

INVISIBLE SPACE

Jeanne d' Arc Umubano, January 2015

“Thus the dream house must possess every virtue. How ever spacious, it must also be a cottage, a dove-cote, a nest, a chrysalis. Intimacy needs the heart of a nest. Erasmus, his biographer tells us, was long “in finding a nook in his fine house in which he could put his little body with safety. He ended by confining himself to one room until he could breathe the parched air that was necessary to him.”

Bachelard, Gaston. *The Poetics of Space*. Trans, Maria Jolas. Boston: Beacon Press, 1994. Page 65

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1. Preface

The space is described as an invisible limitless expanse where all matters exist. It is where all material objects are located and all events occur. It is a dwelling of human thoughts, dreams, concepts, visions, and ideas — that is, what Apostle Paul encouraged people to focus on in the New Testament: “*Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.*”¹

The structures, forms, and volumes are all results of the invisibility. They are safe places where the invisible world is excised before it is brought into existence or into visibility. They are an ensemble of chambers: spaces within spaces, which are naturally in order, Are arranged, organized, classified, and systematized. A void will be filled with a positive or negative energy/spirit and be influential in accomplishing a goal/objective. We are able to create, design, plan, or determine who we really are according to the spaces we choose. There are indefinite patterns of choices depending on human desires in that rime of the spirit. It is therefore difficult to be able to make good combinations since human beings have to strive for good. There is always a war of good and bad (evil) going on in the mind. The mind becomes a battlefield of questions of like *Who we are? What kind of thoughts do we have, in which spirit or power do we operate? What are our interests? What kind of spaces to choose? Where do we feel at home?* and so on. We are actually what we think — and as one thinks, so s/he is.

In his book *The Fourth Dimension*, David Yonggi Cho argues that “*In the universe there are three types of spirits- the holy spirit of God, the spirit of the devil, and the human spirit which are the materiality of the invisible space.*” And he goes on to explain the space formation and how it functions: “[...] *when you study geometry you put up two points, one here one there, and if you draw a line between the two you call it one dimension. It is just one line between the points, one dimension. But if you add line upon line by the hundreds of thousands, then one dimension naturally creates a second dimension, a plane. And if you stack up planes one upon another then it becomes cubic; this is called the third dimension. The material world and the whole earth belong to the third dimension.*”²

The first dimension is controlled by the second dimension, and the second by the third dimension, and all of them are controlled by the fourth dimension which is the invisible world.

According to Paul the Apostle, to operate in the invisible world, one needs faith which he describes as follows: “*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report. Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.*”³ The practicing of faith then finally brings me to a conclusion of imagining what our great and great-great parents brought into existence striving and acting in faith in order to live a good life. For instance, among them are the greatest designers and architects from whom we inherited wisdom, knowledge, and understanding of space. If then the space properties are abstract within peoples’ minds, every individual through his/her perception should be responsible for re-thinking and re-defining built-up concepts and ideas, to bring them into existence for development and changes in the real world.

1 The Holy Bible. King James Version. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, Philippians 4:8

2 David Yonggi Cho, *Discovering a new world of answered prayer: The Fourth Dimension*, volume one, 1979 Bridge-Logos Publishers. page 26-27.

3 The Holy Bible. King James Version. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, Hebrews 11:1-3.

2. Introduction

For a long time, I was confused over the fact that, in my own life, there was a continual shifting from one place to another. My own personal experience was plagued with such questions and provided an adequate ground for doubt and suspicion regarding the subject of ideal or convenient space for living. Being grown and raised up in a community where most people live in households that include not only the nuclear family (mother, father, children), but also members of the extended family (grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and others), my life was deeply entangled in the habitual corporeal dynamics of the home. Family members act as both economic and emotional network and provide individuals with a sense of who they are and where they belong. An individual's sense of self relies on the habitual touch of familiar people and objects at home, as well as of movements through and interactions with its tangible surfaces. The home comes to represent the "self" through the establishment of habitual bodily behaviors, such as smooth routines, by which our bodily practice becomes accustomed to the architectural forms, objects, and other bodies with which we live. The physical engagement with home and its spaces becomes interwoven with emotion and memory, in turn establishing a strong home attachment which results in domestic intimacy. The home's most important function is to reconfirm and maintain this intimacy and identity as materially and historically located which have an influence on the social householder and the built environment.

Identity cannot be separated from the material structure and home history, familiar spaces, objects, and other bodies in the home. The relationship between material home and memories or remembering's processes that are built up domestically, culturally formulate life patterns which eventually become our identity. The centrality of the attachment to our domestic relations with the people and objects in our homes trace the mechanisms of domestic dissolution, whereby the psychological rewards of tactile engagement clearly define domestic spaces. The fact that I had developed my behaviors as well as my way of thinking basing on these facts, I created this imaginary spaces in my mind that could be changed by no means and were like a luggage which I carried whenever I could be and was in search of a perfect and accurate space to place it. In *The Poetics of Space*, Gaston Bachelard writes about these phenomena on how our childhood memories of home operate both as dreams and as bodily sensation: "*Through this permanent childhood, we maintain the poetry of the past. To inhabit oneirically the house, we were born in means more than to inhabit it in memory; it means living in this house that is gone, the way we used to dream in it. [. . .] And so beyond all the positive values of protection, the house we were born in becomes imbued with dream values which remain after the house is gone. Centers of boredom, centers of solitude, centers of daydream group together to constitute the oneiric house which is more lasting than the scattered memories of our birthplace.*"⁴

In House Thinking: A Room by Room Look at How We Live, Winifred Gallagher argues that the home must "*complement who you really are,*" that your home is "*a personal expression.*"⁵ My interests thus gradually spiral inward, beginning with the way we come to understand ourselves through touching people and things at home and through eventually focusing upon the sense of visual, movements we make in order to be connected to these things, posture and location, how we feel and how it affects our emotions and how all these are built up in our memories. In other words, how a person's body defines that person's home and how that home in turn shapes that person's bodily life.

