



A Space Consumption: The Process of Objectification of Home

Bir Mekân Tüketimi: Evin Nesnelleşme Süreci

ABSTRACT

Within the context of spatial consumption, the commodification of homes is contingent upon societal shifts and environmental dynamics. Urban development, technological advancements, and the evolution of lifestyles can shape the structure and utilization of space. The notion of 'home' has transcended its fundamental role as a mere shelter, evolving into a complex spatial entity that reflects individuals' social identities, personal preferences, and positions within the cultural context. The objectification process of home signifies an evolutionary transformation in which individuals perceive their living spaces not merely as functional structures, but also as spaces imbued with symbolic and emotional meanings. This topic forms a pivotal intersection among disciplines such as architecture, sociology, and cultural studies, contributing to a deeper understanding of the multidimensional role of space in human life. However, these unique abodes, originally intended to offer a diversified range of personalized living experiences through distinct spatial arrangements, are being commoditized by homogenizing them with standardized types and typologies. The aim of this study is to conceptually examine the boundaries and frameworks of a space that has transitioned into a consumable product, paralleling the process of its commodification.

Keywords: Space, Consumption, House, Objectivity

ÖZET

Mekânın tüketimi bağlamında evin nesnelleşmesi toplumsal değişimlere ve çevresel dinamiklere bağlıdır. Kentsel gelişim, teknolojik ilerlemeler ve yaşam tarzındaki evrilme, mekânın yapısını ve kullanımını şekillendirebilir. Ev kavramı, sadece temel barınma işlevinin ötesine geçerek, bireylerin sosyal kimliklerini, kişisel tercihlerini ve kültürel bağlam içerisindeki konumlarını yansıttığı karmaşık bir mekâna dönüşmüştür. Bu fenomen, "evin nesnelleşme süreci" olarak bilinir ve bireylerin mekânsal çevreleri nasıl anlamlandırdığı ve kullanımını nasıl şekillendirdiği konusunda temel bir araştırma alanı sunar. Evin nesnelleşme süreci, bireylerin yaşam alanlarını sadece fonksiyonel birer yapı olarak değil, aynı zamanda sembolik ve duygusal anlamlarla yüklü mekânlar olarak algıladıkları bir evrimsel dönüşümü ifade eder. Bu konu, mimarlık, sosyoloji ve kültürel çalışmalar gibi disiplinler arasında önemli bir kavşak noktası oluşturur ve mekânın insan yaşamındaki çok boyutlu rolünü daha derinlemesine anlaşılmasına katkı sağlar. Biricik yaşam alanları olan evler, mekânsal organizasyonunu kendine özgü birer yaşam alanı sunma çeşitliliğinden çok, kullanıcıya sunulan benzer tip ve tipolojilerle tüm özgünlüğünü yitirerek birer tüketim nesnesi haline dönüşür. Evin öznel kimliği bir metalaşma unsuru olarak ayrıştığında kullanıcının öznel kimliği yok olmaya başlar. Çalışmanın amacı, bir tüketim nesnesine dönüşen mekânın sınır ve çerçevesinin nesnelleşme süreci paralelinde kavramsal olarak okumaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Mekân, Tüketim, Ev, Nesnellik

INTRODUCTION

In a world constantly undergoing change, it is evident how the concept of consumption has evolved and transformed both before and after the Industrial Revolution. Following the Industrial Revolution, consumption began to manifest its influence worldwide and has become an integral part of our daily lives. To the extent that consumption is perceived as adding value and has become a means of distinguishing oneself from others within society. Embedded in our daily lives, consumption has normalized to a point where its excessiveness often goes unnoticed within the flow of life. A state to the contrary is seen as unusual, indicating a departure from the realm of mere necessity. Consumption is a culture that cannot be reduced solely to the context of needs. The increase in people's needs does not necessarily correspond to an increase in production; it is the variable of differentiation that determines this relationship. Thus, this relationship lies between the increasing differentiation of products and the increasing differentiation of societal prestige. However, while the differentiation of products may be limited, the increasing differentiation of societal prestige is limitless. As a social entity, an individual is not limited within the boundaries of needs, apart from physical characteristics. They generate meaning and value that sets them apart from others. While a person might have quantitative limitations in terms of consuming food due to their digestive system, the boundaries of their cultural system are not limiting but rather boundless (Söylemez, 2006: 8).

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"Consumption cannot be suppressed,
for it is built upon an absence."

