

Analyzing a Meaning of Home through the Perspective of the User: A case study of Wooden House of Dharan

Parash Mani Rai ^a, Sanjay Uprety ^b

^{a, b} Department of Architecture, Pulchowk Campus, IOE, Tribhuvan University, Nepal

✉ ^a parashmanirai752@gmail.com ^b suprety@ioe.edu.np

Abstract

A perception of any subject differs individually. This research paper draws on the study of the relationship between dwellings and their users. This paper is based on research on the study of the meaning of home through the perception of the user. The research applies two phenomenological approaches, existential and hermeneutical, which fall under the scope of qualitative research. The existential-phenomenological approach provides a comprehensive, embodied knowledge of human life. The hermeneutical-phenomenological approach primarily pivots on a combination of argumentation and/or textual analyses. The research's study area is in Dharan, which is in eastern Nepal. First, three different houses have been purposefully sampled from the study area and briefly examined. Then, a single house was selected for the focused case study. Open-ended interviews, observation, artifacts, and site studies are the data collection tactics used for the research. The collected data is coded and evaluated, and the analysis and interpretation serve as the foundation for the conclusions and discussion. This study shows us that the belief systems of the user affect the form and planning process of the house. The user seldom refers to the house by mentioning its architectural features, and the meaning of home to the user is multi-faceted, where the meaning varies accordingly with the time and situation of the user using the house.

Keywords

perception, phenomenological, existential, hermeneutical, house, home

1. Introduction

A meaning of something to every individual is different but also contains some degree of similarities when breaking the meaning of that 'something' in its literal form. The meaning of shelter, house, or home can be unique, yet similar, from dweller to dweller. We can find no distinctive differences in the meaning of house and home when they are only to be understood with its literal form or just by its applied meanings. We humans have a strong relation with our houses, and the houses play a critical role in the growth of our conscious and sub-conscious. The inevitable changes occurring in the civilization of human beings have changed the art of dwelling. Humans in their earlier phase of civilization built their houses which synchronously made them think about the spaces. Whereas now the act of building houses with an active involvement of the owners is scarcely being practiced. The experience, visualization, imagination of a dweller now is addressed and planned accordingly by the planner who plans a livable space for the dwellers. Pedagogically, the institutions of architecture has its own domain of language, where meanings are applied to the subjects to coherently understand, share, talk, read, about architecture. This domain of language gathers and theorizes the physical, social, economic, and political threads of society and its architecture. On the other hand, the non-architect or refereeing them as the 'users of architecture'. The users have no distinctive knowledge of the architectural language to perceive architecture. Yet, the architecture is still built, and people dwell in it. This academically structured ideology of an architect and the non-structured ideology of the users sometimes do contradict each other resulting in the edifices

not resonating with the desired living intentions of the users.

This research paper is an attempt to analyze the meaning the users assign on residential spaces they live in. The research revolves around two major research questions which are:

- What is the perception of users towards the architecture of a house, and what meaning do they assign to it?
- How does the usability of the user's spaces and the experience of their home affect their thinking on architecture?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Dwelling

Living essentially means dwelling [1]. Dwelling has multiple layers of meaning. From philosopher to architects, dwelling has been studied in varied disciplines to grasp its real essence. A Heideggerian inquiry about dwelling is essentially ontological rather than being architectural in the narrow professional design sense or guided by the technical procedures of engineering in building construction or being merely motivated by responses to ecological concerns in the fields of environmental studies and sustainability [2].

In the book, "The Concept of Dwelling: on the Way to Figurative Architecture" by Christian Norberg-Schulz, he explains the four modes of dwelling. Natural dwelling, collective dwelling, public dwelling, and private dwelling. The stage where private dwelling takes place, is the house or home, which may be characterized as a "refuge" where man gathers

and expresses those memories which make up his personal world [3].

2.2 Life world

The lifeworld refers to the tacit context, tenor, and pace of daily life to which normally people give no reflective attention. The lifeworld includes both the routine and the unusual, the mundane and the surprising. Whether an experience is ordinary or extraordinary, however, the lifeworld in which the experience happens is normally out of sight. Typically, human beings do not make their experiences in the lifeworld an object of conscious awareness. Rather, these experiences just happen, and people do not consider how they happen, whether they could happen differently, or of what larger experiential structures they might be a part [4].

2.3 Space and Place

Space and place - two related but different phenomena are often confused or mentioned in the same breath in daily speech. Our lives are so place-oriented and saturated with place that we cannot imagine what it would be like to live without a place [5].

People make places in which to do the things they do in their lives—places to eat, to sleep, to shop, to worship, to argue, to learn, to store, and so on and on. The way in which people organize their places is related to their beliefs and their aspirations, their world view. As world views vary, so does architecture: at the personal level; at the social and cultural level; and between different sub-cultures within a society [6].

From a phenomenological perspective, place can be defined as any environmental locus that draws human experiences, actions, and meanings together spatially and temporally [7].

2.4 House and home

The word 'house' gives a concrete physical picture. A picture where physical elements of a house like, door, wall, window, floors, etc. come together to form a visual picture. Whereas a word 'home' when visualized not only gives us the picture of a house with its physical elements but also overwhelms us with a feeling which arise in us. It gives us a sense of belonging, comfort, nearness, etc. which are the eternal part of human life and gives us a sense of living. The experience of home is structured by distinctive activities- cooking, eating, socializing, reading, storing, sleeping, intimate acts – not by visual elements [8].

Buildings are designed and built for vastly different purposes: from prosaic and utilitarian functions, such as production and storage, to purely mental and symbolic purposes, such as memorials and monuments. However, the most fundamental and subtle task of architecture is the function of dwelling. The house reveals the complexity of many dimensions: practical and symbolic, visible, and invisible, physical, and mental, that intertwine in buildings and in our experience of them. The dwelling is, naturally, a shelter against unfavorable climate and weather, a protection against hostile forces, and a utilitarian device to enable the practical acts of daily life. But the house also supports the dwellers self-identity, and it serves as the

organizing center of his/her life. Home is the axis mundi, or the omega point to use a notion of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, for the imaginary ideal point from which the world can be experienced correctly and as an entity [9].

