

# Relationship between building, dwelling and notion of 'home'



**ASSIGN  
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**‘ Discuss the relationship between building, dwelling and the notion of ‘ home,’ drawing on ethnographic examples,’**

Understanding building as a process enables architecture to be considered as a form of material culture. Processes of building and dwelling are interconnected according to Ingold (2000), who also calls for a more sensory appreciation of dwelling, as provided by Bloomer and Moore (1977) and Pallasmaa (1996) who suggest architecture is a fundamentally haptic experience. A true dwelt perspective is therefore established in appreciating the relationship between dwelling, the notion of ‘ home’ and how this is enframed by architecture. We must think of dwelling as an essentially social experience as demonstrated by Helliwell (1996) through analysis of the Dyak Longhouse, Borneo, to enable us to harbour a true appreciation of space devoid of western visual bias. This bias is found within traditional accounts of living space (Bourdieu (2003) and Humphrey (1974)), which do however demonstrate that notions of home and subsequently space are socially specific. Life activities associated with dwelling; sociality and the process of homemaking as demonstrated by Miller (1987) allow a notion of home to be established in relation to the self and haptic architectural experience. Oliver (2000) and Humphrey (2005) show how these relationships are evident in the failures of built architecture in Turkey and the Soviet Union.

When discussing the concept of ‘ building’, the process is twofold; ‘ The word ‘ building’ contains the double reality. It means both “ the action of the verb build” and “ that which is built”...both the action and the result’ (Bran (1994: 2)). With regards to building as a process, and treating ‘ that which is built;’ architecture, as a form of material culture, it can be likened to the process of

making. Building as a process is not merely imposing form onto substance but a relationship between creator, their materials and the environment. For Pallasmaa (1996), the artist and craftsmen engage in the building process directly with their bodies and 'existential experiences' rather than just focusing on the external problem; 'A wise architect works with his/her entire body and sense of self...In creative work...the entire bodily and mental constitution of the maker becomes the site of work.' (1996: 12). Buildings are constructed according to specific ideas about the universe; embodiments of an understanding of the world, such as geometrical comprehension or an appreciation of gravity (Lecture). The process of bringing structures into being is therefore linked to local cultural needs and practices.[1] Thinking about the building process in this way identifies architecture as a form of material culture and enables consideration of the need to construct buildings and the possible relationships between building and dwelling.

Ingold (2000) highlights an established view he terms 'the building perspective;' an assumption that human beings must 'construct' the world, in consciousness, before they can act within it. (2000: 153). This involves an imagined separation between the perceiver and the world, upon a separation between the real environment (existing independently of the senses) and the perceived environment, which is constructed in the mind according to data from the senses and 'cognitive schemata' (2000: 178). This assumption that human beings re-create the world in the mind before interacting with it implies that 'acts of dwelling are preceded by acts of world-making' (2000: 179). This is what Ingold identifies as 'the architect's perspective,' buildings being constructed before life commences inside; '...the architect's

perspective: first plan and build, the houses, then import the people to occupy them.' (2000: 180). Instead, Ingold suggests the 'dwelling perspective,' whereby human beings are in an 'inescapable condition of existence' within the environment, the world continuously coming into being around them, and other human beings becoming significant through patterns of life activity (2000: 153). This exists as a pre-requisite to any building process taking place as part of the natural human condition.; it is because human beings already hold ideas about the world that they are capable to dwelling and do dwell; 'we do not dwell because we have built, but we build and have built because we dwell, that is because we are dwellers...To build is in itself already to dwell...only if we are capable of dwelling, only then can we build.' (Heidegger 1971: 148: 146, 16) (2000: 186)).

Drawing on Heidegger (1971), Ingold (2000) defines 'dwelling' as 'to occupy a house, a dwelling place (2000: 185). Dwelling does not have to take place in a building, the 'forms' people build, are based on their involved activity; 'in the specific relational context of their practical engagement with their surroundings.' (2000: 186). A cave or mud-hut can therefore be a dwelling.

