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Architectural Epistemes of Housing: Towards an Analytical Apparatus for Reading Individualization

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Architectural Epistemes of Housing: Towards an Analytical Apparatus for Reading Individualization

ABSTRACT

Contemporary theories of dwelling have extended architectural analysis beyond form, function, and typology toward embodied experience, enactment, temporal change, and affective relations. Yet their translation into a transparent procedure for reading architectural evidence remains underdeveloped. This paper develops an apparatus for examining architecture's potential to support individualization, understood as relational differentiation within architectural continuity rather than as personalization or flexibility. An integrative conceptual review and framework analysis synthesize phenomenology, performativity and affect theory into six architectural epistemes: Space, Body, Time, Threshold, Atmosphere and Act. Their translation into guiding questions directs the analysis of published plans, sections, photographs, audio and video materials, and project descriptions. Findings are combined through abductive cross-episteme synthesis to identify architectural mechanisms. The procedure is applied to and demonstrated through Moriyama House (2002-2005) by Ryue Nishizawa. The analysis identifies four mechanisms: 1) dispersing volumes and functions, 2) externalizing circulation and part of the dwelling, 3) overlapping territories, and 4) distributing distances and views. The possibilities these mechanisms offer for autonomy, change, and contact among residents remain conditional on weather, accessibility, privacy, and unequal control over space.

Keywords: *architectural epistemes, phenomenology, performativity, affect theory, individualization*

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1. INTRODUCTION

Housing is commonly examined through form, function, typology, standards, and technical performance. While these approaches remain indispensable, they do not exhaust what dwelling is. Dwelling is both a place and a state: it is encountered through a body, enacted through repeated routines, altered over time, negotiated at boundaries, and felt through atmospheres. In this paper, dwelling is therefore understood as a relational and processual phenomenon produced through the continuing interaction of architectural organization, inhabitants, practices, temporal rhythms, and environmental conditions.

Treating dwelling in this way creates a methodological problem for architectural analysis. The aspects of dwelling included in this definition have been developed within distinct theoretical traditions, each using different concepts and making different relations visible. Phenomenology explains dwelling as embodied being-in-the-world and gives architectural significance to place, orientation, and sensory experience [1], [2], [3], [4]. Performative and process-oriented accounts show that space is socially produced and continually enacted through movement, event, duration, repetition, and everyday practice [5], [6], [7], [8], [9], [10]. Affect theory, when applied to architecture, highlights how environments and bodies alter one another through conditions, intensities, and atmospheres that precede conscious interpretation [11], [12], [13], [14]. Together, these traditions explain why dwelling exceeds a neutral container. What remains less explicit is how their insights can be translated into a transparent procedure for reading architectural evidence, such as published plans, sections, photographs, descriptions, etc. Theory explains how dwelling takes place, and conventional analysis describes the building, but the link between the two is often left implicit.

The same difficulty surrounds individualization. The term itself is usually associated with flexible layouts, consumer choice, customized finishes, etc. And while these may contribute to individualized use, none constitutes individualization on its own. A resident, for example, may personalize an interior while remaining within a spatial organization that fixes relations of privacy, co-presence, use, and change. Conversely, a dwelling may support markedly different lives without displaying an individualized form.

For the purpose of this paper, individualization is defined as the capacity of an architectural organization to support different ways of dwelling by allowing inhabitants to adjust relations of withdrawal and co-presence, use and appropriation, exposure and protection, sensory conditions, and temporal change, without requiring a unique architectural form for each person. In short, individualization is a relational differentiation within architectural continuity. Personalization, by contrast, refers to changes in visible attributes, such as colors, surface finishes, or decorative elements. These choices primarily alter how a dwelling looks and may contribute to the expression of identity. Individualization concerns the range of spatial, temporal, bodily, social, sensory, and affective relations that the dwelling allows residents to establish and adjust. Personalization may contribute to individualization, but it does not constitute it on its own. Flexibility, for example, may expand this relational range, but it is neither a synonym nor a sufficient condition for individualization.

Yet individualization cannot be established from architectural evidence alone. Architectural analysis can identify only configurations that support it: those that distribute autonomy, leave future allocations open, mediate relations, permit local environmental adjustment, or enable appropriation. Whether residents use these possibilities, experience them as

enabling, or have equitable access to them cannot be established without empirical research involving the residents themselves.

The question is therefore: How can an abstract and multidimensional account of dwelling be translated into a transparent architectural reading without reducing individualization to flexibility? The answer lies in the concept of an architectural episteme: a theory-derived way of reading architecture that poses a guiding question, defines what counts as relevant evidence, and traces the relations relevant to that question. The term episteme emphasizes the connection between how architecture is approached and the knowledge produced via that reading. The same architectural configuration can reveal different relations depending on the question asked. Each episteme pursues its question across the layout as a whole in order to make the interpretation explicit: what is being examined, based on what evidence, and how that evidence informs the resulting findings.

The apparatus develops six such epistemes: Space, Body, Time, Threshold, Atmosphere, and Act, each explained in Section 3. They function as complementary analytical orientations rather than architectural categories, design principles, or predicted outcomes. Each makes particular relations visible, while their shared focus on the same architectural organization allows findings to be compared and connected. This is essential to the synthesis: when findings from several epistemes converge around the same architectural operation, they provide the basis for identifying architectural mechanisms. The proposed apparatus thus moves from distinct questions about architecture to a connected explanation of what its organization does and what it makes possible for residents.

Since no single theory can cover every dimension of relational individualization, all three are needed to generate these epistemes. Phenomenology displaces abstract space toward embodied and meaningful experience. Performative accounts displace the building as a finished object toward dwelling as a socially produced, enacted, appropriated, and changed through time. Affect theory displaces experience understood through conscious meaning toward the material and atmospheric modulation of what bodies and environments can do. The three registers are thus a minimal complementary set, not an exhaustive theory of dwelling: each corrects a reduction left by the others, while none is treated as a master framework. Their conceptual merging generates the six epistemes, while their differences prevent dwelling from being reduced to experience, practice, or affect alone.

In the broader research, epistemes guide the reading of different architectural cases; intersecting findings reveal mechanisms; and recurring combinations of mechanisms across cases are later abstracted as spatial logics. Spatial logics must then be related to empirically examined relational capacities before strategies of individualization can be formulated. This paper covers the derivation of the epistemes and their application within one case, leading to architectural mechanisms, architecturally grounded possibilities for residents, and, finally, limitations. It develops and demonstrates a new analytical apparatus for examining how architectural organization may support different ways of dwelling. It does not perform a cross-case comparison, empirically validate relational capacities, or formulate strategies.

The contribution is therefore methodological rather than universalizing. First, the paper documents how the theoretical corpus was selected and how the epistemes were derived. It then operationalizes each episteme through observable indicators, after which it demonstrates the procedure in one information-rich critical case study: Moriyama House (2002-2005) by Ryue Nishizawa.

2. METHODOLOGY

The study uses a theory-led, two-stage research design.

