**Redesigning Media Living Spaces**

Dr Christiane Wagner
Research professor, Institute of Advanced Studies (IEA), University of São Paulo (USP), Brazil
Affiliated researcher, Institute for Cultural Inquiry Berlin (ICI Berlin), Germany
contact@christiane-wagner.online, ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3445-1446

**Abstract:** Challenges in media living spaces relate to the (de)construction of Western knowledge exploring utopian visual and digital structures. Embedded in the principle of utopia is the critical intention to discuss the social context that embodies sustainable values. The goal is to demonstrate that the aesthetic aspects of design performances and media images do not form autonomous discourses when political activity is considered a socially conscious part of this reality. The sensitive aspects of the media images and design performances include the content and political subject. The process involves examining how digital spatial models can, on the one hand, help overcome challenges related to differences and, on the other, create differences as a sense of otherness when developing new forms of urban life that must coexist with the past, present, and future. Decolonial contexts in hybrid realities found in global cities must also be examined. Modern Western societies under state participation have achieved autonomy through ethics and rationality, allowing science and philosophy to guide technological progress instead of myths and beliefs. As a result, new technologies have significantly impacted visual culture, politically and aesthetically influencing the creation of new images. Methodologically, this study discusses the transformative potential of utopian and dystopian visions through technique—under which the term *art* is included—as simulations of built environments for interactive living spaces aiming at integrated, human-centered, and public-interest design through media studies, aesthetics, and critical theory, evaluating the current public sphere and sustainability.

**Keywords:** public sphere, diversity, acculturation, invisible, visible, urban space

**Introduction**

The analysis centers on the coexistence of digitalization and shared spaces in cities, emphasizing interactivity and audio-visual communication. The goal is to address environmental challenges and achieve sustainable development goals, particularly the 11th goal of sustainable cities and communities, by promoting sustainability in urban public spaces. Therefore, this discussion requires two perspectives. The first is an urban spatial model, and the second is a transformational framework that uses new technologies to create realities, artificial environments, and interactive communities, considering the interaction of art, architecture, design, and media, opening an essential space for aesthetic effects. Media living spaces refer precisely to urban spatial models in which the connection between technology and society is central to cultural transformation. In this discussion, the focus is on emphasizing the importance of embracing decoloniality in media living spaces. It underscores the necessity for diverse and inclusive representation in mainstream media.

Digital models have emerged as a potential solution for the urgent need for sustainable development today. To achieve a more sustainable world, we must embrace digital models. In that way, this paper explores the digital environment as a multi-dimensional space involving visual, audio, tactile, and kinaesthetic perceptions regarding public policies and cultural diversity. However, the interaction of art, architecture, design, and media, and the principle of utopia, questions whether sustainable environments are intentional and capable of reflecting ethical, social, and political values for creating sustainable public spaces in a postcolonial context towards a decolonial path. The Global South and North are interconnected, and interactive media living spaces must be decolonized. It is about the aesthetic experience in different forms of media, such as film and video art performances, and how they depict decoloniality, especially in digital ecosystems and living spaces. This analysis focuses on how people experience the aesthetics of different media types and how combining various media can create a new and unique aesthetic experience that promotes social integration[1]. This distinction relates to Karl Marx's theory of capitalist society, which highlights the growing class antagonisms—social integration—related to the contradictions between the forces of production and the relations of production—system integration (Scott and Marshal 2009). On the one hand, the achievements of cultural development have taken place within territorial limits – the appropriation of physical urban space. On the other hand, deterritorializing spatio-temporal architectural spaces and moving images creates virtual urban space, according to the author's literature review and research (Wagner 2022, 2024). Consequently, this discussion considers decoloniality under various forms of audio-visual expression and everyday perception in the urban environment toward media living spaces. Amongst these theories, critical theory stands out as an essential tool for analyzing postcolonial theories and establishing strong connections between the material aspects of cultural production. It considers the political context of non-Western countries and its role in decentralizing knowledge. This approach is crucial in meeting the objectives of decoloniality and

decolonization, compared with the empirical qualitative research on the observed context that is part of everyday urban life, media narratives, and the utopias and dystopias that shape an uncertain future of human lives and societies.

