

OFFICE into HOUSING

Living as a Home-Based Worker

Giancarlo Bionda, PDM 2020-2021



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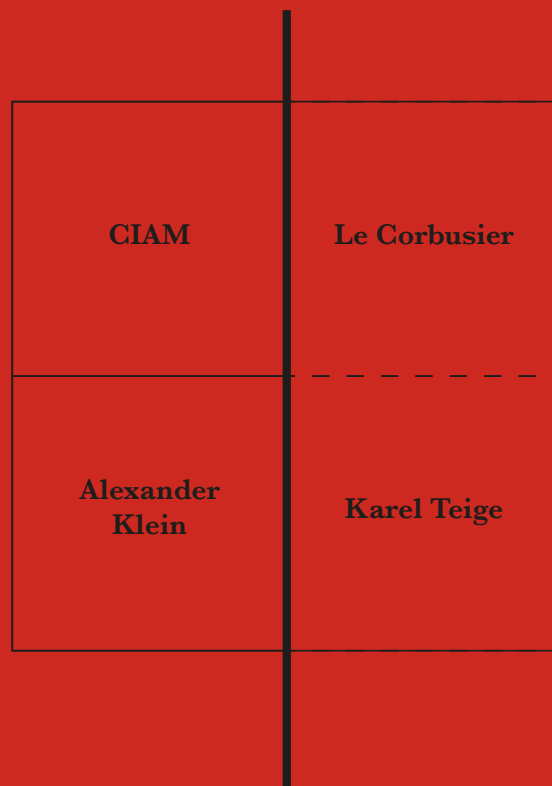
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INTRODUCTION

CIAM	Le Corbusier
Alexander Klein	Karel Teige



INTRODUCTION

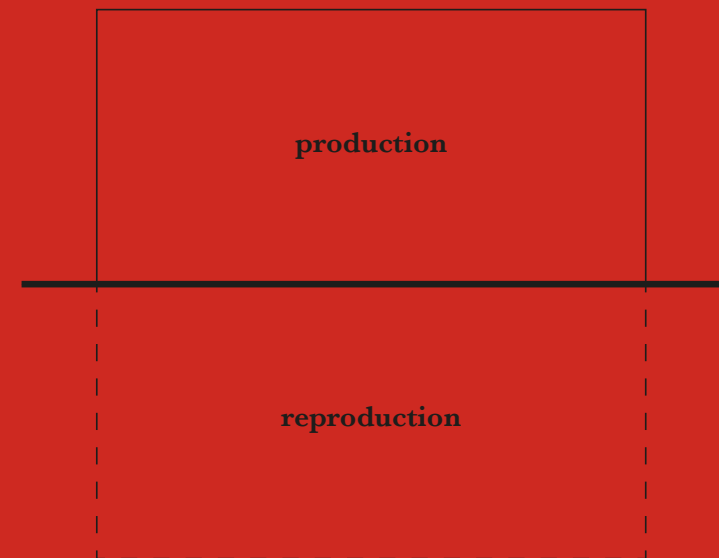
The starting point of this research is the shortage of affordable housing in a metropolitan European context.

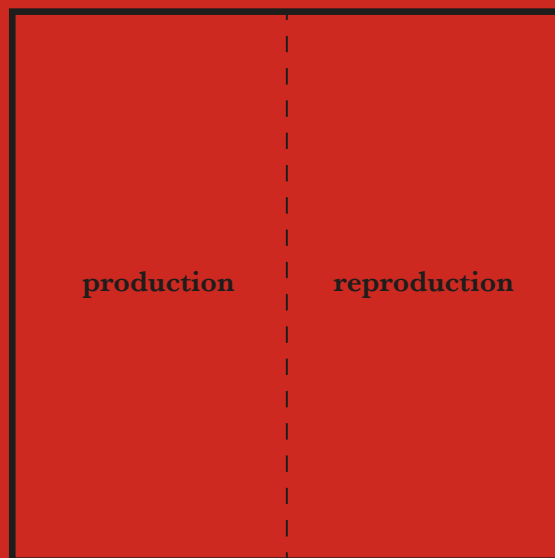
Architectural analysis have been framed on a subject, as the ideal target and a precise type of intervention, as terrain of battle.

The *Home-Based Worker* is chosen as the central actor for his peculiar conditions of precarity and lack of social protection, while the transformation of *Office into Housing* has been detected as the architectural intervention of interest because it embodied the direct consequence of multitude's change in the way of work.

The aim of this thesis is to develop a *manifesto* of intervention, trying to define if these changes can support dwelling alternatives able to fight the actual crisis.

1. HOME-BASED WORKER





1. HOME-BASED WORKER

Before tackle the architectural domain is essential to define our target, which will be one of the focal point of the debate.

Method and style of Italian *Operaismo*'s experience is took as a model to identify the potentiality of a precise group of people. If we look at what they did in the 50's, the figure of *Operaio Massa* has been chosen not just because it represented the new young driving worker's class, in break with the past *Operaio di Mestiere*, but also because it was considered the most vulnerable section (in terms of social protection) of that time. In this weakness lies the potential of destabilize the entire system: the potential of change.¹

Operaism's activists moved to Torino in order to reach Fiat's factory, the hub of this new generation's *Taylorist* workers. The main method was to anticipate event of conflicts and to reorganize power through a syndicate apparatus in the service of *Operaio Massa*'s figure (again in conflict with the old syndicate system: passing from the mediation and organizational role to the exclusive support of working class). The goal was not just to use workers as a key weapon to overturn capitalistic system, but also to free them by the obtaining autonomy.²

In the same operational style (try to anticipate tendency and channel futures conflicts into a coalition, affirming autonomy and freedom), Sergio Bologna identify in the *Knowledge Worker* a new leading class, successor of the *Operaio Massa* in contemporary context.³

If the passage from *Operaio Massa* to *Operaio Sociale* (the 70's social worker of the *generally intellect*) has been characterized by breaking factory's boundary, in this case the target group has been generalized to an entire new generation, composed by students, self-employed and freelance workers.⁴

¹ Tronti Mario's intervention in *Quale futuro per i lavoratori della conoscenza? Precarietà, formazione, welfare*.

² Toni Negri's intervention in *Quale futuro per i lavoratori della conoscenza? Precarietà, formazione, welfare*.

³ Bologna Sergio. *Ceti medi senza futuro? Scritti, appunti sul lavoro e altro* (Roma: DeriveApprodi, 2007).

⁴ Korbi Marson. "Absolute Beginners: Living as a Knowledge Worker, from the Parents' Home to Collective Living" in *GAM Architecture Magazine*, vol. 16, (2020): 88-101p.

To summarize, knowledge worker's conditions can be defined as precariousness, mobility and flexibility, suffering from downgrading, devaluation, extreme competition and pressure generate by business management and company's market, especially over women and young workers. This muted reality is described by Negri as *Neo-Taylorist* workfare state, in continuity with the factory's apparatus, but spread all over the world, a reality potentially connected but at the same time deeply fragmented.

These global actors compose a distinct *multitude* of people with new needs and different relationship with domestic and work space. As Marson Korbi pointed out, one important example of habit mutation concerning the way of live, is the transformation of private bedroom into working space,⁵ as well as the multiplication of shared apartments through young workers.⁶

Architecturally speaking, with domestic business becoming a possibility open to everyone, the knowledge worker enter in the same trajectory of a more generalized category: the *Home-Based Worker*, describes by Frances Hollis in her research about the topic of the Home-Work typology. The list also include: family care-givers, backbone of the community (public services), professional and managerial, 24/7 artists, craftworkers, top-up, live-in (residential and security care-workers) and start-up workers.⁷

This generalization, in combination with different needs of the emergent workforce, open the doors to new consideration concerning the mutation of the domestic sphere based on the collision between dwell and work space.

5 Korbi Marson. "Absolute Beginners: Living as a Knowledge Worker, from the Parents' Home to Collective Living" in *GAM Architecture Magazine*, vol. 16, (2020): 88-101p.

6 As Sergio Bologna underline in his text *Ceti medi senza futuro?* The rise of this generation also coincide with the middle class crisis of 2008, even if the history of intellectual labor already start in the last century.

7 Hollis Frances. "A Tradition" in *Beyond Live/Work: The Architecture of Home-based Work* (London: Routledge, 2015).



Figure 1

Figure 1 A recreation of the garage where Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak developed the first Apple computer, set up in Disney World's Epcot theme park, Florida. © Ted Tamburo.

WORK AND LABOR

To better understand the change in use of the domestic space, is primordial to define in a more precise manner what *work* really means and what differentiate it from *labor* activities.

*In her book “The Human Condition”, Hanna Arendt distinguishes labor from work. While in many languages the use of these two words is interchangeable, Arendt returns to their radically different meaning. Labor is the sheer unending business of the reproduction of our species: eating, sleeping, and washing, giving birth to and raising children, and the cleaning of the household. What characterizes laboring activities is that they do not leave anything material behind; the product of labor is destined to immediate consumption for the sake of the reproduction of the human species. The traditional place of labor is thus the house whose purpose is reproduction.*⁸

In others terms this definition of labor and work is presented as the differentiation between production and reproduction activities of human species inside society.

The origin of this dichotomy is traceable since the ancient Greek model of the *Oikos* (house), counterposed to the *Polis* (city). Inhere, all reproduction or “immaterial” activities took place in the house, while work were executed in the city. At the time, production activities were considered superior than oikos labor because of the instant value of material work; that’s why reproduction activities were often carried out by slaves or women.⁹

In Middle ages the model was completely different. Work and labor used to coexist under the same roof (since the Renaissance, with the rediscover of classic models); some examples from all over the world are the Japanese *machiya*, the Malaysian *shop-house*, the Vietnamese *tubehouse*, the French *silk-weaver atelier*, the Dutch *merchant’s house* and the English *longhouse*.¹⁰

8 Dogma + Realism Working Group. “The villa from negative utopia to communal house” in *Communal Villa: Production and Reproduction in Artist’s Housing* (Leipzig : Spector Books, 2015).

9 *Ibidem*.

10 Hollis Frances. “A Tradition” in *Beyond Live/Work: The Architecture of Home-based Work* (London: Routledge, 2015).

Ancient models reaffirmed their predominance over Europe’s society starting from the Modern era, driven by industrial revolution and the rise of capital (even if this process already started with the privatization of commons, or enclosure, since 16th 17th century in England), increasing even more the distinction between production and reproduction, re-splitting the two activities in separate buildings: factory and modern house.¹¹

Thanks to digital revolution, home-based workers raised all over the world and with them, a series of new laboring activities. As result of the constant improvement of numeric devices, this new kind of work, producing anything physical, affirmed itself as major change, able to put in crisis this ancient dichotomy, challenging production and reproduction subdivision.

*While Hannah Arendt¹² described labour as a process of biological survival (eating, sleeping and taking care of the household) enclosed within the private sphere of the house, in the 19th century Marx already defined labour as the aggregate of the physical and mental capabilities that are present in the human being*¹³

In Marx’s definition, labor could not just be considered as the main fundamental asset of modern and contemporary society, but he also suggest a collision between production (also new immaterial work) and reproduction (physical labor) in the same concept. In a present-day look, this thought can also be reinterpreted as the will of equality between work and labor, which doesn’t have to be distinguished anymore¹⁴, all derived from human being capabilities.

In addition, this new workforce is not negligible anymore. Actual pandemic’s investigations showed up a telework potential of 50% (meaning half of active workers) in different nations across Europe as Switzerland, France, Luxembourg, Austria and Spain.¹⁵

11 Hollis Frances. “A Tradition” in *Beyond Live/Work: The Architecture of Home-based Work* (London: Routledge, 2015).

12 Ardent Hannah. *The Human Condition* (Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1958).

13 Dogma. “Introduction” in *Living/Working: How to Live Together in Merihaka* (Helsinki: L’Esprit de l’Escalier, 2014).

14 Decisive notion to support alternative approaches of the domestic space.

15 Dubois Yann. *Effets de la crise sanitaire, Le télétravail dans 7 pays européens*. Mobil’homme.

A SUSTAINABLE SHIFT

This re-convergence of productive and reproductive activities in the same domestic sphere can potentially contributing to achieve a more sustainable way of life.

In her book *Beyond Live/Work*, Francis Hollis shows in which manner the practice of home-base workers can be a way to face contemporary environmental, economic and social issues.¹⁶

1. Environment

Starting from 19th century, division between work and labor was also visible through the separation of programs into different buildings. This fact, not just needed two distinct sites, but also the double of construction materials.

Speaking about energy consumption it was also necessary to heat both spaces, even if they were used in separated times. Meanwhile, the inevitable distance between home and workplace created a travel flow of people in constant growth.

Considering the major impact of heating, joined to the embodied energy of building's construction materials, a possible 50% reduction represent a way to drastically decrease global environmental emissions.

In addition, this reunification of work and labor activities could also bring to an important reduction of daily travel and commuting of private and public transports. To sustain this hypothesis, pandemic crisis's investigations showed up how in different cities of Europe, the diminution of people's mobility were primarily influenced by the mass (and forced) increasement of tele-work practice, and just secondly by sanitary purposes.¹⁷

¹⁶ Hollis Frances. "Sustainability" in *Beyond Live/Work: The Architecture of Home-based Work* (London: Routledge, 2015).

¹⁷ Dubois Yann. *Effets de la crise sanitaire, Le télétravail dans 7 pays européens*. Mobil'homme. Pearce Marc. *Enquête sur les impacts du confinement sur la mobilité et les modes de vie des Français*. L'OB-SOCO.

This process of program's re-consolidation, is an attempt to augment occupation's efficiency of a main building, trying to fight and avoid redundant spaces by constructing less, heating less, traveling less and, simultaneously, saving money, energy and time.¹⁸

2. Economy

*Hard economics, not the potential to contribute to global carbon reductions, is driving the current rapid increase in home-based work. In highly developed and developing economies alike, this working practice creates economic growth in three ways: (1) by increasing the efficiency of large organizations; (2) by encouraging new businesses; and (3) by supporting economic activity amongst marginal members of society.*¹⁹

Starting from efficiency's problematic, several investigation like BT (*Flexible Working*, 2007) and SUSTEL (*Sustainable Teleworking*, 2004) show an increasement of production, derived from the opportunity of freely manage time²⁰ and work routine in a more flexible lifestyle.

