

:ARTIGOS

People and Buildings, a Vital Interweaving: Dialogues Between Art, Architecture, and Anthropology

Pessoas e prédios, um emaranhado vital: diálogos entre arte, arquitetura e antropologia

Personas y edificios, un entramado vital: diálogos entre arte, arquitectura y antropología

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ABSTRACT

This article forms part of a broader research project exploring ordinary architecture in contemporary cities, integrating perspectives from the arts and anthropology. Through theoretical analysis and the examination of reference works – including films, literature, and visual arts – it underscores the importance of deepening our understanding of the subjective human relationship with everyday architecture. Such an understanding, the article argues, is essential for fostering greater vital engagement in both private and public spheres. The theoretical framework of the text draws on Tim Ingold's *Bringing Things Back to Life: Creative Entanglements in a World of Materials* (2010), Bruno Latour's *From Realpolitik to Dingpolitik or How to Make Things Public* (2005), and Max Weber's concept of the "disenchantment of the world." Among the reference works analyzed are Jacques Tati's film *Mon Oncle* (1958), Agnès Varda's *Les Plages d'Agnès* (2008), and Paul Preciado's chronicle *My Trans Body is an Empty House* (2020).

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Keywords: ordinary architecture, urban anthropology, material culture, vital engagement, disenchantment of the world

RESUMO

O artigo está inserido em uma pesquisa mais ampla dedicada ao estudo da arquitetura ordinária de cidades contemporâneas, integrando artes e antropologia. Através de leituras teóricas e análise de obras de referência – como filmes, literatura e artes visuais –, busca destacar a importância de qualificar a relação humana subjetiva com a arquitetura cotidiana, visando aprimorar o nosso engajamento vital nas esferas privada e pública. Entre as bases teóricas do texto estão os artigos *Bringing Things to Life: Creative Entanglements in a World of Materials* (Tim Ingold, 2010), *From Realpolitik to Dingpolitik or How to Make Things Public* (Bruno Latour, 2005) e o conceito de “desencantamento do mundo”, encontrado em diversos textos de Max Weber. Entre as obras de referência discutidas, estão os filmes *Mon Oncle* (Jacques Tati, 1958) e *Les Plages d’Agnès* (Agnès Varda, 2008), e a crônica *A casa vazia* (Paul Preciado, 2020).

Palavras-chave: arquitetura ordinária, antropologia urbana, cultura material, engajamento vital, desencantamento do mundo

RESUMEN

El artículo forma parte de un proyecto de investigación más amplio dedicado al estudio de la arquitectura ordinaria de las ciudades contemporáneas, en el que se integran las artes y la antropología. A través de lecturas teóricas y análisis de obras de referencia como el cine, la literatura y las artes visuales, pretende destacar la importancia de cualificar la relación humana subjetiva con la arquitectura cotidiana, con vistas a mejorar nuestro compromiso vital en las esferas privada y pública. Se fundamenta en textos como *Bringing Things Back to Life: Creative Entanglements in a World of Materials* (Tim Ingold, 2010), *From Realpolitik to Dingpolitik or How to Make Things Public* (Bruno Latour, 2005) y en el concepto de “desencantamiento del mundo” de Max Weber. Entre las obras analizadas figuran las películas *Mon Oncle* (Jacques Tati, 1958) y *Les Plages d’Agnès* (Agnès Varda, 2008) y la crónica *La casa vacía* (Paul Preciado, 2020).

Palabras clave: arquitectura ordinaria, antropología urbana, cultura material, compromiso vital, desencantamiento del mundo

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People and Buildings, a Vital Interweaving: Dialogues Between Art, Architecture, and Anthropology

If we were to open people up, we would find
landscapes. If you were to open me, you would find
beaches.