**The City's Atmosphere**

This approach involves scrutinizing the transformative structure of living spaces through new media and digital spatial models. These models create differences as "otherness" and pose challenges to overcome these differences while developing alternative forms of cohabitation. That is particularly important when the past, present, and future coexist. Utopias and dystopias spark the imagination and invite us to explore the possibilities of what could be. With a simple twist of fate, our world could be transformed into a utopia, where everything is perfect and beautiful, or a dystopia, where everything is ugly and a nightmare. The power of imagination is the key to unlocking the potential of these worlds, and it is up to us to explore the boundaries of what is possible. The bases are precisely in the productive processes and new technologies enabling the materialization of ideas. On the one hand, this refers to the material world that has been perfected through a technicization process related to science and technology development. On the other, it presents an aesthetization process.

Gernot Böhme describes the city's atmosphere as an ordinary and evident phenomenon for its inhabitants. They produce it in their public lives, and visitors perceive it as a characteristic through their impressions and perceptions of the environment. In an aesthetic sense, the atmosphere of a city is not the same as its *image*. The aesthetics of the atmosphere liberates the image from its restriction to the symbolic visual. Beauty can be understood broadly by considering ethical and aesthetic aspects and in a specific sense that evokes aesthetic emotions through color and sound. Urban life is defined by its various infrastructures, amenities, and concepts such as order, balance, harmony, and power. To achieve a balance between urbanism and aesthetics, it is crucial to recognize the significant role that physical spaces play in shaping our experiences and perceptions of the city (Hartman 1974; Vlad 2009). Compared to Böhme's aesthetic of atmosphere, these observations present a clearer understanding of beauty in different contexts.

Nevertheless, the central question related to aesthetics in its development from modern reason to the postcolonial context continues as its primary object, artistic appreciation and the sense of beauty. Here, not only among postcolonial authors but also since Kant (1788), the understanding that aesthetic judgment can be simultaneously subjective and universal implies a grounding in the *Critique of Practical Reason*. Moreover, the evolution of aesthetics, that is, the way it has been developed and applied since Baumgarten ([1750] 2007), implies in each moment the historical, political, and cultural context of how the fundamental basis of reflection on beauty should be employed, undoubtedly considering the influence of Plato and Aristotle in their contradictory positions, complementary and essential to the entire development of aesthetic analysis. The exception was Hegel ([1823]2014), who presented a synthesis of these positions of Plato and Aristotle as the basis for constructing Western knowledge as a new worldview. Consequently, in that urban atmosphere, as we confront the advancements in science and technology, the real challenge lies in human development. At the same time, artificial intelligence is a valuable tool for sustainable development in solving social and aesthetic issues. In the actual stage, some artificial intelligence models prioritize data, providing a general overview of people's behavior and having far-reaching implications for ethical considerations. Consequently, it is assumed that adopting ethical standards and a human-centered approach will help understand people's needs to envision an ideal future.

In that direction of a better future considering redesigning living spaces, the new tools and conditions related to the Artificial intelligence scenario of the entire public sphere, it is crucial in meeting the Sustainable Development Goals as design strategies associated with Max Weber's social concepts (1922) of value-rational and instrumentally rational actions (*Zweck-Mittel-Rationalität*), which refer to the technical-rational appropriateness of the means to achieve an arbitrarily selected goal. That is an essential aspect of Habermasian thought for the critical analysis of practical uses of technology and its social implications, such as the current trend of reducing life to sets of technical problems for experts to resolve. Habermas's (1968) reflections on and clarifications of Weber's (1922) rationality concern the choice of strategy for the use of technologies and the organization of systems according to the goals of institutions that aim at world organization. Many theories have discussed its instrumentalization and impact on cultures. In this sense, Dipesh Chakrabarty (2000) discussed how critical theory is fundamental in structuring the analysis of postcolonial theories to enable connections between the material aspects of cultural production, considering the political context of non-Western countries for the emergence of the decentralization of knowledge in meeting decoloniality and decolonization.[2]

