic space, their approach towards spatial arrangement of the private space and the ways in which they manage the boundaries between the private and the public in their domestic realm to improve their social interactions.

Therefore, I position my study of the dialectics of home for women in a way that acknowledges these differences, but what interests me is how these challenges, addressed by feminist studies, are actually used for women's benefit by women. I argue that their power lies in encountering social and political restriction, demanding space and representing an active "other" through home.

Geographer Alison Blunt (2002) dedicates a wider meaning to the concepts of home and identity for women in her research on Anglo-Indians. She states that Anglo-Indian communities resolve the issue of their national identity by referring to England as their fatherland and introducing India as their motherland. Anglo-Indians recognise themselves as both Indian and English and create a unique identity that includes both nationalities (Blunt 2002: 58). "England is imagined at a distance as an inspiring source of memory, heritage, tradition and veneration, whilst India is imagined in more immediate terms as the site of daily life, present meaning, and the location of home" (Blunt 2002: 20). Regardless of political attempts to put more emphasis on Indian nationality, Anglo-Indians continue to imagine their home as more British (Blunt 2002: 51). Blunt reveals an interesting contradiction in relation to gender aspects of home. She notes that home, traditionally recognised as a female realm, is associated with the "masculine imperial heritage" in the case of Anglo-Indian communities.

While a British imperial lineage was imagined through the figure of a British forefather, political debates about home, identity, and nationality largely erased the figure of an Indian maternal ancestor and instead focused on Mother India and on the present and future political roles of Anglo-Indian women within and beyond the home. While ideas of home and identity were potent sites in shaping ideas of nationality, the mixed descent of Anglo-Indians was thus both manifested and erased in public debates about the future and status of the community (Blunt 2002: 51).

She refers to the important political role of Anglo-Indian women in their homes drawing attention to the political intensity in their domestic life that transformed their home to a site of political resistance (Blunt 2002: 65). Blunt's research shows the role of the home in the embodiment of cultural identities and as a secure place to exhibit the nationality that one is being forced to deny.

The impact of social expectation on females' identity and the arrangement of the domestic space are discussed by Irene Cieraad (1999). She examines the relationship between windows and women in Dutch social history by studying the representation of women from the seventeenth century until nowadays through windows. Windows in Dutch homes in the seventeenth century functioned as barriers to the outside world of public, a transparent boundary that exhibited the domestic life to the public. She argues that female virtue was judged according to their appearance behind windows by the society. "By the end of the century (eighteenth century) the 'window attitude' of women marked their status. Upper class women were not to be seen at a front window or to be seated in an open window. Acts from which lower class women were not yet restrained" (Cieraad 1999: 36). This led to the application of "spying mirrors" designed to monitor street life secretly without leaning out of

the window and being seen (Cieraad 1999: 36). During the nineteenth century, with the influence of French fashion, curtains covered Dutch windows and they “looked like dark caves, functioning as the territories for respectable housewives” (Cieraad 1999: 32). By examining the relation between window and women, Cieraad reveals gender and social class elements in the private realm of home and public spheres. This shows how this relationship can shape social expectations and women’s engagement with their domestic space.

In another paper, ‘Out of my kitchen!’ Cieraad (2002) examines how women’s expectations and requirements of home during the twentieth century led society and architects to create new spatial structures. She refers to the shortage of servants for upper middle class families at the beginning of the twentieth century. Since the engagement of upper middle class women with household activities may have affected their social activities, different solutions were proposed by architects to decrease the necessity of having several servants and to arrange better space to encourage more young women to be employed as servants. “Architects commissioned to design fashionable country houses - the latest trend among the new upper-class - re-arranged the traditional floor plan of the town house with its upstairs-downstairs hierarchy into a coordinative floor plan in which family house and service wing were juxtaposed” (Cieraad 2002: 267). She notes that, during the 1960s, the fact that women were able to keep working after their marriage caused a change in household activities, such as answering the door for paying bills or receiving groceries.

The doorstep is not only a physical border between public and private, but also a symbolic border between two main economic spheres: on the one hand the non-profit domestic services of a mother and housewife and on the other, the commercial services of suppliers. Therefore money, the currency of the public domain, was paid on the doorstep, for it did not belong in the domestic, non-profit domain of the house. Love and dedication are domestic currencies (Cieraad 2002: 274).

Later, when women became capable of appearing actively in society and having their own income, there was no need for such an arrangement. This caused a change in the home architecture as the open plan became popular and the hallway for answering the door was added to the living room. Cieraad’s studies show the representation of women’s identity through home and how women’s identity, which is a combination of personal and social identity, is embodied within home.

Each of these regulations, and the ways in which women tackle them by making home a secure place of resistance, influences the dialectics of home, its tangible and intangible facets. The study of atmosphere is already a complex matter, hence my intentions are to discuss how women may have a different approach in making home, since their reality has been associated with home for so long. The main purpose is to acknowledge that women can experience home differently and to recall the significant role that home plays in formation of female identity, both socially and individually. The different gender-related experience of home does not merely concern the social and architectural aspects of domestic life. Sandy G. Smith (1994) examines people’s feelings and sense of belonging to their present and other

homes. Smith categorises atmosphere in the personal theme of home descriptions and with a gender division outlook. She notes that most of the women participants described their present and other homes by more emphasis on the psychological atmosphere than its physical features. Women associated the qualities of home with the positive atmospheres, while men were more focused on the physical aspects of home.

Women's perception of their home atmosphere is specifically examined by Bodil Birkebæk Olesen (2010). She discusses the use of ethnic objects in the home of American women to produce homely atmospheres. Women included ethnic objects in their homes, unconscious of their cultural origins and the history of their production, merely for the colourful design and patterns. This helped them to create an atmosphere very different to that of public space (Olesen 2010: 33). She notes that the quality of the objects gave them the ability to enhance the home decorations and improve "the unwanted qualities" of their home environment. "The nature of such atmosphere was rather indeterminate and seemed to somewhat hover above or beyond the material features of the environment, filling up or permeating space like a haze and embracing and comforting its occupants" (Olesen 2010: 31). Meanwhile, she states that the presence of an object is not in itself enough in the creation of a pleasant atmosphere at home and it requires the presence of social relations too. For Olesen, successful home decoration happens when it creates a homely atmosphere with traces of social life (Olesen 2010: 38).

As mentioned above, the discussion of atmosphere concerns the hybrid connection of the materiality and immateriality of home. Women have long enriched and wielded these flows of spatiality, not from a position of oppression but through caring and empowering the household (and themselves) and influencing the society. The range of sensory experiences (through food, music and household routines), objects and cultural practices radiates and embodies a certain atmosphere that is charged with codes of memory, individuality and history of the users that helps to produce a sense of home.

### **1.2.3.3 Home possessions**

Atmosphere is an elusive and intangible entity, whereas the materiality of space, the design and the objects in it, play an important role in producing it. Therefore, in this section, I look at the different ways that home possessions and the spatial arrangement of them impact the identity representation and consequently represent a certain atmosphere. The personal possessions play such a key role in home decoration and impact on sense of identity and consequently can be applied to recreate a certain atmosphere. Hence, I examine the role of domestic furniture and personal objects at home in reflecting identity, this is followed by an argument on the ways in which identity is embodied through the process of consumption at home. Besides purchasing and collecting domestic objects and furniture, the arrangement of the objects also reveals different aspects of self-representation. Further, I discuss how tangible elements such as objects and the physical arrangements of home are mutually applied to create spatial/ephemeral qualities.

One of the most obvious ways of representing identity within the home is via objects and

domestic furniture. Objects and the way they represent personal identity both in the individual and social sphere has received extensive critical attention. Jean-Sebastien Marcoux (2001) has declared that through objects the home is symbolically created and rebuilt (Marcoux 2001: 71). The challenge of choosing what to take and what to leave when leaving home is highly connected with people's memories and emotions. "Tenants can probably be said to inhabit their belongings as much as their place. In fact objects are at the heart of problematisation of the experience of mobility because while these possessions move in relation to a place, they may represent stability in relation to the people" (Marcoux 2001: 71). Marcoux's research highlights the significance of objects in making and remaking home. This is a process that symbolises home through objects, the objects that are chosen to be carried and to be remembered by the owner as a representation of their identity and their being. The arrangement of the objects is also a vital factor in the issue of identity and home. Iris Marion Young (2005) has mentioned that not only objects refer to one's identity but also the arrangement and the way they are organised within the home is significant in the reflection of identity. Young declared that both homemaking and identity are fluid entities (Marion Young 2005: 134-135).

Another way of representing identity within the home is through the consumption of personal objects and even groceries. Greg Noble (2003) has reminded us of the importance of the production, application and arrangement of objects in the house as a representation of the subject (human). "Focusing on the persistence and connectedness of human subjectivity across time and place, objectified in our possessions, however, can provide a sense of the density of lived experience" (Noble 2003: 234). Noble discusses the accumulation of possessions as "the accumulation of being". He states that the process of consumption in the house is the representation of self and being and argues that by producing objects, we produce ourselves. "The essence of ourselves as human is realised through labour; we externalise or objectify ourselves into things we produce, things that we then reabsorb" (Noble 2003: 235). Noble additionally shows that through consumption we represent ourselves to the others and "objects connect and include us with others" (Noble 2003: 239). He also examines the role of objects and furniture in the creation of shared identity among the household members.

The reflection of identity through consumption is the centre of Suzanne Reimer and Deborah Leslie's (2004) study. Reimer and Leslie, in their research on identity and consumption at home, reveal that home is not merely a place of self-representation, but also a place for household members to find shared identity through the purchasing and consumption of goods and domestic objects. "Home consumption practices thus may not be simply reflective of an individual consuming self, but also have the potential to mould relationships between individuals in the home" (Reimer and Leslie 2004: 189). They refer to Don Slater's statement that being a consumer creates temporary identities because of the process of choosing the products for home. "Thus, not only are we required to choose between different types of selves, but also the "post-traditional world" requires that we "constitute ourselves as selves who choose, consumers" (Slater 1997: 91, cited by Reimer and Leslie 2004: 191). They

believe that, while home consumption is a self-centred act that discloses different fluid identities, it also shows respect and attention to others' expectations. They use the example of shopping (especially for women) in which consideration is given to the desires of others in the house (Leslie and Reimer 2004: 191). Then they relate homemaking to furniture and consumption and how this leads to the creation of shared identities in households. "Furniture consumption frequently is negotiated between individuals and can come to embody shared and negotiated identity. Furniture is tactile as well as visual, and items such as sofas and beds may be explicitly tied to notions of shared intimacy in the home" (Leslie and Reimer 2004: 193). Furniture bought together by household members will be associated with their relationship and creates a shared identity. The purchase, articulation and the approaches applied to share the domestic objects reveal many layers of personal and shared identity of the household. By looking at the location of the objects even more stories are to be understood in regard to one's identity. Homemaking can be a development of personal and shared identity through the process of preparation, arrangement and application of domestic objects and furniture.

In the last section, I specifically discussed how objects radiate and represent a certain atmosphere. Additionally, studies such as Kate Pahl's (2004) shows how the application of certain objects in everyday life can represent cultural and ultimately atmospheric qualities and the making of home. Her observations of the homes of her participants reveal the production of certain cultural atmospheres through the application of objects and sensory experiences of space. "She wore a headscarf and dressed simply. Her home included a few images of mosques, and Islamic inscriptions on the walls. In the kitchen she displayed the Islamic calendar, with praying times printed out. There was a large television which was usually tuned to a Turkish channel" (Pahl 2004: 351). Additionally, Pahl has discussed the narratives embodied through artefacts and their influence in representing cultural identity; in her research 'every object tells a story'. She emphasises the importance of objects in the representation of cultural identity and draws attention to the different meanings represented by the ways in which objects are placed at home. Pahl approaches the study of objects in the house with regard to their cultural and personal meanings; this is different from Olesen's analysis of objects regardless of their cultural meanings for the users. However, both authors examine objects as powerful figures in the creation of atmosphere, which seems to fit into Böhme's discussion of objects' aura.

#### **1.2.3.4 Spatial arrangements of home**

Another influential element in reconfiguration of identity within home grounds it in the dialectics of public and private. In this section, I examine the fluidity of the territory of inside/outside. Due to the advent of technology not only is the home defined within a broad, flexible territory but also it influences the spatial arrangements of home. If we define space and identity as fluid, therefore, the complexities of home territories in today's world can be tackled. This fluidity of home spaces leads to defining new territories. Kate Church, Jenny Weight, Marsha Berry and Hugh MacDonald (2010) refer to Deleuze and Guattari's concepts of "the smooth" which is a fluid and indeterminate space and "the striated", a sedentary and

settled space to analyse domestic activities in relation to technology. The domestic activities and the fluidity caused by media devices and virtual spaces can be categorised in the realm of smooth space while the physical and fixed elements of home happen under striated space (Church et al. 2010: 281). They argue that defining home in relation to fluid and fixed spaces gives the ability to understand the contradictions in describing home and its territories. The authors also declare that dual/multi-purpose functionality has been brought to the house by the media devices that reshape the thresholds of the home spaces. "The advents of personal portable computing and broadband Internet access have further complicated this privacy issue, necessitating a reconsideration of the boundaries between notions of public and private, both within the home and without" (Church et al 2010: 273). In fact, home is a place of stability as it is located but the territories and thresholds of home can be very flexible within itself and in relation to the outside world. Others, such as Bowlie, Gregory, and McKie, state that the territory of home is delineated through the relationships between the people living there and the way they interact and care about each other. Essentially, they believe that caring is the main factor that distinguishes home spaces from the labour market of the outside world. "The "private" domain of the household is where caring is seen as most appropriately taking place and contrasts with the competitive "uncaring" world of the labour market" (Bowlie et al. 1997: 345). There is no doubt that home is a place of privacy and is where one can be the most comfortable, but the thresholds of privacy can be redefined according to the users' circumstances. The inside and outside world can be combined and the house can function in response to different levels of personal and social activities. The home office for people who carry on their work from their home has reshaped the common ways of living inside and outside and challenged the idea of home as a refuge from work or the outside world (Mallet 2004: 72). For nomadic people who have challenged the idea of home and settlement, the territory of home is much broader and is not limited to a physical private space that can be differentiated from the outside world (Mallett 2004: 73).

This blurry distinction of inside and outside can be applied to the making of atmosphere and ultimately the making of home. Paul J. J. Pennartz (1986) discusses the atmosphere of home specific to the feeling of pleasantness in home spaces. He defines atmosphere as a double-sided communication between the subject and outside world. He develops his study by conducting interviews based on the question of 'when' and 'where' the most pleasant atmosphere in the house occurs. The questions regarding 'when' reveal that pleasant atmospheres in the house in relation to the individual's feelings and their daily experiences and the 'where' questions reveal the architectural factors that are responsible for the creation of a pleasant atmosphere. He categorises the responses to the question 'when' is the house most pleasant in five parts; "Communicating with each other"; "Being accessible to one another"; "Being relaxed after having finished work"; "Being able to do what one wants to do"; and "the absence of boredom" (Pennartz 1986: 146). For Pennartz, these constitute the main factors that contribute to a pleasant atmosphere at home. Further, he argues that these features link to the following architectural elements: "the arrangement and the connection between the rooms"; "the size of the rooms"; and "the shape of the rooms" (Pennartz 1986: 146). In doing so he reveals that architectural features, personal experiences, social

interaction and communication are factors in creating a pleasant atmosphere.

Atmosphere as a product of social interactions at home is the focus of Liz Kenyon's study of student accommodations. She compares the sense of homeliness in the term-time students' home with their parental home. Atmospheric qualities can be observed in the statements about the characteristics of a home-like place. "Home was seen by students to be a place which should contain three constituent parts: a living group of significant others, a supportive atmosphere where social and emotional needs were met and a friendly neighbourhood where the individual believed they fitted and belonged" (Kenyon 1999: 90). She defines the different types of 'sense of home' that are the product of social atmospheric qualities. The supportive atmosphere of the parental home, the reduced tension in the atmosphere of social relationships in the student home and the friendly atmosphere of the neighbourhood are mentioned as the factors that give a place home potential. Therefore, if home and identity are defined in a broad sense, liberated from the limitations of physicality and essentialism, atmosphere as the most intangible aspect of home must be perceived within these flexible realms of inside and outside movements. The hybridity of privacy both in terms of interior spatial relations and the territory with the outside is an expanding locality; hence atmospheric qualities can embody the spatial character of the experience of home more than merely the tangible elements of it.

#### **1.2.4 The architecture of the everyday**

French Marxist Philosopher, Henry Lefebvre's (1974 and 1987) critique of everyday life and space has been the most influential when it comes to the concept of everyday architecture (McLeod 1997: 21). In his book *The social production of Space* (1974) Lefebvre provides a comprehensive analysis by adding another dimension to the binary definitions of space that is the social space. "Social space will be revealed in its particularity to the extent that it ceases to be indistinguishable from the mental space as defined by the philosophers and mathematicians) on the one hand, and physical space (as defined by practico-sensory activity and the perception of 'nature') on the other" (Lefebvre 1991: 27). Space as a social product was the ground of his discussion within a "conceptual triad": *Spatial practice* that grasps production and reproduction. "The spatial practice of a society secretes that society's space; it propounds and presupposes it, in a dialectical interaction; it produces it slowly and surely as it masters and appropriates it" (Lefebvre 1991: 38). It is the "spatial set" that features the social construction of that particular space. It is a space of continuity and cohesion (Lefebvre 1991: 38). It is the process of providing the material arrangement for the "social spatiality" that is acknowledged both as the formative figure and as the product of human actions and experience (Soja 1996: 7). *Representation of space* is the "conceptualized space" that is any society's dominant space to recognise what is lived and perceived with "what is conceived" (Lefebvre 1991: 38). *Representational spaces* embraces complex symbolism linked to the social life (Lefebvre 1991: 33). These spaces are different and linked to the other at the same time. "Clearly an attempt is being made here to retain, if not emphasise, the partial unknowability, the mystery and secretiveness, the non-verbal subliminality, of spaces of representation... Here then is space as directly *lived*, with all its

intractability intact, a space that stretches across the images and symbols that accompany it, the space of "inhabitants" and "users." (Soja 1996: 67).

Edward Soja (1996) in his book *Third space: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*, discusses the notion of "third space" grounded on Lefebvre's trialectics of *spatiality*, *spatial thinking* and *spatial imagination* (Soja 1996: 7). He illustrates that Lefebvre speaks of a "triple consciousness" of complex connections between space, time and social being. It is through this trialectic that he breaks down the binary of material/real and the imaginary definitions of space through acknowledging a third category in which is the lived space that is the product of the social interactions (Soja 1996: 7).

Combining the real and the imagined, things and thought on equal terms, or at least not privileging one over the other *a priori*, these lived spaces of representation are thus the terrain for the generation of "counterspaces," spaces of resistance to the dominant order arising precisely from their subordinate, peripheral or marginalized positioning. With its foregrounding of relations of dominance, subordination, and resistance; its subliminal mystery and limited knowability; its radical openness and teeming imagery, this third space of Lefebvre closely approximates what I am defining as Thirdspace. (Soja 1996: 67-68)

He introduces "Third space" as the space of openness, the space of other (Soja 1996:2). It is a place of continuous approximation as the meaning and openness of the third space is destroyed otherwise (Soja 1996: 61). By interpreting the space of otherness, the third space, from Lefebvre's trialectics of space, Soja takes the reader to a journey that situates the third space or third subjectivity within the decolonisation and feminist theories by discussing work of authors such as Bhabha, Massey, hooks and Andalzua (Soja 1996: 96-143). *The Social Production of Space* is not the only work of Lefebvre that leaves a space for gender and domestic space studies. In "Everyday and Everydayness" Lefebvre (1987) in his tendency to connect theory and practice, finds the solution in decoding the modern world according to the everydayness, meaning that the everyday does not appoint a system but rather prevails the existing system. He defines that the notion of everyday "illuminates the past" and is characterised with repetition. "The everyday is situated at the intersection of two modes of repetition: the cyclical, which dominates the nature, and the linear, which dominates in processes known as "rational." (Lefebvre 1987/1997: 47). Lefebvre's adds that all activities and human functions share a level of "organised passivity" that in the case of the domestic space, it is associated with consumption and therefore, has not been divided equally. "It weighs heavily on women, who are sentenced to everyday life, on the working class, on employees who are not technocrats, on youth-in short on the majority of the people- yet never in the same way, at the same time, never all at once" (Lefebvre 1997: 48). However, he mentions that the everyday also provides a territory of desire and resistance for women, a rebellious empowering place outside of the dominant power systems (McLeod 1997:30). It is through the close contact and experience of everyday life that women are in touch with the cyclical time, the nature's pace, creativity and tactility (McLeod 1997: 30) .

Grounded on Lefebvre's conception, Michel De Certeau (1984) develops a more optimistic notion of everyday life. De Certeau discusses everyday life in response to consumerism and as a powerful notion that alters situations and creates independent territories (McLeod 1997: 27). To explain his idea of the practice of everyday life he proposes two notions: strategies and tactics. A strategy is when the subject of power separates itself from the environment and considers a place to be restricted as "proper". A tactic on the other hand, exceeds the "proper" classifications and belongs to the other. "The "proper" is a victory of space over time, on the contrary, because it does not have a place, a tactic depends on time- it is always on the watch for opportunities that must be seized" (De Certeau 1984: xix). De Certeau uses the act of reading for relating these notions with his idea of space. When a person reads a text s/he cannot feel the passing of the time and gets involved with another person's writing and "appropriates" the text based on own interpretations. "This mutation makes the text habitable, like a rented apartment. It transforms another person's property into a space borrowed for a moment by a transient" (De Certeau 1984: xix). In that sense, he explains that how ordinary people manipulate the establishment of the "strong" within "clever tricks of the "weak"" (De Certeau 1984: 43).

To explain the power of the space of the everyday, De Certeau explains how through walking, the citizens of a city create their own spatiality. He declares that there is this desire to look at the city as a whole, ignoring the on-going narratives that are created by ordinary people within the city paths dismantling "programmed and regulated operations" (De Certeau 1984: 92-95). "Escaping the imaginary totalizations produced by the eye, the everyday has a certain strangeness that does not surface, or whose surface is only its upper limit, outlining itself against the visible" (De Certeau 1984: 92-95). In that sense, the space of everyday is beyond the located physicality, it is another dimension of spatiality that provides a "mythic" experience of space that emerges within movement, and invents others (De Certeau 1984: 93-98). It is through the space of everyday that a space becomes a place. A space exists through interpretations. The same way that a text becomes habitable by reading and a city is inhabited by walking, a space is inhabited when practiced (De Certeau 1984: 117). It is through narratives of the space that a place is determined hence, an architect's role in the everyday practices of space is to "fill in and build up "the space in between."" (De Certeau 1984: 128).

The notions of everyday architecture exceed beyond the "nostalgic and sentimental" ideas of space and are rooted in the politically constructed resistance towards consumerism (Harris and Berke 1997). Deborah Berke (1997) illustrates the architecture of everyday as inclusive and concerned with addressing diversity. It resists any rigid definitions, hence may be contradictory at times but its dynamic essence makes it relevant for some at some points. It is humble and leaves space for individual meaning making processes. It is also sensual and creates full sensory experiences. Most importantly the everyday recognises the significance of the domestic life (Berke 1997: 234-236). Berke addresses that the repetition of familiar things and behaviours of everyday creates a level of comfort and poetry while ignoring oppressive routines. These rhythmic routines are designed by architects and the challenge is

to create spaces that encompass potential habits rather than dictating rituals (Berke 1997: 236).

Acknowledging the significance of everyday aspects of architecture helps to achieve more in depth discussions and better perceptions on how the domestic life is constructed and lived. It also reveals how the identity of the users is embodied within the tangible and intangible everyday practices. This becomes even more important when it comes to transient space of diaspora for women. Therefore, the everyday architecture not only acknowledges the domestic space, but also it provides the space to examine feminine space both as the place of the other (as a woman and as an immigrant) and as the space of empowerment and resistance.

As it has been mentioned previously, the space of everyday in the context of this research has not been receiving much attention. The everyday aspects of Iranian home and consequently the Iranian diasporic home are the focus of a very few discussions and the existing studies are not comprehensive as they are context oriented or focused on a certain cultural or religious elements. However, through examining similar studies in the middle eastern context (mostly north African) observations and overlaps can be emerged that are relevant for the Iranian setting as well. In *The Architecture of Memory*, Joelle Bahloul (1996) examines how the everyday spatial practices of the Algerian homes are regulated by the help of memory of inhabited spaces by Muslim and Jewish migrants. Bahloul investigates these homes with the focus on the collective memory and how it feeds the cultural traditions, religious routines and social regulations for producing practices that leads to temporary and flexible uses of domestic space for distinct activities (Bahloul 1996: 36). She reminds that the importance of memory is beyond “a nostalgic sketch of a house from the past” but rather it reveals the dwelling experience (Bahloul 1996: 51). Additionally, Bahloul addresses that domesticity is associated with femininity in Maghrebian culture and home is considered a female domain (Bahloul 1996: 36). However, the presence of the gender hierarchy in the domestic space had caused an uprootedness for women in the home. For sleeping, for example, they had to move between different rooms or apartments (when they get married) according to the designated sleeping area for the male members of the family. “In women’s memories, the domestic world is both a place of rootedness and enclosure and a place of instability and internal mobility” (Bahloul 1996: 35). This shows that the domestic space impacts female identity in a profound manner that cannot be simply classified as an oppressive space. Another important element stressed by Bahloul is the role of rituals on collective memory and consequently the spatial practices at home. She discusses courtyards as the spatial locus of family reunions and festive celebrations (Bahloul 1996: 41, also see Edwards 2006). In these spaces, with the help of the collective memory, a sense of community is enriched and the present is linked with the past through the cultural and religious rituals as “forms of performed memories” and within reinvented atmospheric and sensory experiences (Bahloul 1996: 134).

The impact of the gender hierarchy and the importance of the past and the historical elements on the spatial practices at home is also examined by Muhamed Gamal Abdelmonem and Gehan Selim (2012) in their investigation of homes in Cairo. They explore the role of architecture in moderating the community experience and traditions. "Architecture, in this context, acts effectively not only as a reminder of the traditions and culture of the past, but as an agent for everyday narratives of men and women" (Abdelmonem and Selim 2012: 164). They highlight that in old Cairo context home is associated with collective memory as these memories turn homes into living narratives that without them homes turn into merely a space of consumption (Abdelmonem and Selim 2012: 170).

While new spaces of the present have to accommodate many social activities, the flexibility of their temporal arrangement was informed by the experiences of the past... In this context, house models and configuration of physical spaces recall certain socio-cultural systems, such as women's position in society, social hierarchy, tolerance about male-female interaction, or, in certain cases, progressive or conservative ideologies (Abdelmonem and Selim 2012: 176).

Subsequently, Muhamed Gamal Abdelmonem (2012) in "The Practice of Home in Old Cairo: Towards Socio-Spatial Models of Sustainable Living" illustrates the homes in old Cairo function under these cultural and traditional elements of the past and the circumstances of the present. To be able to accommodate the social and cultural modalities, he refers to the flexible use of the same space for different activities during different times of the day that has resulted in the creation of part-time spaces. "The notion of part-time space, in this sense, reflects the dynamic nature of social activity spheres that develop and transcend boundaries and thresholds. Thus, what may be prohibited in the evening (e.g., visits to women's quarters) may be allowed in the morning, as the location of boundaries and thresholds changed according to accepted social practice" (Abdelmonem 2012: 40). Consequently, in societies as such that are going through rapid changes and are dealing with cohabitation of modern and traditional elements, spaces like home "may be decomposed to its preliminary elements, then reconfigured and reorganized in new forms suitable to emerging needs and demands. This process may be slow, unnoticeable, and in constant flux." (Abdelmonem 2012: 40). Within these sustainable living settings home becomes the embodiments of the ways that the community articulates its resources over times by the help of creative spatial patterns (Abdelmonem 2012: 40).

In these studies, elements such as temporary or part-time spaces of domestic realm (using a single space for different activities in different time), the impact of cultural traditions and rituals rooted in the past (locating the traditions of the past in the homes of the present), and the gender roles in the articulation of space overlaps with the context of Iranian homes and ultimately the Iranian diasporic homes. In terms of how architecture is situated within this trajectory, a profound understanding of the "traditional systems" of the studied context while regarding the power of the everyday life is necessary (Abdelmonem 2012: 35).

### 1.3 Home in Diaspora

So far, this thesis has explored a series of issues relevant to the discussion of the meaning, atmosphere and identity of home, proposing an in-between approach to studying home as a place that is an embodiment of the enfolding movements between the tangible and intangible elements of home. As has been mentioned previously, the homes of Iranian women in diaspora have been chosen for examining this approach because of the transitory and often temporary state they possess. In that sense, home in diaspora is a representation of the contradictions that causes home to be a complex place to study; therefore, in such a study, ambiguous notions such as atmosphere and situating identity must be addressed within a suitable framework of study. In this part, firstly, different definitions of diaspora are addressed; then the meaning of diaspora in relation to notions of transnationalism is examined. By introducing transnationality along with diaspora, I seek less conventional definitions of diaspora to achieve a more fluid and flexible framework that can accommodate the in-between idea of home within. Following this, the diasporic home is discussed by focusing on homemaking as a process that shows the reformation of culture, identity and gender associated values within an in-between space, through highlighting the tangible and intangible elements. The aim is to explore the role of these elements in creating the atmosphere of original home within the diasporic home.

#### 1.3.1 Diaspora: history and definitions

The word diaspora is derived from the Greek verb *diasperein*, which means to sow or scatter about (Reis 2004:44). Michele Reis (2004) categorises the definitions of diaspora into two parts: the ones that refer to the Jewish diaspora as a reference (old definitions) and the studies that analyse diaspora in a wider perspective (new definitions) (Reis 2004: 53). I allude to the latter in this thesis. Roger Brubaker (2005) has argued that nowadays the term diaspora is applied “essentially to any and every nameable population category that is to some extent dispersed in space” (Brubaker 2005: 3). To be a member of a diaspora is to share a profound longing for home and to share the feeling of yearning for homeland. Displacement does not affect home perceptions but rather makes the image of home clearer (Fenster 2013: 181).

Political scientist William Safran (1991) has set out a range of collective experiences that represent a model for defining diaspora. He explains that the members of diasporic community are diffused into at least two “peripheral” locations by being dispersed from the homeland as the core or the “centre”. Additionally, the members of diaspora develop an image, memory or myth about the homeland. He declares that the diaspora members believe that they are not capable of integrating or being accepted by the society in the host country and that in diaspora homeland is considered as the ideal place to return when the time is right, while being concerned with the progress and maintenance of the homeland. Therefore, the group is defined by on-going relationships with the homeland (Safran 1991:83-85). Safran has defined diaspora in relation to the experience of the diaspora community and its position towards homeland and host society. Additionally, social scientist Robin Cohen (2008) classified different approaches to defining diaspora over different time periods. The

first classical application of the term was applied to the dispersion experience of specific groups of people, such as Jewish communities, and later in the 1960s and 1970s was also applied to other communities like Armenian, African and the Irish. The second phase of application of the term refers to the 1980s, when authors like William Safran introduced diaspora as “a metaphoric designation”. This conceptualises diaspora as a notion that addresses difference among people and is used for any group of people who are different from the others. The third period, from the mid-1990s, is based on the idea of social constructionists who criticised the second phase ideas on diaspora, when the focus on homeland in defining diaspora was challenged and the concept of diaspora was described according to deterritorialised and reterritorialised identities. In the latest studies, the social constructionists’ definition of diaspora emerged with the focus on homeland, as otherwise, it may create the “danger of emptying the notion of diaspora” (Cohen 2008: 2).

Historian James Clifford (1994) has however argued that the formation of diaspora is a reaction to living outside the national time/space by maintaining identity through differences. The relationship between diaspora and homeland is non-linear and in-between “here” and “there”. “In diaspora experience, the co-presence of “here” and “there” is articulated with an anti-teleological (sometimes messianic) temporality. Linear history is broken, the present constantly shadowed by a past that is also a desired, but obstructed, future: a renewed, painful yearning” (Clifford 1994: 318).

The new notions of diaspora posit a new definition that is ‘hybrid’ and challenges the notion of community diaspora. Geographer Michel Bruneau (2010) found the roots of ‘hybrid diaspora’ in studies by Anglo-American scholars on African American diaspora. He refers to authors such as Hall (1990) and Gilroy (1993), who base the notion of diaspora on Deleuze and Guattari’s idea of fluid identities. “There is no hard core of identity - nor continuity nor tradition - as in the community model, but a variety of formations. Such a hybrid diaspora rejects all reference to the nation and to nationalist ideologies” (Bruneau 2010: 37). As a result, the constant desire to return to the homeland is not the main factor that keeps diasporic communities alive, as the regular religious, cultural and political gatherings in the host country are catalysts for diasporic existence. Bruneau argues that these “periodic gatherings” are generally concentrated on ‘iconography’, meaning that the diaspora separates itself from the other communities in the host country with the symbolic icons that represent its social, religious and political values (Bruneau 2010: 38). Social taboos, flags, cultural monuments and religious buildings are icons that create a shared cultural memory. Iconography helps to preserve the shared memory of the homeland when physical access to it is not available. “Through migration, diaspora members have lost their material relationship with the territory of origin, but they can still preserve their cultural or spiritual relationship through memory”. (Bruneau 2010: 48).

The importance of the nation state as a reference point for diaspora formation and desires has recently been subject to challenge. Sociologist Roger Bruberker (2005), believes that if diaspora is defined according to a fluid identity then referral to the homeland, as the hard core of diaspora, is irrelevant. Bruberker claims that this conceptual and wide-ranging way of

defining diaspora across cultural and political disciplines has caused a “diaspora” diaspora, which is a “dispersion” of the meaning of the term in conceptual space as well as in the disciplinary area (Bruberker 2005: 1). He addresses the ambiguity and contradictions in defining diaspora.

Diaspora can be seen as an alternative to the essentialisation of belonging; but it can also represent a non-territorial form of essentialised belonging. Talk of the de-territorialisation of identity is all well and good; but it still presupposes that there is ‘an identity’ that is reconfigured, stretched in space to cross state boundaries, but on some level fundamentally the same (Bruberker 2005: 12).

He proposes that diaspora should be analysed as ‘idiom’ and non-linear process rather than a ‘bounded entity’. In this way the issues of yearning for homeland and identity come into relief (Bruberker 2005: 12).

The fluid nature of diasporic identity is discussed further by Pnina Werbner (2002) in the realm of sociology. Werbner has defined diaspora as “deterritorialised imagined communities” that are confined within spatial dimensions and are located via cultural values (Werbner 2002: 119). Werbner identifies diaspora as non-mythical, historical entities in space, located and bordered, independent of any centre and extending across and beyond national borders. However, authors such as Faist (2010) took a more moderate line on the nation state in diasporic life. He mentions that both old and new notions of diaspora discuss the nation-state in relation to diaspora, the old definitions are centred on the nation-state and the new notions dichotomise diaspora and nation-state. Faist argues that the vital role of the nation state in defining diaspora as a place of rootedness has changed into an intermediate agency between diaspora and transnational communities (Faist 2010: 23).

In this thesis, diaspora is addressed as a socio-spatial entity that is based on a non-singular relationship between the diaspora community, homeland and host country. I take Faist’s approach for defining diaspora, as it is in-between the two definitions. It provides flexibility, as it is not limited to one point of view. This definition addresses diaspora as fluid but located. In this framework, notions like identity (hybrid or shared), memory, desire to return and homeland could be discussed.

### **1.3.2 Diaspora and Transnationalism**

The relationship between diaspora and the transnational community is examined more closely here using a variety of social science approaches. It aims to provide more in-depth analysis to find a more flexible definition of diaspora in terms of identity reconfiguration, homemaking and social relations. The advents of technology and inexpensive forms of communication and travel have affected the nature of diaspora. Migrants communicate routinely with their relatives in their homelands and are often updated frequently about the political, social and economic changes in their original country. This influences the process of assimilation and integration in the host country and gives the members of the diaspora the opportunity to be effective in their home country. Sometimes the desire for eventual return is

postponed to an unforeseen time and the trauma of living as diaspora is replaced with a need to be engaged in both countries (Shuval 2000: 47).

Janine Dahinden (2010) has linked transnationality with mobility and locality, meaning that transnational formation is the result of mobility across borders and locality that represent social, economic and political connections within the sending and receiving countries. "In order to stay mobile it is necessary for migrants to develop some local ties and to be embedded in specific localities" (Dahinden 2010: 52). Additionally, geographer Caroline Nagel (2001) defines transnationalism as a movement across borders:

If the international signifies relationships between states or actors representing different states, then the transnational refers to linkages forged by social groups who exist seemingly in spite of the nation-state and who, through their transnational activities, undermine state sovereignty and the hegemony of national borders and ideologies (Nagel 2001:248).

Nagel's definition puts more focus on the process than on the state itself and represents the transnational community as a series of activities and relations independent of fixed locations. A transnational community can in some cases be described as a diasporic community that is fluid and independent of geographical location and is based on relations rather than states. Although transnational and diasporic communities are closely related, they are still distinguishable. Michel Bruneau (2010) states that a diaspora is associated with trauma and uprooting from the original country, while in transnational communities there is no strong longing to return because 'transmigrants' never leave home permanently as they are well connected back to the homeland with the help of communication (Bruneau 2010: 44). Additionally, Faist (2010) states that although both terms indicate 'cross-border processes', diaspora represents religious and national groups outside a homeland, while transnationalism, in a wider sense, relates not only to communities but to any kind of social organisation and, in a narrower case, refers to migrants' strong connection across countries (Faist 2010: 10). He associates diaspora with community and refers to transnationalism as a process. He declares that 'transnationalism' is a broader term than 'diaspora', hence transnational communities include diaspora but not all transnational communities represent diaspora. Diasporas are based on shared identity regardless of being traumatic or not, while transnational communities indicate a mobility that results in hybrid identities that occur within an in-between space. The other difference mentioned is that of time, as diasporic communities concern several generations while transnational communities are more transient and are generally involved with recent migration flows (Faist 2010: 21 and 22).

From the study of diaspora and transnationalism it can be observed that the two definitions address similar perceptions and partially overlap. The desire to return and longing for the ideal homeland distinguishes a diasporic community from a transnational community. The members of a transnational community replace these desires for homeland with being active members of both homeland and host societies, socially, politically and economically. My aim in discussing transnationality is to emphasise that the notion of diaspora itself can be defined dynamically, as a series of hybrid socio/spatial movements between the homeland and the

host country. This reminds us that the diasporic home is a fluid, in-between place of becoming and therefore should be examined accordingly. Additionally, the notion of transnationalism was introduced in this chapter to address a broader dimension of diaspora and does not merely focus on the relations with the host and the original country. In that guise, the participants' accounts of realities can be linked to various nodes of diaspora/transnationality spectrum.

### **1.3.3 The diasporic home**

Home is central to descriptions of diasporic experience in relation to identity, culture and gender. The process of making the diasporic home and the representation of culture, identity and gender values within home is examined in this section. Perceptions of home as a fixed place of belonging and security are challenged by diasporic experience, transnationalism and ideas such as deterritorialisation.

Living the image of home based on previous experiences is addressed in Tabassum Ruby's (2006) research about Muslim women in Canada. Ruby has described the migrants' tendency to define home as an imaginary place by relating it to identity. "Some of the memories of the participants are fixed in time and place and their imagined 'back home' cultures appear static. The women's occasional visits to their countries of origin shock them because both the indigenous people and the country have changed in their absence" (Ruby 2006: 40). Home, for Ruby's participants is a fluid concept. The participants mention home as "where I am". It does not necessarily mean homeland, as the migration estranged them from homeland as well.

Sara Ahmed (1999) has discussed this "estrangement" in migration and how it has led to creation of migrant communities based on collective memory of a particular historical period and shared feelings of familiarity. "Migration can hence be considered as a process of estrangement, a process of becoming estranged from that which was inhabited as home. The word estrangement has the same roots as the word 'strange', and yet, it suggests something quite different. It indicates a process of transition, a movement from one register to another" (Ahmed 1999: 343). Based on Rosie Braidotti's theory of "Nomadic subjects" and Iain Chambers' idea of "Authentic migrants", Ahmed defines migration linked with movement and transition, and describes how this process of movement shapes the migrants' identity as fluid and unfixity. There is no desire for fixity, as being a migrant does not need settlement, since we are all migrants at some point. Based on these theories, she describes how no settlement is required at home because for the global nomads the world becomes home. Therefore, movement does not destabilise identity, it rather creates a global identity and the fixity is developed through the shared experiences of lacking home rather than the desire of home. "The forming of a new community provides a sense of fixity through the language of heritage - a sense of inheriting a collective past by sharing the lack of a home rather than sharing a home" (Ahmed 1999: 343). Consequently, in order to be able to create a new (imagined) home, identity becomes detached from a particular place (Ahmed, 1999: 343).

Being migrants and experiencing different cultures gives the ability to criticise the contradictions of their culture. “The skills of the global nomads are also associated with their ability to move beyond the boundaries of a given culture, to question those boundaries, and perhaps even to recognise their cultural constructedness” (Ahmed 1999: 337). This is also argued by Haideh Moghissi (1999) who declared: “being away from 'home' sometimes may be the only way one can look at 'home' critically, dispassionately and with reason” (Moghissi 1999: 216). In her research on Iranian women in diaspora, Moghissi discusses how they go through double victimisation since they take refuge in their own patriarchal culture in response to the racism in the host country. As a consequence, the ability to go beyond the boundaries of the original culture, and even to criticise it, inspires the reconfiguration of identity as a fluid and ‘nomadic’ subject. An entity that does not belong to a specific location, rather it belongs to a transnational community that benefits from the differences. It does not ignore the original home and original culture but it belongs to both, to here and there.

Geographer Tovi Fenster (2014) has studied the meaning of home in movement and the role of objects and furniture in representing feeling of settlement. Fenster compares the meaning of home for Jewish migrants and Palestinian indigenous women living in Israel, explaining how the settlement of Jewish women in Israel marked the beginning of the displacement of Palestinian women. While some of these women have moved between homes many times, their image of home has not been troubled. Fenster examines women’s perceptions of home by analysing their memories about their previous homes, looking at their drawings of those places in order to do so. She addresses the differences between the drawings that referred to less homely spaces to the ones that had more sense of home. Jewish women drew their homely homes in detail with great focus on furniture and material culture as opposed to the “emptiness and rootlessness” of the less homely ones (Fenster, 2013: 182). Fenster indicated the significant presence of the “wall” in Jewish women’s drawings and its association with the beginning of settlement and sense of belonging in their new place. Narrating the story of women from both sides of this displacement that are embodied within drawings represents the significance of experiencing and making home through the memory of previous home. A memory that has perished has often chosen to be forgotten by the sense of settlement achieved in the current home.

Geographer Divya Tolia–Kelly (2004) has linked identity construction with memory and the process of “re-memory” through objects in Asian British homes. She notes the role of objects and home possessions in the construction of memory and argues that not only are artefacts representations of one’s self but also they reveal national history and evoke both personal and shared memory. She defines home as a place that has the duality of both past and present. “The new site of home becomes the site of historical identification, and the materials of the domestic sphere are the points of signification of enfranchisement with landscapes of belonging, tradition, and self-identity” (Tolia-Kelly 2004: 4). Consequently, she discusses the ways in which the experience of the previous home is carried to the future home, and its memory is embodied through objects (Tolia-Kelly 2004: 6). Tolia-Kelly has described home as a “stage of emitting history” and the home possessions as the “geographical nodes of

identification” (Tolia-Kelly 2004: 9) by stressing that not only does material culture shows bonding with the past home but also represents the sign of remembered landscapes. Hence, she argues that the process of migration and making the diasporic home changes the value and the meaning of the objects for the owner.

After the move they are created anew, in the process of their circulation. They may be bought as objects of little value but in the context of migration they are bought, given as gifts, or ordered at great expense to ensure their contribution to the cultural landscape of the home in England ... Their earlier value is heightened in their being dislocated along with the owner, but in a social context of recognition and signification. Thus... [the object] is valuable not only to the owner personally, but has a role in signifying to others who see it in the home; a biographical and cultural vitality which inevitably resonates with others within the community and without (Tolia-Kelly 2004: 6).

Objects and their relationship with representation of personal and social identity in the diasporic home is also analysed by Zeynep Turan (2010). She scrutinised the role of object in the reconfiguration of identity and also the ways in which objects are understood through the relationship with other people, places and history (Turan 2010: 45). She examines at the life of Palestinians in the United States, highlighting the role of objects in the creation of identity and the making of home. In two of her interview cases, a lady decorated her living room with a traditional dress from her homeland. She states that not only it was beautiful but also it showed to the guests her original background. In another example, a young man hung a Palestinian flag in his room to remember his country of origin and to express his political views as a sign of respect to both his current country and the past home (Turan 2010: 50-51). These examples show the role of objects in creating and representing one’s identity in the diasporic home sphere. Objects develop ‘aura’ in the sense in which art objects develop cultural value. These discussions relate to the study of the created atmosphere at home. The aura of the objects evokes certain meanings and atmospheres that can be used for both personal and social experiences.

In their research on South African women in New Zealand, Annika Philip and Elsie Ho suggest that by analysing the migrants’ homemaking we can recognise how settled they are in the new country. Notably, objects play a significant role in what they call ‘migrant’ homemaking. They analysed the process of bringing certain objects into the home in the destination country. “Although not all of them had gained permanent residence status when first arriving in New Zealand, they had brought objects from South Africa to decorate their new homes”(Philip and Ho 2010 :88). These familiar objects have created an emotional support during the challenges of feeling ‘estranged’. Besides objects that are brought for decoration, some objects are specifically brought for making South African food. They mentioned that everyday routines and eating habits also help in the recreation of home. Eating South African food and shopping for groceries from homeland evokes nostalgic feelings for home, as taste and smell create a bridge with homeland. This highlights the significant of cooking food in bringing the memory of homeland, through the sensory experience of the taste and the smell. Philip and Ho also discuss how grocery shopping, food

and consumptions develop a diasporic identity. They observe that not all transnational practices develop through physical mobility across borders but rather some happen within the boundaries of the host country. “One example is shopping at the South African butcher shops, who provide not only ‘nostalgic’ products that cater to the tastes and habits of fellow migrants but also an important space for socialising and conversation” (Philip and Ho, 2010:98). By referring to their participants’ statements about feeling strange in their home countries after returning to their homeland they discussed the creation of transnational and fluid identities (Philip and Ho 2010: 98). They note that South African women created a sense of home through the making of food, grocery shopping, and building social relationships, with the help of the safety and security provided in New Zealand. Therefore, the process of grocery shopping, cooking food, and sharing it with other migrants from different ethnic backgrounds has given the migrant women in New Zealand the ability to create a sense of home in their new country.

The role of food in creating a connection with homeland and representing homeland culture through the configuration of a transnational identity is at the centre of Lynda Johnston and Robyn Longhurst’s (2012) study. They argue that cooking produces mixed feelings about the current home. Johnston and Longhurst examine how migrant women share their sense of not feeling at home by sharing food at their diasporic home with other migrant women of different ethnicities. It is about creating familiarity through food rather than promoting their original culture (Johnston and Longhurst 2012: 24). They also illustrate the role of the grocery store in creating a shared identity for migrants, regardless of their country of origin. Therefore, grocery stores become a site for perceiving the familiar feeling of “unfamiliarity” through consumption of different cultural ingredients. Through preparing and sharing food, sensory experiences and social relations are created to generate a sense of familiarity within the differences.

The study of home through the experience of diaspora reveals different dimensions of home that provide a better understanding of this subject. It reveals that home can be created over time by the help of memory, senses and cultural values that are embodied through tangible and intangible elements. The diasporic home is an in-between site that embodies previous experiences of home and is a representation of an individual’s personal history.

### **Summary**

This chapter introduced a range of theories on home examining the challenges of studying home as a place charged with dialectics of public/private, being/becoming, real/unreal, form/expression and one/other. Through defining the relationship between these dualistic notions, I endeavour to tackle the complexities of understanding home both as a space and as a concept. By presenting this as interdisciplinary study, I propose a conceptual tool that brings an architectural perspective to this realm and consequently guides the empirical analysis of this research.

In the first part of this chapter, I examined different theories of space, identity and home across different or rather contradictory theories, to produce a conceptual model that benefits

the study of home. That is, addressing the ambiguity of home through illustrating the dialectics of tangible and intangible as hybrid rather than opposite; from the notion of symbol/figure and archetype, and the ideas of space as *habitus* or/and as socially produced to the post-structuralism and feminist ideas of identity and space. While they all add valuable dimension to home studies, they all have something in common, promoting a relationship between a duality of notions of space, home and identity that are not contradictory but rather complementary. Based on Dovey's (2010) suggestion, I replace the notion of being, with becoming able to define home as a place of becoming, a place of possibilities and a place of the independent individualisation of the other in relation to the one, a notion that refuses to solely define the other position as inferior but rather describes it as a condition of resistance (hooks 1991). Therefore, I seek to examine the possibilities and creative processes at home in regard to hybrid dualities of home.

In the second half of the chapter, I deliberated the most intangible aspect of home, atmosphere, as a fluid and indeterminate entity that envelops the space and its occupants. I endeavoured to encompass its spatiality through an analysis across different discourses, mainly philosophy, sociology and architecture. I illustrated that atmosphere is limitless yet bordered and has character that is infinite but it can be reproduced under certain conditions. It is an entity of space that changes the mood of a person and provides the opportunity of a shared experience within space. Through the study of atmosphere, I provided an analysis of architects' attitudes towards intangible dimensions of space and more particularly home. I represented the ways in which architects try to settle the dialectics of space through conceptual tools (predominantly phenomenology) and technical and physical tools (design and material). Architects may not be able to control atmosphere but with the help of architectural and sensory elements, atmospheres could be designed that enrich sensory experiences in spaces. This chapter gives the ability to compare various studies on atmosphere across different disciplines. Additionally, it reveals a large unexplored area and depicts the lack of connection between the architectural and social science studies. It quickly becomes apparent that a combination of architects' subjective and poetic approach towards the study with the social sciences methods would enrich the study of atmosphere. This review provides a better understanding of the entity of atmosphere, how it is made, how it is perceived and how it can be studied. Ultimately by discussing the experiencing and creating of atmosphere based on tangible (objects and home designs) and intangible (memory and sensory experiences), I examined the dialectics of tangible and intangible within atmosphere that embodies its spatiality. Atmosphere was mentioned as a dimension of home that is charged with cultural, gender and social modalities that consequently can be applied as an alternative approach to homemaking. In the final part of this chapter, I reviewed the current notions of diaspora to represent a comprehensive study of home literature in regard to the study of home in diaspora. Therefore, I explained that the notion of diaspora itself could be examined in a dynamic way that can make the study of home in diaspora possible. Then I examined different significant elements that are necessary to be considered for the study of home in diaspora. In the next chapter, the possibility of situating this categorisation of

theories within a flexible methodology is examined by discussion of the notion of feminist phenomenology.

## **Chapter 2 : A methodology for an architectural research study**

### **2.0. Introduction**

In the previous chapter, I discussed theories on home that help to achieve a conceptual framework for the study of home as a place that encompasses various dialectics of being and becoming, tangible and intangible and real and ideal. It was argued that home could be studied as an in-between place that represents these dualistic concepts as hybrid movements. In that sense, home can be examined as a place charged with possibilities of *becoming* that settles the notion of otherness. In this chapter, I examine how these theories can be applied to the study of home in a methodological sense and how these methodological approaches open up a space for an architectural study of home. However, the diasporic home as a transitory space reveals unique dimensions of home that cannot be achieved in other circumstances. This is also represented by *becoming* processes of experiencing otherness for me both as a woman and as an immigrant. I endeavour to study Iranian women in diaspora by proposing an evolving methodology that is grounded on feminist and phenomenology methodologies, in order to make the study of the in-between space of being and becoming possible. Phenomenology was brought into the discussion to highlight the subjective dimension of home concerning notions such as culture and identity. Additionally, through phenomenological studies, my history and subjectivity is represented and situated within the process of research development. The notion of feminist theory and consequently feminist methodology is brought to the discussion first because these are the home of women as members of a society (both in the host country and in homeland) that have experienced being the 'other'. Therefore, the way they situate themselves within the spatiality of home is the main concern of this research. Additionally, through feminist theories, a space for the architectural dimension of home is created by emphasising alternative perceptions that exceed beyond the dualistic manner of thinking. In that sense, sensory and intangible aspects of home can be examined as well as its tangible elements. In the second part of this chapter, I focus on the details of the proposed methodology, explaining the proposed qualitative methods and their relevance to the theories of the discussed methodology, representing a study that minds the "process" rather than merely the final product (Nagel and Kaplan 1964: 23).

### **2.1. Evolving architectural methodology through feminist phenomenology**

In this section, I examine the development of an architectural methodology by reviewing the methodological aspects of feminism and phenomenology, before examining the possibility of feminist phenomenology. For this purpose, I draw on Linda Groat and David Wang's (2013) book, *Architectural research methods* that provides a comprehensive overview on the essence of architecture as a discipline and consequently the ways in which architectural research becomes possible within a model that remains loyal to architectural agendas. Groat and Wang elaborate on Julia Robinson's (1990) categorisation of architectural research that divides it into "science" and "Myth". The first one encompasses the engineering and technological projects while the second refers to the researches that are rooted in art and

humanity which is “continuous” and “generative”. The latter is applied to research regarding design theory and history in architecture. They argue that her aim for such a dichotomisation is to propose the possibility of a research method in architecture that is a combination of the two. They, however, focus on the issue of qualitative and quantitative method raised by Robinson’s notion of architectural research (Groat and Wang 2013: 68-69). Additionally, they highlight that this qualitative/quantitative dichotomisation is “oversimplified”. They note that the main purpose of methodology is to provide a discussion of an approach that connects theory and method (Groat and Wang 2013: 73).

What is helpful about Groat and Wang’s expansion on different ways of doing architectural research is the emphasis on the dual nature of architecture both as a profession and a discipline that “encompasses an exceedingly multidisciplinary scope that ranges from highly technical research, to analyses of design processes in many cultural contexts, to studies of the history of particular stylist forms or building types, and a vast array of many other foci inquiry” (Groat and Wang 2013: 73). Obviously, this thesis is positioned towards the qualitative, poetic side, but what makes this relevant to my argument is that doing interdisciplinary research is not diverging away from the architectural schemes; on the contrary, it is compatible with the nature of architecture discipline as a realm that encompasses different areas within it. Nonetheless, different architectural dimensions can be brought to the research through the selection of theories, the collection of data, and the analysis of it in a way that represents spatial characteristics of a space comprehensively. In terms of theory, I start with how phenomenology theories help to determine the progress of an architectural research study. Groat and Wang (2013) discuss how phenomenology has faced difficulties from being situated within other disciplines due to its focus on subjectivity, while it has long been applied within architecture by emphasising one’s experience of place and built form. They introduce this personal perception of space “held in abeyance” as intersubjective (Groat and Wang 2013: 95). They define phenomenological inquiry as a result of a principle that in it consciousness is perceived to be conveyed towards an object and in the case of architecture that object is the building and physical environment. Thus, in terms of methodology, they consider phenomenology “having more kinship with architectural research than other qualitative approaches that have originated with a more exclusive focus on people’s interactions unmoored from the physical context” (Groat and Wang 2013: 228). Based on David Seamon’s (2000) three strands of hermeneutical, first person and existential, within phenomenology, they discuss the ways in which subjectivity is situated within each strand that serves architectural research purposes. The first strand refers to the classical phenomenology approaches and the application of literature and poetry to represent a subjective approach of knowledge production. Gaston Bachelard or Christian Norberg Schulz can be categorised as the pioneers of this approach. Groat and Wang categorise the second and the third strands of phenomenological enquiry within the qualitative research strategy. The first person strand is characterised by the researcher using her/his own “first hand” experience as the basis for examining the phenomena. The third strand of phenomenological inquiry however occurs within a broader context. In the existential strand the main focus is on the analysis of the experience of specific individuals or groups of people in actual situations

and places with the anticipation that meaningful themes can emerge from the “individual’s descriptive accounts” (Groat and Wang 2013: 232). In this thesis, a combination of the last two will be applied for the phenomenological inquiry of the research. The first person approach has been applied to provide an analysis of an Iranian home based on my personal perceptions of the home (see chapter 3). Through this, combined with the existential study of the Iranian diasporic home of Iranian women, I hope that I can identify meaningful themes that can benefit the study of home.

Groat and Wang also highlight the issue in drawing on subjective analysis in architecture:

The challenge is even more complicated when architects and designers, as the researchers, apply their subjectivity to illuminate the “essence” of a given place experience. A considerable body of design research has demonstrated critical differences between expert and lay experiences in a variety of settings and contexts. Similarly, people who experience a building or landscape with different purposes in mind (an errand versus recreation; or a business meeting versus building maintenance) are likely to experience the setting in fundamentally different ways. So, for purposes of design practice, first-hand phenomenological studies may well spark an imaginative design concept, but they may not yield sufficient insight for designers faced with the dynamics of a complex, multifaceted design project (Groat and Wang 2013: 229).

Therefore, although the analysis based on the first-hand perception of the space reveals valuable information, it is dependent on the context in which the phenomenon is experienced, which should be regarded throughout the research process.

### **2.1.1 Phenomenological methodology**

In this part, I discuss how the theories of phenomenology can be employed for methodological purposes. I will explain descriptive and interpretative approaches, the notion of reflexivity and validity in phenomenological methodology and clarify the appropriate method for this research. Linda Finlay (2009) in “Debating Phenomenological Research Methods” talks about the different methodological interpretations of phenomenology. She summarises that phenomenology’s main concern is “to return to embodied, experiential meanings” and to provide flourishing perspectives of a phenomena as it is lived and experienced (Finlay, 2009: 6). She refers to phenomenological methods as “responsive to both the phenomenon and the subjective interconnection between researcher and the researched” (Finlay 2009: 5). She speaks about Interpretational Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) discussed by Smith (2004). Smith introduces his inductive method that respects and follows the individual lived experiences and minds of the personal perceptions of the participants, but regards the role of the researcher as central (Finlay 2009: 8). She elaborates two types of phenomenological approaches of descriptive (rooted in Husserl’s definition of phenomenology) and interpretive (specified by scholars such as Heidegger). The first one is grounded on “revealing essential general meaning structures of a phenomenon” and then the researchers narrow down the distance with the phenomena and examine its complexity by limiting themselves to making claims that are supported by suitable spontaneous validations (Mohanty 1983, cited by Finlay 2009: 10). The interpretation, on the other hand, as

Heidegger puts it, is what encompasses the “meaning of phenomenological description” (Heidegger 1962: 37, cited by Finlay 2009: 11). Finlay argues that the interpretation is an essential part of the procedure as “it constitutes an inevitable and basic structure of our ‘being-in-the world’. We experience a thing as something that has already been interpreted” (Finlay 2009: 11). Later, she illustrates the idea of interpretation and description as a continuum and summarises that the boundaries between the description and interpretation can be adjusted creatively. In that guise, trying to define a rigid definite boundary between the two challenges the essential grounds of phenomenology (Finlay 2009: 11-12).

One of the issues raised about doing phenomenological research is to what extent the subjectivity of the researcher should be involved and how that influences the process of producing “valid” knowledge. Therefore, this brings up ideas about how subjective phenomenological approaches should be combined with other methods in order to provide a comprehensive analysis. She mentions that there are two different kinds of attitudes among phenomenologists on how the subjectivity of the researcher should be applied to the research. She first argues that “reduction” is a process of neutralising subjectivity and they aim to set aside the subjectivity of the researcher in order to be able to examine the subjective experience of the researched. The second group however finds the subjectivity of the researcher to be a core to the research process and that it is through acknowledging their own subjectivity and applying it as a foreground of the research that they can separate out what belongs to the researcher and be able to perceive the researched subjectivity on the phenomena (Finlay 2009: 12). Moreover, she argues that the researchers should benefit from a constant journey between their own experience and the experience of the researched. They should use their own experiences as a tool to reflect on the experience of the others (Finlay 2009:13). She explains her perspective on the challenges of phenomenology to concurrently settle the contradictions of being ‘scientifically removed from,’ ‘open to’ and ‘aware of’ while being able to connect with the participants in the middle of the exploration of their experience (Finlay 2009: 13). In that sense, the researcher’s reflexivity becomes a “process of continually reflecting upon our interpretations of both our experience and the phenomena being studied so as to move beyond the partiality of our previous understandings” (Finlay 2003b: 108, cited by Finlay 2009: 13). However, she highlights the importance of avoiding the subjective preoccupation of the phenomena that results in prioritising personal experience and the perception of the researcher over the researched. To avoid this, she suggests drawing upon the *intersubjective* relationship between the researcher and the researched (Finlay: 2009: 13).

After discussing the phenomenological research methodology and the ways in which it can be applied to developing architectural research, I will use interpretative phenomenology as a methodological tool for the research on the diasporic home of Iranian women. As I previously discussed, the conceptual tool that I developed in the previous chapter was based both on phenomenology and feminist theories. Therefore, I will examine the possibility of an evolving

methodology that encompasses the challenges of studying home as ambiguous subject, for women, as *the others* in diaspora and within an architectural model.

### 2.1.2 Feminist Methodology

In order to be able to talk about the concept of becoming rather than being in space, I bring feminist discussions to my research to provide a mixture of phenomenology and feminist methodology as a tool to examine home as an in-between place of becoming and a platform of possibilities. Defining a distinctive feminist methodology is challenging due to the “evolving nature of feminist reflections on the methodological and epistemological dimensions and dilemmas of research” (Doucet and Mauhthner 2007: 36).

Kathryn E. King also argues that there is no one true feminist methodology and the aim is to produce knowledge through feminism theories with maximum flexibility (King 1993: 21). She outlines the difference between method and methodology in feminism and explains that methods are the techniques and strategies that are used to answer a certain question, while methodology is the philosophy and theory of the research that addresses the researcher’s point of view (King 1993: 21). She states that the aim of feminist methodology is to introduce methods and methodologies that can be reflective and flexible to address the feminist philosophy of providing a platform so that everyone’s voice can be heard. Although feminist methodologies can take many forms, Susan Hanson (1997) has defined three main approaches: first, minimising the power between researcher and researched; second, sensitivity to multiple identities and considering identity in research as an entity that can be de-territorialised and re-territorialised for both the researcher and the participants; and third, the commitment to improve women’s lives (Hanson 1997: 123). However, recently the latter has been expanded to other marginalised members of society.

Sandra Harding (1987) implies that, in a sense, any research could be categorised into methods of inquiry within the social sciences researches. The methods of listening, observing and analysing based on the social and cultural contexts have been used for the aim of carrying out feminist research as well. However, she suggests that the distinguishing factor for feminist research is how they conduct these methods and that “how women informants think about their lives and men’s lives, and critically to how traditional social scientists conceptualise women’s and men’s lives. They observe behaviours of women and men that traditional social scientists have not thought significant. They seek examples of newly recognised patterns in historical data” (Harding 1987: 2). She defines methodology as a theory and analysis that defines how the research is progressed or should be developed. “It includes accounts of how ‘the general structure of theory finds its application in particular scientific disciplines’” (Harding 1987: 2). How feminists situate their aim within this framework, however, is by questioning the traditional theories and approaches of knowledge production to represent an understanding about how women engage in their society. Therefore, they have tried to provide feminist versions of the existing theories such as phenomenology in order to be able to understand the world of women. Notwithstanding, Harding argues that the problem of whether these attempts have been successful in presenting the real world of

women still stands, as it can be argued that these theories are rooted in epistemologies that genuinely exclude women as knowers or “agents of knowledge”. Therefore, the remaining alternative is to seek other theories of knowing (Harding 1987: 3). She concludes that the comprehensive approach is to move away from the objective point of inquiry and consider the researcher’s beliefs, history, and social and cultural background. It is only through that that an analysis can be produced that is liberated from these issues regarding the theoretical and epistemological stances.

The best feminist analysis goes beyond these innovations in subject matter in a crucial way: it insists that the inquirer her/himself be placed in the same critical place as the overt subject matter, thereby recovering the entire research process for scrutiny in the result of the research. That is, the class, race, culture, and gender assumptions, beliefs, and behaviours of the researcher her/himself must be placed within the frame of the picture that she/he attempts to paint.... This the researcher appears to us not as an invisible, anonymous voice of authority, but as a real, historical individual with concrete, specific desires and interests (Harding 1987: 9).

Doucet and Mauhthner (2007) state that one of the most comprehensive introductions to feminist epistemology is Sandra Harding’s (1987) three categories of feminist epistemology: feminist empiricism, feminist standpoint epistemologies, and transitional (postmodern) epistemologies. (Doucet and Mauhthner 2007: 37). Nonetheless, they remind us that this categorisation has faded over the years and feminist epistemology and methodology has been a combination of each of these, especially the last two. They talk about the evolution of feminist theories outside of this framework of categorisation and more towards the idea of specifying the reflection on “the processes of knowing, knowers and known”. Later, through the emergence of postmodern and post-structural and post-colonial thinking the emphasis was drawn towards the idea of several ways of knowing but they also address that this has faced the issue of moving far from feminism agendas (Doucet and Mauhthner 2007: 36). They remind that although it has been difficult to precisely define feminist methods of inquiry, methodology and epistemology, feminist research represents specific characteristics that can be distinguishable. First, the long time commitment of carrying out research that concerns women, which could include doing research for women or possibly with women. Second, the openness to explore alternative methodologies that challenges the mainstream or traditional and dominant ways of doing research (collection, analysis and representation of data) regarding women and their experiences and, finally, the dedication to contribute to a larger social and cultural change. Consequently, they remind us that what makes feminist research distinctive is being concerned with changing a society that is unequal and hierarchical (Doucet and Mauhthner, 2007: 40). They add two other categories specific to feminist research to the previously mentioned three categories; reflexivity and power. In the section on power, they review how the main focus of feminist research has been grounded on the equal power relations in the process of knowledge production between the researcher and the researched, and how the recent feminist stance is acknowledging the fact that the power relation inevitably is in the favour of the researcher. “The focus of much current feminist scholarship has moved on from the question of *whether* there are power inequalities between

researchers and respondents, to consider *how* power influences knowledge production and construction processes” (Doucet and Mauhthner, 2007: 40). In that regard, they imply that even when researcher and researched share similarities in race, class, gender, age and ethnicity, it does not necessarily secure a straightforward route to a better understanding or better knowing. Therefore, they warn about the danger of the presumption “to know” or to “speak for” others as a contested part in today’s feminist area of research (Doucet and Mauhthner, 2007: 41). “As the site where research participants’ voices, accounts, or narratives become “transformed” into theory, we have argued that the interpretation stages and processes of empirical research are critical to feminist concerns with power, exploitation, knowing, and representation” (Doucet and Mauhthner, 2007: 41). Thus, they draw attention to the matter of reflexivity and transparency in order to be able to settle the critical aspects of applying subjectivity for the aim of producing knowledge.

Based on Norman K. Denzin (1997), they define reflexivity as the way that one’s subjectivity is intertwined with the experience of the others. They argue that the social and cultural background of the researcher influences reflexivity, therefore where it is situated, and ultimately this reflexive positioning explains the class, gender and race of the researcher. However, with reflexivity comes the possibility of making the privileged position of the researcher the centre of the research. They summarise that the main purpose of feminist research is to emphasise other ways of knowing; they specify, by referring to Code (1993): “to know responsibly’, to ‘know well’ and to provide ‘exemplary’ ways of knowing” (Doucet and Mauhthner 2007: 42).

### **2.1.3 Feminist Phenomenology**

The idea of feminist phenomenology is a challenging one, as phenomenology has been perceived as having complexities within the feminist realm. Although they both question the conventional ways of knowledge production, setting the issue of gender within the ground of phenomenological immanent subjectivity and universal consciousness has been found problematic by feminists. Nevertheless, feminists have developed different readings of phenomenological classical works, and authors such as Simone de Beauvoir (1948), Iris Marion Young (1980) and Judith Butler (1989) have brought the notion of gender and feminist theories to the interpretative phenomenology (Mitchell and M. Baird 2014: 421-422).

Anne van Leeuwen (2012) speaks about the philosophical approaches of Beauvoir and Irigaray and argues that although they may seem to have contradictory perspectives, they both share a level of affinity that comes from the fact that for both of them their philosophy is rooted in the elaboration of sexual difference and more specifically on the constitution of sexual difference rather than “proceeding from the givenness of this difference” (Leeuwen 2012: 475). By discussing their discomfort with transcendental phenomenology, she examines the possibility of feminist phenomenology as an approach that is inclusive to these ideas. She discusses how phenomenology that is representative of the immanence and the binary opposition of divine presence is embodied through the material world, which, in essence, encompasses the idea of difference within.

Phenomenology is ostensibly committed to the immanence of philosophical inquiry; yet, insofar as it is also committed to a transcendental method, broadly understood as an inquiry into the *conditions* of that which shows itself within the domain of immanence, phenomenology is ostensibly recalcitrant to a thinking of difference (i.e., the other, the contingent, the new). That is, according to its materialist critics, phenomenological inquiry inevitably domesticates difference insofar as it asserts the existence of a relation of heterogeneity and identity between phenomena and the conditions of their appearance. As a result of this gesture, phenomenological inquiry appears to ineluctably co-opt and contain the emergence of difference within the purview of sameness or identity. Thus, in its most incisive articulation, the materialist turn calls into question the very possibility of a feminist philosophy that remains within the parameters of this phenomenological project (Leeuwen 2012: 475).

Leeuwen expands Beauvoir's idea of phenomenology through the ways in which she describes the relationship between human existence and the senses. In *The ethics of ambiguity*, Beauvoir (1949) talks about the ambiguity that humans dealt with from the beginning of the time, the ambiguity between the subjective and objective, "being a sovereign and unique subject amidst a universe of objects, is what he [human] shares with all his fellow-men. In turn an object for others, he is nothing more than an individual in the collectivity on which he depends" (Beauvoir 1949:8). Through this duality of subjective and objective and, consequently, soul and body, she questions the prevalent philosophy that promotes this duality. Beauvoir discusses the idea of ambiguity by an illustration about how children are situated in the world and how this certain way of situating influences their perspective on the world. She positions the notion of freedom and the liberation brought by staying insignificant as the other as a way of surviving through this symbolisation. "They [children] cannot make a dent in the serene order of a world which existed before him, without him, where he is in a state of security by virtue of his very insignificance" (Beauvoir 1948: 35). Then she describes this state of being as a "ceiling which is stretched over their head", so that the freedom is only given within a predefined universe (Beauvoir 1949: 36). Therefore, she proposes not to prioritise the dualities of existence but to accept it as an ambiguous circumstance of human being.

To declare that *existence* is absurd is to deny that it can ever be given a meaning [*sens*]; to say that it is *ambiguous* [*ambiguë*] is to use subject to assert that *its meaning is never fixed ...*, sense is inscribed with a twofold ambiguity: ambiguity belongs to the structure of sense constitution but also to the constituted-sense of the world. Ambiguity, in other words, designates an existential structure that institutes a horizon of sense that is itself equivocal or open (Leeuwen 2012: 477-488).

Leeuwen declares that Beauvoir, by discussing the idea of ambiguity that is rooted in "the very structure of sense-bestowal", acknowledges that this "accomplished sense" is ambiguous in essence; hence, it encompasses the notion of difference within. She adds that Irigaray employs the same approach to bring gender and difference to the reading of phenomenology. For example, Irigaray's notion of *sexuate difference* brings about the idea of

“openness” in the world. She claims that the presence of alterity is “coextensive with the disclosure of a horizon of sense that, in virtue of the persistence of alterity, remains fundamentally open or equivocal (i.e., “irreducible to a single world”). Therefore, by accepting the existence of the other, the idea of “one world” is challenged: “a world is always”, “at least two” (Leeuwen 2012: 480). Thus, by referring to Irigaray’s notion of *sexuate difference* and the idea of “not one world”, she interprets a perception that confronts the priority of one to the other but rather aims to provide a dialogue towards the idea of openness to this difference. Consequently, this proposes a modification of “transcendental investigation of sense constitution: *Sexuate difference* appears as a transcendental condition for the very disclosure of a world that is not one. Yet, as irrecoverably other to and coextensive with the disclosure of a world, the *alterity* that conditions this horizon of sense is thus inscribed within the parameters of this transcendental project” (Leeuwen 2012: 481). Leeuwen argues that for both Beauvoir and Irigaray, the analysis of the constitution of sense is applied to speak from a phenomenological stance that does not eliminate difference but rather includes it within. Hence, through “revealing ambiguity” and *alterity* that is appropriated by the constitution of sense, the idea of other and difference can be positioned (Leeuwen 2012: 481).

Beauvoir’s reading of phenomenology has been applied by a number of other feminists as a ground of the feminist phenomenology discussions. Iris Marion Young (1980), for example, has elaborated this concept by analysing Simone de Beauvoir (1974) and Merleau-Ponty’s (1962) phenomenological argument. She represents a phenomenological feminism based on an analysis of female body movements and the way it is situated in lateral space based on Merleau-Ponty and Beauvoir notions. Young draws on Beauvoir’s discussion of the differences between men and women, not as a minimising pattern for women but as an acknowledgement that helps to situate feminine essence. “Every human existence is defined by its *situation*; the particular existence of the female person is no less defined by the historical, cultural, social, and economic limits of her situation” (Young 1980: 139). She alludes that Beauvoir’s analysis of situating female body in the world and its differences with male body is more focused on physical and biological differences. To complement her argument, she adds Merleau-Ponty’s discussion of being in the world and situating femininity through the ways that the female body is oriented and positioned. Then, she talks about her notion of femininity and feminine existence, grounded on Beauvoir’s notion, as “not a mysterious quality or essence which all women have by virtue of their being biologically female. It is, rather, a set of structures and conditions which delimit the typical *situation* of being a woman in a particular society, as well as the typical way in which this situation is lived by the women themselves” (Young 1980: 140). Therefore, she expands Beauvoir’s definition of female existence as an embodiment of the “tension between immanence and transcendence” and argues that the otherness that women experience occurs in society and through cultural modalities that define their being as an addition to men and as an imminence embodiment. This problematises the essence of female subjectivity and creates a series of contractions within her human subjectivity; her transcendental being cannot be ignored while her situation dictates otherwise. Consequently, Young suggests that “the modalities of

feminine bodily comportment, motility, and spatiality exhibit this same tension between transcendence and immanence, between subjectivity and being a mere object” (Young 1980: 141).

Through Merleau-Ponty’s definition, Young describes the contractions of female existence within a spatial context. She notes that Merleau-Ponty describes human existence in relation to the body and the ways it is oriented in the world, in contradiction to the “intellectualists” who related human subjectivity and consciousness solely to the mind (Young 1980: 145).

The body is the first locus of intentionality, as pure presence to the world and openness upon its possibilities. The most primordial intentional act is the motion of the body orienting itself with respect to and moving within its surroundings. There is a world for a subject just insofar as the body as capacities by which it can approach, grasp, and appropriate its surroundings in the direction of its intentions. While feminine bodily existence is a transcendence and openness to the world, it is an *ambiguous transcendence*, a transcendence which is at the same time laden with immanence. Now once we take the locus of subjectivity and transcendence to be the lived body rather than pure consciousness, all transcendence is ambiguous because the body is natural and material is immanence. But it is not the ever present possibility of any lived body to be passive (Marion 1980: 145).

Furthermore, she argues that for the body to exist as a transcendent presence, it cannot be perceived merely as an object; the body “is referred not onto itself, but onto the worlds of possibilities”. Then, based on this, she analyses how female existence is rooted in the female body both as an object and as a subject (Marion 1980: 147). Accordingly, she argues that the unity of transcending performance shapes a link between the body and space. “Each instant of the movement embraces its whole space, and particularly the first which, by being active and initiative, institutes the link between a here and a yonder” (Merleau-Ponty 1962: 140 cited by Young 1980: 150). According to this description, Young links female existence with a “double spatiality” that deals with a conflict between the space of “yonder” that is not connected with the body possibilities and the “enclosed space” that is “here” that is inclusive of one’s bodily possibilities. Therefore, “The space of the ‘yonder’ is a space in which feminine existence projects possibilities in the sense of understanding that ‘someone’ could move within it. Thus, the space of the “yonder” exists for feminine existence, but only as that which she is looking into, rather than moving in” (Marion 1980: 150). Consequently, through these theories, Young brings about the possibility of a feminist reading of phenomenology. By Simone de Beauvoir’s definition of female existence through pointing out the sexual differences and Merleau-Ponty’s notion of subjectivity linked to the body’s orientation in the world. Not only does she acknowledge female existence as situated and in relation to social and cultural context, but also she provides a spatial dimension to her account of female existence, a dual spatiality that is in-between the personal spatial being or the spatial relation to the others.

In terms of methodology, Johanna Oksala (2006) examines the possibility of an interrelation between feminism and phenomenology. Oksala speaks of a new reading of phenomenology,

to be applied as a great tool for feminist studies. She emphasises the importance of addressing sexual difference (corporeality is situated within phenomenology) and states that just arguing that corporeality is included in Husserlian phenomenology does not mean that the sexual difference is considered. This is because phenomenology as a transcendental analysis should go beyond the worldly conceptions of everyday life and study “their condition of possibility in transcendental subjectivity”, therefore it cannot be categorised within sexual notions (Oksala 2006: 231). Then, she concludes that in this reading of phenomenology the question of gender cannot be raised as it is reduced to transcendental consciousness (Oksala 2006: 231). She expands the corporeal readings by referring to Merleau-Ponty’s argument as well and implies that the focus should be more on the experience of the lived body than on transcendental reduction.

The phenomenological study of gender is understood as a study of the basic modalities or structures of female embodiment that are typical of feminine existence. There is thus a distinct mode of corporeal being in the world that is female or feminine, and the aim is to describe the eidetic structures of the living body, rather than constituting consciousness that characterise this feminine way of being (Oksala 2006: 232).

Additionally, she argues that, apart from the complexity of this approach; “If any first-person description by a woman is understood as a phenomenological account and then generalised by turning it into a description of eidetic female embodiment, we end up with a female body that is essentialised”; feminists have had a long battle against minimising female subjectivity to a merely biological matter (Oksala 2006: 232). However, it was previously discussed in this chapter that others see this as opening a window to women’s understanding of the world.

In the second reading of phenomenology that is proposed with the aim of situating gender, Oksala proposes the intersubjective reading of phenomenology grounded on the phenomenologist Dan Zahavi’s reading of Husserl’s latest works. Zahavi categorises three interpretations of Husserl’s work: the first one is grounded on the connection between the subjects that is based on “when I experience an experiencing other” (Oksala 2006: 233-234). The second and more fundamental category of intersubjectivity is based on the existence of prior subjectivity that is not dependent on the presence of the subject but rather is a universal subjectivity, is previously constituted and “forms the condition of possibility for ecological sense constitution” (Oksala 2006: 234). The third type highlights the role of culture and society in the constitution of intersubjectivity: “As an incarnate subject, I am always already situated in an intersubjective, historical nexus of sense. I am a member of a historical community, learning from others what counts as “normal” and thereby, as a communalised subject, participating in an intersubjective tradition” (Oksala 2006: 235). She highlights that it is through this third type that a gender phenomenology could be achieved. But she finds the issue that even the third category stays committed “to the universal, pre-linguistic validity of the transcendental structures of the ego” as the method begins with a first-person examination of experience and gradually moves towards “the constitution of sense by identifying a priori structures of transcendental subjectivity” (Oksala 2006: 236). Through

post-phenomenology, she suggests, the complexity of situating gender within phenomenological methods could be resolved.

It is impossible to understand how gender is constituted through normative ontological schemas if we believe that we can, by some supreme methodological step such as the epoche, leave all our ontological commitments behind. It is my contention that we should therefore accept the hermeneutical circle – at least in connection with our analysis of gender – and try to see to it that our method continuously turns back upon itself, questioning and modifying itself in an effort to articulate what it secretly thinks (Oksala 2006: 238).

She also argues that Husserl had to eventually extend the mere reliance of self-assessing the consciousness and look into other disciplines including sociology and anthropology. Also Heidegger and Foucault looked into other disciplines such as history in addition to the analysis of pure subjective experience (Oksala 2006: 238). She suggests an open attitude towards accepting that essential role of 'ontology', as it is significantly rooted in our language, methods of perception and the ways we see the world. This designates acknowledging the partial presence of the subjective reflection in philosophical examination (Oksala 2006: 241).

The discussions presented in this chapter not only highlight the benefits of the methodological approaches of each of these theoretical frameworks but also alerts about the challenges. Being aware of these issues, I choose to emphasise the aspects of each of these theories that facilitate the progress of my research on home as an in-between space. Feminist phenomenology seems appropriate, as it provides the flexibility of discussing home across disciplines and within the context of culture, gender and identity (figure 2.1). It provides the basis for the possibility of a flexible approach that can provide a platform for a research inquiry that concerns different modalities in relation to the notion of power, reflexivity, subjectivity and validity. Additionally, as it is mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the architectural nature of this research is enriched by the ways in which spatiality is explored through the application of phenomenology and feminism approaches. In that guise, the methodologies grounded on these conceptual frameworks will facilitate the study of the in-between space of home in diaspora. In the next section, the specific methods and analysis approaches suitable for such a methodology are scrutinised.

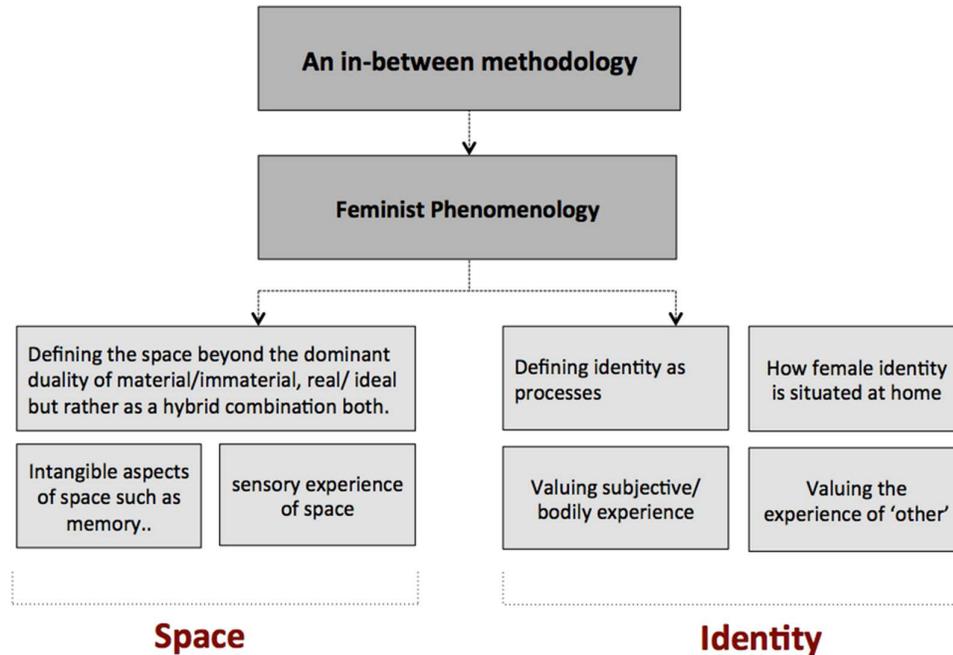


Figure 2.1 How a feminist phenomenology accommodates notions of space and identity within an in-between framework.

## 2.2 Introducing an in-between methodology and the qualitative methods:

Since the study of home, with an architectural perspective, for women in diaspora, is a multidimensional process, a dynamic, cross-disciplinary methodology is required to be able to address different levels of complexity involved in this research. For that purpose, I have already set out a theoretical framework and, in this section, I provide a study of how a flexible methodology can be approached within a range of qualitative methods.

Yvonna Lincoln and Norman Denzin define qualitative research as a “situated activity that locates the observer in the world” (Denzin and Lincoln 2017: 45-46). Defining qualitative research as a situated activity represents different personal, cultural and social factors involved in the process of conducting research. On the other hand, it represents a process that locates the researcher in a world in which the idea of reflexivity and the researcher/researched relationship are tested. Therefore, in qualitative research, more than presenting a rigid, definite outcome, the focus has shifted towards providing better understandings and practices and methods that each “make the world visible in a different way” (Denzin and Lincoln 2017: 45-46). The key to providing an analysis that is bringing various dimensions to the study is achieved through the application of a range of methods by describing the researcher as a “*bricoleur*” who creates a “*bricolage*”<sup>6</sup> as a series of presentations that are “pieced-together”. In order to settle this idea and to promote a notion

<sup>6</sup> *Bricolage* is a French word, meaning a handywoman or handyman who completes a task with the use of available tools (Kincheloe 2001:680).

that can be flexible for such a process, Lincoln and Denzin suggest the replacement of paradigm with perspectives.

If paradigms are overarching philosophical systems denoting particular ontologies, epistemologies, and methodologies, one cannot move easily from one to the other. Paradigms represent belief systems that attach the user to a particular worldview. Perspectives, in contrast, are less well-developed systems, and it can be easier to move between them. The researcher-as-*bricoleur*-theorist works between and within competing and overlapping perspectives and paradigms (Denzin and Lincoln 2017: 47).

One of the achievements of such an approach is being comfortable with ambiguity—embracing it as an advantage by breaking down the complexity of the inquiry. This is rooted in poststructuralist and postmodernist ideas that there is no one clear way to understand “the inner life of an individual” as every approach towards understanding one’s true experience in the world is situated within a context of different social and cultural contexts and within the discourse of language, gender and race. The on-going nature of human life does not result in providing a full experience of individuals, and therefore a variety of methods should be applied that each brings a different perspective to the discussion (Denzin and Lincoln 2017:55). In that sense, the focus on revealing “reality” is set aside and instead the researcher aims to be located between the “web of reality” and the social position of other researchers in the process of knowledge production (Kincheloe et al. 2017: 432).

The *bricolage* is dealing with a double ontology of complexity: first, the complexity of objects of inquiry and their being-in-the-world; second, the nature of the social construction of human subjectivity, the production of human “being.” Such understandings open a new era of social research where the process of becoming human agents is appreciated with a new level of sophistication.... The *bricolage* is acutely interested in developing and employing a variety of strategies to help specify these ways that subjectivity is shaped (Kincheloe et al 2017: 440-441).

Drawing on Lincoln and Denzin’s (2000) introduction to *Bricolage*, Joe Kincheloe (2001) expands this idea as a method of inquiry. Kincheloe defines *Bricolage* not only as an approach that contains a combination of methods, but also as a blend of different theoretical viewpoints. He signifies the disciplinarily/interdisciplinary dynamics of *Bricolage* and points out its interdisciplinarity (Kincheloe 2001: 680). Therefore, indicating the interdisciplinary nature of such an approach does not suggest confining disciplinarity, in fact a successful *bricolage* is achieved through understanding the history of the involved disciplines (in the inquiry) and the ways in which they have functioned. Therefore, a good literacy knowledge should be evolved across the studied disciplines (Kincheloe 2001: 683). In that sense, “the *bricoleur* becomes an expert on the relationships connecting cultural context, meaning making, power, and oppression within disciplinary boundaries” (Kincheloe 2001: 683). In his description of *Bricolage*, he characterises interdisciplinarity as a process where the boundaries between disciplines are crossed and “the analytical settings of more than one discipline are employed” (Kincheloe 2001: 685). Thus, “the *bricolage* understands that the

frontiers of knowledge work rest in the liminal zones where disciplines collide. Thus, in the deep interdisciplinarity of the *bricolage* researchers learn to engage in a form of boundary work” (Kincheloe 2001: 689, see also Pinar 2001).

There are two questions raised from such an approach that embraces complexity and ambiguity and works within cross-disciplinary processes: validity and reflexivity/intersubjectivity. How do we validate such a research and how are the dynamics of the researcher and researched relationship positioned? In terms of how to determine the validity, I refer to Yvonna S. Lincoln, Susan A. Lynham, and Egon G. Guba (2017) for characteristics of qualitative research. Linking validity with authenticity, they argue that validity can be accomplished through the idea of authenticity; later they show how the notion of fairness as an approach could be applied for the sake of validity. They emphasise that fairness is not attainable by avoiding bias, based on an objective analysis, nonetheless “this fairness was defined by deliberate attempts to prevent marginalisation, to act affirmatively with respect to inclusion, and to act with energy to ensure that all voices in the inquiry effort had a chance to be represented in any texts and to have their stories treated fairly and with balance” (Lincoln et al. 2017: 253). Within this point of view and referring to Richardson’s (1997) notion of validation through crystallisation, they illustrate an alternative form of validity. Richardson (1997) deconstructs the traditional ideas of validity by proposing that validation is not occurring through:

A rigid, fixed, two-dimensional object. Rather the central imaginary is the crystal, which combines symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multidimensionalities, and angles of approach.... Crystallisation, without losing structure, deconstructs the traditional idea of “validity” (we feel how there is no single truth, we see how texts validate themselves); and crystallisation provides us with a deepened, complex, thoroughly partial understanding of the topic. Paradoxically, we know more and doubt what we know. (Richardson 1997:92, cited in Lincoln et al 2017: 256).

Therefore, through this conception they imply a fresh characterisation of validity as “transgressive” that transform “pure presence” into a process that is partial and fluid (Lincoln et al 2017: 256). The second matter to be clarified for an inquiry that is representing ambiguity is reflexivity and how the researcher’s subjectivity is situated across the research.

We always know something already and this knowledge is intimately involved in what we come to know next, whether by observation or in any other way. We see what we expect to see, what we believe we have every reason for seeing, and while this expectancy can make for observational error it is also responsible for vertical perception (Kaplan 1964: 133).

“What I already know” influences the way the research is designed, processed and analysed. Consequently, before starting any examination in regard to the diasporic homes of Iranian women in the UK, I open a window towards my history and experience as an Iranian woman

and an Iranian immigrant. Through taking the reader to my experience of the Iranian home during the time I was living in Iran, I not only represent the lived experience of the Iranian home, but also provide information in regards to the context I am coming from, in a variety of social, cultural, religious and gender terms. This is achieved through a phenomenological study of home and is represented in Chapter 3. Another outcome of such an analysis relates directly to the notion of reflexivity and provides important clues in respect to the dynamics of the researcher and the participants' relations. Olesen (2017) implies that the interpretations of both the researcher and the participants are "data" (Olesen 2017: 289).

The other significant factor is how the researcher/researched relationship is positioned through the process of data collection and analysis. I discuss concepts that are more linked to feminist theories of one/other and the power relations within the research discourse. In that sense, I attempt to clarify my position across the research process, to be able to depict the dynamic of one/other relations across this study. I aim to remain accurate about the contribution to the world of the researcher and the researched and the space in between. Yvonna S. Lincoln, Susan A. Lynham, and Egon G. Guba (2017) remind us that what should be regarded in the process of reflexivity is how the process of becoming is formed. "We must question ourselves, too, regarding how those binaries and paradoxes shape not only the identities called forth in the field and later in the discovery processes of writing, but also our interactions with respondents, in who we become to them in the process of becoming to ourselves" (Lincoln et al. 2017: 259). However, they argue that these multiple selves brought to the research by the help of reflexivity have both a good side and a bad side. Although the presence of multiple voices can create a flexible approach and open up endless possibilities for the sake of research, it can also bring more complexity in terms of representation and writing; therefore, to avoid this confusion, the choices are made within the theoretical models (Lincoln et al. 2017: 259-260). For example, Olesen mentions that this issue is tackled within the feminist discourse. "They link to emergent methods and new knowledge from critical work in "borderlands" and endarkening feminist research. Also necessary is continued close attention to representation, voice, and text to avoid replication of the researcher and hidden or not-so-hidden oppressions and instead display participants' representations" (Olesen 2017: 295).

To clarify my stance on the issue of reflexivity and how it is positioned in this study, I refer to María Elena Torre, Brett G. Stoudt, Einat Manoff, and Michelle Fine's (2017) discussions of notions of *hyphen* and *nos-otras*. They talk about Michelle Fine's (1994) ideas of feminist methodology, about "solidarity and difference" and how the idea of self and other are situated within an entangled relationship in the research. They mention, "*hyphen*" as an in-between space introduced by Fine (Torre et al. 2017: 865). They argue that through the discussion of "working the *Hyphen*" she emphasises the need to "simply write about those that have been othered", the others who have been "inscribed" (Torre et al. 2017: 866). To achieve that, her suggestion is to create a dialogue between the researcher and the participants to discuss "what is and what is not" happening in the in-between space of the discourse that contains

the stories that are being told (and why) and the stories that are being shadowed and more importantly *why?* (Torre et al. 2017: 867).

Michelle Fine's concept is taken further by the concept of *nos-otras* introduced by Gloria Anzaldúa, who additionally addresses the in-between relationship of self and other within the research dynamics. Through explaining the Spanish language spoken by Mexicans in the US, she explains that the Mexicans are *othered* both in their host and their country of origin through the means of language. She uses the language representation (as a reflection of reality) as a tool to open up a window towards the experience of *otherness* at different and deeper levels and consequently applies the notion of *nos-otras* as a way to define a hybrid identity, that is contained both us (*nos*) and the others (*otras*). "We are a synergy of two cultures with various degrees of Mexicanness or Angloness. I have so internalised the borderland conflict that sometimes I feel like one cancels out the other and we are zero, nothing, no one" (Anzaldúa 1987: 85). A hybridity that encompasses dynamic cultural processes which "leak" into each other, however, is not necessary in a context of "equal" relations.

Torre et al. (2017) specify that in the *hyphen* discussed by Anzaldúa, these "mutual" relations are not always balanced or equal. They are not "static or determined" either, rather the significance is rooted in the "constant movement" of it. This constant movement is shaped by the structural power that has been created through social and political modalities that are in endless processes of shaping and reshaping. "A function of social reproduction, of labour, culture, and intimacy, *nos-otras* illuminates the "between" in relationships, highlighting the ways individuals are mutually implicated in producing the conditions of each other's lives. *Nos-otras* builds on *hyphens* demanding a new theorising of power that is bidirectional and mutually dependent" (Torre et al. 2017: 868). Consequently, they argue that by working within and between *hyphen* and the elaboration of *nos-otras* as a platform that carries on-going processes of becoming us and others, the dominant narratives could be altered and new inclusive possibilities could be created.

Thus, grounding on phenomenology and feminist theories, I have discussed the emergence of developing an interdisciplinary methodology that is flexible and dynamic in order to be able to tackle the challenges of the study of home. I also suggested that the research should be processed within a space that encompasses hybrid relations, in terms of researcher/ researched relations and also in the case of how the validity is achieved in such a platform. Subsequently, I elaborate how the proposed methodology that is entangled within interdisciplinary theories is facilitated with different methods, discussing their relevance and the ways in which they assist the progress of this study. In that case, I aim to comprehend a flexible methodology that highlights how home can be studied as an in-between place.

In order to be able to attain a methodology that addresses different spatial, gender, social, and diasporic aspects of the Iranian diasporic home for women, a variety of qualitative methods are applied. The diasporic homes are examined through a variety of methods

including interviews, photography and hand drawing of the home spaces and focus groups. These methods and what they add to this research are discussed next.

### 2.2.1 Interviews

In this section, I examine my intentions for employment of interview, why it was chosen and how it can bring a dimension to the process of knowledge production in this thesis that could not be achieved within any other analysis. In-depth, semi structured interviews are conducted with eight Iranian women across different cities in the UK, as a part of visits to their homes. The following discussions represent an examination of perspectives on interview rooted in the theoretical frameworks discussed earlier. I examine how interview analysis is perceived in both phenomenology and feminist points of view.

Svend Brinkmann (2017), in her examination of the use of interview in qualitative inquiry, defines the interview as “a social construction of communicative processes” and states that the “magic” in interviewing is the participant’s willingness to share much information about his/her personal life, just because the interviewer is a researcher (Brinkmann 2017: 1025-1026). Brinkmann implies three categories for the employment of interview; structured, semi-structured, and unstructured. Based on Parker (2005), she mentions that basically there is no such thing as a structured interview as things are always discussed beyond the structure of the interview. However, she additionally argues that there is also no such a thing as an unstructured interview, as every interview is planned ahead (there is always an idea about how the interview is going to proceed) even in an interview with only one question. She continues that it is important to remember that the interviews should be flexible enough so that the interviewees can raise their concern (Brinkmann 2017: 1027). She explains that relatively structured interviews may be useful for some purposes (such as quantitative) but they do not “take advantage of the dialogical potentials of knowledge production in human conversation”. Therefore, they can be only “passive recordings of people’s opinion” (Brinkmann 2017: 1028).

Brinkmann specifies that what distinguishes a semistructured interview from any other kind of friendly conversation is “purpose”, that the researcher seeks to derive information from the conversation that will lead to knowledge production (Brinkmann 2017: 1029). In terms of the knowledge produced through the conduct of the interview, based on phenomenological theories she places emphasis on realising *how* the world of participants is shaped around a specific object rather than *why*. (Brinkmann 2017: 1030). Brinkmann (2017) introduces two types of approaches towards the application of interview; the first one is “Interview as a Research instrument”, which is grounded on the assumption that what people say can be used as reports and a “resource of studying” with the focus on the lived experience of the participants and in relation to the “what”; hence, it is in the pursuit of “truth”. The second category is “Interview as a social practice”, that sees people’s statements as accounts, and as topics “in its own right”. The analysis is employed as being situated and in relation to the question “how” and “the relevance” is the primary challenge in the analysis (Brinkman 2017: 1043). Additionally, she states that phenomenological ideas are based on revealing “*how* the

interviewees experience their world, its episodes and events, rather than *why* they have certain experiences” (Brinkmann 2017: 1030). Subsequently, this research aims for the examination of *how*.

The approach in conducting interviews in phenomenological studies is based on the common ground and how the researcher and the participants could communicate and relate within a discourse of common understanding. Therefore, the main aim for the employment of interview for phenomenologists is pursuing authenticity from the participants. In that guise, “‘truths’ take a backseat to the realities that respondents narrate for themselves, leaving strict methodologists little room to generalise data to explanatory theory or make claims comparing responses across time or communities” (Crowley 2014:148). One of the main contributions of interviews influenced by phenomenology is promoting a more flexible way of knowledge production within the shared platform between the researcher and the researched. The study of personal experience requires a level of intimacy that is only achievable through an approach that encourages “co-creating knowledge” (Borer and Fontana 2014: 53).

The second category encompasses ideas that see interviews as situational and socially constructed communications. In contrast with approaches that perceive interviews as reports that represent the answer to “what” and pay great attention to accuracy, in this school of thought the emphasis is on “how”. The interview is a site of “situated” interactions that produce data and is a reflection of the reality that is constructed within the discourse of interview. The participant’s statements are analysed only to make them relevant and are not treated as representations of the reality outside the site of the interview. An example is Denzin’s (2001) approach towards interviews as a political mean to achieve and perform social change (Brinkmann 2017: 1044). In that guise, the interviewer is seen as a “social agent” whose background in terms of gender, race, culture and class shapes the structure of the interview based on how the relationship between the interviewer and interviewee is created (Denzin and Lincoln 2003: 125).

Interviews are social processes in themselves. They are an integral part of constructing individual subjectivity. Numerous researchers specialising in qualitative interviewing stress that the interview is, as its name suggests, an “inter-view,” that is, an interchanging of views on a common subject between people — people who travel together on a conversational journey (Herzog 2014: 210).

