Yasmine Musharbash (PhD Australian National University, MA Freie Universität, Berlin) is an ARC Future Fellow and senior lecturer with the Department of Anthropology at the University of Sydney. She is an anthropologist and has been working with Warlpiri people in Central Australia since the mid-1990s. She has published widely on the themes of everyday life, sleep, the night, monsters, and death as well as boredom, the emotions, the senses, and embodiment. She is the author of Yuendumu Everyday: Contemporary Life in Remote Aboriginal Australia (2009), and has co-edited three volumes: Mortality, Mourning and Mortuary Practices in Indigenous Australia (2008), Ethnography and the Production of Anthropological Knowledge (2011) and Monster Anthropology from Australasia and Beyond (2014).
"Country', 'Community' and 'Growth Town': Three Spatio-temporal Snapshots of Warlpiri Experiences of Home

Yasmine Musharbash – University of Sydney

Abstract: The last 100 years have seen Warlpiri people experience drastic changes in ways of being in the world, from a hunting and gathering past, followed by violent frontier days and ensuing institutionalized sedentization in government settlements, to community life in the era of self-determination, and on to contemporary times of intensive policy intervention. In this paper, I explore some of these changes by focussing on one aspect of them, Warlpiri experiences of home. These in turn I examine by contrasting three different examples across time: (1) Warlpiri notions of home as country during the hunting and gathering past, (2) Warlpiri experiences of home in houses of Yuendumu community during the time of self-determination, and (3) in the here and now of intense policy intervention.

On the one hand, these examples illustrate an easily assumed progression of life ‘outside’ in the desert, via the yards of colonial houses, to the ‘inside’ of contemporary suburban style housing. On the other hand, I show how the inside/outside dichotomy veils other values crucial to understanding Warlpiri notions of home.
This chapter focuses on three snapshots of experiencing home across time to sketch some of the drastic changes Warlpiri ways of being-in-the-world have undergone over the past one hundred years or so. The bulk of this chapter is an abbreviated version of Chapter 2 of *Yuendumu Everyday* (Musharbash 2008), my ethnography of everyday life at Yuendumu, a Warlpiri community on the fringes of the Tanami Desert, about 300 kilometres northwest of Alice Springs. *Yuendumu Everyday* draws on participant observation-based data I acquired during anthropological research spanning from 1998 to 2002 and this excerpt is concerned with first pre-contact camps and camps during the era of self-determination. In the final section of this chapter, I add material from research I undertook since the publication of *Yuendumu Everyday* to update on developments from the here and now of intense policy intervention.

I adopt Heidegger’s (1993) idea of building-dwelling-thinking as a processual cycle in my endeavour to appreciate Warlpiri experiences of home across time. He elaborates on how, in order to dwell, one has to build; and the way one builds mirrors the way one thinks, which in turn is inspired by the way one dwells. Home, from this perspective is experienced through the interdependence of domestic structures, social practices of dwelling within them, and values embodied through such dwelling and within those structures—or, a series of building-dwelling-thinking. Being in the world adjusts as structures, practices, and ideas change, and in the Warlpiri case such change is impelled further by the weighty intersection with another series of building-dwelling-thinking: that of their colonizers.

In 1946, Yuendumu was set up as one of a number of government ration stations on the fringes of the Tanami Desert with the express purpose of alleviating the ravages of frontier violence and a recent drought that Warlpiri people had experienced. Soon, the ‘government ration station’ transmuted first, and briefly, into a ‘mission’, and then into a ‘settlement’ (coinciding with the last decades of the so-called era of assimilation). As self-determination became the new political doctrine, Yuendumu and other settlements like it became ‘communities’. Today, in the aftermath of the Northern Territory Emergency Response initiated in 2007 and the continuing heavy neocolonial policy intervention experienced across the Northern Territory, Yuendumu is labelled a ‘growth town’.

In this chapter, I offer brief examinations of Warlpiri experiences of home during three of these periods: during the hunting and gathering past, secondly in houses of Yuendumu community during the time of self-determination, and finally in the here and now of intense
policy intervention. In the conclusion I reflect about the changes experienced and their effects on the Warlpiri notion of home.