In this respect, nowadays, a relationship between humanism and anthropocentrism is significant when dealing with the object of art, visual culture, and material related to historical construction. Anthropocentrism places human beings and their interests at the center of existence, while humanism is an approach that values human rights and dignity based on a human understanding of the relationships between different cultures and societies. Anthropocentrism has a more individualistic focus, always seeking what is best for the individual, while

humanism highlights social relations and social actors with equal rights. Nonetheless, anthropocentrism is a worldview centered on human beings and their activities, responsibilities, and control of the environment. In this sense, it is assumed that the environment should be managed according to human interests and nature to serve human interests. Various cultures have adopted this approach throughout the 20th century, and it is still present in debates about preserving nature and renewable energy sources as an alternative to fossil fuels and representation through the arts.

It should be remembered that the basis of anthropocentrism can be found in Cartesianism, which represents the development of modern Western culture and, consequently, the doctrine of reason. That is a controversial subject in our contemporary age. What conditions the conception of the development of modern Western knowledge to the process of transformation, considering other forms of acquiring knowledge valid other than exclusively scientific? All these events in scientific and technological development and the arts were and still are part of changing political and social contexts, favoring thinkers, historians, and artists to renew knowledge. Postcolonial theories discuss knowledge production in this context by considering a structured set of concepts, assumptions, and discursive practices used to produce, interpret, and evaluate knowledge about non-European peoples. These theories include the context of African culture and art to decolonize Africa and theories about Latin American culture focusing on decoloniality, such as decolonial aesthetics.[3] Consequently, the current context presents the coexistence between former colonizers and the colonized, which has resulted in the acculturation of native peoples with the sense of *progress* hegemonically linked to scientific, technological, and industrial development with its Cartesian bases and, economically, with the liberal market involved in sociocultural transformation. Thus, focusing on the Global South, the cosmologies of indigenous and tribal peoples, and the Afro-diasporic movement become essential references. However, it must be understood that the historical fact of colonization cannot be forgotten or ignored, as it represents the current reality in all its consequences. The coexistence of this colonizing past with the decolonization process is a reality, considering the strength of the Global South and its native cultural values in resistance to modern European knowledge as an instrument of power. Therefore, a critique of Eurocentrism and contextualization of the centralizing power determining expertise and, in this sense, the aesthetic values through which all cultural and artistic production passes are necessary.

The artistic, cultural, and political dimensions are reciprocal in transforming the global image, particularly regarding the articulations that recognize the search for sustainable development. To this end, social responsibility is one of the main characteristics of this interdependence in its functional, rational, objective, and, above all, historical aspects. It is precisely in this interdependence that the potential of design lies in creating and recreating new habits and functions based on transdisciplinary associations to achieve solutions for social integration as an essential part of this new history in the context of sustainable development. As a result, focusing on redesigning media living spaces to meet the needs of people in the Global South and North means understanding the importance of sociocultural integration in the current context for a new city's atmosphere. [4] Considering the specific aesthetic categories applied to the design practice related to the diverse culture is essential. In this sense, the Venice Biennale has been working to combat climate change by promoting a more sustainable model for designing, installing, and operating all its events. Thus, in its 2023 edition, *La Biennale* sought to strengthen the participation public's awareness with the 18th International Architecture Exhibition – *Laboratory of the Future* with proposals reflecting on the themes of decolonization and decarbonization.

**Making The Invisible Visible Spaces**

The technological revolution has changed the habits and attitudes of individuals in the face of new challenges, for instance, ubiquity—the individual's mobility (or not) with the possibility of moving their image, voice, and sensory faculties to other environments to present themselves without necessarily having their physical presence. In its global condition, many theorists also discussed the internet as a way of transforming relationships, gradually interfering in several areas. The internet has enormous potential because it allows people with little technical knowledge to access the network and participate in mass communication. The individuals are also perceived as the idea of a base, as the matrix of a series that will go into the production line of a democratization process under the illusion of a human being who is more conscious of their choices.