Therefore, interviews are a part of examining a reality that is echoing cultural, social and historical elements within a precise context (Herzog 2014: 209). Borer and Fontana (2014), in their research on postmodern trends in interview, imply similar ideas that are based on the deconstruction of traditional frameworks of seeking the one and ultimate “truth”. It moves towards accepting many possible truths in that guise that defines theorising as “fragments in continuous flux”. Hence, uncertainty and ambiguity find their place in the process of knowledge production. “It persuades us to accept uncertainty and turn our attention to these fragments, to the minute events of everyday life, seeking to understand them in their own

right rather than gloss over differences and patch them together into paradigmatic wholes” (Borer and Fontana 2014: 48). Consequently, if interviews are socially constructed, they should be examined like any other social encounter as the participants provide “organising accounts” that transform the “fragmented process of everyday life” into meaningful explanations that are a result of co-constructions of situated sense of reality (Dingwall 1997 and Borer and Fontana 2014: 52). They consider that the interview is a “social production” between the interviewee and the interviewer and involves a “collaborative construction”. They mention, “Because the interview is situationally and contextually produced, it is itself a site for knowledge production rather than simply a neutral conduit for experiential knowledge, as traditionally believed” (Borer and Fontana 2014: 53). Within this framework we can understand “the biographical, contextual, historical, and institutional elements that are brought to the interview and used by both parties” (Borer and Fontana 2014: 53).

They additionally describe that one of the most important influences on postmodern interviewing has been added by feminism, which is based on a continuing concern with “the elastic subject position of the respondent” (Borer and Fontana 2014: 54). Feminists look at the interview as a platform that makes the experiences visible that have been muted. In terms of the interview itself, the focus is on blending the researcher-participants roles, as the researcher becomes a part of the research process as well, and seeking to balance the power relations within the interview, meaning that the researcher is not separable from the research (Crawley 2014:157). This has been taken further as the researchers become active advocates for the people they interview (Borer and Fontana 2014: 55-56). This type of attitude towards interview requires an active role of the researcher in the research process and links directly to the reflexivity and personal experience of the researcher. In their research on in-depth interviewing John M. Johnson & Timothy Rowlands (2014) talk about how having previous knowledge or connection about the subject of research is considered essential in the process of in-depth interview. They refer to Lofland and Lofland’s (1995) notion of “starting where you are” meaning that the researchers should consider the employment of what they already know and the “advantaged access” that is rooted in their history and experience. However, there is always the issue of taking the known knowledge for granted that one needs to overcome (Johnson and Rowlands 2014:107).

Another significant approach in the feminist quarter is the notion of balancing power within the context of the interview. The idea of achieving a complete power balance in the discourse of interview has been found challenging.

The interviewer has scientific competence and defines the interview situation. The interviewer initiates the interview, determines the interview topic, poses the questions and critically follows up on the answers, and also terminates the conversation. It is illusory to think of the research interview as a dominance-free dialogue between equal partners; the interviewer’s research project and knowledge interest set the agenda and rule the conversation (Brinkmann 2017: 1045).

Therefore, although the mediation of power relations could be challenging, through the process of co-construction of knowledge both by the interviewer and interviewee, the structured power, could be altered within the context of the interview by empowerment of the voices that are not being present.

Hanna Herzog (2014) states that, although it is intended to define the interview within a space that grants multiple voices and equal power relations, some such as Briggs (2002) see the interview as a catalyst of power relations within the capitalist world. Briggs sees the interview as a platform that reproduces the “power relation” of the society, as they are conducted with the individuals that are evaluated based on class relations that are infused by the institutional power. Therefore, in general, the dominant communities are targeted for the interviews. He find the solution in seeing the interviews as a political and situational discourse, so the interviewers could emerge with social experiences that are infused with resistance (Herzog 2014: 214). In that sense, any kind of refusal, starting from refusing to participate in the research, to challenging the questions being asked, becomes relevant to the research as it reveals qualities that may change and redefine power structures (Herzog 2014: 215). Herzog additionally suggests seeing every interview as “a socially constructed, negotiated event” which aims to define a mutual relationship between the researcher and the researched not solely in terms of the participation in the research process but also in terms of interpretation. This means that, in the same way that the interviewer is seeking to obtain an understanding about the reality of the interviewee’s world, his/her behaviour is also being perceived and analysed throughout the interview time (Herzog 2014: 214).

### **2.2.1.1 Both/and as opposed to either/or: feminism and phenomenology in interview**

Following the presented discussions on the phenomenology and feminist stance on conducting interviews, I elucidate how the employment of the interviews is situated in this research in relation to those theories. I aim to find a common ground between the two theoretical points of view for the conduct of the one-by one, in-depth interviews.

After defining two sets of approaches within these theoretical frameworks, Brinkmann suggests a “dualistic manner” as a comprehensive way of conducting interviews and implies that the either/or approach can lead to extreme approaches on both sides.

So interviews are never just research instruments. However, they are also never just social practices enclosed on themselves, for interviews (and human communication in general) seem premised on the point that we can in fact refer to experiences outside of the concrete communicative situation. In my view, the distinction above should be taken as a pragmatist one, highlighting different emphases that researchers might choose. Sometimes it is useful to approach human talk as reports that people articulate, and at other times, we need to address it as accounts occasioned by the situation (Brinkmann 2017: 1060).

This method helps to locate a flexible approach that links different theories that can benefit the research. Margarethe Kusenbach (2002) for example suggests a “go-along” approach following the flux of the interview process allowing the participants to contribute to the co-construction of knowledge through representing their personal and collective identity (Borer and Fontana 2014: 9). Similarly, other researchers have contributed to this notion with the same perspective suggesting a flexible attitude that is open towards the synergies of the interview and is willing to benefit from the unexpected, such as “go with the flow” that represents similar notions (Johnson and Rowlands 2014: 14).

Grounding on the same notion, Sara L. Crawley (2014) in her research on autoethnography as a form of self-interviewing, argues that we can be narrowing down the gap between the academic world of theories with the world of everyday life. She finds the solution by linking these two worlds through feminist theories that value autoethnography and phenomenological approaches that value subjective experiences and the multivocality of feminism. The latter addresses the idea of common consciousness and the former implies the “epistemological issue of whose knowledge matters the most in social research” (Crawley 2014: 147). Then, grounded on the notion of the both/and in black feminism, she suggests that a dual context is beneficial, as opposed to the dominant approach of either/or.

Following the “both/and” approach of black feminist thought, it is imminently clear that identities are based in narrative and discourse, profoundly grounded in constructions of history, time, and context, and it is equally true, at least to members, that their lived experiences of identities, places, communities, and especially inequalities feel real in a Marxist sense of consciousness. These realities coexist at the level of lived experience. We can measure a theory by what it makes clear that was previously cloudy—considering multivocality a positive character of the work while not letting go of the realist project of describing a world that exists if only in the way that some experience it. In that way, both analytic and evocative ends are valid and useful, informative and enlightening—both/and, not either/or (Crawley 2014: 160).

Based on this, I have conducted the interviews with a combination of phenomenological and feminist grounding, in relation to the features specified previously in this chapter (figure 2.2).

In order to test the process in reality three pilot interviews were arranged which were all developed in line with University of Sheffield ethical approval. I accessed my informants via friends in the Iranian student community in Sheffield. I sent each of them a description of the research and the structure of my visit and once they agreed, the visit was arranged. The pilot interviews took place in at the beginning of the summer 2014. The outcome of the pilot interview analysis formed the basis of the actual interviews. The pilot interviews revealed the temporary nature of these diasporic homes and it became obvious that seeking tangible and obvious traces of the Iranian-ness in diasporic home was a challenge. However, that did not mean that the memory of Iran was absence in those space. What all these homes had in common was the existence of the transient ways of recreating the experience of Iranian home such as the memory of home, food, music and Iranian habits. Also mobile objects such as small Iranian crafts, souvenirs or gifts received in Iran, family photographs, Iranian books

and Iranian food utensils and ingredients were briefly used. Above all, since these women just recently left home, Iran still had a strong presence in their conversation and their perceptions of the experience of migration as they kept comparing their current life with their experiences in Iran. This helped the development of the comparative questions that showed their conceptions about home and homemaking both in Iran and in diaspora. When they were asked about home and homemaking, their parental home was still the home for them but they were all happy with their autonomous life. It was acknowledged that although they may have less privileges in their current homes but their diasporic home was appreciated very dearly as it was the space of their own. They were happy with their new lifestyle and the opportunity to enjoy life without the cultural and social restrictions of before however, their circle of their close friends remained strongly Iranian. Another important outcome of the pilot interviews was the fact that the participants were very cautious about remaining anonymous to avoid any problem for their regular visits to Iran. Therefore, pseudonyms are used throughout this thesis and the photographs of the homes were taken in ways that does not expose any personal information.

What concluded from these pilot interviews facilitated the modification of the interview sessions. It was learned that these women have developed other ways of homemaking than only presenting tangible elements. The interview questions were amended accordingly examining ephemeral ways of homemaking and questions about the atmosphere of home, sensory experiences, social gathering and cooking were added. Conducting the pilot interviews provided a more profound understanding of the reality of the diasporic homes of the Iranian women that led towards the development of a more inclusive approach.

Following the conduct and analysis of the pilot interviews, the actual interviews were held during the next few month and were terminated by the end of October 2014. Prior to each visit the participant were provided by an information sheet and a consent form upon my arrival to their home. The time of the visit varied between one to two hours long and the interviews were 50-90 minutes long. I usually spent more time in the homes as I was hosted for a meal or tea. The interviews were conducted in Persian to minimise the possibility of losing meaning through language barriers. I translated the transcripts as faithfully as I could. The process of translation was coordinated with analysis as well - to think about the idea and meanings behind words and finding the right words for them in English was a process that provided deeper perceptions of the data and gave a better understanding of their meanings. Ramazanoğlu and Holland (2002) proposed translation and data interpretations as the process of knowledge production that gives researchers a better understanding of the data. However, there are always the limitations of understanding different mind sets. "Language has powerful effects in producing meanings, so interpretation of data is like translation in constructing rather than just conveying meaning" (Ramazanoğlu and Holland 2002: 118).

### **2.2.1.2 Location**

Since, the location of the interview is the centre of this study, examining the influence of location on the process of interview is an inevitable matter. The studies on interview location mostly address technical issues in relation to the comfort provided for the participants to

make the data collection an easier process (Seidman 2006). It has been recommended that the location should be a familiar place for the participants that would empower them, and hence increase the chance of their active engagement (Borer and Fontana 2014: 56). One's home has been recommended in that regard as well for the types of research that are focused on personal experience or are centred on sensitive subjects (Brinkmann 2017: 1058-59).

Hanna Herzog (2014), in her study on the location of the interview, notes the significance of the location in shaping the synergy of the interview and consequently the ways in which data is constructed. She suggests examining the location of the interview beyond the technical concerns, and looking at it as an element that enriches the whole knowledge production process. "The interview location plays a role in constructing reality, serving simultaneously as both cultural product and producer... It should be examined within the social context of the study being conducted and analysed as an integral part of the interpretation of the findings" (Herzog 2014:209). She mentions that, although the location is not inherent, it is recreated within social interactions. Hence, the interview location becomes a dynamic site that is an inseparable part of the produced data and its analysis. She states that solely being concerned with notions of comfort, atmosphere, intimacy and friendliness, in regard to the location, and examining the interview outside the meaning of social and political relations, may result in an "illusion" of openness and equality (Herzog 2014: 209).

Another matter that Herzog (2014) discusses in regard to the location of the interviews signifies the issue of power relations and the idea of resistance. This can be achieved by providing the chance for the participants to be involved in the process of selection of the location. Additionally, being interviewed in their own home provides a more balanced position for the participants in relation to the interviewers (Herzog 2014: 214-215). Then, she points out that when the participants are given the option to choose the location, the meaning that emerges becomes a part of the research journey, as it conveys the message the participant intended to represent to the researcher (Herzog 2014: 218). For example, she specifies how conducting the interview in the home of the participants balances the power relations. Additionally, being in the participants' home, observing her family and community, provides a way to understand their status in their home and the ways in which her subjectivity is situated (Herzog 2014: 220).

In the case of this research, the location of the interview was the subject of the study; hence, asking the participants to be interviewed in their home placed them in a much more controlling position than if they were interviewed in any other place. Moreover, the interviews were part of a few hours' visit that included sketching and photographing the home spaces right after the interviews; therefore, the interviews were part of the process. In that guise, the emphasis was not solely on the interviews during the visits. Another important issue in regard to being interviewed at home was started before the visits, in the process of the participants' selections. Similar to what Herzog (2014) discussed, in relation to the idea of power in the interviews, the individual's rejection or acceptance of participating in the interview could be considered as a part of the meaning-making process in the research. The participants'

willingness to allow me to enter their home was already a meaningful statement. Herzog discusses “unwillingness” as resistance that should be considered across the research process, both in terms of not being willing to participate or resisting certain questions. Herzog takes this idea further and refers to the Israeli and Arab participants of her research and derives meaning from their choice of location. She describes how the structure of the society under surveillance has resulted in the feeling of “distrust” in the community and therefore the participants were dealing with the fear of what they say may have resulted in their incrimination. Therefore, their refusal to be interviewed was grounded on their “genuine fear” but also it was a form of resistance (Herzog 2014: 226-227).

In the case of Iranian women and recording their home spaces, some of the potential participants did not agree to participate, mentioning their discomfort with being interviewed in their home because of the privacy issue. During the interviews, however, I realised that there is a constant concern with not being able to go back to Iran, or in case of their return, the troubles they might face. On the other hand, the women who agreed to be interviewed (on the condition that their identity remained confidential) were not conservative in expressing their ideas about the structure of Iranian society and their experience in Iran in regard to social, political and cultural structures. Therefore, they expressed their resistance by accepting to be interviewed.

One of the other participants stated her agreement to be interviewed but mentioned her discomfort about the way that her house looked, as she did not feel her house was decent enough. Herzog discusses how the choice of home as the site of the interview also represents class status. For example, poor people are not willing to be interviewed in their homes while elite groups are not reluctant about being interviewed at their home as it is a location that represents their privileges (Herzog 2014: 226-227). In the case of this research, this reluctance to be interviewed is also coming from the fact that the participant did not feel that her home was representing her class status. Considering the majority of these women are coming from the middle class or upper middle class in Iran, the challenges of living in diaspora alters their conventional perceptions. Therefore, the participants’ approach towards the location of the interviews represents meanings that can be beneficial to both the production of data and analysis. These meanings are not only limited to the interview itself and could expand from before and after the interview to help the construction of knowledge.

Through one to one, in-depth, interviews it was aimed to create a platform where the participant’s experiences and realities could be discussed in an open and friendly environment. Conducting interviews that were placed in the home of the participants, in Persian, and by an Iranian woman student, led the participants to feel comfortable in co-constructing meanings and revealing the ways they think their subjectivity is represented in their homes (Johnson and Rowlands 2014: 104). Through in-depth interviewing, friendships were built and in some cases expanded to other occasions, such as being invited to an Iranian dinner party in the upcoming week of the interview, as the interviewee thought it could be beneficial for my research. The closeness and the interests created through the interview not only helped the research at the time of the interview but also went beyond the initial

agreed commitments of the participants. According to Johnson and Rowlands (2014) the ideal in an in-depth interview is that the participants become active collaborators in the research and contribute to the “intellectual endeavour at hand” (Johnson and Rowlands 2014: 119). Therefore, although the conversations were based on producing data, the familiarity provided a level of care that continued the process of involvement with the research (Johnson and Rowlands 2014: 101).

Johnson and Rowlands (2014) describe four characteristics for an in-depth interview. First they illustrate in-depth interview as an approach to achieve “deep understanding” of the reality of the participants and the meaning behind their actions. Being a member of the same community could be a great influence in that sense (Johnson and Rowlands 2014: 104, see also Anderson 2006a: 375). The second way to approach in-depth interviewing is to go beyond the cultural and social common ground by exploring the world of the participants and try to achieve deeper levels of meaning. The third approach shows how the researcher’s experiences and history can boost the process of understanding the participants’ realities. If the researcher and the researched share similar experiences and events, it influences the way that the participants are understood. The fourth is the commitment to conduct the interview in a way that allows multiple perspectives and views on the subject to be heard (Johnson and Rowlands 2014: 105). Consequently, they imply that having previous knowledge or connection about the subject of research is considered essential in the process of in-depth interview (Johnson and Rowlands 2014:107). They also argue that to be able to conduct an interview the researcher must undertake “considerable self-reflection to get to know themselves”; therefore they must be self-conscious of their thoughts about, their connection to and their reflection on the subject during their interaction with the others (participants) (Johnson and Rowlands 2014: 119). Having these approaches in mind, before starting with the interviews, a self-exploratory analysis was conducted that aimed to represent the subjective connections to this research within a phenomenological study. Through this phenomenological exploration (chapter 3), I share my experience and my understanding of the Iranian home. Thus, I provide an insight to “what I already know” and how that influences the way that my subjectivity is located across the data collection and analysis process. It helps to explain the selection of methods, and the ways they have been designed and analysed. Then, based on the notion of both/and, the interviews were undertaken with a series of open-ended questions, following the “go with the flow” approach, trying to be open towards the dynamics created by the participant. In that sense, I aimed to bring both the emphasis on subjective experience of phenomenology and the stress on the reflexivity and the notion of empowering the participants in the feminist approach under one roof (figure 2.3). Therefore, the interviews in the home of these participants could be an in-between space, a place of sharing personal experiences, of situating subjectivity. Consequently, this offers a chance to participate in the process of co-creating a reality that is based on the common grounds between the researcher and the researched.

However, as much as these individual interviews are enriching sources of knowledge production, the idea of expanding the research in regard to how these discussions are

perceived in a group discussion is inevitable. In that sense, not only can the participants represent their ideas but also they can be situated in a context that is in direct communication with the others. For that reason, in the following section, I look into bringing another view to the experience of Iranian women's diasporic home through undertaking a focus group (figure 2.3).

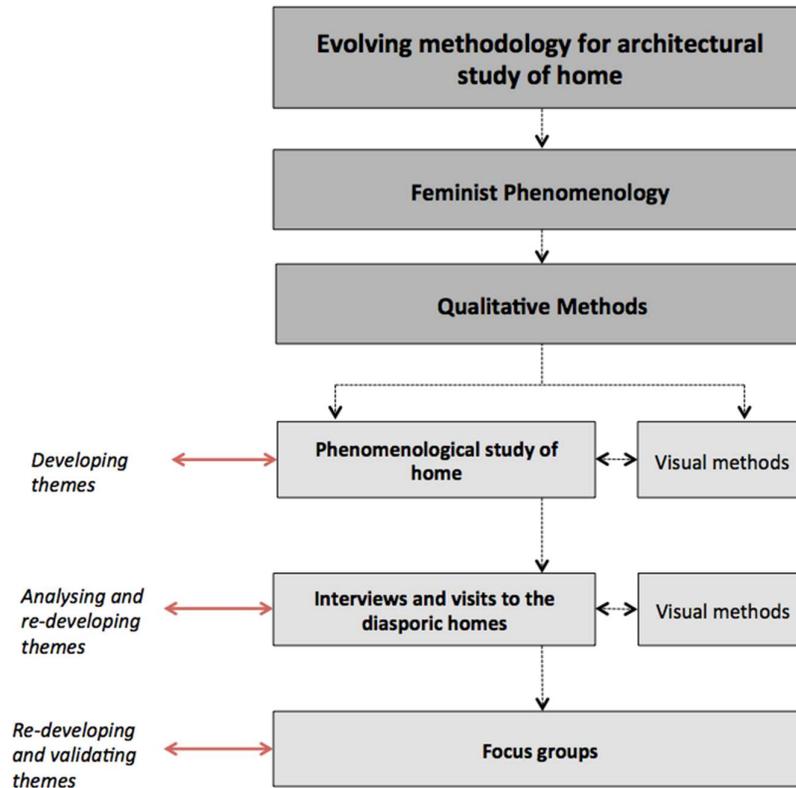


Figure 2.2 The development of qualitative methods.

### 2.2.2 Focus groups

After conducting interviews, focus groups are employed with the intention to illuminate the result of the previous analysis, bringing perspectives that could not be achieved otherwise (Freitas et al. 1998: 6). Focus group has been introduced as a complementary method, that helps to produce additional data for the main study (Freitas et al. 1998: 6). The significant matter to consider is that the researchers must be clear about what a focus group analysis could add to the research analysis (krueger and Casey 2010: 385).

Visits to the home of the participants, accompanied with in-depth individual interviews, represent different levels of data in relation to the diasporic experience for Iranian women, while offering different approaches of situating subjectivity within the constraints of their diasporic home. Such a process involves careful consideration in regard to the researcher/researched relationship and the way this interaction is defined and consequently

influences the co-construction of knowledge. However, what happens in a focus group brings fresh perspectives to the discussion because of the different synergy in a focus group. What interests me in a focus group is that the role of the researcher is minimised even more than was attempted in the interviews. The dynamic of a focus group, in essence, is all about the participants, their conversations (over a particular topic) and their interactions. It is formed around the participants and the way they situate their subjectivity and opinion in relation to the other participants.

Henrique Freitas, Mírian Oliveira, Milton Jenkins, Oveta Popjoy (1998) state that focus groups are a combination of two qualitative methods in social sciences: interview and group observations. However, in a focus group, a considerable amount of data can be produced in such a short time, besides the collection of data happens in a rich flexible process that is not achieved through other methods (Freitas et al. 1998: 3-4). They define focus group as a type of in-depth interview happening within a group; with an emphasis on the interaction in the group based on a proposed topic and an examination of the participants' influence on each other. The role of moderator is limited to encouraging the discussion or leading the conversation in a way that balances the power dynamic throughout the conversations, so that everyone can have the chance to participate (Freitas et al. 1998: 2). The success of the focus group is directly linked to the "positive synergy" among the participants as the data is generated through informal discussions within the group (Denton and McDonagh 2003: 130). The key to such a success can be achieved through planning ahead in advance, such as having a list of questions and providing a friendly and comfortable environment. There is an extensive literature guiding the researcher, in terms of the technical elements that influence the dynamic of the focus group and advice on designing the focus group by being clear about what to expect from the outcome, by designing questions that are encouraging for the participants, and finally the ways in which the analysis could be undertaken (Krueger and Leader 2002, Denton and McDonagh 2003, Freitas et al. 1998, Krueger and Casey 2010).

What makes focus group relevant to this research is discussing the topic within a group; in that guise, the collaboration between the interviewer and interviewee changes to an interaction that positions the interviewer as a listener in the back seat, and is solely initiated among the participants (Krueger and Casey 2010: 386). This interaction provides a platform that positions the participants in relation to others. Consequently, this provides a window to the co-construction of knowledge and meaning from a new perspective that can reveal realities that were not discussed within the interviews. Since the interaction among the participants is what shapes the synergy of the sessions, their interest in the topic and "what others have to say" is a significant matter. Therefore, having homogeneous participants, in terms of their perspective and interest, will shape the necessary grounds for boosting the conversation (Freitas et al. 1998: 12, see also Krueger and Casey 2010 and Morgan 2014: 13).

David L. Morgan (2014) provides a comprehensive illustration of the meaning of the participants' interactions, and how it contributes to the co-construction of meaning. He represents a study that highlights how the meaning is produced, based on how the

participants perceive themselves in relation to the others and how that influences the ways that they contribute to the process of knowledge production in a focus group. Morgan analyses the dynamics of the focus group and aims to introduce applicable approaches to interaction and communication in a focus group. For that purpose, the process of interaction is linked to the practical information that group participants produce which then illustrates how the design of the research can affect the synergy of the focus group. Based on Mead's (1934) notion of symbolic interaction, he defines interaction as "shared meanings that are created and negotiated by the participants in the course of their interaction" (Morgan 1998: 163). He states that, although the significant role of the participants is undeniable and it is up to them to "initiate and sustain their own discussion", the researchers' decision impacts the essence of the focus group discussions (Morgan 2014: 163). Morgan specifies that the meaning is shared and produced through the interaction of the focus group and is a result of representation of the identity of self and other that happens beyond the individual interaction realm and involves society through the notion of "looking-glass self" discussed by Cooley (1909). Based on this concept, he argues that people find the meaning of their own actions in relation to the action of others.

It is also important to recognise that Mead (1934) considered most aspects of thought to be a form of interaction that occurs within "the little theatre of the mind." In addition, Mead treated interaction as inseparable from the broader social context that extended beyond the boundaries of face-to-face contact, to include the host of other identities that participants possess. Thus, the interaction that occurs in focus groups involves all the elements of *Mind, Self, and Society* (Morgan 2014: 163).

Additionally, he notes that there is a lack of studies on the interactions of the focus group. However, it is important to remember that, as important as the interactions are, they are not data but that they help to produce data (Morgan 2014: 165). In order to be able to analyse focus groups in relation to "interaction", Morgan suggests two different types of goals in focus groups: content-oriented and conversation-oriented. The first one is centred on substantive content and the latter is related to the conversational dynamics. He mentions that the first ones are the most common and in this type the micro-dynamics of the conversations are not considered relevant. In the less common one, however, "the conversations in focus group discussions are almost always used as a convenient site for studying interaction in general, so the specific subject of the discussion is largely irrelevant" (Morgan 2014: 165). Essentially, he illustrates the difference as "what was said" and "how was said" and draws attention to a gap between these two approaches and seeks an answer to fill in this distance (Morgan 2014: 166). His proposal is to find a medium method that considers both and links the two approaches by introducing the concept of "co-construction of meaning" within the interactive processes of the focus group (Morgan 2014: 165). He analyses the interaction among the participants by introducing notions of "sharing and comparing". When the participants are interested in the topic of the discussion they continue and develop the conversation by sharing and comparing. This process not only helps the researcher to understand "*what* the participants think" but also "*why* they think the way they do". This follows the same logic as

“inductive” processes that guide qualitative research in general (Morgan 2014: 167-168). How the participants contribute to the discussion is affected by “turn talking”, meaning that when the researcher has asked a question not only should it interest the participants, but also it should raise their willingness to hear others’ responses. Through turn talking each response is in connection with the previous response in two forms: sharing, that confirms the previous discussion, or comparing, that highlights the differences. However, although the sharing and comparing are different processes, they both serve the same purpose, which is to “*expand on the content of the on-going conversation*” (Morgan 2014: 168-169). What differentiates sharing and comparing from agreement and disagreement is that sharing and comparing carry qualities that help the progress of conversation and ultimately the “*co-construction of meaning*” (Morgan 2014: 171). Another level beyond sharing and comparing in an interactive conversation that contributes to the co-construction of meaning is “*organising and conceptualising*”. Therefore, by expanding the sharing and comparing towards the organising and conceptualising, knowledge is produced. Morgan states that, despite the researchers, the participants do not have access to the process of data interpretation; consequently, taking the conversation to the next level and “*coding, categorising and conceptualising*” is their way of interpreting and reflecting on their argument. Consequently, as the flow of the conversation continues, the participants construct their previous point and use it as a “*social object*” to take the conversation further (Morgan 2014: 181). Therefore, through sharing and comparing, the participants create a common ground that helps the process of conceptualising.

Every conversation is about something, and that “something” is the core of focus groups. When we design our data collection, we want to hear what the participants have to say about our research topic. When we analyse the data, we want to understand what the participants have said. At every step, our goal is to listen to and learn from participants’ conversations about the topics that interest us (Morgan 2014: 183).

Therefore, the research design for a focus group should be tackled in a way that shapes the dynamics of the group in a manner that boosts the conversation forward by “*sharing and comparing*” and possibly “*organising and conceptualising*”. One approach would be to design questions or activities that create a platform that can encompass several points of view, meaning that each participant has multiple possibilities to be able to connect with the conversation. In that sense, leading the conversation towards sharing and comparing becomes attainable (Morgan 2014: 174-176). Thus, the researchers need to find a way to moderate the necessity for collecting data and the participants’ comfort. For that purpose, the researchers should take multiple roles, taking the role of participants, when designing the questions, and taking the role of researcher when moderating (Morgan 2014: 166).

Following Morgan’s discussions, the focus groups in this research are conducted in a way that aims to link the conversation and content. It draws attention to the ways that participants contribute to the process of the co-construction of meaning as individuals and in interaction with each other. In that sense, not only the issues in regard to the experience of participants

in diaspora (and their homes) are discussed but also the ways that they situate their subjectivity in relation to the others by sharing and comparing is examined. Therefore, they share their notion of diasporic home and diasporic experience, in addition to having the option to reconfigure their perceptions as they have a conversation with others who have the same experience. This may lead to going beyond sharing and comparing and result in conceptualising and organising ideas that are relevant to everyone.

### **2.2.3 Visual Methods**

Previously, I discussed two methods, interview and focus group. In this section, I examine other approaches such as photography and drawings that are applied to support the analysis. Visual analysis of home, through photographs and drawings, are used across this work and are employed for two purposes. First, to provide information about spatial experiences that connect the past and present, and second, to enrich the process of data analysis by examining the purpose and the meaning behind the photographs, both for the researcher and for the participants. Therefore, a combination of pictures and drawings of the home spaces not only signifies an architectural representation but also helps to understand different dynamics of space.

#### **2.2.3.1 Photographs**

Much has been written on the use of photographs, as a methodological tool in social sciences studies and in visual ethnography by Dona Schwartz (1989), which is a particularly useful source. She analyses different types of information that a photograph reveals. Referring to Paul Byers (1964), she described two different approaches to taking photographs: first, when a photo represents the photographer's aesthetic view and concerns and, second, when the photo is taken to show reality that is "yielding an unmediated and unbiased visual report" (Schwartz 1989: 122). Basing her ideas on the work of Roland Barthes, she points out that there is another view that gives meaning to the photographs- the viewer's interpretation of the photograph. She argues that spectators can interpret a photograph in various ways and their understanding is based on their personal history and experiences. Therefore, a photograph does not contain a single meaning but "it is, instead, the raw material for an infinite number of messages which each viewer can construct for himself" (Barthes 1964: 31, cited by Schwartz 1989: 120). Schwartz argued that this might give the photographs a level of ambiguity that is not a limitation but an enhancement to the research (Schwartz 1989: 120). In her opinion, photographs in social sciences research should be used to "acquire meaning" (Schwartz 1989: 120).

Eric Margolis and Renu Zunjarwad (2017) argue that, in postmodern and post positivism, "the position of the image maker and the observers" becomes relevant in the analysis of the photographs. They suggest that the photographs are always a product that is framed within a combination of the culture of the photographer and the photographed. "They [photographs] connote (at least) socially established ideological and aesthetic beliefs learned by the photographer and the viewer. Images also circulate within a system of communication. Like currency and language, photographs are 'social facts'" (Margolis and Zunjarwad 2017: 1072).

They state that through Hermeneutic approaches (as interpretation of interpretation) and application of “multiple theoretical techniques” the meaning behind photos in a larger social context becomes attainable. Additionally, they refer to semiotics, as a method rooted in linguistics to analyse the meaning that is conveyed by images (Margolis and Zunjarwad 2017: 1093).

Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1953), the French linguist, is known as the founder of semiotics, who proposed a binary model of signs that is based on the twofold of random relations between the signifier and the signified (Margolis and Zunjarwad, 2017: 1093). Later, Ronald Barth develops a model that regards two elements to be considered in a photograph: denotation (first layer of meaning or what is represented in the images) and connotation (second layer of meaning or what the people, objects and places represented in the images mean or stand for) (Margolis and Zunjarwad 2017:1094, see also Leeuwen and Jewitt 2001: 92-118, and Leeuwen 2011: 92).

The field of semiotics emphasises that the meanings of things and images are completely context dependent and generated through interactions of multiple elements within social and cultural structures. Meaning should not be looked upon as an inherent characteristic because it can never be owned, only created (Margolis and Zunjarwad 2017: 1097).

In a study on semiotics and iconography, Theo van Leeuwen (2011) discusses different approaches in which meanings could be conveyed through visual analysis. He defines two main approaches to the visual analysis: the visual semiotic discussed by Donald Barth (1973-1977) and iconography. These two approaches seek to examine the two main questions when a picture is analysed: the representation (what do the images represent and why?) and the hidden meanings (what are the ideas and values behind the people, places and things represented in the photos?) (Van Leeuwen 2011: 91). Leeuwen argues that the semiotics discussed by Barth relies on studying solely the image and the understanding of it, and is dependent on the common cultural perceptions (recognising what we already know) among the beholders, but iconography brings the missing piece to the discussion, which is the context that the images are produced, not only using textual but also contextual analysis (Leeuwen 2011: 91-93 and 101). Highlighting the potency that the photographs contain, the diasporic homes of Iranian women are captured through photographs to illustrate the reality of the life of Iranian women in diaspora (Berger and Mohr 1982: 96).

### **2.2.3.2 Drawings**

During my visit to the homes of my participants, first the interview was conducted, and then a set of photographs was taken that was followed by sketches and drawings of the home plan. I learned that drawing a quick plan of each home gave me a better understanding of the home spatial dynamics that was not accessible through words and pictures. It is through the architectural drawings of these homes that I introduce the situated nature of my own knowledge and the impact of my subjectivity as an architect and as a migrant woman. The hand drawings of home spaces were used to delineate the “smooth” spaces at home within the physical space (the “striated” space) based on my personal perceptions, home dynamics

and architectural arrangements (Deleuze and Guattari 1980/ 2010: 5). Through these drawings, I try to embody dimensions of these diasporic homes that were not discussed through the interviews and the photographs. By presenting these drawings, I provide a platform for interpretation based on memory and previous experience, connecting past with present. Drawings have also been applied in Chapter 3, where the Iranian home is studied through drawings and narratives using a phenomenological approach.

The comprehension of data through drawings is one of the common approaches in architecture. By focusing on architectural representation, Dalibour Vesely (2006) attempts to draw attention to the immaterial aspects of architecture by creating open and ambiguous drawings that provide the possibility of multiple interpretations (Vesely 2006: 388). Furthermore, Juhani Pallasmaa (2009) has defined the hand as the extension of mind and buildings as the extension of the body, memories and human presence. He refers to unconscious human experience as “silence knowledge” and declares that it is accessible through hand drawing and sketching. He discusses “embodied knowledge” as the type of knowledge that cannot be communicated verbally. My approach in representing architectural drawings is grounded in the representation of my subjectivity through the visualisation of the Iranian home (chapter 3) and the diasporic home of Iranian women (chapter 4). By embodying my presence and experience in these houses through these drawings, I represent my memory and my interpretation of these homes. These drawings are continuous and aimed to create a platform for various interpretations.

The phenomenological study of the Iranian home is also represented through a series of exploratory drawings. The aim was to represent spaces visually on a level that is understandable while triggering imagination and memory. Studying home as a process and as a place of in-between requires applications of method that assist the capture of its fluid nature. A combination of text and drawing has been applied to serve that purpose. Using a combination of these two is not an uncommon approach, especially in architecture. Jonathan Hill (2005) sees architect and architectural drawings as “twins” and defines architecture as an individual artistic process being developed through drawings, disconnected from the construction. However, he states that, to explore an architectural idea, a building is not always the answer. An architectural concept could be explored through writing or drawing. He finds the relation between writing, drawing and building a “multi-directional” relationship. He argues that the limits of architecture could be altered with writing and drawing as much as a building (Hill 2005: 285-286). Based on this, it could be concluded that drawings and texts could function as alternative forms of architecture, allowing “multiple cross-readings and viewings” (Manolopoulou 2006: 303). Following this perspective provides the potency to examine creative and new procedures that could be very helpful for bringing an architectural dimension to the phenomenological study of home. A question could be raised in that matter and that is: what type of drawings combined with writing have the potential to be considered as alternative forms of architectural thinking? The following discussion defines architectural drawings beyond merely informative and technical forms of representation and highlights the

significance of 'unformed', 'ambiguous', 'imaginative' and open drawings as "in-between" methods of knowledge production.

Yeoryia Manolopoulou (2005) discusses drawings as "a place where design and critical thinking intersect" (Manolopoulou 2005: 517). She argues that shifting between writing and drawing and employing a series of tools such as sketches and diagrams helps to create new architectural possibilities (Manolopoulou 2005: 518). It is by combining these methods that the world of thought is connected with the material world (Manolopoulou 2005:519). She argues that unformed drawings, as opposed to traditional architectural drawings, do not aim to describe the reality within a unified system, scale and consistency, rather unformed drawings are inconsistent, are informed by psychological and cultural facts and are open to multiple interpretations. Hence, unformed drawings are more representative of the complexity of space, its dynamics and how it is experienced, remembered and imagined. As a result, even the ambiguity and confusion perceived in a sketch could be informative, as it triggers the imagination and brings about the possibility of something new emerging from the unknown (Manolopoulou 2005: 522). Grounded on the undetermined process that leads drawings to be developed into a building, Manolopoulou (2006) also examines the role of chance in architectural drawings. Manolopoulou claims that by accepting chance in architecture the issue of determinism, authorship and taste is challenged. As a result, unexpected ways could be explored and imagination is stimulated. Consequently, she suggests a variety of methods and tools from drawing and sketching to model making and text and even methods specific to the authors to be maintained in the process of architectural design (Manolopoulou 2006: 312).

Robin Evans' (1997) in "Translation from drawing to building" has represented an influential debate on where architectural drawings are situated within the design and production process in architecture. Evans discusses how, in architecture, unlike any other form of art production, there is a disconnection between the architects and the object of their work buildings. He argues that architects always work through a medium that is the drawing. "Recognition of the drawing's power as a medium turns out, unexpectedly, to be recognition of the drawing's distinctness from and unlikeness to the thing that is represented, rather than its likeness to it, which is neither as paradoxical nor as dissociative as it may seem" (Evans 1997: 154). Evans draws attention to the recent tendency towards the "rediscovery of the architectural drawings". That is, acknowledging drawings as independent of what they represent but as what they are in their own right (Evans 1997: 160). The second approach, he states, is rooted in this and claims, "If one way of altering the definition of architecture is to insist on architect's direct involvement, either calling the drawing 'art' or pushing it aside in favour of unmediated construction, the other would be to use transitive communicative properties of the drawing to better effect" (Evans 1997: 160). Therefore, two approaches to drawing could be taken: first, the representational properties of a drawing and, secondly, its relationship to building as the outcome of architectural processes (Kanekar 2010: 772). Additionally, Evans suggests that these two possibilities are contradictory but they are not necessarily incompatible, and a medium approach can be applied to fill in the gap between the drawing and building in

architecture processes (Evans 1997: 160). Hence, he criticises both approaches and states that this “blind spot” between drawing and building in architecture could be resolved by a historical study that focuses on this gap itself, as he remarks that the most significant matter is the way that architectural drawings emerge (Manolopoulou 2006: 312).

In addition to the ambiguous essence in the drawing/building relationship, the representational nature of the architectural drawings has been the centre of numerous debates. Igea Troiani and Tonia Carless (2015) argue that architectural drawing can be applied as an in-between spatial discourse that “operates as a medium of exchange” between the disciplines and blurs the boundaries between them and proposes new possibilities. They highlight that architectural drawing has the potency “to become the site of spatial discourse”. Consequently, they see drawings as an in-between platform that “destabilises binary oppositions” (Troiani and Carless 2015: 269). In such an account, architectural drawing is not merely representative of technical and informative elements in regard to space; it also depicts more depth in regard to understanding of space and what is the essence of architecture and space dynamics. In that sense, the drawings are concerned with representing a process. Based on this, they remind us that, by representing architectural drawings liberated from binary opposition, an in-between space of feminine thoughts is created. It is a medium that suggests new possibilities and reintroduces views towards practicing architecture.

Others, such as Sonit Bafna (2008), have developed the idea of looking at architectural drawings in their own terms as independent pieces that simulate “special modes of visual attention”. Bafna categorises architectural drawings into two sets: annotative and imaginative. Unlike notational drawings that are understood based on reference to “pre-specified characters”, imaginative drawings are read based on the provided visualising aids in the drawing. Hence, the major part of understanding these types of drawings is based on previous architectural experiences and, although they seem to represent something different from the actual experience, they provide a trace.

Based on these discussions that consider architectural drawings as elements with the potency to capture the complexity of space, in the phenomenological study of Iranian home and the study of diasporic home of Iranian women, I applied a series of imaginative drawings that, combined with texts, diagrams and photos, are used to each bring depth to the study of the Iranian home in Iran and in diaspora. In that sense, an architectural dimension is brought to the study to capture the fully sensory experience of the Iranian home in regard to cultural routines, memory, imagination and atmosphere of space. Hence, the study aimed to represent drawings that are open to interpretation while providing a hint about how those spaces looked and how they were experienced and perceived.

### **Summary**

The discussions in this chapter were grounded on developing a dynamic and evolving methodology, using feminist phenomenology as a conceptual tool. Throughout the representation of methods of interview, focus group and visual analysis, I followed the same

framework, discussing mediating space between phenomenology and feminism. By aiming to find a middle space across these theories, I clarified the power relations, reflexivity/intersubjectivity and the notions of otherness in each of these methods. The aim was to represent an approach that is at ease with moving across disciplines, theories and methods, in order to be able to develop a methodology that can tackle the challenges of studying home in diaspora for Iranian women. Grounding on the notion of *bricolage*, I implied the possibility of blending different methods and theories regardless of the conventional limitations. I took this idea further by discussing notions of *hyphen* and *nos-otras* emphasising that, to study home as an in-between site of becoming, a hybrid and dynamic approach of study needs to be developed. I affirmed the dual role of the researcher across the research process; the interviews, focus groups and the analysis stating the in-between space across different stages of this research. Therefore, the ambiguity and complexity of studying home becomes possible by positioning a methodology that is a combination of several methods and aims to disclose different aspects of home by examining it within situational spatial, social, cultural and gender relations.

## Chapter 3 : What makes a home Iranian? A phenomenological study of the Iranian home

### 3.0 Introduction

In the previous chapter, the methodology was discussed in more details in regard to the issues of subjectivity, otherness and reflexivity and was situated within a combination of phenomenology and feminism methodological approaches. The noticeable common ground between the two was the importance of the researcher's identity, previous experiences and personal view in evolving the methodological ways of tackling and progressing the research. This previous account ensured that the methodological approaches, the selection of methods, and eventually the data analysis approach could be understood in a broader sense. In this chapter, before presenting a phenomenological study of home, I first discuss the necessity of a phenomenological study of home, and then I examine the essential cultural elements of the Iranian home that carry spatial meaning. These elements are hierarchy, hospitality and cleanliness, which will all be discussed comprehensively in this chapter in relation to Iranian culture, society and architecture. These themes will frame a structure for the phenomenological study of home that is represented in the last part of this chapter.

### 3.1 Phenomenological study of home

This section is grounded on looking at home through a phenomenological experience. It will consider how home could be studied in phenomenology and what could be learned from such a study in terms of user notions of home, its atmosphere and the architectural dynamics of space. Home for phenomenologists is an integral part of existence and how to be is, to be at home-ness (Seamon 2008: 1). David Seamon (2008) draws attention to the ambiance of the house and argues that it is perceived through both the physicality of home and the inhabitant's situation and experiences. Therefore, he talks about a mutual relationship between the house and the users, and reminds us that the physicality of the house affects the inhabitants the same way that they influence the house (Seamon 2008: 2). Seamon speaks of home as "real experientially", that is an on-going spatial representation of an intersection between the past and the present. He suggests a framework for the phenomenological study of home and states that architecture could be studied in phenomenology within three categories of *lifeworld*, *atmosphere*, and *environmental and place wholeness*. Architecture as *lifeworld* refers to the fact that a building can be understood as a constellation of actions, events, situations, and experiences associated with individuals and groups that use that building. Architecture as *atmosphere* refers to the fact that a building can be understood to include a certain ineffable character or ambiance that contributes to the particularity or uniqueness of that building as a place. Architecture as *environmental and place wholeness* refers to the fact that a building can be understood as it facilitates or undermines a lived integration and connectedness between architecture and users (Seamon 2017: 1).

His categorisation draws attention to the place architectural perspective has in the phenomenological understanding of home. It reminds that although home could be understood within as a series of actions and routines, or could be perceived through ambivalent and immaterial sensory experiences, the core role of architecture in shaping these experiences is irrefutable. In the next step, he elaborates the notion of buildings as architectural atmospheres, and consequently discusses the difference between the sense of a place and the spirit of a place. Seamon defines architectural atmosphere as “the lived quality of a building” that provokes a certain ambiguous character or ambience that makes a place unique or unusual (Seamon 2017: 6). Based on Juhani Pallasmaa’s definition of atmosphere (see chapter 1), he draws attention to the role of sensory experience of space and social situations on the formation of atmosphere while regarding its “almost material presence” (Seamon 2017: 6). He specifies that, in many aspects, the architectural atmosphere is related to the “unique ambience and character of a place” or the spirit of place. Seamon (2017), through this discussion, depicts the importance of architecture in human life and introduces architectural phenomenology as a way to “facilitate a self-conscious awareness of the architectural and place aspects of lifeworld”. Thereby, an architectural phenomenology provides a platform to address the importance of every-day life in relation to architectural and spatial elements that are usually taken for granted. As a result, the architecture could be experienced within qualities that encourage imagination, memory and wonder (Seamon 2017: 13-14).

In terms of architectural phenomenology and home, I refer to Kristen Jacobson’s (2009) study of home and phenomenology. Her discussion is important in this research both in terms of the study of home in phenomenology and understanding the influence of childhood home in one’s perception of home. Based on these notions, my childhood home, and homes that I experienced as a child, were selected for a phenomenological study of the Iranian home. Jacobson brings a combination of theories across disciplines to define the experience of home within a phenomenological context. Jacobson provides a phenomenological study of home not only in relation to the notion of dwelling suggested by Heidegger but also examines the notion of “being at home” as a way of being, based on the ideas of Merleau-Ponty. She argues that being at home is a state of passivity that is rooted in a series of activities, “although ‘to dwell’ is inherent to our nature, ‘how’ to realise this nature is something learned” (Jacobson 2009: 355-356). She examines the experience of home as a developed continuum that represents being at home as a passivity brought by activity. And finally, drawing on Merleau-Ponty’s notion of “levels”, she represents a conceptual tool for the study of home in phenomenology (Jacobson 2009: 356).

Jacobson explains that the notion of being by “being-at-home” is centred on the sense of “my own”, that is “an intersubjective way of being that is familiar and secure”; therefore, the sense of home is a localised way of being that can temporarily disconnect one from the outside and provides a place that one can “recollect familiarity” in the space of home (Jacobson 2009: 358). Based on this notion of home as localised sense of “here” and “there”, and that of home being a place of our own, she combines Bachelard’s idea of home as the centre of being and

as “our corner of the world” with Merleau-Ponty’s reading of phenomenology that is grounded on our body being our reference in the world. In that sense, the level of settlement and passivity is derived from our bodily actions. Grounded on these notions, Jacobson relates our home experiences to our bodily experiences and defines the experience of being at home and “bodily sense of self” as inseparable. Whereby, home as the second body provides the sense of “here-ness” and “settlement” (Jacobson 2009: 361). Consequently, we are responsible for the feeling of being at home as we must learn how to make ourselves at home, with and through others (Jacobson 2009: 362). This learning process has begun from the very early experiences of home, from our childhood home, where we learned how to inhabit both our bodies and our home. Therefore, she suggests that not only our childhood home provides a sense of world but also it is where we learn how to locate our bodies and practice body movements. It is where we learn how to walk, how to move and how to manage our bodily powers and learn how to place things in their proper locations. Our first communication skills and interactions with others is also shaped in our childhood home (Jacobson 2009: 363). But the significance of childhood home is not only related to the fact that it shapes our personhood through these practices, it is the leaving of the childhood home too that plays a central role in shaping one’s self and perception of the world.

Our personalities and our very ways of perceiving the world are built in and through our childhood homes. This also means, then, that our home is not a separate part of our experience, but is rather a pervasive structure, providing the core to all our action. Whether we show signs of continuing the traditions of our childhood home or show signs of turning distinctly away from them, we are shaped by our first home in terms of how these self-developments will unfold. Our childhood home, in this way, makes its mark on our future way of being in the world (Jacobson 2009: 364).

Therefore, we are shaped by our experiences of our first home, whether we repeat it or move away from it. By speaking of home through the notion of “levels”, discussed by Merleau-Ponty, she talks about how “we experience our body as a given power” and explains that we engage with our home spaces through the understanding we have from our bodies. For example, how we sit without looking or how we reach the bathroom in the dark. These are all rooted in the fact that we are aware of our space through our bodily experiences. Levels are established by us as “attunement” to be able to “move about in and accomplish projects” (Jacobson 2009: 367). These spatial levels are developed into passivity as they are housed in our body and have become “familiar”(Jacobson 2009: 367). Based on our experience of our childhood home, we develop specific approaches to understanding things and tendencies, which will be carried and applied in our future home. As a result, we develop a particular “level” that we carry with us to provide the sense of settlement and familiarity for us in situations of estrangement (Jacobson 2009: 369). In that case, we learn to be at home in new situations by establishing new spatial levels, learning to be at home again, a home away from home (Jacobson 2009: 369). Thus, home as our “foundation level”, because of all the stability and familiarity that it provides, could be restricting and a limiting potency to explore other levels and new possibilities. However, Jacobson argues that it is the limitations of home

and this “self-contradictory tension” that provide the platform to question the notion of comfort and be open to the world full of new potentials and new experiences (Jacobson 2009: 372).

Following this discussion, she expands the conception of *unfamiliarity* discussed by Deleuze and Guattari (1987), analysing the relationship between home and *unfamiliarity*. Based on this, she addresses how leaving home is essential for the experience of home itself, and how going beyond the constraints of home and exploring unfamiliar territories, is rooted in the experience of home as the familiar. Deleuze and Guattari maintain that our daily functions and our signature identities are possible only on the basis of a territorialised (or, at least, a territorialising) existence. They describe the territory as our abode, expressive both spatially and temporally in which we recognise ourselves and are thereby freed up for daily actions and inspirations. Hence, it is through this territory that we define the distance between us and others. Deleuze and Guattari describe how this stable, secure territory is established based on the familiar force of a “refrain” that is any collection of “matters of expression” that shapes a territory and moves towards territorial themes. In other words, a refrain is what helps us to develop towards familiarity and settlement (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 323 and Jacobson 2010: 225). However, they explain that a refrain is the initial ground for moving beyond that familiarity and is the fundamental basis for exploring the unfamiliar, “having established a base, it allows for improvisation to begin” (Jacobson 2010:224). An improvisation helps to go beyond the current territory and even to create new ones; therefore a refrain is a two way process, supporting both inward and outward approaches to being (Jacobson 2010: 225).

By the help of these discussions, the foundation for a phenomenological analysis of the Iranian home and its relation to the Iranian diasporic home is developed. Based on Seamon (2008 and 2017), I draw attention to the on-going nature of home, the importance of everyday life in forming it and how a phenomenology of home could be situated within an architectural analysis. Based on Kristen Jacobson’s (2009 and 2010) notions of home in phenomenology, I affirm that the taken-for-granted aspects of home are rooted in a series of active processes. Additionally, her study unfolds the possibility of a multidisciplinary outlook towards a phenomenological study of home. At the same time, Jacobson’s study reveals two significant factors in regard to the study of the Iranian home in diaspora: firstly, the importance of the childhood home as foundation to the experience of home and, secondly, the idea of home possessing a dual constraint, that makes it a reference to both the process of living in and leaving a home. In addition, she suggests that the secure and stable sense of homeliness is rooted in “rhythmic repetitions of actions and perceptive knowledge of the spaces we are in”. These repetitions create home rituals and routines that can vary in each culture and context, but still the essential notion of home remains a common concept for all (Angelova 2010: 40). Grounded on this and the discussions provided in the previous chapters, a phenomenological study of the Iranian home appears as a necessity to provide a better understanding of Iranian home and consequently the experience of Iranian homes in diaspora. Through such a study, I introduce the rituals and the home cultures of Iranian homes while remarking the way they are situated spatially and within the architecture of the homes. This is taken further in the next part, by going through my personal experience of different Iranian homes in Iran. These

homes are described and represented through a combination of texts, drawings and architectural sketches.

### 3.2 *Zaher* and *Baten*, traditions of hierarchy, cleanliness and hospitality in the Iranian home

Based on Jacobson (2009 and 2010), I highlighted the contradictory notion of home, as a place that secures while it limits. However, home could be a foundation for pledging actions that are liberating, a foundation that shapes the actions and results in exploring new territories and possibilities. At the same time, throughout this thesis, I deliberated that although home could be a place that encompasses contradictory notions it is also a place where these dualities could be resolved and be embodied within hybrid, transforming processes. In this section, I argue that Iranian culture, in its core, deals with the same level of contradictory notions that are coexisting and complementary entities. There is a long-standing binary opposition in Iranian culture: the traditional concepts of *Zaher* (outside, exterior, outer self) and *Baten* (inside, interior, inner self). These notions are embodied in Iranian home cultures and the link to understanding three specific characteristics of the Iranian home: hierarchy, hospitality and cleanliness (figure 3.1).

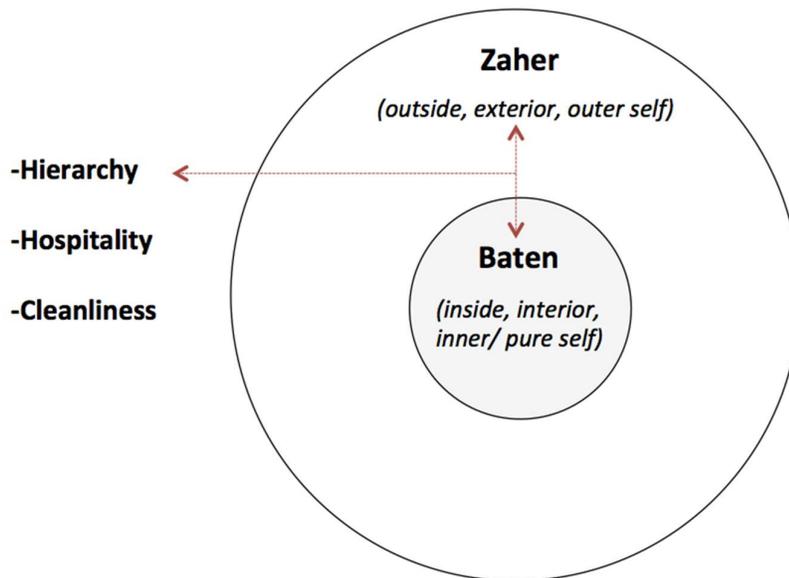


Figure 3.1 *Zaher* and *Baten* in Iranian culture and the embodiment of hierarchy, hospitality and cleanliness.

Zoroastrianism, the former religion of Iranians before Islam, is based on the struggle between God's power and Evil. According to Zoroaster, the Creator is *Ahura Mazda*, who is all goodness and light. The Destroyer is *Ahriman*, who is all evil and represents darkness. Thus, Zoroaster defined the great cosmic dualism: light and darkness; good and evil (Ziabakhsh 2000: 21). The duality between light and dark is present in the core of Iranian identity and

every aspect of their social life. Definitions such as *Zaher* and *Baten* find their meanings in that regard; *Zaher* is the outer, materialistic expression of self and *Baten* is the moral, holy part of the individual. The ultimate objective is to make *Zaher* a true expression of *Baten*. “Communicative contexts in Iranian culture are marked in terms of two continua: one of personal and communicative intimacy, from ‘inside’ (*Baten*) to ‘outside’ (*Zaher*), and another of social hierarchy, from contexts indicating hierarchical relationships to those indicating equality” (Beeman 1976: 1).

*Baten* is pure and immaterial and *Zaher* is the material and worldly part of the human nature. The human’s ultimate spiritual evolution depends on how well she/he manages the struggle between *Zaher* and *Baten* (Ziabakhsh 2000: 22), a struggle that is intimately connected with the space of home. Samad Zare (2011) mentions that Islam<sup>7</sup> also encourages this existing dualism of *Zaher* and *Baten* in shaping Iranian identity. Zare points out that, in Islam, *Baten* is associated with all good things and positivity and it is immensely valued. The *Zaher* on the other hand is a symbol of all the materialistic and animalistic desires of humans. *Zaher* is mentioned as a necessity to protect and present *Baten*, but it is not as highly valued as *Baten*. He shows how this dualism is enhanced in Sufism, a mystical version of Islam that is extremely influential on Iranian culture, literature and architecture. In Sufism, the ultimate goal is to try to dig into the deeper layer of human nature and push away the outer layer, *Zaher*, to access the pure, holy part of self. “There is a distinction between the external desire and the internal mystical dimension of humans. The belief is based on the ideology that one should get away from the external or animalistic aspect of human nature in order to reach pure *Baten*” (Zare 2011: 139). This dualism also strongly appears in Iranian culture, literature and architecture. The division of space into *Andarooni* (interior/inside/private) and *Birooni* (exterior/outside/public) is the genuine representation of this ideology in daily practice.

These two spaces are associated with modes of being, dressing and acting. *Biruni* is associated with appropriate sitting and body movement, proper dressing, formality, etiquette, and self-control; while *andaruni* is associated with uncensored behaviour and body movement, spontaneity, casual dressing, informality and self-expression. It is in *Andaruni* that traditionally men wear pyjamas and women are “veil-less” (Behzadi 1996:73).

Iranian Architect Kamran Afsharnaderi (1996), in “The composition of the opposites in Iranian architecture”, discusses the presence of this duality as a series of frequent movements between two opposite qualities in Iranian architecture; inside (*Andaroon*) and outside (*Biroon*). “Iranian architecture is neither all about the expression of harmony and unity nor it is all concerned with showing oppositions and intensity, whereby, it is constantly in move between the two” (Afsharnaderi 1996: 68). He expands the notion of “introversion” in Iranian architecture to be able to talk about its coexistence with the exterior of the buildings. Afsharnaderi explains the existence of introverted vernacular architecture in Iran in relation to the issue of security and harsh climate conditions. Therefore, the idea that there is no exterior façade for Iranian traditional buildings is rooted in specific circumstances of the time. The

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<sup>7</sup> The current common religion in Iran.

traditional houses were built sharing three sides, having no windows facing the public passage and showing nothing from the interior of the house but a door. That is why “door” and consequently “the entrance” play a great role in vernacular Iranian architecture, as they are the only elements linking inside with the outside<sup>8</sup> (Afsharnaderi 2010: 4-7). Therefore, Iranian architecture was more concerned with the interior than the exterior, so that Iranian architects, unlike European architects, started the design and construction process from the inside. This attitude was not specific to residential buildings and could be seen in Mosques, Bazaars and schools. Therefore, open urban spaces such as *Meydans* (Plazas) were seen as an open interior, an *Andaroon* for the city. In that sense, even the whole city was an *Andaroon* for the wider environment. This opposition not only is underlined but is also regarded as an enhancing point to show each space in its own right (Afsharnaderi 1996:71).

Ghazal Farjami (2015) reinterprets the opposite notions of *Andarooni* and *Birooni* and reconfigures the idea by focusing on the notion of emptiness in Iranian architecture. This emptiness is an in-between concept that comes to life through this duality (figure 3.2). She refers to dualistic notions of light and darkness in Zoroastrian belief that were later adopted by Islam. Farjami mentions that it was reinforced by Iranian art to focus on creating a space between God and man: an empty space (Farjami 2015: 275). She claims that Iranian architecture is representative of the duality of mass and void that embraces emptiness. It is through the parallel existence of the two that the architectural spaces could be experienced, as it is through the defining of the emptiness that the volume of the building is designated. She implies that the stress on the medium space of emptiness could be traced back to Achaemenid Persepolis’ architecture, and later traditional courtyard houses. She uses the example of courtyards in Iranian architecture to explain how emptiness is embodied in Iranian architecture.

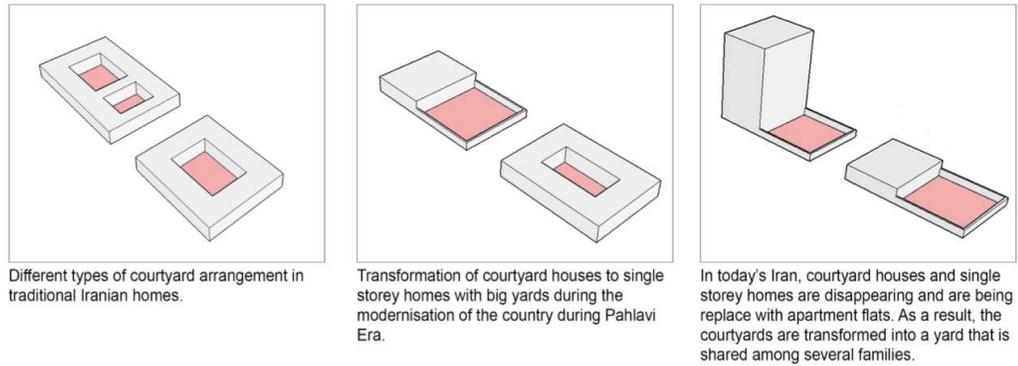
The idea of a central empty space implied an inward-looking attitude while keeping a necessary connection with the outside. This is the exact mission of central courtyards in traditional architecture. Throughout the homogenous urban context of traditional cities, where everywhere is covered with sand-like colours and textures, these empty spaces emerge as green treasures. They are known as heaven among solid masses, which let the city breathe while being autonomous, yet still integrated with the surroundings (Farjami 2015: 275).

Iranian courtyards are an architectural attempt to recreate a piece of heaven on earth. Perhaps this point of view that sees Iranian courtyards as a recreation of heaven, explains Iranians attitude towards the way they use and experience the space of their courtyards. The experience of Iranian gardens, as opposed to how the European gardens are experienced, does not involve walking; Iranians sit, relax and enjoy the breeze of cool air created by wind

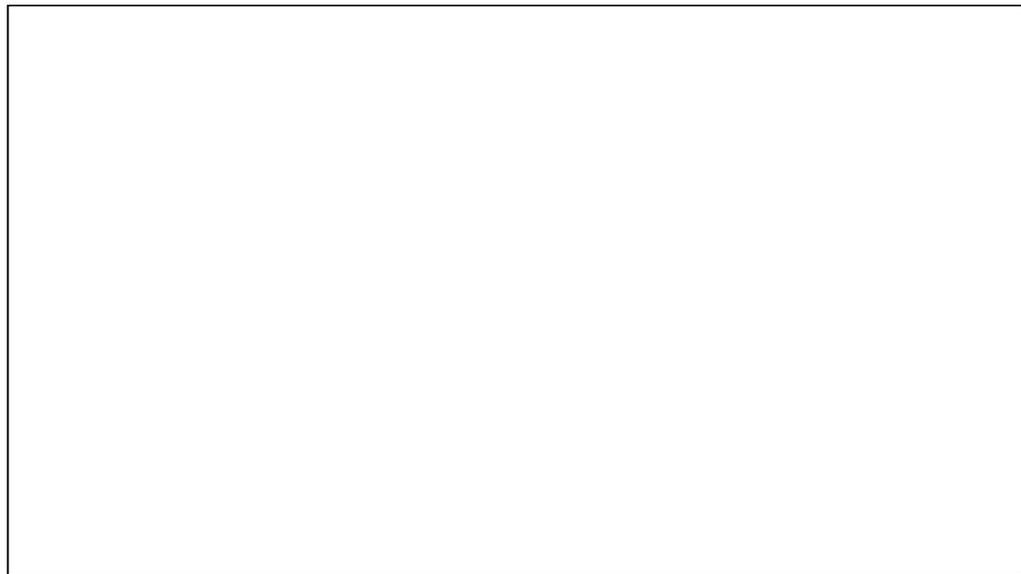
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<sup>8</sup> In “the entrance” Afsharnaderi (2010) defines the entrance in Iranian traditional houses as beyond a brief architectural element, but as a “system” that on its own contains a series of spatial experiences. That connects the outside to the courtyard and *Eyvan* (porch), by a sequence of spatial experience (Afsharnaderi 2010: 4). Afsharnaderi relates the evolution of entrance in Iranian Traditional Architecture as an independent self-contained element, to the harsh climate and the issue of security at times (Afsharnaderi 2010: 7).

going through the trees and the small pool designed in every Iranian *Paradise*<sup>9</sup> (Iranian garden), they enjoy a passivity and settlement and do not move until they decide to leave the garden (figure 3.3) (Kateb-Valiankoh 1997:179).



**Figure 3.2** The evolution of courtyards in houses, from traditional houses until today.



**Figure 3.3** The Boroujerd house's courtyard, 18th Century, Qajar Era, Kashan (Charmchi 2018).

In terms of home dynamics and how these hybrid notions are shaping Iranian home cultures, I address cultural notions such as hospitality, hierarchy and cleanliness that each carry spatial qualities and affect the home's architectural arrangements. The hierarchy and

<sup>9</sup> Persian Word for Paradise, derived from the *Avestan* word *Pairidaeze* meaning "surrounded by walls" and attributes any kind of "enclosure" that contains nothing inside. Hence at a conceptual level, this emphasises the notion of emptiness, see also Afshamaderi 2007).

thresholds of home and the public/private division within the house is the embodiment of these concepts. Clear thresholds highlight gendered spaces and spaces of hospitality. Promoting the *Zaher* of the house by careful zoning of activity is a common practice in hosting others and is significantly valued in Iranian culture. The concept of *Ta'arof*<sup>10</sup> (an Iranian attitude towards guests) is grounded on the notion of this duality that is represented extensively in hospitality. Cleanliness is tied into the identity of Iranian women but also is appreciated by the Shiite regulations for daily prayer. Cleanliness as an act of creating an ideal image of home that is a transitory moment<sup>11</sup> is also a representation of one's respect to the guests. In the next section, the ways in which each of these elements is practiced in Iranian homes are described.

### 3.2.1 Hierarchy

Social hierarchy plays an important role in Iranian culture and is played out in hierarchies of space.

There are few societies, which take the obligations of status as seriously as Iranian society. Persons placed in a position of superiority should ideally rise to that position and retain it by fulfilling obligations towards inferiors, which ensure their support and respect. Inferiors in turn, retain their ties to specific individuals in superior positions by reciprocal observance of obligations of their own (Beeman 1976: 16).

Vida Nassehi-Behnam (1985) identified three kinds of hierarchy in Iranian culture: the hierarchy of age, the hierarchy of gender and the hierarchy that is built upon experience (Nassehi-Behnam 1985: 557). Given that I am studying hierarchy in relation to the home, I will focus on hierarchies of gender and age, and add the host-guest hierarchy, as in my opinion, these are more noticeable in everyday life in a domestic sphere. In an Iranian family, hierarchy is perceptible through the expression of extreme respect to another person who is of an older age.

The position of women in the society over time has created a gender hierarchy within the household, expressed through the representation of public and private self (Ziabakhsh, 2000: 98). Up to and including the *Qajar* era (1785 to 1925) Iranian women were in an inferior place, both in the public and the private domain of home. Within the expanded family household, the oldest male member of the family was respected the most and everyone respected his command. The father was in charge of the household and even the children's education (Najmabadi 2005:183). During this period gender segregation was practiced in public through veiling and in private through the spatial division of *Andarooni* and *Birooni*. As women's public role changed through political activity so did women's place in the hierarchical space of home. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the reforms with a particular emphasis on improving women's position as good mothers and good housewives, for the sake of the nation, were promoted. This was followed by the process of modernisation

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<sup>10</sup> According to the Moein dictionary, *Ta'arof* literally means to know each other, to welcome, but is mostly known as exaggeration for expressing respect for one another.

<sup>11</sup> See also Harris and Sachau 2005: 82.

that put women in a stronger position than before and consequently Iranian home spaces were reconfigured. This process was followed after the revolution of 1979, but this time giving freedom to those women (traditional middle class women) who remained at home during feminist movements at the end of the *Qajar* era and the modernisation reforms of *Pahlavis* that occurred between 1963 to 1978 (figure 3.4). Pamela Karimi has argued that during *Shah's*<sup>12</sup> regime when the focus was to secularise the public, the home became a religious space, and after the 1979 revolution when the public domain was more religious, people made Iranian home a more secular place (Karimi 2009: 257). In that regard, a hierarchical sense has always been present between the public and private. Within the home itself, however, by referring to Sufism ideologies, Karimi explained that the division is less about public and private and more about uniting the spirituality and materiality (Karimi 2009: 245).

The presence of a specific space of *Andarooni* for women and a separate place of *Birooni* for social interactions that are particularly associated with men in Iranian homes can be related to the gender hierarchy. Gholamhossein Memarian (1998) explains that it was only in the Zarathustra era, sixth century B.C., that women had open relationships with men and consequently were not restricted by the territory of their house. But after the death of Darius the Great, *Achaemenid* Emperor (521-486 B.C.), women (mostly upper middle class) were segregated from the public due to the King and prince's power in claiming any women they desired in the land. Therefore, women were encouraged to stay protected by avoiding appearing in the public areas of the house. He traces back spatial gender segregation to the Persepolis Palace built in the *Achaemenid* reign in 521 to 495 B.C., in which the women's spaces were located in the lower level of the eastern side, far from the reception hall in the west side of the building (Memarian 1998: 92). With the arrival of Islam, the separation of female and male spaces was reinforced, based on the Islamic beliefs. The family as the most fundamental sector of the society was valued greatly and home was where the security for the family was made possible. According to Memarian, the privacy of the house is highly valued in Islam, to provide the comfort necessary for the family. He refers to the publications by Persian/Islamic elites such as *Nasir-i-din Tusi* in the thirteenth century, who defined the characteristics of a "good house" as being "structurally stable" and providing separate spaces for men and women in the house (Memarian 1998: 93). However, Pamela Karimi (2009) argues that the separation of public and private in Iranian homes was more related to religious concerns with notions such as cleanliness and dirt than Islamic Shiite gender restrictions. "We have seen that in both traditional and modern Shiite literature the male/female segregation as demanded by Islamic regulation never meant that there had to be a separate space - only something that keeps the other from being seen" (Karimi 2009: 251).

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<sup>12</sup> *Shah* in Persian means King, here it refers to *Muhammad Reza Shah* (1941-1979), the second and last *Pahlavi* king.



Nima Naghibi (1999) has discussed this juxtaposition of public and private as less hierarchical but more complementary of each other. Naghibi explained this duality of public and private over time through the history of veiling for Iranian women. He declares that the reconfiguration of *Andarooni* and *Birooni* has been repetitively applied through veiling as a symbol of oppression during *Reza Shah* and a representation of women's emancipation after the Islamic revolution. *Reza Shah's* policy did not result in dissolving the boundaries; rather it extended this division into the public realm as veiled women did not pass through the main streets and were obligated to walk in the side streets (Naghibi 1999: 561). After the Islamic revolution, veiling was introduced to make *Birooni* as safe as *Andarooni* to allow women to appear in workspaces. "This argument implicitly suggested the symbolic reconfiguration of Iranian architectural space: the literal boundaries of *Andarooni* (inner, private space) and *Birooni* (outer, public space) were dissolved because women could venture anywhere as long as they remained veiled" (Naghibi 1999: 567). In addition, Naghibi suggested that "*Andarooni* has taken over the entire private space" in the contemporary Iranian home.

Through the window of *Andarooni* and *Birooni* the veil can be recognised as the reflection of architectural space within the domain of home. Farzaneh Milani (1992) highlights the "fear of exposure" in Iranian culture as the root of veiling logic for Iranian women and explained that veiling is applied as a protecting mechanism from the view of *namahram* (forbidden men).<sup>13</sup> By veiling, women have been rewarded with honour and protection from objectification (Milani 1992: 4). She noted that women were praised for accepting the veil as an embodiment of their *Sharm*, a highly appreciated quality for traditional Iranian woman. *Sharm* (meaning a combination of charm and shame) indicates women's honour and modesty and values her beauty (Milani 1992: 6). Whether veiling is a religious or cultural act, chosen by women or being forced on them, it has been applied to represent the nation's ideals.

Excluded from the public domain, they come under the rule of the symbolic order. Absented in one arena, they become an overwhelming presence in the other. From the veil seclusion, they come to dominate the psychic order inverting hierarchical norms of gender, position and rank. They embody their nation's dream and nightmares. ... Forcefully unveiled they personify the modernisation of the nation. Compulsory veiled, they embody the reinstatement of the Islamic order (Milani 1992: 4).

Additionally, she examines the spatial aspects of the veil in relation to public/private, self/other hierarchy.<sup>14</sup> She compares veiling with "portable walls" to maintain privacy and suggests that veiling designates how people interact with each other and with themselves. "It is a ritualistic expression of culturally defined boundaries. Like walls that enclose houses and separate the inner and outer spaces, the veil makes a clear statement about the disjunction between the private and public life" (Milani 1992: 23). Veiling is rooted in the pre-Islamic

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<sup>13</sup> Milani refers to the role of evil eye (*Cheshm-e bad*) in Iranian culture. Sickness, sudden death and bad luck are related to the exposure to the evil eye, however, it is one's responsibility to avoid the *evil eye* to prevent the unfortunate incidence caused by it, therefore veiling is a cultural act of women protecting themselves from the gaze of men (Milani 1992: 22).

<sup>14</sup> See also Haeri, Shahla (1980), Women law, and social change in Iran, in Jane I, Smith (ed), *Women in contemporary Muslim societies*, Lewisburg: Bucknell University press: 209-234.

history of Iran and it was not specific to women.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, veiling is used as the *Zaher* that protects women's *Baten*.

Although, this co-existence of public and private spaces within Iranian homes has been sustained until the present day, the gender hierarchy in the Iranian home has gradually diminished and the patriarchal structure of the household has started to reduce over time. Despite the diminution of gender hierarchy, other kinds of hierarchy such as age hierarchy or hierarchy represented through hospitality are extensively present in Iranian homes.

### 3.2.2 Hospitality

Hospitality is an act of broadening home thresholds to people other than the household members and is a moment of redefining home boundaries within time and space. The level of hospitality is highly influenced by the cultural and social contexts. The word hospitality is rooted in the Latin word *hosti-pet* that means a guest-master relationship (Aidani 2007: 177). "We extend our hospitality by opening our arms, doors, or borders, always from a threshold, from a limit marking what is our own - or what we take to be our own from what is not. Although the threshold marks the limits of one's own, and so is always exclusionary, selective, often times harsh" (Nass 2003: 154, cited by Aidani 2007: 178). Mammad Aidani (2007) has discussed the various levels of hospitality in relation to thresholds.

The existence of hospitality depends on the existence of a door; Derrida adds that if there is a door there must be hospitality that is hostile to the stranger because someone has a key to the door, which implies that they control the parameters of hospitality. Hence hospitality is the door - the threshold - that closes up the world of strangers so that it could allow entry to strangers-as-friends (Aidani 2007: 178).

Aidani defines hospitality in relation to architectural elements and spatial characters, and describes it as a temporary act that gives unity to the notions of one and other. In the case of hospitality specific to Iranian homes, Gholamhossein Memarian (1998) introduces two patterns that are considered significant in the design principals of Iranian house; privacy and hospitality. These two notions embody both Iranian culture and Islamic beliefs and are discussed as noteworthy elements in housing design not only in Islamic Iran but also in the pre-Islamic period. Memarian discusses hospitality as one of the ways in Islam to consolidate the relationships between the members of the Islamic society. Therefore, in Iranian culture a guest is considered to be loved by God and hospitality is an act to seek God's mercy (Memarian 1998: 94). He examines the role of hospitality in the spatial arrangements of Iranian homes by an overview of different types of Iranian dwellings, from nomadic homes, to different types of architecture across Iran. All they have in common is the allocation of a

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<sup>15</sup> Persian Kings also practiced veiling as "*Khosrow Anosiravan* (r.531-79) came into the audience hall to receive Zuyaszan from Yaman covered" (Gheybi, Bijan 1990: 609, "Chador in early literary sources", in *Encyclopedia Iranica*, cited by Milani 1992: 2). The act of staying covered was a costume for the women in the court of the *Achaemenid* Empire (ibid). Veiling remained a practice specific to royals and was a symbol of wealth. At the beginning of the twentieth century, veiling was an indicating factor of social and economic class. Upper and middle class women wore chador, and some covered their face with a part attached to their chador while peasant and rural women used *Roosari* (scarf) that partially covered their head, with long colourful dresses (Naghbi 1999: 557).

separated space for guests and the automatic separation of space for men and women, regardless of climate conditions, size and order.

Apart from religion, in Iranian culture specifically, hospitality is the ultimate fulfilment of *Zaher* and *Baten*. It is where cleanliness and hierarchy are at their most evident. Beside the effort that is put into keeping the house clean for the daily life, the home will be at its cleanest when hosting people. Giving a good impression relates to a good *Zaher*, showing the house at its best, giving the impression that the house is always perfect is the key. The *Baten* (private) side of the house and what is happening in real life might not be what is represented as *Zaher* and publicly. The best housewife needs to bring together the real and the ideal in an attempt to unify the *Zaher* and *Baten* of the house. In Iranian traditional culture a clean house is the representation of a skilful housewife, a virtuous family and a hospitable household.

Hospitality is one of the features of Iranian culture that has been sustained over centuries and is being adapted to modern ways of living. The term 'guest', *Mihman*<sup>16</sup> in Persian, is highly appreciated in Iranian culture; a *Mihman* is loved by God and is believed to bring happiness and prosperity to the house. Iranian hospitality is well known amongst travellers and is a significant quality of Iranian culture (Ala Amjadi 2012). The word for 'host' in Persian is *Mizbaan* which some explain as a combination of *miz* (table) and *baan* (keeper) meaning someone who offers the table for guests while some believe this word is derived from the *Avestan* word *Mizadpaan*, a person who is supervising the food (Ala Amjadi 2012). The guests are welcomed to the house by the eldest in the home and with greetings such as "you troubled your steps"<sup>17</sup> or "you brought bliss". The guests are served with fruit, tea and carefully decorated Persian food.

When the guests are seated, great care is taken that they are comfortable. They are asked several times during their visit if they are comfortable. Cushions and pillows are provided for the guests to rest their back and to relax. The best places are offered to the elders and others are careful that they sit at the head of the table or *Sofreh*<sup>18</sup>. The host and the guests spend a proper amount of time socialising (Ala Amjadi 2012).

"Keeping the *Zaher*" (*Zaher ra hefz kardan*) is an act to represent the house at its best and to behave politely. Displaying a clean house and cooking the best meal while wearing decent clothes and behaving well is a sign of respect and the effort to make the guest feel welcomed. Iranian hospitality has a great impact on the layout of the home. The guest takes hierarchical priority - eating the best food, sitting or sleeping in the best place. This is a temporary hierarchy that will be reversed if the host goes to his/her guest's home as this time she/he will be treated as the superior.

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<sup>16</sup> The word is derived from the verb "*maandan*" (to stay). Perhaps it refers to the contradictory point of view that the memory of the guest could sustain longer than his/her short stay. "The guest leaves at one point in time, but his impact and contribution in altering the space around us lasts longer" (Amjadi, *Tehran times* 2012).

<sup>17</sup> A phrase appreciating the guests for taking their time to give the host a visit.

<sup>18</sup> Persian tablecloth spread on the floor or table for serving food (Shirazi 2005: 293).

### 3.2.3 Cleanliness

Housework is not gender neutral and the ways in which housework is practiced within the home are a representation of gender identity in different cultures. John Robinson and Melisa Milkie research the issue of equity in the household and underline that women feel more responsible for the cleanliness of the house as they evaluate themselves based on how well the housework is maintained. Women's extra attention towards house cleanliness is linked to their extreme care for their family members and often could be associated as a part of their identity as a good wife and a good mother (Robinson and Milkie 1998: 207).

In their study, Paul Harris and Daniel Sachau (2005) introduce cleanliness as a process of home idealisation, approaching "godliness" (Harris and Sachau 2005: 82). The authors introduce the term "environmental impression" to draw attention to the importance of others' perceptions on the household sensitivity for house cleanliness. They explain that observers of the house relate the level of cleanliness to the status of the household. Consequently, they define women's sensitivity towards house cleanliness in connection with a tendency to create a good impression and "to communicate a sense of respectability" (Harris and Sachau 2005: 82). Therefore, they argue that there has been pressure on women for this as "in the residential arena, good housekeeping is both an accepted norm and a domestic ideal that, although affecting all members of the society, has historically placed the greatest amount of pressure on women as the keepers of the home" (Harris and Sachau 2005: 88).

The dualism of clean and dirty links back to other dualisms within Iranian culture; a combination of cultural traditions and religious principles makes Iranians highly sensitive to cleanliness. In regard to cultural habits, there is a tradition called "*Khaneh Tekani*" meaning "shaking the home", a metaphor that means to clean every corner of the house with its furniture for welcoming the spring when the new Iranian year begins. From a religious point of view, because of the daily praying that is practiced at least three times a day, the house should be kept clean especially where the praying is done. Hence, a combination of religious and cultural elements encourages Iranians to take extra care with their home cleanliness both on an everyday and annual basis. This is not only defined in Muslim Iranian families, in Jewish Iranian families also there is so much care put into cleaning. According to Soomekh (2009), household activities in the Iranian Jewish family were seen as a "ritual devotion". "Everything I touched and cleaned in my house was done in order to maintain a Jewish character in my home. Every feather I plucked from a chicken and every time I got on my hands and knees to clean for Passover, I did it with the idea that I am making this meal and my home holy" (Soomekh 2009: 20). In the current Iranian society, women still take most responsibility for the household.

Pamela Karimi has examined the transition of domestic life in Iran at the beginning of the twentieth century when the country went through a massive development towards modernisation. She refers to the policies that resulted in the foundation of British and American missions whose roles were to replace traditional habits and promote modernisation expressed through better organised, cleaner households (Karimi 2009: 49). The missionaries were centred on changing Iranian domestic life based on Western ideas of morality with no

regard for Iranian or Islamic traditions. Karimi states that this was an attempt to encourage a modern lifestyle and the consumption of modern furniture and devices. She refers to images in the magazines at that time, promoting modern housewifery, and depicts women in Western clothes doing general cleaning activities. Additionally, in an article in *Zannegaar* magazine, she discusses how Iranians over time accepted the modern lifestyle selectively, meaning they benefited from modern furniture and devices according to their religion and their cultural norms (Karimi 2013). She highlights the significance of the religious notion of clean and filthy in the spatial arrangement of the Iranian home.<sup>19</sup> On the other hand, modern devices of cleaning or new spatial arrangements of home challenged the previous traditional and Shiite notions of cleanliness. For example, places such as toilets were considered inherently filthy and hence were located outside the home. But gradually they were accepted to be inside the house based on the methods proposed by Shiite clerics such as Ayatollah Khomeini<sup>20</sup> who accommodated the new systems within the traditional Islamic<sup>21</sup> ways of cleaning (Karimi 2009: 214 and 237). Combined with other cultural elements such as hospitality, cleanliness at home is enriched and developed into an element that is bonded with Iranian women's identity.

Through the cultural notions of *Zaher* and *Baten* and their relationship with three key elements within the Iranian home: hierarchy, hospitality and cleanliness, I discussed how these contradictory notions could coexist in every aspect of the Iranian home in a complementary manner. This duality has made the Iranian home an in-between space that manages to respond to the daily spatial, cultural and religious routines at home. Through discussing the notion of emptiness in Iranian architecture, I highlighted how these opposite notions created an in-between space and a complementary relationship rather than functioning as opposite entities. In addition, based on the claims of authors, such as Karimi, Naghibi and Behzadi, I argued that the public-private division within home (known as *Andarooni* and *Birooni*) is more of a co-existence of spaces than a spatial gender separation.

These elements are still present in the routines of Iranian households but with different intensities. For example, the gender hierarchy of the past has become more moderate and technology has improved ease of cleaning. Hospitality has also remained a significant part of Iranian culture. Besides the political factors, the religious and the cultural principles influence

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<sup>19</sup> In Shiite regulation water plays a great role; it has to be clean itself (rain water, spring water, water from fresh wells and tap water). If it is a right amount (3 square feet) it can purify anything that is not originally filthy. Natural substances are inherently clean (*Taher*) unless they become filthy (*Najis*) in contact with filthy materials. The recognition of filthy and clean is essential especially for the daily praying that is accompanied by the ritual of ablution (washing the face, hand and feet with water) and is a symbolic act of cleanliness (Karimi 2009: 233-236).

<sup>20</sup> High ranked Shiite clerics explain Shiite orders for everyday life issues within a handbook called *tawzih –al masael*. In the *New tawzih –al masael* of Ayatollah Khomeini, he discussed the updated ways in which new domestic devices can be used within the Islamic Shiite framework. Through examining *New tawzih –al masael*, Karimi discussed this process of adjustment to the modern life in the domestic domain by the help of updated methods proposed by religious thinkers (Karimi 2009).

<sup>21</sup> Additionally, Karimi noted the Iranian resistance to using detergents for washing clothes, as Iranians preferred alkaline soil to soaps because of the place it has in Iranian culture. At the same time clothes washing was also practiced like a ritual accompanied by *Salavat* (expressing blessing Allah and praising Prophet *Mohammad*), which was believed to enhance the purification level. However, the use of the washing machine was proposed as purifying as long as the water exits inside the machine (Karimi 2009: 214-234).

the spatial arrangement of the Iranian home. Iranians have had to keep their *Zaher* and continue the dualism of appearing in a different way in public than in private. As a result, the Iranian domestic space has become the place of comfort and self-determination and this contraction between domestic and public life has become accepted as the current face of Iranian society. The contemporary Iranian home remains the main place for social gatherings for Iranians. The presented material here provides the necessary information to comprehend the social, cultural and the political contexts in which Iranian homes are made.

In the next part, a phenomenological study of home is presented, providing a more detailed view of the discussions presented in this chapter. Seamon's idea of phenomenology in architecture and the notion of atmosphere along with Jacobson's debate on the importance of childhood home and her description of notions such as levels and refrains in one's perception of home have been adopted for the study of the Iranian home with a phenomenological approach. Exploring my personal memory and experience of the Iranian home is structured within the cultural/spatial elements of hierarchy, hospitality and cleanliness bringing the discussions in this chapter together. In that sense, I will provide a closer look at Iranian contemporary homes based on my own experience, analysing four cases of Iranian homes.

### 3.3 Phenomenological study of the Iranian home

In this part, a more detailed introduction to the experience of the Iranian home is represented, grounded on a phenomenological approach. What follows is an introduction to how an Iranian home is lived in and experienced in everyday life and how Iranian cultural elements are settled within Iranian home routines. Knowing what makes a home Iranian is essential to understand the dynamics of Iranian home in diaspora. Through notions of phenomenology, architecture, situating body, and sensory experience, I examine the possibility of studying home within an in-between discourse that is created by the help of different tools such as writing and visual methods (diagrams, drawings and photographs). Hence, the phenomenological study of home opens up new possibilities on capturing the essence of home, which ultimately brings architecture to the discussions of home. Moreover, by sharing my personal experience of home, my background and the ways in which my subjectivity is situated within this research could be understood. This chapter covers three major objectives; to introduce how my subjectivity is situated across this thesis, to give an introduction to the experience of Iranian home, and to bring an architectural dimension to the study of home.

An analysis of the Iranian diasporic home requires an understanding of the contemporary literature on Iranian homes<sup>22</sup>. Contemporary Iranian homes look dramatically different from the traditional ones. Currently, Iranian society is in transition, opening up to the globalising tendencies of the twenty-first century culture, restating its commitment to Islamic values while

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<sup>22</sup> There are comprehensive sources on Iranian traditional and vernacular architecture including houses, with particular attention to the material and the physical architectural elements (Pirmia 2010) and the compatibility with environments (Ghobadian 1998). In terms of spatial arrangement, Nader Ardalan and Laleh Bakhtiar (1979) in *The sense of unity: the Sufi tradition in Persian Architecture*, described Iranian home (with focus on the traditional courtyard house) in regard to *Sufism* mystic notions of uniting the materiality and spirituality, as an idealised, nostalgic place of Unity (Ardalan and Bakhtiar 1979: 68). Mohammad Reza Haeri Mazandarani (2009) and Fatemeh Kateb (2009) discuss the necessity of applying solutions derived from the rich architectural approaches of the past in modern Iranian homes.

trying to stay loyal to the Iranian traditions. Consequently, the modern Iranian home is a very challenging subject to describe or to explain. One of the challenges of this thesis is to try to capture this process of change.

Iranian homes vary from city to city and from region to region. Since the focus of this thesis is on the subjective experience of home, I will try to communicate the characteristics of the Iranian home in the last decades by giving an account of my own experience of living in three different locations, in making the transition from the traditional country home to contemporary apartment life. In that sense, I provide a view of the conflicts of modernisation with tradition (both in terms of culture and architecture) at an everyday level through discussing my experience of Iranian homes chronologically. Whilst my homes cannot be said to be typical, they provide a starting point for understanding the experiences of the women in my case studies as we share similarities in terms of age, class and social background. For this reason, they are described in similar terms to the case studies with the emphasis being on the creation of an Iranian atmosphere. Four homes are discussed in this chapter that each reveal a different dimension of Iranian homes in terms of tangible, intangible and the in-between elements over the post-revolutionary period:

- Life in the country, grandparents' farmhouse (1986-1995): through describing this house I represent the simplicity, generosity and strong connection with the context in an Iranian home.
- Urban living, the childhood home (1986-1998): This house was at the beginning of a transformation point and, by examining this house, I remark how modern and traditional lifestyle functioned together while still benefiting from a large size home with a great access to nature.
- Urban living, grandparents' house (1992-present): it has the same characteristics as my childhood home but illustrates the challenges of maintaining the traditions within a more modern home and lifestyle.
- Urban apartment life, the current home in Iran (2002-present): this home is an apartment flat in Tehran with much more limited space than our childhood home and is examined to show how living in a modern apartment flat has influenced the practice of cultural traditions.

Each home is illustrated within the categories of hierarchy, hospitality and cleanliness and is described based on my experiential narratives accompanied by drawings based on my memories of these homes (figure 3.5). These imaginative drawings aim to explain the spatial arrangements of the homes by focusing on being simple and precise. The atmospheric characters of the spaces are left to be imagined through a combination of text and visual representation of each home. By sharing these experiences, I aim to give a better understanding of my history and background and consequently the way this research has progressed in terms of methodology.

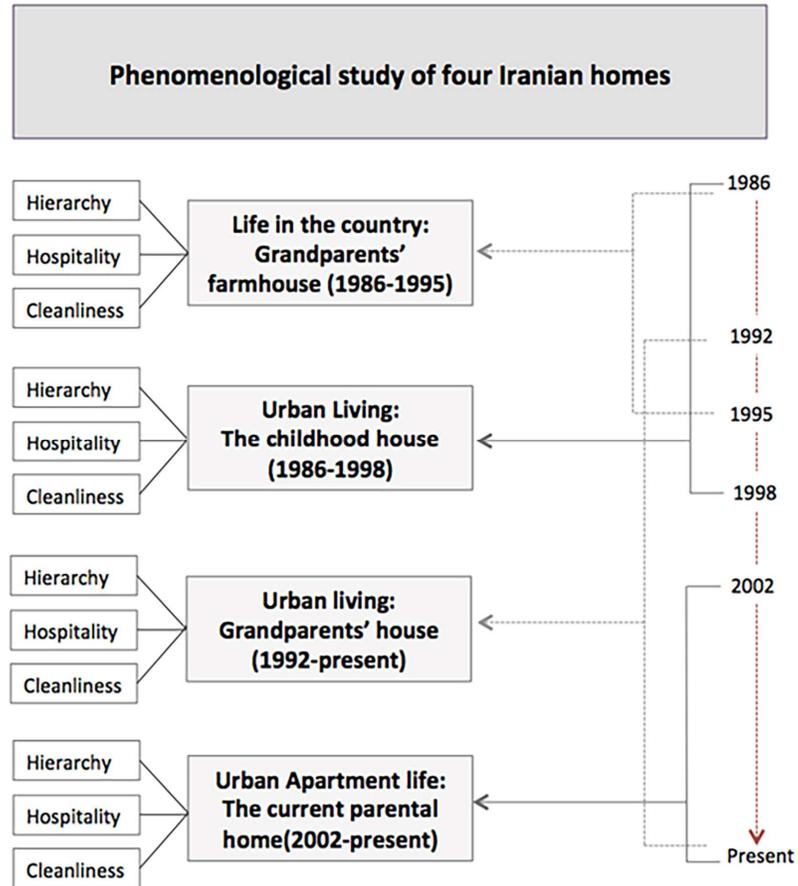


Figure 3.5 An overview of the phenomenological study of four Iranian homes.

Before moving to the description of each home, below (table 3.1), is a series of important cultural and religious events that are depicted throughout a year. Knowing this is important, as these events, which often encompass hospitality and feasting, need to be accommodated in increasingly restrictive settings within the contemporary Iranian home.

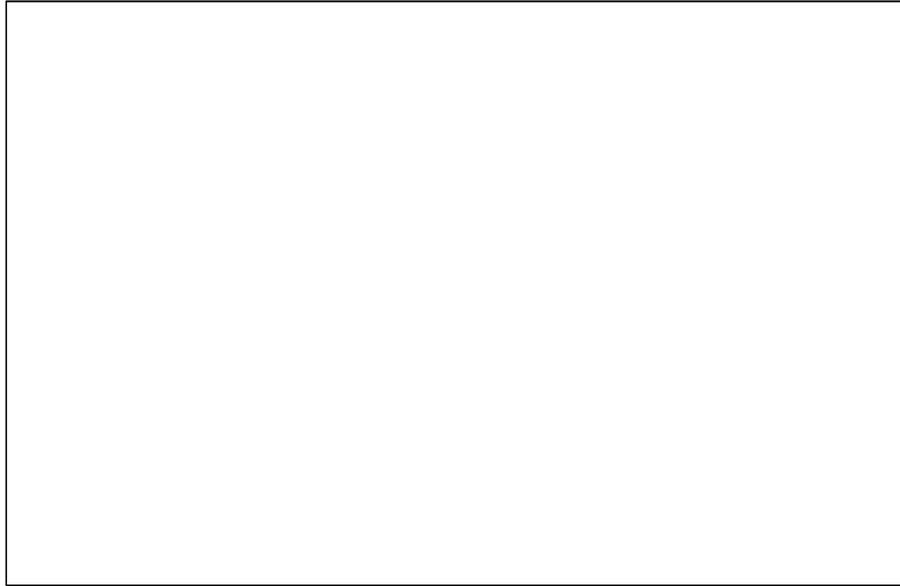
Table 3.1 The important annual events that represent the co-existence of Iranian and Islamic culture.

List of important Iranian and Islamic Events throughout the year	
Iranian Events	Islamic (Shi'a) Events
<p><b>Chaharshanb soori (Wednesday fireworks):</b> The Festival of fire, celebrated in the last Wednesday of the year.</p>	<p><b>Ramadan:</b> The ninth month of Islamic calendar is the month of fasting. During the Ramadan people host their relatives for dinner (<i>Iftar</i>) with the variety of Iranian sweets and food specified for this month.</p> <p><b>Eid e-Fitr:</b> The celebration of "fast-breaking" at the end of Ramadan.</p>
<p><b>Nowruz:</b> The first day of New year and the first day of Farvardin (the first month of Iranian calendar), on 21<sup>st</sup> of March. It is the beginning of a two weeks' holiday and the most important event throughout the year. Iranian households prepare for the New Year celebration from weeks before <i>Nowruz</i>. Starting from <i>Khane Tekani</i>, the house is prepared for hosting the relatives during the holiday and there is shopping for new clothes to show a perfect appearance to friends and relatives. In the Iranian households, this day is celebrated through symbolic representation of this new beginning by preparing <i>Haftseen</i> table. <i>Haftseen</i> table includes seven elements that each start with the letter "S" in Persian alphabet and conveys symbolic meanings, wishes for the New year.</p>	<p><b>Tasua and Ashura:</b> The ninth and the tenth days of Muharram (the first month of Islamic Calendar) are the days of mourning for the martyrdom of Imam Hussein (Third Shi'a Imam). People in Iran honour these days by offering <i>Nazri</i> (food and drinks specially prepared for these days) to the neighbours and poor people. In a traditional Iranian home, the process of food preparation starts a few days before when relatives and neighbours gather and offer their help.</p>
<p><b>Sizah be dar (Nature day):</b> The last day of Iranian new year holiday that is celebrated by spending a day in nature, 2<sup>nd</sup> of April.</p>	<p><b>Nimeh Shaban:</b> Celebration of the twelfth (the last) Shi'a Imam's birthday. Iranians commemorate this day by offering <i>Nazri</i>, celebrating with fireworks and decorating and lighting their neighbourhood.</p>
<p><b>Yalda:</b> Celebration of the longest night of the year on 21<sup>st</sup> of December. This night is celebrated by spending the night with relatives and friends reading <i>Hafiz</i> poetry (A very respected poet among Iranians). The <i>Yalda</i> table constitutes Pomegranates, Watermelon, variety of Iranian sweets and nuts.</p>	<p><b>Eid e-Ghadir:</b> The day when Prophet Muhammad appointed the first Shi'a Imam (<i>Imam Ali</i>), as his successor.</p>

### 3.3.1 Life in the country: Grandparents farmhouse (1986-1995)

The first home to consider is the farmhouse of my grandparents in the west of Iran. The house was built in the 1950s. My grandparents lived there until 1995 when I was nine years old and then moved to the city afterwards. Although I did not permanently live in that house, we used to visit regularly at the weekends; as a result, I have a great understanding of the house organisation and spatial arrangements.

The house was made out of a combination of clay, straw, mortar and stones with a roof that was structured by wooden beams. The interior walls were covered in plaster and the floors were made out of cement (although they could hardly be seen as all the floors were covered with carpets). Therefore, a combination of local and modern materials was applied in the construction of the house. These are the fundamental materials in Iranian vernacular architecture, seen in different locations in Iran (Baboli, Ibrahim, and Sharif 2015). From the well-known *Boroujerdaha* house to very ordinary rural houses, the application of these materials were widespread (figure 3.6 and 3.7). Therefore, these materials are more than just physical entities; they carry meanings in relation to each region and in regard to the meaning of Iranian architecture itself (figure 3.7 and 3.8). These meanings emerge from the fact that they have been applied over time for a particular reason and in harmony with people's needs and everyday routines. There is long history behind them and they have been well-situated over time. The matter of "time" is what Juhani Pallasmaa (2005) sees as the missing element in the modern materials. They suffer from the lack of slow preparation and therefore, miss the meaning and connection with the users. "Natural materials- stone, brick, and wood- allow our vision to penetrate their surfaces and enable us to become convinced of the variety of matter. Natural materials express their age, and history, as well as the story of their origins and their story of human use" (Pallasmaa 2005: 32). Perhaps that is why the architectural elements I most remember are the façade made of clay, straw and stones and the roof made of a series of timber beams (figure 3.7 and 3.8).



**Figure 3.6** Boroujerdis house (Charmchi 2018)



**Figure 3.7** Abyane Village, a Village in *Kashan*, in central Iran, close to deserted areas (Latombe 2014).



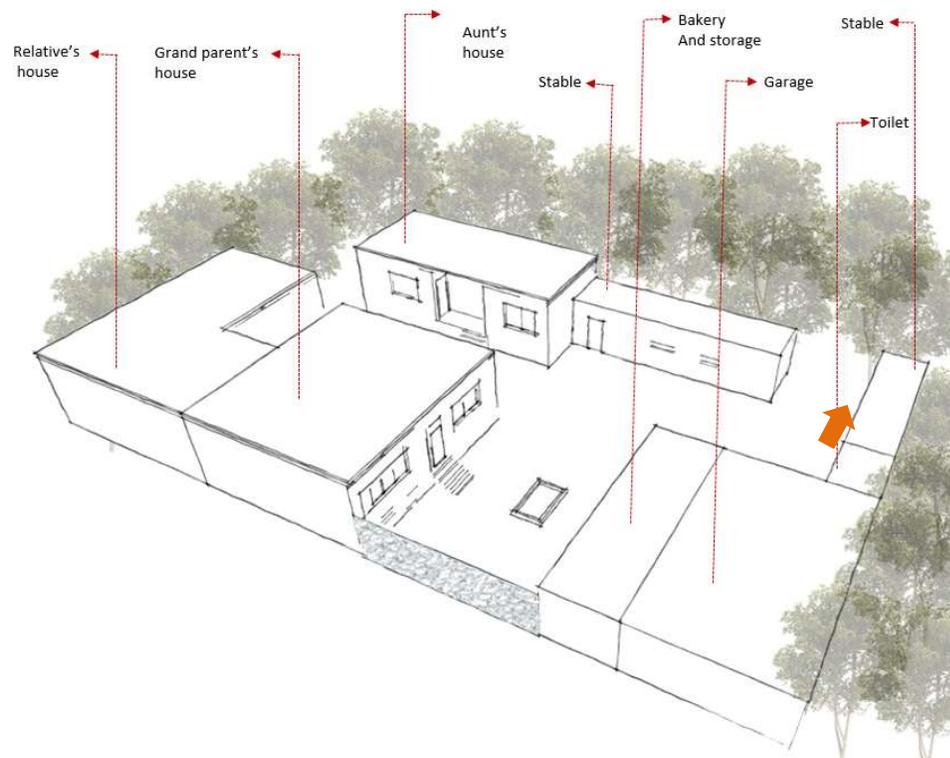
**Figure 3.8** Shabandar Village in the same state (where my grandparents' house was located), having houses with the same property, in west Iran, photo courtesy of Somayeh Rouzbahani (Rouzbahani 2014).