**Olden days’ camps**

Before sedentization, Warlpiri people lived a highly mobile hunting and gathering lifestyle, travelling across the Tanami in bands of ever-changing composition. Before nightfall, the people who formed a band at any one time arranged their sleeping quarters. While the position of these *camps* changed depending on where a band was at a particular time, the shape these *camps* took was always the same, and highly structured. People did not randomly plop down, but every night they reproduced the same structure, or, building in Heidegger’s sense. This was made up of windbreaks, rows of sleepers, and fires. Figure 1 uses Warlpiri iconography to depict a typical *olden days’ camp*, and delineates the named spaces within it.

[[INSERT FIGURE 3.1]]

**Figure 3.1 The spatial terminology of camps**

**Yunta**

In its most restricted sense, the term *yunta* is used to denote a windbreak (Keys 1999:44-46; 165-171). A windbreak is constructed out of leafy branches, either piled on top of each other to create a low, thick wall, or (especially when also used during the day for shade or when particularly windy) through thick leafy branches dug into the earth so they stand upright and interwoven with further horizontal branches. The windbreak is oriented to the east of the sleepers’ heads, stretching from north to south, and people sleep with their head to the east and their feet to the west.

In a more expansive sense, a *yunta* is the spatial manifestation of a row of sleepers, and I use the term to refer to the combination of a windbreak, the places for people to sleep sheltered by it, the people sleeping in it, and, if present, fires. The sleeping places were indicated through moulds in the sand. A *camp* may be made up of a single *yunta*, or a number of them.

**Yarlu**

The space surrounding one or a number of clustered *yunta* is called *yarlu*, and is similar to a yard or a garden in a suburban style Western house, open space between the public (the
street) and the private (the interior of the house). One crucial difference between a yard or garden and yarlu is that the former do not shift their positions (or existence), whereas a yarlu is only there when the yunta and the people sleeping in it are present, meaning, it appears with the creation of yunta, and it disappears as meaningful and named space when a specific camp is deserted. It is this yarlu space, or rather the boundaries around it, which clarify the distinction between yunta and camp. A single yunta with a bounded yarlu space is a camp, more often, however, a camp is made up of a conglomerate of yunta surrounded by one yarlu space. This boundary constitutes the threshold between public space outside the camp and private space inside it. In the absence of walls, doors, doorbells, porches, halls and other similar physical markers of the threshold between public and private, social rules of behaviour structure its crossing. One never walks straight to the location of an actual yunta but waits at the outer boundary of the yarlu, to be noticed and then invited ‘in’.

Yalka

Within the yunta, there is a further delineation of space between the windbreak and the heads of the sleepers, called yalka. Although yalka is a long strip of space between the sleepers’ heads and the windbreak, this space is divided up into individual personal spaces. Each sleeper in a row has their own yalka space, positioned just above the head. These spaces are not physically separated from each other but there are strong invisible boundaries separating individual portions of yalka. The yalka space ‘belonging’ to a particular person is their most private space, to keep their personal belongings.

Kulkurru and yitipi

Within the yunta, the sleepers’ positions are further distinguished in terms of ‘inside’ and ‘outside’. Kulkurru describes the position of sleepers in the middle of a row and yitipi denotes the positions of the sleepers on the outside of a row. Whether a person is a yitipi or a kulkurru sleeper depends on a number of factors. At night, one does not quite know what is out there, both in terms of animals and people, and in regards to the potential presence of ‘spooky’ beings. Accordingly, the kulkurru position quite simply feels safer and therefore, the most socially senior people within a yunta take up the yitipi positions on the outside—sheltering and protecting the sleepers inside.

Gendered camps

Camps are further differentiated by the gender and the marital status of their residents. Married people sleep in yupukarra, married people’s camps; unmarried people sleep in
camps distinguished by gender, women in jilimi, women’s camps, and men in jangkayi, men’s camps. Children sleep in either yupukarra or jilimi, never in jangkayi (for detailed ethno-architectural discussion of the three types of camps, see Keys 1999; 2000). Their order was prescribed in the following way: The married people’s camps, the yupukarra, were situated in the middle, separated into individual yunta. Located to the west of them was the single women’s camp, the jilimi, and the single men’s camp, the jangkayi, used to be to the east of the married people’s camps. If within the same area, the jilimi and the jangkayi should be located as far from each other as possible (Keys 2000:126; Meggitt 1962:76).

