Inhabit in the pandemic: the news published on the ArchDaily website

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SUMMARY

This article approaches pandemic’s influence in architecture and urbanism and tries to answer the question: what are the main subjects that have been discussed by architects and urbanists in the news when they try to understand the relationship between habitation and pandemic? The article’s purpose is to reveal an overview of the main reflections running on specialized websites, such as searches at ArchDaily Brazil, about how Covid-19 affects architecture and urbanism. It’s a qualitative research with an exploratory character and a systematic literature review with an extensive content analysis. In the end, some topics try to bring possible answers for the distancing and social isolation repercussions in residential architecture and cities.

KEYWORDS: Habitation. Coronavirus. Residential architecture.

INTRODUCTION

Contemporaneity has been marked by diverse and fast transformations that affect the way we perceive life in the urban environment and, consequently, in our daily lives in the home environment. With the advent of mass access to information and communication technologies, digital technology has been increasingly inserted into our social routine, seeking to compress time and reduce distances and, therefore, shorten space (SILVEIRA; ROSSI; DE VUONO, 2020), being responsible for behavioral changes in humanity at the end of the last century and, especially, in this first quarter of the 21st century.

The pandemic resulting from COVID-19 brought even more alterations, in an accelerated and sudden way, profoundly modifying user experiences in the urban context and the relationships of individuals with housing (SILVEIRA; ROSSI; DE VUONO, 2020). These changes directly reflect on the meaning of inhabiting and the experience of living. According to Requena (2019), understanding inhabiting nowadays is essential for us to analyze the transformations suffered by the physical space of habitation, creating a framework for future projects.

Social isolation or social distance and the need to stay home, as a result of actions to try to control the dissemination of the new coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) (BEZERRA; SILVA; SOARES; SILVA, 2020), made housing space the locus of countless activities, which were repeatedly done out of the home environment. Faced with such circumstances, professionals from diverse fields of human knowledge were summoned to opine on the effects of the pandemic on society, as well as universities and research institutes, which quickly took the pandemic and its effects as study objects (DUTRA, 2020). It is verified that, in this context, the internet has proved to be fundamental for the wide and fast dissemination of information and for the spread of new knowledge that emerges, each day, around the world.

Within this scenario, architects and urbanists have been speaking out, seeking to highlight the impacts and consequences of the pandemic for edifications and cities, both in the present moment and in the period after social isolation or social distance. Such manifestations come not only from scientific studies, carried out in academia, in teaching and research institutions, but also from practice, empirical knowledge, and professionals working in the civil construction market.

It should be pointed out that these manifestations, almost always published in the digital environment, present some possible ways to face the pandemic, though based much more on conjectures, they can be understood as pieces of a large puzzle that keeps being assembled
collectively. Therefore, this article is the result of research that started off with the following question: what are the main themes that have been discussed by architects and urbanists on the news broadcast in the digital environment, when addressing the intertwining between the themes of housing and the pandemic?

In order to get closer to this list of discussion, a qualitative research of exploratory nature was used, with a systematic review of the literature, through which we sought to survey the publications on the ArchDaily Brasil website (a site specialized in content for architects and urbanists) dealing with the theme investigated. Therefore, it can be said that the objective of this article is to reveal an overview of the main reflections about the influence of the Covid-19 pandemic on architecture and urbanism that have been broadcast in the digital environment, based on a specific section of the searches carried out in the aforementioned website.

**HOUSING IN CONTEMPORANEITY AND HIBRIDISM IN RESIDENTIAL ARCHITECTURE**

Architecture and urbanism’s products can be understood as human artifacts, which are closely related to space and time in which they are produced and, therefore, are the result of a cultural context. Therefore, a history of humanity can be told from the history of the dwelling. (VERÍSSIMO; BITTAR, 1999). Broadly speaking, it can be said that transformations in residential architecture occur in parallel with social transformations.

