An incursion through space in relation with the contemporary realities
Final Master Thesis

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The thesis critically appropriates the collaborative philosophy of Henri Lefebvre to analyze the architectural space from a philosophical point of view, used for defining how we can quantify space as entity. One of the difficulties of this project stems from the fact that the canon of philosophical discourse itself operates as a constant production of the space, releasing from its static qualities.

The research undertaken to complete the thesis has consisted of contemporary experiments in complexity theory, and current socio/economic analyses of labour markets. Particular interest has been accorded to European Union -28 states.

By addressing the need for new philosophical instruments to understand space, the thesis advances a philosophy of economics by examining the function of it in relation to the evolution of space in contemporary reality. By having this extended view of the space, the definition of the individual’s characteristics and how they are interfering with the architectural space, as a fundamental factor, which give dimension both to space and society, is essential in this analysis.

Having all these information, we will analyze some innovative project which are intended to propose a new typology of space and some from the very recent years, as appreciated by contemporary society as being innovative and bring a great contribution to the architectural scene.
## CONTENTS:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. SPACE DEFINITION</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. CONTEMPORARY SPACE &amp; SOCIETY</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1. The modernization of the city</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2. The urbanization of space</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3. Society &amp; relation with technology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. CONTEMPORARY INDIVIDUALS HABITS AND LIFESTYLE</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1. Density</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2. Type of dwelling</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3. Tenure status</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4. Housing quality</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5. Housing affordability</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6. Labour market</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7. Employment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.8. Unemployment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.9. Quality of life</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.10. Individual’s habits. Conclusions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. PROJECTS WHICH INNOVATES AND CHALLENGE THE SPACE TIPOLOGY</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. CONCLUSIONS: TOWARDS A NEW TIPOLOGY OF SPACE?</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“The present age may be the age of space . . . We are in the era of the simultaneous, of juxtaposition, of the near and the far, of the side-by-side, of the scattered.”

Michel Foucault, 1967

“We have often been told... that we now inhabit the synchronic rather than the diachronic, and I think it is at least empirically arguable that our daily life, our psychic experience, our cultural languages, are today dominated by categories of space rather than by categories of time, as in the preceding period of high modernism.”

Fredric Jameson, 1984

INTRODUCTION

This investigation is intended to explore contemporary architectural space, starting from philosophical definitions of the space, having as starting point the vision of Henry Lefebvre about space, using as a starting point, of Henri Lefebvre’s theory of the production of space, done in 1991. The critical work “Space, Difference, Everyday Life: Reading Henri Lefebvre”, realized by Stefan Kipfer, Kanishka Goonewardena, Christian Schmid, Richard Milgrom in 2008, will guide our incursion about the architectural space.
Euclidian system: length, width, height
CHAPTER 1

SPACE DEFINITION

Space generally is measured in three dimensions of distance -Euclidian system- : length, width, and height. In modern physics, space is a “boundless four-dimensional continuum” known as space-time, where each place is related to a specific time, creating an interdependence framework.² Space may be consider also a relationship between entities, where the perception of an object is defined by comparing to a reference which is the empty space.

Space is used in a large spectrum of areas. We deal with “space” also as one essential element of geographical concepts. In most of the cases, it needs to be related to others concepts, to have an external referential system, in order to acquire meaning and sense. Commonly, space is defined as emptiness, by being conceived as a supplement to things. The concept of “space” appears also when we are analyzing individual landscape elements as their environments, when “space conceived in this way has the character of a field of force”. There is also a “geographical” space which can be conceived in relation with the totally of landscape elements, as a “synergetic” system.³

In architecture space is conceived as an empty, to carve space out of the space, to design it, which means to divide various spaces from a bigger one, making use of geometry, materials, shapes, colors, different treatments. We cannot reduce space just to its boundaries, it contains all the elements which are intermediating our interaction with it; by this, we can understand the way how spaces are interconnected inside of a building, with the environment, the movement through it and how we inhabit that space, which all influence our perception as users.

In this thesis, we will focus on the architectural space. According to architect and author Christian Norberg-Schulz, architectural space can be divided into existed space and architecture. It describes space as human power of orientation, where human perceive the space according to its modification, a space exist thanks to the human presence, although out it will not be detected.⁴

Image source: https://theartstack.com/artist/perejaume/untitled-3267 accessed 20th June 2017
He divided space into 5 concepts, based on the social and cultural background:
1. Physical / pragmatic space - this space has ceiling, walls and floor;
2. Perceptual space - the perceived space by immediate orientation;
3. Existential space;
4. Cognitive space;
5. Abstract space / Geometrical space - through logical relations.

In the analysis of the architectural space is very important to take into consideration the concept of phenomenology, which is playing an essential role. Apart from the theoretical understanding of the space, we need to consider it, in order “to promote the integration of sensorial perception as a function of a built form which lead to an experience that is beyond tangible, but rather abstract, observed and perceived”.

In this analysis, I will make use, as a starting point, of Henri Lefebvre’s theory of the production of space, done in 1991. The critical work “Space, Difference, Everyday Life: Reading Henri Lefebvre”, realized by Stefan Kipfer, Kanishka Goonewardena, Christian Schmid, Richard Milgrom in 2008, will guide our incursion about the architectural space.

Nowadays, our society is in a constant change. The speed of it is much more intense than ever before and even more than what we can imagine.

“Time configurations determining our world call for new concepts of space corresponding to contemporary social conditions.” In this context, Henri Lefebvre’s theory of production of space fits very well, based on the complex social theory about the systematically integration of the different concept of space, allowing the understanding and analysis of space’s processes from different points. In his opinion, the production of space is including also the context. This means that he understand space as being totally related to social reality, space “in itself” cannot exist, and never can serve as an epistemological position, it is only produced. According to his theory, space cannot be imagined as an independent material reality existing “in itself”, always depends on the elements which “are producing” the space. Those “elements”, in the theory of Lefebvre, refers to human beings, with their corporeality and sensuousness, with their sensitivity and imagination, their ideologies and their thinking, which are interacting with each other through their activity and practice. Based on these assumptions, Henri Lefebvre constructs his theory of the production of social space and social time, which transform

5 Article “Theory of Phenomenology: Analyzing Substance, Application, and Influence”, p. 2  
https://ctek.edu/sites/ctedrupalctek.edu/files/docs/portfolios/kraus/essay2.pdf

space and time are not purely material factors, which cannot be reduced to the status of pure and
which are understood as being integral aspects of social practice. By transforming them in social
products that means “they are both result and precondition of the production of society”. By
being socially produced, time and space can be only understood relating to a specific context, to a
specific society, outside of what they could not exist universally.

The production of space can be divided into three dialectically interconnected processes or
dimensions, according to Lefebvre’s theory, saw as “formants” or “moments” of the production of
space, being “doubly determined and correspondingly doubly designated”. They refer to the triad of
“spatial practice”, “representations of space” and “spaces of representation”, and on the other side, to
“perceived”, “conceived” and “lived” space. These distinct points lead to a twofold approach to space:
a phenomenological and a linguistic or semiotic one. Because, the understanding of the producing of
space and time depends on the social reality, marked “in itself” by contradictions, means that we can
have a good understanding just by comprehending this contradictions. This is not leading to an intent
of lapsing into irrationality and mysticism, but more on the investigation of the emotional, instinctive,
and “irrational”, as social facts. In this context, the introduction of the symbol is needed, with its
significance for human being in society, a symbol which depends on social structures and ideologies,
and which forms the basis for the social imaginary, different from the individual one, with a very clear
distinction between its philosophical and social function. According to Lefebvre, the formalization of
the symbol is not possible, having a decisive significance.