Ngurra

Camp is the Aboriginal English translation of the term ngurra, which, however, holds meanings surpassing those captured by the term camp. If camp stand for the aspects of building and thinking of Heidegger’s series, then ngurra embraces the aspect of thinking, encapsulating the values underlying the world views arising out of (and feeding back into) such structures and practices. Ngurra radiates multiple levels of meaning which afford an incipient understanding of how ngurra is a core concept in Warlpiri language and cosmology:

1) Generic idea of shelter.
Ngurra is something every person and every animal has. It designates the place where one sleeps at night—for people ngurra takes the structure of the camp; for animals ngurra takes the form of a nest, lair, burrow and so forth.

2) Place where one habitually sleeps.
A related term is ngurra-yuntyuntu, denoting a place where many people lived for an extended period of time, a large and long-term camp, as for example the original camp sites on the outskirts of the settlement, where Warlpiri people lived during the early days before houses were built.

3) Home.
The emotional bond one can have to one’s ngurra becomes more pronounced in the term’s added meaning of home, with all the emotional depth that can possibly be attached to it. The phrase ngurra-ngajuku [my home] is generally used in this sense, especially in Warlpiri songs, many of which are about homesickness. Ngurra-ngajuku in these songs often stands for Yuendumu (if the song writer is from Yuendumu).
4) Ancestral Place.

*Ngurra* also designates the idea of the place with which a person is associated by conception, birth, ancestry, ritual obligation, or long term residence; in short, their country, their land. For example, Mawurritjiyi, a place to the south of Yuendumu, is one of Old Jakamarra’s *ngurra*, a place with which he had profound emotional associations, a place for which he knew the songs and dances, where he had lived in the past, for which he was often pining, and which he consequently often painted in his dot paintings.

5) Family.

The term *ngurra-jinta* [lit. one camp] is used to refer to the people living in one *camp*, typically close kin. It connotes being one family, of one household, from the same place. *Ngurra-jinta* presupposes either family connection or long-term cohabitation, coupled with emotional affiliation.

6) Ritual division.

The terms *ngurra-kurlarni-nyarra* [lit. camp-southside] and *ngurra-yatuju-mparra* [lit. camp-northside] designate the two patri-moieties into which all Warlpiri people are divided. During certain rituals these moieties spatially oppose each other, being positioned on the southern and the northern sides of the ceremony ground respectively.

7) Time.

*Ngurra* also stand for the period of twenty-four hours, and designates numbers of days or nights. For example, when I asked about the distance to a settlement up north, the answer was “*ngurra-jarra*” [lit. two camps], meaning a three-day drive with two overnight stays on the way.

8) Country, the world.

Finally, *ngurrara* means country, father-land, place, land, home. On one level it can be used to refer to one’s own country, e.g. Mawurritjiyi, or, more commonly, to the Tanami Desert, to the entire Warlpiri lands. However, *ngurrara* does not only denote the expanse of physical space but everything within it, the people, the animals, the plants, as well as the ancestral beings and spiritual powers contained within the land, the moving clouds, the winds, the stars, the passing of time and so forth.
As this inventory makes abundantly clear, *ngurra* as a term encapsulates a great number of meanings, beginning with the most generic idea of shelter to the incorporation of the Warlpiri cosmos into a single term. *Ngurra* is conceptually extensive and covers the entire spectrum between residential units and cosmological concepts—underpinning Warlpiri notions of ‘home’.

**Housing policy and (not so) implicit values**

*Camps* were physical manifestations of people’s movements through their country and they accommodated (and created) kin. They were erected out of bush materials (sand, branches, fire); when people moved on their *camps* were simply left behind and new ones were erected effortlessly whenever the band reached a new place. *Camps* embody the core values of mobility, immediacy and intimacy encapsulated in *ngurra*; core values which clash significantly with those signified by the house.