House and home are two evidently different notions: house is material, spatial and architectural concept, whereas home is a unique setting and product of the act of dwelling itself. Home is charged with subjective meanings, symbols, memories, and images. A home is also a set of personal rituals, habits, rhythms, and routines of everyday life. In every sense of the word, home is an extension of its inhabitant. Consequently, it cannot be an object of design by an architect: it is secreted, as it were, by the actual act of dwelling. This description of home seems to belong more to the realm of fiction, poetry, cinema, and painting, than to the theory or criticism of architecture. Yet, architecture, or a house, can either facilitate the gradual formation of home, or prohibit it [9]. In the last two centuries, the idea of home has become the core of Western traditions and a mainstay of popular culture. In our ever-increasingly technological and mobile society, however, home takes on new, ambiguous meanings that its uniqueness experientially is in danger of being lost [4].

2.5 Vernacular houses of Nepal

Vernacular architecture is a dynamic cultural heritage, and it is not 'frozen in time' like a historical heritage [10]. The settlements of sub-tropical region are arranged by a loose pattern that allows air penetration – a typical design strategy for hot and humid climates. The rectangular building form and horizontal space arrangement in one story is dominant. Wall and roofing materials are light rather than heavy and are often permeable to air. The high and almost undivided interior space together with the openings in wall and roof enhances the natural ventilation within the building. In some houses openings are in such a way to foster stack ventilation. Wide roof overhangs including the provision of shaded veranda space reduces the direct solar gain through walls and openings. Concluding, the traditional house design in Subtropical climate of Nepal is very climate responsive. Main strategies like enhancing air movement within the building and protecting from the strong solar radiating are considered [11].

2.6 Vastu shastra

'Vastu' is derived from the root Sanskrit sound 'Vas' which encompasses a range of words related to objects that are used as a surround by human beings like cloths, house and habitation [13]. 'Vastu' in the context of Vastu Shastra means places where immortals and mortals dwell [14].

2.7 Phenomenology in Architecture

As the founding father of phenomenology, philosopher Edmund Husserl believed that, beneath the changing flux of human experience and awareness, there are certain invariant structures of consciousness, which he claimed the phenomenological method could identify. Because Husserl viewed consciousness and its essential structures as a pure "region" separate from the flux of specific experiences and

thoughts, his style of phenomenology came to be known as “transcendental.” [15]

The progressive influence of phenomenology in architecture is a complex narrative involving several different disciplines, professional efforts, and intellectual events. Beginning in the 1940s, philosophers working phenomenologically explored a wide range of themes implicitly relevant to architecture [15].

2.8 Factors affecting perception

The personal, cultural, and physical are the factors affecting perception. The education, gender, training, and experience of an individual also affects the perception of the people [16]. Experiences contain both the outward appearance and inward consciousness based on memory, image, and meaning.” This memory, image, and meaning are subjective and unique [17].

3. Methodology

The attempt to understand the meaning of home through the interpretive study of the day-to-day life of the household pins this research in the realm of phenomenology. The phenomenon under study is the basis for the research, where the researcher tries to study the experiential realities of the phenomenon under study through first-hand experience of the house, through open-ended interviews, and through observation and analysis of the spaces of the house.

3.1 Existential phenomenology

The existential phenomenological research focuses in the research of specific experiences of specific individuals and groups involved in actual situations and places. The heart of this approach is “the analysis of protocol data provided by research respondents in response to a question posed by the researcher that pinpoints and guides their recall and reflection” [18]. Specifically, he speaks of four steps in the process :

- Identifying the phenomenon in which the phenomenologist is interested.

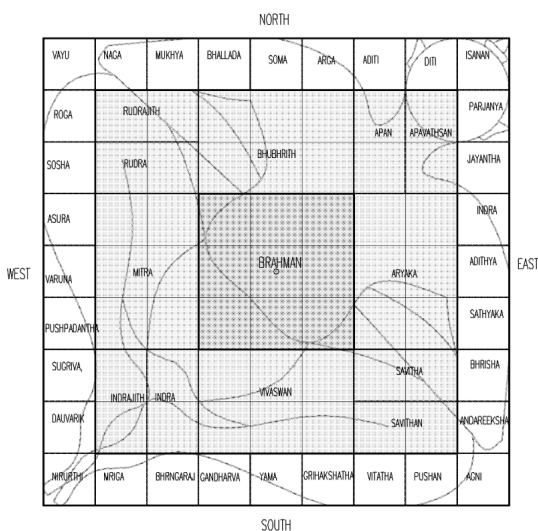


Figure 1: Vastu purusha on paramasayika mandala [12]

- Gathering descriptive accounts from respondents regarding their experience of the phenomenon
- Carefully studying the respondents’ accounts with the aim of identifying any underlying commonalities and patterns
- Presentation of findings, both to the study respondents (in the form of a “debriefing” about the study in ordinary language) and to fellow researchers (in the form of scholarly presentation)

3.2 Hermeneutical phenomenology

Hermeneutical method is a method where one embeds oneself in the process of getting involved in the text, one begins to discern configurations of meaning, of parts and wholes and their interrelationships, one receives certain messages and glimpses of an unfolding development that beckons to be articulated and related to the total fabric of meaning. The hermeneutic approach seems to palpate its object and to make room for that object to reveal itself to our gaze and ears, to speak its own story into our understanding [19]

This method allows to reveal the underlying structure that gives meaning to external actions which should be considered together with the personal structure of each individual being studied. In order to achieve this interpretative understanding, it is essential to apply a variety of thought processes which will be specific according to the objectives of each stage and phase of the approach [20].

3.3 Research framework

Three methods of data collection are applied for this research, and the data collected is triangulated for its richness, accuracy, and validity. The three data collection methods are open-ended interviews, observation of the site, and archival documents and sites. The collected data is coded and interpreted, and finally, the findings and discussion are reflected on the basis of analysis and interpretation.