Spatial practice refers to the material dimension of social activity and interaction, denoting a system
resulted from articulation and connection of elements or activities. In other words, denote “the real”,
as “lived and taken-for-granted space”. By spatial, in this case, we understand the simultaneity of
activities.

The representation of space, as conceptual ideologies, offers an image and also is defining a space,
referring to “the symbolic”.

Spaces of representation, as experienced and describable imagined spaces, being the inverse of
“representations of space” deal with “the imaginary”. This dimension of the production of space
doesn’t refers to the spaces themselves, but “to the process of signification that links itself to a (material)

7  Ibid.
8  Ibid.
9  Ibid.
Reading Henri Lefebvre”, Routledge, 1 edition (January 27, 2008), ISBN-10: 0415954606
12  Ibid.
SPACIAL PRACTICE
physical space (naturel)
Perceived
daily routines align with routes between places

REPRESENTATION OF SPACES
mental space (abstractions)
Concieved
scientists, technocratic subdividers, planners

SPACES OF REPRESENTATION
social space (sensations, actions)
Lived
inhabitants and users
symbol”.13 As we made an introduction to the semiotic or linguistic approach of the space, we will focus now on the concept of phenomenology, where the perception is playing a fundamental role. Perception, by definition, depends upon the subject, which give a very distinctive range of interpretations, based on a concrete, produced materiality, not only the mind’s result.14 Edward Soja offers another definition of space: he divided it into the autonomous existence of three spaces: a first physical one, a second mental space, and a third social space. He insisted on the importance of the third social space as a comprehensive space, a place from where all spaces can be grasped, understood and transformed, a lived space of representation.15

The second triad, defined by Henri Lefebvre, is about the space as perceived, conceived and lived, but none of these can be considered as absolute or privilege. “Space is unfinished, since it is continuously produced, and it is always bound up with time.”16 In this scenario, individuals assume space and become the subjects of their space through the spatial practice. The connections between daily lived space and the separation structures, defined as urban, are experienced every day in the processes of living, working, leisure spaces and so on, becoming objects of spontaneous knowledge of space. “From the standpoint of reproduction, the “satellite town” is an ideological apparatus where the lived ideology of spatial separation becomes materialized through everyday practice. Spatial practices thus acquire their cohesion through the dominant ideologies of lived space. They lead a material existence insofar as Ford’s Model T becomes a model of lived space.”17

Conform to Lefebvre, “space is becoming a [relatively] independent “reality” as a result of the long process of modernizing society. The initial question for this sketch is the following: can the epochal shift from the temporal to the spatial, like the epistemological change from the “industrial” to the “urban,” be located in the discourses and political technologies of the modern production of urban space?”18 In order to have a closer viewpoint of the question addressed by Henri Lefebvre, we will analyze two fundamental problems at the beginning of the next chapter regarding the modernization of the city and the urbanization of the space.

13 Ibid.
18 Ibid, p. 54
Spatial practice

Representation of space

Spaces of representation
"Nowadays, the fluctuating life has already become reality in wide sectors of the population. I think that what is needed is not simply to draw those images, but to find the procedure to create a real space suitable for the new life that will come." - Toyo Ito

2.1 THE MODERNIZATION OF THE CITY

During the industrial era, city was determined by villa/factory/workers’ tenement, pursuing the industrial principles of organizing time and space in the workplace, which once with the beginning of the modernization process spread beyond industrial “borders”. They tend to take control over the entire society, and level the class structure, divided into urban and proletarian sectors. The social is homogenize and standardize by the industrial concepts.

Production and cooperation from the labour sector are being translated to redefine the city’s disciplines, becoming the main concepts for the new Fordist society of social knowledge and power, putting in charge the processes of standardization, rationalization, typification and Taylorization to shape the metropolitan everyday life.

City is described as an enterprise, as exemplified in this fragment by New Frankfurt “What is the city for? It should enable every single citizen to realize their vocation by allowing them to maximize performance with minimal effort. This principle must be the guiding star directing all future measures undertaken by the city builder.”19 This concept of the city as an enterprise, give new directions about new type of social rationalization, combining the new methods of planning in architecture, administration and urban planning with the metropolitan masses lifestyle, already used with those methods in their working lives. The daily lived spaces are experiencing a fundamental transformation during the modernization process, influenced by the hegemony of the Fordist model.

Industrial machine (the engine and the automobile) becomes the iconic reference, and “enterprise” regulative concept of the urban, determining the new themes in the planning and control of the economy for the “new” city such as mobility, speed, traffic, synchronicity, which are describing the functioning of metropolitan everyday life. “Social efficiency” and “equality” are intended to be

19 Ernst May, quoted in Ruth Diehl, Die Tätigkeit Ernst Mays in Frankfurt am Main in den Jahren 1925–30 unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des Siedlungsbaus, Ph.d. dissertation, University of Frankfurt (1976), 75 (translated by B. Coone-wardenal)
integrated into society through the metropolitan reform, and “progress” now constitutes history as an expectation of future development.20

2.2 THE URBANIZATION OF SPACE

Through the medium of automobiles and mass media, the process of spreading the modern metropolitan culture is reaching all the places which are included in urban category.

The Fordist motto "city without limits" from the postwar period, manifested by the extension of the production of space of the inner-city principles to the peripheries, giving birth to the concepts of homogenization and hierarchization. This determined also the penetration of peripheralization of the city center, seen before as the history of the city and society. This determined a big change: the city center started to be the host for "the banality" of modern tertiary architecture, losing its power of symbolizing the relations between inhabitants and their city, becoming as an empty foyer, characterized by their symbolic spatialization: "The urban is, therefore, pure form; a place of encounter, assembly, simultaneity. This form has no specific content, but is a center of attraction and life."21 Those processes of extension both to the peripheries, as also to the city center of the empty in hospitality of abstract space give the freedom that any place can convert in a sub center, where the new hierarchy is based on distance, and transportation.

The urbanism is modified by the Fordist urban planning concepts, that overlay the industrial, becoming the dominant ideology of daily urban life, introducing abstract space as grids, fragments, distances, which determine the loss of the urban, resulted from the separations in urban culture and the codification in urban consciousness as a set of oppositions: monotony/variety, public/private, work/residence, anonymity/individuality. The city centered more on functionalized architecture, shattering the utopia of progress for urbanity, which determined the crisis of the city, consequence for the representation of space: "In the early sixties, after the essential foundations for a new concept of architecture were laid in the works of Saverio Muratori, Carlo Aymonino, Aldo Rossi, Oswald Mathias Ungers, the problematic of architecture undergoes radical change. The significance of space and its elements come to the fore, the construction of housing is relegated to second place behind city building".22 This period determined the end of the center and of perspectival space, the end of the power of the factory and enterprise form over urban space and the social as dominant ideology.

The theorization of representations of space allows to become aware of the transformations of urban forms, giving an insight of the general and political crisis of representation. Urban, as opposite to urbanism, which is revealing gradually its ambiguity, collects the data from society, becoming the episteme of a period.