Taking an archetypal Western-style house and looking at its conventional uses, those that Westerners consider *normal* independent of the way they actually live themselves, we find that the primary purpose of the house is to shelter the family. An average family is imagined as a nuclear family, as parents and children. The house is removed from the public world by the front lawn (often also a fence and a porch) and accessed through the front door. The inside is expressive of a spatial order where separate rooms are reserved for specific functions: a lounge room to relax and welcome guests into, a kitchen to cook in, a dining room to eat in, bathrooms for bodily functions, and bedrooms for sleeping. The latter, bedrooms, are the most private space within the house; all other rooms are shared, these are not (with the exception of the master bedroom which is shared by the parents). Bedrooms are not only for sleeping, though, they contain each respective person’s private possessions, and this is also where these persons spend time on their own (apart from sleeping, presumably to read, to think, to have phone conversations they do not want overheard, to daydream, to play, to cry, and so forth).

Contemporary Western-style living revolves around separate rooms for different people with the ideal of one bedroom per person living in the house and some shared rooms for all, separated from the world outside. Houses both symbolize and enable privacy rather than intimacy. Houses are built of heavy materials (concrete, bricks, wood) and do not move, they are permanent, at least over significant periods of time. Thus fixed in place, houses in turn fix
people in place—they foster stability rather than mobility. In terms of materials needed for building, skills involved in building, as well as in terms of maintenance, houses are costly. They foster and express future-orientation rather than immediacy: generally, one needs to accumulate in order to afford dwelling in a house, either to pay rent, or, preferably, to pay off a mortgage with the ultimate goal of owning one’s own house. Similarly, one must budget for household items, furnishings and maintenance.

The values of mobility, immediacy and intimacy, which underpin the Warlpiri series of building-dwelling-thinking, thus find their opposites in the values symbolized by the house as metaphor and enabled through the house as actual physical structure. The government project of sedentization, of institutionalizing people who previously roamed freely through their country in settlements, aimed to negate and overcome this inherent clash of values, using the house as a ‘civilizing tool’.

Following the Second World War, during the era of Assimilation, so-called ‘transitional housing’ was introduced in central Australian Aboriginal settlements. This entailed a vision of Western-style houses as a ‘medium of uplift’ and the idea was to move Aboriginal families through a series of domestic structures with increasing complexity. A damning critique of transitional housing can be found in Heppell (1979). Ultimately, Heppell argues that in respect to Western styles of living and Aboriginal styles of living the transitional housing scheme ‘permits neither set of living practices, nor does it permit a compromise between the two’ (Heppell 1979:15). Rather than state-provided housing transforming Warlpiri people in the intended way, the two series, the Western one and the Warlpiri one, intersect, with reverberations that shape Warlpiri experiences of home.

Most camps are located in and around Western-style houses, which come in a great variety of shapes and forms, reflecting stages in policy, from one room tin houses to the latest suburban-style bungalows. The Warlpiri term for the physical structure of a house is yuwarli. However, independent of the kind of physical structure any Warlpiri residence at Yuendumu is located in and around, it is called camp in Aboriginal English or ngurra in Warlpiri. That is, a camp can be in a humpy or a suburban style five-bedroom brick house. Practices of dwelling in contemporary camps at Yuendumu follow as well as differ from those of the olden days in significant ways.

**Warlpiri ways of dwelling in houses during self-determination**
Warlpiri people try to continue to follow the rules of how to set up camp, with many compromises. Yuendumu is a large settlement now encompassing six Warlpiri-populated ‘suburbs’, and thus too large an aggregation of people and physical structures to support the spatiality of the residential separation of men, women, and married people or, of jangkayi, yupukarra, and jilimi (to the east, middle and west respectively). On a smaller scale, the Western-style houses in and around which most camps at Yuendumu are located make it equally hard to sustain this form of spatial ordering. In response, people uphold the rules of gender separation but are lenient with the rules of spatial orientation. Many houses are used either as a jilimi, a jangkayi, or a yupukarra, independent of their location within the settlement. Other houses, however, have two or all three kinds of camp located in and around them. In these cases, different gendered camps occupy different rooms when sleeping inside, or, and more frequently, when sleeping outside, they are located either on different sides of the house, or, at least at some considerable distance from each other. Houses often interfere with the possibility of orienting the head to the east at night. Here, too, Warlpiri people are pragmatic and if east orientation is possible, they adhere to it, if it is not, people are willing to sleep in other orientations.