⁴ Bachelard, Gaston. *The Poetics of Space*. Trans. Maria Jolas. Boston: Beacon Press, 1994, page 16, 17.

⁵ Gallagher, Winifred. *House Thinking: A Room by Room Look at How We Live*. New York: Harper, 2006. Page 64.

A home thus should be a distillation of interests meeting one's needs and reflecting who we really are. It should be a place we feel most comfortable and rejuvenated. According to Aldo van Eyck, a home is a starting point of an observation to find out various realities and qualities of domestic spaces. Looking to the organization of spaces in his design, he notes that "*a house should be like a little city, and every city a big house joining people and their home environment.*"⁶ The arrangement, order and organization of the space plays here a very important role in bringing appreciation, harmony, and calmness in genuine habitats and this goes hand in hand with our bodily, emotional, and material which are central to the home's purpose and provide a solution to the question raised in design in relation to functions.

In his book of *Housing for the Millions*, John Habraken emphasizes the need we have for each other in order to maintain a natural relationship between people and their homes. He highlights the role of a user/dweller of a domestic space to be responsible for creating and designing his/her own domestic domain. People should have their total freedom to organize and reorganize their private areas as well as their environment. It should not only be that, but also add to their intelligence expansion and creativity. Herman Hertzberger believes that there is always room for householders to rearrange and reorganize the space according to their needs. In his design, he gives always an opportunity for expansion or the ability to make changes. I find that this offers a great deal to the solutions of our identities, which are becoming more complex, and our relationships with each other, which are becoming more interconnected. It affects the relationship between architecture and modern experiences or architecture and human body.

When Winifred Gallagher comes to eliminating the flexibility in personality and domestic space, she becomes doubtful if the home will continue to express the self. Specifically, On explicating the elision between self-improvement and home improvement in her discussion of environmental psychologist Connie Forrest's work with a woman undertaking simultaneously a "*big professional transition*"⁷ and a home renovation, Gallagher demonstrates the contradiction which could be raised up in trying to design a home around who we "really are." When we refine our inner vision of the self, it should equally also done to our homes as well, so that this newly renovated personality can be expressed in the newly renovated home. On the other hand, we have to put in our minds that the experience of home as an incorporated process involves not only intimacy and connection with loved ones, but also pain, loss and, at times, danger. The significance of tactility through our senses reveals us a critical and experiential framework through which contemporary cultural constructions of intimacy, domesticity, and embodied subjectivity can be understood in the domestic realm. By situating embodiment in its particular postural relationship to the emotionally resonant spaces of the home, the approach to material domesticity and embodied identity, will uncover how the tangible dynamics of our everyday lives create our identities and come under stress when those identities are called into question.

⁶http://www.academia.edu/3223396/City_is_House_and_House_is_City_Aldo_vanEyck_Piet_Blom_and_the_Architecture_of_Homecoming. Page 181.

⁷ Gallagher, Winifred. *House Thinking: A Room by Room Look at How We Live*. New York: Harper, 2006. Page 64.

3. Domesticity

3.1 Domestic space

According to James Krasner, a domestic space is composed by the total relationship among our perception of the body's surface, the space that surrounds it, and the material forms (including people, objects, animals, and architectural features). The tactile interchange between the spaces and the body surfaces in the home create one's domestic environment. It is both about the materiality of the home and the material experience of the body within that home where our body senses determine domestic relations with the self, people, and objects. The emotional power of domesticity is also fully located in the relations between these phenomena as much as it is in the home's geometrical space or ideological formulation. These all reflect a desire to connect us to the roots of one's culture.

James Krasner makes it clear that we cannot focus more on motion and location in domestic space rather than on geometric or spectacular function, as domesticity ultimately becomes contiguous with the body's sensory. Embodied identity at home cannot be defined by a clear edge or reduced to figure/ground distinctions; rather, it must take into account the body's intimate and dynamic engagement with the home's resonantly familiar materiality. John Habraken's analysis gives us an explanation of an object within a space in relation to geometry, namely, that an "*object has a concrete space, which is the space filled by the object as a result of geometry. It has also an abstract space, which is the space required for it to function and the space required for the human user.*"⁸ For example, the object geometry of the door is given by its height, width, and depth. Its functional space is the space needed for the sweep of its door leaf. Its user space may be additional space on either side of the door to allow access. Thus, the total space that can be allocated to an object is the union of its concrete and abstract space. A domestic space, therefore, is a cluster of tactile sensations and bodily positions that form the somatic groundwork through which we experience its emotional sustenance. Thus, the home becomes an ensemble of these domestic spaces, a place where everything about domesticity takes place. A foundational ground of our thoughts, memories, and dreams on which our domestic intimate life relies as is described by Bachelard. It is seen as a dreamlike tableau that is made with corridors and stairways as the bowels, while living rooms, bedrooms, attics are bodily cavities. Thus, home becomes both a cultural formulation and a building where architectural values and social patterns are intimately shared.

