Housing Without Rooms

An Architecture of Objects

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Housing Without Rooms: An Architecture of Objects

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Bachelor of Architectural Science, 2014

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Master of Architecture 2018
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Abstract

Today's housing models suffocate their inhabitants. While the free plan has reduced architecture to its bare essence, its logic has been undermined by utilizing free space to fit a maximum number of rooms possible. This has come at a great cost to people – socially, architecturally, psychologically. Each housing unit is an individualized cell, completely severed from any other through walls. Consequently, neighbouring units rarely interact. Communality, once an integral part of inhabiting almost any space, is now vainly achieved in the limited offerings of circulation and amenity spaces, carefully entwined within the optimized stacking of units. Occupants and visitors must navigate these cavernous mazes through a series of secured checkpoints – concierges, security, elevators, card-accessed areas – reinforcing isolationism. A new way is possible: a move away from the enclosure and containment of rooms to the freedom of transient objects that can accompany and enrich us.

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Table of Contents

Author’s Declaration	iii
Abstract	v
Acknowledgements	vii
Table of Contents	viii-ix
List of Figures	x-xi
Introduction	1-4
444 Dufferin Street	5-8
Artists, Production and Reproduction	9-16
New Ways of Living	17-22
Human Agreement	23-24
An Architecture of Objects	25-28
Constraints	29-30
Critical Project	31-40
Overview	31-32
Section	33-34
Ground Floor	35-36
Middle Floors	37-38
Top Floor	39-40
History of the Private Room	41-58
Objects as Space: Three Strategies	59-80
Object as Enclosure	61-66
Collapsible Object	67-72
Object as Undefined	73-78
Appendix	81-122
References	123-125

List of Figures

Cover images: by author

Fig. 1: by author

Fig. 2: <http://urbantoronto.ca/database/projects/390-444-dufferin-redevelopment>

Fig. 3-4: by author

Fig. 5-7: https://www.blogto.com/city/2015/04/doomed_dufferin_warehouses_future_could_be_bright/

Fig. 8: courtesy of Mark Peckmezian

Fig. 9: <https://www.gosee.us/image/andy-warhol-s-factory-by-stephen-shore-891720/news/36614>

Fig. 10: <http://www.pisopiloto.org/en/posten/view/room-street-and-human-agreement/>

Fig. 11-12: <http://www.furnituretoday.com/article/536260-vintage-mattress-ads-strike-some-modern-themes/>

Fig. 13: <https://www.arkitekturbilleder.dk/bygning/saettedammen/>

Fig. 14: <https://picryl.com/media/kollektivhuset-smaragden-interior-trappa-61a1e9>

Fig. 15: <https://japaneseminimalism1.wordpress.com/2014/03/22/moriyama-house/>

Fig. 16: <https://www.archdaily.com/222881/the-share-rebita>

Fig. 17: <http://archeyes.com/riken-yamamoto-field-shop-local-community-area/>

Fig. 18: <http://kaosberlin.de/>

Fig. 19-25: by author

Fig. 26: https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Top-Plan-of-part-of-Natufian-hamlet-at-Ain-Mallaha-Eynan-Centre-Plan-of-hamlet-at-PPNA_fig2_264351303

Fig. 27-32: DOGMA, *The History of the (Private) Room*, London: Black Square, 2017

Fig. 33: <http://phd.aaschool.ac.uk/alvaro-arancibia-the-minimum-dwelling-kar-el-teige-48/>

Fig. 34-50: by author

Fig. 51: https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Co-op-Zimmer-Hannes-Meyer_fig2_272883044

Fig. 52: <https://www.designboom.com/interviews/andrea-branzi/>

Fig. 53: <https://walkerart.org/magazine/counter-currents-ooiee-on-superstudio>

Fig. 54: <https://www.archdaily.com/84524/ad-classics-villa-savoye-le-corbusier>

Fig. 55: <http://socks-studio.com/2015/11/10/house-without-qualities-by-o-m-un-gers-1995/>

Fig 56: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/absalon-cell-no-1-t07222>

Fig. 57-59: Stille Straße + Assemble, *Wohnungsfrage*, Berlin: Spector Books, 2015

Fig. 60-61: DOGMA + Realism Working Group, *Wohnungsfrage (Communal Villa: Production and Reproduction in Artists' Housing)*, Berlin: Spector Books, 2015

Fig. 62: <http://www.georgenelsonfoundation.org/george-nelson/works/storagewall-60.html>

Fig. 63-69: DOGMA + Realism Working Group, *Wohnungsfrage (Communal Villa: Production and Reproduction in Artists' Housing)*, Berlin: Spector Books, 2015

Fig. 70: Atelier Bow-wow + Kooperatives Labor Studierender, *Wohnungsfrage (Urban Forest)*, Berlin: Spector Books, 2015

Fig. 71-73: <https://www.maio-architects.com/project/110-rooms/>

Fig. 74-75: <https://www.maio-architects.com/project/kitchenless-city/>

Fig. 76: Nolan Boomer et al, *Take Shape no. 1: Loft*, Chicago: Graham Foundation, 2018

Fig. 77: https://www.thestar.com/life/homes/2014/01/09/masterchef_canadas_tv_kitchen_has_its_secrets.html

Fig. 78: by author

Introduction

The architect — often no longer needed — has been reduced to the one who places ornamental cherries on a finished cake.

Marcus Miessen, *The Nightmare of Participation*, 2009

Contemporary housing design is predicated on the construction of separation. This method utterly dominates housing design. Today it has become the most sought after model of housing. From isolated grandiose McMansions with their sprawling, endlessly-repetitious rooms to multi-roomed, multi-floored penthouse suites in luxury condominium residences, it is clear that isolating oneself in an excess of rooms—with their hyper-specific functionalities—is a sign of a status. Mid-tier residential developments, such as suburban houses and condominiums, sell an attainable simulacra of luxury housing based on a similar lifestyle image on a smaller scale. Ironically, a subdivision of spaces and a case of *horror vacui* arguably decreases quality of life by obfuscating any other possibility.

Separation is a tool used by capital to amplify and conceal class differences at all scales. In any given city, many public spaces are often privately owned, maintained and secured, even though they appear to be available to be used by anyone. Housing is organized around abstract economic and social divides, ensuring the financial success of their residents and defining the forms of housing that will be built there. Even individual buildings are segregated by class: lower floors are typically less expensive than top floors. Classism is effectively built into our structures.

Architecture has become a participant in maintaining class divisions by stripping itself of any profound endeavours of change and has instead focused on the act of personalized object-making and ownership. Contemporary architects focus instead on sculptural, stand-alone structures for the financial elite, from oil-rich Middle Eastern nations to Asian metropolises to North American financial institutions. The Bilbao Effect and ‘iconic’ buildings have proven to be attractive models to replicate, but have little social impact. That is to say that architecture has become a complacent agent for economic optimization, rather than an agent of change. Design innovation must move beyond the realm of aesthetics: the early 20th century proved that good architecture can exist even within a simple apartment block. The facts of our lives are changing: economic conditions, social rituals, concepts of family, yet the structures that house us have failed to progress to suit these changes. What we encounter, then, is architecture that is at odds with people.

It is only relatively recently that architects have begun dealing with the question of housing. The history of housing is at once a story of buildings and of social history, and how these two have interacted. In recent history, however, this interaction has stultified. Housing design has seen few radical notions for design. Instead, the focus has been on variations in styling a very standardized architectural plan.

Erased: Four Seasons Hotel + Condominium, Penthouse Floor

There are several crises of housing today.

At its most elemental, housing is a question of shelter: today there are millions of people that are homeless, and many more that struggle to adequately shelter themselves. There are also environmental challenges to be addressed by the building industry both at the level of design and construction. These issues, of course, are intersectional and in no way solvable by design alone. Important to note, however, is that in the next decades, the inevitable influx of city dwellers will require approximately 1 billion* new dwellings around the globe, raising questions about what forms will best accommodate them not only in terms of numbers, but with respect to the conditions of their lives.

To move beyond the conception of housing as shelter, there are questions about what sort of housing we should be making if we are to progress as a society – this line of inquiry is the focus of this Thesis. What new forms are possible when notions of privacy and publicness are challenged within our current systems of design? How can design be used as a tool to bring people together within the domestic domain? The house as a foundational force holds the power to shape new lifestyles, curb consumption and ultimately inform newly enlightened conversations about the city.

