THE DIFFUSE OFFICE

Federica Longoni
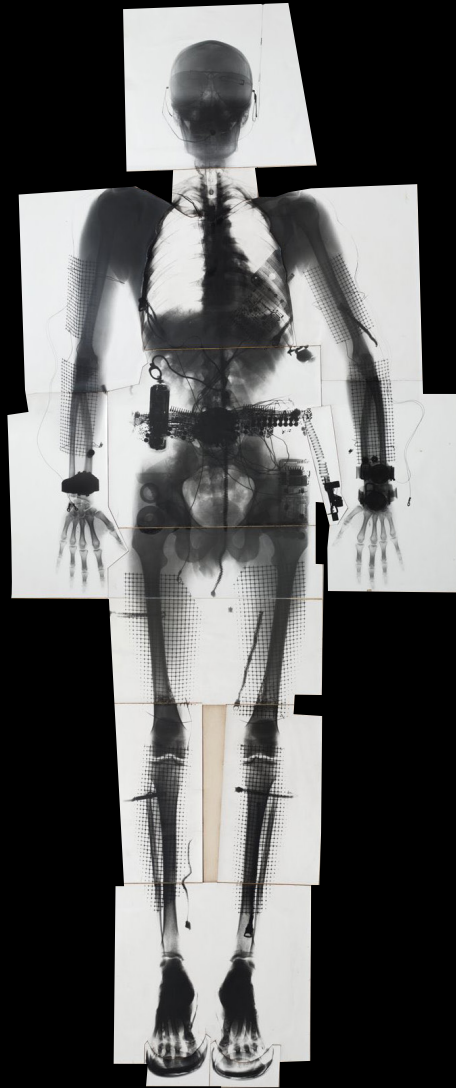
The diffuse Office

Introduction

In May 2020 Twitter executive officer Jack Dorsey announced that all Twitter employees will be allowed to work from home forever. Moreover, he promised to increas allowances for buying home office supplies, such as desk, chairs etc. The aim is to transform the most private space, the home, into a preoductive realm.

How did we get there?

During the current time of the Coronavirus pandemic working from home was a condition which initially came out of of necessity. However, recently there has been a reconsideration of the phenomenon. What if this goes on forever?

On the other hand, Internet, which is the abbreviation of Interconnected network, has been around for many decades and its ubiquity and reliabilily are not something totally new, although certaintly implemented durin the last years.

Home working is phenomenon of location indipendence, enabled by digital technologies. The roots of this phenomenon can be traced back to the end of the 20th Century.

In 1991 Yahoo was already advertising a regular house as the ''world hottest new financial headquarter''.

Although, there has been a general reticence against this possibility.

The current situation had enabled a new reconsideration aroung it: a sort of "World mass homeworking experiment" as the title of an article by The Financial Times was stating. What are the consequences?

What is the physical implication of the emerge of digital technologies in the working environment?

The emerging reality of a shrinking world

Migration can be described as "The process of moving or being moved from one place to another"[1]. An additional possible definition expresses migration as "The movement of people to a new country or area in order to find work or better living conditions"[2]. In the second definition, the term migration gains a specific versus.

Nevertheless, for both definitions, the word migration presupposes the existence of two points – A and B - afar from each other, with a distance d in between. Many thinkers have reasoned about how the perception of this distance has changed along history due to technological development. Harvey in "The shrinking map of the world"[3] has explained this perception through a series of drawings in which the world becomes smaller and smaller in parallel to the technological progress.

Internet, Information technology and its networked architecture is the latest technological development which has most dramatically changed how we conceive this same distance. It could be therefore included at the bottom of the list as the latest element responsible of having further shuriken the size of the world. It has enabled the Planet as we knew it to become as small as it has never been: so small that the movement (of information) became not only extremely fast but practically instantaneous.