--Agnès Varda, *Les Plages d'Agnès* (2008)

The central cast of *Mon Oncle* [*My Uncle*], a 1958 comedy film directed by Jacques Tati, consists of two main characters. The first is the Arpel family, composed of a couple and their young son. The second is Monsieur Hulot, played by Tati himself, who is Mrs. Arpel's brother and the "uncle" who gives the film its title. Despite their kinship, the activities and lifestyles of Arpel family and Hulot could hardly be more different. With minimal dialogues, the film highlights the stark contrasts in their values and ways of living through their actions and specially through the physical environments they inhabit. The affluent Arpel family is primarily associated with three settings: their home, Mr. Arpel's factory, and their car, which serves as the connection between the two. These spaces share striking similarities: they are designed using basic geometric shapes, dominated by gray and pastel tones, and constructed from flat, hygienic materials. Their soundscapes are defined by mechanized noises – electromagnetic hums, engine roars, gear clatters, alarms, and the sharp clicks of hard surfaces colliding. In contrast, Hulot's world is distinctly urban. He lives in a modest rooftop apartment in a bustling Parisian neighborhood, though little of the interior of his home is shown, as he spends most of his time outdoors. Whether interacting with neighbors, visiting the Arpels, or simply moving around on foot or by bicycle, Hulot's environment resembles a vibrant suburb. Accompanied by a cheerful soundtrack, his

surroundings feature weathered yet charming buildings adorned with lace curtains and greenery, stray dogs scavenging or roaming freely, children playing in vacant lots, and lively exchanges at street markets. In essence, while the Arpels are confined to their sterile, controlled spaces, Hulot's "home" extends to the entire city, embodying a dynamic and interconnected urban life.



Fig. 1 - On the left, the modern Arpel house is shown, the couple standing in front of it. On the right, the modest Hulot building is depicted, with the character (visible in the top left corner of the image) having just closed the door to his home. True to his habits, he places the key on the eaves. (Source: Stills from the film *Mon Oncle*, 1958).

Despite the Arpels' materially comfortable lifestyle, the couple appears to live in a state of tension. For them, nothing can go wrong; everything must remain under strict control. The residence's grating soundscape offers no respite. In this atmosphere of infinite alertness, there is no room for rest, pleasure, or intimacy. In contrast, Hulot exudes cheerfulness, relaxation, and willingness, even though he lacks a defined professional occupation – a circumstance that, especially by today's standards, could easily be a source of significant distress.

The cartoonish contrast between the Arpels' irritating wealthy existence and Hulot's vibrant, popular life serves as the cinematic strategy through which Tati (1958) critiques the rigidity of modern thought. Aligning with other thinkers of his time, such as Henri Lefebvre, Michel de Certeau, and Guy Debord, Tati uses *Mon Oncle* to explore this theme on a small scale – that of the home and family – an approach which he would later expand to the urban scale in his film *Playtime* (1967), set in a futuristic, hyper-consumerist Paris. Despite being created over 50 years ago, *Mon Oncle* (1958) remains a compelling starting point for reflecting on the relationship between life ethics and the architecture which shapes our surroundings.

In *The Good Life: A Guided Visit to the Houses of Modernity* (2001), Iñaki Ábalos explores the connections between ways of life and intellectual currents of the 20th century by examining various approaches to designing and, more importantly, inhabiting a house. *Mon Oncle* (1958) is discussed in two of its essays. The first one is *Jacques Tati's Machine for Living In: the Positivist House*, in which Ábalos derives his central ideas from an analysis of Arpel's house. The second is *Picasso on Vacation: the Phenomenological House*, in which he initially focusses on analyzing the summer houses of painter Pablo Picasso but then discusses extensively the character of Hulot and the built environment he lives in. For Ábalos (2001), the architectural landscapes in *Mon Oncle* serve as archetypal representations of one of the great philosophical clashes of the 20th century: positivism, embodied by the Arpel family and their home, versus phenomenology, represented by Hulot and his urban existence.

Ábalos (2001) articulates in words what Tati (1958) conveyed in his film through actions of the actors and the landscapes they inhabit. The Arpels and their house epitomize the ideals of modern scientificism. They are portrayed as the model family of a society organized like an industrial assembly line, having their movements dissected and controlled according to Taylorist

principles. Described as a “statistical subject of positivism” (Ábalos, 2001, p. 86), the family inhabits a rigid, protocol-driven, and ultimately uncomfortable home, while striving to uphold the moral and progressive goals of their time. In contrast Hulot, the phenomenological being, is defined by radical subjectivity and a worldview shaped through a bodily experience. Unlike the Arpels’ future-oriented projections, Hulot lives in the present, approaching the world with the curiosity and intensity of a child. Hulot and his “implicit, active relationship with the physical environment” (Ábalos, 2001, p. 122) embody a stark alternative to the Arpels’ mechanized existence, by responding spontaneously and authentically to his surroundings.

