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## **The Future of the Past – Housing in Blade Runner**

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# The Future of the Past – Housing in Blade Runner

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## Abstract

Architecture, in addition to the role of setting in the film industry, can also be an element of discussion, interpretation, and generalisation. Many works have already been developed from this perspective. In this context, the dystopian universe presented in the science fiction movie *Blade Runner* (1982, directed by Ridley Scott) and its sequel – *Blade Runner 2049* (2017, directed by Denis Villeneuve), deserve mention. The films have a time interval of 30 years in relation to the fictional chronology of the original movie and 35 years elapsed in conventional chronology. It is precisely these temporal windows that motivate us to observe and investigate the endurance, transformations, and relationships in the domestic space, starting from the representations of the internal environments of the protagonists' apartments in both films. The goals focus on being able to observe the spatial and functional variations of dwellings between the different time frames proposed by the films in order to understand how they represent the relationship between space and technology (in a broad sense) within the domestic domain. The methodology is based mainly on comparing the protagonists' apartments presented in each movie (case studies), observing spatiality, domestic functions, type, uses, etc. (through the development of a redraw of the floor plans of both apartments and quantitative and qualitative analyses). We chose to explore fictitious architectural narratives, "made" to house androids/replicants, to investigate the relationship between technology and domesticity in contemporary times.

**Keywords:** *Blade Runner, Blade Runner 2049, architecture and cinema, domesticity, space and technology*

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## 1. Introduction

Among several authors who have already ventured to relate architecture and film, many have concerned themselves with the omnipresence of architecture as a crucial element in defining film space, materialised through scenarios or locations (or a mixture of both); others have seen in cinema a powerful expressionist tool that can say a lot about architecture, even when it is not directly intended.

Admittedly, one art form can benefit from the other, and the relationship between architecture and cinema since the first films in the early twentieth century is evident and natural. The strength

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of cinematic spatial imagery has the power to place us in worlds which are fantastic, ancient, future, contemporary, etc. (Friedberg, 2006), and it would not be so if there were not a very clear architectural intention in the realisation of these possible imaginary realities. Denise Lezo (2010), addressing the relationship between cinema, city and architecture in film productions of the first decades of the twentieth century, gives us the following interpretation:

With complex imagery and conceptual formulations, these filmic architectures and cities are still relevant today to understand various aspects related to the cultural transformations that occurred in that context. Through their formal conceptions, the resources of cinematic language used to portray them and the narratives in which they were inserted, these architectures and cities apprehended, problematised and reformulated questions related to themes such as life in the metropolis and the ambiguities and contradictions imposed on the metropolitan inhabitant; new technologies, and the ways in which they impacted daily life and sparked imagination; formal experimentations of avant-garde art, and the search for overcoming the boundaries between art and life; innovative conceptions of architectures and cities that longed for creating a new society. (Lezo, 2010, p.16, our translation)

Similarly, we understand that an investigative look at the architectural approach in *Blade Runner*<sup>1</sup> film (Scott, 1982) and its sequel, *Blade Runner 2049* (Villeneuve, 2017), can be a valuable exercise in searching for a reflection and understanding of contemporary architecture, especially when observed through the bias of transformations in space, and its relationship with domesticity and technology (in a wide-ranging way).

The methodology is basically divided into three stages: the first one is a brief literature review of texts that address the relationship between architecture and cinema, those that investigate the films, and specific texts about the subject of domesticity and technology. The second stage consists of redrawing the floor plans of the protagonists' apartments (our case studies: the blade runners Deckard (1982) and K/Joe (2017) homes), and direct observation of both films, collecting and analysing quantitative and qualitative data about the aforementioned domestic spaces (studying spatiality, functionality, topology, uses, etc.). Finally, the third stage focuses on generalising and speculating about the relationship between space and technology within the domestic domain, starting from the analysed universe.

Beyond the entertainment naturally linked to cinema, we can, through this proposed path, understand that the relationship between architecture and cinema is capable of providing us with new panoramas since “[...] through film and technology, the filmmaker, as well as the architect, have gotten wings to showcase their creative universe through their desire in the form of spaces such as cities, real or imagined and inhabited as if they were real.” (Afonso & Eloy, 2014, p.167, our translation).

That is why cinema is an important architectural laboratory that is eventually to come (not to mention that it is also an important source of record for existing architecture and, in some cases, for some which have ceased to exist). Hence, architecture has, especially in science fiction, the opportunity to see itself reflected, anticipated, or speculated, as if cinema, indirectly, could be understood as a kind of visual oracle to architecture.

## 2. The Architecture and The Science Fiction Cinema

The relationship between architecture and science fiction (sci-fi) cinema has been evident since the advent of such path-breaking films as the iconic *Metropolis* (Lang, 1927) and *Things to Come* (Menzies, 1936) or *Aelita* (Protazanov, 1924). *Metropolis* is considered “One of the first notable films where the city is created in the image of a futuristic vision that marks the beginning of German expressionism [...]” (Afonso & Eloy, 2014, p.170, our translation). Anthony Vidler (1996) highlights and exemplifies this relationship by stating that films can even predict or anticipate the design of both architecture and city: “[...] we have only to think of the commonplace icons of Expressionist utopias to find examples, from *Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari* to *Metropolis*, that apparently succeeded, where architecture failed, in building the future in the present.” (Vidler, 1993, p.13).

*Metropolis*, because of its pioneering spirit and boldness, has become the classic example of the need to look at architecture as the source and means to be able to represent the city of the

future (in this case, a pessimistic future, by the way). Consequently, in its early days, sci-fi cinema developed techniques, strategies and special effects to visually accurately represent versions of an imagined future and unreal scenarios (Afonso & Eloy, 2014).

For Jorge Gorostiza (2001), this cinema genre influences engineering by creating new mechanisms and architecture by incorporating these inventions, especially for the ability to build a morphology capable of giving an original expression unique characterisation to unprecedented and often fantastic places. Michael Webb (1996) points out that sci-fi films are, first and foremost, an autocratic and personal view of their directors, in which visual effects and scenarios are the means of expression needed to represent these views, which, however, always carry with them contemporary features.