The media is saturated with images representing the home. The home is one of life's great endeavours: a stable, personalized refuge from the outside world. Yet housing as we know it only services and perpetuates a particular lifestyle so that any other proposals seem radical. The suburban model has already proven ineffective for urban conditions and their primary method of separation—physical isolation—is having larger political and social implications. Their contemporary counterpart, the condominium, is failing to provide adequate solutions to any of the housing crises we face. Formally referencing existing models cannot be the only way that housing is made in the future: there need to be new, prototypical methods that address the changing nature of the way people live.

If rooms and walls are the primary method of dividing people within an apartment complex, then let us explore a method of how limiting spatial division can be used to bring people back together. In this Thesis, let us explore how the use of free-floating objects in large, open spaces has the potential to foster communal lifestyles.

*Maak, Niklas. *Living complex: from zombie city to the new communal*. Hirmer, 2015.

For millenia, building complexes were the rule and significantly more than four related people, on average, lived in them together, whether they were farmsteads or palaces or bourgeois townhouses. What seems like an experimental residential commune to us today was for centuries the norm.

Even notions of what being “private” means has changed radically over the course of the history of building. The history of the bedroom, the living room, the kitchen, or the children's room reveals that dwelling is not a static affair. It shows that spaces, furnishings, forms of housing can be rethought. And it also shows that there were frequent attempts to make housing easier, less expensive, to reduce it to its essence...

Nicholas Maak, *Living Complex: From Zombie City to the New Communal*, 2015

444 Dufferin Street

In March of 2018, 444 Dufferin Street, a warehouse space which affordably housed dozens of artists located at Queen and Dufferin in Toronto, was entirely vacated to make way for a new condominium development. This was no surprise, as the site was slated for redevelopment for years, and numerous schemes were proposed for the site – first by RAW Architects, and later by Graziani + Corazza Architects. While the first proposal was sensitive to the specific conditions of the site and was generally supported by the community, the project proved to be problematic and several different developers considered taking charge of the project. The final proposal is a condominium like all others, which will replace a building that offered people an alternative mode of living.

Stylistically, they are nearly indistinguishable from other such developments. They feature the same neo-modern style prevalent in Toronto, popularized by corporate offices. They suppress surface ornamentation, opting for pure functionalism and are clad by inexpensive foreign-supplied readymade panels. Even though they appear to be clad by brick, this is just an illusion as most condominiums merely have a thin panel with a brick veneer. The rest of the facade is made of the same blue-green glass that now overruns the city's skyline.

The appeal of the condominium is they connote status. Their lobbies are outfitted with dazzling yet cost-efficient interior design that create an image of luxury living. The housing units, in reality, are bare-boned rooms that are fitted with modern appliances. The interiors feature an efficient organization of housing units, stacked around a range of amenity, service, and circulation spaces. Although these types of developments typically promote themselves as 'vertical neighbourhoods', they foster none of the communal relations that make neighborhoods a social good. To navigate one of these buildings is to be sent through a maze of secured checkpoints such as concierges, security, elevators, and card-accessed areas to get anywhere within the building. Floors are separated so that only inhabitants of those particular levels are granted access to them. Even amenities meant to be shared, such as party rooms, must be rented at a cost.

The construction of the condominium involves no innovation; it's a formula we see reiterated again and again throughout the city, guaranteed to make a return on an investment. Old buildings often of historical and social importance, are often the target for these developments, in particular where current inhabitants are not in a position to resist.

By proposing an alternative development for the site, an ethical stance is taken regarding the future housing. The site is an ideal testbed for the ideas that have been developed in this Thesis for the purposes of communal living—not only did it already host an affordable living and working complex for artists, but the site's dimensions would accommodate several buildings, allowing for experimentation.

Development proposal by Graziani + Corazza Architects

Interior

Figure 3, 4

7

Exterior

8

Figure 5, 6, 7

Artists, Production and Reproduction

As automation and income inequality continue to shape the workforce, lack of meaningful work, and the rise of precarious work, will continue to millions. Today's artist already inhabits this phenomenon: they are most often precariously employed, and most often work to supplement their art. Their goal is usually to get to a point where art may be their sole source of income, though few achieve this stage.

For hundreds of years, the role of the domestic space has been at the forefront of the question of labour, with the household manifesting itself as the site of reproduction and affectivity. It is in this context that capitalism has been able to exploit the domestic space's ability to produce immaterial labour and reap the benefits of a functioning working population. Although domestic space has been traditionally seen as a refuge from work, the house is essentially the core of production because it maintains one's life such that one is able to work. Much like the natural environment has been used as a free cost within market capitalism, domestic duties have similarly been a source of exploitation. With the ever-decreasing importance of gender in the discourse of labour, roles that were traditionally confined to the female realm – education, health, service – are emerging as the most important aspects of a healthy society. The role of the domestic space is once again being discussed, especially now that each member of the household is expected to work. Economic relations have created a schism in society, and it's yet unknown whether economic forces such as automation will eventually lead to more equality, in the form of Universal Basic Income, for example, or an increasingly drastic class divide. What is for certain is that there will be a rise both in city dwellers, and in precariously employed workers.

The blurring of life and work in the domestic realm is best represented by the precarious nature of the artist. It is a bio-political state whose work can no longer be reduced to the studio space and cannot be measured solely by material output. This state is entangled in both productivity and reproductivity. In the same way that the artist's work draws from his or her life, their living space is a physical manifestation of this blurring between working and living.

Mostly out of necessity, artists have forged a new way of living in their homes that may offer new solutions for the way housing operates on a whole. This means finding and exploiting gaps within urbanization that are overlooked. Unfortunately, they are exploited by being used as a tool for real estate speculation. While artists typically create vibrant autonomous neighbourhoods and communities, developers take notice, and choose to develop in these areas of cultural capital.

From 2010 to 2015 I personally experienced a communal living situation in downtown Toronto. The building was an old warehouse space that had gradually been converted into both studio spaces and apartments. Each unit had large windows, high ceilings,

and unique interior configurations. My unit had anywhere between 4-6 people living in it at any given time and felt like a special place for everyone that lived in it. Although each of us had different needs and schedules, because we were friends, or friends of friends, it was always easy to work out some sort of solution to any given problem. This space was simultaneously a domestic domain, a communal workspace and a successful events venue.

I credit the time I spent in this space with catalyzing my ideas into new ways of living. There I took part in an organic community that I hadn't witnessed elsewhere. At the same time, it seemed to address many of the problems that seem to plague the way housing is made today: there was no loneliness, there was ample sharing, it was cheap and it was a genuinely fun place to live.

Artists have been quietly living in a communal way and offer a counterpoint to the way housing is made today. As such, the artist – as an exemplary figure – who works and lives in the same space, is the model for future living that this project addresses. Communal living in particular presents new opportunities for meaning-making for each of its participants.

Mark Peckmezian, *Untitled* (263 Adelaide Street West), 2011

Though no one knows the true origins, many argue that warehouse spaces were developed from early storage buildings, such as the Roman *horrea*^{*}. The Industrial Revolution pushed countless industries to machine-based manufacturing and architecture responded to accommodate this new type industry. 19th century innovators and engineers developed the industrial loft space as it is known today with the knowledge that they may be used for other purposes in the future. This is a mark of their surprising ingenuity^{**}. The large windows in these spaces were developed at the end of the 19th and turn of the 20th centuries, when electricity was not readily available and to allow the transportation of large goods^{***}. Ever since industrial production moved out of city centres, warehouse spaces have been used anywhere from film sets to today's modern tech offices. Their flexibility and rustic beauty, popularized by artists, is what attracts so many to them.

The nature of artists' work requires large, luminous spaces. Within the last century, artists have naturally gravitated towards loft spaces for their minimalist interiors that provide uncluttered, expansive spaces, their large windows and their proximity to city centres. Creative communities helped bring back attention to this typology, particularly because they were affordable and unwanted for a long time. This process continues to this day, though it is becoming far more rare due to increasing prices. New construction and office typologies do not offer the same size as these old warehouse buildings do. Industrial lofts and warehouses offer a template for a possibility to create a new standard – their sheer popularity proves that they are indeed in demand.

