Socio-Cultural Resilience to Domestic Space Change, the Benin Traditional City Experience, Nigeria

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Abstract
Research over time has revealed that activity spaces in domestic home have undergone evolution, adaptation and resilience over the years across Benin residential zones, Nigeria. Space segments/activities sections like cooking/eating, household goods storage, visitors and conveniences sections have somehow remain unchanged in terms of function, meaning, and arrangement. The study identified socio-cultural factors as responsible for resilience of domestic space to change in Benin domestic architecture across Benin City. The paper engaged both qualitative and quantitative research method. Triangulation was adopted for collection through focused group discussion using Semi-structured interview guide, questionnaire, observation guide and photographs. Factor analysis was used to analysis of data in order to reduce the identified socio-cultural factors to sizeable portion. The finding showed that, whilst some activity space, its size and location have evolved in Benin contemporary architecture, the style has remained intact. For instance some activity spaces in some residential zone of the city have been adapted to suit the new realities. Further observation itemised the socio-cultural factors that are responsible for resilient to change in Benin domestic architecture. Result of research underscores the role of culture in process of architectural development amidst rapid urbanization. Research upon completion is expected to be a good case study for measuring resilience to evolution of spaces in typical house setting in any African traditional city.

Keywords: Socio-Cultural Resilience, Domestic Architecture, Domestic Space Change, Traditional City, Urbanization.

1. Introduction
Urbanization process leads to societal evolution in housing, and other social amenities [1]. According to [2] urbanization is perhaps the best symbol of radical, physical, economic and social evolution that mankind is experiencing due to development. The evolution of domestic space in Benin traditional city has been rather slow [3]. “Traditional city” in this context is deliberate. It implies a closed structure where traditions, customs, cultural values and beliefs are held in high regard so much so that happenings, events and other prevailing activities are explained based on traditions and cultural beliefs [4]. Benin is a traditional city, with estimated population of (1,147,188) as at 2006 population census estimates, and 1.3
million as a projected population at 2.9% growth rate by 2010 [5]. The Edos, as indigenes are called, are admired for their arts and craft. Benin has a unique cultural heritage that has been sustained for centuries and transmitted from generations to generations. Edos are believed to have one of the oldest continued monarchies in the world [6-7]. Annually Festivals are held to celebrate historic occasions & seasons, culture and bless the land & people. However, due to social change in Benin, there are noticeable evolutions in activity spaces. But socio-cultural indicators responsible for resilience in Benin domestic architecture in some residential zone were identified in this study. However, in spite of western education, missionary activities, and cultural exchange process, the Edos maintained a firm grip of its customs, traditions and practices in terms of house activities patterns and space.

Figure 1a: Picture showing the Urban Area Map of Benin City
Source: Author

Figure 1b: Planned Layout Map of Benin City
Source: Abakare (2013)
Figure 2: location of historical sites Map in Benin City
Source: [8]

Figure 3: Historical sites in Benin City that have undergone changes but still very resilient. 1. The Benin Royal Palace built by Oba Ewedo (1255AD – 1280AD) and rebuilt (1914 – 1932), 2. The Ogiamen House Built about 1130AD, and predates the emergence of OBASHIP, 3. The Benin Moat the largest man-made earthworks, 4. Igun Street (UNESCO Cultural Heritage Site), Emotan Statue, pioneer of the first day care, 5. Chief Asoro Statue, a valiant brave man, 6. Igue Festival, 7. Holy Aruosa Cathedral: {Aruosa N’Akpakpava} Nigeria oldest church built in West Africa, 15th century (i.e.1504-1550) situated in Akpakpava, in Benin.
Source: Authors work, (2018)
2. Literature Review

