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Smart Homes and Domestic Wellbeing: What has been lost?
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Abstract

Body is our intimate home. Although it may be contained within various spaces only in home location meets the self's most primordial need for belonging as to provide an orientation for one's actuality. According to Blumen, Fenster and Misgav the body is where one's sense of self dwells, develops and negotiates and the prime site where the meaning of "feeling at home" is sensed and comprehended. Similar to the body, home constitutes an intrinsic locus of meanings from where one's self develops and stretches out to the immediate and furthermost, physical and human, environments. Home is a notion that inseparably entwines the "materiality" of location and space with "domesticity" that connotes the dominant way of living. The house, the place of living, is converted into a home by homemaking, i. e. human efforts re-shaping the environments that support human life. Nowadays technological innovations are counted among these efforts. Digital solutions are rapidly evolving and we are witnessing a blooming of tech-based products, several of which promise to improve the way we live in domestic environments. The latest advances in the information systems literature refer to appliances that aim to make a home a smart one. The term "smart home" can refer to any form of residence which integrates interconnected devices to fulfill and ease the daily routine tasks. The application of smart home technology has been shown to improve users' wellbeing, as well as promoting independent living. Interconnected technologies perform daily routine activities such as house heating, water heating, light management, the search for cheaper energy providers. In addition, smart home technologies promise to diminish the feeling of isolation and improve psychological wellbeing, through the provision of assistance and support in daily routine activities, inducing a feeling of companionship. Even though in this period of "lockdown" we have experienced these significant benefits provided by smart home technology on a large scale, the degree of skepticism among users about the effects of tech-based products on the actual domestic wellbeing has not diminished. Why? Most likely we have to shift the focus of investigation from a functional approach and understand what technological culture has forgotten yet perceived as very important by users in order to achieve an effective wellbeing.

This paper addresses the identified open issues by offering a twofold discussion. In the first part I'll propose a return to the living human body in its ambiguous "dual unity" and "subjective anatomy" as a critical framework to explore and interpret the meaning and characteristics of our most intimate "feeling at home" with its practical implications on the concept of wellbeing. Then I'll apply the identified characteristics to domesticity in order to design an ethic of homemaking that does not exclude but integrate and develop the technology potential.

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