Industrial loft spaces that have been converted to studios and live/work spaces are usually outfitted with bedrooms, kitchens, bathrooms and communal spaces in a myriad of different ways. They also have the possibility of negotiating the exact dimensions of housing/studio units because these buildings typically offer large open floor plates. Due to the height of the ceiling in these spaces, rooms are often half-height and exist within a larger overall space – as was the case with my living arrangement. This forms part of the reasoning to do away with rooms and walls: when multiple inhabitants exist within one space, they are more prone to share that space communally, as there is less construction of isolation. While many artists have opted to occupy large units on their own, with the increasing unaffordability of these spaces, many have had to move into them in groups. It is through economic necessity and social willingness that communality is achieved in industrial loft spaces.

^{*}Richardson, Lawrence. *A New Topographical Dictionary of Ancient Rome*. JHU Press, 1992.
^{**}*A Loft, Aloft: John Hejduk at the Cooper Union*, Canadian Centre for Architecture, 2017.
^{***}Taylor, Simon et al. *Manchester: The Warehouse Legacy*. Empress Litho Ltd, 2002.

Stephen Shore, *Andy Warhol's Factory*, 1967

The condition of productivity and reproductivity within the home is exemplified in Georges Perec's writings on the use of space and everyday experience. In his writings, most notably *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces* (1974), as well as *Life a User's Manual* (1978), Perec asks us to question "the banal, the quotidian, the obvious, the common, the ordinary, the infa-ordinary, the background noise, the habitual"*: in other words, he is asking us to understand the home as more than its physical constituents. He questions the ways in which architecture acts as a background organizing force for the specific objects that make up his daily routine by labouriously documenting every object in his Parisian apartment. In *Life a User's Manual*, he provides a fictional account of the lives of hundreds of inhabitants of a housing block. In this socio-anthropological account he attempts to understand a building as more than its immobile walls: it is a place of work, of relaxation and of life itself.

For Virginia Woolf, the room served as a place of protest against existing patriarchal norms as well as a place of escape. In her 1929 essay, *A Room of One's Own*, she writes that "a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction,"** to describe how the room serves as a physical and abstract space where a woman may dedicate herself to her work without the interference of the male-dominated landscape. She writes of the importance of education for women (her father believed that only the boys of a family were to be sent to school) while pointing out the dangers of ridicule for one's gender in society. This example illustrates how one's own private space holds important practical and psychological consequences, especially for marginalized peoples. For this reason, even open and communal settings, where traditional private barriers dissolve, must include personal space for each individual.

For Louis Kahn, the room serves as the fundamental beginning of architecture, as he outlined in his 1971 speech, *The Room, the Street and Human Agreement*. Kahn considers the room not only as a physical structure – which he defines as walls, a floor and a ceiling, which is then followed by dimension, structure and light – but also as a sublime place where one may be alone with their own mind, and where an individual 'proposes and makes a life'***. Since humans exist everywhere on a sliding scale of sociality, the room is the only place where one can truly be alone and is thus the ultimate representation of interiority.

The room is therefore the conceptual territory of a single or shared life. It is the absolute minimum requirement that an individual/couple/other(s) need in order to function as a unit in society. For some artists, it is a crucial mental retreat needed to do good work. While most people would likely rather have more space for themselves and their rooms, we often observe a willingness to give up to give up one's private space in favour of communal space in the artistic community.

*Perec, Georges. *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces*. 1974.
**Woolf, Virginia. *The Room of One's Own*. 1929.
***Kahn, Louis. *The Room, the Street and Human Agreement*. 1971.

Louis Kahn, *The Room, the Street, and Human Agreement*, 1971

Our age of virtualization has seen notions of what is ‘public’ and what is ‘private’ change at an alarming rate. The two concepts can no longer be thought of as binary opposites. The history of the home reveals that the two spheres have in fact often collided or even overlapped when certain socioeconomic conditions are present.

The bed, which only up until the 19th century was not a solitary experience (upper class excluded) is a representation of the shifting forms and functions of essential components of our homes within the last century. In medieval times, for instance, it was not uncommon for more than ten people to sleep naked together. Until the 1950s, the bed was still advertised as the male domain, until there came a concerted effort to rebrand the bed to a female audience: beds became colourful and comfortable retreats. This shift coincided with the departure of sex from the private bedroom and into the public sphere. Today, the bed is seen as an additional place of work. Work is no longer confined to the office or public spaces, but now takes place in domestic domains, as well. The bed’s form, too, has been recently shifting, as is evident by the comeback of the wall-bed (also known as a Murphy bed). In rural Germany, there were no bedrooms in the Low German House, a typology popular between the 13th and 15th centuries. The bed was built into the architecture of the house and people slept directly in an alcove. In monasteries, where open space was seen as a crucial component of clearing one’s mind, furniture such as the bed was often also built into the wall. There has been a re-emergence of this type of bed recently due to stagnant economic conditions that have forced children to move back to their parents’ homes.*

*Maak, Niklas. *Living complex: from zombie city to the new communal*. Hirmer, 2015.

New Ways of Living

Many of the youth of today have abandoned the previous generation's dream of home ownership. As young people distance themselves from the goal of home ownership, new ideas are conceived surrounding the dwelling, and new goals emerge. A growing number of people face precarious labour conditions which has resulted in the 'gig economy'*. This condition has brought about a general anxiety about economic conditions as the old adage of 'hard work pays off' has proven to be a myth – today, people are facing the fact that economic inequality will only worsen.

At the same time, there has been emergence of the 'sharing economy', whereby individuals' personal possessions are leased out for a price; eliminating the need for one to own a car, for example. Now that this way of operating has been legitimized, the concept has been extended to office spaces and even housing. Communal dwelling, often stereotyped as a product of hippy modernism, has received an enormous amount of criticism. Neoliberal politics in particular have systematically undermined the legacy of the 60s' revolutionary autonomy movements. Over the last several decades, the financialization of all aspects of life has created a society of individuals where independence is seen as the only possible mode of existence. This hyper-individualization, together with precarious labour conditions and the designed physical separation of modern real estate, has created a general sense of purposelessness and isolation. Sharing is just one of the ways that people are fighting back to preserve community.

'Co-living', a general term for different types of co-housing, is a relatively new way of addressing the housing crisis. Co-living's modern reincarnation can be traced back to Danish architect Jan Gudmand-Hoyer's 1964 proposal of gathering a group of his friends to discuss housing options. After a series of consultations and planning, by the end of 1973 construction had been completed on two collective communities, *Saettedammen* and *Skraplanet**. This triggered a wave of new ideas (based on historical and non-Western ways of living) around the world.

Instead of limiting the household to blood-based family networks, co-housing today allows the possibility of living together with family, friends and complete strangers. These spaces generally include private areas such as bedrooms but share amenities such as kitchens and bathrooms. The Fellowship for Intentional Community lists 1,539 co-housing communities in the United States, though this number is likely larger if it's assumed that many did not register with their database. There are hundreds across Europe and 11 completed communities in Canada (British Columbia has 23 communities forming or already established, according to the Canadian Cohousing Network).**

*Tolentino, J. (2017, June 19). *The Gig Economy Celebrates Working Yourself to Death*. Retrieved April 03, 2018, from <https://www.newyorker.com/culture/jia-tolentino/the-gig-economy-celebrates-working-yourself-to-death>

**<https://colivingcanada.com/>

Saettedammen

*Richardson, Lawrence. *A New Topographical Dictionary of Ancient Rome*. JHU Press, 1992.

***A Loft, Aloft: John Hejduk at the Cooper Union*, Canadian Centre for Architecture, 2017.

***Taylor, Simon et al. *Manchester: The Warehouse Legacy*. Empress Litho Ltd, 2002.

Communal living typically faces a significant amount of backlash, especially among conservative defendants of the nuclear family. Early 19th century experiments were also frequently criticized for reasons of poor hygiene. This is due to propaganda and the fictionalization of the conception of the family unit but also the result of dramatic failures that occurred within many communal experiments. *Kommunalkas*, the preferred Soviet answer to increased urban populations, were forced communal arrangements that gained prominence in the early 20th century. They are often alluded to as a way to criticize communal living, but that these arrangements were compulsory and essentially forced upon the people means they cannot be looked to as ideal circumstances for communality.