[9] argued that society irrespective of size, structure, location and time experiences change. Change concept could be gradual, rapid or spontaneous depending on prevailing circumstances. Change is inevitable and a continuum [10]. Social Change refers to alterations in the existing practices, norms, values and societal structure, organization and its component parts over time due to internal or external dynamics [11]. Alteration may be in size, complexity, direction, or function. Since society is a product of interaction, organised as a system, it is presumed that alteration in any part will affect the structure of the whole [12]. The study is interested in the socio-cultural resilience in domestic space evolution. According to consensus theory, the society as a system is a collection of interrelated, interdependent parts such as family, education, economic and religion which contribute to the operation and functioning of the whole system [13]. Relating this to the study would mean that the Edos culture account for resilience to evolution in Benin. Culture is functional because it meets all human needs. Since social change implies alteration in the structure, size, complexity direction/function. Resilience to evolution in Benin domestic architecture has assisted to maintain the status quo, ensure stability, and preserve cultural, historical materials and designs for posterity as each part functions to maintain an orderly and predictable system that preserves social order. Retaining old-existing-house designs and spaces has cultural and religious significance. For instance, deceased home owner in Benin are buried in their homes, so that the ancestral spirits can ensure blessings and protection for its family members [14]. Culture describes the totality of peoples’ way of life, shapes self-perception and interaction between people and environment [15-16]. Culture explains habits and defines behaviour, boundaries among people and it is the basis of identity and development [17]. Culture can be in different forms, material culture - tangible visible aspects like housing pattern, clothes, food, utensils/equipment etc. The intangible, non-physical aspects of culture which helps to regulate man’s behaviour and lifestyle within society, is referred to non-material culture (e.g. religion, beliefs, customs, traditions folklore etc.) [18-20]. This paper establishes a relationship between material culture and influence of non-material aspects in adaptation, resilience and evolution.

Therefore, according to [21-23], the study identify five core concepts of resilience in traditional city that enhances its supple ability to change; this includes Attribute, Continuing, Adaptation, Trajectory and Comparability. Resilience concepts have application at individual, group and community level [24]. Resilience refers to community capacity to cope with stress, stun adversity or adapt to change positively. It is described as ability to recover, bounce back and comeback from negative experiences to the previous state, normal, and stability [25-27]. In socio-architecture of traditional city, resilience concepts may be referred to as protective or risk factors which is the socio-cultural factors that have prevented city core change [28-29]. There are two types of social resilience in traditional city- social system’s ability to speed up drifts of evolution, decrease vulnerabilities, and assist adaptation; and social-ecological system's capacity to sustain preferred modes of economic activity [30]. Resilience in traditional city therefore, is the amount of change a system can undergo, still retain same structure, function, identity, self-organization capability, and reorganisation after disturbance [31]. Resilience in the study is viewed in terms of land-use, domestic space, and house patterns in Benin City core-oredo which connects other parts of the city.

[32] claimed that oral tradition supports the reality of distinct socio-political structure founded on government of elders before arrival of Ogiso dynasty. For thousands of years, sustainability in the old values and customs might have spur Edos to a sense of history and custom as a ways of life. The Benin social structure always thinks of past developments that will not endanger the future [33]. At the development monarchy system, Benin was a cluster of thirty-one villages with a sense of shared identity centered on history, custom and beliefs [34]. The villages were groups of family units with socio-cultural mutiny as families came into working relationships. Through socio-cultural revolution the features of social and political organization began to emerge resulting in the settlements evolving patterns. [35].
Natural environment supporting human settlements and integration of political systems were identified in Benin development [36]. Benin Socio-Political Structure is hinged upon the Oba-spiritual and temporal head, having hereditary accession and principle of primogeniture succession and his royal court. Next to Oba in hierarchy are *Uzama n’ihion*- ’King Maker’ see figure 2. The *Eghaevos*, is next the *Uzamas*, instituted to weaken the position and authority of *Uzamas*. The *Eghaevos* consist of Eghaevo n’ Ore-town chief led by chief Iyase -prime minister and Eghaevo n’ Ogbe-palace chiefs/Oba’s personal councilors supervised by chief Uwangue. Afterward are Owina-craftsmen/artisans, Ewaise-religious functionaries- and Iwebo, Iweguae and Ibiwe, serving physical and spiritual needs of the Oba [37]. Chieftaincy and guild system is the administrative group [38]. Benin social structure determine location of houses across the four residential zones viz: core, intermediate, suburban and planned estate. The core and intermediate residential zones where the *Oba*, royal family and *Eghaevos* respectively reside, consist of Benin traditional courtyard houses that are resilient to change (i.e. concept, space arrangement and building envelope are unaltered). While the suburban zone where royal guilds and nobles occupied showed resilience and adaptation in the houses.