3.2 Domestic intimacy

Domestic intimacy can be understood as a series of physical habits that create tangible contiguity between ourselves and the people we live with. Gaston Bachelard analyzed the intimate spaces of our lives and concluded that they are composed of "*thoughts, memories and dreams of mankind.*"⁹ He notes that the binding principle in this foundation is the daydream through which we can intimately travel to our past, present, and future. It is the conscious and unconscious metaphysics that starts from the moment when the being is cast into the world, when the human is deposited in the well-being, originally associated with being. Our souls are on abode, now everything becomes clear, the house images move in both directions: they are in us as much as we are in them. The exact drawings we have lived are tone on the mode of our inner spaces, henceforth calling for actions. Before these actions, the imagination is at work being ready, waiting for the Wright time to bring these drawings and all imaginary actions into existence.

⁸ http://www.habraken.com/html/downloads/emergent_coherent_behavior.pdf. Page 4.

⁹ Bachelard, Gaston. *The Poetics of Space*. Trans. Maria Jolas. Boston: Beacon Press, 1994. Page 6.

In this respect, we have within ourselves an entire assortment of images and recollections that we would not readily disclose. This is because our memories of former dwelling places are relived as daydreams, as these dwelling places of the past remain in us for all time. We should therefore be able to say how we inhabit our vital space, in accord with all the dialectics of life, how we take root day after day in a corner of the world, expressing all the complexity and values that attach us to our domestic spaces. The humble and primitive experiences from the home, which emerge in their reality and their vitality by the means of our thoughts and dreams, create the uniqueness of the oneirism after having cast into the world.

After having been introduced to the atmosphere of the campongs (self-sufficient Malayan communities built according to their own fixed plan), John Habraken concluded that when people are responsible for their own housing the results can be an interesting and wholesome environment. Him, Aldo van Eyck and Herman Hertzberger being space designers, they insisted on giving the users of the space the opportunities to create and satisfy their own desires about the choices making and usage of the space.

I can then argue that the reason why the inhabitants or dwellers should be responsible of their spaces creativity, is because of the values that belong to the daydreaming that mark humanity in its depths. It has the privilege of authority which derives direct pleasure from its own being. Gaston Bachelard goes on arguing that *“the house we were born in has engraved within us the hierarchy of the various functions of inhabiting, that we are the diagram of the functions of in habiting that particular house, and all other houses are but variations on a fundamental theme.”*¹⁰ He describes these collective moments that we relive during daydreams as *“shut-in spaces”*.¹¹

3.2.1 Shut-in spaces

Shut-in spaces are experiences of heartwarming space, of a space that does not seek to become extended, but would like above all to still be possessed. All the spaces in which we have suffered from solitude, enjoyed, desired, and compromised. Solitude remains indelible within us and precisely because the human being wants them to remain so — instinctively knowing that it is the resource of creativity where the promises of the future inhabit.

The heartwarming spaces are localized in the womb of the home, in the utmost depths of reverie. The refuges of our memories and embodiment of our dreams. In the place of the cradle where the details and descriptions of the oneiric intimacy is revealed. The humble, comfortable, and lovely spaces that we passed through. The domain of intimacy in which psychic weight is dominant, in the power of attraction, in the secret places. All the spaces of intimacy are designed by an attraction and their being is well being and infinity.

I am, for example, very much attached to the African traditional hut which is one of the world’s most distinctive habitations as a practical adaptation to the environment and lifestyle. It is unsurpassed in its simplicity, in its use of available materials, in its convenience, and in its visual cheerfulness, which also makes it one of the most attractive human shelters. In my daydream, I always relived these collective moments of seeing myself in this traditional hut from which I traveled back and forth through the material home from inside out. In the back side of this hut with its high built-in beds and storage underneath, from the ceiling to the floor, I could make a deep observation of the structure and the very fine work of weaving techniques which were done using grass, reeds, straws, and bamboo. There were central poles holding up the roof, between which there was a fire-place and a hole to let the smoke out on this roof. Around this fire-place, there was a private space shared by the householder which I can call the living room.

¹⁰ Bachelard, Gaston. *The Poetics of Space*. Trans. Maria Jolas. Boston: Beacon Press, 1994. Page 15.

¹¹ Bachelard, Gaston. *The Poetics of Space*. Trans. Maria Jolas. Boston: Beacon Press, 1994. Page 10.

In the modernist tradition, the spaces are always named after the function they hold in a house. In traditional houses (huts), the function of spaces is more difficult to name, because some spaces have no specific function. They serve a lot of purposes and they may be described according to the function of what usually takes place in them. For example, in this private space, it was also where they cooked, stored their belongings or where they slept. It is where the whole family sat while eating and also gathered before bed-time. Behind this space, there was another space where visitors were to be received, or kept while waiting to be invited into the private space. It is more an inner communal space where activities were shared with other members of the community. It also served as a meeting space for friends and neighbors to sit and watch the happenings from outside while talking. This can be described as a link between inside and outside space connecting the more public street side and the front compound with the more private realm of the hut itself.

All the spaces were separated from each other by partitions of intricately woven mats and it was done in such a way that an inhabitant could see out; however, someone outside could not see in. As going outside, there was a big compound with more huts which were the extension of the family growth from generation to generation. Here were also spaces for collective activities. These included holy spaces, spaces for women and for men, for food storage, structures for domestic animals, etc. Settlements typically had community spaces at the center and these spaces were the sites for public gatherings, discussions, and meetings, as well as for other community interactions. Today, we call such areas "public spaces" and these areas were hugely important with the idea of bringing people from different parts of the area together. Traditional huts were made so that they could provide a cooling effect during the hot weather and warmth during the cold, rainy season. The thatched huts were environmentally sound with some useful attributes. Fires built inside such huts effectively fumigated them preventing the spread of vermin. They were almost entirely built by women and had dung-hardened floors which could be polished to a fairly high sheen. Clay soil and soil from termites' nests were used for the foundation, joining some parts and also needed before the floor was laid.

