

# A MAN AND HIS SPACE – ARCHITECTURE IN RELATION TO HOME

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**ABSTRACT:** How a place becomes a home, what such a place looks like, and what it means for its residents, not only the place itself but also the objects within it. The relationship between house and home is not straightforward. Housing as an architectural form, in its physical embodiment, particularly from a functional perspective, often surpasses the concept of home as a specific human existence. On the other hand, home, in terms of experiences and emotions, often transcends housing, not only spatially but primarily on an existential level.

This article is a theoretical interpretation of the phenomenon of home with a focus on its material and spatial dimensions. The aim is to connect knowledge from the humanities with the field of architecture and provide a foundation for further research on single-person households of young adults in the Czech Republic and their connection to dwelling and the process of creating a home.

**KEYWORDS:** home; dwelling; house; place; space; architecture; materiality; sociology; sociology of housing

## INTRODUCTION

"Architecture is our primary tool in our relationship to space and time and provides a human scale to these dimensions. It domesticates the boundless space and infinite time that the human species inhabits, tolerates, and understands." [6]. During its evolution, architecture has changed from a mere means of protection to a distinct reflection of the character of society. It has become a kind of man-made extension of nature, providing us with a basic premise for perceiving and a horizon for understanding the world. [6]. It is obvious that architecture is strongly intertwined with other disciplines and, for the most part, with those of the humanities such as sociology, anthropology, and psychology. Knowledge of these disciplines thus seems almost indispensable for an architect. As the architectural theorist Dalibor Veselý says about architecture, "...architecture is not primarily a technical discipline, but a humanistic one". [12]

In the first part of this thesis, we will focus on the concepts of "dwelling" and "home" which multidisciplinary connect and anchor people in architecture. The term "home" has no precise definition, and it can be approached from various angles. Therefore, it is subject to scrutiny by different disciplines, particularly sociology and phenomenology, which explore its connection to the field of architecture.

The relationship between a house and a home is not clear-cut. Dwelling, as an architectural form in its physical form, especially in terms of function, often transcends the concept of home as a specific aspect of human existence. On the other hand, the notion of home, in terms of experience and emotion, often surpasses dwelling, not only spatially but primarily on an existential level. Home can be understood as the fundamental situation for anchoring a person in the world and as the central point of their existence. [2]

However, this point also has a physical form and substance that significantly influences the overall meaning and expression of a home. The material and spatial components of dwelling and home are largely architectural or are greatly influenced by it. How does a house or apartment become a home for someone? It is important to mention, in this regard, both possible approaches, namely the phenomenological and critical perspectives, which, given the disciplines involved and the breadth of the topic, have a significant presence in this case. The starting point of this text will be Martin Heidegger's phenomenological approach, which has served as the foundation for many other authors across various disciplines.

The text is an introductory theoretical background to research on single-person households of young adults in the Czech Republic and their relationship to housing and home-making. In particular, the focus is on the material and spatial dimensions of the home, which are most co-created through architecture, and an understanding of which is crucial to the field. This thesis aims to define the concept of home in relation to architecture and its perception and negotiation by the individual.

## HOME AS A STARTING POINT

Dwelling and home are concepts that have been universally embedded and perceived in society for many years. The phenomenon of home has been explored across disciplines, and with this come different approaches to its definition. To begin, I will try to define the three fundamental concepts in this text, namely - architecture, house, and home. Subsequently, the text will offer definitions and perspectives on the concept of home from various disciplines.

Architecture is the creation of space and matter, forming the built environment where each of our lives unfolds. It serves as a backdrop but also a means through which we connect with a specific place and time. One of the most common products of architecture is the house, which exhibits various archetypal forms across the world and in different cultures. The house is distinctly characterized by its mass, which delineates the space and serves as the boundary between the outside and inside - the interior and exterior. When we talk about dwelling, we refer to a type of house with a well-defined primary function. The most abstract of these concepts is undoubtedly "home." Can home be defined as a place, or is it more about the relationship to that place? In my opinion, there is no single answer that entirely and precisely encapsulates this term. In the following lines, I will present key approaches from different disciplines that will provide us with partial definitions of the concept of home.