![Figure 4: Socio-Political Organogram of Benin Social System](image)

Source: [39]

3. Research Method

In this paper, the focus was on Benin City core, so houses/residents in the core residential zone and part of the intermediate residential zone was used. Houses were identified, based on physical characteristics and spaces organisation along residential zones across Benin City. This resulted to 1054 selected houses across the City. 1054 questionnaire was administered and were returned appropriately responded to. The Study on Benin traditional City was designed to identify socio-cultural factors that are
"resilient to change" in the Benin traditional courtyard houses and peoples positive adaptation to living in the residential zone having semblance of rural neighborhood. The study was conducted over a period in collaboration with the residents of core zone, in-line with previous study done on other community. Interviewed guide were prepared to find out factors that contributed to resilience to domestic space change in Benin City core zone. The 14 informants were selected based on socio-political class in the Benin social system. A cross section of dukes, chiefs, elders, landlord, university dons and professionals were interviewed as well as focused group drawn from local Benin historians. Several factors were drawn from the results of the attitudinal questions (section B) from questionnaire, interviews undertaken across Benin City core community and a review of previous literature. The factors were analyzed using principal component analysis and varimax with Kaiser Normalization. From the result of the factor analysis, these factors were further reduced to six factors across the city. Since the focus of the paper is core and immediate zones. Two main factors were key because the occurred simultaneously in both zones – residents’ believes and residents’ early experience. These factors otherwise known as socio-cultural factors include - Environment and Lifestyle, Beliefs System, Early Experiences, Sense of Purpose, Household Size, Embracing Differences, Learning, and Social Networks and Support as shown in table 1.

Table 1: Socio-Cultural Factors that Determine Resilience to change in Domestic Space across the Four Benin Residential Zones

| Core Zone         | Intermediate Zone       | Sub-Urban Zone         | Planned Estate Zone     |
|-------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Factor 1          | Environment & life-style | Environment & life-style | Environment & life-style |
| Factor 2          | Residents’ Beliefs       | Residents’ Beliefs     | Residents’ Early Experience |
| Factor 3          | Residents’ Early Experience | Residents’ Early Experience | Residents’ Early Experience |
| Factor 4          | Sense of purpose         | Sense of purpose       | Embracing difference     |
| Factor 5          | Household size           |                        |                         |
| Factor 6          |                          |                        |                         |

Source: Authors fieldwork, 2015

4. Finding and Result

Panache of Benin traditional courtyard house reflecting Edo culture in spaces use, organization and meaning was passed-on to the next generation through “Benin Royal Guild System”. Benin architecture “Ikun design concept” was built based on Socio-Political Structure in Benin. Though design is for all social class, but each house height, size and ornamentation differentiates one social class from another. Over time, change in building materials, spaces organizations, size and house pattern occurred, yet spaces and features in the core zone were resilient. Several factors were responsible for the resilience over the last five centuries [40]. Therefore, data of house plans collected between 2018 & 2019 in Benin City were analysed to determine the degree resilience of Benin domestic space in core and intermediate residential zone. Examining space sections like: cooking and eating space, storage space, visitors’ space, and space for convenience in a Benin house showed adaptation in location and size but resilient in organization and meaning, over the last five centuries across Benin City.

4.1 Interpretation of Result

During factor analyses in core zone, 21 items were loaded and three significant factors identified which are: factor 1-environment & residents’ lifestyle. Factor 2-residents’ belief & Factor 3-early experience of residents. These three factors determined domestic activity space resilience to change in Benin core zone houses. The factors in intermediate zone are slightly different; four factors were identified, the factors include: Factor 2-residents’ belief, Factor 3-residents’ early experience, Factor 4-
sense of purpose of residents, and Factor 5–household size. Of these four factors, two were recurrent (i.e. residents’ early experience and residents’ beliefs), reflecting as the predominant factors in Benin domestic space evolution. The other two factors (household size and Sense of purpose) accounted for other house-types not in core zone rather in intermediate zone due to evolution. Meanwhile, after subjecting the 21 items to factor analysis using extraction method, rotational method and scree plot as shown in figure 5.