Although the relationship between the material home and processes of memory or remembering were inherited, the amount of elephant-grass required to build such houses would be impossible with the present-day population. The uses of these materials were incorporated into a more short-term framework for how such buildings could and should last, likely tied to their usage. There were changes of materials through the periods of rapid social and economic change and, after several generations' building activities, new principles of house typology were adapted. The most stable thing remaining was the spatial organization of the space which seems to be most intimately related to our behavior. Apart from the material homes prompting stories about the changing circumstances of the extended household, it also acts as a generative model for practices of remembering. The interweaving of memories of the family and the memories of the built environment create a deep relationship between a dwelling and social life that needs to be acknowledged by anthropology. Looking back to the house in which I grew, it is domestically juxtaposed in my memory with the rest of houses I lived in, as such differences in the built environment between places help to establish contexts where identities are formed overtime.



4. Materiality of the home

4.1 Material home and memory

The home material has indeed an impact on the social householder. In the case of Sub-Saharan African studies, there is a considerable body of literature on the interaction between social and spatial form. In his 1996 study of memories of a colonial house in Algeria, Bahloul explores the way in which the house is inhabited by memory and remembrance is molded into the material and physical structures of domestic space. According to her, the memory transforms the house into the symbolic miniature of the Algerian social world.

Furthermore, Carsten and Hugh Jones in 1995 used the notion of the houses as a metaphor in their argument for a more holistic approach to houses in the social studies and they particularly pointed out that the processes of building and maintaining are often closely interwoven with the temporality of household composition and ongoing need.

They concluded that the social and material processes should be more closely connected analytically. One of their arguments that is of a particular relevance here is that intimately linked both physically and conceptually, the body and the house are the loci for dense webs of signification and affect and serve as basic cognitive models used to structure, think, and experience the world.

Pierre Nora's concept of "*lieux de memoire*" deals with the site of symbolic memorialization arising out of the sense that there is no such a thing as spontaneous memory. For him, memory is multiple yet specific, collective and plural yet individual... rooted in the concrete; in space, gesture, image, and object — hence structuring and influencing the reproduction of embodied forms of memory. Carsten and Hugh Jones noted the way in which the material home and ways of thinking about the world came together, that it's not only through the material surroundings that we can remember, but also in our embodied skills and spatial orientations.

In his article "Type as a social agreement" John Habraken, after having analyzed the particular shape of the Malayans houses with their expressive roofs together with the particular organization of the spaces inside, notes the culture, the social patterns, and the shared preferences of people which are expressed in the house form itself. The expression of people's identity is closely linked to other cultural expressions like clothing, and customs of social behavior which make "the house a cultural artefact: the collective product of what a people is all about."¹² John Habraken also had an opportunity to study house types with the students who came from different parts of the world with the interesting traditional construction of their parents and grandparents' houses; he encouraged them to explore what they liked in those buildings and learn from the experience invested in them. Being a methodologist, John Habraken learned more about the general principles of house typology in order to find out a method of the analysis and comparison of house types. He finally arrived to the conclusion that designers can use traditional patterns to achieve new solutions. He notes that, by connecting traditional values, one can use stylistic elements from a traditional house type and apply them to a building that has no spatial or technical similarity to this type at all. He finds it very important to learn from our cultural heritage not to deny present-day realities, but to establish a continuity between the traditional and the new. Learning from our cultural heritage and helped by our memories and the remembering processes, we can transform what was done in the past into something compatible with the values we hold today. Architecture's specificity is aligned with the materiality of both history and experience and they leave behind the marks: Paintings, icons, symbols, texts, and other forms of art presented to consciousness and perception.

¹² http://www.habraken.com/html/downloads/type_as_a_social_agreement.pdf. Pagina 3.

There are many ways that are used to express the experiences of home materials and to understand the architecture language. Homes, in my case, were the places of creativity; women typically adorned the walls of houses with painted designs – demonstrating an appreciation for artistic expression. Such architecture and settlement design brought together an intersection between environmental architecture and design with spirituality and community centeredness. It also ensured a minimal environmental footprint. In *Housing Problems*, Susan Bernstein' analysis links the "text" and "house" in the actual houses of Goethe, Walpole, and Freud, focusing on the historical tradition that has established a symmetry between design and instance, interior and exterior, author and house. She takes us on a journey noting that "*the habit of the literal is housed in the house, our usual dwelling, the unaccountable spaces and rooms through which even the most philosophical bodies pass.*"¹³ Bringing the attention to home's materiality, she concludes that "*the experience of place is actually an opportunity to connect texts, images recollections, and representations.*"¹⁴

Bachelard establishes the home as an imaginary or mnemonic realm where architectural structures are synecdoches for the emotional states defining selfhood. While Bachelard gestures towards the reality of attics and basements, he considers the material structures of the home as imaginary forms through which "*the sheltered being gives perceptible limits to his shelter. He experiences the house in its reality and its virtual, by means of thought and dreams.*"¹⁵ Similarly, in his distinction between the "map" and the "tour" of lived space, Michel de Certeau argues for an understanding of the home as a "*chain of spatializing operations*"¹⁶ that establishes identity through mobile engagement between body and space. He describes this chain as a structure of travel stories that lives the traces behind, indicating a representation of places and a local order produced by the body actions and its function in a certain space. He looks at it as a semantic space, in which walking is a "*space of enunciation*"¹⁷ that traces the language of everyday practices of a lived place without being outside the field. As an example to him, rooms serve to define narrative, rather than bodily, limits.

