



MICHELA BASSANELLI (ED.)

Abitare oltre la casa. Metamorfosi del domestico

Derive e Approdi, Roma, 2002, 192 pp.
Softcover. 14,00 €

Language: Italian

ISBN: 978-88-6548-435-7

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New perspectives for living

Abitare oltre la casa. Metamorfosi del domestico combines the contributions of scholars and professionals with skills from different disciplines into a single narrative, organized into four thematic sections concerning cohabitation, space, workplace changes, and sociality.

It is, therefore, a multidisciplinary work aimed at investigating the changes in living in their complexity, taking as a point of view the human being whose feelings, a bit like in Ovidio's *Metamorphoses*, plastically change the space and shape of the house.

During the lockdown periods due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the house, in some ways, represented "the world" understood as the totality of existing and practicable things. Once the pandemic is over, it is necessary to overcome the concept of the house as a system of limits and borders and approach the topic of living with a different gaze. Every time a global epidemic spread, the structures of living are deeply involved since they are a resistant nucleus which helps the resilience capacity of societies to be stronger. The sense of the choices underlies how living has changed; in

normal conditions, it is affected by a design process that, on the one hand, can be the outcome of shared goals between designers and inhabitants but, on the other hand, is due to a top-down process. Conversely, places, spaces, paths and relationships should be defined in order to create a common ground between the house and its inhabitants, in order to spark a common identity which supports the relationship between the house and the home.

In the post-pandemic world, this common ground has stretched, and its limits are still uncertain: if 2020, as Peppino Ortoleva argued, in the case of an urban block of flats, the family system coincides with the type of dwelling, (the apartment itself) and therefore with the common ground that corresponded largely to the physical limits and to those of the family nucleus, the pandemic has questioned all of this, radically changing people's habits and therefore the very meaning of living which, in neo-Latin languages, notoriously shares the same etymological root of habit.

Changes in habits have led to co-living meant to be according to Leonardo Caffo "as a conception of the existence as a function of other bodies [...] in a relationship of extraneousness and dependence". This entails not only preventing underestimating of the viruses but that phenomenal life, the one that is understood in the here and now, makes sense if supported by a system of relationships, while time instead makes sense in the relationship between instant (especially the insignificant ones) the past and the future. Domestic space is based on flows between bodies and finds its context in the home. The latter and dwelling are related to each other in a relationship similar to that between duration and instant that we have just seen. To grasp this relationship, it is necessary to know its historical trajectory described very well by the book's editor Michela Bassanelli, who summarizes the recent events of Italian domestic culture, underlining how it has been grounded on a 'system of places'.

Such a system is set by the physical limits of the house and by the chance of crossing them as well: walls, envelopes, surfaces, partitions, doors, and windows tend to be responsive to the invisible boundaries made by the relationships between people. They actively interact with human emotions and turn the house into a home. Due to this process, the home can be perceived as a cozy shelter or an oppressive prison, as happened during the lockdowns, especially in the case of small apartments.

Indeed, the outbreak of Covid -19 has overturned the sense of limits: the virus has penetrated the cells of human beings, making them ill and spread into houses: the countermeasures have been based on strengthening the barriers, acting biochemically with vaccines on the immune system or by tightening physical boundaries through distancing and seclusion. The essays by Giovanni Corbellini, Alessandra Ponte and George Teyssot demonstrate how the practices aimed at obtaining a distance

between possible vehicles of contagion are deeply rooted in history and in modernity itself, giving new impetus to Le Corbusier's rereading of monastic life.

Paolo Inghilleri outlines the complexity of the interweaving between the home and psychic life by pursuing the concepts of place attachment and place identity. Those constructs widely explored in environmental psychology are usually considered a way to connect human behaviour and experience; in the context of our book they represent a field on which the living is grounded, that stems from the reciprocity between thought and the shape of the physical space. Marita Rampazi argued, the experience of living, to develop, implies a mutual adaptation between inhabitant and habitat. This process, in turn, can be traced back to empathy as the understanding of reality through identification. In sum, empathy allows one to experience the house (or any architecture), through the structure of the "as if": the subject perceives the house "as if" he were himself the designer. This phenomenon gives a "soul" to spaces and objects: a reciprocal correspondence is activated between the human and architectural body for which they "exchange", thoughts, sensations, and ideas which are addressed to create the atmosphere and the past of the home.

In times of seclusion, the tightening of borders has forced families within the domestic walls, shifting them into a "sacred enclosure" turned inwards, condensing functions normally performed outside, including work and study activities, clearly a non-secondary aspect of living. This has been made possible by smart working and by the development of telematic networks. They have a disruptive effect on space both because they distance nearby places and vice versa, and they make time more prominent than space. Indeed, the home became an unhomey place of contradiction between the fast time of the job and the immobility of a space from which no one could get out. Imma Forino delves into the theme of spaces for immaterial work by tracing the connections between phenomena that concern society as a whole, such as temporal flexibility and the mutation of places and the movement of work activities within the home during the health emergency. Having analyzed the problems due to the compression of spaces and activities in the perimeter of the house, she posits concrete proposals for equipping some intermediate spaces, such as the ground floors, of residential buildings to house-shared workplaces.

The book offers a paradigm shift in the design of the domestic space by intertwining different knowledge in a fascinating journey into the domestic dimension. The design is not a mere definition of a plan layout but a twine of different sensibilities, sociological and philosophical approaches and considerations on the sense of living.

https://doi.org/10.26754/ojs_zarch/zarch.2023219776