Figure 5: Scree plot of the 21 items in the interview schedule
Source: Ekhaese, (2011)

Four factors were recognised in sub-urban zone this includes: Factor 1-environment and lifestyle of residents, Factor 3-residents early experience, Factor 4-sense of purpose of residents, and Factor 6–embracing difference. Here, two factors were from the core zone (environment and lifestyle of residents and residents’ early experience), also two factors repeated from the intermediate zone (Sense of purpose and embracing difference) and a new factor was added which is embracing difference. This shows that some domestic spaces in core, intermediate and sub-urban zones are resilient. Factor 6-embacing difference showed that there are some additional new spaces in houses in suburban zone. This implies adaptation in activity space and may be a new house-typology in the zone. In planned estate zone, factor analysis confirmed that only three factors are deemed satisfactory after loading the 21 non-redundant items. These include Factor 1-environment and lifestyle of resident, 3–residents’ early experience and 6–embracing difference. The result showed two factors from core zone (environment and lifestyle of resident and residents’ early experience), and two factors from the suburban zones (Early experience of residents) and embracing difference). Generally across the Benin City this analysis result revealed that some domestic space are resilient, some adaptable and others have transformed across the four Benin residential zones.

The clustered bar in intermediate and sub-urban zone is the recommended charts for the study largely because the two zone had the highest numbers of socio-cultural factors (four) responsible for resilience across the city. Again because the cluster bar chart is used to compare values across categories and to show duration, the socio-cultural factors showed that the house typology and the activity spaces in the two zones are resilient and adaptive to changes due to development and urbanization. However, the similar socio-cultural factors in the two zones are the sense of purpose and residents’ early experience. This common factors show a strong place attachment correlation. The sense of purpose of a house, space and place determine the value of resilience. Whilst the residents’ early experience also play a vital role in resilience and adaptation of a house, space and a place. Therefore, the strong belief and cultural values, Benin residents’ attaches to the use and function of an activity spaces in their domestic architecture determine how resilient the space would be to any form of change. However, the socio-cultural factor to
resilience that occurred across the four residential zones of the traditional city is factor 3—residents’ early experience. This further reinforce the claim that residents early experience is a major place attachment determinant of residents and domestic space resilience in traditional cities across the globe.

Figure 6a: clustered bar count of socio-cultural factors resilient to domestic change in intermediate residential zone in Benin

Figure 6b: clustered bar socio-cultural factors resilient to domestic change in sub-urban residential zone in Benin

4.2 Retorts and Approaches of Residents
In Benin City core, participants discussed the significance of surrounding environment & lifestyle factors in resilience. Residents in core highlighted the role of natural environment & climate in shaping Benin Core housing elasticity. The factors attracted early settler to the area, and reinforced both cultural and social diversity in the area. Residents stated that learning to manage climatic events such as flood, drought, erosion etc., was resilience in Benin traditional architecture. The regular environment was associated with community pride and a sense of belonging for some residents [41]. The significance of residents’ beliefs was amongst the frequently reported resilience factors [42-43]. The city core residents referred mostly to belief system relevance in forming society resilience. The residents stated that shared religious beliefs or practices, such as going into same religion, was a vital component of community resilience that influenced on the house type and domestic spaces within Benin City core and the intermediate zone.
The effect of residents’ early experiences, at community level, was supposed to be a key component of resilience by most residents [44]. The residents highlighted early experiences types that included struggle and hardship, specific cultural and heritage factors such as origins, etc. residents narrated how positive experiences had shaped resilience. With regard to neighborhood perspectives, intermediate zone residents believed that a key contributor to Benin traditional architecture resilience was its socio-cultural context. ‘Benin historical traditional city is resilient because of the socio-culture heritage and has influence its domestic architecture.’ The residents’ narratives how both positive and negative early experiences added to resilience. Sense of purpose was most commonly reported by city core residents as an important element and an essential component of neighborhood resilience [45]. Benin City core residents agreed that having a collective sense of purpose was principally crucial during crisis, and this was a strategic component of Benin City continued resilience to change in domestic architecture despite repeated adversity and rapid urbanization. Without exception, the household size was a dire resilience factor amongst residents. Most of the city core residents agreed that family and friends that provided support or networks based on shared culture, formed the foundation of people resilience. Extended family networks are multicultural and were principally essential, with the links ensuing from intermarriage or mutual interests such as a faith/profession of significant value. Generally, size of household was the most often nominated element of both society resilience and an ideal resilient society [46].

