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# Home and Homelessness

## KIMBERLY DOVEY

### INTRODUCTION

*The phenomenon of home . . . used to be an overwhelming and inexchangeable something to which we were subordinate and from which our way of life was oriented and directed. . . . Home nowadays is a distorted and perverted phenomenon. It is identical to a house; it can be anywhere. It is subordinate to us, easily measureable in numbers of money value. It can be exchanged like a pair of shoes.*

—Vycinas, 1961, pp. 84–85

The concept of *home* has been receiving increasing attention in the modern world. There are those, such as Vycinas, who lament the passing of a time when deep connections with the home place were unavoidable. Others work to replicate, invent, package, and sell the images of home for an increasingly nostalgic public who perhaps shares this sense of loss. And there are those of us who seek to explore and understand the meanings of this intangible and difficult concept.

I want to begin this essay by distinguishing between the concepts of *house* and *home*. The use of a phrase such as *home ownership* treats house and home as synonymous terms. Although the meaning in this case is clear, in other usages it becomes more ambiguous. For instance the statement *I don't have a home* may mean either that the speaker lacks

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access to a dwelling place or that the dwelling place does not carry the meaning and experience of *home*. The focus in this essay is on these experiential aspects of *home* that distinguish it from *house*. Although a house is an object, a part of the environment, home is best conceived of as a kind of relationship between people and their environment. It is an emotionally based and meaningful relationship between dwellers and their dwelling places. Concomitant with this distinction is the assumption that the concept of the "housing problem" is not identical to that of "homelessness." Indeed, the housing problem can be, and often is, solved in a manner that creates homelessness. For the purposes of this essay the term *home* is intended to refer to this relationship or experiential phenomenon rather than the house, place, or building that may or may not represent its current manifestation in built form.

The first part of the essay constitutes an outline of what I see as our current understanding of the phenomenon of *home*. There are three themes or approaches to this understanding that have been used to organize this section. The first consists of various kinds of "order" through which we are oriented in the world. The second is the processes of "identification" through which we connect with our world in a meaningful way. The third theme is that of "dialectic processes" that describe an essential dynamism in the process of becoming at home.

In the second part of the essay I turn over the coin to examine some aspects of *homelessness*—processes and conditions that can erode the experience of home and paralyze its emergence in the modern world. I conclude with some brief comments on how these understandings may be applied in the design professions. These applications have both limits and opportunities. They are limited because the current problems of homelessness are deeply rooted in cultural, technological, social, and economic conditions of modern society. The opportunity lies in the chance for a radical shift in the ways that we conceptualize environmental change and the designer's role within it—a shift that may flow from an enhanced understanding of the experience of home and the processes of both its erosion and emergence.

The theoretical approach in this essay is phenomenological. Such an approach is suggested by the intangible nature of the concept in question. Although we might study the *house* as a discrete variable, *home* is not an empirical variable whose meaning we might define in advance of careful measurement and explanation. As a consequence, understanding in this area is plagued with a lack of verifiability that many will find frustrating. My aim, however, is not to produce specific cause–effect relationships or explanations; it is rather to deepen our understanding of an intrinsically intangible phenomenon. My sources are several. First, I

draw heavily on the literature of phenomenological philosophy and ge-
ography. Second, the cross-cultural studies of anthropological fieldwork
offer an insight into the forms and experiences of home in the traditional
world. Third, the world of literature reveals important and clear explica-
tions of the experience of home and the processes of its emergence.


## PROPERTIES OF HOME

I have argued that *home* is distinguished from *house* in that the
former is a relationship, an experienced meaning. My aim in this first
part is to explicate some properties of this relationship and aspects of its
meaning. I do not mean to imply that these properties are necessary nor
sufficient for the experience of home; rather they offer us hints at a
structure underlying this intangible concept.


### HOME AS ORDER

The first of these properties is *order*, by which is meant simply
"patterning" in environmental experience and behavior. Being at home
is a mode of being whereby we are oriented within a spatial, temporal,
and sociocultural order that we understand.


*Spatial Order*

One of the most important contributions of the phenomenological
approach to environmental experience has been a thorough reinterpre-
tation of the concept of *space* that parallels the distinction between *house*
and *home.* At the heart of this reinterpretation is an important distinction
between *conceptual space* and *lived space* (Bollnow, 1967). Conceptual
space is abstract, geometric, and objectively measured, a kind of context
or ether within which places, people, and things exist. Lived space, by
contrast, is the preconceptual and meaningful spatial experience of what
phenomenologists call "being-in-the-world" (Heidegger, 1962). Where-
as conceptual space is an abstract homogeneous continuum, lived space
is a concrete and meaning-centered bodily experience. The most sophis-
ticated argument for the priority of lived space is that of Merleau-Ponty
(1962, p. 243) who argues that

> Space is not the setting (real or logical) in which things are arranged, but the
> means whereby the positing of things becomes possible. . . . [It is] a certain

possession of the world by my body, a gearing of my body to the world . . . a
pact . . . which gives me the enjoyment of space and gives to things their
direct power over my body.

The concept of home is deeply rooted in this "gearing" of our bodies to
the world. There are three kinds of structures that are important here.
First is the triaxial structure of the human body and the fundamental
distinctions between up/down, front/rear, and left/right (Dovey, 1979;
Needham, 1973; Straus, 1966). Gravity is an ever present part of this
structure of being-in-the-world that sets the vertical dimension apart,
both practically and symbolically from the horizontal. Second, there is
the structure of our actions in space—grasping, sitting, walking, manip-
ulating, looking, hearing, smelling (Norburg-Schulz, 1971; Piaget, 1955).
Third, there is the structure of the world, which, although it may differ
enormously in its geography, retains a structure whereby we live out
our lives on a roughly horizontal surface between earth and sky (Hei-
degger, 1971). Home finds its roots if not its forms in these universal
structures of environmental experience and action. Although universal,
these structures are not so much determinant as they are limiting struc-
tures. The links with architectural form will hopefully become clearer as
I proceed, but they are by no means determinant nor simple.

     Thus the human body stands vertically on a horizontal plane with
certain spatial abilities and limits. This is Norburg-Schulz's (1971) model
of existential space, a vertical axis piercing a horizontal plane. The un-
derlying structure of home as spatial order lies in its role as a center of
our spatial world with a sense of verticality and horizontal access. This
center that we inhabit is also infused with other kinds of order that
separate it off from the surrounding world. Home is a sacred place
(Eliade, 1959), a secure place (Rainwater, 1966), a place of certainty and
of stability. It is a principle by which we order our existence in space
(Dovey, 1978). Home is demarcated territory with both physical and
symbolic boundaries that ensure that dwellers can control access and
behavior within. Although this center is clearly distinguished from its
surroundings, it is also strongly oriented within it. This orientation is to
the compass points, the celestial bodies, the surrounding geography,
and the access routes. To be at home is to know where you are; it means
to inhabit a secure center and to be oriented in space. A certain ambigu-
ity in the phenomenon of home becomes apparent at this point because
home as territory also involves a kind of home range that can include
neighborhood, town, and landscape. Yet this larger home is also a kind
of ordered center within which we are oriented and distinguished from
the larger and stranger surroundings.