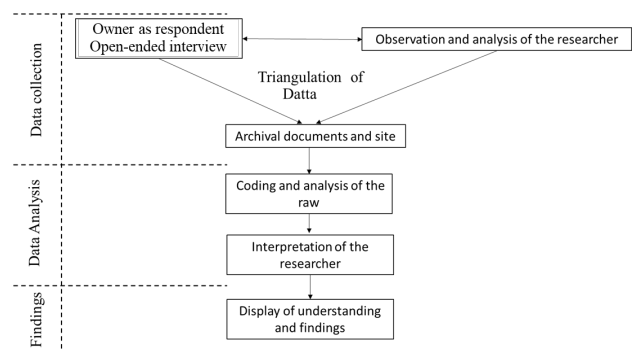


Figure 2: Research framework of the research

4. Study area

Dharan Sub-Metropolitan City is situated in the Sunsari district, Province-1, Nepal. The city lies in the foothills of the Himalaya, bordering the hilly and Tarai regions of Nepal. The

city used to be a market hub for districts like Terhathum, Bhojpur, Khotang, Dhankuta, Okhaldhunga, Taplejung, Pachthar, Solukhumbu, and Sankhuwasabha.

Dharan Sub metropolitan city encompasses an area of 193.85 km² with 715 population density per km², located at northern latitudes 26.8065° and eastern longitudes 87.2846°. Based on the 2011 census, a total of 137,705 people (64,671 male and 73,034 female) are living in 32,693 households within the city. The built-up area covers most of the central region. The western part of the city merges with the forest area bordering the city from the south.



Figure 3: Map of Nepal highlighting province 1



Figure 4: Map of province-1 highlighting Sunsari District and Dharan Sub-metropolitan city

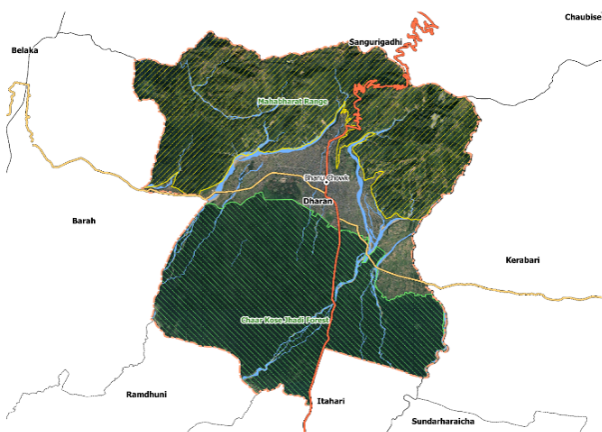


Figure 5: Geographical map of Dharan Sub-metropolitan City

4.1 Purposeful sampling

The purposeful sampling is conducted to get an overview of the cases of houses and select the suitable house under the scope of the study. Three cases have been briefly studied, where the general house plans and elevation are drafted through observation, artifacts, and physical site measurement. The general information of the house, like owner information, years of stay, construction date, and present situation of the house, has been studied to make a distinction between the houses. Finally, a single house has been picked to forward the research.

Case study House no.1

Owner: Ms. Kalata Rai, Built: 2030 B.S (1973 A.D)



Figure 6: Picture of house no.1

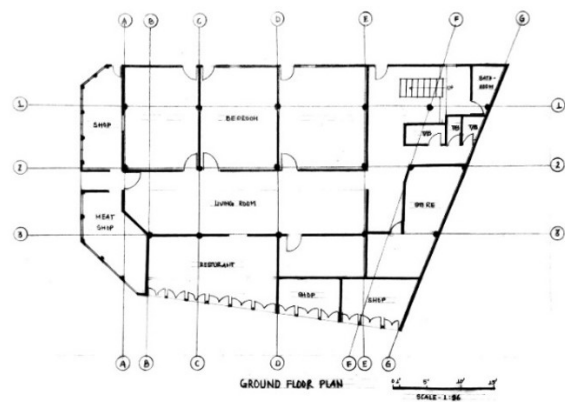


Figure 7: Ground floor plan of house no.1

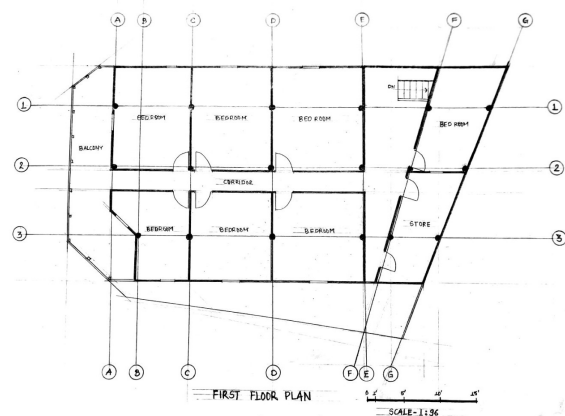


Figure 8: First floor plan of house no.1



Figure 9: Front elevation of house no.1

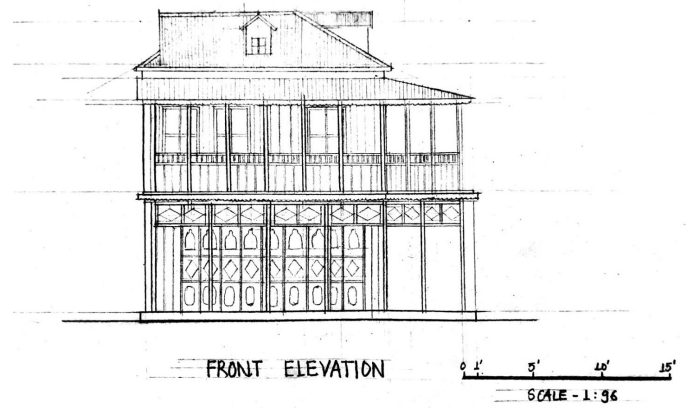


Figure 13: Front elevation of house no.2

Case study house no.2,

Owner: Ms. Sonu Rai, Built: 2030 B.S (1973 A.D)



Figure 10: Picture of house no. 2

Case study house no.3 (selected house)

Built: 2045 B.S (1988 A.D)

This selected house belongs to Mr. Ram Babu Sharma, who was born on the same site where his grandfather, father, and he himself built a house for living. This long years of stay at the same site made this research favor the study based on this house and site of Mr. Sharma.