This practice also encourage new business by making possible to begin an activity from home, saving overheads and, consequently, maximize investment.

Considering the informal sector, there is still a large number of people working in *shadow economy*; home-base practice has the potential to integrate this marginal workforce into a more sustainable and protected system by normalizing this activity, making official economy more attractive.²¹

The possibility for people to spend more time in their proper neighbourhood could also bring to a reinforcement of local and circular economy.

¹⁸ Hollis Frances. "Sustainability" in *Beyond Live/Work: The Architecture of Home-based Work* (London: Routledge, 2015).

¹⁹ *Ibidem*.

²⁰ Also thanks to the abolishment of transport time necessary to connect home to workplace.

²¹ Hollis Frances. "Sustainability" in *Beyond Live/Work: The Architecture of Home-based Work* (London: Routledge, 2015).

3. Social

*Social sustainability can be defined as the ability of a community to develop processes and structures that meet the needs both of current members and of future generations. It blends traditional social objectives and policy areas, such as equity and health, with issues concerning the economy, the environment and, more recently, notions of participation, social capital, happiness, well-being and quality of life.*²²

Speaking again about neighbourhood, the augmentation of people's presence in their district of inhabitation can potentially mean a growth of local solidarity, reinforcing social network in a more compact and solid area and, at the same time, increasing their engagement in terms of communal life.

In one hand is true that home-base practice can raise the control of a single person over his life but it's not negligible the danger of merging together dwell and work in a single space, reinforcing the domestic domain, known to be one of the most violent places on earth.

Actual pandemic also emphasize some of those negative social aspects as violence and segregation. Recent investigations even include others problematics in the equation: social isolation, difficulty in the organization of an healthy routine, in defining a convenient separation of spaces, in finding a quiet place to work, technical difficulties, lack of appropriated device to work, and so on.²³

In terms of social issues, the balance between work and labor is crucial and polyvalent. It embodied a lot of potential but at the same time it's easy to make it worse. As we will see in the analysis of cases studies, the presence of sociology and the comparison with past experiences will be decisive to develop solid statements.

²² Hollis Frances. "Sustainability" in *Beyond Live/Work: The Architecture of Home-based Work* (London: Routledge, 2015).

²³ Kaufmann Vincent, Daffé Laurie, Clément Garance. *Une recherche sur le vécu du Covid-19 en Suisse*. Corona Citizen Science (Accessed 25 October 2020).

IMPACT ON THE CITY

This new way of working, colliding production and reproduction activities in the same place, has the latent power to challenge and transform step by step a rigid zoning subdivision (predominantly residential and industrial) into a mixed system, avoiding redundant spaces, increasing densification and creating a more flexible set up.

Beyond Live/Work's research pointed out the importance to fight against a strong zoning subdivision; like in the case of United Kingdom where this strict separation, heavily correlated with its historical process of privatization (starting from the phenomenon of enclosure, through industrial revolution, since today's digital era) is still a legal constrictions for contemporary home-based workers.²⁴

Hollis refers to Jane Jacobs principles²⁵ to combat segregation and develop a more solid social capital in big metropolitan cities:

1. Mixed use districts
2. Short blocks and corners
3. Mixed buildings
4. Dense concentration of people

This mixing approach in terms of activities can be applied to different scales, from urban planification to one single building, avoiding the predominance of mono-program districts.

In Hollis vision this would help to create a new reality of neighbourhood network, more active in social and political life, reinforcing social capital and revitalizing local circular economy²⁶; the starting point to create a more resilient reality based on solidarity and strong district connections.

²⁴ Hollis Frances. "The city" in *Beyond Live/Work: The Architecture of Home-based Work* (London: Routledge, 2015).

²⁵ Jacobs Jane. *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Vintage Books, 1961).

²⁶ Japan is a perfect example of that practice, where a strong tradition of mixed use district made possible the spread of *machiya* model all over the country.

BEYOND WORK-HOME TYPOLOGY

As seen before, this new generation of home-based workers, producer of immaterial work, is actively correlated to a different way of living, diverging from the past in terms of conditions and needs. Tension between work and labor has always been a drive for deep alterations of the domestic sphere and, in parallel, a huge impact over urban context.

Architecturally speaking, if we compare the current situation with the last 50 years (starting from the tendency of the *grands ensembles*), little changes have been made. Even if the shortage of affordable housing is still a problematic today, nuclear families are not really the model anymore, expanding the definition to several different configurations. Also cooperatives and shared facilities are becoming more popular in contemporary cities like Zurich and Geneva (although they still represent a marginal movement).

Despite that, although if people already adapted themselves to new condition of precarity, mobility and flexibility of this rising way of life and work,²⁷ a real architectural respond seems to be missing and with that, the possibility to take advantage of this mutation to rethink the domestic sphere.²⁸

This shift have to be seen as an opportunity and a drive to support architectural experiences of alternative dwelling conditions, like public social housing or cooperative houses²⁹, challenging private property and the still too present nuclear family model.

The American *Residential Hotel* or the Soviet *Dom-Kommuna* (Fig. 2-3),³⁰ are historical examples from the 20's that in a certain way were also expression of this shift of working practice, anticipating certain current habits and bending boundaries between labor and work. These past

27 In a certain sense, this transformation have been forced by work conditions.

28 The main concept of domesticity as oppression and domination environment can also be questioned, proposing a *non-domestic* model.

29 Even if this system represent an “hybrid ” solution between public and private property (a middle class system, not so radical than public social housing), it can still be considered as an alternative to the household owner.

30 Based on a sharing practice of common spaces an facilities.

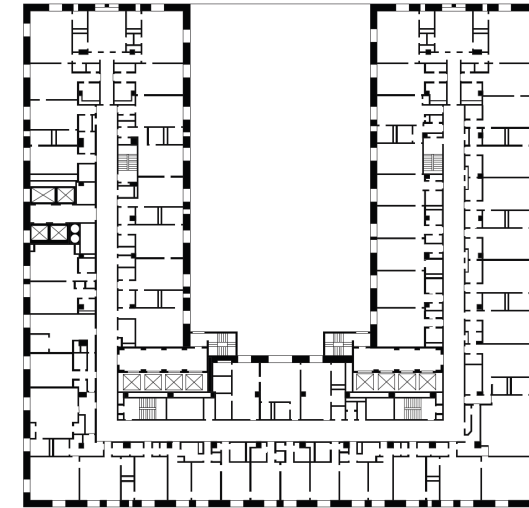


Figure 2

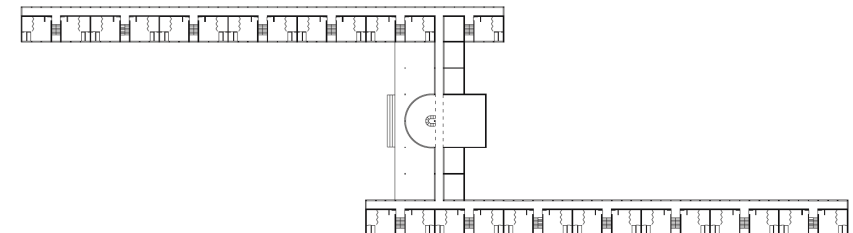


Figure 3

Figure 2 Warren and Wetmore, *Biltmore Hotel*, New York, 1913.
Typical floor plan, standard models of design and efficiency.

Figure 3 Ginzburg, Strojkom. *Dom-Kommuna prototype with A-1 cells*, 1928.
Plan of one-room apartments.

experiences of organizational prototypes can suggest a similar *modus operandi*, adaptable to contemporary necessity of home-based workers.³¹

A prospective could be the return to a collective system,³² based on a reunification process of production and reproduction into a single entity.

In this sense, the question *How to live together?* will become the crucial and focal point to develop an equitable coexistence of different *idiorrhhythmy*.³³

I personally argue that, instead of proposing adapted work-home typology,³⁴ it would be better to invest in flexible spaces, a rationalism's structure able to transcend present functionalism, adapting itself to support today's necessity and allowing future permutations, defining a sort of non-domesticity, attempting liberation of domestic stigmatism as private property, domination, oppression and violence.

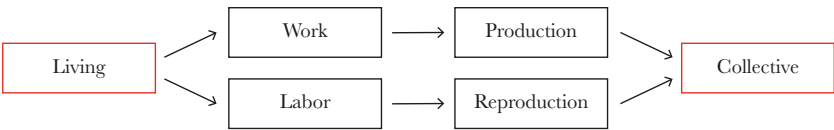


Figure 4

31 Korbi Marson, Andrea Migotto. “Between Rationalization and Political Project: The Existenz-minimum from Klein and Teige to Today” in *Urban Planning*, vol. 4 (2019): 299-314p.

32 Not by chance this “return” refers to a medieval model, where also the land was shared by Common’s system.

33 Roland Barthes, *How to live together* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013).

34 As Frances Hollis seems to conclude.

2. RENOVATION

kitchen	dining	salon = club
house-keeping	bathing	children's space
services	physical cultural	individual living cell

centralized and collectivized

2. RENOVATION

After have focused the attention in this new generation of workers, is now the time to concentrate efforts over the frame of architectural intervention: the renovation of *Office into Housing*.

As said before, this particular type of transformation embodied perfectly the change in the way of work, in parallel with the rise of density concerning all majors European's metropolises, due to the constant augmentation of urban population and gentrification's phenomenon.¹

This type of intervention must be interpreted not just by a way to fight the crisis of affordable housing, but also the will to match others contemporary problematics like the strict zoning subdivision (by empowering mixing district), the limitation of urban boundaries and the environmental energetic crisis.

kitchen	dining	salon = club
house- keeping	bathing	children's space
services	physical cultural	individual living cell

**centralized and
collectivized**

¹ Lévy-Vroelant Claire, Tutin Christian. *Le logement social en Europe au début du XXIe siècle* (Rennes, Presse Universitaire de Rennes, 2010).

OBSOLESCENCE OF INDUSTRIAL OFFICE BUILDINGS

Across major European cities today, the increasing visibility of vacant office space is evidence of the decline of the office typology. Such a phenomenon can be explained as a consequence of the emergence of new forms of labour where the distinction between living and working is increasingly blurred. No longer organized by the traditional 9 to 5 workday, contemporary forms of labour involve the entire life of workers and their spectrum of social relationships.²

Although this type of practice have drastically increased since 21st century, current pandemic (from a sanitary point of view) pushed this decline to the extreme, avoiding all big open workplaces and, simultaneously, imposing telework whenever possible.³

Despite these major shifts, most of architectural renovations of this type seem to be stocked into ancient domestic models, which is even more absurd if we consider the primary reason of the conversion: an obsolete program.

This phenomenon is linked to nowadays problematics such as the possibility to support domestic's alternatives and the potential of renovation as sustainable strategy, going in the same line of densification but against urban's spread, with the objective to preserve natural unbuilt landscape by taking advantage of existing sites and materials before considering new solutions.

² Dogma. "Introduction" in *Living/Working: How to Live Together in Merihaka* (Helsinki: L'Esprit de l'Escalier, 2014).

³ Dubois Yann. *Effets de la crise sanitaire, Le télétravail dans 7 pays européens* (Mobil'homme, 2020).

TYPICAL PLAN AS NEW RESILIENT MODEL

Office buildings are spread all over the world, existing in different typologies, but there is one in particular that derives from the debate of workers against factory, an index of generic labor power: the *Typical Plan*.

Typical plan is an American invention. It is zero-degree architecture, architecture stripped of all traces of uniqueness and specificity. It belong to the New World. (...) Typical plan is as empty as possible: a floor, a core, a perimeter, and a minimum of columns.⁴

Since one of the earliest and emblematic example: the *Ford Motor Company Plant* of Detroit by Albert Kahn, 1909 (Fig. 5-7), is clear that this new architecture break with the past because of its characteristic features like the extreme abstraction and structural neutrality, of which the only goal is to perform business and make money.

The ambition of Typical Plan is to create new territories for the smooth unfolding of new process, in this case, ideal accommodation for business. (...) The architects of Typical Plan understood the secret of business: the office building represent the first totally abstract program – it does not demand a particular architecture, its only function is to let its occupants exist.⁵

This system will find further accomplishment in the American skyscraper, a pure extrusion of the parcel, expressing through the section a complete differentiation of programs, totally unrelated to each-others and, at the same time, creating a complex building completely immune to exterior variations (thanks to new technologies like elevator and air conditioning system).

Architecture is monstrous in the way in which each choices leads to the reduction of possibility. It implies a regime of either/or decisions often claustrophobic, even for the architect. All others architectures pre-empts the future; Typical Plan – by making no choices – postpone it, keeps it open forever.⁶

⁴ Koolhaas Rem, and Bruce Mau. "Typical Plan" in *S, M, L, XL* (New York: Monacelli Press, 2002).

⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁶ *Ibidem*.

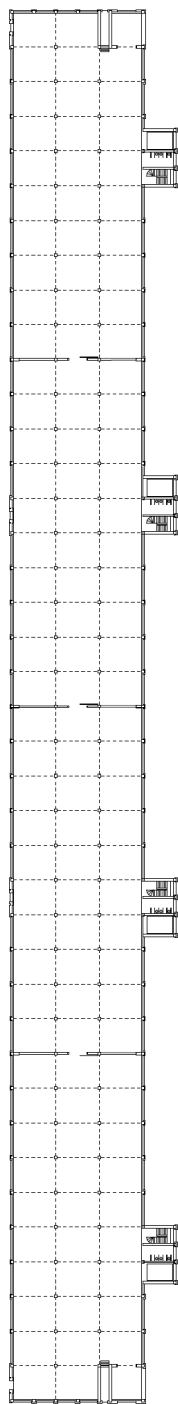


Figure 5

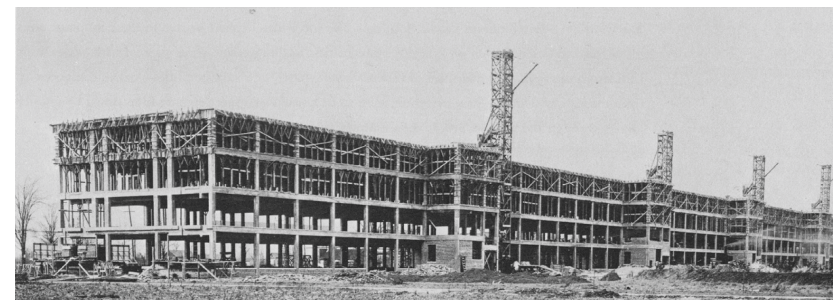


Figure 6



Figure 7

Figure 5-7 Albert Kahn. *Ford Motor Company Plant*, Highland Park Old Shop, Detroit, 1909.