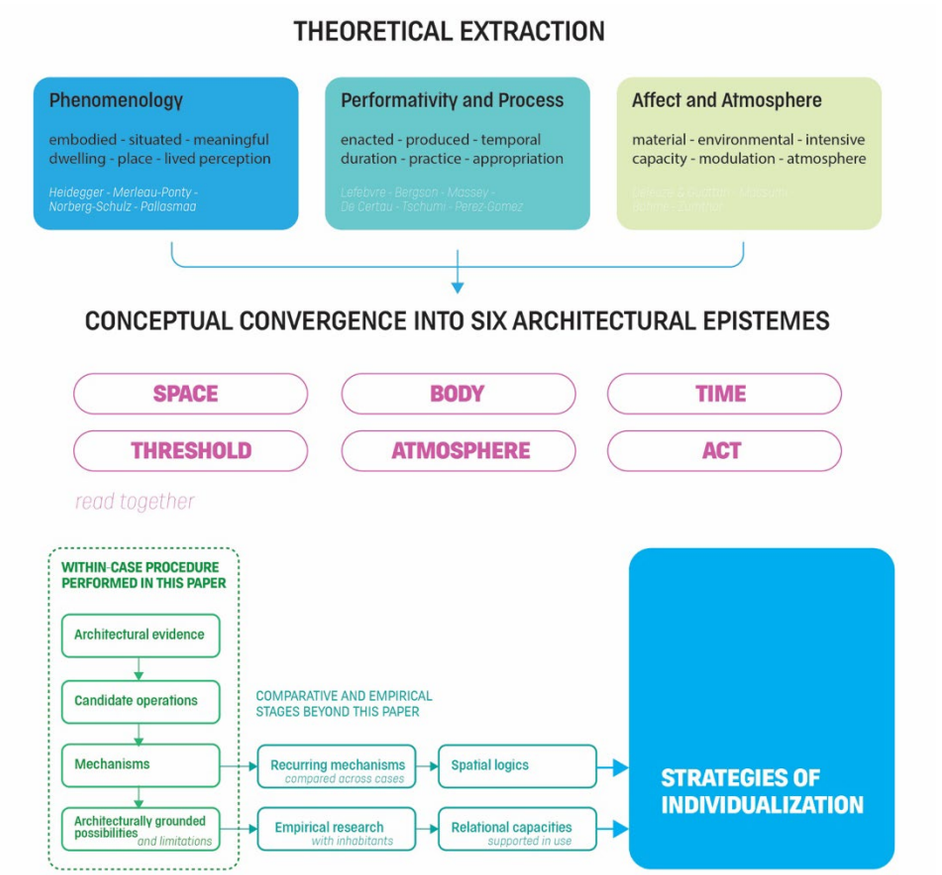


Figure 1. Derivation, analytical hierarchy, and scope of the procedure. Three non-redundant theoretical registers are synthesized into six epistemes as ways of reading. This paper performs the within-case sequence from evidence to mechanism and to architecturally grounded possibilities and limitations. Cross-case derivation of spatial logics, empirical examination of relational capacities, and their intersection in strategies of individualization remain beyond the scope of this paper.

The first stage derives an analytical apparatus from three theoretical registers. The second applies this apparatus to Moriyama House and relates the resulting findings through an abductive synthesis. Figure 1 presents this sequence, but also distinguishes the work performed in this paper from the comparative and empirical stages of the wider research.

2.1. RESEARCH DESIGN AND THEORETICAL CORPUS

In the first stage, concepts drawn from three theoretical registers were selected, compared, and organized into six epistemes: Space, Body, Time, Threshold, Atmosphere, and Act. In the second stage, these epistemes were applied to architecture. Each episteme framed the questions asked of the project and directed attention towards distinct architectural evidence. Findings from different epistemes were then compared and brought together through abductive cross-episteme synthesis to identify architectural mechanisms. The

method moves from theory to modes of reading, from modes of reading to architectural findings, and from their cross-episteme interpretation to mechanisms.

The theoretical stage combines an integrative conceptual review, which relates concepts from heterogeneous bodies of literature to generate a new interpretive framework, with conceptual framework analysis [15], [16]. These methods were chosen because the aim was not to exhaust all scholarship on dwelling or to measure how often particular terms appear. Instead, the aim was to develop an architecturally usable framework from different but complementary accounts of how dwelling takes place.

Three theoretical registers were selected in relation to the definition of individualization used in this study. The framework must address how spatial relations are experienced by situated bodies, how they are enacted and altered through practice and over time, and how they are affected by material and environmental conditions. Phenomenology, performativity, and affect theory provide complementary starting points for these questions. That said, no single register sufficiently explains all three. Other theories could extend the apparatus, but removing any of these three would leave one requirement conceptually under-specified.

Within these registers, texts and authors were selected purposively. They were included when they: 1) made an influential contribution to the understanding of dwelling, lived space, everyday spatial practice and affective environment; 2) addressed the relation between architecture and inhabitation rather than architectural form alone; 3) offered concepts that could be translated into architectural questions; and 4) contributed a dimension not sufficiently explained by the other selected traditions.

The phenomenological corpus includes Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Norberg-Schulz and Pallasmaa [1], [2], [3], [4]. Their work enables dwelling to be read and understood as an embodied, situated, multisensory, and meaningful experience. Lefebvre, Bergson, Massey, de Certeau, Tschumi, and Perez-Gomez [5], [6], [7], [8], [9], [10] belong to the performative and process-based corpus. In their research, they direct attention to the production of space, duration, everyday practices, repetition, appropriation, and event. The affective corpus includes Deleuze & Guattari, Massumi, Böhme, and Zumthor [11], [12], [13], [14], who explain how bodies are affected by material conditions, sensory intensities and atmospheres that cannot be reduced to conscious interpretation. Architectural accounts of intermediate domains and threshold spaces by van Eyck, Hertzberger, and Boettger further inform the treatment of spatial mediation [17], [18], [19]. These traditions are not combined into a single philosophical position. Their differences are retained because each makes a different dimension of dwelling visible and because they provide the theoretical basis from which the six epistemes are derived.

2.2. DERIVING THE ARCHITECTURAL EPISTEMES

Concepts were first identified and extracted from each theoretical register, then compared across the corpus. Concepts addressing the same aspect of dwelling were brought together. Each group was translated into concrete questions that could be investigated by examining plans, sections, photographs, written descriptions, or other architectural evidence. Through repeated comparison and refinement, six architectural epistemes were defined: Space, Body, Time, Threshold, Atmosphere, and Act.

An episteme was retained only if it met three conditions: it was supported by concepts from more than one theoretical framework; it posed a distinct analytical question that could not be reduced to another episteme; and it could be investigated through observable spatial,

material, temporal, or environmental features. The resulting epistemes are explained in Section 3, followed by their application to Moriyama House. The theoretical synthesis is summarized in Tables 1 and 2 in Section 5.1.

Each episteme was operationalized by translating its conceptual focus into a fundamental question, identifying the architectural relations relevant to that question, and specifying the evidence through which those relations could be examined. This translation links theoretical concepts to features such as adjacencies, level changes, entrances, openings, material conditions, routes, and possibilities for reallocation of use.

For example, Space draws most strongly on phenomenological and relational accounts, Act on performative accounts, and Atmosphere on affect theory. Nevertheless, each episteme incorporates concepts from at least one other register, which broadens the architectural question it can address. The six epistemes are therefore analytical orientations that overlap by design. They are distinct yet may examine the same architectural feature from different perspectives. To illustrate, both Space and Threshold may examine a doorway, but Space asks how the doorway organizes relations across a whole layout, whereas Threshold asks how it regulates the transition between different degrees of privacy, belonging, or exposure. Body and Atmosphere may both examine light. Body asks how inhabitants perceive and respond to it. Atmosphere asks how it works with materials, enclosure, and environmental conditions to shape the sensory character of a space.

Therefore, the indicators direct attention to evidence, but their presence does not establish individualization or predict residents' experiences. The same architectural feature can be examined through more than one episteme, provided that each reading addresses a distinct question. The resulting operational matrix is presented in Table 3 in Section 5.2.

2.3. CASE SELECTION

Moriyama House was selected as an information-rich case for demonstrating the procedure rather than as a representative example of individualized housing per se [20].

Its detached volumes, exterior connections, and differentiated patterns of occupation make the relations under investigation particularly visible. The analytical test is whether the apparatus can move beyond this familiar image of fragmented composition to distinguish interacting architectural operations and their architecturally grounded possibilities and limitations.

2.4. FROM EPISTEMES TO MECHANISMS: ANALYTICAL PROCEDURE

An architectural mechanism is a distinct and traceable operation performed by a spatial, material, or organizational configuration. Architecturally grounded possibilities for residents denote the range of relations (to oneself, others, space, and environment) that an operation might make possible, based on architectural evidence. The application proceeds via the following five crucial steps:

1. Evidence identification (plans, sections, photographs, and published project descriptions are read through each episteme to identify the architectural relations relevant to its guiding question).

2. Candidate operations (the identified evidence is reformulated as an active architectural operation, expressed by a verb rather than a quality: architecture disperses, externalizes, overlaps, or distributes).

3. Cross-episteme examination (findings are compared across the six readings and clustered, while a mechanism is retained when it is traceable to the architectural material, supported by more than one episteme and more than one form of architectural evidence).

