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Culture as the Nexus Between Theory and Practice of Architecture: Evidence from a Hausa Migrant Settlement in Ile-Ife, Nigeria

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Abstract

The gap between architectural theory and practice has widened over time. Contemporary architectural practice is shaped less by theoretical frameworks and more by global forces such as globalization and sustainability, which have profoundly influenced spatial environments. Housing and built forms have undergone radical transformations, adopting increasingly globalized identities. Yet, despite these inevitable changes, architectural design must continue to ensure a strong person-environment fit. The enduring factor that mediates this fit is "culture". Although formal cultural theories rarely guide architectural practice, culture nonetheless plays a critical role. This study investigates Hausa migrant housing in Ile-Ife, comparing it with both the Yoruba house and traditional Hausa domestic architecture to highlight the centrality of culture in shaping design continuity and transmission in the absence of explicit cultural theory. Previous research on Hausa migrant settlements has seldom examined the design and organization of migrant housing or its relationship to traditional Hausa compounds. Using a qualitative approach, this study documented one hundred and twenty-six (126), building plans in annotated sketches which were thematically analysed these against traditional Hausa housing patterns. Findings reveal the same pattern for all the houses, so only the unique and representative ones were presented in this paper. It was also revealed that while migrant housing incorporates elements from the host community, the organization of spaces reflects strong cultural transmissions. This cultural continuity strengthens the person-environment fit for Hausa migrants. The study concludes that culture serves as the critical nexus between theory and practice in architecture. However, in this era of globalization and sustainability, the future of architectural design must recognize culture as the confluence where theoretical ideals and practical realities meet.

Keywords: Appropriation, Culture, Housing Design, Globalization, Sustainability, Theory and Practice, Person-Environment Fit.

Introduction

Theories are plausible or scientifically acceptable general principles used to explain phenomena. They are also said to be beliefs, policies or procedures proposed or followed. There are as many theories, guiding principles and practices, as the numerous fields and disciplines that exist. Architectural theories are examples and these exist to guide the conception, understanding and practice of different areas in the same field of endeavour. One of the earliest possible known architectural theories is 'functionalism' credited to one of architecture's proponents of modern architecture, Louis Sullivan. His maxim was "Form follows function", which guided modern architecture of the early twentieth century. This theory's proposition and strength is emphasized in his own words: *"Whether it be the sweeping eagle in his flight, or the open apple-blossom, the toiling workhorse, the blithe swan, the branching oak, the winding stream at its base, the drifting clouds, over all the coursing sun, form ever follows function, and this is the law*". Louis Sullivan, 1896 (in Papageorgiou, 2016)

Modern architectural practice followed this principle of 'form follows function' (Lang & Moleski, 2016) and still does so till date. However, in recent times, the theory has been critiqued and contested for its rigid approach to design. These critiques have emanated from practice and observance of the ethos of the theory, and this implies that theories are no rigid rules which may not be dismembered. In actual fact, practice tests and informs theory to either affirm its potency or to refute its claims. This is best captured by the words of artist and designer Leonado de Vinci:

"He who loves theory without practice is like a sailor who boards a ship without a rudder and a compass" (in Lang & Moleski, 2016).

Theory without practice lacks direction and cannot be validated. Practice makes theory more validated. To buttress this, again one application of this theory, Banham's appraisal of functionalism, is observed in his published dissertation, *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age (1960) (in* Mallgrave & Goodman, 2011). Here, he describes how the farse of the first machine age was already being overtaken, at the time, by the second machine age. His critic was that there was nothing, such as a theory, tying those ages and technological inventions together. This was to emphasize the importance of theory in explaining everyday phenomena while stressing the importance of application and future needs. His words:

"The architect who proposes to run with technology knows now that he will be in fast company, and that, in order to keep up, he may have to emulate the Futurists and discard his whole cultural load, including the professional garments by which he is recognized as an architect. If, on the other hand, he decides not to do this, he may find that a technological culture has decided to go on without him."

On the other hand, in facing the reality of contemporary times, certain other concepts like globalization and sustainability moderate the practice of these principles. The tenet of globalisation has ushered in the advent of global identities in housing; now houses in tropical climates bear similar identities with those in temperate regions with respect to technologies, materials and methods. But then, while globalization permits a universal identity as against local indigenous ones (Wang, 2007; Danjuma et al., 2020), sustainability emphasises that technology, methods and materials are sustained for every context, in order to secure and provide for the future generations.

The consensus however will be achieved when there is a person-environment fit between peoples and their environments, irrespective of theoretical underpinnings, practice, the demands of culture, globalisation and sustainability. These intentions for person-environment fit will be achieved when cultural transmissions are permitted through design, use of materials and technologies. This study examines houses of migrants in the Hausa enclave of Sabo in a town in South-west Nigeria, Ile-Ife, in comparison to traditional Hausa housing in order to explain the influence of culture on them.

The rest of the paper is planned out as follows: a literature review which examines literature from theory and practice of architecture, through the influences of the concepts of globalisation and sustainability on housing, to literature on person-environment fit, the influence of culture ensues. Next, the method used, and then the findings and discussion. Lastly, the paper is rounded up in the conclusion section.

LITERATURE REVIEW/THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING

An overview of literature on architectural theory, functionalism to be precise, and its applications in practice; globalisation and sustainability and their consequences; culture, its transmission and Person-environment fit.