Heidegger's way of thinking and defining the concept of "living"<sup>1</sup> is crucial for phenomenology and will serve as the foundation for this text. At the core of his philosophy is the human being and their unique existence in the world, or dwelling. However, "dwelling" carries a different meaning in his approach compared to the conventional usage of the word. Heidegger perceives dwelling as a specific way of being in the world, involving the creation of places and things. In his work, architecture is seen as a phenomenon with the purpose of existentially supporting the human being; thus, "dwelling" becomes an integral aspect and purpose

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<sup>1</sup> Home as a place, however, can go beyond our private spaces and can be understood in different ways, but at the same time these private spaces do not necessarily mean home for everyone. Home itself and how we experience it is influenced by the environment in which it is situated, and which surrounds it. [Vacková, Galčanová, 2014]

of architecture. This phenomenological approach to dwelling and home forms the basis for many other authors across various disciplines.

"A person lives insofar as they can navigate their environment and identify with it." "Housing, therefore, encompasses more than mere 'shelter.' It also implies that the spaces where life unfolds have a distinct and defined character." [5] There is no doubt that architecture plays a pivotal role in a person's life and their self-identification.

Looking at the issue of "home" is even more complex. Several disciplines, in which the topic of home is pivotal, offer a range of definitions for this phenomenon. In sociology, what's pertinent to the question of home is the household as a functional unit and its spatial configuration, specifically the relationship between individuals and their dwellings. However, sociology's primary focus is not on buildings and architecture but rather on the relationships that form within them, particularly interpersonal ones.

Phenomenological perspectives define home as a place essential for human existence because humans and the world don't exist separately; they are interconnected. Place represents the concretization of meanings within the world, and home serves as the central locus of human existence. [2] Given this nature, it's also crucial to concentrate on the material aspect of home, of which architecture itself is a part. These themes hold paramount scientific interest for us, especially concerning the anthropologist and sociologist Peter Gibas.

"Architecture articulates 'being in the world' and reinforces our sense of reality and self. It does not create worlds of mere invention and fantasy. Buildings and cities provide a horizon for understanding and confronting the conditions of human existence. It directs our consciousness back to the world and to our sense of self and our being." [6] Housing is a fundamental manifestation of human existence in the world, which is experienced through architecture. This connection between architecture and its human experience has been explored by Finnish architect and theorist Juhani Pallasmaa, who is one of the main proponents of the phenomenological perspective on this topic, which he relates to the field of architecture.

The home thus becomes a pivotal site for comprehending our relationship with the world and should receive maximum attention in the realm of architecture. Not only do we influence and shape it, but it, in turn, shapes us, our attitudes, values, and behaviour. Therefore, from a phenomenological standpoint, the home transcends the material aspect; it represents just one of its components. [2]

The connection between the material aspect of home and the meanings that home represents for us was emphasized in studies conducted by the French sociologist and psychosocial scientist Perla Korosec-Serfaty in the mid-1980s. She offers a slightly different perspective on the concept of home, with a primary focus on the process of home-making as an appropriation of place on both material and meaningful levels, which evolves. She also introduces another critical element in the study of home, which is the temporality and dynamics of this phenomenon.

According to Perla Korosec-Serfaty, any changes that impact the significance of a place also modify and influence our relationship with home. Therefore, it is clear that reconstruction, alterations, and even simple decorations in our personal spaces alter our relationship with these places and represent a form of appropriation, not just at the material level but also in terms of meaning. This approach shifts us away from the

positivist perspective of phenomenology and guides us toward a different interpretation and exploration of the concepts of living and home.

This critical approach and study of home diverges from the original phenomenological concept of home as a place for existential grounding in the world. It transforms this concept into a complex space influenced by a variety of external factors. Critical approaches and studies of home are no longer phenomenologically universal, but look at the context in which the issue is studied.

