



## THE SEARCH FOR THE "INTERIOR DIMENSION" IN THE DOMESTIC SPACE: COMFORT, WELLNESS AND CULTURE

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*Published Online on: 24 Oct. 2021*



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To appreciate a house or a dwelling, several factors come into play. We thus speak of the interactionist approach which assumes that the notion of appreciation in the domestic space design approach is constructed by an interaction between subjectivist, objectivist and relativist factors.

It is the position of one of the factors in relation to the other that makes the difference between one space receptor and another. The position organizes man's priorities in relation to his domestic space. In this organization of priorities that form our well-being and our culture. This interaction results in two notions: the notion of comfort and well-being.

### \* THE CONCEPT OF COMFORT

Housing can be defined as an industry of protection and comfort. It protects man, in the first place, from various aggressions against which he feels the need to protect himself, but once this essential need for protection is satisfied, the next requirement is that of having comfort and well-being.

From this point of view "*comfort qualifies the quality that is expected from the housing envelope, as a dwelling, as a second habit and as a "third skin", to control exchanges with the outside, but also to support the formal rules. and informal which organize the being together inside the*

*home, and thus carry out the complex acts of domestic reproduction ”.*<sup>1</sup>

The requirement for comfort often results in well-being. The conditions which characterize an environment considered “comfortable” cannot be defined in absolute terms. The concept of comfort or more generally of well-being must include aesthetic and psychological parameters such as the quality of light, the landscape, safety, etc.

All these factors remain decisive for the conceptual choices to be made. It is also not impossible that we give up one kind of comfort for another kind of comfort. Between a spacious and energy-perfect house and a small and humid house in the city center, some people choose the second.

The term comfort seems to us equivalent to the pleasant use of a house or an object. Thus, our aesthetic and bodily requirements are met. To this personal, immediate and present-related enjoyment is added the well-being, which is rooted in a society's past and which is linked on all sides to its civilization. Our civilization shapes our preferences. By the shapes, the materials, the harmonious colors, by

the rituals according to which she taught us to live, by the space and the times in which we learn from her to feel at ease, by the symbols that reflect our style of existence and our way of living over generations.

So real comfort, this well-being, comes from a human, historical and social environment, from which all these elements come to us ... And the most precious of them, this request from our interior dimension: this calm certainty of belonging to a culture both free and protected. Everyone looks for their own image of domestic satisfaction and appreciation and finds the space that offers this mixture of sensations and impressions comfortable.

“Feeling good at home”, this comfort, an entirely internal and highly personalized notion, is nowadays influenced by various well-intentioned policies aimed at improving it by universalizing it. We produce living environments, successive envelopes rich in conviviality and interiority.

#### \* **Body comfort**

In addition to hot and cold, this overall feeling of physical appreciation

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<sup>1</sup> Pinson, D, Housing design. Housing and Habitat Dictionary, (under the direction of Marion Segaud, Jacques Brun, Jean-Claude Briant). Editions

Armand Colin, Paris, 2002, page 83

is made up of dry or wet, spacious or narrow, hard or soft, light or dark, silence or noise which gives us a feeling of comfort. How is this notion formed?

Any space occupied by a living being exposes it to shapes, colors, temperatures, smells or sounds which subject it to a set of information of various kinds. But this stimulation only becomes effective if it elicits a reaction from the body.

Below a certain threshold, this does not occur, excessive on the contrary, it contains a threat to our balance and can provoke a response from our regulatory centers. It is in this interval that we find this kind of euphoria or its opposite.

Our upbringing has taught us to interpret our own bodies and the world. Each sensation in fact recreates for us a space that is specific to it: formal, colorful, sound, smell, touch.

The messages of the senses thus make it possible to locate us in space and time insofar as everything converges in confrontations with regard to memory. Our sense of comfort is born precisely from these confrontations. "Feeling good at home" is hardly reduced to the satisfaction of our skin and it is easily

thwarted by the desire to give us a framework aesthetically consistent with our status or capable of protecting our privacy.