McLuhan, while talking about communication technologies, said that:
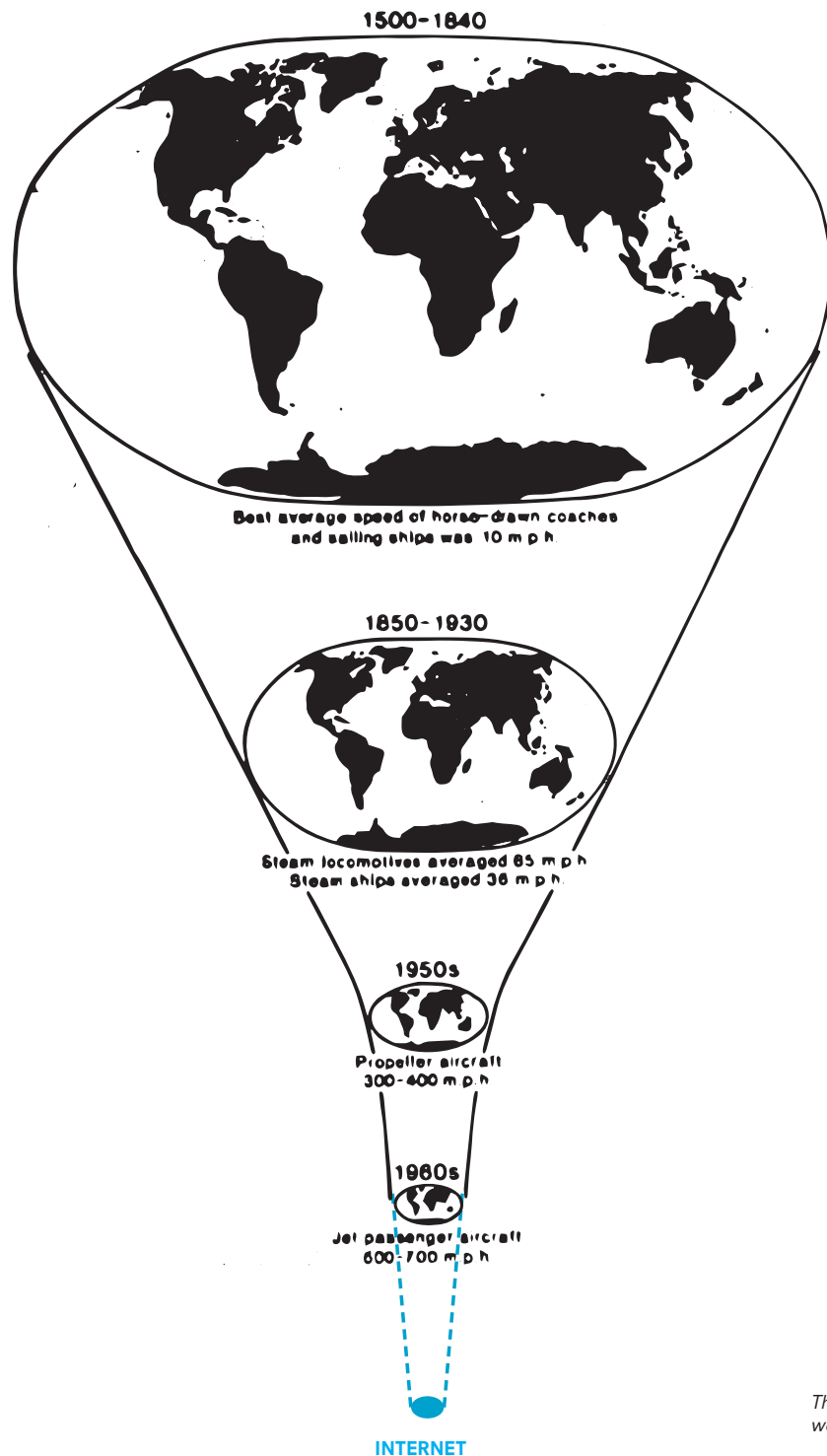
''The latest technologies have expanded the body so far that they have shrunk the planet to the size of a village'' [4].

In his concept the Planet becomes a ''Global Village''.

Internet, which is the abbreviation of interconnected network, became soon ubiquitous. Arfanet, his antecedent, was invented in 1968 and it was able to connect only few points in the Unites States. Soon, more points had been added to the network allowing the user to enlarge its connectivity to the whole planet. The user only needs to own one of these points, to own the whole system enlarging his body from one singular location to all the locations connected to the former:

"The individual simultaneously occupies the whole (networked) territory"[5]

The image of the planet as a global village expresses clearly this condition. The planet becomes a village because through the erase of the distances it can be perceived extremely small in size but at the same time it is a global one: every village has deleted its border and therefore, in itself, it is coinciding with the whole globe.

1500-1840

Best average speed of horse-drawn coaches and sailing ships was 10 m p h.

1850-1930

Steam locomotives averaged 65 m p h.
Steam ships averaged 36 m p h.

1950s
Propeller aircraft
300-400 m p h.

1960s
Jet passenger aircraft
600-700 m p h.