The critique of modern rationalism presented in Jacques Tati’s 1958 film and echoed by Ábalos (2001) aligns with what Max Weber described in several of his works as the “disenchantment of the world”. Weber used this term to highlight the negative consequences of replacing religion with science as the primary source of universal explanation for the mysteries of life and the world. In *Science as a Vocation* (1946) [originally *Wissenschaft als Beruf*], an expanded version of a lecture Weber delivered in 1917 in Munich, the concept of “disenchantment” features prominently. In this text, Weber argues that society is moving toward an unshakable belief in the total control of life’s processes, thereby stripping the world of its “enchantment” – that is, the aspects of existence that cannot be explained solely through Western humanist rationality. However, contrary to expectations this shift did not lead to ultimate enlightenment or absolute control over life’s complexities. Instead, it resulted in alienation. This fragmentary apprehension of the world, in which only part of the process is known, would ultimately turn science into a new religion, or even a fundamentalism of order and progress (Ábalos, 2001). Thus, this incomplete grasp of life fails to provide fulfillment or satisfaction, instead fostering a profound “loss of meaning” (Pierucci, 2013, p. 152), as it detaches us from the intricate and multifaceted nature of human existence.



Fig. 2 - The two top scenes depict Arpels' automated daily life. On the left, a social event takes place in the geometric garden of their home. It shows an unsuccessful attempt to foster an emotional connection between Hulot and their neighbor. On the right, Mrs. Arpel is shown in the kitchen serving breakfast to her son in a hospital-like setting. Her dress and demeanor reflect the sterile formality of their routine. The two lower scenes show Hulot's spontaneous daily life. Their rich colors contrasts sharply with the monotonous gray tones dominating the Arpel family's world. On the left, a vibrant view of his colorful neighborhood is shown and, on the right, Hulot is seen interacting with a neighbor from the first floor of his building, who has kindly offered him caramels. (Source: Stills from the film *Mon Oncle*, 1958).

Alongside *Mon Oncle* (1958), Agnès Varda's autobiographical documentary *Les Plages d'Agnès* [*The Beaches of Agnès*] (2008) offers equally interesting material for examining our relationship with architecture and urban everyday life. In the film, Varda revisits locations and recreates moments from her personal history and artistic journey. The opening scenes show Varda, assisted by her team, arranging a series of mirrors on the beach in Sète, a coastal town in southern France. These mirrors, framed in wood and varying in size, are placed directly on the sand. They are supported by stands which allow them to reflect the surrounding landscape and the people passing by. Narrated in the first person by Varda herself, the film opens with her defining the beach as her typical "inner landscape". However, while natural landscapes do recur throughout the documentary, the film's settings extend far beyond them. From the initial scenes in Sète, Varda takes viewers to a local casino, a place her father frequented during her childhood. She then travels to Brussels, Belgium, to visit the house where she spent her early years. Returning to Sète, she shifts her focus to the town's urban areas, recalling the period when she lived on a boat with her family. Later, she revisits Paris and Rue Daguerre, where she lived with her husband, filmmaker Jacques Demy (1931-1990), and their two children, and where she remained living until her death.

These are just a few of the many locations Varda explores in *Les Plages d'Agnès* (2008). Between these visits and the intimate stories she shares, the director intersperses scenes from her travels for work, strolls through cities she has visited, institutional spaces where she exhibited her photography and films, records of her art installations, and even staged recreations of memories – real or fictional – that shaped her personal and professional life. Varda's life and work are inseparable from the spaces she inhabits and revisits. As the film reveals, her "inner landscape" was not solely defined by natural settings like the beach but also by built environments – architecture itself. Through this interplay of memory, place, and identity, Varda demonstrates how deeply intertwined our lives are with the spaces we inhabit and the landscapes we carry within us.