Architecture: Theory and Practice

From modernism to post-modernism architecture and practice has been backed by theories and principles; with each era marked by theories that help understand the styles and architecture of the time. Lang and Moleski (2016) have suggested that there are three bodies of theoretical knowledge for the design fields. These are said to be firstly, a theory of functionalism, secondly, a set of architectural theories that centre on the purposes which buildings and urban environments should serve in specific instances and lastly, theories focussing on the design process or methodology.

The concept of functionalism according to Lang and Moleski (2016) was, and is still central to architectural thought and practice. These authors reiterate that functionalism has in a general sense, referred to the instrumental, or utilitarian, purposes a building or urban space is designed to serve, as well as the purposes its structural and constructional systems are intended to fulfil. However, they assert that this definition is inadequate and that the proper definition should capture the broad range of purposes that buildings and built environments afford humans and other living things. They explain that this redefinition is necessitated by lessons learnt from

the different purpose buildings serve across cultures, which are deductions from efforts and experiences, mainly from environment-behaviour studies and also architects in practice.

No doubt the concept of function is important in building design, it is interpreted as spatial organization in a building. Spatial organization is closely linked to and explained by the cultural persuasions of the building owner. This is explicated in cross-cultural studies like Rapoport (1969), which shows that buildings are used and organized in ways that suit the users' values, lifestyle and culture in a general sense. Also, as Lynch and Rodwin (1958) suggest, urban forms are a result of experiences, which are fundamental elements of human settlements, culture, and society. This means that the organisation of urban spaces is crucial to producing social and spatial arrangements.

More recent scholarship expands this view: as Poerschke (2017) argues that functionalism must now be understood in relation to systems theory and sustainability, showing how design processes are increasingly shaped by ecological and technological imperatives. Lang and Moleski (2016) revisits functionalism, stressing its socio-political relevance and clarifying misconceptions about its scope. These newer perspectives more or less, strengthen the older arguments by showing that functionalism is not static but is continually redefined through practice and cultural contexts.

Practice on the other hand either informs theory or is informed by theory. Reiterating Leonardo de Vinci, it is said that *"He who loves theory without practice is like a sailor who boards a ship without a rudder and a compass"* (Lang & Moleski, 2016). The direction and critique that theory requires is strengthened through practice. In architecture, principles and theories generally are rooted through practice.

Although the concept of functionalism or spatial organisation and practice are important, other concepts like globalisation and sustainability have influenced building designs and organisation as well as practice for some time now.

Globalization

As the UK architect Adam (2010) suggests, it appears that the phenomenon known as globalisation had been in existence long before it earned a name or catchword for itself. Giddens (1981, p64) defined it as "the intensifications of a worldwide social relations, in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa". To the effect, the concept of globalization, has been variously defined as it impacts on different domains of life. However, the general definition for the concept as given by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is that it is

> *..."generally, used to describe an increasing internationalisation of markets for goods and services, the means of production, financial systems, competition, corporations, technology and industries" and that amongst other things, "this gives rise to increased mobility of capital, faster propagation of technological innovations and an increasing interdependency and uniformity of national markets"* (OECD document, 2002).

Adam (2008) also reports the encyclopaedia Britannica's definition for globalisation as "the process by which the experience of everyday life is becoming standardised around the world".

For about 40years now, globalisation has ordered production and trade in all facets of life across the world, and consequently, there are advantages and consequences as well.
Akindele et al. (2019) suggests, with empirical evidence, that globalization trends have positively impacted real estate in Nigeria, this is however, contested in other domains like in architecture (Fraser, 2019; Eldermery, 2009). Fraser (2019) critiques Eurocentric biases in architectural histories, showing how globalization often marginalizes local traditions. Ouroussoff (2019) adds that globalization has produced ethical dilemmas, where architecture risks becoming a tool for vanity projects rather than social responsibility. Predictably so, because although in certain aspects, the advantages of globalisation are clear cut, the fact that many technologies, products and ideas are more or less imposed on different cultures across the world, there will be challenges of adaptations and acceptance. Next came the concept of sustainability to more or less create a balance.

Sustainability

Sustainability as a developmental intervention, also conceived as sustainable development has been existent for some decades now, since 1987. It was at this time, the United Nations Brundtland Commission first defined the concept. Their report "Our Common Future" defined sustainability as 'development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' (WCED 1987, 8). By the year 2002 during the United Nations Summit, which held in Johannesburg, it was unanimous that sustainable development basically involved the reconciliation of three pillars of sustainability namely: environmental, social and economic pillars (Memott & Keys, 2015). By the year 2005, sustainable development was defined as development which was environmentally responsive, economically viable and that promoted social equity.
In response to this and irrespective of theoretical underpinnings, Architecture as a field of study embraced sustainable development by focusing on achieving environmental aims for any development; this has been promoted through the green issue (Tabb & Deviren 2013) generally. Consequently, some fields of study have emerged in response to this like biophilic designs (Kellert, 2005), green architecture (Kwok & Grondzik 2011), eco-housing, environmental design and regenerative design (Lyle, 1994) among others. All these fields as Memott and Keys (2015) point out from the literature, focus on technological, climatic, planning and material aspects of sustainable development, which can be directly explained by both the environmental and economic pillars. On the other hand, recent scholarship strengthens the argument in another dimension; Pons-Valladares and Nikolic (2020) review sustainable design and refurbishment, noting that social equity remains under-integrated in architectural sustainability. Littlewood et al., (2025) emphasize resilience and climate adaptation, showing that sustainability now includes designing for long-term ecological and social resilience. Bręczewska-Kulesza and Kaus (2025) argue that traditional housing forms embody sustainable practices by adapting to local climates and cultural needs.
While the environmental and economic pillars of sustainability provide necessary technical and material benchmarks (WCED, 1987; Kwok & Grondzik, 2011; Tabb & Deviren, 2013),

culture serves as the vital fourth pillar by providing the "operational definitions" required to align human values with physical environments (Hawkes, 2001; Opoku, 2015). Opoku (2015) argues that the traditional three-pillar model is frequently inadequate for the built environment because it overlooks the cultural vitality that fosters social identity and long-term viability (Opoku, 2015; Sabatini, 2019). In the context of Hausa residential architecture, this cultural dimension is paramount, as domestic spaces are direct manifestations of religious beliefs, ethnic identity, and ancestral social orders (Adisa, 2013; Memmott & Keys, 2015).