When we look at the most recent production of housing in Brazil, we realize that, in addition to the changes caused by the insertion of digital technologies, the Brazilian family structure has also been changing and there are, therefore, implications for housing architecture. Although the nuclear model still prevails in most Brazilian families, the number of members has decreased and, at the same time, the number of conjugal unions without legal ties and single-parent arrangements has grown (REQUENA, 2020). According to the author, the place of women within the family core has also been changing, as well as the new relationship patterns among family members (REQUENA, 2020). All these issues cause new demands for residential architecture.

Another element must also be considered: the design of the Brazilian age pyramid. This design supports the understanding of family organization and housing models. It is possible to realize, through the analysis of the pyramids, the increase in life expectancy and birth rate reduction, which justifies the decrease in the family group size (REQUENA, 2020). Besides these issues, there is a contemporary demand for multifunctional, flexible and diversified spaces. If, in the modernist period, the functions sectorization vision prevailed, an ideal so well registered in the Letter of Athens (LE CORBUSIER, 1993), in contemporary times there is a multifunctionality predominance, i.e., in the hybridity of functions (BRAIDA; NOJIMA, 2019). According to Braida and Nojima (2019), hybridism is related to the mixture, multiplicity and heterogeneity notions.

In his book “Habitar híbrido”, Guto Requena, within a contemporary approach, states that, “for a space to harbor the meaning of inhabiting, it must open possibilities to the unforeseen, thus contradicting the logic that governs certain spaces that they are simply functional” (REQUENA, 2019, p. 17). This statement, even though it was in a different context from the pandemic we are currently experiencing, is very pertinent to the present day. After all,
the place of habitation must meet the unforeseen evermore now, and adapt to support the most diverse and mutual activities that are now exercised in it. The living must be dynamic (BARUFFALDI, 2020).

The Brazilian housing space was already undergoing analysis and criticism due to its spatial configuration. Its internal design is based on a tripartition - social sectors, intimate sector and services sector - with a compartmentalized division that favors functional and watertight environments, originating from the Parisian bourgeois apartment of the 19th century (REQUENA, 2019) and needs even more attention nowadays. The political and social context brought up by the pandemic exposed the deficiencies of Brazilian residential architecture in an incisive way.

According to Bittar (2020), when referring specifically to multifamily residential architecture aimed at the middle class, he finds that its spaces have been transforming and suffering a gradual shrinkage since the end of the 20th century. The minimum dimensioning of internal spaces allowed by municipal legislation results in parties that determine and impose new forms of coexistence and spatial proximity, while increasing social distance. "All close, but alone ..." (BITTAR, 2020, p. 157).

As noticed, in addition to the themes that were already being questioned in residential architecture, during the pandemic, new agendas emerged that relate, for example, architecture and health, housing and health, residence and multifunctionality. Thus, the discussion about housing and the hybridism of residential architecture gained prominence in the agenda of news broadcasts during the pandemic. This news reveals daily life from the perspective of the field of architecture and urbanism and are records that help us to understand the moment we are living in and foster transformations for the future.

METHODOLOGY

From a methodological point of view, this article can be said to be the result of qualitative exploratory research. This is a systematic literature review carried out on a website specialized in content for architects and urbanists that addressed the Covid-19 pandemic influence on architecture and urbanism, with a special focus on urban housing. This section of contemporary residential architecture and the relationship of living during the social isolation period, resulting from this pandemic, is due to the fact that, because of social distance, housing has become the main space for carrying out daily activities, including activities that previously happened in the public space of the city. According to Loureiro (2020), urban life in times of pandemic has happened in windows and balconies, these spaces having ceased to be just the eyes of the house became spaces for socializing and communication among people.

The ArchDaily Brasil website (www.archdaily.com.br) was selected as the data collection source. The main justification for choosing this site is the fact that it is a space in which specialized content is broadcast for architects and urbanists, becoming an important source of consultation in the Brazilian scenario (and abroad). Founded by two Chilean architects in 2008, David Assael and David Basulto, the website’s content permeates among projects, products, news, events, interviews, opinion articles, among others, published in five versions: global (English), Latin, Mexican, Brazilian and Chinese. According to Forbes México magazine (2014),
most of the platform’s content is sent by architects and the site team analyzes, translates and publishes; another part, more focused on news from the architecture sector, is produced by the platform’s team of collaborators.