This condition of postponing choices, make impossible for the building to fall in obsolescence, because it's designed to readapt itself. Office landscape, or *Bürolandschaft's* movement (Fig. 8-9), is a perfect example of past mutation in large industries work organization, made possible by the essentiality and regular repetition of the supporting structure. This type of architecture became the indifferent background for any kind of activity.

In Europe, according to Rem Koolhaas, the Typical Plan have been reinterpreted in a more ideological way, losing his real intensity.⁷ For this reason OMA's project for *Morgan Bank*, 1985 (Fig. 10-11), is an attempt to recreate in Amsterdam a pure loft building with the minimal adaptation to the context (like the *Berlage piazza* in the main corner). Also proportions are a little atypical comparing to Manhattan's model, because of the site height's impositions.

Despite European context, the possibility to take advantage of a similar building type remains a valid option, also considering the increasing number of administration offices realized since 70's and 80's.

Workers re-appropriation of the factory is a political statement and a process of confrontation: some aspect have to be greeted and maintained (like the rational structure, facilitating intervention and future flexibility; also allowing experimentations, challenging the main idea of business and profit) others have to be brutally rejected (like the isolation from the context as well as between different levels, fighting again the indifferent character of the building). In synthesis, a total overturning, welcoming new multitude's needs, keeping the ensemble immune to future obsolescence.

7 He report cases as *Project for Frederickstrasse* (Mies van der Rohe, Berlin, 1921), *House of Industry* (Ivan Leonidov, Moscow, 1929) and *No-Stop City* (Archizoom, 1970).

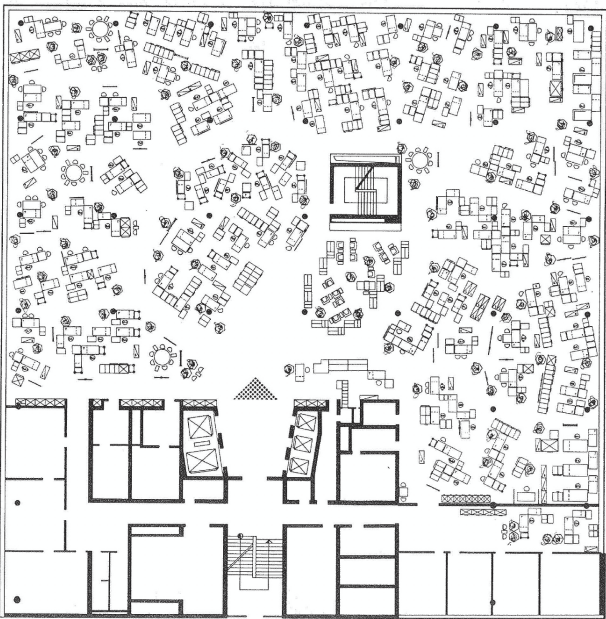


Figure 8

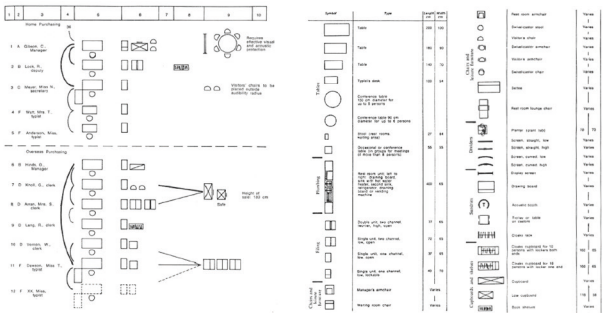


Figure 9

Figure 8-9 OSRAM. GmbH Administration, Bürolandschaft, Munich, 1962.

3. CASE STUDY

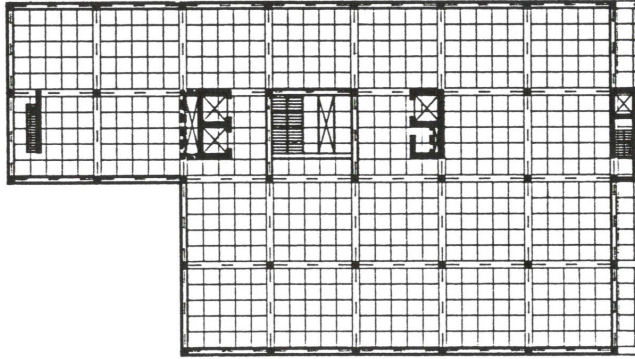


Figure 10

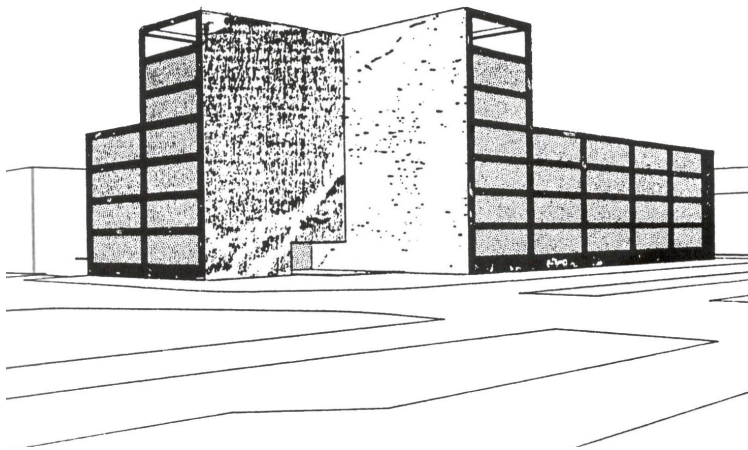


Figure 11

Figure 10-11 OMA. *Morgan Bank*, Amsterdam, 1985.
Proposition for a Typical Plan in Europe.

Rue Salurine	Brückenkopf
ZIN	Pretty Vacant



3. CASE STUDY

As said in precedents chapters, transformation of office into housing have become a little tendency in all European cities suffering from vacant administration buildings, in particular since 21st century.

The major problem is that in a lot of cases, people's appropriation of an industrial construction can easily bring to segregation and uncomfortable spaces. In better circumstances, there is still a lack of taking into account the potential for proposing dwelling alternatives adapted to different work and life needs, rather than perpetuate traditional models.

Through the investigation and comparison of following cases studies, the idea is to understand how radical this impact can possibly be, towards not just the domestic space in itself but also in the future planification of the city.

In this context, even a global pandemic can be considered as a drive (pushing work's change to the extreme), and also as a tool, allowing to question ourselves about social, economic and political issues concerning production and reproduction activities collapsing together.

Next little catalogue of projects contains a series of similar transformations, presented by an increasing level of complexity towards the main act of renovation. These different approaches will be analysed and contextualized using sociologist's investigations as a crucial tool to evaluate and figure out shortcomings and possible improvements,¹ defining necessity of contemporary home-based workers and proposing alternatives to traditional architectural conversions, showing full intervention's potential, since now apparently underrated.

¹ That's also another parallelism with operaism's method: contesting Marx's objective vision of society, reintroducing sociologist as a central figure.

PROJECTS

TOPIC

1

RUE SALURINE

Seyler & Lucan Architects
Realized
Paris, 2002

Context
Envelop

2

BRÜCKENKOPF

Bauart
Realized
Bern, 2021

Urban Connections
Structure and Distribution
Mixed-Use

3

ZIN

51N4E
Competition
Brussel, 2020.

City Plan
Scale
Flexibility

4

PRETTY VACANT

Dogma
Competition
Brussel, 2014

Collective Dwelling
Appropriation
Affordable Housing
Home-Based Workers

RUE SALURINE, PARIS 75009

Seyler & Lucan Architects
Realized
Paris, 2002



Figure 12

Figure 12 Seyler & Lucan Architects, *Rue Salurine*, Paris, 2002.

Transformation d'un immeuble de bureaux en 23 logements sociaux.

L'opération située 16, rue Saulnier, a pour objet la transformation d'un immeuble de bureaux en un immeuble de 23 logements locatifs. La nouvelle façade sur rue remplace un mur-rideau de années 1960 très endommagée. Elle est constituée par des murs de pierre calcaire du Bassin parisien (pierre de Saint- Maximin), qui forment l'ordonnance générale depuis le rez-de-chaussée jusqu'au cinquième étage. Sur la cour intérieure, les façades et les murs mitoyens sont revêtus d'un enduit traditionnel clair, afin que les logements profitent au maximum de la lumière.²

The first project we are going to study is a transformation of a little office building in the city centre of Paris into 23 social housing, realized in 2002 by Seyler & Lucan Architects.

Despite this operation consist in a contained scale of intervention and an irregular configuration, far away from the Typical Plan, it represent the first step of our journey through this kind of process.

Context:

Paris is the perfect example of a city with a complex urban system, due to centuries of intense manipulations. Zoning plan impose rigid restrictions in terms programs, making a transformation project really hard if you try to introduce innovations thinking; this argument is particularly true also for building's typologies.³

In addition to that, the narrow parcel impose a functional reorganization of the interiors (Fig. 13-14). With this kind of dimension is difficult to set up the condition for a flexible space, easy to fall again into a rigid configuration.

But this barrier is not just about the site, legislation is another big obstacle. Normally, the first step to transform a mono-functional building into a mixed one, is the alignment with the urban zoning plan. Cities with a strong history of industrial revolution tend to still suffer today

² Seyler & Lucan Architects, *Rue Salurine*, Paris 75009 (Accessed 05 January 2021).

³ Lucan Jaques. *Où va la ville aujourd'hui ? Formes urbaines et mixités* (Paris : Éditions de La Villette, 2012).

about a strong subdivision of activities (residential and industrial and commercial); Paris and London are good examples.⁴

So not just the right type of building, but also the choice of site and city context has to be included in the equation. This point rises the decisive question of urban planning which has to be reintroduced in the political agenda with a central role. Without legislative support, it will be difficult for architecture alone to fight the problematic.

Envelop:

In this project, a remarkable element is the facade. Not just the conversion in itself, but also the use of regional materials supports a sustainable type of intervention. Local stone is used to reconstruct the entire damaged old envelop, reinforcing the feeling of belonging to the site.

Even if this project is not really about rationalism, a subtle parallelism can be made with Italian's *regionalism* movement, after the end of WW2, where the main idea was to get rid of the envelop, considered the regime's mask, by developing a sophisticated dialogue between a more international concrete skeleton and traditional materials as filling (often local bricks, Fig. 15).⁵

Even Paris has a profound connection with this kind of approach, just think about the fact that one of the inspirational sources of this movement was the French architect Auguste Perret and some of his work, like the *Immeuble de rapport* in *Rue Franklin*, are right in the centre of the capital, making the confrontation almost obligatory.

Regionalism has to be kept in mind because it also can easily be applied to drastic interventions concerning bigger administration buildings, challenging the isolation and indifference of 'Typical Plan'.



Figure 13



Figure 14

⁴ Hollis Frances. "The city" in *Beyond Live/Work: The Architecture of Home-based Work* (London: Routledge, 2015).

⁵ Roberto Gargiani, *Hérétiques Italiens du Rationalisme* (Automne semestre, 2020).

Figure 13-14 Seyler & Lucan Architects, *Rue Salurine*, Paris, 2002.
Parcel context, typical floor plan and ground floor.



Figure 15



Figure 16

Figure 15 Mario Ridolfi, Wolfgang Frankl. *Case Torri*, Viale Etiopia, Roma, 1954. Example of Italian post war regionalism.

Figure 16 Seyler & Lucan Architects, *Rue Salurine*, Paris, 2002.

Comparison:

To amply the debate about urban context and parcels, an additional comparison can be made with another renovation project of the same studio Seyler & Lucan in 2016: *Rue Delizy, Pantin 93*, again a transformation of 2 offices building into 69 residential units.

In this case the site is situated in a peripheric zone of Paris. The shape of the building is more regular, approaching to a typical industrial building: a central core of distribution and a free plan all around (Fig. 19).

Compared to the precedent project, we can notice an increasing level of flexible potential. Apartments space it's generous and a smart configuration help to hide certain structural pillars while others are used to delimitate different programs.

Unfortunately the original plan is missing but one thing that is still possible to notice, is that the punctual vertical structure is not completely regular, which obviously is a disadvantage for this kind of operations. In addition, thanks to the primary structure, it is strongly possible that even thick separation walls are not supporting elements, fact that would make easier future modifications, in line with a more flexible way of built.

This last point bring us to another crucial problematic touching Parisian context: the type of construction system. In his book *Où va la ville aujourd'hui ? Formes urbaines et mixités*, Jacques Lucan complains a major tendency concerning French building industry: the indiscriminate use of structural concrete walls as predominant solution (instead of using a punctual system that would make projects more flexibles, welcoming future permutations with a considerable reduction of interventional work time and materials).⁶

This trend is a crucial reality almost in every European metropole, making the majority of residential and administrative buildings close to a possible future obsolescence precisely because of the lack in adaptable potential. Not just the change of affectation but also the necessity of

⁶ Lucan Jacques. *Où va la ville aujourd'hui ? Formes urbaines et mixités* (Paris : Éditions de La Villette, 2012).

technical renovations (concerning old architectural elements impacting on comfort and energy consumption of the building) are some of the responsible for this obsolescence process. In cases like that, because of renovation's complexity, costs of demolitions and complete reconstruction are usually lower, pushing public and private authorities to prefer this solution instead of conversion.

In this era, characterized by built and rebuilt, demolition and reconstruction, flexible structures and demountable architectural elements assumed a central role to fight this trend.