Image source: https://medium.com/@sverhulst/re-imagining-cities-322f015bbc0b accessed 16th August 2017
The diagnosis of space today consists in the missing of coherence in terms of representation of
space (the symbolic), which is intermediating "the existential experiences in the spatial practice of urban lifeworld (the real) and the spaces of imagining the world and nature (the imaginary). In this case, image, concept, and reality are dissociated to the point of provoking a crisis of meaning and representation."23 Apart from this character of the space today, a new concept of technological spaces of robotization and computerization are invading our daily life; "genetic engineering conquers biological corpo-reality; semiological image spaces replace the hermeneutic cultures of the written world; apparatuses of artificial intelligence produce hyperspaces of experience (Erlebnis), cyberspace."24 This is introducing a new typology of spatiality, an immaterial one, which belongs to codification and networking information, and which cannot be represented using the conventional representation of space, time and world, and which is introducing a new language of space. Hans-Ulrich Gumbrecht, in his work "Symptomatology of the present" is talking about the "de-temporalization (loss of historicity), de-totalization (heterogeneity of life-worlds) and denaturalization (fusion of man, machine, nature), an uncorporeal process of spatialization whose material consequences for the relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence can be represented at the most virtually, as transformations of a "process by which space becomes an autonomous 'reality' mediated by images".25

24 Ibid.

2.3 SOCIETY & RELATION WITH TECHNOLOGY

Starting from the 20th century and until today, the society is defined by individuals, identified by their patterns of consumption, which mean the products they are buying. Nowadays, contemporary society is confronting with a change of paradigms, more than changes in terms of technics or styles. Those changes are reflected also in architecture, based on the shift in philosophy, structure and world view which determine a change in the basic framework of thoughts. In order to define the impact which has on architecture, we should start with a sociological question about our contemporary lifestyle. Which are the new factors which are incorporated as habitual in our daily life? Do we, as human beings, have new needs comparing to the old ones?

In order to offer a proper answer to the upper questions, I will make an analysis of the contemporary society, trying to define the fundamental aspects which characterize it.

“The post-Fordism society implies flexible and qualitative modes of regulating social and political-economic relations that are restructured in the capitalist apparatus (dispositif) of space—cities, regions, and nations—and evoke a “revenge of the urban” (Alain Lipietz) at an international scale. “Information society” denotes the daily technology-intensive transformation of production and reproduction which infuses modern relations of money, time, and urban space with information (Castells). And “culture society” (Kulturgesellschaft) refers to the tendency of social space to differentiate between a plurality of lifestyles that are symbolized as “fine distinctions” in differential representations of urban lifeworld (Pierre Bourdieu).”

The modern imaginary urban is making use of different means of shock experiences in terms of images, language and cinema in order to make available the “collective unconscious of functionalized metropolitan daily life” to the citizens, giving the freedom of creating their own point of views and ideas about their “reality”, which doesn’t necessarily have to fit with the dominant ideological representations.

Rem Koolhaas, during the Pritzker Prize Ceremony Acceptance Speech in 2000, was making a short introduction into the contemporary society scene. He started with the modern period, around 1950, when “architecture was a continuum that ended up with urbanism. A house was seems as a small city. The city was seen as a huge house. ... It is now 2000...Our client is no longer the state or its derivations, but the private individuals often embarked on daring ambitions and expensive trajectories. The system is final: the market economy. We work in a post- ideological era and for lack


... support we have abandoned the city or any more general issues. The themes we invent
and sustain are our private mythologies, our specializations. We have no discourse about territorial organization, no discourse about settlement or human co-existence. One development is certain. In the past three years, brick and mortar have evolved to click and mortar. Retail has become e-tail and we cannot exaggerate the importance of those things enough. Compared to the occasional brilliance of architecture now, the domain of the virtual has asserted itself with a wild and messy abandon and is proliferating at a speed that we can only dream of. For the first time in decades, and maybe in millennia, we architects have a very strong and fundamental competition. The communities we cannot imagine in the real world will flourish in virtual space. The territories and demarcations that we maintain on the ground are merged and morphed beyond recognition in a much more immediate, glamorous and flexible domain—that of the electronic. After four thousand years of failure, Photoshop and the computer create utopias instantly. At this ceremony in this location, architecture is still fundamentally committed to mortar, as if only the proximity to one of the largest piles assembled in the history of mankind reassures us about another two thousand years of lease on our particular niche...**Rem Koolhaas traced some of the most eloquent characteristics of our society: the mass privatization, fewer public investments compared to increased private ones, which change the focus from the city as a unit to more local and private interventions, extreme fast development of technology, the invasion of the virtual utopias and, in this context of evolution, architecture is still committed to mortar. In order to offer a better understanding of how those facts manifest and which are their consequences, I will try to treat them separately.**

Each experience as human being in a society is defined by “living”, as an indeterminate relation between a symbolic reality and a “real” reality. The symbolic reality is the one which is intermediating with the real through various representations, similar to fiction, allowing us to perceive, conceive and live the world in a specific way. The Real and the symbolic, as working in a total dependence one to the other, contain relations that eventually appear to us as naturalness as possible. “It is in this indeterminacy, where “living” is constituted as a mode of visible configurations and dynamics of subjectivation that are conforming in their own future.”

Apart from these realities, in 1990, the investigator Tom Caudell introduced the terminology of “augmented reality”, technology used from 1960 in aeronautical military industry. This new reality is a technology based on virtual data, offering the possibility of creating a physical space through informatics means.

The growth of technology has changed the way we live our lives and benefitted us in so many ways...**27 Rem Koolhaas, Pritzker Prize Ceremony Acceptance Speech, 2000
28 arquis, vivienda mínima contemporánea | diciembre 2016 | issn 0328-2384 dlm 24695 - 1996
Theoretically, everything which is created by the hand of man is not natural. Paradoxically, cities in themselves are an unnatural environment, as being a human creation. The augmented reality is manmade, but which is going far away from what we can even imagine. In the case of mass implementation, the augmented reality, it will be a technology of a power not known until now, but very vulnerable, since it is based on “high technology” dependent on the continuous connection system and represented in devices with planned obsolescence. This means that in case of a change of a certain importance in human development, it may create a certain dependency, and a significant risk of losing data difficult to recover.

Nowadays, man arrived at the point of living in totally artificial spaces, and even his social relationships development are extended or entirely moved in cyberspace. Despite this fact, which superficially said, has the goal to make easier the communication, in today’s society, there are, more and more often, people who die in absolute solitude. People who are even dead when they are found in their homes and without anyone to notice their absence. Those are not just isolated cases. For example, throughout Spain there are one million eight hundred and ninety thousand elderly people living alone, of whom it is estimated that between 10% and 20% do not receive visits from friends or relatives. Even more worrying fact is that this is not just applied for old people. The extended phenomena led to the apparition of companies, as the one named Keepers, whose business it is to dispose of possessions left behind by those who die in solitude. As related by the company’s director, the number of young middle age people, around 40-50 years old, of dying alone is even bigger.

Based on the tool introduced today by the development of technology, with the goal of “giving the freedom of each one to do what he like”, led nowadays to a style of dining that exists somewhere between dining out and dining in. Eating out suppose interaction with people in the restaurant. Home cooking implies some sort of personal connection in the store where the individual need to buy the ingredients, with the staff or with other customers. But when eating prepared foods exclusively, something just pop into the microwave, that means no connection with anyone. In conclusion, modern hyper-convenience, as facilitating the isolation, indirectly encourages it.