### **3.3.1.1 Hierarchy (Grandparents farmhouse)**

Experiencing this home has given an understanding of how actually an extended family settled in a rather traditional Iranian house. I should mention that this was a farmhouse, not an urban home. I have chosen to discuss this house in this research because it represents the traditional Iranian home in regard to its experiential essence. The house was approximately 200 m<sup>2</sup> and included three families: my two uncles and my grandparents, functioning as one household. My aunt was married and was living in the house next door (figures 3.9 and 3.10). When I think about this house I remember it with its garden, the bakery (for the household use) and the storage room, and the door that connected the courtyard to a garden with apple and almond trees. I remember how the house was positioned towards my aunt's house and how we could see their house through the guestroom window (figures 3.9 and 3.15). This house territory was broader than its physical boundaries. It was defined in relation to family, relatives, nature and daily tasks. The hierarchy was present in this home on different levels. My grandfather's residence was the nuclear place, the centre of the inhabitation, while everyone else's home was arranged based on that. Each son had a room with his wife and children that made a household with thirteen people. My uncles' rooms were separated from each other with a drawing/guest room in the middle. My grandparents had the biggest room and all the rooms opened to a living room that was connected to the courtyard with a door (figures 3.9 and 3.10).



**Figure 3.9** The exterior of the farmhouse within the compound surrounded by the relatives' homes. My grandfather's brother was living right behind this house and my aunt's home is depicted on the right. The small pool was used for washing dishes and clothes.



**Figure 3.10** The house position with the other houses, the garage, the stables and the route to the garden.

What differentiated this home from the other homes I experienced was the lack of the distinct spatial gender division at home. There was no sign of strict separations between men and women and they interacted with much more freedom and autonomy (figures 3.11 and 3.12).

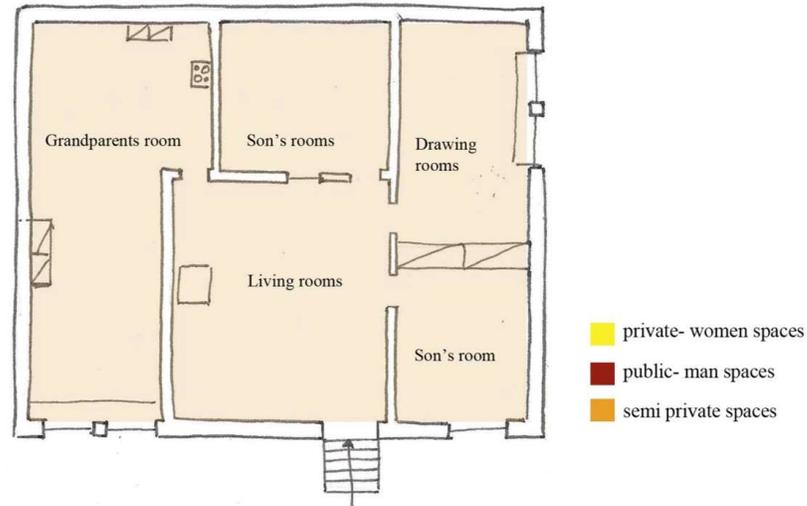


Figure 3.11 The plans of home depicting the divisions of space in terms of hierarchy.

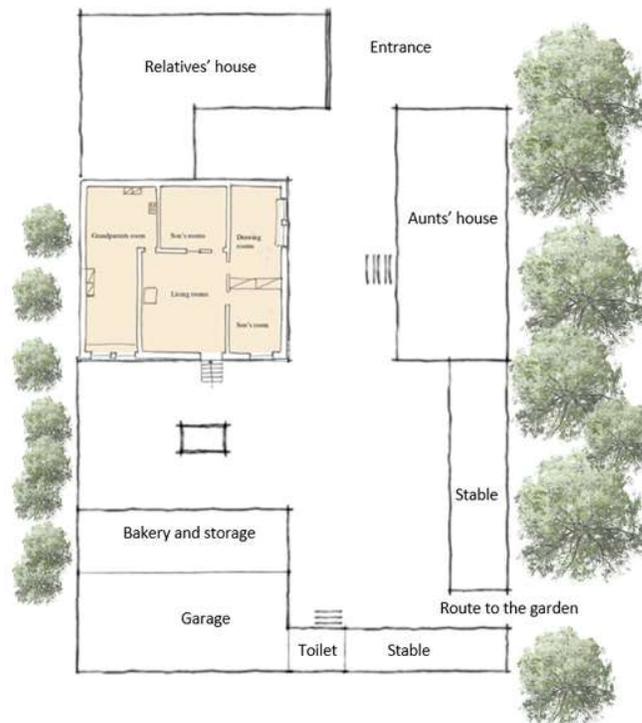


Figure 3.12 The plans of home in relation with the other buildings.

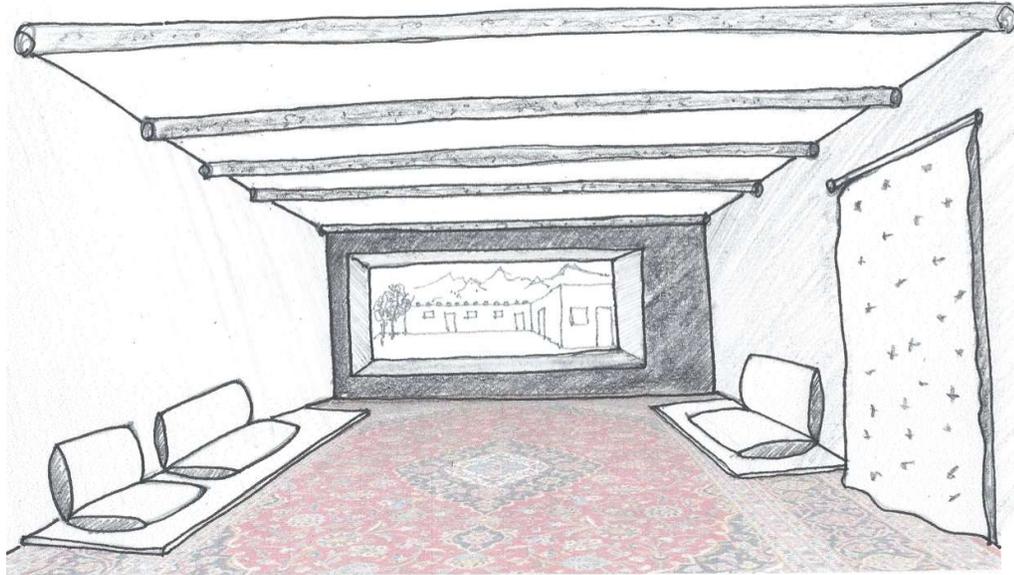
Women did not wear a veil and their appearance was more open than urban women of the time. Half of their head was covered with a traditional scarf over the top of their head and the rest of their hair was left out, braided at both sides. All the women wore long floral dresses that covered their body, meanwhile giving the freedom to conduct their daily tasks.

### 3.3.1.2 Hospitality (Grandparents' farmhouse)

This house was defined within a wider context, in constant connection with the outside while welcoming others on a daily basis. The door was open all day, hosting relatives and strangers; there was always someone in the house so everyone would be welcomed. The bakery, storage and the bathrooms were located outside in the courtyard. At the same time simple hosting facilities were located in each room such as kettles and baskets of fruit for making hosting easier. There was also a small hub in my grandparents' room for cooking rice and heating milk. My grandmother sometimes cooked rice for dinner to eat with grilled or cooked meat and the whole house was filled with the scent of rice. In the morning the scent of fresh bread, hot milk and tea penetrated every corner.

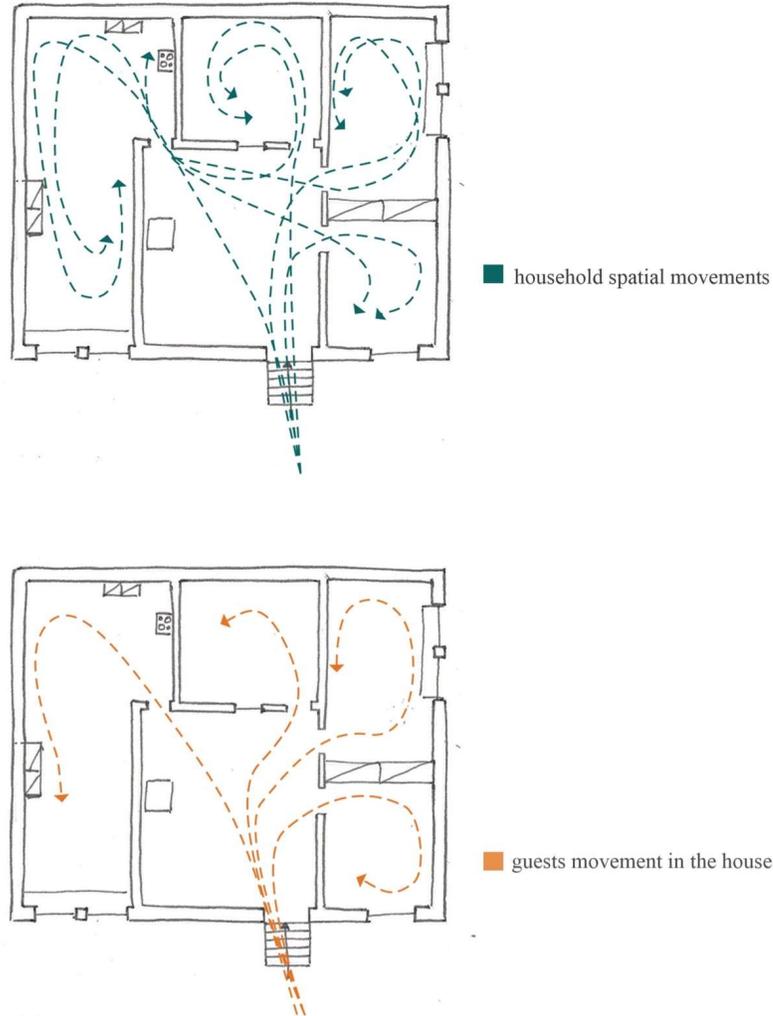
This is how the household functioned; everyone woke up before sunrise. I remember waking up with the voice of my grandfather reading the *Quran* after his early morning prayers. That was like a morning wake up call for the household. The women started earlier to bake bread, that was made on a big tray on a fire made of wood and took almost an hour to prepare; the bread was baked every day for the household and the guests' consumption. The breakfast was served in the living room. The smell of fresh bread, hot milk and the taste of homemade cheese and yoghurt are what I still yearn for. Making dairy products and traditional handicrafts was also an occasional activity in the household.

After breakfast the men went to work and often women joined them in the farm but they were mostly busy with taking care of the children, cooking and hosting people. I remember the warm sunlight entering the room through the window in my grandmother's room in the mornings (figure 3.13). I used to sit there and talk to the others in the garden when everyone was busy with their daily tasks. The inner edge of the window was wide enough to be able to use it as a sitting area. I remember this corner of the house clearly; how the sharpness of the sunlight got into my eyes and how it beautifully penetrated the darkness in the room. Having that small sitting area by the window created a whole new level of experiencing both inside and outside spaces and the light and shadow interaction. Juhani Pallasmaa (2005) states how the window has lost its meaning as a mediator between the light and darkness, public and private and enclosed and open space in modern times. Hence the windows have been degraded to simply "absence of the wall" and this has resulted in losing our sense of intimacy (Pallasmaa 2005:47).



**Figure 3.13** Grandparents' room with a view to the garden from the window; the bakery and the barn could be viewed from this room.

At the end of the day, everyone gathered for dinner and chatted about their day with the family and guests. If the guests stayed for dinner, it most probably would be insisted that they stay the night as well. Each household went to their rooms for the night's sleep. Their rooms functioned to keep their belongings and to sleep. If they hosted guests they were offered the guest room; on the occasions that the house was overcrowded with the guests, the other rooms were used as well (figures 3.15).



**Figure 3.14** The spatial movements of the guests and the hosts in the home. The guests had access to all parts of the house. Their only limitation compare to the hosts was movements. However, the hosts were more comfortable moving around the house as they were serving the guests and performing daily tasks.

### 3.3.1.3 Cleanliness (Grandparents' farmhouse)

The cleanliness was the women's responsibility and was based around the comfort of the visitors. The house was furnished with essential functional objects. All the rooms were fully carpeted with handmade Persian rugs and *Kilims* to make a pleasant floor sitting experience (figures 3.13 and 3.15). An extra folded blanket was applied on top of the carpet along with cushions leaning to the walls to give a comfortable sitting experience. Eating, hosting and chatting were happening on the floor while everyone was leaning against the wall. The drawing room was decorated with paintings, flowers and brand new cushions (figures 3.13 and 3.15).



Figure 3.15 The drawing room with the view to my aunt's house.

The elders and the guests were offered seats at the top of the room and if the place was taken they were offered this place immediately, as an act of respect. The host was always concerned for the guests' comfort to make sure they were seated in a pleasant place with a comfortable cushion. The guests were served with tea before and after dinner and were accommodated in the drawing room with the best space in the house. The drawing room was decorated with care and kept clean at all times. Although the door was open all the time to welcome guests daily, the women of the household kept the house tidy and clean (figure 3.16). No one was entering the house with shoes; they were taken off right at the entrance door and no pets were allowed inside the house. During eating, an extra sheet (*Sofreh*) was applied on the top of the carpets to keep the carpet clean and to provide a pleasant dining experience.

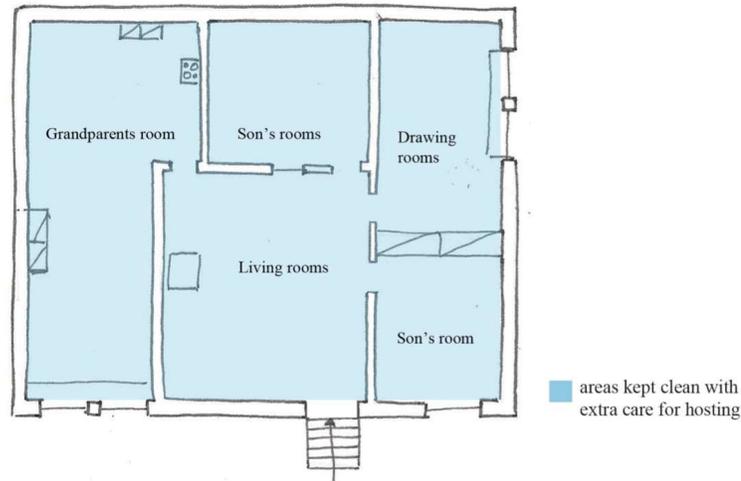


Figure 3.16 The plans of home depicting the divisions of space in terms of cleanliness.

A few years later my grandparents stopped living there and moved to the city with their children. My last encounter with this house was when an earthquake demolished the house. It was then that I realised what a great place this house had in my heart. It was very painful to see the place that was full of life, turned into ruins. Architecture has the power to “emancipate us from the embrace of present and allow us to experience the slow, hearing the flow of time” (Pallasmaa 2005:52). Even through the remains of the house, I could remember all the moments and memories that had happened in there. This has had a great impact on shaping my “self” despite its simple architecture. On the other hand, because of being immense in “taken for granted” aspects of this home, I did not realise its meaning until this house was not accessible anymore. This is a reminder of Jacobson’s (2009, 2010) discussion on the role of leaving a home in finding its meaning for one. The openness of that house and the broad territory of the house was a great reminder of how Iranian homes in that region looked a few decades ago. Such houses are in a minority and such a culture that gathers close and far relatives on a daily basis is slowly disappearing.

### 3.3.2 Urban Living: The childhood house (1986-1998)

The second home I address here is the home of my childhood. I previously discussed the role of the childhood home in shaping one’s being and its relevance to this discussion. In this account, illustrating my childhood home not only represents how my perception of home began to form for me but also reveals important elements of the Iranian home that are explored in this study. My childhood home was a house in a city in the west of Iran and I lived there until 1997. It accommodated our family of four with a very big garden filled with trees and different plants. The house itself was raised up above the garden, which was accessed by a flight of stairs. It had three bedrooms, a drawing room, living room, a big patio and the kitchen (figures 3.17 and 3.18).

### 3.3.2.1 Hierarchy (The childhood house)

This house represented a series of hierarchical qualities both in terms of gender and hospitality. The kitchen as the realm of the housewife was designed to have absolute privacy. The bedrooms and the drawing room opened directly into the living room and a barrier of decorative shelves from the living room separated the drawing room. A wooden hatch connected the drawing room and the kitchen to pass food from the kitchen to the drawing room to avoid the food getting cold; however, it was never used for that purpose. The kitchen was accessible through a corridor from the living room. The location of the kitchen encouraged the privacy of the household because the kitchen could function as an independent, invisible space that could stay connected with the bathroom and the bedroom without passing the drawing rooms and living room (figure 3.17).

The third bedroom was changed to a male drawing room over time for giving more privacy and comfort to the household, as some of the guests were strangers or my father's business partners; the former guest room was used when we hosted guests with family. Men only were hosted in the new drawing room because it was connected directly to the garden, therefore providing the household with more privacy. The decoration of this room was kept simple and there was no sitting furniture, however cushions and floor pads were provided for floor sitting.

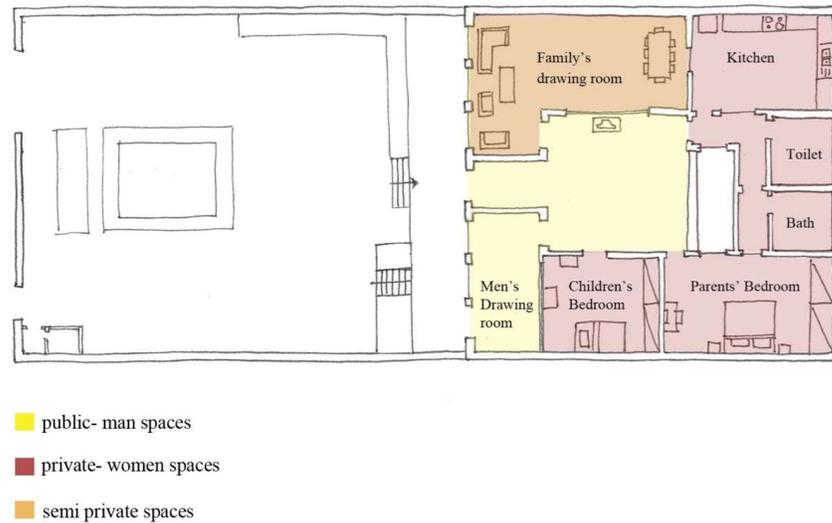
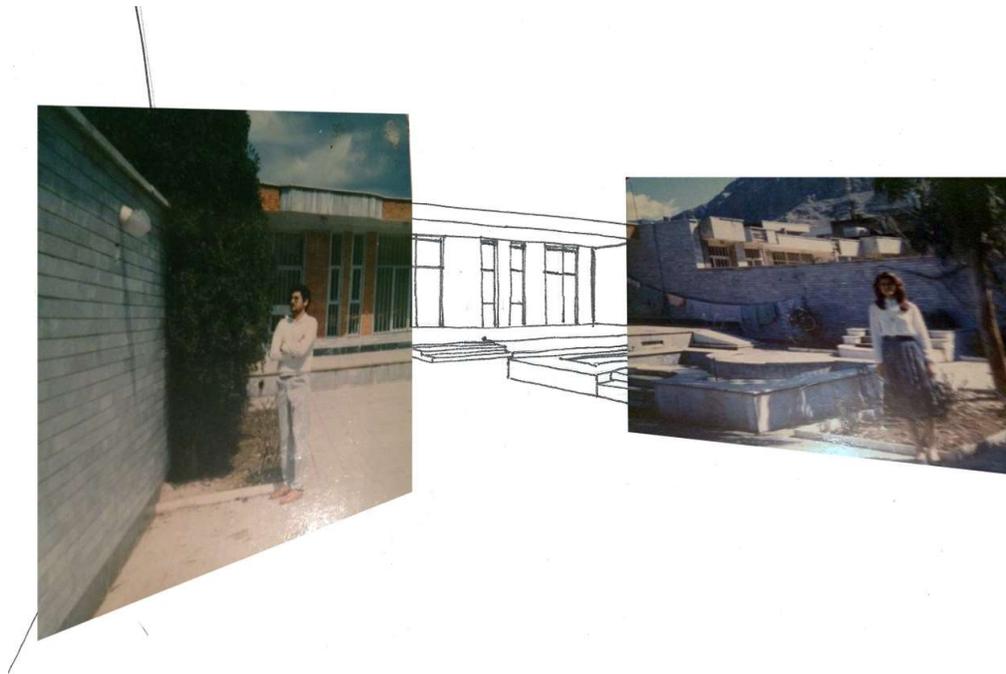


Figure 3.17 The divisions of space in terms of hierarchy for the occasion of hosting guests.

The bedrooms were furnished with beds, wardrobes and decorative closets and desks for us. My brother and I shared the same room that was next to our parents' room and was separated from the male drawing room with a line of doors that always stayed locked. When we had our friends and our cousins for a sleepover, we opened those doors to be able to have more space to sleep on the floor. We could have used the drawing room too but this

worked as an extension to our room. Therefore, a space that could have been used for more comfort of the household was preserved as a male drawing room to provide a better privacy for the family while hosting.

Our bedroom door was always open and we were constantly on the move between the living room, the patio and the garden. When the weather was good my brother and I spent most of the day in the garden. We could communicate with our neighbour who came up over the wall on a ladder or go outside in the alley and play with neighbours' children. Although the house had rigid territories it felt very flexible and very welcoming in a broad sense (figure 3.18). The patio was the focal point of the house, the first place seen when entering. The majority of the houses of that time had a patio to designate light and nature inside the house as well; two elements that have been long appreciated by Iranian users. This house was not an exception either; the patio provided the light for the living room, my parents' bedroom, the bathroom and the corridor next to the kitchen. Our bedroom used the light from the glass top of the doors from the drawing room. They were two large rooms with direct natural light that were allocated to the guests.



**Figure 3.18** The exterior of the childhood home; on the right side our neighbours' home and the wall where she used a ladder to come up and communicate with us in the evenings can be seen.

### 3.3.2.2 Hospitality (The childhood house)

The family drawing room was a big L-shaped room, fully carpeted with handmade Persian rugs, a few sofas and a dining table. The walls were decorated with my mother's embroideries on the theme of nature and paintings that my father purchased that depicted a Spanish bullfighter brought back from his travels. The decorative barrier that separated the

living room and the drawing room was decorated with flowerpots (non-Iranian), decorative dishes and small China sculptures. One arm of the room was allocated to a sitting area decorated with special sitting cushions for the back and a layer of pads on the top of the carpets. These were placed next to the walls around the room (figure 3.19).



**Figure 3.19** The drawing room where a combination of modern furniture and floor sitting furniture was applied to host the guests.

When a big number of guests were hosted, a sheet was used on the carpet and the food was served on the floor. The same order of sitting applied in this house too. The elders and the guests were offered a place at the top of the room and the most comfortable places. The dining and other hosting processes, such as the serving of tea and sweets in the male drawing room, took place on the floor.

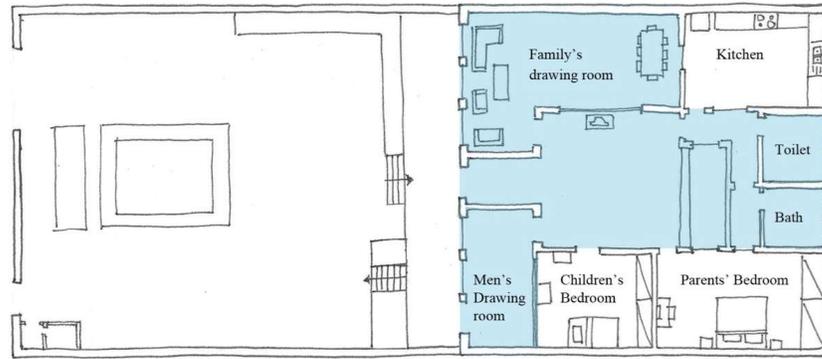
We could tell we were having guests over as the atmosphere of the home changed and it was based on the guests' comfort. The guests were hosted with more than two main dishes as it may have been seen as impolite to only serve one type of food. The drawing room was open and there was a constant commute to the kitchen to serve tea, food, fruit and sweets. The house was filled with the smell of saffron and rice and fresh tea accompanied with traditional Persian music. The ladies were busy talking to each other and occasionally to men; the men were debating different issues and playing games while the kids were in the garden (figure 3.20).



Figure 3.20 The host-guest spatial movement.

### 3.3.2.3 Cleanliness (The childhood house)

The drawing rooms were kept extremely clean the whole time to be ready for unexpected guests. It was not like the farmhouse where there was an open door policy. During the ordinary days when we were not hosting anyone, the drawing rooms stayed closed and out of access to children.



■ areas kept clean with extra care for hosting

Figure 3.21 The divisions of space on the occasion of hosting guests.

The living room, the bedroom, the drawing rooms and the corridors were all carpeted with Persian carpets. No shoes were allowed in the house and the carpets were vacuumed daily, brushed with soap foam regularly and washed once a year for the New Year. In that way any dirt was prevented from entering the house and any dust would have been cleaned on a regular basis to make floor sitting a clean and favourable experience (figure 3.21 and 3.22).



Figure 3.22 The living room and the patio. The decorated shelf on the left and the bedrooms on the right are depicted.

Close to the Persian New Year the households went through a massive house cleaning called *Khaneh Tekani* (shaking the house out of dust). In the first days of the New Year we visited relatives and friends in each other's houses. The visits started with the older relatives and the people who came to visit should be visited back in their homes. *Khaneh Tekani* not only is a celebration of a new beginning but is also a way of representing the house in the

best way possible. Having an extremely clean house is a representation of respect to the guests and also shows the housewife's expertise and care for her home.

### 3.3.3 Urban Living: Grandparents' house (1992-present)

Another house I discuss in this chapter is the home of my other grandparents in the city. I believe discussing this home is beneficial to this research as it represents many elements of the Iranian home in transition. It was built to be a modern house but the strong cultural traditions have transformed its spatial arrangement and decoration into something that serves both modern and traditional purposes.



**Figure 3.23** The exterior of the grandparents' urban home. The transition of the Iranian home can be seen in the Roman architectural elements; having several floors has separated this home from the rest of the homes in the neighbourhood.

The house is located in a neighbourhood where all the houses were designed to have a front door and a back door connecting two parallel streets. The front doors open to the main street through a big garden and the back door opens into the back street that faces into a park (figures 3.23 and 3.24). The house is positioned above the garden that is accessed through a series of stairs. It was designed and built for my grandparents in three storeys, interconnected by a big patio in the middle.



Figure 3.24 The back entrance and the view to the park.

### 3.3.3.1 Hierarchy (Grandparents' urban house)

The hierarchy was present in this house as well in regard to gender code and hospitality. Although the house has a very big garden it also benefits from a big middle patio and a smaller one in the more public side of the house. The patios could be considered a replacement for the Iranian traditional courtyards that divided the houses into two zones of public and private. The bigger patio divides the house into the public and private (figure 3.25). The private space that can be also be accessed through the back door includes a small living room, a bathroom, kitchen and a bedroom. The public part includes two bedrooms, a small patio, a bathroom and a big living room that was separated from the drawing room through a step. They are both filled with plants and flowers. The second and third floor includes the children's rooms but with a slightly different design and they are not used regularly. The kitchens are used to store extra utensils and food and some of the bedrooms are decorated for guests.



Figure 3.25 The spatial division in terms of hierarchy and privacy in the home.

### 3.3.3.2 Hospitality (Grandparents' urban house)

This house also receives guests on a daily basis, hosting a large circle of friends and relatives. The household is so busy during the New Year holidays as the children from different cities and countries come to visit at this time. Also, the New Year visits of friends and relatives happen a few times a day. Whenever there are guests visiting, Persian kebabs are grilled in the garden. The food is served in the drawing room and the smell of Persian rice combined with saffron and the smell of kebabs is in the air during the serving of food.



**Figure 3.26** The separated patio between the public and the private spaces of the home. A curtain can be seen in the background that is applied to give more comfort to the household (especially women) on the occasion of hosting.

The spaces are used for hosting guests based on how close they are to the family. When hosting close relatives, only the private part of the house is used and women and men are gradually separated to give more comfort for women. Women go to the kitchen and men stay in the small living room. The kitchen is fully carpeted and functions as a sitting area as it is much bigger and brighter than the living room. The guests who are not very close are hosted in the public area (figures 3.26).

During the family visits or when a large group of guests stayed the night, the big living room floor is used for sleeping since the whole floor is carpeted with big Persian carpets. The big living room walls are decorated with a clock, a framed Persian carpet with some lines from the Quran, an evil eye and an embroidered scene that shows a few European women (from a few centuries ago) sitting in nature with a mansion in the background. The library in the big living room is decorated with a series of religious and historical books, souvenirs from different cities and different countries, decorative teapots and small China sculptures (figure 3.26).

The house has the capacity to hold big ceremonies such as weddings, funerals and religious rituals. On these occasions the furniture is relocated to other floors to be able to use the maximum capacity of the house. The public division in the house is also used to host male guests. A curtain is used on one side of the patio that can be closed for more comfort for women; therefore, they have their own space without their privacy being disturbed (figures 3.26 and 3.27).

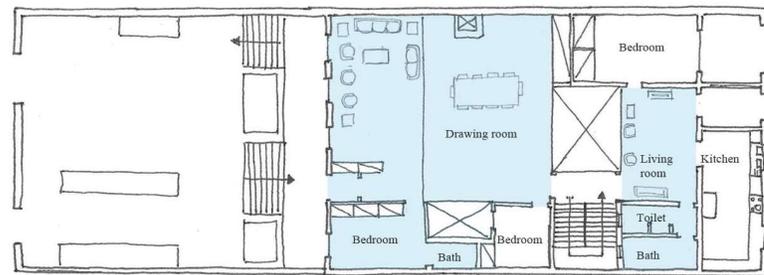


Figure 3.27 The spatial movement of the guests and the host.

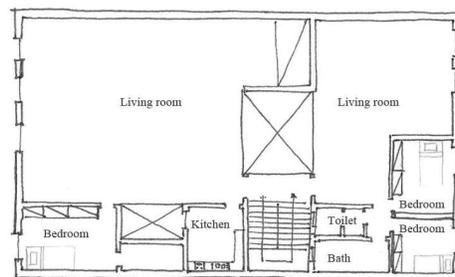
### 3.3.3.3 Cleanliness (Grandparents' urban house)

The cleanliness routines of this house were very similar to the other two homes discussed previously. There is a general cleaning which is more emphasised for places that are designated for guest use. This care for presenting a clean house has also caused certain spaces to be kept out of use to make sure that the house is always having a space ready for hosting guests. Therefore, more private spaces of the house that were divided by the patio were used with a less sensitive approach in terms of tidiness and arrangement of furniture while the other side was kept out of everyday access, representing an ideal image (figure 3.28).

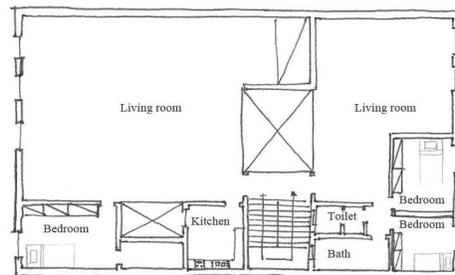
Despite having marble floors, the majority of the floors in the house are carpeted with large Persian carpets. The living rooms are decorated with sitting cushions and pads and the drawing area is furnished with sofas and a dining table (figure 3.28 and 3.29). This house is designed to have a connected drawing room and living room, with no spatial gender division, or to have small carpets and be fully furnished with modern sitting furniture, but these have been changed in use. The big Persian carpets cover most of the floors and the drawing room and living rooms are partially furnished with modern furniture. The patio that is supposed to be a connection zone between the public and private sides of the house was transformed into a division sector by the curtains for the occasions of hosting distant relatives or strangers. Therefore, spaces are reconfigured by the daily routines and are used based on the household needs.



First floor



Second floor



Third floor

■ areas kept clean with extra care for hosting

Figure 3.28 The spatial division of grandparents' urban home in terms of cleanliness for hosting.



Figure 3.29 Photos from the movie recorded on 2009, correlated with the plan.

This house is still accessible and is taken care of, for the occasions when the whole family manages to gather for Persian New Year or religious ceremonies such as *Muharram*. A few years later, after we moved to Tehran, we went back for a visit. I had already started architecture school and had a camera with me all the time. When I visited this house, I started walking and filming the interior spaces.

A few years later, after we moved to Tehran, we went back for a visit. I had already started architecture school and had a camera with me all the time. When I visited this house, I started walking and filming the interior spaces. I was concerned that I would forget what it looked like, as it was a part of me that I did not like to forget. What interests me is that I did not choose to take pictures; I needed to capture the sense of the place, the sound, the light and the motion to record a sensory experience.

In the movie, I start walking in the house going from one room to another; you can hear the TV commercials and women talking in the background. Then I go to the yard where a lady is hanging clothes to dry and I cannot tell who she is; in the meantime, my younger brother and my cousin enter as they went to buy ice-cream from the little shop next door. I forgot this video even existed and found it quite accidentally, but I was impressed by how enriching it was for my research now. It encompasses so many aspects of looking at home in a phenomenological approach as it represents the experience of space, the sense and atmosphere of a place and the tendency to capture it. What makes this video valuable is that it was not taken for this research but as a self-exploratory act, nearly ten years ago, to remind myself who I was and where I was coming from. This shows that, because of living in a new environment and community, I was dealing with a sense of yearning for the past, and was seeking to reconfigure my sense of self through exploring this space (figure 3.29).

#### **3.3.4 Urban Apartment life: The current parental home (2002-present)**

A few years later we moved to Tehran, the capital and the city with a population of over 11 million (Statistical Centre of Iran Census Report, 2013: 44). We lived and still live in an apartment flat with three bedrooms, three bathrooms, a living room and an open kitchen (figure 3.30). These types of housing have become popular in the last decades, because of the constantly increasing population of the cities and the ensuing housing shortage; the homes become smaller and are majorly transformed into apartment flats. Therefore, to make the best out of the spaces, western spatial solutions were applied to respond to this issue without developing design solutions compatible with Iranian culture.

In contemporary homes, the closed invisible kitchens of the previous homes were replaced with 'open' kitchens, the big gardens were replaced with balconies and in some homes the living room and the drawing room as two separately defined spaces united as one large space. The public-private division was defined into two main areas; the bedrooms as the private and the living room, drawing room and the open kitchen as public. Therefore, the gender division in the home spaces slowly disappeared (figure 3.30).

### 3.3.4.1 Hierarchy (the current parental home)

This flat is located in a five-storey freestanding building with one flat on each floor. Therefore, the connection and relationship with the neighbours is dramatically different from the older versions of housing. The horizontal system of neighbouring that provided a more flexible boundary for homes has been replaced with the vertical ones and has put the homes in an isolated position. This has also disconnected the homes from accessing nature or direct sunlight in all the spaces of home. The flat entrance door opens to a big living room that functions as both living room and drawing room, and benefits from natural light provided by long floor windows. The whole house is divided into two areas; the private that includes the master bedroom, another bedroom and a bathroom that is connected to the living room with a corridor, and the public that includes the open kitchen, one other bedroom, the living room and a guest bathroom. The master bedroom and the kitchen also benefit from natural light while a patio in the middle provides natural lighting for the other two bedrooms. In terms of green space, there is a balcony that can be accessed through the master bedroom and a common small garden that is only used for parking (figure 3.30).



**Figure 3.30** The division of spaces in terms of public and private on the occasion of hosting others.

In terms of gender hierarchy, the sensitivity to having a specific space designated for women has been decreased due to the current circumstances caused by shortage of space. However, the hierarchical arrangement of space, dedicating better quality spaces (spaces

with free flow and access to direct sunlight) to the public areas of the house is strongly apparent.

### 3.3.4.2 Hospitality (the current parental home)

The hosting tradition has changed from having daily visitors to occasional dinner or tea parties in this home. The open plan of the house prevents the accommodation of very large groups as the open kitchen limits the privacy and comfort required to tackle household activities while hosting people during the day. There is no space for gradual division of men and women. Unexpected guests are rarer than in the previous homes, since our social circle is largely limited to close friends and relatives (figure 3.31).

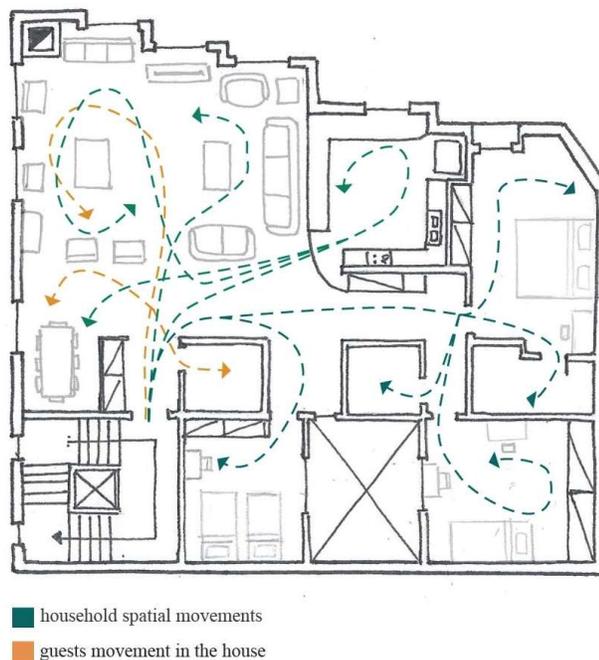


Figure 3.31 The spatial movements of the guests and the host.

These types of design have been very popular in the last decades, as they are believed to be 'modern', keeping up with the contemporary tendencies of the 'western' or 'foreign' architecture. 'Open' kitchen, and free flow spaces with minimum division -in the more public side of the home- have become very popular, despite their incompatibility with the Iranian home culture (Asadi et al. 2015: 118). The free flow of the traditional Iranian homes that were significantly bigger than the current Iranian homes seems to be created by removing the division between the more public areas of the house, such as uniting the living and drawing room, and by designating an open kitchen. In that sense, the design responds to both the desire of having a space that is bigger, or at least seems bigger, especially to others (Zaher), while giving the impression of following contemporary architectural trends.

Our big handmade Persian carpets were replaced with smaller ones to match the sofa set. The home was furnished with sofas and the floor does not function as a sitting area anymore (figures 3.32 and 3.33). Sitting on the floor is not the main daily custom and has been transformed to an occasional habit that may happen for seeking more comfort or concentration (figure 3.32). When the household receives guests who stay overnight they are offered the bedroom that is close to the living room. On the special occasions that we host more than one family or only male friends, the furniture in the living room is relocated to have a bit of extra space to use the floor for sleeping.



**Figure 3.32** The interior of the flat, showing engaging with the floor and modern furniture in the daily setting.



**Figure 3.33** This photo depicts the open kitchen that is a common trend in the current Iranian flats in contrast to the isolated hidden kitchen of the past homes.

#### **3.3.4.3 Cleanliness (the current parental home)**

In terms of cleaning, the main traditions such as the cleaning for the New Year and cleaning the carpets regularly has stayed the same, but keeping a space clean and tidy with extra care has been a challenge since there is no separate space allocated to the guests. This was resolved by choosing the space that is not only the first to be seen when entering the house but also benefits from the best natural light, as the drawing room space. This space is separated from the living room by the way that the furniture is placed, although it took a while to find this as the solution for the flat's spatial arrangement. In this case, a space was allocated and kept clean without being disturbed by the daily activities happening in the living room. The furniture and the space are kept clean to represent a welcoming image every time the flat door opens (figures 3.32 and 3.34). Therefore, the public space of the house is divided into two parts by the designation of two sets of furniture, one being a comfortable sofa set for daily use of the household and other one a more formal set of furniture only used by the guests.



**Figure 3.34** The division of spaces in terms of public and private and cleanliness on the occasion of hosting others.

The limitation of living in a smaller home has changed the practice of habits such as hosting large groups of people and floor sitting, but they are still practiced according to the capacity of the house. The thresholds of public and private within this home are more distinctive in comparison to the previous homes because of the house design and less frequent hosting. The apartment has become a private space as a whole with less focus on gender division. Therefore, the thresholds of home with the outside are more distinguishing. However, traditions of hierarchy, hospitality and cleanliness are still significantly practiced. The main traditions are still a part of home cultures and the households have found their way to fit into the new space design while committing to the cultural and religious customs.

### Summary

Introducing the Iranian home through my personal experience has given me the ability to reveal aspects of Iranian home culture and habits that are barely touched upon by the current literature. Furthermore, it delivers a better perception about the notion of home for Iranian women whose diasporic home is studied in this thesis.

One the other hand, I aimed to bring architecture to the phenomenological study of home by creating an in-between space through the drawings of home I discussed. In addition to the descriptive texts, illustrations that are accompanied by informative diagrams were presented to bring an architectural dimension to the phenomenological study of home by creating a medium, in-between space. This in-between space provides clues on the ways that my subjectivity is situated throughout this research, while introducing themes for the study of

Iranian home in diaspora. These themes are categorised based on the outcome of the theoretical studies in the previous chapter; the tangible, intangible and the in-between (table 3.2).

**Table 3.2:** The themes emerging for the study of Iranian home in diaspora

Tangible	The in-between	Intangible
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Object/decoration <b>(Persian Carpet)</b></li> <li>○ Furniture</li> <li>○ Architectural elements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Spatial/Cultural elements: Hierarchy, Hospitality, cleanliness</li> <li>○ Furniture arrangement/ Sitting on the floor</li> <li>○ Spatial quality: light and nature...</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Sensory Experience of home</li> <li>○ Cultural habits/daily routines/yearly events</li> <li>○ Connection with the outside</li> </ul>

This chapter shows that the design of the Iranian homes is different now and they are much smaller than before with much less access to nature. The big courtyards of previous homes have disappeared and the current Iranian homes are more isolated from nature than before. The experience of space so characteristic of homes in Iran is rarely replicated in Iranian diasporic homes. As a result, size can be a noticeable matter in Iranian diasporic homes. Additionally, in this chapter, I discussed that although Iranian homes look very different in comparison to a few decades ago, the cultural traditions live on in most sectors of society. Cultural and religious elements still encourage habits such as hospitality and cleanliness but in a different manner that suits the current spatial arrangements. The cultural and religious events are practiced throughout the year at homes but on a smaller scale, and while the homes of the past were prioritised based on hospitality and the guests' comfort, in the contemporary Iranian home privacy and comfort of the household itself is a priority. Through the phenomenological study of home, I argued that the transaction between body, imagination and environment has changed over time in Iranian homes and, by addressing cultural elements, I aim to highlight the significance of architecture in providing a medium for experiencing space. With the help of the analysis in this chapter and the theoretical studies in the previous chapters, a framework of themes was designed to be examined during the interviews and the visits to the diasporic home of Iranian women which are presented in the next chapter.

## **Chapter 4 : Iranian women and their diasporic homes; Remaking of the Iranian home**

### **4.0 Introduction**

This chapter introduces the respondents, their notion of home and their experience of living in diaspora and sharing the differences they perceived between the homes in England and their homes in Iran. I first discuss the demography of the respondents, their social class and the ways in which it becomes possible to interview them and meet them in their home. Then, I provide an introduction for each respondent specifically, giving information about their notion of home and their understanding of their diasporic home. The introduction of each respondent's home is accompanied by two sets of drawings. The first ones are showing the spatial movement within the home for the guest (researcher) and the host (researched) through the architectural plan of the home. The second ones are spatial representations of Iranian elements that were identified upon my arrival to these homes, specifying their locations. The stories behind these elements were narrated through the interviews and will be discussed in the second part of this chapter. In that sense, I represent an analysis the interviews that took place during the visit to these home. The analysis regards the framework of the themes that fit into the tangible, intangible and in-between structure that have been developed based on the theoretical studies of home, and the phenomenological study of home.

### **4.1 The respondents**

The respondents are women between 24 to 32 years' old who were in the early stages of migration and have settled in four different cities in the UK. All the respondents have left Iran legally to continue their education and would have no problem in returning. However, some of the potential participants were concerned about getting involved in this research because of the difficulties it might cause on return to Iran. The ones who agreed to be interviewed based their acceptance on the condition that their identity would not be revealed at any stage of this research. For that reason, the homes and the respondents are photographed in a way to keep their identity hidden and pseudonyms have been used throughout. All the interviews were held right after the pilot interviews and from July to October 2014.

Considering that all the respondents have come to the UK to continue their education with the help and support of their family, they are mostly from the upper middle class level of Iranian society; therefore, this research addresses mobile Iranian upper middle class perceptions of home. Another key issue that should be noted is that living independently in a different home from the home of parents is not a common tradition in Iran. In Iran the majority of the young people regardless of their gender live with their parents before marriage because of financial and cultural matters. Although the young Iranians in Tehran and other big cities may have practiced modern, western lifestyles recently, living alone before marriage is still an uncommon situation. Women may experience living away from their

parents while going to university in another city, but living alone in the same city as the parents is still unusual. Since autonomy for women in Iran is a challenging subject, migration provides the possibility of redeveloping both personal and gender identity through the practice of autonomy which necessarily impacts on the making of home.

The respondents are ordered into diasporic types according to their own self-assessment of their level of engagement with the host society, starting with the most engaged. Since none of the respondents had any desire to go back to Iran permanently, a less engaged migrant here means the ones who are not actively involved with the host society and have instead shaped their community and their social interactions within Iranian communities (table 4.1).

**Table 4.1** Information regarding the respondents' diasporic home, their length of stay in the UK

<b>Name</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Education</b>	<b>House type</b>	<b>Dwelling Status</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>Length of Stay in the UK</b>
<b>Shadi</b>	30	Masters degree- Working part time	One bedroom semi-detached house	Married-living with her husband	London	6 years
<b>Negar</b>	32	Masters degree-working full time	Studio apartment Terraced house	Living alone	London	6 years
<b>Leila</b>	29	Studying PhD	One bedroom flat	Living alone	Sheffield	3 years
<b>Elaheh</b>	27	Masters degree-working full time	Three bedroom Shared house	Sharing house	Cambridge	3 years
<b>Azar</b>	28	Studying PhD	One bedroom flat	Living with her boyfriend	Sheffield	4 years
<b>Hoda</b>	28	Studying PhD	One bedroom flat	Living alone	Liverpool	4 years
<b>Sahar</b>	24	Studying for Masters degree	One bedroom terraced house	Married-living with her husband	Cambridge	10 months
<b>Mina</b>	29	Masters degree-Currently looking for jobs	Studio apartment	Living alone	Sheffield	3 years

### **Shadi**

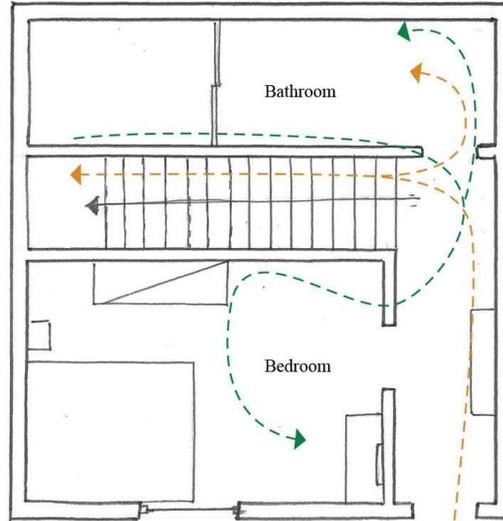
Shadi was interviewed in September 2014 and was thirty years old at the time. She moved to London with her sister in 2008 to continue her education. She was living with her sisters in Iran before she moved to England. She also lived in a shared house with her sister in London before getting married and moving into her current place. Shadi was living with her Iranian husband in London in a two storey semi-detached house that has been refurbished recently. The bedroom and the bathrooms were located on the first floor and the kitchen and the living room were located on the second floor (figure 4.1).

Shadi had prepared lunch for my visit and I spent the evening with her family. During the interview, she specified several times that she would never want to go back to Iran to live. She visited Iran once a year just because of her mother. Shadi's memories of her homes in Iran did not involve a sense of belonging and her current diasporic home was mentioned as the only place that she has ever felt at home.

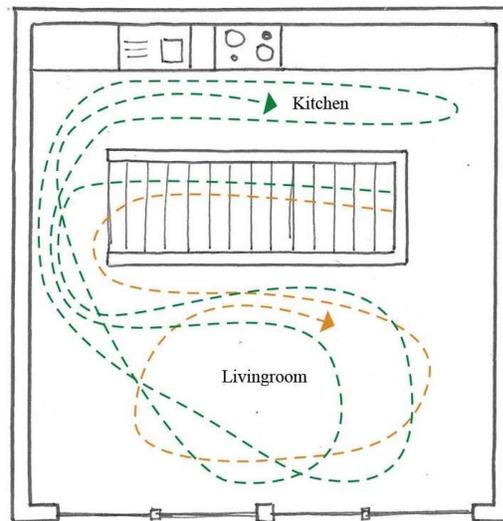
In the other homes (in Iran), ... I was not much involved in decorating them, which is really important for me. Even when I was living with my sister alone back in Tehran, we made [decorated] our house, but because of the neighbourhood atmosphere and the society, I never felt completely secure, I felt I was under a magnifying glass, like people were controlling me. Here, because I am the one who made my home, I feel more at home.

By making home she had developed a sense of ownership and belonging that she had not achieved in her previous homes. Her previous homes in Iran provided the sense of comfort and security, but the societal limitations and the homeowner's arrangements have influenced her sense of belonging to those places. Additionally, she did not really connect with her previous homes in England either, as she never had the chance to decorate them to have a sense of belonging. Homemaking was a process that helped her to represent her identity (figure 4.2).

First Floor

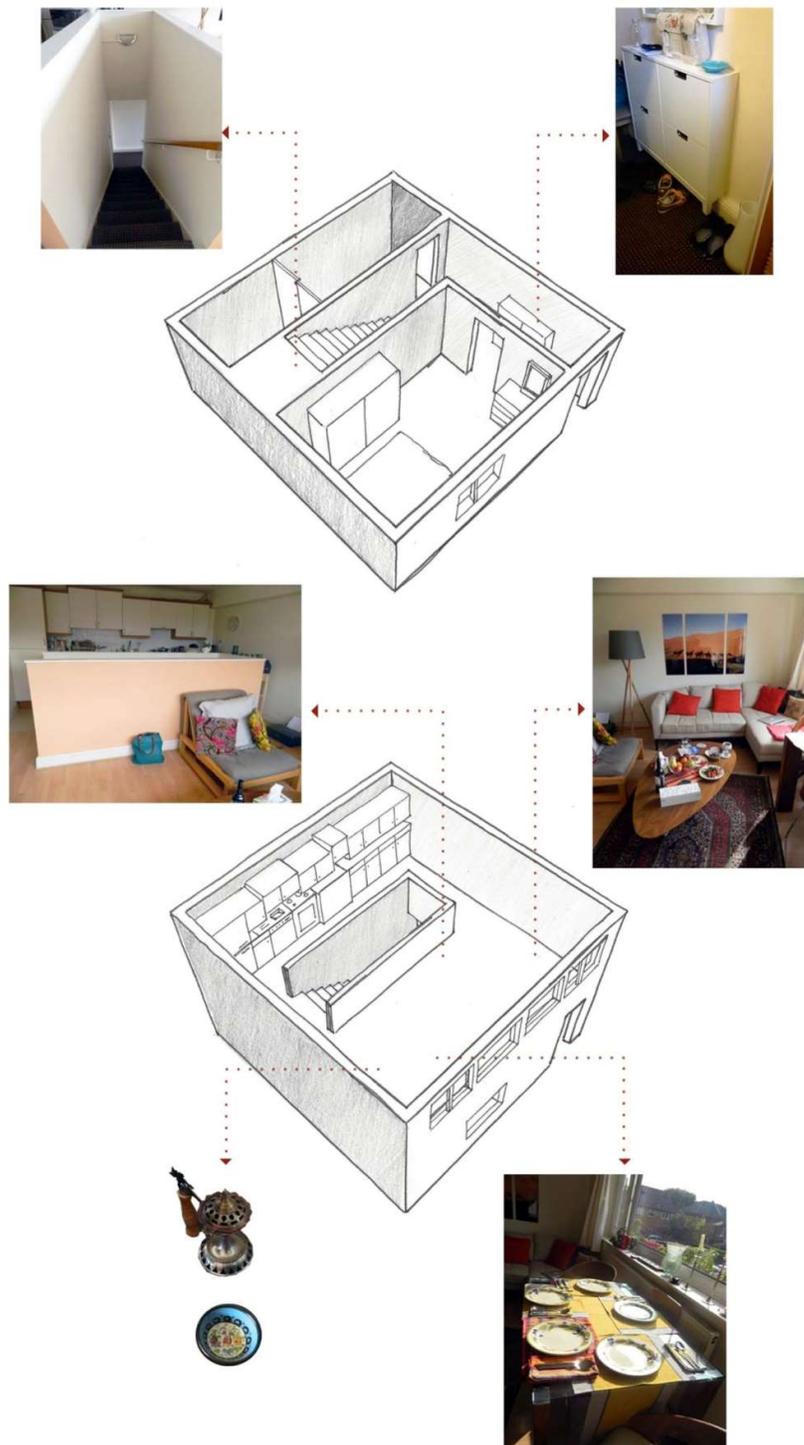


Second Floor



- household spatial movements
- guests movement in the house

Figure 4.1 Guest and host movement in Shadi's home.



**Figure 4.2** Shadi made her home with the furniture she bought in the UK. However, Iranian objects are also applied in her home decoration. The objects and their locations are shown in this figure.

### Negar

Negar was thirty-two years old at the time of the interview on September 2014. She left Iran in 2008 with her sister to study for her Masters degree in London. She used to live with her sisters in Iran and when she moved to England she was living with her sister for a while. She was living in a studio apartment in a renovated terraced house. Negar was working full time and described her home as a place of refuge from the outside world. She explained her perceptions of home as: “a space that gives you calmness”. Negar looked back to her home in Iran as her most homely place. Negar highlighted the necessity of having separated spaces in her home to accommodate different activities. The size of her current home did not allow her to have distinct spaces and that influenced her sense of belonging. Negar remarked that having separated and well defined spaces is an element that differentiates Iranian homes from English homes (figure 4.3 and 4.4).

The separated spaces for each function can be seen in Iranian houses more than in here. Homes in Iran are not that similar to each other as they are here, each home had its own architecture, one might have a very big living room, the other one might not. Anyway you don't expect to go to people's houses and see similar things... I feel houses here are more similar to each other...for example, if you remove kitchen stuff it will not look like a kitchen, it might look like a bedroom...but in Iran the spaces were more defined.

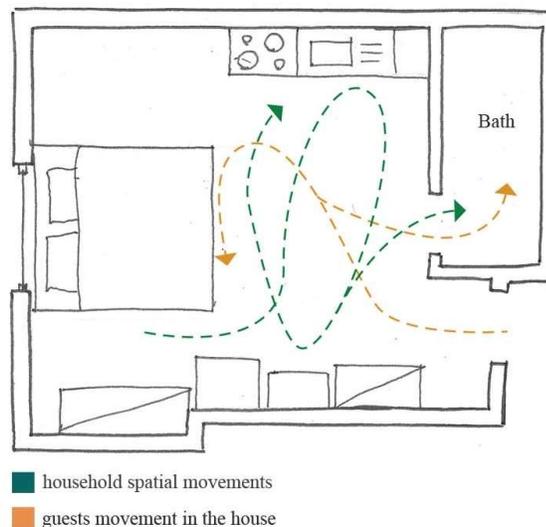
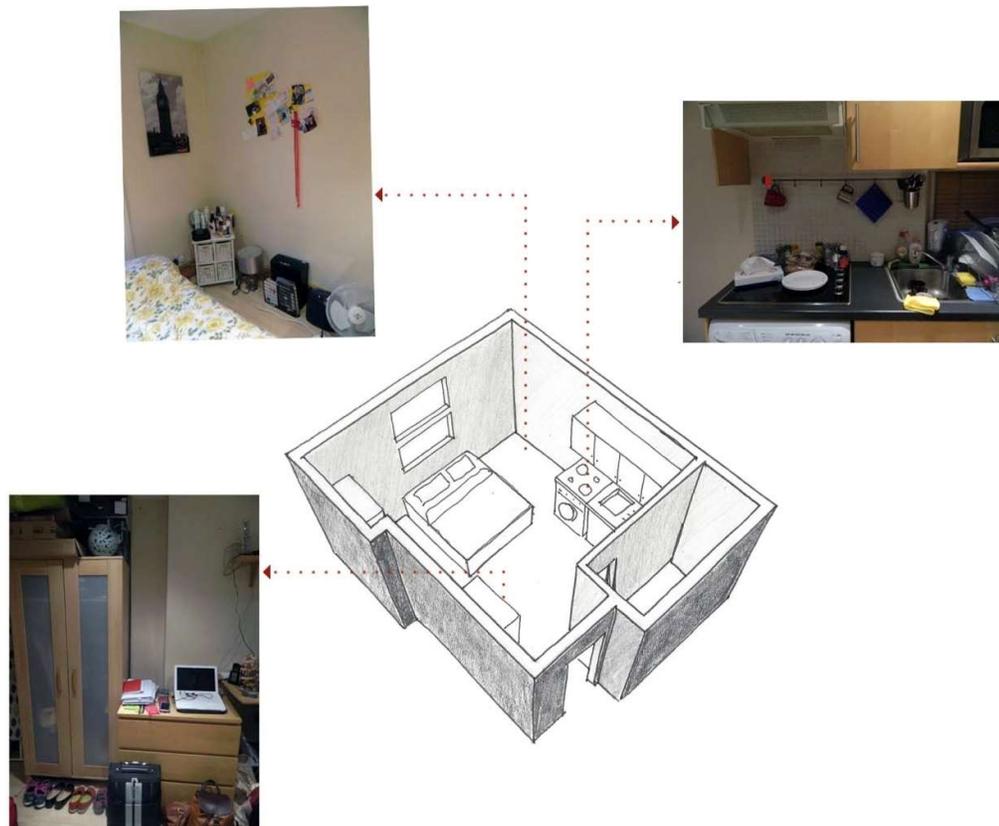


Figure 4.3 Guest and host movement in Negar's studio apartment.



**Figure 4.4** Different corners of Negar's studio flat are given different characters through the application of objects and the furniture arrangement.

Great access to light was another element for Negar that made a place homely, which she felt was missing in her current home. Having enough appropriate light that can be adjusted for different activities was highlighted several times. She described how natural lighting is adjusted in Iranian homes during the day and how it influences the perception of size in a space.

In a proper Iranian home, you have a well-designed two-layer curtain. The first thin layer is used during the day and the slightly thicker layer will be added at night to cover the home interior.... basically the curtain made your house prettier with some light. But now, if I shut the curtain, it might make my room prettier but because it is a small space, the space will look smaller. So I like it to be open, to have light in the room during the day and at night because it makes the room look bigger.

Home for Negar, a spacious, multi-functional place with the capability of adjusting both natural and artificial light for different activities, was reduced to a small studio apartment with one window. It is a single space that serves multiple functions.

### Leila

Leila was interviewed on July 2014 and was a twenty-nine years old student. She studied for a Master's degree in Iran but moved to England in 2010 to study for another Master's degree in London. At the time of the interview she was studying her PhD in Sheffield and lived alone in a one-bedroom flat in a recently built apartment (figures 4.5 and 4.6).

I lived in three different places, the first one was a student accommodation, the second one was a house and this one is a flat, but the only thing they have in common, that is different from Iran, is their size. They are much smaller. There are houses that are old and smelly, but homes like my current place, that are modern flats, they all have similar spatial impressions and there is nothing to differentiate them.

Size was what differentiated the Iranian home from the English home for Leila. She shared similar opinions on the differences between Iranian and English homes with Negar and implied that different functions in Iranian home spaces could be perceived by maintaining size and scale, while the spaces in English homes are only differentiated from each other through the furniture and objects. The majority of the respondents did not live alone in Iran so their perception of home was based on their family homes.

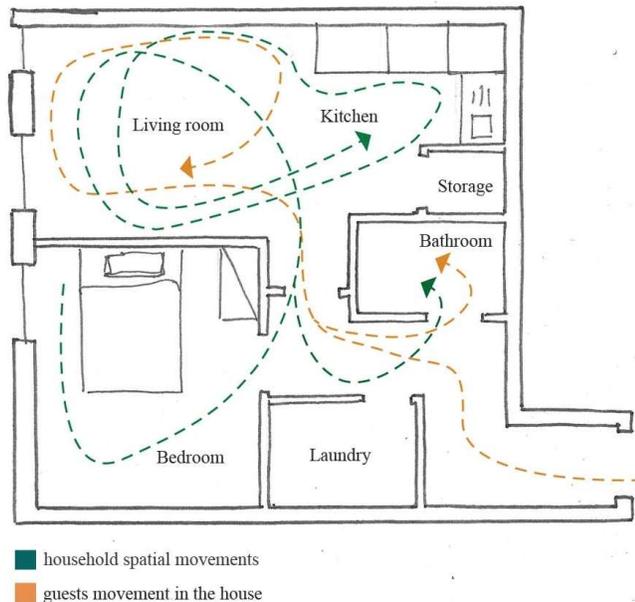
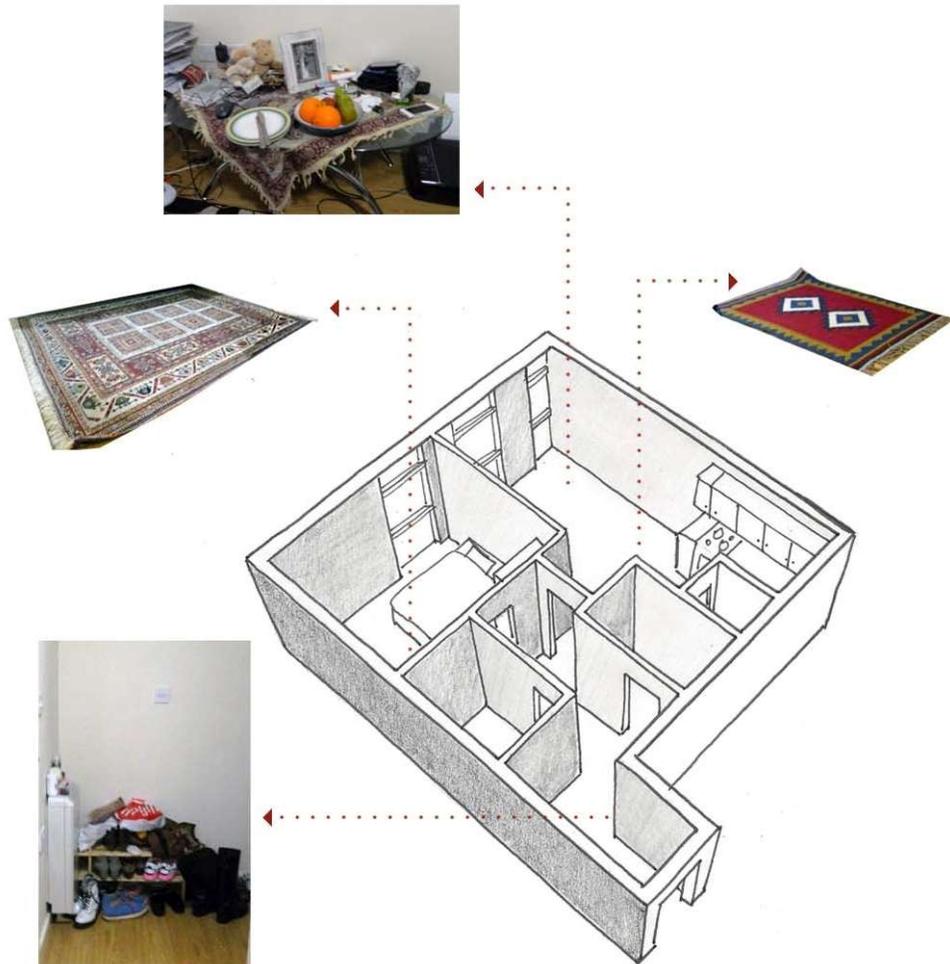


Figure 4.5 Guest and host movements in Leila's flat.



**Figure 4.6** The location of Iranian objects in Leila's home. Her concern with the floor cleanliness can be understood by the shoe storage she had placed in the corridor. She had also prepared sweets and fruit for hosting me.

Leila expressed her dissatisfaction with her current home several times. She described home, as “the feeling of belonging, feeling of warmth, a familiar space that you feel you belong there.” She also stressed that the feeling of belonging not only involves her emotions but is also achieved through the physicality of space. A basic level of bodily comfort for daily relaxation was not achieved in Leila's diasporic home and this has impacted her sense of belonging and her perception of home (figure 4.6).

For me home is a place that I can lie down, I can't lie down in here so I don't feel comfortable. Home is a place that you can interact with it in different ways and being comfortable in different positions, this place is not giving me that. Even the couch length is not enough for me to be able to lie down. The home

furniture should function in a way to make you comfortable, this is really important for me. It is not necessarily cultural; it is not compatible with my body system.

Comfort was the main factor for Leila when she described her sense of home in her parental home in Iran compared to her diasporic home.

**Elaheh**

Elaheh was 28 years old at the time of the interview on September 2014. She was living in a shared house provided by the company she worked for in Cambridge (figure 4.7 and 4.8). She came to England in 2010 to study for her Master's degree in Sheffield.

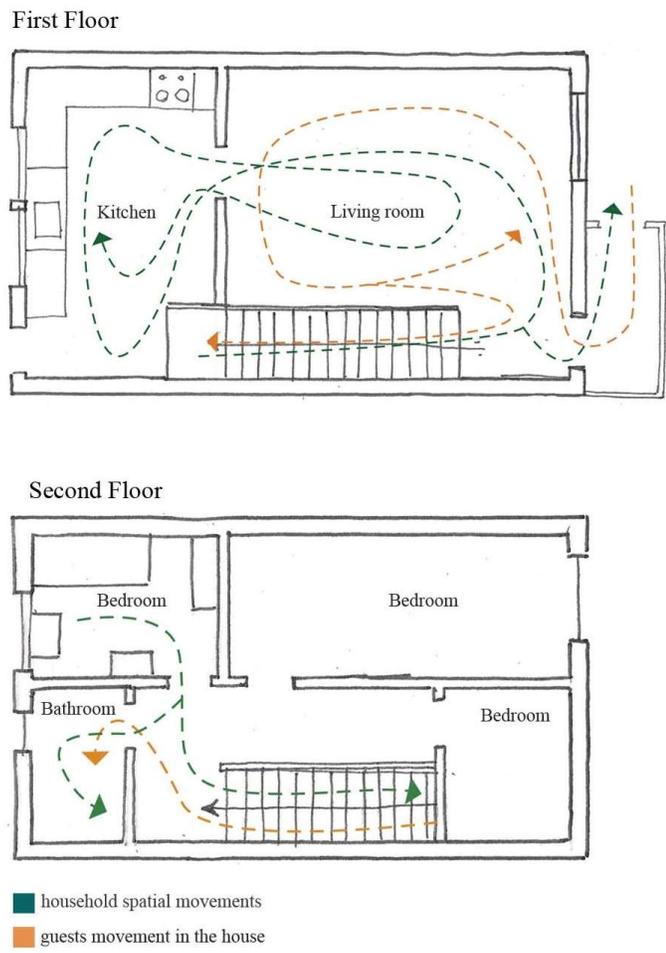


Figure 4.7 Guest and host movement in Elaheh's home.

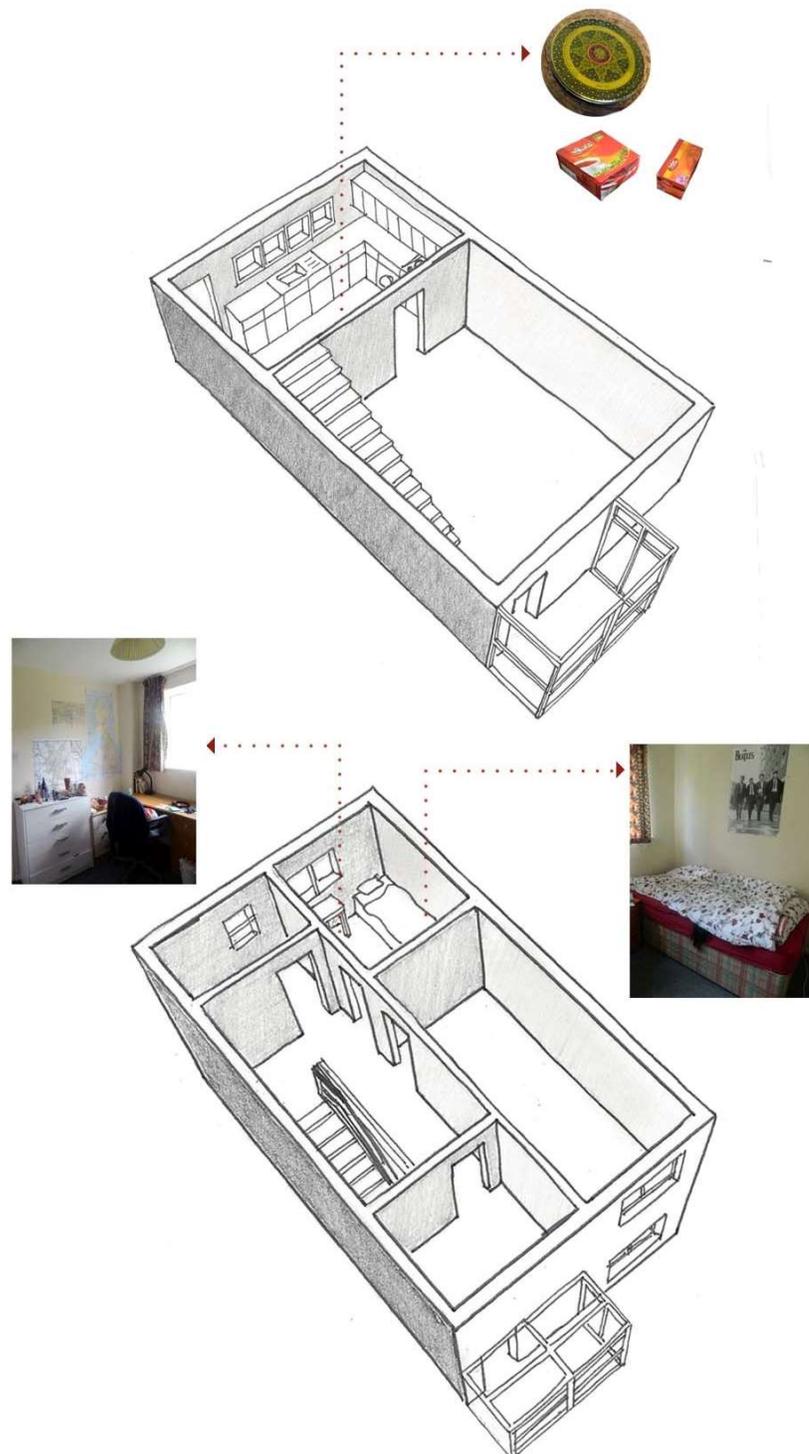
Home for her was her home in Sheffield because it was the first place she rented with her own income after graduating from University. "I rented the flat with my own money and I think

that was really important. It had many good factors, if I want to compare it to my home in Iran, we had a two-bedroom flat with my sisters but I never felt the same as I felt in my flat in Sheffield, because I felt it was all mine.” She referred to the feeling of independence that was embodied in her home. The autonomy provided by her financial situation gave her this feeling of settlement.

She mentioned that, since she left Sheffield for an internship in Cambridge, she did not feel settled any more. “The interesting thing is that after my home in Sheffield, I lost my settled feelings. I mean, it wasn’t like, because I am settled in the UK so wherever I go I feel at home. My feeling changed, when I changed my home, I felt unsettled again.” Elaheh connected her feeling of belonging and settlement to the stable situation that gives her autonomy and financial independence.

Elaheh’s sense of home was achieved in a space that gave her autonomy. Her feelings of homeliness in her current home were limited to the times that she was alone in the house. Elaheh highlighted the design elements that provided favourable spatial experiences. “I think since my flatmate has left, I feel at home whenever I am in her room, especially in the bed, I really like it, I think the reason is because it is bigger, the walls are farther from me. I don’t like it when walls surround me. So I like it there and I don’t feel very restricted in there.” (Figure 4.8). She was also aware of the design elements that provided favourable spatial experiences. “The window is bigger and the room is brighter than mine too, I can also see a big tree there, even if my room had the same window I don’t think I would feel as comfortable as I do in my flatmate’s room, because my room has more walls [her room is smaller]. I mean you see more walls than space.”

Elaheh defined her sense of belonging to her home as being contingent on fulfilling her autonomy both financially and personally. Her home in Sheffield was a representation of her independent life. Having the flat in her control and also being capable of paying for her home by her own income gave her the independence that led to a feeling of settlement. Her sense of home was concerned with features such as size and privacy. She mentioned her favourite architectural element in her home in Sheffield was the corridor that separated the living room and the kitchen from the bedroom. The corridor in Elaheh’s home in Sheffield functioned as a transition space that highlighted the privacy of her bedroom. A transition space that connects private and public spaces of the house is also a traditional characteristic of the architecture of Iranian homes.



**Figure 4.8** Despite the limitations of living in a shared house, Iranian ingredients and Iranian inspired duvet cover can be identified in Elaheh's home.

### Azar

Azar was interviewed on August 2014 and was a twenty-seven years old PhD student, lived with her Iranian boyfriend in a one-bedroom flat in Sheffield. She moved to England in 2009 to study for her Master's degree and has continued her stay by studying for her PhD. She lived in student accommodation and another flat before moving to her current home in 2012 (figures 4.9 and 4.10). She later mentioned that living with her boyfriend was not an option for her in Iran and highlights this as the main difference between her lifestyle in England and that in Iran.

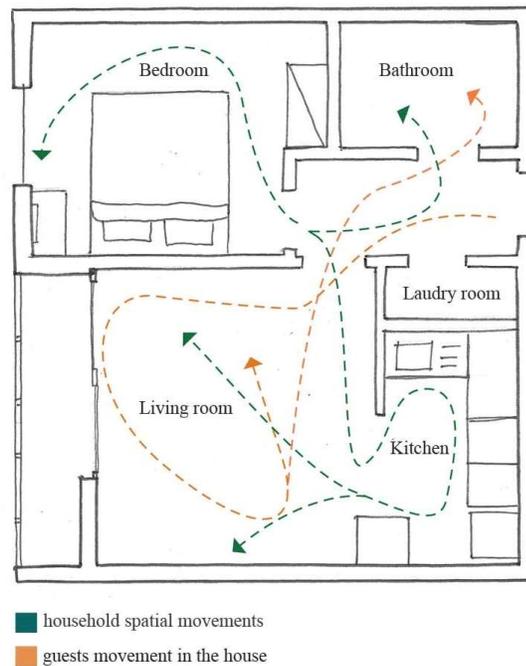


Figure 4.9 Guest and host movement in Azar's home.

The immateriality of home is what interested Azar the most. She described her perception of home as “a place that anything in it calms me down. Home for me is more a spiritual entity than a place made of stone and bricks.” Home for Azar was a meaningful entity that shaped her identity over time. She referred to her home in Iran and the special meaning of that home for her regardless of its materiality.

When I hear the word home, there are several places that come to my mind, one of them is my current home here, and another one that is our house in Iran, the place that I spent my undergraduate years... It was a very old company house and it was not very luxurious or beautiful but it was located in a very big garden. That house made me very happy and it was in a time that I started to know myself, the time that I defined my values

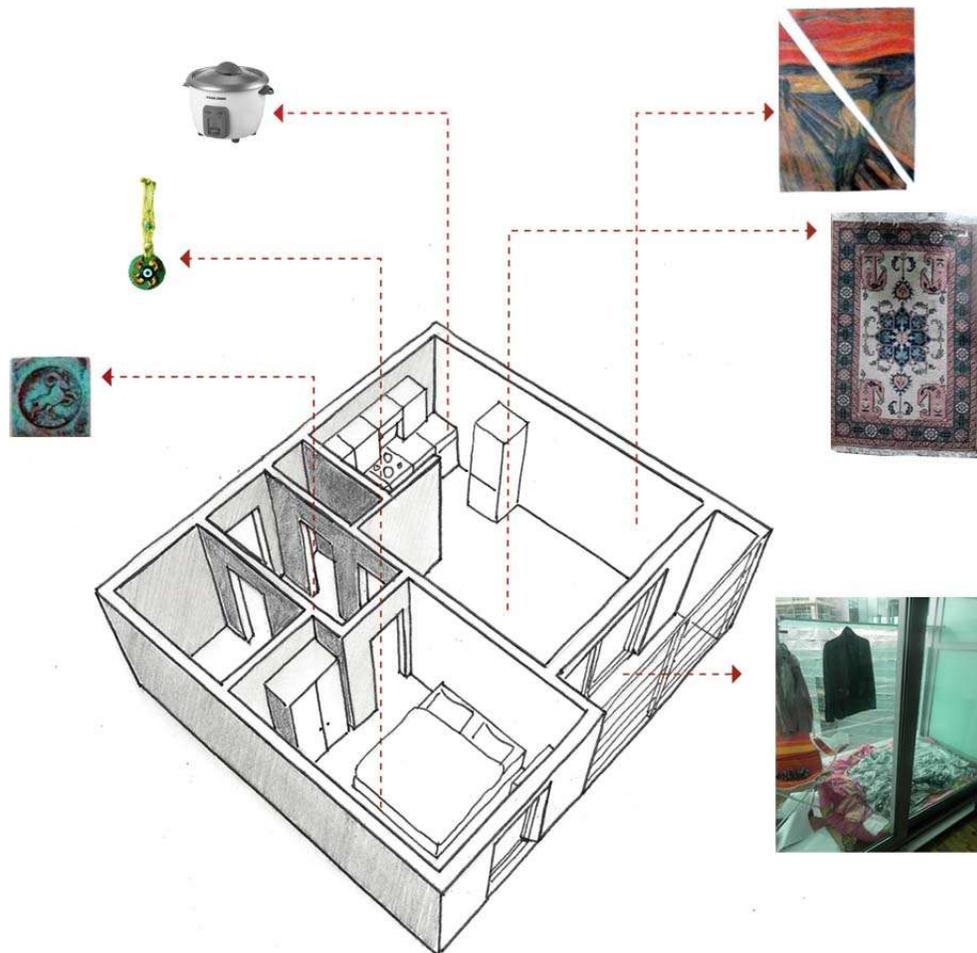


Figure 4.10 The location of Iranian objects in Azar's home.

Azar's home was a place to explore and define herself. Its meaning was maintained through both the materiality and the immateriality of home. She talked about her experience of the English home in comparison to her home in Iran:

What I really like in the houses here is the quality of the decoration... I always thought that the quality of the colour used on the walls has a huge influence on the house decoration. But most of the time, because we wanted to save money, even in the house we built, the walls were kept with plaster and we didn't paint them. Even later when we painted the walls we didn't use the high quality ones, because we didn't have money to paint the whole house. So always the houses that were painted with high quality colours resembled a luxury life for me. Then, I came here and I realised that in most of the houses, the walls are covered with high quality colours, and that gives me a very good feeling. It is the same story with the interior doors; I like them and the quality of the wood that is been applied. It is really important for me to see that the

houses here are built with precision and care. That is really interesting for me although my home is a student style apartment but all the basics have been considered.

Her attention to the quality of the materials in houses in England represented immaterial factors like care, luxury and quality. Azar's understanding of English homes was also connected to her personal experiences in Iran as she drew attention to factors like the quality of the decoration or wooden doors that is not commonly perceived as luxury or speciality by others.

### Hoda

Hoda was twenty-eight years old and a PhD student at the time of the interview on August 2014, living alone in her one-bedroom flat in Liverpool. She moved to England in 2009 to continue her education. She mentioned that she felt like home in her diasporic home as she felt it responds to her concern with privacy (figure 4.11 and 4.12).

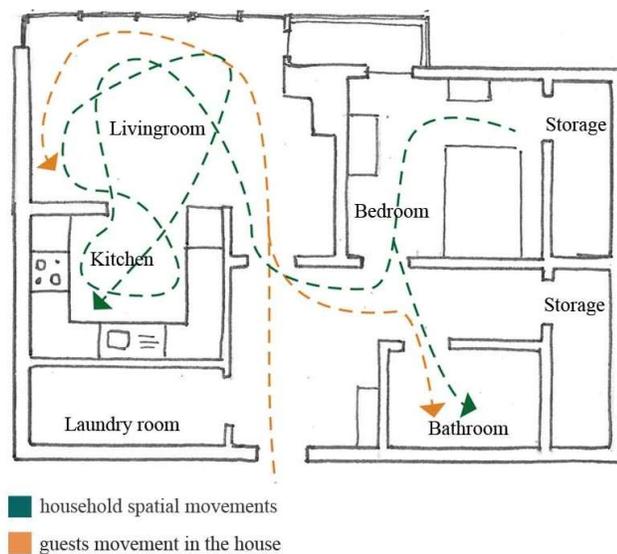
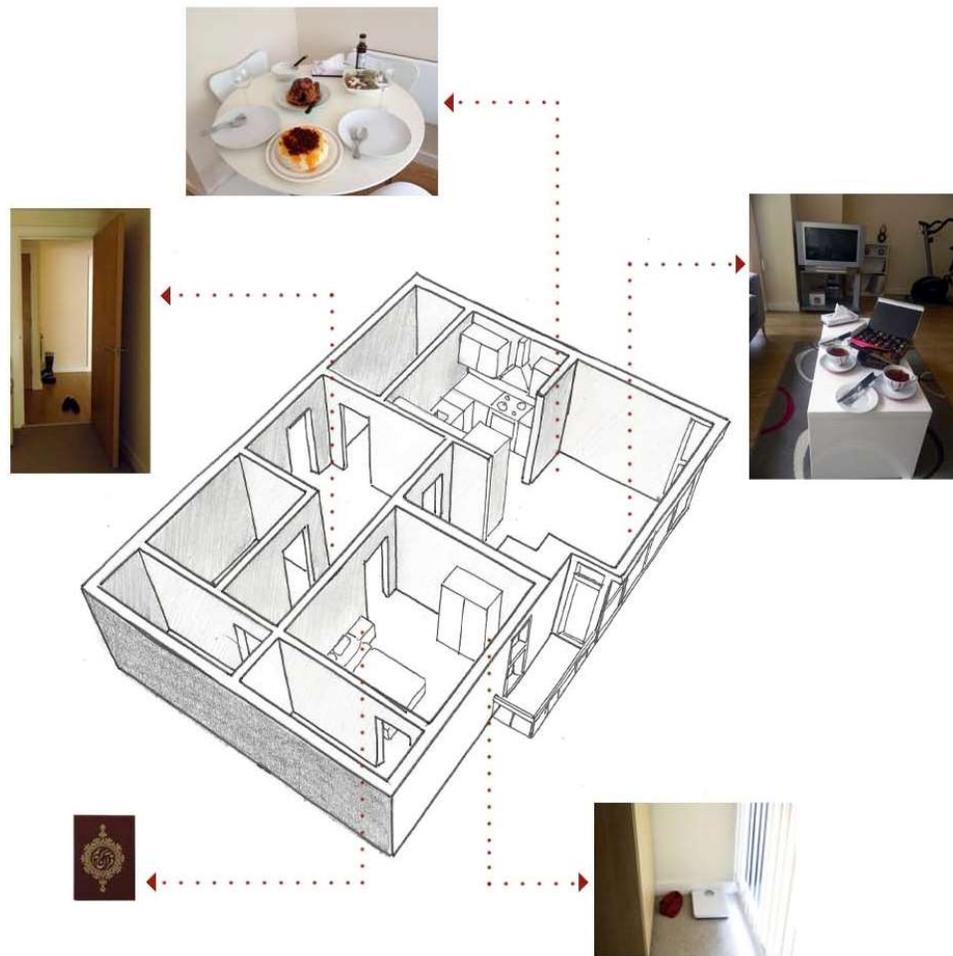


Figure 4.11 Guest and host movement in Hoda's home.

However, she explained that when she thinks of home she remembers her grandmother's house or her childhood home in Iran, because they were houses with big gardens. "One of them is my grandmother's house, and the other one is a home that we lived, it had three bedrooms with a really big balcony and a very big garden, that is what I remember as home. Our current home in Iran is a flat so I don't really see it as our home, and when we moved to this flat I was a university student already". She noted that her parents' current home is an apartment that does not benefit from the privacy or the garden a house can offer.



**Figure 4.12** Hoda hosted me with Persian food and tea. Her sensitivity to cleanliness was perceptible as her home was extremely clean. Besides, the shoes were taken off before entering her bedroom. There were also minimum objects displayed; only a few religious books and Iranian handcraft could be identified implying Iranian culture in her home.

Like the other respondents she remarked on the size as a major distinction between Iranian homes and her home in England. “The apartments are bigger in Iran; we have 500 m<sup>2</sup> apartments in Iran. Even now that the majority of people live in apartments, there are still spaces designed for partying and hosting large groups of people. But here, because they even eat their breakfast out, they don’t see the need to have more space for that.” For Hoda size was the factor that influenced her sense of homeliness. She also remarked on having a view to a garden as an element that encourages her sense of belonging and settlement in her diasporic home.

Hoda shaped her image of home based on the places she called “real home” that she experienced in Iran. Her sense of home, in her diasporic home, was also maintained through

recreating that image within the potential of her home. She could not have a whole house to secure her privacy, but she lived alone in a flat that responded to her desire not to share her home while being able to define the boundaries of her home. Her view to her courtyard was the closest she could have to a garden in an Iranian home, however it was enough to feel like home.

### Sahar

Sahar was interviewed on August 2014 and was 24 years old. She moved to Cambridge in 2013 to join her husband who moved to England a year earlier. Sahar was the only non-Muslim respondent of the study who is from the *Baha'i* faith community. Sahar and her husband were proudly open about their faith although the followers of the *Baha'i* faith in Iran are not allowed to talk about their religious beliefs. At the same time, my brief knowledge of the *Baha'i* faith, gave me a feeling of otherness. Considering religion plays a great role in the Iranian political, cultural and social realm, regardless of being religious or not, I had to solely focus on our Iranian-ness to be able to develop the interview. Sahar was studying for her Master's degree and was living in a one-bedroom flat on the lower ground floor of a terraced house (figures 4.13 and 4.14).

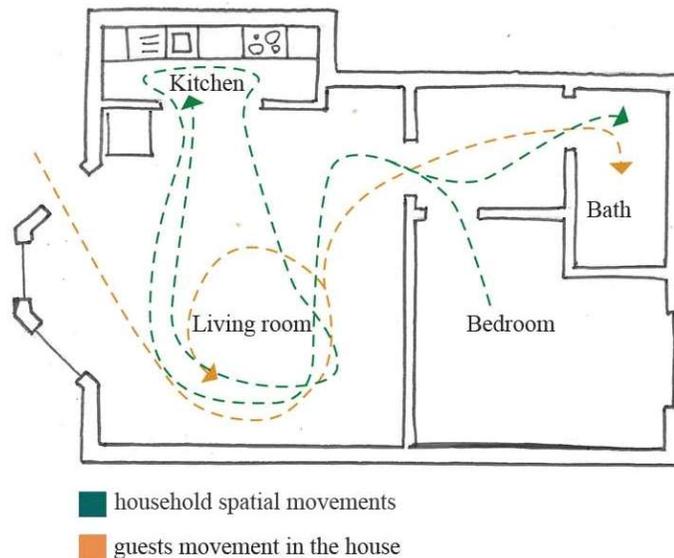


Figure 4.13 Guest and host movement in Sahar's home.

She explained that she does not have a desire or yearning for her previous homes and home for her has always been her most recent home. She stated that, because she had experienced living alone before, her experience of migration has not resulted in feeling lost or missing her previous homes.

However, when Sahar talked about her favourite space in her diasporic home it was the bathroom. Her justification was “because it is big and is the warmest place”. Interestingly her description of her favourite space in her home in Iran also had a profound spatial and sensory dimension. “The latest home I was living in in Iran, the bedroom had a really big window down to the floor that in the summer received good sunlight and I liked to lie down in the light. In the winters, when it was snowing, I had a sofa next to the window that I was sitting there.” Spacious spaces that benefit from natural light are the factors she desired for her diasporic home.

Sahar described her English home as “it is old and it is small” as opposed to the “the big, new Iranian flats with several bedrooms.” Nonetheless, her conception of the English home was shaped according to her husband’s descriptions prior to her arrival rather than on her own experience. Sahar mentioned that, although she is not happy with the limitations of her diasporic home, she did not find it too unpleasant because she was prepared to face a house with worse conditions.



**Figure 4.14** Sahar was also prepared in advance for hosting me for the interview. There were traces of her life in Iran that could be observed through her family photos and the gifts in her home decorations. Besides, I noticed rugs that were applied to cover the floor that were very similar to the ones in Azar's home.

**Mina**

Mina was twenty-nine when she was interviewed at her home on October 2014. She moved to England in 2010 to study English for one year in order to be able to continue her education. She has lived in Sheffield since then, had finished her Masters studies and was looking for a job. Mina was living alone in her studio apartment in a modern tower in the city centre (figures 4.15 and 4.16). She mentioned that she loved the location as it connected with urban life. Mina mentioned that she is from one of the biggest cities in Iran, therefore living in the centre of Sheffield linked her with her previous experiences of living in a big vibrant city. At the same time, she valued the great location that made it possible for her to walk to the Peak District and enjoy nature in a way that she had never experienced before when she was living in Iran. Mina's appreciation of her current home exceeded beyond the boundaries of her home, her sense of home was enriched through the location of her home within the city. "I can see cars on the highway and I have a big grocery store in front of my building, being a part of the city helps me not to feel alone. Meanwhile, I can see the beautiful nature of Sheffield in the background. They both are helping me to love my neighbourhood".

The architectural design of her home has also been influential on her sense of homeliness. Having separated spaces in her studio apartment was highly appreciated by her as a factor that allowed her to perform different activities in her apartment. Having the bedroom as the private space, being separated from the living room where she occasionally hosts her friends and the separated kitchen, they all contribute to her sense of comfort at home.

She identified her balcony and her living room as her favourite spaces in her home because they allowed her to connect with the urban side of her neighbourhood. Her least favourite place in her home was the bedroom because it did not have access to natural light and a door to protect its privacy (figure 4.16). She mentioned: "it is still really important for me to keep spaces like the bedroom private. I think the bedroom is the most private one for me. In Iran there was just a few times that my very close friends entered my bedroom, otherwise I hosted people in our living room." Mina's perceptions of home were greatly influenced by her experiences in Iran. Despite her strong connection with Iran and her previous experiences of an Iranian home, her diasporic home was where she considered home.

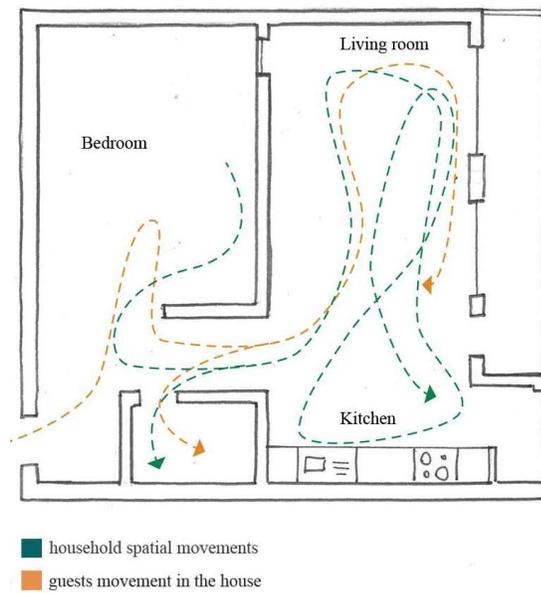
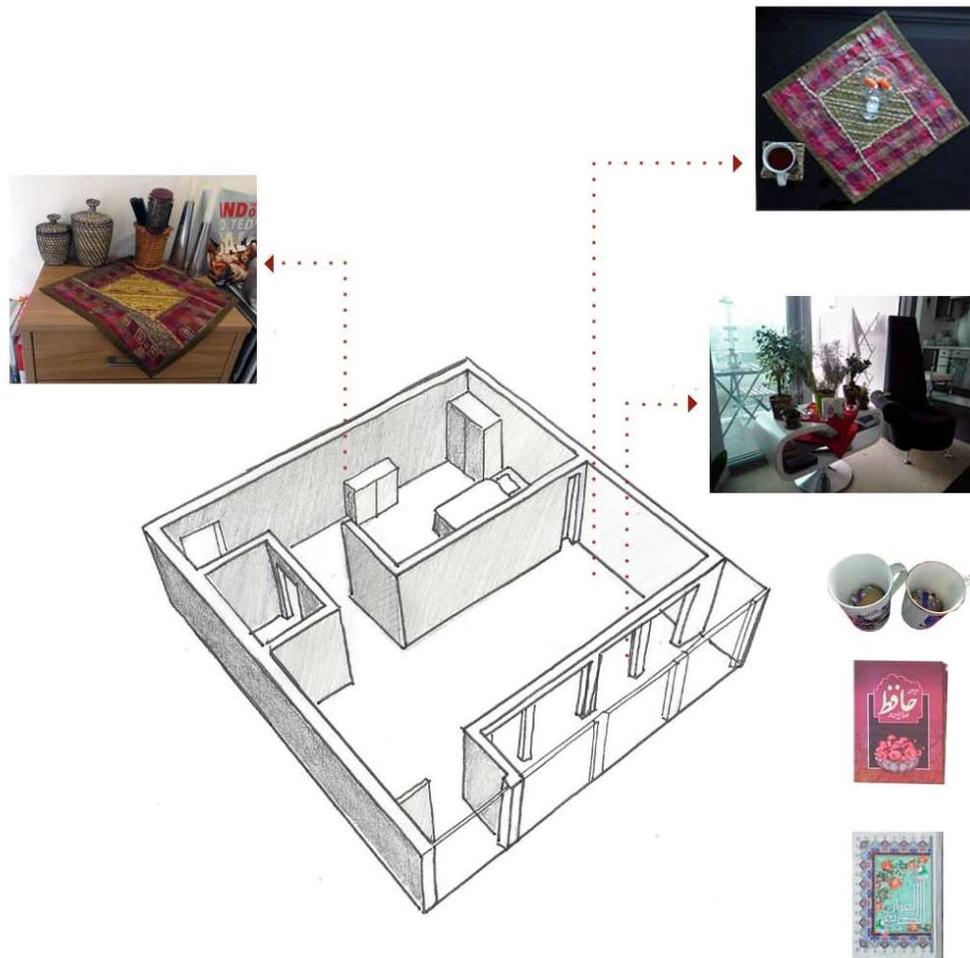


Figure 4.15 Guest and host movement in Mina's home.

Mina's idea of home was a combination of the image of childhood home, her parents' home in Iran and her current home. Home for her was a multi-dimensional entity that was shaped based on the homes she lived in during her life. At the same time, she was attached to her current home in England. Her sense of homeliness is divided among spaces in different time and spatial dimensions. Therefore, she felt at home in her parents' home - where she goes, whenever she visits Iran - as much as she felt at home in her current place which she tried to recreate as an Iranian place with various means. Mina explained how her sense of identity is divided between these locations:

I cannot go back to Iran for good and I cannot stay here without going back to Iran regularly. Just the idea of never going back bothers me. ...But in the middle, it is me, I don't know where my identity belongs? It is hard to have an accurate answer to that. This is not only my challenge, when I talk to my other Iranian friends; they also have the same feelings. They don't feel good to go back to Iran forever and they also don't like to live here without visiting Iran, because of the feelings and attachments they have for Iran.



**Figure 4.16** A variety of Iranian handicrafts and objects were noticeable in Mina's home. There were also traces of celebrating Iranian traditions as painted eggs for the *Haftseen* table was recognisable in her home decoration.

Her identity, like her home, was being reformed as a result of her migration. Having an option to go back to Iran was her bridge to her Iranian identity that she is trying to reconstruct in her destination country. Although she was trying to represent and reconstruct her Iranian identity, her social interactions were limited within Iranian communities and her relationship with non-Iranians was also based on sharing her cultural background.

In this section I introduced the respondents, their understanding of home and their experience of home both in Iran and in England. In some cases, the lack of physical comfort influenced the sense of home of the user. One of the most important elements that were remarked upon by all the respondents was the size of their home relative to their home in Iran. In their experience, size is the definitive factor that gives character to different spaces and is what differentiates a bedroom from a living room. The respondents' experience of English homes is limited by the time they have spent in England. The English homes lived in

by these women during their diasporic life have been much smaller than the homes they experienced in Iran. Consequently, in some cases, this affected their sense of homeliness and their willingness to practise cultural traditions. Meanwhile, the experience of living in diaspora has given these women the autonomy of being able to make home for themselves.

One element that is missed both in current Iranian homes and in the diasporic home of these respondents is direct access to nature (having a garden in the house). Although all the respondents live in apartment flats in Iran, they have experienced living in a home with a garden and have had direct access to nature at some point in their life. For this reason, gardens still play a major role in their idea of homeliness.

The women I interviewed had moved to England recently (they had been in England from 10 months to 6 years) and only a few of them were feeling and experiencing a settled life. The rest are still struggling to finish their studies and only some are approaching a point in their migrant life when they can stay and possibly settle here. Therefore, most of them consider their current home as temporary. Consequently, their homemaking approach was less dependent of stable physical elements and more developed through portable components and ephemeral moments. This, will be discussed in more detail in the next part where the diasporic home of these women is examined within the framework of tangible, intangible and the in-between in order to be able to conclude a methodology for the study of home.

Having introduced the respondents, now I return to the themes that have emerged through the theoretical analysis and the phenomenological study of the Iranian home to examine the process of homemaking for Iranian women in diaspora. The proposed framework is grounded on defining home as an in-between place that creates possibilities of becoming. It is important to mention that, through the interviews and visits to the homes of these women, no generalised data is intended to be produced. Instead, the aim is to open a window onto how these women's approach to homemaking represents the way their individuality is situated in the process of shaping a new life. Therefore, based on this analysis, it is aimed to propose a methodology for the study of home in diaspora.

The tangible, intangible and the in-between category were developed through the theoretical studies (Chapter 1), and then through the phenomenological study of home in Chapter 2, more detailed themes emerged within that structure (table 4.2).