### **\* Visual comfort**

This second level of comfort seems more ambiguous in nature. More highly publicized, it is based more on impulses, needs rather acquired than spontaneous. It does not depend on physiological requirements but rather on needs which can provoke the pleasure of the beautiful. Qualifying a building as beautiful suggests more than a simple aesthetic predilection, it implies an attraction for the particular way of life that this structure advocates with its roof.

A sense of beauty indicates that we have encountered a material expression of some of our ideas of a good life. Likewise, buildings will appear ugly to us not because they collide with some mysterious visual preference but because they oppose each other to our conception of a satisfactory existence.

Our domestic space is the chosen setting for our favorite sensations, where we have tried to create a kind of harmony between bringing together colors, materials and shapes capable of

making us experience our aesthetic emotions.

The two levels of bodily and visual comfort are sometimes found in a contradictory relationship. You can accept what is beautiful even if it is not comfortable or convenient. You can attach yourself to a house, furniture, household accessories even if it is neither beautiful nor practical. It reminds us of a memory or it marks a desired social status etc. This confirms the interactionist nature of the notion of appreciation. Thus, the body and the pursuing mind interact together for the quest for well-being.

*"Aesthetic pleasure and, sometimes, the sensual pleasure of the body moving in space, are important to enjoy living in the same place on a daily basis."*<sup>2</sup>

The notion of aesthetics and the notion of "liking" are related to each other. Liking is a criterion of judgment. The space receptor represents the house through a set of "aesthetic codes" which regulate its residential practices at the level of production and organization of housing. These practices are the result of aesthetic choices made by the inhabitants

according to their decision-making capacity in the face of a set of alternatives, constraints, and choices.

Marion Segaud distinguishes between two types of a popular aesthetic. The first, which is strongly linked to practice, considers the house through its adequacy to use and ends in this movement by which the object becomes subject through appropriation. The second, which results from aesthetic judgment, translates, through the expression of preferences, the role played by conventions.

In short, aesthetics conveys elements of classification, certain codes of which in these scales constitute an ideal to be achieved in order to signify a position or a social trajectory. Here the question of social models arises: possible reference models, internal classification systems and hierarchies first of all which make it possible to make popular aesthetics a privileged witness of positions but also of social changes and universes of likings. Social stratification produces differentiated aesthetics. The concern for social distinction, the relationship to others, the heterocentric approach on

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<sup>2</sup> Eleb, M., and Chatelet, A.-M., Do architects take lifestyles into account? Evolution of lifestyles and housing architecture, (Construction and architecture

plan, "Cité-Projets" program. Research No42 under the direction of Marion Segaud). Ministry of Housing, Paris, 1993, p 95

the one hand and the egocentric approach on the other hand, is like being versus appearing.

We can conclude that aesthetics can become an issue. This occurs when the fads multiply and create fairly uniform aesthetics in the countries under influence, *"Here and there, as in any movement of globalization of values, the fight around the imposition of standardized reference codes or the imposed models end up disturbing, at least temporarily, all the reference codes"*.<sup>3</sup>

Aesthetic expressions are then declined in terms of imposition, attraction of novelty or passive resistance, leading to conflicts of use and interpretation between those in power and ordinary inhabitants.

As moments of confrontation, these periods act as revealers of systems of judgment and interpretation but also of cultural transition and the composition of new aesthetic codes, conveying social and economic labeling systems in updating. This implies broadening the reference universe of aesthetic and symbolic

practices and productions - beyond the sole dominant formal repertoire to integrate the decorative expressions of identity conveyed by the practices of the inhabitant.

The circulation of models will no longer be confined to the sole influence of scholarly production (academic styles) on popular (minor) aesthetic embellishment practices, but will also refer to "the influence of minority or popular models on scholarly and dominant models. , that is to say in a real back and forth."<sup>4</sup>

#### **\* The comfort of privacy**

In a domestic space, we only really enjoy on the condition of being alone or in the company of those with the presence of certain people. This is a comfort level of a social nature.