Therefore, we can find in sci-fi cinema a rich, creative, critical, and legitimate way to understand frames of contemporary architecture:

The study of fiction filmology that speculates about future times allows us to verify some achievements of prospected ideas that eventually came to happen. Since the invention of television and telephone, the futuristic home has had a host of automated functions, computer technology and the effects of globalisation. All these ideas express concerns about the future of present trends. Thus, the fact that the prospects are projected in light of specific facts of the current world, yearnings or fears in the face of events of the time, the ideas for this future are grounded and can serve as inspiration for their actual realisation, being previously simulated in cinema. (Afonso & Eloy, 2014, p.187, our translation)

Cinematic foresight, understood as a field of representation that is able to tell a great deal about the present, even when it seeks to portray the future, can sometimes point to an optimistic, futuristic view (as in *Things to Come*, for example), sometimes to a pessimistic one (as in *Metropolis* and *Blade Runner*, among many others). However, regardless of the narrative tendency, the fragments of contemporaneity present in the making of cinematic imagery are what most interest us because they can highlight trends and possibilities, as well as critiques and considerations with which architecture can evolve.

## 2.1. Blade Runner (1982)

The film, directed by Ridley Scott and initially released in 1982, is based on the argument of Philip K. Dick's book *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* Published in 1968 (Neumann, 1996). Throughout its 116 minutes, the film features the overcrowded city of Los Angeles in November 2019. The story, by and large, deals with an unequal society in an environmentally collapsed world where multi-ethnic humans and (some) replicants inhabit a dystopian vision of the future and, consequently, of the city.

According to Michael Webb (1996), the author Philip K. Dick envisioned a bustling, texture-rich Los Angeles for 2019, wealthy, colourful and alive, while Ridley Scott chose to make a dark, dirty city marked by the alternation between a smoky and rainy filter with a noir aesthetic:

He and his conceptual designer speculated that, in a city of 90 million people, pollution would generate continuous smog and acid rain. Those who could afford to leave would move to "off-world" suburbia or the security of mile-high towers, abandoning the streets to a multi-ethnic underclass. As wealth drained from the city, it would become too costly to rebuild, so that older buildings would be retrofitted with signs and service ducts snaking across their facades. "Everything had to look old, sleazy, and odd," said Mead, "a strange, compacted, crowded look exaggerating the danger and hopelessness of these people's lives. To me, movies have always been an alternate reality. You just have to adjust it to what people think is real". (Webb, 1996, p.45)

Aside from the pessimism mentioned above, it is curious to note that the film's creative team draws references from the past to create a dystopian ambience of the future. Moreover, it should be conjectured that if the film was released in the early 1980s, its idealisation probably came about in the late 1970s, when Denise Scott Brown, Robert Venturi & Steven Izenour's *Learning from Las Vegas* (1972), among other publications of the period, still reverberated and led a strong discussion in favour of postmodern architecture, aimed for a greater discursive power for architecture, in which even the influences of historicist revivalism were welcomed.

Adriana Afonso & Sara Eloy (2014) perceived the city of Blade Runner as “[...] a city that takes over the past and builds a future in temporary and constructed scenes, enriching oneself with ages and styles of various timeframes to dialogue with each other.” (Afonso & Eloy, 2014, p.188, our translation). Moreover, “[...] in Blade Runner it is assumed that the importance of architecture in relation to certain places, cultures and eras is lost, and this city returns to the past to reveal the historicist desire displayed by postmodernism.” (Afonso & Eloy, 2014, p.185, our translation). Hence, the city expresses its timeless character, blending past, present and future.

In this way, we can see in the film existing buildings mixed with building designs developed exclusively for the film’s fiction. Existing buildings often gained external piping, reminiscent of vines and roots, but now artificial and technological. Dietrich Neumann (1996) highlights the presence of four existing works used in the film: the Yukon Hotel, the Union Station (1931-1939), the Bradbury Building<sup>2</sup> (1893), and the Ennis Brown House (1923), designed by Frank Lloyd Wright, which served as a location to represent parts of Agent Deckard’s apartment, and to be its primary compositional reference.

Regarding this revivalist demand with a mixture of different historical references, Michael Webb (1996) points to the art directors’ quest for ensuring an aesthetic inspired by some buildings of Ancient Mesoamerica (especially Mayan culture) and based on this information. In Figure 1, we sought to establish a visual comparison between the Pyramid of the Sun (in Teotihuacán) and the headquarters of the Tyrell Corporation. Adriana Afonso and Sara Eloy (2014) perceive a volumetric and aesthetic resemblance with the Mesopotamian Ziggurat building, which is also an aesthetically acceptable comparison.

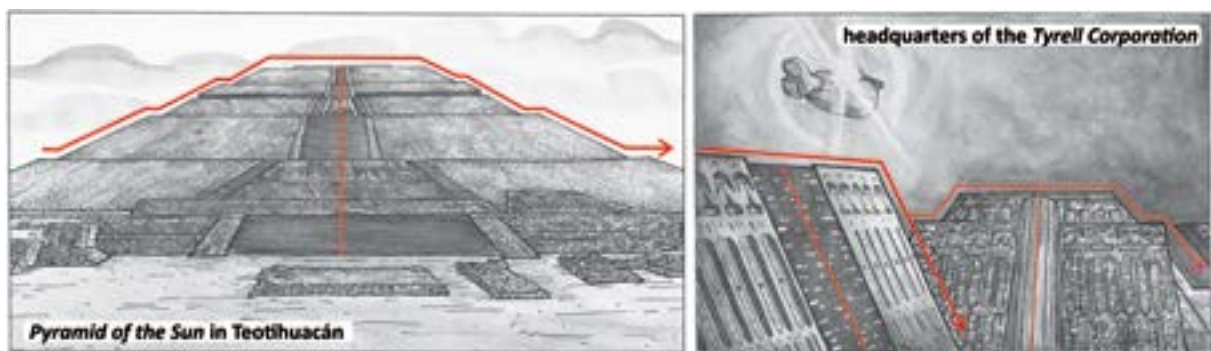


Figure 1. Historical shape references—illustration by Alisson Ribas Cirqueira, with edition and diagrammatic insertions elaborated by the authors.