Most of the social relationships are driven by the technologies of communication, which are private, from the point of the active users. Nowadays, we are in the situation of social exclusion in the case of those who don’t know to manage the existed technology (because of untrained skills, ignorance or lack of economic resources), which is one of the reasons which are accentuating the gap between...
individuals, as much as getting them digitally closer. In conclusion, today society is the most uniform from the history. The communications means produce a double phenomenon: a uniformity inside the same generation, because of the common information base, accessible from all over the globe, and, in the same time, the generational barrier between people born in the information society and previous generations.

Since the early ages, architecture has been related to the existing technologies, mainly referred from the construction methods point of view and which were contributing to define different architectural spaces, depending on the era. However, this paradigm is enlarging its influence nowadays, when many technological innovations are being oriented towards electronics and telecommunications.

The range of the electronics incorporated into architecture, with the goal to increase the comfort parameters, have been summarized by Flax (1991) as follows: energy management, temperature monitoring, lighting control and reduction, access and area locate, security, fire safety, telecommunication, local area networks, management information, maintenance, heating, ventilation and air-conditioning (HVAC). This concept, named “Responsive Architecture” combine the principle of architecture with the idea that electronics has the power to adjust the way a building is functioning, blurring the boundaries of architecture and his response to a given context, with its specific tools. The electronical innovations are often interpreted as given more freedom to design a generic architecture, which doesn't depends on the existing context because electronics will achieve the comfort parameters.

The writer Pau Virilio, manifested his skepticism about the time depletion as speed technologies occupying all the areas: “There is again the same illusory ideology that when the world is reduced to nothing and we have everything at hand we will be infinitely happy, I believe just in reverse - and that has already been proven - that we will be infinitely unhappy because we have lost the authentic place of freedom, which is the extension.” 32 Despite, the main objective, as liberating man from different routine activities, the effect is not the expected one.

Nowadays, the technological innovations which cover a certain need, take place so quickly that the individuals don't have time to get used with its physical representation. This is happening because the customers need a certain time for accommodation of how to use it. On the other side, there are also the individuals which cannot afford to buy the latest available technology, and, for which their already existing is the only one they will interact and use. Even in the case of the customers with high purchasing power, there is also a repulsiveness to change the devices which involve a new learning process.

Economically, the need of exponential growth is which leads to the production of ephemeral technology, characterized to have a short life (planned obsolescence), useful just for a specific designed time. The concept of creating products today is about incorporating the lowest quality possible. During the XVIII century, the products were produced in the best way available at that moment; but during time this philosophy wasn’t profitable, because of the invested time and because of the long life, which was determining a lower demand.

Based on the intentionally limited life, technology offers a false happiness around the concept of newness. Knowing that, a very big problem is represented by the cultural production of our era, whose archives consist in devices with limited life, which because of the obsolescence or the technologically imposed changes will be in a short time out of use. The impact of this process of disappearance will create a problematic situation for our society. Today, just very few companies have the interest to continue operating the devices which can read a product from a long time ago. And even in this scenario, if will be just 2 or 3 companies available on doing that, then the free circulation and access of information will lose its freedom.

Nowadays, most of the time, we are changing a device not because is not fulfilling its role, but it’s because a new one was released into the marked, which most of the time, has more functions, but mainly is fulfilling the same main role. There are also situations, when the technological change is a significant one, from an old to a new product, in that case we are talking about a disruptive technology.

The technological development is so fast that doesn’t give the time neither for the adaptation of the consuming market. In that case, the use of technology by consumers is limited by their own knowledge, without considering the actual device limitation.

The advertisement development possess today an important role in this context, based on a great advancement, promoting ideals of life, implementing false ideas of happiness dependent on consume, which at the end, never reach the expectations. Even the simple announce shared online by common users, is also a form of advertisement, penetrating even the “private paradise” (personal generated online space). 33

33 Jean Nouvel 1995 “Dreams of Power” Exposicion organizada en el Centro Zitelle de Vencia.
CHAPTER 3

CONTEMPORARY INDIVIDUALS HABITS AND LIFESTYLE

In this chapter I will make use of European Union statistics as base of my analysis, trying to define the habits and lifestyle of contemporary individuals. The ambit of this study will be limited to EU-28 countries.

3.1 DENSITY

“The majority of EU-28 population lives in a relatively small area ...”

The area covered by the EU-28 is close to 4.5 million km$^2$ and the population density about 116.4 inhabitants per km$^2$, where actually less than half of the EU’s total area was inhabited in 2014 (44% or 1.95 million km$^2$). In this context, almost 72.5% of EU-28 inhabitants lived in cities, towns and suburbs in 2014, and just 27.5% in rural areas.

The population distribution density is different between EU Member States depending on the size and spatial distribution of the urban development of each country. In order to give a view of this, I will use the terminology provided by Eurostat, whose analysis are done in base of grid cells (a grid is composed of squared grid cells containing population counts per grid cell, in order to describe the spatial distribution of population and to study the interrelationships between human activities and the environment). 77.2% of the EU-28 population was living in 10% of the grid cells, with an average population density more than 2400 inhabitants per km$^2$, which means 17.5 times higher than the EU-28 average.

On the other side, in a totally contrast, 11.9% of the EU-28 population was living in 80.9% of the inhabited area.

Future prediction about people migration from rural is expecting to be around 7.9 million inhabitants until 2050, which will reduce rural population to 20% of the EU-28 population. By 2050, it is anticipated that more than 80% of the EU-28 population will live in predominantly urban regions, which will rise an important challenge for the cities: to create solutions to accommodate them.

3.2 TYPE OF DWELLING


In this context, the form of living is partly determined by the type of dwelling. In 2015, 42.0% of EU-28 inhabitants, which means more than 4 out of every 10 persons, lived in flats, 24.1% in semi-detached houses and 33.3% in detached houses (see Figure 1).

Based on the data from the previous analysis, from those 72.5% of the population living in urban area, 42% were living in flats and the rest of 29.5% in detached and semi-detached houses. This express the compact character of the dwellings. We can see the high concentration of people in the urban areas, and the limited land, are determining compact building, with a minimum ground contact, which is growing on vertical and explore a large range of facilities. As consequence, nowadays, we arrived at the point when one of the first questions about a building, is the number of square meters.

3.3 TENURE STATUS

The tenure status is an important factor of this analysis, because is expressing the individual possibilities/preferences in terms of buying. In 2015, 26.9% of the EU-28 population lived in an
owner-occupied home for which there was an outstanding loan or mortgage, while 42.5 % of the population lived in an owner-occupied home without a loan or mortgage. As such, 69.4 % persons in the EU-28 lived in owner-occupied dwellings, while 31.6 % were tenants. 19.7 % were tenants with a market price rent, and 10.9 % were tenants in reduced-rent or free accommodation.

Based on the 2014 data, for example, in Switzerland the proportion of people who lived in rented dwellings outweighed those living in owner-occupied dwellings, as some 55.5 % of the population were tenants.

In Sweden (63.4 %) and the Netherlands (60.1 %) more than half of the population lived in owner-occupied dwellings with an outstanding loan or mortgage; this was also the case in Iceland (62.8 %) and Norway (61.9 %). This data highlight the conservatory man’s tenure character - from ancient times man felt the need of possession -, with a new interest, more intensively in the developed countries, in changing this paradigm and being more orientated in giving itself more freedom and flexibility, even in terms of one of the most stable area: the house.
In order to define contemporary man profile, we need to have a look of his way of living. We will start with analyzing the house quality.

### 3.4 HOUSING QUALITY

One of the key dimensions in assessing the quality of housing is the availability of sufficient space in a dwelling compared with the number of inhabitants. The overcrowding rate describes the proportion of people living in an overcrowded dwelling, as defined by the number of rooms available to the household, the household’s size, as well as its members’ ages and their family situation.

