

ARCHITECTURE AS A SOCIO-SPATIAL EXPERIENCE:

**A STUDY OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HOUSE FORM AND
ATTRIBUTES OF EXISTENTIAL SPACE**

A Dissertation
Submitted to the Department of Architecture of the
University of Moratuwa in partial fulfillment of the
Requirements for the degree of



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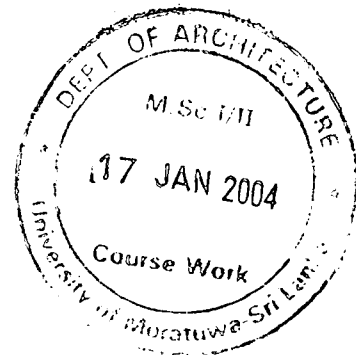


University of Moratuwa

By

Fernando M. I. K.

2003-2004



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DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation represents my own work, except where due acknowledgment is made, and that it has not been previously included in a thesis, dissertation or report submitted to this University or to any other institution for a degree, diploma or other qualification.

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Fernando M. I. K.
Department of Architecture
University of Moratuwa

Architecture as a socio-spatial experience:

A study of the relationship between house form and attributes of existential space

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ABSTRACT

Architecture is a socio-spatial experience. In doing so, it crystallizes the process and the product of human habitation (Habraken, 1983). In the process of architecture it embeds the social values and perceptions of people of different socio-economic, cultural and political contexts. In the 'product of architecture, it re-expresses those human ambitions, aspirations, attitudes and value systems in its spatial medium. They change and evolve over time; nevertheless within this changing flux they show a clear continuity. Accordingly architecture too shows continuity in its progression over time.

Traditions, which contain the essence of human values and attitudes, beliefs, and responses, continue into the future. They **exist** within each society. They add different meanings to different broader spatial settings. Such a **broader meaningful spatial setting** is termed as the 'existential space' in this study. Existential space is thus a space that **exists** within a certain social group. For example *Wewa* (tank") is an existential space for the Sinhalese rural community. The beach is similarly existential a coastal fishing community. The forest is an existential space for the Red Indians, or the Weddah community of Sri Lanka.

This study argues that a good work of architecture whether it is an individual house or a public space, is a projection of the pertinent existential space.

House is seen as the most intimate personalized spatial domain, which brings out the essence of this relationship. Throughout history, different house forms are found in different socio-cultural settings reflecting their inextricable relationship with the macro existential space. Those house forms have been meaningful architectural spaces addressing to the physical and psychological needs of people. Understanding this connection and applying it in the design of houses is essential, to create good architecture that satisfies its inhabitants physically as well as psychologically. In this context, this dissertation seeks the key attributes of (an) existential space and the way they are manifested in the respective individual house forms.