Such influence of Mayan architecture is still felt in Frank Lloyd Wright’s cited choice of Ennis Brown House, albeit indirectly. Due to the moulded panels were designed by the architect who, according to Jan Gympel (2000), was inspired by the Governor’s House in Uxmal, as can be observed in Figure 2, which still presents detailed examples of the use of these panels at the internal composition of the ambience of Blade Runner’s protagonist’s apartment, as evidenced by Dietrich Neumann too:

The architectural treatment of Deckard’s apartment – inspired by and partially filmed at the Ennis Brown House – contains one of the clues to the nagging central question about his being a replicant. Wright’s characteristic treatment of his ornamented concrete blocks was based on the imagery of Mayan architecture. In the film, two Mayan-inspired pyramids house the headquarters of the Tyrell Corporation, producers of the replicants. (Neumann, 1996, p.152)

Agent Deckard’s apartment will be effectively approached later. However, still in this section, it is worth mentioning two other dwellings that take shape in Blade Runner’s narrative, which is the penthouse of the Tyrell Corporation’s founder (the apartment is on the top floor of the previously covered building and shown in Figure 1); and inventor JF Sebastian’s apartment, a large dwelling located in an abandoned Bradbury Building. Both apartments flirt with classicism and feature some baroque elements. While the first exemplifies wealth, the second is marked by a decaying classic-baroque aesthetic.

Observing the interiors of the three dwellings mentioned (Deckard et al.) demonstrates that the

strategy of going back to presenting an idea of the future is not limited to the urban exterior and also applies to the domestic space, in which one can note the coexistence of past styles with equipment of the future (some still non-existent nowadays), in a complex and disordered symbiosis. Adriana Afonso and Sara Eloy (2014, p.182, our translation) point out that: “[...] however, this future will tend to be based on fragments of the past and some adaptations shall be made, abandonment, overlap keeping always fragmented the evolution of the city and the buildings [...]”.

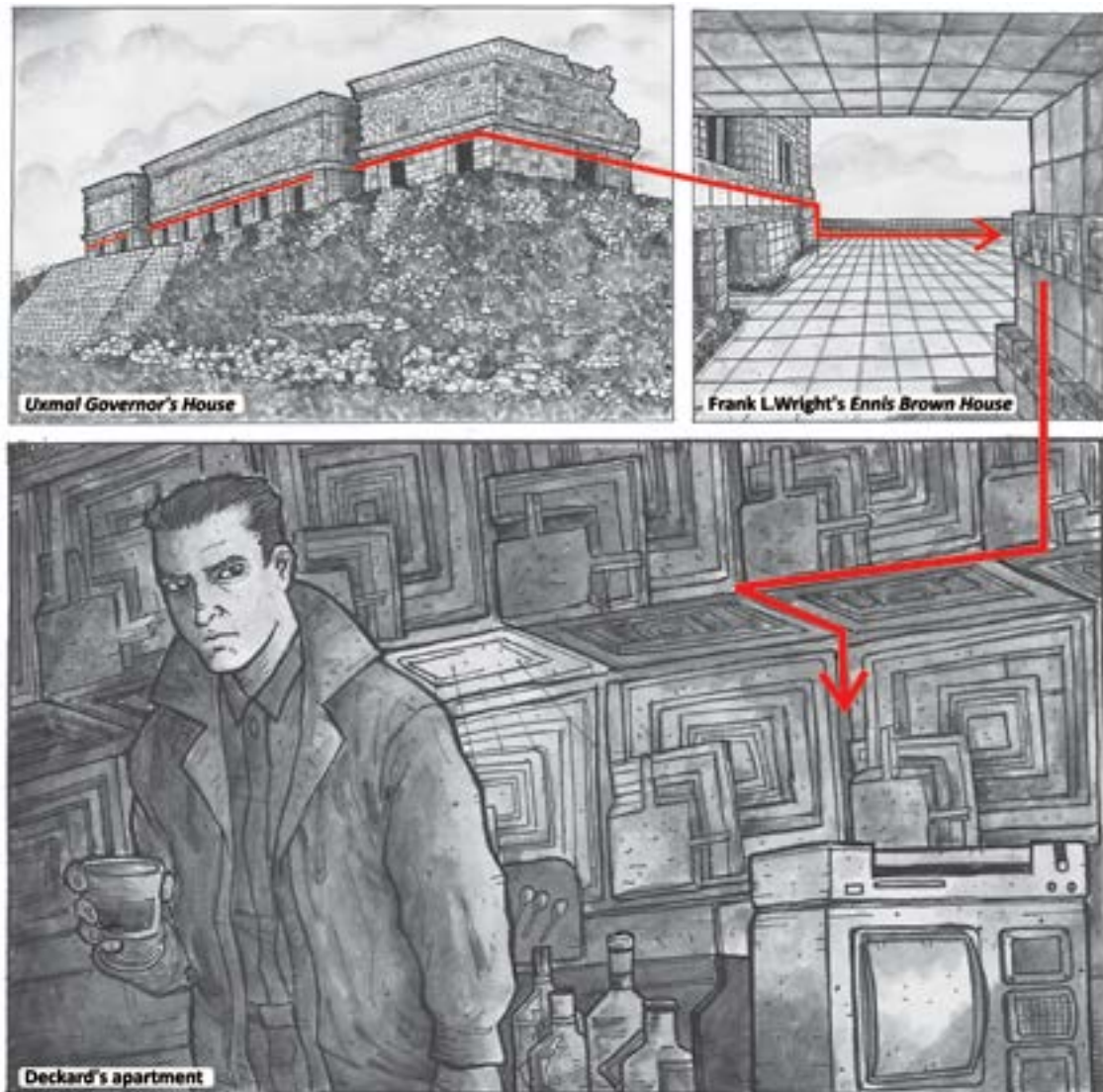


Figure 2. The Mayan panel. Illustration by Alisson Ribas Cirqueira, with edition and diagrammatic insertions elaborated by the authors.