In 2015, 16.7% of the EU-28 population lived in overcrowded dwellings (see Figure 3). The highest overcrowding rates among the EU Member States were registered in Romania (49.7%) and Poland (43.4%), while rates above 50% were recorded for Serbia (53.4%) and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (51.1%).

![Figure 3](image-url)

*Figure 3*

*Source: Eurostat (online data code: lhc_lhv05a)*
In addition to overcrowding, some other aspects of housing deprivation — such as the lack of a bath or a toilet, a leaking roof in the dwelling, or a dwelling considered as being too dark — are taken into account to build a more complete indicator of housing quality.

The severe housing deprivation rate is defined as the proportion of persons living in a dwelling which is considered as being overcrowded, while having at the same time at least one of these aforementioned housing deprivation measures.

Across the EU-28 as a whole, 4.9 % of the population suffered from severe housing deprivation in 2015. There were four EU Member States where more than 1 in 10 of the population faced severe housing deprivation in 2015: Bulgaria recorded a rate of 11.4 %, with this share rising to 15.5 % in both Hungary and Latvia and peaking at close to one in five persons (19.8 %) in Romania. By contrast, 1.0 % or less of the population in the Netherlands, Belgium, Finland and Cyprus faced severe housing deprivation in 2015.
Next aspect to be analyzed will be the affordability of a house based on the monthly costs.

3.5 HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

In 2015, an 11.3 % share of the EU-28 population lived in households that spent 40 % or more of their equalized disposable income on housing (see Table 1). The proportion of the population whose housing costs exceeded 40 % of their equalized disposable income was highest for tenants with market price rents (27.0 %) and lowest for persons in owner-occupied dwellings without a loan or mortgage (6.7 %).

The EU-28 average masks significant differences between the EU Member States. At one extreme there were a number of countries where a relatively small proportion of the population lived in households where housing costs exceeded 40 % of their disposable income, notably Malta (1.1 %), Cyprus (3.9 %), Ireland (4.6 %) and Finland (4.9 %). At the other extreme, just over two out of every five people (40.9 %) in Greece and just under one in six of the population in Romania (15.9 %), Germany (15.6 %) and Denmark (15.1 %) spent more than 40 % of their equalized disposable income on housing.

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total population</th>
<th>Owner occupied, with mortgage or loan</th>
<th>Owner occupied, no outstanding mortgage or housing loan</th>
<th>Tenant — rent at market price</th>
<th>Tenant — rent at reduced price or free</th>
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(*) Tenants — rent at reduced price or free: unreliable.

(*) 2014.

(*) 2013.

Source: Eurostat (online data codes: ilc_ho07c and ilc_ho07a)
3.6 LABOUR MARKET

A data which will give an important overview of the contemporary habits and lifestyle are the labour market statistics. Based on the diagram below, the labour market is composed from active - employed and unemployed persons - and inactive population. The difference between the active unemployed persons and the inactive ones is the duration of unemployment.

3.7 EMPLOYMENT

In order to have an overview of the nowadays individual working situation, I will analyze different aspects, which I consider more eloquent.

The duration of working life was in a constant increase during the last years, 2.5 years more in 2015 comparing to 2000, a boost from 32.9 to 35.4 years for the EU-28, where the highest rates are registered in the most developed countries. (see figure 5)
Employment rates by sex and age

Employment rate, age group 20–64

In 2015, the EU-28 employment rate for persons aged 20 to 64, as measured by the EU’s labour force survey (EU LFS), stood at 70.1%. (see Figure 6) The lowest rate of employment are registered for the young people, with age between 15-24 years old, because the EU-28 minimum working age is 18, and a certain number of young people is getting a specialization, being involved in university studies, workshops etc. Also, the missing of practical experience after finishing the studies, a lack of the economy in synchronizing the offer with the demand is leading to the upper results. Also small rates are registered in the case of the people with age between 55-64 years old, because of the difficulty in finding a similar job in case dismissal based on the fast society changes or the difficulty of getting another specialization in a new area.
Type of employment by age group, 2015

Part-time and fixed-term contracts

The part-time contracts are becoming more and more used because of the new form of economy and also because of the increasingly individual freedom in terms of managing his time and type of job. Based on statistics, the proportion of the EU-28 workforce in the age group 20–64 years reporting that their main job was part-time increased steadily from 16.5 % in 2005 to 19.0 % by 2015. (see table 2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
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<th>Euro area (EA-19)</th>
<th>Persons working part-time, age group 20-64</th>
<th>Persons with a second job, age group 15 and over (*)</th>
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</table>

Table 2 - Persons working part-time or with a second job, 2005–2015

In 2015, the proportion of employees aged 20-64 in the EU-28 with a contract of limited duration (fixed-term employment) was 11.1 %. For example, more than one in five employees in Poland (21.9 %) and Spain (20.7 %) had a temporary contract.

We can say that today we are confronting a “working” nomadism, with people being more...
interested in looking for an idealistic job and an economy which is not prepared to assure a long term
guaranty to individuals. For example, in Spain the legislation has been changed in order to protect
more the employee, which, in the end, transformed in being its “enemy”. By being so rigorous with the
employer, determined those ones to hire less people with an unlimited full-time contract and prefer
the part-time and fixed-term ones.

![Figure 8 - Persons](image)

employed with a contract of limited duration, age group 20–64, 2015

3.8 UNEMPLOYMENT

Eurostat estimates that 19.716 million men and women in the EU-28[1], were unemployed in March 2017.
In order to understand better what the impact of those numbers is, I will analyze depending on the
age group and the duration of unemployment. The last one, will give an overview of the proportion
of inactive people, which are playing an important role in contemporary society through their
working status.
Youth unemployment trends

In March 2017, 3.883 million young persons (under 25) were unemployed in the EU28. Youth unemployment rates are generally much higher, even double or more than double, than unemployment rates for all ages. As for the rate for the total population, the youth unemployment rate in the EU-28 was 19.7 % at the end of 2015. This data determine an unbalanced situation in the economic system based on state retirement plan, which mean the difficulty to be cover the retirement money by the young generations. In the search for a solution, more and more countries introduced the private pensions as mandatory together with the state ones.

In the upper figure, can be seen that the proportion between the employed people is less than half
of the unemployed and economically inactive people. That give an insight of the need of economy to balance this situation, by efficient and sustainable strategies.

Figure 10: Youth unemployment rates, EU-28 and EA-19, seasonally adjusted, January 2000 - March 2017 (%) source: Eurostat
Long-term unemployment rate

The long-term unemployment rate in the EU-28 in 2016 was around 4%. The highest one was in Greece (17%), followed by Spain (9.5%). This data refers to working available persons, aged between 15-65 years old, which are inactive for a long-term. To this category, will be added the children, people which have never worked and the persons over 65 years. (Figure 11)
3.9 QUALITY OF LIFE IN EUROPE - FACTS & VIEWS

This section, as a conclusion of the above data's impact on individuals' life, will be analyzed from the point of view of the quality of life and how those numbers are reflected in their human perception. On a scale of 0 to 10 nearly 80 % of European residents rated their overall life satisfaction in 2013 at 6 or higher. That means, nearly half of them (49.2 %) reported a medium level of satisfaction with their financial situation (6–8 out of 10), 37.6 % reported a low satisfaction level (0–5 out of 10) and only 13.2 % a high satisfaction level (9–10 out of 10). The average of satisfaction around 7.1, with values ranging from 4.8 in Bulgaria (followed by Portugal, Hungary, Greece and Cyprus, all at 6.2) to 8.0 in Finland, Denmark and Sweden. Women and men were nearly equally satisfied and younger EU citizens were more satisfied than the other age groups. Unemployed and inactive people were on average the least satisfied (5.8) compared to full-time employed (7.4) or people in education or training (7.8), who reported the highest rates of life satisfaction.* This express the need of the man to play an active and significant role in the society, which will increase the level of happiness. The younger generation, despite the statistics which show a less favorable situation from the point of view of the working situation, stability, is happier because of being less willing for compromise and assuming more changes in order to have the perfect job that fits to them.

