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From drawing our homes to styling them – Semiotization processes of space at work

“My home is my castle.” The focus of this paper is the semiotic space of a home, rather than a castle. Home for most of us means a safe place to be in, a place where we have our things, a place to relax, meet with friends, and so on. Most of us hardly ever think and analyse how our homes came about. We may occasionally think about shifting this table from that corner to another corner, perhaps in an adjacent room. But we do not systematically go on to analyse our homes as outcomes of semiotic processes. Neither have we really had the tools for it. This paper attempts to do an analysis of a home – my home.

The theoretical basis for this paper is the multisemiotic views that have been developed within systemic-functional linguistics. This theory draws upon functionalism in contexts of culture and contexts of situation, going back to Malinowski's and Firth's views. It allows us to see the city planning and architectural design of the object to be analysed in its proper context. The Hallidayan functional views on system and structure and ranks, developed particularly in relation to architectural design by O'Toole, give us a clear picture of the architectural meanings intended for the home in the building and in the city where it is located.

As with discourse, dynamism is also needed in the theory of meaning-making, even when we are discussing such things as a flat in a concrete multi-story house. This paper suggests some dynamic issues that we need to consider and theorize about in the 'life in a home' and of particular interest to this paper are the issues that relate to the discourses and semiotic activities that take place or are envisaged to be taking place in a home. The paper is intended to be a contribution to the interaction of multisemiotic theories between disciplines and aims at encouraging fruitful co-operation across disciplines.