The sum proposed by Blade Runner is based on an architectural view consistent with the discussions of its time (1970s/1980s), postmodernism, and the ecological crisis/oil crisis. This architectural support as a means of representing the city and housing, blending technological development with historicist revivalism, as well as including social and environmental criticism of the film's plot and aesthetics, made it unique and original to the extent that it continued to retain its relevance, not for getting it right or wrong about the future that has come, but for being able to show a future with a frighteningly familiar structure and aesthetic.

## 2.2. Blade Runner 2049 (2017)

The sequel to the first film, Blade Runner 2049, was directed by Denis Villeneuve and released in theatres in 2017. The film maintains as its argument the book of Philip K. Dick and the plot of Blade Runner (1982). During its 163 minutes, the film features a Los Angeles at least as thick, multi-ethnic, media, smoky and rainy as the first film. Moreover, perhaps even more socially

unequal, as it is now possible to see the equivalent of the slums of underdeveloped or developing countries in the more peripheral part of the city.

The environmental criticism, already fierce in the previous film, becomes even more brutal. In the city of Los Angeles, year 2049, sea levels have already risen, and a huge barrier has to be built along the coast, segregating the city from the sea. Trees only exist in holographic projections, and any piece of wood is considered a rare item. Trash (especially electronic) dominates the extra-urban landscape (unlike the first film, which is all centred in the city of Los Angeles, this second explores other “cities” and outdoor areas, such as protein farms). From what can be conjectured from the film, the planet no longer has nature as we know it and has become an artificial or residual whole with no middle ground.

The *Blade Runner 2049* dystopia is carefully calibrated to be both a continuation of the universe elaborated in the first film and able to reflect changes over the past 30 (fictitious) years, seeking to intensify certain messages and nuances, such as those mentioned above environmental and social issues. However, it is also concerned with bringing new approaches, such as those related to the technology issue, which is no longer the same as in the first movie. Nevertheless, it has not evolved to the point of completely transforming that universe. It has developed only gradually, so much that what we see somehow accompanies the expectations and problems related to technology felt today, such as the emergence and consolidation of human-machine interaction (artificial intelligence, virtual reality, augmented reality, mixed reality, holograms, performance, privacy issues, data protection, etc.). These phenomena are presented deeper within the freedom of cinematic creation.

Regarding architecture, in general, we can say that it maintains the heritage of the first film but does not rely exclusively on it. It is as if one intends to reinterpret the question of spatiality without resorting exactly to postmodern historicism, as was the case in the first film. The headquarters of the Wallace Corporation (which took the place of Tyrell's) makes formal reference to the old building (including its neighbour); however, it expands its scale and the tectonic changes. Internally, its spaces are large (as opposed to the housing units of the film, which are relatively minor), and it acquires brutalist characteristics. It is constantly adorned by idyllically yellowish illumination, as well as the continuous movement of the water “shadow”.

As for architectural references, our interpretation identifies a particular mix of precedents ranging from Ricardo Legorreta to Peter Zumthor (see Figure 3), while the AD Editorial Team (2017) also relates the Neanderthal Museum project in Piloña, Spain, developed by Estudio Barozzi Veiga.

Spaces devoted to domesticity continue to represent a certain diversity of solutions, so we still have an apartment in a residential building, as Deckard did, and the same happens to Agent K/ Joe's place, which we will discuss in the next section. Deckard now (2049) lives in a bar of an abandoned casino hotel. In the context of the films, two unusual housing approaches are present in *Blade Runner 2049*, namely the bunker of Dr. Ana Stelline and the protein farmhouse of the character Sapper Morton.

The bunker is located inside a laboratory, in a possible criticism of the loss of privacy and work invading the domestic space (home office), in fiction justified by a health issue that forces the character to live in isolation (curiously, it would serve as a metaphor for pandemic times). The shape of the bunker resembles an enlarged igloo, all white and with a small transparent surface (also internal). Curvy lines that resemble cartographic projections scratch the spherical surfaces and the ground, probably serving as guidelines for holographic projections. It is a completely immersive environment; perhaps, for that reason, it is an entirely aseptic and spartanly furnished environment.

The last home we approached is, actually, the first to appear in the movie, and it is a detached house—the only one with that feature in both films and the only non-urban one, explaining its isolation. A sort of anteroom was attached at the entrance, which seems to isolate the indoor air so as not to be contaminated with the outside; otherwise, its ambience and furniture are relatively similar to several existing houses in the real world.