[2] The built becomes a 'container for life activities' (2000: 185). Building and dwelling emerge as processes that are inevitably interconnected, existing within a dynamic relationship; 'Building then, is a process that is continuously going on, for as long as people dwell in an environment. It does not begin here, with a pre-formed plan and end there with a finished artefact. The 'final form' is but a fleeting moment in the life of any feature when it is matched to a human purpose...we may indeed describe the forms in our environment as instances of architecture, but for the most part we are

not architects. For it is in the very process of dwelling that we build.' (2000: 188). Ingold recognises that the assumptive building perspective exists because of the occularcentristic nature of the dominance of the visual in western thought; with the supposition that building has occurred concomitantly with the architect's written and drawn plan. He questions whether it is necessary to 'rebalance the sensorium' in considering other senses to outweigh the hegemony of vision to gain a better appreciation of human dwelling in the world. (2000: 155).

Understanding dwelling as existing before building and as processes that are inevitably interconnected undermines the concept of the architect's plan. The dominance of visual bias in western thought calls for an appreciation of dwelling that involves additional senses. Like the building process, a phenomenological approach to dwelling involves the idea that we engage in the world through sensory experiences that constitute the body and the human mode of being, as our bodies are continuously engaged in our environment; 'the world and the self inform each other constantly' (Pallasmaa (1996: 40)). Ingold (2000) recommends that; 'one can, in short, dwell just as fully in the world of visual as in that of aural experience' (2000: 156). This is something also recognised Bloomer and Moore (1977), who appreciate that a consideration of all senses is necessary for understanding the experience of architecture and therefore dwelling. Pallasmaa (1996) argues that the experience of architecture is multi-sensory; 'Every touching experience of architecture is multi-sensory; qualities of space, matter and scale are measured equally by the eye, ear, nose, skin, tongue, skeleton and muscle...Architecture strengthens the existential experience, one's sense of

being in the world and this is essentially a strengthened experience of the self.' (1996: 41). For Pallasmaa, architecture is experienced not as a set of visual images, but 'in its fully embodied material and spiritual presence,' with good architecture offering pleasurable shapes and surfaces for the eye, giving rise to 'images of memory, imagination and dream.' (1996: 44-45).

For Bloomer and Moore (1977), it is architecture that provides us with satisfaction through desiring it and dwelling in it (1977: 36). We experience architecture haptically; through all senses, involving the entire body. (1977: 34). The entire body is at the centre of our experience, therefore 'the feeling of buildings and our sense of dwelling within them are...fundamental to our architectural experience' (1977: 36).[3] Our haptic experience of the world and the experience of dwelling are inevitably connected; 'The interplay between the world of our bodies and the world of our dwelling is always in flux...our bodies and our movements are in constant dialogue with our buildings.' (1977: 57). The dynamic relationship of building and dwelling deepens then, whereby the sensory experience of architecture cannot be overlooked. It is the experience of dwelling that enables us to build, and drawing and Pallasmaa (1996) and Bloomer and Moore (1977) it is buildings that enable us to hold a particular experience of that dwelling, magnifying a sense of self and being in the world. Through Pallasmaa (1996) and Bloomer and Moore (1977) we are guided towards understanding a building not in terms of its outside and the visual, but from the inside; how a building makes us feel.[4] Taking this dwelt perspective enables us to understand what it means to exist in a building and aspects of this that contribute to establishing a notion of 'home.'

Early anthropological approaches exploring the inside of a dwelling gave rise to the recognition of particular notions of space that were socially specific. Humphrey (1974) explores the internal space of a Mongolian tent, a family dwelling, in terms of four spatial divisions and social status; 'The area away from the door, which faced south, to the fireplace in the centre, was the junior or low status half...the "lower" half...The area at the back of the tent behind the fire was the honorific "upper" part...This division was intersected by that of the male or ritually pure half, which was to the left of the door as you entered...within these four areas, the tent was further divided along its inner perimeter into named sections. Each of these was the designated sleeping place of the people in different social roles.' (1974: 273). Similarly, Bourdieu (2003) analyses the Berber House, Algeria, in terms of spatial divisions and two sets of oppositions; male (light) and female (dark), and the internal organisation of space as an inversion of the outside world. (2003: 136-137).[5] Further to this, Bourdieu concentrates on geometric properties of Berber architecture in defining its internal as inverse of the external space; '...the wall of the stable and the wall of the fireplace, take on two opposed meanings depending on which of their sides is being considered: to the external north corresponds the south (and the summer) of the inside...to the external south corresponds the inside north (and the winter). (2003: 138). Spatial divisions within the Berber house are linked to gender categorisation and patterns of movement are explained as such; '...the fireplace, which is the navel of the house (itself identified with the womb of the mother)...is the domain of the woman who is invested with total authority in all matters concerning the kitchen and the management of food-stores; she takes her meals at the fireside whilst the man, turned towards