However, the increasing influence of globalisation introduces a significant theoretical and practical conflict: the standardization of "everyday life" through generic architectural forms (Prucnal-Ogunsote, 2001; Littlewood et al., 2025). This standardization specifically challenges Hausa domesticity by promoting global open-plan trends that fundamentally contradict the traditional requirement for strict gender-segregated spaces (Sa'ad, 1986; Ibrahim & Özorhon, 2025).

In a traditional Hausa compound, the *Cikin Gida* (inner house) functions as a private, feminine sanctuary that must remain visually and physically shielded from public view (Nash, 2018; Ibrahim & Özorhon, 2025). This spatial hierarchy, often defined by a tripartite division of public, semi-private, and private cores, acts as a "built-in hijab" to protect the modesty of women in purdah (Sa'ad, 1986; Moughtin et al., 1999; Umar et al., 2019). When global architectural norms, characterized by fluid, transparent interiors, are imposed, they often render these spaces "inoperable" with the residents' religious and cultural practices (Prucnal-Ogunsote, 2001; Adamu, 2005).

By documenting 126-houses in the Sabo enclave, this study captures the specific ways migrants negotiate this tension (Adisa, 2013). The resulting analysis reveals how these households often adapt standardized, non-contextual structures to preserve the cultural vitality and privacy of the *Cikin Gida*, thereby demonstrating that true sustainability in the built environment must include the preservation of intangible cultural values (Agboola & Zango, 2014; Bręczewska-Kulesza & Kaus, 2025).

Culture and Housing:

The link between housing and culture is not farfetched. The use and organization of space as well as building forms are influenced by culture (Rapoport, 2005; Memott & Keys, 2015). This is established in many cross-cultural housing studies, especially since Amos Rapoport's seminal work, House Form and Culture, 1969; and in his subsequent writings. As Rapoport opines, building a house is a cultural phenomenon, and as a cultural phenomenon, the house is said to be best suited to the way of life of the people (1969). He also argues that the form and organization of the house is greatly influenced by the cultural milieu to which it belongs; this implies not only geographical settings, but also socio-cultural groupings. Recent scholarship further buttresses the point, Akhanolu and Ahianba (2025) highlight architecture as a repository of cultural continuity, showing how housing reflects values and traditions even under globalization. The Hausa and their architecture are quite unique in the sense.

Hausa Architecture

Hausa architecture is a well-studied area in Nigeria and Africa generally. It is said to be peculiar and unique (Moughtin, 1964; 1985; Buchanan & Pugh, 1995; Bikam & Chakwizira, 2020). Moughtin, 1985 discusses and illustrates how it is one of the most important areas studied in African Architecture. It has also been shown to have responded well to trends and time periods, hence its spatial configuration, and open space configuration have evolved over time in response to changes and influences external to it (Moughtin, 1964; Buchanan & Pugh, 1995; Bikam & Chakwizira, 2020).

Today, with the Hausa moving southward in Nigeria, the architecture of the migrant Hausa has transformed from traditional Hausa architecture to adaptations reflecting a mix of both the "alien" architecture and certain features of traditional architecture as Moughtin (1964, 32) observes. Features like the strong cultural themes of privacy and territoriality; with restricted entrances/exits to and from the building, small window openings, a hierarchy in the organisation of space heightened by the concept of privacy, and a consciousness of segregation of sexes as much as possible. After Moughtin's (1964) work, studying the settlement or houses of the migrant Hausa, there are no known studies which have studied Hausa migrant housing in Nigeria, except for Pellow (1988) who studied the *Zongos* in Ghana.

Person-Environment Fit (P-E Fit)

P-E Fit concept is a vastly studied concept that has mainly focused on the relationship between two entities; usually people and some form of environment (Giauque et al., 2014). Most areas of focus are on job satisfaction, organizational commitment, work motivation and intention to move. Hence, there exists some P-E Fit constructs like Person-Job fit (P-J Fit), Person-Organisation Fit (P-O. Fit), Person-Vocation Fit, Person-Group Fit and Person-Reforms Fit amongst others. P-J Fit and P-O Fit are said to be the focus for most P-E Fit studies (Giauque et al, 2014). However, it is applied to every possible domain where humans relate, including housing and housing environments, although rarely.

What P-E fit seeks to evaluate is a fit between persons' characteristics and attitudes on one hand, and the environment (housing, job, work, organisation, and other environment types). According to Giauque et al (2014, 202) fits in most researches conducted are investigated by questioning respondents on what perceptions they have of their fit with their environment in question, or job, colleague, organization and housing. This measure of the perception of fits is said to be subjective reality that may directly impact on and determine productivity, work outcomes, satisfaction or commitment. Congruence between both entities suggests satisfaction and generally positive attitudes towards the environment, but the reverse is the case with negative outcomes and lack of fit (Zhang et al., 2024; Kandler et al., 2024). A lack of fit results in negative attitudes generally.