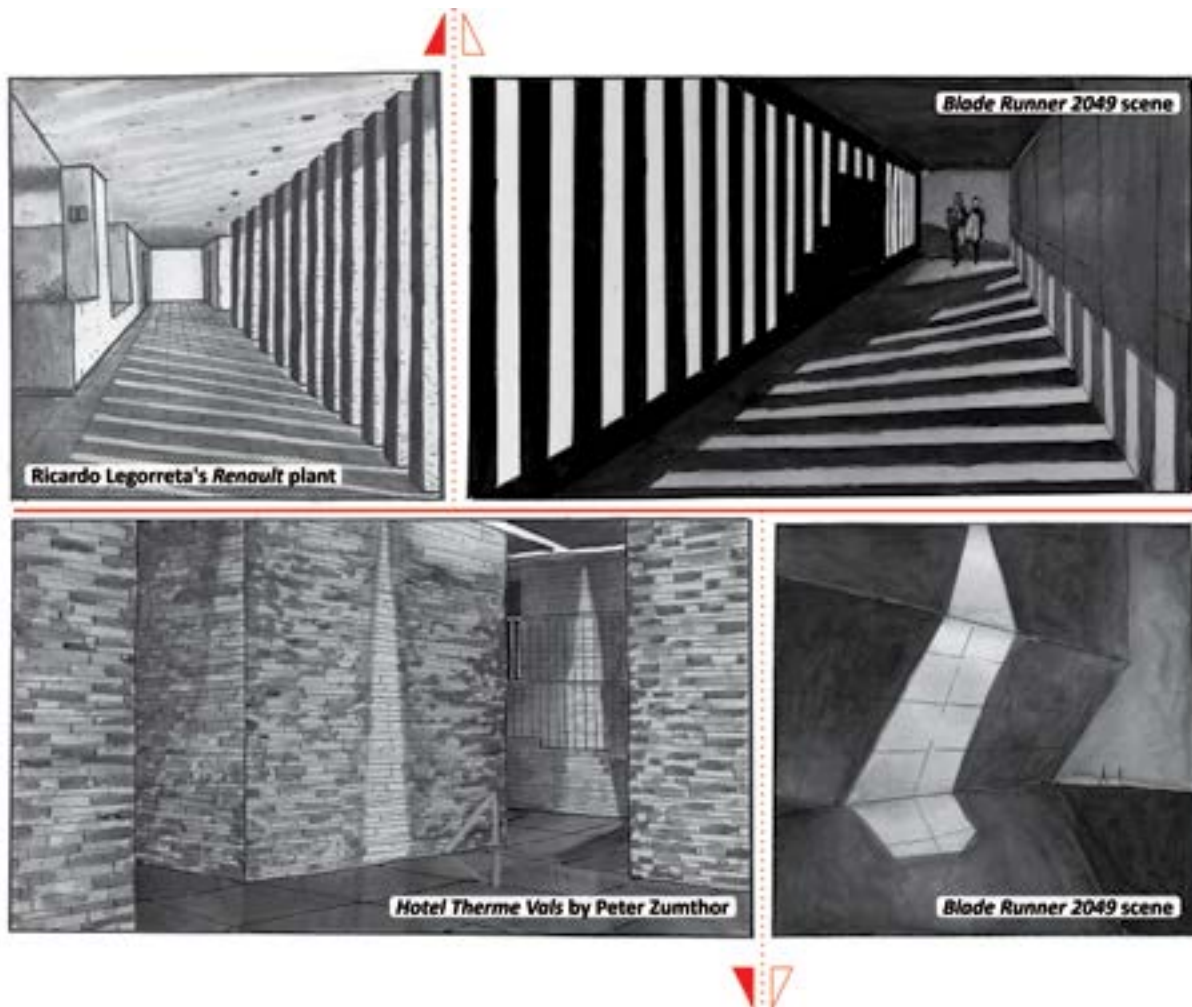


Figure 3. References in contemporary architecture. Illustration by Alisson Ribas Cirqueira, with edition and diagrammatic insertions elaborated by the authors.

The second film sought to create a different and unique architectural identity by knowing how important it was to the critical success of the first film; yet, at the same time, this new identity could not mean a complete break with the postmodern approach and aesthetics decadent noir by *Blade Runner*, so strong in the minds of the spectators. There was also the challenge of trying to reflect on some contemporary issues, such as the relationship with technology in today's society, for example. From this complex challenge, we believe that the urban-architectural proposal present in *Blade Runner 2049* is not an attempt to overcome or copy the original. Nonetheless, it seeks to mean a possible evolution within that universe in 30 years.

### 3. Home for Android Hunters

As stated earlier, we are facing an unusual possibility of analysis, allowing us to observe and compare two dwelling units presented at different times (1982 and 2017) and, on both occasions, referring originally to future times (2019 and 2049). In the two films analysed, we have to assume that we have no definitive indication of the year in which the buildings were actually built; after all, even today, it is possible to live in a newly built building neighbouring another of the nineteenth century, for example.

We understand these apartments as the "houses" of the protagonists, considering that it is in these specific scenarios spaces where domesticity develops, i.e.:

The idea of a house that we share today presupposes the idea of dwelling and, hence, the idea of an occupant who takes it as home. A house is a place where a significant part of life is spent, where one seeks physical protection and psychic rest and where the citizen recognises oneself far from the masks of social roles. Therefore, we continue to associate it with the ideas of privacy and intimacy (and usually family), although we live in an excess of modernity in which these concepts are weakened. (Furtado & Moreira, 2001, p.96, our translation)



Among the aspects that make the protagonists' apartments comparable, we can quickly point out that both cater to similar characters (besides being the protagonists of their respective films): both male replicants, aged between approximately 35 and 40 years old, who live alone<sup>3</sup>, and have the same job (police officers "hunters of androids"). We highlight that our specific objects are the apartments that served as housing for these protagonists. When we refer to Agent Deckard's apartment, we are talking about the 1982 film apartment, and when we refer to Agent K/Joe's apartment, we are addressing his home in the 2017 film<sup>4</sup>.

The comparative analysis of both case studies seeks to establish similarities and, at the same time, relevant changes. A critical method of the work is to redraw the floor plans of both apartments. Following this path and based simultaneously on redrawing and in the film's visual narrative, we can perceive, speculate, and register some observations regarding domesticity in the universe of Blade Runner.

Before addressing other aspects regarding the redrawing of floor plans (presented in Figure 4), we need to say that these redrawings are the result of careful observation of the scenes of both films, their interpretation, analysis and information gathering from other authors who set themselves the same task<sup>5</sup>; however, in both drawings of the other authors, we found points with which we differ, so the drawings presented here, of our own, become unique, by incorporating information available, but modified according to the direct observation of the films. It is also noteworthy that these floor plans are speculations since in film production, the spaces where you shoot are seldom actually built, and often they are sets of locations, which may even be independent, yet which in the making of the film seem to be a unique organism, as apparently happens to Deckard's apartment, for instance.