INTERNET

The shrinking map fo world by Harvey.

edited inserting the latest technological development: internet

The ubiquity of the network and the work location independence

While the internet has had major impact on a variety of aspects of the human life, I would like to focus the following article on a particular one – *work* – which has constitute historically one of the main reason for people to migrate.

While in the past working duties were supposed to happen in a fixed location, with the rise of the digitalisation we are witnessing a dramatic change. In the book "Millenial city – trends, implications and prospects for Urban Planning and Policy", the author states: *''Communication technologies became ubiquitous, reliable, and increasingly mobile. This has had a variety of consequences. The first is that many alternatives to the traditional workplace have become feasible"* [6]

The physical consequence of the information age is that the office typology, once interpreted as stable and fixed, does not exist in these terms anymore, at least for certain sectors.

As stated in the book Architecture and the Smart city:
"The development of information and communication technology in a globalized service economy, and especially the ubiquity of the network, progressively spread work outside of the office." [7]

Work and consequently its economic activity are losing their tightness to specific locations rising new questions in the urban and global scale for city planning and architectural design. Richard Schearmur is arguing that the identification of this new spaces generating work is fundamental for a better understanding of the contemporary city:
''The question of where work actually takes place is increasingly pressing. The assumption that most work takes place in a fixed location needs to be reassessed" [8].

Potentially every place, as long as connected to the network becomes a productive one. Economic value is generated in a multitude of location: from cafes, to meeting places and ultimately to the home. A discussion around the redefinition of those places have to be addressed.

Permanent nomadism and home-working: two cohexisting opposites

Beforehand we defined *migration* as *"The movement of people to a new country or area in order to find work or better living conditions"* [2]. This has partially changed due to the digitalisation of the work experience.

While in former times, people were migrating towards specific countries which could provide more opportunities of work and better welfare, nowadays an increasing number of people seems to decide to move and live in other countries, basing their decision more on social and enjoyable life parameter rather than working opportunities.
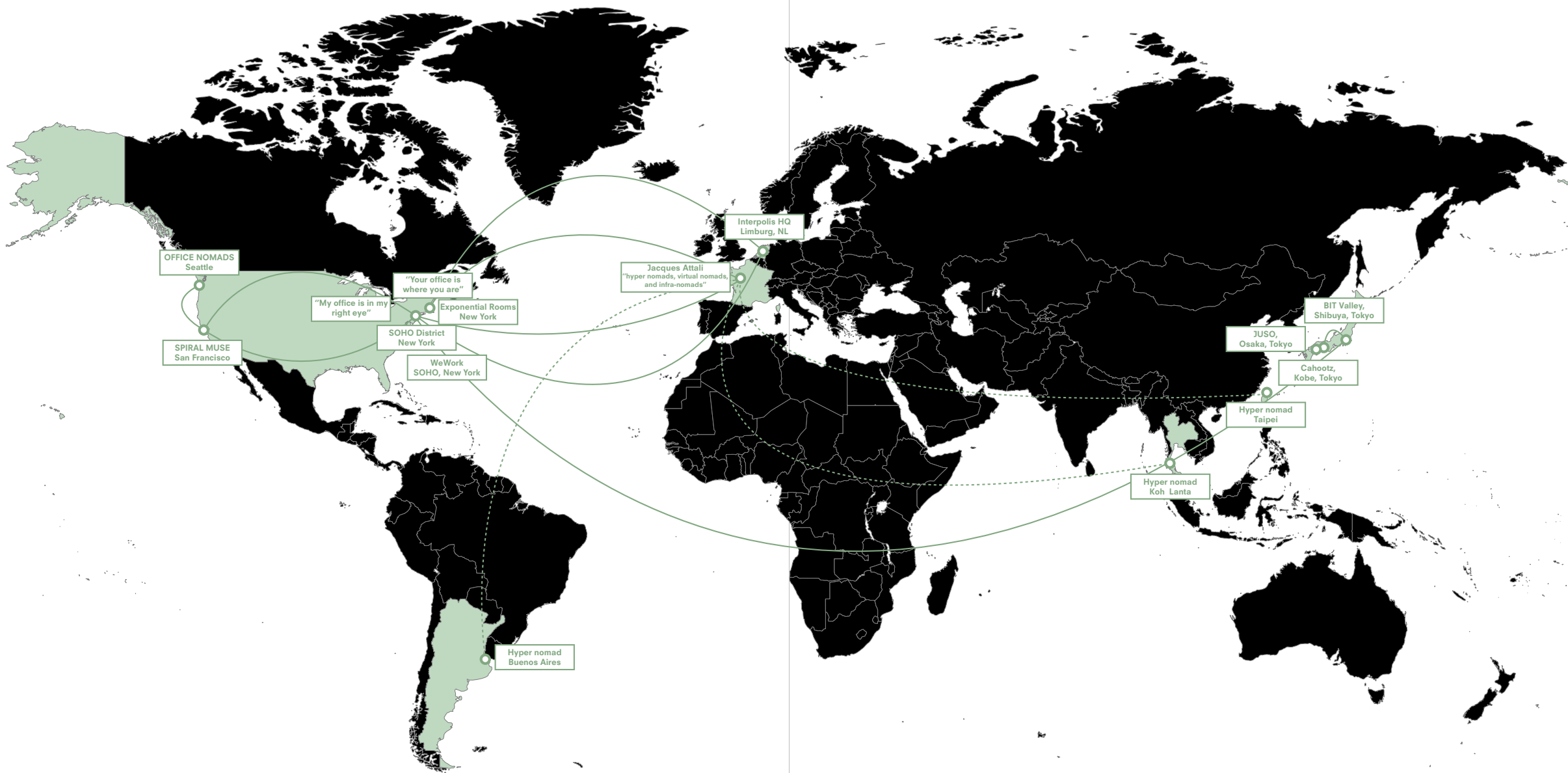
Your office is where you want to be.