The domestic space represents the moment of domestic withdrawal and of a return to an anchoring of family intimacy or even solitude in relation to what the exterior places offer. But while promoting family sociability and conviviality, the domestic space must still isolate each of its participants in order to have this

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<sup>3</sup> Deboulet A., (1999). Introduction. "Popular aesthetics", The LAUA notebooks, Places Commons, N ° 5: page 15

<sup>4</sup> De Villanova, R., (2001). Intercultural beliefs: from borrowing to interbreeding.

Building interculturality? from the concept to the practices" (under the direction of Roselyne of Villanova). Harmattan Publishing, page 261

dimension of intimacy and domestic withdrawal.

### \* **An interior dimension**

An interior blend simultaneously with the needs of the inhabitant that it must meet and the attributes it has in relation to public spaces. Thinking “inside” almost always amounts to projecting an inside to build, at least to imagine a living environment endowed with all the means of comfort.

The domesticity and interiority of a space are expressed through the play of composition which is articulated between points, lines, surfaces, volumes, colors or materials, light and shadow, scale, proportions etc. Our well-being is born from the meeting of our instincts, more or less objectified in needs, and of the values considered necessary for its survival by our community. This is what creates harmony between: my upbringing, my likings, my character, my will and my habits.

*“This intimate image of domestic coziness differs from all those of others because we have molded it to the contours of a 'hollow shape' that is unique to us and that I will call our*

*inner dimension. It is from this mold of our desires, less and less vacant and available as we move forward in existence, that we shape our singular dream of comfort, so that it precisely follows its most secret contours”*<sup>5</sup>

But we can see to what degree all of them express the centrality of our body and first of all derive from the perception of the world that it gives us. It is he who teaches us to use the expanse to carve out our place to live there, to build our houses there in order to house it by covering it. Of all these residences, we build our own, after having subjected the image to the most intimate contours of our interior dimension. Even more concrete visions are offered to us by the cinema or the media, describing at leisure the private lives of rich people who are therefore deemed to be happy.

It even happens that these images become our truth, compared to a daily environment devoid of grace, so that it seems to us a failed sketch of what television offers us. Turning it off brings us back to life: this dismal reality.

### \* **FROM COMFORT TO WELL-BEING**

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<sup>5</sup> Massabuau.J, From comfort to well-being the interior dimension, Harmattan, page 15

We have become accustomed to understanding ambient comfort in a restrictive way by relating it exclusively to the physical conditions which determine the comfort of the hygrothermal type, air temperature, humidity, ventilation, solar radiation, etc. But to ignore that the concept of comfort is much broader is certainly a distortion of reality.

The concept of comfort or more generally of well-being must include aesthetic and psychological parameters such as the quality of light, the landscape, security, prestige, cultural aspects are also to be considered, especially when it comes to countries in the process of development where the evolution of mores and habits is relatively slower than in Western countries. All these factors remain decisive for the conceptual choices to be made. It is also not impossible that we give up one kind of comfort for another kind of comfort. More still, climate-efficient architectural solutions could be poorly accepted culturally because they do not respect established aesthetic standards or the lifestyle.

This shows all the interest there is in relativizing the notion of well-

being and leads us to admit that in the current state of knowledge, quantitative approaches for the evaluation or even the achievement of comfort have limited effects, in particular, because of the subjective factors which condition it.

#### \* Culture and well-being

*“This innate adherence to a certain form of well-being reveals the existence in each of us of an ultimate requirement of the interior dimension which would be that of our entire culture. Overcoming the stage of physical comfort and sometimes forgetting that we dwell on that of aesthetic impressions, embracing as much as is appropriate the uses of sociability, accomplishing the gestures of inhabiting it and applying ourselves to it, we reach the deep level of the comfort: to feel inserted both passive and active in our civilization with firm gentleness and unshakeable precision.”*<sup>6</sup>

Well-being, unlike physical satisfaction, is built over time and through the practice of living in it. This progression of comfort in well-being takes place by going beyond the status of simple use to a deeper

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<sup>6</sup> J. PEZEU-MASSIBUA, from comfort to well-being the inner dimension, L’Harmattan, page315

mechanism. They are collective meanings, therefore impersonal but already carrying a long duration. There will be added the multiple implications that my particular mode of use will give them over the days, years and generations. True well-being can only arise from this use, for it is made up of addiction even more than immediate convenience.