4. Capacity and limitation (for every mechanism, the architecturally grounded possibilities for residents and the architectural limitation or tension it introduces are stated separately).

5. Scope control (claims are restricted to what the available material supports; the analysis is interpretative, identifies only potential, and does not infer residents' actual behavior, experience, or satisfaction without empirical evidence).

2.5. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The paper develops the apparatus and performs the within-case research sequence from architectural evidence to mechanisms, architecturally grounded possibilities for residents, and limitations. It does not undertake cross-case comparison, derive recurring spatial logics, relational capacities, or formulate strategies of individualization. In the wider research, comparative analysis would examine recurring combinations of mechanisms, while research with inhabitants would investigate which capacities are available and used, by whom and under which constraints. Only then could strategies be formulated by critically relating the two sets of findings.

3. ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK: ARCHITECTURAL EPISTEMES

3.1. SPACE

The shift from space as a neutral container to space as a relational field and organization is the starting point here. Heidegger's account of gathering, Norberg-Schulz's emphasis on orientation and place, and Lefebvre's socially produced spaces differ substantially, yet they all reject the assumption that spatial meaning is contained in geometry alone [1], [2], [5]. Space is analyzed not as an abstract substance but as architecture's distribution of relations among inhabitants, their activities, and surroundings. In this sense, the episteme asks how the configuration connects, separates, ranks, or equalizes domains. A plan is therefore read through adjacency, distance, proximity, orientation, continuity, relation, circulation, etc. Its outcome is to go beyond space as "open" or "fragmented". The focus is to try and identify what its configuration does: whether it concentrates or disperses activity, fixes or leaves the relations between personal and shared fields negotiable, centralizes or not, etc.

3.2. BODY

Merleau-Ponty's lived body displaces the observer: the body is the medium through which a world becomes available [3]. Pallasmaa translates this very position into architectural experience by insisting on multisensory and haptic perception [4]. Affect theory further amplifies the phenomenological body by treating it as both a perceiving subject as well as a capacity that changes through encounters [11], [12]. With that in mind, Body examines how architecture positions and moves human bodies and how scale, level, light, sound, air, view, and temperature support or constrain them. The analytical question is therefore not simply how a space feels, but whose body can enter, move, withdraw, orient, or remain comfortable there.

3.3. TIME

Time transforms the relationship between architecture and its inhabitants. Individualization is always temporal, not instantaneous. Bergson's duration views time as a lived continuity, rather than a sequence of equivalent moments [6]; Massey describes space as unfinished and produced through relations [7]; everyday practice repeats and modifies spatial orders [8]. In the context of this paper, temporal openness does not mean that every element moves. A stable structure may support change because it permits functions, territories, or levels of occupancy to be redistributed without losing coherence, logic, or its utilitarian function.

3.4. THRESHOLD

A threshold is not merely a line crossed by movement. Heidegger's understanding of the boundary as the beginning of presencing, van Eyck's in-between realm, Hertzberger's work on intermediate domains, and Boettger's account of threshold spaces as spatially ambivalent sequences establish the threshold as a spatial condition in which differences are brought into relation [1], [17], [18], [19]. Performative and affective views extend this understanding by showing how thresholds are repeatedly used and negotiated, thereby modulating exposure and contact between bodies and their environments. Architectural elements such as entrances, galleries, garden edges, balconies, passages, and windows are examined according to the spatial depth they create and the possibilities they offer. The question is therefore whether relations between private and collective, inside and outside, withdrawal and encounter are organized as binary oppositions or mediated through habitable transitional spaces that allow different degrees of privacy and openness and different possibilities for withdrawal or contact.

3.5. ATMOSPHERE

Atmosphere is never fixed. It is neither a stylistic effect nor an intimate emotion projected onto a neutral room. For Böhme, atmosphere emerges between subject and environment as a tuned space [13]. For Zumthor, it is materially orchestrated through light, sound, texture, temperature, and presence [14]. Deleuzian affect and Massumi's intensities prevent this tuning from being reduced to conscious interpretation [11], [12]. The focus is thus on the question of how architecture modulates a field in which bodies and the environment affect one another. It examines the distribution and adjustability of daylight, air, acoustic exposure, thermal conditions, vegetation, contact, and degrees of enclosure. Because atmosphere changes with weather, occupation, and time, analysis can identify the architectural range and controls offered but cannot prescribe what every inhabitant will feel.

3.6. ACT

A dwelling is continually enacted through entering, cooking, sleeping, cleaning, working, caring, rearranging, repairing, meeting, and withdrawing. Lefebvre's production of space and de Certeau's everyday tactics make such practices constitutive rather than secondary [5], [8]. Tschumi and Perez-Gomez likewise challenge the idea of separating architecture from event and performance [9], [10]. So, the focus here would be what residents can do in a space and how its organization supports, enables, or limits their actions. This includes how surfaces can be used, how routes direct and enable movement, whether shared, collective areas can be occupied, and how rooms without fixed functions can be adapted to different needs. Architecture does not determine what people will do, but it affects how much effort

an action requires, who has access, which activities remain visible, and what uses are possible.

3.7. FROM ARCHITECTURAL EPISTEMES TO INDIVIDUALIZATION

As established, the six epistemes are six complementary analytical orientations. Each makes a distinct dimension of architectural evidence visible, but no single episteme identifies a mechanism on its own. They emerge when findings from several epistemes converge around the same architectural operation. Each mechanism then supports a provisional claim about an architecturally grounded possibility for its residents and the limitations through which that possibility remains conditional. Read together, the six epistemes show how architecture may support different relations of occupation, movement, privacy, encounter, exposure, appropriation, and overall change over time. Individualization is therefore approached not as a property of form, but as a relational potential produced through the interaction of architectural organization, embodied experience, temporal continuity, mediation, atmosphere, and everyday practice. Architecture becomes significant not simply through what it is, but through what it does and what it makes possible.

4. ANALYSIS: MORIYAMA HOUSE

Moriyama House is widely recognized for its image of fragmented composition. If the proposed apparatus merely redescribes that form, it adds little; its task is therefore to show how this fragmentation shapes everyday movement, exposure, and withdrawal. To examine these relations, the analysis draws on published plans, photographs, and project descriptions as its primary architectural evidence [21], [22]. Documented accounts of the owner's and tenants' spatial allocations, including the film Moriyama-San, contextualize the patterns of use [21], [22], [23]; however, they are not treated as empirical validation.

4.1. ARCHITECTURAL ORGANIZATION

Moriyama House was designed by the Office of Ryue Nishizawa in Ohta-ku, Tokyo, between 2002 and 2005. On a 290 m2 plot, ten freestanding steel volumes of different surfaces and heights accommodate the owner's house, one unit on four floors, and five separate rental units [21], [22].



Figure 2. Moriyama House, interior/exterior field between freestanding volumes. Photo: Shinkenchiku-sha, reproduced in Arquitectura Viva [22]

Some volumes contain compact apartments, while others accommodate a single domestic function. Although the volumes themselves do not touch, gardens, paths, and small exterior working or sitting areas connect the spaces between them, providing each resident with an outdoor space of their own. The project is therefore neither a conventional house nor a conventional apartment: continuous enclosure gives way to a field of relations among detached volumes. This arrangement creates "a new kind of semi-communal lifestyle" [21] that can evolve over time. Movement between rooms is not standard either, because it requires crossing outdoor space, which can compromise privacy. Yet privacy does not depend on distance alone: the placement of openings avoids direct window-to-window confrontation even where buildings stand close together [21], [22].