Figure 14: Picture of house no. 3

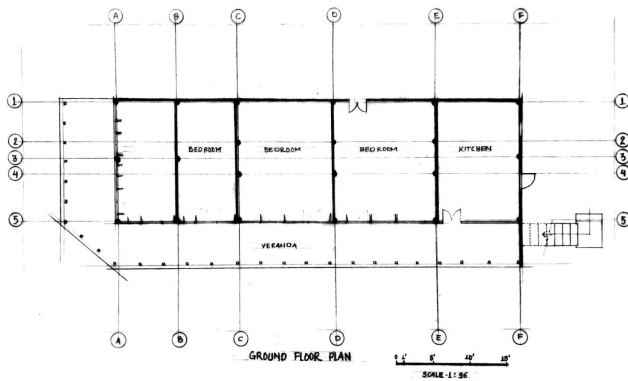


Figure 11: Ground floor plan of house no.2

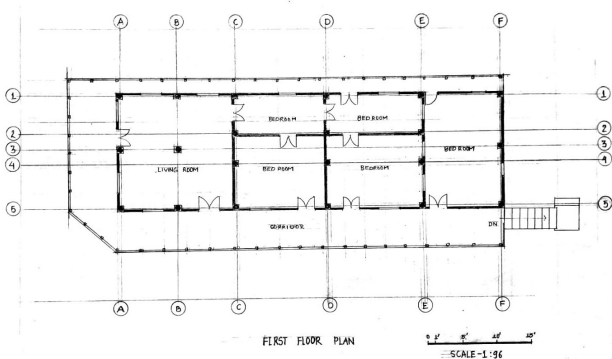


Figure 12: First floor plan of house no.2

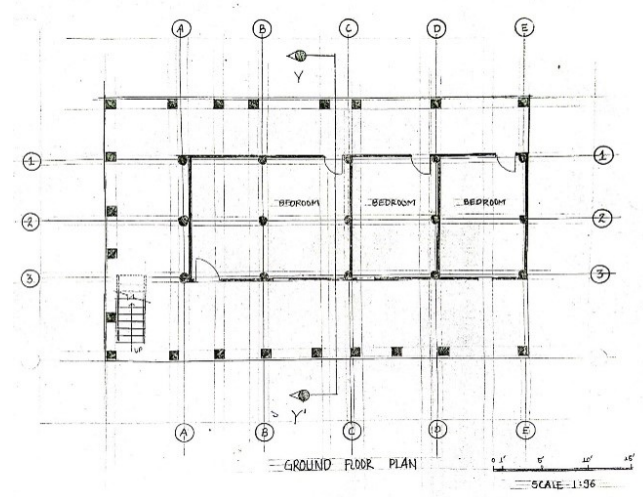


Figure 15: Ground floor plan of house no.3

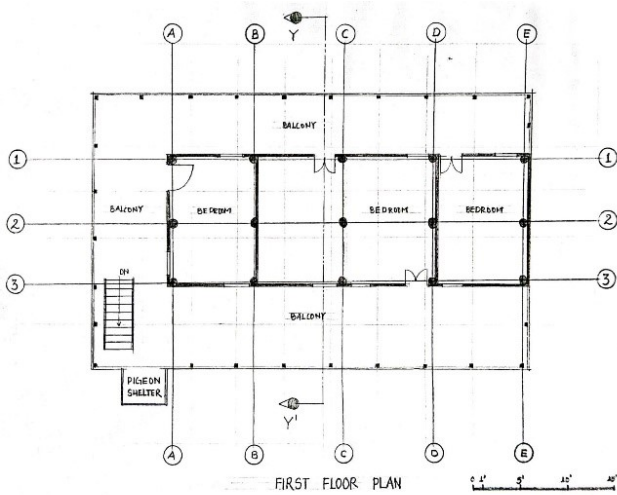


Figure 16: First floor plan of house no.3

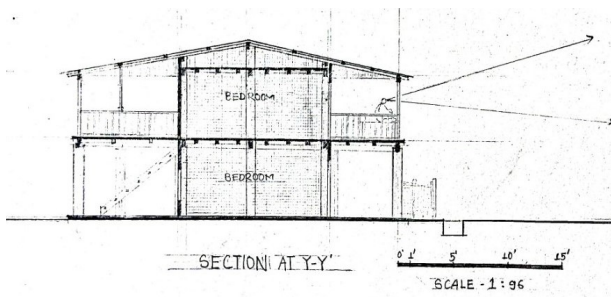


Figure 17: Section Y-Y' of house no.3

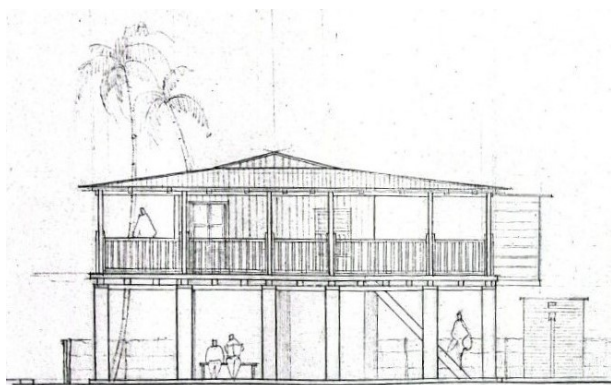


Figure 18: Front elevation of house no. 3

5. Data collection and analysis

5.1 Open-ended interview

Respondent Name: Ram Babu Sharma

Age: 77 Years old

Gender: Male

Children: 3 sons, 2 daughters

Education level: S.L.C (2019 B.S), I.A- B.A (2026 B.S)

The interview with Mr. Ram Babu Sir has been segmented into two stages. The first interview with him was conducted in

2019 A.D., before COVID. The first interview was conducted to collect the literature data for my B.Arch thesis title, "Crematorium and burial ground at Saptakoshi, Sunsari, Nepal." The second interview was conducted exclusively for research on the meaning of home. It was an open-ended interview conducted in an informal setting with few pre-scripted questions to collect the data in its rawest form as far as possible. Below is the section of interviews that are hermeneutically analyzed.