*Temporal Order*

Home as order is not only spatial orientation but also temporal orientation. Home is a kind of origin, we go "back" home even when our arrival is in the future. The home environment is one thoroughly imbued with the familiarity of past experience. It is the environment we inhabit day after day until it becomes taken for granted and is un-selfconscious. This sense of familiarity is rooted in bodily routines, a place where, according to Seamon (1979, p. 80), space becomes a "field of pre-reflective actions grounded in the body." When we wander through the dark in our home, we do not need to see where the furniture and light switches are; we can "feel" them. The home environment is predictable. Although when we are away from home we need to be alert and adaptable, at home we can relax within the stability of routine behavior and experience.

Home as temporal order and familiarity includes not only direct experience of places over time but also familiarity with certain spatial patterns from other places in past experience. Home thus has strong roots in the experiences of childhood where the visual images of home were formed. It has been suggested that there are connections between such experiences and the environmental attitudes and preferences later expressed in adult life (Cooper Marcus, 1978). Home as temporal order is not dependent on aesthetic attraction; it may be more accurate to say that the homes of our past set the ground for our very perceptions of attractiveness and ugliness.

In yet another way, home as temporal order can extend to a familiarity with the past processes through which the forms of the environment have come into being. The experience of wood for instance connects with our experiences of climbing trees, sawing, chopping, nailing, and carving. We are familiar with its strength that we see reflected in its size and with its growth patterns reflected in the grain. The materials and forms will of course differ much from place to place, but a knowledge of how the places in which we dwell came into being provides a sense of home even when we were not engaged in the construction (Feuerstein, 1965).

The dichotomy of *insideness* versus *outsideness* is increasingly used to categorize relationships between people and places (Appleyard, 1979a; Relph, 1976). In this sense, home is an experience of complete insideness that can only develop over time. The order that constitutes the experience of home often looks like chaos to an outsider. Indeed, many people are more at home among their own "disorder" than within

someone else's "order." Herein lies an important dilemma in the attempt to understand the concept of home. Because the insider's temporal order stems largely from the personal routines and cycles repeated through extended periods of time, it may remain invisible to the outsider who sees only the resultant spatial form. Furthermore, this temporal order may be so imbued with familiarity that it becomes taken for granted and is unselfconscious for the insider. Thus both insider and outsider are faced with difficulties in achieving a depth of understanding.

*Sociocultural Order*

This discussion of home as spatiotemporal order has thus far largely omitted any mention of environmental form. This is because the forms in which this order becomes manifest are primarily sociocultural. Given the basic limits of the structure of the body and the world in space and time, there remain infinite variations in the forms of dwellings. Cultural beliefs and social practices represent the ordering system that selects from among these possibilities and shapes the broad range of formal manifestations of home within any sociocultural context (Benedict, 1946). Thus, the particular patterns and rituals of environmental experience and behavior are largely sociocultural phenomena. The phenomenon of homes comes to be embodied in this ordered structure that is at once spatial, temporal, and sociocultural.

Consider the activity of eating for instance, which, although common to all people, differs markedly in its spatial and temporal manifestations according to cultural patterns. Spatially, Westerners eat while seated in chairs, Indians sit on the floor, and ancient Romans ate lying down. And there are differences with regard to where one eats, with whom, and who sits where. Temporally, certain cyclic routines and rituals are followed (Lawrence, 1982, p. 27) with regard to when meals are consumed, who eats first, and when feasts are held. Certain spatiotemporal categories, such as the *Sunday dinner* or the *breakfast room*, emerge within each culture. As patterns of experience and behavior stabilize over time, so do the spatial arrangements and environmental props that support and evoke those experiences. Patterns of dining, talking, sleeping, studying, and watching television form the bulk of the assumptions that go without saying in housing design. These are patterns that orient us in space, in time, and in the sociocultural context.

The notion of home as social order is at once extremely flexible and yet conservative. It is flexible inasmuch as it is embodied not in a house or building but in the patterning of experience and behavior. It is a way of relating to the environment that may be transposed from place to

place, and in this way the meanings of home may be reevoked if the patterns are recreated. For instance the !Kung bushmen of the Kalahari Desert create a new home every night with just a fire to mark the center and a small windbreak or symbolic entry. These are enough to evoke a complex schema of spatial meanings that orients everyone in relation to the fire (Marshall, 1973). This flexibility also extends to the ability to adapt one's "home" to changing social circumstances. The adolescent who rejects the family home, for instance, may not be rejecting "at homeness" so much as reordering a spatial schema to center on a new "home"—a subcultural group and its preferred places. Although the particular spatial patterns may be sociocultural, the sense of connectedness may be more personal. It is a very old tradition that lovers can transcend a dependence on place; their love can elevate any place they happen to be into a home. People who are thoroughly immersed in an activity that they love can convey a sense of home to that place. Thus *home* may be the relationship between an intellectual and a set of ideas, a pianist and a piano, a cook and a kitchen, a gardener and a garden, a sportsperson and a playing field. This is not to say that the setting for such activities is not important—indeed, it is often crucial—however, the place is elevated into a home by virtue of allowing such homelike activities to take place.

The conservative aspect of home as sociocultural order lies in the all pervasiveness and taken-for-grantedness of this order. Everyday discourse and social practices rarely question the spatial context within which they are located and concretized. Bourdieu (1977, Chapter 2) argues that the house is the principal locus for the embodying of the basic categories of the world—the taxonomies of people, things, and practices. For Bourdieu the basic schemes of perception, thought, and action are embodied in the home, which is privileged through being the location of the earliest learning processes. The house is thus a kind of "book" that is read by the body through its interactions. "As an acquired system of generative schemes," he argues, "the habitus engenders all the thoughts, all the perceptions, and all the actions consistent with those conditions and no others" (p. 95). Through being deeply rooted in the past, home also carries with it considerable inertia to change. Social hierarchy, injustice, and outmoded sex roles are difficult to question when they are embodied in, and evoked by, the taken-for-granted world of spatial patterning.

## HOME AS IDENTITY

Home then is a highly complex system of ordered relations with place, an order that orients us in space, in time, and in society. Yet the

phenomenon of home is more than the experience of being oriented within a familiar order; it also means to be identified with the place in which we dwell. Although home as order has a strong cognitive element, home as identity is primarily affective and emotional, reflecting the adage *home is where the heart is*. Identity implies a certain bonding or mergence of person and place such that the place takes its identity from the dweller and the dweller takes his or her identity from the place. There is an integrity, a connectedness between the dweller and dwelling. Home as order and as identity are strongly interrelated; yet whereas order is concerned with "where" we are at home, identity broaches the questions of "who" we are, as expressed in the home, and "how" we are at home.

### Spatial Identity

There are now many interpretations of built form as the representation of identity in space. Complexities in the field have expanded as important differences are shown to occur across cultures (Rapoport, 1981), classes (Gans, 1974), subcultural groups (Pratt, 1981), and stages of the life cycle (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981). Debate in the field suggests a primary opposition between social and individual interpretations of identity. The social perspective tends to interpret the home as a "statement" of identity expressed through a shared symbolic language (Appleyard, 1979b; Goffman, 1971). In this situation the home may indeed represent a socially desired identity rather than any depth of character. Rakoff (1977) has argued that although the meaning of the house is privately experienced and may be deeply felt, it is collectively determined in Western society by an individualistic ideology. Individual interpretations often argue for a deeper connection between the home and the human spirit. Jung has argued that self-expression in built form is one way in which the self archetype becomes manifest. He has described the construction of his own house as a "concretization of the individuation process" (Jung, 1967, p. 252), an approach that has been developed by Cooper (1974) and others.