For example, one of the current scholarly themes is the relationship between the material and the imaginative or signifying aspects of the home, which pushes and expands the techniques of studying material culture. It is primarily concerned with understanding the home as a place that helps people to co-create their identity. [2] Thus, we arrive at several levels of home - the first being the material side of home and the second being the meaning and experience side of home. It is the boundary between the house, as an architectural form, and the home that is very indeterminate and in a way fluid. For this reason, we can encounter phenomenological and critical approaches to this topic.

In this area, the thinking of the British political scientist and sociologist Anthony Giddens and his theory of individuation can be seen as a starting point, which may have implications for our understanding of home as a place where individual self-realization and the expression of identities take place. The home thus becomes an environment in which unique individual experiences and preferences are formed and expressed. It emphasizes interconnectedness and balance, particularly between the material and social components of the home.

It is clear, therefore, that the definition of home is not clear-cut and varies according to discipline and approach. However, home can be defined as a phenomenon that has material, spatial, temporal, and psychological dimensions. It becomes the central place in our lives, and at its core is our 'self.' It is a place that has a physical form, the scale and meaning of which may vary from person to person.

## MATERIAL AND SPATIAL DIMENSIONS OF HOME

If we revisit the thoughts of Martin Heidegger and his concept of dwelling, we find that for him, the essential aspect is the place or the possibility of living and dwelling in a specific place. The negotiation of home and home itself is thus inherently connected to a particular place. Place and space are not synonymous in this context. Unlike space, place lacks clearly defined boundaries or scale. This distinction allows us to conclude that home need not be confined to a specific space; it often transcends it. However, they are interrelated and linked to time.

A similar perspective on the materiality of home is presented by Blunt and Dowling, who emphasize the multiscale nature of home. They explicitly state that the home within the house is just one level of home. Other levels might include, for instance, the neighbourhood, city, state, and so on. [16]

In many ways, architecture becomes the instrument of birth, and the house becomes the subsequent imaginary vessel of the home, which, to some extent, can significantly influence its creation. Not only the private spaces themselves, but entire localities and cities, can assist people in the process of building and creating a home. We perceive the qualities of the space that surrounds us, the materials of the architecture, and its scale with all our senses. "An architectural work is

not experienced as a series of isolated images... we perceive it in its fully integrated material, embodied, and spiritual essence. [6] Therefore, it is necessary to pay special attention to these physical manifestations of home.

The material aspect of home is also dynamic and changes during the process of negotiating home. Often, material culture represents a compromise between the ideal and the real worlds and available resources. Some things we accumulate over many years, while others we forget after some time, and they become unnecessary. However, it is important to realize that these things co-create the home and have a significant influence; they are a part of us. This material aspect of our private space could be considered our life story, which we adapt to our own image. This image is influenced by a multitude of factors that work together in the process of negotiating home.

The process of creating a home is aided not only by architecture itself but also by the objects we place in the space and commonly use. How are these objects involved in this process, and how does it happen that a mere structure becomes a home? Adapting and modifying the space to our needs can be described as the initial negotiation of a home, initiating the process by which a foreign space becomes our home. [8]

## ARCHITECTURE IN THE NEGOTIATION OF THE HOME AND THE ROLE OF THE ARCHITECT IN THIS PROCESS

Architecture is the primary context of our lives. It has certain functions assigned to it in advance, while others it acquires over time through interaction with humans. What is the role of the architect in this process, and to what extent can the architect influence the creation of a home? Given that the negotiation of a home is a long-term process influenced by a variety of factors, it is evident that the architect's role should not end with the mere delivery of a blank canvas, especially when we are discussing living spaces.

Unique research into people's preferences for the layout and furnishing of their apartments and houses was conducted by the Institute of Housing and Dress Culture.<sup>2</sup> Although this research remained primarily theoretical, it employed a sophisticated methodology that involved a broader spectrum of professionals, allowing it to yield unique data on the needs and desires of the inhabitants of that era regarding their apartments, houses, and furnishings. Psychological methods were also included to ascertain why people discounted certain dwelling layouts over specific furnishings and decorative items in their living spaces.