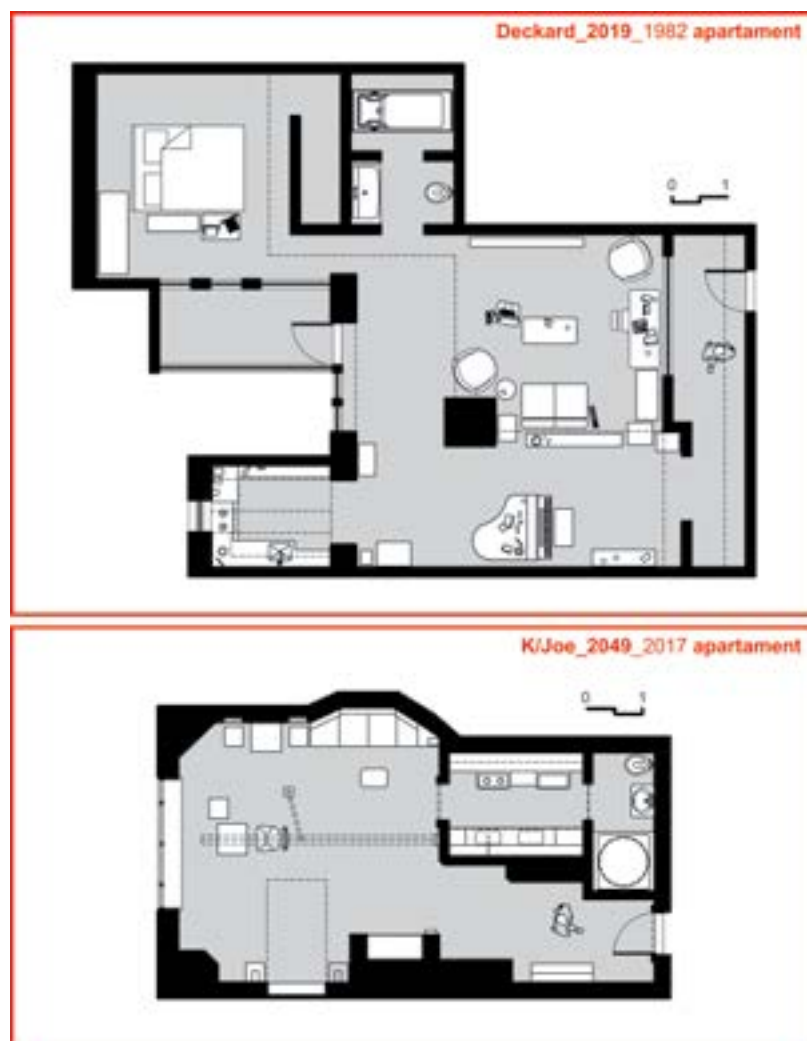


Figure 4. Floor plans of Agent Deckard's (upper) and Agent K / Joe's (lower) apartments, graphical scale, with no geographical orientation. Authors' drawings.

By analysing the floor plans, we can see that Deckard's apartment is more subdivided, with a larger number of isolated rooms, and, at the same time, it has a large integrated space that fulfils the function of a "living room" (but with additional uses). In K/Joe's apartment, fewer compartments meet basic needs: while hygiene and food preparation have unique spaces, the other activities share a flexible space that can be used as a living room, dining area or bedroom.

We still can notice that Deckard's apartment is abundantly furnished and filled with personal objects, as well as showing a disorganised aesthetic. K/Joe's has small furniture, few personal items, and seems more impersonal. In K/Joe's apartment, while some pieces (apparently) are constructed of concrete and therefore not precisely count as mobile furniture, others can be embedded in the walls, providing a certain flexibility to the space.

Watching the films, we can also perceive that the apartments are made of heavy and opaque materials, with a predominantly stone look in Deckard's room and grey walls (perhaps cementitious boards) in K/Joe's room. Even though Deckard's apartment has more windows, it is darker than K/Joe's apartment, which has a single large window, but the lighting is artificial, as the sun no longer looks to be such an abundant light source in 2049 Los Angeles.