Jean Baudrillard

Consumption is fundamentally an ever-evolving, infinite cycle of the consumption of human labor over time. The laborer is a human being, and it is once again a human who perpetually consumes the labor's output. Marx noted that the regulation and utilization of labor time is central to capitalism; the arrangement of time for utilization is essential. As a means of consumption and materials for consumption, the exchange of commodities is, in reality, an exchange of labor times (Urry, 1999:15). Marx emphasized that the core of the capitalist understanding is based on the destruction of space by time, leading to significant transformations across agriculture, industry, and population over time and space (Urry, 1999:19). The apparent effort of consumer culture to create differentiation is, in fact, a state of differentiation through the transformation of the same things without actually becoming distinct. Baudrillard elucidates the transformation of consumption from creating differentiation to becoming identical and homogenized: Consider this: the great configurations and condensation schemes that sustain the formation of meaning in poetry, the living articulation of separate elements, the great metaphors, and figures of contradiction—these are no longer possible. Only the eternal substitution of identical elements reigns. There is no longer any symbolic function; only an eternal mix of ambiance prevails, perpetually in spring (Baudrillard, 2013:27).

ARCHITECTURE AND CONSUMPTION

There is a sequential and complementary dialectical relationship between the Industrial Revolution and modernity. The changes that accompanied the Industrial Revolution began to emerge in the mid-18th century in England and quickly spread to European countries. Developments such as industrial production, population growth, and mechanization of production paved the way for significant societal and ideological changes. The post-Industrial Revolution societal developments and the resulting changes have distinct characteristics for many periods (Tercan, 2009:47). Architecture has evolved into a consumption platform where the changes that have persisted since the Industrial Revolution can be clearly observed. Space, a fundamental product of the discipline of architecture, is a created and consumed entity within social dynamics. Space goes beyond being a passive object of consumption and is a dynamic entity that directly influences and organizes consumption relationships (Yırtıcı, 2002:9). An architect assumes a social role in creating space, and this role, significantly influenced by the Industrial Revolution and still evolving, involves determining the processes of establishing a good living environment starting from the right to housing, in a world transformed by consumption, that shapes and continues to shape societal layers' (classes') settlement in space. Regarding the reflection of the new economy shaped by the current phase of global capitalism on architecture, city, and spatial formation, Lefebvre states in the 1970s that a transition has occurred from the production of goods in space to the production of space itself as a commodity (Oğuz, 2009:68). If we look at the consequences of the transformations that arise in consumption processes from a spatial perspective, it is observed that space becomes commodified and turns into a consumption object to the extent that it facilitates the expression of the new lifestyle. The users of these spaces are part of the new "upper middle class," which is both the producers, carriers, and consumers of the formation referred to as the consumption culture, organized by global capital. The distinctive feature of this era in spatial terms is that spaces facilitating the lifestyle of the upper middle class, with primary functions such as housing, health, education, culture, work, etc., are designed as interlinked functional transitions or overlaps, serving as consumption-oriented spaces such as shopping malls (Süer, Sayar, 2002:42).

Today, architecture has transformed into a commodity born within a social indicator system generated by contemporary consumption discourses. The abundance of architectural "isms" is a simple reflection of consumption relationships. Forms emerge, are consumed, and disappear successively without any inherent causality, independent of their reasons and contexts (Yırtıcı, 2002:11). Architecture and consumption represent a significant intersection that reflects the intricate relationships and cultural changes of modern society. In its traditional sense, architecture is perceived as the design of spaces that amalgamate functional and aesthetic value, while consumer culture centers around the acquisition and utilization of goods and services. The interplay between these two realms can be observed across a broad spectrum, ranging from individual homes to the silhouette of cities. In the contemporary landscape, the ascendancy of consumer culture has profoundly impacted architectural practice and spatial utilization. Homes have evolved beyond mere living spaces; they now serve as conduits for conveying status and identity. People may perceive their homes not just as spaces for personal contentment, but as "brands" in themselves, placing importance on their alignment with societal expectations and trends over mere aesthetics. This phenomenon might lead to a prominence of standardized designs and external appearances. However, this transformation also presents novel opportunities. Architects, by understanding and seamlessly integrating consumer demands, can craft spaces that are both more functional and distinctive. Simultaneously, as concerns for sustainability intensify, consumption-driven approaches might yield to more sustainable and environmentally conscious designs. Within the context of examining the nexus between architecture and consumption, it is vital to envision spaces not solely as commercial commodities, but as designs that cater to individual needs and ways of life. The utilization of spaces holds the potential to reflect

the unique expressions and practical necessities of individuals. While the standardization of homes may mirror the influences of consumer culture, safeguarding distinctiveness and individuality stands at a juncture that elevates the significance and value of space. The rise of consumer culture has not only redefined the essence of spaces but also reshaped the role that these spaces play in human existence. In this paradigm, architecture and consumption stand as a dynamic interplay that reflects the multifaceted nature of modern society.