Study Context: The Sabo Enclave and the Hausa of Sabo in Ile-Ife

The context for the study is located at the heart of Ile-Ife, a large town in Osun State, south-west Nigeria. It is known as "*Sabo"*, which means "new". The Sabo enclave in Ile-Ife, covers

less than 62.5hectares (0.625Km2) of land in a town with about 10, 500hectares (105 Km2) of landed area (about 0.6% of total landed area) and accommodates about 7% (11,680) of the Ife-central local government's population, which was 167,254 as at the 2006 census. It is a slum settlement, known to be the most densely populated portion of town with an overwhelming growth rate.

METHODOLOGY

The study is an aspect of a larger one which examined housing as a locus of ethnic identity in a Hausa migrant settlement in Ile-Ife. The original study employed a total enumeration approach, successfully surveying 203 households/house with a fewer than ten declining participations. This paper draws upon that dataset, utilizing qualitative analysis to interpret the findings. This original data was collected for about 5weeks between May and June, 2013. Recent site visits and observational reviews confirm that the Sabo enclave has remained largely static over the past two decades.

Data retrieved were floor plans, and documentations of physical observations of the layout and organisation of the spaces, which were thematically analysed from an environment-behaviour perspective. Interestingly, in nearly two decades, not much has changed in the Sabo enclave. These plans were analysed first in comparison to the houses of their Yoruba hosts, and then with the use of gamma maps, in comparison to the traditional Hausa house/compound, in order to sift out the salient themes that explain the peculiarities of the culture of the migrants.

Over a hundred sketches of the *Sabo* house were retrieved from the main study, but analyses of these revealed that the houses were organised in very similar ways. Although it was obvious from the beginning that saturation had been reached, from the monotonous sketches. However, the documentations stopped as soon as one hundred and twenty-six house plans were sketched. Hence, only a few different sketches are documented here based on differences and uniqueness in designs. Altogether, four different plans of the Sabo Hausa houses are presented, analysed with gamma maps, and discussed.

RESULTS/FINDINGS

Findings begin with a description of the *Yoruba* house, the architecture of the host community, its design and organisation are presented and analysed; next the Sabo Hausa houses are described and analysed in comparison to this Yoruba house; and lastly, the Sabo Hausa house is examined against the traditional Northern *Hausa* house/compound for differences or similarities, and discussed.

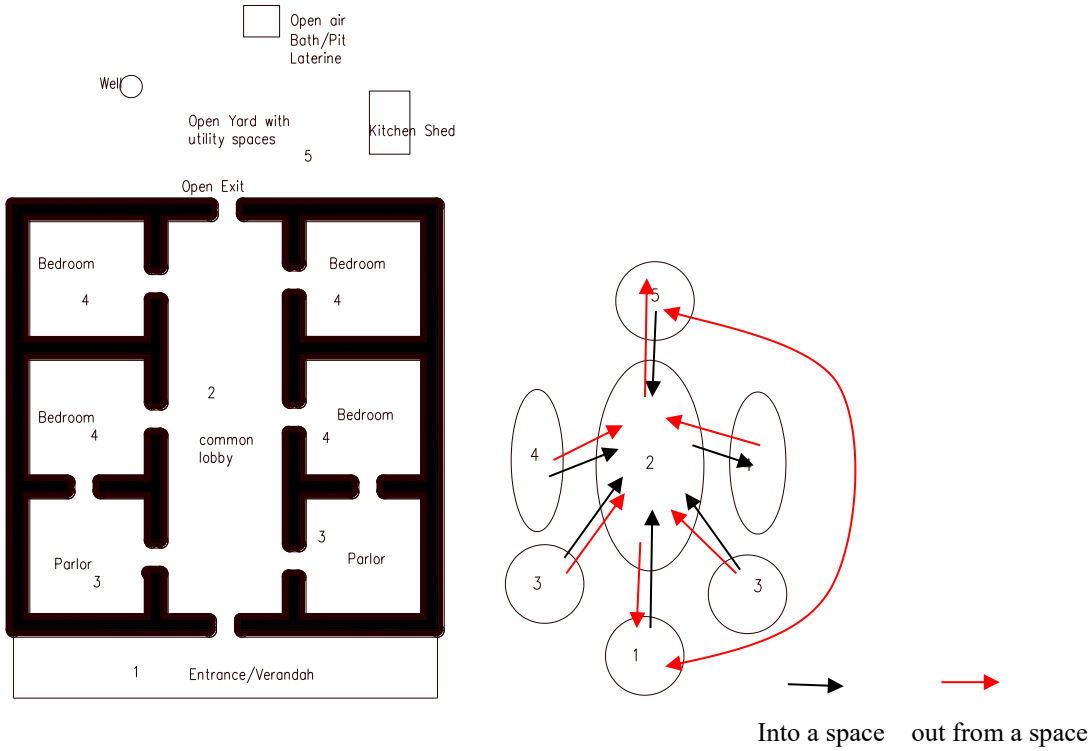


Figure 1 - The Yoruba House (Source: Authors)