In Stockholm, *The Kollektivhuset* was a set of fifty apartments designed by Swedish architect Sven Markelius which opened in 1935. The houses included a bare minimum amount of functionalist furniture, including a bed, a desk, a shelf, two chairs, a bath and a toilet. The ground floor contained communal amenities such as a daycare, a communal kitchen and a repair garage. According to its critics, the project failed because of the extreme functionalism that governed all areas of life: food was a necessity, not a source of pleasure, the furniture was cold and practical, and children were hedonistic because of the conditions of the daycare. Depending on one's point of view, components that are desirable could potentially be spun into a different narrative. The project failed not because of its communality, but because of its uncompromising commitment to functionality, which stripped life of spontaneous occurrences and personal embellishments.*

The Kollektivhuset

*Vestbro, Dick et al. *Design for Gender Equality: The History of Cohousing Ideas and Realities*. Aalto University, 2012.

Today there exist collective housing schemes that are successful and prove that this way of life is indeed possible. Japan is leading the wave of new schemes, particularly because the idea of a nuclear family is not as prevalent within their society.

Moriyama House by Ryue Nishizawa is a micro-community consisting of ten small apartments that vary between one to three storeys. They are arranged around ‘corridors’ that are also outdoor garden spaces. The affordability of these spaces arises from their small footprint – they are essentially room-sized apartments but offer communal space as a bonus. Their scattered arrangement, combined with personal cooking equipment and bathrooms allows their residents to escape the feeling of forced communality. People may still meet throughout the many areas for gathering, such as on the roofs which can be reached by small ladders (and where many enjoy their breakfast).*

The Share in Tokyo, on the other hand, is a 1960s apartment building that has been retrofitted towards a communal scheme. The apartments have been reduced in size so that communal living rooms, kitchens and libraries can be accommodated. The idea for the project arose from the constraints of living in Tokyo: space is sparse and a lot of money is wasted on unused appliances and furniture. People may retreat to their small personal apartment or may relax in the larger communal spaces with others, a lifestyle that is only afforded to the upper class in Tokyo. Spatial organization encourages communality without stifling its inhabitants.**

Riken Yamamoto’s *Community Area Model* is a manifesto that attacks the single-family house, claiming that the standardization of housing in turn standardizes the families that inhabit them. Yamamoto proposes a three-dimensional grid structure that can accommodate small apartments, workshops, offices, daycares, restaurants and outdoor spaces. The buildings can adapt over time—favouring spontaneity—to fit the specific needs of their inhabitants and offers a counter-model to single-family homes. Each of his buildings contain the complexity of the range of services of a city in a single structure.***

There are countless other projects around Europe and North America that prove that communal living is a positive and desirable way of living.

*Barry, Andrew et al. *Not Really of this World: Moriyama House*. Architecture New Zealand, 2017.

**<https://www.the-share.jp/>

***http://www.riken-yamamoto.co.jp/index.html?page=ry_proj_detail&id=95&lng=_Eng

Human Agreement

Even though politics continuously try to dissolve people into their most finite individual identities, the idea of living in a society is inherently social. Communally-oriented lifestyles provide people with purpose.

The most compelling argument for communal living, apart from the economic incentive, is the dynamic nature that is potential in communal spaces as well as the possibility of sharing. Communal spaces offer a pragmatic solution to the increasing loneliness faced by society due to increasing instability and precariousness. In addition, they allow for the cross-pollination of ideas, methods, and work by people who may share goals, social lives, working styles, etc. In other words, it is an area that allows the possibility of friendship and mentorship. This style of working has begun to proliferate in recent years with the emergence of the ‘co-working space’.

In terms of a housing unit, the communal space can be the locus of the intersection between productivity and reproductivity. The communal space offers the potential of the living room/multi-purpose space but is charged with its true potential by adding diverse groups of people. The communal space is organized and acted on through a language that develops through horizontal social structures. There is no higher authority that dictates their function, it is agreed upon through a shared oral agreement. This space acts on the affinities of people and requires a degree of exclusivity in terms of mutual moral and ethical understandings in order to avoid conflict. Communal spaces must vary and offer acoustic and spatial separation in order to accommodate people’s needs, and as a way to mitigate conflict.

The same can be said of a communal bathing space as well as communal cooking and dining areas. There is an invisible social contract that concerns and contains each of the residents to ensure that everything is shared equally and fairly. Utilizing a centralized, communally-paid for cleaning service or objective spreadsheets can ensure that conflicts do not arise due to hygienic/personal preferences.

This logic can further be extended to negotiating the allocation of private space. Everyone has different needs and desires, and it is possible to provide a basic framework under which people may negotiate how they want their own private space to be split up within a larger framework.

Kaos co-working space, Berlin

While architecture is unable to create a functioning domain on its own, it has the power to establish an order which can frame new ways of living, ultimately shifting the conversation around issues within a city. The act of setting a limit—the beginning of any settlement—allows architecture to demarcate a new form of dominion within a larger framework. This can be through the adaptation of a pre-existing framework or with a *tabula rasa*. Only through destruction can something with a clear purpose be built. Architecture needs to withdraw from its continuous search for formal ingenuity and focus on creating prototype forms of living that can defy the logic of contemporary models.

If the room is the target of critique, then a method of deviating from it provides the basis towards communality. An empty, infinitely homogeneous grid, composed of a series of structural columns, each spanning a width of 8 meters and rising 6 meters high, form the underlying base of the critical project. The grid acts as an invisible territory that denotes an infinite variety of uses within each new square in a fluid, horizontal fashion. The homogeneous space acts as a leveling field under which everyone is to live simultaneously.

A series of objects are scattered evenly throughout the space. Each object is either a permanent or temporary autonomous area, and is the site of a private space that cannot be intruded. Each object may be re-arranged within the grid as necessary. Rather than completely severing the space through a series of walls, the objects exist divorced from the structural logic of the homogeneous space, allowing the possibility of the objects to take on any orientation desired. Amenities are shared within centralized areas. All of the other underlying leftover space is negotiable communal territory.

Figure 19

Historically, rooms have been introduced into domestic architecture as a way to systematize a life marked by increasing, often disorienting complexity. They have also been used as a tool to gender the home and separate female services from male entertainment, study and business. In modernity, their logic has been contorted as to sell the possibility of luxury. By avoiding their use altogether, new arrangements can arise spontaneously. The inhabitants can focus on building their lives according to their specific needs.

The dense collection of individual apartments in a condominium tower represent the same logic that early industrial capitalism utilized (in the form of single room occupancies) in order to increase worker productivity, ultimately destroying historic forms of housing and ways of co-habiting. The bedroom, or one's private space, is the arena in which the notion of the 'individual' emerged, and reveals the historical conditions that society has prioritized to make it happen.

With the standardization of housing become ever more predominant and with the size of dwellings shrinking, the idea of housing is being irrevocably damaged. Housing's accompanying problems become amplified. An Architecture of Objects seeks to ameliorate this accelerating trend by positing a different course, one that does not offer any answers. By avoiding the readymade techniques used to make housing today, a space is created that allows a new communal architecture—an Architecture of Objects—to take place. This isn't to say that this way of living is better or worse than what is available today, but to say that society needs to allow alternative prototypical forms of housing to exist in order to let new ways of living flourish naturally.

...it is useful to think of the 'private' room as the product of one of the most important processes shaping any form of society: that of individuation. The French philosopher Gilbert Simondon has described individuation as a process in which the individual subject is not the cause, but rather the effect of individuation. [...] In developing Simondon's theory further, Bernard Stiegler affirmed that the individuation of the *I* is always inscribed in that of the *we*, whereas the individuation of the *we* takes place only through the individuation of the *I*'s which constitute it. These definitions of individuation echo an observation made by Karl Marx in the introduction to the Grundrisse, regarding a theme which became one of the central tenets of classical political economy: the individual subject. Marx did not reject the existence (nor the importance) of the individual subject, but contested the idea promulgated by economists such as Adam Smith that the individual is an intrinsically solitary subject. For Marx, the individual subject is the outcome of the economic condition of industrial capitalism, in which – unlike previous forms of mastery – the exploitation of workers presupposed the voluntary selling of their individual labour power.

DOGMA, *The Room of One's Own*, 2017

Constraints

The critical project utilizes a set of constraints that form the underlying basis of the design. These constraints are based on research into the most malleable housing typologies and on the needs of its intended inhabitants.

The first two constraints are strictly pragmatic – they appropriate the legwork done by the 444 Dufferin Street design proposal by Graziani + Corazza Architects, ensuring that the overall form of the project remains responsive to the needs of the neighbourhood it is situated in. The buildings remain the same height—36 meters—and are divided into 3 mid-rise towers.