Figure 17



Figure 18

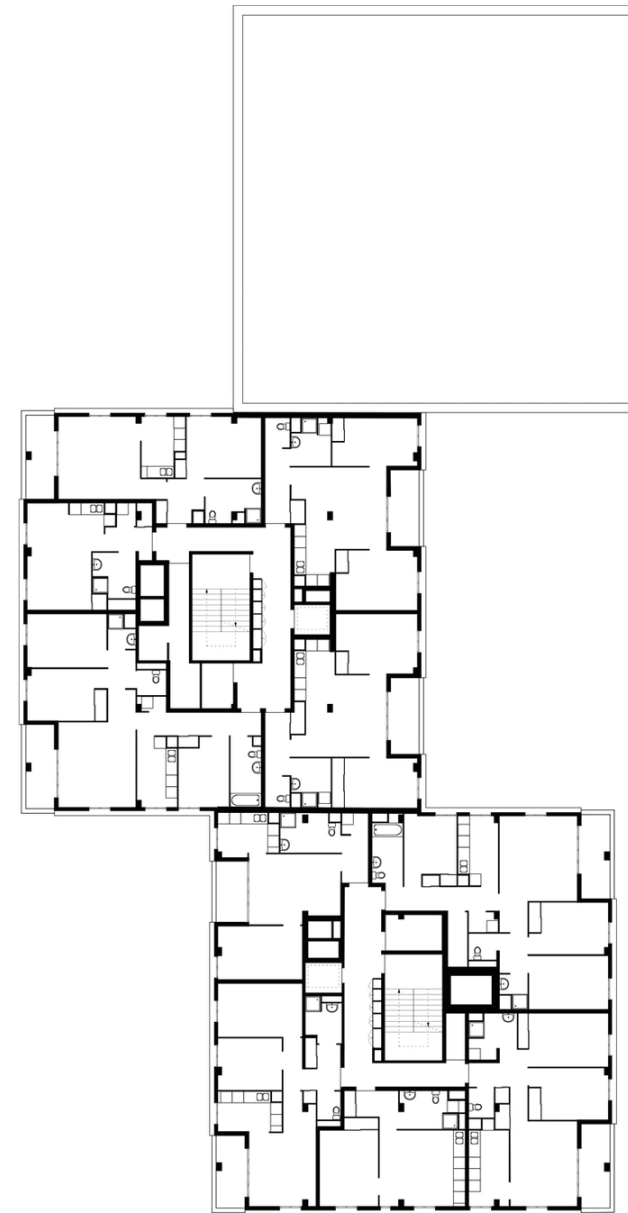


Figure 19

Figure 16-19 Seyler & Lucan Architects, *Rue Delizy*, *Pantin 93*, Paris, 2016.
Competition views and plan. Ambiguous relationship between pillars and sustaining walls.

BRÜCKENKOPF

Bauart
Realized
Bern, 2021



Figure 20

Figure 20 Bauart. *Brückenkopf*, Bern, 2021.

Sous la devise urban living, cet immeuble des années 1960, qui abrite actuellement des bureaux, est en train d'être transformé en petits appartements de 1.5 à 3.5 pièces et en lofts. Le système constructif poteau-dalle doit faire place à des murs et des colonnes autoportantes et à une façade rideau. Les différents emplacements définissent le standing des appartements en même temps qu'ils dictent le degré d'ouverture de la toute nouvelle façade. C'est ainsi que le bâtiment s'ouvre vers le haut. Le toit reçoit une terrasse commune avec des cuisines en plein air ainsi que des jardins privés qui peuvent être loués. Le rez-de-chaussée est affecté au commerce, le socle - au-dessous du niveau de référence du pont - est converti en lofts.⁷

Also the Swiss capital is affected by the same problematic of vacant workspace. Due to new exigences of the city, as the increasing demand of inhabitant space, 60's administration office has been converted into a mixed-use building.

Urban Connections:

Starting from the site, the project is situated in a strategic location, near the historic centre and next to one of the majors transport axis, in proximity to many commercial activities. This point could seems marginal, but in reality is essential for the success of the project.

As said before, the aim of this kind of operation is to support a mixing zoning plan, transforming administration building into multiple-use programs. In Switzerland this type of intervention is still pretty new but if we look at England this practice is well known, especially in the last decade where a considerable number of renovation have taken place in different cities with the same goal to reactivate vacant office space.

The main issue was that in lot of examples, UK projects failed fundamentally because of site's characteristics. In many cases these buildings, renovated as pure residential units, were situated in peripheric zones, missing all basic primary services and public transport in a nearby area.

⁷ Bauart, *Brückenkopf* Berne - Transformation de l'Eigerstrasse 73 (Accessed 05 January 2021).

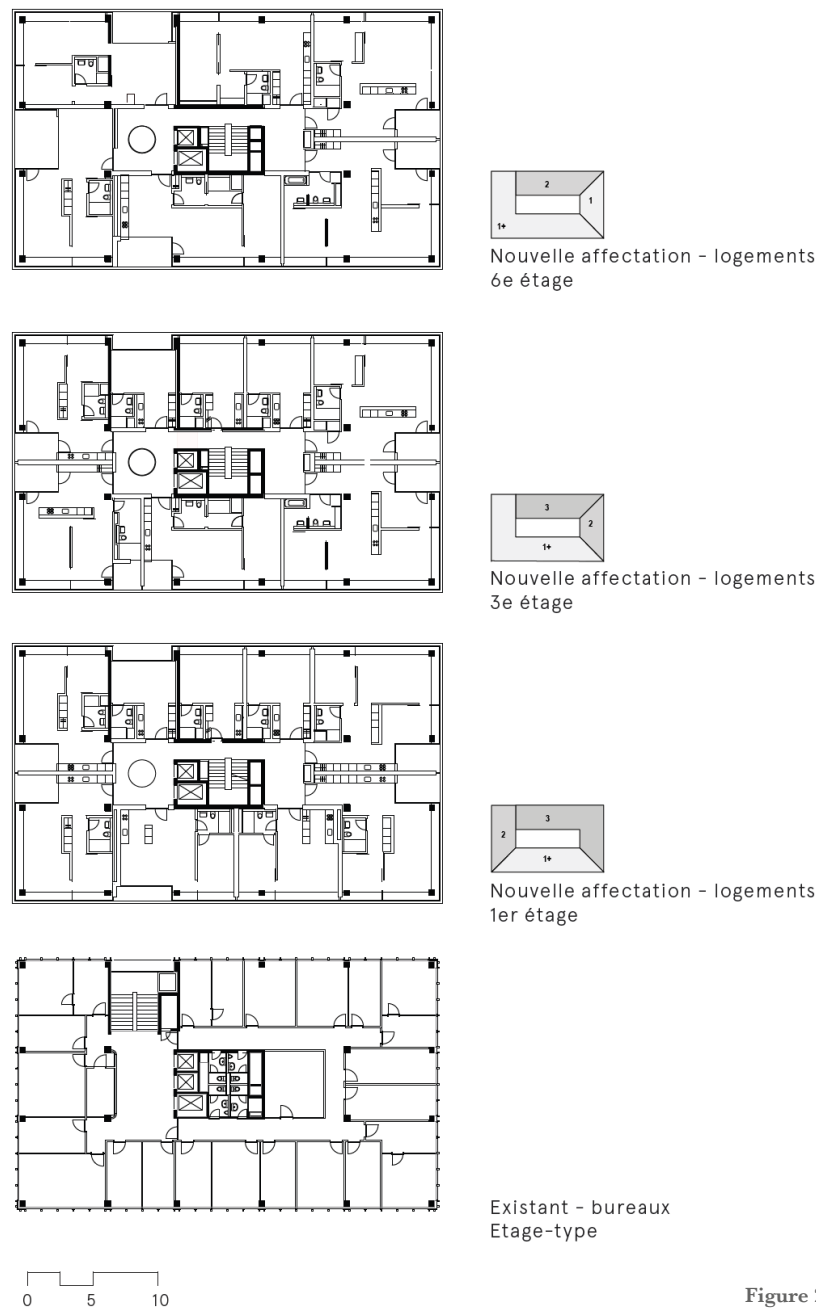


Figure 21 Bauart. *Brückenkopf*, Bern, 2021.
Compaction of the central core by moving the existent staircase.

This fact reminds *grands ensembles* experiences where one of the major problematics has always been the segregation effect, directly correlated by district isolation.⁸

Is true that many renovations of this type, also suffered from a domestic point of view (tiny little cells, badly insulated with lack of natural light), fact that was also dictated by speculative reasons, reducing the renovation to the minimum, just creating the maximum of rental apartments that, at the end, resulted more similar to a prison than a comfortable living space. This point is another big parallelism with *grands ensembles* of which some majors lessons does not appear to have been understood.⁹

Back in Bern, unifications of factors like services proximity and direct connection with public transports are all element driving a successful integration to the urban context.

Structure and Distribution:

Now if we analyse the internal structure of the building, we can notice that the configuration is more closed to the model of Typical Plan, with regular perimeter and an almost homogeneous sustain punctual grid, facilitating the intervention. The only exception is the staircase, separated from the central core (positioned on west facade), that's why Bauart decided to replace it with another-one, this time adjacent to the main core, in order to compact vertical circulation and liberate external space (Fig. 21).¹⁰

Speaking about the inhabitant part (upper levels), constraints of the existing project were: the absence of an external interface, as balcony and loggia, the lack of kitchen, toilets and shower, and a deep blind space, inevitably given by the Typical Plan model.

⁸ Not by chances, some examples like Lignon in Geneva, significantly improved quality of life conditions offered to inhabitant over time, also thanks to urban expansion englobing the whole area and making it less isolated.
Pattaroni Luca, Drevon Guillaume. *Rapport au logement des personnes au bénéfice du logement social*. Mobil'homme.

⁹ Moore Rowan. "It's like an Open Prison: The Catastrophe of Converting Office Blocks to Homes". *The Guardian* (Accessed 31 October 2020).

¹⁰ This intervention has been made just in upper levels, the residential ones, while in all semi-grounded floors, the system remains as it was in the past.

In response, architects reorganized the plan with a concentric approach; the internal concrete core of vertical circulation has been kept in the centre; around it, all distribution corridors and water's connection rooms. Finally the hole system has been surrounded by living space, directly in contact with the exterior facade. With this strategy each apartment has been provided with the maximum amount of natural light possible while the inner space is exploited as *servant* functions.

Mixed-use:

Focusing now on the internal use, the ex-monofunctional building has been transformed into a mixed-one, applying a vertical differentiation of functions.

The lower half of floors (semi-grounded) include technical area, store-room, loft for hobby and handcraft space. The ground floor, with the main entrance connecting the system to the urban transport axis, is composed by services and commerce activities. The upper part contain residential apartment and the rooftop propose a common terraces, gardens and little outdoors kitchens.

In terms of program subdivisions, this vertical layering allows a repartition between work (down) and dwell (up) activities, functioning together as an ensemble. As seen in precedent chapters, this convergence increase the occupation efficiency of the building, optimizing at the same time the rate of energy consumption (Fig. 22).

The question of how to separate living and working, has always been an essential problematic for social housing. American's Hotel and Soviet Dom Komuna for example, had two distinct visions. In the skyscraper the organization was similar to Bauart's project, by taking advantage of vertical height to subdivide functions (normally with communal services at the ground floor and rooftop, while basements were consecrated to technical spaces).

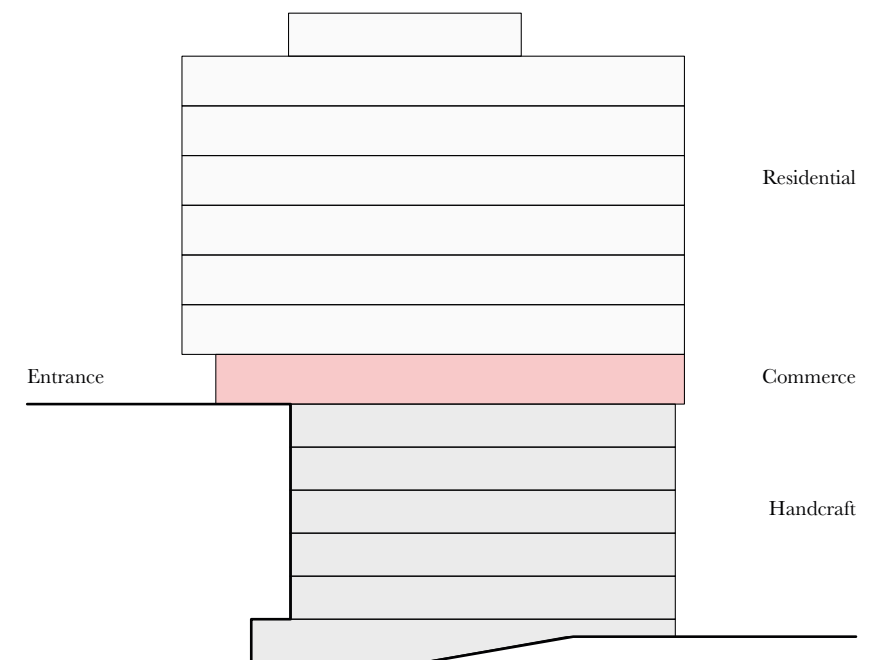


Figure 22

Figure 22 Bauart. *Brückenkopf*, Bern, 2021.
Vertical layering of functions: residential, commerce (buffer) and handcraft.

In Russia, on the contrary, the idea was to separate residential and common activities in different but communicating buildings (dividing like that different necessities in terms of space and acoustic, avoiding conflicts).¹¹

Poet and critic Karel Teige, underlined modern difficulties in trying to combine centralized services in a single building, proposing instead a *decentralization* of collective functions dispersed in an entire residential zone.¹²

A contemporary parallelism of this approach can be found in Swiss collective TEN; a distributed network of cooperative facilities over the city of Zurich. Based on the fight against an increasing global financialization of housing, the idea is to use cooperatives as counter model of speculative market. In Zurich this type of intervention are pretty consolidated (if compared with others Swiss or European realities that didn't experienced a history of cooperative activism) but to push the system further, TEN speeded up the process by introducing the concept of *extended home*: integrating affordable house with shared living, working and cultural infrastructures disseminated in the entire district, planning to create a strong network of shared communities.¹³

In Bauart's case, the strategy seems to be the more in line with the American Hotel (line that has been recovery also by modernists in between two wars, like the *Vertical City* of Hilberseimer, 1924), but with an essential addition: the ground floor as activity buffer. Since we are talking about a relative reduced scale (comparing with Typical Plan's skyscrapers), separation between noisy and quite area is even more important; for this reason the introduction of a level filtering the passage

¹¹ Despite space and acoustics have always been some of the majors problems, in a possible home-based work configuration, Frances Hollis enlarged the debate, introduce the following design subdivisions: determinacy/indeterminacy (fix and flexible configuration), public/private, visibility/invisibility (in the case of a house-work activity), noisy/quite, clean/dirty, hot/cold and inside/outside.