*source: Eurostat statistics
Average satisfaction with different aspects of life

The quality of a person’s life was analyzed in relation with the following aspects: personal relationship, accommodation, commuting time, living environment, green and recreational areas, job, life overall satisfaction, time use and financial situation.

One of the highest rates from all the analyzed aspects, were registered in the personal relationship section, around 7.8 for EU-28. Among the EU Member States, those most satisfied with their personal relationships were to be found in Ireland (8.6), Denmark and Austria (both 8.5) and Malta (8.4).

The satisfaction with financial situation had the widest gap between Member States, with a 3.9 difference between the highest and lowest average, meanwhile the average was around 6, the lowest value from the all analyzed aspects and with the biggest gap between extremes. In contrast, job satisfaction and time use had the narrowest gaps between Member States, both with a 2.1 difference between the highest and lowest averages, and with an overall around 7.1 and 6.7 for the last one, according to Eurostat.

In 2013, 17.2% of EU residents were living in over-crowded dwellings, a decrease of 2.3 percentage points compared to 2005. Over the same time period 34.4% of EU residents were living in under occupied dwellings, an increase of 3.1 percentage points compared to 2005. It is not surprising that more than eight in ten Europeans were relatively satisfied with the dwelling in which they lived.

In particular, on a scale of 0 to 10, 51.8% of EU residents reported a medium satisfaction (6–8 out of 10), 32.5% of EU residents reported a high satisfaction (9–10 out of 10) and only 15.7% reported a low satisfaction (0–5 out of 10) with the dwelling they lived in.

Source: Eurostat statistics
Job and commuting time satisfaction

Being productive or having a main activity includes also both paid and unpaid work and other types of main activity status. Work usually takes up a significant part of someone’s time and it has a significant impact on the quality of life. Basically, work generates an income, but also provides an identity and presents opportunities for socializing with others, to be creative, learn new things and be engaged in activities that give a sense of fulfilment and enjoyment. Consequently, quality of life may be affected when job insecurity is experienced or work is inadequately paid. As we saw in a chapter before, the lack of work or unemployment may threaten one’s psychological health and impacts directly the individuals’ happiness level. (2)

In the EU-28, approximately one in five residents (19.4 %) (3) currently in employment assessed their job negatively in 2013, whereas approximately one in four (24.8 %) expressed high levels of satisfaction. The remaining residents (55.8 %) declared medium levels of satisfaction with their job (Figure 13). Based on a scale of 0 to 10 — where 0 is the lowest level of satisfaction and 10 the highest (4) — the medium resulted in a level of satisfaction around 7.1, similar to the overall average life satisfaction in the EU.

Employment is also associated with constraints such as commuting time. This is the time (mostly unpaid) workers go from home to work and back (5). Although this is not considered as working time from the employers’ point of view, it is time dedicated to work (6).

(3) All current household members aged 16 and over who are currently working.
(4) Where 0 means not at all satisfied and 10 completely satisfied; low satisfaction refers to 0–5 ratings, medium satisfaction refers to 6–8 and high satisfaction to 9–10.
(5) Some workers are eligible for the reimbursement of at least part of their travel expenses, in particular self-employed workers.
(6) At the EU-27 level, around 4 hours were spent on commuting in 2005. Source: Eurostat, Reconciliation between work, private and family life in the European Union (2009), p. 42 (Source: Eurofound, European Working Conditions Surveys— EWCS).
The proportion of EU workers (7) who declared low levels of satisfaction with their commuting time was close to the proportion of EU workers who reported low job satisfaction (20.5 % vs 19.4 %). Even in this case, EU workers were much more likely to be highly (37.9 %) or moderately satisfied (41.7 %) with their commuting time compared to their job satisfaction. This led to a higher mean satisfaction with commuting time compared to job satisfaction (7.4 vs 7.1 out of 10) (figure 13).

Figure 14: Satisfaction with job and commuting time, by labour status, EU-28, 2013 (left axis: % of population; right axis: mean rating) data source: Eurostat statistics

Table 4: Employment condition versus low job
satisfaction, by country, 2013 (%) data source: Eurostat statistics

Respondents are all current household members aged 16 and over who are currently working. The variable refers to the respondent’s opinion/feeling about the degree of satisfaction with his/her job.

Average Duration of Jobs

A higher percentage of younger workers had short duration jobs. Among jobs started by workers with ages from 25 to 29, 87% had an average length of employment of fewer than five years as compared to 83% of workers with ages from 30 to 34.

76% of workers with ages from 35 - 39 had an average job duration of fewer than 5 years and this figure declined to 69% for workers from ages of 40 to 48. There was little variation in average job duration by race with Hispanics and Blacks spending only a slightly shorter average length of time in each job.35

Incomes statistics

Figure 15: Median gross hourly earnings, EUR & PPS, 2014 - data source: Eurostat statistics

Low-wage earners

Low-wage earners are defined as those employees earning two thirds or less of the national median gross hourly earnings. Hence, the threshold that determine low-wage earners is relative and specific to each Member State.
One in every six employees in the European Union is a low-wage earner. Highest share of low-wage earners in Latvia, lowest in Sweden.

The poverty rates in 2015 in Europe

Figure 16 – risk of poverty rate

Emotional stability

Marriage and divorce statistics

Recent demographic data show that the number of marriages per 1,000 persons decreased within the EU-28 in recent decades, while the number of divorces increased. An increase in the proportion of children who are born to unmarried couples was also apparent.

Figure 17: Crude marriage and divorce rates, EU-28, 1970–2011 (per 1,000 inhabitants)

Fewer marriages, more divorces

Some 2.1 million marriages and 986 thousand divorces took place in the EU-28 in 2011, according to the most recent data available for all EU Member States. These figures may be expressed as 4.2 marriages for every 1,000 persons (in other words the crude marriage rate) and 2.0 divorces for every 1,000 persons (in other words the crude divorce rate).

Since 1965, the crude marriage rate in the EU-28 has declined by close to 50 % in relative terms (from 7.8 per 1,000 persons in 1965 to 4.2 in 2011). At the same time, the crude divorce rate increased from 0.8 per 1,000 persons in 1965 to 2.0 in 2011. Part of this increase is due to the fact that in several EU Member States divorce was legalized during the period (for example, in Italy, Spain, Ireland and Malta).

A rise in births outside marriage
The proportion of live births outside marriage in the EU-28 in 2012 was 40%. This share has continued to increase, signaling new patterns of family formation alongside the more traditional pattern where children were born within marriage. Extramarital births occur in non-marital relationships, among cohabiting couples and to lone parents.

The share of children that were born outside of marriage increased in the EU-28 from 27.3% in 2000 to 40.0% in 2012.