The debate of individualistic versus social interpretations of house identity is both rife and productive (Duncan, 1981). My view is that the personal and the social are inextricably interwoven; that representation of identity in the home stems from both social structure and our quest for personal identification within it. The home is both a "statement" and a "mirror," developing both socially and individually, reflecting both collective ideology and authentic personal experience.

If the meaning of home as identity is both collective and personal, it

is also in a sense universal. One of the strongest themes here is the house/body metaphor (Bachelard, 1969). The house is commonly experienced as a symbolic body with concomitant distinctions between up/down and front/rear. And just as the body boundary defines the distinction between self and other, so the metaphoric body defines the boundary between home and away-from-home. When this metaphoric body is burglarized or raided, there is often a strong and lingering feeling among the inhabitants of having been personally contaminated.[1] The traditional world abounds with examples of houses that embody representations of the body. The Dogon (Griale & Dieterlen, 1964) and the Tamberma (Blier, 1981) of West Africa inhabit houses where there are direct correlations between parts of the body and parts of the house. Houses of both the Dogon and the Kabyles of North Africa (Bourdieu, 1962) have forms that are symbolic representations of sexual union. For the Tukano of the Amazon the hearth is a symbolic uterus (Reichel-Dolmatoff, 1971). If the home embodies a connection with our microcosmic home, the body, then it also can embody a representation of the macrocosm. For the Atoni of Indonesia (Cunningham, 1973), a triadic view of a sky covering an earth composed of sea and dry land is symbolized in the house by an attic (sky) that covers an inner room (dry land) and a veranda (sea). The house plan is symbolically conceived like a mandala, with cardinal points at the periphery and the hearth at the center. The hearth fire is considered to be the fire of the earth, in symbolic opposition to the sun, the fire of the sky. Sun and hearth are represented in two ridge poles of the house that are tied together with rope, a symbolic connection of microcosm and macrocosm (Cunningham, 1973, p. 222). There is evidence that this kind of symbolism, whereby the meanings of body, house, and world are gathered in the form of the house, is widespread in the indigenous world (Critchlow, 1975; Gardiner, 1975; Rykwert, 1972; Saile, 1977).

Home as identity is not just a matter of the representation of a self-image of a world view; it also entails an important component that is supplied by the site itself. We not only give a sense of identity to the place we call home, but we also draw our identity from that of the place. Since the beginnings of agriculture, humans have endowed places with an earth spirit (Eliade, 1963). This is the chthonian realm of the Greeks and what the Romans called the *genius loci* or "spirit of place." Heideg-

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[1]Empirical evidence on this issue is scarce but anecdotal evidence abounds. See "Emotional impact of burglary as serious as robbery, study finds," *Law Enforcement Assistance Association Newsletter*, 1978, 7(4), 5–6; and D. Hickie, Fortress suburbia. *The National Times* (Australia), 1984(682), 12–16.

ger (1966) speaks of what he calls *autochthony* or *rootedness* in place as a basic condition for the development of authentic human existence. The Greek term *autochthonic* meant "sprung from the land itself." The sense of identity embodied in the phenomenon of home has an important component of autochthony. Another way to describe this is as "indigenous," the etymology of which means "to be born within." Home in this sense is something that grows in a place rather than being imposed from without. It grows both from the particular personal and social circumstances of the dwellers but also from the environmental context of the place itself, its *genius loci*. Thus home has a key element of uniqueness, it is place based.

*Temporal Identity*

Home is a place where our identity is continually evoked through connections with the past. Although temporal order is primarily concerned with familiarity, temporal identity is a means of establishing who we are by where we have come from. The role of the physical environment in this regard is that of a kind of mnemonic anchor. Consider the following description of the experience of the Lepchas of the Himalayas:

> Every piece of land is meaningful for them, for every piece, unless it be the home of a supernatural, is, has been, or will be cultivated. Every piece of land, every step they take reminds them of the past and the present, of their own work and struggles and those of their neighbors; the houses and fences they have helped to build, the land they have helped to clear and weed and harvest, the places where they have played as children or, later, met for amorous encounter. . . . They see the record of their lives and of the lives of their ancestors, and of the lives to come of their children. (Gorer, 1967, p. 81)

Our experience in the world carries its own meanings, and the places in which these experiences occur become inbued with those meanings. The physical environment plays a very important but little-recognized role whereby it enables us to concretize the memory through association. "The emotion felt among human beings," Tuan says (1974, p. 241), "finds expression and anchorage in things and places. It can be said to create things and places to the extent that, in its glow, they acquire extra meaning." Tuan uses the phrase *fields of care* to refer to the connections with place that grow over long periods of time through everyday dwelling and care. The Kaluli of New Guinea see the present landscape as a kind of living history embodying the spirit of past lives and events:

> Each person knows the streams and landmarks of his longhouse territory, and these recall the people he worked with and shared with there. This growth of young trees, that patch of weeds with a burned house post, this

huge Ilaha tree that dominates the crest of a ridge, reflect the contexts and
personalities of his life. (Schieffelin, 1976, p. 182)

During the important Gisaro ceremony, songs are improvised that trace
a path through the landscape, using place-names to evoke grief and
sorrow. The audience has intimate memories thrown at them in the
form of the place-names wherein the memories are anchored. The aim is
to evoke sorrow for lost relatives and ancestors and also for a lost past.
In such a way the sense of connectedness with the past is periodically
renewed. The role of the environment as a mnemonic anchor enables us
to participate in an interaction between present and past, between expe-
rience and memory. The memories reflected in the home environment
help to create our current experience of home, and those experiences
serve in turn to preserve, evoke, and even revise the memory.

   Home as temporal identity is not limited to connections with the
past but extends into a connectedness with the future. I noted earlier
that home is a center of security, of possessed territory, a place of free-
dom where our own order can become manifest, secure from the im-
positions of others. This aspect of home as a place of autonomy is also
fundamentally linked to home as identity; it gives a connection into the
future. Home suggests a certain dynamic adaptability. It allows for both
the *representation* and the *growth* of identity. Growth of identity is more
than the search for a form that reflects a static self-image; it is dynamic
and may indeed actively resist equilibrium (Allport, 1955). The growth
of identity requires a certain freedom of interaction between present and
future, between our experiences and dreams. Knowing that we have the
power to remain in a place and change it permits us to act upon and
build our dreams.

## HOME AS CONNECTEDNESS

   The themes of home as order and identity that I have presented
thus far are summarized in Figure 1. Home is a schema of relationships
that brings order, integrity, and meaning to experience in place—a se-
ries of connections between person and world:

- *Connectedness with people*: both through the patterns of sociocultur-
  al order and through the role of the home place in the symboliza-
  tion and representation of identity
- *Connectedness with the place*: first, through being oriented in it; and
  second, through the ways in which we put down roots and draw
  an indigenous sense of identity from each unique place
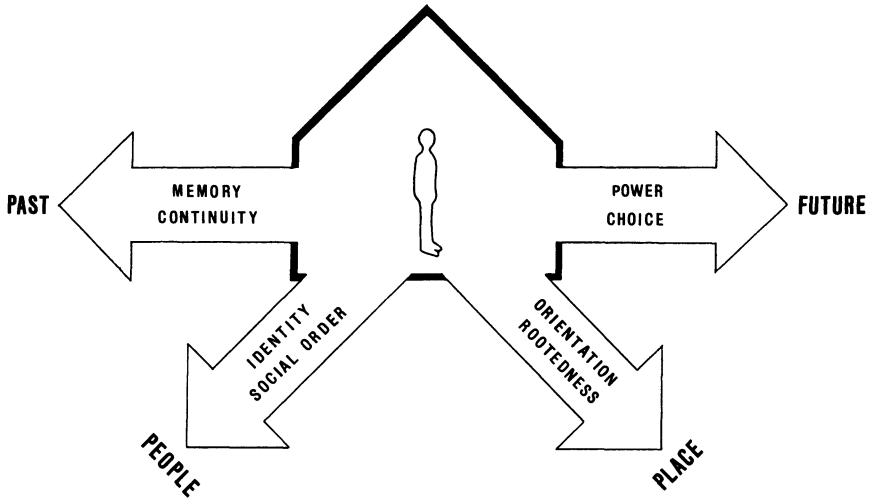- *Connectedness with the past*: through having memory anchored in