Hollis Frances. "Everyday realities" in *Beyond Live/Work: The Architecture of Home-based Work* (London: Routledge, 2015).

¹² Teige Karel. "Towards new forms of dwelling" in *The Minimum Dwelling* (Cambridge Massachusetts, The MIT Press, 2002).

¹³ <https://futurearchitectureplatform.org/projects/4235059c-b1fd-4e39-b60a-8b40b585b6b4/>. In a less radical way, this is connected also to the recent appearance of shared workspace inside cities, normally rented by dynamic companies not owning a big physical headquarter, like start-ups.

from working to dwelling,¹⁴ allows the building continuing performing the two activities simultaneously without risk of conflicts.¹⁵

Recent investigations like *Rapport au logement des personnes au bénéfice du logement social*, 2019, can be correlated to the same subject. The will of common additional space is rising (especially rooms for hosting family and friends, but also workplaces and ateliers) but the necessity of privacy (spatial, visual and acoustic) apparently remains one of the biggest priority.¹⁶

In Bern's solution, traditional separation between work and dwell, public and private, do not seems to be challenged (proposing pleasant apartments in the upper part, taking advantage of natural condition as the view and light while work and others common activities, performed in the semi grounded-floors, are more in relation with the city flow); the entire project focused on assuring a good functioning of distinct part in a mix-use building by the act of vertical separation.

¹⁴ The buffer take advantage of traditional 8-17h workday, ensuring a quite floor during evening and night.

¹⁵ This strategy could be particular effective speaking about home-based worker generation, of which work's rhythm routines are very heterogeneous, flexible and unpredictable.

¹⁶ Pattaroni Luca, Drevon Guillaume. *Rapport au logement des personnes au bénéfice du logement social*. Mobil'homme (Accessed 20 December 2020).

ZIN

51N4E
Competition
Brussel, 2020



Figure 23

Figure 23 51N4E. ZIN, Brussel, 2020.

The innovative project “ZIN in No(o)rd” aims to reuse the emblematic WTC I and II towers located in the heart of the Northern Quarter in Brussels. Instead of a simple restauration of the existing building, it is a question here of adding an unprecedented dimension to the project by connecting the towers with a new volume of 14 double-height floors, creating a new condition for the development of an hybrid building mixing a new way of working on housing, a hotel, sports and leisure spaces, shops and lot of vegetation. The relationship to the city is also completely redesigned with an open-ground floor with many addresses, developing a range of relationships to the city and the public space. The project is thus a response to the surrounding context and future developments. This new flexible concept will introduce a new standard in Europe for larger-scale mixed buildings.¹⁷

City Plan:

Similarly to Selyer & Lucan’s work, the legislative context is essential. In fact Belgian government introduce a program of subvention for administration building’s conversion in order to stimulate this kind of intervention and face vacant spaces. This project demonstrate the importance of an active political plan to push potentialities of transformation and mixed-use constructions.

It’s probably thanks to these subventions that 51N4E studio is able to propose such a drastic restauration, keeping just the central core of these 2 towers. Even with the idea of recycle and reuse the maximum quantity of demolition’s material, it will be difficult imagine a similar approach in others Europeans countries, considering high costs of architectural recuperation of elements. In addition, this radical act of dismantle even concrete slabs, avoids a possible exploitation of the existing structure.

This strategy is supported by the possibility to rethink the entire buildings since the basements, creation an open-ground floor full of public services and connected with the urban context. Another important aspect is the opportunity to over-densify the entire complex thanks to the new double floor system, creating a third volume connecting the two original ones.

¹⁷ 51N4E, Zin (Accessed 05 January 2021).

In this context densification is clearly a necessity of the project, nevertheless, both renovation of basements and densification of the towers could have been done also keeping untouched the primary existent structure, of course in a less radical way, but at the same time shooting down global costs of interventions.

Scale:

Easy to notice that the project scale is on another level compared to precedent ones, questioning the scale, or the *grandeur conforme*, of intervention.

Le Corbusier did the same for *Unité d'habitation de Marseille* in 1945,¹⁸ questioning himself about finding an equilibrium between dimension, number of inhabitants and services. Again, *grands ensembles* from the past 60 years are a good counter-example, considering that, part of the failure process was the overscale dimensions, bringing as a consequence the partial or missing use of communal activities (to compare: Unité de Marseille count an average of 1600 inhabitant, against 2400 of Gallarate, 6800 of Lignon and 7800 of Corviale).¹⁹

Even Karel Teige interrogate himself over this question, reporting URSS studies of collective services that went from 100 to 1000 peoples complexes²⁰ (again, to compare with two of the major systems of that time, the Russian Narkomfin, 1932, 150 inhabitant, and the American Biltmore Hotel, 1913, 1000 inhabitants). For this kind of project, Teige estimated a reasonable average between 400 and 800 dwellers. In case of a higher number of peoples (2000-8000), he suggested a fragmentation of the system into different collective service and residential buildings, spread in an entire zone, becoming a sort of socialist district.²¹

18 Reaffirmation of the social group beyond the individual, where the community of the house is replaced by an ensemble of individual cells.

19 Marchand Bruno, Joud Christophe. *MIX, Mixité typologique du logement collectif de Le Corbusier à nos jours* (PPUR : Presses polytechniques, 2014).

20 *Paquebot* was often used as a comparison model for understanding quantity and relationship between minimum units and services; not just URSS but also Le Corbusier took inspiration from transatlantic course ship.

21 Teige Karel, "Towards new forms of dwelling" in *The Minimum Dwelling* (MIT Press, 2002).

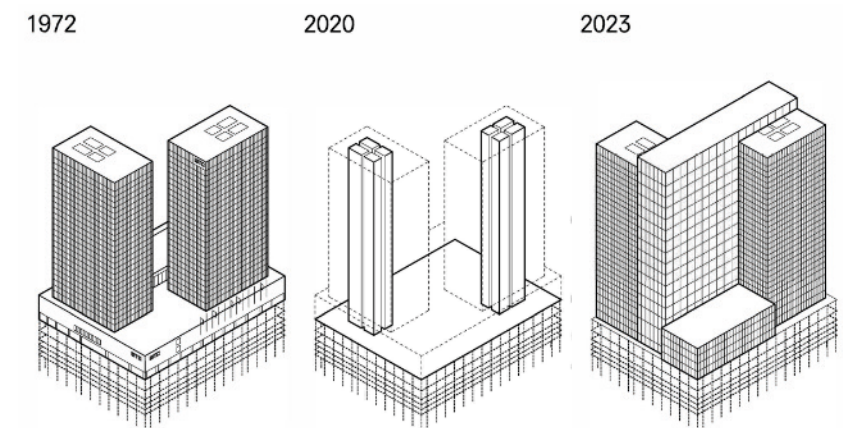


Figure 24

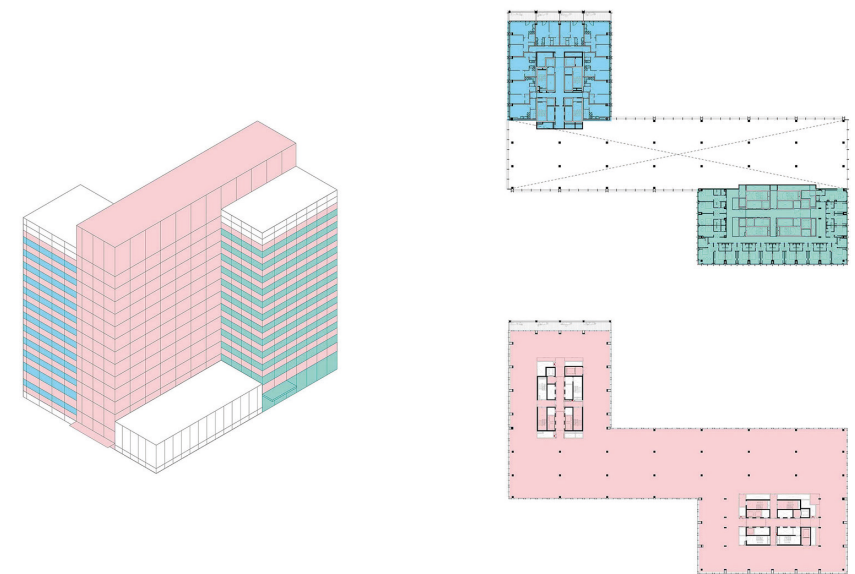


Figure 25

Figure 24-25 51N4E. ZIN, Brussel, 2020.

Renovation stages and typical floor plan: apartments (blue), hotel (green), double high office spaces (rose) and communal services (white).

Despite these considerations, the context of renovation is even more complex, because it has to do with the existing urban network of the city and what vacant building has to offer. Two tendency are often counterposed: the little scale intervention, or fragmentation (already seen starting from Jane Jacobs principles, to Teige and more recently TEN) versus the big scale intervention.

This second example has been observed by Jacques Lucan studying the urban development of Paris.²² After the recapitulation of most recent urban phases (from the *ilot fermé* to the *ilot ouvert*, Fig. 26-29) he came up noticing a contemporary tendency that he named *Macrolot*, where the scale of intervention include more “islands” of buildings, even fragmented from the outside, but connected from basement levels, similar to a colossal podium underground.²³ In this type of project, the new operational unit stopped to be the parcel, substituted from the entire *ilot*. The mixed-use building become the mixed-use *Macrolot*, where different programs are now divided in separated building constituting an ensemble; a little polyfunctional district.²⁴

Zin project can be considered as an hybrid of the two strategies, involving deep work of renovation (since an urban level)²⁵ but at the same time including just “one” single building.²⁶ Speaking about numbers, in its standard configuration, Brussel’s project counts an average of 500 potential inhabitant (counting apartment and hotel), in affinity with Teige’s standard of functional size. But the main feature of the building is its potential of flexibility, that can be pushed to double the amount of dwellers by reducing workspace.

²²Lucan Jaques. *Où va la ville aujourd’hui ? Formes urbaines et mixités* (Paris : Éditions de La Villette, 2012).

²³ It’s important to understand the role of building fragmentation also as the major character of differentiation between *Macrolot* and grands ensembles, or even the concept of *Bigness* for Koolhaas.

²⁴ In terms of renovation, *Macrolot* can be imagined applied, instead of one single building, to an entire vacant administration office park; the problem with lot of them, also recent ones, is that they are often located in the periphery of the city.

²⁵ We can see that through the integration of public activities like the conservatory and sport space in the ground floor, but also with the introduction of green public space (rooftop and ground floor).

²⁶ Another time, location is crucial for the success of project, in this case the proximity to several public transport lines and local services make the site very attractive.

Flexibility:

As said, a valuable aspect of the project is, thanks to its neutral structure, the opportunity to adjust and modify over time four space parameters (housing, hotel, office and polyvalent) depending on exigences in constant mutation. New internal area is thought to be a basic open plan with light partitions, even between different programs, allowing future permutations. This change is also supported by to three distinct vertical circulation systems (basically imagined to separate private, collective and business activities), keeping function flows independent to each-others.

This strategy propose not just a vertical but even an horizontal mixed-use, potentially changing from one level to another. Shared multifunctional spaces, based on the rooftop (roof garden) and at the ground floor (conservatory and sport centre), are made to bring users and local residents together, maximizing the use of the building thanks to a constant flow of different people.

Despite at this stage of the project (competition) certain elements needs to be clarified (like how to guarantee privacy and acoustic insulation in a model so variable and how to ensure a correct functioning of polyvalent space) the main focusing point is the necessity for today’s project to have, even in earlier phases of conception, a plan for future adaptability with a coherent strategy for possible permutations.

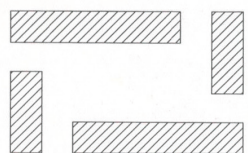
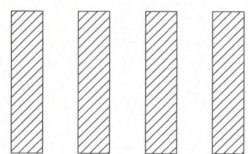
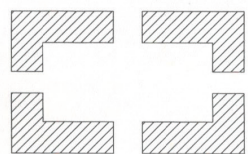
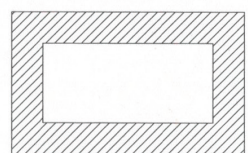
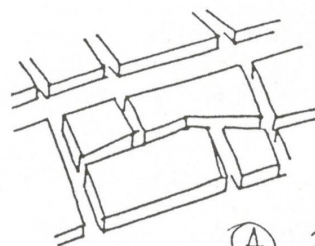
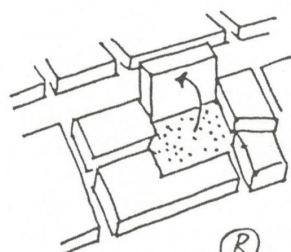


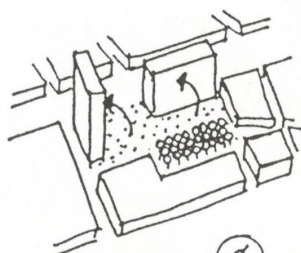
Figure 26



(A) Pour une
répartition
différente
des densités,

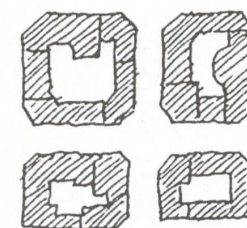


(B) Pour une
répartition
organique
et plastique



(C) fini
les villes
en croix

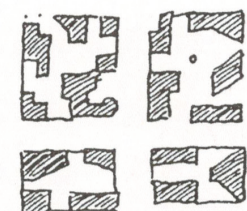
Figure 27



îlot fermé



open planning



îlot ouvert
immeubles
presque libres

Figure 28

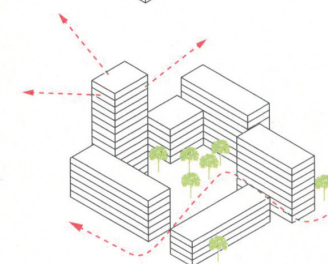
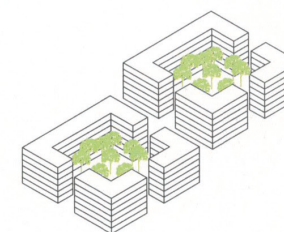
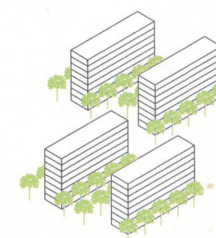
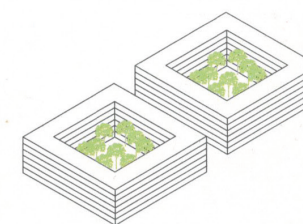


Figure 29

Figure 26-29 Lucan Jaques. *Où va la ville aujourd'hui ? Formes urbaines et mixités* (Paris : Éditions de La Villette, 2012).