The third constraint is a deployment of an 8 meter x 8 meter grid in each building. This structural span is economical in terms of the amount of steel used and is large enough to accommodate up to two living cells comfortably within one square (based on a 8m² minimum dwelling unit). It is also large enough to fit an elevator and fire stair core. Instead of formatting the dimensions of the structural grid based on the size of a typical parking lot, this grid ‘humanizes’ the standardization by placing people first.

Each of the spaces within the critical project is double-height – 6 meters. As is evident within industrial loft spaces, a generous ceiling height provides countless possibilities for future redevelopment and unforeseen circumstances as the vertical space is used creatively. Housing units may be stacked vertically, or a combination of work and living space may be re-oriented with the use of the height of the space. High ceilings can also provide psychological relief for its inhabitants.

Amenity spaces such as kitchens, bathrooms and dining rooms are located within centralized areas of the proposal. Circulation is accessible from two points on the sides of each building. This alleviates confusion and clearly demarcates areas that are negotiable communal territory.

The majority of the buildings’ floors are devoted to live/work space. This Thesis explores the possibilities of future living and as such, these spaces are the main focus of the critical project. 16 units are located on each floor, corresponding to the amount of minimum dwelling units that could fit on the floor plate on this particular site while still allowing ample communal space.

The final constraint is the suppression of style. In order to explore possibilities of bringing about ways of living together, specificity is avoided. Materiality is ambiguous and the overall aesthetic is as generic as possible, allowing for personal embellishments.

Same building heights (36 meters)
+
of buildings as the 444 Dufferin Street proposal (3)
8x8 meter grid
Double-height spaces (6 meters)
Communal amenities
Live/work spaces (16/floor)
Generic Design

Figure 20

Object as Enclosure	Collapsible Object	Object as Undefined
Pool	Patio	Event
Living/working	Living/working	Living/working
Living/working	Living/working	Living/working
Living/working	Living/working	Living/working
Living/working	Living/working	Living/working
Garage	Communal kitchen + daycare	Playground

Program: Three Strategies

Figure 21

Section

This section, taken right through the middle, provides an overall glimpse of the strategies deployed in this critical project. Each building is connected to the other two through circulation towers and each floor may be traversed freely across the entire site. The bottom and top floors contain communal functions while the middle floors contain live/work spaces.

The ceilings of ground and middle floors are designed with a series of high-powered LED lights, arranged according to the structural grid. Typically used on film sets to achieve realistic natural lighting, these lights can simulate outdoor conditions or can comfortably light up a large space square-by-square within the grid, allowing for multiple residents to control the light as they see fit. Below the LEDs are slats that help diffuse the light evenly throughout the space.

Ground Floor

The ground floor of the buildings contains garage/workshop spaces on the southern end, a communal kitchen and daycare in the centre, and a children’s playground on the northern end. The leftover space on the southern end is a small parkette.

Dufferin Street

Middle Floors

The middle floors contain 3 different strategies for living together. Each prototypical strategy utilizes the free plan to carve out private and communal spaces.

The first strategy utilizes a compact solution in which all of the essentials of a home are reduced into one standardized scheme, in the form of a thick wall. The second scheme deploys an arrangement of mobile furniture that can be re-arranged by occupants as they see fit. The pieces of furniture may be expanded to merge several occupants together. The centre space contains a communal kitchen, bathroom and dining room. The final scheme proposes a series of cross-shaped columns that partially separate occupants while providing heating, ventilation and storage. The living units are defined by the occupants themselves. In all three schemes, the empty space is communal territory that is negotiated between the occupants.

Top Floor

The top floors of the building are dedicated to communal functions. The southern end contains a swimming pool, the middle building contains an outdoor patio space and the northern building has a semi-outdoor patio with an event space in the middle.

History of the Private Room

Old English *rum*, German *raum* (space)
Latin *rus* (open country)

Old English *rumian* (make clear of obstacles)

Room Etymology*

The history of the private room reveals the collective decisions that have executed over millenia that have shaped housing into what it is today. In order to develop new ways of living, it is important to understand its history.

Domestic life was founded on the ritualization of human activity. Some of the earliest known settlements belonged to the Natufians, a hunter-gatherer society that existed in the Neolithic Period (approx. 10,000 BCE – 2000 BCE) and who eventually founded the ancient city of Jericho. It is clear in looking at the plans of their settlements (which were a semi-circular shape with a hearth in the centre) that they were well-versed in geometry. The enclosure thereby became not only a form of shelter from nature (that was clearly distinct from the landscape) but also helped define the specialized rituals that they developed. Geometric abstraction therefore grounded and made concrete their temporal habits. The collection of rooms thereby gave the Natufians a clear individuation and helped define the rituals of their distinctly communal way of life. The archaeologist Richard Bradley has argued that these early settlements imposed their way of life unto the world (with rooms acting as a ‘theatre of everyday life’) rather than being integrated into the landscape, forming the basis of modern dwelling.

Rosalind Hunter-Anderson, an anthropologist with a focus on pre-historicism, has argued that the shift from foraging to farming eventually changed the circular domestic spaces into rectangular ones. This evolution coincides with a need to store resources and for more efficient organization, as well as the ability to perform multiple activities within one space. The rectangular form eases the process of subdivision, which was necessary to accommodate the increasing complexity of farming communities. This process is evident in later Neolithic settlements.**

Natufian + early Neolithic settlements

* <https://www.etymonline.com/word/room>
**DOGMA. *The Room of One's Own: The History of the (Private) Room*. London: Black Square, 2018.

This shift can also be observed in the plans of the Greek *megaron*, a prototypical form of a temple which also originated in the late Neolithic era. While early forms of this type feature one large open space, over time a series of subdivisions transformed them into multi-roomed dwellings. They typically consisted of a central courtyard space around which other rooms were arranged. In some cases a porch is evident, signifying the symbolic act of entering the house. This development intersects with the rise of gendered domesticity, allowing ceremonial and administrative spaces (most often reserved for males) to be separated from service spaces (female), with the courtyard acting as a large private space shared amongst several families. This method of splitting the household into three distinct areas whereby the spaces of hospitality were highlighted, and the placed of reproduction were hidden is what we are familiar with today.

Several centuries later in the 5th century BCE, the Greek *oikos*, translated to house, became the basic unit of the city. The household became the centre of *techne oikonomike*, meaning ‘house management or economy’. With this arrangement it became clear that the house, with its distinctly segregated male and female domains, was the most integral component of a functioning city, while also providing a clearly defined private space separate from the *polis*. While exclusively males were allowed to participate in civic affairs, the invisible reproductive management done by women was also crucial to the survival of the city (Aristotle describes the functionality of the *oikos* in organizing household activity as a fundamental component of the polis in the first chapter of his book, *Politics*). In *Oeconomicus*, Xenophon appoints the layout of the house as the foremost determinant of the adequacy of a house, comparing it to a carefully choreographed dance. The house, which was usually in the shape of a long rectangle, eventually transformed into a gradient of public spaces (porch, courtyard, anteroom) morphing into private spaces (storage, kitchen) at the back through the continual subdivision of the structure. In later iterations and especially in wealthier households, the courtyard was surrounded by smaller interstitial spaces which cushioned more private rooms and allowed households to rent out rooms to guests. It was in this shift that for the first time family and domestic space became potentially divisible within one house.*

*DOGMA. *The Room of One's Own: The History of the (Private) Room*. London: Black Square, 2018.

Greek *Megarons*
Neolithic to Late Helladic periods

The ancient Roman house, *domus*, on the other hand, was far more integrated into the public domain than its Greek counterpart. It was not only a home, but also a space for business, rest, entertainment and lobbying. The word *familia* not only referred to the biological family but also included servants (*famulus*) that also occupied the house, which was thus a miniature version of the city. The house was constructed around monumental public spaces (*atrium*, *vestibulum*, *peristylum*) where family, friends and guests would dine and end with an enclosed private garden or courtyard space.

The *cubiculum* was a smaller space dedicated exclusively to rest, sex and concentration for work. It was the ancestor of the private bedroom/studio space—in this space the architecture was scaled around the human body. (A room dedicated exclusively to sleeping was not called a *cubiculum*.) The *cubiculum* was the first space where individual privacy was prioritized: where societal norms were transgressed and an individual could retreat from (and perhaps even defy) the public sphere. The importance of this was amplified when Roman society collectively converted to Christianity. This is a vital factor as Christianity not only espouses family values, but prayer could not take place in public spaces until the 4th century CE when the church adopted basilicas as the formal places of worship. Additionally, Christianity emphasized the individual relationship with Divinity, which required a solitary space (as opposed to other pagan Roman cults at the time). Because of its importance to early Christian worship, the *cubiculum* helped transform some wealthy Roman houses into monasteries, and became an early predecessor of the monk’s cell.*

*DOGMA. *The Room of One's Own: The History of the (Private) Room*. London: Black Square, 2018.