4.3 Material home and emotions

Good emotions are released in a space where we can let our guards down and relax. In a safe haven to express ourselves freely, in a special space that contributes factors to our overall emotional well-being. But then what happens if it is the other way round? There is a power of material surfaces in order to address the emotional impact of the material aspects of the home in relation to the materiality of the body. In addition, the very materiality of the home can be a repository for memories of such disparate phenomena. Physical and psychological dysfunction threatens the graceful motion of the body through the home, reorganizing the boundaries and valuations of its spaces, to threaten both body and domestic order. By forcing us to somatically negotiate memory and identity, these crises reveal how grounded in tactile sensation our home lives are and make us aware of how the experience of embodied domesticity always returns us to tactile apprehension.

¹³ Bernstein, Susan. *Housing Problems: Writing and Architecture in Goethe, Walpole, Freud and Heidegger*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008. Page 13.

¹⁴ Bernstein, Susan. *Housing Problems: Writing and Architecture in Goethe, Walpole, Freud and Heidegger*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008. Page 154.

¹⁵ Bachelard, Gaston. *The Poetics of Space*. Trans. Maria Jolas. Boston: Beacon Press, 1994. Page 5.

¹⁶ De Certeau, Michel. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Trans. Steven F. Randall. University of California Press, 1984. Page 120.

¹⁷ De Certeau, Michel. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Trans. Steven F. Randall. University of California Press, 1984. Page 98.

Throughout, I concentrate on those moments that James Krasner described when body or home or both are at risk, and their tactile relation is becoming most apparent. Our perceptions of our own bodies, and of the spaces in our homes, are fraught with anxieties that emerge most vividly when the tactile practices of embodiment become misaligned with the material structures of domesticity. Grief, memory loss, psychological disorders, and disease all reveal the tactile aspects of our intimate, embodied relations with our loved ones, caregivers, and prized objects. Losing a loved one means losing not just that one body but also one's own bodily engagements with it in familiar domestic spaces. Our grief becomes a series of slight physical adjustments based on the fact that a body that has always been here is in a certain spatial and postural relation to our own is now gone. It leaves an emptiness that needs to be refilled and reordered which is almost impossible. In terms of localizing individual distance and personal space, domestic space is disrupted and disordered due to the addition of extra bodies at home— in this case, when the space is overwhelmed with a lot of people.

When we focus at the theories of the abject, the house is remembered as a series of layers which materially reveal experiences of hardship, a certain relation to the place and cultural adaptation. Going through these layers, I am, for example, reminded of different disrupting and uncomfortable incidents that connect me to certain spaces, which I can describe as a violation of an individual distance or personal space. I remember those times when we, the six of us, slept on one bed in a tiny room. There was too much heat and the sweets gashed like water through the whole night and the following day every one could feel tired and sleepy. I also remember different kind of smells of my family members' homes because of what they used to cook. The cooking was done where other activities took place and the smell of food easily spread all over since houses had no doors. There were also routines of singing or whistling which were done very early in the morning to wake each other to go on plantation. That meant that even those who were supposed to stay including children also had to wake up. I also grew up disliking these worshipping sacred spaces because of the violating and shouting activities that took place in the night and it was mandatory allocated in the household. There was no way to escape that, everyone was concerned.

If I follow Douglas Mary and Kristeva's arguments that the spatial dynamics of purity and impurity follow a "*logic of distribution*"¹⁸(Kristeva) in which the impure is defined by its exclusion from the Temple's sacred space, I will then conclude that we live under the low. We do have rules to follow in homes which are impossible to fulfill everyone's needs. Some householders will violate some of these rules and end up being rejected. Our body surfaces in this context also choose and determine to stay where they feel comfortable, which differs from one another. They reject discomfort spaces and bad conditions. By striving, we then do make unique choices of good (pure) and bad (impure) that are build up in layers. So, to accurately locate the abject, Douglas and Kristeva then conclude their argument saying that one must define both the body and the building's walls, as well as their crucial relation to one another.

¹⁸ Kristeva, Julia. Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection. New York: Columbia University Press, 1982. Page 91.

5. The body experiences of material home

The body symbolizes the self of what we are as an individual, personal and unique. It is both abject and object where our body senses determine domestic relations with the self, people, and surrounding objects. The physical body is a means from which all physical things are experienced; through our skin and our senses, one can interpret and recognize the world. Without our physical body, our recognition with the world cannot exist because it is where the physical or tangible objects and sensual communication revolve around the physical body. Through our tactile experiences, things are recognized and captured by our individual senses to create the world around us and, at the same time, through our individual experiences interpreted by our physical, body our senses are constructed.

My focus lies on here and now of spaces, objects, and our immediate sensual interaction between our body and material home or the touch of a surface. In general, people can have tangible as well as intangible (sound or music) aims and intentions for moving. However, in order to start moving, one needs something that encourages movement in the first place. Such movement-triggers could be visual: people's movements and their actions through the space and their surroundings. It could be the structure, form, organization and position of objects and the space that determines our choices of the body posture and the location, depending on a person's personal style as well as on his/ her conscious experience or desired impression. In addition, people need a social excuse or reason to move, for example, that such movements or movement patterns are socially accepted or encouraged in a specific context. Therefore, the social setting defines which movements are appropriate to use for interaction and, hence, it delimits which movements one feels comfortable doing.