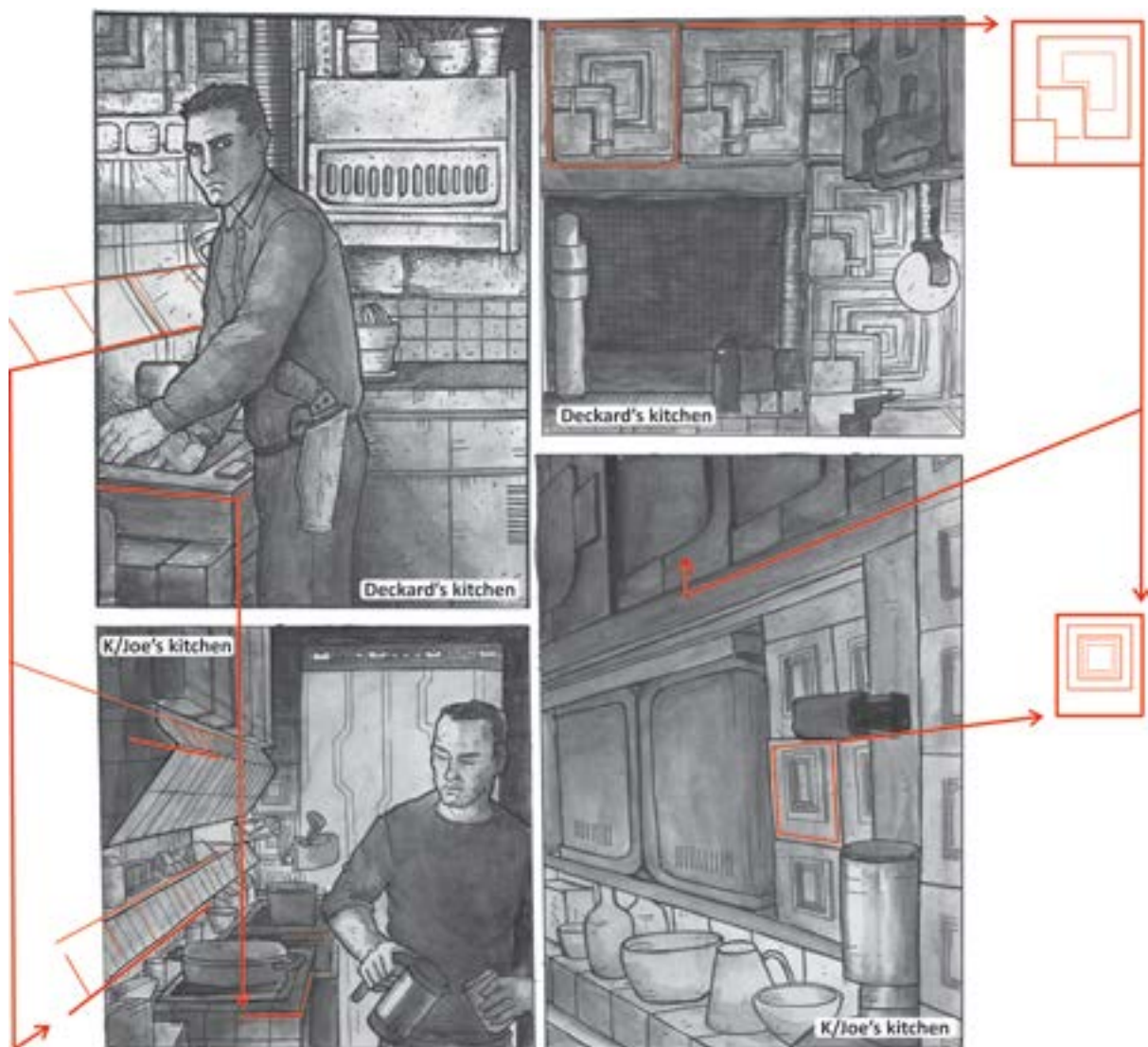


Figure 5. Endurances and transformations in the panel and the kitchen. Illustration by Alisson Ribas Cirqueira, with edition and diagrammatic insertions elaborated by the authors.

The kitchen remains very similar in both apartments, K/Joe's kitchen having a clear rereading and tribute to Deckard's kitchen (see Figure 5), with parts of the furniture perhaps made of masonry (sloping and lined with simple tiles, the same ones used in countertops); and in the case of K/Joe's kitchen there are small decorative plates/panel and possible cabinet doors with designs that allude to the plates of Deckard's apartment, which in turn comes from Frank Lloyd

Wright's Ennis Brown House, as discussed earlier and evidenced in Figure 2.

Looking at the floor plan of the apartments (see Figure 4), we note that the kitchen, in addition to the similarities pointed out, has a very different layout, being almost an annexe in Deckard's apartment and practically the centre of K/Joë's apartment, even being mandatory the passage through it to reach the bathroom, which does not happen in the 1982 apartment.

The most important finding regarding housing perceived in comparing these films (see Table 1) was that the number of rooms, their dimensions and their use changed. Over the fictional 30 years, we have seen a reduction of specialised spaces and emerging flexible spaces that do not have a single use. Probably, this strategy is the way to alleviate the significant reduction in the real estate area. Roughly speaking, it is possible to say that K/Joë's apartment (47 m<sup>2</sup>) is almost half the size of Deckard's property (86 m<sup>2</sup>)<sup>6</sup>. This reduction in area, as well as the change in typology, may mean the perception and reproduction of changes in housing production over the last decades and in new ways of living, emphasising the tendency to minimise areas and the individualisation of housing (Lorenzo, 2012).

Table 4. Blade Runner housing – from Deckard to K/Joë. From authors and publicity posters Warner Bros and Sony.

<b>THE HOUSING IN BLADE RUNNER - FROM DECKARD (2019) TO K/JOË (2049)</b>		
<b>Blade Runner</b>	<b>title</b>	<b>Blade Runner 2049</b>
<b>1982</b>	<b>release</b>	<b>2017</b>
<b>116'</b>	<b>Runtime</b>	<b>163'</b>
<b>22'31"</b>	<b>length of stay in their own domestic environment</b>	<b>18'03"</b>
<b>19%</b>	<b>percentage of own domestic time</b>	<b>11%</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>how many times the apartment is shown</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>1 bedroom apartment</b>	<b>housing type</b>	<b>Studio apartment</b>
<b>86 m<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>approximate area of the apartment</b>	<b>47 m<sup>2</sup></b>
<b>6</b>	<b>number of rooms</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Hall</b>	<b>room types</b>	<b>Hall</b>
<b>Integrated space</b> (living room/music/computer/tv)		<b>Flexible space</b> (living room/bedroom/pantry)
<b>Kitchen</b>		<b>Kitchen</b>
<b>Bathroom</b>		<b>Bathroom</b>
<b>Bedroom</b>		
<b>Balcony</b>		
	<b>developed activities</b>	
	● rest/leisure	●
	● eventual professional work	●
	● Housework	●
	● personal hygiene	●
	○ food	●
	● interpersonal interaction	●
	○ virtual interaction	●

For Leonardo Previ, “[...] the urban housing reality and the parallel world that gravitates around the cinema are artistic expressions strongly related to our way of being in the world.” (Previ apud Afonso & Eloy, 2014, p.170, our translation), and that can influence each other. Dietrich Neumann (1996) provides an excerpt from Philip K. Dick (Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?) in which Dick partially describes Blade Runner’s ambience and living conditions, in which we can see that the second film’s apartment seeks to be more faithful to the book (but not as deteriorated as that) and, in a way, to the great modernist housing estates, marked by impersonality, standardisation and large scale:

He lived alone in this deteriorating, blind building of a thousand uninhabited apartments, which like all its counterparts, fell, day by day, into greater entropic ruin. Eventually, everything within the building would merge, would be faceless and identical, mere pudding-like kipple piled to the ceiling

of each apartment. And, after that, the uncared-for building itself would settle into shapelessness, buried under the ubiquity of the dust. By then, naturally, he would be dead, another interesting event to anticipate as he stood here in his stricken living room alone with the lungless, all-penetrating, masterful world silence. (Dick apud Neumann, 1996, p.152)

This fast analysis and comparison around the cases, using the data arranged here and taking into consideration the visual narratives of both films, allow us to focus on the domestic space in the universe of Blade Runner. From this thematic cut-out, we were able to have a better comprehension of organisation, spatiality, uses, etc. Therefore, we tried registering some mutations and trends regarding housing in Blade Runner.

