The earliest habitation technology was the grotto—a natural feature that primitive man sought for warmth, protection and sociability. There, he built the primordial hearth. Until the 20th century, the hearth remained a focal point: it was not only functional, but, as Frank Lloyd Wright noted, it was “the psychological center of the home.”

Over time, heat has become unmoored—human history has seen an evolution of the hearth, a narrative of climatic liberation. From grotto to fire pit, from Victorian pipes to central heating and suburban thermostats, man exerts more and more control over his immediate environment. Technology accommodates an itinerant lifestyle.

Exacerbating the asymmetry between energy and occupancy—a binary choice between ON and OFF guarantees comfort at the expense of efficiency. Buildings are heated or cooled 24 hours a day; empty corners are indiscriminately kept just as warm as those in use. To ensure constant comfort, man heats every space he might possibly inhabit.

Digital controls adapt to human patterns—at the convergence of bits and atoms, technology can understand and adjust to the body. Climate control becomes a dialogue. With today’s integration of smartphones and digitization, dynamic control systems modulate heat over time to match inhabitants.

A new paradigm of local warming is ushered in with dynamic control over space. An individual thermal cloud follows each human: a personal climate that ensures comfort and decimates energy consumption. New sociabilities are forged as people share heat across digitally-integrated modes of living.

Man no longer seeks heat—heat seeks man.