5.1 Visual and tactile experiences

The combination of visual actions and materiality through the sense of touch plays directly formative roles in shaping human experience, actions, and social relations.

According to Martin Jay, if we focus on our visual and tactile experiences, vigilantly keeping an eye out for these deeply embedded as well as those on the surface, we can gain an illuminating insight into the complex mirroring of perception and language.

Depending, of course, on one's outlook or point of view, the prevalence of such metaphors will be accounted on obstacle or an aid to our knowledge of reality.

James Krasner explains the privileging of vision over the other senses. The body's materiality become subsumed within a visual panorama that can be controlled, objectified, and ordered; a return to tactility would thus require a radical repossession of the embodied self through what Martin Jay calls "*hostility to visual primacy*".¹⁹ These are the images that are captured and not easily forgotten in our mind so that to enable us to keep our routines and put boundaries on our relationship between ourselves and home materials. As a result, ocular power then establishes and maintains these boundaries as a cultural-constructed envelope or membrane useful in policing social Identity. According to Mikhail Bakhtin's discussion of the "grotesque" medieval body, it is this envelope that identifies a historical moment when the body's margin begins to be imagined as a net, garment, or an enclosed "vessel". The body's material essence is accessed by breaching or distorting its enveloping margin that tends to reassert the dominance of visual perception by relying upon the ground apprehension of bodily form. In other words, implanting and getting used to the system that we have created after our bodies' experiences in the home. I will say therefore that images captured by our mind should be taken as more valued, because they nourish us all kinds of imaginations and fantasies, creating the illusion of an open field of meanings and interpretation.

¹⁹ Jay, Martin. *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993. Page 15.

A good example is an inspirational idea for designing *The Burgerweeshuis* in which Aldo van Eyck used the clearly visible skeleton as a structuring construction in his architecture, which led to a wide range of developments with completely individual interpretations. His perception of domestic space brings him to reality and a high quality of living.

In his commentary '*The gentle etching of reciprocity*'²⁰ Van Eyck explained that he had been looking for an open community, from which children could visit schools, courses, and associations in the city, and, in turn, to which they could also bring friends. Everything was aimed at an attempt to build this orphanage like a small city, on the basis of the recognition that the city should be like a big house. Van Eyck insists on the organization of the space, using each space as a bunch of spaces. In this case, he removes the boundaries of separation and long distances between homes and their environment, such as the intimacy of domestic spaces to be found in public spaces. As a result, he creates a life pattern which influences behaviors and gives unlimited freedom to the outside world, to bring them together towards a common goal.

In the extended family (my community), the qualities of the space also come from the repetition of similar patterns of behavior. Like van Eyck, I count one space from other spaces just as the primary place where an individual exercised his freedom. The people who inhabit such spaces with their activities turn them into places. An individual exists in connection with a larger group, including his or her wider family. S/he acquires his/her identity from that group. S/he depends on that group for his/her physical and social survival. Through various rites of passage, s/he progressively becomes a fuller member of the community and takes on the role of ensuring the survival of the group via marriage and procreation. In traditional life, the individual does not and cannot exist alone, except corporately. S/he owes his/her existence to other people. The community must therefore make, create, or produce the individual. Only in terms of other people does the individual become conscious of his/her own being, duties, privileges, and responsibilities towards him-(her)self and towards other people. The extended family is to provide an individual with a personal and corporal identity. One was associated with a particular community with clear roles that were assigned to him/her at various stages of life. The cultural and moral norms of the community, which were applied within the extended family, help an individual to grow into a productive and respected member of the community. Those norms served as a blueprint for his/her life.

In the same way, *The Burgerweeshuis* inspires a reconsideration of apparent opposites, such as many-single, unity-diversity, element-whole, big-small, many-few, inside-outside, closed-open, movement-rest, constancy-change, individual-community, and so on. Van Eyck calls these differences 'dual phenomena' which he tries to reconcile with each other and offer great opportunities of activities. His distinction between space and place. In his quotation from 1962 "*I make no apology for repeating*", van Eyck notes that "*whatever space and time mean, place and occasion mean more, for space in the image of man is place and time in the image of man is occasion*".²¹ In this case, Van Eyck explained that the intention of *The Burgerweeshuis* was to create a spot, a bunch of spots through recognition of the healing power of reciprocity, where the split dual phenomena are given a great opportunity to restore themselves. Here, a multiplicity of elements was permitted, so to speak, to form a loose, complex pattern. They were then all subjected to a single structural and constructional principle in order to make the pattern recognizable and homogeneous and also joined together by a general human motif with an individual/community significance: the inner street with adjoining exterior areas.

²⁰ 'Sculpture Pavilion for Sonsbeek, Arnhem. Quaerens, Peter: Paviljoen Sonsbeek 66, Katholiek bouwblad 1966. Page 412- 415.

²¹ Bryan Lawson, THE LANGUAGE OF SPACE, A division of Reed Educational and Professional Publishing Ltd, 2001. Architectural Press, An imprint of Butterworth-Heinemann, Linacre House, Jordan Hill. Page 230.

While all the spaces independent of their function and span conform to the possibilities of a single architectural style, each is given its specific meaning by its position, purpose, order, treatment of detail, by its relation to others, as well as the whole and the content of the situation.



