

## DIGITAL HOME

*Reflection about contemporary living spaces*

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### 1. Configure space (living spaces renewal)

As a computer science and information technology are entering a new era<sup>1</sup> defined by the tremendous expansion and settling of physical communication networks, new types of living spaces are currently emerging, homes that promote encounters and interactions with the outside world without being intrusive. Those definitely outward-looking households are meant to be “linkup” spaces (both individual and collective) contained within a larger housing network in which intimacy and collective concerns, closeness and distance come together. Seen as true life environments or habitats (“*mi-lieu*” *de vie*), houses can be laid out, adjusted or configured at will in order to meet the least needs of its dwellers: a room can open up to share its access paths, its surfaces “virtually” with other places.<sup>2</sup>

Nowadays living spaces no longer refer to isolated, clearly delineated, closed places but to spaces where all bonds, all relationships and all connections converge. Such places appear as the ideal playground for restructuring and reorganizing the patterns/dynamics of the real – in which the de-structuring ideology of architecture is rooted – with buildings isolated and compartmented like dark and narrow recesses.

The time is now for public and private spaces to begin shifting and cross-breeding (residence, workplace) and to break all the rules of intimacy. “Connexity” and *proximity* are laying the foundations for a new social system. People now have the power to become part of collectivities sometimes spreading beyond boundaries (trans-border collectivities), thus establishing *de facto* new communities.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. “pervasive computing,” a term which describes the ubiquitous presence of wired and wireless networks, “intelligent agents,” self-organized networks.

<sup>2</sup> Among these transformations we can mention the presence of varied furniture devices working as input or output units.

The domestic space – which once was the home of the private sphere – no longer refers to this place “between the walls” where intimacy secretly came to life. On the contrary it polarizes the tensions between privacy and social concerns, sometimes even going as far as endowing individuality with a *political* dimension (encompassing many aspects of individuality, from one’s most secret inner life to the subjective personal space allotted to each individual). The function of the living space is totally reversed and homes become a ground where identities can be mediated, an interface between individuals and collectivities.

The very concept of intimacy is reversed and takes on a brand new meaning: it now appears as a socially significant notion (in that it enables a “socializing” construction of individual spaces). The dividing line between private and public spheres (prevailing to this day) fades away, thus enabling the public sphere to “interfere” upon intimacy, as A. Midal points out (Midal 2004). All domestic-life-related issues must take root in individual concerns and grow until blending with the macrocosm of collective exchanges. The status of privacy now implies a constantly common life, the expression of a vision of how personal, familial and social aspects should interact with one another.

## 2. Digital home: smarthome (case study)

Offering both a reflection about contemporary living spaces and a study of design concepts<sup>3</sup>, this communication (poster) will aim to show that a new “geographicity”<sup>4</sup> of the network-centered Humankind is currently emerging, unsettling the traditional division of space into territories and disrupting even space itself.

Studied projects are the following:

- Philips, *Sense and simplicity* (design proposals), 2004-2008,
- Jean Nouvel (associates and partners), *Corian Nouvel Lumières*, 2007,
- Living tomorrow, *R&D collaborative project (57 associated societies)*, 2007.

## 3. References

Dardel E.: 1952 *L'Homme et la terre*, Paris, Colin, p. 2.

Midal, A.: (november-december) 2004 « Domesticity », *Mouvement*, n° 31, pp. 62-69.

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<sup>3</sup> Where spatial design and computer design meet.

<sup>4</sup> This term does not refer to a cognitive process but to the existential bond between human beings and their living spaces. This process was described by Eric Dardel drawing inspiration from a philosophical tradition embodied by Heidegger, Jaspers, Kierkegaard: “[...] a geographicité of Humankind seen as a mode to define its existence and its fate.” (Dardel 1952)