Roman *domus*
1st Century CE

The monastery is an interesting dichotomous organization, because from its inception it presented a way of living at once alone, and within a community. Emerging in the 4th century and developing through the 15th century, monasticism (from the Greek *monos*, translated to ‘alone’) sought an escape from urban life and the institutionalization of the church. First as a way of completely separating from other communities as a hermit, then to living with other hermits in a casual fashion, and finally to living alone within a shared monastic domain. Early monks would occupy single cells (from the Latin *cella*, meaning small room/store-room) arranged around a shared central space. As explained by Roland Barthes in his last major research project, *How to Live Together*, the monk’s cell would become the basis for the most ubiquitous modern typology: the single room. In this case and arguably nowadays, the single room doesn’t thwart a communal way of life, it brings the two closer in a reciprocal relationship.

In cenobitic monasteries (which stress communal life), such as Carthusian monasteries, the internal layout has many similarities to the Roman *domus*. Individual, self-sufficient ‘houses’ were grouped within larger compounds, with each ‘house’ containing a laboratory, a kitchen and a garden. The main tenet was the *cubiculum*, which was the primary site of study, sleep, and nourishment. Some later examples contain movable furniture, such as desks that fold into the wall, stressing the importance of clearing the space for contemplation.*

*DOGMA. *The Room of One’s Own: The History of the (Private) Room*. London: Black Square, 2018.

Monk’s cell
4th century to 15th century CE

Figure 29

The Renaissance saw a surge of rooms within private domains, especially in the upper classes, signifying an increasing desire for privacy as well as the act of accumulation traced to the initial privatization of ‘public’ land. It also helped cement the exploitation of female labour by formalizing the complete privacy of the home (later exasperated by industrial capitalism). The house was subdivided into increasingly specialized spaces in which the house was understood as a retreat from the public world. Various buffer zones were created, such as the ceremonial entrance space, which would allow the wealthy owners to withdraw when needed (and is the basis for the layout of the modern apartment). The apartment (derived from the Latin *appartare*, meaning ‘to separate’ and ‘to distribute in parts’) appeared in *palazzos* as a set of rooms that could house a single person, usually for friends of extended family. This allowed the owners to establish a clear hierarchy of spaces within their homes and reinforce the sense of ownership.

Similar to the monk’s cell, the *studiolo* or cabinet became a space of contemplation and study but also a status symbol. In many of these *studioli*, storage was built in to the architecture in order to maintain the emptiness, or to keep from interrupting the emptiness. In France between the 16th century and 18th century, the *boudoir*, or the women’s closet, became the female counterpart of the *studiolo*. It was a space where the private and public (informal meetings) coalesced for the first time since pre-modernity (and not as two intrinsically separate concepts as promoted by the state). It was only in 16th century France and England that the private room, accessible from one entrance, became common. Efforts were made by the 18th century onward to improve the living conditions of the lower classes by promoting the idea of family living (rather than barracks) typically through an arrangement of a living room and three bedrooms.*

*DOGMA. *The Room of One’s Own: The History of the (Private) Room*. London: Black Square, 2018.

French mansion
18th century

By the 19th century, collective lodging schemes were widely used in order to help house uprooted working populations in cities, and in response to a supposed lack of 'ideal' single-family homes available to the lower classes. In New York, for example, there were many collective houses that provided inhabitants with small rooms and communal facilities. In boarding houses, chores were typically done by waged workers, while in utopian communal models facilities and chores were generally shared, reducing the burden on women. The architecture of these spaces was typically sparse, essentially containing a small room without cooking equipment and built-in furniture.*

*DOGMA. *The Room of One's Own: The History of the (Private) Room*. London: Black Square, 2018.

Left: Henry Roberts, Hatton Garden Lodging House for Women, London, UK, 1851. Adapted from Roberts, 1851.
Center: Henry Roberts, Model House for Four Families, London UK, 1851. Adapted from Roberts, 1851.
Right: Alcide Vaillant, Cooperative Housing on Rue Jean Roberts, Paris, France, 1884–86. Adapted from Teyssot, 1988.

French and English collective lodging
19th century

Early 20th century housing acts according to the belief that separating functions into contained rooms would improve quality of life, although a focus on minimal dwelling was still important. Early Soviet communal dwellings, such as the *dom-kommuna* and the *kommunalka* featured private living units that did not contain kitchens, but were fitted with generous shared facilities such as a collective kitchen, dining room, gymnasium, library and a communal day-care. Later, Moisei Ginzburg together with Mikhail Okhitovich proposed a different model that had detached housing (supported on pilotis) scattered across a field nearby public transportation. The intent was for these structures to be mobile so inhabitants could choose to situate themselves in residential clusters or in isolation. The element of choice is crucial here. They proposed a series of collective facilities to be evenly distributed within the open field. This proposal sought to alleviate the burdens of the lived reality of collective living from those that were not as interested in partaking living in that way.*

*DOGMA. *The Room of One's Own: The History of the (Private) Room*. London: Black Square, 2018.

Narkomfin Building, Moisei Ginzburg and Ignatii Milinis (Soviet *dom-kommuna*)
1932

These North American and Eastern European examples of collective housing were largely based on the ideas of minimum dwelling, of which the second CIAM in 1929 was devoted to. Karel Teige, a Czech architect, wrote a seminal critique of this phenomenon in his book, *The Minimum Dwelling*, released in 1932. While he applauded the idea of conceiving standardized, humane methods of addressing housing concerns, he also heavily criticized projects by the likes of Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe and Walter Gropius, who he claimed were building new versions of antiquated palaces for the new financial elite. He criticized the practice of designing working class housing as mere miniature versions of bourgeoisie housing, but instead proposed an entire reformulation of what it meant to live at that time, built with the cooperation of many different professionals of different fields. Teige rejected the idea of building housing around the kitchen or around the notion of a traditional family structure, or even through technologically-driven solutions. For Teige, the ideal housing complex did not consist of stacked, family apartments but consisted of single-roomed dwellings that shared collective facilities – in this way, he believed, the privatization of domestic labour and life could be subverted.

Karel Teige’s critique of housing not only foreshadows some of the techniques that were utilized in 1960s and 1970s communal living experiments, as well as solutions being proposed to this day. Minimal living as a solitary concept, however, cannot be divorced from the idea of communal living, or else the same problems in housing will inevitably persist. Such is the case with the new concept of ‘micro-apartments’, which are, as Teige critiqued, simply miniature versions of bourgeoisie apartments.

Reproducing even the smallest family house, even if equipped with modern appliances, represents a step backwards in the advance towards the solution of the housing question. A miniature version of the family-housekeeping economy propels its inhabitants back into an age when everyone milked a cow. The ownership of a minimum cottage effectively reinforces both practically and psychologically the ideology of private ownership and family.

Karel Teige, *The Minimum Dwelling*, 1932

The history of the private room reveals the political and social conditions that shaped its place in the house and in the life of the individual. In tracking its development, we are witness to the ways it has been a space for subversion.

First, as evident in the prehistoric Natufian examples, geometry is the fundamental essence of the architecture of a room. Geometry lends abstraction to everyday rituals and is thus the underlying structure of this Thesis. It helps define boundaries without the need for a physical separation. A simple, rectilinear geometry works best in that subdivision can later be erected.

The house has been used from Roman times up to capitalist times as a miniature version or unit of a working city. Making the switch to a collective environment can have profound implications for the metropolis.

A courtyard or a central space is an effective method of providing circulation and organizing multiple inhabitants. To centralize the collective space may subvert its historical use as a separator between service, entertainment and hospitality spaces. Modifications to how we delineate what is public and what is private within a housing scheme can further undermine contemporary models.

Evolved from the *cubiculum* to the monk's cell, the modern room is now a non-negotiable component of modern housing. Its form, however, is negotiable. The private room can exist as a complementary component of a collective scheme, as evidenced in monasteries.

