

The culture of people determines and shapes the domestic space in their domestic architecture. Subsequent modifications of the idea have focused on more precise revelations of how the spatial arrangements of material culture are culturally patterned. Through a topological analysis of house plans and patterns, collected from the City of Benin, this study detects a transformation in the house-type aspired and developed by people during the last five centuries. A group of 1054 houses, located in four residential zones in Benin City, Nigeria, has been analysed by means of frequency distribution, Space Syntax categories and factor analysis. The research is determined to find out how the use, organization and meaning of space in Benin have changed and whether or not there are continuities over the years across the entire City. The Space Syntax approach is used to measure the varying degree of change at each stage of the evolution. Here, the space-activity interaction is the main idea that enables us to see what underlies the process. As the old spaces take different names and functions in the new design, they bring about the recombination of their activities, and when this occurs repeatedly at each stage, it leaves behind topological paths from which the direction of the evolution can be measured. Further examinations reveal that the space-activity interaction arises both at each partitioned space and at the collective space that is closely related. The analysis of the attitudes and responses of the residents using factor analysis revealed that both socio-economic and socio-cultural factors are responsible for the change and continuity in the domestic space.

## **CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION**

The transformation process of domestic architecture described in this study shows that it is not simply the changing arrangement of spaces, but also the interaction between the spaces and its activities within the domestic environment that defines the new space. There is an indigenous concept of level-distinction involved in the process. Guided by these underlying forces, the evolution of the houses in Benin followed topological paths to adapt old inherited properties to new physical environment, and the user's attitudes and responses shows that these values do persist through recognized changes. Transition in domestic space though interesting and gradual but understanding this usually depends on definite factors and physical observations. These factors and observations frame our imaginations, comprehension of reality and history to determine the process, rate and directions (Dynes, et al 2000). The cultural significance of transition in/of spaces is determined by technological development, socio-economic and sociopolitical characteristics of the people. The extent of depth of domestic space in culture is perhaps best measured by its transition. Furthermore, it was observed that the continuity of domestic space exists as an integral part of contemporary Benin culture, no longer controlled by religious or cultural ideologies, making a prototype used by anyone who finds it useful and in certain ways might be considered a model. The symbolic value of continuity of domestic space in contemporary house design has been reduced by increasing cultural illiteracy (Kazimee, et al 2002). However, in Contemporary house design in Benin, there have not been issues of cultural significance yet contemporary issues such as durability, aesthetics and class have limited our attention, it might be possible to adapt continuity of domestic space. The domestic spaces are now modified with durable and aesthetically pleasing materials and since culture is no longer too significant, spaces still have to be created and continued. It was discovered that shortly after independence (i.e., the 60s), the target of Contemporary Architecture Period in Benin was to modernise and enhance the people's living. For some architect, the old domestic culture was regarded as out-dated, unhealthy and not suitable for contemporary way of living; hence it is expected that contemporary house-types from the West should enclose the western style of living and jettison the existing traditional style of living in Benin. For instance, in the contemporary plans, the floor of the bathroom and kitchen is the same level with the living room, and heaters were provided in the bathrooms. (Zhang, 1994; Kang et al., 1999).

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