Tangible	The in-between	Intangible	The structure evolved by the theoretical studies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Object/decoration (Persian Carpet)</li> <li>○ Furniture</li> <li>○ Architectural elements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Spatial/Cultural elements: Hierarchy, Hospitality, cleanliness</li> <li>○ Furniture arrangement/ Sitting on the floor</li> <li>○ Spatial quality: light and nature...</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Sensory Experience of home</li> <li>○ Cultural habits/daily routines/yearly events</li> <li>○ Connection with the outside</li> </ul>	

**Table 4.2** The themes which emerged from the phenomenological studies under the evolved structure.

Hence, the interview discussions are represented in this chapter within a themed analysis that is categorised within the tangible, intangible and in-between. The themes in each category are examined to see how relevant they are to the realities of Iranian women’s experience of their diasporic home. In addition to testing the existing themes, the interview discussions are examined flexibly, meaning that it was intended to be open to the emergence of new themes or the elimination of the existing ones. Therefore, the process of analysis is approached within an evolving manner, by constant testing and correcting of themes within the space of interviews. In the next step, the finalised outcome of the interviews is tested through a focus group bringing more dimension to the analysis.

Therefore, the tangible elements are object/ decorations, furniture and the tangible architectural elements. The intangible elements are the sensory experience of home/memory, the daily habits/cultural events and the connection with the outside. The in-between includes themes that bring elements together that are both tangible and intangible, such as: spatial quality (light, nature, size) and the spatial/cultural elements of hierarchy, hospitality and cleanliness. These are hybrid dual elements that make the creation of atmosphere possible, in the process of making a place feel like home.

#### 4.2.1 Tangible

In this section, the role of tangible elements in the process of homemaking, or alternatively atmosphere making, is discussed. In the case of these women objects/ decorations, because of their portable nature, were emphasised the most. The significance of objects in reforming and representing identity in each diasporic home is examined from two aspects: firstly, as the representation of cultural and personal identity and secondly as functional domestic furniture. Both of these categories of objects can be representative of a certain atmosphere and they can produce spatial atmospheric qualities. This categorisation, therefore, includes both the objects that are brought from Iran and the ones purchased in England. The examination in this section is grounded on Kate Pahl’s (2004) and Pahl and Rowsell’s (2010) study of objects and the narratives behind them in representation of cultural identity, the notion of *aura* of the objects by Böhme (1993) and Tolia Kelly’s (2010) idea of *re-memory* through objects. These highlight how objects can directly and indirectly evoke cultural and personal

meanings within the diasporic home. Since, the diasporic home of the majority of the respondents were transitory homes, most of the respondents did not own the furniture in their home, meaning that my focus was on the more movable elements of home. I was not only looking for obvious elements of Iranian culture but the objects that carry a narrative and meaning that links the current diasporic home to the experience of the Iranian home.

Among all the respondents, Mina was the only woman who deliberately used objects to represent her Iranian identity. Mina stated that she felt responsible for representing Iranian culture in the best way possible to increase others' understanding of her culture. She stated that she travels to Iran twice a year and the things she brings from Iran are highly influenced by her concern with representing Iranian culture. She brings handmade artefacts and food ingredients to be able to decorate her home and host her guests in a way that shows her Iranian background. Mina was the only respondent who was concerned with representing the culture of her country of origin to the host society (figure 4.17).



**Figure 4.17** Mina's bedroom is decorated with a British flag duvet cover and an Iranian handmade craft.

Apart from the Iranian handicrafts, Iranian poetry books and magazines along with the Quran were located on Mina's table. The Quran and Hafiz poetry are the two books that can be found in the house of many Iranians and Mina, by representing them in her home, showed her connection with her home culture (figure 4.18). "If you look around you see many handicrafts from Iran" said Shadi. she mentioned that if the flights weight limitations allowed

she would have brought more traditional objects and even a Persian carpet as they are “Iranian symbols” and she can talk about them with her non-Iranian guests. Therefore, according to her circumstances, she uses Iranian elements strategically in a way that she represents her individuality according to the circumstances of her life.



**Figure 4.18** The living room is decorated with Iranian crafts and Iranian and religious books including Hafiz Poetry (the book on the second row on the left) and the Quran (the book on the first row on the left). Mugs with the sign of the university and the Peak District are located on top of Iranian objects.

Mina was also concerned with the location of the Iranian objects in her home. She was very sensitive of representing Iranian-themed objects at a time that is compatible to Iranian culture and tradition as she placed the coloured egg for the New Year’s table hidden in her British-themed mugs waiting to disclose them at the next Persian New Year. This is rooted in the fact that she feels responsible for representing Iranian culture appropriately (figure 4.19)



**Figure 4.19** Decorated eggs that were used for Mina's Iranian New Year table are placed in her British mugs, she stated that in this way she can use them next year without displaying them all year.

It is worth mentioning that the use of Iranian handicrafts in Iranian home decorations is not as prevalent as in Iranian diasporic homes. The users employ the meanings and the aura of the Iranian-themed objects to connect with homeland. Objects alone, or in combination with food and social interactions, have been used for the creation of Iranian atmosphere (figure 4.20).



**Figure 4.20** Mina's home was decorated with different kinds of Iranian handicrafts.

Additionally, the majority of the respondents mentioned that the experience of living abroad has unconsciously changed their taste towards more traditional objects and objects with ethnic patterns. Shadi, for example, referred to the cushions that she decorated her home with and explained: "I like things with patterns, for example I would have never put a cushion like this in my home in Iran but now I like to see that with different colours and designs." She stated that she likes to use these objects because they give character to her home (figure 4.21).



Figure 4.21 The colourful, delineated cushions in Shadi's home.

Elaheh also mentioned this change in her taste since she has migrated to England. She referred to her duvet cover and mentioned she had bought it just because it reminded her of Iranian textiles (figure 4.22).



**Figure 4.22** Elahah's duvet cover is shown in this photo. She also has posters of the Beatles and a map of the world on her room's walls that she explains are not hers and they belong to the previous tenants and that she did not have anything against them so she kept them.

Leila is another respondent who remarked that the way she decorates her house might be different in England in comparison to Iran. Besides, she tends to use small Iranian pieces (that she can bring them from Iran) in her diasporic home, which she did not think she would use in Iran. "if I live in Iran I would use colours (to represent my Iranian self) like the colour

turquoise ... I like to have things that mean something to me not just the collective memory related stuff”.

Leila also had Kilims - one in her living room and one in her bedroom - that her parents brought from Iran when they came to visit (figure 4.23).



Figure 4.23 The Kilims in Leila's living room and bedroom.

Leila also had the Quran and religious books displayed in her living room although she stated that she never uses them. She also mentioned that she has two handmade Persian carpets packaged under her bed. Leila believed that it was a waste to use those high quality carpets in her current diasporic home; therefore, they are carefully placed under her bed.

Objects played a significant role in Azar's home. She had a modern art painting (*The Scream* by Edvard Munch) on her wall that she had carried with her since she was thirteen. She mentioned the first time she saw the photo of this painting, she was so touched that she asked her father the same day to print a copy for her. The painting was a reminder of her teenage years when she was still living with her parents and in the house that she described as a place where she discovered her interests and formed her values (figures 4.24 and 4.25).

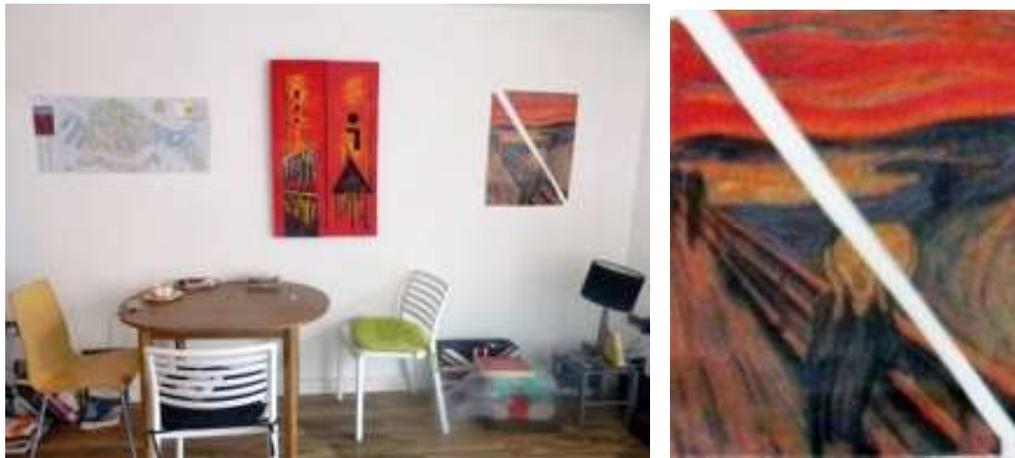


Figure 4.24 The decorations on the walls in Azar's living room including "The Scream".



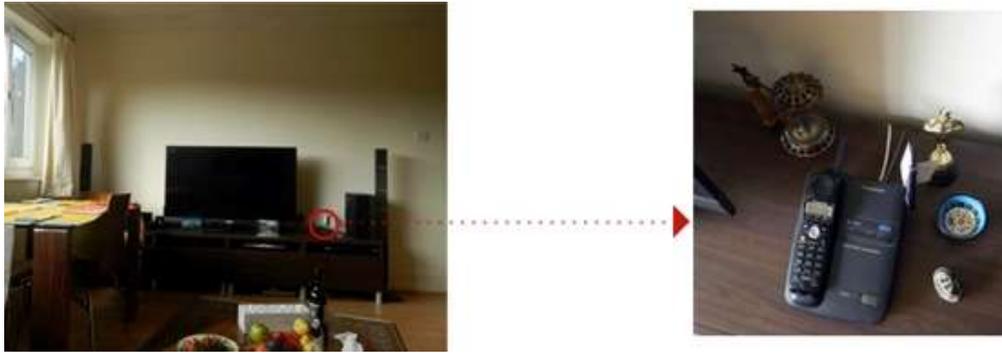
Figure 4.25 The decorations on the walls in Azar's living room.

Her walls were decorated with pictures of modern art combined with small crafts from Iran. There were objects like an Iranian evil eye, or Iranian souvenirs hanging on her walls. To an outsider this is an Iranian-themed home with Iranian atmosphere while she stated that she only feels the Iranian atmosphere when she has other Iranians in her home (figures 4.24, 4.25 and 4.26).

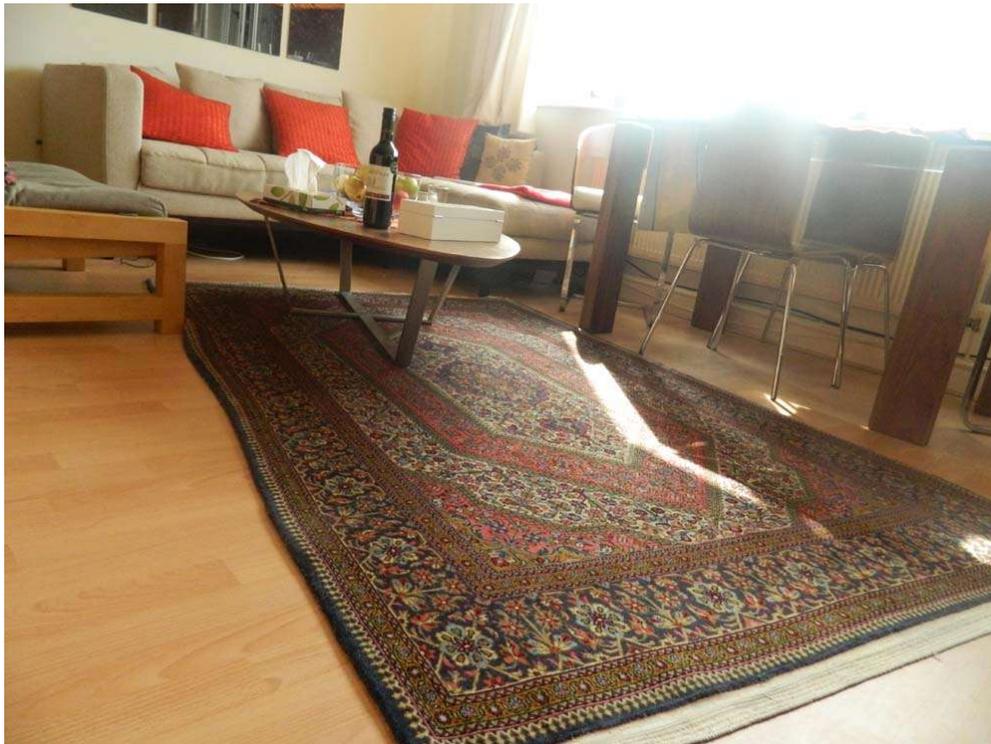


**Figure 4.26** The corridor walls (the left picture) are decorated with paintings and souvenirs that Azar brought from Iran for her boyfriend. The right picture shows the bedroom walls where the Iranian evil eye and more paintings are displayed.

In Shadi's home, on the other hand, there are objects that are an immediate reminder of Iranian culture and traditions like Persian carpets or handmade Iranian crafts, but she expressed her indifference towards placing those in her home as they were gifts or souvenirs from others (figures 4.27 and 4.28). However, she mentioned that the process of furnishing her current home has highly influenced her sense of belonging and ownership towards the place. The process of purchasing the furniture and decorating the house according to her own taste has given Shadi the autonomy and sense of ownership despite the fact she does not own her home. This shows how her sense of ownership is associated with homemaking through objects, but only the ones which she has chosen.



**Figure 4.27** The receptacle on the left is a device to burn *Esfand*, a seed that is believed to send away the evil eye and negative energy. Shadi mentioned that this is a gift from her husband's father from one of his trips to Iran. The small colourful bowl is also a handcraft from northern Iran that Shadi's friend gave her when she was leaving Iran. Both objects are located next to the TV and when I was asking about them she specified that she didn't buy them and if she was in Iran she wouldn't display them in her home.



**Figure 4.28** The Persian Carpet is a gift from her husband's parents; her husband's grandfather originally owned it. She specified that she didn't like it at the beginning and couldn't imagine her house with a colourful carpet, but her husband loved it and as time passed she started to like it too.

Nonetheless, objects in Hoda's home are not the main focus. There are only a few objects placed in her home decoration and they are not Iranian. The only objects in her living room were a set of decorative dishes placed under her coffee table and were a gift from her friends before she left Iran. However, in her bedroom there were a few objects that I could associate with Iran that were carefully placed. A small Quran and religious texts were respectfully placed in the centre of her bedside table (figure 4.29).

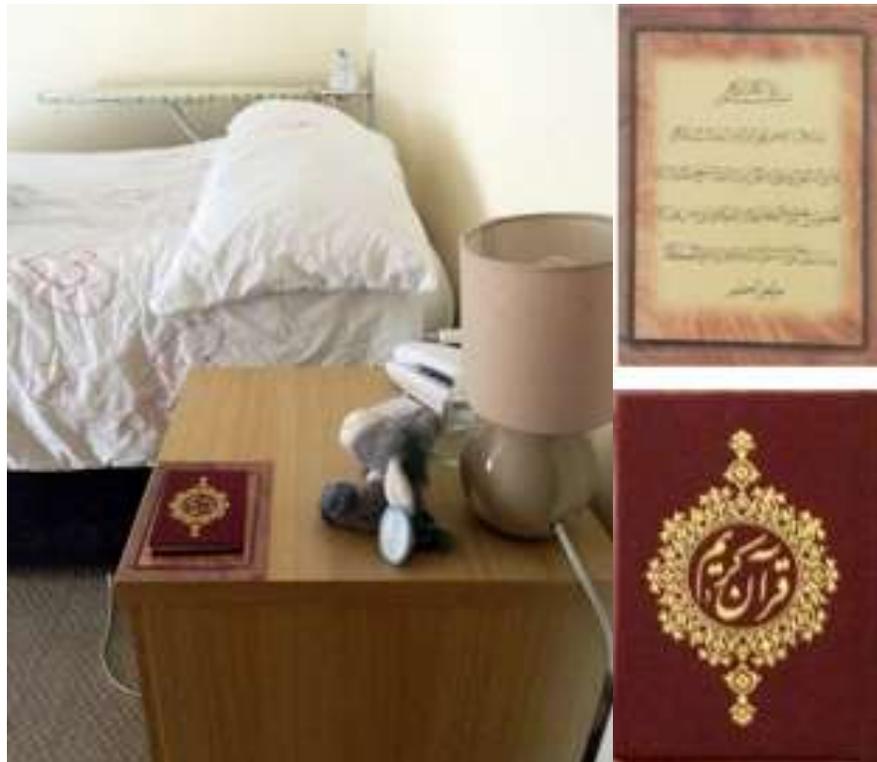


Figure 4.29 The Quran and religious texts placed on Hoda's bedside table.

Sahar, my *Baha'i* respondent, also has used objects to represent her religious identity. There are two drawings on her wall, one was an artwork given by her husband's grandmother and the other one is a drawing of Bahauallah, the founder of the *Baha'i* faith (figure 4.30).



**Figure 4.30** A drawing of Bahá'u'lláh displayed on the living room wall in Sahar's home.



**Figure 4.31** A drawing that is a gift from the grandmother of Sahar's husband on the living room wall.

Persian carpets, Iranian handcrafts, Iranian food products, the Quran, Iranian poetry and literature are all objects that represent cultural, personal and religious identities of the homeowners (figure 4.29 and 4.30).

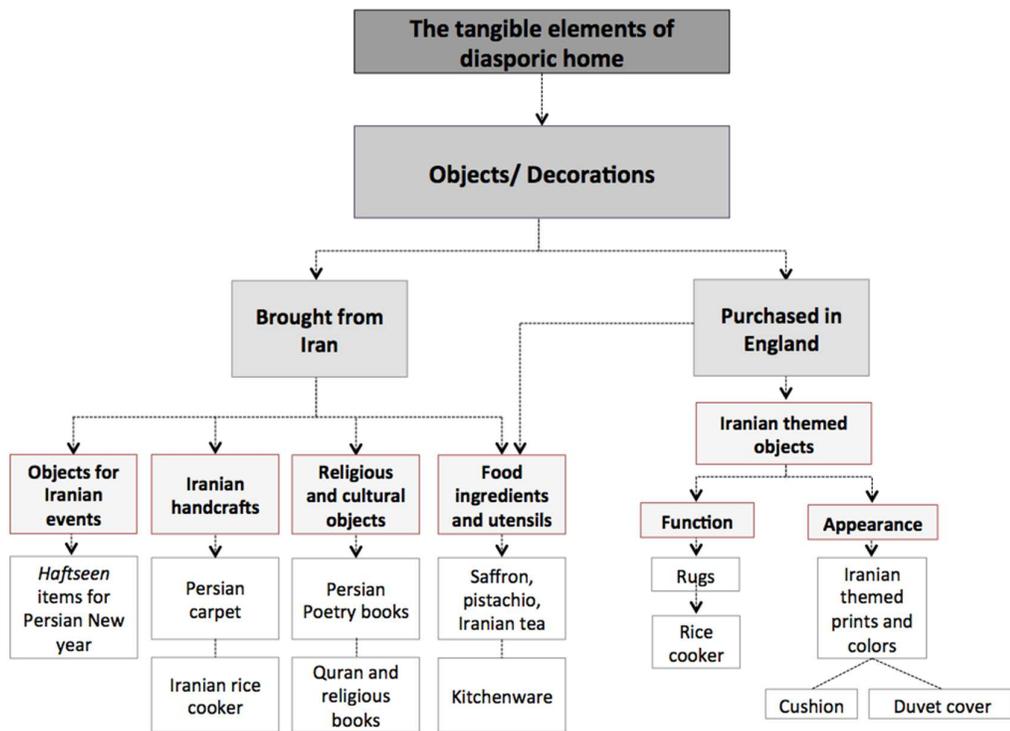


Figure 4.32 An overview of the tangible elements and their relationship in the Iranian diasporic homes.

How Iranian, religious and sensitive to culture the users are not the matter here; the connection they provide is the main factor that embodies a different culture from the culture of the host society. These objects evoke a certain aura. One can only see it as a different experience but the ones with connection to this culture connect it with their personal experience and understand it through their memory. It is the process of *re-memory* that connects two different locations within the atmosphere of diasporic home. During my visit to the eight diasporic homes, objects were highlighted as being symbolic of culture, a reminder of personal past experiences or a piece of homeland.

#### 4.2.2 Intangible

The sensory experience of home/memory, the daily habits/cultural events and the connection with the outside were designated as the intangible elements of home to be examined during the interviews. However, during the interviews some of the elements were emphasised more than the others. Food for example was highlighted as a significant sensory experience and a common method to situate Iranian female identity within the confines of diasporic home. Yearly cultural/religious events were also implied numerous times as the time when they experience Iranian atmosphere at home the most. Therefore, in this section the intangible elements are discussed in two sections: sensory experience of home with specific emphasis on food and then the cultural events.

#### 4.2.2.1 Sensory experience of home: food

Most of the respondents denied their interest in displaying Iranian objects or representing their culture; however, they all mentioned food as an entity that gives Iranian character to their diasporic home. As the process of food preparation, cooking and eating (sharing) is one of the domestic routines that significantly involves senses (Petridou, 2001: 88), the respondents were asked about their experiences and their food habits to see how Iranian-ness is represented through food preparation and consumption (table 4.3). Because all the respondents in this research are not completely settled in England, their home is not decorated with Iranian objects and furniture as much as a settled Iranian migrant. Since the circumstances of their current lifestyle do not allow them to invest significantly in their home decoration, food stands out as an important linkage to homeland.

Cooking most of the Iranian food requires Iranian ingredients; in addition, cooking traditional Iranian food is time consuming, therefore eating Iranian food is not a daily habit in the home of the respondents. Most of the respondents stated that only simple Persian food is a part of their eating routine and the traditional Iranian food is used for special occasions like hosting people or a gathering with other Iranians.

Table 4.3 The cooking habit of the respondents

Name	Cooking at home	Cooking Persian food for personal consumption	Cooking Persian food for Guests	Ingredients from Iran
Shadi	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Negar	Yes	No	No	No
Leila	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Elaheh	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Azar	Yes	No	No	No
Hoda	Yes	Yes	Yes	No - Brought by parents
Sahar	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mina	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Shadi stated that she brings ingredients from Iran that cannot be found with the “Iranian quality” in England, like saffron or pistachios. Arabic and Indian shops are where the ingredients that cannot be found in supermarkets are purchased (figure 4.33).



**Figure 4.33** Shadi hosted me with an Iranian dish accompanied with different types of Iranian pickles she bought from an Iranian store in her neighbourhood.

She mentioned that she only cooks Iranian food for her guests—not for its cultural or national identity associations but because she is more confident cooking Iranian food for her guests, as it is easier for her. “I don’t usually cook at home, I don’t have time, but if I do, I cook quick and easy Iranian food like *Kookoo* (Iranian omelette). ... Generally, I don’t cook that much when it is only me and my husband.”

Mina was the only respondent who uses Iranian food for the purpose of sharing her culture and representing her Iranian background. She was proud of her culture and was using food to communicate about her culture. She mentioned that she brings a few essential ingredients from Iran and purchases the rest from international shops. “Cooking is the other way of representing my culture. I think Iranian food is very delicious and beautiful.” She referred to her experiences of taking Iranian food to university and explained how the smell attracted other students to her food. “I cooked chicken with saffron and my friend tasted it and she loved it. My Iranian background has always been with me, whether as my food in the university or as the food I prepare for my guests. I am so proud of it.” Therefore, not only does she cook Iranian food for her own preference, but she also uses it as a means to discuss her culture and identity with others.

All the ingredients for Iranian food are brought from Iran in Hoda’s home. She mentioned that her parents visit her once a year and bring all the ingredients she needs. However, she remarked that cooking Iranian food is a monthly occasion and, although she cooks many times during the week, she does not cook Iranian food because it is a complicated process. “I cook Iranian food whenever I like which is maybe twice a month. But if I do, I cook three or

four dishes in one day and put them in the freezer. But in terms of how many times I eat Iranian food, I eat it at least once a week.” Nonetheless, Hoda hosted me with a fresh Iranian dish that she had prepared in the morning that day (figure 4.34). Hoda also talked about the Iranian atmosphere when her mother cooks Iranian food in her diasporic home. “The atmosphere is very Iranian specially when my Mum is here, my parents usually come together, and it just happened once that my father came alone. He also tried to cook, or clean a bit, but my Mum is different... when I come back at noon, I can smell the food from the corridor outside the flat.” Hoda’s perception of atmosphere involves different sensory experiences from the smell of food to the level of cleanliness in the house.



Figure 4.34 Hoda hosted me with rice with saffron and barberries and chicken.

Elaheh, on the other hand explained that, because it is healthier, she tries to cook more often but she only cooks Iranian food in the weekend because it is time consuming. She specified that her approach remains the same even for when she hosts Iranian guests. “Now if I don’t have time I cook something simple. When I am alone, I often start making very complicated Iranian food for myself. The person doesn’t matter for me anymore but maybe I would have preferred to cook it for my guests than myself in the past.” Elaheh additionally clarified that the way she cooks and the ingredients she uses for her cooking are among the factors that represent her Iranian identity to her flatmates within her shared diasporic home. “There are other factors, like using saffron in the food or the spices. For example, I cooked for my housemate the other day and it was not even an Iranian food but because of the spices I used (turmeric and cinnamon) he really liked it. I think my cooking has a flavour and it is not just cooked with salt and pepper. Even in my tea, I always add saffron or cardamom”. Elaheh

also talked about the arrangement of her ingredients in her kitchen cupboard that is influenced by the way her mother arranged the kitchen in Iran.

No ingredients are brought from Iran in Azar's home and she never cooked before she started living with her Iranian boyfriend. And the only thing she can highlight as Iranian in her cooking habits is the frequent use of rice. Rice is an essential ingredient in every Iranian household that is eaten almost every day. Some of the respondents mentioned eating rice as an Iranian-ness in their eating habit. Apart from Elaheh who was living in a shared house, all the other respondents had an Iranian brand rice cooker that was brought from Iran, or purchased one in England. Annika Philip and Elsie Ho (2010) studied the ways South African migrant women in New Zealand create a sense of home by the help of objects brought from the home country, grocery shopping and eating South African food (Philip and Ho 2010: 81). Philip and Ho referred to the *Biltong maker*<sup>23</sup>, a utensil that is used in the houses of their respondents, and discuss the creativity of the migrants in remaking one in New Zealand in case bringing one from South Africa was not an option (Philip and Ho 2010: 90). Not having access to Persian rice did not stop the habit of cooking rice with Iranian methods as, by having the rice cooker to make Iranian style rice, the habit of eating rice has been sustained in the Iranian diasporic home (figure 4.35).



Figure 4.35 Rice cookers in Sahar's (left) and Azar's (right) kitchens.

<sup>23</sup> "Biltong, a South African specialty, is meat that gets dried in a box, the *biltong maker*" (Philip and Ho, 2010:90).

Leila noted that smelling Iranian food connects her with her homeland. As an outsider, my visit to her house had an Iranian quality. She hosted me with tea and fruit and we talked about our experience as a migrant in England and the challenges of assimilation. Therefore, having a Persian conversation while having tea, in a space that is decorated with Persian Kilims, Persian literature books and the Quran was a reminder of Iranian atmosphere. She stated that, although she is not focusing on representing her culture in her home decoration, cooking Iranian food and her books might depict her Iranian-ness. The atmosphere of her kitchen was influenced by the smell of Persian saffron tea she brought from Iran and she hosted me with Iranian sweets while we were talking in Persian. Therefore, through various sensory elements an atmosphere was created within her diasporic home that was connected to the Iranian home atmosphere. Regardless of time and geographical location, an Iranian moment was created.

Similarly, during my visit to Shadi's home, I noticed how strongly the smell of food and the conversations over food evoked emotions and memories that connected all of us. Our shared memories as Iranians connected us to our homeland experiences and created an atmosphere that is both Iranian and diasporic. The big windows in Shadi's home that gave light to her living room and her Persian carpet instantly connected me to experience of homes in Iran; the light lines on a Persian carpet is an image that is a reminder of Iranian homes. Therefore, the combination of Iranian food, Persian conversations, and the discussion of Iranian topics in a space that is decorated with a Persian carpet brightened with warm afternoon sunlight created a truly Iranian atmosphere (figure 4.36).



**Figure 4.36** Shadi's dining area.

Similarly, a day after the interview with Mina, she invited me to a dinner party with her Iranian friends. She cooked Iranian food and all the guests were Iranian. The conversations were mostly based on issues inside Iran and the diasporic experience. The classical Iranian music was played the whole time and it changed into Iranian pop songs after the dinner. Mina successfully created an Iranian atmosphere within the limitations of her home. By hosting other Iranians, she provided a space to talk about Iran and for each of us to connect with our experiences in Iran with the help of objects, food and the sensory experiences she created. Hence, by elements such as music, food and objects that can be associated with Iran, an Iranian atmosphere was created.

#### 4.2.2.2 Daily routines/calendar of events

The main focus of this section is to highlight the cultural and religious events during the day and throughout the year to introduce elements with atmospheric character that, in practising them at home, provide a connection to homeland. For example, one of the essential duties of being a Muslim is praying several times a day. Sunni Muslims are obliged to pray five times a day and for Shia Muslims it is three times a day: praying before sunrise, after noon and after sunset. People are reminded of the exact time by the call to prayer, *Azan*, which is announced by the local mosques in each neighbourhood. Living in a Muslim country like Iran, *Azan* is a sound that is a part of everyday living.

As mentioned before, Iranian culture and identity is a combination of Islamic and Iranian traditions. Therefore, the household events are a combination of religious and Iranian customs. All of these events influence the home arrangement and atmosphere for a period of time. For example, praying takes place on the floor; hence, it is necessary to have a clean floor. Therefore, the necessity for keeping the floor extremely clean for daily praying has resulted in a sensitive culture for cleanliness<sup>24</sup>. This, combined with traditions like cleaning the whole house for the Persian New Year, sensitivity to the need for cleanliness to provide ideal hospitality, and keeping the floor clean for sitting, has created a home culture that is highly concerned with cleanliness. In terms of atmosphere, each of these daily habits and yearly traditions produce certain atmospheres which experiencing them far from home provoke emotions in regard to homeland.

Apart from the intentional efforts to create an Iranian atmosphere, there are some moments where an atmosphere is perceived with the help of senses as a reminder of Iran. When I asked Shadi to share her experiences over here that reminded her of Iran, she described: "Our neighbour is in an Arab family, they came five or six months ago, they play *Azan* five times a day and the first time I heard it, I got goose bumps. I couldn't believe I was hearing it here... still it is weird for me. It reminds me of sadness and chagrin and all the sad memories." Hearing *Azan* several times a day connected Shadi with her homeland but in an inconvenient way. This sound connected two geographical locations within her diasporic

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<sup>24</sup> Muslims are advised to pray with a clean body and clean clothes and in a clean place as otherwise the prayer might not be accepted.

home “as a site of historical identification” and the process of “re-memory” has evoked her feelings about her previous home (Tolia-Kelly, 2010: 3-4).

The way that Mina described her feelings about Iran and her experiences of home, evokes a range of atmospheric qualities. She talked about her sensory experiences at home and outside of home and how they connect her with memories of Iran. “The sound of *Azan*... sometimes I hear it passing through Muslim neighbourhoods, it reminds me of Iran every time. It is so touching; sometimes there are things from your childhood like a smell or a sound that reminds me of Iran, I grew up in Iran, a Muslim country, so every time I hear *Azan*, I remember Iran.” The sound of *Azan* is a reminder of Iran both for Mina and Shadi although with different meanings. For Shadi it is a reminder of unpleasant memories while for Mina it is a sound that connects her to homeland.

Living in a small studio apartment with its limitations, caused Negar’s home to be a space that responds to her primary needs and is not a place for representing her cultural background. Negar was asked about any diasporic experiences that reminded her of Iran; she replied that they vary from sensory experiences that expand from hearing an Iranian song or Iranian conversation to social and religious behaviours:

Once, I was here, and I heard the sound of Iranian music, it was really interesting for me, so I was sure that I have an Iranian neighbour. Or sometimes, I can hear someone who I assume is the same person talking loudly on the phone in Persian. It is shocking a little bit. Another thing, I am living in a Muslim neighbourhood, there is a mosque on the way to my home, this mosque and the people who are going there remind me of Iran so much. On religious occasions, like *Ashura* and Islamic *Eids*, there are so many cars parked, it is exactly like Iran because all the Muslims are coming to pray. Another thing that reminds me of Iran socially is that, a bit further than the mosque, every morning when I go to work, I see so many workers waiting to be picked for construction work. It reminds me of workers waiting for work in the big squares of Tehran.

These experiences provided a moment that connects her with her personal memories of Iran, like the workers’ daily routines, but it is not an Iranian specific behaviour that connects Negar to Iran based on her personal perception. It is an Iranian atmosphere perceived by the subject, as Böhme discussed in his notion of atmosphere and it connects two locations by the help of *re-memory* as described by Tolia Kelly.

Mina discussed how she creates an Iranian atmosphere in her home alone and with other Iranian friends with the help of music. Music is played in her home every day to avoid the feeling of loneliness. “I am addicted to music; the first thing I do in the morning is turn on my laptop and play some music. The reason might be because I don’t want to feel I am alone.” Iranian music is also used during her gatherings with her friends as a celebration of culture and common memories. “We enjoy Iranian songs together a lot. We listen to Hayedeh (a popular singer of Iranian classical music), we turn off the lights and we sing together.”

In Sahar's experience there were occasions that sharing Persian food, socialising with other Iranians and staying committed to Iranian traditions were not enough to create the same atmosphere that can be experienced in Iran during New Year. "I made a small *Haft-seen*<sup>25</sup> and we were invited to our friends' house for the New Year dinner<sup>26</sup>, but in here it was not the same as it was in Iran. It wasn't the same atmosphere." Sahar was not the only respondent who remarked that the special atmosphere in Iran during New Year could only be felt in Iran. All the other respondents highlighted this time of the year as their favourite time to visit Iran because of the atmosphere. For example, Elaheh compared the atmosphere of the Persian New Year in Iran with the New Year celebration in England:

... the whole country is celebrating the same thing; you can feel it in the streets. I enjoy the moment that seems it is being stretched, it feels longer... In Iran, people are in the street from many days before, to be prepared, and even after the New Year when all the streets are empty,<sup>27</sup> it is actually helping to make me feel it is taking longer. I think that is why I like to be there.

Mina also referred to the special atmosphere of New Year in Iran with sensory qualities and mentions she loves to be in Iran those days because of "Iran's atmosphere, the smell of Iran, the feeling of *Farvardin*<sup>28</sup>, the goldfish and *Sabzeh*<sup>29</sup>." Mina remarked that she tries to travel to Iran during *Nowruz*<sup>30</sup> because of the pleasant atmosphere in the country and among people. She also referred to the friendly and warm atmosphere of her homeland in comparison to her current environment: "The warm atmosphere of my family and good food, that's what I miss the most. Iran has a warmer environment, people are warmer and they are so hospitable, I don't want to say who is better but the feeling that I get is better. Some things are better here and some other things are better there." Making a *Haft-seen* table is an attempt to create the same New Year atmosphere and to show the commitment to the Persian traditions that is practiced every year in the Iranian diasporic homes of the respondents. It is an act to reconstruct Iranian identity by reconnecting to the personal and shared memories of homeland to provide a platform to be able to share it with others. Regardless of being religious or not, living in a Muslim country has created a shared memory of homeland for the respondents. They all associate certain religious events with Iran, whether it is a positive or a negative memory. Shared cultural memories are also applied in order to create certain Iranian atmospheres by the help of food, music and hosting others. Cultural habits such as hospitality or celebrating the Persian New Year shape the daily and

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<sup>25</sup> *Haft-seen* is the table setting for *Nowruz* (the first day of spring) during the Persian New Year. It includes seven items that start with the letter 's' in the Persian alphabet, each item symbolises a meaning to wish for the upcoming year. It is accompanied with goldfish, the Quran or Hafiz Poetry, mirrors and painted eggs.

<sup>26</sup> *Sabzi polo- Mahi*, Persian rice with herbs served with fried fish.

<sup>27</sup> Persian New Year holiday is the longest and most important holiday in Iran for two weeks. In big cities like Tehran, the city is very crowded for the preparation for New Year and suddenly it becomes empty of people as most of the people go on a trip after the New Year celebration.

<sup>28</sup> The first month in the Iranian calendar.

<sup>29</sup> Wheat or lentil sprouts grown in a dish symbolising life and rebirth (one of the *Haft-seen* elements).

<sup>30</sup> The first day of the Persian New Year, meaning new day.

yearly routines of the household. These cultural routines are a reminder of Iranian atmosphere that are regularly recreated in the diasporic home (figure 4.37).

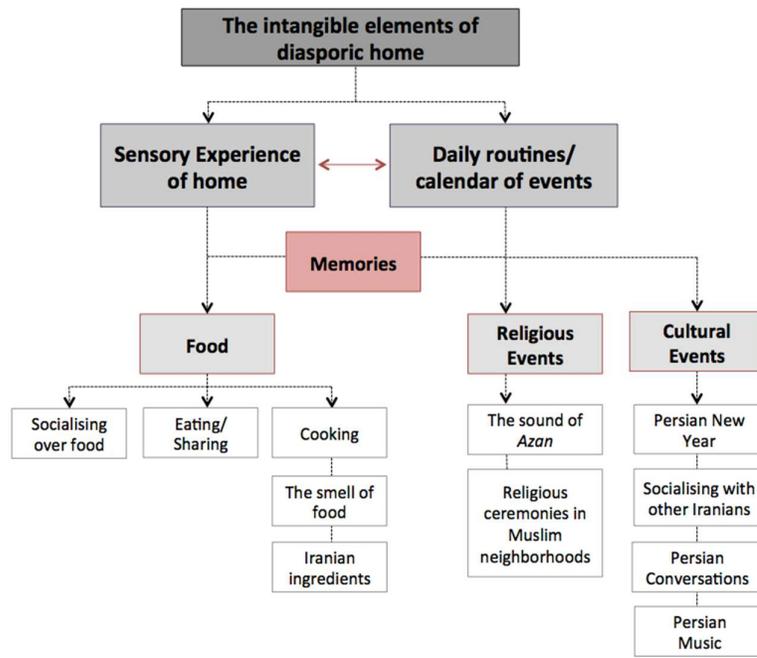


Figure 4.37 An overview of intangible elements and their relationship in the Iranian diasporic homes.

### 4.2.3 The in-between

The in-between elements are examined in two parts, the general spatial quality at home and the cultural/spatial elements of the Iranian home that each play a role in the making of atmosphere. These elements are discussed in regard to the sense of homeliness and also the previous experience of the Iranian home. The connection with the outside, however, did not develop through the conversations as significantly as it was expected and it was limited to random discussions about privacy and the thresholds of home.

#### 4.2.3.1 The spatial qualities: light/nature...

One of the issues that received frequent comment from the respondents was the limitation of their diasporic home in relation to the quality of space such as size, natural light and access to nature. These were mentioned as factors that improve the spatial quality of home and provide a better sense of home. The majority of the respondents have experienced living in a house with a big garden and with access to natural light and this has influenced their expectations of home.

I explain the significance of these themes by examining the respondents' descriptions of their ideal home. Living in a spacious home with spaces that have access to nature and benefit

from natural light is how the respondents described their ideal home. The ability to have privacy and autonomy at home was also remarked upon as a highly desired factor for the ideal home of the respondents. They were asked about their ideal home to examine how their desired home is influenced by their previous experienced homes. This would help to link the current home with the past home and the future home, to be able to analyse the role of cultural and diasporic experience on this process.

Hoda said that her ideal home: “should be a home that, if it has several floors, it would be all yours, and you will not have neighbours that are close to you, window to window. Also, that your door entrance will not be shared with anyone else.” Hoda’s concern with privacy is apparent in her ideal home as well. She already highlighted her desire for privacy in her home in Iran and her diasporic home. Privacy stands out as a main factor in her ideal home that seems to be influenced by her childhood home that was a one-storey house with a garden.

Elaheh has a similar image of her ideal home but mixed with modern elements that benefits from the privacy of a house and the freshness of a garden. “My ideal home, I like it to be a big one-storey home with a back garden that has long floor windows, so minimal with no walls and nothing in the middle of the window. Have you seen those movies with flat houses that have floor windows, surrounded by a garden?” Her current home does not seem to be linked to her ideal home.

The ideal home for Mina is a home with a very big garden, like her childhood home. She had a very specific expectation and defined her ideal home in detail. “My ideal home should have a really big garden; this might be influenced by my major... I like it to be a big house with a big garden and with a beautiful design”. She linked this ideal image with her previous homes in Iran and explained:

In the home where I grew up in Iran, we had a garden. We lived there until I was 16 and then we moved to an apartment. That house had a very big and beautiful garden. I remember my father designed it in a way that we had grapevine arches and we could see the grapes hanging from it. It felt great to see that every morning. Maybe the main reason for my interest in having a garden comes from my teenage years.

Leila, on the other hand, wants a very modern home; she is not very concerned with showing her cultural background as long as her house responds to her taste. “My ideal home is a modern home. I don’t believe in sticking to my culture. But you can see some touches from my culture, I don’t like to expose my personality through so many things.” She explained those “touches” as applying colours associated with Iranian culture or having very small artefacts.

The ideal home for Negar was the opposite of her diasporic home, which was a studio apartment. “My ideal home should have so much free space, having separated spaces with separated functions. I do care about the design of the interior with decorations; it should have

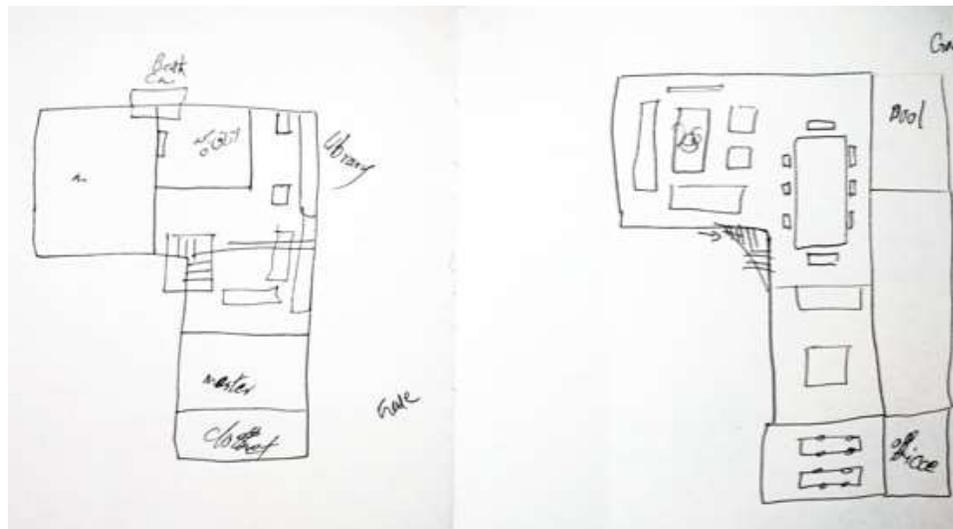
so many glazed areas with long windows and it should have so much light. I like colour; by colour I mean different colours but in a harmonic way. I don't want to colour it all in white or by one colour". Having extra, separated spaces that are defined for different functions and having access to the natural light combined with the ability and freedom to decorate her home are the characteristics of her ideal home that are influenced by the limitations of her current diasporic home.

Shadi also had a clear image of her ideal future home. She explained that one day she found a photo of a house that fitted into how she imagined her ideal home; since then, she has kept the photo in her computer and looks at it every day (figures 4.38 and 4.39).

I look at it almost every day so that I can remember what I imagined for my home. It is a two storey L-shaped home with a gate. When you enter, it has a green area; there is a roundabout that you need to pass to be able to get to home. It has a garage where you can park the cars so that they won't leave them outside. The windows are different from this image, they are bigger. In the living room we will have a big sofa set that it is not L-shaped but the way we put it is L-shaped with a TV. According to what I need the plan and spaces change. For example, it didn't have an office before but because I am working at home now, I added an office.



**Figure 4.38** The picture of an L-shaped home that Shadi found closest to the image of her ideal home. She checks the photo every day and always looks around in different neighbourhoods in London, in case she finds it in reality. However, she is not planning to purchase a house right now.



**Figure 4.39** Shadi draws her own plan for her ideal home. The right drawing is the first floor plan and left is the second floor.

She has a vivid image of the spaces that she personalises and adjusts according to the changes in her life. She even locates the furniture and she adds more spaces based on what she needs over time. She used her imagination to create the interior in relationship to the exterior by adding more space and redesigning the windows. It is notable that her ideal home has a poor fit with her life in London, as this photo appears to come from an American context.

The study of the respondents' ideal homes, combined with their perceptions of home, reveals different aspects of the making and remaking of their original Iranian homes. The desired future home in most of the cases is a combination of their home in the past (childhood) and what they do not have in their current home. Apart from the spatial limitations of their homes, what seems to be missing is the ability to change and to adjust their rental accommodation, an inability that impacts upon their sense of home and, ultimately, self. However, living in a different society and experiencing autonomy in a diasporic home while being challenged by its limitations has made them know what they want. The current diasporic homes are considered as transitory homes to the ideal home of the future, a home that not only benefits from modern life but also gives the user the freedom to express her personal and cultural self. At the same time, the ideal home of the future is influenced by the idealised home of the past. Gardens, light and big spaces are the characteristics of the homes that were experienced in Iran but are missed in the current homes and, thus, are yearned for as the ideal.

#### **4.2.3.2 The spatial/ cultural elements: Hierarchy, hospitality and cleanliness**

Hierarchy and hospitality are the themes that explain how the boundaries of home are defined for the comfort of both the household and the guests. Additionally, there is a high sensitivity to cleanliness and representing a clean house is associated the household willingness to host others. Floor is another sensitive matter in terms of cleanliness. A clean floor is a necessity for floor sitting. Therefore, hierarchy hospitality, and cleanliness are discussed as elements that represent the Iranian-ness and are influential in creating Iranian atmosphere in the diasporic home of Iranian women.

##### **4.2.3.2.1 Hierarchy**

'Hierarchy' in this section is defined in relation to the notion of public and private and the idea of thresholds in defining the private territory of home. The flexibility in defining thresholds of home in different situations provides different atmospheric qualities at home. The atmosphere of home with family and loved ones is different to the atmosphere at home on the occasion of hosting guests. The hierarchical thresholds at home are defined to provide the autonomy and the privacy required for the household while they can be flexibly redefined to welcomingly host others. The diagrams depicted in this chapter aim to represent the spatial division of public and private within home. These diagrams are complementary to the ones in the previous chapter which illustrated guest and host movements. The diagrams in this chapter, however, add another dimension to the previous ones as they represent the thresholds of home for the household itself.

Experiencing atmosphere at home is how Leila remembers her home in Iran. She mentioned that the living room is the image she always remembers from their home. "Because it is so cosy and separated from the other spaces. It is close to the kitchen and I really like the atmosphere that we are all close to each other." Therefore, besides the architectural arrangement of home the atmosphere created by the household closeness is the most remembered by her. A combination of functional spatial arrangement and family closeness created a favourable image of home for Leila (figure 4.40).



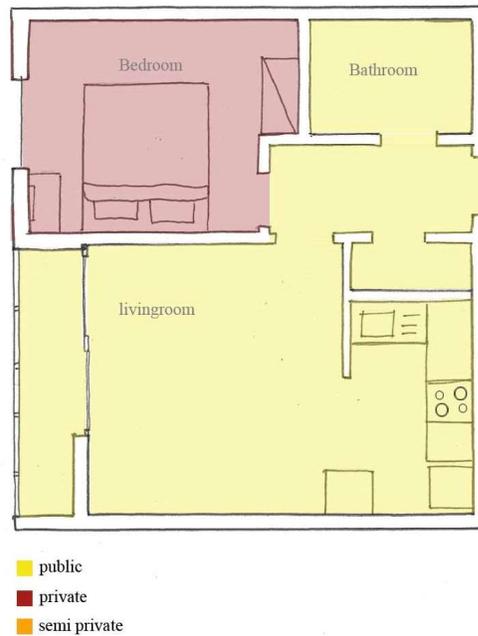
Figure 4.40 The public and private division in Leila's home.

Elaheh remarked upon the presence of people at home as an essential factor in creating a pleasant atmosphere that encourages her to go home. "I think the presence of the people that I like, makes me want to go home. That is why I really don't care about the house appearance, the people at home are important for me; they are the ones who give spirit to the home. The spirit of the home is more important for me than the physicality of home." Because of the restrictions caused by living in a room in a shared house for a short time, her room was kept simple without any extra decoration but the "spirit" of her home provided the sense of homeliness for her (figure 4.41). She signified that the design and the architecture of her house in Sheffield gave her a sense of belonging: "the flat was physically so cosy. First you entered the living room then you walked a bit to get to the bedroom, then the bedroom was very private. I felt it doesn't matter if I am in England or on Mars or wherever, this 3x4 bedroom is just mine. Also because it was far from the entrance I liked it." The spatial design of her house, which responded to her need for having her own private space, combined with her financial independence resulted in achieving a sense of home.



Figure 4.41 The public and private division in Elaheh's home.

For Azar, the ways in which the thresholds of home are defined has a great influence on making a memorable atmosphere. She mentioned that the atmosphere of her teenage home was very important in remembering that home. "I loved that house because I was living with my parents, it was a really good atmosphere, this still exists but that period of my life was very good." In terms of her diasporic home, she stated that she feels her Sheffield home atmosphere is very Iranian whenever her boyfriend's parents come to visit them from Iran; although it is not her most favourite atmosphere. "When my boyfriend's parents are in the house it is a very Iranian atmosphere, but the atmosphere I like best is when I am alone." Again she related this interest of hers to her experience in her parents' home while growing up. The thresholds of Azar's childhood home were defined in a way that not only provided closeness with her family members, but also gave her a sense of autonomy by shaping her world within the privacy of her room. She found that she needed this autonomy in her diasporic home when guests came to stay for a long time. Therefore, a favourable atmosphere for her is when she can attain her privacy at home (figure 4.42).



**Figure 4.42** The thresholds of public and private in Azar's home.

When Hoda was asked about the most pleasant atmosphere in her home, she referred to how uncomfortable she is in her office and how her home is a refuge from her office atmosphere. Hoda also referred to the Iranian atmosphere of her home when her parents come to visit and compared the atmosphere of the home with times when only one of the parents came to visit. However, she mentioned that as much as she enjoys the family atmosphere of her diasporic home with her parents' presence, she feels the necessity of having her own space at home. Hoda linked her desire of having a separate space in her home while her parents are in the house with her diasporic experience as she mentioned she had got used to living alone and living independently and that after a few weeks she wishes to be able to have that space again (figure 4.43).

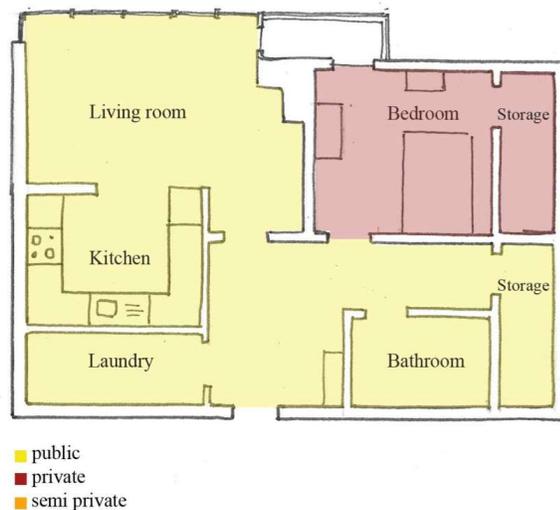


Figure 4.43 The thresholds of public and private in Hoda's home.

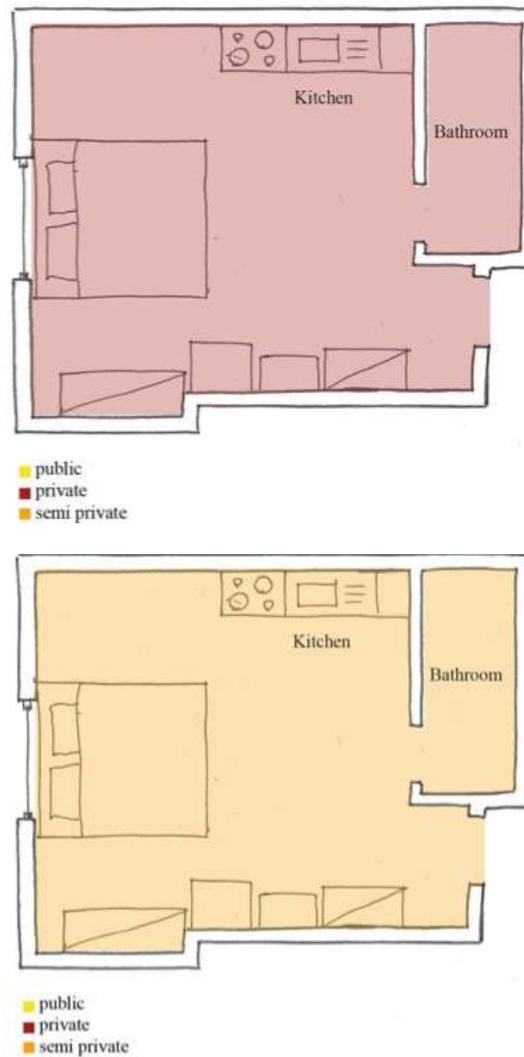
The threshold and hierarchy of public and private can be defined in different situations to create different levels of privacy and comfort. The household defines its thresholds in relation to the others and among its members. Also, the ways in which thresholds are defined on different occasions can produce pleasant or unpleasant atmospheres at home according to how responsive the home thresholds are to the household's privacy and autonomy.

#### 4.2.3.2.2 Hospitality

Comfort and privacy at home has a shifting position when it comes to hospitality. When a household host guests at home the comfort of the guests is a priority. As was discussed previously, in Iranian homes a lot of effort is put into making the guests feel at home. It is common for Iranian homes to allocate a separate space with more elegant furniture and design for hosting people, aiming to represent an ideal image (a good *Zaher*, see chapter 3). This may be more or less the same in any other culture but what marks hospitality in Iranian culture is Iranians' attitude to respect. Inviting someone (sometimes even a person they are meeting for the first time) to home is an expression of deep respect and being hospitable is directly linked with having respect for the guests.

In this section, I analyse hospitality in regard to how this cultural behaviour is practised in the limitations of diasporic experience, considering that the social interactions and spatial capacities are more limited in diasporic life than in Iran. Therefore, the creation of the atmosphere of the Iranian home within an Iranian diasporic home will be examined through the perspective of hospitality at home. For that purpose, each respondent was asked about her concern with hospitality; do they ever host in their diasporic home and, if they do, how different is their experience in comparison to Iran? They were also asked about how different their home looks when they host guests in comparison to the ordinary days, in order to

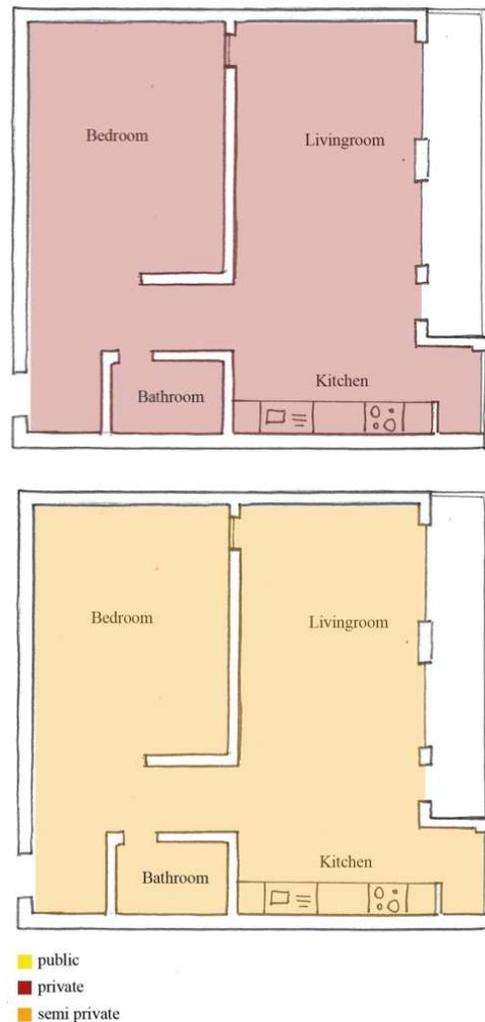
examine the *Zaher-Baten* relationship in diasporic experience. In that sense, their concern with hospitality in their diasporic home can be compared with their Iranian home by examining to what level they forego their comfort to make their guests more comfortable. At the same time, creating an Iranian atmosphere at home by offering hospitality is examined.



**Figure 4.44** Thresholds of public and private in Negar's home. The right diagram shows her home on the occasion of hosting.

For some of the respondents, for example Negar, hosting others at home was not an option because of the spatial limitations of the house (figure 4.44). Similarly, Leila mentioned she hosts a few friends in her diasporic home, but that is not comparable to the number of times

she hosted friends at home in Iran. She found the reason in the different lifestyle in England where friends meet up outside the house. On the occasions when she did have some friends over, she explained the influence of British society on her attitude to hospitality. She described that her cleaning attitude has changed, towards being more concerned with cleanliness than tidiness and that she does not aim to show a perfect image as her house because she believes everyone has a moderate attitude in this new context. For Mina, on the other hand, hospitality was a significant concern. She considered that hosting people was a way of representing her cultural identity and her background (figure 4.45).



**Figure 4.45** The thresholds of public and private in Mina's home. The second figure depicts her home on the occasion of hosting others.

She described herself as a very social person that enjoys the “friendly atmosphere” of having people over. I was invited to a party she held a day after our interview. She hosted her guests with traditional Iranian food and snacks; she was very hospitable and was constantly moving between her kitchen and her living room to be able to check her food and her guests. She talked about the food she cooked and gave advice about where to buy the ingredients. She also talked to her guests about the new handicrafts she had brought from Iran. Consequently, she created an atmosphere that encompasses both Iranian and diasporic potentials.

For the rest of the respondents, much was dependent on whether the guests were Iranian or not. For them, the Iranian friends were hosted at home while the international friends were met outside the house. Sahar, on the other hand, shared her experience in hosting a non-Iranian friend at her home and mentioned her effort to communicate with non-Iranians upon her arrival that led to her friendship with one of the University staff.

I still cannot speak English fluently and at the beginning, when I couldn't understand very well, that had a huge impact on my relationship with other people. But my British friend was so patient because she was responsible for communicating with international students. So, she tries to understand and she talks slowly... but with the other students at the university, I felt I couldn't speak the same level as them or understand the jokes....

When Sahar was asked about her concern with hospitality and her home appearance she replied, “Yes, because in Iran we care to present our house in the most luxurious way, you can't compare it to here at all. I can't imagine if I were living in Iran, I would have lived in such a house. It is another story.” This reveals the impact of migration on her expectations from home while she still practices similar habits of hospitality within these limitations (figure 4.46).

Additionally, she referred to the significance of the dominant atmosphere in the society that influences her effort to practise the Iranian traditions. “I try to not to care about people's judgment but it affects me unconsciously. I feel, I need to have a cleaner home or host people with better plates, the society's atmosphere has a great impact.” Meanwhile, she recalled that the host society culture has made it easier for her to host people. Therefore, she hosts people without being extremely concerned with Iranian regulations of hospitality.



Figure 4.46 The thresholds of public and private in Sahar's home.

Shadi mentioned that all the guests she hosts in her home are Iranian and she meets non-Iranian friends outside her home (figure 4.47). Shadi's cooking habits in relation to Iranian-ness highlight the importance of hospitality as she only cooks complicated traditional Iranian food for her guests. For her, cooking is a form of welcoming. She also talked about the type of ingredients and utensils she brings from Iran. "I couldn't find the knife and small forks for serving fruit so I asked my father to bring me some".

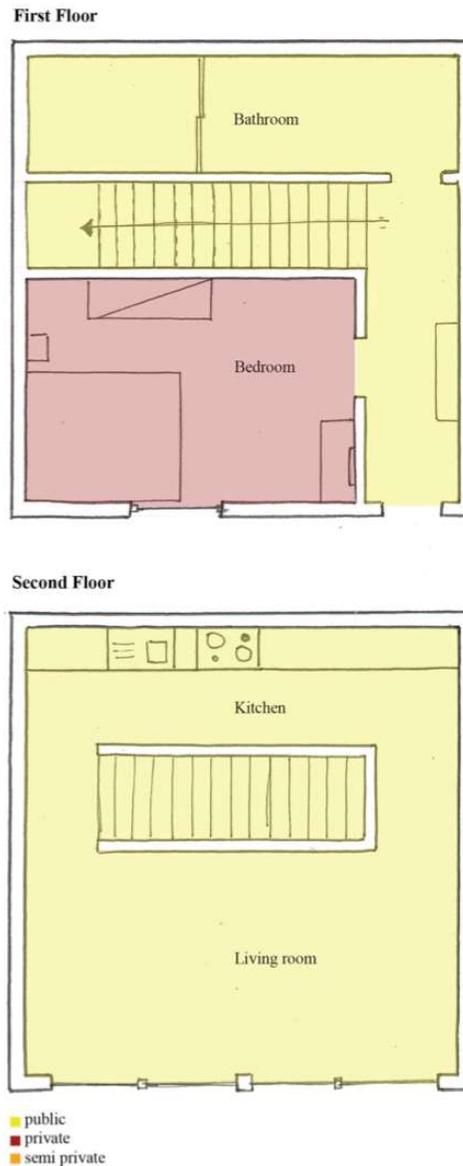


Figure 4.47 Thresholds of public and private in Shadi's home.

Elaheh's concern with being a great host has not changed in her diasporic home although she may not have the same level of sensitivity that she had in Iran, since her guests have the same attitude as well. She compared her hospitable attitude in her diasporic home with her approach in Iran as the same but addressed that she has never been very strict about it. "I might not clean my own room but I clean the room that the guests are going to stay", said Elaheh. She saw cleanliness as a way to show respect to her guest by providing a comfortable space for them. Therefore, rather than being concerned with representing an

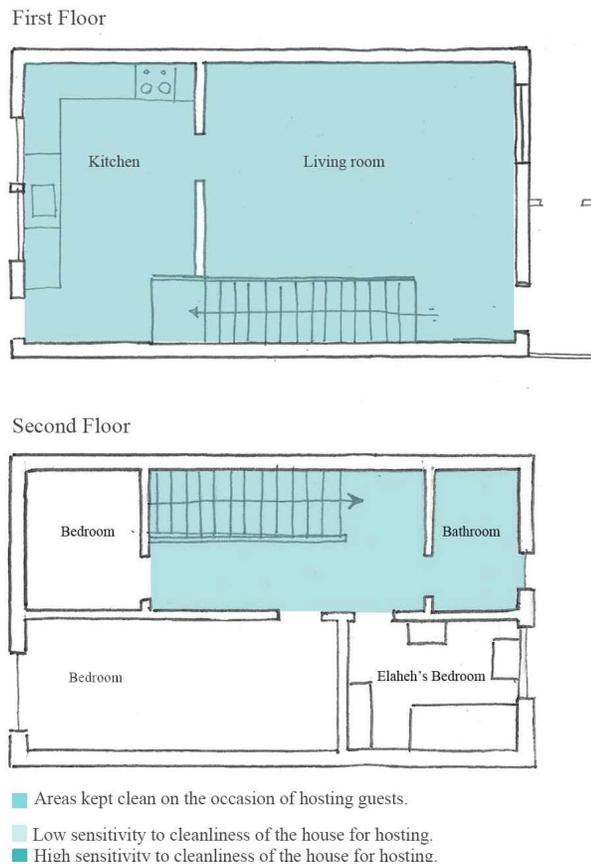
ideal image (ideal *Zaher*), her sensitivity to hospitality is only centred on depicting a welcoming attitude to her guests.

Azar explained that her mother's attitude in preparing the house for guests has influenced her behaviour in hosting others; keeping the appearance acceptable without investing too much effort. However, she has different attitudes for different guests, she prepares her home based on their expectations and the reactions she may receive meaning represent a cleaner house for those she is less comfortable with.

Questions about hosting people in the diasporic home revealed several factors with regard to the lifestyle of these Iranian women and the influence of society on their attitudes on regulating their households. The most noticeable aspect in relation to hospitality is the significant decrease in its intensity in comparison to their homes in Iran. The main reason was the home's physical limitations. The second reason was the host society's culture—that hosting others at home is not as popular as in Iran. Therefore, meeting people can be happening in different forms in the public realm. On the other hand, the *Zaher* and the *Baten* are closer to each other for the participant in the case of hospitality as their concern with showing an ideal image (*Zaher*) has disappeared as a result of living in a different cultural context. Living in a different society may have limited the habit of hospitality in some sense, but the majority of respondents stated that living in a society that is less concerned with the complexities of hospitality has made hosting others easier since both the host and the guest are less concerned with achieving a perfect level of hospitality. For the ones who still prefer to host friends at home, hospitality is applied to share their cultural background with others within their home, such as Mina, or is used as a factor to gather other Iranians in a realm to create and to share a sense of Iranian-ness. Either way, hospitality is employed as an approach of atmosphere-making with the help of a series of tangible and intangible elements such as objects, food and sensory experience.

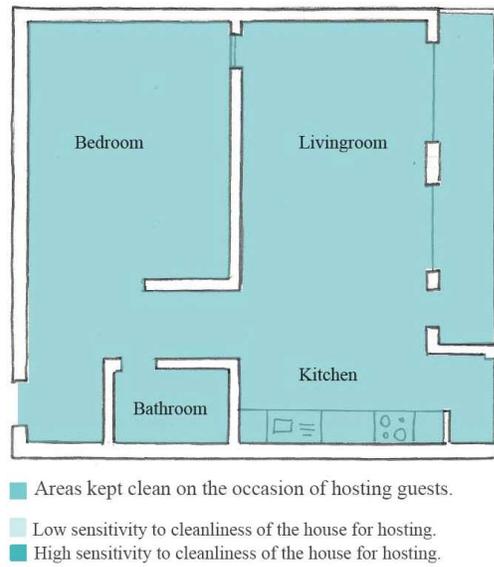
#### **4.2.3.2.3 Cleanliness**

Cleanliness is another theme that significantly influences the sense of homeliness. Several respondents mentioned that not being aware of the cleanliness of certain furniture at home has affected their interaction with home spaces. Cleanliness was highlighted during the interviews in relation to hospitality. Taking extra care with cleanliness is a representation of the host's respect for the guests and meanwhile is an attempt to show an ideal image from the household through home (an ideal *Zaher*).



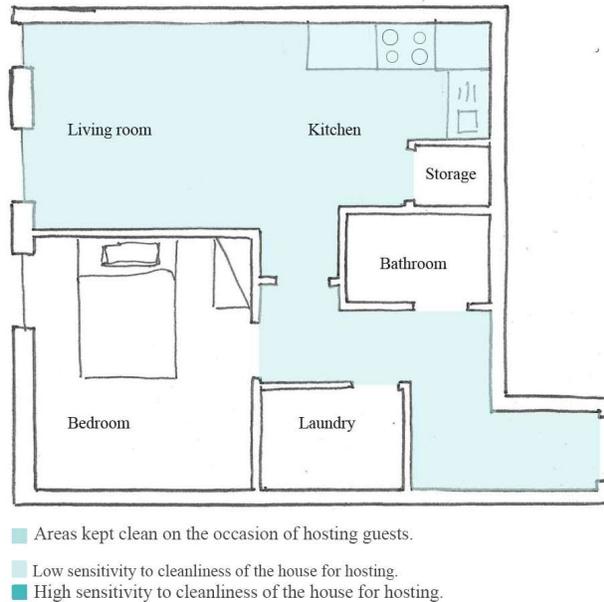
**Figure 4.48** The intensity of cleanliness and the spatial division it creates in Elaheh's home.

In the interviews, cleanliness was felt to be a cultural factor specific to Iranian women. In some cases, when the respondents were asked about the Iranian-ness of their home, they referred to their concern with cleaning as a representative element of their culture in their diasporic home. For example, Elaheh discussed her concern with cleanliness as her “Iranian touch” to her home. “I think if you look around the house there are some things that you can recognise that are coming from a culture, like the cleanliness of the bathroom, like using the air freshener spray, or moist paper. I think my touch is the caring for keeping things clean” (figure 4.48). Similarly, Mina explained that her home level of cleanliness looks different when she is alone in comparison to when she has guests. “I definitely care about that; in general I am very clean and neat. When I am alone, my table may be messy but when I have guests, I really care about having a clean and tidy house, unless I have unexpected guests when I have not had a chance to clean” (figure 4.49). She specified cleanliness of her house along with Iranian food and objects, as an element that represents her culture. “The other thing [Iranian element] is cleanliness; Iranian women and Iranian girls are very clean, especially in housework, and cooking.” She precisely talked about Iranian women’s concern with cleanliness as a factor specific to Iranian culture.



**Figure 4.49** The intensity of cleanliness and the spatial division it creates in Mina's home.

For Leila, living in diaspora has changed her attitude towards her home cleanliness and has affected her previous habits, such as sitting and lying down on the floor. "Because it is not clean and I don't clean it that much, I am lazier here, which is more personal. But I am being more sensitive that I can't lie down on the floor anymore" (figure 4.50).



**Figure 4.50** The intensity of cleanliness and the spatial division it creates in Leila's home

Hoda, on the other hand, considered having a very neat and clean home as a necessity (figures 4.51 and 4.52). This sometimes can affect her hospitality too. She mentioned that, although she always keeps the bathroom and living room clean and tidy, if it is not at a level that she feels comfortable with, she does not invite friends inside her home. “I don’t let anyone enter my home if it is not clean. I have an Iranian friend, sometimes she comes in but if my home is messy, I wouldn’t invite her, I don’t even pretend to invite her.” She remarked upon her sensitivity to cleanliness as a combination of both personal and cultural matters that is linked to her experience in Iran. “In Iran it was also possible to go to people’s homes when they looked messy, but it was less so than here. I am not the kind of person to judge people by the cleanliness of their home or to feel uncomfortable. But in my own house, I like it to be neat (less objects around), everything located in the right place, especially if someone is coming. I don’t like them to see my home messy.”



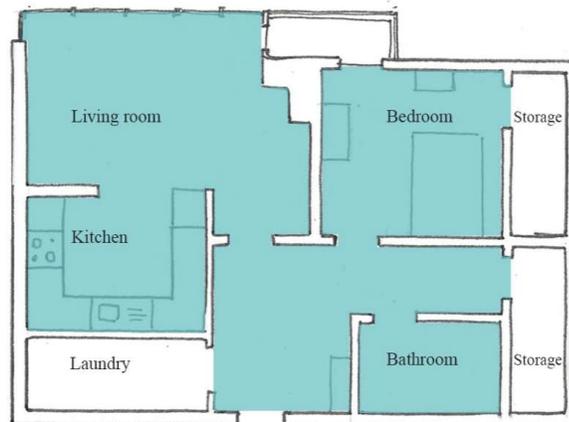
**Figure 4.51** Hoda’s home was tremendously clean and neat with no extraneous objects and with no trace of how she accommodates her daily activities within her diasporic home. She mentioned that the dining table is usually where she works and stated that she removed her laptop and her papers and books from the table and placed them in the storage area in her living room because she was hosting me that day.



- Areas kept clean on the occasion of hosting guests with high sensitivity on ideal cleanliness.
- Low sensitivity to cleanliness of the house for hosting.
- High sensitivity to cleanliness of the house for hosting.

**Figure 4.52** The intensity of cleanliness and the spatial division it creates in Hoda's home.

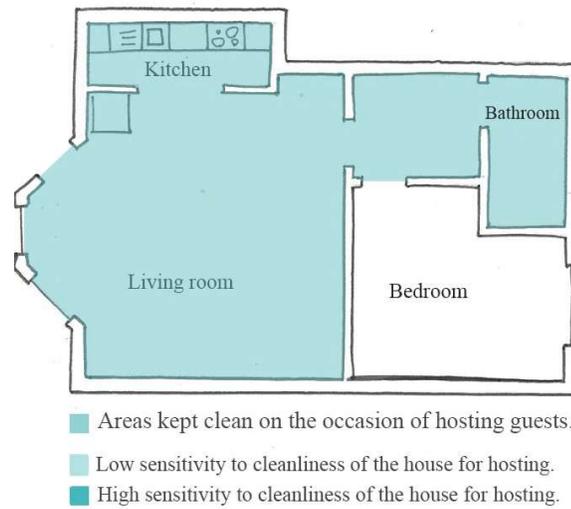
For Azar, temporary cleanliness is acceptable for hosting people unless she is not comfortable with her guests. But cleanliness is also linked to a pleasant atmosphere and a factor that creates a sense of home (figure 4.53).



- Areas kept clean on the occasion of hosting guests with high sensitivity on ideal cleanliness.
- Low sensitivity to cleanliness of the house for hosting.
- High sensitivity to cleanliness of the house for hosting.

**Figure 4.53** The intensity of cleanliness and the spatial division it creates in Azar's home.

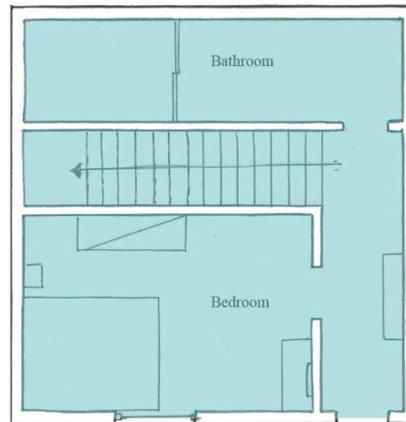
Sahar also mentioned that she tries to keep her home tidy, especially when hosting others. “I’ll do my best, but when I compare myself with the other Iranian women, I feel I am not as tasteful as they are in cleaning and tidying up my home” (figure 4.54).



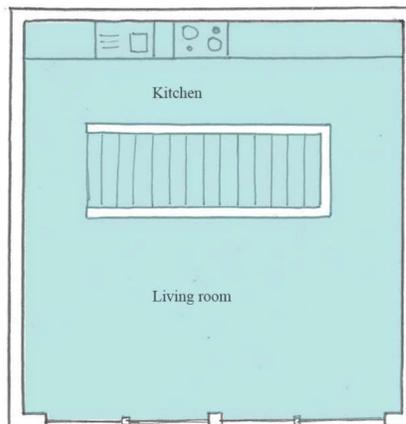
**Figure 4.54** The intensity of cleanliness and the spatial division it creates in Sahar’s home.

Additionally, Shadi explained that, when she hosts guests, her home does not look very different but it also depends on her guests (figure 4.55).

First Floor



Second Floor

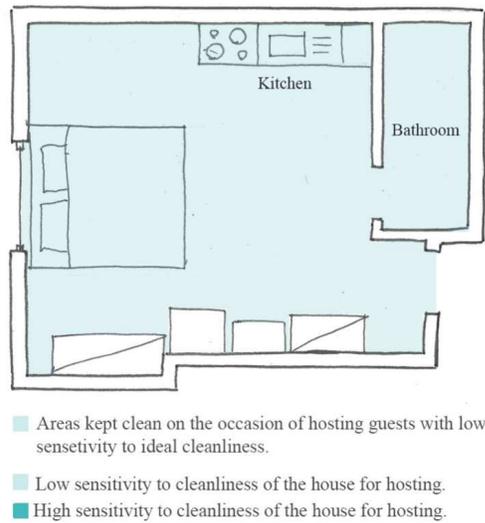


- Areas kept clean on the occasion of hosting guests.
- Low sensitivity to cleanliness of the house for hosting.
- High sensitivity to cleanliness of the house for hosting.

**Figure 4.55** The intensity of cleanliness and the spatial division it creates in Shadi's home.

She stated: "Right now you can see dust on the table. But it depends; if my husband's family are my guests, I try to make everything look perfect. But recently, as I am working full time, I am taking it easier." She continued that she is more comfortable with her friends than her relatives and her sensitivity to cleanliness and hospitality varies based on who she is hosting. This not only represents the different levels of sensitivity but also highlights the temporary identities associated through home in hosting different people. Sharing different temporary ideal images of home with others based on their expectations designates the representation of situational identities at home.

Cleanliness was one of the themes that was emphasised the most during the interviews. The respondents linked cleanliness with women's identity many times. Cleanliness was associated with Iranian-ness and as a major distinction for Iranian women's identity. It was linked to hospitality as a way of showing great respect to the guest.



**Figure 4.56** The intensity of cleanliness and the spatial division it creates in Negar's home.

Cleanliness was also mentioned during discussions of the floor-sitting habit and it revealed that many respondents stopped sitting on the floor because they were not sure about the carpets' cleanliness in their rental home. In cases like Hoda's home, the bedroom carpet was kept clean to be able to sit on the floor on probable occasions. Hoda stated that she does not sit on the floor in her current diasporic home because there is no rug, even though floor sitting was a daily habit for her in Iran. "I sat on the floor in Iran a lot, even if there was a sofa I preferred to sit on the floor and lean my back on the sofa." Hoda specified that she sits on the floor in her bedroom when she wants to dry her hair. It seems that she uses the carpet as a replacement for the Persian rug. She cares about the carpets staying clean, so she and her guests have to take off their shoes if they want to enter the bedroom (figure 4.57).



**Figure 4.57** Hoda's bedroom is the only carpeted area in her home where she sometimes sits on the floor in order to tackle her daily activities more comfortably.

Cleanliness associated with cultural representation and cultural habits is influential in the production of a certain atmosphere especially when it is combined with other themes. Floor sitting has highly influenced the regulations and the development of Iranian homes' arrangements. The modernisation of the country in the past few decades led to the modernisation of urban housing with modern furniture that has resulted in restrictions on practising this habit. However, other cultural and religious norms have ensured that the habit of floor sitting continues in Iranian culture. Sitting on the floor may not be as popular as it was in the last decades but it is still a significant part of Iranians' daily life in social, political and religious realms.

Floor sitting has now become a way of seeking additional comfort as opposed to the past, where the majority of activities were performed while seated on the floor. Sitting on the floor was mentioned, by the respondents who used to sit on the floor in Iran, as behaviour to seek more comfort in the diasporic home.

Not only did Azar sit on the floor as her daily habit growing up but she also specified that sometimes when she is working she sits on the Persian carpet brought by her boyfriend's parents in her diasporic home as it is more comfortable for her (figure 4.58).



**Figure 4.58** The carpet that Azar sits on while working.

Azar's home is almost fully carpeted with the rugs she bought in England but the way she used them to cover most of her living room and corridor floor is a reminder of her Iranian home. She also covered unusual spaces such as the balcony floor (figure 4.59). This depicts how much of the interaction with home spaces occurs on the floor, consequently representing a spatial dimension similar to Iranian homes.



**Figure 4.59** The corridor and even balcony are fully carpeted in Azar's home.

Floor sitting was a daily habit for Elaheh in her home in Iran. "I was basically seated on the floor most of the time. I feel so relaxed on the floor and I did that in all the homes that I had in Iran." She not only sat on the floor for more comfort but also occasionally ate on the floor, but she stated that having a comfortable experience sitting on the floor must be provided. "It has its basics, I don't like to sit on the cold floor, there must be rugs on the floor and I will be sure that it is clean." However, Elaheh has stopped sitting on the floor in her diasporic home because she does not feel the floor is clean. But she specified that if she ever has her own home in England, she is going to decorate a space specifically for sitting on the floor. Initiating homemaking with floor sitting emphasises the role of this habit as an Iranian custom which roots the users back to the experience of the Iranian home. Additionally, for Leila, floor sitting was a daily habit in her home in Iran and she has stopped sitting on the floor because she is not certain about the floor cleanliness.

In our home in Iran, my mum always kept the floor clean, so I was sure I could lie down. I used to sit on the floor and lean on the sofa and watch TV. I was not sitting on the floor all the time but I had the option to sit on the floor, which was happening at least once a day.... In here, sometimes I like to lie down and watch a movie, but the length of the couch is not enough, so I can't do it. In my current home, only when I am very sad and depressed, I sit on the floor. There were a few times that I sat on the floor and leaned on the sofa here too. But in Iran, I sat on the floor because I was comfortable.

Floor sitting in her diasporic home has transformed from a daily habit that serves comfort to an occasional act that happens when her mood is down. For Negar, sitting on the floor has

never been a daily habit either in her home in Iran or in her diasporic home. “The only occasion that I sat on the floor in Iran was when all the chairs for the dining table were full and I felt it is cosy to sit on the floor and eat. Even now if I have the same home as I had in Iran, I would do the same. But in here my bed is so in the way that I prefer to just eat in the bed.”

Floor sitting for Shadi also has been a sporadic behaviour. “...only if our friends were with us and we were doing something on the coffee table. For example, polishing our nails or reading something together.” She explained that she is following the same habit in her home in diaspora although everyone takes off their shoes before entering her home and all the carpets are kept clean a tall time. In her diasporic home and her floor sitting habit is limited to the times that she has to.

Shadi’s house is fully carpeted, she owns a Persian carpet and the floors are kept clean in her home but her floor-sitting habit is limited, as it was in Iran. For Negar and Shadi floor sitting is associated with hospitality, as Negar sits on the floor only to give others priority for using chairs while finding a more comfortable spot for herself on the floor and Shadi only sat on the floor for more closeness with her friends. Sahar, on the other hand, mentions that she never sat on the floor in her home in Iran and her habit has not changed in her diasporic home.

To summarise, floor sitting has been a fundamental custom in Iranian culture, although it is not as significant as it was before as a daily habit, but still has been sustained and is randomly practised in the current Iranian homes. In the diasporic home of the Iranians, because the essential circumstances such as a clean floor or rug are not an option, floor sitting has transformed into a rare habit for the ones who used to sit on the floor. Therefore, as an Iranian habit, floor sitting provokes an Iranian atmosphere at home; it is applied for presenting better hospitality while being linked to homemaking (figure 4.60).

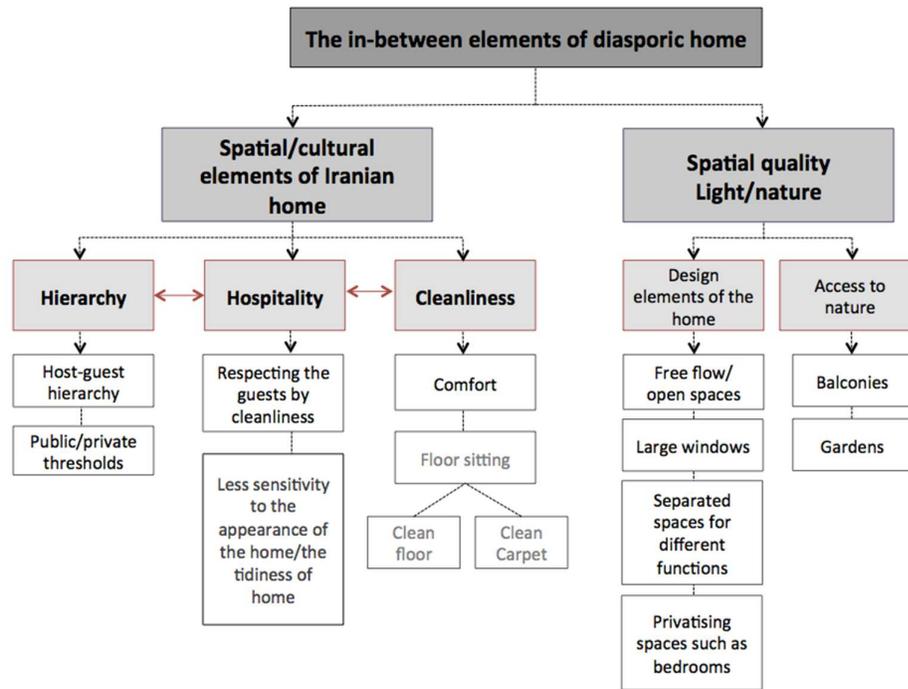


Figure 4.60 An overview of the in-between elements and their relationship in the Iranian diasporic homes.

### 4.3. A framework for the study of the Iranian home in diaspora

In the previous sections of this chapter, tangible, intangible and the elements of in-between were examined in relation to the making of home and the atmosphere of home. This categorisation helped to explain the Iranian home in different aspects, both in regard to the elements of the Iranian home itself and the diasporic experience. These themes structured a framework that scrutinised the meaning of home in relation to identity and cultural factors while highlighting specific elements in both the Iranian home and the diasporic home. The framework of tangible, intangible and in-between, which was developed by the theoretical studies, was used as a tool to examine a series of themes that were developed based on both the theoretical studies of home and the phenomenological study of Iranian home. During the interviews the developed themes were examined; this helped the process of evolution of the themes that highlighted some as more important and eliminated others. Themes such as floor sitting or the thresholds of inside/outside were not discussed as important while others such as size or cleanliness were remarked as significant (figure 4.61).

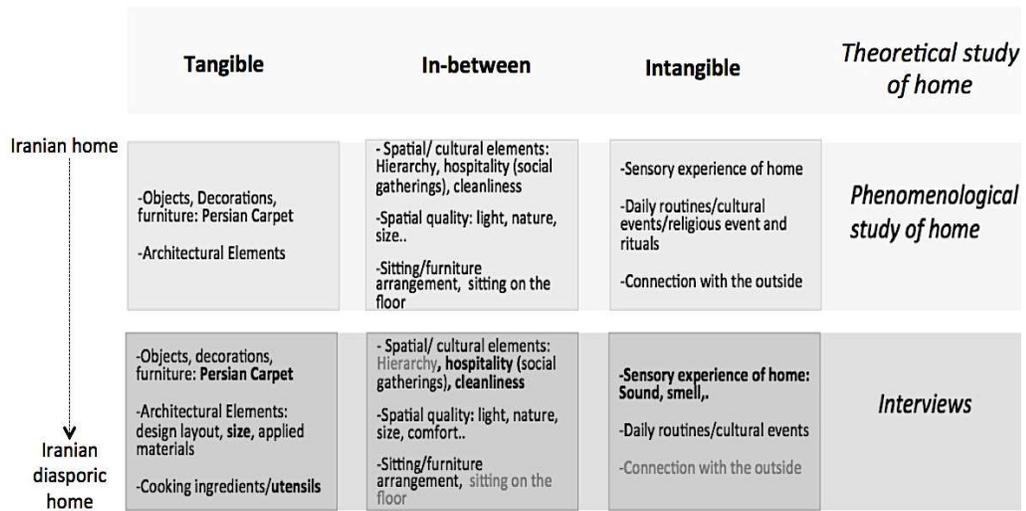
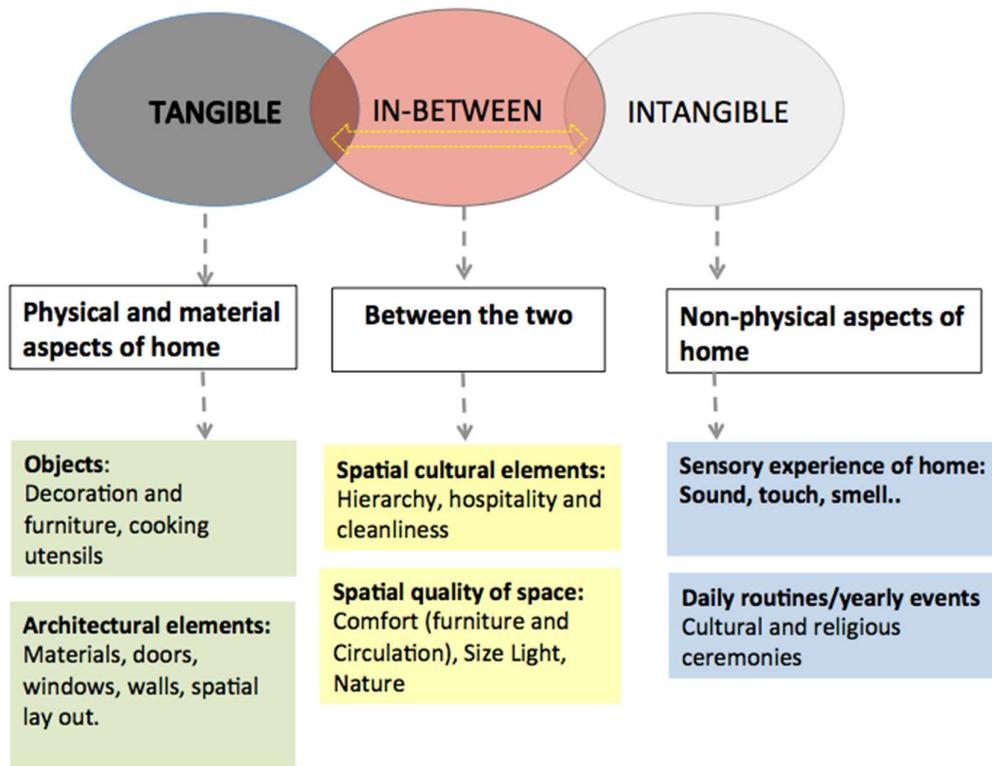


Figure 4.61 The development of the methodological framework.

Defining themes with spatial qualities, examining the home within spatial relations and representation of the data, were all conducted in order to propose an architectural analysis towards the study of home. Atmosphere as a spatial entity was proposed as a solution to the limitations of diasporic home, as making atmosphere was applied as an alternative to homemaking. Within the study of atmosphere, architectural techniques, for example drawings, were combined with the other analysis in the area of home studies to draw attention to the necessity of looking at home in both ways. Although some of these homes were not decorated to look Iranian, the traces of culture were present through transient moments and portable elements. These diasporic homes mostly provided the autonomy and privacy they required, but were lacking in other respects. The women coped with this in the knowledge that their diasporic home was a transition space on the way to their future home where they would have the freedom to express themselves as they wished.

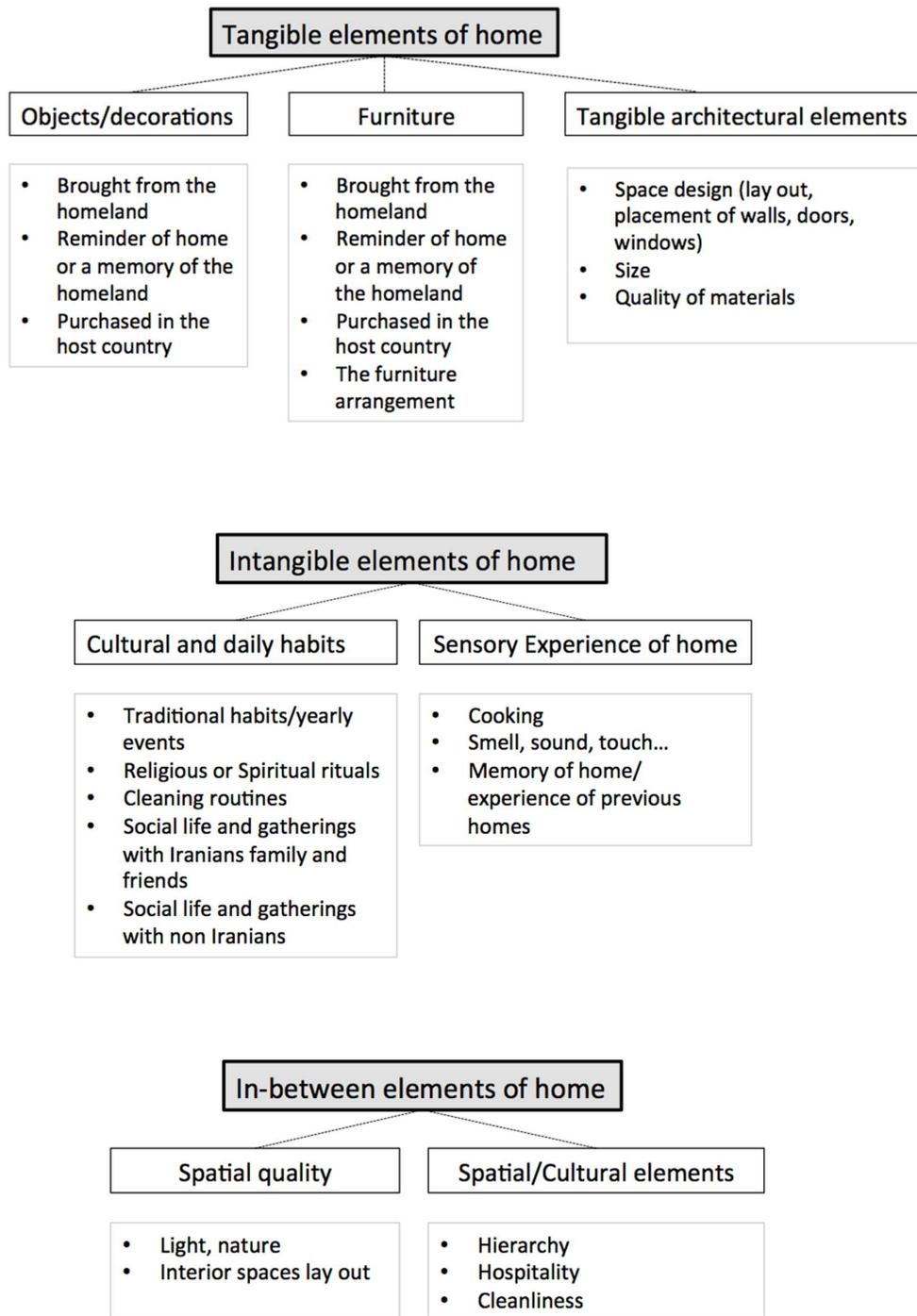
The challenge in analysing the Iranian diasporic home was to narrow down the outcomes of the research into clear and comprehensive themes while trying to retain the complexity of the study of home and the making of home in diaspora (figure 4.62).

The interview analysis helped to position the developed themes from the phenomenological studies in the context of diaspora. Some themes such as floor sitting were less relevant in diaspora while other themes such as size or light were highlighted significantly. Themes such as hospitality or hierarchy were adapted based on the circumstances of the diasporic life.



**Figure 4.62** The categorisation of data generated from the interviews into three areas of tangible, intangible and the in-between.

The majority of the respondents discussed similar point of views in regard to their diasporic home such as the size, light or lack of access to nature, but also some other randomly mentioned notions such as the quality of material or comfortable furniture—these need to be evaluated again. For that reason, the validation of the framework of themes within the structure of tangible, intangible and the in-between was designed within focus group discussions. In that sense, not only could the evaluated themes be confirmed and discussed in more detail but also they could be categorised based on the level of importance to the participants. Additionally, what was learned from the interviews was applied to the examination of the themes in an approach that is relevant to the experience of diasporic homes. For example, notions such as floor sitting that did not have a strong presence in the diasporic home were examined within the category of “furniture/sitting arrangements” (figure 4.63). Reconfigurations like this resulted in the generation of interesting and key data which brought more complexity and breadth to the examination of the Iranian diasporic home.



**Figure 4.63** The detailed categorisation of themes to be examined in the focus groups derived from comparing and analysis of figures 4.32, 4.37 and 4.60.

Figure 4.63 shows the development of a detailed framework for the study of Iranian home in diaspora. It is created based on a themed analysis of the tangible, intangible and the in-between elements discussed in this chapter. This category of themes was used in a spreadsheet format for an examination based on the level of importance during the focus groups (figure 4.64). Therefore, the framework of themes that was developed during the interviews was re-evaluated and validated in more depth and in different aspects.

Home making elements	The level of importance in creating a sense of home					Comments
	Not at all	Slightly important	Moderately important	Important	Very important	
<b>Decorations/Objects</b>						
Brought from Homeland (Iran)						
Reminder of home or a memory of homeland (Iran)						
Purchased or received in the host country (UK)						
<b>Furniture</b>						
Brought from Homeland (Iran)						
Reminder of home or a memory of homeland (Iran)						
Purchased or received in the host country (UK)						
The furniture arrangement						
<b>Tangible Architectural elements of the current home</b>						
The design of the space (placement of walls, doors, windows, etc...)						
Size (the flat/house and interior spaces)						
Quality of materials used for the architectural elements						
<b>Cultural and daily habits</b>						
Traditional habits/yearly events						
Cooking						
Religious or spiritual rituals						
Cleaning routines						
Sensory experience of home: smell, sound, touch, light, nature,...						
Memory of home (previous experience of home)						
<b>Social Life and gatherings</b>						
Gatherings with Iranian family and friends (coming from Iran or living in the UK)						
Socialising at home with family and friends (not necessarily Iranian)						

Figure 4.64 The detailed themes fitted into a structured format to be examined based on the level of importance.

Focus groups were designed for another purpose and that was to provide a better view to the respondents' perception of the Iranian home. Being linked to the phenomenological study of home presented in chapter 3, the notions of hierarchy, hospitality and cleanliness were re-examined within an activity in the focus group involving discussion of photographs of different types of Iranian homes.

### Summary

In this chapter the respondents and their homes were introduced, then an analysis was presented discussing their notion of diasporic life, home and homemaking in diaspora. The spatial aspect of these homes was examined based on a combination of visual methods (drawings and sketches) that were recorded during the visit to these homes and the content analysis of the interview discussions. The data was analysed based on the tangible, intangible and the in-between framework while highlighting the themes that were developed based on a phenomenological study of the Iranian home. Based on this analysis, a framework for the study of Iranian home in diaspora was proposed. In the next chapter, this framework is examined and validated in more detail in the form of focus group discussions. In that guise, a subtler framework of themes for the study and for understanding the Iranian home in diaspora will be formed.

**End of volume 1**



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**Home Remaking: An architectural study of home in diaspora  
in contemporary Britain with particular reference to the lives  
of Iranian women**

Shima Rezaei Rashnoodi

A thesis submitted for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Sheffield

Faculty of Social Sciences

School of Architecture

July 2018

**Volume 2**

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## Chapter 5 : Focus groups analysis

### 5.0 Introduction

In this section, I clarify the reasons why focus group interviews have been used in this research. In Chapter 2, I discussed focus group as a method parallel to the fundamental theories of this thesis and pointed out why a focus group could be a suitable follow up to the interview discussions. In this research, focus groups in combination with other methods create a space that is employed for providing a comprehensive architectural study of the diasporic home of Iranian women. Here, I mention more detailed reasons for conducting the focus groups.

In Chapter 2, I talked about a series of notions emerging from the theories of feminism and phenomenology and discussed how these theories could be employed for designing a flexible methodology that can be responsive to the study of home from an architectural perspective. I also discussed the notions of 'one' and 'other', reflexivity and power balance between the researcher and the researched, and ideas centred on how there is no objective observation. Based on this, I borrowed the idea of 'bricolage' and discussed the possibility of a methodology that is flexible and multi-dimensional, to be able to address ambiguous and complex matters in relation to understanding and examining the space of home.

This was followed by examining notions that are fitting to the idea of 'in-between' by proposing methodological perspectives that are mediatory and aim to create a space between the researcher and the researched that highlights 'what is and what is not' to show what stories are being told, what narratives are being missed and why (Torre et al 2017: 867). Grounded on these notions of creating a series of possibilities between the researcher and the researched, the idea of conducting a focus group seems relevant. Through conducting the interviews, the 'what' questions were mostly answered while, by conducting the focus groups, I intend to understand the 'why' and the 'how' behind the phenomena and creations (Morgan 1998: 30 and 2014: 168). Therefore, by working between the discourse of different methods, on-going processes of becoming one and other are created that could alter the dominant narratives.

The group discussion in the focus groups provides a dynamic that is not achievable otherwise. The participants in this situation possess more power in comparison to the interviews and their opinion is shared and compared in relation to each other. The participants have the opportunity to have access to the process of data interpretation, analysis and evaluation through the presented discussions in the group. Through these participant-driven discussions, they can elevate the conversation towards "organising and conceptualising" the data (Morgan 2014: 181). The focus groups, in addition to the interviews, because of the group synergy they provide, open up inclusive discussions that provide the possibility of "co-creating knowledge" through examining various possible truths (Borer and Fontana 2014: 53).