The figure of this kind of migrant is what has been first defined by Makimoto in his book as the *"Digital Nomad"* in 1997. The motivations which lies beneath the choices of migration by the Digital Nomad are generally different from the historical ones. As explained in Makimoto's book the Digital Nomad is *''Finding himself in a pleasant part of the world and enabled by technology to run his business from a hotel room (or even a beach) without being at the mercy of the latest crisis call, he can take time out to enjoy himself free from the dictates of a rigid travel schedule."* [9]

It is possible to list some relevant features to identify the profile of the Digital Nomad. Millennials are one of the categories which tend to undertake this life choice, being them comfortable in the usage of digital technology and social media and usually determined by a precarious employment status in the home country.

The information age has enabled this location independent figure in the society. However the latter doesn't stand alone. Together with the digital nomad we can identity other forms which can be expressed as the direct consequence of the digitalisation of the work experience: these are, for instance, co-working, co-living and ultimately home working.

The latter can be described as the radical opposite of the Digital Nomad and raises some interesting questions. Since the beginning of the digital age, the typology of office and the one of home were stable and fixed. Nowadays their borders are blurred. As

OFFICE NOMADS
Seattle

SPIRAL MUSE
San Francisco

"Your office is
where you are"

"My office is in my
right eye"

Exponential Rooms
New York

SOHO District
New York

WeWork
SOHO, New York

Interpolis HQ
Limburg, NL

Jacques Attali
"hyper nomads, virtual nomads,
and infra-nomads"

BIT Valley,
Shibuya, Tokyo

JUSO,
Osaka, Tokyo

Cahootz,
Kobe, Tokyo

Hyper nomad
Taipei

Hyper nomad
Koh Lanta

Hyper nomad
Buenos Aires

○ Cities

▬ Countries

── Conceptual migration of work

- - - - Hyper nomad most quoted locations

long as the user is connected to the network its physical position is irrelevant for the work perspective. Again, in Architecture and the Smart City the author stated: *"The work space becomes much less territorial. The boundaries of such spaces are diluted in an omnipresent and reticular network"[10]*.

The home becomes the site of production, as the office in the past would have been. Inside its boundary the situation keeps changing according to necessity: the same room can be a living room at 11 A.M. but translated into an office from 2 P.M onwards. Rooms are not identified by singular functions but rather they become loose and able to accommodate different situations and different need throughout the day.

Space Cavier in his book called The quantified home says: *"In fractal planning, zooning is something that occurs at the level of the room, within the home, rather than at the neighborhood level. We now apparently have the tools to rezone a bedroom or living room as commercial property within a residential container at least for a period of time"[11]*

Again, production happens in different situations and different time: the whole trajectory of the user, even within the boundaries of his home, can gain economic value.

Home-office: the hybrid dimention of working and living

The hybrid dimension between home and office gives a tangible architectural form of the contemporary condition of labour. The home-office is a place where domestic labour, productive labour, rest, intimacy etc are merged together in a single sphere.

However the origin of this practise of working from home brings us back in a typological development of the activity of labour throughout history.