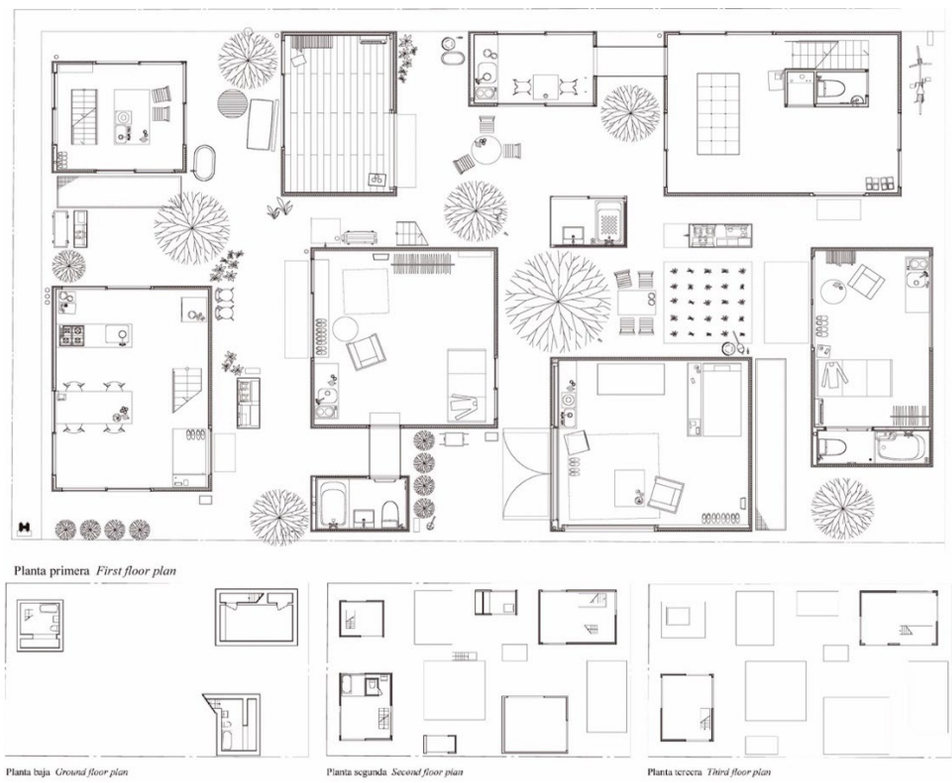


Figure 3. Moriyama House, floor plans: Office of Ryue Nishizawa, reproduced in Arquitectura Viva [22]

4.2. READING THROUGH THE SIX EPISTEMES

4.2.1. Space: from object to distributed fields

The plan disperses functions and residential units across ten freestanding volumes rather than enclosing them into one whole. There is no internal corridor that unifies the entire complex, and no single shared room that represents the collective community. Connection, which still exists here, is produced through the arrangement of volumes, paths, gardens, and views. Space therefore operates on two levels: each volume establishes a relatively autonomous domain, whereas the plot establishes a common relational field.

The ground-floor plan shows differently sized volumes, or units as the architect calls them, positioned across the entire plot, with open interstices rather than a single dominant center. Adjacency is what primarily connects living, bathing, working, and circulation. The same composition can support an owner's dispersed dwelling and several compact tenancies. Yet this capacity is not infinite. For example, functions placed in separate units depend heavily on exterior movement, while territorial clarity may vary with occupancy and ownership.

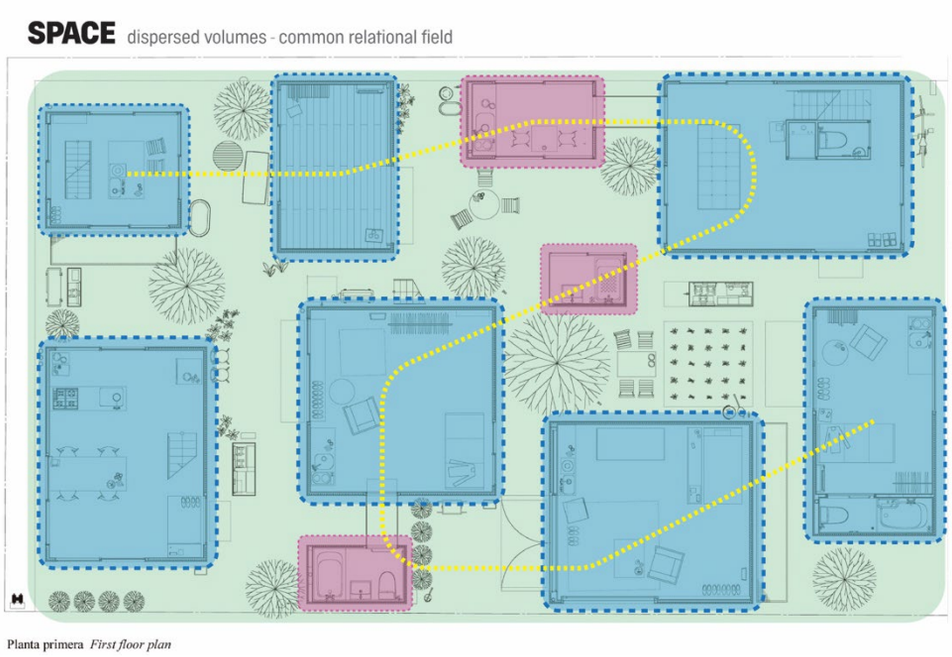


Figure 4. Space - analytical overlay by the author, based on the published and accessible plan [22]

4.2.2. Body: domestic movement through exterior space

Movement in Moriyama is not a neutral transition between functions - for example, from a room to a bathroom - within a protected corridor, as it would be elsewhere, given that several routes between rooms cross gardens and passages.

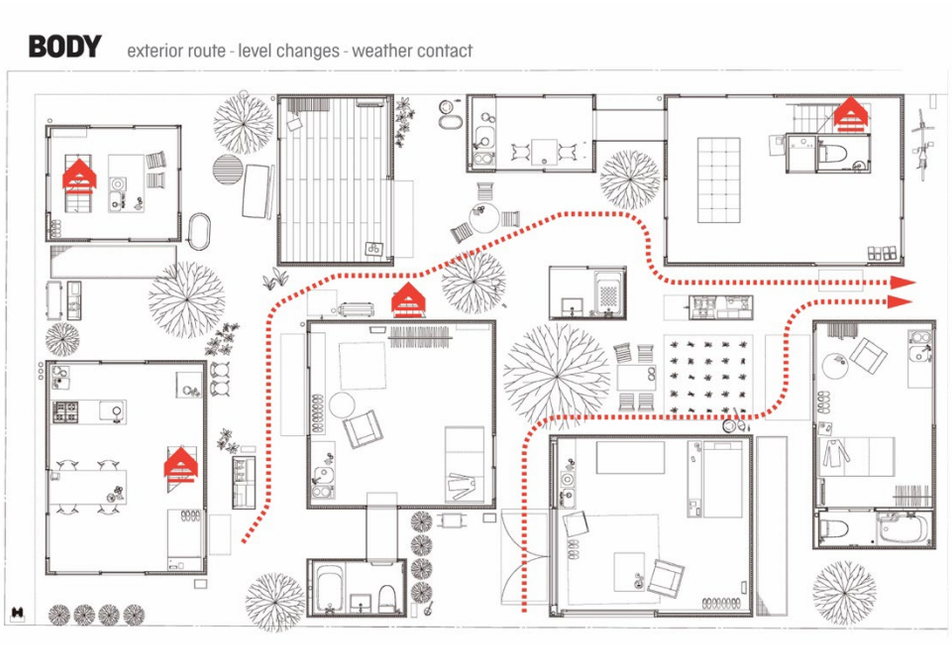


Figure 5. Body - analytical overlay by the author, based on the published and accessible plan [22]

The body repeatedly exits a volume, crosses the ground, moves back inside, and repeats this cycle over and over again. In this way, the body is bound to encounter diverse changes: in enclosure, ground, light, air, and weather. Short walks become part of the routine. Approaching another room is dissimilar to approaching another room elsewhere - here, it carries more meaning - because it also entails approaching the domain of others. Large openings and small distances create visual awareness across the plot, while stairs and compact multi-level volumes intensify vertical movement and different views.

This arrangement produces a choreography of the body while also revealing its exclusion. For one, exterior circulation and regular level changes may be a bit difficult for inhabitants with reduced mobility. Second, weather is not merely viewed but physically encountered. Third, thin envelopes and large openings may intensify thermal and acoustic exposure. The Body therefore identifies both an expanded sensory field as well as the absence of a universally protected, accessible route connecting all domestic functions.