The choice before what is offered by the novelty starts from a process in which the architect, designer, or artist realizes an idea that can be different from the demand at a specific time and in a specific sociocultural context, conditioning individuals to accept a world of simulations. In this model of the individual, as the fulfillment of demand, all of humanity's aspirations are transferred and translated by the image of progress. At the same time, thinking about evolution requires a relationship with the past to understand the transformation process. In general, the possibilities of communicative mechanisms being factors of change for society do not come from the technology itself but from what the citizen makes of it. Thus, in an environment that is not increased but

modified by constant technological innovations, individuals transform themselves, transcending time and space. However, at the same time, these individuals need physical spaces and objects to demarcate, evidencing a need of human nature for domination and delimitation for personal satisfaction—needs that offer no doubt in this capitalist system with the consumer society. The idea of many urban planners and architects that their concepts would change ways of life is found in many projects. Nevertheless, the reality consists of the concrete and plausible facts that urbanization does not create ways of life but offers support for the possibilities of some models that meet the expectations of public life. Urbanization, design, and architecture projects that address social reality focus on the problems generated by it; the complexity of these problems comprises production, consumption, the city, and the habits of the citizens in their rhythm of life amidst their most diverse values. Since the great world conferences, urban life and cultural diversity have been noticed, leading the world to another path and configuring the image with elements that characterize this complex reality. Therefore, redesigning media living spaces for an aesthetic of everyday life is verified through new interventions connected to communication and information technologies in synchrony with the urban rhythm that makes images and new dimensions of spaces possible. The political and social transformations are perceived mainly in public spaces.

Contemporary cultural projects have enabled new forms of perception, mainly visual. This visual phenomenon presents a significant course in the history of civilization, social life, technological changes, and the individual's senses in their development in major cities. An example is the cultural project developed with AR, Augmented Berlin, in commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Germany and Europe from Nazism on May 8, 2020, and the End of World War II. Augmented Berlin provides the user's interactivity with the scenery and historical context of Berlin city in retrospect until 1945.[5] The urban environment, with its monuments, architecture, and urban objects, is transported to historical moments, placing us in each significant location and receiving historical information. Through AR, the user participates in this historical moment. The historical information was created using a visual narrative based on autobiographies and testimonials from people.

Regardless of all the resources of digital AR technology, this project seeks to keep the memory of the horrors of National Socialism alive to prevent history from repeating itself. It is an international policy of reconstruction and maintenance of democratic societies amidst new conquests and appropriation of space, where the image is built for the collective consciousness. It is the reality of human existence, becoming the argument of a necessity and the stimulus to the quest for solutions through new projects. As in this project, many others with other media put this question into practice, which implies preserving values established by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, whether through cinema, literature, TV shows, music, or mass culture. In this sense, it is what Walter Benjamin ([1935-39] 2002) called aura—the values that we carry from an origin to a (re)production, (re)presentation, adding values that belong to other times, experiences, and moments of social and individual history, that is, the values of (re)production and (re)presentation as reality.

However, the diversity of cultures, whether between nations or different nationalities concentrated in the same country, fosters intellectual, spiritual, and aesthetic development through the acculturation process. The most remarkable characteristic of the results is perceived in the present cultural and political practices. It works that survive time, marking not only a cultural origin but a process of identification and adaptation with other realities of time and space. In this cultural project, the technology employed is AR, which consists of the user being present in a natural environment—in this case, the city of Berlin—and through the Augmented Berlin application (App), receiving additional information through visual (re)productions in animations and 3D visualizations. VR is used in many situations that require simulations or even real experience. The scenarios are elaborated with static or moving images in 350 degrees reproduced in the external world or entirely (re)created. Thus, in the Augmented Berlin cultural project, the user of this application perceives the information provided through virtual elements in the natural environment of Berlin. Therefore, for a complete experience, one must be physically present in Berlin, although if one uses this App in other settings, AR also works. Still, the city and places of interest are projected onto the environment in which one is, and this technology can thus be applied in seemingly free spaces and offers many opportunities for applying and projecting objects. In addition, new technological solutions and special lenses enable a revolution in visual perception by offering illusions and new sensory experiences through AR and VR. The focus of the cultural project Augmented Berlin is not to explore digital technologies and their evolution in terms of AR and VR but to address the coexistence of physical and virtual realities as an actuality within global society and urban life rather than as fiction or a future possibility.