Working at home is not a revolution of the last years. If we look back in history there are plenty of examples where the two functions were existing in the same architectural project. Before the 19th century it was common practise to have a dedicated room, a studio where it was possible to perform productive work within the property of the house. The

beginning of 19th century constitute the time when with the industrialisation, work had been split from the living realm. As Walter Benjamin explain in the passage entitled *"Louis Philippe, or, The Interior"[12]* the dwelling is for the first time opposed to the places of work, the offices. Industrialisation enable productive manual work to take place in factories and at the same time communication technology developments allowed the operational tasks to happen elsewhere, in detached buildings called later on "offices". Office places became central focal points in our cities: they dominated for years the skyline of cities replacing the prestige images of churches and temples. Finance, law, retail and all the so called ancillary professions were rising in importance next to the ones of the heavy industries.

The post industrialisation and the digital revolution took work into the home again, avoiding the redundancy of having equal possibilities of management and productivity in two different places. However, home-office took different characteristic in the contemporary society. More than an already established typology, the home office took new nuances along the informational age. The typology can be subdivided in three main subcategories. The differentiation criteria is what Frances Hollis calls *''The dominant function"[13]*. What Hollis noticed is that contemporary workers don't usually live and work in purposed like architectures, but they re-adapt already existing buildings accordingly to their need. Therefore, from one hand there are users redefining their home as office space and on the other, there are users repurposing their workspace as their homes. The third subcategory is where the function of work and living takes equal relevance. According to these dominant functions, Hollis finally calls these categories ashome-dominated, work-dominated and equal-dominated buildings. The equal dominated seems to be the desirable one, where domesticity and productivity form an equal realm and don't overcome one another. But, in the current times where floor area is squeezed to the minimum and densification is on the list of development goals in every major city, how is it achievable?

Annemiek van Luinen, 24, a graphic designer, and her boyfriend, Michael Koehler, 30, a screenwriter who runs an online film school, at Roam Miami.

Credit: Benjamin Rasmussen for The New York Times

''My wife hates it when I work from home''

Bansky

Credit: Instagram account bansky

Steve Mann

Passport

''My office is in my right eye''

Neil Harbisson

Passport

''I am not wearing technology, I am technology''

Most people don't have the possibility to re-function an additional room within their property which, especially in big cities, are small studio apartments. In contrast with this specialisation of room functions, the example by Hasier Larrea of the *''exponential rooms''* comes as a new opportunity. Instead of having houses developed as a sequence of rooms having specialized functions – whether for working or living – Larrea proposes an alternative scenario when the two conditions are not only living in proximity but are ultimately overlapping. In a studio apartment of 50 sqm, Larrea aims to use the full potential of the place for both realms, with the concept he calls *''space on demand'': ''Space that is exactly what you need when you need it. If I'm one person living in 300 square feet of space, that space should be exactly and entirely what I need at every moment. If I'm working, my office should be 300 square feet.''* [13]
Home would have to be investigated and designed taking into account how this blurred line between domesticity and productivity is taking shape in architectural design. There is no one solution fits all: surely the most challenging task would be to redefine the concept of working/living when talking about small studio apartments in cities. How can the space be optimized but still be reveal is nature of home while being fully productive? Howere, another emerging question arises: ultimately, when we all work from home, who needs cities after all?

The new geography in the reality of a dispersed workforce

The geography of economic spaces is rapidly changing. While in the past the Central Business District was the primary resource for creating profit, nowadays the economic value can happen in a multitude of places: cafes, shops, homes, meeting places. The whole trajectory of the user gain an economic value. *''Instead of a single cluster, a vision of a polycentric city is slowly emerging, where people can work from a number of locations. […] The future workspace will be more diverse and varied in both location and functions''* [14]
Not only cafes or meeting places. The ubiquity and reliability of the network creates a phenomenon of location independence. The tightness of technology to our body made this location independence more extreme. Steve Mann, one of the founders of the MIT Wearable Technology Lab once said:

''Actually, my office is my right eye. In the morning, I put on my office'' [15]