#### 4. The Future of the Past of Technology and Domesticity in the Universe of Blade Runner

In the technological context, there were important variations. First, we can see that many of the technological incorporations present in Deckard's apartment have been available in the market for a long time: access via card, lights that turn on automatically, among other devices, are no longer news, even if in a way, have not had their use completely popularised. While in K/Joe's apartment, apart from the access control that set aside the use of a card to be done by reading the palm of his hand, the main innovations are the improvement of the home "management" system (a personal assistant/AI), a sort of central computer, and the presence of a hologram, initially connected to a mobile projection system, and later made by a kind of wireless connection.

In both approaches, housing is limited to being a technology wrapper, so much so that both, except for one piece of equipment or another, would not cause great astonishment today. The element that most impact domesticity when related to technology is the way holographic projection develops. From a certain point of view, we could relate it as an element of what some authors begin to define as performative architecture (Lenz & Celani, 2015). In this case, it is not only a system that maintains specific characteristics of the environment (such as lighting and temperature, for example) but which mediated by a sort of artificial intelligence (cinematographically sophisticated, in the case of Blade Runner 2049); it can establish relations with both constructed space and interaction in various ways with the inhabitant(s).

In their article *Cartografias da domesticidade*, Gonçalo Furtado and Inês Moreira (2001) already partially addressed these questions:

The increasing incorporation of electronic-digital systems and technologies allows us to imagine the emergence of intelligent multimedia housing (which overlapped with the "machine room" of plug-in appliances), which, with a real nervous system (composed of all household devices via cable and radio to a central computer and information highways), you will be able to ensure your own control and management by self-monitoring. (Furtado & Moreira, 2001, p.100, our translation)

In any case, the possibility of being aware of these cinema-sponsored experiences allows us to discuss or anticipate debates about the relationship between technology and domesticity; as Mariantina Papadea (2019) points out, "[...] although cinematic private residencies are not purely the product of architectural design or realistic representations of homes, they are fuelling questions about conditions of privacy, surveillance and the introduction of technology into the home of the future." (Papadea, 2019).

Exception made to the holographic issue inserted in the second film and the sophisticated "central computer/AI" (somewhat present in both films) regarding the architectural/domestic universe, we concluded that no major innovations were proposed, perhaps because of the option already made in the first film to mix elements reminiscent of the past with punctual futuristic technologies. Adolf Loos has ruled in a particular context: "The work of art is revolutionary; the house is humble." (Loos apud Miranda, 2006, p.101). In a way, perhaps this is a fitting description for the housing universe of Blade Runner's protagonists.

#### 5. Conclusion

The encounter of two forms of expression so distinct but that, at the same time, complement each other easily – cinema and architecture – within the established framework made possible

for us to observe, understand, speculate, and generalise about contemporary housing contained in past that looked to the future, the future that turned into past, and the present projecting new possibilities for the future.

The analysis of both movies *Blade Runner* and *Blade Runner 2049*, even if risky, either by re-approaching a film already so studied, sometimes by daring to study such a recent object, proved to be a stimulating and unique path, mainly because we have analytically and comparatively focused on the dwellings of their protagonists, allowing us to explore stability and mutations, concordances, and divergences between them. Always having some revealing detail that we seek to record and clarify about what remained as well as what has changed, which has allowed us to conclude that even in the fictional future, housing remains close to today's spatiality, serving primarily as a technology shelter.

Housing shall continue to be a recurring scenario both in the cinema and everyday life. Understanding, studying and questioning the way we inhabit and represent them will always be a valid task, for which we hope that the methodological path taken here, and the speculations raised can be stimuli to other studies of the same nature.

## Conflict of Interests

The author declares no potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

## Endnotes

1. *Blade Runner* had several versions that were released in theatres. Later, VHS and DVD, but the basis for this paper is the 116-minute version released in 1991, identified as the director's final cut version (Director's Cut), and chosen precisely because it is the closest version to the one designed by its director, Ridley Scott.
2. According to Adriana Afonso & Sara Eloy (2014, p.185, our translation): "Another dwelling characterising another layer of the city of Los Angeles is located in the Bradbury Building (1893), George Wyman's building. Interestingly, the design of this building had also been influenced by a description of a typical commercial building for the year 2000 made in a sci-fi work, *Looking Backward* by Edward Bellamy from 1887."
3. As much as other interpretations are possible, we still do not consider the character Joi as a physical inhabitant precisely because of its holographic nature.
4. It is important to make this delimitation, as the character Deckard participates in both films, and also has a dwelling in the new version of the film, *Blade Runner 2049*, but which is not the subject of analysis in this paper.
5. Mariantina Papadea's [1] drawing for *Blade Runner 2049* and Ali El-hashimi's [2] drawing for Deckard's apartment were the reference.
6. As the size of these areas was calculated according to the redraw developed here, one should take into account the speculative factor employed in the method and not adopt them with extreme rigour but as values that point to and confirm trends.
7. This paper has been presented at the SPACE International Conference 2021 on Cities, Architecture and Cinema.

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[2] <https://www.intjournal.com/thinkpieces/project-blade-runner-1982> (Last Access: 10.05.2021)