In the 1990s, life in Warlpiri-occupied houses was oriented outwards rather than inwards—most activity, including sleeping, cooking, eating, and socialising, took place in the yard and on the verandah. This yard-orientedness of Warlpiri people leaves the house available to them as a space to put to other uses. In the pre-contact past people did not have more possessions than they could carry and store in their yalka. As Warlpiri people came to own more things, the most prominent usage of houses became storage. First among Warlpiri people’s possessions are items of bedding. Each adult person has his or her own swag or mattress, a ground sheet, a number of blankets, and at least one suitcase or large bag full of clothes, also stored inside the house. No matter whether sleeping outside or inside, Warlpiri people continue to sleep in yunta, rows. Sleeping normally takes place on the ground, although some camps have beds in them. Instead of moulds in the sand, sleeping positions are made up of people’s bedding, in the main swags or foam mattresses and blankets laid out on a ground sheet. The windbreak above the sleepers’ heads can be anything from a ‘proper’ Warlpiri-style windbreak constructed out of leafy branches, to the wall of a room or verandah, a car, a suitcase, or it may just be there symbolically. Yunta are set up at nightfall and in the morning the bedding is put out of sight.
At Yuendumu, *yarlu* space and yard space surrounding a house are often conflated through the introduction of fences. When I first arrived at Yuendumu in 1994, only some public areas and buildings, such as the school and the clinic, and some non-Indigenous houses had fences. Since then, fences have become immensely popular and most Warlpiri *camps* have a fence, surrounding them in a square yard-like enclosure. Instead of the previous invisible and implicit *yarlu* boundaries, today, Warlpiri and non-Indigenous people alike often use the fence as the point of negotiation for entry into a *camp*.

As in *olden days* etiquette, today the *yunta* present a further level of privacy within the *yarlu* (see also the Spatial Diagram of activity areas within the *yunta* of Warlpiri *jilimi* in Keys 1999:168). *Yunta* are only entered by people actually sleeping in them or people very close to them. Equally, the *yalka* space between the sleeper’s head and the windbreak (just above, or sometimes underneath, the pillow) remains the most exclusive space within the *camp*. It is used for storage of essential items and prized possessions, such as water bottles, money, matches, handbags, talismans, tablets, photographs, tobacco and whatever else is important to the sleeper. In terms of the *yitipi* and *kulkurru* positions of the sleepers within a *yunta*, nothing has changed.

Most significantly, as in the past, there is no concept of a single person *yunta* as a single *camp* on its own. Close proximity when sleeping enables the sharing of dreams (Dussart 2000; Poirier 2005), it deflects possible accusations of sorcery, and most importantly, it prevents ‘loneliness’. To be without *marlpa*, company, is unthinkable and avoided at all costs. Sleeping alone is an impossibility not only because the ‘lonely’ person would be unhappy but also because should something happen to that person, the ones who left them without *marlpa*, alone, would be the first to be blamed. This two-directional relationality—seeking the company of others for one’s own comfort as well as to provide comfort to others—principally underpins the character of Aboriginal relations in central Australia, or, what I call Warlpiri forms of intimacy, and thus experiences of home.

**Warlpiri ways of dwelling in houses during the current era of intense policy intervention**

Warlpiri desires, Western policies, as well as demographic circumstance all played a role in affecting the changes in building-dwelling-thinking that have taken place since the previous era (see also Hinkson, 2014:71). Perhaps the most drastic, and immediately visible, one is that in contrast to the 1990s today less Warlpiri people seem to be sleeping outside. This is
just one aspect of a larger development: a gradual (as well as age-graded) shift away from living in the open towards using the house as a domestic (rather than as storage) space. Other visible markers document this: Yuendumu’s townscape, today, does not include humpies (except at certain times, during the performance of mortuary or initiation rituals, on the margins of the settlement). All impermanent domestic structures, as well as the colonial one-room tin houses and besser brick ‘donkey houses’, have been replaced by suburban-style houses, including the latest edition: duplexes. The long-demanded refurbishment of old housing stock and the addition of much needed new houses are one outcome of the NTER, and the ensuing Stronger Futures legislation, and came at the cost of signing over a lease of the Yuendumu town area to the government (compulsory five-year leases, followed by negotiated leases of up to ninety-nine years over ‘prescribed areas’ were a central pillar of these highly controversial policies).\(^3\)

Having, at least momentarily, access to improved housing stock, means that for the first time, a majority of Warlpiri-occupied houses are now actually cooler inside than the outside in summer, and warmer inside than the outside in winter.\(^4\) Sleeping and living inside rather than outside could simply be seen as made possible by functioning air-conditioning and heating. However, matters are more complex, illustrated by the fact that it is the younger population of Yuendumu that uses the inside of houses more—the older residents continue to orient their lives to the outside.