The seaming less connection between Body and technologies enabled the users to loose even more tightness to their workstations. Anywhere becomes possible, even a field as Hans Hollein would suggests with his performance of the Mobile office.
This new spectrum of possibilities has an impact on various scales: the one of the city, the one of the neighbourhood and the one of the home.
Therefore, a redefinition of the relationships which are happening at the level of the city and around it is needed.
Veldhoen, Erik in *''You-Topia: The Impact of the Digital Revolution on Our Work, Our Life and Our Environment''* was reasoning about the implication of the digitalisation of Work at the level of the city. He states that we used to live in suburbs and working in business park, being always in transit. With the home working phenomenon, we would probably regain a lost relationship with our residential neighbourhood and instead of only coming back to it physically, we would do it spiritually too.
Recently, the Head of Twitter announced that his employees will be allowed to work from home forever: the opportunities that the network is giving to us starts to be taken as a positive possible solution to be undertaken by major and established firms. A new reality is emerging.
With the imposed condition of the smart working during lockdowns many workers decided to not only embrace the dimension of home working within the city they moved in originally: they decided to further take this opportunity at the extreme, coming back to the origin, their native land and neighbourhood.
For instance,
in Italy, Smart working became ''south working'' [16]:

workers from Milan, London, New York came back to their native land, from which they were originally forced to leave in order to find better working opportunity in the North, historically more financially and economic developed. This is allowing a reconfiguration and distribution of economic value within the whole peninsula, not constraining working activity is certain regions but allowing a broader spectrum of possibilities.

We are ultimately witnessing a phenomenon of dispersed workforce which could be able to distribute economic values in multitude of new spaces.

The redefinition of the community feeling

The possibility of home working is not brand new. Home working is a phenomenon of location independence enabled by digital technologies, which was already available and quite reliable during the last 20 years of the 20th century. '

'Your office is where you are'[17]

  Stone and Lucchetti were already stating in 1985. While they were not addressing an extreme location independence as the one available today, they first interiorised the possibilities offered by digital technologies within the office building, formulating the concept of ''based activity working''. According to the concept, the worker was able to perform his working activity freely within the office building losing the tightness to a fix workstation. Thanks to mobile phones, laptops and an initial kind of internal Wifi in the company, choosing different places for different activities became possible. The concept became widely accepted and it is still used today in Coworking companies such as WeWork. Soon, the potential of location independence spread out of the office.

In 1991 Yahoo was already advertising a regular house as the ''World hottest new financial headquarter'' [17]

However, the more the digitalisation was taking place, the more offices invested in even more equipped and gigantic headquarters.

Margaret O'Mara in an article of the New York Times states *"Ironically, it has been over the past decade — as mobile and cloud-based products made it far easier to work remotely — that companies invested in ever more lavish offices and doubled down on their commitment to having employees work in those offices, not remotely"[18].*

In these office giants the aim is to keep the employee within the borders of the Headquarters. In order to achieve this goal, a multitube of different amenities had been added to the main office program. For instance, in the Google Headquarter the same amount of sqm is given to both office facilities and amenities, which includes any kind of social and recreative entertainment. As Sennet argues in his book Dwelling and Cities these offices became ultimately *''Cities, without nothing of the city itself''[19]*

A strong sense of community has been built between their walls which is under thread with the current implementation of smart working. In an article of the Finantial Times, Lucy Kellaway was arguing that *''We will miss the office if it dies. At first, offices resembled factories, later they became a second home''[20].*

A new sense of community would have to be regained and the neighborhood could be a place where this lost sense of social interaction and proximity will be nurtured again.

Conclusion

A new range of possibility becomes available by embracing the phenomenon of remote working. The ubiquity of the network is translated into a comprehensive redefinition of economic activities which also influence social aspects of the human life. New questions have to be addressed: while working from home, how can we avoid being isolated, how can we create a new sense of community within our homes? What is the role of the cities when we can all work remotely? Do we still need the city? Are densification policies adequate to reflect the current changes?

One of the major challenges of architects will be to re-question the very basics constructs of social experience in a comprehensive research on how the work location independence is reshaping the architecture realm. The possible answers will range between different scales: from countryside, the city, to the neighborhood and ultimately to the home. A brand new spectrum of discussion needs to find in experimentations possible answers.

Endnotes

[1] Oxford Dictionary

[2] Oxford Dictionary

[3] Harvey, *The condition of Postmodernity*, 245

[4] McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man.*

[5] Figueiredo,Krishnamurthy, and Schroeder. *Architecture and the Smart City,*

[6] Moos, Pfeiffer, Vinodrai. *Millenial city – trends, implications and prospects for Urban Planning and Policy*, 69

[7] Figueiredo,Krishnamurthy, and Schroeder. *Architecture and the Smart City,*

[8] Moos, Pfeiffer, Vinodrai. *Millenial city – trends, implications and prospects for Urban Planning and Policy*, 66

