

18 Withdrawal to Smart Homes

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18.1 People live

This need is an existential one, adequate housing is also treated as a human right, homelessness, on the other hand, is seen as a desperation. Up until the corona crisis, the rising costs of housing and the fear of homelessness dominated the discourse, but with the curfews and contact bans it suddenly became clear again what living in all its ambivalence means: protection from dangers, a secure space for the intimate and personal, but just also a prison and a space of isolation, which is also a meaning of a gated community. Quarantine in one's own apartment means nothing other than that it becomes a prison or a monad, which especially affects singles and people who live closely together and need the outside world as extended living space.

The aspect of protection from the outside world and the distance to others makes it clear why the inviolability of the home is protected by the constitution almost as high as the dignity of the person and equality before the law. When the apartment or house becomes a castle again, which is supposed to protect against dangers and ensure safety, the prescribed retreat into one's own or rented four walls transforms them not only to the immediate vicinity, but practically to the whole world, despite historically unique media connections at the same time into a trap as soon as the free oscillation between inside and outside is restricted. Anyone who also has to live in small, overcrowded, dark apartments or who has followed the hype and lives in so-called "Tiny Houses" or micro-apartments will find out in times of quarantine and curfews that an appropriate size and condition of the interiors must be guaranteed in order to stay longer. Do not experience staying in this quickly as oppressive.

18.2 Smart Home

In the digital age, the apartment, the house, is anything but a place of retreat for people, the private space, separated from the public by walls, doors and windows. With the so-called "Smart Homes" we bring machines into the private space as supposed servants who monitor us and monitor or control our behavior. "Smart cities" and "smart homes" could also become independent via artificial intelligence, and as residents we would then become prisoners - and also set up ourselves with theories about simulation in digital prisons based on the example of the Platonic allegory of the cave.

18.3 Digital Prison

In contrast to earlier times, the digital prison is no longer an occasion to find a way out, but rather to lock oneself even better, which corresponds to the demand for "gated communities" and "gated nations", i.e. for controlled borders, preferably with walls - a life in fortresses that are secured with high-tech externally and internally. Now so-called "preppers" who anticipate wars or catastrophes are preparing for them privately by means of bunkers and other protective measures, while the holiest of digital societies, the server farms and data centers, are becoming the best protected places, the fortresses of digital societies in which the immaterial sounding "cloud" is housed.

18.4 Disinfection

Living is interwoven with behavior towards guests. After the age of dirt and epidemics prescribed by scientists at the time, people defended their homes with vehement means, especially from the 19th century, against unwanted guests. The sanitation of living conditions that has been taking place since then, the great cleaning, goes hand in hand with the disappearance of the servants in the middle classes. One lives self-sufficient, the families shrink to the point of single existences, the subleases as well.

In the meantime, the disinfection is also affecting the gardens and the land beyond the enclosed and protected space. The paradise garden that has been created is being depopulated, the houses are aseptic, approaching the life-repellent clean and "clean rooms" in which semiconductors are produced and server farms are housed. In the interiors protected with surveillance technology, the windows of which have to be hermetically sealed for reasons of climate protection in order to prevent heat and air exchange, further cleaning techniques are now moving in during the corona crisis with HEPA air filters and robots that disinfect surfaces with UV rays, while we wash ourselves frequently, cover our mouths and noses, and with a vaccination that strengthens the immune system, chase the enemy out of the body or keep them away. As early as 1866, the American hygienist Lewis Leeds declared in view of the dangers of disease transmission in rooms: "Man's breath is his greatest enemy."

In smart homes and smart cities, people no longer withdraw from nature and from their fellow human beings into buildings, the first artificial environments to be created. Here, in principle, they are directly connected to the world, the apartment is becoming a globalized element that can be controlled, viewed and hacked from anywhere. At the same time, the resident is integrated into the entire world, into the global data sphere, and more public than in the always local public space, even if he is still surrounded by walls or material boundaries such as windows. People do not go into cyberspace, they are woven into cyberspace along with their material lifeworld. A paradoxical existence between transparency and privacy, previously determined by the enclosed space and legally secured by the inviolability of the apartment.

18.5 Privacy

Apartments and houses were once bastions of the private. That is long gone, as living is fundamentally changing with smart homes. With the move into intelligent dwellings, the illusion of privacy is finally over, but not the defense against the immediate environment. In times of pandemic, control over the entrance becomes even more important. Life does not necessarily take place in public, but the home becomes more or less a subject that reacts to the residents and influences their behavior. The first traces can be found with the digital assistants such as Alexa, with whom we control our networked devices from vacuum robots to heating or lighting to TVs or alarm systems and start talking to the house. This can also lead to relationship and communication disorders, especially if the house becomes too independent as a personal counterpart.

At home you are no longer alone since the phone that pounded the first hole in the walls. The resident himself becomes a guest who, in addition to the diverse interactions with his home Internet of Things and the dialogue with the "home server", the new speaking and understanding servant, takes part directly in the world public and lives in the virtual metropolis. Today it is no longer old palaces, castles or crumbling buildings that are haunted, but the cold, clean, perfect housings that are controlled by computers and become a living counterpart - and the new guests in the form of viruses or Trojans the flats.

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