5.2 The posture and the location of the body and tactile experiences

Johani Pallasmaa insisted on the importance of the posture and the location of the body. He represented these as a collection of tactile interactions and mobile engagements. For example, Pallasmaa suggests that “*as we open a door, the body weight meets the weight of the door; the legs measure the steps as we ascend a stairway, the hand strokes the handrail and the body moves diagonally and dramatically through space.*”²² The body in this passage engages a sequence of actions (pushing, stroking, climbing) upon and among spaces and surfaces. Which Kent Bloomer describes in architectural space as a “*form of dance*”.²³ Such actions are also experienced in African traditional huts, in most cases of things which are kept hanging on walls (pans, clothes, tools) and on the ground or under beds. And even on the ceilings. To reach all these things, there is a need of tactile interactions and mobile engagements of the stretching and the bending of the body. In Hertzberger’s nursing home De Drie Hoven also, for example, it makes it possible for various opportunities for freedom and multi-functional use that lead to these kinds of actions. The square on the first floor of the center of the building has a void to the second floor with a big skylight above it. Here, there is a chain of different spaces, some with low walls on which you can sit or put things down. The space itself is inviting people for the action of sitting and putting things down. On these lower walls periphery dividing the space also invites people to sit down for a chat or look at the activities of others on a more communal one under the big void of this covered court. In this way, the house becomes for many people a piece of the city with the specific spots and spatial continuity. Notable too in De Drie Hoven are the half-doors for the housing units: inhabitants can cut themselves off definitively by keeping the door completely closed, but they can also open the upper door a little for some visual contact with the corridor or completely open in order to have a conversation over the lower door with a neighbor.

An attempt to introduce an excess of details in order to stimulate multi-functional use in domestic home always calls for a collection of tactile interactions and mobile engagements. A somewhat bigger covered space at a junction of corridors can give rise to extra activities: spaces for shoes or hanging space for coats. Low walls inside or outside a building, or column bases, stairs, and deep window-sills can through being slightly oversized contribute to multi-functional use as seating or offer space for children to play in. Illustrative of the protruding brickwork or overhang at the front door: while looking for the key, you can put your shopping bag on this for a moment, the postman puts a package on it while the receipt is being signed, children clamber up on it in order to press the bell and adults sit in the sun for a moment or put a flowerbox on it sometimes. This desire for flexible use links up with the housing desires.

²² Pallasmaa, Juhani. *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses*. Chichester, England: John Wiley, 2005. Page 63.

²³ Bloomer, Kent and Charles W. Moore. *Body, Memory, and Architecture*. New Haven: Yale University Press 1977. Page 107-108.



5.3 Movement of the body and tactile experiences

Merleau-Ponty explores the paradox of the human body being an object in the world that experiences itself as itself and, at the same time, as a part of the world of things that are not itself. He puts emphasis on vision and movement being linked together by means of the body. "*Because it moves itself and sees, it holds things in a circle around itself. Things are an annex or prolongation of itself*".²⁴ The body needs perpetually movement engagement in order to extend out into the world, thus setting up a dynamic network of postural relations. I will give an example of myself being an object in the space where other objects are found. I can see myself and I can see those other objects. By moving my body, I am connected to the chosen object. It may lead me to an observation or a surprise and even carry out the task set in my mind before moving my body.

Because our physical experience of home life is intimate and habitual, and our tactile sensations of the home's spaces and surfaces are so familiar, they serve as the most recognizable example of the sort of located tactility investigated by James Krasner. He explains that, to feel the world, one must move a part of one's body against it. To move a door or walk up a stairway is to hold the architecture of that building in a circle around oneself as a group of haptic movements and sensations (pressure, solidity, empty space), rather than to consider it a visual background against which one's body appears. This contiguity can operate only through the dynamic perception in which the body, especially the hand, actively engages with material phenomena, creating thus an ever-changing sequence of extensions and reorientations of bodily form. Once again, if I am engaged in the activity in the space, I use all means to reach my goal. I can connect myself with an object using my hand and I can use that object to touch or fill another object.

Using an artifacts example found in human of John Habraken in the paper written in January 1984 for participants in the project on form hierarchies at the department of architecture, the form hierarchies in the material world, according to John Habraken, influence the relations between the space, actors(users), and designers. We are interested in hierarchies where the dominance between forms is the result of the properties of the forms in question. Here a big or high form determines the framework. The higher level forms perform specific services for the lower level forms. If we consider a hierarchy of spaces where a space can contain an object or something else, it may therefore as well contain another space. The only relation allowed is that a space must lie within another space and may, itself, contain yet another space. It also reveals to us that any space that contains other spaces can be divided into public space and private space. The private space is occupied by all lower-level spaces and the public space, which is described as the shared environment, is excluded from the private space but inside the high-level space. This brings me back to the creation of spaces within a space in African traditional community. Housing properties and farmland formed overlapping circles, becoming increasingly public as one moved outward.

There was always a possibility of change in composition over time as children grew and in need of their own house, older relatives died and relatives came to stay. In the case of the king's palace, the innermost core of these circles was the windowless bedroom for the queen who would never leave the room. The separate houses of a nuclear family were often joined together by short reed fences to form courtyard where everyday activities could take place in privacy as well as providing shade and protection from the wind. Therefore, hierarchies depend on our purposes and the performance expected in the space.

²⁴ Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. "Eye and Mind." Trans. Carleton Dallery. *The Primacy of Perception*. Ed. James M. Edie. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964. *Phenomenology of Perception*. Trans. Colin Smith. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962. Page 162.