These developments go hand-in-hand with a shift in demographics: like elsewhere across Aboriginal Australia, the Aboriginal population of Yuendumu is increasingly young (as a result of the combination of high mortality rates and high birth rates).\(^5\) There are more young couples at Yuendumu now than ever before, and with the increase in housing stock, they have enthusiastically taken up opportunities of having bedrooms to themselves. Compared to the 1990s, many more houses today are occupied by closely related couples and their children, with one individual yupukarra (married people’s camps) per bedroom. The youth of the population influences ways of dwelling further, and there is today a clear distinction visible in the way a Warlpiri camp/house looks and is used according to the age of its core occupants. As a rule, camps/houses headed by those in their fifties and older do not essentially look any different from camps in the 1990s (and residents, including younger members, in these also sleep outside more often, cook on fires outside more often, and spend more of the day outside). The houses of younger occupants also differ materially; they contain:
• more furniture such as large heavy beds (rather than the steel bedframes sometimes used when sleeping outside), wardrobes, shelves, some have tables and chairs, some have sofas;
• flat screen TVs, speakers, stereos, PlayStations, etc.;
• more decoration such as framed photos, posters, mirrors, etc.;
• more kitchen utensils, pots and pans, bowls, plates and cups, slow cookers, toasters, and so forth (on generational differences in cooking and diet, see Musharbash 2004).

This is a mutually reinforcing process: as younger Warlpiri people spend increasing amounts of time inside their houses, the inside of their houses change—or, as they acquire more goods that make inside living alluring, their domestic space changes and with it their practices of dwelling within it.

Other practices, however, have remained the same: there still is no one-person yunta. For example, if the husband of a married couple who made their yupukarra in a bedroom is away, the wife ceases to sleep in the bedroom and either moves into a jilimi with older female relatives, or, other women living in the house move with her onto the verandah, into the yard, or the ‘living room’, creating a jilimi there. Nor has anything changed in regards to the spontaneity with which Warlpiri people respond to the needs of those close to themselves: whether it be the vacating of a house due to a death, the turning of a living room into jilimi full of rows of sleeping women and children, or easy incorporation into domestic space of visitors, no matter how many or whether they will stay for a night or a year.

The different influences underpinning these developments do not seamlessly flow together; rather, this is an often jarring process, illustrated clearly in Warlpiri emotional responses to some of the consequences of signing the lease over Yuendumu to the government. This entailed Aboriginal houses, formerly administered by community councils, becoming the responsibility of the NT Department of Housing, or any of their contractors. Tenants had to sign new rental contracts for the houses they lived in, and found that their style of dwelling was under scrutiny and pressured to change in a number of regards. They did not take gladly to a number of these, including:

• tenants are now technically forbidden from making fires in the yard;
• they are also technically forbidden from sleeping outside;
• the number of dogs was reduced to two per house (from a former rule of thumb of two dogs per person, which in itself was seen as an imposition seldom adhered to);
• visitors now technically should be registered and their numbers limited;
• every signee had to take a course in ‘house cleaning’;
• there are now four (legal) house inspections annually (and I know of unannounced inspections as well).

While (so far) nobody in Yuendumu has been evicted for breaking their tenancy agreement, this has happened in town camps in Alice Springs and further north. Some of these cases are reported in the news;\(^7\) moreover, the well-oiled ‘bush telegraph’ has everyone at Yuendumu informed about such incidents. Late last year, for the first time in my long experience at Yuendumu, I experienced Warlpiri people not ‘feeling at home’ as fear of eviction took hold in many Warlpiri houses. To give but three examples: a Warlpiri friend of mine glumly declined requests by two different researchers, who in the past often stayed with her, to stay at her house, afraid she would be evicted. At the camp I stay regularly, for a while we did not sleep outside even though conditions were perfect, nor were fires made for cooking—the residents of this camp did not voice fears about eviction so much, but expressed concerned uncertainty about the implications of making a fire, or sleeping outside. Just a week earlier, the senior women at a neighbouring jilimi, one morning woke up in their yunta on their verandah to a white, male person photographing them in their beds, for a report to NT Housing. It took a while until people got over the shock of these demands and life ‘at home’ went back to normal. Yet, it remains to be seen how these clashes unfold in the long run, what action NT Housing takes, and in turn, how Warlpiri people will react.

