

Capturing Interiority

Paramita Atmodiwirjo, Yandi Andri Yatmo

*Universitas Indonesia
Indonesia*

The idea of interiority is manifested in various forms, emerging through subjective modes of engagement with space and place, personal experiences, and ways of seeing. Simultaneously, interiority also is manifested in physical entities that function as *traces* of inhabitation. "To dwell means to leave traces" (Benjamin, 1982/1999, p. 9). Traces left from inhabitation—in the form of objects, materials, arrangements, or configurations—are the physical markers of interiority. This issue of *Interiority* presents a collection of inquiries that attempt to capture traces of interiority in different everyday contexts using various modes of inquiry and representational media.

Defining appropriate means to capture interiority begins by understanding the concept of interior as various kinds of systems. When interior is viewed as a system of objects (Baudrillard, 1996), it suggests that each object plays a particular role within the whole interior system, as part of both functional and cultural systems. Studying objects and their functionalities helps capture the interiority of space where objects exist. Interior as a container of human life also becomes a system of environment-behaviour relations (Barker, 1968) as a setting in which synomorphic relations exist between human behavioural patterns and their physical milieu. Interior also can be studied as "a system of procedures and arrangements" with the purpose of making spaces habitable (Accasto, 2010, p. 59), involving appropriation of interior space to match inhabitants' living needs.

Attempts to capture interiority require various modes of inquiry and representational media that can capture the system inherent

within the interior—a system of activities, objects, procedures, or arrangements. An inquiry to capture interiority involves strategies to reveal various aspects of interiority ranging from individual experiences, historical perspectives, and cultural practices to creative design processes and with expanded scales of interiority, from building to urban, and from individual to communal (Vaux & Wang, 2020). Capturing interiority may involve strategies to investigate both physical and cognitive-affective dimensions of inhabitation. The physical dimension is manifested through observable behaviours and acts, the presence of objects and elements, or spatial arrangements and configurations. Meanwhile, cognitive and affective dimensions can be identified through personal narrative, verbal description, and subjective expression towards the interior. Many inquiries to capture interiority require direct engagement with the real by being present in the field and establishing knowledge from real occurrences in everyday practice.

Attempts to capture interiority also require media that can expand interior representation, not merely as a "representation of space before the fact of its coming into being" (Power, 2014, p. 15). The choice of representation media plays an important role in conveying the idea of interiority in a particular context. As McLuhan (1964/2010) stated, 'the medium is the message' (p. 7), and it can 'amplify or accelerate existing processes' (p. 8). An inquiry through a specific medium of representation arguably conveys the idea of interiority specific to a context and to the particular medium. Various modes of representation have been established to reveal the internal structure of human inhabitation space. The exhibition *Signs of Life*, by Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown, was an attempt to represent the internal structure of everyday world, as an inquiry into "the forms of the ordinary" (Fausch, 1997, p. 76) through thousands of photographs using the realistic display technique. The *Coupe Anatomique* (Periton, 2004) captured everyday life as part of urban life through a section drawing that contained pieces of everyday stories. Another drawing technique, developed surface interior (Evans, 1997), depicts objects as part of interior boundaries that reveal the inhabitation of space. Interior occupation could be represented through layers and samples of materials, with each piece containing particular meaning concerning domestic interior occupation (Ioannidou, 2021). On an expanded scale, an attempt to map urban everyday narratives captured interiority that emerged from collective inhabitation acts (Atmodiwirjo et al., 2019). These examples suggest possibilities, through various methods and media, to capture interiority from different perspectives and in different contexts.

This issue of *Interiority* presents inquiries on interiority in various everyday contexts, demonstrating how the idea of interiority could be captured through everyday images, the presence of objects in space, locality narratives, and spatial arrangements of inhabited space. Pablo Meninato discusses a photography exhibition by Denise Scott Brown as an attempt to capture everyday life and culture. The process of capturing inhabitation in different countries demonstrates how photography becomes a catalyst for architecture and urban planning theory. Sanjeh Kumar Raman and Safial Aqbar Zakaria present an in-depth study of the seat in the everyday life of Pathars, the traditional Tamil goldsmiths. They argue that the presence of objects in space could represent sociocultural meaning and political views regarding individuals' position within society.

The next two articles capture interiority from the narratives of local culture in Thailand and Indonesia. Narrative of locality becomes a means of revealing interiority through actors' spoken language and space inhabitation for cultural practice. Nuttinee Karnchanaporn and Chanida Lumthaweepaisal examine local museums' role in local communities, arguing that the spatial arrangement involving interior-exterior connections becomes crucial to local museums' survival in representing local culture. Astrid Kusumowidagdo, Melania Rahadiyanti, and Tri Noviyanto Puji Utomo present the local culture narrative in Sade Village as an indigenous corridor for tourism by investigating the typology of interiority that has emerged from various spatial elements. They argue for the importance of understanding local narrative to maintain the indigenous site alongside tourism development.

Some aspects of interiority can be captured by revealing subjective responses to the built environment. The final two articles present studies that capture the practice of adaptation in the domestic interior from users' perspective, responding to different pressing conditions. Beth L. McGee, Ryan J. Couillou, and Kristjan Maalt capture working-from-home experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic and the role of home workplace interior in defining these experiences. Based on empirical data from participants in several countries, they uncover the subjective preference of the home workplace, suggesting some lessons learned about future workplace design. Dilruba Yasmin and Farida Nilufar capture the practice of domestic interior adaptation in Dhaka's low-income housing community. Spatial adaptation strategies in response to the limitation of domestic space are reflected in the changes of spatial arrangement and the redefinition of interior space uses.

The collection of studies in this journal issue demonstrates the richness of ideas and possibilities concerning how to capture interiority. They offer contribution to the understanding of interiority in various sociocultural contexts, as well as the proliferation of interior inquiry and representation methods.

References

- Accasto, G. (2010). Shelter. In L. B. Peressut, I. Forino, G. Postiglione, & R. Rizzi (Eds.), *Interior wor(l)ds* (pp. 59–64). Umberto Allemandi & Co.
- Atmodiwirjo, P., Johanes, M., & Yatmo, Y. A. (2019). Mapping stories: Representing urban everyday narratives and operations. *Urban Design International*, 24(4), 225–240. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41289-019-00100-x>
- Barker, R. G. (1968). *Ecological psychology: Concepts and methods for studying the environment of human behavior*. Stanford University Press.
- Benjamin, W. (1999). *The Arcades Project: Walter Benjamin* (H. Eiland & K. McLaughlin, Trans.). Belknap Press of Harvard University Press. (Original work published 1982)
- Baudrillard, J. (1996). *The system of objects*. Verso.
- Evans, R. (1997). *Translations from drawing to building and other essays*. Architectural Associations Publications.
- Fausch, D. (1997). Ugly and ordinary: Representation of the everyday. In S. Harris & D. Berke (Eds.), *Architecture of the everyday* (pp. 75–106). Princeton Architectural Press.
- Ioannidou, E. (2021). Home no.7 (a sample of). *Interiors*, 11(1), 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.1080/20419112.2020.1836804>
- McLuhan, M. (2010). *Understanding media: The extensions of man*. Routledge. (Original work published 1964)
- Periton, D. (2004). The 'Coupe Anatomique': Sections through the nineteenth century Parisian apartment block. *Journal of Architecture*, 9(3), 289–304. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13602365.2017.1351805>
- Power, J. (2014). Interior space: Representation, occupation, well-being and interiority. *Temes de Disseny*, 30, 10–19.
- Vaux, D. E., & Wang, D. (Eds.). (2020). *Research methods for interior design: Applying interiority*. Routledge.