POETIC HOME

Architecture is fundamentally the tangible metaphor for experiences that lead to the senses and the inner journey of humans. While architecture extends beyond being just an image, it touches our lives. Often perceived as something that only activates the sense of sight, both poor and excellent architecture engage all our senses. In this context, architecture becomes the concretized and objectified form of senses and a metaphor. In today's world, the inevitable reality of perceiving architectural structures as visual images or paintings is accompanied by the fact that architecture's initial impact appeals to the sense of sight. However, Rasmussen expresses that the understanding of architecture goes beyond determining a building's style from its external appearance. Merely seeing architecture is not enough; we must also experience it. Understanding how a building is designed for a specific purpose, how it adapts to the rhythm and concepts of a particular period – these are the things you need to observe. You must inhabit the rooms, feel how the walls surround you, and witness how fluidly you move from one room to another. You must recognize the tactile effects, discover why certain colors are used, and understand how the room's location in relation to windows and sunlight influences color selection (Rasmussen, 2012:35). The world is a collection of experiences we perceive, touch, listen to, and measure with our entire physical existence. Our body, our home, is the repository of memory and identity (Pallasma, 2014:80). Deleuze has remarked in this context: Emotions are produced and are real, but they aren't produced solely by the building. Emotions are produced when a person connects with the building, and individuals prepare for these encounters through life experiences that include their education. Like any work of art, a building is a block of perceptions and emotions. Encounter is an experience, an experiment (Ballantyne, 2012:44). In the context of the relationship between architecture and consumption, the most significant architectural product can be positioned as the house. The house has demonstrated its relationship with consumption through the form of housing. However, when consumption enters the realm of the house, housing transforms from a concept of home to a tangible consumer object. The house is a space of "experience," and within the realm of consumption, this experience cannot coexist. The relationship between the house and humans is meaningful when framed within the context of this "experience." This concept of "experience" is defined by Aydınli as follows: "From an epistemological perspective on spatial interpretation, the essence that reflects the tension between meaning and form necessitates a strong relationship that holds together the entirety of all elements among the functional process of life, emotional and intellectual behaviors. At this point, the concept of 'experience' brings together the interpretation of space on a common ground, as it reflects the productive unity that is open to change and development between space as a sensory apprehension object and the cultural and societal forces contributing to its formation" (Aydınli, 2000: 41-42). Aydınli also emphasizes the importance of the concept of experience by stating: Architecture can be defined as the art of creating an environment that transforms user behaviors into responses; the understanding and interpretation of this environment take place around the axis of the 'experience' concept. Experience helps to reveal the hidden power arising from the tension between opposing concepts; and it can be considered as an epistemological foundation that sheds light on the interpretation of space" (Aydınli, 2000: 50).

A house cannot be reduced to a mere commodity, as it holds a special place in a person's life and inner world. A house is our corner in the world, our primal universe (Bachelard, 2013, p.34). The human being at the heart of the house is not confined to a physical body alone. Their soul becomes intertwined with the house they will inhabit, and it's within this unity that an individual's house becomes integrated with their own existence. In one's home, they are most themselves, in their most private world; an individual is not merely a being "thrown into the world," but a being nestled in the cradle of their home (Bachelard, 2013, p.37). Bachelard, who emphasizes the unique relationship between humans and houses, beyond that of other architectural structures, particularly addresses the structure of a house. He asserts that a house should not be seen solely as a physical object. Spaces like homes, which are places of birth, are not merely given; they are filled with traces of memories. Therefore, a space like a house plays a significant role, especially in the formation of memories. A house harbors the capacity for imagination, serving as a metaphorical realm where Bergsonian time operates. Our bodies do not forget the first house we encounter. The distinctive essence of a house is etched into us physically. Memories become material, and hence, in Bachelard's view, the temporality of memory is rooted spatially. Houses are lived through a person's body and memories (Urry, 1999:41). A house is the tangible embodiment of accumulated memories intertwined with "experience." While what is seen is concrete, the unseen aspects go beyond the tangible and hold significant meanings. A house is a refuge, and the experiences that occur within it can evoke feelings even through a scent in every phase of life. In this context, Bachelard portrays how a house transcends its visible four walls to become a living space uniquely belonging to an individual. He

explains: "To give the plan of a room that has really belonged to me, to describe the small room beneath the attic, to say that from the window one could see the hill between the indentations of the roofs, what use is it? In the memories of another century, only I can open the deep, concealed cupboard where the scent of dried grapes still lingers" (Bachelard, 2013:44).