Figure 1. Home as connectedness.

the forms of the home place and from the experience of familiarity
and continuity that this engenders
- *Connectedness with the future*: when power and autonomy permit
  dreams and hopes to inform environmental change

Home then is an integrative schema that is at once a bonding of
person and place and a set of connections between the experience of
dwelling and the wider spatial, temporal, and sociocultural context
within which it emerges. Home orients us and connects us with the
past, the future, the physical environment, and our social world.

## DIALECTICS OF HOME

The picture of the phenomenon of home presented here has one
critical weakness—it is too static. It does not convey an understanding
of the dynamic processes through which the order, identity, and con-
nectedness of home come into being. These processes are fundamen-
tally dialectical. My use of the term *dialectic* here is similar to that adop-
ted by Altman and Gauvain (1981) with three defining characteristics: a
tension between binary opposites, an essential unity in that the poles
are mutually defining, and a dynamism that lends their interaction a
certain progression. Unlike the house, the meaning of home is not self-
contained but emerges from its dialectical interaction along a series of
binary oppositions that are summarized in Figure 2. Once again, these

social dialectics

PUBLIC

OTHER                    COMMUNITY

SELF    PRIVATE    IDENTITY

HOUSE / ROOM

HOUSE    HOUSE

OUTSIDE    CITY    INSIDE    HOME

**HOME**

HOME    BEING-AT-HOME    YEARNING

REST    JOURNEY

FAMILIAR    ORDER    AUTONOMY

STRANGE    SECURE    SACRED

DANGEROUS    PROFANE    HETERONOMY    MOVEMENT
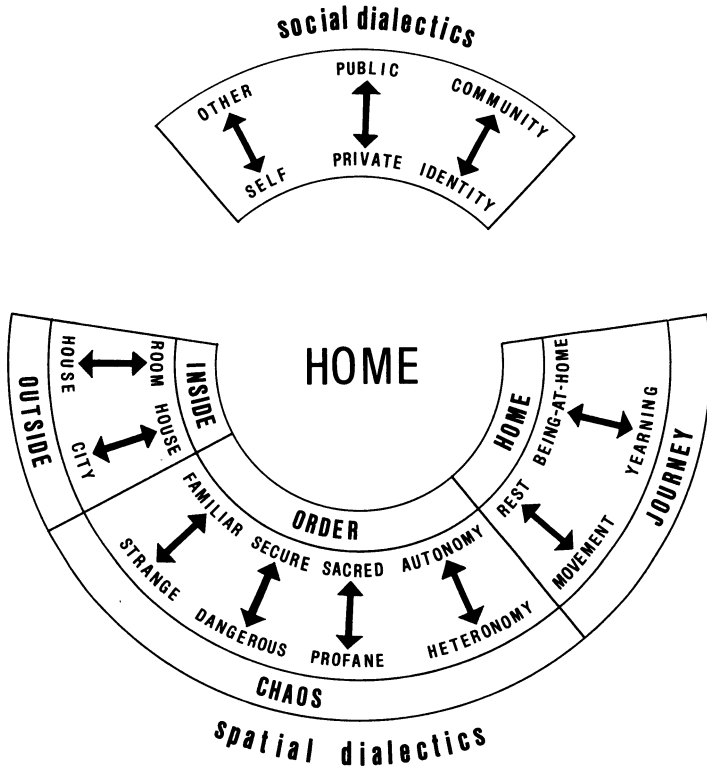
CHAOS

Spatial dialectics

Figure 2. The dialectics of home.

dialectical oppositions may be divided into those that are primarily spatial and those that are primarily sociocultural.

*Spatial Dialectics*

The spatial dialectics are derived primarily from the opposition of home and journey. We participate in this dialectic through movement in time. Home is a place of rest from which we move outward and return, a place of nurture where our energies and spirits are regenerated before the next journey (Seamon, 1979). Buttimer (1980, p. 169) uses the phrase *lived reciprocity* to describe this dialectic: "like breathing in and out, most life forms need a home and horizons of reach outward." The experience of each pole of the dialectic implies and engenders the other. The journey is opposed to the dwelling as the road is opposed to the hearth; the one grows out of the other (Jager, 1975).

Several of the properties of home outlined earlier also participate in this spatial dialectic. It is a dialectic between inside and outside. It is through an understanding of this dialectic that we can understand the ambiguities in our use of the word *home* when we use it to refer to a room, a house, a town, a city, and a nation. Home can be a room inside a house, a house within a neighborhood, a neighborhood within a city, and a city within a nation. At each level the meaning of home gains in intensity and depth from the dialectical interaction between the two poles of experience—the place and its context at a larger scale.

Yet the dialectics of home involve more than inside versus outside. Home is a place of security within an insecure world, a place of certainty within doubt, a familiar place in a strange world, a sacred place in a profane world (Dovey, 1978). It is a place of autonomy and power in an increasingly heteronomous world where others make the rules. These oppositions can be subsumed under the rubric of order/chaos. Home certainly has the properties of order as argued earlier; yet it is only through the dialectical interaction that its meaning develops. Home as mere order and identity can well become a prison, a hermetically sealed world devoid of chance. To experience the meaning of home is to experience this dialectic. In the words of the poet Auden (1966), home is "not a windowless grave, but a place I may go both in and out of." A world of total order is a world of comfort, yet without the friction that keeps our experiences alive. Order too has no meaning without chaos.

The dialectic processes of home and journey can help us to understand the meanings that are attached to the ambiguous areas at the interface, such as the threshold, porch, front garden, and window seat. To be at the interface is empathically to participate in the dialectic, to be at home yet with a sense of reach, to have a refuge and a prospect (Appleton, 1975). The sense of home is heightened when we are warm in bed yet can hear the rain on the roof and the wind whistling under the eaves. The contrast between inside and outside accentuates the meaning of being inside; the sense of cold outside makes warmth meaningful. The unfamiliar and insecure world may threaten, but it is at the interface between it and the ordered center that we find all new experience, and hence the excitement and aventure of life. To live fully one must both journey out and return. Yet, like all true dialectics, that of home and journey is not merely cyclical but rather is dynamic or spiral. In the traditional Hegelian sense, if home is the thesis and journey its antithesis, then the synthesis is a deepened experience of the phenomenon of home. Finally, it is important to recognize that the dialectic between home and journey is also a dialectic between two kinds of experiences of home, between that of being-at-home and that of yearning-for-home.

Yearning-for-home is "about" being-at-home; it occupies a different level of logical type (Olsson, 1981). Whereas being-at-home is unself-conscious and taken for granted, the experience of yearning is idealized and self-conscious. The two experiences should not be confused.