Fig. 3 - The documentary highlights several scenes in which architecture emerges as a central focus of the narrative. On the top left, there is a view of the casino building on Sète beach, a place frequented by Varda's father. On the top right, a recreated scene by Varda shows the "imaginary kitchen" of the house on L'Aurore Dageraad street in Brussels, Belgium, where she lived during part of her childhood. On the bottom left, a detailed shot captures a boarding ramp used for embarking and disembarking from a boat anchored at the quay in the village of Sète. This scene is accompanied by Varda's narration, in which she reflects on the architectural element's significance in her childhood, as it served as the vital connection between the city and her home – the boat. On the bottom right, the images show Varda inside the installation *La cabane de cinéma* [The Cinema Hut], which she presented at the Lyon Biennale in 2009. The installation consists of a metal-framed structure shaped like a conventional house, covered with strips of film negatives from an unfinished project. As Varda tenderly remarks, *The cinema is my home* (Varda, 2008). (Source: Stills from the film *Les Plages d'Agnès*, 2008).

Tim Ingold, an anthropologist, professor, and researcher at the University of Aberdeen in Scotland, also provides valuable insights that deepen our understanding of the relationship between people and their material surroundings. In 2010, he published an article titled *Bringing Things Back to Life: Creative Entanglements in a World of Materials*. In this text, Ingold critiques the metaphysical separation between subjects and objects, a division that remains prevalent in humanist intellectual debates. He argues that, within this anthropocentric framework, objects and matter are often perceived as passive and inert, serving merely as containers awaiting human action to invest them with meaning. Among the consequences of this perspective, Ingold writes, “it is as if the world had ceased its worlding, and had crystallized out as a solid and homogeneous precipitate, awaiting its differentiation through the superimposition of cultural form” (Ingold, 2010, p. 8). His proposal, as suggested by the article’s title, is to “bring things back to life”, restoring complexity and richness to both the world and human existence.

Ingold’s (2010) discussion is not entirely new but forms part of a broader reassessment of the subject-object relationship within the field of material culture. This reevaluation, in many ways, revisits the positivist-phenomenological clash already mentioned and echoes Max Weber’s earlier ideas about the “disenchantment of the world”. In *História e cultura material [History and Material Culture]* (2012), historian Marcelo Rede outlines the chronology of this debate. According to Rede, in the late 20th century, scholars across psychology, philosophy, and anthropology began questioning the hierarchical relationship in which materiality is subordinated to immateriality – that is, to human thought. In this anthropocentric paradigm, material culture is “reduced to passivity, that is, existing without the capacity for action in itself, but serving only as the reflection, physically concretized, of the impulses of a matrix that precedes it and is external to it” (Rede, 2012, p. 144, translated by Helena Cavalheiro). In other words, the physical environment is seen as having no influence on human mental processes, with material productions being merely consequences of intellectual activity.

Ingold (2010) proposes revising these subject-object asymmetries by advocating for the use of the term *thing* instead of *object* to describe the physical elements of the world. For Ingold, an object is a static, inert entity, dependent on human action to acquire meaning and utility. In contrast, a *thing* is a dynamic phenomenon, “a ‘going on’, or better, a place where several goings on become entwined” (Ingold, 2010, p. 4). This implies that *things* participate in meaning-making rather than merely receiving human interpretation. In this framework, the boundaries between humans and things dissolve, and together, they participate in what Ingold describes as a “parliament of lines” (2010, p. 4). Ingold (2010) illustrates this concept of a “parliament of lines” or a “vital tangle” by examining the interdependence between the human body and mind. Ingold (2010) draws on Andy Clark’s (1997) concept of the mind as a “leaky organ”, describing it as something which mixes with the body and the world while carrying out its operations (Ingold, 2010). Our thoughts, emotions, and ideas – our “immateriality” – do not exist independently of our physicality. Instead, they emerge through the interplay of brain, body, and environment, each influencing the other. Extending this idea to architecture and urbanism, Ingold (2010) suggests that cities and buildings are not merely “products” or “portraits” of the human condition. Rather, they are active participants in a reciprocal relationship with their inhabitants: we and the spaces we build and inhabit are two *things* in interaction. Rede (2012) aligns with this perspective: “The interaction between society and materiality is two-way, and the set of representations and practices that constitute social action cannot be conceived without its physical dimension” (p. 147, translated by Helena Cavalheiro).