4.2.3. Time: change through reallocation

Moriyama House is often described as flexible, but its primary temporal operation is not a movable or transformable structure. The volumes themselves are fixed. Their openness lies in the possibility of changing their allocation and combination. Published accounts describe the owner's use of different rooms at different times and envisage the future incorporation of rental units into his dwelling [21], [22]. These accounts contextualize possible patterns of use, while the architectural capacity itself is inferred from the relative autonomy of the volumes and their possible recombination.

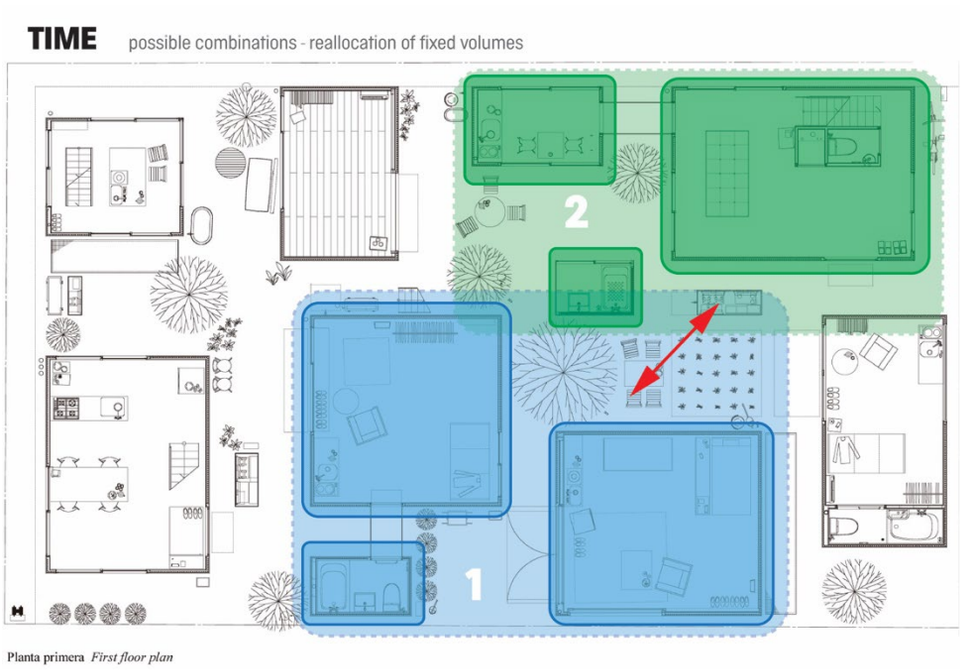


Figure 6. Time - analytical overlay by the author, based on the published and accessible plan [22]

Time is therefore embedded in the redundancy and relative autonomy of volumes. Layout and configuration can accommodate different occupancy patterns without requiring the whole to be rebuilt. Nevertheless, reallocation depends on tenure, availability, and the

practical, functional duplication of kitchens or bathrooms. The possibility of reallocating volumes therefore depends on ownership and access to resources, which are not equally available to all residents.

4.2.4. Threshold: multiplied mediation without a single front door

The project multiplies the threshold. Each volume has its own entrance. Garden paths, gaps, windows, small paved areas and vegetation mediate between interiors. The plot edge remains visually and spatially connected to the surrounding neighborhood. The dwelling, therefore, cannot be reduced to an inside, meaning, a single inside that begins at one front door. Instead, it unfolds through a sequence of partial entries and exits.

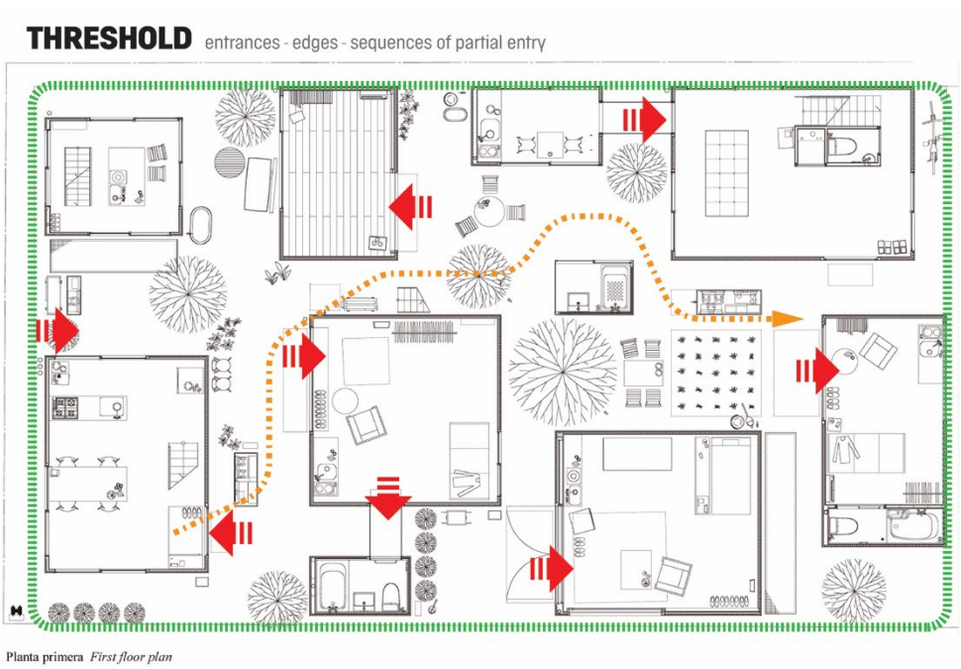


Figure 7. Threshold - analytical overlay by the author, based on the published and accessible plan [22]

These thresholds offer choices of approach, avoidance, observation, and encounter. They also create ambiguity. Because shared and personal territories overlap in the interstitial field, privacy is continuously negotiated rather than completely guaranteed. Large glazing and close proximity can very well expose domestic acts. While the arrangement makes a strong effort to avoid direct window confrontations, it is unable to completely eliminate unequal control between an owner and a tenant, or between a person crossing the garden and a person being visible inside.

4.2.5. Atmosphere: environmental variation as part of dwelling

White steel envelope, thin construction, large glazed window openings, narrow passages and gardens, varying heights of the volumes, and the repeated transition between interior and exterior create a range of situations and scenes: a long shadow on a façade, sunlight glittering in a tree canopy, the flicker of leaves on billowing curtains, an exposed roof terrace, and a narrow passage where footsteps echo.

These scenes are not fixed images of architecture. Their qualities depend on the time of day, season, weather, the condition of vegetation, the openness of doors and windows, and the presence of other residents. Air, humidity, light, temperature, and sound do not stop at the boundaries of individual units. Neither do views, which are layered through glass, planting, and gaps, producing an alternation of intimacy, openness, exposure, brightness, and shadow.



Figure 8. Atmosphere - analytical overlay by the author, based on the published and accessible plan [22]

This creates atmospheric plurality rather than a single, controlled domestic climate. Different volumes, orientations, and heights produce different conditions that can support seasonal or situational choice, but they can also reduce local control over acoustic, visual, or thermal exposure. The apparatus therefore reads atmosphere as a calibrated range with tensions, not as an inherently positive aesthetic effect.

4.2.6. Act: appropriation with a deliberately incomplete domestic script

The layout and organization do not assign all domestic life to a single prescribed sequence. The absence of a conventional common room shifts collective life to a small exterior and to various threshold situations.

Sleeping, working, dining, bathing, reading, gardening, listening to music, and watching films may take place in and on different units, so the home is enacted anew each day through the ways in which the resident connects the separate units and decides where particular activities will take place.

Leaving and entering, understood here as acts, are therefore not empty intervals between "real" or "right" rooms. They are actions through which the resident establishes the extent of their home each single day. The film Moriyama-San [23] directly demonstrates this: how the act of movement continually reproduces the house as a shared field.