## Social Dialectics

The importance of the representation of social identity to the concept of home was outlined earlier. This property, too, is dialectical because it participates in the negotiation and representation of identity through the oppositions of self/other, identity/community, and private/public. We participate in these dialectics as we engage with the spatial dialectic of home and journey: we journey from the private individual world out into the public communal realm. Altman and Gauvain (1981) argue that our engagement in these dialectics are cross-culturally reflected in dwelling forms, especially in the realm of the threshold and house front, the interface between home and journey. Altman's (1975) model of privacy, as a dialectical boundary control mechanism, is pertinent here. The phenomenon of privacy, like that of home, is not so much a place as a dialectical process of being in contact and being out of contact with others. And there are links to the property of autonomy in the phenomenon of home. "Privacy mechanisms," Altman argues, "define the limits and boundaries of the self. When the permeability of those boundaries is under the control of a person, a sense of individuality develops" (p. 50). From another direction, the symbolic interactionist perspective argues that identity emerges through a process of taking the role of a "generalized other" and changing ourselves in response to how we imagine we are seen (Mead, 1934). Inasmuch as the home is a social symbol of our identity, we participate in this self/other dialectic of imagining how we are perceived through the symbolism of our home.

## Dialectics of Appropriation

Perhaps the most important dialectic related to the concept of home is that of *appropriation*. This is a very difficult yet fundamentally important notion because it goes to the heart of the concept of home as a mode of being-in-the-world. I use the term *appropriation* in the general sense of its etymological root, the Latin *appropriare*, "to make one's own." For Heidegger (1962), appropriation is a dialectic process through which we take aspects of our world into our being and are in turn taken by our world. It involves both a "caring" for a place and a "taking" of that place

into our own being (Relph, 1981). The caring aspect is not just utilitarian but involves a sparing and preserving of the world in its own right (Heidegger, 1971). The second part of the dialectic is the taking and incorporation of the world into our sense of identity. It is through our engagement with the world, our dwelling, embodying both caring and taking, that the world discloses itself. As we open ourselves to the world of things and places we bring them meaning, and at the same time these things and places lend meaning to our sense of identity. Appropriation is rooted therefore in action, in the dialectical practices of everyday life through which we appropriate aspects of the world as anchors for self-identity. The dialectic of appropriation embodies the emergence of environmental meaning through interaction. It is the dialectic between personal change and environmental change, the process through which we change our environment and we are in turn changed by environmental experience.

An understanding of the concept of home involves an understanding of dialectical processes and changing transactions over time. The trap is to regard the problem in static terms or consider one side of the dialectic and disregard the other. The house is static, but home is fundamentally dynamic and process oriented. There is no sense of home unless there is also a journeying. Without community there is no identity; without a public realm there is no privacy. And in a sense, without homelessness, we would not be concerned with what home means.

## BECOMING-AT-HOME

In order to draw together and exemplify some of the themes presented previously, I want to consider two passages from literature that show how the process of becoming at home may be manifest in our culture. The first of these is a passage from Steinbeck's *Cannery Row* where a group of "homeless" men in Monterey, California, appropriate an old warehouse.

> The Palace Flophouse was no sudden development. Indeed when Mack and Hazel and Eddie and Hughie and Jones moved into it, they looked upon it as little more than shelter from the wind and the rain, as a place to go when everything else had closed or when their welcome was thin and sere with overuse. Then the Palace was only a long bare room, lit dimly by two small windows, walled with unpainted wood smelling strongly of fishmeal. They had not loved it then. But Mack knew that some kind of organization was necessary particularly among such a group of ravening individualists. . .with a piece of chalk [he] drew five oblongs on the floor, each seven feet long and four feet wide, and in each square he wrote a name. These were the simulated beds. Each man had property rights inviolable in his space. He could

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legally fight a man who encroached on his square. The rest of the room was property common to all. That was in the first days when Mack and the boys sat on the floor, played cards hunkered down, and slept on the hard boards. (Steinbeck, 1954, p. 23)

This is the beginning, there is nothing more than rough shelter, design excellence is far from their consideration. The building is an envelope keeping out the rain; they have a house but not a home. They bring with them certain spatial patterns—sleeping on the floor, sitting while playing cards. They create territorial rules with certain agreed-upon signs to demarcate territory, a place for each individual with a certain freedom of control over it. The passage proceeds:

Perhaps, save for an accident of weather, they might always have lived that way. However, an unprecedented rainfall which went on for over a month changed all that. House ridden, the boys grew tired of squatting on the floor. Their eyes became outraged by the bare board walls. Because it sheltered them the house grew dear to them. And it had the charm of never knowing the entrance of an outraged landlord. For Lee Chong never came near it. Then one afternoon Hughie came in with an army cot which had a torn canvas. He spent two hours sewing up the rip with fishing line. And that night the others lying on the floor in their squares watched Hughie ooze gracefully into his cot—they heard him sigh with abysmal comfort and he was asleep and snoring before anyone else. The next day Mack puffed up the hill carrying a rusty set of springs he had found on a scrap iron dump. The apathy was broken then. The boys outdid one another in beautifying the Palace Flophouse until after a few months it was, if anything, overfurnished. There were old carpets on the floor, chairs with and without seats. Mack had a wicker chaise longue painted bright red. There were tables, a grandfather clock without dial, face or works. The walls were whitewashed which made it almost light and airy. Pictures began to appear—mostly calendars showing improbable luscious blondes holding bottles of coca cola. . . . A bundle of gilded cattails stood in one corner and a sheaf of peacock feathers was nailed to the wall beside the grandfather clock. (pp. 23–24)

Here time brings changes. What began as a refuge also becomes a prison. Trapped within its drabness they are motivated to improve it. They could have adapted, and without the rain perhaps they would have, but they exercised a choice. Their feelings for the place grew with time, with familiarity, with sustained shelter, and when they experienced its security from the landlord. Their furnishing of it was contagious, first a cot, then springs, then a chaise longue, a clock, posters, and aesthetic objects. Notice how, in this case, there is a progression from the personal to the communal and from the functional to the aesthetic.

They were some time in acquiring a stove and when they did find what they wanted, a silver scrolled monster with floriated warming ovens and a front like a nickel plated tulip garden, they had trouble getting it. . . . It took them

three days to carry it to Cannery Row a distance of five miles, and they
camped beside it at night. But once installed in the Palace Flophouse it was
the glory and the hearth and the center. Its nickel flowers and foliage shone
with a cheery light. It was the gold tooth of the Palace. Fired up it warmed
the big room. Its oven was wonderful and you could fry an egg on its shiny
black lids. With the great stove came pride, and with pride, the Palace be-
came home. Eddie planted morning glories to run over the door and Hazel
acquired some rather rare fuschia bushes planted in five-gallon cans which
made the entrance formal and a little cluttered. Mack and the boys loved the
Palace and they even cleaned it a little sometimes. In their minds they
sneered at unsettled people who had no house to go to and occasionally in
their pride they brought a guest home for a day or two. (pp. 24–25)

Finally comes the heart and the hearth, a center of warmth and a symbol
of group cohesion that required their collective efforts. And the decorat-
ing efforts took a third step with the outside plants reflecting a sense of
permanence and a commitment to the future. The connections and the
order had been established. It was a center of security, of shelter, of
warmth. It gained meaning through time and activity, through famil-
iarity and through their joint efforts. The men gained power through
privacy and territory that engendered commitment and a connection to
the future. The caring was contagious. Finally they even cleaned it—a
purity ritual. There was a sense of identity both of each man to his
territory but of the group to the whole place. There was a transition from
the individual to the communal, from house to home, from a very func-
tional and rational attitude to one of love, care, and concern.