The Yoruba House

The Yoruba House in the Sabo settlement is the vernacular type, the typical Afro-Brazillian house also known as the rooming apartment, or in popular parlance *"face-me-i-face-you",* is illustrated in Figure 1. This house type itself is a transformation of the traditional Yoruba house and is referred to as the post-traditional architecture (Amole, 2000), having borrowed from some other cultures (Osasona & Ewemade, 2009; Amole, 2000). It is also referred to as being vernacular. It is laid out as a rectilinear block, with rooms aligned on the long sides of the building. This leaves a very large open common lobby for users at the centre of the building, separating each row of rooms. The house usually has a verandah at the main entrance as illustrated, with a wooden dwarf gate and a door over the entrance doorway. At the back of the house, is usually an unfenced yard, where all utility spaces for the house are found; like the kitchen, toilet and bathroom. Very important is the exit door at the back of the house which also admits visitors that are close to the family or families (in a multifamily setup) living in it. This is one of the distinguishing elements between the house type and the Sabo Hausa House. Where a fence is present in this house, the backyard still has an outlet or exit door each time. The floor plan and gamma map in Figure 1 show how open and easily accessible the Yoruba house is to visitors. The front and back of the house both serve as access as well as exits and visitors may access the building from either the front or the back of the house. Also observed is the openness of both accesses to the building interior, as there are no formal spaces or strict territorial measures that keep people away apart from the doors and the goat gate. The goat

gate is a dwarf door, usually wooden, that keeps away goats, dogs and other domestic animals from moving freely through the building since the doors are usually left ajar when occupants are in.

The Sabo Hausa House

Unlike the Yoruba house, the Sabo Hausa house is differently organised, even though it was adapted from a Yoruba vernacular house. It is a more territorial house that has many socio-physical interventions put into it, so that it functions differently from a Yoruba house. Figures 2, 3, 4 and 5 are representations of four *Sabo* Hausa houses, each one different from the other. Two of these, Figures 2 and 3 are adaptations of the Yoruba house, while the other two, Figures 4 and 5, are illustrations of purpose-built single-family houses in Sabo.

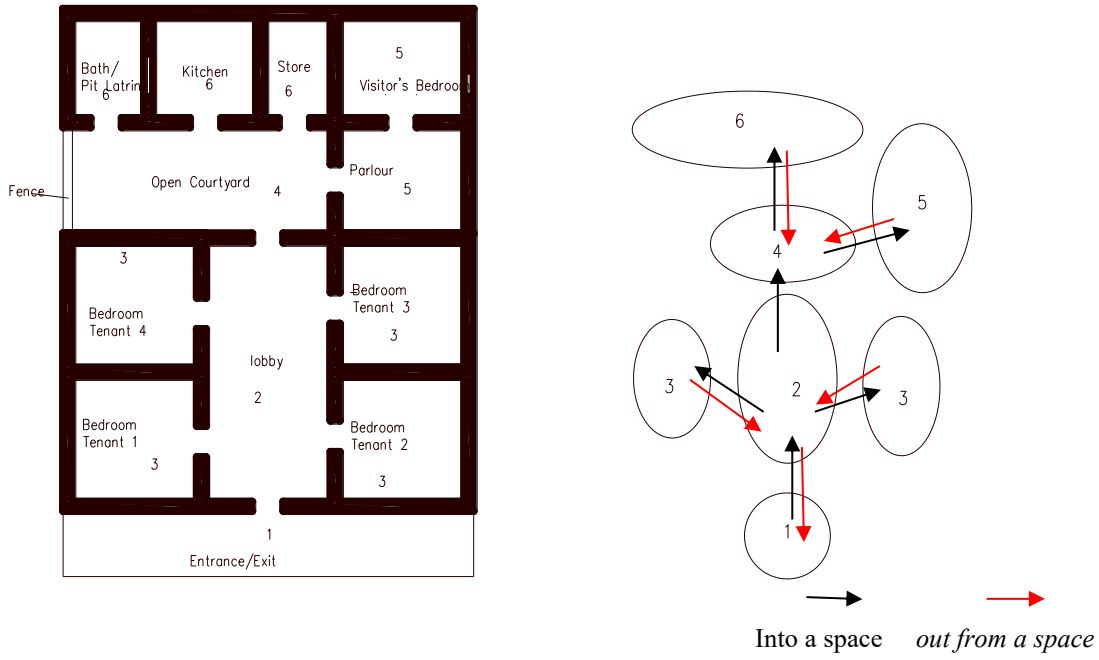


Figure 2 - Sabo Hausa House 1 (Source: Authors)

The house in Figure 2 is used as a multi-family dwelling with four non-related households living in them. In this case, each family occupies one room and share the kitchen space, store and the toilet/bathroom space. The lobby space is the main circulation distribution space and also doubles as a social space for families living together in the house to interact together. Figure 3 illustrates the home of the *Sarkin Hausawa*, the administrative/political head of the settlement, who administers the affairs of the Hausa migrants. His house is one of the largest in the settlement. He has three wives as reflected in the plan and many grown up unmarried sons. As it is the practice of the traditional Hausa (Moughtin, 1964), grown up sons move out of their mothers' quarters to an adjoining quarter built into the family property. This is represented in the house in Figure 3.

In both houses in Figures 2 and 3, a fenced-in compound with a courtyard is observed as opposed to the Yoruba house. Also, the houses are observed to have restricted accesses and exits, more than the Yoruba house. A little difference is observed with the house of the Sarkin Hausawa from the other Hausa houses, this may be explained by the office he holds. His house has two entrance accesses/exits, although both are located at the front of the building/compound; one is used more for official relations and the second which leads into the yard is exclusive for the family members and close relations.



