

# Topological paths in housing evolution

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## Abstract

Traditional courtyard houses that moulded the typical home life of Seoul for centuries have been replaced by modern apartment houses in the twentieth century. On the surface, morphologically, these two are so different and there seems to be no gradual process for the transformation. This study, however, reveals that there were continuous and deliberate efforts to re-adapt the traditional living into the new frame of space. The Space Syntax approach is used to measure the varying degree of change in 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 rooms take different names and functions in the new setting, 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 not only at each partitioned-space level, but also at the collective-space level that is closely related to the traditional concept of binary opposition, i.e., “elevated clean space” versus “earthen-floored dirty space”. Finally, it is concluded that even the domestic culture that is engaged in a fast and intense transformation process still tries to preserve, underneath its surface, its old genotypical value and in the course of change there exist conscious and unconscious efforts to direct it.

## Keywords

Topological paths, space-activity interaction, urban traditional house, apartment house, domestic code, level distinction

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