

## A Spatio-Temporal Interpretation of Domesticity

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### Abstract

This paper is concerned with the micro-use of space in the domestic environment attempting to relate household activities with the daily pattern of domestic routines. The aim is to capture and present the morphology of domestic experience throughout the day.

Recent studies on domestic space organization point out that a house is not just a grouping of rooms (labeled) but rather embodies patterns of organized space which raise questions about cultural and lifestyle preferences. Houses all over the world and throughout history serve the basic human needs of living, eating, sleeping and so on. However, a study of domestic examples reveals variety in the ways in which these activities are accommodated in the houses of different historical periods and cultures, although the labeling of various rooms is similar.

It does seem obvious through studies during the last decades that the labels that we use to describe domestic spaces (such as “dining room” or “living room”) encode information about the way in which a house is inhabited; they denote function but also social conventions that apply to domestic space use. They do not however, describe the configuration of space and they do not describe movement within the spaces. Movement within the domestic interior is considered to be very important because of its immediate social by-product: encounter.

A domestic environment as well as buildings in general, accommodate encounter by providing spaces for people (inhabitants and visitors) to occupy and meet. What is interesting at this point is the nature of the meeting or occupancy. Meetings within the house can be scheduled (like a formal dinner, a party) or unscheduled and generated by the space itself (play, talk). In other words, the domestic layout sustains co-presence (or not) as a by product of movement. Co-presence obviously varies throughout the course of a day within a house and is influenced by the daily pattern of domestic routines in which people engage.

It is therefore argued that modes of labeling in the house interact with patterns of movement within it, co-presence and potential encounter; between family members and between family members and visitors. The pertinent syntactic concept here is consequently, interface. The latter is related to the structure of domestic experience and introduces a temporal as well as a spatial dimension in the process of interpretation of the domestic experience.

This short paper suggests that interpretations of domestic space experience need to take account of time as an important aspect of space. Spatial configuration and labeling of spaces may not reveal important social information related to the use of a domestic environment during normal social time and the use of the same environment during a special occasion and/or family celebration. A single space may also have to adapt to accommodate several functions during the course of a day, involving the presence or not

of various members of the family and/or visitors.

Consequently, what is presented through a case study of 80 traditional houses in Cyprus, is the retrieval of both spatial and temporal quantitative information on the way domestic activities and/or rooms are connected together and sequenced, which activities go together and which are separated throughout a day and the relationship between family members and visitors through space and time.