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the outside, eats in the middle of the room or in the courtyard.' (2003: 136). Patterns of movement are also attributed to additional geometric properties of the house, such as the direction in which it faces (2003: 137). Similarly, Humphrey (1974) argues that individuals had to sit, eat and sleep in their designated places within the Mongolian tent, in order to mark the rank of social category to which that person belonged,; spatial separation due to Mongolian societal division of labour. (1974: 273).

Both accounts, although highlighting particular notions of space, adhere to what Helliwell (1996) recognises as typical structuralist perspectives of dwelling; organising peoples in terms of groups to order interactions and activities between them. (1996: 128). Helliwell argues that the merging ideas of social structure and the structure or form of architecture ignores the importance of social process and overlook an existing type of fluid, unstructured sociality (1996: 129) This is due to the occularcentric nature of western thought; ' the bias of visualism' which gives prominence to visible, spatial elements of dwelling. (1996: 137). Helliwell argues in accordance with Bloomer and Moore (1977) who suggest that architecture functions as a ' stage for movement and interaction' (1977: 59). Through analysis of Dyak people's ' lawang' (longhouse community) social space in Borneo, without a focus on geometric aspects of longhouse architecture, Helliwell (1996) highlights how dwelling space is lived and used day to day. (1996: 137). A more accurate analysis of the use of space within dwelling can be used to better understand the process, particularly with regard to the meanings that it generates in relation to the notion of home.



The Dyak longhouse is a large structure built at up to three and a half metres above ground with a thatched roof stretching up to eight metres in height. Within the longhouse are a number of apartments side by side. These are seven narrow spaces running the length of the longhouse which are described as the “ inner” area of the longhouse; the cooking, eating and sleeping area. An “ outer” gallery can be used by anyone, freely at anytime. (1996: 131-133). Previous structuralist categorisation of these inner and outer areas as ‘ public’ and ‘ private’ domains have led to misrepresentation of relations between individual households and the wider longhouse community (1996: 133). Spatial separation lies between ‘ us’ the longhouse community (‘ lawang’) and those outside of the longhouse community ‘ them.’ (1996: 135). Helliwell’s recognition of the lack of spatial division within the longhouse community is the primary indicator of a more fluid type of sociality for the Dyak people. She highlights that previous structural approaches denoting each apartment as ‘ private’ has left little awareness of social relationships that operate between apartments, and considers the longhouse as a single structural entity, regardless of the single apartments that it is composed of; ‘...relationships are clearly marked: neither the seven spaces, nor the wall between ‘ swah’ (the world ‘ out there’) and ‘ lawang’, stop at the edges of any one apartment. Rather, they continue in identical form, into those on either side and so on down the entire length of the longhouse.’ (1996: 137). The partition between apartments in the longhouse marks the edge of one apartment from another which visually appears to separate. However, Helliwell points out that they are composed of weak bark and materials stacked against one another, leaving gaps of all sizes in the partitions. Subsequently, animals pass

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through, people hand things back and forth and neighbours stand and talk to one another (1996: 137-138). She describes the partitions as ' a highly permeable boundary: a variety of resources moves through it in both directions.' (1996: 138).

It is the permeable partition that is therefore the core of longhouse sociability; its properties stimulate sharing in accordance with a flow of light and sound from one end of the longhouse to the other. (1996: 138). ' A community of voices' exists within a longhouse, flowing up and down its length as invisible speakers appear in monologue. The Dyak people, although invisible to one another, speak to their neighbours through these permeable boundaries in continual dialogue; '...they are profoundly present in one another's lives. Through the sounds of their voices, neighbours two three, four or five apartments apart are tied into each other's worlds and each other's company as intimately as if they were in the same room.' (1996: 138). These voices create what Helliwell describes as ' a tapestry of sound,' containing descriptions of a day's events, feelings of individual women shared whilst they are alone in her apartment, subsequently affirming and recreating social connections across each apartment and reaffirming their part within the longhouse community. (1996: 138-139). In addition, Helliwell highlights that their voices were not raised; '(their) very mutedness reinforced, the sense of membership in an intimate, privileged world...gentle and generous in their reminder of a companionship constantly at hand.' (1996: 139). Here we begin to see Helliwell's notion of fluid sociality and the experience of dwelling as a whole a social one. In addition to sound, the social fluidity of dwelling in a Dyak longhouse is reinforced by

light from individual apartments and their hearths flowing up and down the longhouse at night. Each person is aware of their neighbours' presence, with the absence of light from an apartment provoking concern. (1996: 139).