Excessive subdivision of housing (in the form of rooms) became predominant within upper class private domains after the Renaissance. Reverting back to minimalism can be a way of turning back the stress on individuation in housing. Similar to a monk's room or a *studioli*, a minimal private space with built-in furniture is a tacit way of allowing individuals to clear and save their space.

Shared facilities can spur a sense of camaraderie and reduce the burden on individuals performing household tasks.

Your motivation must always be to do something that is relevant for your time.

What defines the contemporary is that we no longer have a clear idea of how anybody should live. This is very different from an era like the nineteenth century. Back then, there were highly codified systems of power that dictated housing and urban models, and there was little freedom to choose alternatives. In Europe at least, we now govern by democracy. It is no longer a dictatorial model of society, and each minority must have the possibility of realising their own visions for life in our cities.

Peter Märkli, *WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO LIVE TODAY?*, Real Review (Issue 3), 2017

Developed in plan-section relationships, the critical project utilizes three different strategies that experimentally form communal spaces without the use of traditional rooms. Whereas rooms are traditionally used as devices to separate tenants in house planning, objects in this project seek to undo those constraints in order to imagine new ways of living together.

The site is divided into three separate buildings, all of which are connected through circulation cores on either side of each building. Their top and ground floors are designed according to communal functions, such as garages, a swimming pool and a patio, while the sandwiched floors in the middle are devoted to live/work spaces. The middle floors the buildings contain 16 units experimentally arranged. The top floors of the buildings are outfitted with glazed roofs, inspired by the original warehouse space that occupied the site.

Object as Enclosure

The first design strategy provides every individual or group with a minimal private space that allows an offset communal space.

The living scheme proposes a reduction of essential biological services – bathroom, kitchen, bedroom – combined with a storage area and a study room constrained to the dimensions of the structural grid into a ‘living wall’. Since the entire ‘living wall’ is divorced from the structure, it can be rearranged in any way desired within the grid. The cavities of the walls are fitted with sound insulation.

The ground floor in this scheme is devoted to parking and workshop space. The site is subdivided into 4m x 8m garage spaces that can fit a car, a workshop space, storage or a combination the three.

The top floor is dedicated to a communal pool space. It is outfitted with a series of semi-private objects that individuals or groups can use while occupying the pool, similar to some European beaches. Additionally, there are changing rooms, showers and a sauna.

Figure 35

Figure 36

Figure 37

Interior

Figure 38

Garage

Figure 39

Pool

Figure 40

Collapsible Object

The second strategy leaves the potential of the free plan to be defined by the occupants through the use of modular, collapsible objects.

The living space is largely undefined except for a central area dedicated to communal cooking, dining and restrooms intended to be shared amongst all of the inhabitants. This central space is visually porous so as to not completely sever the sight lines. A series of mobile, collapsable objects are deployed such that any occupant can arrange them as they see fit. The furniture consists of a bed unit and table (both collapsible onto themselves), chairs, a storage wall and a hanging wall that can all be stored within the storage wall and put away when more space is needed. These objects can be combined together to form clustered units within the space.

The ground floor of this scheme is dedicated to a communal commercial kitchen and daycare, each of which can similarly be arranged into any orientation through the use of modular object-furniture.

The top floor of this building is an outdoor patio space. It contains object-furniture that can be used by all occupants of the building and which can similarly be put away when necessary. This space can be used for relaxation or as outdoor workspace. The structural grid extends into the sky to be used for different purposes such as drying laundry or to provide shade.

Figure 42

Interior

Figure 43

Communal Kitchen

Figure 44

Patio

Figure 45

Object as Undefined

The third scheme allows the residents to define their own objects as they wish.

Rather than designing a standardized 'room', inhabitants can create any shape of room they want within one square of the grid. In order to facilitate the organization of multiple inhabitants, a series of cross-shaped structures which house collective storage and mechanical systems are introduced to suggest a separation of space. However, they are not connected as to not completely enclose a single room. These objects float freely within the grid and are the only sites of privacy within the space; leftover space is to be negotiated communally.

The ground floor of this building is dedicated to an outdoor playground, to be used in conjunction with the communal daycare. A perimeter bench encloses a large sandpit in which a series of playful objects are dispersed and can be re-arranged by children.

The top floor of this building contains a semi-outdoor patio space with an inset event space. The event space contains a series of objects that can be re-arranged by users of this space for any event. The semi-outdoor patio space is filled with plants.

Figure 47

Interior

Figure 48

Event Space

Playground

An Architecture of Objects is ultimately a critique of the capitalist conception of the city. It accepts the fact that housing plays a large role in shaping our understanding of the metropolis and our society. From the disassembly of current housing techniques to the programmatic amenities available, the interventions in this Thesis signal towards vital components that are sorely missing from the discussion on housing today. It is highly idealistic and is simply an experiment.

Contemporary housing is an armature of the financial apparatus and separation is its tool of choice. Separation not only of private ownership, but class differences as well. An Architecture of Objects seeks to look beyond class and ameliorate tense modern relations by appealing to commonalities.

Childcare, for instance, has become yet another financial burden. Whereas daycares and playgrounds were imperative components of revolutionary housing models in the past, today the issue is expected to be solved through market logistics. A successful housing scheme must integrate childcare as a fundamental concern, otherwise life cannot be reproduced. Food, hygiene, shelter and relaxation are similarly addressed.

An Architecture of Objects accepts the precarious reality of the modern city dweller. It offers the solace of community and shared empathies to achieve the common goal of meaning-making and camaraderie. It seeks to allow everyone to exist on the same social plane. It uses minority demographics as a template for emphatic ways of living and co-existing.

Whereas other radical architectural projections of the city are typically ironic or dystopian, An Architecture of Objects proposes an optimistic outlook that seeks potential and possibility. It builds on the anxieties of our time to create an achievable baseline for replication.

It is a project for today and for tomorrow.

Appendix

In the following pages a number of projects and precedents are discussed that helped shape this thesis.

Hannes Meyer's *Co-op Zimmer (Interieur)* illustrates the radical proposition put forth by the architect in 1926, who imagined a single, nomadic worker—representative of any single individual in a city—living alone in a communal setting that is only implied. Rather than representing the space according to the identity of the worker, the only surviving image of this proposal shows an austere empty room that demonstrates the architecture of 'use', rather than ownership. There is a single bed, a chair, a bookshelf and a single gramophone. This proposal shows how this generic room not only reduces all necessary biological functions to a minimum, but that this space is also a room for enjoyment: not as a privilege, but a universal right. It was a radical critique that sought to undo the constraints of the image of housing.

Superstudio's *Supersurface* and Archizoom's *No-Stop City* exemplifies the power of the grid. Superstudio's infinite landscape, where nomadic wanderers roam and plug into the technical infrastructure as needed, was an ironic commentary on the shift toward the technologically-driven fervor that the 60s brought about. Archizoom's infinite landscape reduced the metropolis to a set of parts, equally distanced and regulated within a grid system. Both projects are now often interpreted as utopian.

The grid is understood as omnipresent and all-controlling but also as the ultimate passive organizing force. Subdivision is simple. The space in between allows for freedom.

Le Corbusier's *5 Points Towards a New Architecture* revolutionized modern architecture in the early 20th century. Through the use of the Dom-ino system, developed alongside Auguste Perret whereby a series of concrete pilotis carry all of the structural load, the architectural plan becomes free to take on any internal configuration desired. This not only allows the facade of a building to become dramatically thinner than previously possible (down to the thickness of glass) but also allows large interior expanses.

Le Corbusier, Villa Savoye, 1931

OM Ungers' *House Without Qualities*, built in 1996, formulates a generic architecture that is designed to be used in multiple ways. Rather than designing a highly specific image, he deliberately suppresses style and focuses on the house as a composition and for new ways of living, reducing architecture to its fundamental essence. The walls act as containers for services such as kitchens, bathrooms and storage.

Absalon’s *Living Cells* provide a concrete example of how pavilion-rooms may be realized. Absalon designed six full-scale prototype units—intended for single-occupancy living—for his own use.

Made from plywood, these units are painted entirely white on the inside and outside, perhaps as a method of abstraction or a homage to his home in Tel Aviv. The Israeli artist planned to install these living cells with electricity and running water in six major cities around the world, corresponding to his exhibits. He explained that each cell’s architectural expression responded to its urban destination. Each cell was an area of twelve square meters in which a kitchenette, a workspace (which consisted of a table, chair and bookshelf), a closet and a washroom were squeezed in. He designed all of the cells based on his own bodily dimensions.