THE COMMODIFICATION OF THE HOME

According to Pallasmaa, architectural space is more about lived space than physical space, and lived space is always more than geometry and measurability. Architecture defines an experiential space behind the physical appearance, so expressing this experience through mathematical formulas or tangible objects is not possible. Since the concept of experience is what constitutes architecture, it finds itself within a realm where it can be perceived, sensed, and experienced, beneath a concrete image. According to Bachelard, the relationship between the mind and space is defined as follows: The space perceived by the imagination cannot remain a space subjected to geometric measurement and thoughtless realization (Bachelard, 2013:28). Heidegger, on the other hand, states regarding this matter: "spaces" come into existence not with the "space" grasped mathematically but with the "place" grasped through human experience (Sharr, 2013:53).

Just like many spaces that have fallen under the influence of consumption, the objectification of the home has become inevitable. The home, too, has been standardized and transformed into a manufactured product, removed from its architectural context. In such a situation, the home has become a commodity that is produced and desired for consumption through various means. With the new understandings created by the modernization movement, the requirements for many new living environments within the home have progressed in parallel. Modern culture has led to the creation of organized and completed residences that play an active role in consumption. These residences entice consumers with messages, bringing the concept of home closer to housing, and even dissociating these concepts entirely from one another. The organized home within the context of modern cultural needs has been photographed as an architectural consumer product and made accessible to the masses. Architectural products presented as 'miniatures of reality' in photographs become a piece of experienced - tasted and stripped from context - merchandise in the eye of the beholder. When photographs portray one's most personal space, the home, as an advertising tool in magazines and posters, the home starts to transform into a marketed consumer commodity, and the potential users of the home also turn into consumers. Thus, the center (fortress) of subjectivity, which is the home, becomes objectified and needs to reorganize its relationship with the subject (Tekin, 2014: 13).

In capitalist societies, the home has become a part of consumer culture. It has taken on the form of four walls that offer the same living possibilities to each individual, creating similar and homogeneous living spaces. The home has transformed into an objectified entity, where the subject becomes alienated and unable to reach it, turning into an object of desire presented under the guise of modern culture. It has become an experimental object for generating answers to live in the most ideal home within the context of new understandings and the new culture of consumption. Loos contradicts this notion, stating: "The house does not have to say anything outside; on the contrary, all its richness must be obvious inside" (Loos, 1914: 339). The home is like a habitat composed of countless objects collected from different places and times, randomly found, gifted by someone, unrelated to each other, and when brought together, lacking a concern for creating unity. It's possible to metaphorize the objects in this habitat as micro-lives that carry all the data of the time and mindset they belong to, dragging them along as they enter the house (Akçay, 2021, 231). Within this habitat, the subject constantly holds the potential for experiencing new emotional encounters, as the habitat is constantly renewed and becomes more intricate. The very complexity that ensures productivity is the key, yet modern architecture's effort to whitewash all walls and see objects that bear the traces of time as stains, striving to turn the home into a fully completed, well-functioning machine from top to bottom, seriously alters the subject's potential emotional experiences by preemptively restraining the relationship with the home (Tekin, 2014: 20).

There are many factors that facilitate the process of the home becoming a consumption object. The home has been at the forefront of various discourses, with an idealized concept built around it. Advertisements, newspapers, magazines, and television, among other forms of public communication, have all fallen under the influence of this phenomenon, making it easier for the home to be objectified and transforming it into a desirable and ideal dwelling. However, the home is essentially a place where the interior world, defined by the architect's boundaries, belongs to it. What defines a home is not the creation of a traditional sense of place, where a place-like space is constructed, but rather the domestication of the field of vision in this manner (Colomina, B., 2011:314).

The phenomenon of modern architecture turning the home into a completely desirable object is directly related to modernity's control and management of the individual's subjectivity. The individual has been pushed to become a modern subject, detached from their personal characteristics, and has opened themselves up to the outside world,

inadvertently making themselves more universal. With industrialization and globalization, in an environment where everything is disciplined under the banner of 'efficiency', the individual has had to conform to the process of standardization and has been standardized themselves (Tekin, 2014: 45). In architectural practice, the commodification of the home leads us to question the balance between the commercial and social values of space. Viewing homes as purely commercial entities can weaken the unique meaning and societal function of space, but when design brings together individual expression and societal context, it can enrich the meaning of space. In this context, architects and society should collaborate to understand the challenges posed by the commodification of homes and reevaluate the significance of space in human life.