In essence, Helliwell stresses the sociality of dwelling, aside from spatial appreciations of the architecture in which it takes place. Although partitions mark the space of a Dyak household, they concomitantly incorporate a household into the wider longhouse community; ' It is this dual flow (sound and light) which constitutes each ' independent household' as coterminous with all others and with the longhouse community as a whole.' (1996: 138).

This creation of community brings to light the ways in which people use architecture, not just to mark divisions of space, but to implement and enable sociality. This is highly relevant for a true anthropological appreciation of dwelling and in particular its relationship with the notion of ' home.' Dwelling is inevitably connected to the process of homemaking through its aspects of sociality as a physical and bodily experience within ' the built' (Brand 1994: 2) and as a fundamentally social experience.

Architecture as a physical form of shelter that enframes the process of homemaking; what Ingold (2000) terms ' life activities' (2000: 185) and the coming together of people. Through acknowledgement of the social aspects of dwelling we can establish notions of ' home,' which are primarily constructed on the dynamic relationship of building and dwelling and the aspects of sociality that occur through the dwelling process; ' life activities' (Ingold (2000: 185) and home-making, involving, kinship, memory, play, eating, ritual, and birth among other anthropological themes.

A relationship emerges then, between dwelling and the notion of 'home,' a dynamic relationship facilitated by 'the built,' (Brand (1994: 2)) taking place within architecture. Houses are defined by Carsten and Hugh-Jones (1995) as 'places in which the to and fro of life unfolds, built, modified, moved or abandoned in accord with the changing circumstances of their inhabitants.' (1995: 1). 'Home' emerges as an architectural space which enframes the processes and characteristics associated with dwelling. Ingold (2000) suggests that a house is made, not constructed (2000: 175). More specifically, Miller (1987) draws attention to the process of home-making through which "the built' becomes a 'home' by a process of consumption and appropriation by tenants on a London council estate in England. He argues that through consumption and appropriation of their domestic space, tenants are able to develop and establish a sense of self (1987: 354). This is in response to feeling like "passive recipients" of housing, alienated from society by being perceived as a particular class and at a level of poverty. (1987: 357). Miller argues; 'on the whole...there was considerable evidence to suggest that the white population felt a deep unease about their household consumption status as tenants, reflected in resentment and feelings of being stigmatised. Furthermore they clearly associated the fittings provided in the kitchen with the council, as objects embodying in their materiality the intrusive signification of their status.' (1987: 365-366).

In response, tenants transformed and changed their kitchens in different ways after having been given the same basic facilities by the council. (1987: 356). This included alterations and renovations to fitted cupboards, standard plumbing and energy supplies and original black lino floors in addition to

decorations, curtains and new white goods (1987: 357). For Miller, kitchens became 'canvases' (1987: 360) for the tenants; 'The largest cluster comprised kitchens where substantial changes had been made to the decorative order...these kitchens retained the original plain white surfaces. Instead, a large number of additional objects had been brought in and used, as it were, to cover the cupboards up.... teatowels, breadboards, teacosies and trays were very common and often associated with a particular aesthetic of large bold flowers, cats, dogs and bright patterns. As well as being placed on surfaces, breadboards and trays were typically placed vertically against the walls with their face forward to emphasise their decorative nature. Post-cards, souvenirs, cuttings from magazines and pictorial calendars might be hung or stuck on the walls...there was also the 'biographical pattern'...each piece appeared to be a memento of family or holidays, as in the commercial nostalgia style in which the relation between objects was maintained in the memories of the occupants but not expressed visually.' (1987: 361-362). Tenants' properties subsequently became personalised, replacing and diverting attention from aspects of their kitchens they saw as indicators of their negative housing status (1987: 362).[6] The implementation of kitchen aesthetics and other modes of creativity is one way of home-making, establishing a notion of 'home' in accordance with establishing a sense of self. Connected to this, is the sociality of home making; aspects of marriage and kinship also highlighted by Miller, with females directing and viewed as 'recipients of expenditure' and males undertaking renovations; 'In two cases it was particularly clear that the couples were seen as coming together to overcome their status as tenants, and affirming the power of kinship and marriage in this struggle.' (1987: 367).[7]