3.10 INDIVIDUALS’ HABITS. CONCLUSION

Today, more than ever, we are assisting to a constant increase of urban density. In looking for better opportunities, cities are assaulted, because of their supremacy over the rural. This determines the apparition of a new concept of urban, taking into account the changes of the houses from the last years, as a response to individual needs. Although the overall rate of population growth in the EU-28 has been modest in recent years, there are cities and urban regions which continue to grow at a much faster pace, because of the process of urbanization which is ongoing. Furthermore, population projections for the period through to 2050 indicate that this pattern is expected to continue during the next 35 years. The projections foresee the total number of people living in predominantly urban regions rising by 24.1 million persons, and that by 2050 these regions will provide a home to almost half (45.8%) of the EU-28 population.

Based on the actual growth, around 2.537 planets, similar to Earth will be needed. If by 2010 all the inhabitants of the world consume as the average of the inhabitants of the U.S. it would take five Earth-like planets.36

Michel Maffesoli describes individual identity as eclectic and diffuse: ‘A fragile identity, an identity which is no longer, as was the case during modernity, the only solid foundation of individual and social life.’

Endurance, whether it concerns objects or relations, has become a rare thing. We see that individuals are changing their jobs more often, they are looking for more freedom, being disposed of making

37 Data sources and availability
The data used in this article are primarily derived from microdata from EU statistics on income and living conditions (EU-SILC). The reference population is all private households and their current members residing in the territory of an EU Member State at the time of data collection; persons living in collective households and in institutions are generally excluded from the target population.

38 Connie Hedegaard comisaria de la Union Europea en la cartera de Cambio Climatico de lconferencia central en el Congreso Mundial de CI, la Comisionada de la Union Europea para la Accion Climatical
fewer compromises. They become more self-centered, assuming less and less the responsibility of marriage and to follow the traditional structure of a family. This is reflected also in their emotional stability, where the divorce rate registered is constantly growing.

Based on the forms of employment contract, in the last years the numbers reflecting the people who did not have a fixed working week and a permanent contract grew, once with the numbers of economically active people. During today, the part-time, fixed-term, or temporary work employment contracts became the dominant way of understanding “precarious” work. For a minority part has been a choice, but for 61.7 per cent of Europe’s temporary workers it was because they could not find permanent jobs (ACTRAV, 2011).

The causes of precarious work, in the opinion of Rodgers and Rodgers (1989), were in the deterioration of labour market conditions; rising unemployment; and changes in the mechanisms of job access. Professor Arne L. Kalleberg (2009) suggests that “the focus has to be on those new workplace arrangements that generate precarious work and worker insecurity. This therefore places a focus on changes within the structure and organization of work. He identified six significant causes: the neoliberal and globalized economy which increased competition between companies and led to outsourcing to lower cost countries while created a new labour pool through migration; technological advances forced and assisted companies into becoming more competitive; changes in legal and other institutions; weakening of union power and therefore the weakening of institutional protection for workers; individualism and a new ideological trend shifting towards the personal responsibility for work and family life; and the growth in service-based industries leading to an information-based economy organized around flexible production.

The main drivers of precarious work for Evans and Gibb (2009) were: ‘low-road’ approaches to competition whereby cost-cutting is achieved at the expense of product and job quality, wages and a clean environment; new forms of subcontracting and outsourcing, facilitated by falling costs of coordination and transportation afforded by new information and communication technologies; new management and contractual forms, which loosen the traditional ties between workers and employers, as indicated by the increase in low wage jobs, temporary employment and self-employment, often taking the form of disguised employment.”

Based on the provided statistics data, and the upper definitions of precariousness, we can find a lots of common points between the two, which will leave us to the conclusion that we can call the world in which we are living today, as being precarious.

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39 Sonia McKay, Steve Jefferys, Anna Paraksevopoulou, Janaj Keles, “Study on Precarious work and social rights”, London Metropolitan University, April 2012
CHAPTER 4

PROJECTS WHICH INNOVATES AND CHALLENGE THE SPACE TYPOLGY

In the 20th century, society was affected by the intensification of consumerism, determining the apparition of patterns of consumption, based on what were defined the individuals’ identities. In this context, Toyo Ito offered a response by his project Pao or Dwelling for a Nomad Woman in Tokyo. It was needed, because Tokyo, in 1980, was one of the densest and technologically advanced cities in the world, with most of the people still having a uniform life, except from some nomad girls who lived in the street and whose lifestyle seems to be idealistic. The city itself was decomposing because of the hyperactive culture and high real estate prices.

In this context, the “home” scenario of nomad girl everyday life was meandered from work, going out to leisure places, entertainment and returning to a very small residence, but sufficient for her daily needs. As Iñaki Abalos and Juan Herreros put it: “The nomad girl does not act or pressure the environment, but rather is prepared to be the object herself of the actions and offers proposed by consumerism.”40 The proposal of Toyo Ito analyzes the contemporary lifestyle, characterized by lightness, thinness, permanent nature and ephemerality. The space envisioned by him stand between the intersections of the real with the virtual through projection.


Toyo Ito scenario for Pao I and Pao II (1985 and 1989), imagined all the domestic functions dissolved into the metropolis, allowing to reduce the living units, providing only minimal shelter and access to the informational network. The subject of this research is the urban nomad and the city of Tokyo during the Eighties: where the price per square meters was very high, being one of the most technologically advanced and densest cities in the world. The architectural space of the two Pao is light and ephemeral, being able to dissolve itself in the metropolitan context, which is almost reduced to a series of design objects. “The surfaces become a screen in an effort to incorporate the high-tech development of those times and to absorb the information from the outside world inside the intimate living spaces, a theme which will become recurrent only in later years.”

Axonometry of the two Pao, Inaki Abalos, Juan Herreros, “Toyo Ito, Light Time” El Croquis 71, pag 33

Image source: El Croquis 71, Inaki Abalos, Juan Herreros, “Toyo Ito, Light Time”, pag 33
The limits of the sleeping area, living room, cleaning area are dissolving, more and more people adopting open and multifunctional spaces, where the everyday functional spaces are coexisting. The bathroom, even if it's the one which passed thought multiple forms, compare to the other areas of the house, it's still not part of this “grand opening” of the space.

The family typology is changing nowadays, there are no more predominant family model, no more work patterns, no more gender qualification for jobs, new relationships, and new generations with new dispositions. In this context, the individual is looking how to increase his level of happiness, by achieving more leisure time, the home-office is a reality, traveling is becoming a way of living. This is the generation of living now, not for a future moment. The architecture space should reflect and respond to this context.

The investigation of Boudon, about the Quartiers Modernes Frugès in Pessac, France, designed by Le Corbusier are helping us to understand how people react in relation to certain spaces. Opened in 1926, the complex of houses suffered various alterations on the relationship between the alterations of particular houses, their designs, and their positions in the district. The changes were due to the site conditions and the requirements of the client, and then, after construction, the need of appropriation by the inhabitants to their own purposes. The practice of appropriation, from Henri Lefebvre's point of view, manifests “a higher, more complex concrete rationality than the abstract rationality” of Modernism, concluding that the inhabitants “produce differences in an undifferentiated space.”

With this ideas in mind, we will analyze the winner project of “Mies van der Rohe Awards” 2017. For the first time in the 25 years of competition history, the winner is a social house program project. Kleiburg is located in the Bijlmermeer, a CIAM inspired residential expansion of Amsterdam.