According to the website ArchDaily (2020), every day we receive incredible architectural projects, news suggestions and building material recommendations from hundreds of architects from around the world. Part of our job is to curate the best and share, using innovative technologies with the 10 million architects from 230 countries and regions that connect each month to our extensive database of projects, news, tools, images, technical drawings and materials.

According to the data provided by the website (Figure 1), it can be seen that ArchDaily has a considerable scope, which could lead to the view of it as an opinion-forming website, especially for architects and urbanists.

**Figure 1: ArchDaily’s (2009-2018) number of hits.**

![Figure 1: ArchDaily's (2009-2018) number of hits](https://www.archdaily.com.br/br/content/about?ad_source=jv-header)

As noticed, ArchDaily revealed itself as a relevant source for data collection due to its viewing characteristics and the type of published news. The publications chosen to be analyzed were published on the website’s thematic part entitled “Coronavirus” (coronavirus tag), dedicated to publications dealing with this theme. The consultation was held on September 5th, 2020 and 111 news items were found as a total.

Among these publications, the articles were categorized according to the title and the posts, that contained in their title combinations with the following keywords, were chosen: (1) housing; (2) home; (3) domestic; (4) everyday life; (5) architecture; and (6) social isolation. The period chosen for analysis was from January 29th, 2020, when the first article on the Coronavirus
theme was published on the website, until August 31st, 2020. As a total, 15 pieces of news were selected, which were numbered from 01 to 15 and saved in a database.

After that, a refinement of the chosen texts was carried out, through the reading of all selected articles. From this reading, some qualification criteria were applied: articles that preferably dealt with planning or design of the built spaces from and about living in the pandemic and its relationships. Papers whose reading indicated a focus of interest different from the research objective (news numbers 01, 02, 14 and 15) were discarded. Finally, the selected articles were read thoroughly, especially in regard to content analysis.

Therefore, one can say that the LSR was developed from three main stages, presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Systematic literature review’s news selection process’ stages.

In addition to the complete reading of the selected articles, the texts were analyzed using the software IRAMUTEQ® (Interface de R pour les Analyzes Multidimensionnelles de Textes et de Questionnaires). This software allows the development of some possibilities of textual content analysis. In the research, the analysis of the most recurrent words in the texts was sought, represented by a word cloud generated by the program, which highlights the most prevalent lexical corpus in the articles.

Based on the analysis, 3 main discussion topics’ categories emerged, which will be discussed in the following session of this paper.
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As presented in the methodology section, 15 pieces of news were selected at the second stage, among which, in the end, four were eliminated. Chart 1 represents the news list collected and the final status, after the third stage: selected or discarded.