As is well known, perception is based on interpreting the senses, and each person can experience illusions differently. Moreover, by editing, the experts in these visual reproductions, sounds, artificial environments, and objects in AR could even manipulate and produce meanings if they wanted. On the other hand, it is also about making the invisible visible, creating data of objects that do not exist independently of their (re)presentation and only become visible because of their manipulation and digital (re)presentation.

Given the digital landscape, cultural and public policy projects to resolve social inequalities based on the smart city concept are becoming increasingly common. The term refers to digital connectivity between urban planning, administration, energy supply, mobility, and communication, intending to improve quality of life. These new dimensions of spaces imply ever greater planning needs. In urban projects, computer simulation systems and techniques generate digital models that allow complex interactions and applications in virtual and augmented reality, thus simulating real-world processes. In addition, the entire socio-economic structure is being digitized in its productive, educational, and cultural aspects.

These new initiatives include the *laboratories of public life* as media living spaces in the digital age. They seek to create spaces for people from all backgrounds to take an active role in public life and collaborate in building a more inclusive and equitable society. These spaces work with new technologies and digital tools to promote virtual interactions between users, connect like-minded people to work together and create an environment where everyone can participate. These labs also allow people to participate directly in decision-making without needing to be physically present where such decisions are made. These spaces also connect authorities and citizens, promoting the ability to use digital tools to improve everyone's daily lives. These laboratories contribute to building an environment of active social and cultural participation and allow for the creation of partnerships, the execution of projects, and the monitoring of government action. However, the foundation of a smart city in its interactive communication structure, in the capacity of human communities to cooperate intellectually, aesthetically, ethically, and democratically, is questioned concerning *laboratories of public life* models. A *laboratory* refers to a space for experiments as a media living space. In short, these *laboratories* in the digital age are means of social and cultural participation originally created to encourage experimentation and the development of new ways of solving problems related to public life. The labs usually support interdisciplinary research and seek to bring political actors and scholars together to solve social issues. These labs correspond to public sector initiatives that combine technology, open innovation, and data. However, it is necessary to analyze the course of these *innovations* that aim to make public policies more effective, improve the population's quality of life, and promote public participation if they are consolidated based on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Otherwise, they would only offer a worldview (*Weltanschauung*) and utopias.

**Final Considerations**

In the urban space, objects mediate users and the sociocultural environment, encouraging progress and always adding a novelty, a new form. It is a complex relationship in which industry, technology, and society develop interdependence, offering new objects and spatial models to everyday life. These objects or spatial models become essential to vital or playful activities concerning society's fundamental aspiration for a better quality of life. The interest lies mainly in the new forms of communication based on the inventive capacity of the individual to give meaning, through which the social relationship gains significance. Everything can become meaningful in the social relationship, impregnating the (re) presentation's form of thought, communication, and belonging to cultural identity in a decolonial space. The future of the human condition, in its relation to virtual realities, is a process that transforms the individual's life through technology. Indeed, these advanced processes of communication through digital means present social and aesthetic challenges. In a public sphere whose deliberations focus on reconciling identities and differences, avoiding the construction of differences, and redesigning media living spaces, the main challenge is using the internet to devise solutions for reducing social and urban inequalities that extend into everyday reality. Digital public life—media living spaces—in all its complexity regarding social inclusion and integration is now an essential part of many cities, where people live together, building and rebuilding their histories and their moral, ethical, aesthetic, cultural, social, and political values. Many cities aesthetically represent the space and time of this changing urban life, with the relationship between art, science, and technology for the development of more inclusive and playful urban centers. In short, innovative spaces as laboratories for public life and media living spaces in the digital age are understood as models based not only on government policies and social projects aimed at digitizing and sustaining the urban environment but also as projects still in the experimental phase to enhance and improve the functionality of urban centers.