We can exemplify Ingold’s (2010) and Rede’s (2012) concepts by returning to the analysis of Varda’s (2008) documentary, particularly examining scenes featuring her house on Rue Daguerre. The film highlights the significant influence of the building and its surroundings on her life. In the scene of Varda visiting the house, she recalls buying the property in 1951. She recreates the courtyard as it appeared at the time of the purchase: a cluttered space filled

with debris left by previous occupants, located between a frame shop and a grocery store. Varda (2008) describes that the house lacked basic amenities like sewage and heating, prompting her father to ask, “Are you really going to live in this dump?”. Despite the seemingly dire circumstances, Varda’s narrative is infused with optimism and affection. She recalls responding to her father: “Yes, yes. You’ll see how it turns out. It’s going to be very beautiful” (Varda, 2008). Indeed, by the time of filming the documentary, the courtyard had been transformed into a lush, green space filled with plants and furniture. Between the rubble of the past and the vibrant garden of the present, Varda reflects on the countless moments she spent in the house – from gatherings with family and friends to her professional activities as an artist and filmmaker.



Fig. 4 - Four moments captured in the courtyard of Varda’s house on Rue Daguerre in Paris. On the top left, Varda holds a photograph taken in the courtyard, featuring herself, her husband, and their two children. On the top right, a recreated scene of the courtyard in its earlier state of disrepair, filled with rubble. On the bottom left, a still from the 1988 film *Jane B. for Agnès V.*, shot on the same site. On the bottom right Varda during the filming of the documentary. (Source: Stills from the film *Les Plages d’Agnès*, 2008).

Among Varda's many memories of the house, the process of filming the documentary *Daguerréotypes* [*Daguerreotypes*] (1976) stands out. In this work, the filmmaker captures the daily lives of shopkeepers on Rue Daguerre, where her property stood. The location of the building, as well as the *things* within it, played a crucial role in shaping the documentary, both technically and conceptually. One of her key criteria for choosing locations for filming was proximity to her home, where she was raising her young children. To achieve this, she connected a 90-meter-long cable to the building's electrical network to power her filming equipment. During the days of filming, the cable ran through the letterbox at the gate of her house and extended into the street, reaching as far as it could. This 90-meter limit became a defining factor in selecting the shops she visited and the people she interviewed, ultimately shaping the documentary's narrative structure.

As we see, by revisiting her home, recreating the courtyard in its earlier state of ruin, and reflecting on the *things* within it, Varda poetically interlaces different historical moments, memories, uses, meanings, and emotions – whether tied to the space, to herself, or to both. Thus, the buildings and objects that accompanied Varda throughout her life were not merely “receptacles” or passive backdrops for her experiences; they actively informed and shaped her way of being and acting in the world. In the end, Varda's identity becomes intertwined, even merged, with the architecture she inhabited.

To further develop the theoretical examination of subject-object relations, we turn to Bruno Latour – another pivotal thinker who, like Tim Ingold, made substantial contributions to this framework. His essay *From Realpolitik to Dingpolitik, or How to Make Things Public* (2005) offers particularly valuable insights. This text was published in the catalog for the exhibition *Making Things Public: Atmospheres of Democracy*, held in 2005 at the ZKM (Zentrum für Kunst und Medien), a cultural institution in Karlsruhe, Germany. Curated by Latour and Peter Weibel, *Making Things Public* brought together

more than 100 artists, scientists, sociologists, philosophers, and historians. Their contributions formed a constellation of works aimed at rethinking the problem of representation in politics. In his essay, Latour explains the motivation behind the exhibition and its accompanying publication: “With the political period triggering such desperation, the time seems right to shift our attention to other ways of considering public matters” (2005, p. 14). As a potential solution, Latour suggests that rather than distancing ourselves from the political sphere, we should engage with it even more profoundly, embracing our daily lives – and especially the *things* that surround us – as essential components of this complex machinery. This is the main idea behind the term *Dingpolitik* (Politics of Things), a neologism Latour coined by reimagining the 19th-century concept of *Realpolitik* (Realistic Politics). While *Realpolitik* was rooted in strict pragmatism and materialism, *Dingpolitik* proposes an “object-oriented democracy” (2005, p. 14), one that considers the political geography embedded in the *things* around us.