A second example comes from the autobiography of Margaret Mead
(1972) who describes her struggles to establish a sense of home through-
out a life of travel and of a tower office she acquired in the New York
museum where she worked:

It was just like the room I had at the farm and the kind of room I had always
chosen in each rented house we lived in. Among other advantages, there
were two stairways leading up to the tower . . . this meant that one could
creep down one stairway while someone whom one did not want to meet—
in my childhood, my mother or the person who was It in a game, or later, a
too solicitous elderly curator—was coming up the other. . . . Only a few
years before I came to the museum, that office had been the bedroom of the
building superintendent's apartment in which he had lived with his family.
He used to stand in the doorway and tell me how all his children had been
born in that room. . . . For those of us who worked in the tower there was no
endless hall lined with storage cases to walk along and no limits like those set
by the large handsome offices downstairs. At first my office seemed large
and bare. . . . I hung tapa-patterned cotton curtains at the window, spread
Samoan mats on the floor, and on the wall hung a map of the world on
which . . . to plot our future field trips. . . . Since the late 1920's, I have had
no permanent house to go back to, only a series of rented apartments. . . . So
the office in the museum became the successor to the rooms in which I had

grown up. . . . Up in the tower, with two flights of stairs between me and
the milling crowds below, I feel as safe from intrusion and loss as once I did
at home in my third floor room where the night wind whistled through the
closed shutters and the sparrows racketed in the ivy outside my windows
every dawn. For all my years of travelling, I have always had somewhere to
return to, somewhere where everything is just where I put it away twenty,
thirty or forty years ago. (Mead, 1972, pp. 13–16)

In this passage we once again encounter a range of the principles of
"home" discussed earlier. Mead has a sense of the past history of the
place, there is a structural similarity with her own childhood home, and
she brings to it certain objects that evoke memories of the past. The
tower has a sense of verticality and centeredness unlike the "endless"
corridors below. There is a sense of separation from the "milling
crowds." There is a sense of security, power, and control—power to
control the dialectics of interaction and power to ensure that her own
spatial order would survive the journeys of 40 years. And there is an
overriding sense of the dialectics of home and journey, the home as her
place of stability, order, and identity throughout a life of travel.

It is not my intention that these examples be seen as an idealized
description of the process of becoming-at-home but rather as particular
examples of how that process might become manifest in a particular
sociocultural context. Indeed, it is of the essence of home and the pro-
cesses of its emergence that its forms are unique. Home is what emerges
out of the dwelling activities, the appropriations and the opportunities
available in each particular circumstance. It is an insider's experience,
and it is always unique. Although the basic themes remain the same, the
manifestations are situation specific. It is also important to reiterate that
the phenomenon of home is essentially intangible. There is no precise
point at which a house becomes a home, and none of the properties that
I have outlined previously are necessary nor sufficient for the experience
of home. Rather, like fibers in a rope, each property lends strength to
the meaning of home.

## PROPERTIES OF HOMELESSNESS

I want to turn now to the problem of homelessness. The approach
here is somewhat different in that rather than examining the experience
of being homeless I will explore and outline some of the processes,
properties, and conditions that have eroded the traditional sense of
home and that paralyze its reemergence. These properties can be cate-

gorized into six general categories; however, as with the properties of home, there is much overlap, and there are many interrelationships.

## RATIONALISM AND TECHNOLOGY

Rationalism is an attitude that permeates much current thinking about human–environment relationships (Relph, 1981). It is an attitude stemming from the Cartesian dualism of body and mind, whereby the physical world is held at arms length for our contemplation. Thus, it is regarded as separate from ourselves and objectively· real. Such an at-titude has discrete benefits, both in the realm of objective knowledge about our world and in terms of its technological by-products. Yet when allowed to monopolize our experience and discourse, rationalism serves to erode the experience of home both through its forms of knowledge and discourse, and through its technologies.

The rational attitude is biased toward the tangible. Yet the phe-nomenon of home, as I have argued, is an intangible relationship be-tween people and the places in which they dwell; it is not visible nor accurately measureable. Reason responds to intangibility by reducing terms such as *home* to precise and bounded definitions. Rationally con-sidered, a home becomes reduced to a house—the meaning and experi-ence of home as a relationship becomes confused with the object through which it is currently manifest. Furthermore, the discourse of design knowledge and decision making also assumes an objective stance. Design programs, for instance, are generally written in quan-titative terms of measured space and numbers of plumbing fixtures.

A major strength of the rational attitude is that its technological by-products make possible relations with the built environment that were until recently impossible. These include an enhanced ability to change the environment through planning and construction techniques, to con-trol it through lighting and heating, and to expand it through cars, telephones, and television. However, this technology has also played an important part in eroding our sense of home in that many of the so-ciospatial patterns that were traditionally embodied in everyday life at home have been undercut by rapid advances in technology. Consider, for example, the case of the hearth fire. Beyond its traditional functions of cooking and heating, there is widespread cross-cultural evidence that certain intangible meanings are associated with the hearth fire: as a symbol of home (Raglan, 1966), a sacred center (Eliade, 1959), an anchor for social order (Marshall, 1973), and a place of reverie (Bachelard, 1964). The technologies of heating, however, coupled with a rationalistic at-titude, have undercut these meanings and led to the widespread disap-

pearance of the fireplace from many homes. The immediately obvious advantages of technological change, in this case improved efficiency and cleanliness, can serve initially to mask the loss of intangible meanings.

An important component of the rationalistic attitude is that it implicitly gives priority to the abstract conceptual modes of "space" as opposed to the meaning-centered mode of "lived space." Thus space is viewed in terms of square meters, of measured geometric areas and volumes. Such an attitude is, of course, often necessary to the processes of environmental discourse and change. Relph (1981) has pointed out the interesting dilemma that, although there is widespread condemnation of modern rationalistic environments, there is also a widespread appreciation of the comforts and efficiencies that rationality brings. We are, it seems, simultaneously rational and nostalgic. Nostalgia, which was originally the name of the "disease" of homesickness (Starobinski, 1966), is an interesting synonym for the generalized sense of homelessness that, it is often argued, pervades modern culture (Berger, Berger, & Kellner, 1973; MacCannell, 1976). The problem, however, is that the rationalism comes first; nostalgia or homesickness stems from the loss of intangibles that the rationalism and its technologies bring. One result of this nostalgia, stemming from the loss of intangibles, is their replacement with inauthentic substitutes, such as fireplaces that do not work or are never used—elements of home that stand as mere signs and remnants of a lost meaning. The question of authenticity in the built environment is closely related to that of homelessness, and I have discussed it in more detail elsewhere (Dovey, 1985).

My argument here is not that a rational attitude is a wrong one, but rather that it carries no monopoly on truth or progress (Feyerabend, 1975). It might usefully be seen as a tool for changing the world in ways that are meaningful instead of eroding those meanings through its hidden assumptions. Paradoxically, given our current understanding of these issues, there are good *reasons* to oppose the monopoly of rationalism.