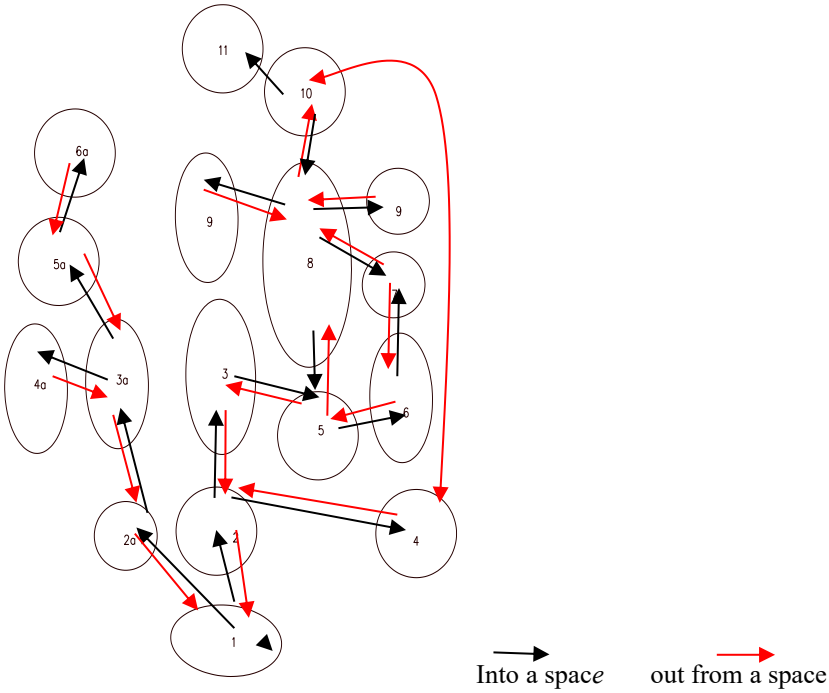


Figure 3 - Sabo Hausa House 2 (Sarki's House) (Source: Authors)

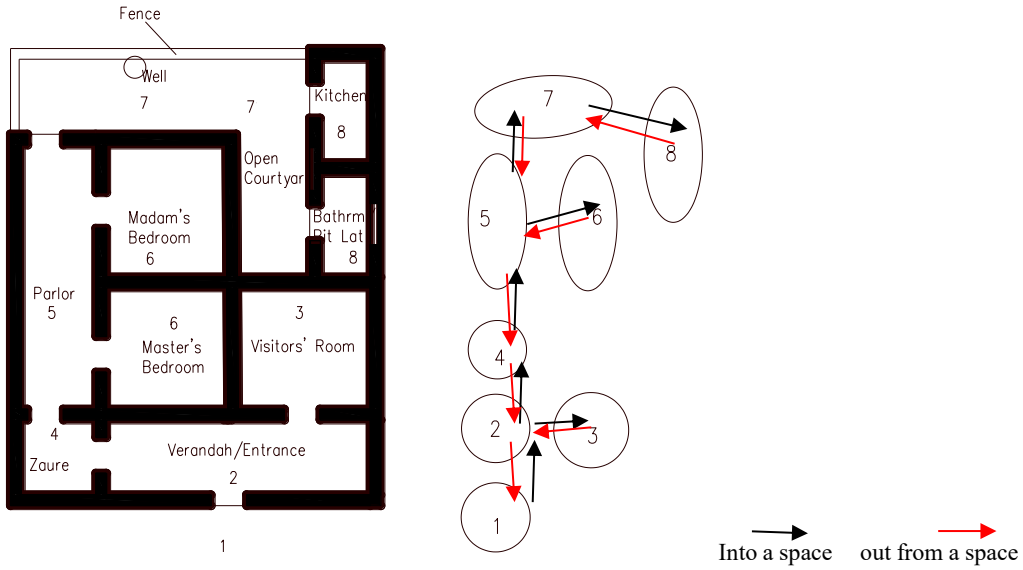


Figure 4 - Sabo Hausa House 3 (Single family house) (Source: Authors)

The houses in Figures 4 and 5 are purpose-built Sabo houses for these migrants, and each of them accommodate a single family. They both look nothing like the Yoruba house nor the houses in Figures 2 and 3. Although they have similar organization with those in Figures 2 and 3 with restricted access/exits to and from them. Each of these have only one entrance/exit to them. Although the house in Figure 5 has no courtyard, it tries to simulate the outdoor into the indoor space, about where the courtyard should have been. It also accommodates every space and activity required indoors, even the well for water.