"You see, this house was constructed in 2045 B.S right after the earthquake hit. I have no worries about people calling me old fashioned. I can proudly say that I have a house like no others. This is the pride of mine. This is a wooden house. There is no other wooden house near this periphery."

The user reflects himself in the material of his house. He seems to materially distinguish his house from the rest of the houses in his neighborhood. He denies his house being old-fashioned, rather stating it as his pride. He claims that he has no reservations about living in a house made of wood, which does not appear to be a product of modern Dharan culture. When he says that he has the house like no others, this notion of pride emerging in him from his house gives us an understanding of the idea of 'symbolism' for a user. How the user asserts himself with the house. How an individual represents his house in a symbolic manner creates an identity of 'self' with the house they live in. This speaks to us about the influence of the space on the user over a long period of time and how the essence of the space and its spatiality mold the life of the user, where the user truly and uniquely reflects himself or herself according to the nature of his or her house.

"R.C.C houses are stronger and feel cooler(climatically) to live in. Whereas this wooden house is not that cooler in the room. But the balcony is wider and cooler during the summer. This old house is just made for to fulfill the basic needs of the family. as you can see it is not properly constructed because we were in rush after the earthquake. I remember sleeping with my sons on the balcony on hot summer nights."

The user has two houses for himself. A wooden house and a R.C.C. house. The user distinctly differentiates the spaces of R.C.C. and wooden houses through the modality of climatic comfort they provide. He states that the rooms of the R.C.C. house are more comfortable to stay in during the summer with respect to the rooms of his wooden house. But he argues that the balcony of his wooden house is more thermally comfortable than that of his R.C.C. house. He states that the wooden house was just made to provide for the very basic needs of the family. Nostalgically, he visits his older days of sleeping on the balcony with his children during the hot summer nights. Reflecting on the idea of home from the literary point of view, we can say that the feeling of home is explicitly experienced with the shared spaces of the house, like the very basic activities of an individual like sleeping, eating, talking, etc., which eventually go with time and become a memory. This notion of experiencing an experience of the past through the spaces of the house represents a strong connection between the user and the spaces of his or her house. Architecturally, space is the portal for the user to visit his or her good or bad memories. This expresses how strong the quality of space and architecture is, its relationship with its

dwellers, and how it can evoke feelings in the user.

"The houses you see across the roads... There were no houses there. These were agricultural lands where people used to do agriculture for living... just like now, there was still a scarcity of water here back then. People left way of agriculture, and the lands went barren... this is the reason people named this place, 'bajogara' before (Bajo-barren, gara-land). But i'm displeased now because this name was not addressed officially by the municipality. They call it 'Pindeswori' now. It makes me want to cry for this. They should have kept the original name at least."

The user has noticed the gradual change in his neighborhood. From the early vernacular to the modern. The original name of his community, which originated from the geographical feature of his neighborhood, seems to be his identity for this place and its surroundings. But the lack of concern by the municipality and eventually not addressing its original name in the municipality have deeply affected the identity of the user. This suggests to us that the identity of an individual is also affected by the name of his place or neighborhood.

"This house where we are right now was constructed from the materials of the old house. This was constructed right after the earthquake. I collected a few more materials and constructed it as soon as possible for the immediate shelter. Back then woods were abundantly sold by the government by getting permits from the ranger department." (This conversation was a turning point which revealed that the house was constructed in 2045 B.S (1988 A.D) but the materials were from 2019-2020 B.S (1962-1963 A.D)

The house in the discussion, as claimed by the user, is said to have been built using the materials of the older house built around 2019–220 B.S. (1962–1963 A.D.), which was destroyed by the 1988 A.D. (2045 B.S. (1988 A.D.) earthquake. This clarifies the resiliency of wood as a material for construction. Using the materials of the older house, which was constructed around 1962–1963 A.D., the material is aged to 60–61 years old. This shows the fast and durable nature of wood as a construction material for building.

"No! It was an 'L' shaped house not rectangular, and its front face also faced the road, just like now. The old house was a little smaller than this house. It also had an 'aagan' (front porch) at the front of the house."

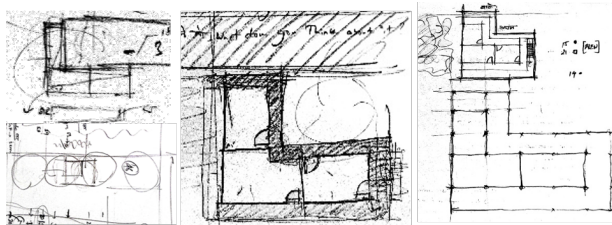


Figure 19: Shape and plan of the user's old house drawn by the user and author during the interview

During the discussion of the plan for an old house, the user advised that the plan of the older house, which was built in 2019–2020 B.S. (1962–1963 A.D.), didn't have a rectangular shape but had a L-shaped plan with the 'aagan' (front porch) at the front of the house. The user perceives the plan of the

house with the help of the letter 'L' of an alphabet, which means that the user needs a referential figurative order to identify the shape or form of a building.

"No! it was not intentional. During the rainy season or when the crops were brought inside the house to dry. All this railing was used for drying crops like maize. Railing... the rafter above the railing... all these spaces were used to store and dry crops. The only space that was kept free was the space where I used to sit. The wider veranda of the house was constructed for drying crops like maize during the rainy season. Use of the railings, the secondary railings above the post of verandas were also used for the drying of crops."

This suggests to us that the users during the old days were more concerned with the issues of drying and harvesting crops than thinking about the climatic conditions and leisure spaces during the construction of the spaces. Moreover, he also mentions that the bed, which is kept at the northeast corner of the 1st floor from where he sits and looks upon the streets, is said to be kept free from the crops. This also suggests to us that the priority of his space within the space, which was not dedicatedly designed for leisure in the beginning, later happened by placing a bed, which created him a place for leisure and never got disturbed, even by the regular agricultural activity like drying of crops.