Like Ingold (2010), Latour envisions the *things* of the world as forming a kind of parliament – a space to discuss “matters of concern” (2005, p. 16). However, while Ingold approaches our interactions with *things* from a more phenomenological and subjective perspective, Latour frames it as a political act. For Latour, *things* function as “hybrid forums” (2005, p. 23), serving as sites where societal concerns, values, and principles converge. Reintegrating *things* into the public sphere, Latour argues, can help mitigate, in this case politically, the positivist alienation characteristic of modernity.

Bringing the discussion closer to the fields of architecture and urbanism, Latour (2015) presents two compelling examples in his text. The first is the architectural model, an ordinary yet essential tool in design practice. He asks, “Who could dream of a better example of hybrid forums than the scale models used by architects all over the world to assemble those able to build them at scale

1?” (Latour, 2015, p. 24). Indeed, a “working model” not only allows architects to test spatial configurations and materials but also serves as an object for negotiating potential solutions with other designers and clients. In this way, the model functions both as a technical and political medium, testing and communicating ideas to the world.

The second example for hybrid forums Latour offers is *Allegoria ed effetti del Buono e del Cattivo Governo* [*Allegory and Effects of Good and Bad Government*], a series of frescoes painted by Ambrogio Lorenzetti between 1338 and 1339 in the Palazzo Pubblico in Siena, Italy. Constructed in the 14th century, the building now serves as the city’s town hall. Regarding the frescoes, Latour observes:

What is most striking for a contemporary eye is the massive presence of cities, landscapes, animals, merchants, dancers, and the ubiquitous rendering of light and space. The Bad Government is not simply illustrated by the devilish figure of *Discordia* but also through the dark light, the destroyed city, the ravaged landscape and the suffocating people. The Good Government is not simply personified by the various emblems of Virtue and *Concordia* but also through the transparency of light, its well-kept architecture, its well-tended landscape, its diversity of animals, the ease of its commercial relations, its thriving arts (2015, p. 17).

Luckily, one need not travel to Siena to engage in the kind of reflection Latour proposes through Lorenzetti’s frescoes. Simply observing the *things* that shape the built environments around us can inspire reflection not only on the quality of the governments in charge but also, more broadly, on the implications of their decisions for urban well-being.



Fig. 5 - Details of some of Lorenzetti's frescoes housed in Siena's Palazzo Pubblico. On the top, a cityscape depicting the "Good Government". On the bottom, two details from frescoes illustrating the "Bad Government". (Source: Commons Wikimedia. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Ambrogio_Lorenzetti_-_Allegory_of_Good_Government_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg)

Although Ingold and Latour adopt different approaches in advocating for *things* to take on a more prominent role in life, their perspectives can be seen as complementary. In this context, Paul B. Preciado provides a compelling example of the intersection between architecture, subjectivity, and politics – once again, on the intimate level of body and home. A philosopher, curator, and writer, Preciado is a leading figure in queer theory and gender studies. Born Beatriz Preciado in 1970, he experienced his gender transition in the 2010s. In 2019, he published *An Apartment on Uranus: Chronicles of the Crossing* (2020, 2nd edition), a collection of chronicles written between 2010 and 2018 for the French newspaper *Libération* and other European media outlets. These writings, produced during his gender transition, explore themes ranging from personal daily experiences to global events, weaving together topics such as art, architecture, astronomy, science, Greek mythology, philosophy, law, and literature, as well as his own dream activity.

In the chronicle *My Trans Body Is an Empty House*, Preciado (2020) recounts his experience of moving into a new apartment in Athens, Greece, where he lived temporarily in 2016. The move was prompted by his role as curator of the Public Programs for Documenta 14, art event held that year in both Athens and Kassel, Germany, being the second its official headquarters. Preciado describes living in a nearly empty apartment for the first month, with the initial two weeks proving to be a particularly radical experience. Due to a delay in the delivery of his purchased bed, he slept directly on the floor during this period.