**Conclusion**

*Ngurra-jinta*, literally meaning ‘one camp’ is the term used to describe one’s closest family, those one lives with, *at home*, sharing time, space, resources, care, emotions. One’s *ngurra-jinta* sustain the self; who one is as a person is defined through being with them. This self-definition through home radiates out to encompass *ngurrara*, one’s country, where one dwells, but more importantly from which one hails, spiritually, and into which on returns at death. *Ngurra*, also simply means camp, the actual place of dwelling, literally home. The multiple meanings enshrined in the Warlpiri term *ngurra*—family, country, camp—exemplify Warlpiri notions and experiences of home, and the main point I make in this chapter that *this* has changed but little over the past one hundred years or so. *Ngurra* in its multi-layeredness continues to define what home means.
However, this experience of home takes different shapes during different eras, each characterized by different styles of dwelling, as well as different dwellings. *Olden days* camps were camps within country, from where country could be surveyed, and experienced: temperature, the breeze, the stars above, all were the same at home in the camp and at home in country (see also Jackson 1995). By the 1990s, in Aboriginal English, the generic term for ‘country’ in distinction to the settlement had become ‘out bush’. The settlement itself took on some characteristics of country: not only spiritually in that the settlement, by default, became the conception Dreaming place for many of the children born to women living there, but also, and importantly, in terms of the settlement itself acquiring characteristics of home. *Ngurra-ngajuku*, my home, now also referred to Yuendumu. While Yuendumu, materially, was made of more permanent structures than Warlpiri people used to live in, houses of all kinds of style, Warlpiri people lived in their *ngurra*, their camps, not that differently than they used to, even though these camps became located in and around houses. Camps themselves shifted frequently, and mobility was facilitated for by the possibilities of moving from camp to camp within Yuendumu (discussed in much more detail in Chapter 4 of Musharbash 2008).

Yuendumu, the growth town, in contrast has less mobility through the camps (though it is still immensely higher than that of the non-Indigenous population). Combined with the continuing shift towards living inside more than outside, means that home today by many is not experienced as country (as it was in the past). Phenomenologically speaking, for example, there now is a radical and novel split between home as the inside of a house, where much time is spent, and ‘the world’. The inside of houses and the world differ drastically in regards to all sensuous experience: aurally, olfactorily, and visually there is very little overlap, even the temperatures differ, as does the feel of the air (wind, stillness or a breeze versus heated or air-conditioned air). In other words, being at home now feels different from being in the world. Finally, Yuendumu the growth town also transports feelings of increasing loss of Warlpiri control over the town. And this, I put forward, is one last factor contributing to the shift towards the inside of house, propelled by the hope that there, at least, one can continue to experience home in its Warlpiri sense of family, place and being.

**Acknowledgements**

I am immensely grateful to Aboriginal Studies Press for generously allowing me to use material from Chapter 2 of *Yuendumu Everyday* (Musharbash 2008) in this chapter. Time to
work on this chapter was made possible by ARC Future Fellowship FT130100415 and I would like to thank Alison Leitch for inviting me to participate in the ‘home’ project.

References


Poirier, Sylvie (2005), A World of Relationships: Itineraries, Dreams and Events in the Australian Western Desert, Toronto: University of Toronto Press.


1 On the significance of threshold in Western-style houses see Rosselin (1999) who describes the complex social negotiations of entering Parisian apartments without entrance halls.

2 See Musharbash (2013) for an ethnographic in-depth exploration of the kulkurru and yitipi positions, as well as Chapter 4, 5, and 6 in Yuendumu Everyday (Musharbash 2008).


4 This is not to say that houses in Aboriginal communities are of a comparable standard to houses elsewhere in Australia (for some persistent facts, see Torzillo et al. 2008).