It is also noticeable that, following his intuitive manner, John Habraken designed a house for his parents in Apeldoorn which shows his characteristic approach to design. He looks at it much more as a combination of structure and dimensions — and all the more so because, as such, it offers a spatial framework for activities to be filled in at a later time. Areas between columns which determine the contour of living area and exterior walls can accommodate all sorts of functions, such as kitchen, sitting area, and working space. Much importance is attached to the individual recognizing his/her living or working space.

Reacting humanly, John Habraken expected the family growth and extra activities which could arise later. My reflection takes me back to the extended family which was as a means of mutual support. Since 'one was because others were', members of the extended family supported each other psychologically and practically, for example, in farming, rearing children, supporting the elders and the sick. In case of any need, an individual could count on support within his/her extended family. It was also a means of ensuring security, since usually a number of members of the extended family would live in the same compound or close to each other.

Unlike African community making decisions as a group, in the interior of the Central Beheer Herman Hertzberger gives an opportunity to the individuals in order to challenge the users to make choices in their own work space. On the other hand, however, he avoids an excessive distance between spaces, like in African community where they live nearby each other as families. Herman emphasizes only big things being multiple units which are small in themselves, leading to possibilities of great diversity of relationship. Aldo van Eyck also adds to this by saying that, in the true interiors of the community, everybody should know each other and know what is going on so that the sheltered spirit can heat the houses, streets, and squares, removing the distance between people and things in order to discover the relationship miracles between these, and waiting on the moment of awareness of a fuller life by perceiving connections whose existence we had not been yet aware of. With inimitable colorful choices of words, Aldo van Eyck emphasizes that it was more than merely a question of the transitions between interior and exterior. He wrote that everybody should make every door a greeting and every window a face, because the proper kingdom of the spirit is the kingdom of the in-between, wealth of architecture.



John Habraken, parents' house, Apeldoorn, living room, circa 1961

6. Conclusion

The major intention of writing this thesis was to unveil the reality and consequences behind my shifting from one place to another. Sifted from where I grew up in an African society, I realized that my identity, my sense of place and my sense of belonging are continually complicated because of my extended family's historical attachment that returns me to this place that is still referred to as "home." This feeling of homesickness towards a place that does not exist resulted in such conflicts and confusion between my living conditions and architecture. I have deeply focused on the way in which social processes of remembering and the materiality of the home are intimately interconnected as the time goes by, and create a process in which memory-work is actively engaged in structuring and making sense of the past in the present. I found that there were factors which could justify my case: one being the perspective households have upon the material home and its relationship to memory. Spaces in home have particular connections to the way people locate their memories, activate them, and make them meaningful as parts of life. This phenomenon is what Gaston Bachelard writes about in *The Poetics of Space*, on how our childhood memories of home operate both as dreams and as bodily sensation.

He goes on arguing that "*the house where we were born has engraved within us the hierarchy of the various functions of inhabiting.*" He adds "*Of course, thanks to the house, a great many of our memories are housed, and if the house is a bit elaborate, if it has a cellar and a garret, nooks and corridors, our memories have refuges that are all the more clearly delineated. All our lives we come back to them in our daydreams.*"²⁵ I have emphasized on the way our attachment to the home is based on our physical engagement with it, and its spaces becoming interwoven with emotion and memory, which results in domestic intimacy and how the relationship between material home and memories or remembering's processes that is domestically build up, culturally formulate life patterns which eventually becomes our identity.

The second factor is the centrality of attachment to our domestic relations with our selves, the people we live with, and objects in our homes which trace the mechanisms of domestic dissolution, whereby tactile sensory engagement clearly defines domestic spaces. When our body surfaces come in contact with things domestically, we can feel at home irrespective of the architectural space that surrounds us through sharing body image or bodily engagements. Knowing that the body symbolizes the self of what we are as an individual, personal and unique, I have noted how our physical body becomes a means from which all physical things are experienced, and through which our skin and our senses one can interpret and recognize the world. As an example, I have shown how the combination of visual actions and materiality through the sense of touch play directly formative roles in shaping human experience, actions, and social relations.

I have noted the importance of the posture and the location of the body as a collection of tactile interactions and mobile engagements which facilitate determining the use of the space. Finally, I explained how physical movements interconnect every reaction that is born from our senses allowing the body to fulfill its desires in the space, among other people and the surroundings.

²⁵ Bachelard, Gaston. *The Poetics of Space*. Trans. Maria Jolas. Boston: Beacon Press, 1994. Page 8.

Throughout all these, I finally come to my conclusion that the home I am searching is invisible and is deeply hidden in my mind. It is thus defined by my personal interpretation and my social behavior. It is very flexible and changes according to the perception of the built environment whereby an individual is uniquely able to define his/her boundaries as the time goes by. Gaston Bachelard tells us that *“It is a strange situation, the space we love is unwilling to remain permanently enclosed. It deploys and appears to move elsewhere without difficulty; into other times, and on different planes of dream and memory.”*²⁶ He makes it clear to me that *“Sometimes the house of the future is better built, lighter and larger than all the houses of the past, so that the image of the dream house is opposed to that of the childhood home. Late in life, with indomitable courage, we continue to say that we are going to do what we have not yet done: we are going to build a house. This dream house may be merely a dream of ownership, the embodiment of everything that is considered convenient, comfortable, healthy, sound, desirable, by other people. It must therefore satisfy both pride and reason, two irreconcilable terms.”*²⁷

²⁶ Bachelard, Gaston. *The Poetics of Space*. Trans. Maria Jolas. Boston: Beacon Press, 1994. Page 53.

²⁷ Bachelard, Gaston. *The Poetics of Space*. Trans. Maria Jolas. Boston: Beacon Press, 1994. Page 61.

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