CONCLUSION

"Because a house,
is our corner of the world..."
Gaston Bachelard

In today's context, the concept of "commodification" has come to signify the loss of individuals' subjective and symbolic values in their living spaces, resulting in standardized and homogeneous structures. Particularly in this process, homes can deviate from their originality and become spaces that resemble each other. However, it is necessary to offer a critical perspective on how this process of homogenization affects the subjective character of homes and alters individuals' perception of space. The commodification process of homes is often driven by economic and commercial concerns, societal norms, and the standardization of the construction industry. This can lead to physical similarities between homes and the loss of their individuality. At this juncture, it is important to question how compatible the concept of "home" is with uniqueness and personal expression.

The transformation of homes into a more uniform structure can impact individuals' perception of space. The interior design, decoration, and arrangement of homes might be compelled to adhere to a general norm rather than reflecting the identities and lifestyles of their owners. This situation could undermine the quality of homes as spaces that carry meaning beyond mere functionality. However, in the light of this critical perspective, the uniqueness and subjective perception of homes can still be preserved. Individuals can continue to shape their homes according to their personal preferences and expressions. Unique home designs and alternative approaches can serve as resistance against the homogenizing commodification process of homes.

Globalization, capitalism, and advancing technology have ushered in a culture of consumption that extends its influence to every facet of our lives, including the homes where we spend a significant portion of our time. As culture becomes industrialized, the subject, who is an integral part of culture, shifts towards becoming an object, as Adorno pointed out; the culture industry intentionally molds consumers to fit its mold. The consumer is now a participant in this industry, readily accepting what is presented to them. Thus, the objectified consumer embarks on a quest to reclaim their subjectivity. While it was once believed that the subject could maintain control over their consumption, they have, in fact, become objects in the very heart of consumption. If architecture is regarded as the consumption of space, then the home must also be seen as a part of this consumption. However, as a product of architecture, the "home" responds to the need for shelter that encompasses the concept of "lived experience," setting it apart from all other architectural practices and products. The home is too intimate, personal, and individual to be commodified. It serves as a nest, a sanctuary, a refuge, and a dwelling. The home transcends the geometric architectural boundaries of four walls; it is much more than that. While the home inevitably becomes a part of consumption, it has been transformed into a commodity within the cultural framework of the industry, detached from its relationship with the subject. In such a context, the concept of "lived experience" cannot evolve distinctively from similarity, uniformity, and sameness. The transformation of "lived experience" into a consumable commodity has resulted in the loss of the home's entire subjectivity. In this context, the concept of "lived experience" has become incapable of development beyond similarity, uniformity, and sameness. The conversion of "lived experience" into a consumable commodity has led to the loss of the home's entire subjectivity. Within such a framework, the concept of "lived experience" fails to evolve into something distinct from similarity and sameness. The transformation of "lived experience" into a commodity has caused the loss of the home's entire subjectivity. The home, in this process, has become a part of industrial culture and a commodity, detached from its relationship with the subject. In such an environment, the concept of "lived experience" has failed to develop beyond the constraints of similarity and sameness. This transformation of "lived experience" into a consumable commodity has stripped the home of its essential subjectivity.

The abundance of choices presented to us by modern life, coupled with the inclination towards consumption, has paradoxically led to a sense of scarcity and limitation. The prevalence of uniformity has created a sense of lacking, and in a world where individuals are treated as objects, resisting and standing up against this situation is not an easy task. In a world dominated by capitalism, the rejection of this state of affairs and the search for differentiation prove

to be quite challenging. Our most profound experiences are often centered around our homes, yet due to the pressure of capitalism, these experiences are deprived of their true essence, leaving us with a limited realm of imagination. The pressure of capitalism has confined the concept of "home" to an image rather than allowing it to flourish beyond that. In a commodified modern culture where experiences are disregarded, standardized "lived experience" areas have been presented to us. Every step taken to further modernize homes has contributed to the process of commodification. The concept of "home" has been transformed into an ideal object, commodified as a residence, becoming an unattainable yet ever-desired commodity within the context of the subject's existence. In this context, the inexhaustible array of choices in modern life has paradoxically exacerbated a sense of scarcity and limitation. The impact of uniformity has induced a feeling of deprivation, while attempting to reject and counteract this situation in a world where individuals are objectified proves to be challenging. The experiences that occupy our minds the most are predominantly centered around our homes, yet under the weight of capitalism's influence, these experiences lack the depth they deserve, leaving us with a restricted realm of imagination. Capitalism's pressure has confined the concept of "home" to an image, rather than allowing it to flourish beyond these constraints. In a commodified modern culture that disregards experience, standardized "lived experience" spaces have been presented to us. Each step taken to further modernize homes has contributed to the process of commodification. The concept of "home" has been molded into an ideal object, commodified as a residence, turning into an unattainable yet perpetually desired commodity within the realm of the subject's existence.

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