Another crucial notion discussed in Chapters 2, relates to the idea of minding the background and the history of the researcher as an influential factor in both data collection and analysis. This was followed in Chapter 3 by representing a phenomenological study of home, grounded on my personal experience of Iranian homes. Focus groups in that sense will play a great role in bringing similar or fresh views towards the material presented in this chapter by discussing the participants' experience of the Iranian home.

On the other hand, the focus group dynamics itself has the potency to be used for discussing ambiguous and complex matters (Colucci 2007: 1431). In that guise, through the dynamic created in a focus group, ideas are generated that will help to "uncover" and to note "less tangible reactions/emotions/needs" (Denton and McDonagh 2003: 134). Since the study of home deals with numbers of intangible elements, emotions and notions, the idea of discussing these elements with the participants could be a useful addition to the existing data.

As a result, three focus groups were conducted for the purpose of testing and validating the results that were generated throughout the interview discussions; one with a group of Iranian women who had already been interviewed as a part of this study and two focus groups with new participants. Hence, a comparison could be made of the relevance of the produced data to each group. The analysis is grounded on comparing these two groups, while having a parallel comparison between the two focus groups with new participants as they are from different demographics: one being women who migrated to England in their childhood and the other one consisting of women in their late thirties with two of them having children.

The discussions during the focus group interviews were recorded, transcribed and categorised within three themes of tangible, intangible and the in-between. This categorisation is based on the theories discussed throughout this thesis. The in-between is the result of becoming processes and the space that gives the users the ability to create a temporary sense of homeliness through creating a homely atmosphere. It is the intersection of one's identity, culture and memory and where one's understanding of home spaces is embodied. By making home through creating atmosphere, a transient moment is created to provide a sense of home that is achieved by a full sensory experience within a selective application of tangible and intangible entities.

Each subcategory is generated based on the analysis of the interview discussions and is examined within the discussion of focus groups, driven by activities that are specifically designed to cover each of these categories, to provide an insight on the participants' stance towards them (Morgan 1998a: 49). Like the interviews, the focus groups were conducted in Persian, because asking the participants to speak in English could have influenced the synergy of the conversation as they might have struggled to find the right word immediately and that could have made it difficult for them to convey what they intended to express. It was decided that the better solution would be to hold the focus group discussions in Persian, later to be translated into English (Krueger 1998: 51). However, in the case of women who were

raised in England, English was the more comfortable language for them; hence, the second focus group was held in English.

### **5.1 Ethical Procedure**

Like the interviews, the focus groups were also conducted in accordance with the University of Sheffield Ethical regulations. Similar to the interviews pseudonym was used to protect the identity of the participants. The participants were presented with the information sheet and concession form, making sure they were aware of the procedure and their rights. They were assured that the data collected from these sessions would be confidential and their identity would remain concealed. At the beginning of each session they were briefed about the project and who to contact and what to do if they had any further questions. Then, the outline for the session was discussed, in terms of how long the whole session was going to last, how many tasks were designed for the session, and the distribution of the time among them.

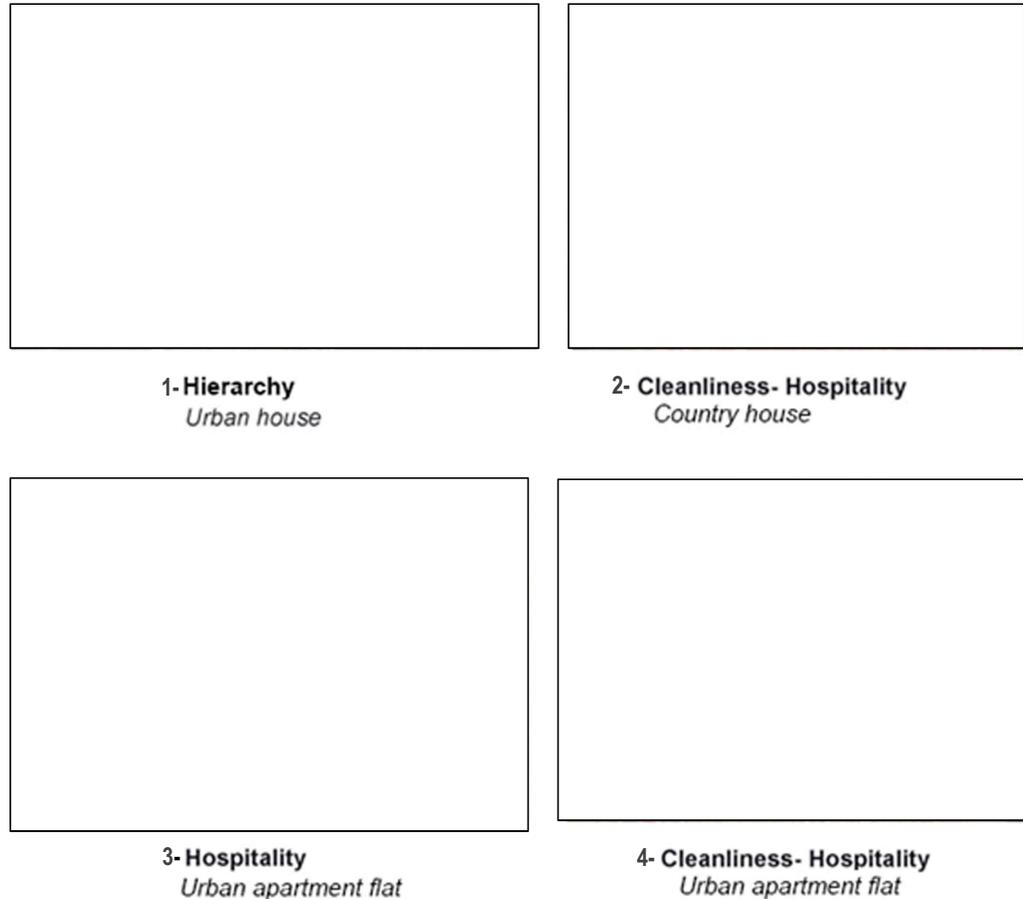
### **5.2 Introducing the focus group to the participants**

The focus groups were conducted on a few years later than the time of the interviews on October 2017. At the beginning of each session, an introduction was given regarding what was expected from these sessions, explaining the focus group dynamics. The aim was to clarify that the session would be participant driven and I was only there to facilitate the discussions; hence, the participants themselves developed the main discussion. Each session was recorded by both a camera and a voice recorder, since by using two devices, any probable error was minimised. The reason to video record the discussions was to avoid future confusion about what was stated by whom, but most importantly to be able to observe the participants' body language, pauses, and reactions in addition to what was verbalised.

#### **5.2.1 Activities**

The design of the focus groups was based on a sequence of activities that covered aforementioned categories and their relationships. Designing the activities was considered essential to be able to include everyone's insight on each topic. Thus, if some participants found it difficult to immediately respond verbally or needed more time to be reflective, they had the opportunity to contribute in the discussion. Another intention behind progressing the conversations in the focus groups through activities, was to provide a platform for different perspectives and perceptions that all participants could relate to the topics discussed (Morgan 2014: 176). The activities were designed through a careful examination of suggested frameworks by Richard A. Krueger (1998) and Erminia Colucci (2007).

There were three main areas of discussion that were considered necessary to be covered by the focus group activities the past experience of home, the current diasporic home and the making of home. Although the participants' understanding of home and their experience of the Iranian home were discussed during the interviews, it was mainly centred on the relationship with the diasporic home. The focus groups are considered as an opportunity to discuss their home in Iran in more details.



**Figure 5.1** The photos presented to the participants that were chosen in regard to the mentioned themes. Photo number 1: "An ordinary family" in *Iranian living room* by Mohammad Mahdi Amya/Fabrica (Bossan 2013), Photo number 2: "Life as an elderly person" in *Iranian living room* by Hamed Ilkhan/Fabrica (Bossan 2013). Photo number 3: Photo courtesy of Chidaneh (Aghazadeh 2016). Photo number 4: photo by Mohammad Reza Hossein Nejad and Mohammad Zadeh ("Caspiancover" 2015).

After the project introduction, opening /introductory questions were asked about what home meant for the participants. Through this question they were prepared for the upcoming activities. The first activity was designed to test their understanding of the Iranian cultural elements of hierarchy, hospitality and cleanliness. They were given a series of photos that each represents one of those themes (figure 5.1). The photos were also chosen in a way that covered the different types of Iranian homes I discussed in the phenomenological study in Chapter 3. The participants were asked to write three to five words that came to their mind on the blank margin of those photos, then compare their answers within a group. Therefore, different aspects of these homes were discussed while the activity provided the opportunity to see whether they had perceived the same themes from each photo or not. Therefore, through analysing different layers of characters, the objects and the space, a series of thoughtful practices would be evoked in relation to memory, emotions, and sensory and spatial experience. Meanwhile, this visual analysis is representative of their way of thinking about

space and is “the stimulus that helps participants collect their thoughts and explain how they see a concept or idea” (Krueger 1998:74).

The second activity was a detailed spreadsheet, asking the participants to rank a series of elements from the least to the most important, in terms of the roles they played in making them feel like home in their current home in diaspora. These elements ranged from the tangible to intangible and the in-between qualities (figure 5.2). The answers to this spreadsheet not only provide a rich comparison data, but also functioned as a catalyst for the group discussion on the fundamentals that make one feel like home and consequently provide insight on the process of homemaking.

Through this spreadsheet, the important homemaking themes and approaches that are identified based on the collected data from the interviews are examined again. Therefore, how these results match the participants’ reality and their understanding of the homemaking process in their diasporic home is analysed. This activity builds up the key discussion of the focus group.

Home making elements	The level of importance in creating a sense of home					Comments
	Not at all	Slightly important	Moderately important	Important	Very important	
<b>Decorations/Objects</b>						
Brought from Homeland (Iran)						
Reminder of home or a memory of homeland (Iran)						
Purchased or received in the host country (UK)						
<b>Furniture</b>						
Brought from Homeland (Iran)						
Reminder of home or a memory of homeland (Iran)						
Purchased or received in the host country (UK)						
The furniture arrangement						
<b>Tangible Architectural elements of the current home</b>						
The design of the space (placement of walls, doors, windows, etc...)						
Size (the flat/house and interior spaces)						
Quality of materials used for the architectural elements						
<b>Cultural and daily habits</b>						
Traditional habits/yearly events						
Cooking						
Religious or spiritual rituals						
Cleaning routines						
Sensory experience of home: smell, sound, touch, light, nature,...						
Memory of home (previous experience of home)						
<b>Social Life and gatherings</b>						
Gatherings with Iranian family and friends (coming from Iran or living in the UK)						
Socialising at home with family and friends (not necessarily Iranian)						

Figure 5.2. The spreadsheet examining the categories concluded from the interviews analysis.

The focus group finished with a question about the sense of home and the perception and the making of atmosphere. The participants were asked to think about the last time their current home had a homely feeling, and to try to list a series of elements that they believed had influenced that perception. Since, they had already discussed and framed an idea about the same or similar elements in the previous activities, they had an idea about how detailed their response should be. The answers were compared in a group and the conversations were progressed by asking questions such as: “have they ever tried to create that sense of home intentionally and if yes what was their strategy?”

This helped to finalise the discussion by agreeing on a summary about the common approaches of homemaking among the participants and examining the making of atmosphere as an alternative approach to homemaking strategies in the confines of the diasporic home.

### **5.3 Focus Groups Analysis**

In this section, first I provide an overview of the development of the framework of themes in detail and then, I discuss how the focus groups, as the final stage of analysis, help to validate the whole process. As has been mentioned throughout this thesis, the methodology for the study of Iranian home in diaspora has been an evolving methodology that is developed by learning from each step and correcting and reforming its structure.

Figure 5.3 shows the evolution of the methodology and the structured framework within each stage. It also depicts how certain themes were eliminated, added, or considered less or more important at each step. In that sense, a level of breadth is added to the study that concerns different dimensions of each category in the discussions. Through the theoretical and phenomenological study of home, I developed themes from the theoretical framework and my own experience to frame the structure of the interviews. The interviews themselves brought about new themes or highlighted some as more significant than anticipated, and finally the focus groups were conducted to provide more clarity on the discussed subjects (figure 5.3).

The analysis discussion is shaped through two sets of arguments; the first one discusses the first focus group that was conducted between three women who were interviewed previously (see Chapter 4); and the second one a comparison between this one and the other two focus groups that were held among women who were not interviewed before.

### The development of the methodological framework

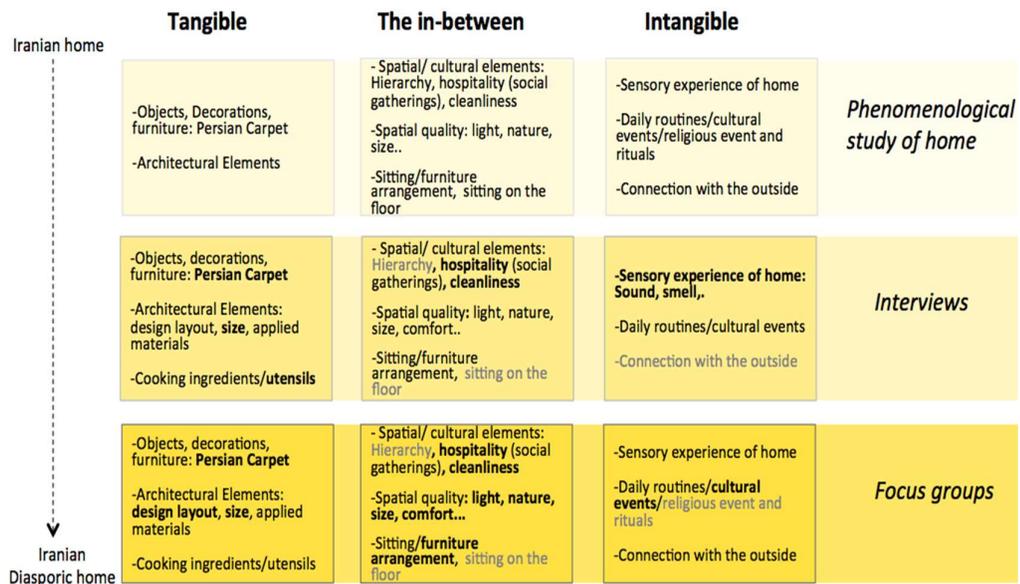


Figure 5.3 The development of the proposed framework of themes through each step

The focus group analysis follows the triangulation of tangible, intangible and the in-between, and their subcategories. The tangible relates to physical and material aspects of home such as: any objects (decoration and furniture, cooking utensils), architectural elements and materials. The intangible relates to the non-physical aspects of home that are mostly based on the individual behaviour and interaction within the home, such as sensory experience of home and daily routines/yearly events. The last set of themes and the most important one is the in-between, the series of elements that brings the two together and reinforces the process of homemaking. It concerns spatial cultural elements of hierarchy, hospitality and cleanliness, the spatial quality of space and the spatial arrangement (furniture arrangement). The activities and the discussions in each focus group are designed in relation to these categories; therefore, the outcome and the analysis follow the same structure as well.

#### 5.3.1. First Focus Group

As was stated earlier, the women in this group had already been interviewed and were contacted to have a second discussion within a focus group. What follows is a brief account of where they are in their life now in comparison to the time of the interview. The next section will be a content analysis of the discussion in this focus group within the structure of tangible, intangible and the in-between.

- **Shadi:** A few years back Shadi was interviewed in her home in London where she was living with her husband. Now, she is living in Liverpool in a three-storey house with her new partner.

- **Negar:** She was living alone in her home in London and now lives in another home with her boyfriend in the same city.
- **Elaheh:** She was living in a shared home provided by the company she used to work for in Cambridge at the time of the interview; she now works in Peterborough but lives alone in Huntingdon in a two-bedroom flat.

The focus group was held in the living room of Shadi's home in Liverpool and was 1.5 hours long.

### 5.3.1.1 Tangible

The tangible elements of home are discussed within a range of categories, the object/ furniture/ decorations and the architectural elements such as wall's layout, windows or the applied materials. These are mainly discussed through the spread-sheet activity.

#### 5.3.1.1.1 Objects

The role of objects as physical entities that carry meanings and memories and evoke emotions have been already discussed through the interviews (see Chapter 4). During the focus groups, objects and physical elements of home were discussed in more detail in relation to the making of home.

Objects and the furniture were discussed in relation to their origin, from where they were brought, and whether that is important in the process of making. The discussion on the objects and how much they make one feel at home was a complex one for this group. They all mentioned that it does not matter for them if an object was brought from their homeland as long as it is beautiful or unique. Meanwhile they all associated uniqueness with Iranian-ness throughout the conversation (figure 5.4).

-Shadi: Look for example, this tray that I am saying, it has poetry written in Persian calligraphy that has been carved out of wood. I think it is a very trendy design. It is something between traditional and modern. If I bring something traditional, I wouldn't like it at all. But this one, I thought was very cool and stylish.

-Negar: Now my question is, if you didn't have this object it wouldn't have bothered you, you wouldn't have thought you are missing something in your house.

-Shadi: No but I had my eye on it! Well, because it is a decoration, you never feel a decorative object is a necessity; you don't feel it is missed. But now that I have it, I feel it is so pretty in my home.

-Elaheh: For instance, in my home, the Iranian objects that I have, I didn't go looking for them, I either got them from someone or they just seemed nice and I bought them. But in my opinion these elements, because of their beauty, make my home prettier.



**Figure 5.4** The top photo depicts the tray Shadi brought from Iran. And the bottom photo shows other decorative objects she has in her home brought from her trips back home: the golden birds, painted clay pomegranates and the decorative bowl.

Another important factor that could be understood from this conversation is the way that the participants influence each other in understanding the activities, completing them and then making meaning out of the process (figures 5.5, 5.6 and 5.7). The following flowcharts have been filled in by each of them; these augment their answers in order to reveal different aspects of how they conceptualise and analyse their position towards this matter. The idea of co-construction of meaning through “conceptualising and organising” discussed by Morgan (2014) was borne in mind throughout the analysis of these focus group discussions and this is a great example of such a process. By being a part of a group discussion, the participants influenced each other and made meaning by comparing and contrasting. The discussion was taken to another level by organising and conceptualising meaning out of those conversations.

Therefore, although they all mentioned that having Iranian objects in their home is not a necessity, they all have some decorative elements that were either given to them or they have personally purchased and that those specific objects give a unique sense to their home.

Chapter 5: Focus groups analysis

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1 Home making elements		The level of importance in creating a sense of home					
2 Decorations/Objects		Not at all	Slightly important	moderately important	important	very important	Comment
3 Brought from Homeland (Iran)			X				
4 Reminder of home or a memory of homeland (Iran)		X					
5 Purchased or received in the host country (UK)			X				
6 Furniture							
7 Brought from Homeland (Iran)			X				
8 Reminder of home or a memory of homeland (Iran)		X					
9 Purchased or received in the host country (UK)		X					
10 The furniture arrangement						X	
11 Tangible Architectural elements of the current home						X	
12 The design of the space (placement of walls, doors, windows, etc...)						X	
13 Size (the flat/house and interior spaces)						X	
14 Quality of materials used for the architectural elements						X	
15 Cultural and daily habits						X	
16 Traditional habits/yearly events			X				
17 Cooking					X		
18 Religious or spiritual rituals		X					
19 Cleaning routines					X		
20 Sensory experience of home: smell, sound, touch, light, nature,...					X		
21 Memory of home (previous experience of home)		X					
22 Social Life and gatherings							
23 Gatherings with Iranian family and friends (coming from Iran or living in the UK)			X				
24 Socialising at home with family and friends (not necessarily Iranian)					X		

Figure 5.5 Shadi's completed spread sheet.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1 Home making elements		The level of importance in creating a sense of home					
2 Decorations/Objects		Not at all	Slightly important	moderately important	important	very important	Comment
3 Brought from Homeland (Iran)		X					
4 Reminder of home or a memory of homeland (Iran)		X	X				
5 Purchased or received in the host country (UK)							
6 Furniture							
7 Brought from Homeland (Iran)							
8 Reminder of home or a memory of homeland (Iran)		X					
9 Purchased or received in the host country (UK)		X					
10 The furniture arrangement						X	
11 Tangible Architectural elements of the current home						X	
12 The design of the space (placement of walls, doors, windows, etc...)						X	
13 Size (the flat/house and interior spaces)						X	
14 Quality of materials used for the architectural elements						X	
15 Cultural and daily habits						X	
16 Traditional habits/yearly events						X	
17 Cooking				X			
18 Religious or spiritual rituals				X			
19 Cleaning routines				X			
20 Sensory experience of home: smell, sound, touch, light, nature,...				X			
21 Memory of home (previous experience of home)				X			
22 Social Life and gatherings							
23 Gatherings with Iranian family and friends (coming from Iran or living in the UK)					X		
24 Socialising at home with family and friends (not necessarily Iranian)					X		

Figure 5.6 Elaheh's completed spread sheet.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1 Home making elements		The level of importance in creating a sense of home					
2 Decorations/Objects		Not at all	Slightly important	moderately important	important	very important	Comment
3 Brought from Homeland (Iran)		✓					
4 Reminder of home or a memory of homeland (Iran)		✓					
5 Purchased or received in the host country (UK)		✓					
6 Furniture							
7 Brought from Homeland (Iran)		✓					
8 Reminder of home or a memory of homeland (Iran)		✓					
9 Purchased or received in the host country (UK)		✓					
10 The furniture arrangement						✓	
11 Tangible Architectural elements of the current home						✓	
12 The design of the space (placement of walls, doors, windows, etc...)				✓			
13 Size (the flat/house and interior spaces)						✓	
14 Quality of materials used for the architectural elements						✓	
15 Cultural and daily habits						✓	
16 Traditional habits/yearly events		✓					
17 Cooking						✓	
18 Religious or spiritual rituals						✓	
19 Cleaning routines						✓	
20 Sensory experience of home: smell, sound, touch, light, nature,...						✓	
21 Memory of home (previous experience of home)		✓					
22 Social Life and gatherings							
23 Gatherings with Iranian family and friends (coming from Iran or living in the UK)				✓			
24 Socialising at home with family and friends (not necessarily Iranian)				✓			

Figure 5.7 Negar's completed spread sheet.

Linking back these discussions with what was observed during the interviews helps to explain these women's approach to homemaking in more breadth and details. Similar to the

interviews, objects and decorations from Iran were not mentioned as a significant factor for this group in their homes. There are selective objects represented in their homes that were purchased from Iran because the owners saw a certain beauty in them that could not be found elsewhere. Since Iran is where they go regularly, they were brought from Iran.

On the other hand, Elaheh and Shadi stated during the interviews that they are choosing certain patterns or colours at their home that were not going to be used if they were still living in Iran. Therefore, with all the stress that was put on the detachment from Iran, the experience of leaving home has influenced their approach of homemaking when it comes to purchasing objects and decorations.

The same responses were given about the furniture. But everyone -except Negar- agreed that the Persian carpets are the only piece of furniture that they prefer to bring from Iran. Shadi, who during the interviews mentioned she did not like her Persian carpet at the beginning, is now having carpets in every room in her current house (figure 5.8). Elaheh confirmed a similar approach and mentioned that she really likes her Persian carpet in her living room (that is brought from Iran) because it is representative of Iranian culture and that she likes “to show off” and to talk about it with her guests at home.



Figure 5.8 Carpets in different spaces in Shadi's current home.

Furniture is used as a reinforcing element by these women to create a sense of home, since within the confines of their diasporic home, furniture as portable elements are more flexible to be changed and placed in different areas or to be used for different purposes. Shadi, for example, stated in the interview that her sense of homeliness improved once she was able to

purchase and decorate her home step by step. Elaheh made the same statement and in the focus group discussion, again she talked about how being capable of decorating your own place has given her a sense of home. She mentioned her couch specifically as a reason for her sense of homeliness in her current home in Huntingdon (figure 5.9).

-Shadi: When I rented the place, it didn't have anything, I bought everything myself with my own money. I assembled everything myself, and it gave me a sense of belonging to this home... so my place started becoming my home slowly. I bought my sofa, it is not only an object for me, I used a little bit of colour with it [the cushions] and it is very comfortable.



Figure 5.9 Persian carpet in Elaheh's living room.

The furniture and the way it is arranged was discussed in a direct link with the sense of homeliness. Leaving sufficient free space was mentioned as a crucial factor for creating a space that is favourable and pleasing. The participants discussed how this is achievable by having furniture that is proportional with the space and a selective application rather than an accumulation of the furniture. The furniture arrangement not only involves the sensory experience of home but also represents how these women have used that as a method to express their individuality and autonomy.

#### 5.3.1.1.2 Tangible architectural elements of home

As was anticipated based on the interviews, the physical design elements of the spaces were considered very important by all the participants. Having several windows in a space or large floor windows and high ceilings were mentioned as favourable architectural elements for a space to possess homely qualities. In this section the participants repeated what they discussed during the interviews in their home.

Size of the space was a factor that emerged out of the interview discussions; and was mentioned as an element that if they have the “luxury of choosing a bigger space” they would. In general, having bigger spaces with a free flow was stated numerous times throughout the interviews and was confirmed during the focus group to be an important element to make one feel comfortable at home and give a sense of homeliness.

#### 5.3.1.2 Intangible

The discussions on intangible elements were very similar to the interview findings. Shadi and Negar expressed an indifference towards the traditional ceremonies, just as in the interviews, while Elaheh considered the importance of these ceremonies in terms of how the familiar feeling they gave her. She added that she appreciates having sufficient space to have people over for Persian new year celebrations.

It was the same for cooking; they all agreed the necessity of having a space that makes cooking and the cleaning up afterwards easier, but just like the interview Elaheh considered food to be very important and stated that she always bring ingredients such as *Lahijan*<sup>31</sup> Tea and Saffran from Iran.

They all mentioned that the sensory experience of home is essential for them as well. Negar talked about how she likes to hear the sound of birds from her home as it connects her with the outside; for Elaheh, light was an important figure for giving a sense of home.

-Elaheh: this is how my home looks like all the time [showing figure 5.10]. I always thought it looks pretty and was thinking that I should take a photo on a sunny day and upload it on Facebook as my cover photo. Then yesterday, I was at home and that happened and I took a photo...For example, it is important to have my shade blinds shut to block the cold air but I try to open them as much as I can to let the light in.

Elaheh has developed a consciousness that is rooted in her constant sensory experience of her favourite place in her home, her living room. She appreciates the way it looks and it feels as if it has even influenced her daily household routines as she mentioned that, just to maintain the spatial quality presented in this image, she has become a tidier person. She found her place so homely that felt the others needed to see that as well and she shared that

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<sup>31</sup> A city in north of Iran.

she was impressed by the positive reaction she received from everyone on her social media platform.



Figure 5.10 Photo from Elaheh's living room.

The memory of previous homes' impact on the making of diasporic home was insignificant for Negar and Shadi, but Elaheh had a different stance:

-Elaheh: ... I learned how to make my home or arrange my furniture over time and sometimes this is the result of the moving experience from one home to another... because I have learned something from one home and I am taking it with me to the new home.

Elaheh's awareness of the impact of her memories of home on her diasporic home illustrates the theoretical discussion of the phenomenological studies of home in Chapter 3, in terms of living and leaving home, and how that process is essential for an individual to find his/her place in the world. It is through these memories and experiences of each home that the new home is made. Elaheh was also the only person who associated her sense of belonging to her home with the city as well. She has experienced living in other cities before moving to Huntingdon but feels more like home in her current city. Therefore, her sense of belonging is not only centred on her home but also in connection with the broader context of the city. The leaving and coming back to home is contributing to the perception of home itself as feeling

safe on the way home, having a better life quality and the accessibility; these have all shaped the way she interacts with her diasporic home.

### 5.3.1.3 The in-between

In this part, I evaluate the discussions that were made about the categories between the tangible and intangible elements of homemaking. These categories are rather hybrid and are a combination of the two; therefore, they are discussed within a mediatory section. These elements are: spatial qualities (Sitting/Furniture arrangement, light, nature...) and the cultural spatial elements of Hierarchy, hospitality and cleanliness.

#### 5.3.1.3.1 Spatial qualities

The notion that was raised from every single discussion in the group in regard to furniture was comfort. The comfort was mentioned with two different intentions: the comfort of the furniture itself; and the comfort in moving within space by the way in which the furniture is arranged. All the participants mentioned having comfortable furniture as a feature that reinforces their sense of home towards a certain place. Comfort and quality of the materials used for the furniture was something that everyone agreed on numerous times. The interesting point raised from this is that although furniture is a tangible element, the way it is used and perceived, has sensory qualities (figure 5.11).

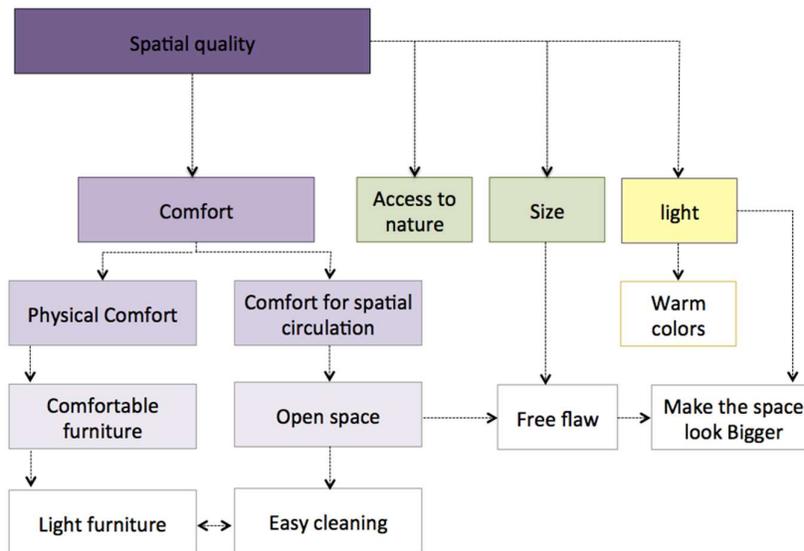


Figure 5.11 The themes discussed in relation to spatial quality in the focus group no.1.

For the participants, the feeling of comfort was the priority when it came to the selection and placement of the furniture at home. Some like Negar associated her sense of homeliness with the comfort that the furniture provides;

-Negar: for me it is a feeling, it is a sense of calmness, and also the comfort of the furniture. For example, that when I arrive at home, I can rest and feel comfortable with the furniture to take a rest. I mean, the furniture shouldn't be difficult to use, like they are made out of materials that I can be comfortable to seat or lie down.

-Elaheh: I agree with everything the others said, it is very important for me that the furniture I use is comfortable.... The tidiness at some levels is essential as well. For instance, I like my home to have enough free space, it calms me because I think it orders my brain and frees my mind.

Furniture arrangement was a significant element when it came to the notion of homeliness that involved body movement in space and sensory experience of place, specifically vision. Hence, the quality, material and weight and the level of comfort of the furniture was considered essential. Also the way the pieces are arranged, as it could influence the perceptions of the size of the space that can affect the interaction with space and ultimately impact daily routines which are the representation of one's individuality.

-Shadi: the ideal furniture arrangement for me is when it gives me a sense of comfort. Also, that I have my own touch in that space. This is because I have worked as an interior designer. It is essential for me to be able to design the space myself. For instance, if I go to a furniture shop and see an arrangement, I wouldn't stick to that. I will make the layout myself.

**Me: What do you mean by comfort exactly? Is it the space between the furniture, how the body moves within those spaces or the whole general layout?**

-Shadi: That definitely, but also it should look appealing to the eye so as I look around, it looks harmonious.

-Negar: It is important for me, I could have said [more important] but because of the lack of space in London, sometimes I just have to accept it that way. Now, if I want to be a bit more specific, the sitting comfort is important, to have free space to move around.

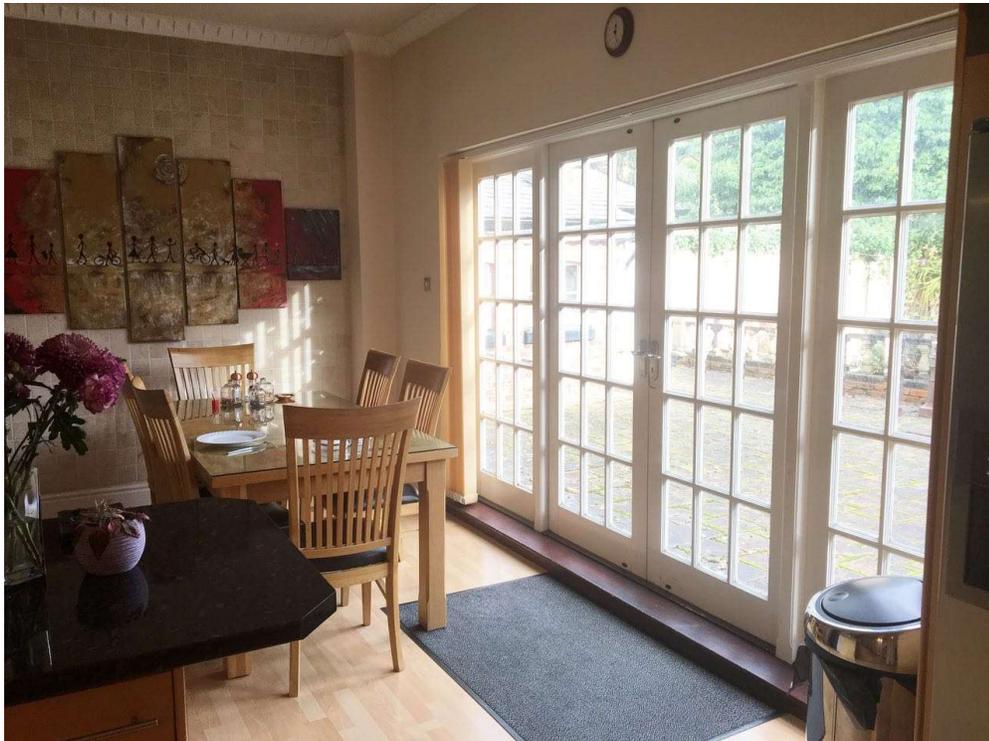
-Shadi: Having lightweight furniture is another crucial thing for me as well.

-Elaheh: I mentioned it is "very important" because the arrangement of the space could make it look more spacious. It must be neat and tidy, and that cleaning would be easy within that arrangement; I mean to arrange the furniture dynamically to make the cleaning easier. Also, the space shouldn't look cluttered in a way that it disturbs your calmness. So, the furniture arrangement is very important.

The arrangement of the furniture was considered vital for having a convenient space. Highlighting the need for having free and open spaces was pointed out several times by all participants during the interview visits, but the focus group discussions drew attention to more sophisticated aspects of homemaking. Through these discussions, they mentioned how these material objects can influence their state of calmness and the way they perceive a space.

Relating a tidy space with a calm space, or making a space look bigger by a certain way of placing the furniture is a representation of homemaking approaches at a simple everyday level. This tendency to have spaces that look more “free” or “open” might be rooted in the desire to have bigger spaces that could relate to the experience of homes they lived in Iran and this is their way of recreating that space within their current limitations

Another homemaking approach applied by these women that could be related to the Iranian experience of home is the use of “warm colours” and was mentioned by the entire group as a feature that gives a favourable quality to space. Shadi explained her tendency for employing warm colours to compensate for the lack of sunshine and the cold weather in general (figure 5.12).



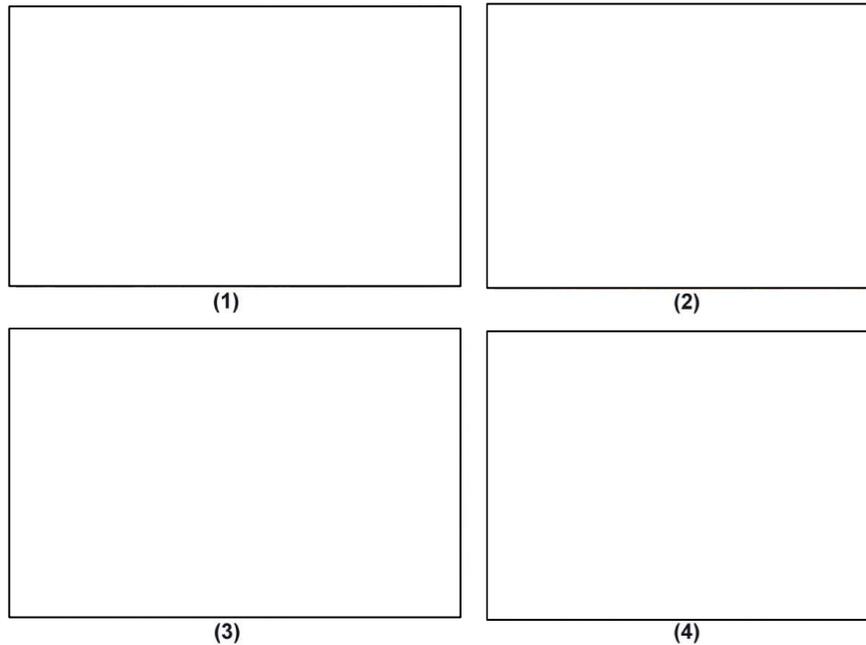
**Figure 5.12** Shadi's private back garden that could be accessed directly from the kitchen.

The stress that was put on the importance of light, both during the interviews and in the focus groups, represents the way these women are approaching homemaking with the accessible qualities. Perhaps that is why they mentioned having several windows or large floor windows as a great quality in space. This is their way of seeking light in a country that has a rather opposite weather condition to their homeland. Therefore, if there were not enough sunlight, or big windows to catch natural lighting, the solution would be found in using warm colours to represent that sense of warmth in their home.

Another spatial quality that was mentioned numerous times, both during their individual interviews and the focus groups, that seems to be rooted in their experience of the Iranian home is having access to nature. This was mentioned as an important feature in terms of a sensory experience of home and spatial quality. This is achieved by having a direct access to the garden by Shadi, for Elaheh considers the plants as essential elements at her home and for Negar is still something to be achieved because of the limitations of living in London. For Elaheh, her plants are a very essential part of her home. She states that although she never got them herself -as they were given to her by her friends when they moved out of the city- she now believes they have become an essential part of her home as they have given spirit to her home.

### 5.3.1.3.2 Spatial/cultural elements (Hierarchy, Hospitality, Cleanliness)

The spatial/cultural elements are where the tangible and intangible elements come together. It is where the feeling of home could be created for the intention of making one feel like home. In this category the importance of making atmosphere in diasporic home is highlighted. These spatial/cultural elements have already been discussed during the interviews with specific focus on the diasporic home. The focus groups however, pursued the reason behind the significance of these elements by providing an opportunity to discuss them within the context of Iranian homes itself. This was achieved by presenting four photos to the participants (figure 5.13).



**Figure 5.13** Photos that were discussed by the participants in the focus group. The first one was chosen to raise discussions on hierarchy, the second one cleanliness/hospitality, the third one hospitality and the last one cleanliness., Photo number 1: "Life as an elderly person" in *Iranian living room* by Hamed Ilkhan/Fabrica (Bossan 2013). Photo number 2: Photo courtesy of Chidaneh (Aghazadeh 2016) Photo number 3: "An ordinary family" in *Iranian living room* by Mohammad Mahdi Amya/Fabrica (Bossan 2013). Photo number 4: photo by Mohammad Reza Hossein Nejad and Mohammad Zadeh ("Caspiancover" 2015).

### Hierarchy

Photo number one, which was chosen for hierarchy, raised interesting discussions regarding sitting arrangement, sense of space and the arrangement of furniture. At some point the gender hierarchy was pointed out as a discomforting factor.

-Shadi: well... the way that the man is sitting, there is no place left for anyone else to sit. It doesn't seem he would be leaving that chair anytime soon either.

The last photo led to discussions about guest/host hierarchy; how the guests are given priority to use the "luxury" furniture without a cover while the household keep the covers on for their own use or they have another sofa set for daily use and keep one whole set dedicated to the guests.

-Shadi: My early childhood home, we didn't have sofas and stuff but it had Persian carpets and we were comfortable in there, you know... The next homes they were more or less the same, ..., they had two sets of furniture, one for the guests and one set of comfortable sofas. That was the big change because for example, before we had only one set of furniture that was used by us and also by the guests.

The way that hierarchy was discussed in the focus groups was very similar to the way these women defined hierarchy in Iranian homes and in their current home in the individual interviews. In their current everyday life, the most noticeable type of hierarchy -if it does exist- refers to the hierarchy between the guest and the host, which gradually evolves to the notion of hospitality.

### Hospitality

Photo number three was chosen to raise discussions about hospitality in a contemporary Iranian middle class home. However, this photo was also mentioned as a hospitable house that may not seem modern but still seems very friendly and humble. In photo number two, the light quality, the Persian carpet and the neatness were mentioned, as factors that make this space look favourable regardless of its simplicity. The photo no. 4 however, brought about the idea of hospitality but in a way that sacrifices the household comfort and, therefore, was devalued. While photo number three showed a welcoming home that is comfortable for both the hosts and the guests:

-Negar: ... what I get from the photo is like more nostalgic ... everyone is seated on the floors, so I think it is traditional. Then the rug, it is an element that grabs your attention.

-Elaheh: yes I also wrote that: *Bah Bah!*<sup>32</sup> *Mihmani*<sup>33</sup> and food; the best of Persian culture! The house is having this big space that they could

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<sup>32</sup> An Iranian impression when something brings joy to you like a delicious food, a pleasant weather or when you see a person you like.

<sup>33</sup> The Persian word for Party (more of a dinner party where the host provides food and the place for the friends or family to gather and to socialise).

spread the *Sofreh*<sup>34</sup> on the floor... Another thing I like about this place is that they have a big space but they also thought about how to use it, for example they thought we are going to have guests and for that reason they put the sofas next to the walls to make more space. They used the house dynamically!

-Shadi: Flexibly.

-Negar: yes!

-Elaheh: yes, it is flexible, and they thought about how to make the house more spacious. I also like it that the home looks modern... they have sofa sets and the floor is laminated wood...

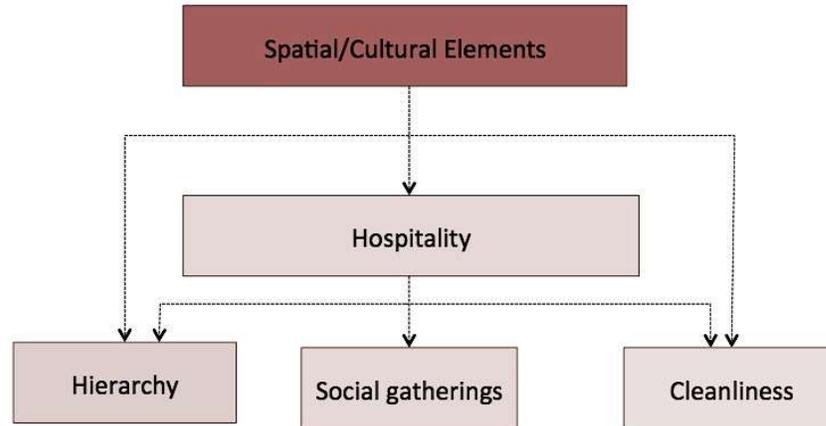
The participants engaged with this photo based on their memory and what they remember from their experience of living in an Iranian home. Analysing the characters and thinking about their intentions behind the certain way of arranging the furniture shows their awareness of such a culture that prioritises receiving guests at home. On the other hand, the social gatherings categories were mentioned to examine hospitality in the current home of the participants in diaspora (figure 5.14). They all agreed that if they were in Iran they would have had more gatherings or hosted more but it does not happen in diaspora as often as in Iran.

-Elaheh: I would like that my home gives a good feeling to people when they are my guests. For instance, the sofa I bought is a sofa bed and that is for the times that my dad comes to visit that he has a place to sleep. I also like my home to be comfortable enough that if I have guests, they feel fine being there. I like to receive guests but again because of my lifestyle in the UK, I don't have that luxury.

Similar to the interviews, Negar referred to the circumstances in London that have affected the possibility of receiving guests. Shadi also mentioned that she should like to have a designated space for when her parents come to visit.

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<sup>34</sup> The Persian word for a sheet that is spread over the carpet where the meal is served.



**Figure 5.14.** The spatial/cultural elements of home categorisation in diasporic home of Iranian women, showing how the hospitality is in primary presence and the other two elements of hierarchy and cleanliness work as complementary elements to hospitality.

### Cleanliness

Cleanliness was discussed in relation to hospitality and the methods applied to keep the furniture clean at all times. Although photo number four was designated for cleanliness, this photo was mentioned mostly to be pretentious and they related the photo number two with cleanliness and tidiness the most. Everyone in this group associated the smell of cleanliness at their diasporic home with a sense of home. Therefore, cleanliness was discussed within two aspects: how it is represented to the others and how it is applied as a homemaking approach. The care that is put in the second photo into the tidiness and cleanliness provide a sense of comfort that they all could relate to; in the last photo, however, the cleanliness and the attention to how one is represented to the others is taken to the extreme and that takes the focus away from the cleanliness of the space. In terms of the diasporic home, however, they all associated cleanliness and the sensory experience of it with homeliness. The cleaning itself was discussed in relation to the furniture in two aspects; first the furniture must be arranged in a way that there is enough space to move around for cleaning, and secondly that the furniture should not be very heavy so that they could be moved or relocated easily for cleaning purposes (figure 5.14).

### Summary

The Summary question of the session was a short activity asking the participants to think back about the last time they felt like home in their current home and try to list the elements that contributed to that feeling/moment. This has helped to finalise the session with a discussion on homemaking approaches that applies a series of tangible and intangible elements as well as ephemeral and transitory moments. In that sense, the making of home through making atmosphere in diasporic homes is examined.

This summarising activity significantly highlighted how the participants think of space, sense of belonging and homemaking. Elaheh defined a sense of homeliness within the series of

elements of objects such as Persian carpets, light, plants and architectural elements (windows, high ceilings). These are all categories that expand across the tangible, intangible and the in-between spectrum (figure 5.15). These were mentioned during her individual interviews as essential for a place to be perceived as home and her home in diaspora is a representation of that. Shadi was a very similar case as well. During the individual interviews she stated that the ability to decorate her own home helped her to develop a sense of belonging towards her home. Now, she has moved to her partner's home where everything was furnished and decorated already; however, she has other ways of making herself feel like home: having selective objects of her taste could be one of them. But having her partner, and the spatial qualities she was seeking before, has made her current place homely. She mentioned that she is impressed by how this home is an exact representation of the ideal home she drew during her individual interviews. Additionally, Negar's list of notions represents that these elements of tangible/intangible and the in-between are applied within the process of the making of home in diaspora.

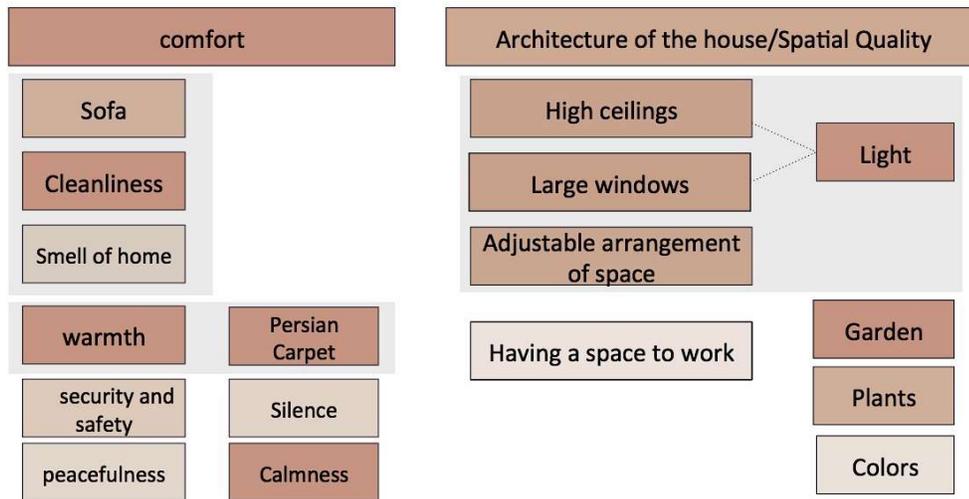


Figure 5.15 The important elements of homemaking for the first focus group.

The making of home was developed by the application of elements across the spectrum of tangible and intangible that came together within in-between space. The architecture of space, for example, was perceived within the following elements: windows, height of the ceiling and the space lay out (free flow). Light: large windows, high ceilings, free flow and access to nature were the common architectural aspects of home that were mentioned as essential for making one feel like home. Another important point was associating Iranian culture and identity with Persian carpets as one of the pillars of Iranian homemaking. Additionally, the sense of comfort brought about by the comfortable furniture is another example of the hybridity in which the home spaces and articles are perceived.

### 5.3.2 The second and the third focus groups

The participants for these focus groups were found through the University of Sheffield Persian society and five women among the ones who were contacted agreed to participate. Three women were in their late thirties, and migrated to the UK to continue their education while the other two were born in Iran but raised in England most of their lives. Therefore, to have more productive sessions the participants were divided into two focus groups. However, an interesting similarity emerged out of these sessions and that was the praise, admiration and nostalgia for Iran. The focus group no.2 participants were two university students, who talked about Iran and Iranian culture with so much appreciation and empathy although they have spent most of their life in the UK. The focus group no.3 participants left Iran at the beginning of their thirties, meaning they have spent most of their life in Iran growing up, two of them were married and moved to England with their children; these two women made regular commutes to Iran because their husband were still based in Iran.

In this section, first I introduce the participants of each focus group, and then I continue the analysis while comparing the two groups. Although these two groups seem widely different, they are both new to this topic and were not interviewed before, and more remarkably, although they were from different classes, community or age range, they both approached the conversations on Iran very positively. This was something that was hardly perceivable in the first focus group. A parallel analysis of these focus groups (group no 1 with groups no 2 and 3) brings about two different perspectives of looking at homeland and its culture; one with a nostalgic praise homeland, struggling to situate individuality in the new context, and the other with less dramatic approach.

#### Second focus group

Similarly, to the first focus group, this focus group also started with a general question about the sense of home, asking the participants to start sharing their ideas about what are the essential elements for them to make a space, a home. This was followed by the same activity that was based on the exploration of photos about Iranian homes. Then the session followed the same structure as the focus group no.1, with spreadsheet activity. The closing discussion considered the homemaking approaches, asking the participants to think back about the last time they felt like home in their current place and try to write down the essential factors that they thought were the reasons for that ephemeral sense of homeliness. By discussing these factors within the group, the participants' sensory engagement with space and their atmosphere making approaches as a way of homemaking in diaspora were examined.

The second group was conducted with two students.

- **Paniz:** She is 22 years old and moved to Nottingham when she was 7 and has never visited Iran since then. She is a student at University of Sheffield but visits her family in Nottingham at the weekends.
- **Shirin:** She is 24 years old and has been living in Sheffield with her family since she was 7. She has been settled in Sheffield with her family since then and is a student at university of Sheffield.

This session was two hours long and was the only session that was not conducted in English as they both mentioned that they were more comfortable that way. However, they used Persian words and terms during the discussions numerous times that showed they had a good understanding of the language and the culture. The session was very positive and they both were very enthusiastic about having a space to be able to discuss Iran. The dynamic of the session was very positive and there was no issue regarding their participation or any of them dominating the discussions. Their admiration and respect for Iranian culture opened up conversations on the notion of identity and how much they feel they belong to UK culture. The responses were fascinating both for me and the participants themselves.

-Paniz: full Iranian! Yes, I know, I was raised in here my whole life pretty much, but I'm Iranian... cultural wise...I don't know ...I mean, I belong here, of course!... here is where I am living, I'm happy... I'm not lacking anything but it's different. You know! The culture that you have at home you don't get that with people around you, you know? ... because I'm so attached to that culture that we have ...all those little things we do, all these celebrations that we have like fasting, *Yalda*, like *Eid* that is a lot of culture you know, and there is a lot of background within those. It is not just bonfire night... there is so much stories that you get from that. Like ... there is so much emotions that come from it and I love it and I think that's what makes Iranians, Iranians. ...you know how I said I would actually be living in Iran, it's never gonna go away?

-Shirin: um. Yeah...I don't know, I didn't expect you to say that...

-Paniz: did you not?

-Shirin: yeah, I don't know why, I don't, I don't think I belong in here and I don't think I belong to Iran and, I think a lot of people who sort of lived a similar life ... you're not quite Iranian and you're not quite English, you're in that limbo phase. Yeah, I've always said being sort of dual-nationality or bilingual, you get the best of both worlds.

-Paniz: absolutely!

-Shirin: you got a choice in what you get and what you drop and you have a comparison at all times and I think that's very important because it gives you perspective in life, but... I feel... I don't think I could live in Iran and ... I find it very difficult working there and I have to go there twice a year for work and I find it really difficult. So, I don't think I could live there and I don't think, I would end up living here for the rest of my life either.

Although Paniz and Shirin moved to England at the same age, the way their identity is built upon Iranian-ness is rather different. For Paniz it is about togetherness, family and being a part of something with a nostalgic and dramatic approach towards homeland. For Shirin, on the other hand, it is based on the perceived realities of the circumstances in Iran. Shirin is in direct contact with Iran through her regular visits, while Paniz's understanding of Iran is based on her parents' effort to keep her connected with the culture and through staying in

touch with the other Iranians in diaspora. However, for both, belonging to any of these locations is undecided. Paniz finds the refuge from this ambivalent state of identity by attaching herself to Iranian culture, while Shirin mentions she cannot associate her identity with any of these two countries and is thinking of moving to a country like Italy one day.

### **Third focus group**

This focus group was held with three women at Maral's home. The session was in Persian and was 2 hours 30 minutes long.

- **Ziba:** She is 38 years old and moved to England to study her PhD. She is married and lives in Sheffield with her thirteen years old son while her husband is based in Iran and comes to visit every other month.
- **Shideh:** She is 37 years old and came to study her PhD ten years ago. She is married and lives in Sheffield with her two children. Her husband lives in Iran and comes to visit almost every month. She is working as a medical practitioner and teaches at the university at the same time.
- **Maral:** She is 39 years old PhD who came to Sheffield 8 years ago to continue her education and has lived in Sheffield since then. Her partner whom she met in Sheffield lives in Iran now.

Since two of the participants had children, another perspective about the experience of migration that was not present in the other two groups was brought to the discussion. Although all these participants have been living in the UK for almost a decade, they still have strong ties with Iran and they all regularly visit Iran. In the following section, I provide an analysis of the discussions within the structure of tangible, intangible and the in-between. Then through providing a comparison between these two groups and the first one I aim to be able to provide a comprehensive discussion about how the experience of migration, making home in diaspora and identity construction is perceived by these women.

#### **5.3.2.1 Tangible**

Like the first focus group, the participants of the focus groups no. 2 and no. 3 were asked about the tangible elements of home (the objects, the furniture, decorations and the architectural elements such as walls, windows, the applied materials or in general any physical object of the house), trying to detect the role they play in bringing memory, recreating identity and making home.

##### **5.3.2.1.1 Objects**

In the focus group no.2, objects, decoration and portable physical elements in regard to Iranian culture exist if the parents have decided to bring them from Iran. Paniz and Shirin come from households who have two opposite approaches towards the application of objects or decorations that are brought from Iran or have any relevance to Iran. Paniz mentioned that there is no single object from Iran in their home and even if her parents receive any gifts from relatives they just leave it behind, while Shirin stated:

-Shirin: well, I'm the opposite, we have a lot of *Farsh*<sup>35</sup> from Iran, and we have a Samovar from Iran. We have teacups from Iran, we have mantelpieces from Iran, and we have a lot of stuff that comes from Iran and vice versa. I don't know why my mum tries to exchange our home. She brings stuff from our home in Iran to here and she takes things from here to Iran.

What all the participants had in common was that they all bring objects/decoration/kitchen utensils and furniture pieces that are hard or impossible to find in England. Paniz, for example, mentioned that her family struggled to find a good pressure cooker in England and that was the only thing brought from Iran. Or Elaheh in the first focus group talked about bringing ingredients such as saffron from Iran that is not found with the same quality in England.

In the third focus group, similar to the first one, the idea of originality came up again: that when an object is brought from Iran, it feels more unique and original:

-Ziba: ... I think what you bring from Iran is more authentic and original.

- Shideh: Yes, because it is something you bought yourself from where you like.

-Ziba: yes, you feel you have bought it from the original source...I think it is true for everything, for example you like to buy a postcard of Pisa tower next to it rather than buying it in London, you feel the first one is more original.

The question about whether the participants bring any objects or portable physical elements from Iran also raised another important point, which was taking objects from the UK home to the home in Iran. That was the case for the participants who had a home in Iran as well, because one member of the family was still based in Iran, like Shirin in the focus group no.2 or Ziba and Shideh in the focus group no.3.

How the objects brought from Iran are essential in shaping identity and defining one's approach to homemaking was directly mentioned by Shirin—how her parents tried to keep them connected with their roots through the placement of certain objects at home:

-Shirin... Yeah there are certain things that you associate with Iran and Persian-ness and Persia; the carpets, the Paisley print, I think the paisley print came out from the Silk Road, isn't it? ... I think the stuff that are a reminder of home and memory are pretty important. *Cheragh Nafti*<sup>36</sup>! ...yeah my mum especially always says; I never want you to lose perspective, I always want you to know where you came from wherever you get to. It's important to have perspective that once we used to sit around *Cheragh Nafti* and do our homework. You know?

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<sup>35</sup> *Farsh* (فرش): Persian word for carpet.

<sup>36</sup> *Cheragh Nafti* (چراغ نفتی): Kerosene lamp.

And, I'm here at the Diamond<sup>37</sup> at times at three o'clock in the morning, very comfortable with a MacBook! So, I think she chooses specifically what she keeps in the house, one for herself probably as a reminder and two I imagine being for me.

Then, later she talks about how she likes her house to be and that her taste is influenced by the way that their diasporic home was made.

-Shirin: ...I like simple style in the house... white walls and doors and things like that ... but, I like the old fashion red carpets so... like have a completely white room with sort of old furniture and that red bright carpet. But that would have never happened if we didn't probably have had some in our home.

In focus group no.3, the significance of objects in creating a sense of home was discussed and the participants mentioned the use of objects as a way of homemaking and a solution to feeling like home again when their life is in a temporary state.

-Shideh: to be honest, this feeling that everything is temporary is very bad, it is something that I believe bothers us the most and doesn't allow us to live the way we like to. It is a very bad feeling.

-Ziba: yes! A friend of mine lives in Canada, we used to go to each other houses a lot when we were both in Iran. When she left for Canada, she took everything she had in her home with her. Not big furniture, just every little decoration and picture frames with her childhood photos. We hadn't met for several years and I went to visit her in Canada. Once I entered her home, I couldn't believe how similar her new home was to her home in Iran. It was so interesting for me to see that how much these little things could make her place feel like her home in Iran again. That made me realise that I haven't brought anything to UK with me from my home in Iran. I mean, anything I have from Iran, are the stuff newly bought from my visits to Iran.

-Maral: although it could have helped you feeling like home...

-Shideh: in my case, I could never bring anything from my home in Iran; I always think everything in that home belongs there.

-Ziba: that is interesting, because you consider your home in Iran as "home".

This conversation showed how they find objects and decorations essential in terms of creating a familiar sense in a space that could lead to making a place, home. Shideh, for example, still considers her home in Iran as her "real" home although she only visits Iran twice a year, staying a month each time. The circumstance of migratory life has created a temporary sense towards her life in England, an uncertainty that is settled by considering her home in Iran as her permanent home. Purchasing objects represents a level of care for a

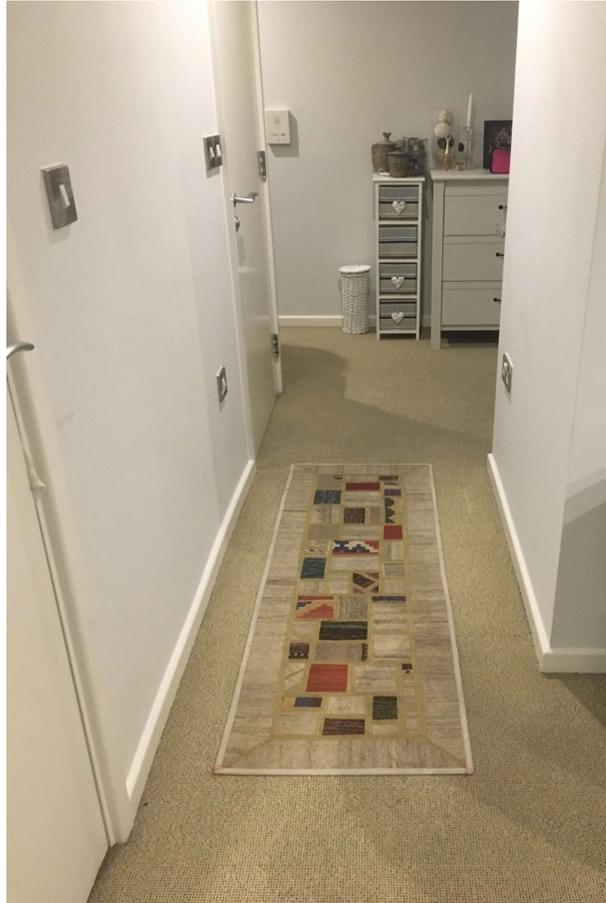
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<sup>37</sup> The diamond is a student building encompassing studying facility at the university of Sheffield.

place; this is something that she does not have for her UK home where she lives most of the year. But just by stating that she only buys objects and decorations for her home in Iran, all the other participants anticipate why and relate it to the fact that her home in Iran is her 'real' home. She takes objects from the UK to her home in Iran while she does not do the same for her home in the UK.

In terms of furniture, one piece that was found essential to bring from Iran to have at home, in all focus groups, was a Persian carpet. Persian carpets were associated with Iranian identity, pride and the feeling of belonging (figure 5.16).

Maral: ... I went to the IKEA a couple of times when they opened a store in Sheffield, and I was very proud to see the Persian carpet section. Although they were very low quality but it was a great feeling to see they have them exhibited there. I even considered buying one but there are two issues; first is that my home and my life here is temporary, and second it was not affordable for me.



**Figure 5.16.** A handmade tribal rug brought from Iran in Maral's home. She mentions this carpet was ideal for her as it was easy to carry due to the small size and lightweight.

In some cases, like Shirin, her care for Persian carpets went beyond representing her culture, as she was concerned with making a contribution to the homeland economy.

-Shirin: I think it's important to be in that economy. The way that the economy dies if people stop investing in it... I would never ever walk into IKEA ...and buy Persian carpets... I can feed a family in Tabriz<sup>38</sup> or whatever, it just doesn't seem right to put the money into somebody else's pocket when I could directly put it in the hand of the supplier.

Caring for her Iranian identity and culture for Shirin exceeded the moments of pride, or the placement of the carpets in her home, but rather her care is embodied by trying to help the economy and the people. All the participants have mentioned through the interview and focus group discussions the importance of the Persian carpet in their home. Additionally, they all noted that their taste and their homemaking approaches have changed since their immigration: that when they were in Iran they intended to decorate and make their home with modern elements while since their migration they are more interested in traditional design and objects.

-Ziba: ... I bought some coasters, just because they had a turquoise traditional design, when I got home, my cousins were like...only people who live abroad pay for these things, no one in here spend that much money for these stuff. And I think this says a lot...

-Shideh: maybe because we are far from that ...

-Maral: yes, I think the distance made us realise how rich and profound our culture is. For example, I have so much pride for being Iranian since moving here in comparison to when I was in Iran. It wasn't important for me, but here you need to live with that honour ...

-Ziba: it's an identity matter... completely...

-Shideh: yeah you need to establish your identity...

-Ziba: we are in an environment that is not compatible with us at all. We all are dealing with some sort of identity crisis. I mean let's be honest, this is something we all are dealing with at some point...one of the things that we could attach to is this... we are constructing an identity through these things.

-Shideh: yeah we like to show it by any means that look... this is who I am! We want to make it clear...

-Ziba: yes... exactly what you say Maral, that my Iranian-ness is important for me now, it shows you are actually building identity for yourself.

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<sup>38</sup> *Tabriz*: A city in Iran, known to produce high quality Persian carpets.

They noted that, by the application of Iranian themed objects and decoration, they find a way to reshape their individuality by having pieces that are reminders of homeland in a different context, within the limiting circumstances of diasporic life. During the discussion in all focus groups the participants expressed their limiting circumstances and the constraints of their diasporic home by mentioning that they just cannot have a bigger home, or cannot buy the furniture they like and because of that they do not even consider those as an option. Therefore, it seems after realising certain things are not a possibility anymore, these women start to find their way of making home through what they think is possible or affordable for them. Apart from the financial issue for participants, such as the ones in the focus group no. 3, buying decorations or objects was considered irrational because of the temporary state of their life in England. An exception to that was Ziba who mentioned that although she is finishing her studies in a few months and may go back to Iran, after lots of thinking she decided to buy the furniture just because she was tired of that temporariness.

#### **5.3.2.1.2 Tangible architectural elements of home**

Similar to the focus group no.1, tangible architectural elements were considered essential in creating a sense of homeliness in the focus groups no.2 and no.3. Having large windows, appropriate textures and materials, and the size came up as important elements. In the second focus group specifically, the circulation and the design lay out of a house was highlighted during the discussions. This may be because of the fact that these participants left Iran at an early age and had a chance to experience both types of home growing up and develop a great understanding of the differences between the space distributions in these two completely different contexts.

-Shirin: I personally don't like sort of 70s or 80s home in the UK. I either prefer new builds or very old Victorian. Because I think, especially as Iranians, we're used to open space, like homes in Iran are free flowing, there aren't barriers. But I feel like specially terrace houses here, it's not a home, it's a sleeping space, it was made for the industrial revolution for work... there isn't a free flow; there isn't a homeliness to it...It's really hard to look at a terrace house and fall in love with a terraced house, because it just doesn't flow. There isn't enough free space; walls... door, walls... door! Whereas, in Iran you have open kitchen... I feel like architecture here, unless it's an old Victorian house where you have tall ceilings and sort of large windows, especially considering how dark it gets in here, and gloomy the weather is, I don't think the houses reflect.

Therefore, apart from having big windows, high ceilings, convenient texture and materials or having a proper sized home, the layout and the way one moves within a space was brought to the discussion as a very important element.

-Shirin: Light matters, how much of it. The amount of light that room catches also matters. I prefer tall ceilings too. ... tall ceilings, large windows, like sort of large floor plan-free flowing floor plan and textures. I like textures and materials, so I might not necessarily experiment with colours, but I definitely experiment with textures.

The third focus group was not an exception either; all the participants in this group visit Iran at least once or twice a year and have a chance to constantly compare Iranian homes with their current home. All the participants mentioned big windows, good quality materials and the size as very significant features for a place to have a homely feeling.



Figure 5.17 The furniture that Maral has bought for her flat.

After mentioning how much smaller the UK homes are in comparison to Iranian homes, they start developing their idea about how the notion of size itself could be relative (figures 5.17 and 5.18).

-Shideh: I agree with Maral... I feel yes, Iranian homes are much bigger, with more open spaces, and English homes have more limited space but they haven't also been designed in a way that you feel comfortable in them. Even if you go to a big home, that still applies; the entrances are so small.

-Ziba: yes, entrances, the doors, the corridors...

-Shideh: I don't know maybe it's for keeping the heat inside the house... I don't know the idea behind it...but they have a different spatial design here. On the other hand, after living here, the Iranian design seems too big for me; I sometimes think maybe it's too much.



**Figure 5.18** Living room in Maral's flat. She mentioned that the lamp and the steel chair were given to her by a friend who was living in the same block after he moved out from his place.

The size was mentioned as an issue throughout the conversation, then British homes were criticised for not having this factor, and ultimately they start looking for reasons why these homes are the way they are and maybe the Iranian homes are too big. At the end they all

agree that a balance should be found in terms of architectural elements, proper size, good design layouts and spatial circulations.

### 5.3.2.2 Intangible

In this category, the intangible elements such as the sensory experience of home, daily routines and cultural events and the home connection with the outside context are examined. The memory of home and the sensory experience of home were an important part of home perceptions for the participants of the focus group no.2. Both participants state that their childhood home in Iran and other homes -such as grandparents' home or relatives' homes- that they experienced as a child in Iran had a great impact on the way they understand, experience and make sense of their home in diaspora. Paniz shares her experience of how she perceived their home in England upon their migration:

-Paniz: Oh yes! I remember my exact feelings when we moved here and I saw the house we were living in and I was like... I don't like it! ... Cause exactly what she said [Shirin], you know it wasn't a free flow house and I was on the second floor, my brother on the third and I was like ...this is not ok. I had to go downstairs for the kitchen... yeah exactly it [in Iran] was all in the same floor, you know like a bungalow!

-Shirin: yeah!

-Paniz: it was like a bungalow; you know? Very open. There was no up and down, there were mini stairs like here and there but not flight of stairs ... I didn't like the lay out and I still don't...

The way that the previous experiences of home influence the experience of home in diaspora could be highlighted from Shirin's description of her grandparents' home in Shiraz. She remembers the way to get to her grandparent's home with so many details, that she immediately reflects that perhaps it was because of those experiences that her perception and expectations of home and what she needs from a home are the way they are now. Her description is valuable on so many levels as it links past, present and future notions of home; her memory of that home has influenced her perception of home and her ideals for the future home.

-Shirin: So, there is a, just after *Saad*<sup>39</sup>, coming up ... there is a road called *Kucheye Sorsoreh*<sup>40</sup> that goes from *Baghe Delgoshah*<sup>41</sup> and it's literally a road cut into side of a hill or a mountain and the house used to just go up the mountain. So, there was a huge garden and God knows how many stairs before you got to the top of the house, and then on the top it was our home and then it was, I think it was an old lady called *kuchik khanoom*<sup>42</sup>. Yeah! So yes, it massively influenced how I see home. I'm used to gardens, my grandma's garden was massive,... her

<sup>39</sup> Name of a known Persian Poet from Shiraz, here, it refers to the neighbourhood that his shrine is located in Shiraz.

<sup>40</sup> The name of an Alley, literally means slides (کوچه سرسره).

<sup>41</sup> Name of a Street, literally means; "exhilarant Garden" (باغ دلگشا). She specifically uses the Persian words as they are very Persian, poetic and charming words.

<sup>42</sup> Means little lady (کوچیک خانوم), an old name that is only seen among older people.

garden was almost like a *Bagh*<sup>43</sup>. In the afternoons, when she'd go wash the *Hayat*<sup>44</sup> the smell of *Khak o Aab*<sup>45</sup> was raised ... Yeah, that's a reminder of my home. I wouldn't live in a flat even though I'm living in a flat now, but the moment I move out, it have to have a garden and I think that is very much influenced by my childhood experience.

Architecturally speaking, her memory description depicts how Iranian homes were experienced and lived within a wider context by talking about the route towards the home and its surroundings and the neighbour. Her memory is a mixture of nostalgia, sensory experience with the smell of water and soil or the garden that was so pleasant that she seeks a chance to recreate it in diaspora. This is similar to the description I provided in Chapter 3 about my grandparents' houses in the country and in the city, big houses with big gardens, placed in an open context and defined through the relationship with the whole neighbourhood. As migrants this is what is yearned for the most—to be a part of a wider context and to feel one belongs to something.

-Shirin: So, I put the last time that felt like home; this is quite hard, because you don't even realise it! This is one of those things that you don't pay attention to until you're like...oh... this is nice! It was the last time I was in Iran with my parents. Um... and it was *Ghoroub*<sup>46</sup>, and then the sound of *Azan* obviously from the distance, and the window was open, because it was warmer... it was near the summer! So you could hear the kids outside playing in the street and I was sat watching *Harim-e Sultan*<sup>47</sup>, so the TV was on and my dad was on his phone and my mum she... *Ghali mibafe*<sup>48</sup> so the *Daf*<sup>49</sup> of the *Ghali*, like that very vivid in my head and we were all quite full and content and we were in our *Zirshalvari*<sup>50</sup> and Pyjamas.... We just finished eating *Kabab Tabeh*<sup>51</sup> for dinner, and I just remember sitting there... and it's times like that, that I now appreciate them more.

Through this description, Shirin shares a memory that is very visual and relatable in terms of sense of home and the ephemerality of home, that the ultimate feeling of homeliness is achieved from a “passive sense” that transpires within the normality of everyday life (Oksala 2006).

The third focus group participants did not have a nostalgic approach towards homeland, because of their constant contact with Iran - but they all reflected on the process of situating

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<sup>43</sup> Persian word for Garden, there are two words in Persian for green areas near the house. *Hayat* (حیاط); which is more like a small yard with plants and a couple of small trees and *Bagh* (باغ); that is much bigger and is very similar to traditional Persian gardens with lots of trees and green areas.

<sup>44</sup> *Hayat* (حیاط): Persian word for yard/garden.

<sup>45</sup> *Khak o Aab* (خاک و آب); means Soil and Water.

<sup>46</sup> *Ghoroub* (غروب): Persian word for the time of sunset.

<sup>47</sup> *Harim-e Sultan* (حریم سلطان) a very popular Turkish soap opera aired from satellite TV through Iranian networks that are based abroad (UK and US mostly).

<sup>48</sup> *Ghali mibafe* (قالی میبافه): she weaves the carpet.

<sup>49</sup> *Daf* (دف): the metal tool that is used to press knitted layers of carpet.

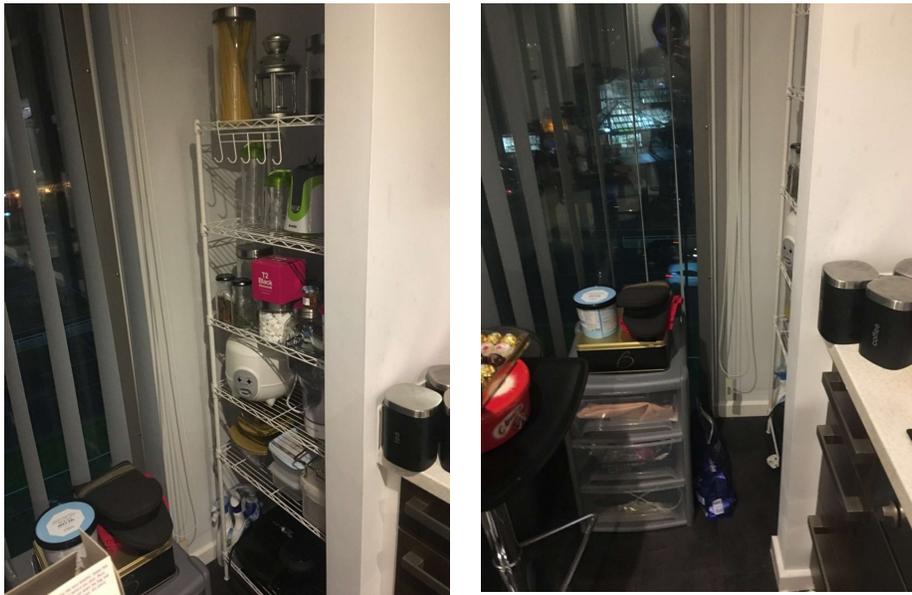
<sup>50</sup> *Zirshalvari* (زیر شلوارى): Persian word for Pyjamas.

<sup>51</sup> *Kabab Tabeh* (کباب تابه ای): Kebab made of minced beef that is fried in a pan.

identity, the meaning of homeland and the idea of belonging. They all talked about their yearning for the traditional Iranian homes that they had all experienced somehow in the form of a grandparent's or a relative's house. In that sense, these two groups were very similar to each other as they all admired the traditional Iranian homes and the sensory experience they provided. In terms of sensory experience, food was mentioned as essential in all focus groups. Some, such as Ziba in focus group no. 3, associated the essence of home with the sensory experience of home. Shideh in the same group mentioned that, without sensing the space home "loses its meaning". She suggested maybe as immigrants, they should reflect on the pleasant sensory experiences of Iranian homes to be able to recreate a sense of homeliness by trying to replicate those experiences in their homes in diaspora.

-Shideh: I think as Maral said, if we can duplicate these elements in our homes in here, then they will be having that warmth we were talking about and we may feel more belonged. We have those feelings with us, unconsciously, if we pay attention to embody those through these methods, our home would be more homely.

Other sensory elements such as the smell of cleanliness, and the smell of food, were mentioned as important in the sensory experiences that make a place feel like home. But the smell of *Eid* [Persian New Year] was mentioned in this focus group and throughout the interviews, associating a sensory experience and an intangible feeling with a certain event. This brings about the idea of atmosphere and the role that the sensory experiences play in creating a familiar atmosphere that is shared among individuals, connecting them and contributing to creating collective memory.



**Figure 5.19.** Maral stresses the lack of storage area in her home to store kitchen utensils and ingredients, hence she had to buy storage shelves.



Figure 5.20. The kitchen in Maral's flat.

Spatially, issues such as not having sufficient storage space or not having proper cooking areas were mentioned in relation to food (figures 5.19 and 5.20). But food was the topic that mostly raised intangible aspects of experiencing home, such as memory and identity. They all talked about how much the smell of Iranian food is a significant factor in giving a homely atmosphere to their home. The Persian ingredients, the cooking, sharing and the smell of food were mentioned to be important connecting factors to homeland (figure 5.21). Shirin and Paniz talked about the atmospheric and temporary experiences their parents created at home to keep them connected with homeland.

-Shirin: I have a vivid memory of being 16 or 17... I finished school like at 4 or 5, ... I remember my mum made *Khoreshte Bademjun*<sup>52</sup> with *Sabz*<sup>53</sup> and *Torobcheh*<sup>54</sup> and *Torsh*<sup>55</sup>... and in the UK, we would sit on the floor to eat it, she wouldn't put it on the dining table. And to me, that's one of the best memories I had with my mum. And I was sort of never good at eating with my hands and she made me learn, and she was like ... this is how some people eat.

-Paniz: yeah... What's that food, eh... it's a traditional food, you're supposed to have it for *Eyd*?

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<sup>52</sup> An Iranian Stew made of Eggplants, tomato and diced beef.

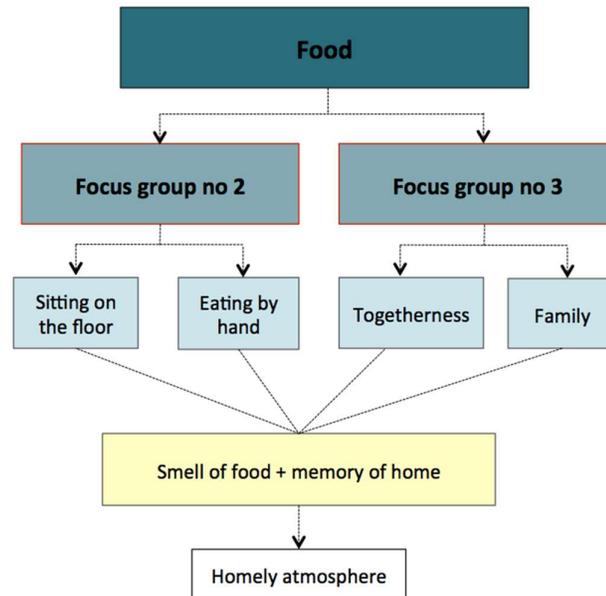
<sup>53</sup> Herbs

<sup>54</sup> Radish

<sup>55</sup> Pickled vegetables

**Me: Sabzi polo ba Mahi<sup>56</sup>?**

-Paniz: yeah that, they eat it by hand and that's the way to eat it, my mum even until today... she'd sit ...that was the only food she would love to even until today, she would like to sit down, *Charzanu*<sup>57</sup> with the food in front of her and eat it by her hand. Even until today she says, this is how you are supposed to eat it.



**Figure 5.21.** The food related themes in focus groups no.2 and no.3

The experience of eating has created a spatial memory. The act of eating by hand while sitting on the floor goes beyond the eating itself, it is an intersection of culture, identity and comfort, bringing an experience of Iranian home to diaspora within a transitory, ephemeral experience (figure 5.21). The experience of eating has become spatial, with the atmospheric qualities and the memories it created. For focus group no.3, the atmospheric aspect of food was mentioned in relation to creating a warm feeling and a sense of togetherness with family.

Another important intangible element of home discussed by both groups was the Persian New Year. It was found significant by both groups and mentioned to be an important event to celebrate and to reunite with Persian traditions and gather with the other Iranians in diaspora. In cases like Paniz, it was directly linked with her identity and the way she situated herself within the two cultures.

<sup>56</sup> *Sabzi Polo ba Mahi* (سبزی پلو با ماهی): a dish made of fried fish with saffron and rice and herbs, served at the Persian New Year's Eve.

<sup>57</sup> *Charzanu* (چهار زانو): sitting cross-legged.

-Paniz: without that... I would have probably wouldn't be sat here right now! Um... I do know quite few people actually that are more Iranian than any of us three but they just don't have it. They've lost it and it's simply because of the lack of culture in their life.

Everyone in these two focus groups mentioned that Persian New Year is celebrated at home or with other Iranians outside home. When they were asked about their sensory experience at home they mentioned the smell of cleanliness or the smell of *Eid* (the Persian New Year). They mentioned the feeling is different even if they are not in Iran during the New Year celebration. Making a sensory experience was not specific to Persian New year, everyone in these two groups talked about the religious rituals such as *Muharam* and the tradition of *Nazri* or fasting in *Ramadan* as events that change the atmosphere of the home. Although most of the participants made it clear that they are not religious, they all mentioned that they like to commit to religious traditions because of the favourable atmosphere and the feeling of belonging they create.

-Ziba: the value this has for me is as much as the traditional events. A part of it is nostalgia, because you want to repeat the experience you had in Iran in here. So, it is nostalgia for *Nowrouz* or *Muharram*...and the other part is connected to identity issues. In here, for example, Christmas is a meaningless event for us, you know? But because it is such a big event here, we kind of try to be a part of it. But sometimes you feel you need to have something of your own, a ritual for you that represents your identity. It is an identity trigger. Secondly, because we have children, a part of it concerns educating them on these traditional and religious ceremonies to make an identity for our children as well.

-Shideh: I totally agree with Ziba. In *Muharram* and *Tasua* and *Ashura*, I always try to provide that environment for my children to experience. I try to go to the ceremonies that are held outside with other people that the kids can experience it fully, but it will influence the home atmosphere as well.

-Ziba: yes for example during *Ramadan*<sup>58</sup>, I like to listen to *Rabbana*<sup>59</sup>, while my boy is playing and is in his own world but just because *Rabbana* has had a nostalgic feeling for me, I try to repeat that for him too.

The second focus group participants, being the children of immigrant households, react the same way; possibly these events link them back to the experiences and memories that have been created for them by their parents. Paniz, for example, mentions that both her parents are Christian but they all still do fast in *Ramadan* or go to *Muharram* ceremonies because of the good feeling it provides and the fact that committing to those rituals make her feel attached to the culture.

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<sup>58</sup> The ninth month of Islamic calendar is the month of fasting.

<sup>59</sup> *Rabbana* is a praying song that has been played by the media in Iran, right before the sunset when the fast could be broken.

-Paniz: yeah my dad can't [fast] anymore because of some health problems, my older brother, he just can't be asked but my mum she does it and it's so cute! ... she did it and I was like ok I do half a day and now... I only drink water and nothing else. I think it's nice... It's exciting. I feel like being a part of something special. And then the excitement when you come home and then you have those particular foods that you only eat during the fasting ...

For these women, religious ceremonies exceed beyond a spiritual activity, it has become something that involves sensory experience, influences daily habits and food routines, and ultimately creates a certain atmosphere that is a reminder of a memory; a memory of childhood or homeland. This creates emotions that inspire the longing to be part of a bigger community. These ceremonies and events go beyond their religious and cultural essence and become a way of connecting and reuniting with others. They are great opportunities of identity reconfiguration both for themselves and for their family "to remember where they have come from".

### 5.3.2.3 The in-between

In this section, factors such as spatial quality that encompasses sitting/furniture arrangements, light and nature are discussed in relation to the experience of the Iranian home both in Iran and in diaspora. This is achieved by also examining cultural/special elements such as hierarchy, hospitality and cleanliness. Through these, the participant's expectations of home and their ideals could be revealed while depicting suggestions on how their individuality is re-constructed through the making of home.

#### 5.3.2.3.1 Spatial qualities

Similar to the focus group no.1, the participants of the last two focus groups talked about comfort as a significant factor for creating a sense of homeliness, both in terms of furniture comfort and the spatial circulation and flow of space that brings about the idea of the furniture arrangements. The participants in the focus group no.2 expressed that they have never reflected on its importance but now that they have been asked about it, they found it so significant. In all the focus groups, the furniture arrangement was found so important in making a place look bigger and more pleasant, and made daily routines easier to do; it ultimately just looked more Iranian.

Shideh...I don't know if you have also noticed this or not, but I realised that British people would like to create a small space with the furniture. Everything is always circled around something. But I like everything to be arranged in an open way. I think they do that for two reasons, that the house looks bigger and that they can communicate easier.

-Ziba: yes, it's the same for me too. The furniture should be in harmony that they work well together and with the space so it gives you a good sense. I agree with Shideh, I think in general we like big and open spaces as opposed to British people who would like to make several chambers within the home.

...

-Shideh: For example, when I was renting my current home, when I entered and saw that it has an open kitchen, my first impression was like; oh this is great! It looks like Iranian homes.

Through a comparison between how British people “make home” or arrange the furniture with Iranian place making approaches, they tried to comprehend why things are the way they are. Similar to the first focus group, the furniture arrangement was also mentioned as an approach to making a place look more spacious. Therefore, the physical comfort of the furniture brings a sense of calmness that could only be maintained through a comfortable furniture arrangement as well. In some cases, the “Iranian” arrangement brings that sense of calmness.

-Shirin: I found that fascinating... like I didn't even realise that, but our furniture in here is very different from the way we arrange our furniture in Iran. Like... over here everything is pointed at the TV and in Iran that... isn't. Like ... sometimes there is no TV in the living room, you know you have two separate living rooms; like you have one for when you chill, you watch TV and then you have one for when the queen comes around! ...you know that area that you never use...yeah but I thought that was really, really fascinating!

Having homes both in Iran and in England, Shirin compares the spatial arrangements in both homes and defines the Iranian arrangements of space within certain features: arranging in a way that make the space look bigger with a free flow, and then arranging the furniture based on the division that regards hospitality. To have two separate spaces, one that is not used regularly and kept clean for the guests and the part that is used daily by the household, is the layout of such a space arrangement.

Another intangible element in a home that was mentioned as essential to make one feel like home was warmness and warm colours that brought about another significant factor that brings spatial quality, light and size together.

-Shideh: light it is very important because homes in here have less light or warmth.

-Ziba: Light is extremely important for me; I am very attached to light. Maybe, the element that I would like the most in a house is light. In here the windows are very small, I don't like it at all, I like to have big windows that the rooms can catch the light.

Maral connected this appreciation for light as a response to the lack of sunlight, but she also mentioned another level of experiencing atmosphere that involved memory and situating identity.

-Maral: this warmness that we are all addressing again relates to the lack of sunlight here. I mean when we have a sunny day, I am happy. ... It is very interesting for me, I was in Washington three years ago, it was extremely cold, I was in a hotel where there is no sense of attachment, but it reminded me of winters in Iran. .... That was my first time in

Washington and in that hotel, but it felt familiar because of the sunlight, I was like...oh ...this is Iran! I think **we are all looking for Iran in everything**; this is the reality of our life.

-Shideh: yes, it is the place we grew up in, for example I often think, maybe for my children, here is their home and they have those feelings about England. When they remember their childhood these are the houses they will remember.

Talking about light as an intangible element raised debates on how it connects one with the previous experiences in homeland and creates familiar feelings. Similarly, Shirin finds her interests in having a garden in her ideal diasporic home, in what she remembers from her experience of her grandmother's home patio in Iran, with tiles walls and glass ceiling. Maral, in the other focus group, shares a similar story and mentions her care for plants and her insisting on having lots of plants in her flat and decorating her balcony with them is rooted in her Iranian-ness.

-Maral: there are many main challenges in here; scale or the size of the homes that are much smaller compared to Iran, and second the nature and garden. My parental home was a north/south kind of a home. When I opened the garden door to bring my car inside, I would see the garden and the plants and flowers that my mother planted, they all made me feel so good, like home. ... What really surprised me in here was that there are two types of connection with nature, the backyard and the front garden that they have things planted or not, with these, I never developed that sense of attachment, in comparison to what we have as garden and yard in a home.

Having access to a green area was discussed as an essential element for space quality and it was described as a part of these women's everyday life in Iran while in the UK they struggle to have it. Shideh, Ziba and Shadi have access to nature through good views or having gardens or conservatory in their home while some of them such as Elaheh and Maral tried to recreate small green zones in their home by having plants in their apartments.

#### **5.3.2.3.2 Spatial/cultural elements (Hierarchy, Hospitality, Cleanliness)**

The participants discussed the Iranian spatial/cultural elements of hierarchy, hospitality and cleanliness through the first activity where they commented on four photos of four types of Iranian domestic spaces. In the second and third focus groups the responses to photos were very similar to what was in mind when selecting these photos for the activities. The participants have experienced all those homes at some point in their life. Some analysed them within a generational timeline while others looked at the houses through a class division. This activity helped to examine how others have experienced an Iranian home and how similar those experiences were. The first photo was selected with my urban grandparents' home in mind, while trying to highlight hierarchy. Several participants described it as a grandparent house that belongs to a middleclass household. The second photo was chosen to examine cleanliness and at the same time was a house very similar to the house in the country that I talked about in Chapter 3. All the participants shared the same

feelings of memory, nostalgia and yearning for the closeness and togetherness atmosphere those houses had. But they also agreed that such houses might not exist in the cities anymore. The third photo was mentioned as a house that they all lived in growing up and they still experience it at the home of relatives when they go to visit. I chose the last photo to raise discussions about hospitality and cleanliness and as a representation of the current Iranian homes. All the participants in the last two focus groups agreed that this is how a “modern” Iranian home looks like nowadays, but the conversation was also taken towards criticising the culture that makes the use of furniture for the household so uncomfortable just so the occasional guests would be impressed.

### **Hierarchy**

The first photo was intended to raise discussions on hierarchy that was addressed by the participants through analysing the characters and different layers of the photos.

-Maral... a retired man with very basic life ... and a lady that is a housewife and usually the first thing that entertains her is the telephone...

-Shideh: I don't know, because I've seen places like this, elderly people who sit together, after all these years they don't have much to talk about really. But even the atmosphere in there... she is talking on the phone in front of him, I think it kind of creates some sort of a good vibe in the house.

All the participants mentioned that this house was similar to a house of a grandparent and it was associated with family. Even at times when some commented on the cold colours or possibly ill man, others talked about the atmosphere of the place and the humbleness of the space to point out other sides of the space. In terms of hierarchy, apart from brief comments on gender hierarchy in this photo, there was no discussion on gender hierarchy in Iranian homes in general or in diaspora. The only mentionable type was the hospitality and prioritising guests over the household.

### **Hospitality**

Photos no. 3 and no. 4 were specifically chosen in regard to the notions of hospitality. The first photo was one aspect of hospitality that is based on having a humble attitude towards this matter by openness, generosity while the fourth photo was to point out the sensitivity to cleanliness. The photo no.3 was praised as the ideal, especially in the second focus group as it was linked with closeness, family and feeling belonged.

-Shirin: ...but this (no 3) is the type of house I probably grew up in. Like I actually wrote the word *Patogh*<sup>60</sup> ...because to me, my *Ammeh*'s<sup>61</sup> house was where we all collected on like a Thursday night or a Friday.

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<sup>60</sup> *Patogh* (پاتوق): Persian word for a haunt, a place to hang out regularly.

<sup>61</sup> *Ammeh* (عمه) means Aunt.

*Patogh* is a place to hang out regularly and it carries layers of meaning. *Patogh* not only refers to a comfortable place but also it is defined through comfortable friendly relations that are accompanied with delightful emotions. It could be happening at home a restaurant or a social hub, but what make the *Patogh* special is people's tendency to go back to that place due to its pleasant atmosphere. Therefore, the regular visit of certain people from a specific place is what makes that place special. *Patogh* is a perfect example of place making based on favourable previous experiences, it is a place remade to recall the same feelings, memories and sensory experiences.

The type of family household is analysed by assumptions about the characters. Ziba mentions that the type of hosting- using *Sofreh* or sitting on the floor- shows that the host is one of the older family members that are the regular host to gather all the relatives.

A perfect hospitality was defined as having a warm welcoming home and household, to care about serving great food and to show your respect and care for the guests by having a clean, neat home.

-Maral: um... look ... what I've learned from Iranian culture is there are two things (especially when you are going to have guests and you clean the house two days in advance); the notion of cleanliness is very crucial in Iranian culture, also having a tidy house. And then if you have guests this is going to highlighted even more. So, it is a concern that is with us all the time and is rooted in our culture.

Hospitality was strongly associated with cleanliness, which was mentioned by all the participants in all groups as having an important place in Iranian culture. Additionally, the discussions on social gatherings mostly led towards hospitality. For example, Shirin responded as below to the role of social gathering in making her feel like home:

-Shirin: It is very important... she [her mum] was a renowned person in the family for having dinner parties, like she would go all at it; ... she made like five sets of dishes. She was very good at it, and I used to get ripped into my weekend doing that with her... I vividly remember this one night where she invited everyone and then everybody stayed. So, you had like 30 people in one house, where there is only three beds. You have like those old fashioned mattresses... so there was like people sleeping in the hallway... in the rooms, there was like 15 people in the hall...

The togetherness, the closeness and the simplicity of these types of socialising have made hosting people a memorable experience for Shirin. The third focus group pointed out different aspects of socialising with others that was not an issue for the second focus group; socialising with people other than Iranians.

-Ziba: I think one aspect of it is also language.

-Shideh: and common memories!

-Ziba: yes, that too. I said before that your homeland becomes an abstract notion for you after immigration; the other important thing is the language. It plays a great role in keeping you attached to your home country and its culture. Your mother language is like a pyjama that you are comfortable in. So, I think this comfort that everyone is talking about when gathering with Iranians, some of it is because of the language... English language, although we all are fluent in it and we don't have a problem communicating, is like a very pretty dress that you just wear but you are not comfortable in it; it is a functional tool not an emotional one. I would like socialising with people but I prefer Iranian gatherings more than anything else because of those reasons.

-Shideh: the other reason is also the shared memory. For example, with British friend they start talking about a show from twenty years ago but you can't continue the conversation because you don't have that shared experience.

Socialising at home in a broad sense was stated to be significant to create a homely atmosphere. However, being more comfortable with Iranians and hosting other Iranians at home was mentioned several times during the interviews as a way of creating a sense of home, although temporary. This was mentioned again in the focus groups in more detail. Conversations as such also highlight the studies in this research in relation to the notion of one and other. The space provided by the interview session and more specifically the focus groups- because of its social nature- was a discourse for these women to talk about how they feel as the other. These women who are the other in host society used this session to become the centre or the one again, within the context of the focus group session, through speaking their own language with other Iranian women who were sharing their stories of immigration and assimilation.

### **Cleanliness**

In all focus groups the cleanliness for Iranian household was perceived to be different from UK households. The participants discussed the possibility of Iranian women being too concerned with having a level of cleanliness that might not be considered necessary by others. Similar discussion went on in the third focus group mentioning different levels of cleanliness that Iranian women commit that may categorise within a highly sensitive range.

Cleanliness in these focus groups was discussed within two levels; first, the level of cleanliness in the house for hosting others and then the cleaning routines. All these women agreed that, for Iranians, one of the ways to show respect to the guest and welcoming them is the level of care put into presenting a clean and tidy home. However, it was mentioned that cleanliness in Iranian culture is very important and Iranian women may be over conscious about household cleanliness and cleaning routines. The attention to cleaning routines as it came up through conversations in different focus groups could alter the spatial layout and furniture arrangements.

### Summary

The summary questions for the second and third focus groups are very informative on these women's understanding of the Iranian home, home in diaspora and the making of home. As was explained previously, the participants were asked to think back about the time they felt like home and to list the elements they thought were essential in creating that feeling. The notion of making home by making atmosphere was very present throughout the discussions in all focus groups. Their responses involved previous homes, their diasporic home and the homemaking approaches that emphasised the importance of the atmosphere of home. Figures 5.22 and 5.23 show the outcomes of the discussions of homemaking and the atmosphere in a visual manner with different tones of colour emphasising the precedent of some elements over the others. They affirm the application of transient elements for creating a temporary sense of home through a combination of spatial and sensual elements. The architectural perceptions of home are strongly bounded with its qualitative aspects and even quantitative elements such as size are perceived within qualitative realm. The same applies for the tangible elements such as sofa or Persian carpets as the former is associated with comfort and later is representative of the homeland culture. Therefore, these figures show the in-between nature of elements that are considered essential for creating a sense of home through homemaking practices.

Each homemaking process is based on individual circumstances but through developing an understanding about the common experiences of home of these users, and based on the activities and the discussion of the focus groups, a pattern emerged that fits into the tangible/intangible and the in-between, while highlighting the in-between elements. The discussions on the focus groups showed that, to be able to study home, a flexible approach is required that could be achieved by looking at the elements of home with an in-between approach. This approach was developed by the help of the theoretical framework, bringing feminist and phenomenology notions of identity, subjective experience, the experience of the other and the transient notions of home. This framework also formulated the selection of method and the methodological approaches for the study of home with an architectural manner. Based on these theories and the phenomenological study of Iranian home, the basis for the architectural study of home for women in diaspora was created. In that guise, not only an understanding of the experience of home was presented but also a comprehensive discussion on the everyday spatiality of home was discussed.

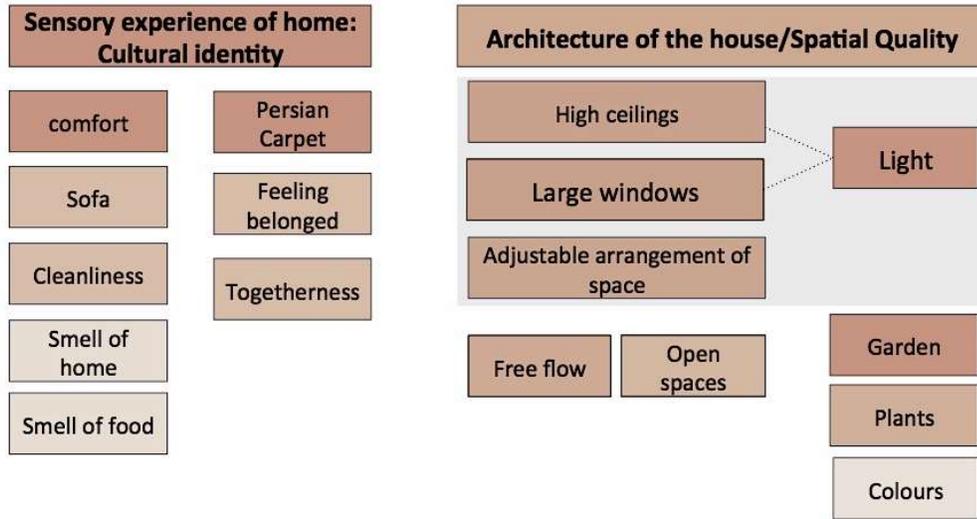


Figure 5.22. Homemaking elements in diasporic home of Iranian women in focus group no. 2

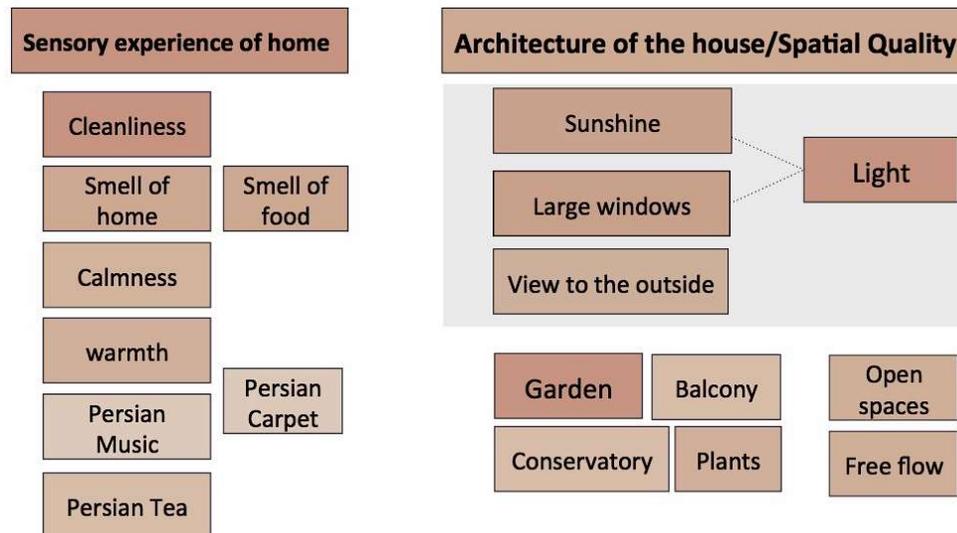


Figure 5.23 Homemaking elements in diasporic home of Iranian women in focus group no. 3

Figures 5.24, 5.25 and 5.26 highlight the outcome of the focus groups discussions about the sense of home and the making of home (and the making of atmosphere) within the proposed framework of tangible, intangible and the in-between. Based on this overview, the focus group's outcome is compared with the themes emerged during the interviews in a visual approach that concluded a framework that is a combination of the two within each category of tangible intangible and the in-between (figure 5.27).