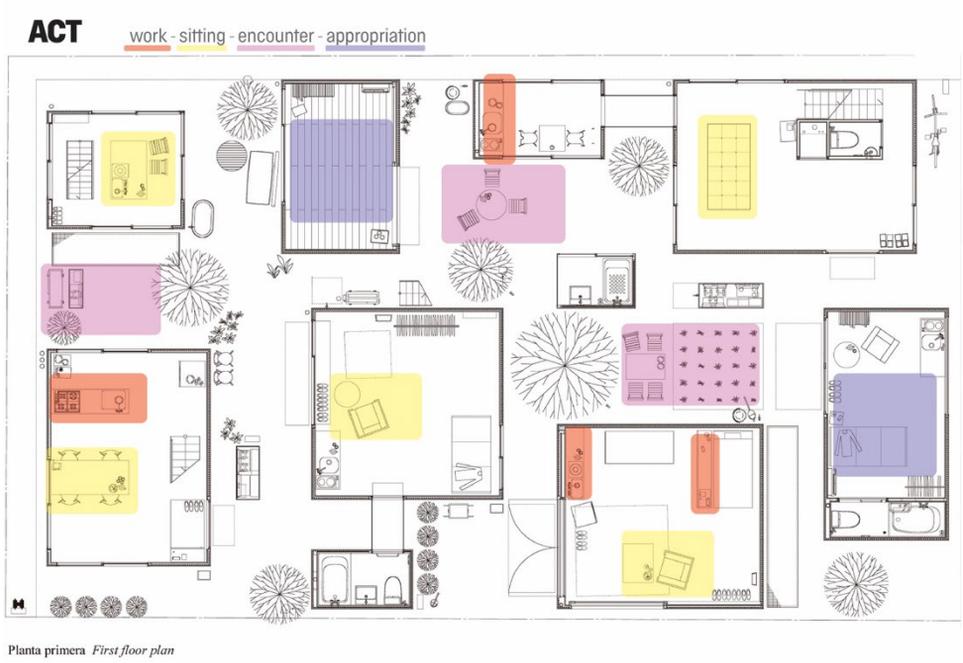


Figure 9. Act - analytical overlay by author, based on the published and accessible plan [22]

Yet openness to appropriation is uneven. Small, single-purpose volumes, designed and conceived this way, can be less adaptable than neutral rooms, and exterior commonality may depend on climate and social tolerance. The owner has a different capacity to reallocate space than tenants. The Act therefore prevents "freedom" from being read as a formal property. Instead, it asks which practices are supported, by whom, and under what spatial and institutional conditions.

5. RESULTS

The study yields two related results:

1) an analytical apparatus derived from the theoretical synthesis and

2) four architectural mechanisms identified through its application to Moriyama House.

The following sections present the theoretical synthesis and its analytical translation; they summarize the case-study findings and relate the mechanisms to architecturally grounded possibilities (for residents) and to limitations.

5.1. THEORETICAL SYNTHESIS

The synthesis of phenomenology, performativity, and affect theory produces the following six architectural epistemes: Space, Body, Time, Threshold, Atmosphere and Act.

They are complementary analytical orientations rather than architectural categories, design principles, or predicted outcomes.

Table 1 summarizes the main contribution of each theoretical register through selected authors and key concepts.

Table 1. Theoretical foundations of architectural epistemes

Theoretical register	Selected authors	Key concepts	Primary contributions to the apparatus	Epistemes informed
Phenomenology and its architectural translation	Heidegger; Merleau-Ponty; Norberg-Schulz, Pallasmaa	dwelling as being, gathering, place and orientation; lived body; multisensory perception; boundary	Understands dwelling as embodied, situated and meaningful rather than as occupation of a neutral container	Space, Body, Threshold, Atmosphere
Performativity and process	Lefebvre; Bergson; Massey, de Certeau; Tschumi; Perez-Gomez	production of space; duration; event; relationality; everyday practice, repetition; appropriation	Understands dwelling as an ongoing process shaped by use, social relations and change over time	Time, Act, Space, Threshold
Affect and atmosphere	Deleuze and Guattari; Massumi; Bohme; Zumthor	capacity to affect and be affected; intensity; attunement; pre-conscious; material and sensory orchestration;	Understands dwelling as a body-environment relation that exceeds representation and conscious interpretation	Atmosphere, Body, Time, Threshold, Act

Table 2 shows how concepts from the registers converge to define the analytical focus of each episteme.

Table 2. Derivation and analytical focus of the six architectural epistemes

Episteme	Phenomenological register	Performative and process register	Affect and atmosphere register	Conceptual convergence and resulting analytical orientation
Space	place, orientation, gathering	production of space, relationality	spatial field, distributed intensity	Relational organization of personal, shared and environmental domains rather than a neutral container.
Body	lived body, situated and multisensory perception	movement, repetition, bodily enactment	capacity to affect and be affected	Situated capacity to access, move, perceive, act and be exposed within architecture.
Time	continuity of dwelling, lived temporality	duration, repetition, event, transformation	modulation through encounter, seasons and life change	Relation between architectural persistence and changing routines, occupation and households.
Threshold	boundary, in-between, transition	passage, negotiation, repeated crossing	modulation of proximity, exposure and intensity	Spatial mediation that grades privacy, belonging, withdrawal, encounter and environmental exposure.
Atmosphere	multisensory experience, feeling character of place	alteration through occupation, event and rhythm	tuned space, intensity, sensory orchestration	Variable environmental field relating to bodies, material and conditions.
Act	embodied action, inhabitation as being	everyday practice, event, appropriation, performance	capacity emerging through encounters	Practices architecture invites, supports, distributes, makes visible, negotiates or constrains.

The three theoretical registers do not contribute equally to every episteme. Space draws most strongly on phenomenological and relational accounts, Act on performative accounts, and Atmosphere on affect theory; nevertheless, each incorporates concepts from at least one other register. The resulting apparatus retains distinct questions while allowing the same architectural feature to be examined from vastly different perspectives. This overlap provides a basis for bringing findings into relation without treating the six readings as independent results.

5.2. ANALYTICAL TRANSLATION

The transition from theory to architectural analysis is operationalized in Table 3. Each episteme is defined by a fundamental question, an architectural focus, and indicative evidence. The indicators are not a checklist whose presence proves individualization. They direct attention to evidence from which architectural operations may be inferred. The result is an apparatus that specifies what to ask, where to look, and what can be interpreted from the available material.

Table 3. Operational definition of the six architectural epistemes

Episteme	Fundamental question	Architectural focus	Indicative evidence
Space	How does architecture organize the relations through which dwelling occurs?	distribution and relation among personal, shared and environmental domains	adjacency, distance, hierarchy, orientation, continuity, enclosure, circulation, fields of view
Body	How does architecture position, move, support and expose different bodies?	embodied access, movement, perception and comfort	route, level change, reach, scale, proportion, tactility, light, acoustic and thermal conditions
Time	How can dwelling persist while occupations, routines and household structures change?	continuity, repetition, reversibility and transformation	redundant or equivalent spaces, non-fixed allocation, seasonal routes, adaptability, incompleteness, capacity for combination
Threshold	How are relations of privacy, exposure, proximity, withdrawal and belonging mediated?	spatial depth and negotiation between domains	multiple entrances, sequences, buffers, galleries, garden edges, openings, adjustable boundaries
Atmosphere	How does architecture modulate the affective relations between body and environment?	environmental and sensory tuning	daylight, air, sound, temperature, material, vegetation, transparency, shadow, degree of enclosure
Act	What practices does architecture invite, support, distribute, negotiate or constrain?	enactment and appropriation of dwelling	multiple use, movable elements, work surfaces, shared routes, occupation of residual space, maintenance and care

5.3. FINDINGS FROM THE ANALYSIS OF MORIYAMA HOUSE

The six readings reveal that Moriyama operates on two connected levels: the detached volumes establish relatively autonomous domains, while the plot forms a common

relational field. Functions and residential units are distributed across ten freestanding volumes. Gardens, paths, gaps, and views connect these parts without a continuous internal corridor or a single shared room. For the dispersed domestic functions, movement between rooms entails crossing exterior space, making changes in enclosure, ground surface, light, air, and weather part of domestic routines.

Temporal openness lies primarily in the possible reallocation and recombination of fixed volumes [21], [22]. These accounts contextualize possible patterns of use but do not establish that all residents have equivalent opportunities for change. Reallocation depends on ownership, availability, and access to resources.