De l'îlot fermé à l'îlot ouvert. De l'îlot à la barre, l'opposition voulait être radicale: deux formes de la ville antagonistes. L'îlot ouvert propose une conciliation, selon diverses modalités.

Figure 26-29 From left to right:

26. De l'îlot fermé à l'îlot ouvert (moderne).

27. La ville modernisée selon Henry Bernard, 1965-1967.

28. La ville de l'âge III selon Christian de Portzamparc, vers 1995.

29. La ville variée selon Herzog et de Meuron, 2009.

PRETTY VACANT

Dogma
Competition
Brussel, 2014

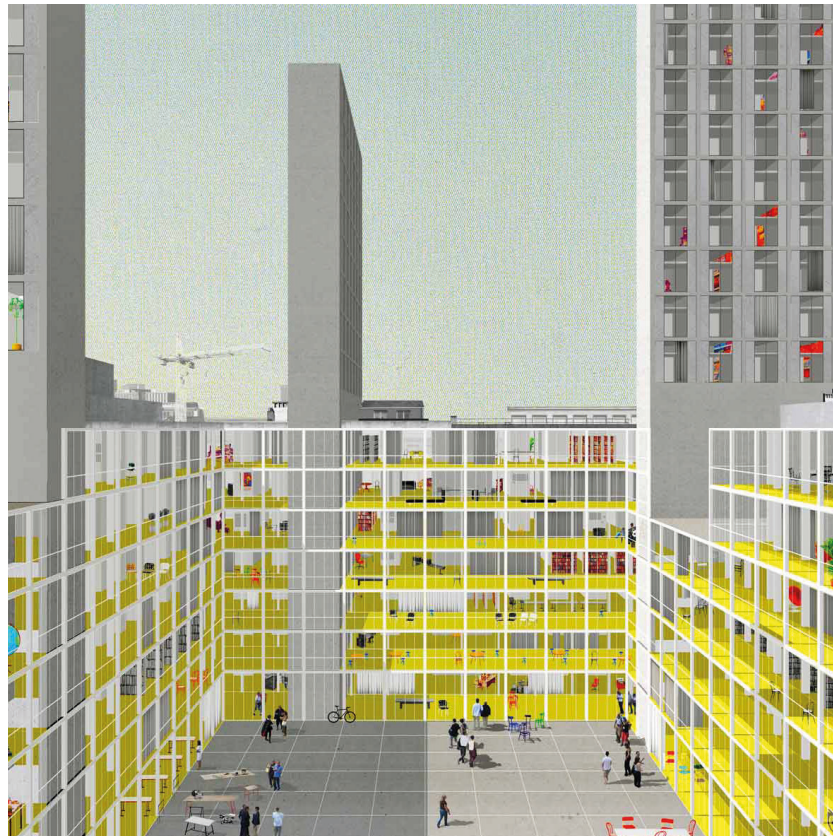


Figure 30

Figure 30 Dogma, *Pretty Vacant*, Brussel, 2014.

Due to Brussels's role as an administrative and political center, which culminated in 2000 when the Belgian capital became the capital of the European Union, the city has witnessed a dramatic increase of office space over the past 30 years. Today, a large part of this stock is vacant. Two parts of the city make this crisis especially visible: Quartier Léopold, just east of the inner ring road, where almost all the major EU administrative buildings and associated organizations are located, and the office parks located in proximity to the international airport of Zaventem. We propose that these two sites be transformed into live/work spaces.²⁷

Pretty Vacant²⁸ is an entire city-block of obsolete offices space, converted by get rid of all internal partitions and secondary volumes present in the courtyard.

Like the case of ZIN, the renovation is also a pretext to increase density. The four building composing the ensemble are unified by slim towers, welcoming additional apartments in the upper part and storage rooms in the lower part, between existing constructions. The base is conceived as the entrance to the court yard which also gives access to inhabitant space.

Comparing with Bauart's project, the presence of a cloister double the exterior surface but at the same time the problematic of depth remain, inevitable for office typologies. For this reason inhabitant cells are located in the central and darker area of the building, creating a filter between private and common spaces, now taking advantage of external view and natural light.

27 Dogma. "Pretty Vacant" in *Hidden Architecture* (Accessed 31 October 2020). <https://hiddenarchitecture.net/pretty-vacant/>.

28 *Sex Pistols*, Never Mind the Bollocks, Here's the Sex Pistols, 1977.

Collective Dwelling:

In this project we can finally see an attempt to investigate alternatives forms of domesticity linked to work practice by proposing the coexistence of two spatial conditions: *be alone and together*.²⁹

Following Karel Teige's principles from *Minimum dwelling*, individual space is reduced to the minimum allowing the maximization of collective space, becoming also a place for sharing domestic labor.

Living partitions are recreated by the introduction of the *inhabitant wall*, an architectural and furniture element containing all the basic necessity for young temporary workers (bed alcove, bathroom, little basic kitchen and storage).³⁰ This element become the base unit of the entire project, separating inner space in three sections: from the courtyard, a public and collective space, a seclusion zone inside two walls and a more private part. In addition, the flexibility of the system enable a constant negotiation of space based on current needs; separation and unifications of spaces will depend by the choice of individual residents.

From a sociologist point of view, this tripartition can be read as the distinction between dwell zone (private space), meeting zone (common space) and use zone (seclusion alcove). Dwell zone is characterized by ease feelings, the more intimate and sensible space, while meeting zone is more connected with social life, work and community moments. Finally use zone is correlated with practical life, pure functional activities (Fig. 31-32).³¹

In this sense we already have seen in project like Bauart's one this tripartition made more in a vertical way, where the use zone was used as filter between dwell and meeting. Here Dogma decided to apply this subdivision in an horizontal way, assuming the peculiar position to considerate

29 A+ Architecture in Belgium. "Lecture by Martino Tattara – Dogma". *Living/Working. How to live together* (Accessed 31 October 2020).

30 In a similar way, Hans Widme described his *Bolo'Bolo* community based on affordable shared facilities and hospitality (like a squat movement) where the intimate inviolable space, *Taku*, is reduced to the minimum.
P.M. *Bolo'bolo* (Lausanne: Editions d'en bas, 1986).

31 Pattaroni Luca, *Sociologie Urbaine* (Automne semestre, 2020).

the seclusion alcove, or minimum dwelling unit, as the main filter. This decision is made possible by an ulterior subdivision of meeting areas, where the most conflicting activities in terms of space and noise are still pushed in the ground floor, making the ensemble an opposite alternative of Dom Kommuna.³²

According to social housing investigations³³ there is an increasing will and necessity to invest in common spaces (from the possibility to host family and friends to work or atelier space). For singles and couples the tendency is to prefer individual units with communal facilities instead of a shared apartment system. Families in the other side, also are favourable to this approach thanks to the possibility of casual meeting and increase exchange with neighbourhood.

Home-based workers phenomenon is also in line with this strategy: isolation is one of the first possible disadvantage given by the non-necessity to leave your place; this aspect have been emphasized by recent pandemic crisis. Even after the forced period of seclusion, people continuing working by home did suffer from social seclusion, that's why empowering a common space system would be a good combo thinking about young workers necessities.³⁴

These considerations seems to confirm Dogma's lecture of a project made for new generation's way of life, proposing a remarkable quantity of common spaces (almost half of the liveable area) which is thought to be a big and connected living room, or polyvalent space, depending on needs.

Connected to the minimum dwelling strategy, there is another central purpose in Pretty Vacant's project: the centralization and collectivization of domestic labor work, as kitchen, house-keeping, and children's space; again following Teige's model. This approach can be seen as a

32 If we consider again the Soviet (complete separation of dwell and common activities) and the American model (all-in-one building with vertical separation), Pretty Vacant propose a third variant (all-in-one floor, vertical and horizontal separation). In this perspective, hotel system could be considered as an hybrid solution between Soviet and Dogma's projects.

33 Pattaroni Luca, Drevon Guillaume. *Rapport au logement des personnes au bénéfice du logement social*. Mobil'homme (Accessed 20 December 2020).

34 Kaufmann Vincent, Daffé Laurie, Clément Garance. *Une recherche sur le vécu du Covid-19 en Suisse*. Corona Citizen Science (Accessed 25 October 2020).

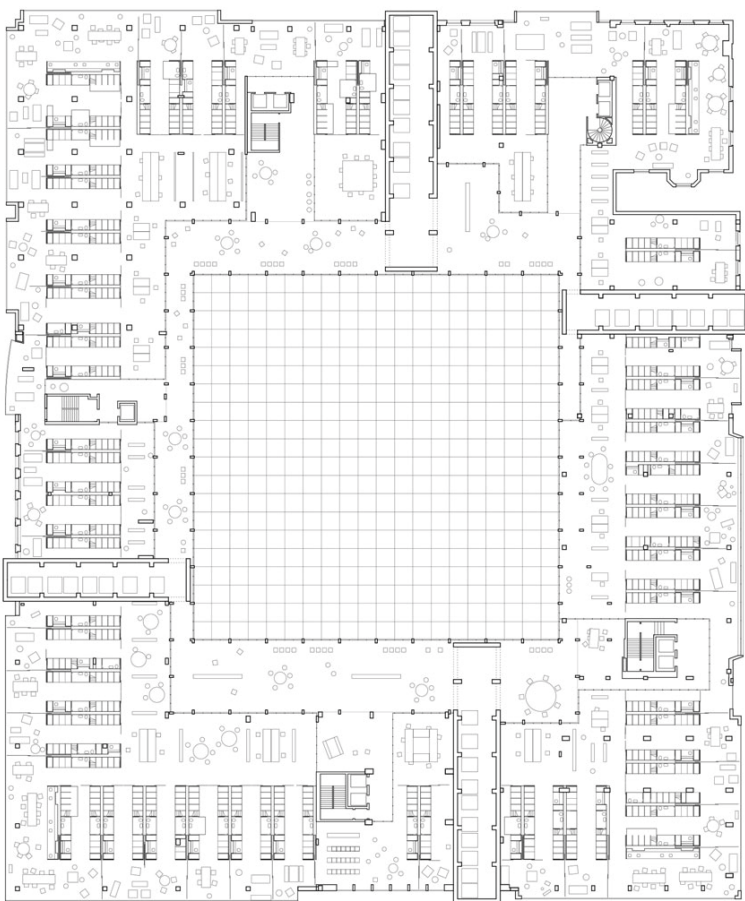


Figure 31

Figure 31 Dogma, *Pretty Vacant*, Brussel, 2014.
Typical floor plan; from the inner cloister: common space, seclusion space and private space.

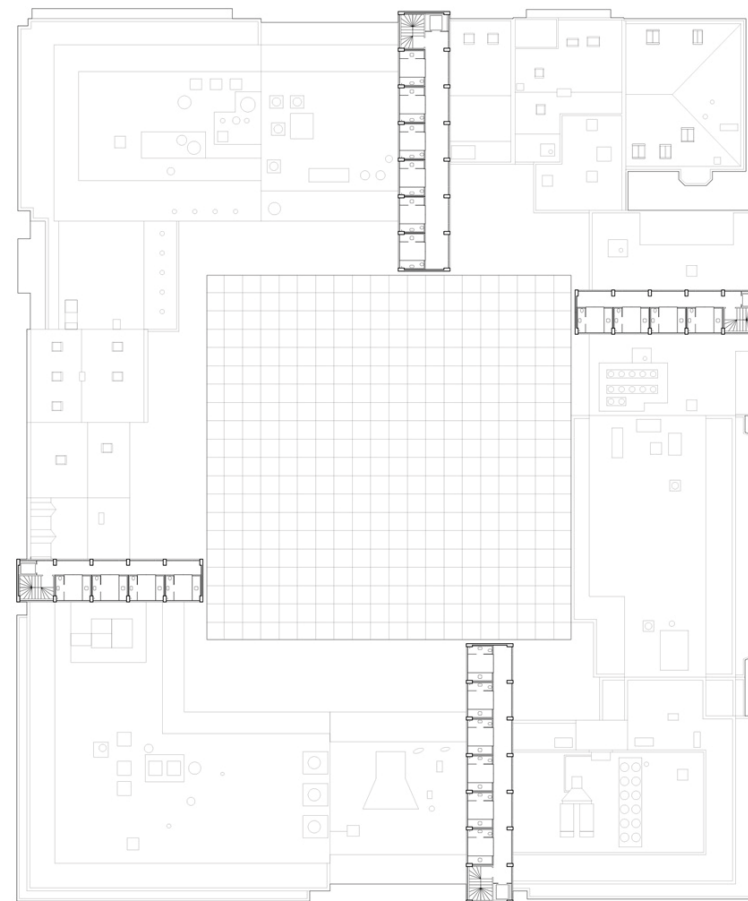


Figure 32

Figure 32 Dogma, *Pretty Vacant*, Brussel, 2014.
Slim towers, typical upper floor plan; dense system of temporary living units.

unification of production and reproduction activity in a whole cooperative system, following the genealogy of residential hotels and Dom Kommuna.³⁵

Also the court yard, developed by inner facades, is created to offer a mineralized cloister of common activities. Connected to the urban context by 4 main access (one per side, in coincidence to new slim towers), the idea is to create alternatives path through the city and expand people's connections also outside the bloc.