Figure 5.27 is a representation of the outcomes from each empirical stage brought together to be analysed in a comparative approach. It shows different perceptions of home in different depths in terms of both the methodology and the content. The interview figures reveal the initial ideas and observations of home for the participants, arguing the general understanding of home and homemaking within broad themes, showing what are the main characteristics of these diasporic homes. Through the focus groups however, the detailed group discussions contributed to the production of a more sophisticated set of themes and homemaking approaches. The focus groups figure provides more elaboration on the emerged themes from the interviews and their different qualities. It led to modification or elimination of some and provided a perception on the significance of these themes within the tangible, intangible and the in-between category. For example, the “objects/decoration” of the tangible elements category in the interviews were expanded to “object decorations, furniture and the tangible architectural elements”. Or the “spatial quality” in the in-between category of the interviews evolved towards the clarification on what is meant by spatial quality by discussing notions such as comfort, size, light and nature. In that sense, the experience of home and particularly homemaking is understood in more depth. By combining these two figures, it is aimed to create a picture that depicts a clear idea about how Iranian home is imagined and how that image is recreated and practiced in diaspora. The final figure brings the two outcomes together and represents the generated findings through highlighting the relationship between the interviews and the focus group outcomes. It is a framework structure that not only brings the themes together but also highlights the way they function as a whole to the process of homemaking. This framework aims to be inclusive to the endless personal and creative possibilities of homemaking in the in-between space of home.

The generated outcomes and the framework of themes are in correlation with theoretical framework as they relate to transient and other ways of homemaking. Architecture, being mainly associated with the physicality of home, in here is described as more of a qualitative entity rather than merely a material notion. These findings emphasise on the importance of the home being made through ordinary every day practices within ephemeral moments, exceeding beyond the tangibility of home, bringing memory, cultural elements and subjective perceptions of space together. These diasporic homes have a contradictory place in the life of these women. On one hand, these homes are lacking qualities such as sufficient size, favourable access to light and nature, on the other hand they are perceived as embodied spaces of autonomy and empowerment. These diasporic homes are their “own” space, enabling them to resist the difficulties of being the other, as being a woman (in Iran and in the UK) and a migrant in diaspora. Their diasporic limitations are acknowledged but their diasporic home is the embodiment of their strategic homemaking processes. Through these processes they choose what part of their culture to be shown and what part of their history to be modified, in that sense they reconstruct their identity by the help of homemaking approaches that are situated within their migratory experiences.

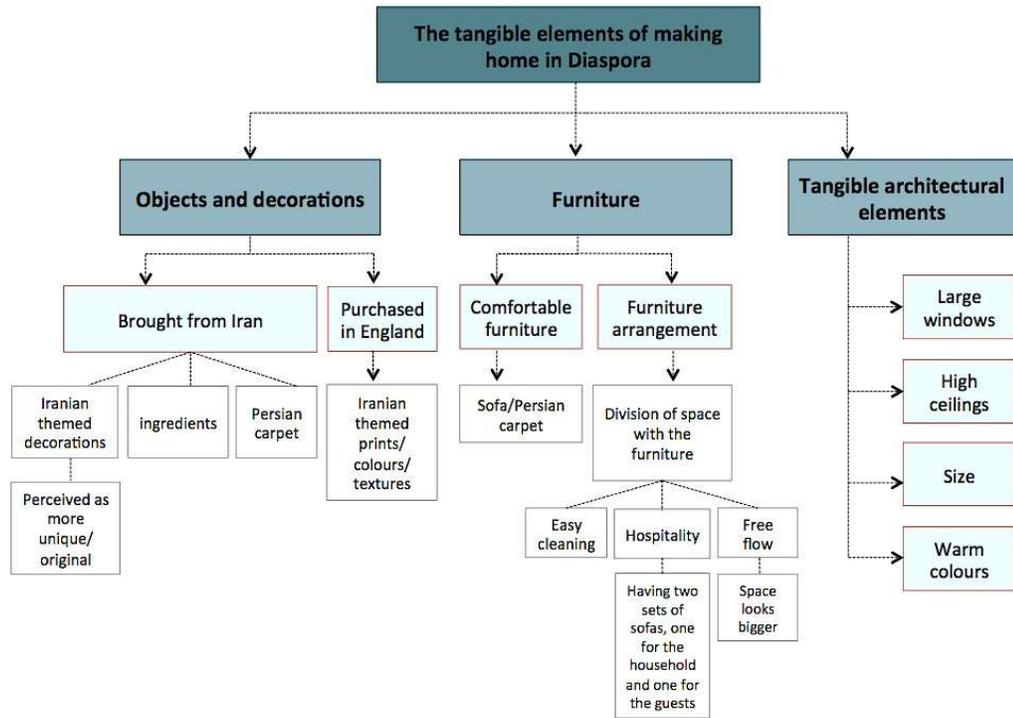


Figure 5.24 The Tangible themes of making home in diaspora and their relationship highlighted from the focus groups.

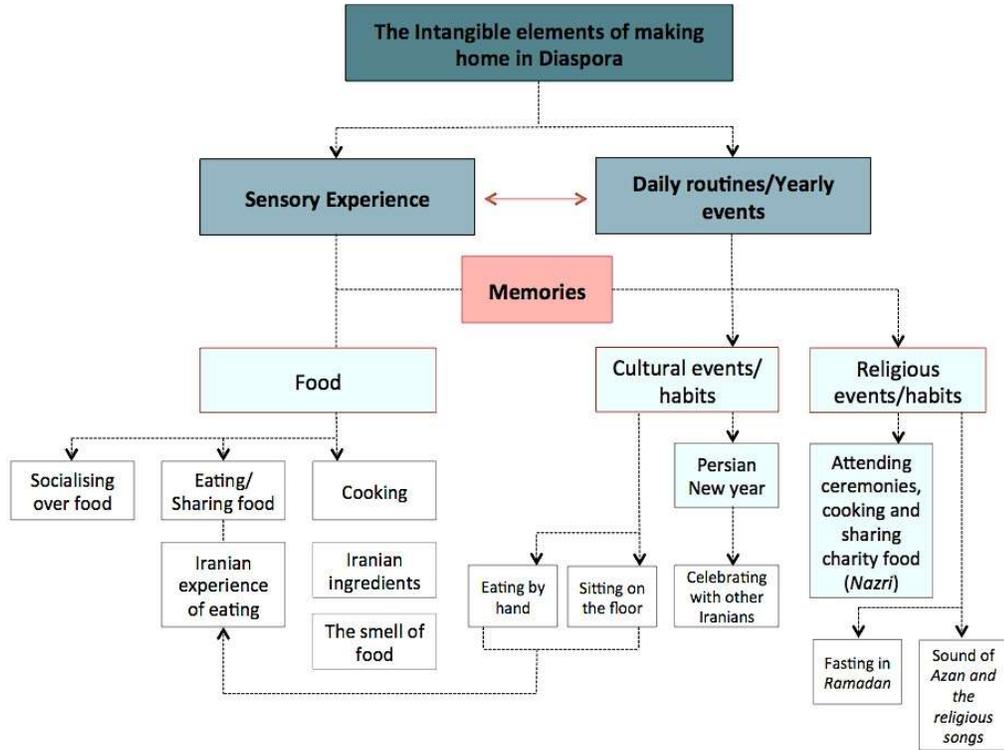


Figure 5.25 The intangible themes of making home in diaspora and their relationship highlighted from the focus groups.

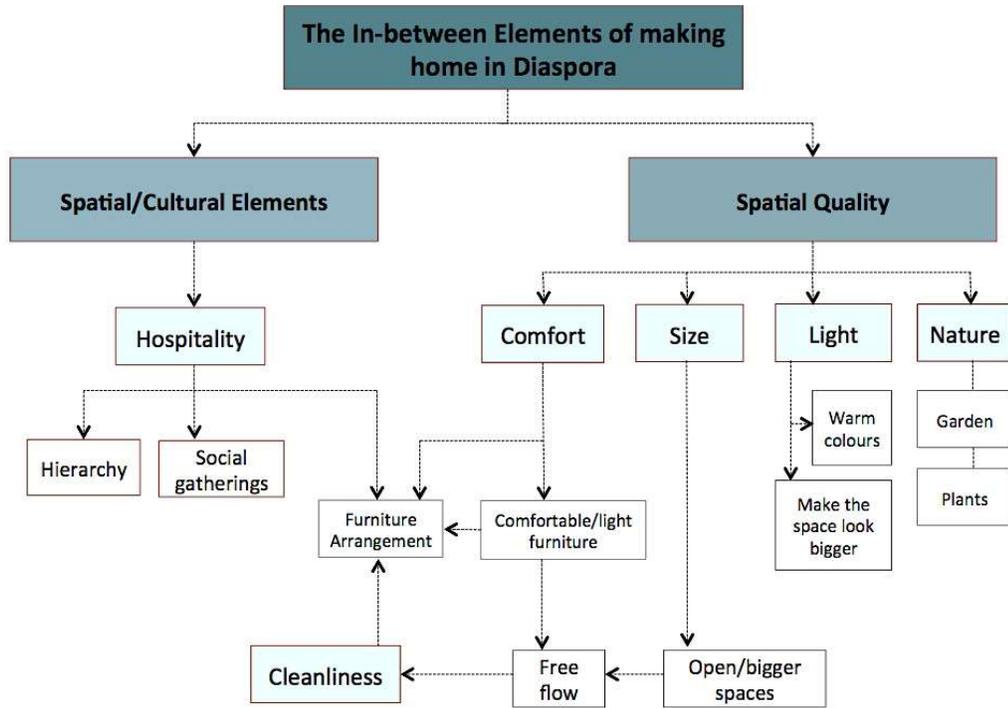


Figure 5.26 The in-between themes of making home in diaspora and their relationship highlighted from the focus groups.



## Chapter 6 : Concluding discussion and recommendations

### 6.0 Introduction

In this thesis, I aimed to represent a better understanding of the meaning and manifestation of Iranian home in diaspora, and propose a methodology for the study of home that brings architecture to the realm of home studies. This was conducted by creating an in-between space that brings both architectural and humanities approaches together by the application of different theories and methods. These theories and methods have been used as complementary tools that have evolved across the thesis, each contributing to the development of a flexible and scalable methodology. The women whose homes have been analysed in this research have chosen to leave Iran in order to pursue their education and to seek more autonomy. Through the making of their diasporic homes, they narrate their life in Iran, their perceptions of home and the issues they face in their current migratory life. I examined how these experiences are embodied through their diasporic home and argued that the current diasporic homes of these women have provided them with the desired autonomy whereas being limited in terms of providing their desired spatial quality. Additionally, I represented the dimensions of the Iranian home that are missing from the current scholarly literature.

For representing an architectural study of home and proposing a suitable methodology, first the meaning of home needed to be clarified. For that purpose, chapter 1, aimed to elucidate how home is defined in this thesis both as a concept and as a place. I began by addressing home as a place of encompassing contradictory notions such as public/private, real/ideal, being and becoming, one/ other, form/expression and tangible/intangible. This was examined by reviewing theories across different disciplines that embrace the dialectic notions of home. At the same time examining Iranian diasporic home for women inevitably dictates certain theories such as the female experience of home and the transitory state of experiencing home in diaspora and identity reconfiguration through space. This, however, necessitates seeking less conventional approaches of examining and perceiving space, identity and gender. Therefore, alternative ways of examining space were applied to formulate a conception that can be applied to the study of home in diaspora.

Therefore, the discussions presented in Chapter 1 was developed in a way to bring these different theories from different disciplines under one roof. Having these binarised notions of home in mind, Dovey's (2010) proposal to replace the notion of being in phenomenological approaches with becoming discussed by Deleuze and Guattari (1972) of space was employed. Moving towards the ideas of becoming instead of being, opened up discussions about the deconstruction of conceptions that define space, identity and gender within a fixed duality. This is where the notion of in-between was developed within the dialectics of tangible and intangible.

Consequently, the feminist theories were examined to explore female situatedness in the world seeking alternatives notions about identity, space and the idea of one and other. Massey, Grosz, Hook, and Young discussions each illuminated different perspectives on the deconstruction of the existing duality in the conventional ways of thinking and knowledge production and debated the necessity of claiming a third/in-between space that exceeds beyond this duality. In that sense, a space is created between the two that encompasses endless possibilities of becoming as a site where the previous experiences, identity and culture are embodied. Subsequently, the theoretical framework of tangible, intangible and the in-between was formulated to study home as a place that embraces different dualistic notions. Therefore, notions such as atmosphere and diaspora were examined in the next section, exploring the possibility of looking at intangible and complex notions. The atmosphere at home as one of the most intangible aspects of home was studied as a spatial character and in relation to architecture, analysing ambiguous/tangible notions within an architectural approach. Further, the idea of an in-between space beyond the conventional binary definitions was discussed in regard to architecture, deliberating notions such as the architecture of the everyday and the “third space” conception. The significance of the everyday in initiating other ways of doing architecture or a notion of architecture that goes beyond the dualistic conventions, was examined by looking into Henri Lefebvre’s (1974 and 1987) notion of space. The idea of the space in regard to the everydayness of architecture was discussed grounded on work of De Certeau (1984), Soja (1996) and Harris and Berke (1997) who urged looking at everyday architecture as a necessity rather than a nostalgic and poetic approach. They ultimately argued that it is through bringing the everyday life to the architecture discourses that the importance of spaces such as home is understood the way it is supposed to be. Subsequently, the everyday aspects of home and the role of architecture in creating and feeding socio-spatial practices of home in the context of middle east was examined. Bahloul’s (1996) discussion of memory, rituals and gender roles in Algerian homes along with Abdelmonem’s (2012) study of homes in old Cairo on practicing traditions at home through the memory of the past, depicted the ways in which architecture of the home encompasses tangible and intangible elements and shapes homemaking strategies on the everyday basis. These studies emphasised on how architectural design strategies must regards context oriented every day practises of home in order to be able to produce relatable outcomes.

The developed theories in this chapter were discussed in Chapter 2 in relation to the development of a methodology for the study of home. Consequently, phenomenology and feminist approaches were examined for the formation of a flexible methodology for representing a multi-facet study of home. It was concluded that by creating an in-between space between the two disciplines such a study becomes possible as they all bring valuable dimensions to the ways home is understood and is studied in relation to the notion of identity and gender. Therefore, this in-between approach was articulated across the chapter discussing different methods and their relevance to these theories and the ways in which they facilitate the study of home. Consequently, a combination of the phenomenological study of home, interviews, focus groups,

and visual methods were structured as the qualitative approaches for data collection, analysis and validation.

After articulating the theoretical framework, the developed notions were examined through a phenomenological study of home in Chapter 3, where the meaning of Iranian home and its spatial dynamics was studied. Representing Jacobson (2010 and 2009) and Seamon's (2008 and 2017) discussion of phenomenology and home and the relevance of a phenomenological study of home was discussed in relation to the idea of homemaking, atmosphere and the importance of childhood home. Before representing my subjective experience of four Iranian homes, the duality of *Zaher* and *Baten* in Iranian culture was introduced to discuss essential spatial/cultural notions of Hierarchy, hospitality and cleanliness. In that sense, the meaning of Iranian home and the accommodation cultural and religious elements at home were spatially illustrated with the help of subjective narratives and visual methods. Therefore, not only an architectural study of Iranian home is represented but also the ways in which Iranian homes are lived in an everyday level are discussed. Based on the phenomenological study of home and the framework developed during the theoretical studies, this chapter resulted in the development of a series of themes for further examination during the interviews.

Chapter 4 examines these themes with the interviews that are conducted in the diasporic homes of Iranian women. In that guise, the meaning of Iranian home in diaspora is explored in relation to the experience of Iranian home. Additionally, the participants' notion of home, diasporic experience and their homemaking approaches were analysed. Similar to the previous chapter, a combination of texts and visual methods were represented for the analysis of interviews in this chapter. Through the interview sessions, more themes were evolved and a framework of themes for the study of home in diaspora was developed.

Chapter 5 is where this framework is tested and validated with the help of focus groups. In this chapter, a methodology is proposed by evaluating the outcomes from each stage; the phenomenological study of Iranian home, interview analysis of the Iranian diasporic home and the focus groups. Therefore, a framework of themes is proposed under the category of tangible, intangible and the in-between for an architectural study of home

### **6.1 Thesis contribution**

The study of home is a multi-faceted study; it becomes more complex when it is focused on the female experience of home and in the temporary state of diaspora. This complexity is put into relief by embracing its ambiguity, aiming to move between the disciplines to present a study that regards architectural notions as important as social, cultural and individual conceptions. The contribution of this thesis is twofold; it contributes to the topic of inquiry by proposing the theoretical framework of tangible, intangible and the in-between for the study of home, and in terms of methodology by developing an architectural methodology for the study of home. Developing a conceptual framework rooted in phenomenological and feminist studies, facilitated

the phenomenological study of Iranian home. In that sense an understanding of the experience of Iranian home in an everyday basis was achieved. Meanwhile, the tangible, intangible and the in-between framework implemented a structure for the themes emerged from the theoretical studies. This theoretical framework also facilitated the methodology discussions, the process of method selection and the data analysis. The suggested methodology therefore, examines the idea of looking at architecture beyond rigid boundaries of tangible elements. It urges to investigate interdisciplinary approaches to be able to capture the essence of home as a space and as a place that influences people's perceptions in so many levels. It reminds that in order to be able to spatially and architecturally arrange a domestic space, the everyday habits and rituals, traditions, the memory and the ways the space is individually and socially produced must be recognised.

Throughout this thesis, I showed that the current literature on home studies is dominated by other disciplines, such as social sciences, rather than architecture. Through the literature review discussions in the first chapter, I aimed to define the notions of space, identity and gender in the domain of home in a way that included architecture- to find common grounds for the development of a conceptual framework that would lead to the formation of the methodology. I began by examining the ideas of authors such as Heidegger (1971) and Bachelard (1958) on defining space and, ultimately, home, as an embodiment of one's being. Then, based on Dovey's (2010) appropriation of these theories for architectural studies, the notion of being was replaced by the idea of becoming, discussed by Deleuze and Guattari (1972). Based on these studies, such notions were acknowledged to be relevant for the study of the Iranian home in diaspora. It was anticipated that these homes would be an embodiment of the nomadic identity movements caused by living in diaspora. The majority of the participants stated that the process of migration has influenced their perception of identity and that they are experiencing a reconfiguration process of their culture, society and, ultimately, the ways in which they perceive home. These discussions were established within the memory of home and homeland, the sensory experience of home and the atmosphere of home in general. Therefore, to examine the idea of in-between, the atmosphere of home was studied within an interdisciplinary study, highlighting its significance in relation to architecture and the experience of home.

Additionally, atmosphere itself as a spatial entity have been the centre of seldom investigations. The definition of atmosphere in different disciplines and its relevance to architectural notions of space and place making was represented. The theories of atmosphere from different areas were compared aiming to highlight the possibility of discussing atmosphere with an architectural focus. In that guise, atmosphere and its potential for transforming a space to a place was articulated. Since the atmosphere of a place is an embodiment of sensory experience, memory, subjective representation and social interactions, it was examined in order to represent the possibility of a study that minds the intangible and in-between aspect of a place as important as its tangible.

Subsequently, it introduces the making of atmosphere as a homemaking strategy. Something that was found significant for the context of home in diaspora.

Consequently, different sets of themes were highlighted within the framework of tangible, intangible and the in-between in relation to the notions of becoming, sensory experience of home, gender and cultural views and the architecture of home. This theoretical framework suggests that a variety of elements must be considered for studying home that includes ideas of being and becoming within space and gender modalities. It became apparent that the study of home with an architectural perspective becomes possible only if it is located in a context that encompasses subjective experience, memory, identity and gender while highlighting its essential tangible aspects. Consequently, the theoretical studies on diaspora revealed that these notions might be altered due to the transitory nature of diasporic experience and that the study of the diasporic home is a space that embodies different levels of complexity.

Additionally, in this thesis, through the feminist theories, I examined how alternative ways of defining space could be implemented, relevant to the temporary identity conceptions. I remarked that study of home deals with a series of dialectical notions: real/ideal, tangible/ intangible, public/private, atmosphere/materiality and the essential duality of home/journey (Dovey 2010). Therefore, for the study of home in diaspora as a place of the embodiment of these dialectical notions, a conceptual framework needed to be developed to resolve these contradictory internal notions, to be able to investigate the conceptions of gender, identity and diasporic experience at home. The examination of feminist theories has provided this possibility by urging the importance of moving beyond the existing duality of thinking by proposing an in-between philosophy and means of knowledge production. Hence, the theoretical framework of tangible, intangible and in-between was formed and was implemented across the thesis. Another significant theory, which emerged from the feminist study, was the notion of otherness, highlighting how the research can provide a space to share the experience of the other. Iranian women in diaspora deal with otherness in two aspects; being a woman in Iran- a society with patriarchal dynamics (Naghibi 2007, Moghadam 1992, Moallem 2005 and Ghavamshahidi 1995)- and being a migrant in the UK. Hence, this research aimed to define a space for these women to address and discuss their experience in that regard. The interview sessions for example, provided that possibility while the focus groups sessions were an opportunity to take this even further. The group dynamics of the sessions empowered the participants as they discussed notions of identity reconfiguration, connecting with the host society and reflecting on Iranian culture within a group, with other Iranian women who were going through similar experiences and issues.

On the other hand, the phenomenological theoretical studies showed the importance of subjective experience and intersubjectivity. Examining home through phenomenological approaches illuminates the idea of the atmosphere at home, focusing on the subjective experience of home, bringing memory and the previous experience of home to the perception of

current home. Representing David Seamon's (2008 and 2017) arguments, I explained why phenomenology is important for an architectural study of space and consequently how the atmosphere of space could be examined through phenomenological studies. At the next stage, through Jacobson's discussions on home, I drew attention to the importance of the childhood home in one's perception of identity and home. This idea was highlighted by the participants of the interviews and the focus groups as well, mentioning how their childhood experience of home has influenced their idea of home and their expectations of their ideal/future home.

Through these theories, I signified three trajectories of research: the notion of the atmosphere at home, the feminist notion of locating the body (or subjective experience), and finally the importance of the childhood home in framing ones' perception of identity and home.

Subsequently, I represented the phenomenological study of the Iranian home by discussing spatial/cultural elements of hierarchy, hospitality, and cleanliness under the duality of Zaher and Baten notions in Iranian culture. This was discussed within the framework of tangible, intangible and in-between. As it was mentioned previously, the Iranian home and particularly the Iranian women experience of home is a very challenging subject due to the rapid social, economic and political changes of the country. Also, Iranian homes has been politically charged spaces, always reinventing itself in response to the society's transformation. On the other hand, the domestic spaces in Iranian homes have long been associated with female identity and homes are considered as women's domain. Due to these complexities, there is a lack of comprehensive studies on the everyday essence of Iranian home and the experience of Iranian home. Hence, through the phenomenological study and the visual analysis of Iranian homes, it was aimed to capsule these complicated matters with an agile approach. Additionally, the architectural analysis is conveyed through the application of visual methods. The drawings and the photos facilitated the discussion of the spatial aspects of the Iranian home dynamics on an everyday level. By representing my personal experience of four Iranian homes where I have lived in Iran, I depict how these elements are practised in everyday life and how they architecturally influence the domestic spaces of the Iranian home. Relating to feminist theories, I also argued the notions of reflexivity and how this chapter provides an understanding of how my subjectivity is situated across the development of this research: as an architect, a migrant and an Iranian woman. The phenomenological study of the Iranian home was used not only to provide a window to the potent issues of culture, society and identity but also to provide more depth to the study of Iranian homes. What I knew about Iranian homes, the society and Iranians' collective memory and experience, combined with the theoretical studies, was used as a reference to frame the study.

In the next step, the themes and analysis from this study were taken further through interviews, visiting and recording the diasporic homes for data collection and analysis. The same framework of tangible, intangible and the in-between structured the analysis of interviews. Subsequently, this framework was re-evaluated, tested and validated through focus groups. The architectural analyses of the diasporic homes were employed by the representation of photographs and

drawings that resulted in proposing a fourfold methodology through architectural research that employs phenomenological approaches, interviews, focus groups and visual methods. These qualitative methods are introduced as a bricolage of tools while being linked to the framework of theories aiming to represent a comprehensive study of home (Kincheloe 2001 and Denzin and Lincoln 2017).

Therefore, this thesis provides a series of new insights into the study of the home. First, the contribution to current home studies that comes from developing a theoretical framework that led to the evolution of an architectural methodology suggesting a fresh approach for analysing home spaces. Additionally, atmosphere as an ambiguous entity was studied through a spatial examination to address different approaches to the making of home. In terms of Iranian studies, I introduced aspects of the Iranian home that are seldom the centre of discussions, since both the current Iranian home and the Iranian diasporic home, as spaces of encompassing everyday life and routines, have been rarely examined. The limited existing studies that emphasise on everyday aspects of home in relation to its architecture are mainly developed around one specific notion of Iranian culture, such as religion or privacy, or are context specific conducted in a certain region of Iran in a specific climate or culture (Molki 2017, G. H. Memarian, Hashemi Toghr oljerdi, and Ranjbar-Kermani 2011). Hence, representing an understanding of the Iranian home within a multi-dimensional framework that studies important Iranian cultural modalities together and with a spatial approach is a neglected area.

This thesis offers a methodology for the study of home and brings new sets of narratives towards the current home and the previous home. On a theoretical level, this thesis emphasises the necessity of developing an interdisciplinary conceptual framework that works as a catalyst for the formulation of methodology and the methods. This framework is shaped within the related discourses on the topic of the research, acknowledging the differences or contradictions among them while seeking to benefit from applicable ideas within each of them. This then feeds the process of method selection, analysis and validation. For this study, for example, the theories of feminism, architecture and phenomenology were found significant for studying home, in diaspora, for women and with an architectural approach. Therefore, relying on these theories, phenomenological studies, interviews, focus groups and visual methods were implemented to study home in different facets within the tangible, intangible and in-between framework. Hence, a methodology was formulated that is not only applicable to the Iranian home studies but also could be applied to other similar contexts and cultures, and the study of home in general, with few adjustments and alterations.

### **6.1.1 Data analysis and validation**

The main body of collected data was examined through the analysis of the interview discussions, photographs and sketches in the diasporic homes. The interviews were examined as the means to discuss the immaterial aspects of home and the physical elements of home were represented

through the photographs. Finally, these two aspects of home were embodied through an architectural representation of these spaces based on my personal memory and understanding of the home spaces that were embodied within the discourse of drawings. In that sense, a comprehensive analysis was represented, depicting different dimensions of Iranian diasporic homes. The analysis was structured within the theoretical framework of tangible, intangible and the in-between and the themes that were developed throughout the thesis to scrutinise the making of home in general while highlighting specific characteristics of the Iranian home and Iranian diasporic home. Additionally, the structure of themes can also be modified into a framework that can be responsive to the study of the atmosphere at home.

The framework of tangible, intangible and the in-between within the spatial/cultural elements of the Iranian home was examined through this process; as themes evolved, some were eliminated and some new themes were developed. Subsequently, to test and validate the outcome, focus groups were employed. This framework was examined through the interviews. The analysis of the interviews helped new themes to emerge; therefore, further studies were required to test and validate the data. The phenomenological study of home, along with the interviews and visual analysis led to a methodological package that was tested through the focus groups. The focus groups were conducted for several reasons: for continuity with the participants, and also to receive feedback from new participants for more objectivity and fresh perspectives on the matter. It was aimed to make sense of the proposed methodological framework by the further examination of the outcome. Additionally, the group nature of the focus group session added more complexity and breadth to the discussion, opening up new ideas and directions. Hence through the implementation of the focus groups the findings emerged from the interviews and phenomenological studies were examined while presenting a more in-depth analysis of the proposed themes of homemaking.

### **6.1.2 Thesis main findings**

The examinations in this research indicated that diasporic experiences have influenced the participants' idea of identity in two different aspects; firstly, the ones who have associated themselves with a transnational individuality, maintaining relevance to both cultures, selectively positioning themselves in-between the two societies. Secondly, those who had a nostalgic view of Iranian culture and their Iranian identity, praising and appreciating the experience of the past, mentioning that through the distance caused by migration the value of the homeland and its culture is realised. Hence, highlighting the cultural differences and the lack of connection with the host society communities was the major challenge in their view. This group have accepted this dynamic, and have stopped trying to assimilate into the host society and maintain a distance by mostly interacting with other migrants or other Iranians. These two different approaches to re-configuring identity were embodied in the diasporic homes in different manners as well. The first

ones, who considered themselves more involved with the host society, showed less interest- or consciousness- in representing tangible elements in their home that are visibly linked with the Iranian culture. For these groups, the Iranian-ness was represented through intangible and in-between elements, such as transient moments of the atmosphere of the homeland (sensory experience, food, music, etc...), daily habits and certain spatial arrangements such as furniture position. Tangible Iranian-themed elements were seen in all the studied diasporic homes, but the intensity and the intention behind representing them were different. Most of the second group of participants, who had a nostalgic view towards Iran, intentionally used Iranian objects as a statement, depicting who they are and where are they coming from. For this group, even the intangible practices of home, such as cooking, hosting and atmosphere making were intended to show their background to the others, relieving the undecided state of identity for them. Therefore, the examination of identities as becoming processes found its relevance within the interview and focus group discussions as it revealed valuable points about the diasporic experience and homemaking approaches in diaspora. Being attached to Iranian culture or not, these homes were an embodiment of these women's processes of becoming and their approach to reinventing and reconstructing their individuality anew due to their diasporic experience.

Regardless of the approach they have taken in response to the challenges of migration, these women each developed their own strategic approach to represent their identity, their Iranian-ness and their otherness at their homes. Similar to their home in Iran, their diasporic homes were perceived to provide contradictory practices as well. These women's home in Iran were much bigger, they were the only place that they could be free and represent their true self, but they were located in a context that did not provide much autonomy for women. Their current diasporic homes are also contradictory, they provide the required autonomy and are situated in a context that is not considered patriarchal but it lacks certain architectural qualities and sufficient physical requirements such as the proper size, or favourable access to natural light and nature. However, their diasporic home was an embodiment of their struggle as being the other in home and in the host society. It was a place of reinventing their narratives by developing their own homemaking strategies, selectively representing their history and individuality. For example, the patriarchal society of homeland or gender hierarchy in the society and gender roles at home in Iran were not mentioned as a significant matter. They refused to uphold to the dominant represented image of middle-eastern/Muslim women as the victim by ignoring such conceptions while only focusing on their own strength (Bahloul 1996:70). Their aim was to reconstruct their own identity focusing on the best parts of both culture in their independent life brought to them by migration.

The primary hypothesis was that many elements of Iranian culture would be apparent in the homes of these women in diaspora. The reality, however, was slightly different. This research showed that one's individuality is embodied through the process of homemaking but not always through physical and tangible elements. This is where the importance of making the atmosphere, as an alternative approach to making home, became clear. The sense of homeliness was also

produced within ephemeral moments such as cooking, hosting or even cleaning that expanded across a variety of sensory experiences bringing past and present together with the help of memory (Hua 2005). In that sense, home becomes the embodiment of the binary oppositions of imagined and real (Zoppi 1999:151). The complexity of this matter, however, is setting a spatial analysis of such approaches that keeps the importance of architecture in mind during the examination of homemaking; otherwise, the study would be reduced to a single perspective. The solution was found in embracing this complexity by applying a flux of methods that brings an architectural dimension to the study of home.

The spatial quality; light, nature, size was already examined in the interviews but were strongly affirmed during the focus groups. During the group conversations these themes were taken further and new ones emerged such as spatial circulation and furniture arrangement. Furniture arrangement was highlighted again by discussing cultural/spatial elements of hospitality and cleanliness. The ideal furniture arrangement was mentioned to be: first, when there is enough space between furniture to perform cleaning routines, second, when the furniture arrangement makes the place appear bigger. Having an open flow and dividing space through furniture for hosting purposes were categorised as an Iranian spatial arrangement; therefore, there was a tendency to bring the Iranian-ness to the diasporic home within the existing possibilities. When the size or the layout of the home is not alterable, the portable elements such as furniture could be changed in a way to present a rather similar sense. Similar to the interviews, hospitality and cleanliness were discussed as Iranian specific themes that are influential in the way that the home is arranged and made in diaspora. Another response to the spatial restriction of the diasporic home was the application of warm colours in the interior decorations to compensate for the lack of natural light. Warm colours in a space resemble brightness and warmth, qualities that these women mentioned to be missing in their diasporic homes due to the lack of access to natural light.

The discussions of the literature review highlight a series of tangible and intangible elements as essential components of homeliness. The analysis of diasporic homes brings out the significance of the in-between elements of home within that categorisation as well. This is addressed in two aspects, the sense of homeliness in general and the homeliness that was linked to the sense of Iranian-ness. As it was anticipated, the sense of homeliness was described mostly with intangible elements. The sense of homeliness through Iranian-ness involved spatial dynamics and design. The smell of food, celebrating Iranian events and gathering with other Iranians, were occasional moments of making the home Iranian (an Iranian atmosphere), but in the everyday situation, there were specific spatial qualities that were considered to make the diasporic home have a sense of home. These were comfort, cleaning routines, furniture arrangements, the free flow (open spaces), open kitchen, large space (high ceilings) and appropriate access to natural light and nature (larger windows): all were mentioned as the essential qualities for homeliness that

were directly linked to the previous experience of an Iranian home. These are elements that were lived every day in the Iranian homes to a larger extent than the current diasporic homes.

The classification of tangible, intangible and the in-between provides the structure to begin the analysis of home in a general context. Based on the research objectives, the themes, the details and the specific points could be analysed leaning more towards one in the spectrum of the tangible or the intangible. But what is important is to analyse the space of home within the in-between domain, as it is where a comprehensive study becomes possible. In the case of this research, for example, the diasporic home of Iranian women is closer to the intangible themes: however, in the analysis, a balance between the elements of each category is maintained within an architectural approach.

## **6.2 Recommendations**

It is hoped that, by drawing attention to the necessity of studying home through an architectural approach, this thesis provides the ground for future research on home in regard to its spatial nature. It is expected that the spatial examination of current Iranian homes in diaspora based on women's experience of home, will act as a catalyst for more research on this fruitful but neglected area. Hence, the outcome of this research benefits the architectural research of home, the studies on home in diaspora and Iranian home studies.

According to UK National Statistics (2015), the population of Iranians in the UK has been estimated at around 85,000, that does not include the number of students that are waiting to be settled in the UK. Additionally, Iranian refugees are among the top five nations seeking asylum in the UK (McKinney 2017). Therefore, there is a considerable population of Iranians with a different demography to whom the outcome of this research could be applied to improve their living situation. A responsive home layout can function as a catalyst for the migrants' process of assimilation that ultimately benefits both the host country and the immigrant communities. Therefore, the main area that could benefit from the outcome of this research are the followings:

- The design practices: This research opens a window towards understanding home, the experience of the diasporic home in general and, more specifically, the significant role of the experience of home in the homeland in shaping the expectations of the current home. In that sense, applying the proposed methodology improves the possibility of understanding the diasporic home's dynamics as well as the practice of home in the original country, providing more applicable routes towards designing and planning responsive homes for immigrants. Ultimately, providing a better understanding of the dynamics of the Iranian home and the meaning of Iranian home in diaspora helps to inform appropriate design strategies that not only help architectural practice but also influence the quality of the user's life within the boundaries of their diasporic home. The current Iranian home characteristic is a conflicted and complex notion, whose complexity can be addressed by analysing the Iranian home through the spatial/cultural elements of

hierarchy, hospitality and cleanliness within the dialectic notions of Zaher and Baten. Therefore, based on the circumstances and the limitations in each case, an architectural design strategy could be employed responding to this framework. This means that the homeliness of the homes can be achieved not necessarily through material forms and tangible architectural elements but rather by considering and designing spaces that have the potency and flexibility to be compatible with the users' cultural preferences. As was discussed earlier, for the case of the Iranian home in diaspora that would be a space with appropriate access to light and nature, an open/free flow space-not necessarily a big space- that is capable of accommodating 'Iranian' furniture arrangements, and ultimately a place with allocated spaces for different functions.

- Academia and research: with the theoretical framework and the suggested methodology for the study of home, this thesis generates new knowledge in different areas of studies such as the study of home as it adds an architectural dimension to the existing studies. It also contributes to the study of home in general and in diaspora. In addition, it adds to the growing body of Iranian studies on Iranian diaspora. Furthermore, it highlights the importance of female notion of diasporic space and in particular Iranian women's understanding of home. Lastly, by proposing an architectural methodology for the study of home, this thesis informs to the existing architectural research reminding the necessity of interdisciplinary studies for providing fresh views towards complex spatial notions such as home. Hence, this research provides the ground for similar studies in these areas that each possess enriching potentials to be investigated further and in more details.

The proposed framework could be used to categorise the definitive factors for space, while the themes in each category could be defined specifically in relation to the users' culture and circumstances, helping to propose solutions in terms of spatial design and dynamics. It is also a framework that can benefit other nationalities and cultures as the proposed framework is applicable to home studies in a broad sense, and only the spatial/cultural elements specific to the case of research needs to be modified.

### **6.3 Limitations**

Studying home deals with a series of complexities, as it is the study of home in diaspora. One of the main challenges of this thesis was recruiting the participants. Finding and persuading Iranian women that were not reluctant to share their personal and diasporic experiences or have their home visually recorded, was not an easy task especially when they are in a different country. Hence, the unwillingness rooted in sociocultural and religious principles combined with time limitations were the main restrictive factors.

Another issue that limited the research strategies was the temporariness of the diasporic homes that made the possibility of the follow-up interviews very difficult. Most of these women moved to other cities or left the UK in a short time after the interview. Thus, only the ones who remained living in the UK could be recruited for the focus group sessions.

And finally, the lack of studies on the current Iranian homes in terms of spatial dynamics and the everyday use made it difficult to define a conception of Iranian home that could be related and employed for this research. The same issue applies to the Iranian diasporic home as it has been rarely discussed in relation to spatial and architectural arrangements. Both trajectories are neglected areas in terms of female perceptions and interaction with these spaces as well.

#### **6.4 Future work**

The immediate next step for this research could be examining the proposed methodology in a different context. Additionally, another trajectory of research that this thesis promotes is how Iranian cultural, traditional and religious habits are adapted into the space of contemporary Iranian homes. This was explored by the phenomenological study of the Iranian home. The next step would be to examine this framework within other methods of architectural research to provide a comprehensive description of contemporary Iranian homes. Ultimately this research adds to the growing academic works on home studies while bringing fresh ideas on Iranian feminism and the study of Iranian women and their homes in diaspora. The proposed methodology regards female identity within the process of homemaking, addressing inclusive methods that bring cultural, social and architectural elements under one roof. In that sense, feminist approaches to studying home are highlighted as an area that can reveal different valuable insights for the case of the Iranian home and Iranian diasporic home and, therefore, is ripe for further study.

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## **Appendix 1. The interview transcripts**

### **Interview no 1: Azar**

#### **What home means for you?**

Home is a place that brings calmness for me, for example imagine a day that I had a very busy day or a very exciting or stressful day, home is a place that anything in it calms me down. Home for me is more a spiritual entity than a place made of stone and bricks.

#### **What is the image of home for you?**

When I hear the word home, there are several places that come to my mind as my home, one of them is my current home in here, another one that is interesting is our house before I came here that I spent my undergraduate years in there, it was a place that I discovered myself in many aspects in that home. It was a very old organisational house, it was not a very luxury or beautiful house but it was located in a very big garden, that house made me very happy and it was in a time that I started to know myself and the time that I defined my values. It was a very good house. That house is what I remember as home.

#### **So you are saying that you love that house because you were living there in an exciting period of your life not just because there was anything special about the house?**

Well, not really, one of the reasons that I loved that house was because I was living with my parents, it was a really good atmosphere, this is still existing but that period of my life was very good, the thoughts that I had in my room and the things I took with me to my room, I really like those. I still remember it.

#### **How much that garden influenced your interest in that house?**

Very much, because, I don't know how to explain for example, imagine whenever you open the door you had to walk through a garden at least for 6-7 minutes until you get home. The garden that was full of flowers and some times the sound of water. I always thought this route helps you to release all of your tiredness by the time you get to home. I think it was so influential on my love to that house.

#### **What are the most noticeable differences that you feel between your current house and your house in Iran?**

Well, the first thing that grabbed my attention was the tap waters with separated hot and cold taps that I found it very difficult to use. What I really like in the houses in here is the quality of the wall paintings, and I can explain why it is important for me, I always thought that the quality of the colour used on the walls has a huge influence on the house decoration, but most of the time because we wanted to save money, even the house that we built, the walls kept with plaster and we didn't paint them, and later when we painted the walls we didn't use the high quality ones, because we didn't have money to paint all the house. So always the houses that were painted with high quality colours reminded me of good luxury things. Then I came here and I realised that here, in most of the houses the walls are covered with high quality colours, because of that the houses in here give me a very

## *Appendix 1. The interview transcripts*

good feeling. It is the same story with the internal doors; I like them and the quality of the wood that is been applied. It is really important for me to see that the houses in here are built precisely and with attention that is really interesting for me that although my home is a student style apartment but all the basics has been considered.

### **So, that also means that the majority of houses in here are built according to the standards that are not related to the financial level of the residents?**

Yes, exactly, there are some quality standards that are considered everywhere. But in Iran you had to spend so much money to achieve that quality. For example, the student houses or even many of the average houses are not presented like that.

### **What is your favourite place in your house now?**

The sofa, sitting on my sofa gives me very good feelings, when I sit and I do my work, I don't like the kitchen here, I like my previous home kitchen more than here, but I also like the quality of the kitchen materials and how they are presented precisely, but the sofa is still my spot, the image of me sitting on the sofa and do my work makes me calm.

### **What are the spaces of the thing that you wish to change?**

My bedroom, I prefer it was classier or I had the ability to change it in a more fantasy way. I mean the furniture could be prettier. For example, I like my bed more if it was made of wood than metal. I do not like the lighting design in my bedroom, although I put two lamps in there. Generally, I like my living room and I like it more than my bedroom I wish it was cosier. I think having a couple of wooden furniture in there gives a more settled look, like this it looks so temporary, like the organisational houses.

### **Was your bed in Iran a wooden one?**

Yes, it was and it was very old, right now in my bedroom in Iran I don't have a bed, and in the new house that we just moved my parents haven't furnished my room. But I don't know, unfortunately my family believed that decorating the house is an extra spending, but I never thought that way, I always love to have a pretty room. Maybe it was because my father had a limited income so if we bought our home we spent all of our money on that and if there as any money left we would spend it of buying a sofa for the living room. So there was no money left for me to change my room furniture. For example, I have my bed since I was seven, but I like it because it was made of wood.

### **What are the differences you realise in the home space in here in terms of privacy, for example In Iran we are really concerned about keep our home interior invisible to public by many means like curtains, do you feel any difference?**

Well, it is very different, it is not really important for me to be seen in my house by other people, I don't see a reason to shut the curtains all the time. For example, in front of our building there are many labours working but I never feel that is it a strange thing for them [to see me inside my house]. Even if when I am changing my clothes I don't think no one would even look. Even if they see it will not have any consequence for me later. But I dealt with the same situation in our current home in Iran, but it was important for me to not to be seen by them, because I did not feel secure later. I can imagine any

## *Appendix 1. The interview transcripts*

one will bother me later just because they see me in my house changing but it is an imaginable situation for me in Iran.

### **How different is your lifestyle in here from the way you lived in Iran?**

It is really different. I can't live with my boyfriend in one house in Iran. It is not defined in Iranian culture. But I live with my boyfriend here. Even before that I was living alone which was not like that in Iran. I am not also a person to be able to live with my parents but choose to live alone. The memory of my father coming home on five o'clock is a very sweet image for me that I really like. So if I live in Iran and I am single I prefer to live with them because this is one the joys of my life. But in terms of similarity in Iran I did certain thing, like going to university, going out with my friends for a coffee in the afternoon and going to the gym, it was more or less like that. At night I was at home with my parents, it was very rare that I go to parties until 2-3 o'clock in the morning, my parents did not like that at all. But even in here that I have the possibility of doing that and no one is controlling me, I am not still going because it is not what I like to do. I still go to university and I go out with my friends for a coffee, so my daily lifestyle has not changed at all.

### **What are the times that you really feel like going home?**

When I am really tired both physically and mentally. The idea of returning to home is always a beautiful idea for me unless I need to get some fresh air. But I have to go out every morning. Wherever I am I must go out, I don't like to spend my morning at home. Apart from that returning home in an ideal for me specially when I am tired, or hungry or when I need to relax. Especially when my home is clean, I like to go back home if I cleaned the house before.

### **When are the times that you are not interested to go home?**

When the house is really hot, I prefer to choose somewhere cooler. But there are sometimes when my boyfriend parents come to visit, I feel a bit uncomfortable.

### **How different is your house when you have a guest with when you don't?**

I think I am continuing my mother approach in here. For 90 percent of the guest she tidies up the house briefly to look favorable she did not put so much effort I am the same. But I really care about the bathroom; this is very vital for me. But for 10 percent of the guests like my boyfriend's parents or some people like some girls that I know they judge me by my home appearance I try to clean the house as much as I can.

### **What do you do in Iranian traditional ceremonies like Nowrooz?**

Nowrooz is the only Iranian ceremony that if I can I go to Iran. I really love Nowrooz in Iran, I like the atmosphere and family visiting. In here I am not active that much, I might night even prepare the Haft seen table although it is not expensive to do that. But if there is a party or if we get invited somewhere, yes I would go. But about the other ceremonies like Yalda no, still if I get invited somewhere yes I go but I never held a yalda night in here.

### **So they have been time that you went to Iran just to spend the Nowrooz there?**

Yes

**How often do you usually go to Iran?**

I go every 4 months. Because I have several important things in my life, one of them is my work and my aims in life and the other one is my parent. I mean if going to Iran will not disturb my work and my life in here, I would definitely try to be in Iran with them. When I go Iran I spend my time with my parents all the time. Most of my friends have already left Iran and the one that are still remained in Iran I try to set my time in a way to spend most of my time with my parents. For example, I say my mum will be in school until 2 pm and my father comes home at 5. I tell everyone from 10 to 2 that no one is at home; I can meet you after that I can't make it.

**What do you usually bring with you from Iran?**

I don't bring many things, or ingredients, It is limited to souvenirs for my boyfriend and ...

**Do you usually cook here?**

No I don't usually cook, before living with my boyfriend I did not even used my hob. But now I am cooking more, and it is better anyway, it helps you to eat better quality food. Well the Iranian factor in our cooking could be the rice. Usually we put chicken or meat in the oven and eat it with rice. We don't cook complicated Iranian food like stews. And the rice we cook is the normal Tesco rice.

**Do you host people in your home as much as you did in Iran?**

No, not really

**When is the time that you feel the home atmosphere is favorable or the atmosphere is reminding you of Iran?**

When my boyfriend parents are in the house. It is a very Iranian atmosphere, but the most favourable atmosphere for me is when I am alone.

I can say I grew up in silence, we were just two sisters in the house and she left when I was thirteen, so I have always been alone. My father arrived home at 6-7 at night and my mum 3-4. So I was alone most of the time. I like to be alone and don't have any problem with that because I am not lonely. For example, at work I can communicate but I like my home when it is more quite and calm.

**How about your friends? Are they mostly Iranian?**

I have two close friends that they are Iranian, but the people that I communicate with, like my colleagues, we have a very good relationship, we might not be that close to go out for a coffee and things like that but we spend most of our day together in our office in school. There is not any Iranian in my office. My close friends are Iranian but the people around me are mostly non-Iranian. But if I go to a place that they are all British, I might feel like an outsider [stranger].

**Why do you think you feel like that?**

The first thing is language barrier, sometimes when they do the very friendly talks to each other I don't understand it. It might also relate to the fact that I am not person group of friend's person. I have the

*Appendix 1. The interview transcripts*

most fun when I go out with one or maximum two friends of mine. Even when I was in Iran, which we didn't have this culture barrier, I was never a part of big group of friends.

## Interview no 2: Elaheh

### **What is the meaning of home for you? What is the image of home for you?**

It is a place that I feel safe and calm in there. The place that I can rest there and it is also very private.

### **So more than being a physical space is a mental space for you?**

Yes.

### **Among all the houses you've been living so far which of them had these specifications that you mentioned for a home?**

I think my home in Sheffield.

### **Why do you feel like home in that place?**

I think the home was designed properly; it was a one-bedroom flat. I rented the flat with my own money and I think that was really important. It has many good factors, if I want to compare it to my home in Iran, We had a two bedroom flat in *Saadat Abad*<sup>62</sup> with my sisters but I never felt the same as I felt in my flat in Sheffield, because I felt it was all mine while I was sharing my flat in Iran with my sisters. In terms of finances, I rented the house by my own money, so it wasn't like my father pays for my rent because I am a student. The other point is that the flat was physically so cosy. First you enter to the living room then you must have walked a bit to get to the bedroom then the bedroom get very private. I felt it doesn't matter if I am in England or Mars or wherever, this 3\*3 bedroom is just mine and because it was far from the entrance I liked it while I didn't feel the same in the living room.

### **So you liked the fact that it took a while to get to the living room?**

Yes, I liked that pause. For example, the bedroom door was opening from the corner. It was not opening from the middle of the room, so when you entered the bedroom there was a distance until you get to the bed, so it made it like a more special corner of my own

### **It can be understood from your comments that the better home is the more individual one and you want it to be or you make it your own individual, private space?**

The physicality of the home also matters. For example, in some of the previous flats that I lived like west one, it was tried to face all the doors in one space, but I didn't like that. I like my home architecture that separates the spaces; I prefer a corridor as a connection space than living room. So, I like my home in Sheffield first because It I felt independent in it and second the design of the houses responded to what you wanted.

### **So your home in Sheffield was the first place in the UK that made you feel like home?**

Yes, but the interesting thing is after that home in Sheffield I lost my settled feelings. I mean, it wasn't like, I am settled in the UK so wherever I go I feel like home. My feeling changed in the other places, when I changed my home I felt unsettled again.

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<sup>62</sup> A neighbourhood in north of Tehran.

*Appendix 1. The interview transcripts*

**So your adaptation process with the environment was not dependent on the time, the longer you live in UK the more you feel like home?**

Yes, feeling like home is more of a personal thing. I think I feel the same if I find a settled job or if I start my PhD. If I feel stable (*jaye pam mohkam bashē*) I feel like home.

**In the houses that you lived in here so far, what I was the most differences between them and Iranian homes? (if you feel any)**

First of all, the comfort facilities were different, somewhere better some worse. It might seem funny but the water taps; I think they are super annoying. The worse is the toilet that there is no water to wash yourself in the toilet. There was some thing that were better, like the internet, it is faster in here and it doesn't take ages for them to come and install it for you. Or bills are easier in here to sort them out, the process is more complicated but the staffs are responsive. These are in terms of services.

In terms of personal factors, in some aspects I can't compare my space in Iran with here, because I was always living with my family in Iran but in here I have always been independent. The good thing about my home in here is that I can have my own touch in my home for example if I like to buy this sheet, I can do that because I am not influencing the whole house decoration. Or if I want to put a pot, I can do that, but if the house in your parent house you can't do those things.

I find out my taste in household stuff.

**You mean you think you have more freedom in your current places in terms of expressing yourself?**

Yes, I can express myself, by decorating the home. it wasn't like that they tell me not to do some things. But in here because no one is telling you anything I just realised that I never expressed myself this way I see some things that I didn't know I like.

**You discover some taste in you that you didn't know about them because you had to cope with the existing decoration in your parents home?**

Yes, it is interesting, it is like for example your mum put the sugar in a specific place in the kitchen and you see even if your mum is not here but you also put it in a similar place and then you think why am I putting the sugar here, I can put it somewhere else. So yes, it did happen to me many times and I discovered many things about home in myself.

**So it is actually followed by what you mentioned before about feeling independent?**

Yes, and it gives me a secure feeling.

**How about your current place? Does it make you feel independent (feel like home) in any level? Is there any special space that makes you feel like that? or because it is temporary it is not like that at all.**

I think since my flatmate has left I feel like that in his room, specially in the bed, I really like, I think the reason is because it is bigger, the walls are farer from me. I don't like it when I feel I am surrounded by walls so I like it there. so I don't feel very limited in there.

**How about the light? And window?**

## *Appendix 1. The interview transcripts*

Yes, the window is bigger and the room is lighter than mine too, I can also see a big tree there, even if my room had the same window I don't think I would feel as comfortable as I do in my flatmate room, because it has more walls (smaller). I mean you see more walls than space. Even in here, although it is temporary but I still have my own touch in here, that even sometimes people follow my touch (rules). For example, before I come here my flatmates didn't have kitchen towel, but now they use it and they like to use it now. Or I buy good quality tissue or hand wash liquids that smell nice. I think I even change their lifestyle. The spicy that I use or we have more fruit and salad since I came.

**So even if you haven't change the interior that much but you influenced their lifestyle a bit?**

Yes.

**What is your least favourite space in this house for you? If you wanted to change anywhere in the house, where would it be?**

I don't know, there is no place that bothers me actually. It is very spacious. The only thing that bothers me is that this chair is really big for my room. Or if I could I might have changed the carpet because they make a lot of dust or bought some furniture but the house potential does not require that. But if it was different and I had more money, I would have done that definitely. Or I would take of the garden more.

**Generally, if you want to describe your ideal home how do you describe it?**

My ideal home I like it to be a big one-story home with a back garden with long windows that get down to the floor, so minimal with no walls and no metals in the middle of the window. Have you seen those movies with flat houses with long windows, surrounded by a garden?

**How about the curtains do you still follow the same manner like Iran to keep them shut?**

No, not at all, because in Iran you are worried that people will watch you but I am not concerned about this in here at all. I have my curtains open and I just close it at night just because I don't want the streetlight or moonlight to bother me for sleeping. I even sometimes forget to open the curtains in the morning that some light comes in just because I lost my habit of caring about the curtains. I mean I remember in Iran we opened the windows and the curtains in the morning but we shut them in the evening but I lost this in here.

**How about the privacy? How private is your home or your bedroom?**

I think I take it easier now if some one comes to my bedroom in comparison with Iran, because the culture has an influence on you. I mean if some one come to your room and see your underwear, it is not a big deal they pass, especially if they are not Iranian or not woman even if they are boys they are not seeing it as a big deal or make jokes about it. But in Iran I was not comfortable at all in the same situation with my boy friends. But still, if I feel close to people I like them come to my room and sit with me. My bedroom is still the most private place in my home but I am less sensitive than before, because of the people around me.

**How different is your home when you have guest with when you're alone?**

I think I am still the same. I might not clean my own room but I clean the room that the guests are going to stay. I think it is a part of a culture that you show your guest that they are welcomed in your

## *Appendix 1. The interview transcripts*

house. I am not very strict, like my fridge should be full, I don't mind to go buy groceries when my guests are here, I don't mind if they see that, I think it is because that my guest are also like me. Maybe if my farther comes, I don't feel comfortable to go to Tesco and buy stuff in front of him, I will prepare everything before he comes. Basically I take it easy, but it is important to keep the house clean and tidy that my guests feel comfortable.

**So it is not a matter of being judged, it is a matter of respect?**

Yes

**When is the time that you really like to home, or the atmosphere in the home attracts you?**

I think when I want to sleep. It is really calm in here to sleep, because of the gardens on the back. If I am tired I really like to go home, but basically I am not a person to like to stay at home. For example, when the weather is nice I go out or I go to sit in the garden.

**Does the atmosphere ever attract you?**

I think the presence of the people that I like that make me want to go home. that is why I really don't care how the house look, the people in home are important for me, they are the ones who give spirit to the home. The spirit of the home is important to me than the physicality of home.

**What do you do in Iranian ceremonies like Nowrooz or Yalda?**

In Nowrooz, it is really important for me to do something with my Iranian friends, but it don't mind if they are not Iranian. I like to share this with my non -Iranian friends; I like them to know about Iranian culture. I think it is a good moment that I like to share it with them too and I like to celebrate it. About the other events, I think because I didn't follow in Iran too, they are not much important as Nowrooz is for me.

**Did it ever happen to go to Iran because of the nowrooz?**

Yes, if I could yes, I like to be there in Nowrooz, in Tajrish Square.

**So if you can you manage your time to be able to be in Iran in Nowrooz?**

Yes.

**Why do you like it to be there?**

Because the whole country is celebrating the same thing, you can feel it in the street and you are enjoying a moment that it seems it is being stretched, it looks longer; it is not summarised in two hours like as it is in England. People are in the street from many days before to be prepared and even after the New year when all the streets are empty it is actually helping to make you feel it is taking longer. I think that is why I like to be there.

**So you think the unity that is in the whole country make you enjoy it the most?**

Yes, because in here even if I celebrate with my friends or go to celebrate it with my sisters does not help to enrich the Iranian-ness, even being with your family in here doesn't make it more Iranian.

**Do you always cook in here?**

*Appendix 1. The interview transcripts*

Sometimes, because it is healthier, my priority is to be fresh and healthy.

**Is It Iranian?**

No, not at all, I cook more like pasta, salads. Because it takes time, I usually cook Iranian food in the weekend.

**Does it change if you have Iranian guests?**

There was a time in my life here that when I had guest I mostly made Iranian food but now if I don't have time I cook something simple. When I am alone I often start making very difficult Iranian food for myself. The person doesn't matter for me any more but before maybe I would rather to make it for my guest than myself.

**So you cook the ones that you can find the ingredients here?**

Yes, but I often bring some stuff from Iran.

**Do you sit on the floor in here?**

No because I don't feel it is clean in here.

**Did you sit on the floor in Iran?**

Yes very much, and I am basically seated on the floor a lot. I feel so relax on the floor and I did that in all the homes that I had I Iran.

**What did you do on the floor?**

It has its basics, I don't like to sit on the cold floor, it must be rugs on the floor and I will be sure that it is clean.

**What if you have your own house in here?**

I will definitely arrange a sitting area on the floor in my house.

**How much do you think your Iranian ness influenced your home?**

I think if you look around the house there are some things that you can recognise that it is coming from a culture, like the cleanliness of bathroom, like putting the air spray, or moist paper. I think my touch is the caring for keeping things clean. There are others like using saffron in the food or spicy. For example I cooked for my housemate the other day and it was not even an Iranian food but because I used species (turmeric and cinnamon) he really liked it. I think my cooking has a flavour and it is not just cooked with salt and pepper. Even my tea, I always add saffron or cardamom.

**So even if your home is temporary there are still some Iranian styles that could be seen?**

Yes

**Do you ever eat on the floor in here?**

No I eat on the table

*Appendix 1. The interview transcripts*

**How about Iran?**

No I mostly ate on the table, but I remember when we were younger with my mum, I used to eat on the floor quite a lot.

### **Interview no 3: Hoda**

#### **What is the meaning of home for you?**

Home for me is more a private pace that everything in it belongs to me, like when I was in my parents' house in Iran, it was my room that when I entered my room it was all mine and no one would bother me. And in here my home, it is more because of the calmness it is giving me. When I close the door no one will bother me unless I open the door on people.

#### **So is your home when your thresholds are defined?**

Yes, exactly

#### **When you talk about the home you previously lived which of them is the real home for you?**

Well, one of them is my grandmother house, and the other one is a home that we lived, it had three bedrooms with a really big balcony and a very big garden that is what I remember as home.

Our current home in Iran is a flat in an apartment so I don't really see that as our home, and when we moved to this flat I was a university student.

#### **So a proper home for you is a place that has a garden?**

Yes, it should be a home that if it has several floors, it would be all yours, and you will not have neighbours that close to you, window to window. Your door entrance will not be shared with anyone else.

#### **What are the main differences you realised between the houses in here with your home in Iran?**

Yes, there were many differences, well the student accommodations are a different story, but their homes in here, I don't know, well in Iran, they pay more attention to the houses, when they are building a house they look at it as a place of living. But in here I believe they look at it just as a shelter, having a bedroom to have a place to sleep. But in Iran all of your activities are happening in your home because of that there are spaces allocated to each of those activities.

#### **Yes, especially with the current social situations, homes are spaces to party and socialise too, it could also be because of that?**

Yes, that why even the apartments are bigger in Iran, we have 500 m<sup>2</sup> apartments in Iran. Even now that the majority of people live in the flats/apartments but there are still spaces specified for partying and hosting people. But in here, because they even eat their breakfast outside the home, they don't see the need to have more space for that.

#### **Which of your living places in here gave you a feeling of being at home?**

I think my current place, maybe it is because of its size, because the other ones were too small. My home in Sheffield was a one-bedroom flat but only a double bed could be fitted in there. And my kitchen was just a couple of cupboards that was separated from the living room by the couch.

**So it is really important for you to have some extra space in your house apart from the one that are used for a purpose?**

Yes, I need that to be able to interact with my space.

My interest to my current place could because of the courtyard, if you put the curtains aside you can easily see the little garden in here. but meanwhile you never see such a thing that other flat be that close to be able to see inside your house.

**How do you feel about it? How much do you care that people do not see inside your home?**

No It is not important for me at all, even if I am changing, I really don't care.

**Why do you think is the reason of that?**

I don't know, maybe because it is not important for them too, to see me like that.

When I am sitting in my living room watching TV, my neighbour that comes out to smoke in his balcony, does not watch me. Sometimes they do but they don't care. . So you might not be comfortable to be seen by then when you are wearing some clothes. Besides I go out more or less with the same appearance that I am in my home but in Iran there is a huge difference with what you wear inside and outside your home.

**What is the most comfortable place for you in your current home?**

The single sofa, because, I can watch TV easily and whenever I want I can look outside. And if I want to have some tea, I put it on this table next to it. And it is next to the heater so in the winter it is a warm spot too.

**Do you ever sit on the floor in here?**

In here not, but I sit on the floor in Iran a lot, even if there was sofa I preferred to sit on the floor and lean my back on the sofa.

**Why do you think you stopped sitting on the floor in here? Is it because there is no rug on the floor?**

Yes, because in Iran you don't sit on the floor if there is no rug.

**How about your room? A carpet covers it; do you sit on the floor in there?**

Yes, only if I want to dry my hair or make my hair. But I don't sit on the floor for doing my daily activities.

**Where do you eat in here?**

On the table, my computer is always there, so the table is almost full with a space for just one plate. I can eat when I am sitting on a sofa, I like to eat on the table. But I like to have my tea on the sofa.

**How often do you usually cook?**

Yes, I cook a lot

*Appendix 1. The interview transcripts*

**Do you cook Iranian food?**

No not really, because Iranian food is hard to cook.

**How often do you usually cook Iranian food? Do you cook Iranian food when you have guests?**

I cook Iranian food whenever I like to do it, which is maybe twice a month. But if I do I cook 3-4 food in one day and put them in the freezer.

But in terms of how many times I eat Iranian food, I eat at least once a week.

**Where do you get the ingredients?**

I bring them all from Iran, mostly my parents bring them for me when they come for a visit.

**How often do you usually go to Iran?**

Since I came, I went to Iran once a year and my parents also came here once a year.

**What do you do for Nowrooz?**

I was here for all the Nowrooz since I came.

**How did you spend it in here?**

I went with my friends and I was in Sheffield for all of them. In my master's year I went to Iran but for the New Year not Nowrooz because the tickets were cheaper, but after I started my PhD, I couldn't go because I was also working. But if I could I would have gone for sure.

**Do you still care as much as you did in Iran about your house looking neat for guests?**

Yes, very much, I don't let any one entering my home if it is not clean, I have an Iranian friend, sometimes she come with me, in front of the door but if my home is messy I wouldn't invite her, I don't even pretend to invite her.

**Why is it so important for you?**

I don't know, although I always keep my bathroom and kitchen and this area (living room) clean and neat, but my bedroom could be messy some times with clothes. I don't like it to be seen like that.

**Do you think it is more personal or you are also influenced by our culture?**

Both, because in Iran was also possible to go to people's home and it looks messy. But it was less than here. And I am not a kind of person to judge people by the cleanliness of their home or feeling uncomfortable. But in my own house I like it to be neat (less objects around), every thing located in the right place, especially if someone is coming I don't like them to see my home messy.

**When are the times that you really like to be home? or you want to go home because of its atmosphere?**

## *Appendix 1. The interview transcripts*

Well for example, before, I did not have any Iranian officemates, I was comfortable in my office, I never ran away from there, I don't know why that I don't like to go there that much anymore. I mean when I go home I feel relief.

Although they are really nice people and I like them.

### **Why is it I like that?**

I don't know, I feel its enough we spend so much time together, we worked together, we went to gym together, its enough. I prefer to go home and spend my time for my own.

### **So it is not the home atmosphere that attracts you to your home it is the bad atmosphere of the outside that leads you home?**

Well I don't know really.

### **How about the time that your parents are here? Do you feel the atmosphere is more Iranian?**

Sure, very much. Specially when my mum is here, they usually come together it just happen once that my father came alone, but he also tired to cook, or clean a bit, but my mum is different. When she is here when I come back at noon, you can smell the food from the corridor outside. So I think yes when my parents are here I am more willing to go home.

With all of that, well they stay longer than three weeks, it starts bothering me, I don't mean I don't like them to be here, I wish there was another room, that it was just for me, I look for my own space, which you have it when you are in Iran. You could run away to your room whenever you wanted, but when they come here, you can't have that anymore. I don't like to feel like that, but this is how it is.

### **Don't you think it could also be because of our life style in here? We got used to living alone?**

Yes, definitely, we got used to live alone and you want it to be the same even when they are here.

### **Do you also have the same feeling when you go to Iran?**

Yes, the first two weeks are great but in the third week I start looking for my own corner to hide. Even in here if I go to my friend's home to a couple of days when I come back home I want to spend one day with just me. It could be also because of my Iranian-ness I don't know.

### **So for you this house is your proper home?**

Yes, but even in student accommodation that there are five rooms in a corridor, your room is yours, it could give you the same feeling a bit.

### **What are the things in your house that you think there are representing you? What makes here different from the other flats in this building?**

Well it is different for sure, if I go to my friend house I would feel the difference. I don't know. Have you seen when you see people, you can guess how their home look by the way they dress, for example if I always wear simple clothes not the floral ones, you can imagine if you come to my home it will be pretty much the same. Or a person who always wears colourful, pictorial dresses, you can imagine the home will be full of things. Or a person who wears cloths from brands you can imagine their house is decorated

*Appendix 1. The interview transcripts*

with the brands furniture's. I think it is the same for me too, everything is simple in here, I didn't make things difficult for me by applying different colors and mix them to see if it gets pretty or not.

**How about the privacy of the home, how much do you care that people don't see inside you home?**

I am still the same as I was in Iran, even though when my home is not messy I don't want them to see. My curtains are not shot so people can see inside my home but I only shot them at night that I know most of them are home, but in the weekend is open during the day and shot at night.

#### **Interview no 4: Leila**

##### **What home means for you? How do you define home?**

The first thing that comes to my mind is calmness and comfort. It always reminds me of my family. Home is the feeling of belonging, feeling of warmness a familiar space that you feel you belong there. The materiality of home is also very important. For example, I don't feel comfortable because my bed is not comfortable and stable and it cause me back pain, although I asked them to change it bit it is still uncomfortable. Every time I want to return to my home I remember I have to sleep on my bed it makes me uncomfortable. For me home is a place that I can lie down, I can lie down in here so I don't feel comfortable. Home is a place that you can interact with it in different ways and being comfortable in different positions, this place is not giving me that. Even the couch length is not enough for me to be able to lie down. The objects' features to make me comfortable are really important for me. It is not necessarily cultural; it is not compatible with my body system.

##### **So, because the space doesn't allow you to interact and position yourself in your favourite way stop you from being connected to your home?**

Yes.

##### **Why you do not lie down on the floor?**

Because it is not clean and I don't clean it that much, I am lazier here, which is more personal. But I am being more sensitive that I can't lie down on the floor anymore. In our home in Iran my mum always kept the floor clean so I was sure I could lie down. In here sometimes I like to lie down and watch a movie but because the length of the couch in not enough I can't do it. Basically, I feel I don't have enough space in here because everything is mixed together which I don't like.

##### **What is the image of home for you? Which of the homes you lived so far you remember the most?**

Our current home in Iran. This is the best vision I have from home.

##### **Which space do you remember the most?**

The living room because it is so cosy and separated from the other spaces. It is close to the kitchen and I really like the atmosphere that we are all close to each other. Another space I love in our home is my bedroom, I really love it, it has a big bed, it has different floor material, the colour is warm.

##### **How long have you been living here?**

Two years.

##### **What is the biggest differences you realized between the Iranian homes and Homes in here?**

I lived in three different places the first one was a student accommodation, the second one was a house and this one is also a flat, but the only thing they have in common that is different from Iran, is their size, they are much smaller. There are houses that are old and smelly, but the places like my current place, which is a modern flat they all have similar, space impression everywhere. Because

## *Appendix 1. The interview transcripts*

there is no object in the spaces they are so neat. If I want to mention a factor, it is difficult to say because I am living alone here while my home in Iran is a family house and it is so different in terms of size and space quality. I tried to make my home here as similar as my space in our home in Iran. I think in Iran because I was living with my family I wasn't responsible for many things. We live in a flat in an apartment but it is 320m<sup>2</sup> but here they make ten flats out that area.

### **Have you ever felt like home here?**

For the reasons I mentioned I rarely feel like home. But still in comparison with other places I am more comfortable in here, I can open my fridge and eat whatever I want and I have freedom to do what I want. But I could never feel completely connected.

### **So you like the feeling of having this place?**

Yes, because I feel I own the place and it is a level of comfort.

### **What is your most favourite space in your home?**

In the sofa, all my life is happening here, I sit on the sofa, use the table to watch movie and commute to the kitchen.

### **What is your least favourite place?**

That area where the toilet and storage door, where the bin is, I think the space is wasted, it could have had a door and it could be a separate space. I don't like the entrance too. It is a wasted space too, because it is very long, it could have been used to make the living room bigger.

### **When do you feel like going home? When is your favourite time to be at home?**

In the afternoons to go home for sleeping. And also the time that I want to talk to my family, I talk to them once around 3-4 pm and another time at night. So I prefer to be home for that than in the university. Another time is when I am tempted to have some specific food, I would come back home to cook.

### **Do you cook Iranian food?**

It depends on my mood; I cook different kind of food. If I don't have much time, the maximum time I spend on cooking will be ten minutes but if I have more time I spend an hour to cook a stew [Iranian stew].

### **How often do you go to Iran?**

Twice a year.

### **Do you bring any ingredients for cooking?**

Yes, I bring spices, pistachio, tea, plum, I try to bring food ingredients as much as I can.

### **When is your least favourite time at home?**

When it is dirty I really don't like to be home. There are sometime that my home is messy and I can't even find a place to pass so I really don't like to go back home these times. But in Iran the house is

## *Appendix 1. The interview transcripts*

always kept clean. Sometimes when I remember that I have to clean or through away the rubbish it really annoys me. The times that my bed is not comfortable again like now that one of the wooden boards is broken, I am afraid of sleeping on it and I have to think about ask again for fixing it. This keeps my mind busy and doesn't give me a good feeling about my home.

### **Do you do anything for Iranian ceremonies like Nowrooz?**

I was here for Nowrooz just once, when I was in London with couple of my friends, which we held it completely. It is the most important ceremony for me, it is a good feeling and it is like a new beginning for me.

For example, I have been here in *Yalda* and I didn't do anything but I can't imagine not doing anything for *Nowruz*.

### **So if you want to go Iran you arrange it in a way to be there on New Year?**

Yes, sure.

### **What is the main reason?**

It has many meanings for me, family, the new beginning, having a new dream, I definitely make new decisions, it is a package that has everything in it, I always have fun, I travel.

### **How different is your life style in here in compare to Iran?**

Maybe it is not very different, apart from the fact that I am not living with my family here. I am not around my siblings like before when we did things together and laughed about things or also like when I went out with my mum. I don't have those parts. But in terms of my own lifestyle, it is not very different, I am usually either working or watching TV, which I had a TV until a few months ago but the quality was very bad that send it away so I don't watch TV any more I watch BBC and iplayer. But I feel more isolated here. The gatherings I have here are less than what I had in Iran because I don't easily trust people.

### **You don't trust people here in general or just the Iranians in here?**

I don't have the same level of comfort that I have with my friends in Iran with my British friends, and I don't have the enough confidence to get closer, it doesn't mean I am avoiding them, I have many international friends but it has a influence in addition to social and cultural reasons.

### **Why is the reason for the lack of confidence you mentioned?**

I think the language barrier, because I think my lifestyle is better than 90 per cent of the people in here, so I feel confident about that. The problem is language, which it becomes easier after one or two times.

### **How much do you think you have got adapted to this society?**

I don't build any friendship with Iranians here, all of my friends are non Iranians, I don't like to hang out with Iranians, I think they brought al they had in Iran with themselves and the contradiction between that culture and this one is not pleasant. I don't have any communication problem the issue is we don't have a common language or any common memory. We have different hobbies and

## *Appendix 1. The interview transcripts*

interests. You can feel that. In university atmosphere this is less noticeable as the main focus of every one is their studies, so there is a similarity but in other environments the differences is more visible.

### **Where do you eat in the house?**

If I am alone I eat next to the couch, but when my boyfriend is here we eat on kitchen counter.

### **How often did you sit on the floor in Iran?**

I never ate on the floor, as my mum hated it that we eat there and make the floor dirty. But I used to sit on floor and lean on the sofa and watch TV. Not always but I had the option to sit on the floor, which was happening at least once a day. When I am very sad and depressed I sit on the floor, there was a few times that I sat on the floor and lean on the sofa here too. But in Iran I sat on the floor because I was comfortable.

### **Do you host people here?**

Just a few of my friends

### **Is it as much as Iran?**

It is much less; you can't even compare it.

### **How much do you care about your house to look clean and neat for your guest in here in compare to Iran?**

I am basically a messy person, not dirty but messy so even in Iran I wasn't so tidy, I am still the same here but I think because people take it easier here, it didn't make me worse but at least I feel better and more comfortable with the way I am. The people who come to my home care about cleanliness, so because I want to keep my place in their like I might be more caring about cleanliness but less caring about tidiness.

### **How much the privacy of your home is important for you?**

I was raised in a family that our private boundaries were so important for example my father never entered my room without knocking, so we were so committed to respect each other personal spaces. Therefore, it is the same in here, although no one is coming here, all of my social meetings are happening outside the house. My home is more for studying and sleeping.

### **So the function of home has changed for you since you came here?**

Yes, it is so different, I am not sure if it is also the same for people who lived alone in Iran too. So I am not sure that the difference is because my life structure is changed too or not. But as I see in here even for the family's home is a place just for sleeping, their social interactions are happening outside the home, maybe that's why their homes are so small. They don't see the need for having a bigger space.

### **Is bedroom still the most private space in your home?**

Yes, it is.

**How much do care that your home interior stays invisible and how much do you use curtains to adjust that?**

So much, I always have problems with my boyfriend about this, the first thing he does when he arrives is to put the curtains aside to have some more sunlight. I don't like it because; inside of the house could be seen. I don't like to be seen in any ways. Because I can't say they are not looking. Because in the flat in front us are a rock band who are practicing all the time and they are there all the time. I just open the curtains that I am sure nothing could be seen through them.

**Is there any sound that reminds you of Iran?**

Once an Iranian lady was cooking Iranian food which when I smelled it was so interesting for me to feel that here.

**How do you describe your ideal home?**

My ideal home is a modern home. I don't believe in sticking to you culture. But you can see some touches from my culture, but I don't like to expose my personality through many things.

**Can you explain those touches?**

Yes, like very small things like handcrafts that I can bring with myself, that gives me good feeling if I live here. But if I live in Iran it could be colours like turquois color I really like it with brown. I helped my sister to decorate her house and her curtains are turquois and brown which is so chick. I like to have things that mean something to me not just the collective memory related stuff.

**How much do you think your house is representing your Iranian ness?**

I think it shows I am Iranian. The first things are the rugs that I brought them with me and the second thing is the smell of food. One day one of the building staffs came to check my flat and she was impressed by the smell of food and she asked me about my nationality, that gives an Iranian atmosphere. The spices are also something that if you look around you can see as an Iranian part of my home. My books, Quran or religious books, which I am not using at all.

**Interview no 5: Mina**

**What is the meaning of home for you?**

Considering the fact that I am student and I am very busy with school, the first thing that I want from the home is calmness. It is very valuable for me that after finishing school I have a calm and quiet place to rest.

Especially when the weather is good and sunny in Sheffield, I really like my home. But most importantly, my home gives me calmness.

**So you mean your home should be a place that respond to your physical and mental needs at the same time?**

Yes, exactly.

**When you say home, which of the homes you lived so far comes to your mind?**

My childhood home, the drawings of home that all the kids used to draw, even now when you were asking me this question, I remembered that image. You know because of Iranian culture; we are so involved with the family in our life. So after that I remember our home in Iran meanwhile because I am living here, in a different country or different city, maybe when I say, "I'm going home" to my friend; I mean my home in here.

**So "Home" for you means your home in Iran or in here?**

My current home!

**You feel like being at home?**

Yes.

**Since when have you been living in here?**

I had a studio in a student accommodation, but I like my current place more than the others, you know Sheffield has a double side; it is a mixture of urban and rural areas. I feel more like living in a city in compare to my previous places. One of the main reasons that I preferred to move out and come here is that in here I feel like I am living in a city. I can see cars in the highway and I have a big grocery store in front of my building, being a part of the city helps me to not to feel alone. Meanwhile I can see the beautiful nature of the Sheffield in the background. They both are helping me to love my neighbour hood.

**How about the interior spaces? Do you think that the design of the house is helping you feel like home or you just like the urban context?**

Yes, sure, the fact that it has separated spaces and each space has its own specific function it is influential. I have a bed room that has helps me to sleep or my living room that I host my friend in here, and I also study in the living room. Even my small kitchen that I cook in there, all of these separated spaces with different functions give me a feeling of comfort.

**Where did you live in Iran? Was it a big city?**

Yes, I was living in Mashhad.

**Do you think that is the reason that you like the urban area more?**

Yes, definitely. Because I got used to that environment when I arrived to Sheffield first, I was so shocked, I was expecting city like the metropolitan cities in Iran. But, it is totally different in Sheffield it was hard at the beginning, but after a while I realized how this calm environment relaxed me, in terms of well being and feeling calm. For example, I don't have a car in here and it is not necessary for me at all because, I can walk to different parts of the city. But in Iran, in the big cities such a thing is impossible.

I have been in this home for more than a year now, but I like it that it reminds me of the urban life style and I like the familiarity, meanwhile I can enjoy the beautiful green nature.

**Can you describe your ideal home for me please?**

My ideal home should have a really big garden; this might be influenced by many major, which is urban design. I like it to be a big house with a big garden and with a beautiful design, in terms of material as well as the selection of different types of plants. They are both so important for mental and physical health.

**Have any of the previous houses you lived in had a big garden?**

Yes, the home that I grew up in that home in Iran. We lived there until I was 16 and then we moved to an apartment. It had a very big and beautiful garden. I remember my father designed it in a way that we had grapevine arches that you could see the grapes were hanging from it. I used to look at them every morning and it was a great feeling. Maybe the main reason of my interest in having a garden started from my teenage time.

**Since when did you feel like home in here?**

It took a while. For a week or too I felt like I am not familiar with the space. Although all like the location, it took me while to adopt, specially that I was concerned to design the house in a good way with the options that I had, so because I haven't had bought the stuff that I wanted and I was busy to sort it out on my arrival, after I did that I felt like this is my home and I call it home.

**So you started to decorate the house according to your taste?**

Yes.

**Was it all furnished?**

Not completely so I added some stuff.

**When is your spot in the house?**

The coach and the balcony, especially when it is sunny I like to sit on the chair (I bought the set) to drink tea and to have food. Although it is noisy sometimes but it is fine. Because the urban life style

## *Appendix 1. The interview transcripts*

has trained us in a way that we don't like to go out that much and if you sit in the balcony you can get a sense of being outside the house. It is a good feeling.

### **So you like it because it is like a medium space?**

Yes.

### **What is your least favourite space? If you could change it how would you change it?**

My bedroom, because there is no direct sunlight coming to the bedroom and it is depressing. So I always think if the bathroom was replaced by bedroom, if it was in a place that has direct light it was better. Maybe it is better for bedroom to have less light but I like to have a proper window.

### **What are the main differences between the homes in here and in Iran in your opinion?**

There are so many actually. Well this place is a apartment flat, so if I want to compare it to its type in Iran, there are designed in larger scales, but in here the flats are designed very well in smaller scale. They are designed in an optimum and every extra space is used. I don't have an experience of living in small apartments in Iran but if I want to compare them I don't think there are a lot of flats in Iran that can give you a good quality space in 30-40 m<sup>2</sup>. As you can see I have a balcony in here maybe if you have a 40m<sup>2</sup> space the architect doesn't consider having balcony in that small scale. It is also connected to our culture as in Iranian culture we love to host people and this space does not function for hosting people regularly, but in here people don't communicate in their houses that much they prefer to meet outside the houses. Maybe that is the reason that they think differently.

Another difference is I think the façade designs in Iran are so much prettier in here, I think maybe they don't care about the exterior that much or maybe they are not done perfectly. I prefer Iran buildings façade.

### **Why do you think they are prettier?**

It might come from our culture that they façade should show a graceful face of us.

### **How often do you usually have guests?**

When I was less busy and the university had not been started yet, I had more guests, I am a social person and I like to get in touch with people. Even if I don't have much space but I had so many people and I liked that friendly atmosphere. But after the university started, I had less people over just because I was so busy. I am still interested in the Iranian culture of having guest but just that daily work keeps me so busy.

### **Do you care as much Iran?**

Yes, it is exactly the same.

### **In compare to Iran what is changed in terms of privacy and thresholds in you home?**

Yes, it is still really important for me to keep spaces like bedroom private. I think bedroom is the most private one for me. In Iran there was just few time that my very close friends who entered to my bedroom, otherwise I hosted people in our living room. So it wasn't like that my friends just enter to my room, even when my parents were at home they tried to make us comfortable in the living room.

### *Appendix 1. The interview transcripts*

In here, although my bedroom is not completely private with four walls, I still don't like to take my friend to the room. This is actually one of the problems of this space that once you open the flat door you can see the whole bedroom. So the privacy of the room will be invaded in a second, people can even see what is the color of my duvet cover!

**As you know curtains are really important in our domestic spaces, we have the curtains off most of the time.**

Yes actually with many layers

**Yes, how was the arrangement of the curtains in your home in Iran and how much it is changed in here?**

In some cases, like changing I do care and I prefer to go to my bedroom. But even in Iran when it was the New Year and we washed the curtains and there was no curtain for a while, we felt like there is no boundary because we got used to that. I see this as a bad habit because I see now that nothing would happen, but it is also related to our culture too. For example, in Iran, the houses are built so close to each other that everything could be seen from the other flat. Meanwhile Iranians could also use the ordinary shade curtains that are more flexible and they can be adjusted to bring light to the spaces, which is so important in terms of mental and physical health. The other thing is, what would happen if you are sitting in home and someone from the other flat sees you. This is a culture that I think has not been accepted in Iran yet. Yet in England the weather is always cloudy so there is no reason to shut the curtains but maybe at nights I don't feel comfortable sometimes and shut the shades but it is rarely happening.

**Do you think it is because of the culture that you feel more comfortable here or the urban design?**

Both.

**In which culture do you feel more secure? How different is your life style in here in compare to Iran?**

It is so different. For example, in here I am responsible for everything. I do shopping, cooking, cleaning, studying, working (I am not working but I just joined a group for a part time job), so at least five responsibilities at the same time while in Iran after I finished my studies my only responsibility was my job. I bought some grocery for my mum that wasn't hard because I had a car in there. Here, there is no assistant, not because no one wants to help you, this is the way it is and you see other people are in the condition. It doesn't give you a bad feeling. So when I do shopping and carry heavy bag to my place I look around and see other people around me are the same. So it is not bothering me while my lifestyle in here is so different from how it was in Iran.

I have more responsibility.

**How is different in terms of social life and your hobbies?**

In terms of the time of being out, I feel more secure here. I think Sheffield is a secure student city. My hobbies are different now, if I compare myself with how I was in Iran; I wasn't a person to go for a walk that much or I didn't go walk in nature. I didn't feel and touch nature. It was more like dressing nicely and go out for a dinner. Or going to my friend's house it was a more covered fun, which was,

## *Appendix 1. The interview transcripts*

related the conditions that women felt more comfortable indoors. I really love to go to peak district from where I live it takes three hours to go and come back but when I am back I have so much energy to do my studies or other stuff. But if I stay home which is how I was in Iran I wouldn't be productive. Because it was a big city, the natural environment was not easily accessible.

### **So you have a more active lifestyle here?**

Yes, exactly.

### **How about the limitations? How different they are?**

I actually didn't feel so different for me, maybe it is because I came when I was a grown up maybe if I came when I was a teenager these differences would be more valuable and more attractive for me. But I learned something in here that is very valuable for me, as you know we believe that family and making a family is really important in our culture but when I compare here with Iran, not only they do not care about family and making a family less but it is some times more. For example in peak district, it is a open environment but you feel very safe, and you see many people brought their kids and you see how they care about family. Coming here answered to many of my challenges. I do believe in their way of raising a family, especially nowadays.

### **How much do you think your home is influenced by your Iranian-ness?**

If you look around you see many handcrafts from Iran, I really like to have Iranian things like hand crafts, traditional handkerchief and Persian rugs, but unfortunately I can have all of them because of the weight limitations in flights. But I try to have Iranian symbol in my home, both because of my own interest and also if I have any non-Iranian guest and they get interested I can talk about it. The other thing is cleanliness; Iranian women and Iranian girls are very clean, especially in housework, and cooking. Cooking is the other representation of my culture. I think Iranian food is very delicious and beautiful.

With all these three, if anyone comes to my home, felt the difference in my home with the others.

### **How often do you usually cook?**

It depends on how busy I am with my university work. When I have to study, in order to save time, I eat something outside the home. But I tried to cook. Now that I have more free time I cook because cooking is one of my favourite things to do.

### **Do you cook Iranian food?**

Yes, a lot.

### **Even when you have guests? No matter if they are Iranian or not?**

Yes, to introduce the rich and Old Iranian culture to other nationalities.

### **So you are benefiting from your home as a space to represent your culture too?**

Yes, exactly. If some ask me anything about the Iranian thing that I have, I would definitely explain for them.

**How often do you go to Iran?**

In the three years that I was here, I went twice a year, but in the last year because I had to work on my thesis, I just went once. I miss Iran, although people are nice in here, I don't have any bad memory from the people in Sheffield, I think they are very kind. But I miss my family and again because I came as a grown up, I can forget my attachments to Iran.

**So you still feel belonged to Iran more than here?**

I can't say it for sure. When I go to Iran the cultural differences in terms of regulations like when I am in a bank queue and people don't care about any rules I feel bothered and I prefer to be back. But the warm atmosphere of my family and good food, that's what I miss the most. Iran has a warmer environment, people are warmer and they are so hospitable, I don't want to say who is better but the feeling that I get is better. Something is better in here and some other better in there.

**So you are saying your life is something in the middle?**

Yes, exactly. I can't go back to Iran for good and I can't stay here without going back to visit. Just the idea of never going back is annoying for me. Meanwhile after the time you took and the challenges you had to be adopted to the new environment and it is very hard for you because the environment is the same, you are the one who should change, whether Iran or here. But in middle it is you that you don't know what is your aim or where is your identity belong? [It is hard to have an accurate answer to that]. This it is not only my challenge, when I talk to my other Iranian friend who came for masters or PhD, they have the same challenge, they don't feel good to back to Iran forever and they also don't like to live here without going back, because of the feelings and attachments they have for Iran.

**Do you think the longer you stayed in her you got more adopted?**

Yes. For example, the first year I couldn't accept to go to Iran once a year. But no I the third year although I can give break to myself, I can accept to Skype with my family because of my long term plan that you know we Iranians have to considered many things at the same time, in terms of jobs, visa and planning the future. I think Iranians are very potential people, they don't see things in one way. Just because they are here to study they are not like other nationalities that go back to their countries after finishing without having any attachment to their life they had in here. My supervisor asked me the other day "how do you feel if you go back to Iran?" I said, "It is like my second hometown" I really feel attached to here. I became another person here I tried to tackle many of the challenges I had, talk like them, behave like them, these were thing that the society wanted from me. In any condition, this is the society that forces you or gives you the option to behave in certain ways.

For example, if you are in a store and the salesperson is talking on the phone you can't jump in and ask about their stuff. You need to wait until he finishes and they ask. This is not common in Iran. You have to learn some things. The things I have learned are so valuable for me and I don't like to lose them by going back because I believe this is the correct one.

**Did you do for New Year?**

I never went in New Year but I always wish I could go on New Year. It was always the time that I was so busy with studying. It was risky to go. But if I have a chance to go I would definitely go. Iran

## *Appendix 1. The interview transcripts*

atmosphere, the smell of Iran, the feeling of Farvardin (first month of the spring in Iranian calendar), the gold fish, Sabze (the green grass they sell in the street)

### **What did you do inhere in New Year?**

I made the *Haftseen* table; I have a picture I can show you.

### **Do you invite people too?**

Well, 1<sup>st</sup> of *Farvardin* is my birthday too so my friends always surprised me, so I have people over anyway. But it is my dream to be with my parents this New year.

### **How about the other Iranian ceremonies?**

Yes, we had a gathering with my friends on *Yalda* too. It is not as big as Iran but we had watermelon and nuts and the other things you should have on *Yalda*. I am so loyal to Nowrooz and *Yalda*, it is hard for me to forget them. I am an Iranian girl and I like to keep that meanwhile I like to get familiar with the new environment. I like to be open.

### **How much you got involved with the society in here?**

Most of my friends are Iranian here; it could be because we have the same culture and language. I liked to have my international friends in my home after finishing but I couldn't do it because was so busy not that I just want to be with my Iranian friends. When some of my non-Iranian friends came to my house a few times or when I heated my food at university they were impressed how the food smells nice. Especially saffron, I cooked chicken with saffron and my friend taste it and she loved it. So my Iranian background has been always with me, whether as my food in university or as a food I prepare for my guests that I am so proud of it.

### **Why do you think the Iranian food is special? The use of saffron?**

Not always, they way it is cooked, the smell of rice, the way of cooking rice.

### **So you didn't have any problem interacting with other people but just your close friends are Iranian?**

The other reason is the other international students are temporary, especially the European students return to their country in every weekend on every holiday. So I was staying and I was alone so my only friends were the other Iranians or other people who their country was far like Chinese student, while native students got back to their hometown every weekend.

### **How about sounds, how often the sounds remind you of Iran?**

So many times, the sound of Azan, it didn't happen many times but sometimes I pass from the Muslim neighbourhood and it so reminds me of Iran. It is so touching; sometimes there are things from your childhood like a smell, a sound that reminds you of Iran, I grew up in Iran a Muslim country so every time I heard Azan, I remembered Iran.

### **How about Iranian songs? Do you use it to make an Iranian atmosphere?**

*Appendix 1. The interview transcripts*

Yes, we enjoy Iranian songs together a lot. We listen to *Haydeh* (an old Iranian singer) we turn off the lights and we sing together.

**How about when you are alone? Do you always listen to Iranian music?**

I am addicted to music; the first things I do in the morning is turning on my laptop and plays some music. The reason might be because I don't want to feel I am alone. I think the English weather can affect Iranians mood, the weather, especially this year really frustrated me. It made me feel lonely. I never felt like this in the first or second year maybe because of I as still attracted to many things but this year which my fourth year, I was feeling lonely a lot, if you remember on February and January we didn't have sunlight at all for two months.

**Interview no 6: Negar**

**How would you define a home as a space?**

Home is a space that gives you calmness, when you finish with the challenges of the job and the social life home should be a place that makes you feel comfortable. The hours you spend at home should help you to save energy for another day that you will spend outside the house with strangers or other people that you know.

**What are the characteristics of a space to gives you that comfort and calmness?**

It depends on my needs in different times when I come home from work; in different hour I might want to do different things in my home. For example, in the first hours after I arrive I like to have enough light in my home, because I want to do some work, cook or do some individual tasks. I like to have a specific space to stay, for example if I want to watch something or listen to music I like to have the facilities to do that. But when it is getting late, I like to have less light to relax and prepare my self for sleeping with reading a book or watching a movie.

**What is the image of home for you?**

It is a hard question. Because considering the situations I had in my life in each one, I feel like, there were times that although I had every thing available to be comfortable but I never felt like home. I can say there is one place that I felt like home. Do I need to talk about it?

**Yes, like, what were the characteristics of the home, spatially or personally?**

The home that I can think of is a home I had in Iran, which now that I think of it more it had most of the things that I described as a home. when I have proper lighting and you have separated spaces for sleeping, working and socializing.

**So having a separated spaces helped you feel relaxed enough to see that space as a home?**

Exactly, because you can cook in the kitchen, done with that and go to living room and do other things. Yes, I think it has a lot to do with that.

**You said you've been living here for four years, have you ever felt like home, in here, and if yes since when?**

I've lived here for four years, and I lived in a shared flat for a year, and I lived in another shared house for a year, which I felt more like home in there, it was a three-bedroom house that I shared with my sister. But in here, in terms of having proper space it doesn't make me feel like home but in terms of privacy yes, I feel it is like home, that even if it is small, I can close the door and gain some energy for the next working day.

**So the independency that the space is giving you, make you feel like home although it doesn't have separated spaces?**

Yes.

**What do you think is the biggest difference between the houses in here and in Iran?**

## *Appendix 1. The interview transcripts*

There are a lot of things; I think architecture of the houses in here is basically different from Iran. For example, the separated spaces for each function can be seen in Iranian houses more than here. Homes in Iran are not that similar to each other as they are in here, each house had its own architecture, a house might have a very big living room, the other one might not. Anyway you don't expect to go to people houses and see similar things. But what I have seen more often during these 6 years that I was living here, both in the student shared houses or in the houses of people who are settled in here, I feel houses are more similar to each other. There were just a few homes that I have seen to be completely different from each other. Special if they are not flats, the houses are more similar. For example, if you remove chicken stuff from there it will not look like a kitchen it might look like a bedroom. There is no character for each space; you can't say that a space is definitely a living room or a bedroom.

But in Iran the spaces were more defined.

### **So you believe that in Iran the spaces are designed for a specific function more than in here?**

Yes, for example according to the places that I lived in Iran, the living rooms are usually bigger than bedrooms. Another thing is that is completely different from Iran is lighting, the heating system, kitchen organization.

### **How different is the lighting?**

I think there is not enough light. Maybe because it is expensive in here, or maybe because the lighting is not the main focus in here, apart from the recently built houses that they are not in majority. I always think there is not enough lighting in the houses here.

### **What is the most favourable space for you in your current home?**

It's my bed, it where I do all the things I must have done, I sit and I always put my laptop on my legs, I watch a movie, read book or talk on the phone.

### **If you could change a space where would it be?**

I do think that there is something wrong with the bathroom. I would have made it a bit bigger.

### **When are the times that you can't wait to go home? When is your favourite time?**

I think at the end of the day when I am so tired I feel I want the silence and calmness of the home. I might not get the maximum calmness that I am seeking in my place, according to the condition of my place, which is a converted house, the walls are not thick enough that block the noise or not to smell the smoke when someone is smoking downstairs. But in comparison with outside the home I feel more relax in here.

### **How important is for you to keep inside your house invisible? How different you are in here in comparison in Iran?**

Well, it was never that important for me, but if I feel someone is looking inside the house all the time from a close distance, I don't think anyone or me would be comfortable with it. But in general, both in Iran and in here when I am doing my normal activities in the house, I don't have any problem.

### **So you didn't shut the curtains all day and night to not to be seen?**

## *Appendix 1. The interview transcripts*

I think in general, the differences between house design in Iran and in here make some factors noticeable, like in a proper Iranian home, you have a well design two-layer curtain that the first thin layer is used during the day and the slightly thicker layer will be added at night to cover the home interior. But it was something more based on interior design that I wasn't so committed to that. Basically the curtain made your house prettier with some light. But now, if I shut the curtain it might make my room prettier but because it is a small space, it makes it look smaller. So I like it to be aside, to have light in the room during the day and at night it makes the room look bigger.

### **Where do you usually eat?**

I eat in my bed.

### **Do you usually cook at home?**

Rarely

### **And how often do you cook Iranian food?**

I don't cook Iranian food that much, because it takes time, I am also concerned with the smell because my flat is and studio and I don't want my bed to smell because Iranian food has a strong smell. It is also like that for other food but because there is no perfect air-conditioning in my flat, I need to be careful with what I am cooking.

### **So you don't cook at all?**

No but depends on my life conditions, for example I was very busy in the last couple of month with job haunting, visa application etc. So I didn't care at all to cook. But now, I have more free time, I am watching my diet, I cook vegetables. But it also depends on my mood that I like to cook.

Even in Iran, I had a place that I couldn't cook that much, and I were also so busy with my job so I couldn't cook.

### **Do you host people in your house in here?**

Never.

### **How different do you think your life is in here in compare to Iran?**

My life quality in here is incomparable with Iran. It is worse than Iran. My social life is a lot better there is no doubt on that but when it comes to personal life, I am not happy with it at all.

### **How much do you think you have been adapted to the society in England?**

I don't think I have been adopted completely it is something in the middle.

### **What do you do in New Year or other Iranian ceremonies? Do you go to Iran?**

No, it depends. My career is really important for me and everything depends on my job. If everything goes well with my work, then I start thinking about other things. I don't insist on doing something for *Yalda*, maybe *Nowrooz* is more important for me, but for example last year I had a surgery before *Nowrooz* but I didn't care to postpone it because of our new year. So I didn't do anything. For *Yalda* I don't even remember I did anything for *Yalda*, just once my friend invited me. I am not committed to

## *Appendix 1. The interview transcripts*

do Iranian ceremonies but two years ago with my other Iranian friends we all managed to get two days off for Iranian new year and we arranged a trip, there was nothing Iranian about the trip, it was a normal trip in the night of new year. We all sat around and made a table. But this just happened once since I came here.

### **How often do you usually go to Iran?**

I go every year or every year and a half.

### **Do you go to visit your family?**

I go to visit my mum. My father can manage to come for a visit.