Multiple entrances, garden paths, windows, and vegetation create a sequence of partial entries and exits. These conditions may support approach, avoidance, and encounter, while also making territorial boundaries and privacy less definite. Different orientations, openings, and outdoor conditions produce environmental variation, but this variation is accompanied by exposure to weather and potentially limited control over visual, acoustic, and thermal conditions. The analysis therefore identifies possibilities for appropriation and differentiated use, together with the spatial and institutional conditions that constrain them.

5.4. FOUR ARCHITECTURAL MECHANISMS

The six readings do not yield six independent mechanisms. This is a crucial methodological result: an architectural episteme is not an architectural mechanism, and a mechanism does not belong solely to one episteme.

In light of this, the cross-episteme synthesis applied to Moriyama identifies four interacting architectural mechanisms: dispersing volumes and functions, externalizing circulation and part of the dwelling, overlapping territories, and distributing distances and views. Table 4 traces the findings.

Table 4. Cross-episteme synthesis of the findings

Mechanisms	Epistemes that contribute	Findings that intersect
Disperses volumes and functions	Space, Time, Act, Threshold	Autonomous parts replace a single enclosed whole; Functions and units can be combined and allocated in different ways; Each volume has its own entrance; The house does not prescribe a single permanent sequence of use.
Externalizes circulation and part of dwelling	Body, Threshold, Atmosphere, Act	Movement between functions and volumes takes place through gardens and passages; Repeating entrances and exits are incorporated into domestic routines; The body is exposed to weather, air, light, earth; Work, leisure, and encounter extend beyond the enclosure of the building.
Overlaps territories	Space, Body, Threshold, Act	Personal and shared domains coexist; In-between space enables encounter, observation, avoidance, and withdrawal; The private and the shared are not completely separated.
Distributes distances and views	Space, Body, Threshold, Atmosphere	The position of volumes, windows, openings, and vegetation regulates proximity, daylight, and exposure; Direct window-to-window confrontation is avoided without eliminating the presence of others.

The first mechanism distributes functions among separate volumes across the site. This does not refer simply to the fragmented appearance of the house. Since the volumes form

distinct units, they can be assigned to different users and used in different combinations over time. The second mechanism turns the spaces between the volumes into routes and extensions of dwelling, which become an inherent part of domestic infrastructure. Moving between rooms therefore requires going outside and, in doing so, makes weather, light, vegetation, and soil part of everyday domestic experience. The third concerns how these same outdoor spaces mediate social relations among residents. They are neither entirely private gardens nor a conventional shared courtyard. Given that the placement of distances and visual relations between the separate volumes regulates vicinity and lines of sight, the fourth mechanism shows that dispersion is carefully calibrated through proximity and visual orientation rather than random scattering.

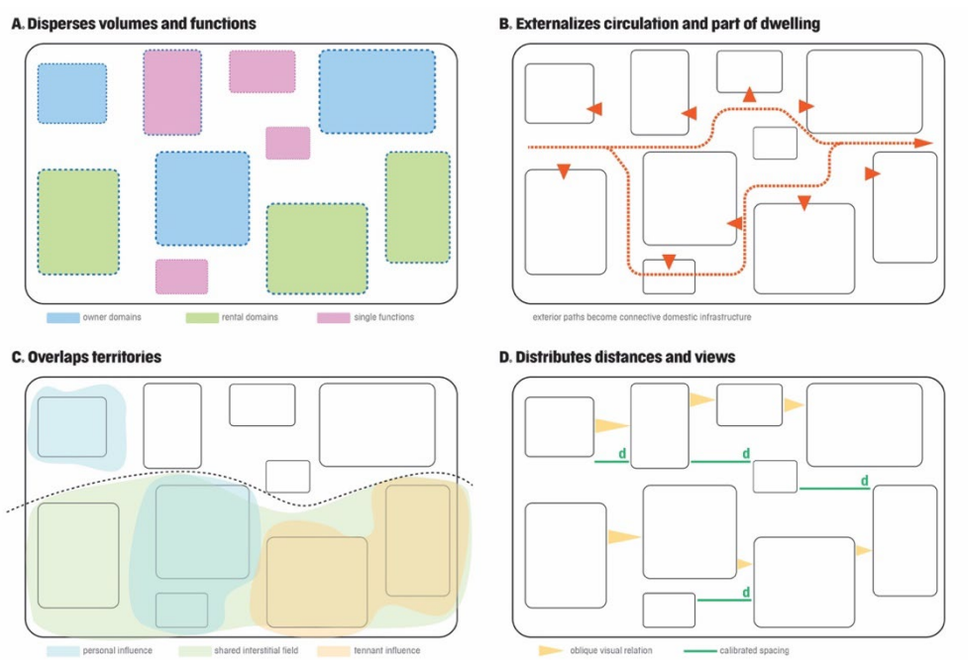


Figure 10. Analytical diagrams of the four mechanisms identified in Moriyama House: dispersion of volumes and functions; externalization of circulation and part of the dwelling; overlapping territories; distribution of distances and views. Diagrams by the author. They are schematic and not to scale.

As seen in Figures 4-10, the derivation of architectural mechanisms proceeds in two stages. The first stage involves the analytical decomposition of the project through the six epistemes (shown schematically in Figures 4-9), while the second stage recomposes the resulting findings through an abductive cross-episteme synthesis (shown schematically in Figure 10). The six epistemes therefore function as distinct ways of reading, while the mechanisms emerge as synthetic answers to the question: Which architectural operations can explain findings identified through several architectural epistemes?

The six episteme-based readings were not treated as six independent results. Instead, after each reading, the architectural evidence identified under one episteme was compared with the evidence made salient by the others. Observations were then clustered according to the underlying spatial operation they described, rather than according to the architectural episteme from which they emerged. Architectural mechanisms, as a cluster, were retained only when they: 1) could be traced to plans, sections, photographs, or project descriptions;

2) recurred across more than one episteme; 3) described what the architectural organization does; and 4) could not be reduced to another operation without losing their explanatory precision. This abductive cross-episteme synthesis produced four architectural mechanisms for House Moriyama. Each mechanism therefore links an observable architectural operation to an architecturally grounded possibility for its residents and to the limitation or tension through which that possibility remains conditional.

These mechanisms reinforce one another. Dispersion makes exterior circulation needed. Exterior circulation activates interstitial territories. Overlapping territories require careful distribution of distance and view. Controlled views allow close volumes to remain partly autonomous. Individualized potential lies in the interaction of mechanisms through which autonomy and relation, stability and reallocation, and enclosure and environmental exposure remain simultaneously available.

5.5. CAPACITIES AND LIMITATIONS

Table 5 links each architectural mechanism to its supporting evidence, the possibilities it may offer residents, and the limitations or tensions that condition those possibilities.

Table 5. Architectural mechanisms, architecturally grounded possibilities and limitations in Moriyama House

Architectural mechanism	Architectural evidence and operation	Architecturally grounded possibilities for residents	Architectural limitation or tension
Disperses volumes and functions	Ten detached volumes distribute complete units and individual domestic functions across the plot, replacing enclosure with a network.	May support relative autonomy, different combinations of occupation as well as differentiated personal and shared domains.	Fragmentation increases dependence on exterior movement and may create territorial ambiguity.
Externalizes circulation and part of dwelling	Gardens, paths and gaps connect rooms, while movement, work, sitting and encounter extend outside the envelope.	May make movement, environmental change and optional encounter part of domestic life.	Climate, accessibility, safety and privacy can limit who can use the distributed field comfortably.
Overlaps territories	Multiple entrances, garden edges, windows and small interstitial, in-between areas place private, shared and neighborhood-facing domains in proximity.	May allow degrees of withdrawal, awareness, encounter and belonging to be negotiated without a single common room.	Control is unequal between owner and tenants while visual and acoustic exposure may be difficult to regulate.
Distributes distances and views	Volumes, openings and vegetation are positioned to modulate proximity and avoid direct window-to-window confrontation.	May enable selective visual connection, daylight, environmental awareness and partial privacy.	Distances and openings are largely fixed, meaning transparency may expose activities and cannot guarantee privacy.

The findings also sharpen the definition of individualization. Moriyama House does not qualify because every inhabitant can personalize a unit or because its form is unique. Its architectural potential lies in the possibility that changing phases of one life can establish different combinations of territory, movement, exposure, encounter and use within an overall firm and stable structure. And while the analysis identifies this possibility, it does not claim nor demonstrate that all occupants experience it equally or positively.