The comparison between the ideas of the ideal way of living and the actual state of affairs that generally prevailed in our country at that time was very important. The architecture of housing, which includes apartments and houses that become homes for us, is influenced by several types of factors. The external objective factors include the architectural form of the building itself and its layout. This involves the use of individual rooms and their physical form, which is composed in the smallest detail of furnishings and other items of daily use for each of us.

Research has revealed the basic requirements of the general public for furnishing flats and houses. Functionality and utility were the key and predominant requirements. In particular, for some specific rooms and specific furnishings, variability, and the possibility of change with respect to the life stages of the occupants of the dwelling also played a role. Furthermore, the importance of aesthetic and emotional aspects in furnishing apartments is very evident from the research.

Often, the things to which we have an emotional attachment are the strongest catalysts for a home. [9]

It is clear, then, that home studies are a key tool for understanding the relationship between humans and architecture. Privacy is one of the fundamental rights of each of us, it is the right to determine what information we will communicate about ourselves to our surroundings and in what form. It is the private dwelling that provides us with a home that is the perfect reflection of us. If we want to understand architecture, we must first understand ourselves.

## CONCLUSION

The text focused primarily on the topic of home, which is becoming an increasingly studied and addressed topic across disciplines. The intention was to present the issue of home and housing through the lens of different disciplines and their multidisciplinary interconnection with the field of architecture.

Architecture is a key tool for human relationships and understanding of space and time, through which we are able to comprehend the world. Linking architecture with the humanities, such as sociology, anthropology, and psychology, is essential in order to create architecture that has the potential to become an important factor in human identification, especially in the field of housing and the process of home-making. It articulates our existence in the world and provides us with a horizon for understanding and confronting the conditions of human existence. The home becomes a pivotal site for understanding our relationship with the world, and therefore, it is essential to give it the utmost attention in the architectural field.

In this respect, the architect as a creator has a very strong influence on the future use of the space and its possibilities for adaptation and modification in the process of creating a home. Space, layout, materials, and other architectural factors can have a significant impact on our feelings, mood, and well-being. A well-designed space can promote communication, interaction, and the creation of social connections. When choosing a house or an apartment, we often look for specific elements that reflect our identity and values.

Home is a very complex concept that can be viewed in many different ways, and its interpretation is influenced by a variety of factors such as culture, religion, geographic location, and so on. The concept of 'home' is defined in the introductory section from several perspectives, and basic starting points for understanding it are outlined. The phenomenological approach and the definition of home as the existential anchorage of the human being in the world serve as a springboard for further approaches.

Home negotiation can be defined as a process in which several factors come into play. One of the main ones is the materiality of the home, which includes the architectural form itself, as well as furnishings and daily necessities. There is a constant interaction between the individual and the material aspect of the home, which helps the person create the emotional and experiential dimensions of the home. This material aspect of home takes on even greater importance, especially for people living independently.

I believe that the material form of the home plays a key role in the process of creating a home, and the architect, from their position as a creator, can significantly influence it. However, it is important to mention that this is an initial stage in the process of negotiating a home, which raises the question of whether the architect's expertise can contribute to the creation of the home at other stages of the process. These stages

<sup>2</sup> ÚBOK (Ústav bytové a oděvní kultury) The Institute of Furniture and Clothing Culture was established in the Czech Republic after the Second World War and its main objective was to meet the needs of the time and to improve the industrial production of nationalized companies in the field of furniture design, lighting, textiles, clothing and other consumer goods.

are determined by changes in needs and the evolution of the human psyche over the course of a lifetime. Therefore, the role of the architect should probably not end with the delivery of an empty structure before 'moving in.'

The text is based on publications by architects and theorists with a phenomenological approach, as well as studies dealing with the issue of home in the field of sociology and other humanities in the Czech Republic. The aim of the text was to link these different disciplines and their approaches to the topic of home.

In conclusion, the relationship between architecture and home plays a key role in our perception, experience, and identification. Architecture has the potential to create environments that greatly influence our emotions, relationships, and overall quality of life, especially in the context of housing. Therefore, it is important to pay the utmost attention to this topic. As a further research question, it is suggested to explore to what extent and at what stage of the design process an architect can influence the process of home formation in the case of mass housing development without knowing the specific future occupant of the space.

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