He was only able to install one fully functioning cell before passing away of AIDS in 1993, at the age of twenty eight.

The Cell is a mechanism that conditions my movements. With time and habit, this mechanism will become my comfort ... The project’s necessity springs from the constraints imposed ... by an aesthetic universe wherein things are standardized, average ... I would like to make these Cells my homes, where I define my sensations, cultivate my behaviours. These homes will be a means of resistance to a society that keeps me from becoming what I must become.

Absalon, *Cellules*, 1993

British architectural firm Assemble have developed a self-organized pensioner's collective in Berlin called *Still Straße*. Their practice includes 18 people from a diverse range of specialties, ranging from Architecture to Philosophy, and prioritizes collaboration between designers and the communities they service. Through a workshop, they were able to deduce exactly what the community wanted, which was to maintain their autonomy within their connection to the city, and to have access to both private and communal space. In response, they created a space that could be programmed as time goes on and a permeability between residential and recreational space. Their project with *Still Straße* highlights the importance of changing how we address senior housing, especially as property value increases and government spending on social housing, inversely, decreases.

The units could house a commercial entity/function or can be developed for dwelling.

Figure 58

Figure 59

Part of this same German publication series and exhibition, *Wohnungsfrage* – or ‘the housing problem’ – was a project by Belgian architectural firm DOGMA. Their intervention is a re-formulation of a European villa, from a private bourgeois estate to a communal villa for artists.

In his series of polemical articles *Zur Wohnungsfrage* (The Housing Question), Friedrich Engels critiqued alternative housing models within the capitalist system as “bourgeois socialism”.

For Engels, the issue was not to build housing for workers, but to establish a working-class critique of the capitalist city, and thus of capitalism itself. This claim, which has long haunted architects and activists who have researched alternative housing models, is a reminder from Engels that the housing question is inseparable from capitalist social relations.

Engels’ argument is that housing alternatives are an illusion or, worse still, a reactionary palliative. Yet, we believe that to abandon any alternative to market-driven housing disempowers those who – in the “here and now” – struggle to afford decent living conditions. To reject housing alternatives altogether, therefore, is to ignore how the dialectics of production and reproduction in the current conditions of class struggle are also spatially defined and that housing plays a significant role within it.

(...)

We have chosen the “artist” as the hypothetical inhabitant of our Villa for a simple reason: the artist as a cognitive/material producer – which includes architects, graphic designers, poets, performers, musicians – is *us*. In a certain way, this project is for us: it responds to our needs, desires, and ideas of how best to organize ourselves in order to live together.

DOGMA + Realism Working Group, *Communal Villa: Production and Reproduction in Artists’ Housing*, 2015

DOGMA’s approach, apart from creating a communal villa from a “negative utopia”, is to consolidate life into a single wall. Their proposal is a prototype for a residence that addresses the conflict between private and collective by way of a mobile “living wall” which includes all the necessary spaces and functions for an individual. This is accomplished by placing services on the first level and a bedroom on the top level of the living wall. Furthermore, there is storage on the opposite side of the wall, allowing a dual function for both the individual (bed, bathroom, etc) and collective (storage). These walls can be arranged as partitions to suit the needs of collective space.

We propose to reorganize domestic space around two complementary conditions: on the one hand, the possibility of having an individual space (the room), and on the other, sharing the rest of the Villa. Such reinvention of domestic space is not simply a functional project. Our intention is not to answer to *Wohnungsfrage* by way of a typological solution, but to use the typological transformation of the villa from family to communal house in order to question the political and economic framework that the “house” has always imposed on its dwellers. Dwelling has never been free of the prevailing political and economic conditions, the habits and conventions of which have defined the architecture of the house through history.

Housing does not only refer to the nuclear family because its purpose has always been to encourage private ownership. This means that housing, above all, is the acceptance of two conditions: the juridical framework of the nuclear family and that of private property as a format for living. This is not a mere economic problem: it is above all a cultural problem. Within our imaginary we need to overcome the idea that in the long-term we will privately own our home, be that a family apartment or a single-family house.

DOGMA + Realism Working Group, *Communal Villa: Production and Reproduction in Artists' Housing*, 2015

Living Wall

DOGMA's living walls are a homage to George Nelson's *Storagewall*, which was developed in 1944 for the *Tomorrow House* book by Life Magazine. The project formed the foundation for Nelson's work with storage systems for the next several decades. Nelson saw the Storagewall as a way to consolidate walls with the variety of objects that individuals typically amass. It was used in lieu of a traditional wall in a domestic setting to separate rooms.

DOGMA's living walls can be assembled into any desired configuration and define private/collective space.

Villa Suburbana

Ground Floor

- 1. entrance
- 2. loggia
- 3. meeting and seminar room
- 4. kitchen
- 5. sauna
- 6. pool
- 7. noisy workshop
- 8. recording studio
- 9. laundry
- 10. room for one person (room can be united to form larger rooms)
- 11. storage

Figure 64

First Floor

- 1. kitchen
- 2. collective multipurpose space
- 3. rooms
- 4. storage

The central collective space is lit from above.

Figure 65

Villa Suburbana

Second Floor
1. kitchen
2. gallery studio
3. storage

The gallery studio overlooks
the collective multipurpose
space.

Figure 66

Third Floor
1. kitchen
2. gallery
3. rooms
4. storage

Figure 67

Axonometric

Section

Figure 68

Structural Systems

Figure 69

Japanese firm Atelier Bow-Wow also contributed to *Wohnungsfrage* with their proposal, *Urban Forest*. This project contains a contemporary Japanese approach to social housing, providing the framework for a new residential type for students. Urban Forest responds to economic realities by minimizing costs in materials and instead focusing on creating dynamic social and private spaces within a canopy-like structure. The minimalist bedrooms are situated on the first floor and overlook a larger communal space – this spatial configuration favours encounters by blurring the division between private and collective space.

Maio Architects' project *110 Rooms* is a 22 dwelling housing block in Barcelona that combines principles of combination and subtraction together. It exemplifies flexibility by not assigning any specific function to any of the rooms.

The housing block is designed as a system of rooms that can be used as desired, the program is not determined. Each apartment can be expanded or reduced by adding or subtracting rooms.

For the next coming years the floor plan is divided as a set of four apartments. Each one containing 5 rooms. Rooms are connected among them, no corridor is needed. A kitchenette is placed in the middle room acting as the center of the house. The other rooms are going to be used as bedrooms and living rooms.

This flexibility is able also due to the position of the bathrooms, where all the installations are placed and work strategically as points for water, air conditioned and electricity supply.

The ground floor refers to the Eixample's traditional halls where veined marbles and large spaces define the place of reception and representation.

The facade is defined according to the height and composition of the adjacent buildings. It searches to consolidate the traditional style of the neighborhood where prevail opaque walls with vertical proportion openings, balconies with wooden shutters and lime stucco with decorative motifs.

Maio Architects. *110 Rooms*. 2013

Lobby

Corridors are eliminated within units and bathrooms are consolidated.

By eliminating the corridor, consolidating shared spaces, leaving the programming of rooms to inhabitants and reducing the size of the kitchen to a small island, Maio Architects propose a radical re-imagining of an apartment block. Anna Puigjaner, co-founder of the firm, won the 2016 Wheelwright Prize, granted by the Harvard University Graduate School of Design, for her research project *Kitchenless City*, a study of future housing models based on precedents of the past. The concept is inspired by the USSR's *kommunalka* and kitchenless apartments that emerged from late 1800s New York City due to increasingly social lifestyles. She argues that shared kitchen spaces reduce the burden of domesticity in fostering a communal approach to food. Her own apartment features a kitchenette that is only 1.2m long.*

*Slade, Tara. "Could You Live In A Home Without A Kitchen?" *Pop-Up City*, 12 Oct. 2016, <popupcity.net/could-you-live-in-a-home-without-a-kitchen/>

MOS Architects' *Affordable Artist Housing, Studios and Maker Spaces* is based on providing each resident a large 8 foot window and combining different circulatory techniques to connect individual spaces together. A double-height ceiling allows a large increase in possible configurations.

Figure 76

Masterchef Canada and US, a reality TV show hosted by Gordon Ramsay, provides an interesting example of a way in which a large group of individuals can cook within one large communal kitchen. By lining up workstations in rows and providing each station with all of the necessary cooking equipment, an efficient way to organize potentially dozens of people is achieved.

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