### **So the only thing that you still have a connection with Iran is your mum?**

Yes, I feel responsible for my mum; I miss Iran but not that much to worth to pay for the plane tickets.

### **Do you sit in the floor? Here or in Iran?**

Again because of the difference in life style, the only occasion that I sat on the floor in Iran was when all the chairs for dining table are full and I feel it is cozy to sit on the floor and eat. Even now if I have the same home as I had in Iran I would do the same. But in here my bed is so on the way that I prefer to just eat in the bed.

### **How much the sounds that you here remind you of Iran? Have you ever experience it at all?**

Yes a few time, once I was here and I heard the sound of Iranian music, it was really interesting for me, so I was sure that I have an Iranian neighbor. Or sometimes I can here some who I assume is the same person talking loudly on the phone in Farsi. It is shocking a little bit. Another thing, I am living in a Muslim neighborhood, there is mosque in the way to my home, this mosque and the people who are going there, there remind me of Iran so much. In religious occasions, like *Ashoora* and *Eids*, there are so many cars parked, it is exactly like Iran because all the Muslims are coming and pray. Another thing that remind me of Iran socially, is that a bit further than the mosque, every morning that I go to work I see so many workers waiting to be picked for constructions works. It reminds me of workers waiting for work in big squares of Tehran.

### **Can you describe your ideal home?**

I think my ideal home should have so much free space, having separated spaces with separated functions. I do care about the design of the interior with decoration; it should have so many glazed areas with long widows. I like color; it should have so much light. By color I mean different colors but in a harmonic way. I don't want to color it all in white or one color I like to have touch from other colors.

### **Do you think your home is influenced from your Iranian culture?**

No I don't think so.

**Interview no 7: Sahar**

**What is the meaning of home for you?**

A place that brings calmness, a warm place and a place that I am always excited to go to.

**What are the factors that give you that excitement to go to your home?**

Well. The fact that my husband is at home, it always excites me to go home and see him, because he is working at home. And because of my bed, I can go under my blanket and relax. And the other thing is when I take a shower.

**So the first feature of home for you is a place that gives you emotional support and the second one is the facilities that are provided for you in your home?**

Yes, a place that comforts me.

**When you talk about the home you previously lived which of them is the real home for you?**

For me because I also lived alone for a while when I was in Tehran, this is not my first experience. But I usually when I say home I mean the latest home that I settled. It was never a special home.

**You mean all the places you lived gave you the feeling of home?**

Yes.

**When you felt like home in your current home?**

Maybe after 4 or 5 month because before I came here, my husband came earlier, he gave me a vision about the houses in here that they are not as pretty as the homes in Iran, they are smaller. He kept saying that the houses in here are not as good as the houses we were living in Iran. So I was prepared that when I come to England I am not going to enter to a good house, so my expectations were not high. When I arrived, it was the beginning of the fall and the weather was cold for me that just came from Iran, and the heaters in our house were common with our neighbours and we had to use it when they used it and we had to adopt ourselves to this. I was really annoyed by that and also we had not bought much stuff for the flat yet so it didn't feel like home. After a couple of month that I got used to the weather and we bought more things for the house I felt more like home in here.

**So the process of making home out of a place for you happened to you when you gain the independency you wanted to be able to control the level of comfort in your home?**

Yes, because buying more things make our flat to look more like home and also I got used to the weather in here and all of these made me feel closer to my home.

**What were the important factors that were mentioned by your husband as the negative parts of the houses in here?**

He exemplified his friends that they are living in a room and they are living in just one room and because it is really expensive in here the houses are too small and no one can rent a big flat like 2-3

## *Appendix 1. The interview transcripts*

bedroom as it is in Iran. Even for young couples. It is old and it is small, these are the characteristics of a British house in contraction with the big, new Iranian flats with several bedrooms.

### **What was your opinion about the houses in here? Did you feel the same?**

No, actually because my mind was so negative about the British houses, here was good for me. I was prepared for this and when I saw we have a living room and a room, it seemed a good home for me because I had that in mind that we have to live in just one room.

### **For how long have you been living here? Have you lived here since you came?**

Yes, September will be a year.

### **What is your favourite place in this house?**

Honestly, I love the bathroom, because it is big and new, my problem is, it was always cold, because we could just turn on the heaters at night, if I went to the bathroom on the daytime, and I would have felt cold. So although I liked the bathroom, a negative point is coming with it for me. Another one is this couch otherwise there is no such a favourite place.

### **Did you have a favourite space in your home in Iran?**

The latest home I was living in Iran, the bedroom had a really big window down to the floor that in the summer it received a good sunlight and I liked to lay down in the light or in the winters when it was snowing I had a sofa next to the window I sat there. These are the things that I like.

### **What are the things that you don't like about this place?**

I think because the flat is in underground, there is not enough light, we are moving out to a bigger and lighter place and we love the new place because it is light. The other thing is that the kitchen is so small that really bothered me. I don't cook a lot but I feel everything is packed in there. And we just have one bedroom and we do not have much space for our stuff but the new house we are moving to has two bedrooms and I am happy that our bedroom will be just a bedroom and it won't be full of books and clothes, we can use the other bedroom. And the bedroom will be more relaxing.

### **How often o you usually cook?**

Almost everyday, but it doesn't take a lot of time because sometimes my husband cooks, for example if I make the lunch he makes the dinner. I just add some species to the chicken and put it in the oven and cook some rice with rice cooker, so it is quick. I don't make the complicated time consuming food.

### **So you don't cook any Iranian food?**

I cook chicken, and we buy the conserved Iranian food although it is not very healthy. Or we buy fish and fry it quickly. So all the things we are eating are very fast. I cook the complicated ones when we have guest like (khoresh badenjan, ghormeh sabzi but with conservative herbs)

### **Where do you get the ingredients?**

Mostly here from the Iranian shop, especially for Ash, which is my favourite, I used to make ash a lot in the winter. But some thing like berry my mum send it for me.

**Do feel any difference in your home when you have guests?**

I'll do my best but when I compare myself with the other Iranian women I feel I am not as tasteful as they are in cleaning and tidying up my home.

**In comparison with yourself do you feel you cared more about this when you were in Iran?**

Yes, because in Iran we care to present our house in the most luxuries way, you can't compare it at all. I can't imagine if I were living in Iran, I would have lived in such a house. It is another story.

**Do you think it is also because we care about how people think about us?**

I try to not to care about people's judgment but it affects my unconsciously. I feel I need to clean more or host people with better dishes, the atmosphere has a big impact. But in here, for example, we bought our plates 2-3 month ago, because we saw we have to host people with old dishes, because a friend of our us gave us our dishes so we didn't go shopping for the house at all the reason was ten days after I arrived my master started and it was so intense that was a bigger responsibility for me. So I didn't mind do we have enough dishes or not. But know that I am close to finish I am thinking about what to buy. But in general in here the home and the furniture are not my passion.

**So even if in here, these kinds of factors are important for the others, it is not important for you?**

No, because the culture in here do not put you through these kind of difficulties.

**How private do you think your home is in here in comparison with Iran? How the thresholds are defined differently? Curtains for examples?**

I generally like the open curtains but I had it in mind to shut them at nights when the lights were on, but it wasn't 100 percent shut. Generally I feel I care less in here, I don't think no one will look through, because for example in the bedroom there is a little yard next to it and the other buildings are higher they can easily look through inside. So when I change I don't really mind that the curtains are not shut but if it come to my mind that there is a possibility of people seeing me I shut the curtains quickly. But generally it is not important for me that I could be seen from the other buildings when I am in my house.

**But in Iran you care about this?**

Yes, I did.

**How much do you see home as a private place in compare to your home in Iran?**

I don't usually see the living room as a very private space, the most private space in my house is my bedroom and it is usually because it is messy and I don't want people to see that. We try to tide it up but because we have a lot of stuff it gets messy again. So I see the bedroom as a private place and I don't like anyone else to go there. I don't mind the living room and we like to host people there.

**So you follow the same structure as it was in Iran?**

Yes.

**What do you do for Iranian ceremonies like norouz?**

I made a small Haftseen but we were invited to our friend house for the Newyear dinner (sabzi polo ba mahi). But in here it was not the same as it was in Iran, It didn't have the same atmosphere that it has in Iran. Because I was so busy with schoolwork and even that half-day made stress about my work.

**Are you friends mostly Iranian?**

Yes, and we usually gather around for the Iranian ceremonies together.

**How much do you think you have been interacted and adapted to the society in here?**

Honestly, I have non-Iranian friends in the university but because, my arrival here was also the beginning of our marriage, so my closest friends are my husbands' friends and I prefer to spend time with our common friends. My husband is also friend with my friend but we never could feel closer to the non-Iranians. I don't know maybe they also keep their distance. Meanwhile the student communities always were planning to go to different place and we couldn't actually join them, so I feel we couldn't get closer to them. On the other hand, my husband came earlier than me and he found many friend in here via Facebook, it was easier for me because we already had a community in here and I was just introduced to them.

**That means you are spending most of your time with Iranian community?**

Yes, but there is a British couple that we went to their house twice and they came here a couple of times for dinner, we are really good to each other but my husband doesn't like it that much because he doesn't feel close to them as much as he does with Iranians. There is always a gap because our culture and our ways of enjoying and our jokes are different so the joy we have with our Iranian friends we don't have with them.

**What do you think is the most important reason that doesn't help you enjoy?**

I liked our relationship with our British friend, my husband wasn't happy with it. But with the rest of the non-Iranians I think because I still cannot talk in English fluently and specially at the beginning that I couldn't understand completely it has a huge impact on my relationship with other people. But my British friend because in the university she was responsible to communicate with international students she is so patient and she tries to understand and she talks slowly, so with her I didn't have those language problems. But with the other students in the university I felt, I couldn't talk in the same level as them or make jokes with them.

**Did you sit on the floor in Iran?**

No.

**Where do you eat in here?**

Some times on the table, and sometimes next to the sofa.

**Do you think your home represent any part of your Iranian ness?**

*Appendix 1. The interview transcripts*

No, I don't think so. There is a painting from a village in Iran. Apart from that, I think no one would know where are we coming from. It is a mixture.

**Interview no 8: Shadi**

**What is home for you? What kind of a place your home is for you?**

You mean what I feel or in terms of decorations?

**Both, generally how do you describe home?**

Home for me basically is a place that after all the challenges I had during my day, and all the different people I met, I go there and it makes me relax and calm and it always gives me the feeling that I like to go back.

**So it doesn't matter where you are any kind of space that gives you this feeling you see it as home?**

Yes, for example if I travel and go to a hotel room I don't feel the same as I do in my home, because I know I have my home, it always gives me a feeling that whenever I am leaving my home it make me to keep it in a way that I like to return there and relax there and be calm and enjoy my time there.

**So the main factor that makes a space like home for you is the sense of belonging and owning that space too?**

Belonging, owner ship and the fact that I have made the space by myself and the fact that in the back of my mind I am the one who decorated the space without other tastes interferes, it makes me calm and confident.

**What is the image of home for you? Among all the houses you lived which one is the image that comes to your mind when you talk about home?**

The image of home for me is my current home. The other homes as I said before because I didn't have much role in decorating them, which is really important for me. My previous homes like my grandmother home where the spaces that we went and I played with the other kids. I always felt secure there that there was someone there taking care of me but at the same time I knew that I have to follow the rules like eating here or sleeping there, you know each house has its own rules. Even when I was living with my sister alone back in Tehran, we made (decorated) our house but because the atmosphere of the neighbourhood and society I never felt completely secure, I felt I am under a magnifier, like people are controlling me. In here because I am the one who made my home in here and I where did I put what, make me feel this is my home.

**Among all your homes in here, this is the first you feel like home?**

Yes, and this is my fourth home in here although this is also a rented house as the previous ones and I am aware of that but because I have made and decorated this place piece by piece, I really feel, I am belonging to this space. So this is the first home that you had the ability to decorate it?

The other places were already furnished so I just put my duvet cover or I put some little stuff like books but in here, because it wasn't furnished, we bought everything and because of that I feel more attached to this place than the others.

**How do you describe your ideal home?**

I am not sure about the other people but I have a dream house in my mind, it has a map with the location of each room that I always try to reach that, maybe I build it or buy it I don't know. Do I need to describe my feelings with it or you want to know how does it look architecturally?

**You can describe it however you like.**

It is a 'L' shape house that I try to look at it every day.

**Did you see that somewhere or it is your own design?**

No I always had that in my mind and I was looking for something like this until I finally found the one that I had in my mind. I carry its picture with me from laptop to laptop. I almost look at it everyday that I can remember what I imagined for my home. It is a L shape home with two stories that has gate that when you enter it has a green area, there is a roundabout that you need to pass to be able to get to home. It has a garage that you can park the cars that they won't be left outside. The windows are different from this image they are bigger. In the living room we will have a big sofa set that it is not L shaped but the way we put it is L shape with a TV. According to what I need the plan and spaces change. For example, it didn't have an office before but because I am working at home now I added an office. Generally, I look at the houses a lot specially when I am outside of London to see do they look like my dream house? I don't want to buy them necessarily but I always look for what I have in mind.

**What is the main difference you realised between the houses in here and in Iran?**

Well, my grandmother house that we all used to go and play with the other kids had a yard and for that age it was great. We were living in an apartment; I've always lived in an apartment. I don't see many differences; maybe the spaces in here are more isolated and the spaces smaller. In Iran even in the apartments we had bigger spaces. For me inside the houses is not much different from Iran but from the outside I prefer the houses in here because there is a harmony among the houses in a neighbourhood, they are not dramatically different.

Basically eastern and western architecture are different. Eastern architecture puts more attention on how the users of the house are more comfortable, in western architecture they also consider that but they pay more attention to how to get the most out of a space. For example, I saw in Iran as well to put the kitchen on the top (upper floor) but it still had more space and they separated kitchen from the other space even with different floor material. But in here everything is compacted and they design the houses in a way that in every small space you can have everything.

**So you think Iranian homes are design with bigger and more functionally separated spaces while in here they are smaller and the spaces are design to have different functions in one small space in an optimum way?**

In the houses that I lived and I visited, yes. but there might be people who have been here for so long and they are living like we were living in the level we were in Iran that pay more attention to their comfort than the multifunction spaces.

**In your current house, since when did you feel like home?**

## *Appendix 1. The interview transcripts*

I have lived here for three years, since April-March 2013, I felt like how I am being settled in here and How much I like to return to this place.

So it was a certain moment that you felt like home in here and what do you think is the reason?

It is like when you buy a dress and you want to do some alterations but you don't know what to do with it exactly, it takes you a while to find out how you are going to wear it and with what elaborations.

**So you think time had a big influence on that?**

Yes, time was important, beside; I had problems with the neighbourhood. But after a while when I saw other neighbourhoods, it made me really love it in here.

**Where is your favourite place in this house? Where is your spot?**

This is really interesting, in all the other houses I had a favourite spot but in this one, every space is my favourite. There is only one space that is not my favourite.

**Where is that space?**

The sink in the kitchen where I wash the dishes, there is no window there, I never had a window next to the sink but it is interesting that I recently discovered that all the negative thoughts come to my mind, when I am washing the dishes, I don't know why.

**So it is because there is no opening? Don't you think the lack of space could be also one reason?**

Probably yes. I think it should have had a window that the solution I think. When I was in Iran I worked on Feng Shui architecture quiet a lot when I was working as an interior designer. So we always tried to find the dead and negative spaces and use that space positively, I tried to do the same with this space too, I added light, I put pretty things around it, I put plants but none of them worked so far. So I thought, if it had window it might work.

**Generally, when are the favourite times that you like to stay at home?**

When it is sunny and the sunlight shines inside the home. Because we have a big window and the light comes in and I think everything is shinier.

**So the atmosphere of the house is pleasant if it is sunny?**

Yes, but if it is too sunny I will be annoyed and I shut the curtains. A mild natural light is my favourite.

**What is your least favourite time to be home?**

I work at home, the times that I have been home for several days and I work and then I sleep in here again, after a while I think the walls and the doors and everything in the house is going on my nerve and everything is too noticeable that I feel the space became small for me and I have to go out for a walk. These are the times that I feel I shouldn't be at home now. Otherwise I never have any problem with being at home. I always even like to invite others to my home too. I always love to see my house full of people.

**How often do you usually host people?**

## *Appendix 1. The interview transcripts*

Not much really, because of the distance and everybody is busy with their own life but I like to invite my friends not relatives because as you know we have this in our culture that we have a level of difficulty when it comes to hosting relatives. My husband families are living close to here and every time they come I want everything to be perfect but basically not everything stays perfect all the time. So I will be a bit nervous. But I like my friends to be with me here.

### **Are your guests usually Iranian?**

In my house yes, I see the non-Iranians outside my home.

### **How much do you think you have been adopted to the society in here?**

The number of my non-Iranian friends is as many as my Iranian ones. I try to not to get much involve in Iranian communities in here. Because I think the Iranians in London are different from the Iranians in the other cities in England. I think they are strange.

### **Why? What makes them different?**

I think they have issues that might affect and cause problem for me too. I think if I keep distance from them it will be better for me. It happened for me or for my friends that I think it is better to stay away from them. But I have a couple of Iranian friends in Cambridge that I really love them and I really hope they were living closer that I could see them more often or my sister friends in sheffield.

Maybe the reason that the number of my non-Iranian friends is the as the Iranian ones is that I couldn't find many Iranians in here that I can feel connected.

### **How often do you usually cook?**

I don't usually cook at home, I don't have time but if I cook, I make Iranian food that is quick and easy to prepare like *kookoo* (herbs and egg omelette). Something Iranian and warm because during the day when you are out you east cold stuff. But there are also other thins that I always care about and I am sure it is the same in every where house in here that I like to have some sweet things on the table all the time. Generally, I don't cook that much when it is just my husband and I.

### **What do you cook for your guests?**

When I have guests I prefer to cook Iranian food. My starter and dessert might not necessarily be Iranian but the main meal in always Iranian. I don't like Iranian desserts so I usually make something else.

### **Why you always cook Iranian food as a main meal for your guest?**

Because it is tastier and besides maybe because I am more comfortable to cook Iranian food, I know to cook them with no challenge so it is not like to explore how to cook. I prefer to not risk it.

### **So you cook the complicated Iranian food just for your guests?**

Yes.

### **From where do you usually buy the ingredients to cook Iranian food? Do you bring them from Iran?**

## *Appendix 1. The interview transcripts*

No I don't bring anything from Iran, I just bring some stuff like pistachio or the things that I can't find. I am not very sensitive to bring everything from Iran. Besides sometimes I ask my husband parents to buy for me the things that I want when they go to Iranian shops. For example, of thing that can not be found easily is Fenugreek. But if I want to cook *Ghormeh sabzi* (popular Iranian stew with herbs) it should be fresh herb, so I go to Indian or Iranian shops to find it. So I don't bring anything from Iran, I also didn't bring any utensil or home pieces from Iran. I just couldn't find the knife and fork for eating fruit so I asked my father to bring me some.

### **How often do you go to Iran?**

The last time I went back to Iran was after two years and a few months. But not because of Iran or because I miss anything there, it is just because of my mum I prefer to go more often.

### **So if your mum were here you wouldn't go at all?**

It is because I feel I made my home and my life in here, when I go back to Iran it feels like I am traveling as I mentioned at the beginning I feel like I am in a hotel.

### **How about Iranian ceremonies, do you commit yourself to be in Iran on that time?**

No, but I make my Haftseen table.

### **Do you also gather with your friends?**

I make my Haftseen table here but even when I was in Iran I didn't like the visiting in New Year. But because my husband family are here, they do that and we need to visit them back and do some stuff. But if I had my parents here I don't think I would never invite them.

### **Did you sit on the floor when you where in Iran?**

Only if our friend were with us and we were doing something on coffee table. For example: polishing our nail or reading something together.

### **Do you still sit on the floor in here?**

Yes, if there is not enough space on the couch, we put cushions on the floor and sit.

### **How about when you are alone? Do you feel more comfortable to sit on the floor for doing specific activities?**

It is the same like Iran. The reason that I don't sit on the floor that much is, in Iran we walked around in our house with our shoes on so I was not comfortable to sit on the floor and go to bed like that. So I got used to that feeling that even in here that everyone takes off their shoes and floors are always clean but I don't feel comfortable. It is because of that background but if I have to I would sit, I don't have any problem.

### **How much do you care your home interior stays invisible in comparison with Iran?**

In Iran it was like that, I cared that my home interior will not be seen from outside because most of the time of our staying it was a construction going on and it was full of workers and they looked inside. I was uncomfortable if anyone looked inside. In here, our home location is in a way that no one can

## *Appendix 1. The interview transcripts*

look inside but in the bedroom, the curtains are shut all the time because I want to keep the bedroom a private space.

### **So the most private place in the house is the bedroom?**

Not for the people who come to my home, for the people who are passing by outside the house.

### **So you don't care if your guests see your bedroom?**

No not really, the only thing that I am sensitive on is that someone goes to bedroom and changes the way I decorated the room and furniture.

### **I have a question about sounds, what kind of sound will remind you of Iran?**

It is actually funny, we have an Arab neighbour, they are a family who came five or six month ago, they play Azan (Refers to *Azan*: Islamic prayer call) five times a day and the first time I heard it I got Goosebumps. I couldn't believe I am hearing it in here. It was so strange for me after all these years. I came here five years ago but still it was weird for me. It reminds me of sadness and chagrin and all the sad memories.

### **It reminds you of Iran but in a sad way?**

Yes, imagine you hear someone's lamentation in Arabic and you don't even know what is he saying at all.

### **How different do you think your lifestyle is different in here in comparison with Iran?**

It is not so different, I was living in Tehran the same as I am living in here, what is different in here is the society. I feel more comfortable in here because I don't feel the pressure of the society. Because as I told you before, my sister and I were living alone in Tehran and when we came here we also lived together at the beginning and it was so different in here, no one would interfere in you life, you can live your life without others disturbing you.

### **Your lifestyle is the same in here but the society gives you more secure feelings, am I right?**

Exactly, but there some things that they got more important for me during the time. For example my lifestyle hasn't changed but in terms of home decorations, I used to decorate my home in a more modern way in comparison with here. In here I like my home to has a character, I put more classic furniture in my home. If you look around most of my furniture's are vintage and they might look modern but at the same time I have a Persian rug that I like. I like the combination of both while in Iran we had a Gabbeh<sup>63</sup> (that was so uncut with modern design).

### **What do exactly mean by character? You want your home character to show your Iranian-ness or it is more a matter of taste change during the time?**

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<sup>63</sup> A Gabbeh a hand-woven pile rug of coarse quality and medium size (90 x 150 cm or larger) characterized by an abstract design that relies upon open fields of color and a playfulness with geometry.

### *Appendix 1. The interview transcripts*

Not Iranian-ness necessarily, it depends where I am. For example until last couple of month we had a three door Ikea wardrobe, it was so spacious but we felt it took most of the space of the room that air didn't circulate well. There is a store called Warren Evan that they have British style furniture, they make them with chunky British wood and it is not like Ikea made of MDF with cubic shape. We bought our bed from that store, the price is a bit different but just because we wanted our bedroom to have the character, and we bought the wardrobe and the bedsides from them too.

#### **So during the time your taste in decorating your home has changed?**

Yes, I like thins with delineations, for example I would had never put a cushion like this in my home in Iran but now I like to see that with different colors and designs.

#### **How much do you think your home is influenced from you as an Iranian?**

If I compare with the homes of my other Iranian friends in here, I can say a lot. Because my friends that are in the same age as me and having the same lifestyle and they are not living with their parents anymore they are living in a room or shared house they are still unsettled. I was also like that at the beginning when I was here, everything is already furnished. I always thought that the house should be decorated by the person who lives there according to their culture and other things. But now I feel I have passed those days I feel I am so different from them. They don't think the same as I do, they just like their life to be passed.

#### **But it is more important for you to decorate your house by your own because?**

Yes, because I think the home represents me.

#### **How different your house looks when you have a guest?**

Not much, you can see dust on the table now. But it depends if my husband family will be my guest I try to make everything look perfect. But recently that I am working full time I am taking it easier.

#### **So it more depends on how much you have time and who is your guest?**

Yes, for example I am really easy on my friends, even if this is their first time in my house I don't mind even if they go and open my fridge. For my husband parents it is different, they never said anything but I don't want them to think we have or we don't have some stuff in our fridge. You know they are parents. With them I am not that comfortable.

## **Appendix 2. The Focus group transcripts and activities**

### **Focus group no 1: Shadi, Elaheh and Negar**

**Could you please introduce yourself, tell me your name and for how long have you been living in the UK? Also for how long have you been living in your current home?**

-Shadi: My name is Shadi, I have moved to UK 10 years ago and I have been living in my current home for two years now.

-Negar: My name is Negar, it been just over 10 years and I have lived in my current home for a year and a few months.

-Elaheh: My name is Elaheh, I have lived in the UK for about 7 years and it's been a year and three months since I moved to my current place.

**Thank you, could you please tell me what your idea of homeliness is? How do you describe a sense of home? What are the specifications of a space for you to make feel like home?**

-Shadi: For me, I think for a space to be homey, the colours are really important and the materials in a space. For example, I really like warm material and colours; they really make me feel good. It is because, here [UK] is such a cold country, and often there is no sunlight, I prefer to have warm colours in my house not strong colours but warm.

-Negar: for me it is a feeling; it is a sense of calmness, and also the comfort of the furniture. For example, that when I arrived at home, I can rest and feel comfortable with the furniture to take a rest. I mean, the furniture shouldn't be difficult to use, like they are made out of materials that I can be comfortable to seat or lie down. Like Shadi, colour is also important for me, it gives me energy, but again not very strong colours. The space is so important too, that my home doesn't look messy and I have free space (between the furniture). The tidiness is essential as well; if my home is untidy it makes me uncomfortable because for me home means to be at calm and that affects that sense of calmness for me.

-Elaheh: I agree with everything the others said, it is very important for me that the furniture I use are comfortable. For instance, remember the formal Living room furniture [French style with a wooden ornamented wood) sofa sets in Iran that were popular and they supposed to be very stylish but weren't comfortable at all"? That is not the case for me. Colour is also important to me, and the plants. I feel – it hasn't been something I chose, it happened to me by accident, but I feel home plants give me a sense of home. Also, having carpets is so important for me, I like the warm feeling it provides. The tidiness at some levels is essential as well. For instance, I like my home to have enough free space, it calms me because I think, it orders my brain and frees my mind.

**So, for all of you having colour is your home is important for having a sense of home and also having a free space? What do you mean by that?**

-Negar: The number of the furniture or the stuff in general in the space would be less than what the space can handle.

**You mean in terms of proportion?**

-Negar: Yes, I mean the proportion and the ratio to be high between the furniture of the house and the space, that the space doesn't look very busy.

**And Elaheh could you explain a bit more about what you mean when you said the plants were not your choice? You didn't buy them? Were they given to you or were they gifts?**

-Elaheh: yes, I didn't buy them, but now I think (Shadi: they are part of your life) yes they are a part of my life. I feel they have a positive presence at home. Sometimes I just sit and look at them and it is nice. They bring a quality to space. Ah! there is another thing; Light. Light is so essential for me, for example, I really like to have the choice to have a house that catches lots of sunlight. Although I am not at home during the day, but even for the weekend, it is vital for me to be able to have light (natural light) in the house during the day.

**How about the rest of you? Do you relate to that at all?**

-Negar: I think, the important thing for me is to have big windows, even floor windows that you can see the outside, for instance I prefer to be able to see the outside when I wake up in the morning. If my view is blocked by other buildings, I don't feel comfortable in that house.

**Do you feel trapped?**

-Shadi: yes

-Negar: yes

-Elaheh: yes

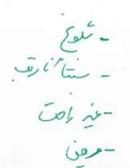
**Ok, for the first activity, doing the activity is not going to take long but the important thing is to hear your opinions and have a discussion about it. I am going to give you four photos now. Please take a look at them carefully and write down on the side or behind them the main specifications for each space. What comes to your mind when you see these spaces?**

-Negar: our comments should be about the space in here or about the people who are using it because I see some of them are depicting people.

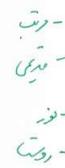
Appendix 2. The Focus group transcripts and activities

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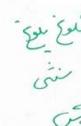


2	
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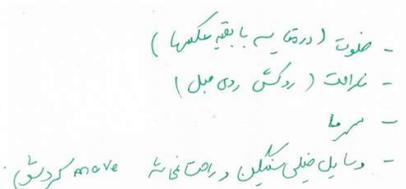
N

3	
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N

4	
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The first activity filled by Negar. Photo number 1: "An ordinary family" in *Iranian living room* by Mohammad Mahdi Amya/Fabrica (Bossan 2013), Photo number 2: "Life as an elderly person" in *Iranian living room* by Hamed Ilkhan/Fabrica (Bossan 2013). Photo number 3: Photo courtesy of Chidaneh (Aghazadeh 2016). Photo number 4: photo by Mohammad Reza Hossein Nejad and Mohammad Zadeh("Caspiancover" 2015).

Appendix 2. The Focus group transcripts and activities

1	
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فتان سارنگین در سرتوی /  
 - Furniture look so tired and aged. بلند و ساد  
 - Not a friendly environment  
 - The only source of natural light has been blocked.  
 - The plants have been covered by the curtain.

2	
---	--

- This space looks very tidy but very tired at the same time.  
 - all the colours have lost their sharpness.  
 - looks old and sad.

3	
---	--

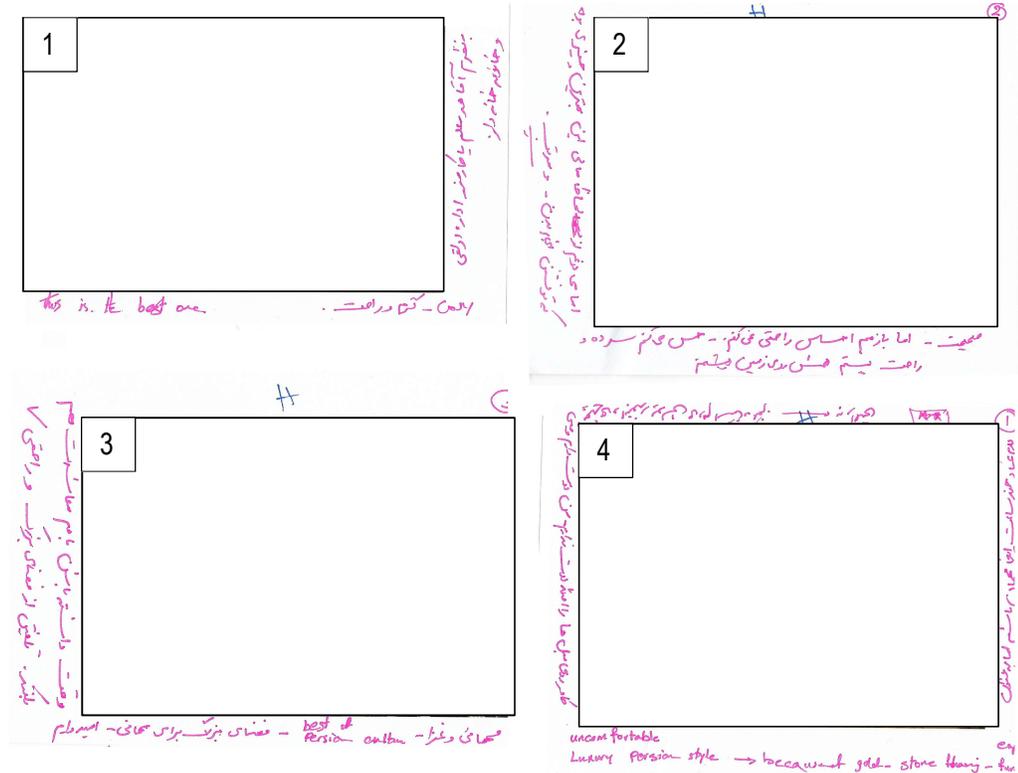
- It's lovely to see a family gathering over a meal.  
 - Looks earthy they sit on the rugs to have their meal.  
 - quite colour full furniture. Not good about like the texture and the layout.

4	
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- No positive feedback on this ~~the~~ photo.  
 - stuffed with furniture.

The first activity filled by Shadi. Photo number 1: "An ordinary family" in *Iranian living room* by Mohammad Mahdi Amya/Fabrica (Bossan 2013), Photo number 2: "Life as an elderly person" in *Iranian living room* by Hamed Ilkhan/Fabrica (Bossan 2013). Photo number 3: Photo courtesy of Chidaneh (Aghazadeh 2016). Photo number 4: photo by Mohammad Reza Hossein Nejad and Mohammad Zadeh ("Caspiancover" 2015).

Appendix 2. The Focus group transcripts and activities



The first activity filled by Elaheh. Photo number 1: "An ordinary family" in *Iranian living room* by Mohammad Mahdi Amya/Fabrica (Bossan 2013), Photo number 2: "Life as an elderly person" in *Iranian living room* by Hamed Ilkhan/Fabrica (Bossan 2013). Photo number 3: Photo courtesy of Chidaneh (Aghazadeh 2016). Photo number 4: photo by Mohammad Reza Hossein Nejad and Mohamad Zadeh ("Caspiancover" 2015).

**I would like to know your opinion about these spaces and also what you think about the kind of users that inhabit these spaces. What thoughts or emotions are evoked when you look at these photos?**

**The first photo:**

-Shadi: I think the first photo, it is a very sad space, it feels sad and cold. The furniture looks so tired and aged. It doesn't look like a friendly environment. The only source of natural light is blocked and the plants are covered by the curtain (talking with a tone that this is a negative thing), that's what I get!

-Elaheh: well maybe it's night!

-Shadi: No, I think it's the daylight!

-Elaheh: Ok I don't know.

-Negar: I just wrote words, I wrote: busy, rather untidy, uncomfortable, sick!

-Elaheh: well to be honest, it is very interesting; in my opinion this one was the best house. How interesting! Because I think it looks comfortable, you also have the option to both sit on the chair and the option to sit on the floor. I feel the man is an employer of somewhere in the government, like a

teacher and the woman is a housewife. This home seemed to me as a comfortable home to live. In terms of giving a cold feeling, I think the temperature in this house could be managed since it looks like a rather modern home. This one was my favourite home among all.

-Negar: we were supposed to compare them to each other?

**Yes, you could do that! The point to express your opinion about each photo and then compare your answers to each other, and comparing the photos could be a part of that.**

-Elaheh: I just want to say something; I don't think I would live in there myself but I find it convenient, for example I can see they have plants and they could just move the curtain and you can see the plant.

**So for both of you this is a sad space?**

Negar: Yes, definitely.

Shadi: I feel I would get ill in this place (Laughing).

Negar: I think I would have committed suicide.

Everyone laughs!

Elaheh: again, I wouldn't be living in this place but I wouldn't hate it that much to commit suicide (laughing)!

**But Elaheh, I found it interesting that you thought of the fact that there are two options that one could sit on the floor and another one could use the chair.**

Shadi: (with a sarcastic tone), well the way that the man is sitting, there is no place left for anyone else to sit. It doesn't seem he would be leaving that chair anytime soon either.

Everyone laughs and agree with her!

Negar: ok let's talk about the second photo.

Shadi: Ok, I think this place looks very tidy but tired at the same time; all the colours have lost their sharpness, it looks old and sad.

Negar: I wrote, tidy, old, village and light.

Elaheh: Light, yes light is a good point, I think there is a sense of friendliness in this house, it feels cosy; everything is so down to earth. But still I wouldn't feel comfortable in here, I would say again because I chose the other one (showing picture number three) as the one that is most comfortable. I think it feels cold in this home, and it would be hard to warm it up. Also, I can't be comfortable with the idea that you have to always sit on the floor and there is no option to sit on a sofa/chair if you would like to. But it seems to me that because of the financial level of the household, this is the best they could do. I think it is a very neat and clean house, and seems they care about their home.

Negar: (laughing) it's funny! I don't know how she knows about the financial situation of the family!

Elaheh: because it is a rural house, look at the ceiling, it is made out of wood timbers.

Shadi: maybe they are wealthy villagers!

**To Negar-Did you also find out it is rural house because of the ceiling?**

-Negar: No, I think because of its style. It is a house in village.

-Shadi: yes, this is not an urban home.

-Elaheh: again, I think the light was a good point.

-Shadi: ok the third picture everyone; I said it is lovely to see a family gathering, or a family socialising over a meal. Feels earthy, they sat on the floor, on a rug to have their meals, quite colourful furniture but I don't like the textures and the style of the house.

**In what sense, you don't like it?**

-Shad: it just isn't my taste.

-Elaheh: it is too much.

-Negar: I wrote it is too much, traditional, what I get from the photo is like more nostalgic that everyone is seated on the floors, so I think it is traditional. Then the rug, it is an element that grabs your attention.

-Elaheh: yes I also wrote that: *Bah Bah!*<sup>64</sup> *Mihman*<sup>65</sup> and food; the bests of Persian culture! The house is having this big space that they could spread the *Sofreh*<sup>66</sup> on the floor. I wrote, I hope they have the time to socialise with each other too, because in Persian culture we just eat and we don't even talk to each other.

- Shadi: I will tell them that! (Everyone laughs).

-Elaheh: what I also like about this place is that they have a big space but they also thought about how to sue it, for example they thought we are going to have guests and for that reason the put the sofas next to the walls to make more space. They used the house dynamically!

-Shadi: Flexible

-Negar: yes!

-Elaheh: yes, it is flexible, and they thought about how to make the house more spacious. I also like it that the home looks modern. I mean, they have sofa sets, the floor is laminated wood. I should mention I really like the combination of wooden laminated floor and Persian carpets though, so it is a modern space I think. You also have the option to sit on the floor or on the sofas. It also has proper lighting

-Shadi: The artificial light is good.

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<sup>64</sup> an Iranian impression when something brings joy to you like a delicious food, a pleasant weather or when you see a person you like

<sup>65</sup> The Persian word for Party (more of a dinner party where the host provides food and the place for the friends or family to gather and to socialise)

<sup>66</sup> The Persian word for a sheet that is spread over the carpet for where the meal is served

-Elaheh: yes!

-Shadi: ok the last one, I think this one is a miracle (sarcastically)

(Everyone laughs)

-Elaheh: awful!

-Negar: no comments!

-Shadi: I don't have much to say about this one, I didn't know what to say. I wrote I can't get much from this photo; there is nothing good about this photo but the most considerable thing is that the placed is stuffed with the furniture

-Elaheh: uhm!

-Negar: to me, in compare to the other photos seems less busy like lonesome! Then I wrote sad and referred to the sofa covers.

-Elaheh: I also mentioned uncomfortable this is a "luxury" Persian style, and I say "luxury" because the floors are made of stones and the *Termeh*<sup>67</sup> on the table and the curtains and the style of the sofas. I think they all look expensive and by expensive, I mean in in terms of Persian style. Then I wrote, I wouldn't mind to be a guest in this place for a couple of hours but I would never like to live here. The sofa covers also are something, why do you cover them by plastic if you have already paid that much money for them

-Shadi: they will remove it when they have visitors or they have guests over.

Everyone laughs!

**So, you all find this place inconvenient? Is it because of the furniture arrangement? Is because of the fact that the place is filled with the furniture or you do not like the sofa covers?**

-Shadi: It seems like a very uncomfortable space to me.

-Elaheh: It is cold (soulless)

-Shadi: for example, this, remember this village house that I said it looks old and aged and stuff... I find myself to be more comfortable in that place than this one. I can sit; lie down, walk and everything. But in this space, it is not possible to walk nor to seat. I mean you can sit but it would be totally uncomfortable

-Negar: now that you are mentioning, I also think, I feel a sense of coldness in here too, because sitting on this plastic cover, I would be really cold.

-Elaheh: I think this is actually only to keep the sofa set clean

-Negar: it seems cold

-Shadi: It will be removed when they have guests

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<sup>67</sup> *Termeh*, originally made in Yazd province, is a type of hand-woven Persian clothes

-Elaheh: take a look at the floor, it shouts coldness, I even feel it by looking at it

-Negar: yes, for me I feel it would be cold but also- this is my personal opinion though- what I have in mind from a luxury home is not this, it wouldn't match this. I wouldn't call it luxury

-Shadi: I think they tried but didn't succeed necessarily, for example the curtains seem very heavy, it gives me a claustrophobic sense

-Negar: uhm!

-Shadi: I feel, I can't breathe in here

-Negar: all the furniture; the sofas, the side tables and the front table they all are very heavy. They are uncomfortable to move for cleaning too.

-Elaheh: yes, or for cleaning in general

-Shadi: and I think if you hit your body to this furniture by accident would be so painful

-Elaheh oh! How much we like this place (with a sarcastic tone).

**OK so if you want to choose one of these homes as a typical Iranian home which one would be?**

-Shadi: (referring to picture number three) I think this one is more similar to a middle class Iranian home but I think none of them is actually representing what I have in mind as the current Iranian home.

-Negar: I would say this two, depending on from what level or class of society they are from, it could be a combination of these two, (Referring to pictures number two and three).

-Elaheh: uhm, In my opinion these two (Referring to pictures number three and four), I think they are very similar, only maybe one of them is wealthier than the other.

-Shadi: they have full sofa sets

-Elaheh: another thing is we can't tell who is wealthier as we don't know where these houses are.

-Shadi: (referring to number four), I think this one you wouldn't see it anymore in Tehran. I mean they are either this one (Picture number three) or they are another level.

**Could you explain more? What you mean by another level? Is the furniture different or in terms of space arrangement?**

-Elaheh: I think this could still be seen in Tehran; maybe just the model is different but for example if you go to a house in *Fereshteh*<sup>68</sup> yes.

-Shadi: No, you wouldn't see something like that in *Fereshteh*!

-Elaheh: why not?

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<sup>68</sup> One of the most expensive neighbourhoods in Tehran.

-Shadi: no in there they use things that are so luxurious

-Negar: I also don't think it would be like this in *Fereshteh*.

-Shadi: to be fair, this is luxury for *Yafabad*<sup>69</sup>

-Negar: honestly, I wanted to use the word tacky but I didn't

-Shadi: I think this is seen rarely

-Elaheh: but I think, you can easily see this in Tehran Pars<sup>70</sup>.

-Shadi: yes, maybe,

-Elaheh: like in Tehran Pas this is luxury

-Shadi, yes so I think the average of society, it [their home] is either this one (number three or number 4), so the level I said or the houses in *Fereshteh* Street are not the average houses in our society.

-Negar: yes, because, you can't say *Fereshteh* is representative of Iranian society. It is either this (number three) or that (number 4). So, the average level of society, if they want to be more modern they go more towards this photo (number three) and they cover it like this (photo number 4) or not, they sit like this on the floor. They have the furniture but still because of their lifestyle they move them to be able to sit on the floor again, because they still have the habit of gathering in large number of people.

-Shadi: for example, our aunt, she is a teacher, she can be categorised as middle class. But when we went to her house, she just renovated her home and "updated" the style, but the sofa set she had been comfortable, like couches. I mean it wasn't this though; it was comfortable that they could use it and she would only remove the covers when she had guests.

**You mean they use the covers to keep them clean?**

-Shadi: Yes, I mean people who use this kind of furniture they cannot use it [because it is not comfortable] am I clear? So, I mean a person who's his/her home is this size, they prefer to choose something more practical than luxury!

-Elaheh: But this looks like a three-bedroom flat in Tehran Pars

-Shadi: [to me] do you know in where these houses are?

**No, OK, so could you please mark the houses you thought are more similar to your perception of Iranian home?**

-Shadi- to be honest If I have to pick only one I would say this one is the home is more common. (pointing to photo number three)

-Negar: yes, it is seen more often in the society.

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<sup>69</sup> *Yaft Abad* is a huge Furniture market, located in south of Tehran, mostly targeting middle class customers.

<sup>70</sup> A middle-class neighbourhood in east of Tehran.

-Elaheh: I think 3 and 4 are the same. And I think this one is disappearing (referring to number 1).

**Ok Thank you, could you please think back about the home you lived in Iran that you think of it as home the most, now could you tell me if it was similar to any of these pictures?**

-Shadi: Among all the houses that I lived, none of them were similar to these photos. My early childhood home, we didn't have sofas and stuff but it has Persian carpets and we were comfortable in there, you know! The next homes they were more or less the same, until I went with my dad, in *Ekbatan*<sup>71</sup>, they had two sets of furniture, one for the guests and one set of comfortable sofas. That was the big change because for example, before we had only one set of furniture that was used by us and also by the guests. So, sorry what was the question again?

**Whether any of the house in these pictures were similar to your homiest home?**

-Shadi: look, the carpets or the material of the floors like laminated wood may have been the same but they style was different.

-Negar: no I don't think it was similar to any of these pictures

-Elaheh: I only think my mom's home that I was living, it was also a combination of Rugs and laminated floor but the style was different.

**So in term of category for example, the second one is a house in the village, could you categorise your home with one of these?**

-Elaheh: Yes, it was more like the third photo; my mother's house was more in this category. That is a combination of sofas and rugs. But my father's home was not in this category.

-Shadi: yes

**It is in a modern category but is not number 4?**

-Shadi: Yes, it is modern but isn't that one

-Negar: confirming by shaking head

-Elaheh: yes, I think the home we shared in Tehran, is not here as well.

-Shadi: yes, it's not

-Negar: it was modern but not like any of the other two they mentioned previously

**You mean it was only comfortable furniture?**

-Negar: yes, we had colour, light, we had free space.

-Elaheh: that home we had was very similar to what we have here

-Shadi: yes

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<sup>71</sup> *Ekbatan* town, located in west of Tehran is a planned town that was built before the revolution, at the End of Pahlavi regime. It is a mass housing projects consisting of three phases/ zones that each have different types of apartment flats in high rising buildings.

Appendix 2. The Focus group transcripts and activities

-Negar: yes, I think it was a home that was more based on our taste than the other places that I had lived with my parents

**It was more you?**

-Elaheh: yes, for example we had rugs but it wasn't anything special.

-Negar: we had a *Gabbeh*<sup>72</sup>

-Shadi: you know the kind of lifestyle you are interested in when you are in between 20 to 25? Our home was about that; it was so contented and practical for that lifestyle.

-Elaheh: I think my life/home is still very similar to that, maybe it has changed slightly.

**I would like to ask you to think about your current home, there are a series of categories that you can rank based on the level of importance in relation to how much they can make you feel like home and help you in the process of homemaking.**

-Negar: there is a traditional habits/yearly event you mean whether I can do those events at home or not?

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1	<b>Home making elements</b>	<b>The level of importance in creating a sense of home</b>					
2	<b>Decorations/Objects</b>	Not at all	Slightly important	moderately important	important	very important	Comment
3	Brought from Homeland (Iran)		X				
4	Reminder of home or a memory of homeland (Iran)	X	X				
5	Purchased or received in the host country (UK)		X				
6	<b>Furniture</b>						
7	Brought from Homeland (Iran)		X				
8	Reminder of home or a memory of homeland (Iran)	X					
9	Purchased or received in the host country (UK)	X					
10	The furniture arrangement					X	
11	<b>Tangible Architectural elements of the current home</b>					X	
12	The design of the space (placement of walls, doors, windows, etc...)					X	
13	Size (the flat/house and interior spaces)					X	
14	Quality of materials used for the architectural elements					X	
15	<b>Cultural and daily habits</b>					X	
16	Traditional habits/yearly events		X				
17	Cooking				X		
18	Religious or spiritual rituals	X					
19	Cleaning routines				X		
20	Sensory experience of home: smell, sound, touch, light, nature,....					X	
21	Memory of home (previous experience of home)	X					
22	<b>Social Life and gatherings</b>						
23	Gatherings with Iranian family and friends (coming from Iran or living in the UK)		X		X		
24	Socialising at home with family and friends (not necessarily Iranian)				X		

Elaheh's completed spread sheet.

<sup>72</sup> Handmade rugs with simple patterns that usually go in smaller sizes and are thicker than the usual Persian carpets and are locally made in west of Iran.

Appendix 2. The Focus group transcripts and activities

A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1 Home making elements	The level of importance in creating a sense of home					
2 Decorations/Objects	Not at all	Slightly important	moderately important	important	very important	Comment
3 Brought from Homeland (Iran)						
4 Reminder of home or a memory of homeland (Iran)	X					
5 Purchased or received in the host country (UK)		X				
6 Furniture						
7 Brought from Homeland (Iran)						
8 Reminder of home or a memory of homeland (Iran)	X					
9 Purchased or received in the host country (UK)	X					
10 The furniture arrangement						
11 Tangible Architectural elements of the current home						
12 The design of the space (placement of walls, doors, windows, etc...)						
13 Size (the flat/house and interior spaces)						
14 Quality of materials used for the architectural elements						
15 Cultural and daily habits						
16 Traditional habits/yearly events						
17 Cooking						
18 Religious or spiritual rituals						
19 Cleaning routines						
20 Sensory experience of home: smell, sound, touch, light, nature,...						
21 Memory of home (previous experience of home)						
22 Social Life and gatherings						
23 Gatherings with Iranian family and friends (coming from Iran or living in the UK)						
24 Socialising at home with family and friends (not necessarily Iranian)						

*Handwritten notes in Persian:*  
 Row 10: RUG  
 Row 11: گسترده، گنجینه رست و مرتب  
 Row 12: فضای باز  
 Row 16: new year  
 Row 17: verdu lah  
 Row 18: نوروزی و یکتا

Elaheh's completed spread sheet.

A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1 Home making elements	The level of importance in creating a sense of home					
2 Decorations/Objects	Not at all	Slightly important	moderately important	important	very important	Comment
3 Brought from Homeland (Iran)	✓					
4 Reminder of home or a memory of homeland (Iran)	✓					
5 Purchased or received in the host country (UK)	✓					
6 Furniture						
7 Brought from Homeland (Iran)	✓					
8 Reminder of home or a memory of homeland (Iran)	✓					
9 Purchased or received in the host country (UK)	✓					
10 The furniture arrangement						
11 Tangible Architectural elements of the current home						
12 The design of the space (placement of walls, doors, windows, etc...)			✓			
13 Size (the flat/house and interior spaces)						
14 Quality of materials used for the architectural elements						
15 Cultural and daily habits						
16 Traditional habits/yearly events	✓					
17 Cooking						
18 Religious or spiritual rituals						
19 Cleaning routines						
20 Sensory experience of home: smell, sound, touch, light, nature,...						
21 Memory of home (previous experience of home)	✓					
22 Social Life and gatherings						
23 Gatherings with Iranian family and friends (coming from Iran or living in the UK)						
24 Socialising at home with family and friends (not necessarily Iranian)						

Negar's completed spread sheet.

**It is more about whether these activities or event make you feel like home at all if you do them at home?**

-Negar: ok

-Elaheh: so, by "brought from homeland" you mean that is that important for to go to Iran to bring a certain object?

**Not necessarily for example if you have brought something from Iran how much that certain object makes you feel like home?**

-Elaheh: so, it means because of that element my home becomes homier?

**Yes.**

-Negar: When you said gatherings with family and friends, it means that your home gives you that option?

**Yes.**

Elaheh: I think I am done, I think I'm a bit confused about these categories, but let's see.

**Can we go through the categories one by one?**

-Elaheh: can I start this time? Because it always starts the other way

-Shadi: I just thought our voices maybe similar and she may have problems later following who said what.

-Elaheh: ok so let's stick to the same order then.

-Shadi: "the objects and the furniture brought from Iran" I chose slightly important for me,

-Negar: for me to be honest is" not important at all".

-Elaheh: look to be fair, you said something that I think it confused me, is the question about how important it is for me to go to Iran specifically to bring something and how much that specific object gives a sense of home to my place?

**Yes, but not that you go to Iran to bring it, if you already have it in your home, an object brought from Iran, how much that is influential in your homemaking approach?**

-Negar: Is it important for you or not? To have an object from Iran. (To Elaheh)

**You know some people in here when we go to their homes all the furniture and decorations are so Iranian, that is the extreme, but then, sometimes you buy something from Iran and you bring it for your home, how much having that object is influential in making you feel like home.**

-Negar: Or, this is how I explained this to myself, that do I like to have certain elements in my home from Iran or that element could come from everywhere else?

**OK**

-Shadi: I mostly see more unique objects in Iran in my trips back home. For example, there is a tray that I hanged next to the entrance, I don't know if you have seen it or not

-Negar: it is on the right-hand side when you enter.

-Shadi: yes, I saw that on Instagram, and when I was in Iran, I realized by chance that they have an exhibition for this artwork and I specifically went to buy it. I was already in Iran though; otherwise I wouldn't have gone to Iran only to buy this. I went to buy it when I was there because I really liked the work.

**Yes, the question is not about you going to Iran to get an object, it is about how objects with stories like this, that are brought from Iran could be important to give you a sense of home.**

**What do you mean by unique Shadi? You mean it has a certain character or that you cannot find it in here where you live?**

-Shadi: Look for example, this tray that I am saying, it is a poetry written in Persian calligraphy that is been carved out of wood. I think it is a very trendy design. It is something between traditional and

trendy. If I bring something traditional, I wouldn't like it at all. But this one, I thought was very trendy and stylish.

**So it was an updated version of the traditional artworks but with a hint of modern trends?**

-Negar: now my question is if you didn't have this object it wouldn't have bothered you, you wouldn't have thought you are missing something in your house.

-Shadi: no but I had my eye on it! well because it is a decoration, you never feel a decorative object is a necessity, you don't feel it is missed. But now that I have it, I feel it is so pretty in my home

-Elaheh: look for example, in my home, the Iranian objects that I have I didn't go looking for them, I either got them from someone or they just seemed nice and I bought them. But in my opinion these elements, because of their beauty, make my home prettier. For instance, you (pointing to Negar) those two golden bowls in your coffee table, you bought them because they were pretty.

-Negar: Exactly, I could have bought those from anywhere else in the world. So, I said not at all because if I saw them anywhere else in the world, I would have bought them still. But I found them in Iran.

-Shadi: so, at the end you brought it from Iran, the question is if you got it from Iran

-Elaheh: uhm

-Negar: it says "is it important for you?" and I said no!

-Shadi: but you couldn't have found it anywhere else, it is important that you bring it from Iran then.

-Negar: No I don't see it like that to be honest.

**Well that is interesting! Although the idea of beauty is also very subjective, the fact that you all think the objects that are brought from Iran have a certain beauty shows how our sense of understating beauty is developed through living in that country. I mean if a person from here sees these objects they may not feel the same connection as we do with these decorations.**

-Shadi: uhm

-Elaheh: I don't know, I can think of those *Sama*<sup>73</sup> sculptures that I took from my sister (I literally just took it)! It is from somewhere else, so I think even if I saw such a thing in Turkey I would have bought it and bring it with me.

-Negar: yes, that is my point exactly.

-Shadi: well what I say is that that is not made by a Turkish designer that is the work of an Iranian designer.

**Turkey is having a very similar culture and the objects are having that middle eastern characters.**

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<sup>73</sup> *Sama*: Is a *Sufi* ceremony, is a gnostic ritual that is a combination of singing and dancing. It is originated from the ideas of Persian poet Rumi who passed away in current Turkey; hence numerous *Sama* ceremonies are held in Turkey every year.

- Elaheh: to be fair, the stuff I bring from Iran makes my place homey. But I can't tell that necessarily... Aha! I think Negar, your point is in the next category that says if the objects are reminder of Iran for you or not. So, these objects give a sense of home to your place but they are not necessarily a reminder of Iran. Yes take a look the next one, so yes it is not important for me at all.

-Shadi: me neither

-Negar: yes, but I still see it the same way

**It is ok you responded based on your own your understanding of it, and you made your perspective clear.**

-Shadi: what is everyone's answer for number 4? I said not all

-Negar: yes all of us are not at all.

-Shadi: number 5, purchased or received in the UK- for me is "slightly important because I live here, I would like to have some elements that give an English style to my home.

-Negar: I said "not at all".

**So, for you Negar it is all about what matches your taste than where they are coming from?**

-Negar: yes

-Shadi: well, the things I buy in the UK, I buy them because I like them, not only because they are for here or Iran. I like those things. But I also like to have certain elements in my home that are English, as sometimes I find very interesting designs in here as well.

-Elaheh: uhm, look I think one English element that I have in my home is the Christmas lights, and I don't know if I was not living in a country that they don't have that [celebrating Christmas] I would have had them still...I don't know. I like to have something in my home from the country that I am living now. Also, I use my Christmas lights all year around, it is on most of the times.

-Negar: I think it is your perception they are Christmas light

-Elaheh: it is a tree light!

-Negar: yes, but so many people use that as a decoration in their homes

-Elaheh: I don't know but this one was actually a Christmas light, the packaging and everything. Like Negar, I can also say that it isn't important for me that I have it just because it is British, but it has influenced me and has given a sense of home to my place.

**But you all use objects and decorations for making your home and creating a sense of homeliness?**

-Negar: Yes, whatever that gives me a good feeling!

-Shadi: so, number 5, furniture brought from home", again, this is slightly important for me but again, in the comment section, I mentioned rugs. If I want to use rugs in my home, I prefer to bring them

from Iran. It is the only furniture that is important for me to bring from Iran, nothing else is as important.

-Negar: I said not at all to this one too.

-Elaheh: for this I said “moderately important” and that is because of the rug as well. The rug I have in my home now is Iranian. I really like it; I like to show off about it and I think this is a part of Iranian culture. I actually like to talk about it with my guests at home. Another thing about objects though, I don't know if food and ingredients are also counted? For example, for me food is very important. I need to bring my tea from Iran, like *Lahijan* Tea, or saffron, these are the things that I specifically bring from Iran. I don't mind if some objects are specifically from Iran, I enjoy them anyways. There are some stuff in my home though that I kept them because they remind me of my mum, like a doll from my childhood or a plate that she got from her grandmother, not necessarily my homeland but my mum.

**Yes, there is a cooking category as well we can talk about it in more details there. So the most important element that has to be brought from Iran is Persian carpet?**

-Elaheh: yes.

-Shadi: yes.

-Negar: I don't mind it!

-Shadi: number 8, reminder of home land. It was “not at all” for me. It is important for me that the furniture is comfortable. From wherever I buy it, the most essential thing is the appearance, comfort and the quality of the material, doesn't matter where it comes from.

**The Persian carpets then if you find them with the same quality you buy it here too?**

-Shadi: yes.

-Negar: I said not at all.

-Elaheh: me too.

-Shadi: number 9, “purchased or received in the host country (UK)”. I said not at all.

-Negar: me too.

-Shadi: yes, again the quality is in priority.

**How about you Elaheh?**

-Elaheh: It's the same for me too.

**And number 10, Furniture arrangement, what did you think of this one?**

-Negar: furniture arrangement is very important for me

-Elaheh: for me too.

-Negar: I said “important”.

**Could you explain a little bit more how is it important for you?**

-Shadi: ok, in here you didn't mean that they should be Iranian or not?

**No, the furniture arrangement in general, for example, what is the ideal furniture arrangement for you?**

-Shadi: the ideal furniture arrangement for me is when it gives me comfortable sense in the space. Also, that I have my own touch in that space. This is because I have worked as an interior designer. It is essential for me to be able to design the space myself. For instance, if I go to a furniture shop and see an arrangement, I wouldn't stick to that. I will make the lay out myself.

**What do you mean by comfort exactly? Is it the space between the furniture, how the body moves within those spaces or the whole general layout?**

-Shadi: That definitely, but also, it should look appealing to the eye as if I look around it looks harmonious.

-Shadi: ok let's go through this, Negar what did you think of this one?

-Negar: It is important for me, I could have said [more important] but because of the lack of space in London, sometimes I just have to accept it that way. Now, if I want to be a bit more specific, the sitting comfort is important, to have free space to move around.

-Shadi: having lightweight furniture is another crucial thing for me as well.

-Elaheh: I mentioned it is "very important" because the arrangement of the space could make it look more spacious. It must be neat and tidy, and that cleaning would be easy within that arrangement. I mean, to arrange the furniture dynamically to make cleaning easier. Also, the space shouldn't look cluttered in a way that it doesn't disturb your calmness. So, the furniture arrangement is very important.

**Do all have the cleaning routines in mind when arranging your furniture?**

-Negar and Shadi: yes

-Shadi: let's check number 12. "Design of the space, walls, door, windows, etc...". This is very important.

-Elaheh: for me as well. For example, having long floor windows is very important for me.

-Shadi: if my home has a short ceiling, it will bother me so much. I really don't like that. Ventilation is essential as well, it has to be great, and I love to have windows, lots of them.

**What do you mean by ventilation? Through the windows?**

-Shadi: The air circulation system in the house I mean, it has to be good.

**Design wise?**

-Shadi: Yes

-Negar: I wrote moderately important and that is because; maybe sometimes my answers are influenced by the existing restrictions in London. So maybe, it is not coming from what I really want, it is based on the circumstances or the social pressure. I think, I am considering these factors when I provide an answer.

-Shadi: Ok, did you talk about your answer Elaheh?

-Elaheh: yes

-Shadi: next one, "Size, the flat/house and interior space". This is very important for me. Now that I don't live in London anymore, it is very essential for me now. In London, I had to live in a small space but now I have the option to choose.

-Negar: I said "important".

-Elaheh: me too! I said "very important" because if I have the luxury of having an option, I would like to choose a place that is spacious. Yes, and that the place shouldn't have too many walls.

**"Quality of the material and the architectural elements"?**

-Shadi: "very important"

-Elaheh: definitely!

-Shadi: because here in UK they basically apply very cheap materials, because all they care is to just finish the project. But I really like it that the quality of the materials used for my home is in way that I wouldn't need to be renewing them constantly.

-Elaheh: yes, it's the same for me too.

-Negar: I also said important.

-Shadi: number 16 "traditional habits", this is slightly important

-Negar: I said not at all, I mean because at the moment, I don't have anything in my home or I don't do or following traditions daily or yearly.

-Shadi: I counted gatherings and similar events in this category too.

Elaheh: I like to have a space in my home that I can have people over during the New Year [Persian New Year]. To me this is a yearly event and for that reason it is important for me.

**Cooking?**

-Shadi: "important"

-Negar: "important" for me too.

-Elaheh: me too, I like to have a space that, I can cook in ease, clean wash and cut comfortably

-Shadi: Exactly

-Negar: Also the ventilation for cooking is essential too

-Shadi: Yes! Exactly.

**About the cooking, so you all talk about sufficient space you need to make the cooking process comfortable, how about the act of cooking itself, is that helpful in a sense to make your space more like home?**

-Shadi: that is not that influential. It is just because I like to eat well, I like to have a proper space to be able to cook. I wouldn't like to have a limited space that makes me eat fast food or ready meals all the time.

-Negar: I don't have time for cooking. But if I cook that is usually once a week or every two weeks, I would like to have the option to cook something that I like.

-Shadi: number 18, "religious spiritual rituals" I said not at all.

-Negar: to me the spiritual part is important. I prefer to have a relaxed, calm space of my own that I can practice my daily spiritual activities.

-Elaheh: it is important for me as well. I would like to have a space dedicated to meditation and yoga.

**Do you mean you like the idea of having a specific space for those activities, or in terms of the having a space that has the quality and the flexibility to create that once you need it?**

-Negar: Calmness! You need calmness and silence, and open space.

-Elaheh: Exactly, open space for yoga is necessary; I would love to have the space in my home to do yoga. It is about having the space [sufficient space]. There is nothing religious about it, it is more spiritual.

-Shadi: "Cleaning routines", this is "important" for me.

-Elaheh: can I say something? I believe the plants that I have in my home have made my home a spiritual place.

-Negar: for the "cleaning routine" I said it's "important".

-Elaheh: Yes, it is very important for me as well. It just makes my place feel like home.

-Shadi: yes

-Elaheh: just the smell of cleanliness is home!

-Shadi: Number 20, ["sensory experience of home"] very important

-Negar: important

-Elaheh: yes, I chose "very important"

-Shadi: I love to hear the sounds of birds outside.

-Elaheh: for me is the light. Light is very essential.

-Shadi: number 21 [memory of home], "not at all"

**How about you Negar?**

-Negar: me, I don't know! Honestly I am a bit struggling to understand the meaning of these...

-Shadi: do you like you home to be in a way that reminds you of your previous home?

-Negar: no I am talking about number 20.

-Shadi: ok

**Yes, we are still talking about number 20.**

-Negar: to be honest I don't want to comment on these, because there are some elements that are very confusing for me. I don't want to say something irrelevant. But in general, sensory experience is important for me but in a quality that I prefer. All the elements that you said in here, I pay attention to them all, when choosing a place.

**Could you expand this a little?**

-For example, the typical British homes, to be more specific, there are houses in London that are very common but they are smelly, they smell like humidity. I wouldn't go for something like that. For sound; it [the home] shouldn't be noisy, if there is a sound of nature is great, but I don't have that option so...And touch; I can't relate to that in this context. Light is essential or if I have green area around is important but again my answers are based on London lifestyle and limitations, so I don't have so many choices available to me.

**Ok.**

-Shadi: "memory of home" is not at all for me.

-Elaheh: look, I thought about it this way; that I learned how to make my home or arrange my furniture over time and sometimes this is the result of the moving experience from one home to another. This is how I perceived this. So for that reason, I found this moderately important, because I have learned something from one home and I am taking it with me to the new home.

**Is it the same for the rest of you? Is the memory of home seen as a learning process? Or you have a different experience? I mean, Elaheh sees the memory of home as a process that happens over time from one home to another, what do you think?**

-Shadi: that is your style that you take with you.

Negar: memory of any previous home or the home in Iran?

**It could be any.**

-Negar: no for me, I try to see what works for each place and try to be flexible for that.

-Shadi: number 23 "gatherings" I chose "slightly important". For example, when my father comes, I would like to have enough space to accommodate them for the time they are her.

-Negar: number 23 and 24 were very close to each other. I chose moderately important for both of them. Again because I don't have the option in London, if I had, it would have been very important to be able to have that.

**So does the gathering help you feel like home at all?**

-Negar: no

-Elaheh: That's the thing, it doesn't happen that often. If we were in Iran, we would have had that quite often, but it doesn't happen in here that much.

-Shadi: when it is happening here it causes more disturbances! I am not talking about my sisters you know, when they come to stay for weeks.

**How about when it is a short time visit and gathering? Like a short get together?**

-Shadi: yes, this way it's all right.

-Elaheh: well, for me both 23 and 24 are important. I would like that my home gives a good feeling to people when they are my guests. For instance, the sofa I bought is a sofa bed and that is for the times that my dad comes to visit that he has a place to sleep. I also like my home to be comfortable enough that if I have guests, they feel fine being there. I like to receive guests but again because of my lifestyle in the UK, I don't have that luxury.

-Shadi: number 24, "socialising with family" is important. The other one isn't, [with Iranian family and friends] but this one is.

**So does having people over and socialising for a short period of time contribute to your sense of home, like elevating your experience of home?**

-Shadi: yes

-Negar: yes

-Elaheh: yes, maybe so many elements of home is circled around this factor.

**Thank you, now could you please think about your current home again, and try to remember the last time you felt like home? It could have been a moment or a particular place in your home. Could you try to think about the specifications that made that space/moment a homely one? Could you write them down in the papers I provided for you?**

-Elaheh: yes, ok, my current home, the reason I chose it was the considerable amount of light. I also really like it that I have a specific place to work. When I got my current home, it wasn't furnished, I was happy with it as it had two bedrooms that I could use one of them as a home office. I always like the idea of having a spare space. My home has lots of light too with high ceilings and long windows. When I rented the place, it didn't have anything, I bought everything myself with my own money. I assembled everything by myself and that gave me a sense of belonging to this home, so my place started becoming my home slowly. But as I said from the beginning because of all the light it had, and that I perceived a sense of freshness, I already felt I belonged there. There is one thing that I forgot to say; sometimes there is a bad smell coming from the pipes and that is taking that sense of

home away from me. It really disturbs me although I am following it up to fix it but right now it is really affecting how I feel at home.

Another thing that I wrote here is sofa, I bought my sofa, it is not only an object for me, I gave colour to it [the cushions] and it is very comfortable. At the meantime my plants have become a part of this home. The city is also important in giving me a sense of home and belonging, because it is a very small town, although I can't tell it is very quiet as I live in the city centre but it's cosy, when I drive home and arrive at my place I feel good. But when I was living in Loughborough I didn't like to go home, I didn't want to drive through the street and alleys [dodgy streets] to get home. But I don't feel this way in Huntington, because it's a small town and everything is available. There is also a higher quality of life, people are a bit wealthier I assume. They are people from different classes like working class but the quality of life is nicer. Another thing that I think it is very influential in helping me feel like home is that I have a permanent job.

-Negar: I think everything I wrote in here could be found in all my previous comments and they are pretty clear. Such as calmness, comfort, open space, arrangement of space based on my need, light, silence, modernity, cleanliness.

-Shadi: to me, our current place gives a sense of security and safety that calms me down and gives me a sense of home. The decoration as well, the rugs and the carpets and the fact that is always warm. The garden gives me a sense of peacefulness too. I love the way our home smells, I also really like its colours. I also think, one of the reasons that I really like this home is my partner and his presence in this house, it give a sense of happiness to the place.

**Elaheh, you showed me a photo of your living room as a space that feels like home for you. Did you intentionally prepare you place for a photo or you just realised it is beautiful and you took a photo?**

Elaheh: No this is how my home looks like all the time. I always thought it looks pretty and was thinking that I should take a photo on a sunny day and upload it on Facebook as my cover photo. Then yesterday I was at home and that happened and I took a photo.

**Have you ever tried to recreate that sense again?**

Definitely, all the time! I mean, I intend to take the best out of my place, for instance I had an orchid in the other room- where I work- that blossomed recently, so I moved it to my living room, because I spend more time in the living room and I wanted to see it more often.

Another example, when I have my shade blinds, (though they were not my choice), it is important to have them shut to block the cold air but I try to open them as much as I can to let the light in. But basically my aim at home is to take the best out of my home potentials. I actually became neater because of that, trying to keep the house tidier, although sometimes I might be very tired.

**So the most important element that makes that space favourable for you is the light? And the plants?**

Yes the light and the plants and the architecture of the house and the high ceiling. I like to pass through that whole event every day. I think the colour of sofa is a very influential as well; it is a very light blue colour, it is comfortable and different. There is also a Persian carpet on the floor that adds quality to the whole space.

Appendix 2. The Focus group transcripts and activities

There is something interesting- only for me- when I put that photo on Facebook, it was very popular, I didn't expect that everyone thinks it is a beautiful combination. I made that space as something for me but it was interesting to see that so many people found it favourable, it is a very universal feeling I guess.

- آبی
- رازی
- فضای باز
- میدان ترابری بازم
- نور
- سکون
- درون
- تری

- بیشتر مواقع احساس امنیت و خون بهی و توستی، آرام هستم.
- به دلیل فرس و موقت، گرمای فضا، فضای بیرونی (آزاد)
- بی خواب خونز و اینکه پاکیزه و جود را تر اینجا بیشتر خون می کند.

The third activity listing the elements of homeliness, top (Negar), bottom (shadi).

- ← نور
- ← فضای باز
- ← آتاق طار
- ← صبل
- ← گیاه صام
- ← خوردهای بولش
- ← شکر تو پد cosy
- ← آرایش
- ← کار دانم

The third activity listing the elements of homeliness, Elaheh.

## Focus group no 2: Paniz and Shirin

### Could you please introduce yourself, and the number of years you have been living in the UK?

-Paniz: I've been here since I was like 7- 8, I'm 22 now, so 14-15 years and I've been living in Nottingham.

-Shirin: I have been here since I was 7 and I am 24 now. I was born in Shiraz, and I was brought up in Sheffield.

### Could you please share our idea on the sense of homeliness, what home means to you? What specifications a place should have to give you a sense of home?

-Paniz: the first thing that came to my heads when you asked that question was my mum and dad and I think... I mean, I'm 22, I haven't necessarily lived without them yet. I mean, yes, I've gone to uni but I've always had "the home" and that's where the parents are. You know? Um, but if I were to say... if they were out of the equation, um... I guess, somewhere that you have memories maybe. Um..., somewhere where you are comfortable... but mostly the main answer would be the same: my parents.

### Could you explain what you do you mean by comfort?

-Paniz: it is emotional, physical, everything. I feel like, it sometimes clicks; I can give you an example. Like, I was at Durham to begin with like, ... I was uncomfortable, you know when you're just walking and you're like, oh... I'm not really sure about this, doesn't feel right. But then, I came to Sheffield and I was like... ah, this is alright! I don't know... it was maybe the vibes that you get from different people ... just... I don't know but that what I mean is, it's just a sense that you get when you walk in somewhere.

### Ok going back to my question, Shirin?

-Shirin: Oh... God... what does home mean?... so I had quite a different upbringing to Paniz, my parents... they lived together until I was about, ... maybe 5 ... and then my dad lived in Iran and my mum lived here so we've been sort of separate. But to me ...uh... home is where they are together or when we are all together. That doesn't usually happen, sort of three times a year in Iran. Uh...yeah... I think parents are definitely home. Like they say "*vaghti madar khune hast*"<sup>74</sup> when mum is at home, it's home! It's cooking, it's that dad's home you feel safe, you feel protected. It's the smell of home cooked food! It's so many things...ah... again, I have a quite active mind and I do think about what happens after them or how I would like my home to be for my family one day and I do think it's what you make of it! I think these things are very much in your own control. Like that, it's meant to be, it's up to me! Uh... but ... I'm very statically pleased at the same time and there are certain ways that a home should be; it should be tidy, it should be sort of warm, it should be having warm colours. I'm not into the sleek kind of a look about the interior of the house .... Necessarily. But in terms of feelings, it's definitely where you have emotional stability, ... I think!

### You talked about warm colours, tidiness, etc... what do you think about that Paniz?

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<sup>74</sup> "*vaghti madar khune hast*"; (وقتی مادر خونه است), Persian for when mum is at home.

Yeah sure, I can see where you're coming from when you say that (pointing to Shirin), the tidiness, the food, the smell, ... of course, yes. And the parents' thing, honestly... wherever mom, specially moms are. The other day, she wasn't home and I went back, I was in Sheffield and I drove back and I was like, I got there and my mum wasn't in and I was like... phew. where is mom? I literally called her; mum where are you? She is like, I'm out... I'm like, then What am I doing here? And she's like just go inside... it's your home, go do whatever... I'm like mum?... you don't understand... I'll just come and sit with you, where are you? Like... you know, she was just laughing that what even if I'm sitting in the street? And I was like yeah! I'd literally come and sit with you, I'll be happy wherever you are, I'm so it because we are together. And that's so true because my parents have been together always, but my brother for the last four five years, hasn't been really living with us but there's always something lacking, you know we have lunch, dinner...

-Shirin: *Jashun khalie*<sup>75</sup>

-Paniz: yes! You know, that completeness, it's not there. We've have been around when it was Christmas, a birthday but it doesn't happen often but when it does, you know... you just take a moment and you're like... this is it! And you can take that moment and put that feeling, it could be anywhere, you can literally take us all and put us in the middle of the street, like in a house, in a restaurant, here and it would have the exact same feeling, emotions, like physically and everything, umm... it's just that feeling of completeness, and you get that when you are together.

-Shirin: I personally don't like sort of 70s or 80s home in the UK. I either prefer new builds or very old Victorian. Because I think, especially as Iranians, we're used to open space, like homes in Iran are free flowing, there isn't barriers, but I feel like specially terrace houses here, it's not a home, it's a sleeping space it was made for the industrial revolution for work, that's what it was, and it's so somewhere you can sleep, there isn't a free flaw, there isn't a homeliness to it. And, I personally am trying to put a deposit to buy a home here and it's really hard to look at a terrace house and fall in love with a terraced house, because it just doesn't flow. There isn't enough free space; walls... door, walls... door! Whereas, in Iran you have open kitchen, ... for example one of our villas that my dad has; the actual building you can walk the entirety of the house and the rooms are around it, it's circular and there is no limits, you know! ... Whereas, I feel like architecture here, unless it's an old Victorian house where you have tall ceilings and sort of large windows, especially considering how dark it gets in here, and gloomy the weather is, I don't think the houses reflect.

**Ok, how much do you think your perceptions on home has been influenced by your childhood home? Do you remember any of it at all?**

-Paniz: Oh yes! I remember my exact feelings when we moved here and I saw the house we were living in and I was like... I don't like it! And I was like mum! I don't like it, cause exactly what she said [Shirin], because you know it wasn't a free flow house and I was on the second floor, my brother on the third and I was like ...this is not ok. I had to go downstairs for the kitchen... yeah exactly it [in Iran] was all in the same floor, you know like a bungalow!

-Shirin: yeah!

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<sup>75</sup> : *Jashun khalie* (جاشون خاليه), A term that literally means: their place is empty meaning the absence of that person is deeply felt.

-Paniz: it was like a bungalow; you know? Very open! There was no up and down, there were mini stairs like here and there but not flight of stairs and I was like mum I don't like it, I want my brother next door to me, and I want you guys there and I didn't like the lay out and I still don't, I'm not gonna lie! I'm exactly on the same page as Shirin.

### Do you often go back to Iran?

Paniz: I haven't been in Iran since, I basically got here but that's not because I don't want to, it's just the opportunity hasn't come yet. Umm. I really, really wanna go and I love Iran and it's actually one of those things that every time I talk about it, I'm like; you never know I might actually live there one day. Like I'm actually that open to it. Even though I don't go there, it doesn't mean there is no love or I don't want anything to do with it, I absolutely love it, I love the people and I do maybe you know have a summer home there and just yeah!

Shirin: my family home in Iran was in ...Are you from Shiraz<sup>76</sup>?

No...

-Shirin: So, there is a, so just After Saadi<sup>77</sup>, coming up from Saadi there is a road called *Kucheye Sorsoreh*<sup>78</sup> that goes from *Baghe Delgoshah*<sup>79</sup> and it's literally a road cut into side of a hill or a mountain and the house used to just go up the mountain. So, there was a huge garden and God knows how many stairs before you got to the top of the house, and then on the top it was our home and then it was, I think it was an old lady called *kuchik khanoom*<sup>80</sup>. Yeah! So yes, it massively influenced how I see home. I'm used to gardens, my grandma's garden was massive, she had a... her garden was almost like a *Bagh*<sup>81</sup>. In the afternoons, when she'd go wash the *Hayat* the smell of *Khak o Aab*<sup>82</sup> was raised and that...! Yeah, that's a reminder of my home. I wouldn't live in a flat even though I'm living in a flat now but the moment I move out, it would be... it have to have a garden and I think that is very much influenced by my childhood experience. I go back a lot; I usually go back two or three times a year on an annual basis.

But, I also I gotta add. Have you ever seen *Mehman-e Maman*<sup>83</sup> the movie?

Yes...

-Shirin: I love these houses, with the courtyard in the middle and there are three or four families that live in the same house and where my mum was brought up actually was exactly that. Her granddad's home had a courtyard that they lived there with her uncle family.

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<sup>76</sup> A city in Iran, the home to known Persian poets such as Saadi and Hafiz.

<sup>77</sup> Name of the known Persian Poet from Shiraz. In here, it refers to the neighborhood that his shrine is located in Shiraz

<sup>78</sup> The name of the Alley, literally means slides (کوچه سرسره).

<sup>79</sup> Name of the Street, literally means; "exhilarant Garden" (باغ دلگشا). She specifically uses the Persian words as they are very Persian, poetic and charming words.

<sup>80</sup> Means little lady (کوچیک خانوم), a very old name that is only seen among older people.

<sup>81</sup> Persian word for Garden, there are two words in Persian for green areas for house. *Hayat* (حیات); which is more like a small yard with plants and a couple of small trees and *Bagh* (باغ); that is much bigger and is very similar to traditional Persian gardens with lots of trees and green areas.

<sup>82</sup> *Khak o Aab* (خاک و آب); means Soil and Water.

<sup>83</sup> A Persian movie that was made in the 2004, called "*Mehman-e Maman*" (مهمان مامان)- Mum's guest. The movie plot was in a traditional Iranian home that was shared by several families. The typical arrangement is that each family has a room and everyone shares the bathroom and the kitchen. This type of household has been presented quite often in Iranian media when showing, traditional or lower middle class families in Tehran.

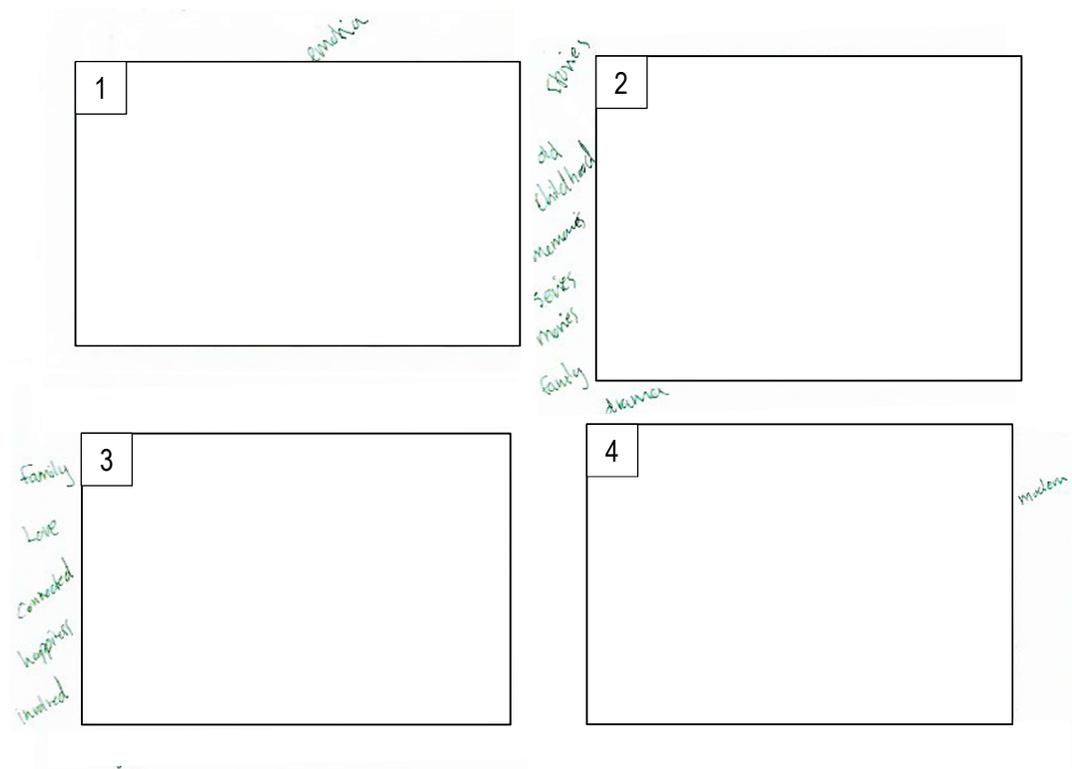
Now I would like you to take a look at these pictures for me, there are four pictures could you please go through them one by one and write down a few words on what do you think of these spaces.

-Paniz: So, these two photos specially 1 and 3, I got a sense of a lot of love, brings a lot of love. Hard work! For both.

-Shirin: that's a good word actually

-Paniz: yeah, family, being connected, happiness, lots of emotions, these two were very similar, uhm. Childhood memories, movies, series that you watch on TV, umm... stories, I feel like, these two are specially... it's what we are made of. This (number 2) almost where it is all began, especially, for us you know? Our age and our parents when they talk about you know! Aw, back in the days ... you know... your grandad this ... your grandma that...

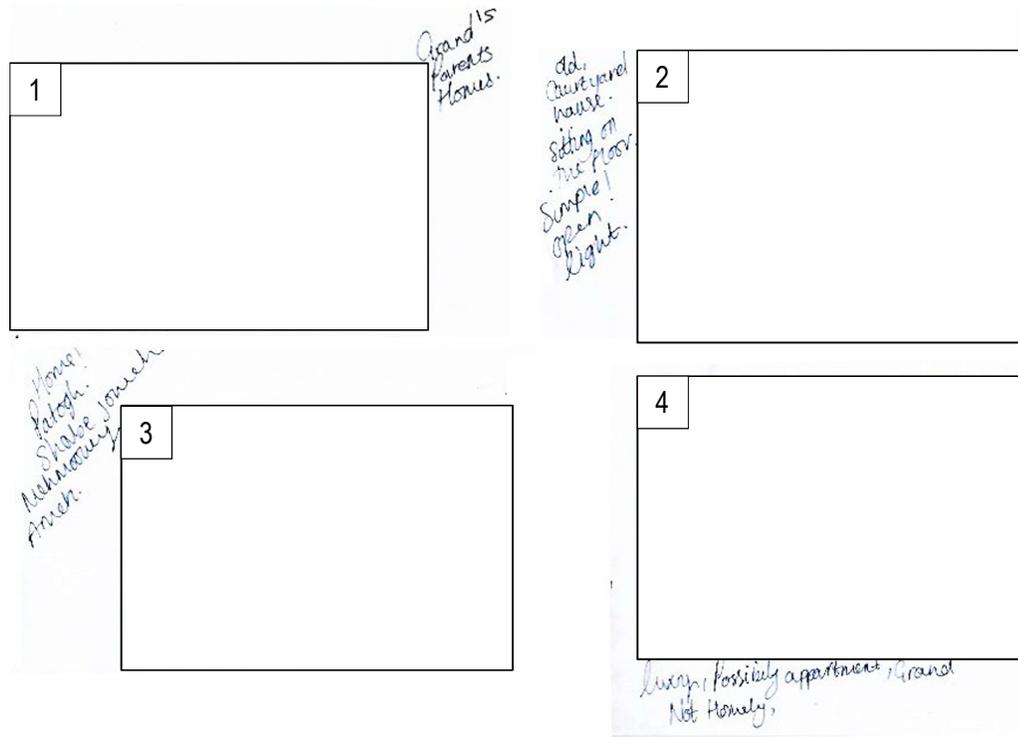
-Shirin: They've got *Taghcheh*<sup>84</sup>! It's so cute.



The first activity filled by Paniz. Photo number 1: "An ordinary family" in *Iranian living room* by Mohammad Mahdi Ayya/Fabrica (Bossan 2013), Photo number 2: "Life as an elderly person" in *Iranian living room* by Hamed Ilkhan/Fabrica (Bossan 2013). Photo number 3: Photo courtesy of Chidaneh (Aghazadeh 2016). Photo number 4: photo by Mohammad Reza Hossein Nejad and Mohamad Zadeh ("Caspiancover" 2015).

<sup>84</sup> *Taghcheh* (طاقچه): Persian word for niche.

Appendix 2. The Focus group transcripts and activities



The first activity filled by Shaghayegh. Photo number 1: "An ordinary family" in *Iranian living room* by Mohammad Mahdi Amya/Fabrica (Bossan 2013), Photo number 2: "Life as an elderly person" in *Iranian living room* by Hamed Ilkhan/Fabrica (Bossan 2013). Photo number 3: Photo courtesy of Chidaneh (Aghazadeh 2016). Photo number 4: photo by Mohammad Reza Hossein Nejad and Mohamad Zadeh ("Caspiancover" 2015).

-Paniz: yeah, it's so cute and weird! I got Goosebumps everywhere. But I feel like, this I where it all began, the happiness or the drama or the emotions, you know! The whole family you were all in the room, you all had to put up with each other but there was so much happiness!

-Shirin: it was a simpler life!

-It was a lot simpler and you know they did everything together, they were so connected and honestly, they worked really hard to get what they've got and you know!

-Shirin: it was a "Noon o Panir or Sabzi"<sup>85</sup> type of a house.

-Paniz: yes, yes! That's what these two are and then you know this, number 3 is sort of in between them, because this (number 3) is how you would be in this (number 2). You know! "Sofraro pahn

<sup>85</sup> Noon o Panir or Sabzi (نان و پنیر و سبزی): Literally means "Bread and Cheese and Herbs", it is eaten as a snack between the meals.

*mikoni*<sup>86</sup> (you spread the *Sofreh*) you know “*hame doresh mishinan*<sup>87</sup>”. You eat together, you sleep together, you do everything together and you know the feeling of being connected?! Belonging somewhere, this is it! It used to be it they connect so well and being involved, being part of something and I think this is what family is about. That is genuinely what family is about! I’m not close to my families back in Iran like my cousins and my uncle and my aunts and Shirin knows that’s one thing that I hate, because I love family, I love belonging somewhere and yes, I have my mum and my two brothers and my dad, but I feel like almost is enough, but it’s not enough when you know you have more. And, feelings connected and knowing you have people to go to, having that love... I think you can’t replace it with anything and these three are so like... that’s why I’m so happy with these three. And, I struggle with this (number 4) so much because, the love that I see in that I don’t see in this, even though this is what I would say our houses is like back in Iran!

-Shirin: yes, that’s what I was gonna say. I find it to be... they are generational things... you know what I mean? There is actually a photo of my dad and my great granddad in a house exactly like this (number 2) so for this one I put old, courtyard house, sitting on the floor, simple open light. and Yeah there is a photo and it’s just one of those photos when you think... (they are both smiling in the photo) God, how much would I pay to be fly on the wall! At that moment in time ... you know?

-Paniz: yeah...

-Shirin: yeah, just to see it all and honestly this one (number 1) I loved that you used hardworking, it very much reflects that, it very much is your grandparents, it’s the sort condenses that you get with your younger child ending up looking after their parents, but this (number 3) is the type of house I ‘d probably grew up in. Like I actually wrote the word *Patogh*<sup>88</sup> ...because to me, my *Ammeh*’s<sup>89</sup> house was where we all collected on like a Thursday night or a Friday and that’s where we all at. And this was a *Sofreh*<sup>90</sup> with all the grandkids and you know my dad has got like nine brothers and sisters so everyone has got at least one or two child. Yeah so, weirdly this (number 4) doesn’t feel like a home.

-Paniz: No!

-Shirin: probably this is how my house looks like now in Iran.

-Paniz: Yes, exactly!

-Shirin: But it’s... I think this is where... this is a reflection of *Cheshmo hamcheshmi*,<sup>91</sup> you know? It’s when we lost the simplicity and it became about my horses are better than your horses and the more grander my house is, the better my life is and the simplicity sort of just got lost, the homeliness just got lost in it all!

-Paniz: I agree!

**-So which of these photos do you think represents current Iranian homes the most?**

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<sup>86</sup> You spread the *Sofreh*; (سفره رو پهن میکنی)

<sup>87</sup> they all sit around it; (همه دورش مینشینند)

<sup>88</sup> *Patogh* (پاتوق): Persian word for a haunt, a place to hang out regularly.

<sup>89</sup> *Ammeh* (عمه) means Aunt.

<sup>90</sup> *Sofreh* (سفره): a sheet made of fabric or plastic that is applied on top of the Persian carpets for when eating on the floor.

<sup>91</sup> *Cheshmo hamcheshmi* (چشم و هم چشمی): A Persian saying meaning when people are very concerned with showing off; like “keep up with the Joneses”.

-Paniz: last one (number 4) sadly!

-Shirin: but then again, equally, like I personally don't come from a very privileged background like... my parents both worked really hard even though that (number 4) may be our home my *Ammeh* still have a house like that and yeah...!

**-Thank you, now could you please tell me which of these houses are more similar to the one that you experienced the most growing up in Iran?**

-Shirin: Probably this one (number 3)

-Paniz: yeah

**So, the last one is more representative of the current Iranian homes, but what you experienced the most growing up are number 1 and 3?**

-Shirin: yes

-Paniz: exactly, I mean when we were little that (number 4) was still happening but it wasn't as much but now poor, rich they are all aiming for this,

-Shirin: yes, absolutely

-Paniz: whether they can afford it or not, people are getting loans; doing things they shouldn't be doing to achieve this.

-Shirin: yeah...

-Paniz: but again, this (number 4) doesn't represent what these (number1-2-3) do.

-Shirin: yeah I was thinking like is it a generational thing? Because, I remember being super young and going to my mum's cousin house and at the time he had like a beer company, and he lived in one of the best streets in Sheffield and his house was very much, grand staircases ... I guess it's always been there it's just how far we developed to fit into it. Do you know what I mean? Whereas, if before maybe these (number 1-2-3) were a lot more common to me and even maybe we had a house like that (number 3), when I was younger now we have a house like this (number 4), so that doesn't mean that never existed. So, it's always been there.

**-So it's just about how common this (number 4) has become.**

-Paniz: Yeah, for example if a kid is born in Iran right now, they will not have a clue what that is (number 2)

-Shirin: yes

-Paniz: I mean, I haven't been, but I don't think a single house exist anymore, I mean a house that is been lived like this, they are ruined, they are gone.

**So, you mean this is a memory right now?**

-Shirin: yes!

-Paniz: yeah

Appendix 2. The Focus group transcripts and activities

-Shirin: this is really fun though!

-Paniz: yeah when she told me what we were gonna do, I thought, this is going be fun.

**Before we move on to the next activity there is one thing that I would like to ask how much do you feel belonged here? I mean how much of your identity do you associate with the UK?**

	The level of importance in creating a sense of home					Comment
	Not at all	Slightly important	moderately important	important	very important	
1 Home making elements						
2 Decorations/Objects						
3 Brought from Homeland (Iran)	✓					
4 Reminder of home or a memory of homeland (Iran)			✓		✓	
5 Purchased or received in the host country (UK)	✓					
6 Furniture	✓					
7 Brought from Homeland (Iran)	✓					
8 Reminder of home or a memory of homeland (Iran)			✓			
9 Purchased or received in the host country (UK)	✓					
10 The furniture arrangement			✓			
11 Tangible Architectural elements of the current home				✓		
12 The design of the space (placement of walls, doors, windows, etc...)			✓			
13 Size (the flat/house and interior spaces)			✓			
14 Quality of materials used for the architectural elements	✓					
15 Cultural and daily habits					✓	
16 Traditional habits/yearly events					✓	
17 Cooking					✓	
18 Religious or spiritual rituals					✓	
19 Cleaning routines					✓	
20 Sensory experience of home: smell, sound, touch, light, nature,...			✓			
21 Memory of home (previous experience of home)					✓	
22 Social Life and gatherings				✓	✓	
23 Gatherings with Iranian family and friends (coming from Iran or living in the UK)				✓	✓	
24 Socialising at home with family and friends (not necessarily Iranian)					✓	

Spreadsheet completed by Paniz.

	The level of importance in creating a sense of home					Comment
	Not at all	Slightly important	moderately important	important	very important	
1 Home making elements						
2 Decorations/Objects						
3 Brought from Homeland (Iran)						
4 Reminder of home or a memory of homeland (Iran)					✓	
5 Purchased or received in the host country (UK)					✓	
6 Furniture						
7 Brought from Homeland (Iran)						
8 Reminder of home or a memory of homeland (Iran)						
9 Purchased or received in the host country (UK)						
10 The furniture arrangement	✓					
11 Tangible Architectural elements of the current home						
12 The design of the space (placement of walls, doors, windows, etc...)						
13 Size (the flat/house and interior spaces)						
14 Quality of materials used for the architectural elements						
15 Cultural and daily habits					✓	
16 Traditional habits/yearly events					✓	
17 Cooking					✓	
18 Religious or spiritual rituals					✓	
19 Cleaning routines					✓	
20 Sensory experience of home: smell, sound, touch, light, nature,...						
21 Memory of home (previous experience of home)					✓	
22 Social Life and gatherings				✓	✓	
23 Gatherings with Iranian family and friends (coming from Iran or living in the UK)				✓	✓	
24 Socialising at home with family and friends (not necessarily Iranian)					✓	

Spreadsheet completed by Paniz.

-Paniz: full Iranian! Yes, I know I was raise in here my whole life pretty much, but I'm Iranian you know (looking at Shirin). Like... cultural wise, I'm Iranian, like there is a lot of things that my roots are... pretty much like, I don't know ...I mean I belong here, of course!... here is where I am living, I'm happy... I have everything... like I'm absolutely fine, I'm not lacking anything but it's different. You know! The culture that you have at home you don't get that with people around you, you know? I don't walk into my lecture rooms thinking you know?... because I'm so attached to that culture that we have and you know English people they don't necessary have a culture...

-Shirin: they have their own culture...

-Paniz: I mean they do but, there is not much to it. What is the depth of the culture? You know? When you talk about the Iranian culture you see all of that, like you see those photos... and all those little things we do, all these celebrations that we have like fasting, *Yalda*, like *Eyd* that is a lot of culture you know, and there is a lot of background within those. It is not just bonfire night... there is so much stories that you get from that. Like ... there is so much emotions that come from it and I love it and I think that's what makes Iranians, Iranians. But to answer your question I feel belong to here and It's perfect but being Iranian is given me ... oh... you know how I said I would actually be living in Iran, it's never gonna go away you know?

-Shirin: uh. Yeah...I don't know, I didn't expect you to say that...

-Paniz: did you not?

-Shirin: yeah, I don't know why, I don't, I don't think I belong in here and I don't think I belong to Iran and I think a lot of people who sort of lived a similar life ... you're not quite Iranian and you're quite English, you're in that limbo phase. Yeah, I've always said being sort of dual-nationality or bilingual, you get the best of both worlds.

-Paniz: absolutely!

-Shirin: you got a choice in what you get and what you drop and you have a comparison at all times and I think that's very important because it gives you perspective in life, but... I feel... I don't think, I could live in Iran and like... I find it very difficult working there and I have to go there twice a year for work and I find it really difficult. So, I don't think I could live there and I don't think, I would end up living here for the rest of my life either.

#### **Where is that ideal place then?**

-Shirin: probably Italy, I think here, I find people very cold... it's very black and white. Yeah... I find it to be a very low culture. Mmm... the weather you know the home... it's not what I want of life. But, I also growing up, specially I think our generation, we learned not to necessarily be attached to a country. Specially that of movement... that now that you can move to places, like a global citizen... that is a thing, that is genuinely a thing. Every time I go to Iran, to Dubai, I feel the same way all the way around the world so, for me I learned to associate home with people rather than places.

-Paniz: yeah I totally agree with that.

#### **Thank you now I am going to give you a spread sheet that is about different elements in your current home that I would like you to rank them from the least to the most important in terms their impact on homemaking process and the feeling of homeliness.**

-Paniz: ok the first one brought from homeland, not at all I said.

-Shirin: I put moderate, Jesus this is where we gonna judge each other (laughing).

-Paniz: well, because, ...

- Shirin: I need to see your house!

-Paniz: you should... except from photographs there is nothing else in our house that is come from Iran.

-Shirin: are you serious?

-Paniz: yes, I swear!

**So have your parents been in Iran since then?**

-Paniz: yes!

-Shirin: well to be honest that's not a bad thing, in terms of packing, it's not a bad thing. My mum is taking kilos with her.

**That's actually very interesting because there are also lots of gifts given by family**

-Paniz: yeah my dad just leaves them behind.

-Shirin: that is just a lucky thing girl.

-Paniz: yeah just photos!

-Shirin: well, I'm the opposite, we half a lot of *Farsh*<sup>92</sup> from Iran, and we have a *Samovar* from Iran. We have teacups from Iran, we have mantelpieces from Iran, we have also of stuff that comes from Iran and vice versa. I don't know why my mum tries to exchange our home. She brings stuff from our home in Iran to here and she takes things from here to Iran.

**Ok, and how much do you think that has influenced you in terms of making you feel like home?**

-Paniz: again, not at all!

-Shirin: yeah?

-Paniz: I just think because of my upbringing, I guess, because I was never attached, I hardly went back, it didn't matter to me what was from there.

-Shirin: see, I am the opposite, I think it's important, I like the old... I quite like simple! So, I like simple style in the house. So, I'm quite Parisian... white walls and doors and things like that ... but, I like the old fashion red carpets so... like have a completely white room with sort of old furniture and that red bright carpet. But that would have never happened if we didn't probably had some in our home. Um... or there used to be one of those old *Cheragh Nafti*<sup>93</sup>, like things like that, nostalgic...