**NOTES**

[1] John Scott and Gordon Marshall: "These terms were first coined by the British sociologist David Lockwood, in order to indicate what he saw as fundamental problems in both the normative functionalist theories of the 1950s, and the conflict theories of writers such as Ralf Dahrendorf and John Rex, which set out to criticize functionalist approaches. Social integration refers to the principles by which individuals or actors are related to one another in a society; system integration refers to the relationships between parts of a society or social system. Despite the use of the word 'integration' there is no

assumption that the relationships so described are harmonious. The terms social integration and system integration can embrace both order and conflict, harmony and contradiction. …In general (and following Max Weber's precepts about social stratification), status-based societies are likely to lead to harmonious forms of social integration, and class societies to conflictual forms of social integration. System integration, on the other hand, is a reference to the way in which different parts of a social system (its institutions) interrelate." "System Integration and Social Integration." In *A Dictionary of Sociology*. Oxford University Press, 2009. https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199533008.001.0001/acref-9780199533008-e-2315.

[2] Decolonization implies overcoming colonialism, whereas decoloniality implies transcending coloniality.

[3] Alanna Lockward and Walter Mignolo, "Decolonial Aesthetics. The Argument as Manifesto", *IDEA* 39 (2011): 89-97.

[4] Lockward and Mignolo, "Decolonial aesthetics", 89-97.

[5] 75th Anniversary of the End of WWII | Kulturprojekte Berlin. https://kulturprojekte.berlin/en/projects/75th-anniversary-of-the-end-of-wwii/

**References**

Baumgarten, A. G. (2007). *Aesthetica*. 1750, 1758 Reprint, Hamburg: Meiner.

Benjamin, W. (1935-39] 2002). "Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit". In *Medienästhetische Schriften*. Reprint, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Habermas, J. (2022) *Ein neuer Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit und die deliberative Politik.* Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Habermas, J. (1968). *Technik und Wissenschaft als Ideologie* [Technology and Science as Ideology]. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Hegel, G. W. F. ([1823]2014). *Lectures on the Philosophy of Art.* The Hotho Transcript Berlin Lectures. Translated by R.F. Brown. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

La Biennale di Venezia. (2023). 18th International Architecture Exhibition, *The Laboratory of the Future.* Veneza: Press release. Acesso 20 de junho 2023. https://www.labiennale.org/en/press.

Lockward, A.; Mignolo, W. (2001). "Decolonial Aesthetics. The Argument as Manifesto". *IDEA 39*: 89-97.

Mbembe, A. (2001) *On the Postcolony*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Scott, J.; Marshall G. (2009) "System Integration and Social Integration." In *A Dictionary of Sociology*. Oxford University Press. https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780199533008.001.0001/acref-9780199533008-e-2315.

Sustainable Cities Program. Available at: https://www.cidadessustentaveis.org.br/institucional/pagina/planejamento-e-desenho urbano?eixos=true (Accessed April 23, 2023).

Sutainable Cities and Comunities, Sustainable Development Goals: Available at: https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal11 (Accessed June 1, 2023).

United Nations. "Sustainable Development Goals." Available at: https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/ (Accessed March 31, 2023).

Wagner, C. (2024). "Consciência histórica e estética: arte e imagem (de)colonial" [Historical and aesthetic awareness: (de)colonial art and image]. *Eikón Imago,* Departamento de Historia del Arte, Universidad Complutense de Madrid.

Wagner, C. (2022). "Everyday Aesthetics and Augmented Reality: Political, Cultural, and Visual Contexts." In *Yearbook of Moving Image Studies, Augmented Images: Trilogy of Synthetic Realities II*, edited by Lars Christian Grabbe, Patrick Rupert-Kruse and Norbert M. Schmitz. Marburg: Büchner Verlag, 17-37.

Wagner, C. (2022). *Visualizations of Urban Space: Digital Age, Aesthetics, and Politics*. Advances in Urban Sustainability. London and New York: Routledge.

Weber, M. (1922). *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft: Grundriss der verstehenden Soziologie* [Economy and Society: Outline of Understanding Sociology]. Berlin: Peter Kietzmann. https://www.textlog.de/weber_wirtschaft.html