"There should be a good understanding between the family members and there should be the feelings and beliefs of 'our' in every member of the family." Once any of the members starts to claim a home as 'my' his/her greediness can destroy the peace inside the home. "Change in meaning is the reason behind for the houses like this. Isn't it?" (R.C.C houses)Some are due to needs some are due to the competition between the people in the society. After birth, humans need food, shelter, and clothes. According to my view towards this world. All living beings need shelter. According to my knowledge, even birds make their house to live in, for domestic animals we make shelter for them. I would like to mention the story of Balmiki here. Who started as a bugler and later wrote books like 'Ramayana' and other major Hindu scriptures. (Ratnakar: name of Balmiki before becoming Balmiki) Ratnakar was requested by the sage to ask for the approval of the family to mutually suffer and share the responsibility for the crime he would commit. As he asked his wife and children, he was not approved by his wife and children."

The user perceives the home as a center of oneness, which is formed by the feelings of the family members. The user gives meaning to the home with intangible aspects like a sense of oneness, our feelings, etc. The home for the user is built with the socio-cultural values of each individual in the family who shares some common values, giving meaning to the spaces and ultimately giving meaning to a home. The user perceives that the change in the meaning of home has caused a change in the architecture of home as well. The user also perceives home as a mutually grown space of living where every member should be concerned about their togetherness and suggests that each member should be heard and addressed by each family member, respecting the differences in beliefs, norms, and values of every family member.

"Everyone needs everyone in this world and animals give life to the house. I don't have any difficulties living with them."

Thinking about them..... they make me move..... They help me to exercise too. And the pigeons and cows give more life to this house."

The user expresses his relationship with the animals domesticated in his house as useful. By making him work to do the daily chores, like cooking food, serving water, and cleaning the shelter of the cows. The user finds the domestication of animals helping him to move around his house, which directly or indirectly exercises his muscles. Moreover, the user perceives the domestication of cows and pigeons as a collateral existence between the animals and the owner, which fills the meaning in his life and in his house.

I sleep at around 9:30 P.M. This is the habit I made right as a child when I was a student just like you. I have not written or read daily for 6-7 years now. I had to stop for some reason. But when I was a student like you. Right after having my food, I used to stay till 9:00 P.M and read whether I had any homework or not. I wake up at 3:30 – 4:00 A.M every morning. I clean myself first. The first thing I do after I wake up is clean the shed of cows and prepare food for her. After that I start the milking process and keep the first tea of the day on fire. After milking the cow, I start to cook food for her and have my tea. This is the first thing I do. After that I have my tea while reading the newspaper. Blast times and Kantipur Daily, these are the two newspapers I read. I never add a single drop of water to the very first tea which I have every morning. Between 5 A.M-6 A.M every member of the house wakes up, i.e., my wife, me, middle son, and my daughter-in-law. At around 10-11 A.M, I have my first meal of the day. If there is any work around which falls in my responsibility, I do it. Getting older means getting more leisure time and friends with leisure time. When no works, I play cards and talk with my friends and neighbors. In the afternoon, I have my second tea of the day, lemon tea with a small amount of salt in it. At 3:00 P.M, it's time to give food to the cow again.

The user has a particular way of living throughout the day. Providing food and water to cows; preparing a cup of tea for himself. Taking his lunch at regular times. Taking a nap during the day or playing cards with his friends if they visit him. Having leisure time with himself, he gazes at the world outside through his balcony. Living in solitude for a moment of time, contemplating things that have gone or things that are far from the present. This shows how the user prescribes his activities to keep him going with his life. Looking through the lens of architecture, every activity in which the user is engaged has an influence on architecture. From the spatial relationship of the cow's shelter to the shelter for himself.

First, the house is built, and the individuals engage themselves in activities in the house. The interaction between humans and houses through the activities eventually gives meaning to the spaces of houses. This active engagement between humans and the houses sets and forms a different nature of human adaptation in the houses, which gradually, with time, craves a sense of belonging in dwellers, eventually calling a house a 'home'.

5.2 Observation, Artifacts, and Sites

There are three cases of behavioral patterns plotted, which represent the maximum usability of space used by the user in

the house. The architectural plans, elevations, site plans, and sketches are represented as the artifacts and sites created from the data and information obtained during the open-ended interview and the observation carried out on the site.

Old Behavioral Mapping of the user in his existing house

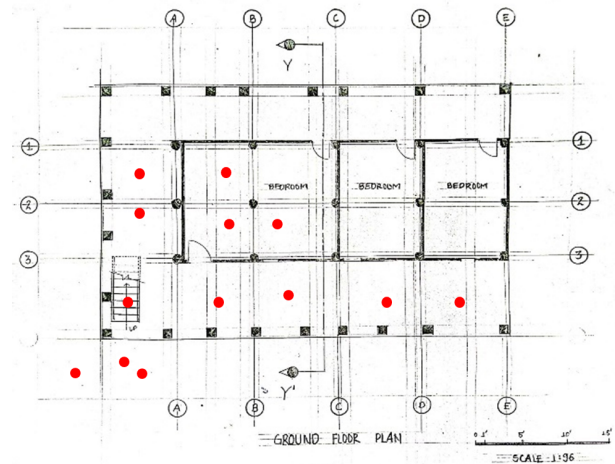


Figure 20: Old Behavioral Mapping of the user on the Ground floor plan of existing house

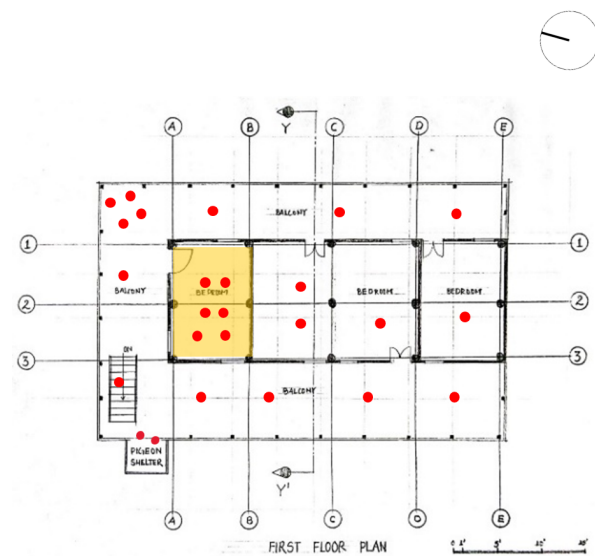


Figure 21: Old Behavioral Mapping of the user on the First floor plan of the existing house

According to the user's experience, the existing house was occupied and used to its fullest when they were living in a large family with parents, sisters, and children. Having three sons and two daughters. The sons used to sleep with their grandfather and grandmother, and the daughters with his sister. The verandas were used for sit-outs during the day and as a place to sleep during the hot summer nights. The verandas were also used to dry crops during the rainy season.