Chart 1: Selected and discarded publications at the third stage

| Number | Title                                                                 | Publication date      | Author                                      | Status        |
|--------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------------------|---------------|
| 01     | Home office advice during Covid-19’s pandemic.                        | March 23rd, 2020      | Nial P. Walsh, Translater: Vinicius Libardoni | Discarded     |
| 02     | 13 space solutions to organize your home training.                   | April 2nd, 2020       | AD Editorial Team                           | Discarded     |
| 03     | Collectivity and common welfare: how housing will change after coronavirus. | April 7th, 2020       | Eran Chen, Translater: Rafaela Bisineli    | Selected      |
| 04     | The re-invention of ordinary and everyday life.                       | April 18th, 2020      | Marcella Arruda                            | Selected      |
| 05     | Reorganize, paint, cultivate: ways of cheering up your house during social isolation. | April 19th, 2020      | Lilly Cao, Translater: Eduardo Souza       | Selected      |
| 06     | Community social distancing: what is co-living teaching us during the pandemic. | April 28th, 2020      | Kaley Overstreet, Translater: Vinicius Libardoni | Selected     |
| 07     | Architecture with no contact: sensors e new technology for daily life indoors. | April 29th, 2020      | Lilly Cao, Translater: Eduardo Souza       | Selected      |
| 08     | Time to rethink the building: strategies for penthouses, facades and ground floors during the pandemic. | May 18th, 2020        | Beatriz Dias, Clara Troia, Guido Otero e Ricardo Gusmão | Selected |
| 09     | The importance of domestic space during the COVID-19 pandemic.        | May 17th, 2020        | Marco Aresta, Nikos Salinaros, Translater: Camilla Sbeghen | Selected |
| 10     | Vernacular architecture in the world post coronavirus.               | May 22nd, 2020        | Duo Dickinson, Translater: Vinicius Libardoni | Selected      |
| 11     | Architecture and circular economy in shared spaces.                  | May 27th, 2020        | Lucas Rosse Caldas                         | Selected      |
| 12     | Nomad architectures: dislocating without leaving home.               | May 31st, 2020        | Camilla Ghisleni                           | Selected      |
| 13     | Home office routine: challenges, opportunities and reflections.      | June 9th, 2020        | Arquicast                                  | Selected      |
| 14     | Tomie Ohtake Institute launches digital publication about body experiences with architecture during social isolation. | July 4th, 2020        | Equipe ArchDaily Brasil                   | Discarded     |
| 15     | MASS Design Group provides a guide on how to design homes for the elderly in the pandemic. | August 24th, 2020      | Eric Baldwin, Translater: Romullo Baratto   | Discarded     |

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Selected news headlines highlight anthropological and social concerns about residential architecture and housing during a pandemic. Given the long period of social distance recommendation, architects and urban planners have been discussing the participation of residential buildings in maintaining a healthy life, for both body and mind.
In addition to the titles, the recurrence of the words analysis also shows evidence of the main concerns. With the analysis of the texts made through the software IRAMUTEQ, it was possible to observe that the most recurrent noun in the selected publications was “space”, this word being used 117 times, followed by the noun “architecture” which was mentioned 85 times, and later the noun “format” and the adjective “new”, both with 51 occurrences, as can be seen in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Excerpt from the analysis of the active forms occurrences in the analysis (nouns, adjectives and verbs)

|     | Active forms | 3 | Supplementary forms | Total | Hapax |
|-----|--------------|---|----------------------|-------|-------|
| espaço | 117          | nom         |                     |       |       |
| arquitetura | 85           | nom         |                     |       |       |
| forma | 51           | nom         |                     |       |       |
| novo | 51           | adj         |                     |       |       |
| mesmo | 46           | adj         |                     |       |       |
| casa | 44           | nom         |                     |       |       |
| tempo | 41           | nom         |                     |       |       |
| mundo | 40           | nom         |                     |       |       |
| pessoa | 34           | nom         |                     |       |       |
| humano | 33           | adj         |                     |       |       |
| cidade | 32           | nom         |                     |       |       |
| social | 32           | adj         |                     |       |       |
| projeto | 30           | nom         |                     |       |       |
| vida | 30           | nom         |                     |       |       |
| tecnologia | 26          | nom         |                     |       |       |
| comun | 25           | adj         |                     |       |       |
| proprio | 24           | adj         |                     |       |       |
| doméstico | 23           | adj         |                     |       |       |
| ambiente | 22           | nom         |                     |       |       |
| compartilhar | 22    | ver         |                     |       |       |
| comunidade | 22          | nom         |                     |       |       |
| estrutura | 22          | nom         |                     |       |       |
| modelo | 22           | nom         |                     |       |       |
| pandemia | 22          | nom         |                     |       |       |
| tomar | 22           | ver         |                     |       |       |
| edificio | 21           | nom         |                     |       |       |
| lugar | 21           | nom         |                     |       |       |
| maior | 21           | adj         |                     |       |       |
| maneira | 21           | nom         |                     |       |       |

Source: Screenshot of IRAMUTEQ, elaborated by the authors.

