

# Housing as a Reflection of Culture

## Privatised Living and Privacy in England and Japan

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### 01 INTRODUCTION

Houses are not just physical spaces but **reflect cultural values through their layout**, shaping social interactions, daily rituals and ideas of privacy. Focusing on England (Bracknell) and Japan (Kohoku New Town), this cross-cultural study examines **how privatised living influences housing design**.

### 02 METHODOLOGY

#### QUANTITATIVE METHODS

- › Analysis of house floor plans & furnishings (n = 146 in England, n = 123 in Japan)
- › Statistical methods to analyse data: T-tests, ANOVA, Chi-square

#### QUALITATIVE METHODS

- › Structured interviews with house owners (n = 56 in England, n = 55 in Japan), including 4 key open questions (e.g. ideal house, likes/dislikes, ...)
- › Responses coded into 20 categories (e.g. privacy, space, family, aesthetics, ...)

### 03 KEY FINDINGS



#### ENGLAND

- › **Focus on personal privacy:** en-suite bathrooms, individual bedrooms, every resident has their own room
- › **Greater desire for functionality:** utility rooms, garden sheds, guest toilet
- › **Front garden** is usually **visible** for everyone to see (no fences or view protection), while **main garden** is for **residents only**
- › Home as a private retreat and space for individual expression

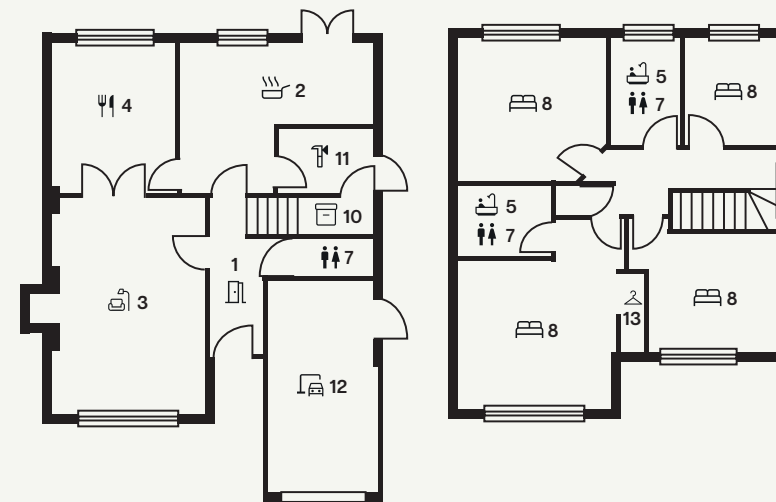


Figure 1. Contemporary English housing; left: 1<sup>st</sup> floor, right: 2<sup>nd</sup> floor

#### Key for fig. 1 and fig. 2:

1. Entrance/Hall; 2. Kitchen; 3. Living; 4. Dining; 5. Bathroom; 6. Washroom; 7. Toilet; 8. Bedroom; 9. Cupboard; 10. Storage; 11. Utility; 12. Garage; 13. Wardrobe; 14. Tatami; 15. Veranda/Balcony



#### JAPAN

- › **Focus on family privacy:** large multi-use living/kitchen/dining areas
- › Desire focuses on homeliness, warmth and **togetherness**
- › Gardens for atmosphere, calm, not for activity
- › **Houses** are usually **surrounded by a fence** to ensure family privacy
- › **Personal privacy is on the rise** (Western-style bedrooms increasing from 17% (1970s) to 66% (1990s))

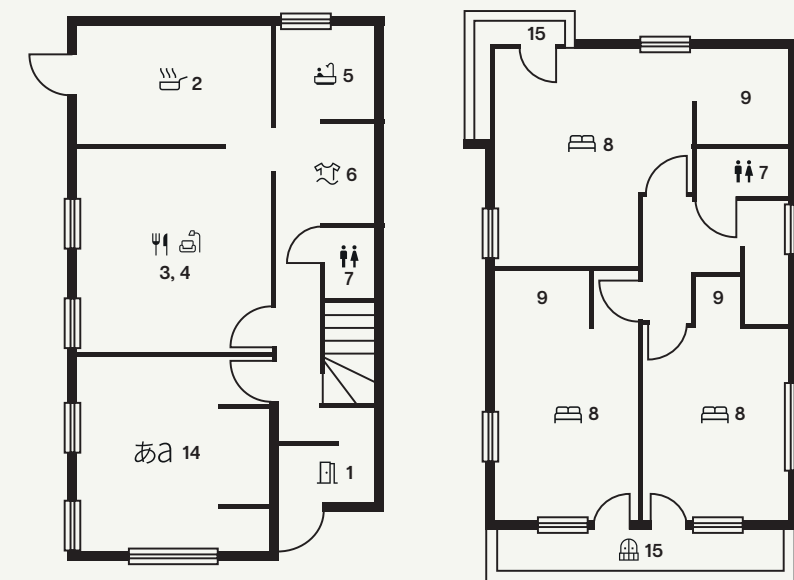


Figure 2. Contemporary Japanese housing; left: 1<sup>st</sup> floor, right: 2<sup>nd</sup> floor

### 04 CULTURAL THEORY

**Geert Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory** highlights cultural differences in the concept of privacy.



- › **Individualistic**, high emphasis on personal privacy
- › Privacy = Personal, self-contained space



- › **Collectivistic** (with Confucian values), emphasis on shared spaces and familial privacy
- › Privacy = Intimate family environment

### 05 CONCLUSION

The paper highlights how **housing styles** in England and Japan are deeply **influenced by social and cultural values** – especially differing ideas about privacy and family life.

While practical factors like **climate, building techniques and cost do play a role** in shaping homes, they are seen more as **secondary influences** rather than the main drivers of design.

The **distinct cultural views on personal space and privacy are clearly reflected in the way homes are laid out**, showing just how closely connected architecture is to the culture it comes from.