In Fig. 21, the solid hatched plane denotes the room of the user and his wife, which seems to be highly occupied while living as a family. Similarly, the north-west part of the floor plan is a space built for the pigeons.

Present Behavioral Mapping of the user in his existing house

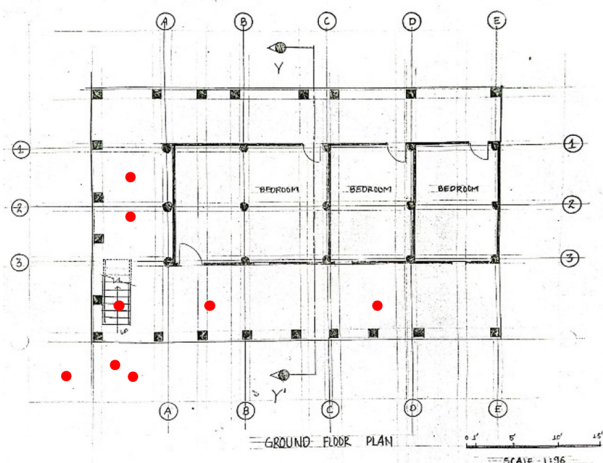


Figure 22: Present Behavioral Mapping of the user on the Ground floor plan of existing house

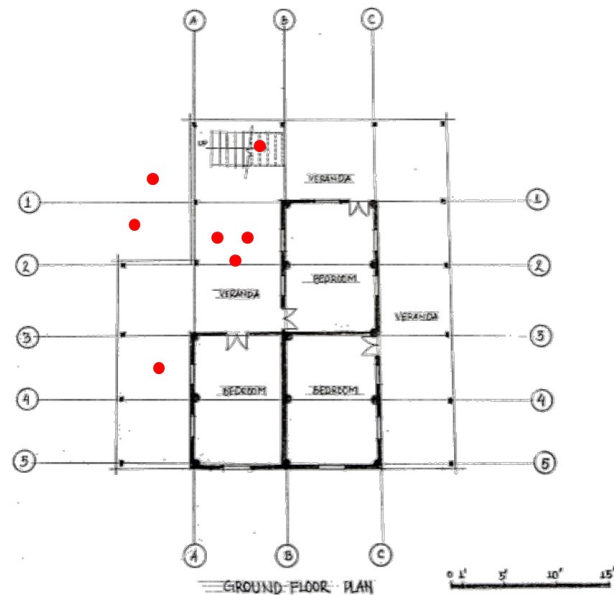


Figure 24: Behavioral mapping of the user on the Ground floor plan of the older house



Figure 23: Present Behavioral Mapping of the user on the First floor plan of existing house

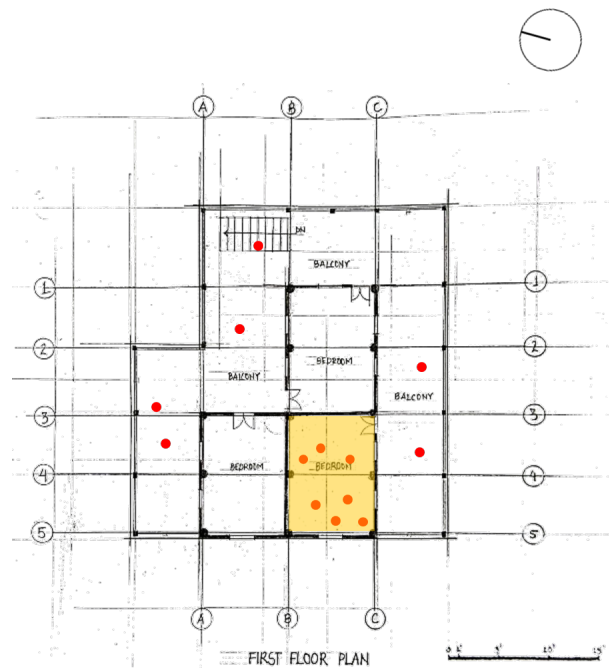


Figure 25: Behavioral mapping of the user on the First floor of the older house

According to the user, the only space he uses in his house presently is the north-east part of the first floor, where he sits, drinks his tea, reads a newspaper, and contemplates about going and coming. In Fig. 23, the solid hatched rectangular plane represents the existing room of the user, which is used only to get isolated from his family members during the ill hours, like during the time of COVID-19.

Behavioral Mapping of the user in his old house

Figs. 24 and 25 represent the behavioral pattern of the user in his older house, which was destroyed in a 2045 B.S. (1988 A.D.) earthquake. Architecturally, analyzing the plans of the old house and the existing house, both house plans have verandas only on three sides of the house. The existing building has a veranda on its east, north, and west sides. Whereas the old plan has a veranda on its north, east, and southern sides. According to the user, the three-sided veranda in the existing house, just like the old house, was not purposeful but a coincidence.