Initially, Preciado interprets this situation as an aesthetic experience, describing the empty house as a “worldly museum of the twenty-first century” and his “nameless, mutant and dispossessed” body as the artwork on display (2020, p. 184). However, as his narrative unfolds, he introduces additional layers of meaning. While Preciado initially attributes the delay in furnishing his home to a lack of time or unforeseen circumstances, he eventually realizes that the situation also carries symbolic significance:

It took me some time to realize that it was not by chance I was keeping this space empty: I established a substantive relationship between my gender-transition process and my way of inhabiting space. Over the first year of transition, as the hormonal changes were sculpting my body like a microscopic chisel working from within, I could only live as a nomad. Crossing frontiers with a passport that barely represented me was a way of materializing the transit, making the shift visible. Today, for the first time, I can stop. Provided this house remains empty: suspend the techno-bourgeois conventions of table, sofa, bed, computer, chair. Body and space are confronted without mediation (2020, p. 185).

Preciado then describes what he calls the “techno-bourgeois conventions” of domestic space. For him, a table and chair form a “complementary couple that is not open to question”, while a lamp beside the bed represents a “marriage of convenience”.

More boldly, he describes a television facing a sofa as a “vaginal penetration” and a curtain by the window as “anti-pornographic censorship that looms when night falls” (Preciado, 2020, p. 186). These comparisons, simple but very provocative, underscore the interdependence between space and human behavior – how we shape and are shaped by our environments. For instance, when we install curtains on our windows to ensure privacy, are we acting out of free will or conforming to social conventions? To what extent does the presence – or absence – of a curtain, or any other form of sight barrier, influence our intimate or even public behavior? As Preciado concisely states, space and body “face to face, they are no longer objects, but social relationships” (2020, p. 185).

In *The Human Condition*, Hannah Arendt (2018) explores a compelling relationship between the public sphere, built environment and cultural artifacts. For Arendt (2018), the public sphere is the symbolic space where individuals reveal themselves through action and discourse, forming the foundation of the *common world* – a shared framework that binds people together, enabling them to build up a collective sense of reality and to sustain political and cultural life. She further examines how built spaces, such as squares, buildings, and monuments, serve as stages for this common world, providing physical settings for human interaction. Art and culture, in turn, play a central role in this framework, as the creation of enduring artistic and cultural artifacts transcends the ephemeral nature of human life and contributes to our collective legacy. Thus, architecture, art, and – more broadly – culture, are essential to both constituting and preserving the public sphere. By extension, they sustain the common world as a space where human plurality can flourish.

In the final chapter of the book *O desencantamento do mundo: todos os passos do conceito de Max Weber* [*The Disenchantment of the World: All the Steps of Max Weber's Concept*] (2013), Antônio Flávio Pierucci recounts that until the very end of his research, he remained convinced Weber offered no escape from

the lack of enchantment that seemed to envelop the world at the beginning of the 20th century. Then, quite unexpectedly, a crucial discovery emerged. Pierucci stumbled upon a potential pathway in Weber's text *Religious Rejections of the World and Their Directions* (1946), published originally in 1915. In this essay, Weber associates the erotic sphere with the possibility of "poeticize all the world with happy features or to bewitch all the world in a naive enthusiasm for the diffusion of happiness" (1946, p. 348). In Freudian psychoanalysis, the Greek god Eros symbolizes what Freud termed the "life instinct", generally linked to pleasure and fulfillment in the human relationship with the world. Freud contrasts this concept with the "death instinct", symbolized by the Greek god Thanatos, which represents a self-destructive tendency within the psyche. In *Civilization and Its Discontents* (1930), a book in which Freud explores tensions between the individual and society placing culture at the center of the discussion, he revisits these two concepts. For Freud, culture is a process "in the service of Eros, which aims at binding together single human individuals, then families, then tribes, races, nations, into one great unity, that of humanity" (1930, p. 102). Thus, culture functions as a libidinal catalyst for the "life instinct".

Although Weber's essay (1946) makes it clear that his reference to the erotic sphere refers specifically to sexual connection, this intriguing digression invites us to expand the concept of eroticism beyond Weber's strict definition, aligning it with the discussion proposed in the present essay. The suggestion here is this: in times of "disenchantment" and "despair", we might seek to rekindle our libidinal energy toward the world – not only in the context of sexual love but in the broader understanding of vital energy as conceptualized in Freudian psychoanalysis. If we embrace Arendt's assertion that culture is a fundamental component of the public sphere and, by extension, of our common world, then we must integrate the *things* around us – as Ingold and Latour urge – into this vital community. And this includes not only the enduring objects of art but, specially, the everyday architecture that shapes our lives.

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