Therefore, the term "space", also considered the main discussion point of architecture and urbanism, has the highest number of occurrences. It is relevant to note that space is being targeted by the approaches carried out in the news. The recurrence of the noun “form” also signals an important concern with the material dimension of the residences, together with the first element of the design triad (form, meaning and function).

From the news found, a word cloud was created, represented in Figure 4, also generated by the software, allowing us to compose a more visual panorama of these words occurrence within the texts.
Notwithstanding these formal aspects of the content analysis itself, through reading the selected news, it is observed that some topics, even if treated differently, with more or less focus, are common during the reflections brought by the pandemic in the context of housing. Therefore, there are three main categories of discussion topics that emerged from the publications: (1) the influence of the built environment (of residential architecture) on human behavior, health and well-being; (2) the production of contemporary architecture and the financial market; and (3) design perspectives and possible scenarios for housing in the post-pandemic.

The first category texts state that the built environment has the power to shape human behavior, and that the context of the Covid-19 pandemic has changed the relationship between people and such environment. A common topic among most articles is the importance of mental and psychological health during the period of social isolation, the dichotomy between the need for isolation for physical health and the need for human contact for the well-being of individuals, having the space housing an important influence for the promotion of this well-being.

For the second category texts’ authors, the pandemic raises questions about the way we live and project. They are imposed by the economic system and the real estate market, whose buildings, with their increasingly smaller and private spaces, organized through a sectorization that no longer serves contemporary life, lead to experiences of living in isolation. Therefore, the possibility of sharing experiences, socializing and interacting with the surrounding
community is prevented, as well as not guaranteeing contact with nature and its essential elements for well-being: natural lighting and ventilation.

And, finally, the texts that deal with the project perspectives and possible scenarios for housing in the post-pandemic. It is believed that in the post-pandemic period there will be a greater need for contact and coexistence in the community, re-establishing spaces for connection. Some authors point out that these housing architecture problems are not new and were already perceived in the period before the pandemic due to changes in society, such as the decrease in family structures and the insertion of technology. Thus, this punctual context only evidenced the need to rethink the changes that were already necessary, has become urgent, as a search for the production of spaces that in fact supply the needs of its users, as well as their rights and instincts.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The pandemic caused by the new coronavirus is still ongoing. There is not even an approved vaccine worldwide; nor a fully effective treatment, capable of ensuring a radical fight against the harmful effects caused by the virus, especially on the most vulnerable groups. Therefore, the discussion still remains.

If, on one hand, there is a search for answers and scientific solutions, on the other, market professionals continue to try to understand the current situation and present hypotheses from conjectures, often based on their own empirical experiences. Thus, there is still much knowledge to be discovered and disseminated.

This article’s purpose was to present an overview of the news published on a specific website for architects and urbanists. Therefore, an attempt was made to gather the reflections on housing spaces, which are being considered and debated. The adoption of the ArchDaily website proved to be relevant both for the volume of publication and access, and for being a site that has an international insertion. Dialogue and coping with the pandemic within a globalized world are fundamental.

It is important to highlight that the context of the Covid-19 pandemic brought emphasis to some issues that had already been considered before, but which now appear to be more emergent, such as broader and more inclusive thinking about living and the city. The consequent isolation of the period we live in allowed the living space to be experienced in a more intense and multiple ways, emphasizing the importance of rethinking and reinterpreting the home daily life, creating spaces that consider the human being as the protagonist and that allow and stimulate relationships and social life.

From what was evaluated, it can be concluded that although the subject is already being debated, there are still essential gaps on this topic, since it affects the life of the whole society. It is necessary to rethink housing architecture, to adapt it to the contemporary and hyper-globalized world, considering the new and different family models, as well as the increasing insertion of technologies in our daily lives.

As a result of this article, it is suggested to expand the data collection base, incorporating other sites, as well as to continue the survey within the research site itself. It is also believed
that, with the incorporation of new texts to be analyzed, new categories of analysis may emerge, which allow understanding the present moment, while projecting the future.

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