[9] Makimoto and Manners, *Digital Nomads*, 147

[10] Figueiredo,Krishnamurthy, and Schroeder. *Architecture and the Smart City*

[11] Caviar, Sqm: *The quantified home*, 221

[12] Walter.*The Arcades Project*

[13] Holliss, *Beyond Live/Work, The architecture of Home-based work,* 41

[14] Larrea. *"Exponential Rooms."*

[15] Rossi. *"Typology Quarterly: Offices."*

[16] Antonelli, *Workspheares: design and contemporary work styles*, 132

[17] D'Alessandro, "Dallo smart working al south working. "Per lavorare a Milano vivendo a Palermo" *La Repubblica*

[18] Yahoo! advertisement. 1991

[19] O'Mara, *"Twitter Could End the Office as We Know It." New York Times*

[20] Kellaway, Lucy . "We will miss the office if it dies." *Financial Times*

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THE PRODUCTIVE HOME

Federica Longoni

The Productive Home

Introduction

The digitalization of labour – enabled by the rise of the Internet and digital technologies – began a redefinition in architecture typologies. The typologies of Home and office, once seen as stable and fixed with clear distinctions, are now blurring their boundaries towards each other. The ubiquity of the network has spread work outside of the office and, as a result, the boundaries of these two dimensions are diluted in the realm of an omnipresent and interconnected reality. While with the modern workspaces (corporate offices etc) it's possible to individuate a clear distinction between home and office, now their boundaries are becoming more fluid, allowing overlapping conditions. New phenomenons are emerging: traveling from place to place while working as a digital nomad, working in different cafes and ultimately also working from home.

How is the digital shift concretizing in architectural design?

The aim of the project is to investigate the last phenomenon previously stated - home working - studying the blurred line between Domesticity and Productivity, giving tangible and spatial form to the contemporary condition of labor in which work, domestic labor, socialization, rest, and exchange are understood no longer as separate spheres but as part of the same productive stream.
Home working is a phenomenon of location independence enabled by digital technologies. Arpanet, the antecedent of the Intenet has been invented in 1969. While at the beginning it was possible to connect just few points in the United State, it became quickly ubiquitous.

''Your office is where you are'' Stone and Lucchetti were already stating in 1985.

While they were not addressing an extreme location independence as the one available today, they first interiorised the possibilities offered by digital technologies within the frame of the office building, formulating the concept of ''based activity working''.

The concept migrated from the US to the first practical example: interpolis building.
With the raise of laptops and initial kind of wifi within the office, the worker was not fixed to the same workstation but he could appropriate of different ones within the same building. Choosing different places for different activities became possible. In the given project site of Rotterdam we can see one famous office building, built following this concept.

Soon, the potential of location independence spread out of the office. In 1991 Yahoo was already advertising a regular house as the ''world hottest new financial headquarter''. Home working has been a increasing trend during the past years in the Netherlands. This phenomenon does not only influence the house, but also the neighborhood and the city which have to be investigated as well.

This condition poses interesting questions at different levels: changes are happening at the scale of the house, the neighbourhood and ultimately at the scale of the city. The geography of economic activities is changing. While historically the Central business district and few other places were at the core of economic value's production, nowadays the same economic activities can be carried out in a multitude of different spaces from cafes to shops, homes, coworking etc. The whole trajectory of the user gains economic value: as long as connected to the network, every place becomes a productive one. We were used to live in suburban areas and commuting to the central business districts but soon, the network made explicit the redundancy of the latter, at least for certain sectors: why having two distinctive places while the same productive activity can be carried out in both? In major cities CBDs are getting emptier and increasingly more vacant. In May 2020 Twitter executive officer Jack Dorsey announced that all Twitter employees will be allowed to work from home forever. Moreover, he promised to increase allowances for buying home office supplies, such as desk, chairs etc.

However, at the same time, while digitally connected we are facing physical distance

RESIDENTIAL
(Productive homes)