6. DISCUSSION

The case shows what the apparatus adds to a conventional formal account. "Ten scattered white boxes" accurately describes the composition, but it does not thoroughly explain what this arrangement does, since it collapses several operations into a single image. The six epistemes, on the other hand, distinguish at least four operations: it reorganizes autonomy, displaces circulation, creates a field of territorial negotiation, and calibrates views and proximity. The main analytical contribution of the apparatus is therefore to move from describing form to explaining its operations.

The procedure also reveals limits that celebratory accounts of openness may overlook. The same exterior routes that expand environmental experience can impede accessibility and protection from weather. The same openings that produce daylight and visual connection can increase exposure, both visual and thermal. The same field without a clear hierarchy that enables optional encounter can make responsibility for common space less obvious and straightforward. The same possibility of changing the allocation of volumes is tied to ownership, which means that the owner may take rented units back into personal use, when tenants do not have an equal option. The potential for individualization is thus relational and uneven: it depends on who controls particular spaces and resources.

The findings suggest that the theoretical framework must relate the architectural conditions of embodied and atmospheric experience to the social organization of everyday practice. The unequal control of owners and tenants can be read through Lefebvre's concept of the social production of space: property relations help constitute possibilities for use and reallocation rather than merely constraining an otherwise autonomous architectural object [5]. Individualization therefore depends on how spatial organization, everyday practices, and rights of control interact.

The use of three theoretical traditions also carries a risk. Phenomenology, performativity, and affect theory rest on different epistemological assumptions and cannot simply be merged into a single coherent theory. The apparatus therefore maintains three distinctions: 1) experience is not equated with practice, 2) practice is not equated with affect, 3) affect is not reduced to emotion. The six epistemes draw from these theories without merging them. For example, Body addresses both lived perception and the body's capacity to act and be affected. Atmosphere examines how material conditions are organized without claiming that they produce a predictable feeling. Act examines how residents use and appropriate space without assuming that they can act independently, free from spatial or institutional constraints. The apparatus is therefore theoretically plural rather than unified.

The analysis also clarifies what architectural elements can and cannot demonstrate. Rooms, windows, and routes do not, in themselves, demonstrate individualization, nor can they "measure" it. They become relevant evidence only when interpreted in relation to other elements and to an explicit analytical question: What do they allow residents to do or regulate, and what constraints do they introduce? Each mechanism is therefore described through both its potential and its restraint.

Several limitations remain. First, the analysis of a single case can demonstrate how the procedure works and makes each analytical step traceable, but one case cannot establish whether the apparatus can produce meaningful and comparable readings across different housing types and cultural contexts. The paper therefore does not claim that the apparatus has already been validated through comparative analysis. Second, the drawings document

the designed layouts: dimensions, adjacencies, entrances, openings, levels, circulation use, and indicated uses.

Published photographs show selected views of materials, light, vegetation, transparency, furnishings, and signs of use at particular moments. The apparatus relates these features and interprets the operations they may support, but neither can establish acoustic performance in use, thermal comfort, conflicts, habits, or the meanings residents attach to spaces and thresholds. Third, Moriyama House is an atypical case: its emphasis on spatial separation makes the mechanisms unusually visible. More conventional apartment plans may require finer evidence to distinguish them. Fourth, the selection of concepts remains interpretative. Another researcher could derive a completely different set of epistemes and identify different architectural mechanisms. This possibility, however, does not make the present findings arbitrary: each episteme is traced to selected theoretical concepts, and each mechanism to specific architectural evidence.

That said, even before comparative validation, the apparatus provides a clear and traceable way to move beyond broad formal labels and to explain how architectural relations may enable or constrain individualization.

7. CONCLUSION

This paper set out to make architecture's potential for individualization analytically clear. The resulting apparatus provides a traceable sequence - from theoretical concepts, through six architectural epistemes and architectural evidence, to the identification of mechanisms.

The Moriyama House analysis shows that an apparently simple formal condition - dispersion - operates through several distinct yet related mechanisms. The apparatus identifies the possibilities and constraints created by these mechanisms. However, it does not establish how residents actually use or experience them. Its contribution is therefore not a fixed classification, a prediction, or a design rule, but an analytical procedure for explaining how architectural relations may support or restrict individualization.

Read together, these four mechanisms - dispersing volumes and functions, externalizing circulation and part of dwelling, overlapping territories, and distributing distances and views - reveal the dual role of exterior space: gardens and passages connect separate parts of one household's dwelling while bringing distinct households into relation. A route through one's own home can therefore also become a route past someone else's. The space between the houses forms part of the organization of the home, suggesting that different ways of dwelling can coexist within a shared field without a single common center or uniform participation. That said, this potential is conditional. Exterior movement depends on weather; porous territories make privacy dependent on negotiation, and unequal control gives the owner and tenants different possibilities for change. Moriyama thus identifies in-between space as an integral part of dwelling.

Future research should proceed along two connected paths. First, comparative architectural analysis should apply the same epistemes to contrasting cases and examine whether the mechanisms recur, combine, or disappear under different typological, climatic, and social conditions. Recurring combinations may then be drafted as spatial logics. Second, empirical research with residents should establish which relational capacities are available and used, by whom, under what constraints, and with what consequences. Strategies of individualization can be formulated only by critically bringing these spatial logics together with empirically supported relational capacities.

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Monika Bilbija

Dr. Monika Bilbija (b. 1982) is an architect and scenographer whose practice spans artistic and research work, curatorial projects, and cultural programmes and strategies. At the centre of her work, which connects architecture with the visual and performing arts, is the exhibition, conceived as a spatial installation – an autonomous spatial artwork weaving together place, text, scenography, light, sound, video and objects. Her solo exhibitions include The Body Never Lies (Banja Luka, 2011), Spirit of Place: The District's First Century (Novi Sad, 2023) and Thresholds (Novi Sad, 2025). She has participated in over 20 group exhibitions, notably the Prague Quadrennial 2011. She holds a doctorate in scenic design from the University of Novi Sad, where she is completing a second doctorate in architecture. From 2022 to 2025 she was artistic director and architecture curator of Kaleidoscope of Culture in Novi Sad, hosting talks with Pritzker laureates Alejandro Aravena and Riken Yamamoto.

Архитектонске епистеме становања: ка аналитичком апарату за читање индивидуализације

Сажетак: Савремене теорије становања прошириле су поље архитектонске анализе, укључивши, поред форме, функције и типологије, и отјеловљено искуство, извођење, промјене током времена и афективне односе. Ипак, начин на који се ова теоријска сазнања могу превести у јасан поступак читања архитектонске грађе још увијек није довољно разрађен. Вођен том идејом, овај рад развија апарат за испитивање потенцијала архитектуре да подржи индивидуализацију – процес у којем становник коришћењем, тумачењем и присвајањем простора успоставља и мијења властити начин становања. У архитектонском смислу, тај процес се испољава као релациона диференцијација унутар архитектонског континуитета. Интегративним концептуалним прегледом и анализом теоријског оквира из феноменологије, перформативности и теорије афекта изведено је шест епистемолошких линија, односно архитектонских епистема: Простор, Тијело, Вријеме, Праг, Атмосфера и Чин. За сваку епистему формулисана су питања која усмјеравају анализу објављених основа, пресјека, фотографија, аудио и видео материјала и описа пројеката. Укрштањем налаза различитих епистема у поступку абдуктивне синтезе издвајају се архитектонски механизми. Поступак је примијењен и приказан на примјеру Куће Моријама (2002–2005) архитекте Рјуеа Нишизаве. Анализа показује да просторна организација куће дјелује кроз четири механизма: 1) распршује волумене и функције, 2) измјешта комуникације и дио становања у спољашњи простор, 3) преклапа територије и 4) распоређује удаљености и погледе. Примјена апарата показује како се теоријски појмови могу повезати конкретним просторним односима и механизмима, чиме се прецизније објашњава на који начин архитектонска организација може подржати различите начине становања.

Кључне ријечи: епистемолошке линије, епистеме, феноменологија, перформативност, теорија афекта, индивидуализација