**\* Well-being: a self-image**

In her house, as soon as the comfort she brings seems to respond to all the calls of her interior dimension, that I feel myself becoming me. But doesn't the mere search for this euphoria already invite my body and my mind to exercise all of their capacities there, to bring them together in this quest for a place that contains me and stabilizes me?

Everything today works to relocate man and, above all, the way of living to which his century condemns him.

**\* Well-being: security dimension**

Well-being also involves feeling guarded and protected by the simple fact of living and carrying out daily actions.

At the meeting of our physical intimacy and the world, the house is the

only one capable of securing us. This place of existence constitutes for us an interior where we feel an assurance that the outside world seems to grant us less and less.

The house has a calming influence and the power to create a certain serenity. This serenity comes from the images and representations generated over time by the repetition of acts or domestic events. Such appeasement also derives from the elimination of our anxieties.

**\* Well-being shared**

It is thus always in relation to a society and its culture that the levels of our comfort, its image, its standards, its elements and what we must implement to achieve it are established.

This intimate and serene bliss which brings us together, preserves us from the anxieties of life, allows us to exercise our freedom, is ultimately defined in relation to others.

Thus, of our well-being, a whole gradation can be observed from the most intransigent egocentricity to an invading altruism.

**\* Well-being: a question of culture**

*“My well-being is my culture. This innate adherence to a certain form of well-being reveals the existence in*



*each of us of an ultimate requirement of the interior dimension which would be that of our entire culture. Overcoming the stage of physical comfort - and sometimes forgetting it - focusing on that of aesthetic impressions, embracing as much as is appropriate the uses of sociability, performing "as it should" the gestures of inhabiting it and applying ourselves to it, we reach the deep level of comfort: to feel ourselves inserted — both passive and active — in our civilization with firm gentleness and unshakeable precision ”.*<sup>7</sup>

Each individual has their own way of feeling or judging, and culture is always representative of the human universe. The feeling is influenced by the culture of the collectivity, but there is also an emotional aspect and a rational aspect of the individual outside the cultural influence, which are rather specific to the individual and which we can associate with human nature.

Cultural factors are those arising from the different components linked to the culture or the cultural environment to which the recipient belongs.

For Armand Mattelart “... Pure cultures are a vision of the mind. Since

the beginning of the history of world exchanges, the cultural and institutional models conveyed by hegemonic powers have encountered peoples and cultures which have resisted annexation, have been contaminated or have disappeared. In these cultural melting pots, syncretisms were born ...”.

Culture is then complex, it is the fruit of common effort, but as the individual subject emerges from the group and obtains a certain independence of thought and feeling, he expresses individual intimacy. It is acquired by an inheritance and comes from the social environment of an individual. The personality specific to an individual which is inherited and acquired, it includes a psychological dimension. Culture that is specific to a group or category and is always learned. Human nature which is universal and also inherited. But cultural programming differs from one group and category of people to another and "each nation is very strongly morally involved in its own dominant mental programming ...". The differences between each culture are thus made explicit.

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<sup>7</sup> Same, page 315

Culture is key when it comes to understanding an individual's needs and behaviors. Throughout his life, an individual will be influenced by his family, his friends, his cultural environment or even the society which will "teach" him values, preferences as well as behaviors specific to their common culture. A society is made up of several subcultures that people can identify with. Subcultures are groups of individuals who share values based on a common experience or a globally similar way of life.

They are nationalities, religions, ethnic groups, age groups, gender of the individual, etc. They are often taken when segmenting a market in order to tailor a product or a way of communicating to the values or specific needs of that segment. Cultural trends or "fads" are defined as trends widely followed by individuals and which are amplified simply by their popularity or by the effect of conformity. The more people follow a trend, the more others will want to follow it. They affect behavior and habits.