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The notion of 'home' reaffirms the concept that space is socially specific; the process of homemaking as an aspect of dwelling, related to how we live within time and space. When professional architects and builders ignore the needs, obligations and beliefs of socially specific people, the notion of 'home' becoming disrupted, the result is an unsuccessful dwelling place.

Oliver (2000) underlines that when the Kutahya Province in Turkey suffered an earthquake in 1970, fifty thousand homeless people were accommodated in fifteen thousand newly built dwellings. (2000: 121). He comments that the accommodation, designed by architects, was 'suitable for the British 2. 2 nuclear family' as three room, single storey houses, 'quite unsuited to the extended peasant families,' who were used to living on the upper floors of large two storey houses, storage, crops and cattle underneath them.(2002: 121). A maximum of eighteen people lived in a house at one time, parents occupying one room, sons, their wives and children in others. The sofa was a communal space for meals, and privacy was 'strictly guarded.' (2002: 121). The emergency housing was small and unsuitable for the large peasant families; large windows caused them to be on show, there was no sofa and the living room opened on to the bedrooms. The toilet was 'external and public' even though the people were 'discrete about bodily functions.' (2000: 121-122). In providing unsuitable buildings inconsiderate towards socially specific ideas of space, earthquake victims had no choice but to accept the offered housing or receive no other help. (2000: 122).

Oliver (2000) shows the architect's failure, who; 'may design responsibly, but the process fails when he ignores the values, morals, building skills, experience and wisdom of the cultures whose housing needs are to be met.'

(2000: 125). Notions of 'home' can be varied,[8] but 'home' and dwelling are inevitably connected through experiences and particular conceptions of how to dwell in terms of appropriate space and related activities. Other state built homes have caused the notion of 'home' and its relationship with dwelling and architecture to be affirmed. Soviet construction of communal dwellings during the 1920s onwards attempted to impose meaning on inhabitants; that of socialist infrastructure to produce socialist men and women devoid of individuality and a bourgeois way of life (Humphrey (2005: 40)). The result was unsuccessful, inhabitants not adopting socialist ways of being, but the meanings the architecture was intended to impose being subverted in Russian fiction and memoirs; examples of Russian imagination. (2005: 43).[9] This Soviet example illustrates that meaning cannot be made through architecture and emphasises Miller (1987) and the process of home making. It is the process of home-making; the activities associated with dwelling and the sociality that it generates that establishes a 'home,' a building being merely a container in which this takes place. The relationship between building and 'home' therefore involves how we live in time and space, the process of homemaking challenging the structures that we build.

Ingold (2000) suggests that dwelling is something that enables building. The opposite standpoint would be that it is building that enables human beings to dwell within architecture. Whatever one's view, it is inevitable that dwelling takes place, and eventually continues to take place within architecture, whether this is in vernacular form; a cave, hut or a barn, or provided by the nation state. It is a social fact that human beings build and dwell. Building and dwelling are inevitably interconnected, existing in a dynamic

relationship with one another. Understanding this from a standpoint lacking in western visual bias, it is the process of dwelling; 'life activities' (2000: 185), its sociality and inevitable connection with building that exists in relation to the notion of 'home.' Meaning is not made in the structure of a building – it is dwelling; activities and social relations that creates and enables a meaning of 'home' to be established in accordance with the self through haptic architectural experience and the home-making process. Pallasmaa (1996) argues that the meaning of a building is beyond architecture; 'The ultimate meaning of any building is beyond architecture; it directs our consciousness back to the world and towards our own sense of self and being.' (1996: 42). The relationship is evident when socially specific conceptions of space and inevitably particular notions of 'home' are ignored; the architecture being unsuitable for dwelling, or failing in its primary purpose of imposing meaning. It can be said that building, dwelling and notions of 'home' are united in an overarching relationship between human beings and their lived environment; the search for meaning and establishment of the self, in this case through forms of architectural experience.

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