The winners were NL architects and XVW architectuur with the project DeFlat Kleiburg in Amsterdam, an innovative renovation of one of the biggest apartment buildings, a bend slab with 500 apartments, 400 meter long, 10 + 1 stories high. Consortium De FLAT rescued the building from the wrecking ball by turning it into a Klusflat meaning that they ask the inhabitants to renovate their apartments by themselves.

43 Lefebvre, preface to ibid.: n.p.
44 Ibid.
The idea was to renovate the main structure - elevators, galleries, installations - but to leave the apartments unfinished and unfurnished: that means no kitchen, no shower, no heating, no rooms. This lead to the minimization of the initial investments. The architects focused on the introduction of diversity, “to get rid of the uniformity, to ‘humanize’ the architecture” 46 and to emphasize the intrinsic beauty of the building. As Lefebvre point out, to “produce differences in an undifferentiated space”.47

Originally, the ground floor was occupied with the storage spaces from all the units, which converted in an unusable space for social activities, acting almost as a “dead zone”. Those storage spaces were moved to each floor, liberating the ground level for social activities.

The abandoned apartments were in sale for 1 euro each one. The government had approved the demolition of the ensemble, but the architects decided to give life to the existing building and established a strategy to determine the people to use it. So they invited them to reorganize the interior and to make the changes they wanted, after some few intervention in the public areas affected by the passing time. The freedom that people have it in choosing how they want to inhabit the space, transform this project into a successful strategy about social housing program, where the architects’ intervention was minimum, it was more about the users, about the project itself, than the name of an architect.


As the Jury Chairman said, “It challenges current solutions to the housing crisis in European cities, where too often the only ambition is to build more homes year-on-year, while the more profound question of what type of housing should be built goes unanswered.”

Kleiburg is an example of a new kind of architectural project, which give a proper answer to changing household patterns and lifestyles in the twenty-first century. A revitalization of typologies of the past is as relevant as experimenting with new untested models in this quest, reactivating the existing building, with a minimum of resources and environmental impact. “The project inspires reflection on the new and complex reality of contemporary living. It proposes new forms of “affordable housing”, adding to what is universally a complex and multi-layered offer (ranging from fully subsidized rent to shared ownership and rent-purchase schemes) by providing options for the large majority who have a little money but cannot afford to get on the conventional property ladder. This is low-cost habitable space (€ 1,200 per m2) - a fantastic new option that does not currently exist.”

Another contemporary project, but with a totally different approach, where architecture is seen as a support, and the one that has a more active role is the inner space.

49  Ibid.
The relationship between technology and users are leading to a revolutionary approach in different industries, based on the facilities provided in terms of communication at a global level. An innovative and revolutionary project, characteristic for our contemporary society lifestyle, representing a trend at a global scale is AIRBNB. The project is representing a new form of living, focusing more on the social aspect, then on creation of a new typology of architectural space. Considering the definition of the space, from the beginning of this analysis, that the space doesn’t exist in “itself”, being produced. This example highlights society new lifestyle, blurring the limits between living and traveling, and changing the balance against the traditional way of organizing a travel.

The factors which determined the apparition of this project are: economical (based on the upper analysis, the individual’s financial situation, especially in the case of young people. The number of those which are unemployed is two times bigger than the ones which have a job, leading to a precarious situation), the freedom and accessibility of traveling in our contemporary society.
AIRBNB is using the existing space, as it is for a long time, but it’s interesting how this space it’s used. The same typology of space is responding to different uses, being able without any external intervention to modify it, but because of the society paradigm shift. The role of the shared economy more compared with the concept existed before, when a good existed just to be used a certain time, cannot be ignored, society understand that you have to use your belongings in order to produce and then unoccupied.

AIRBNB project is changing the typical approach of the housing system: the users are in the position to choose from a variety of options, always having the flexibility that the house adapts to their needs, comparing to the common way that the house be a defined object and people has to adapt to the existing condition. As it was seen in the Mies van der Rohe awards, the freedom to change and adapt the space to people, seems to increase the chances of project’s success.

The shift in the structure, philosophy and word view of our society determine a change in the basic framework of thought which determine a shift also in architecture, based on the embeddedness in the reigning mental paradigms, like other form of cultural expression. The way how it is reflected in architecture becomes a question partly sociological.
CONCLUSIONS: TOWARDS A NEW TYPOLOGY OF SPACE?

The production of space, as we defined it in this work, is based on individual’s perception (phenomenology), but, there is also the semiotic or linguistic interpretation of space, which can help us to conclude about the status of the contemporary space.

Our society is more characterized by the concept of “space”, then “time” as it was in the modern period, once that the ideology of “city as a machine” has lost its credibility. This space, is converted in a relatively independent “reality”.

Nowadays, the needs of the man are changing and are requiring different solutions. The implementation of these new ideas is constrained by individual’s conservator character, as much as his searching for an innovative lifestyle. This contrast is facilitating the penetration of innovation in different areas, outside of the ones labeled as the most “personal” ones, accepted by the individuals, as not changing their primary “roots”. In the end, this is changing their lifestyle and invert their “base and priorities” in their life. Once, they accepted a new change, they are adopting it, based mostly on the way how they are trained to consume and implement it in daily life. Here, the advancement of advertising plays a fundamental role, as presenting an idyllic happiness, brought by the process of consuming specific technology. In the end, this is an illusion, without a consistent fundament in “real” life.

The man’s constant interest in looking for an improvement has its bases on the level of satisfaction with his actual life. As was revealed by the Eurostat statistics, just 13.2% of EU-28 population was content with their life. This fact give the individual curiosity of exploring how can improve the actual existence.

The diagnosis of space today consists in the missing of coherence in terms of representation of space (the symbolic), based on abstract, define as grids, fragments, distance, which determine the loss of urban, from the separation in urban culture and codification in urban consciousness. That can be translated in the following oppositions as monotony/variety, ambiguity/individuality, public/private, work/residence, which became as essentials concepts in our society. This provoke a crisis of meaning and representation.

The social, as dominant ideology of the representation of space, allow to become aware of the urban forms. We are assisting to a loss of historicity, heterogenization of life-worlds because of the mixt of the cultures, and a fusion between man, nature and technology, where space becomes an autonomous “reality”, where images have a fundamental role.
Social space is moved from “real” to cyberspaces, together with the social relationships, considered by users as “private paradise”. The impact of this is a huge gap between generations, depending on the individual’s adaptability to the newest technologies. Also the fastness of the technological evolution doesn’t leave the space for accommodating the existing ones.

The analyzed projects present a different approach of space from distinct areas. Pao project define
a specific type of space, DeFlat Kleiburg gave the possibility of the people to create the space by themselves, inside of their houses, and AIRBNB project present a direct connection between economy and space, as sequential use of it - an increasingly winning concept.

The space described by Toyo Ito combine the real and the virtual as a projection of the contemporary society, characterized by minimalism, lightness, thinness, high tech technology, connection with nature and “ready-to-move” concept as individual’s nomad personality. All the everyday functional spaces are coexisting, adopting the concept of open and multifunctional spaces, the only one closed being the bathroom space.

DeFlat Kleiburg apartments, as an existing abandoned building on the point of being destroyed, the architects concerned on the human need of diversity in an undifferentiated space. AIRBNB, the intersection between space and economy, a new form of living, is investing space with new qualities, apart from the traditional ones: “the power of the living space to produce money, with minimum effort, keeping the domestic functionality.

The impact of those changes on people’s life is what determine the individual reactions: acceptance or conservation, which is leading to the survival of those, or to the research for new ones, always with the goal of evolution.

Images source:
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