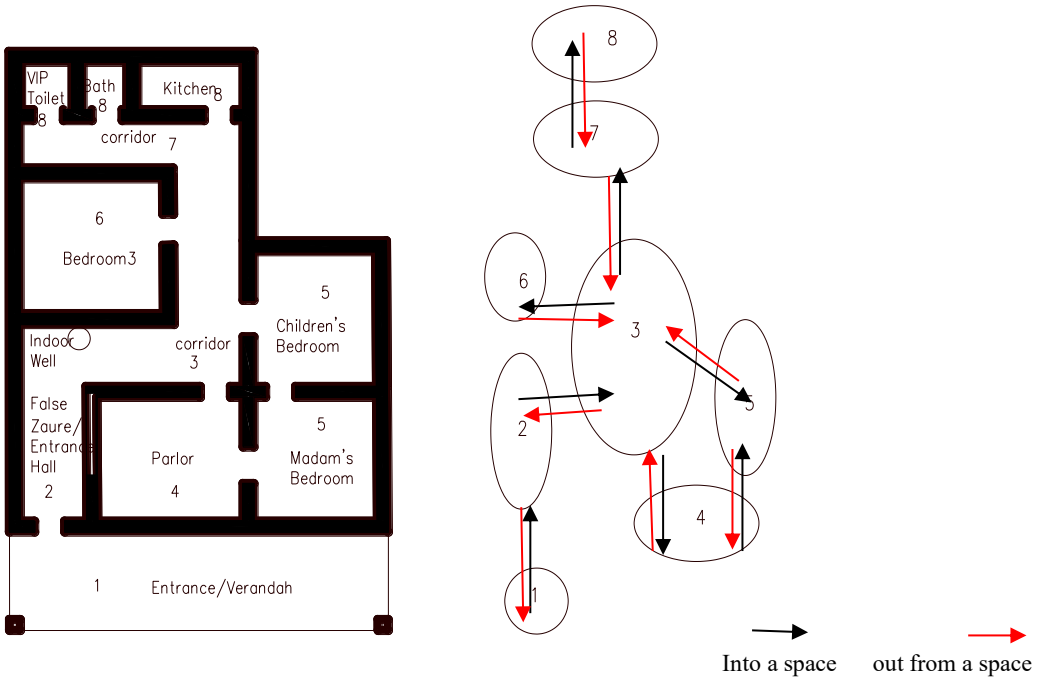


Figure 5 - Sabo Hausa House 4 (single-family bungalow) (Source: Authors)

The Traditional Hausa House and the Sabo Hausa House: Culture the Nexus

Hausa architecture is quite unique, universally, their house designs are guided by certain themes which are linked with their socio-cultural origin as well as the adoption of Islam as the religion of the majority (Moughtin, 1964 & 1985). Very common in traditional times and up until now were walled compounds of family houses, which open onto the streets through an entrance hut, the *zaure.* Also, the entrance/exit is regulated; usually, there is one entrance/exit into the house. Some variants are observed to have another exit accessible from somewhere not too deep into the house.

There are usually more than one *zaure* in a house, each one leading into a courtyard with more private space. Further into the compounds are divisions into sections until one arrives at the *cikin gida*, which is the main family space, where visitors may not enter into anyhow. The women in purdah are given the deepest part of the compound, for their rooms and domestic chores, while the young unmarried sons and visitors are given another part within the network of courtyards. Figure 6 following is an illustration of this family house. these houses are also made from earth construction with mud walls.

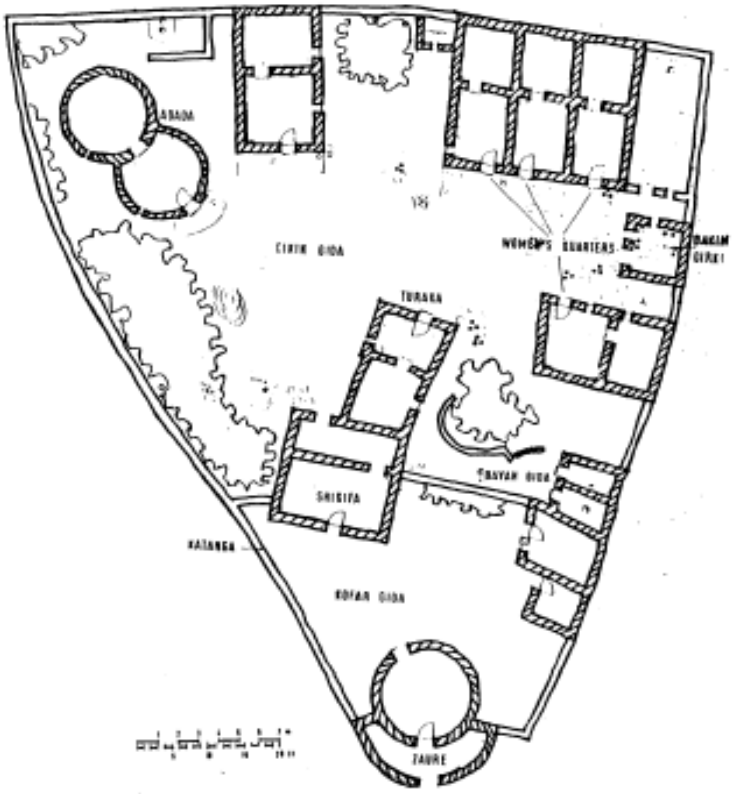


Figure 6 - Typical Hausa traditional courtyard house plan: Source: Rowan, 1981

The plans and gamma maps above in figures 2, 3, 4, and 5 reveal strong cultural transmissions through adaptive measures introduced to the Yoruba house, to make it liveable for the Sabo Hausa. Some of these appropriation measures include; the restriction of access into and out of

the house, fenced-in backyard, reduction in window sizes, the introduction of a courtyard, whether real or simulated, turning the verandah into a *zaure*, thereby restricting access. The stranger has to stand outside and call out a greeting to the members of the house before being admitted in, if they would be admitted at all. On the inside of the building, the large central lobby serves as the *cikin gida*, where members of the house sit and talk or socialize. Then the fenced-in backyard, which is now a courtyard with utility spaces; the kitchen, bathroom/toilet, the water well and storage. These are exemplified in Figures 2 and 3.

Figure 3 is the *Sarki Hausawa's* (the administrative head and chief of the *Sabo* Hausa) house. It has two entrances from the street leading into it; the main one leading into the parlour where he used to receive guests before he got an office in the business area of the enclave. The other entrance leads into the courtyard at the back of the house. This is the most used entrance now for other members of his household, since the Sarki's administrative work is done in the office in the commercial area of the settlement where majority of the men trade and do all forms of business.