Embracing differences was an important component of society resilience [47]. Residents revealed how cultural influences in Benin’s experience have develop resilient factors. Embracing differences inside community were deliberated in relation to cultural background, age, length of residency, and occupational or economic factors [48-58]. Many agreed that acceptance of dissimilarity and diversity was a key feature of Benin architecture resilience overall. However, attitude about the degree to which Benin City embraced social diversity varied greatly. Some residents identified that Benin actively embraced cultural diversity. And the acceptance of all persons contributed to its resilience. Others reported the existence of a strong social or cultural stratification in Benin and this Benin’s social hierarchy contributed to the traditional city’s resilience. Expressly, Residents agreed with that Benin society was a cultural society. The main cultural influence was the influx of persons from other part of Edo state and how this had shaped Benin City and Benin City core houses over time.

5. Discussions

The observed variation in domestic activity spaces across the core, intermediate, and suburban is in the house size across Benin-City. The domestic spaces in Benin traditional houses have shown resilience to change. The socio-cultural values identified amongst culture and tradition has been very constant, being a form of cultural symbol/identity. These socio-cultural values determine meanings, structure, arrangement, pattern, use, organisation, relationship, accessibility and location of domestic spaces in traditional courtyard architecture found in first three residential zones, and formed the basis for resilience to change in the domestic space of Benin domestic Architecture found in the city core, which is the concentration for collection of data. During the last five centuries, the findings showed that houses in Benin have undergone resilience, adaptation and evolution from (traditional - modified - institutional - contemporary). The resilience in domestic space in a typical Benin courtyard house typology can be attributed the effect of Edos’ socio-cultural values. The core zone houses have existed for centuries and are resilient to change. They are symbolic cultural monuments which preserves cultural heritage and historical relics. Domestic spaces like worship/shrines and terraces used as tomb for burying prominent family members are reasons for resilience of Benin domestic architecture. According Chief Ogieobadan “this explains among other reasons why Benin traditional houses are adaptable and resilient”. Chief Ero believes that “the preservation of ancient cultural heritage among the Edos has helped to preserve Benin traditional houses for future generations”. Female domestic spaces such as-storage and kitchen, harem, menstruation room have been resilient to change in the Benin domestic architecture because of the depth,
use, and socio-cultural values attached to it. Therefore, the socio-cultural factors among others account for the resilient nature of traditional courtyard house in the core and intermediate residential zone. The socio-cultural factors explain the adaptive nature of other houses type across Benin.

6. Conclusion

In examining attitudes and responses of Benin City residents’ to socio-cultural resilience to change of activity space in a traditional City, some factors were selected as causal factors. These identified socio-cultural factors were observed to be responsible for resilience to change in Benin domestic Architecture. These several factors were condensed to Six (6) key factors to re-shape Benin traditional city, while determine resilience to change of domestic activity space across the four Benin residential zones. Equally, the identified factors are the 'resilience and protective factors' that contributed to people’s positive adaptation to living in traditional city and were found to enhance the level of resilience of domestic space in Benin domestic architecture. Therefore, socio-cultural factors may be the same in any informal settlements across global south and thus influence the people’s resilience, adaptation and evolution response to domestic space change. The space distribution and organisation analysis in Benin houses though beyond the scope of this paper is relatively unique because it specify private spaces or shared space as experienced in traditional courtyard houses. Although any activity can occur in any parts of the house, depending on the nature of activity and status of its participants.

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