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follow a trend, the more others will want to follow it. They affect behavior and habits.

By social pressure, the desire for conformity or belonging to a group, the desire to "follow fashion" or quite simply as a result of the high visibility granted that they generate, the recipients will be influenced, consciously or unconsciously, by these trends. For example, Facebook has become a cultural trend. The social network has developed widely to the point of having become a fixture that acts on the appreciations of individuals. This leads to the development of the notion of "cultural models". Inhabitant practices refer to models that preform the practices of everyone in a society, it is these models that are called "cultural" or "social".

*“The notion of cultural model is modestly presented as a specific and neutral tool that the sociologist makes available to the architect so that the latter can better judge the conformity of the habitat, he creates to the real practices of people who are not content to occupy it, but to live there, as French or Japanese young or old, [...]. Naturally, as the architect does not build for very narrow categories, nor for short periods, it is a question of discovering the lowest common*

*denominator to all the people likely to live today or tomorrow in a dwelling. given. This is the cultural model ".<sup>8</sup>*

The cultural model is therefore an operational concept, its capacity to articulate spatial devices and social practices results from its very nature; it is in fact a potential chain of acts which presupposes, in order to be realized, a space qualified in a certain way, topologically accompanying the course of these acts, supporting them physically and symbolically.

For each type of practice, there is a stock of "models" which remain at the common disposal of a set of people sharing the same practical culture. Unlike cultural models which relate to ways of living and social practices, the cultural type has a material existence. Raymond distinguishes it, however, from the architectural type which falls under graphic representation because it results from a set of cultural models.

*"The type, this abstraction of spatial properties common to a class of buildings is a structure of correspondence between a projected or constructed space and the*

*differential values attributed to it by the social group for which it is intended, it makes it possible to classify and name the buildings, it is a signifying element in the reading of space, as it is a signifier of a set of practices recognized by members of the social body".<sup>9</sup>*

The cultural type can take different constructed forms but it results from the competence of the users who organize their space according to their cultural models and their mental representations ".

As for Huet, he sees for his part that type is "above all a social product closely linked to the relations of production from which it comes. It is the place par excellence where the articulations between structures and different cultural and ideological levels are developed. Its most important function in the city is to designate, sometimes obscurely but most of the time very clearly, the system of social relations at a given historical moment ". Huet also sees that the type functions at 3 dialectically interlocking levels to form a structure.

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<sup>8</sup> Duclos, D. From the notion of Cultural Model to the concepts of the practice of everyday life. Act of the seminar "Cultural models and habitat", Institute of the environment, (04 Feb), 1 977 page 3

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The first level concerns the use and the practices “at the first level we find inscribed in the space of the “type”, not the cultural models, but the whole of the spatiosymbolic relations which result from it in the form of a distributive typology places of practice”. At the second level the type acquires a physical consistency, it is a built object. At a second level, the "type" fits very exactly into the relations of production insofar as its "constructive" form is closely linked to the development of the productive forces and to the technical division of labor.

The third level is that of the architectural type: At a third level the type concerns architecture or rather a science of architectural space which would not be the prerogative of only architects, which would refer to the formal structures of the space of a society at a given moment and of which the “space” of the architects would only be a learned manifestation.

There is a back and forth movement between scholarly architecture and construction, between discipline and a spontaneous and more or less conscious use of architectural

codes by others than architects ”, but all of these manifestations form a corpus that could be defined as "the architectural space" of a given period ".<sup>10</sup> We were able to conclude through the different parts of this thesis that the notion of appreciation of domestic space is a question of interaction between the various egocentric and heterocentric factors. In this interaction, the individual classifies his needs according to his priorities. This classification is only the representation of the individual's own well-being, which in turn is only a reflection of his culture.

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<sup>10</sup> Huet, B., (1977). Cultural models and architecture. Proceedings of the seminar “Cultural Models and Habitat, Environment Institute, (04 Feb), Page 34

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