Another feature found in the Sarki's house is the quarters for his grown up young unmarried sons. This is built into the fence and one of the side walls of the main house, but assessed from the street. Although it relates with the main house through the courtyard from the back in informal ways, since there is a low flimsy fence in between them. The young men's quarters is a practice in traditional Hausa architecture (Moughtin, 1964, 26). A practice where the quarters of unmarried sons extend from their father's house and gradually grows into large yards as they marry and become larger.

The other two buildings in Figures 4 and 5 were single family houses built from scratch. They also bear the features of a traditional Hausa house; the restricted entrance/exit, the *zaure* at the entrance to the building, the courtyard (although simulated in figure 5), the segregation of spaces and the ordering of privacy.

Bikam and Chakwizira (2020) assert that traditional Hausa architecture has influenced the spatial organisation and function of Hausa settlements in the city of Zaria. They explain that this cultural transmission was possible because of the enabling environment in Zaria and the availability of local materials to build. The case with Sabo is not exactly like that of Zaria, but it is that the migrant Hausa found the Yoruba house adaptable and as a good medium of transmission of their imported traditional culture of housing. In appropriating this house, the Sabo Hausa achieved a good P-E fit with their housing because it enhances their social and especially their cultural values.

Memmott and Keys (2015), while advocating for cultural sustainability, stress the issue of designing ethnocentric designs as being inadequate. This they explain is because an ethnocentric design may be appropriate for a culture but inappropriate for another cultural group, thereby leading to a bad P-E fit, which has negative consequences. These authors maintain that a 'good fit' between an architecture and the user will yield positive reactions and as a result contribute to a culturally sustainable architecture.

These authors bring to the fore the fact that appropriating a house for ones's use, entails certain cultural transmissions, which may not be initially entrenched into design, but are very needful

for its usefulness. They emphasise the importance of culture in using a house. Consequently, they stress that a consciousness of cultural sustainability must be emphasised and incorporated into designs by architects; in order that people will respond better while living in these houses. The Sabo Hausa have found the Yoruba house a useful tool for the propagation of their cultural housing values, and have appropriated it for this reason. This explains their good fit with the house and environment generally, hence their productivity in spite of the physical challenges facing the enclave.

DISCUSSION

The comparative analysis of Yoruba and Sabo Hausa houses reveals how architectural forms are not static but actively reshaped through cultural appropriation and adaptation. The data show that while the Yoruba "rooming house" ("face-me-I-face-you") house offered openness and accessibility, Hausa migrants reconfigured it to reflect their cultural values of privacy, territoriality, and social organization generally. This transformation, seen in the introduction of courtyards, restricted entrances, and the *zaure*, illustrates how culture mediates person-environment fit, ensuring that housing supports both social practices and identity continuity.

These findings extend theoretical debates on cultural sustainability by demonstrating its practical expression in everyday housing. They confirm Hawkes' (2001) proposition that culture is a pillar of sustainability, but they also nuance it: culture here is not abstract but operational, shaping spatial layouts and household interactions. The evidence resonates with Sabatini's (2019) argument that culture sustains cohesion and identity, and with the *Sustainability* special issue (Dessein et al., 2021), which documents similar cases of cultural vitality enhancing resilience in urban contexts.

At the same time, the data highlight the tension between globalization's homogenizing pressures and local adaptive responses. The Yoruba house itself was already a hybrid, influenced by Afro-Brazilian forms, yet its appropriation by the Hausa migrants shows how communities negotiate global and local influences to achieve cultural fit. This underscores that sustainability frameworks must move beyond environmental and economic metrics to account for cultural transmission as a dynamic process.

CONCLUSION

Theories remain valuable but are not undisputable; they evolve and are better experienced through practice, which tests and refines their relevance. Without practice, theory risks stagnation and obsolescence. In contemporary discourse, globalization and sustainability have emerged as dominant influences, reshaping both architectural theory and practice. Yet, as Fraser (2019) points out, globalization often marginalizes local traditions by privileging Eurocentric narratives, while Ouroussoff (2019) warns that globalized architecture can slide into vanity projects divorced from social responsibility. Similarly, sustainability has matured beyond environmental responsiveness: Pons-Valladares and Nikolic (2020) highlight gaps in integrating social equity, and Littlewood et al. (2025) emphasize resilience and climate adaptation as new priorities; which point back to embracing the cultural context in question.

These developments underscore a persistent blind spot; the neglect of culture as a guiding pillar. As Bręczewska-Kulesza and Kaus (2025) argue, traditional housing embodies adaptive responses to local climates and identities, showing that culture is not peripheral but central to sustainable design. Thus, architecture that consciously integrates cultural sustainability is more effective, resilient, and aligned with person–environment fit (P-E Fit), as Zhang et al. (2024) demonstrate in their review of housing environments.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

To strengthen architectural theory and practice in the face of globalization and sustainability, culture must be explicitly recognized as a fourth pillar of sustainability; because it constitutes a big reference to the eventual design of a building. Architects and built environment professionals should collaborate with custodians of cultural traditions to ensure that housing design, organization, and use reflect local values and lifestyles. This approach not only addresses the gaps identified by Pons-Valladares and Nikolic (2020) in social equity but also leverages the resilience strategies highlighted by Littlewood et al., (2025). By harnessing cultural continuity, as emphasized by Akhanolu and Ahianba (2025), architecture can resist homogenization and instead evolve into a meaningful masterpiece rooted in identity. Integrating cultural sustainability alongside globalization and environmental imperatives will ensure that architectural practice remains globally responsive yet locally grounded, thereby enhancing P-E Fit and producing housing that is both effective and culturally resonant.

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