Unfortunately this operation, traceable from social Red Vienna's *Höfe*, seems to miss the most important aspect: the green space. In addition the introvert nature of Dogma's project would hardly be compensated by just 4 little galleries.

Speaking about green space, is not by surprise that recent investigation *Rapport au logement des personnes au bénéfice du logement social* pointed out the central role of green space topic concerning dwellers necessities, especially in city centres; often combined with the need of exterior private and common space, like balconies. These elements become even more important if we consider an increasement of people's permanency at home, like it will be probably the case for new home-based workers.³⁶

The last remark over collective dwelling is about organization of common and polyvalent spaces. Always from the precedent investigation, even the best innovative building cannot endure without a planned conception of communal use. Considering that a big part of internal conflict in social housing is about use and keeping of shared facilities. For this reason, the first advice is the re-thinking of concierge figures, subdividing responsibilities among more people, creating a sort of en-

35 A possible example of extending these principles into a bigger scale could be the experience of *Topolobampo* by Marie Howland, 1885, which basically consisted in a city plan including residential hotels, collective patio houses and kitchenless family houses. Dogma. *Loveless: The Minimum Dwelling and its Discontents* (Milan: Black Square, 2019).

36 This condition have to be imagined not just to connect himself with the external environment, but, in the case of home-based workers, also to create a point of interaction with the community, like a sell spot, like in *machyia* typology, where just a little window over the street allows business of any kind.

Pattaroni Luca, Drevon Guillaume. *Rapport au logement des personnes au bénéfice du logement social*. Mobil'homme (Accessed 20 December 2020).

gaged “mediator” between dwellers and company or municipality, able to follow the evolution of the building, proposing adaptation if necessary and, as said, try to anticipate conflict thanks to the application of simple and clear rules³⁷, equals for everyone.³⁸

In the case of Pretty Vacant, I personally would argue that the extremization of communal space could be possible thanks to the main centralization and collectivization of reproduction activities (just think about the correct function of common spaces in a hotel, like reception, dining zone and lounge; with the support of active and retributed labor; also big and frequented spaces could be managed). In others conditions, the entire system would probably be forced to the fragmentation in small little units, like for university's dormitory with shared facilities.³⁹

Appropriation:

The appropriation by worker of a vacant office building (in a certain way a contemporary factory), is first of all a political act.

A parallelism can be made by Geneva's squat movement from the 70's. Fighting against urban functionalism, enclosure and the progressive reinforcement of private property, the idea was to propose an alternative communal way of live, challenging separations and the nuclear family model; a resistance in opposition to a moral and political system.⁴⁰

37 A clear parallelism can be made with the *Rule* of monastic way of life, just adapted to contemporary context. It really seems that the only way to recreate a complex system englobing multiple *idiorrhythmy* is by the collective adhesion to a common plan, or ideology. Not by chance also cooperatives members, even if not in a written form, all have to agree into a specific way of living, normally not just based on cooperation but especially about mutual tolerance.

38 This phenomenon is partially already adopted by many cooperatives houses, where each shared facilities is managed by a different tenant. Pattaroni Luca, Drevon Guillaume. *Rapport au logement des personnes au bénéfice du logement social*. Mobil'homme (Accessed 20 December 2020).

39 Is the case for contemporary projects like MVRDV's *Silodam* (Amsterdam, 2003), where dwell units are connected in groups from 4 to 8, re-creating an artificial little district by *exacerbating individualization*.

Marchand Bruno, Joud Christophe. *MIX, Mixité typologique du logement collectif de Le Corbusier à nos jours* (PPUR : Presses polytechniques, 2014).

40 Pattaroni Luca, Vincent Kaufmann and Adriana Rabinovich. “Les formes de l'habitat : vivre ensemble dans les différences” in *Habitat en devenir: enjeux territoriaux, politiques et sociaux du logement en Suisse* (PPUR : Presses polytechniques, 2009).

This “moral” system was at the origin of big urban project like Lignon, reflection of a capitalist statement, pushing the household model and the separation between men and women activities (husband worker and wife segregated into the domestic space as housekeeper and caring for children).⁴¹

Left militant’s minority, composed by young workers, activists, feminists and artists, understood the connection between space and power, architecture and politics,⁴² proposing a counter-space, a kind of *heterotopie* in Foucault’s words, an alternative space of communal emancipation, refusing standard models. Finally, the occupation of empty speculative and capitalist buildings was also a way to denounce speculation’s operation in itself.⁴³

The ideology of occupation can be resume in squat’s *manifesto* for communal life:

Critique: homogenization, standardization, speculation, social injustices and individualization.

Defend: social mix, conviviality, creativity, hospitality, solidarity, self-management, self-determination and accessibility.⁴⁴

Squat appropriations, were characterized by spatial transformation. By the act of demolishing walls and connecting spaces, they express a sense of creativity and invention, in break with standardization and individualization. The creation of a common room in the building was the core of the installation process; this room was not just a way to connect with each-others but also the main place of coordination and self-determination (Fig. 33).⁴⁵

41 Pattaroni Luca. *Sociologie Urbaine* (Automne semestre, 2020).

42 A perfect example is militants opposition to the demolition plan for the historical district *Grottes*, that had to be transformed into worker’s residences always based in the same “moral” system saw before.

Pattaroni Luca. *Sociologie Urbaine* (Automne semestre, 2020).

43 The impact of these movement is still visible today, making Geveva (with Zurich, for similar reasons) one of the few Swiss cities with a strong development of social and cooperative housing.

44 Pattaroni Luca. *Sociologie Urbaine* (Automne semestre, 2020).

45 Pattaroni Luca, Vincent Kaufmann and Adriana Rabinovich. “Les formes de l’habitat : vivre ensemble dans les différence” in *Habitat en devenir: enjeux territoriaux, politiques et sociaux du logement en Suisse* (PPUR : Presses polytechniques, 2009).



Figure 33

Figure 33 Gregory Bossien. *Evolution of squat's occupation*, Geneva, 1989.

1. Initial typology, 6 apartments.
2. Occupation, demolition of doors and partition, creating 2 shared apartment more connected.
3. Some years later, after the creation of squatters couples and the desire to have a proper space, the re-subdivision into 4 apartments.

This movement has shown different modality of cohabitation, from a model completely chaotic and free to a more ordinate but exclusives. In all cases, the common goal was to find equilibrium by the tolerance of different *idiorrhythmy*.⁴⁶

Unfortunately, unbalanced power dynamics between men and women also took places in squat communities.⁴⁷ The consequence have been the creation of a feminist squat movement, distinguished from precedent ones by a more marked organization and subdivision of tasks. Despite that, even in this situation the problematic of work disequilibrium was often still present (also if in minor intensity compared to mixed squats). Normally, common solution were still group selection based on common habits and, most important, the application of even more strict rules to avoid conflicts.⁴⁸

In this sense, squat experience is the perfect example of minority expression, teaching us the importance of social and architectural participative process.

This thematic brings also to question our-self about the difference between segregation and aggregation. Is it always true that concentrating people with same interests in one single district is a negative process? Well, squat and social housing movement seems to propose that all depend by urban conditions and reasons that bring people together. Starting from context: if resources, public infrastructures and connections, are evenly spread over the main location, they will help to avoid segregation phenomenon like peripheral *grands ensembles*. Following, district degradation is normally driven by low economic conditions, not by a communal ideology; for this reason aggregation can be seen as a useful tool to improve communal living and producing a city made by heterogeneous district with peculiar characteristic.⁴⁹

46 Pattaroni Luca. *Sociologie Urbaine* (Automne semestre, 2020).

47 The house-keeping was still often done by women, which also were a minority inside squatter groups, with less negotiating power.

48 Gaillard Edith. *Habiter autrement : des squats féministes en France et en Allemagne : une remise en question de l'ordre social*. (PhD diss., University of Tours, 2013)

49 The key is therefore the passage from an economical segregation to an ideological aggregation, reinforcing social mixed systems by an adaptative apparatus of financial support, based on personal revenue.

Concerning space transformation, recent investigation's *Rapport au logement des personnes au bénéfice du logement social*, pointed out the "superficial" attitude about people's appropriation of space. The majority of intervention, or will of interventions, involves secondary modifications like finishing and change of room's configuration instead of heavy space conversion. Nevertheless, even if superficial, this approach strongly drive the attachment feeling over one place, underlining the significative role that physical spatial modification still have in this kind of process (obviously together with other factors like the time spent on it and social relationship developed with neighbourhood and the urban context). Paradoxically, a complete flexible open space without partitions, could be more difficult to appropriate because it miss the transformation component, embodying the act of occupation.⁵⁰

In this sense, even if against the principle of standardization proposed in squat's *manifesto*, Pretty Vacant modular internal system could be a valid solution, a hybrid between closed and open, proposing different configurations without impacting over the supporting structure.

Affordable Housing:

In order to obtain affordable housing, Dogma based its strategy on three different axes:

1. By conceiving the system as a social or cooperative housing.

Nowadays the most impactful element over construction cost is the land, for this reason the idea is to pretend a transition from private to public property (eventually collective of tenants), supported by a coherent city plan (involving municipality and including the lack of affordable houses as a political priority) against speculation and the constant rise of prices.

2. By a collective dwelling.

As Teige criticised CIAM convention in 30's, communal dwelling allows to avoid any redundant space by collectivization and centralization

50 Pattaroni Luca, Drevon Guillaume. *Rapport au logement des personnes au bénéfice du logement social*. Mobil'homme (Accessed 20 December 2020).

of labor activities, reducing necessary space and costs to de essential (compared to *Existenzminimum*, offering to each worker an inappropriate miniature of a bourgeois dwelling unit).⁵¹

3. By rethinking finishing.

Another major impact in the final price of an apartment is finishing materials. Industrial structural components can be leaved as last visible element. Robust and easy to maintain, they will avoid superfluous detail, shooting down global costs.

Last mention about retributed domestic labor: as is it true that it already exist, it is also true that in most of the cases is too expensive, like dwelling. Dwelling's collectivization go in the same direction of domestic labor's collectivization, making it accessible to everyone.

Home-Based Worker:

The practice of diminishing private for maximizing common (or work) area, can be related to the *Atelier d'artiste*,⁵² following a tradition of dwell spaces conceived also as work places (like Monasteries, Phalanstère, American Woman's House, Green City Project and the Sylver Factory).⁵³

This conversion of trajectory between artist and young workers (in terms of space) can be explained by similar life condition as temporality, precarity and flexibility; for this reason Frances Hollis introduce both groups of people in the home-based working category.⁵⁴

51 Teige Karel, *The Minimum Dwelling* (Cambridge Massachusetts, The MIT Press, 2002).

52 Banham, Reyner. "Ateliers d'artiste: Paris studio houses and the modern movement" in *Architectural Review*; vol. 120, n° 715, (1956): 75-79p.

53 Dogma. "Introduction" in *Living/Working: How to Live Together in Merihaka* (Helsinki: L'Esprit de l'Escalier, 2014).

54 Speaking about artists, Daft Punk are a good example, embodying the change of workflow and execution also in the world of music (as well as the experimentation of a new genre). Just thinking about the fact that their first album, not by chance called *Homework* (1997), was entirely produced in a little Parisian child's room.

As said in the second chapter, the variety in habits of this new generation of workers is so disparate that it's really difficult to prefer a specific typology from another. It lead that the better option is to let them the choice by designing both private and common spaces as adaptative spaces, supporting different configurations.⁵⁵

Comparison:

Another project where Dogma approached the transformation of office into housing is in a fragment of a more vast research *Everyday is Like Sunday*,⁵⁶ still in Brussel, proposing different kind of intervention for vacant offices parks in the periphery of the city.

While two of three strategies implies the colonization of the site with a series of new constructions, the third one named *Cell*, propose a renovation approach. The specificity of this intervention is that it's applied to one single building, similarly to Bauart's conditions; the only difference is that here, being an office park instead of a urban city center, there is the possibility of a little spatial extension.⁵⁷

In this case, all non-load and bearing walls are demolished, as well as facades, keeping just punctual vertical structure and the central core, creating a shared loft system of flexible organized common working practice. To remedy the lack of dwelling units, inhabitable cells are attached from the exterior, defining another minimum private space.⁵⁸

55 In line with the postpone choice's attitude of Typical Plan.

56 *Morrissey*, Viva Hate, 1988.

57 Dogma. "Production/Reproduction: Housing beyond the Family" in *Harvard Design Magazine* (Accessed 31 October 2020).

58 *Ibidem*.

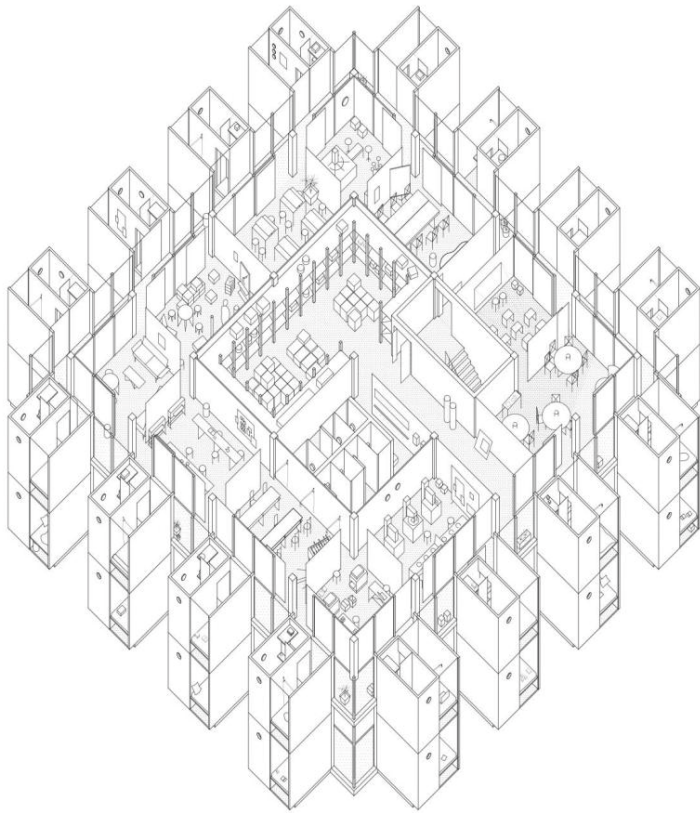


Figure 34

Figure 34 Dogma. *Everyday is like Sunday, Cell*, Brussel, 2015.
Axonometry: the existing central building with new private living cells attached from the exterior.