## COMMODITIZATION

Paralleling the distinction between house and home is a distinction between the house as property and the home as appropriated territory. In the modern world, the house is a commodity involving substantial economic commitment. It is an investment of economic resources that yields profit and power. As such, the house has become increasingly similar to other products—being bought and sold, used and discarded like a car or washing machine. Home, on the other hand, involves a

commitment not of money but of time and emotion. It is the place where we invest dreams, hopes, and care. Although we can buy the props and freedom that make such an investment possible and secure, the phenomenon of home itself cannot be bought or commoditized. Home is a relationship that is created and evolved over time; it is not consumed like the products of economic process. The house is a tool for the achievement of the experience of home. Yet the increasing commoditization of the house engenders a confusion between house and home because it is the image of home that is bought and sold in the marketplace. The belief on the part of both producers and consumers that the home is the house trivializes the concept of home and treats it as an object to be instantly consumed. The qualities of a house that contribute to the experience of home may, of course, be encouraged by market forces. The economic value of certain intangibles are increasingly exploited as they become scarcer. A recent housing development in San Francisco is advertized as "townhomes on a legendary site . . . reminiscent of [a] bygone era," a "commons" with a "sense of place." The town*homes* have "woodburning fireplaces" and "windowseats tucked in corners," offering "a warm retreat amidst urban activity and excitement."[2] The image being sold (if not the reality) is close to that which I have outlined earlier—connections to the past, to other people, and to the place, a sense of center with an inside/outside dialectic. The promise of the experience of home is carefully packaged for the very few at an average price per unit of over half a million dollars.

Commoditization has its main eroding effect not in the quality of house form but in the quality of the relationship of the dweller with the dwelling. The house as a piece of property implies a legal relationship between the owner and the place, a relationship embodying certain legal freedoms. Home as appropriation, on the other hand, implies a relationship that is rooted in the experiences of everyday life over a long period of time. It requires adaptability, control, freedom, and security of tenure. A contradiction emerges here under conditions of absentee ownership or rental. Housing rental creates a split between the dwelling experiences through which home emerges and the longer term legal freedoms of ownership. If the owner is personally identified with the house, then a clash of identities may well emerge when the dwellers attempt to appropriate it. If the owner regards the house as a mere rational investment, then his or her interest in maintaining its commodity value may similarly paralyze the processes of appropriation. In

[2]All quotes are from the sales brochure *Golden Gateway Commons*, available from the Sales Office, 660 Davis St., San Francisco, Calif., 94111.

either case, the legal relationship that embodies the freedom and se-
curity necessary for the emergence of home takes precedence over the
dwelling experiences of the users. The issue of ownership and rental is
not simple; there is great demand for rental housing, and a sense of
home often emerges under such conditions. Yet the rationalistic idea
that problems of housing and dwelling might be solved without ad-
dressing issues of ownership is incommensurable with our understand-
ing of the phenomenon of home.

<center>BUREAUCRACY</center>

    The influence of bureaucratic organization on the phenomenon of
home can be understood as a property of the institutional framework of
housing design and management. Bureaucracy thus infects the design
of housing (through design, planning, and regulatory organizations),
the production of housing (through governmental authorities and devel-
opment corporations), and the management of housing in use. Weber
(1978) has argued that the following properties are characteristic of bu-
reaucratic organization: (a) organization is hierarchical with official juris-
diction over rule-bound procedures; (b) there is a focus on written rather
than verbal discourse; (c) procedures are enacted by experts using spe-
cialized and technical languages of discourse; and (d) the aims of the
organization are speed, precision, unambiguity, and objectivity.
    According to Weber, the nature of bureaucracy

> develops the more perfectly the more the bureaucracy is 'dehumanized,' the
> more completely it succeeds in eliminating from official business love,
> hatred, and all purely personal, irrational, and emotional elements which
> escape calculation. (p. 90)

Crozier (1964) similarly identifies bureaucracy with hierarchy, depen-
dence on higher authority, rationalism, and impersonal rules. The more
that the production, control, and maintenance of home environments is
dependent upon bureaucratic organization, then the more this organiza-
tion both erodes and paralyzes the emergence of the experience of
home. Intangible qualities of identification and meaning, slow changes
over time, local control, adaptability, and complex dialectic interactions
cannot be dealt within a bureaucratic context.
    One important effect of bureaucratic organization is that procedures
generally become biased toward those operating them, increasing the
tendency for the goals of the organization to be subverted by personal
power struggles within the organization. As power is centralized,
Crozier argues, "the power to make decisions . . . will tend to grow

farther and farther away from the field where those rules will be carried out" (p. 189). This can lead, in the case of housing programs, to a phenomenon where the dwellers become "invisible" (Grenell, 1972). Although bureaucratic programs may stem from a genuine desire to improve housing for the maximum number of people, the process begins from a fixed idea or stereotype of who the dwellers are and what "good" housing is.

Bureaucratic structures and processes, like those of home, can be understood as a kind of order and identity; yet this order and identity are diametrically opposed to those of "becoming-at-home." Whereas home is the kind of order that flows upward from the opportunities and problems of each *unique* place and context, bureaucratic order flows downward. A centralized order is imposed across diverse particular cases according to *typical* situations and contexts (Crozier, 1964, pp. 183–184). Likewise, bureaucratic organization has its own identity that, in the case of housing programs, becomes stamped upon the landscape at the expense of the diverse identifications of the dwellers. Housing becomes symbolic of the organization that produces it, spatially regular and temporally regulated places that may not be easily adapted to the uniqueness of each situation or to changes that occur over time. The complexities of the experience of home and the role of the dweller in achieving it are beyond the capabilities of bureaucratic structures to deal with.

## SCALE AND SPEED

The scale at which environmental and housing problems are framed and tackled and the speed at which environmental change is implemented are two properties that are closely linked to those outlined previously, and they contribute to the erosion of the experience of home. Bureaucratic organization, for instance, develops to ensure the remote control necessary to implement large-scale programs. Big problems would seem to demand big solutions. Housing, however, is not so much a big problem as it is a large collection of small ones—many people with a desire for shelter, roots, security, and identity, yet with a multitude of dreams, forms, and social patterns within which this might be realized.

The speed of environmental change erodes the sense of home inasmuch as it threatens temporal identity. When identity is anchored in places, a certain continuity is required in order for dwellers to assimilate changes and to accommodate their sense of identity to the new images as they emerge. Being intangible, qualities of home are often only identified when they are lost. Large, swift changes in the home environment

can destroy these qualities that might have been salvaged if the changes had been smaller, slower, and more adaptable.

Traditional cities and villages for which our culture is so often nostalgic were not produced from master plans but grew piecemeal over a long period of time, responding to circumstances at a local level. The phenomenon of home, too, grows piecemeal rather than being created complete. Swiftly implemented large developments may lend the impression of solving large-scale problems, yet they do so at the expense of the adaptability and identification possible when we understand the processes by which houses can grow as families grow—as economic resources permit and as needs arise.

## THE EROSION OF COMMUNAL SPACE

Another change that has subtly eroded the sense of home is the decline of communally shared open space. The usage and control of streets, squares, and open spaces that form the context of the house were freely negotiated traditionally and appropriated by people through their participation in the community (Aries, 1977; Sennett, 1977). Beginning in the 18th century important changes came about in the relation of the family home to the spatial, political, and social life of the city. Concommitant with the separation of the work place from the home, the state extended its control and surveillance into every domain of city life, eradicating interstitial spaces that were previously beyond the state's sphere of influence (Wright & Rabinow, 1982). As a result, communally shared space has become increasingly managed and regulated by state authorities. Thus its use and transformation must be deferred by the user group to these higher authorities. This remote control of shared open space has political, social, and personal consequences. Politically, it reinforces the jurisdiction of existing power groups and denies the role of shared space as the place of political freedom (Arendt, 1958). Socially, it limits behavior in public to a purified and rule-bound set of activities.