**Ok and the next one, it is about things that aren't necessarily Iranian but raise a memory in regard to Iran?**

-Shirin: yes, Paisley print.

-Paniz: umm, that's for me very important, I need to change that as I put a different thing. Yeah, I'm gonna say very important because, ... oh... it's hard... It's important because, like I said with the pictures, it's like for example... like sometimes, I just sit down ... you don't even realise it you know, I

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<sup>92</sup> *Farsh* (فرش): Persian word for carpet.

<sup>93</sup> *Cheragh Nafti* (چراغ نفتی): Kerosene lamp

am sat on the sofa and we have this massive frame, like... it's so big! With these photos of going 40 years' back

-Shirin: Oh, my God!

-Paniz: yeah even my mum and dad you know, being little baby and there is a picture of me and my dad and my mum put them next to each other and we look exactly the same in the exact same age, we are both three or four and we look identical. And, sometimes, I spend hours even though I know it of by heart, I can literally just paint it for you the whole thing that's how well I know it, I sometimes just find myself just staring at it for ages....

And it's like... my mum asks me like what are you staring at ... so, I think it's very important just having little reminders around the house. Not necessarily from Iran or from England or from anywhere, something you have a memory with. It could be anything like, it could be a teacup, it could be a spoon, you know like; aw... I ate this food with this spoon, I can still taste it by look at it, I think it's very important.

-Shirin: I agree; I put important for that one as well. Yeah there are certain things that you associate with Iran and Persian-ness and Persia; the carpets, the Paisley print, I think the paisley print came out from the Silk Road, isn't it? So, that was pretty much Parisian and Persian. No, I think these stuff that are reminder of home and memory are pretty important. *Cheragh nafti!* Also, my mum has these things like you know the old telephones, you know the ones that you stick your finger and turn it around, and we used to have those as well

-Paniz: yeah I remember, I loved them...

-Shirin: yeah my mum specially she always says; I never want you to lose perspective, I always want you to know where you came from wherever you get to. It's important to have perspective that once we used to sit around *Cheragh Nafti* and do our homework. You know? And, I'm here at the diamond at times at three o'clock in the morning, very comfortable with a Macbook! So, I think she chooses specifically what she keeps in the house, one for herself probably as a reminder and two I imagined to be for me.

### **Could you please tell me your response to number 5?**

-Paniz: yeah I said not at all again, again same thing, it doesn't matter. It's not about objects at all, it's about. You know what? ... This is all about a home and it's all come to the fact that who you're with and the memories you make. It's not necessarily ... I mean yes, if you do have memories with certain things then, it does make sense for you to have them in your home because it makes you feel happy, it takes you back to those times or whatever. But, it is not for me like a great deal to have things certainly like brought specifically from Iran and then brought here, or specifically brought from UK or I don't know... and literally any country ...like... it's not important.

-Shirin: I put important but probably for different reasons. Uh, specially the purchased part I think it's important to be in that economy. The way that the economy dies if people stop investing in it. Uh... I would never ever walk into Ikea and even though I know they have carpets and I know they have very Old Persian carpets but there is never in hell that I walk into Ikea and buy Persian carpets from Ikea.

Do you know what I mean? I can feed a family in *Tabriz*<sup>94</sup> or whatever, it just doesn't seem right to put the money into somebody else's pocket when I could directly put it in the hand of the supplier.

**Ok, and in terms of how the object you actually buy in here?**

-Shirin: if it's better in Iran we get it from Iran. You can't get a *Samovar* in here; it wouldn't be the same you know?

-Paniz: true.

**Shall move on to the next category then? The furniture?**

-Paniz: for the furniture, is that the arrangement?

**No, we get to the furniture arrangement later**

-Paniz: I said not at all but (Shirin) she does have a point because umm... what was it that my mum wanted.... In what do they make the stews?... (to Shirin), that they seal the lid...

-Shirin: *Zood paz*<sup>95</sup>

-Paniz: yeah, you literally cannot find a pressure cooker in here.

-Shirin: my mum also brings ours from Iran.

-Paniz: yes, so, we have that from Iran, but it's not important.

-Shirin: yeah, for me, I put moderately important. My mum brings stuff from Iran if she can. If they are cheaper or better in Iran, she'll do it.

**Thank you, how about the furniture arrangement?**

-Shirin: I found that fascinating... like I didn't even realise that but our furniture in here is very different from the way we arrange our furniture in Iran. Like... over here everything is pointed at the TV and in Iran that... isn't. Like ... sometimes there is no TV in the living room, you know you have two separate living rooms; like you have one for when you chill, you watch TV and then you have one for when the queen comes around!

- Paniz: yes! She is so right.

-Shirin: you know that area that you never use...yeah but I thought that was really, really fascinating!

-Paniz: arrangement... I put important for this.

-Shirin: I put not important for that one, it doesn't bother me, and personally I am one of those people who don't have a TV in their house.

-Paniz: like how you arrange it...

-Shirin: it's a different space, I don't know if you can get the same yeah like,

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<sup>94</sup> *Tabriz*: A city in Iran, known to produce high quality Persian carpets

<sup>95</sup> *Zoodpaz* (زود پز): Pressure cooker

-Paniz: no, I put its important because you wanna arrange it in a way like... look my house the way I see is; it's very like with the sofas you are all connected. So, if you sit down you all see each other, you can comfortably have a conversation, it's not like you're gonna have your back to someone, it's not awkward, it's really comfortable. And then you have the TV there, you know... it's a nice gathering place, you can all sit around. If you guys come over, if your family comes over, we can all sit around you know... do whatever you gotta do... interact with each other... it's very easy... and then you know you have the dinning, again that's like you know, it's our little place, we eat together, whatever.... do you know what I mean?

-Shirin: my house is quite the opposite; my house is like furniture pointing at the TV yeah... and in Iran is slightly different. But in my other half' house, is very different, they live in an end terrace in the north of London and they've slightly expanded it. But his mum is very good with these things. She is definitely a very traditional Iranian mum. So, they have the separate living room in here and the dining room that flows completely. So, she did very well with that.

**That's interesting, let's talk about the architectural elements. Like the space design and architectural features and their impact on making you feel like home.**

-Shirin: I said very important to that one!

-Paniz: It's important for me.

**And why is that?**

-Shirin: I don't like houses with small windows!

-Paniz: laughing....

-Shirin: no seriously! Even for my first degree in Birmingham, I refused student accommodation due to size of their windows. Also, the way that the window points, like sunrise, sunset. I think that to me that's matter! Light matters, how much of it. The amount of light that room catches also matters. I prefer tall ceilings too. For the tangible architectural elements of the current home, for all of them, I have put important or very important. Uh... I am very aesthetically teased, like it matters to me how my home looks ...um... which currently is actually debatable! But no, all like tall ceilings, large windows, like sort of large floor plan-free flowing floor plan and textures.

I like textures and materials, so I might not necessarily experiment with colours, but I definitely experiment with textures.

**Could you explain that a little bit more?**

-Shirin: yeah, so in term of ... so a room might be white and the only colour that may be in it... like it's a very white furniture and the only colour would be the red carpet but you have neat and you have fluff and you have gritty and you have soft and that sort of stuff.

**How about you Paniz?**

-Paniz: the design of the space I put moderately important I think. Uh... you see the design is important not when it comes to it's size and what was the other one?

**The material**

-Paniz: yeah ... the material oh not that's different, it's not time to talk about that just quite yet... now sometimes you're stuck! And that doesn't mean it stops you from the way you design a place. So, I've put design is more important than the size you know? And with the material... that's an interesting one, because I 'm one of those people that I like it to match... so like... I wouldn't go with ... necessarily like different texture and material in one room. I would try and make sure that there is a flow to it.

-Shirin: I said this to her the other day, we were walking through a shop like it was TKMAXX and I was like; I'll be one of those people when you open up my cardboard you will have different colours, bowls, mugs and glassware. I don't not like anything as a set... it's gotta be individual pieces

-Paniz: yeah... that's so true... I am the exact opposite when it comes to that... I don't know. But you never know... you may come to my house in a couple of years and see it quite differently asking me what's going on?

**Ok let's talk about number 16, traditional habits or the yearly events we have ...**

-Paniz: very important!

-Shirin: yeah very important.

-Paniz: without that... I would have probably wouldn't be sat here right now! Um... I do know quite few people actually that are more Iranian than any of us three but they just don't have it. They've lost it and it's simply because of the lack of culture in their life. The way they grew up and I think it's kind of disappointing, it's kind of sad to lose that side. And I think without those traditions, without... you know... Shirin was saying how her mum brings these little things, I think without that she [Shirin] probably wouldn't have had that connection that she has now!

-Shirin: that's quite weird actually because, I put very important for that one, but that's ...I'm aware how important it is because I don't have it. Like we don't have a *Haftseen*<sup>96</sup> in England, we only have a *Haftseen* in Iran, do you know what I mean? I've not sat around a *Haftseen* in seventeen years.

-Paniz: for me it's been every year... every year! Like my mum, she put so much effort...

-Shirin: my mum goes to Iran for *Norouz*<sup>97</sup> so they have a *Haftseen* there and I skype them, but I have not sat... this year when we do the *Haftseen* in Persian Society at the university, will be the first *Haftseen* that I had in seventeen years. But yeah, we really don't have that... but I understand how important that is. But weirdly, on first of December, we always have a Christmas tree! A fresh Christmas tree in the house!

- Paniz: yeah we also celebrate both... both Christmas and the *Haftseen*.

**So, you celebrate Christmas and all the Iranian events like Yalda, Persian new year and ...**

-Paniz: all of it

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<sup>96</sup> *Haftseen*; (هفت سین) a table that is made of seven elements each symbolizing a positive wish for the new year, Iranian sit around this table or *Sofreh*, when the new year is about to start and keep it for 13 days.

<sup>97</sup> *Norouz* (نوروز), meaning new day; the first day of Spring

**And how much those events influence your sense of home? do they make you feel like home at all?**

-Paniz: 100%! I mean it's...

-Shirin: I think that's important, I would definitely apply it in my house.

-Paniz: yeah I think it's really important, because if you don't do it, if my parents didn't do it ...I mean... I would have lost that connection... I couldn't, it wouldn't have been important to me right now. But now I see it, and now I have to do it once I make a family and all that... I have to do it because it's something that is our culture and you don't wanna miss out on your culture, it makes you who you are.

**Ok and about the cooking?**

-Paniz: important

-Shirin: I put very important, I have a vivid memory of being 16...17... doing my A levels and I used to you know... I finished school like at 4 or 5, and I used to walk home and I remember my mum she made *Khoreshte Bademjun*<sup>98</sup> with *Sabzi*<sup>99</sup> and *Torobcheh*<sup>100</sup> and *Torshi*<sup>101</sup>... and in the UK, we would sit on the floor to eat it, she wouldn't put it on the dining table. And to me, that's one of the best memories I had with my mum.

And I was sort of never good at eating with my hands and she made me learn, and she was like ... this is how some people eat.

-Paniz: yeah... What's that food, eh... it's a traditional food, you're supposed to have it for *Eyd*?

***Sabzi polo ba Mahi*<sup>102</sup>?**

-Paniz: yeah that, they eat it by hand and that's the way to eat it, my mum even until today... she'd sit ...that was the only food she would love to even until today, she still does, she would like to sit down, *Charzanu*<sup>103</sup> with the food in front of her and eat it by her hand. Even until today she says, this is how you are supposed to eat it. That's interesting she says that...

-Shirin: I think our parents do really well; I'm not sure how it will be for me!

-Paniz: I just give my kids to my parents, saying guys; do what you did [with us] do it again...

**How about the next one the religious or spiritual ceremonies?**

- Shirin: my mum's family are actually *Sufis* but I'm not religious in anyway, I do believe in Energy! There are certain places where I feel like, I'm walking and I'm like oh wow. And for me the only place

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<sup>98</sup> An Iranian Stew made of Eggplants, tomato and diced beef.

<sup>99</sup> Herbs

<sup>100</sup> Radish

<sup>101</sup> Picked vegetables

<sup>102</sup> *Sabzi Polo ba Mahi* (سبزی پلو با ماهی): a dish made of fried fish with saffron and rice and herbs, served on the Persian New Year's Eve.

<sup>103</sup> *Charzanu* (چهار زانو): sitting cross legged.

that I feel that way is *Shah Cheragh*<sup>104</sup>. But that's only in Iran; I don't go to churches in here or anything.

-Paniz: I've put important but I think I wanna change it to moderately important because my parents are actually both Christians they've been for ever since I remember. Oh... but I'm not...

**This point is more than being religious; it is more about how those ceremonies evoke feelings, emotions and memories.**

-Paniz: in that sense 100 percent, because like I said, we celebrate everything, fasting... everything... I don't fast but I try sometimes

-Shirin: oh really? You fast oh my god!

-Paniz: yeah my dad can't anymore because of some health problems, my older brother, he just can't be asked but my mum she does it and it's so cute! I remember I used to be so young and in school and I was like mum I wanna do it with you... and she was like you silly... you go to school you can't just not to eat. But, I loved it... she did it and I was like ok I do half a day and now I'm like Ok, I do it but I'll do it with water. So, like... I only drink water and nothing else. I think it's nice... It's exciting. I feel like being a part of something special. And then the excitement when you come home and then you have those particular foods that you only eat during the fasting ...?

**Zulbia Bamieh?**

-Shirin: oh...

-Paniz: no *Halim*, I love it! I do it just for that. It's just the fun, the joy and it has [fasting] it's own sense of smell and just everything.

-Shirin: yeah for example we don't do *Nazri*<sup>105</sup> here and I've done *Nazri* in Iran and it's so special. People fight over like the last bit of *Nazri* food, isn't it?

-Paniz: yeah and *Nazri* is so yummy it has some sort of taste for some reason, like it's the smell... my brother and my dad they were always having *Nazri*, like they don't do it themselves but they ask their friends ... but it is just so different, I literally feel I'm in Iran. No, it's just so weird...

**So, although your parents are Christians and you are not religious as well but you all still fast for those reasons?**

-Paniz: oh, yeah, I do everything like... I feel like, I'm not ready and I think ...I mean ... I know a lot of religions, I know the rules and I know what they go by, but I'm not ready to say... oh... this is it. Because I don't believe all of them are absolutely right. I think they're all lacking something ...

-Shirin: because it's also a sense of awareness really... isn't it?

-Paniz: Yeah!

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<sup>104</sup> *Shah Cheragh* (شاه چراغ): A shrine and mosque that is a funerary monument of a son of a Shia Imam

<sup>105</sup> *Nazri* (نذری): the free food that is distributed among people during *Ashura*.

-Shirin: it's giving something a go and being aware of why it happens.

-Paniz: Yeah.

-Shirin: you don't necessarily have to agree with it, it's just there and you try it.

-Paniz: yeah I'm open to it. Muslim again, I agree with some, I don't agree with all. But there are some factors that I'm like oh descent. And, I think that's with every religion, none of them are perfect.

**And, about the cleaning routines?**

-Shirin: I put that's quite important.

-Paniz: I said moderate.

-Shirin: I don't know if that's necessarily a cultural thing, but I got to say that Iranian mums are a little bit more OCD than any other mums in the world. No?

-Paniz: yes! I even until this day, I still get told off because of the way she does things and how she washes things...

-*Gorbeh shuri*<sup>106</sup>

-Paniz: Seriously...it's mental! She is not OCD obviously but honestly there are some things she does and I'm like mum! What are you doing? (laughing)

-Shirin: or when they wash *Sabzi* with *Mayeh Zarfshuee*<sup>107</sup>... Like I'm literally decaf! (laughing).

-Paniz: yes, literally...

-Shirin: absolutely!

-Paniz: yeah... I mean, we wash differently to how English people do.

-Shirin: yeah, we do! It's true...

-Paniz: it's important; it annoys me I cannot wash when they're washing because I just feel like oh my God there is still *Kaf*<sup>108</sup> on it!

-Shirin: yeah, like rinsing it!

-Paniz: Yes, rinse it...Please! When I'm there and they are doing it I'm just like... you are doing it wrong (laughing). I mean there is no right or wrong but again what you grew up with, it's what you know.

-Shirin: being Iranian, as a part of ... I don't wanna say this cause sounds horrible but like the job description of being stay at home Iranian mum, is to maintain the house in a certain way... unfortunately, Oh... to keep it homely and clean... like my mum has a certain way that she likes her

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<sup>106</sup> *Gorbeh shuri* (گریه شوری): careless washing, to wash incompletely.

<sup>107</sup> *Mayeh Zarfshuee* (مایع ظرفشویی): washing up liquid

<sup>108</sup> *Kaf* (کف): studs

dishes to be washed or she has a certain way that the bathroom needs to be cleaned, there is a certain order. Like if you use the gloves here you can't use it there...

-Paniz: Yeah...

-Shirin: I don't know whether that applied in every household... but definitely in my household.

**So you do you think there is a level of care, specific to Iranian culture about cleanliness?**

-Paniz: yeah

-Shirin: yeah

-Paniz: yeah, like we wash everything, what do we not wash?

-Shirin: true... we wash mushrooms!

-Paniz: we wash everything, but in here everything that comes in a packaging they don't wash, I've noticed that, they don't but we do.

-Shirin: we literally don't care we wash everything.

**How about the space cleanliness, because you talked about sitting on the floor in your homes do you take off your shoes for example?**

-Paniz: yeah

-Shirin: yeah

-Paniz: my mum! She is weird...

-Shirin: but to be honest, I get that; I've seen that in a few English homes like old traditional English homes they have this; to exchange shoes for slippers.

**So let's talk about the sensory experience of home;**

-Paniz: very important

-Shirin: I put very important as well.

-Paniz: Yes! One thing we agree on! What's going on? (laughing)

-Shirin: yeah... one thing about the smell... the smell of *Esfand*<sup>109</sup>, when you can smell *Esfand* in the house.

-Paniz: Oh, my God yes... that's a whole new experience itself.

-Shirin: Oh, the sound, in Iran... like... when you can hear the *Azan*<sup>110</sup>... and weirdly now you can get it as an app in your phone...!

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<sup>109</sup> *Esfand* (اسفند): is a seed that is burned in the house to be protected from Evil eye

<sup>110</sup> *Azan* (اذان): the Muslim call for praying that happens 5 times a day, in a Shia country like Iran, it is announced three times a day (when the sun rises, noon and when the sun sets).

-Paniz: really?

-Shirin: yeah so my mum downloaded it for my dad and when she came back it still announces the Azan five times a day.

-Paniz: Oh, my God!

### Was that for him to pray?

-Shirin: yeah my dad prays, he is the only one in the family who prays. His praying skills are debatable! But... he prays when it suits him most! But, I guess he takes comfort in it. But yeah... it's been endearing hearing that ... Touch! Like I said textures, I quite like textures.

-Paniz: yeah, I said very important as well, Iranian food you know? Every day, I lived here yes, but 22 years of my life... there hasn't been a day that my mum hasn't made Iranian food. I mean, yes, we do have days that it's like whatever, she hasn't cook. But like the smell of like fried onions and...

-Shirin: yeah, "*vaghti boo ghaza to khune mipiche*"<sup>111</sup>

-Paniz: yeah like sometimes when I used to walk home from school, I could smell

- Shirin: from down the road...

-Paniz: I was like mum! I can smell the *Ghormeh sabzi*<sup>112</sup>, it's like these little things you know... Sound... I have a little brother and we all speak Farsi to him but he never ... he doesn't speak Farsi himself, but he understands everything and there is always some sort of like silly argument going on in the background. Whether that's my dad or my mum or my brothers, "*yeki be yeki Fohsh mide*"<sup>113</sup> like silly things, tiny little things they are always there... like my dad listens to the news, like Iranian news... that's always on in the background. If he is home, news is on.

- Shirin: yeah

-Paniz: There is no way in hell he is gonna be inside the house and the news is off. That is like never happening. It's just little things... Touch, I don't know about that... I can't...but Light and nature, my mum is all about the windows and the direction of the sun and she is all about that.

-Shirin: I think your mum and me will get on!

-Paniz: yeah literally, it's so important to her. Nature... she likes having plans and stuff like garden and ...I always grew up having plants inside the house.

-Shirin: we currently live in a flat and I have a good ability to kill plants, I am very talented on that nature, they all die under my watch. But talking about plants and nature actually, my grandma's house had like a Patio where it's almost all tiled, it's almost like a green house. The roof of it is glass and you have dangling plants and you have plants growing, you water it and ... yeah... so she always had that. At our garden, previously, it's just been an English garden of a lawn, a few lilies and that's it.

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<sup>111</sup> *Vaghti boo ghaza to khune mipiche* (وقتی بوی غذا تو خونه میپیچه): when the smell of food fills the house.

<sup>112</sup> An Iranian stew, made with herbs, dried lemon, beans and diced beef.

<sup>113</sup> "*Yeki be yeki Fohsh mide*" (یکی به یکی فحش میدهد): Someone is teasing someone else.

Yeah nothing... Nothing Iranian! But again, my partners' mum house, now that's different! You have *Ghooreh*<sup>114</sup>, you have *Golabi*<sup>115</sup>, you have *Naranj*<sup>116</sup>, honestly...yeah that garden is very Iranian.

**The last two are about the social gathering impacts on making you feel like home.**

-Paniz: I said important for social life and gathering with family and friends and then for family I said very important. Because that's what I had for all these year... So, I think it's very important. It all takes you back to family to those connections to those emotions that you have to the love, what makes you happy and I think it all comes from that. If you are not connected, for me, if I'm not connecting with my family, something is missing, something really big is missing. Now, sometimes close friends can become your family, doesn't actually have to be your members but I think it is very, very important to have that in your life. Because it's a part of it... that I feel like you can't live without.

-Shirin: I put very important for the first one, ... before my mum got diagnosed, she was a renowned person in the family for having dinner parties, like she would go all at it; *Baghali polo Mahiche*<sup>117</sup>, *Zereshkpolo*<sup>118</sup>, she made like five sets of dishes. She was very good at it, and I used to get ripped into my weekend doing that with her. But sort of socialising at home with family and friends; because of that type of a person that she was, I vividly remember this one night where she invited everyone and then everybody stayed. So, you had like 30 people in one house, where there is only three beds. You have like those old fashion mattresses... so there was like people sleeping in the hallway... in the rooms, there was like 15 people in the hall... and yeah so, I put very important for that.

**So, gathering with other Iranians has an impact on your sense of homeliness.**

-Shirin: well yes, that's why I'm in the committee, surely...

-Paniz: I would say family and friends and then social life, and that's because of the way I grew up. She [Shirin] knows... it wasn't until Sheffield that I got involved in such a big society of Iranians like... it's sometimes actually weird. I'm like Oh my God what?

-Shirin: yeah... I find that as well... because you are in sort of in a limbo phase... because me and her we don't have *Taarof*<sup>119</sup>. We don't understand the concept of it

-Paniz: I mean we do, we are not crazy, I mean it's not like that we don't have it at all but it's...

-Shirin: yeah like if I do something it's not because I'm *Taarofing* it's because, I genuinely wanna do it... and if I can't do it, I say I can't do it but like feeling of *Moazab*<sup>120</sup> or feeling of *Taarof*, it's not something that appeals to me but I am aware when it happens.

**Ok thank you now I would like to ask you to think back about the last time you felt like home in your current place and try to write down the specifications of that moment or space that made you feel like home.**

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<sup>114</sup> *Ghooreh* (قوره): unripe Grape, used in variety of Persian dishes.

<sup>115</sup> *Golabi* (گلابی): pear

<sup>116</sup> *Naranj* (نارنج): bitter orange that is applied and served the same as lime.

<sup>117</sup> *Baghali polo ba Mahicheh* (باقالی پلو با ماهیچه): A formal Persian dish made of Lamb shank and rice with herbs and broad beans

<sup>118</sup> *Zarshk Polo* (زرشک پلو): rice with barberries and Saffron.

<sup>119</sup> *Taarof* (تعارف): a social behaviour showing extreme respect.

<sup>120</sup> *Moazab* (مغذب): to become uncomfortable.

-Paniz: So, I bullet pointed a few things, I also wrote a little paragraph like a tiny little thing, um... I just said little things like what I've already said to be honest, it's just a repeat of what I said to you guys but; everyone being present, family member, little jokes, inside jokes that you have going on, Iranian food, the love you have for each other, feeling complete, happiness, being comfortable, being relaxed.... feeling settled; Now this is really important for me, that's where I wrote the little paragraph because it's so weird, sometimes I could be very stressed, upset, sad... you know... when you're going through a phase... something has happened in your life and it's been really low? I can just sit down and when I have my family there, it's like... it's ok! You know? Like... it's absolutely fine, I know it's gonna be OK. You know you get that your soul and your heart is so settled and you think that even though I'm sinking badly they're almost like... when I'm with them, I'm hovering, I'm not falling anymore. Like it's such an... it's really hard to describe but that's what settled means to me. Because that's like being supported, feeling belong or just being you!

-Shirin: So, I put the last time that felt like home; this is quite hard, because you don't even realise it! This is one of those things that you don't pay attention to until you're like...oh... this is nice! It was the last time I was in Iran with my parents. Um... and it was *Ghoroub*<sup>121</sup>, and then the sound of *Azan* obviously from the distance, and the window was open, because it was warmer... it was near the summer! So you could hear the kids outside playing in the street and I was sat watching *Harim-e Sultan*<sup>122</sup>, so the TV was on and my dad was on his phone and my mum she... *Ghali mibafe*<sup>123</sup> so the *Daf*<sup>124</sup> of the *Ghali*, like that very vivid in my head and we were all quite full and content and we were in our *Zirshalvari*<sup>125</sup> and Pyjamas.... We just finished eating *Kabab Tabeh*<sup>126</sup> for dinner, and I just remember sitting there... and it's times like that, that I now appreciate them more. Because, it doesn't happen that often, when you think about it obviously. No one talks, nobody would probably interact... everyone's doing their own thing...

-Paniz: yeah...like everyone's really happy.

-Shirin: ...and then you go like oh this is nice, and it's feeling safe

-Paniz: yeah

### have you tried to actually remake that whole experience?

-Shirin: this is very personal and I obviously, I don't mind it being shared, but yeah I have. So, for me the person that I chose to end up with, weirdly makes me feel like how my dad makes me feel. So, being with my boyfriend, almost feels... I feel exactly the same when I'm sat next to him, it literally makes me feel like I'm sat next to my dad, you just feel like home. You feel safe.

### And for you Paniz?

-It's about all of us being there and as I said we've struggled with that for a couple of years now and it happens once or twice a year when we are all there, present! .... And she is right... when she says you don't have to be talking. Like one of us ... like my little brother could be on Xbox, my dad

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<sup>121</sup> *Ghoroub* (غروب) persian word for the time of sunset.

<sup>122</sup> *Harim-e Sultan* (حريم سلطان) a very popular Turkish soap opera aired from satellite TV from Iranian networks that are based abroad (UK and US mostly).

<sup>123</sup> *Ghali mibafe* (قالی میبافه): she weaves the carpet

<sup>124</sup> *Daf* (دف): the metal tool that is used to press knitted layers of carpet.

<sup>125</sup> *Zirshalvari* (زیر شلوارى): Persian word for Pyjamas

<sup>126</sup> *Kabab Tabeh* (کباب تابه ای): Kebab made of minced beef that is quickly made in a pot.

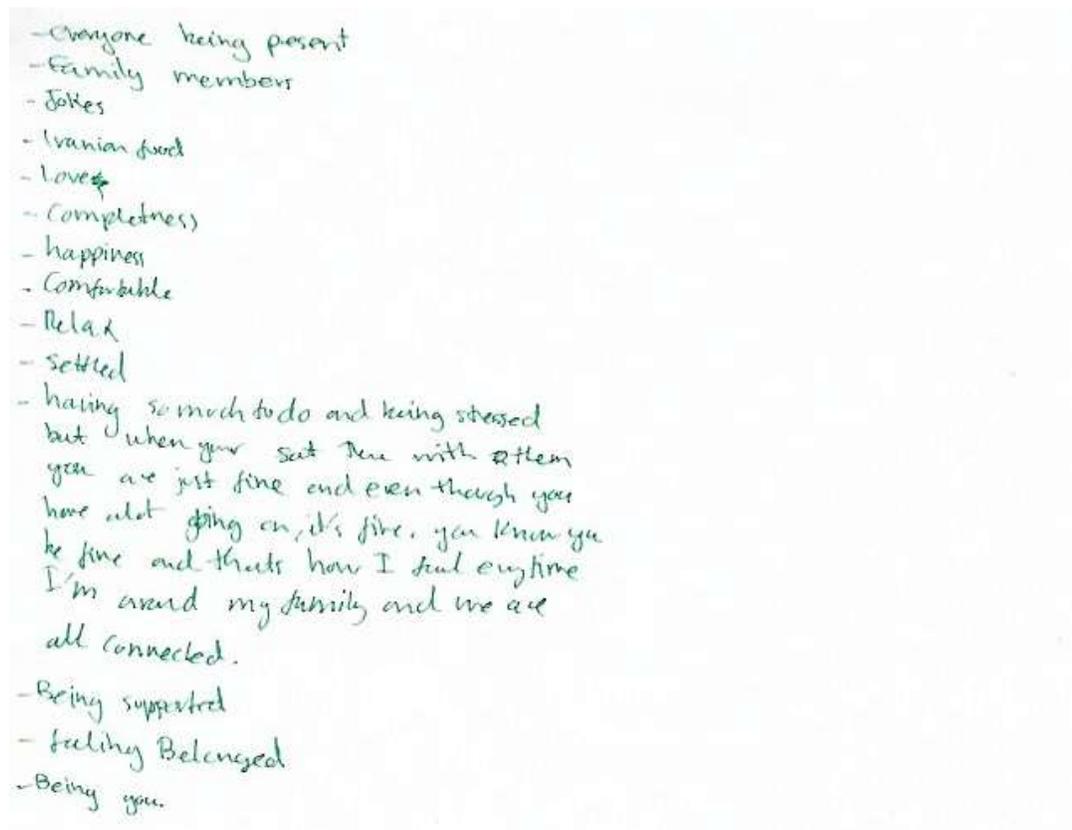
Appendix 2. The Focus group transcripts and activities

watching TV, my mum in the Kitchen... me and my brother doing...pew ... arguing probably but it's that moment when you know... you're all there! And it's just great, you don't realise it and then it clicks on like seconds into it, ... and I've had that moment and I just looked for a second...

-Shirin: yeah you don't realise when you're in it...

-Paniz: and I started looking around... and I was like... I'm so grateful! But, it's not anything perfect, you know... we are not doing anything special ... like exactly not even dressed properly... but it's just perfect! And I think everyone's obviously had that moment, you know, at some points in their life... when you just take a step back and you're just quiet and just looking at everyone doing their own thing, like zoning out.... and you think this is so perfect!

-Shirin: yes.



The third activity listing the elements of homeliness, for Paniz.

- The last time home felt like home. Was when I was in Iran with my parents. It was sunset there was a zoon, kids playing in the street. me sat watching Hamme Soltan on TV my dad on his phone. My Mum was making a carpet. (ghaley mibaft) - Sedaye daf ghaley.
- We just finished having Kabab tabeh for dinner, we were full and content with life. in PJ's - feeling safe.

The third activity listing the elements of homeliness, for Shirin.

### **Focus group no 3: Ziba, Maral and Shideh**

**Hi everyone, this is going to be a focus group and the main topic of your discussion is based on your experience of home and homemaking.**

**Could you please tell me your profession and that for how long have you been living in Sheffield?**

-Shideh: It's been ten years that I've been living here, and I am a lecturer at the university.

-Ziba: I lived here for eight years now, right now I'm a PhD student but I am an engineer.

-Maral: this is my eighth year in here and I'm PhD student and I specifically came for education purposes.

**Could you please each of you tell me about your idea on the sense of home and homeliness, what make a place home for you?**

-Shideh: for me, the presence of the people in a house is important; the warmth feeling I perceive from the place is important; the design of the home, its furniture, even the temperature of the place. When I enter a home that is warm and I see the arrangement of the furniture is the way that I like for example when I entered here, I thought; that's a cool place, I perceived an Iranian sense and the kindness you receive. You know sometimes when you enter a home they are not welcoming, so a home could be very beautiful but when you enter it's not welcoming and that's not very favourable. The feeling you get from the homeowners I think it's so important. Are you asking about my own home or any home?

**Yes, if you could explain a bit about how you connect with your own home that would be great...**

-Shideh: for my own home, I would say my own home should be a place that is warm. I can arrange the furniture they way I like. The space design gives me the possibility of placing the furniture the way I like and obviously, I would choose the furniture in a way that has that Iranian sense.

**What do you mean by Iranian arrangement?**

-Shideh: I don't know the carpet, the way that the furniture is arranged, or the design... for example this place that has an open kitchen is a reminder of Iranian homes for me a little or the plates and dishes in here they all give an impression of Iranian-ness that gives me a sense of peacefulness. Also, the furniture I see in this home makes me think that this place can calm me and I can be in calmness here. The size also matters a lot, because we are all coming from a background with bigger houses, so when we come here we always desire bigger homes, obviously we could never get a place in that size here but we like to have a place that is a bit bigger than the average size in here. For example, every time I come back from Iran and arrive in my current home in Sheffield, I suddenly feel bad because I compare my furniture in there with my home here. As I said we have a more luxurious life in Iran, the furniture, the sofa sets, the carpets we had we all a bit luxury. But here, because we have always thought it is temporary, we could not have provided the same level for our home in the UK. So if I have a home that I really like I try to make to that level, I feel if I have this certain furniture with a certain arrangement I receive more warmth from the place and I feel more

peace and if anyone comes to my home, as a host I try to have an Iranian hospitality that the guest could feel the calm Iranian atmosphere. The hospitality is a part of it, the warmth feeling that you don't see in UK homes that often.

**That open space you are talking about; do you achieve it by arrangement?**

-Shideh: By open space I more mean by... for example in this home if you pay attention, the kitchen is separate, the room is separate, the dining is separate, this is how it is in here usually, but when I see the space is a bit bigger I feel like it is more like home. For example, when I was renting my current home, when I entered and saw that it has an open kitchen, my first impression was like; oh this is great! It looks like Iranian homes. Or light it is very important because homes in here have less light or warmth. So, light and warmth are very important to give me a sense of calmness in my home.

-Zahra: I agree with Shideh, I lived in a house in Sheffield for seven years, it's been a few months that I have moved in to the new home... although it was the longest time I ever lived in a house, but I never felt like it is my home, and I wouldn't like to spend money for it; to buy expensive furniture or... because as Shideh said, I felt it was temporary, I always felt it was not my home. For example, even when I was going to Iran and went to visit my friends in their homes, I liked their home and I always thought they have a home, but I felt "I don't have home" like there is not a place that belongs to me. In terms of feeling that a place is your home. This is a very strange concept; I personally think about it a lot. Now that I have moved in to a new place it is interesting for me too, the houses that I went to see, that is what I had in mind when I entered every house, that will I feel like home here? Will I feel belonged to this home that this is mine?... I still haven't wrapped my mind around it that I can tell you specifically... but what I realised about my perception of home, is light. Light is extremely important for me; I am very attached to light. Maybe, it is the element that I would like the most in a house is its light. In here the windows are very small, I don't like it at all, I like to have big windows that the light can get into the home.... I don't know. Maybe as Shideh said, sometimes you just enter a home and you know it's an Iranian home. You know? Maybe you cannot tell specifically what elements are there to make it Iranian but you feel it. We, as Iranians perceive it. For example, a home could have a n Iranian furniture arrangement, and for me homes like this attract me more because I am more familiar with that. Because that space in here is more western but when you enter these homes you still feel a familiar sense. It could be the opposite too. For example, when I go to Iran, when I see British design or pattern, I feel familiar with that too, because I have been living in here for eight years now and I think if I go back, my home will be a combination of Persian and British designs or patterns. Yeah... for example have you seen these British floral patterns, I like that and I think in my next home, there will be a place for that. I mean after eight years I have developed an attachment to England as well, and even in terms of home I have found what I want in more traditional homes in here.

Or when I go to Iran and I see a store decoration is having a British style, I will definitely go in, because I feel a closure with that style. So how I feel about Iran in here, I feel the same about England as well.

-Shideh: it is exactly like that.

-Maral: there are two main challenges I have regarding this topic; scale or the size of the homes that are much smaller in compare to Iran, and second the nature and garden. My parental home was a north/south kind of a home. When I was opening the garden door to bring my car inside, I would see the garden and the plants and flowers that my mother planted, they all made me feel so good-like home. And then everything the others said about the Iranian home style, applies to me too. What

really surprised me in here was that there are two types of connection with nature, the backyard and the front garden that they have things planted or not, with these, I never developed that sense of attachment, in compare to what idea we have of garden and yard in a home.

It is really interesting you are not the only ones talking about the homely sense of my place; even a couple of British friends of mine who visited my home mentioned the same thing.

As a student, having a house has never been a possibility for me, but lately although I have been very happy in my flat, but I am tired of it now, I have lost that sense of homeliness in my current home and because of that and all the pressure of being away from my family for eight years, I decided to go and look for a room in a house. I found an attic room in a house that I would have my own bathroom, and the living room reminded me of my mother's living room in Iran. In here the floors are wood while in Iran is ceramics with Persian carpet but that bigness and openness of that space gave me a sense of home. And it is really important for me; at this moment this style of living is not acceptable for me anymore.

-Shideh: But is also because you have lived here long enough. Wherever you are if you live in a place that long you'll be bored of it. But it is not the same in Iran, I would not get tired of my home in Iran, I have been having that home for so long now and haven't been tired of it. But here I don't know why but you seek a bit of change. I get tired of my home in here and I look for something new. (To Maral) Maybe it is because of that, it doesn't mean your home is not good, you just need a change, and maybe it's time to explore a new environment.

-Ziba: exactly

-Maral: yes, maybe, in general plants and gardens are very significant in giving me a sense of home. My mum is having Geraniums on two sides of the stairs in our garden that you have pass through those to get to the home entrance that is a memory of Iran for me. Geraniums are Iran for me. My grandmother had them around the pool and our home is not a traditional home anymore and doesn't have that but we have them on the stairs. This is all a beautiful feeling. About the home itself, the size really matters for me, and then the smell of the food, the food that is cooked by my mother.

-Ziba: yes, for is very important

-Shideh: I have a friend here, when you enter her home you think you are in a home in Iran. It is warm, with the smell of food, with pictures and carpets and every thing about her place is Iranian.

-maral: this warmness that we are all addressing again relates to the lack of sunlight here. I mean when we have a sunny day I am happy. That sadness that comes with a cloudy weather goes away with the sunlight's energy. It is very interesting for me, I was in Washington three years ago, it was extremely cold, I was in a hotel where there is not sense of attachment, but it reminded me of winters in Iran. Although it is so cold, there is a sense of life because of sunlight. That was my first time in Washington and in that hotel but it felt familiar because of the sunlight, I was like...oh ...this is Iran! I think we are all looking for Iran in everything; this is the reality of our life.

-Shideh: yes, it is the place we grew up in, for example I often think, maybe for my children, here is their home and they have those feelings about England. When they remember their childhood these are the houses they will remember.

-Ziba: definitely

-Maral: exactly

**Regarding our conversation about the influence of both cultures on your homemaking, how is it for you Maral?**

-Maral: to be honest, I don't know what I am going to do or where am I going to be next year when I finish my studies. This is the worst thing,

-Shideh: I know that is horrible!

-Ziba: yes, I totally relate to that!

-Maral: Yes, if someone just told me you know, you will finish your Phd next year and will return, it is done, you know what will happen, but I don't know. My partner is Iran now and sends me photos of a home they are building of the colours and the decorations, it is a very modern house but I don't like its architecture. I expected that the architects would put some arches that is traditional, which has become very popular in contemporary Iranian architecture. For example, I don't like the open kitchen with a counter on the front, I would have like it if they considered more Iranian elements in the home architectural design. But what is very interesting for me, is that I told him, if come back, I would definitely use a combination of Persian and European patterns and design. I said European, not necessarily British, because I specifically like Spanish designs, it is very pretty. Because I think Spain has been in more contact with Arabs, so you can find that Iranian Arabic design. So you can see that Iranian root is with me everywhere.

-Ziba: it is not all Iranian; it is the Islamic world in general.

-Maral: I mean eastern inspired.

-Shideh: yeah it is still very different from British design.

-Ziba: yeah cities like Toledo...I have been there and once we got off the train, the station had Islamic ceramic designs and my fiends told me, Ziba it is similar to your country. I said yes we have very similar patterns. They said Toledo was a city that was a place that three cultures came together; Jewish, Islamic and Christianity.

-Shideh: well Jewish people are very similar to us.

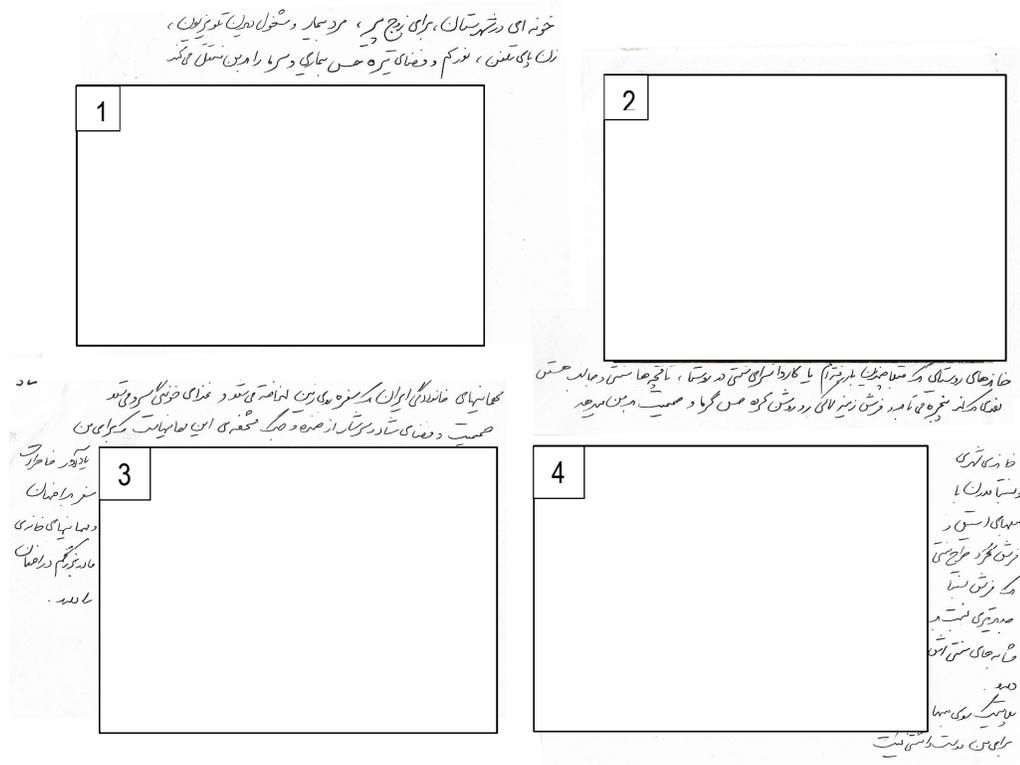
-Maral: yes

-Ziba: yeah we are very similar culturally. So those ceramic designs you also see them in other Arabic countries too.

**Thank you, for our first activity, I am going to give you some pictures, please take a look at them and please right down on the side or on the back of it, what elements or specifications do you perceive from each space.**

-Shideh: for the first one, I wrote; a warm and traditional environment like a grandmother house, I wrote them very briefly. Should I read what I wrote for the other photos?

Appendix 2. The Focus group transcripts and activities



The first activity filled by Ziba. Photo number 1: "An ordinary family" in *Iranian living room* by Mohammad Mahdi Amya/Fabrica (Bossan 2013), Photo number 2: "Life as an elderly person" in *Iranian living room* by Hamed Ilkhan/Fabrica (Bossan 2013). Photo number 3: Photo courtesy of Chidaneh (Aghazadeh 2016). Photo number 4: photo by Mohammad Reza Hossein Nejad and Mohamad Zadeh ("Caspiancover" 2015).

Appendix 2. The Focus group transcripts and activities

1

مجموعه‌های زندگی مثل خانه مادرزاد

2

چیدمان اوستایی با فرش دستباف و تزیینات سنتی  
روشنی تزیینات و تزیینات که یادگار دوران سفر به روسیه

3

کدام بود در تمام ایران در آن زمان  
مجموعه‌های خانه‌های سنتی و گرم، پهن‌رانی با فرش بزرگ و مادرزاد بود.

4

معمولاً دیدن درختان چنبره که در این زمین امروزه دیده  
شده با وضعیت عالی خوب استراحت می‌کند

The first activity filled by Shideh. Photo number 1: "An ordinary family" in *Iranian living room* by Mohammad Mahdi Amya/Fabrica (Bossan 2013), Photo number 2: "Life as an elderly person" in *Iranian living room* by Hamed Ilkhan/Fabrica (Bossan 2013). Photo number 3: Photo courtesy of Chidaneh (Aghazadeh 2016). Photo number 4: photo by Mohammad Reza Hossein Nejad and Mohamad Zadeh ("Caspiancover" 2015).



The first activity filled by Maral. Photo number 1: "An ordinary family" in *Iranian living room* by Mohammad Mahdi Amya/Fabrica (Bossan 2013), Photo number 2: "Life as an elderly person" in *Iranian living room* by Hamed Ilkhan/Fabrica (Bossan 2013). Photo number 3: Photo courtesy of Chidaneh (Aghazadeh 2016). Photo number 4: photo by Mohammad Reza Hossein Nejad and Mohamad Zadeh ("Caspiancover" 2015).

**Now let's compare your answers for each photo.**

-Ziba: that's interesting because I didn't see it's a very warm place, I wrote that it's a house in a city (not Tehran) for an old couple. The man appears to me to be ill and he is watching TV. The woman is talking on the phone. The low light and the dark space are mostly giving me a sense of illness and cold.

-Maral: I had a similar feeling as Shideh. It gives me a sense of grandmother's house. This was my first interpretation of it. But I think Ziba, has also paid attention to more interesting details. She is right, colour, the relationship between these two people in here ... when you focused on it more, you realise that sense that Ziba was talking about.

**What do you mean by the relationship between the two?**

-Maral: It came to my mind that yes, an ill man, a retired man with very basic life ... and a lady that is a housewife and usually the first thing that entertains her is the telephone...

-Shideh: Yes, the telephone...

-Maral: yeah so that is how she deals with her loneliness.

-Ziba: it seems there is no communication between them...

-Shideh: I don't know, because I've seen places like this, elderly people who sit together, after all these years they have much to talk about really. But even the atmosphere in there... she is talking on the phone in front of him, I think it kind of creates some sort of a vibe in the house. That's true it seems like a low light space, I agree you don't see much of cheerfulness in it, maybe you feel that's it's a cold space. Maybe you're right, because he has a blanket around him.

Ziba: he has one underneath and one around him. And then look at the carpets, it has a matt background and it's white, for example compare it with the next picture?!

-Shideh: the next photo, I wrote, it's a village arrangement, the handmade carpet, the red backrests, the lace backrest covers, they are all a reminder of a country/village house...the clock... to me it all seems very countryside kind of a house.

-Ziba: I wrote the same. Village homes that I have visited several times before or a traditional caravanserai in a village, they also have a similar look to this one as well. Then, I wrote the traditional Niche, that I found very interesting. The soft light through the window and brightening up the red carpet... it gives me a sense of closeness.

-Maral: for me it was exactly, the grandmother house, but from my mother side. They were living in south of *Khorasan* with an absolutely Iranian style and traditional and now this house is being preserved by the cultural heritage organisation. And it gave a profound nostalgic feeling. It was exactly during my elementary school; it took me to those days and unfortunately that home does not have the same feeling because my grandparents are both passed away.

-Ziba: Probably the cultural heritage organisation has turned it into a caravanserai or something...

-Maral: they made it *Boom Kolbeh*<sup>127</sup> or something like that. Because the house had very beautiful paintings on the wall. Those paintings they had so much aesthetic value in terms of art. But right now, I'm very happy the cultural heritage has it.

-Ziba: At least they preserve it.

-Maral: yeah definitely, because my uncle was against it, because he wanted to build a hotel in there but the other heir didn't agree with that.

### **Was the house in a city or in a village?**

-Maral: No, the house is in a small town, *Gonabad*<sup>128</sup>, where my mum is from, although she moved to Mashhad since she was 18, but her parental home, where we used to go when I was in Elementary school, because after that they moved to Mashhad but that home is all memories for me. And this photo gives reminds me of that house.

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<sup>127</sup> *Boom Kolbeh* (بوم کلبه): A Vernacular cottage

<sup>128</sup> Name of a town city in Iran.

### Shall we go to the next photo?

-Shideh: The next photo look like a family party it seems like a warm environment, the way of hosting, food on the floor, the lady who is walking, seems like a kind mother that tried to collect everyone, that she could have all the relatives and family members around her that she has a warm gathering.

-Ziba: yes, me too, I wrote; it's family gatherings in Iran, that the *Sofreh* is spread on the floor, homemade food is served, closeness, cheerfulness space, laughter and happiness... Personally, the same way that the other house was a reminder of your [pointing to Maral grandparents' house, this photo is a reminder of my grandparents' house in *Isfahan*<sup>129</sup>. My grandmother passed away three years ago but it was exactly the same system. Whenever we went to Isfahan, she gathered everyone, and it was exactly the same, there was *Sofreh* on the floor...Also, my cousins are very funny, they were joking the whole time when we were eating, it was all laughter and stuff... they brought *Ghalyoon*<sup>130</sup>, it was an interesting space. For me, this was a reminder of that space and experience.

-Maral: for me it was the same more or less, the first interpretation I had from the photo, in a general sense, from the type of Iranian hospitality; like hosting big number of people, that big families that are usually aunts and uncles are gathered with their families. I don't want to get into my nostalgias about my family, so this is my perspective on it. And, I think most of the people have experienced that; the togetherness, the gathering they had that.

So, for all of you it was more or less a reminder of Iranian hospital?

-Shideh: I also think apart from the hospitality, the sacrifice that that standing lady has made.

-Maral: yes, that she has her full attention of the guests.

-Shideh: yes, that she cares they all enjoy their time. I think it show the sacrifice of Iranian woman.

-Ziba: I also think it is mostly think the oldest in the house held such a party.

-Maral: yes

-Ziba: yeah, like *Sofreh* on the floor ... for us right now if we have our friends over for example, we wouldn't eat on the floor... even if there many guests we consider a buffet type and stuff. But this is kind of arrangements is done by the older family members.

-Maral: yeah I also thought she was the host.

-Shideh: she doesn't even have socks on

-Maral: wow you paid attention to so many details (laughing).

-Shideh: (laughing) yeah... I feel she is so tired...

-Maral: (laughing) we are having a psychological analysis too...

### Shall check the last photo?

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<sup>129</sup> One of Iran's big cities.

<sup>130</sup> Ghalyoon (قلیون): Persian word for Hookah.

-Shideh: yes, I wrote; luxury curtain and carpet that is a representation of urban life. And usually those covers on the sofas, reminds me of a newlywed lady that just brought her *Jahizieh*<sup>131</sup>, that they cover it that it doesn't get dirty, I felt this is for a person who just furnished her home, and it was so important for her that her furniture doesn't get damaged and it also look very chick. For me, it represents today's modern and luxurious life. I think the financial level is also good. I see I see prosperity in it too.

-Ziba: for me it was almost the same; it's a rather modern urban home, with stylish Furniture. But that carpet is a very traditional but in compare to its kind it is a more modern carpet, because of its design that is circular, the background is a newer style, it could be handmade or not. But still, it doesn't have that red colour the traditional Iranian carpets have. Exactly, I also noticed those plastic covers; I don't like them at all.

-Shideh: yeah I don't like it either...

-Ziba: yeah, they make you sweat

-Shideh: but I've seen it a lot in new houses.

-Ziba: I think they order them specifically for their furniture to fit perfectly. Yeah, they are tailored. My sister in law has moved to Tehran recently, and she had those and in my opinion, it was a terrible choice, because this is plastic. I don't know why they don't use the ones that are made of fabrics.

#### **The covers were still there while having people over?**

- Ziba: yeah, they had it one day, and another day they didn't.

-Shideh: the idea is, that it shows the furniture but at the same time, it protects it from dust and dirt, but the fabric ones they say it doesn't show the furniture.

- Ziba: yeah ture, but it is extremely uncomfortable, you basically sit on plastic. Because it also makes a noise when you move, and you sweat ... and it was summer... it was so bad. I actually think it ruined the furniture...

-Shideh: to be honest I've seen that too, but I didn't like it.

#### **So, you went to parties that they had that?**

-Shideh: yes I went to a party that the host was a newlywed and all her furniture were all very chick and luxurious, I mean they were very expensive furniture, but she had these on, and even when we were there, she didn't remove them. Even the dining chairs, they also had that.

- Ziba: they are tailored very well and clean though ... precisely this time that I went it was my sister inlaw's home was like that... I told you that she changed all her furniture set... I liked that it was made very clean and fine but it was very bad, I didn't like it at all. Phillies... I think the Phillies in here are much more comfortable

-Shideh: yeah but as I said, it's like that to show.

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<sup>131</sup> *Jahizieh* (جهیزیه): a dowry that the bride takes with her to her new home, in Iran the dowry is the complete furniture for whole house.

-Ziba: yeah but then, this home that I went for example, they didn't have so much space, for example they didn't have separate couches for everyday use, they were using the same ones. So, I think living with that plastic is really uncomfortable.

-Maral: for me, the first thing that I understood was again; the current Iranian homes with a not very pleasant design and not very Iranian. I really don't like this style. I mean, at least, it is expected that the current architects or interior designers, if they would like to bring a modern style for Iranian society, it's better to be a combination of Iranian patterns and modern styles. The notion of modernity is changing constantly, but the Iranian pattern, in all the furniture and the design style should be present. But neither the curtain pattern nor the furniture design is relatable to me. It is looks weird; it doesn't even match this home. This is an issue that I've seen in Iran quite often, that a small home that is 50 to 80 m<sup>2</sup>, they have a set of formal furniture that is suitable for a house unfortunately. Interior design in Iran needs to be defined, because in my opinion, based on what I heard from my architect friends; they all use 3d max software, copying photos they find from Google image from around the world and they call it interior design. So, a very bizarre combination is created and what I find very, very interesting is the interior design in here. For example, if you go to a shop in here, like when you go to Laura Ashley, you definitely see a Classic British style, while it is very modern and beautiful, but still that classic sense is present. I always wonder why we don't do the same thing?... Although Persian patterns or in general the Persian design is very ancient and it is very pretty actually but unfortunately in Iranian society it has been forgotten.

-Shideh: for example, Iranian carpets are beautiful and still everyone loves them and everyone enjoys the Persian patterns they've got. I agree for our other stuff like furniture and curtains we don't have the same thing.

-Maral: for example, that niche in the grandparents' house, should I talk a bit more?

**Yes, sure, please share anything that comes to your mind...**

-Maral: what I found interesting, my boyfriend, this year he spent the *Eid*<sup>132</sup> with his patterns and they visited *Kashan*<sup>133</sup>. recently they have used the same types of houses like my grandparents' home that I talked to you about, and turned them into hotels. They are old houses that they transformed them into four or five star hotels. And when I saw the photos of these hotels, in terms of interior design, it was extremely beautiful for me. Because, meanwhile that was a modern and new space, all the Persian elements, from Arches to even the design of the bathtub and the bathrooms, was repeated like a rhythm throughout the building.

-Ziba: how interesting!

-Shideh: and you can see a harmony and I also give you a sense of attachment as an Iranian and the style is connected with your roots. You feel all of that but at the same time it is a new space and that oldness and detachment and the uncanny character of Iranian home it has been forgotten. These could be looked at as case studies, like there are places in *Isfahan* like that or in *Tabriz* there is a hotel called *Kandovan*. I think we have epic things and I don't know why our architects forgotten all about that.

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<sup>132</sup> The Persian New year

<sup>133</sup> A city in Iran with many traditional and historical attractions.

-Ziba: could I say something? I agree what you say... I also talked about Caravanserais in the rural area, I've only seen the photos, I never got a chance to go, but it so very similar to what you said. These places were abandoned but they transformed them and they look gorgeous. I don't know if you follow *Hoda Rostami*<sup>134</sup> on Instagram, recently she has been in some beautiful places; they were so many place with the same approach that you said. But... that is my taste too. But I think this is something more related to someone's taste... I mean, I cannot value that. Look for example they show you this home (number 4), you can immediately say it is an Iranian home. It looks Iranian, and that it is a home for the new generation... I want to say... I like that style you said, but it would be enforcing our own taste if we say we should all go that way, that we argue why we don't have Iranian elements. I think it could be accepted that this is a new style, that is the new generation of Persian houses ... you know? So many things have changed still. For example, the furniture or so many other stuffs could be imported furniture, they could come from turkey, we don't care, but we do still buy Persian carpets. Even myself in here I am looking for carpets that have this design. We have a pride over our carpets. There is a mixture but I don't see it that bad, I mean... you see this is not pleasant at all, the curtains are not Iranian, the furniture is not Iranian. But I say yes, what does it need to have to be categorised as Iranian? Right now, in Tehran, if I don't say 100%, at least 98% of the house looks like this. If we consider everywhere in Iran excluding the rural areas, unless people who have a good financial situation and they are also very interested in Iranian elements, that let me tell you a noticeable percentage of that is also people who have been abroad, like for example us, if we go back to Iran, our homes will be different than how it looked like before we left. Iranian elements will be more present in our homes. By coming here, I am more into those things.

-Shideh: Yeah it will be more nostalgic

-Maral: I agree with you but I said a combination of modernity and Persian style.

-Ziba: I know...

-Maral: Persian carpet, I agree, but now, I've been to Tabriz and the Persian Carpet Bazaar, you know how much a silk Persian carpet is affordable for the contemporary generation?

-Shideh: not at all.

-Ziba: yeah it's not...

-Maral: what I say is that the same pattern that a Persian carpet, a designer can apply that in curtains, with a delicate knit, and it could be very pretty not a curtain that is from Turkey. If you just go to a curtain shop, the first thing they tell you –proudly- is that it's Turkish. Or Paisley print, how pretty are those? Or the *Patteh Doozi*<sup>135</sup> that is made in *Kerman*<sup>136</sup>, if we just use the same pattern in our curtain and etc.... how great is that going to be. I actually agree with modernity; the world is moving towards modernity; even in here you see some modern homes. But still, you see their persistency on putting the separate tap waters; the things they have been proud of for ages... not in that extreme... but also not like our society. I think everything is mixed in ours, we are lost in it.

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<sup>134</sup> An Iranian photographer

<sup>135</sup> An Iranian handcraft.

<sup>136</sup> A state in south east of Iran.

-Ziba: I think this is more about personal tastes. For example, paisley print is a personal taste. Yeah it is Iranian, I like it too, but I can't enforce it on others. My point is you say this (picture number four) is not Iranian design, I say yes, it is, it is new generation Iranian.

**What does it have that you see it and you know it's Iranian? Does everyone think the same?**

-Shideh: yes

-Ziba: because we've seen it repeatedly in Iranian homes. It is the home of the new generation, contemporary Iranians. That's it.

-Shideh: what I have noticed recently in my travels to Iran is that a slow reverse back has started.

-Ziba: Yes.

-Shideh: for example, now if you go to a shop and ask for a bed set; they show you two types, one that is *Termeh*<sup>137</sup> and is pretty expensive actually and the other type that is Turkish. And there are people who still choose *Termeh* over the others. But they are people who have developed this tendency recently and maybe they would have bought the modern ones before, but now they are having a little reverse back

-Ziba: yes exactly, I agree.

-Shideh: so, it is a slow change, even I noticed that in the building designs, in Tabriz where I live in Iran, I even noticed... my husband works in real states, he is a dentist but he also does some construction work too, they had a paisley print for a commercial plaza. So, people are becoming more interested...

-Ziba: no, you know what, it is becoming a luxury good. Look, traditional things are becoming a luxury...

-Shideh: yes, its changing slowly...

-Ziba: yeah so if you pay attention, it's exactly about that. For example, luxury commercial centres, luxury people, people who are above the middle or upper middle class, for them now this is the new trend.

-Shideh: yeah because they've experienced modernity already.

-Ziba: yes, that too, for example the modernity wave, in general, every phenomenon is having a pick and a low in their existence, so modernity has passed its pick time, and it is fading slowly. So, the next wave is focusing on traditional features. But if you have a bit of leftist ideology, they believe all these waves are rooted in capitalism and capitalist countries. It's the same in here too. You can see paisley print in their clothes; even Ted Baker is having designs with Paisley print. You know what I mean? So, it's not necessarily Iranian carpet. So, these are capitalist rooted.

-Maral: I found out something interesting about paisley print and I did some research, I realised this paisley print that we are very proud of that is not ours, it is originated from India.

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<sup>137</sup> An Iranian handcraft.

*Appendix 2. The Focus group transcripts and activities*

-Ziba: you said something about Turkey and stuff... if you go back a bit, you can't really see eastern cultures as separates. We have influenced each other so much. So, it's hard to separate it like, this is ours and that is not. You know? For example, we have so many common things with Arabs, with Turks, with Indians.

-Shideh: look Turks are very influenced from western culture... so those designs talked they are mostly taken from European or American styles. It is not theirs.

-Ziba: no I mean for example the design from Ottoman Empire.

-Shideh: in terms of when you asked about what make us think this is an Iranian home? That's true, it also seems like an Iranian home to me at the first glance, what that I noticed the most was the carpet, as you don't see this carpet in a western home, and then the curtain design.

-Maral: yes, absolutely!

-Shideh: I haven't seen such a curtain design here. They are more modern and simple in here. In Iran though they are more concerned with having a design that no one else house so they are so many different looking curtains. In here, even in classy places they may choose something that the fabric is more expensive. They don't focus on the way it is tailored.

-Maral: the main focus in here is to show its British style.

-Shideh: yeah, for example in ponds forge there is a very elegant furniture store that they have expensive stuff, but when you go inside you see nothing but simplicity. We may say this is too simple, it doesn't have anything... but the price is high because of the quality of the fabrics. They pay more attention to quality than design. But in Iran, when they want to be modern, I feel they don't focus on the material as much as they do on the design to be different.

Lately, for being more affordable, they have duplicated the silk Carpets' style with machines and you see it looks the same but it's affordable. Now they are going to that direction mostly. I think they are trying to keep both modern and traditional elements within an affordable price range.

-Ziba: yeah, there is a lace curtain, then there is another layer, having two layered curtains is an Iranian thing.

-Maral: probably there is another layer behind it too to protect it from dust and stuff...

-Shideh: actually, in one of these Iranians telegram groups in here, that there is an Iranian lady in Leeds that sews curtains like that.

-Ziba: yes, I saw that too. Her curtains are exactly like this.

-Shirin: yeah I was thinking it came all the way to here too. So the Iranians in here can have curtains like that, they like it...

Among these four photos which one do you think is the representation of current Iranian home?

-Ziba: I would say the last one,

-Shideh: yes, the number 4. The second one is a nostalgia; you don't see it anymore.

*Appendix 2. The Focus group transcripts and activities*

-Ziba: yeah it's either Nostalgia or they are turned into something for public use.

-Shideh: we have an old relative that lives in a village, his house is like that still, it is still available but it is in the rural areas.

-Maral: in the first and second photos, in my opinion, we are very distant from them now. The third and fourth photos; the third photo is for the families that are not middle class.

-Shideh: yeah the third one could be as well.

-Ziba: yeah grandparents' houses...

-Shideh: they both exist but from different classes.

-Maral: number three is for a low-income family

-Ziba: I think, that's is middle class and the number four is more luxury

-Maral: although I don't understand why do we insist on something like that, for example a couple would get a loan or something to have stuff like this (number 4) these are things in my opinion that I always wonder...

-Shideh: well, we after living in here think like this, but there are still people in Iran who are seeking such a home, they make all their effort to have this

-Ziba: yeah as you said [Maral] even if they have a 50 m2 home, they still buy furniture like that.

-Maral: I think the relationship between the furniture and the space is the most important factor itself, for example I didn't have a desk... let me take you to my current home. The biggest weakness in English homes... I don't know this is an Apartment... so, I don't know those of you who live in a house, it could be different, but I have storage issues. For example, I bought that shelves in corner that I can have something to store things temporarily, like nuts, tea, spaghetti and everything, something that makes using them easier. For example, there wasn't a desk here neither the place for it. I bought one but I really had problem to choose one because, I needed one because I write every day, my concern was to get a desk that doesn't occupy the space more than it should, that it doesn't bother me in terms of how I move in the space. The same story applied to my bookshelf; there are things that I added to this home myself. Things like that haven't been defined for such a space. I can really compare Iran with England, they are two completely different stories but as an Iranian person, who have lived here for eight years now, my biggest problem with the homes in here, is storage. The design space is so strange, the entrance of the homes are so narrow.

-Shideh: It doesn't have visibility; I agree with Maral... I feel yes, Iranian homes are much bigger, with more open spaces, and English home have more limited space but they haven't also been designed in a way that you feel comfortable in them. Even if you go to a big home, that still applies; the entrances are so small, there are things that are not being considered.

-Ziba: yes, Entrances, the doors, the corridors... I don't know how do they do it themselves.

-Shideh: I don't know maybe it's for keeping the heat inside the house... I don't know the idea behind it...but they have a different space design here. On the other hand, after living here, the Iranian design seems too big for me; I sometimes think maybe it's too much.

-Maral: yes...

-Ziba: yeah... I agree!

**You also said something about how your taste has change since you have lived in here, that you are more interested in traditional Iranian patterns and designs, how is that for everyone?**

-Shideh: yes, when I was in Iran, having a modern house was so important for me; I arranged my home in a way that looks very modern. I just completed furnishing my home when I decided to come here. But now no... I prefer to have more traditional things...

-Ziba: yes... let me tell you a funny story... I told you that these things have become a luxury goods nowadays...

-Shideh: it could be that too, you're right...

-Ziba: yeah, for example recently when I go to Ira, I go to *Palladium*<sup>138</sup>, I dont know if you knoe but it's one of the most modern places right now in Tehran. Its not that big but still... so, there is a bookstore in there that I go there every time I'm there to buy things that have a traditional touch... I bought some coasters, that they were pricey for Iran still just because they had a turquoise traditional design, when I got home my cousins were excited to see what I bought and once they saw them they were like: only people who live abroad pay for these things, no one in here spend that much money for this stuff. And I think this says a lot...

-Shideh: maybe because we are far from that ...

-Maral: yeah I think the distance made us realise how rich and profound our culture is. For example, I have so much pride for being Iranian since I've been living here in compare to when I was in Iran. It wasn't important for me, but here you need to live with honour...

-Ziba: it's an identity matter... completely...

-Shideh: yeah you need to establish your identity...

-Ziba: we are in an environment that is not compatible with us at all. We all are dealing with some sort of identity crisis. I mean let's be honest, this is something we all are dealing with at some point...one of the things that we could attach to is this... we are constructing an identity through these things.

-Shideh: yeah we like to show it by any means that look this is who I am, we want to make it clear...

-Ziba: yes... exactly what you say Maral, that my Iranian-ness is important for me now, it shows you are actually building identity for you.

-Maral: true...

**This identity that you are making in the UK is it rebuilding something new?**

-Shideh: yes, exactly... you are correct, it is completely different...

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<sup>138</sup> A posh shopping mall in North of Tehran.

Appendix 2. The Focus group transcripts and activities

-Ziba: recently I've been thinking about the notion of identity and homeland quite often...it's a long story... it maybe be beyond of our discussions concerns, but when we come from Iran, we build an absolute abstract conception about motherland. It's not compatible to the reality, it doesn't even have a border, it's not even tangible like soils...it's an idea. it's an abstract idea! it's not even solid!

Ok thank you, shall we move on to the second activity? Could we please fill out this flow chart based on the least to the most important?

1 Home making elements	The level of importance in creating a sense of home					Comment
	Not at all	Slightly important	moderately important	important	very important	
2 Decorations/Objects						
3 Brought from Homeland (Iran)						
4 Reminder of home or a memory of homeland (Iran)				✓	✓	
5 Purchased or received in the host country (UK)		✓				
6 Furniture		✓				
7 Brought from Homeland (Iran)		✓				
8 Reminder of home or a memory of homeland (Iran)					✓	
9 Purchased or received in the host country (UK)			✓			
10 The furniture arrangement				✓		
11 Tangible Architectural elements of the current home						
12 The design of the space (placement of walls, doors, windows, etc...)					✓	
13 Size (the flat/house and interior spaces)					✓	
14 Quality of materials used for the architectural elements					✓	
15 Cultural and daily habits					✓	
16 Traditional habits/yearly events					✓	
17 Cooking					✓	
18 Religious or spiritual rituals					✓	
19 Cleaning routines					✓	
20 Sensory experience of home: smell, sound, touch, light, nature,...					✓	
21 Memory of home (previous experience of home)					✓	
22 Social Life and gatherings					✓	
23 Gatherings with Iranian family and friends (coming from Iran or living in the UK)					✓	
24 Socialising at home with family and friends (not necessarily Iranian)					✓	

Shidehá completed spreadsheet.

1 Home making elements	The level of importance in creating a sense of home					Comment
	Not at all	Slightly important	moderately important	important	very important	
2 Decorations/Objects						
3 Brought from Homeland (Iran)						
4 Reminder of home or a memory of homeland (Iran)				✓	✓	
5 Purchased or received in the host country (UK)			✓			
6 Furniture						
7 Brought from Homeland (Iran)						
8 Reminder of home or a memory of homeland (Iran)				✓	✓	
9 Purchased or received in the host country (UK)			✓			
10 The furniture arrangement				✓		
11 Tangible Architectural elements of the current home						
12 The design of the space (placement of walls, doors, windows, etc...)				✓	✓	
13 Size (the flat/house and interior spaces)				✓	✓	
14 Quality of materials used for the architectural elements				✓	✓	
15 Cultural and daily habits				✓	✓	
16 Traditional habits/yearly events				✓	✓	
17 Cooking				✓	✓	
18 Religious or spiritual rituals				✓	✓	
19 Cleaning routines				✓	✓	
20 Sensory experience of home: smell, sound, touch, light, nature,...				✓	✓	
21 Memory of home (previous experience of home)				✓	✓	
22 Social Life and gatherings				✓	✓	
23 Gatherings with Iranian family and friends (coming from Iran or living in the UK)				✓	✓	
24 Socialising at home with family and friends (not necessarily Iranian)				✓	✓	

Maral's completed spread sheet.

Appendix 2. The Focus group transcripts and activities

1 Home making elements	The level of importance in creating a sense of home					Comment
	Not at all	Slightly important	moderately important	important	very important	
2 Decorations/Objects						
3 Brought from Homeland (Iran)						
4 Reminder of home or a memory of homeland (Iran)						
5 Purchased or received in the host country (UK)						
6 Furniture						
7 Brought from Homeland (Iran)						
8 Reminder of home or a memory of homeland (Iran)						
9 Purchased or received in the host country (UK)						
10 The furniture arrangement						
11 Tangible Architectural elements of the current home						
12 The design of the space (placement of walls, doors, windows, etc...)						
13 Size (the flat/house and interior spaces)						
14 Quality of materials used for the architectural elements						
15 Cultural and daily habits						
16 Traditional habits/yearly events						
17 Cooking						
18 Religious or spiritual rituals						
19 Cleaning routines						
20 Sensory experience of home: smell, sound, touch, light, nature,...						
21 Memory of home (previous experience of home)						
22 Social life and gatherings						
23 Gatherings with Iranian family and friends (coming from Iran or living in the UK)						
24 Socialising at home with family and friends (not necessarily Iranian)						

Ziba's completed spread sheet.

-Ziba: food is very important, for example when I cooked something like a potato patty that has a strong smell later when I enter the house and smell it again, I feel it's home! In compare to when there is no smell

-Shide: yes, food is so important.

-Ziba: last Saturday I was walking in the street and I could feel the smell of fried onion... I think it was an indian household

-Maral: I was gonna say that they must have been indian... I have the experience quite often as well.

-Ziba: yeah I just wanted to stay there longer...

-Shideh: when I go to Iran, we live in an apartment flat and when you leave the flat you smell different amazing aromas from each floor.

-Ziba: yeah the houses in here don't have that.

-Maral: decoration and objects are very important for me.

-Shirin: objects and decorations brought from homeland, I said it's important. Because it matters to me but if I find it in here I don't mind I buy it.

-Ziba: it is very important for me, me too.

-Shideh: Like this teapot or Marals' plates in general

-Ziba: yes, I was going to mention that as well. The blue colour specifically it is so Iranian.

-Shideh: yeah the design reminds me of Iran do if I see this in here I will buy, it doesn't have be from Iran.

-Ziba: yeah

-Shideh: the source is not that important. Unless it is something very specific that I cannot find here but if I can find them here, I'll buy it.

*Appendix 2. The Focus group transcripts and activities*

-Ziba: but I think what you bring from Iran is more authentic and original.

-Shideh: yes, because it is something you bought yourself from where you like.

-Ziba: yeah you feel you have bought it from the original source.

-Shideh: yeah for example when you bring a silver plate from Iran, it becomes very important to you, because you cannot find it here.

-Ziba: yeah, I think it is true for everything, for example you like to buy a postcard of Pizza tower next to it than in London, you feel the first one is more original.

-Shideh: because it is more original.

-Maral: I said important to this.

-Shideh: reminder of home or memory of homeland: I said important

-Maral: important.

-Ziba: very important.

-Shideh: purchased or received in the host country moderately important

-Maral: slightly important.

-Ziba: moderately important.

-Maral: number six furniture is slightly important for me because we are used to this style of furniture in Iran as well, I mean it is not very different from here.

-Shideh: I said important. For example, Persian carpet I'd like to bring from Iran. The rest we can't bring them.

-Shideh: I mean yeah maybe it is possible but we choose not to. It is not affordable to bring sofa sets for example...

-Ziba: besides we don't have traditional sofa sets

-Shideh: yeah Carpets are different but furniture is the same here.

-Maral: I said slightly important.

-Shideh: what did you say to number 8?

-Maral: slightly important.

-Shideh: I said moderately important

-Ziba: I said very important. It says "reminder of home" that the furniture reminds you of home.... Yeah, for example, apart from the carpet, those cushions that I brought from Iran, I really like them.

-Shideh: purchased or received in the host country?

-Maral: moderately important for me.

-Ziba: it is slightly important for me.

**Furniture arrangement?**

-Shideh: I said this is very important for me.

-Ziba: important

-Maral: important

**Could you expand this a bit more? In what sense is this important for you?**

-Ziba: that there is a harmony

-Shideh: it is they way that I like, for example it gives me a sense of calmness. For instance, I don't know if you have also noticed this or not, but I realised that British people would like to create a small space with the furniture. Everything is always circled around something. But I like everything to be arranged in an open way. I think they do that for to reasons that the house looks bigger and that they can communicate easier.

-Ziba: yes, it's the same for me too. The furniture should be in harmony that they work well together and with the space so it gives you a good sense. I agree with Shideh, I think in general we like big and open spaces as oppose to British people who would like to make several chambers within the home.

-Maral: there are two points about homes in here positive and negative; I really dislike the leather sofas. I think they are ugly and what I like is the style of sofa sets in Laura Ashley for example. Or I really enjoy when I go to furniture floor in John Lewis. Although it is a modern style but they are delicate and chic. And I realised when the furniture is very delicate in here they are very valued and are so expensive. But the furniture they use for the houses they rent is too bulky and made of leather for example.

-Ziba: yes, to me leather is appropriate for office; it doesn't give me a sense of home.

-Shideh: I never have had an experience with leather before, I bought one for my home here but I didn't like it.

-Ziba: although it is very easy to clean them...

-Shideh: yes, it is very easy specially if you have kids but it doesn't give you a homely feeling.

**Number 12, The tangible element of the design of the space?**

-Maral: absolutely important for me

-Shirin: it is important for me, but at the same time the furniture is important too. It is not only the building it is a combination of the two.

-Ziba: I said important to both

*Appendix 2. The Focus group transcripts and activities*

-Shirin: I also said important to size as well, because yes it is important but a huge house may be not as comforting as a home that is moderately big.

-Maral: yes, size is very important for me too, as it was my first complaint that I shared with you all. The size of homes is dramatically different in Europe in compare to Middle Eastern countries.

-Shideh: yes, the size that we are talking about is based on Iranian mentality and experience. Or in Iraq or Turkey they all have big houses.

-Ziba: Yes, Arabic countries in general they are all the same as well, like Emirates and Dubai...

**Ok, so what everyone said about the design of the space?**

-Ziba: important, windows are very important for me for example

-Shideh: I said very important

-Maral: very Important as well. Quality of materials also I said very important

-Ziba: very important

-Shideh: I said important because I don't think the quality of material depends on other factors too. I mean just because something is having good material doesn't mean it will make you happy. I think it is a combination of different things.

-Maral: a problem that I have is that when I walk the floor makes noises because it is made of wood

-Ziba: yes, the floors are made of wood here.

-Shideh: what I mean by combination is that for example we talked about size, you may see a much bigger flat than this one that looks bigger but the quality of the materials are not good so it doesn't feel good.

-Maral: yes, I know what you mean, it should be a balanced combination.

-Shideh: yes, it should be a balance of all these elements, the design, the furniture the size, the quality...

**So you see it as a combination of the elements from number 11 to number 14?**

-Shideh: yes, all together could give you a good feeling. You can never find a home that is best of the best, as long as it is balance its fine.

-Ziba: well I thought the questions are asked regardless of the limitation, asking about the ideals you may have. I thought the questions are asking about what is the best circumstance.

-Shideh: even in that sense, ideal doesn't mean perfect for me. I am not a perfectionist when it comes to home and stuff. I think there are other factors that can play as much as role in making you feel calm and relax. As I said before, like the relationship between the people in a home is important for me. For example, I said I would like to have Persian carpet in my home, but it doesn't mean it has to be the best of the best, made of silk...

-Zahra: so you mean regardless if you can afford it or not?

-Shideh: yes, as long as it is pretty it is enough for me. I would go for a specific elegant material.

### **Number 16, traditional habits?**

-Shideh: it is very important for me. Like *Nowrouz*, *Yalda* night, even if it is not in our own home, we try to arrange something somewhere.

-Ziba: yes, very important. It is related to your identity you know!

-Maral: me too.

### **The other one, cooking?**

-Maral: cooking for me is important.

-Shideh: yes, me too. I like to cook and have homemade food. I feel it create a warm atmosphere, that we can all sit around the table and eat. I think it gives warmth and lovingness to the family.

-Maral: for me cooking –especially after getting home from the university- has a therapy affect. You know? It calms me down, especially if I want to cook Iranian food, although cooking Iranian food could take some time. For example, for me sea bass the fish is like fish in Iran, so I cook *Sabzi Polo ba Mahi*<sup>139</sup> at least once a week. It is so easy and healthy.

-Ziba: I am not interested in cooking that much; it is like an obligatory task for me. I don't know, if we had take away for Iranian food, like how it is in Iran, maybe I wouldn't have cooked as much as I do here but I have to.

### **Number 18? Religious rituals?**

-Maral: I said moderately important.

-Ziba: it is important for me

-Shideh: yes, me too.

-Ziba: the value this has for me is as much as the traditional events have. A part of it is nostalgia, because you want to repeat the experience you had in Iran [of those events] to repeat here. So it is either nostalgia for *Nowrouz* or *Muharram*. One part of is related to nostalgia and the other part is connected to identity issues. In here, for example Christmas is a meaningless event for us, you know? But because it is such a big event here, we kind of try to be a part of it. But sometimes you feel you need have something of your own, a ritual for you that shows your identity. It is an identity trigger. Secondly, because we have children, a part of it concerns educating them on these traditional and religious ceremonies to make an identity for our children as well. Because, a child in an age of 10-12 you cannot really talk to them about these matters, you convey your message by doing these events.

-Shideh: I am the same, I totally agree with Ziba. In *Muharram* and *Tasua* and *Ashura* I always try to provide that environment for my children to experience.

### **Do you do that at home or somewhere else?**

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<sup>139</sup> The new year's eve dinner.

-Shideh: I try to go to the ceremonies that are held outside with other people that the kids can experience it fully, but it will influence the home atmosphere as well.

-Ziba: yes for example on *Ramazans*<sup>140</sup>, I like to listen to *Rabbana*, while my boy is playing and is in his own world but just because *Rabbana* has had a nostalgic feeling for me, I try to repeat that for him by playing it.

-Maral: for me I don't know. The first two years these religious events were very important for me, and it was nostalgic for me and was a reminder of Iran. But then, I didn't enjoy socialising with certain kind of people

### **Cleaning routines?**

-Maral: it is very important for

-Ziba: me too

-Shideh: for me it is very important as well.

-Maral: um... look ... what I've learned from Iranian culture there are two things (specially when you are going to have guests and you clean the house two days in advance); the notion of cleanliness is very crucial in Iranian culture, also having a tidy house. And then if you have guest this is going to highlighted even more. So, it is a concern that is with us all the time and is rooted in our culture. for example, if visit a house of a British friend of mine, they might not care if a box is in its place or not, or the kitchen may look messy with stuff but they might not care about that when they have people over. But fore me it is really important and it is because of my Iranian culture.

-Ziba: I believe our cleaning standards, is different with British people's standards. The level of cleanliness that they are comfortable with on every day basis-when they don't have guests- we don't find it comfortable.

-Maral: yes, we find that messy.

-Ziba: we consider that cramped.

-Maral: even their libraries are like that.

-Shideh: everything, it is not even that important for them. It doesn't make a difference for them.

-Ziba: I was thinking about for example; I think all the Iranians have a level of cleanliness about the bathroom that other don't have necessarily. It is a cultural thing that defines the level of cleanliness with much higher standards.

-Maral: look for example what has interests me is that this year when I went to vote<sup>141</sup>, I went to Manchester Islamic centre, and I was really excited using the bathroom as although it was a western toilet, it had a water hose. This is something that I have seen in Dubai hotels as well.

-Ziba: it is the same in Turkey.

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<sup>140</sup> The month of fasting in Arabic calendar.

<sup>141</sup> she means the Iranian presidential election.

-Shideh: yes

-Maral: I think the bathroom is an issue we are all dealing with here.

-Ziba: yeah this is one of those thing that they don't know it even exists to feel its necessity.

-Maral: yeah but then on the other hand, our public toilets are filthy, but if you check the bathrooms in Marks and Spenser or John Lewis, they are so clean. My supervisor is actually having a research on that. Facilities like baby changing are the basics of a design and we don't have that. For Example when I went to *Milad tower*<sup>142</sup> it was a big surprise for me, the restaurant that was serving very beautiful food, didn't have bathroom, it was located in another floor. It is not even defined that each floor must have an accessible bathroom specially if there is a restaurant or café in that floor.

-Shideh: right, it's very important.

-Maral: yes I don't think design is all about having a wow factor, minding these human centered basics must be provided.

### **Number 20, sensory experience of home?**

-Maral: this is really important for me.

-Ziba: me too

-Shideh: yes, very important.

-Ziba: I mean; how else could you define home? That's it; the sensory experience is home! It is a combination of smell, sound, and light...

-Shideh: yes, it is through these that you feel the calmness in the house, if you don't have these the home loses its meaning.

-Ziba: yes, our senses are our way of communicating with the world, and our home.

Maral: one thing that was very strange for me was that when I was invited to some of the Iranian homes in here that they were all having western/European design, I realized that the users try to have low light and decorate the place with candles. It may seem interesting at the beginning but in my opinion it doesn't match Iranian culture and gives a depressing sense. I understand the idea is to save energy but these lamps don't consume that much Electricity. So, I don't like it like that and I always have all my lights on when I have guests. In my parents' home as well, when we have guests in Iran, he always double checks that all the lights are working. Another thing that is very interesting about lighting that I wanted to share is that my mom has these chandeliers that are very old and it has a antique design, we only turn them on for the guests, the combination of the red light of the bulb and the yellow light of the lamp itself is beautiful that every guest we even had has complimented the colors and lighting in our home.it keeps the home alive.

-Shideh: I think as Maral said, if we can duplicate these elements in our homes in here, then they will be having that warmth we ere talking about and we may feel more belonged. We have those feelings with us, unconsciously, if we pay attention to embody those through these methods, our home would

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<sup>142</sup> A tower that is one of Tehran's landmarks.

be homelier. When she was talking, I was thinking the whole time, that maybe one tries to repeat the same thing in her/his home, it will be very comforting.

-Maral: about the smell, the most important one is the smell of food.

-Shideh: yes, exactly

-Ziba: yes, food is the most important one.

-Maral: or the smell of cleanliness.

-Shideh: yes, you know how the house smells when it is clean

-Zahra: or the smell of Eyd (New years Eve)

-Shideh: Yes

-Maral: yes

**Do you feel the smell of Iranian New year in here as well?**

-Ziba: yes

-Maral: I just wanted to say something, when the Ikea store opened in Sheffield, I went a couple of times and I was very proud to see the Persian carpet section, although they were very low quality but it was a great feeling. I even considered buying one but there were two issues; first is that my home and my life here is temporary, and second it was not affordable for me.

-Shideh: to be honest, this feeling that everything is temporary is very bad, it is something that I believe bothers us the most and doesn't allow us to live the way we like to. It is a very bad feeling.

-Ziba: yes! A friend of mine lives in Canada, we used to go to each other's houses a lot when we were both in Iran. When she left to Canada, she took everything she had in her home with her. Not just furniture but every little decoration and picture frames with her childhood photos. We hadn't met for several years and I went to visit her in Canada. Once I entered her home, I couldn't believe how similar her new home was to her home in Iran. It was so interesting for me to see that how much these little things could make her place feel like her home in Iran again. That made me realize that I haven't brought anything to the UK with me from the home I used to have in Iran. I mean, anything I have from Iran, are the things I bought from my visits to Iran.

-Maral: although it could have helped with making you feel like home...

-Shideh: in my case, I could never bring anything from my home in Iran; I always think everything in that home belongs there.

-Ziba: it is because you have that house in there, I don't

-Maral: yes, you see that as your home

-Shideh: yes, even when I see something pretty, I buy it for there not here.

-Ziba: that is interesting, because you consider your home in Iran as "home".

-Shideh: yes, exactly

-Maral: in terms of the objects, I was checking these traditional tea cups in Ebay- Turkish people also have them and it was sold by the name of traditional Turkish tea cup. You have no idea how much they made me feel good, they remind me of my grandparent home. I decided to buy them online and if I am in the mood I use those to drink my tea. It may not seem very important but I really suffer drinking my tea in a mug that I can't see the color of the tea. But we got used to it. But it is really important for us to be able to see the color of tea. When I visited Amsterdam, I was so excited to see that they serve tea in glass mugs.

-Ziba: yes, I have those. You can find them here. I got used to it but my husband never drinks tea in a normal cup, it has to be glass. Another thing that I bought from Iran is a glass mug with Persian calligraphy and I use it in my office now.

-Maral: this little rug in the corridor, I also brought it from Iran, it is handmade and is from *Sistan va Balouchestan*<sup>143</sup>.

### Number 21?

-Maral: I still follow the same habit and style in here as my home in Iran, like the way I tidy up my bed to more things. it is very important for me for example to have my bed made neatly.

-Ziba: yeah I think it is also asking about for example you bring something from your previous home and place it in your current home, because it reminds you of that old home and therefore gives you a sense of calmness.

-Maral: like an object?

-Ziba: not necessarily

-Shideh: like where you leave your keys.

-Maral: I have a family photo that depicts my sisters and me in her birthday this year. The last time I was I her birthday was 2007 and I couldn't make it to her birthday for 10 years. This photo really takes me back to my parental home and Iran and its memories. It is very valuable for me. In terms of routines I have the same habits but I may be a bit tidier here.

-Shideh: I mentioned this was important for me, because for me, my home in Iran is where I consider home. My main home is the one in Iran that I care more about. I go twice a year usually, and I still feel that one is my real home. I left right after decorating my home and I never got the chance to actually live as I planned, maybe that is why. Also every time I arrive there, everything is very clean and the home smells nice, my mum takes care of that house, and it just feels good to get there. In that house I through parties and everything is what you want from a house.

-Maral: I am sure even the parties in there make you happier.

-Shideh: yeah maybe.

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<sup>143</sup> Name of a state in Iran.

*Appendix 2. The Focus group transcripts and activities*

-Maral: I am happy hear but this year when I was in Iran, I was so happy, because my mum was cooking.

-Shideh: yeah it's different, you see so your family, you receive so much kindness, you are more relaxed, I am much happier there. Maybe it's because of all the support you have there. You feel you have something to lean on.

-Maral: although we have lots of issues and restrictions like the air pollution, these could be bothering you but with all those, still

-Shideh: yeah I feel much better in there, for example when I through a party it is so important for me to have specific plates for that specific party but in here I really don't care, I don't know why but I still haven't developed that sense of homeliness here. I am thinking about the fact that I need to start doing something about my home here to have a similar sense.

-Zahra: I think it's very normal.

-Maral: remember those china plates with red roses on them? My mum had a set and my grandmother as well and I used to hate them when I was in Iran. But now I see them as precious antique pieces. I can't bring them from Iran they will break but now if I see something similar here, I will definitely buy them.

- Ziba: I bring everything; just wrap them around clothes nothing will happen. I bring everything like that. In terms of the question, my husband still lives in Iran but he doesn't live in the same house we used to live he has just rented a place for him and I don't go there even when I am in Iran. So i don't have a place like others to hang on to in Iran as much, but the memory of home, for me it is something that I have been missing. I didn't bring anything specifically from that home that I had in Iran, but I feel I should have maybe it would have helped with the way I interact with my home.

-Shideh: I agree, I think if I considered my home here as my home, I would have decorated it better, I would have invested more time and I would have enjoyed more.

-Ziba: yes, it would have given you more joy as you are living here more.

-Maral: I think the biggest issue is the concern about leaving or staying in the UK, or in the UK itself, am I gonna stay here for ever or not?

-Shideh: but I think it is more about reaching a balance, because I have been living here for ten years now and ten years of my life has passed by just saying it is temporary. It has been best years of my life that I should have enjoyed. So now, I am working on just enjoying life wherever I am even if it is only for two years or even a year.

-Zahra: yes, exactly, it wouldn't cost that much anyway. You need to feel good.

-Shideh: yes, you may actually spend the same amount of money on useless things you don't even realize, while investing on your home is giving you good feeling for a long term. So, I think, instead of buying pretty things from here for my home in Iran, I should have just used them for my home in here, because I live in here, I spend most of my time here, so if I would like to have a pretty plate for example, I should do that, these are the moments that will be remembered. If I go to Iran twice a year and stay, there for month each time so I still live here most of the year.

-Ziba: exactly, but I think it is also because we didn't have the experience, I remember, at the beginning of my life here, I had friend who was investing considerably on her home decorations. I asked her why are you spending that much money as your husband will finish his studies and you may need to leave in a few years, but because she had the same experience she knew how to act as she moved to another city when she was living in Iran. She told me I never bought proper furniture or decorated my home properly and I never liked that life and because she had that experience she said I decided regardless of how long am I going to live in whatever place, I am going to invest and make my home the way I want it and enjoy it. So because we didn't have that experience we started thinking about if it worth it or if we are going to stay or not and still after eight years we don't feel belonged to our home. For example, my previous home was furnished but I just moved to a new home that I had to buy the furniture although I am finishing my studies in a few months. I don't know if I will be in Sheffield or in England at all and I thought about whether investing on furniture or not at this point is a good idea or not? And then I decided that they are things that I need to have and if I don't get them it bother me and that would cost me more.

-Shideh: yes definitely, it is like when you like a coat for example and you buy it regardless of the price just because you like it and it makes you feel good. Although the expensive coat could be damaged the same way as the cheaper one but you don't care and still buy it because you enjoy it more. I also tell my husband quite often, that it doesn't matter what we have or what we don't have all that matters is to enjoy them, if we don't what's the point?

-Maral: I think especially for you to or maybe for me later, the fact that you still have half of your life in Iran, can encourage that detachment from here. The moment you start to feel attached to your home here or to accept your life here, the dependent you have to your life in Iran because of you husband or your properties there could stop you from progressing an attachment to your current context. Also I guess your living costs might be twice as well.

-Shideh: yes exactly. The living standards that you should have could be influenced by this dual life, it is so important

-Maral: yeah we are all coming from different economic backgrounds with different expectations of living standards. One of my worse memories from UK is my experience was living in student accommodation. It is like a prison.

-Shideh: yeah no one really enjoys that.

-Maral: yes, the furniture is very bad. Specially beds. I don't know how you feel about your beds here, but I haven't found a good bed in here yet.

-Shideh: I think it is still related to that feeling of being temporary here and we need to overcome that, although it is very hard. I think there should be a point that we decide and say that is it and from now on I need to start enjoying.

-Maral: yes, but you should consider, that not everyone can afford that in such circumstances.

-Shideh: yes, I agree.

-Maral: yes, for example a student that is here for only a year, they cannot do that.

-Shideh: yes, you can live temporarily for a couple of years, I agree with you but after a while you start to know that you will be staying longer, specially for us who are having children. You may need to stay because of your children. So, you should start making a home on that stage not only for you, because we had the experience of having a high quality living and I think our children should get to have that too. We need to create that experience for them too, I don't think the British people care about that so it is not about the kids feeling left out; it is about providing the experience for them. It may be different for cases with families.

### **You mean to making experience by making home?**

-Shideh: to make memories for them, that when they grow up they have something valuable to share with their children the way I do now.

-Maral: I think it will be regardless

-Ziba: yeah they have their own memory of home and the experience of it but in a different context.

-Shideh: yes that too, but I am talking about what we have in mind with our current ideas and expectations. It is about the ideals you have in mind for your children. If it is only you that's a different story, you can have something in mind about your life and home and you will just have it. I remember before I have kids, I had a different idea about everything; I thought after I finish my studies once I have a baby I won't work for two years and will spend time with my children then I start working. But this didn't happen because I came here and everything changed.

### **23 and 24?**

-Shideh: I said important to both, I love to socialize with everyone Iranian or not. As I already mentioned though, we cannot communicate very easily with British people because I feel they don't let you be a part of their community very easily. Although my kids have some friends that I feel very comfortable with their parents, there is one that she comes over for tea while our kids play together, I am very happy with her. So if it's her or an Iranian friend it is the same for me, I am not biased about that to only hang out with Iranians, but I am more comfortable with Iranians because they feel more comfortable around me too.

-Maral: for me, yes it is great to socialize with British people or people from other countries in general, but what that satisfies me the most is if I have an Iranian friend that comes over to my place and I cook Iranian food like *Tahchin*<sup>144</sup>, this will make me much happier than just sharing a tea or cake with others. I think you two (Ziba and Shideh) might have a different experience because of your children, but for me it's different. For example, my supervisor invited me to her house for one of our meetings, she was so respectful and hosted me with coffee and cookies, but I cannot find a connection, I think Iranian gatherings are much warmer. But she was very nice.

-Ziba: I think one aspect of it is also language,

-Shideh: and common memories!

-Ziba: yes, that too. I said before that your homeland becomes an abstract notion for you after immigration, the other important thing is the language, and it plays a great role in keeping you

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<sup>144</sup> An Iranian formal dish.

attached to your home country and its culture. Your mother language is like a pajama that you are comfortable in it. So I think this comfort that everyone is talking about when gathering with Iranians, some of it is because of the language. And then it is about having common memories and experienced with people. For all of us, English language, although we all are fluent in it and we don't have a problem communicating with it, it is like a very pretty dress that you just wear in a pretty but you are not comfortable in it. It more has a functional essence; it is a tool than an emotional connection. I said very important to both categories, I would like socializing with people but I prefer Iranian gatherings than anything else because of those reasons. My connections and with English people is mostly because, I have to.

-Shideh: the other reason is also the shared memory. For example, you can talk to a British friend and they start talking about a show from twenty years ago but you can't continue the conversation because you don't have that shared experience, I don't have anything to say about that. Or conversations about a song or an artist they all are making you to drop back. So, it just makes you stop going, as there is not much to share and to talk about. Even with my colleagues, although it is a very small network of people, but they have known each other for so long and I have no idea about all the things the talk about, so there is nothing to communicate about, it is not that they are pushing me away, I just decide to not to go anymore.

-Maral: the important thing for me in these gatherings is the style of the food. Iranian food is very delicious but very heavy at the time, so not everyone like it. For example *Chelo Kabab*<sup>145</sup> is a very delicious and elegant dish for us but I have foreign friends that found it too heavy. So when things like this happen you don't know how to react as you have a prejudice towards your food.

-Shideh: yes, I have had the same experience; I took some fresh Pistachio to university and shared some with a colleague, she made an impression like she is disgusted, and I got really offended, I love fresh pistachios.

-Maral: my Greek friends had it and they loved it.

-Ziba: they are different Greeks are like us.

-Shideh: yeah I wanted to be kind...

**Thank you everyone, now we will be moving on to the last activity, I would like you to think about the last time you felt like home in your current home, could you please write down when and where was it and what elements do you think that moment or that place has had to make you feel like that?**

-Shideh: I have a bedroom that is having a great view, it is in a higher level and I have a view to a meadow. It also receives lots of sunlight. The times that my home is very tidy and warm, that place gives me lots of calmness. It is a combination of light, appropriate heating, good view, good level of tidiness gives a sense of home. When I go to my bedroom and look at the view I really feel its home. That is the place in my home that I actually miss. Whenever I get home and go there to change my clothes I rest there and it is very peaceful.

-Ziba: If I want to talk about a specific place. I think that would be my conservatory in my new home. Sometimes during the day if I were at home, I would definitely go there. Another important thing is

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<sup>145</sup> A popular Iranian dish, meaning rice and kebabs.

Appendix 2. The Focus group transcripts and activities

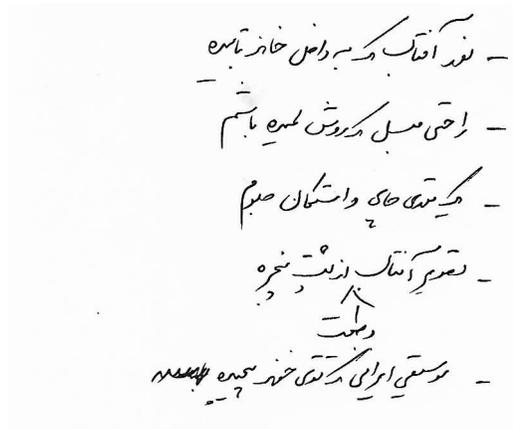
having sunlight in the house. My previous home didn't have conservatory but any time that the sunlight came through the house, and I used to go and I lay down on the sofa that had the sunlight and looked at the sunlight, sky and the trees from there. Other things are the comfort of the furniture and having some tea, I have a teapot with a warmer underneath that I brought from Iran. Another thing that I really like myself is playing some Persian music, that gives me a sense of home.

-Maral: the most important thing and the reason that I actually chose this flat is the balcony. I like to have plants in there with its furniture. Also sunshine, it is very important. Another thing is having Persian rugs. I also wrote having tea with Persian teacups, it gives me a good feeling and if I have some lighted candles then it would be perfect. I got ill for a while and didn't get the chance to decorate the balcony but I have a something in mind to decorate it with plants and chairs and tables.

نور خورشید (sunlight)  
نمای خوب (views)  
میز و صندلی (table and chairs)  
گرم (warm)  
ترکیبی از نور - نمای مناسب ، نظم و ترتیب و زیبایی مناسب من آرایش بخش خانه را آسازد .

I would like to decorate my tiny balcony with :  
1 - persian Ruges  
2 - plants  
3 - table + 2x chairs  
4 - Sunshine  
5 - persian tea + استکان و نعلبکی  
6 - Candles

The third activity listing the elements of homeliness, top photo (Shideh) and the bottom photo (Maral).



The third activity listing the elements of homeliness written by Ziba.