

My bedroom, my world: Domestic space between modernity and tradition

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Abstract

A group of 27 middle class houses, located in Brasilia, Brazil, has been analysed by means of Space Syntax categories. The investigation is determine whether it is possible to characterise a “middle class domestic code”, by contrast with codes which have been studied elsewhere. Also, if such a code is related somehow to the so-called exacerbation of individuality as a dominant social value, and how this might be reflected in the house. Might the configuration of these houses constitute a “vernacular” way of constituting domestic space, as opposed to “erudite” modes of space organisation? “Vernacular”, in this paper, is understood as a certain way of organising space that differs from the ways adopted by “professional knowledge”. It does not mean that such code refers, exclusively, to people of lower income levels.

Comparison was made using data from recent research, involving the theory of Space Syntax and other methodologies, done in Brazil and abroad. It contributes to a “fine-tuning” of the presence of people in the various rooms of domestic space in time, and this in two senses: which spaces are used for longer or shorter periods of time, and which spaces are characterised by rather intense co-presence (sort of “family-rooms”), in contrast with others that are characterised by more individual usage. Some new ways of seeing the presence/absence of people in the various places within the house have been depicted, as well as some long lasting ways of using spaces that date back to colonial times.

Keywords

House configura-
tion, house use,
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codes

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