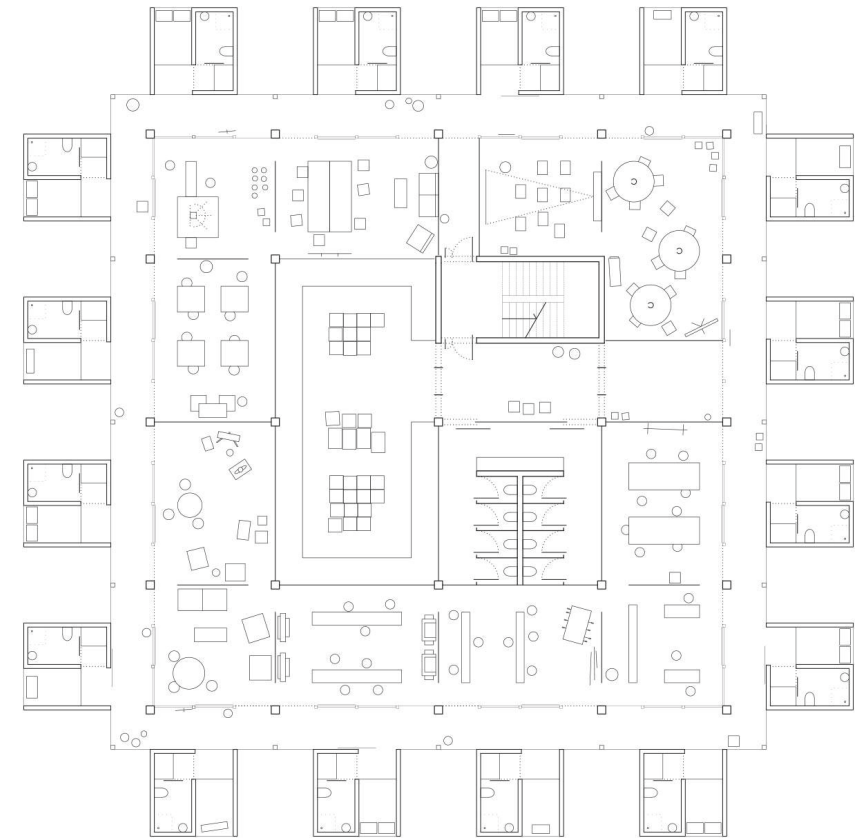


Figure 35

Figure 35 Dogma. *Everyday is like Sunday, Cell*, Brussel, 2015.
Internal common living/working space with a peripheral circulation, giving access to private cells.

Although this configuration is lot more rigid in terms space’s negotia-
tion and diversity of common areas, it inspires an external and addi-
tional intervention: a sort of exoskeleton able to support the expansion
of existing space with the potential to create a new interface to the ex-
ternal context.⁵⁹

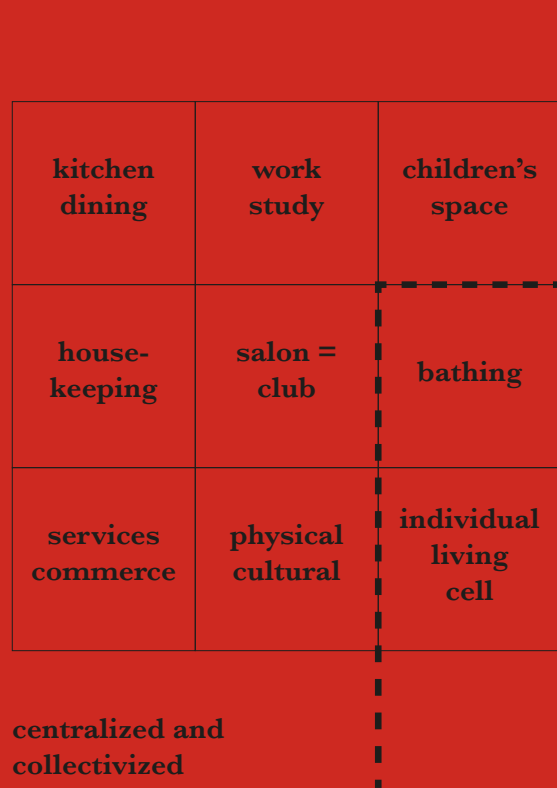
This type of operation, even if more subordinate to parcel’s constraints,
could be a way to compensate the lack of an inner courtyard.

59 Creating a light and permeable external interface could also help better expressing internal
plan’s diversity, preventing hermetic and homogeneous facades, like it’s the case for Le Corbusier’s
Unité d’Habitation de Marseille.
Marchand Bruno, Joud Christophe. *MIX, Mixité typologique du logement collectif de Le Corbusier à nos jours*
(PPUR : Presses polytechniques, 2014).

4. CONCLUSIONS

kitchen dining	work study	children’s space
house- keeping	salon = club	bathing
services commerce	physical cultural	individual living cell

**centralized and
collectivized**



4. CONCLUSIONS

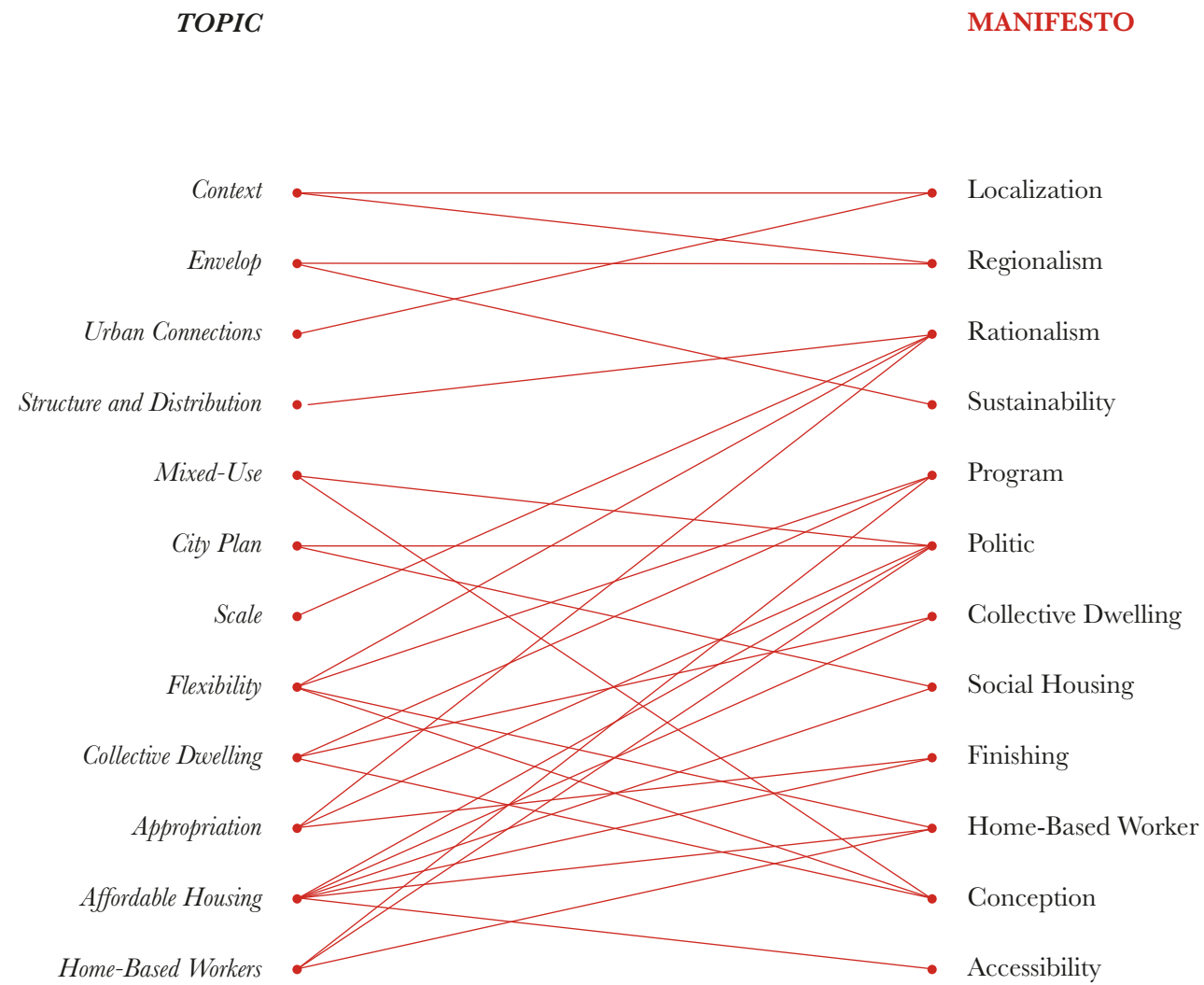
The central questions to be put on the political stage are therefore, how can we live together in a scenario where domestic labor is shared by all and thus reduced to a minimum, and how we can challenge the paternalistic role of the nuclear family and develop forms of life beyond it? These questions cannot be answered by architecture alone. Yet by establishing a more open spatial framework that makes imaginable and possible living together beyond the nuclear family frame, our projects aim to repoliticize domestic space as a truly public sphere where different forms of life are no longer enclosed by the individual home but can be openly confronted, discussed and reorganized.¹

Analysis and comparison of specific cases studies have confirmed the true potential of combining *Home-Based Workers* with the transformation of *Office into Housing* through a design, political and intellectual process able to fight the crisis of affordable housing thanks to alternative solutions.

Despite the peculiarity of this specific combination (subject-intervention), few but significant projects have brought to light various possible solutions, depending by the context and the type of building. Sometimes, starting problems led to develop principles of intervention, other-times those problematics became a principle in itself.

The following *manifesto*, has the aim to resume these principles into a list of purpose, guiding future interventions by acting over a tendency, anticipating conflicts. From private speculation to social emancipation, from commodity to basic right of dwell.

¹ Dogma. "Introduction" in *Living/Working: How to Live Together in Merihaka* (Helsinki: L'Esprit de l'Escalier, 2014).



MANIFESTO OF INTERVENTION

Localization :

Urban context, construction limitation, proximity of public infrastructures, transports and primary services.

Regionalism:

Support sustainable and regional economy by the use of local material, reinforcing connection with the context.

Rationalism:

Robust and durable system allowing inner temporary architecture, Typical Plan, densification, flexible structure, program and distribution.

Sustainability:

Construction materials, maximization of energetic performances, occupation efficiency and technical equipment.

Program:

Mixed functions, subdivision dwell-meet-use by hierarchical privacy, negotiable space configurations, future permutations, exterior interface and intake of green space.

Politic:

Abolition of urban zoning, financial support and promotion of a social housing city plan by the appropriation and conversion of office buildings.

Collective Dwelling:

Liberate dwelling from domestic labor by a centralized and collective system, avoiding redundant spaces while producing affordable housing.

Social Housing:

Avoid private land property and speculation, proposing affordable housing.

Finishing:

Avoid superfluous details, leaving people freely appropriating the space and decrease global costs.

Home-Based Worker:

The main client.

Conception:

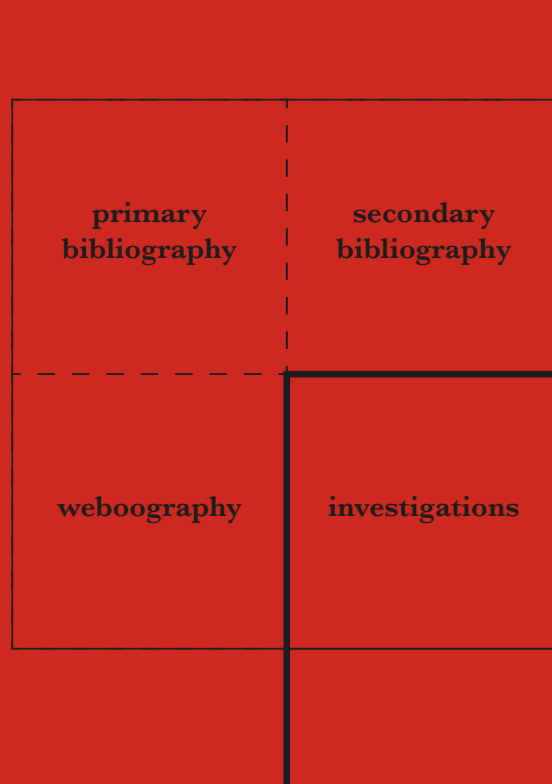
Emancipation form of space, interdisciplinary team, participative process, planned organization, Rule of tolerance and mediators anticipating conflicts.

Accessibility:

Mixed subsidies for social diversity and ideological aggregation.

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FIGURES:

- 1 Korbi Marson. "Absolute Beginners: Living as a Knowledge Worker, from the Parents' Home to Collective Living" in *GAM Architecture Magazine*, vol. 16, (2020): 88-101p. © Ted Tamburo
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P.S.

Words located on the back of this thesis are the lyrics of Daft Punk's song *Harder Better Faster Stronger* (Discovery, 2001). I wanted to finish with this message because, since the beginning of my architectural studies in 2014, it had always embodied the nature of our academic "record". Nowadays, in the context of my research, it should be more appropriate to say that the song is addressed to an entire generation; young, temporary, mobile, flexible and precarious: the Home-Based Worker.

P.P.S.

In case of listening, I strongly recommend the live adaptation (Alive, 2007); performed in Coachella's Music Festival, this version is mixed with another great hit: *Around the World* (Homework, 1997). Maybe it's just a coincidence, maybe it suggest a previous condition now extended to the entire globe.

*Work it harder, make it better
Do it faster, makes us stronger
More than ever, hour after hour
Work is never over*