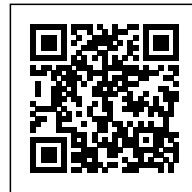


The Domestic City
Flavio Martella

THE DOMESTIC CITY. EXPANSION OF THE ROLE OF DOMESTICITY IN THE CONTEMPORARY URBAN CONTEXT: A NEW RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MAN AND CITY

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The dominant relationship between home and city has always been one of the less obvious, but more significant, factors that can promote and permit generalized social change. In the contemporary era, changes in family structure, in the organization of work, in technologies, in communities and in communication are being reflected in a new urban revolution that blends domestic space with that of the city. Thus, the meanings of public and private, exterior and interior, domestic architecture and city architecture are changing. The urban organizational structure that has accompanied us in the last century is undergoing a strong shock to its foundations, moving towards a radical change in its nature that involves new relationships between man and city.

Domestic space is understood as a domain, a field or a mental territory that extends beyond the material, concrete, tectonic, spatial and bodily conception allusive to the quantifiable. It is a multidimensional condition that encompasses architectural elements through a series of conditions that have to do with the domestic and intimate existential perception of the human being, close to the domain of space as a sense of protection, tranquility, calmness, interiorization, rest, renewal, recovery and pleasure.

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People gather to watch the fireworks display over the East River on the Fourth of July, Tuesday, July 4, 2017, in the Queens borough of New York. Andres Kudacki, 2017.

Domestic space represents an order of architectural objects different from the fundamental and vital reality of the spirit – objects that delimit a territory that is not only environmental/physical, but also full of material and immaterial symbolism. Basic human needs can be generalized in terms of physiological needs such as eating or sleeping, the need for security, love and belonging. Many, if not all, of these needs have been reflected, in the last centuries, in the architecture of the residence, one of the main legacies of the industrial and modern conquest of the bourgeoisie. The prototype of

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this model of home guaranteed the presence of spaces to relax, feel safe, expose the concept of property, build relationships, express personal identity and encourage gender segregation; it was a refuge from external anxieties, derived from the uncertainty of the future and the labor and production needs of the capitalist context – a place of ambiguity and paradoxes (Rechavi, 2009).

However, this idea of domestic space is continually being challenged by changes in the contemporary social and work structure. Its questioning leads to a redefinition of the limits and functions of the space/house, provoking expansions and contractions, and seeking identity not only in the interiorization of physical space, but also in the relationship with the urban context. The demarcation between the house and the context is dissolving, including many other social, public and private spheres within its definition – not least the working sphere.



still from the TV series “*Friends*” di Krane D. & Kauffman M., 1994.

In fact, “the advent of immaterial labour, where life itself is put to work, brings back domestic space as the epicenter of production” (Aureli, 2015). The separation between work and home is canceled, nullifying its construction of space/shelter for external concerns. “This becomes possible not just because new technologies make production ubiquitous, making the traditional workplace (the office, for example) no longer relevant, but because immaterial production is based on aspects that until now were typical of the domestic domain, aspects such as sociability, affectivity and care” (Aureli, 2015). This releases the potential and latent productivity of domestic space, as well as the domesticity of the traditional working space. It is therefore radically changing the urban structure on which cities were founded over the past few centuries.

New technologies are also playing an important role in redefining the domestic sphere and the structure of the house. The multiplication of domestic media is causing an alteration in the way we interact with them, consequently influencing the physical structure of space. To enjoy the new media, in fact, you do not just have to be the owner and use them at will; rather they involve continuous interaction and consequently a lot of time spent with them. As a result, a common solution is to transform the bedroom into a private living room, i.e., an environment where one can develop personal individuality, identity and interests (Livingstone 2007). With the advent of virtual communities and a broader, multi-level global relationship, the outside enters and permeates the domestic sphere, erasing the bourgeois meaning of home as a refuge from social anxieties, as a purely private place. The border between outside and inside, once strict, now fades, causing a perception of the domestic at the antipodes of what it was in the past. In fact, a study conducted by IKEA shows that in 2016 only 7% of respondents (250 families) identify a specific place as home. On the other hand, 37% believe that the concept of home extends outside the domestic walls: 38% identify their home with their neighborhood, while 18% identify it with the city itself. These data thus numerically exemplify the contemporary tendency to move more and more activities, affections and customs outside the traditional domestic space, merging them with the city. Moreover, according to the previous study, most of the new generations (Millennials) feel at home outside their current residences, even performing activities such as watching TV, relaxing or sleeping. The city must therefore absorb many of the previously reserved special features of the house's architecture.

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Urban Non-Place. Tim Gouw.

Furthermore, today the idea of movement, social change and openness is increasingly common and accepted socially. The migrations of people entering and leaving cities, bringing with them their own cultural baggage, create new possibilities for living in the city. In fact, inhabitants of the contemporary city live in the condition that Verschaffel (2012) has called "a-topia", i.e., where the individual becomes a nomadic subject freed from the concept of belonging and therefore is in a state of perennial transit. With this new figure, the perception of urban space passes from being permanent to nomadic.

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The deviation of the domestic from a fixed place highlights and points to the meaning of the non-place – an ephemeral and transitory space dedicated to circulation, consumption and communication (Augé, 1995) – as the new form of domestic hub in the urban context (Suci Warakanyaka, 2017). The independence of the non-place from any socio-cultural construct allows it to be the nomadic place par excellence, the home of the ever-changing population of the city. As a result, more and more people relocate activities that are originally domestic to other locations in the urban context. Eating, socializing, relaxing, sleeping, going to the gym, seeking privacy are now part of a system of domestic citizen relations (Suci Warakanyaka, 2017).



***Conical Intersection.* Gordon Matta Clark, 1975.**

This evolution of the contemporary definition of domestic goes hand in hand with the changing notion of interior. Often today the domestic interior is no longer understood as a finished product,

but as a process in continuous evolution, which feeds on the complicated relationship between the physical and emotional well-being of the inhabitants. This dual relationship is able to generate an incredible variety of ways to inhabit the space (Attiwill, 2012) and is supported and constantly remodeled on the basis of the flow of information produced by the current social system. Precisely because its main influence comes from the external context to the concept of domestic interior, the domestic interior extends beyond the limits of the house, expanding into the urban surroundings. In short, the house tends toward the city, and the city becomes a home.

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