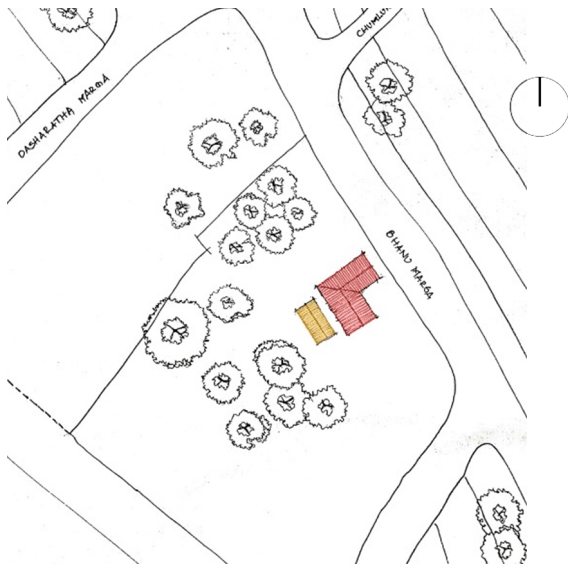
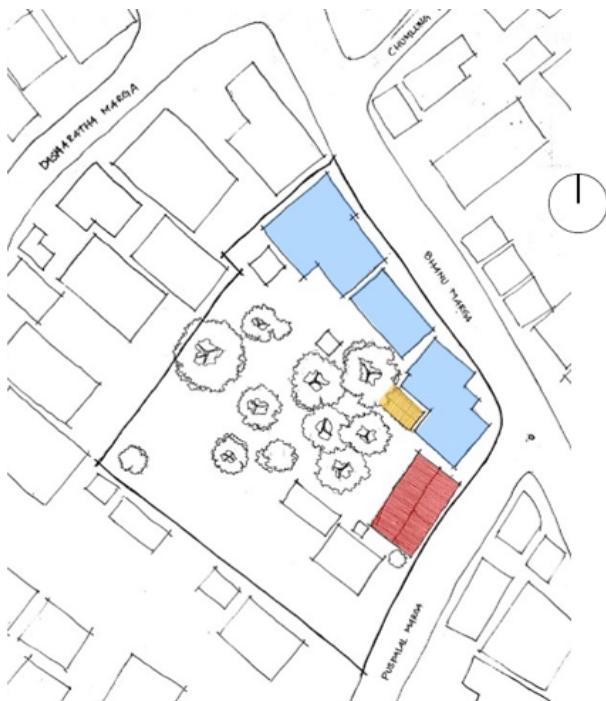


Figure 26: Site plan of the house drafted with visual memory of the user



- User's present and old House
- User's present and old Kitchen
- Houses of the user's sons

Figure 27: Site plan of the existing house of the user

Reflecting on the site understanding of the user in the open-ended interview, we can trace how the site has accordingly affected the planning of his dwelling units. The main road on the eastern side has caused the user to shift his existing house towards the eastern road after the earthquake, buffering the inside space from the outside world. Similarly, the partition and distribution of his land to his sons have also affected the placement of his existing house next to his other

houses. But the spatial relationship between his main house and kitchen unit has remained the same. According to the user, the kitchen needs to be separated from the dwelling unit to obtain a clean and hygienic kitchen free from other activities happening around the house.

Some pictures of the house



Figure 28: East elevation of the existing house



Figure 29: Entering inside the house



Figure 30: Courtyard of the house



Figure 31: Main house



Figure 32: Northern balcony of the Main house



Figure 33: User's leisure space



Figure 34: User using the leisure space

6. Findings and Discussions

The open-ended interview reveals that the user of the house seldom derives the meaning of home through the architectural features of the house. The user gives meaning to home by reflecting on the relationship with family members, his self-beliefs, his life world, his memories, and his sense of belonging. The study shows that the user dominantly symbolizes his house through the medium of the materials used in building the house.

Similarly, the study shows that there is a close relationship between the user and the identity of his neighborhood. For the user, the essence of home is geographically larger when addressing it to others. Asking, Where is your home? The user gives the first identification of home with the name of the community or neighborhood they live in, not directly by how his house looks.

Analyzing the interview and the observation of the site, we can see the physical manifestation of the beliefs of the user, where we could see the user providing a space for pigeons to dwell in the house, believing in pigeons to add symbolic value to his house.

The comparative behavioral pattern of the user in his present house and his old house shows us that the usability of space seems to be changing with the change in time. The existing house is only used as a place to contemplate and view the streets and people. When recalling his old house through his visual memory, he recalled it, referring to it with the shape 'L'. This suggests that the user needs a reference to address architecture. Therefore, the language of the user to refer to architecture is based on the referential figurative order pre-existing in the world through which he perceives the architecture.

The spatial quality of the spaces in the old house can be seen occurring in the existing house. The repetition of two separate units of house, the living room and the kitchen. Which suggests that the user's perception of the spatial relationship of the spaces of the house is affected by the socio-cultural values of the individual or the inherent generational beliefs and practices of the family. This gives the very notion of "traces of spaces." Not exactly the physical traces of spaces, but the traces of spatial characteristics of spaces observed in the user's house. This spatiality of spaces is experienced and adapted by the user so immensely and substantially that it demands to be repeated.

Therefore, the spatial relationships of the spaces in Mr. Sharma's houses have been guided by generational patterns. Where the main house and kitchen are consecutively occurring throughout all the generational houses built in different years. This suggests that generational patterns also guide the planning process of a family house.

7. Limitation

This research is driven by a study of the perceptions of a single user who has been living in the same site for more than 70 years. Comparatively, the findings and discussion can have a high degree of difference when conducting the same scope

of research with other users and their houses. Therefore, the meaning of home expressed by this research might not be similar to the meaning expressed by other individuals.

8. Conclusion

The existing house was built by Mr. Sharma using the wood gathered from the house destroyed by the earthquake, which was built by his father in 2019–2020 B.S. (1962–1963 A.D.). This suggests the resiliency of wood as a building material.

Mr. Sharma has built a pigeon shed as a habitable space for pigeons in his existing house. This shows the nature of the physical manifestation of a belief system, which has affected the architecture of the building in different aspects. Especially the form of the house, its elevation, and its spatial relationships with other spaces in and outside the building.

Therefore, the perception of the user towards his house is driven by its materials, usability of its space, its visual form, curated by the lifeworld, and memories experienced and lived by him in the house, which ultimately give a meaning of home and which change with time.

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