The public realm has become a place where it is difficult if not impossible to enact personal or collective appropriations. It is a place where "they" are responsible for control and maintenance of a rule-bound status quo. At the personal level, this loss of a shared common place as a context of the home brings a subtle yet profound erosion of the dialectics of home/journey and private/public. The home becomes the sole area of personal control and security; its boundary hardens, semiprivate edge areas disappear, informal appropriation and surveillance across the interface weaken, and crime proliferates (Newman, 1972). The dialectical movement between home and reach, private and

public, loses its sense of transition. From a place of complete control and security, we cross a boundary of locked doors, barred windows, and security systems to confront a world that is someone else's responsibility. Shut off from this world the home has become an isolated world unto itself, a cocoon of security and comfort severed from its deeper connections with the urban fabric. "The urban conglomerate," Aries (1978, p. 233) argues, "has become a mass of small islands . . . all separated from one another by a great void. The interstitial space has vanished." As the communally shared realm has been eroded, so the private realm has expanded to fill the void, leading to an inordinate demand on the home to fulfill all of one's needs. Herein lies a dilemma—without the broader sense of home extending into community life, the experience of home contracts and loses meaning; yet at the same time increased demands are placed upon this depleted experience of home.

## PROFESSIONALISM

Strong forces within the architectural profession mitigate against the emergence of a sense of home. Design professions are strongly peer-group oriented, and the designer's reputation is determined more by the visual images of buildings in professional journals than by the experience of the users. The relationship between the designer and the place designed is characterized by a process of creative identification not unlike that described earlier as a property of becoming-at-home. Thus, a personal relationship and connectedness between the designer and the image of the place emerges. This highly personal relationship, together with its assumptions of professional superiority, tends to paralyze the emergence of similar yet deeper relationships between dweller and place. Because designers receive their kudos from the image of their products as judged by their peers, they have an interest in keeping these fine-tuned symbols free from contamination by the dwellers. The problem here, even when the dwellers share the values of the designer, is that whereas the designer's concern is with the image, the experience of home is dynamic and action based—it is an experience of "living in" rather than "looking at" buildings. I am not trying to deny the designer's role as creative form giver; I am merely trying to draw attention to the ways in which it may be antithetical to the processes of becoming-at-home. A home cannot be someone else's work of art.

## BECOMING HOMELESS

The previously mentioned properties have been characteristic of many approaches to housing problems throughout this century. Exam-

ples here include most of what began with the modern movement in Europe (Boudon, 1979) and was exported under the guise of urban renewal to the United States (Gans, 1968) and the Third World (Detier, 1973; Turner & Fichter, 1972). The dream of the modern movement in architecture and planning was that technology and industrialized housing would be able to provide high-quality housing for everyone, mass-produced in high-rise blocks set in a garden landscape. Housing was regarded rationally in terms of universal requirements, applicable internationally and cross-culturally. The house was conceived as a "machine-for-living-in," a piece of technology.

The result, we have since learned, was homelessness. The stripped aesthetic of modernism destroyed continuity with the styles of the past and with regional traditions. The scale and speed of the developments instantly transformed the landscape, wiping out the anchored memories of the former dwellers. Little room was left for the expression or development of personal identity; indeed, the very powerful institutional and bureaucratic identity of housing "projects" was a key element in their failure (Newman, 1972). Standards of housing were considered entirely from a rational point of view, in terms of square meters and plumbing requirements. Existing elements of home, such as social networks, were not recognized nor preserved, resulting in severe social and psychological disruption (Fried, 1963; Gans, 1968). Housing was treated as a commodity (Turner, 1972), a product to be provided for people who would have little choice in terms of design or location. Furthermore, bureaucratic management of housing in use has ensured that the lack of user control and the paralysis of personal identification has endured. Despite the promise of landscaped open space and "streets-in-the-sky," these public places have become some of the most dangerous ones in our cities. It is ironic that many of these housing schemes received lavish praise from the design professions in advance of being condemned and even demolished as a result of their extreme social inadequacy. These housing processes and schemes represent the most extreme example of the consequences of not distinguishing between house and home and of ignoring the intangibles of home. Despite solving the "housing problem" as stated, they were an excellent recipe for homelessness.


## IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

I will conclude this essay with some brief suggestions as to where I think an understanding of the concepts of *home* and *homelessness* might

lead in relation to research and practice in environmental design. There are four directions that I see as useful in this regard.

The first of these relates to the development and application of design patterns or guidelines that embody understandings of the experience of home. Clearly, this kind of knowledge is most available for spatiotemporal patterns that are embodied in a sociocultural order. The aim of this approach is to build a bridge between environmental design research and practice, and much of such work has been done (Alexander, Ishikawa, & Silverstein, 1977; Cooper Marcus & Sarkissian, 1985; Zeisel, 1977). Although such guidelines tend to be primarily formal and spatial, they could usefully be extended to encompass the temporal processes of "becoming-at-home." Patterns could be developed to guide not only the forms of environmental change but also the processes of design and change, embodying an understanding of issues such as the speed of change, the preservation of temporal connections with the built environment and processes of appropriation. There is, however, an important caveat on the use of design guidelines. Based as they are on a sociocultural context, their possible misuse in a multicultural society remains an ever-present problem (Dovey, 1981).

The second direction is that of participatory design. Although the aspects of sociocultural order and identification can be embodied in guidelines, those of a more personal order and identification cannot. Being the representation and embodiment of the order and identity of the dweller or group of dwellers, the experience of home requires their active participation in the design process. This is not only because dwellers all too often have their desires ignored, but also because the opportunity for environmental change is an opportunity for an enhanced sense of home. Participation can be as important for the opportunities it opens up as it is for the mistakes it avoids. Although there is a clear link between participatory design and the experience of home, implementing such a process is no simple matter in the modern context. Techniques of participatory design are scarcely taught in design schools, and the effects of participatory design are not well understood by researchers. The participatory approach therefore offers significant opportunities for research and practice in environmental design.

The third direction of importance for research and practice is that of understanding and undercutting the properties of homelessness outlined in the second part of this essay. Each of these properties represents an aspect of the context within which designers operate in the modern world—the context within which design problems are defined, explored, and solved. This is at once a political, sociocultural, economic, professional, philosophical, intellectual, and bureaucratic context. And

like the unself-conscious aspects of the experience of home this context is largely taken for granted. The task is to bring these properties of homelessness into the light: to highlight the issue of scale when problems are unsolvably large; to pressure bureaucracies into adaptability; to talk about the intangibles of life and breathe a certain reality into them before they are lost. This role has a clear political component to it inasmuch as it is an issue of whether the built environment is to represent the order ("home") of centralized power structures or the order of the diverse identifications and adaptations of the dwellers.

Finally, a change in attitude and understanding is required of designers. This involves an enhanced understanding and a celebration of the experience of home and the processes of becoming-at-home that exist in every place and every community. The goal here is not only to create a sense of home but rather to recognize and preserve it in its myriad of processes and forms. Its processes are seldom visible, and its forms are not always beautiful; yet beneath them lie the seeds of a deeper sense of home, struggling to flower.

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