COWORKING

COLLETIVE SPACE

PLINTH: EXHIBITION SPACE
OUTDOOR PUBLIC SPACE

SHARED PARKING FACILITIES

EXHIBITION SPACE
PODIUM TOWER

Sitting

Playground

Exhibition

Lecture

Green

CITY

Connecting to tower and city
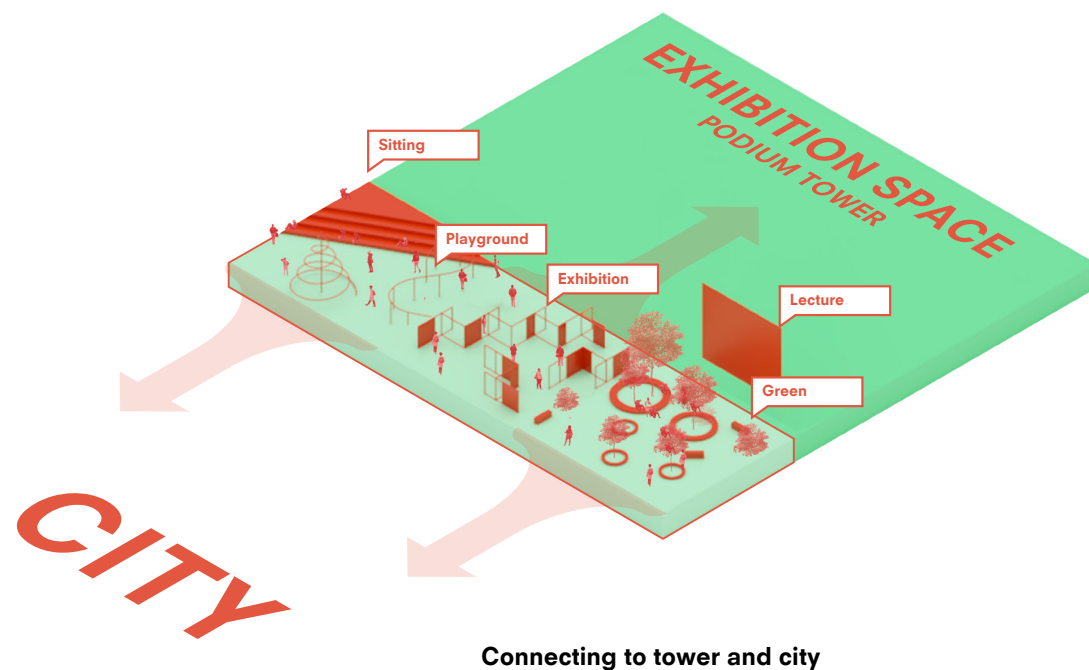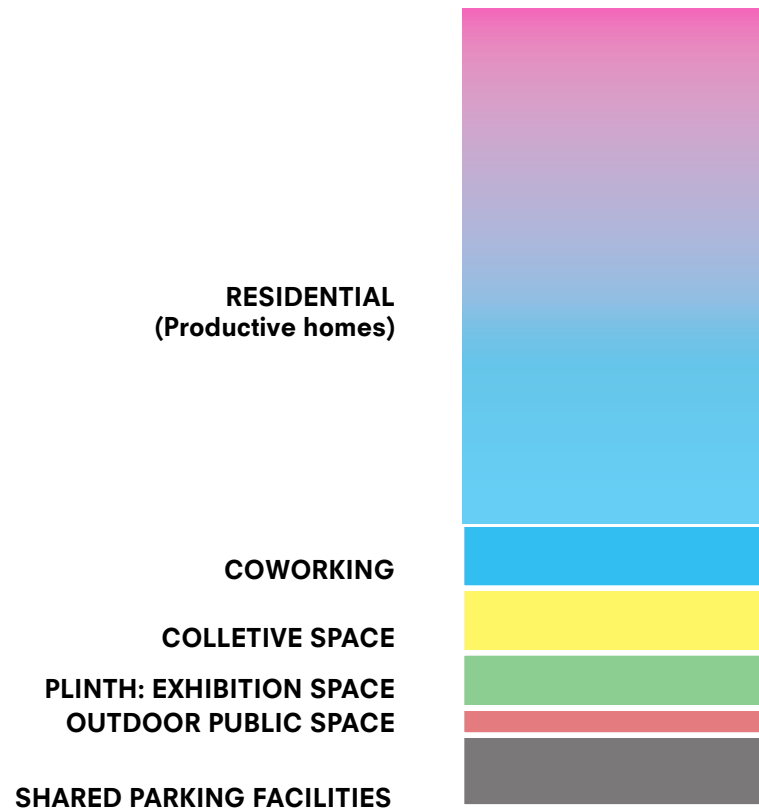
risking the phenomenon of isolation and loneliness. In an article of the Financial Times, Lucy Kellaway was arguing that ''We will miss the office if it dies. At first, offices resembled factories, later they became a second home''. How do we foster a new ideas of community?

This new spectrum of possibilities is changing how we live our cities. Although digital technologies became ubiquitous already decades ago, there has been a reticence to fully express their potentials. The current situation had enabled a new reconsideration around it: a sort of "World mass homeworking experiment" as the title of an article by The Financial Times was stating.
This change goes beyond the design of the single building, to enlarge its consequences to the whole society and to every territory it encounters.

The productive home is a project with the aim of addressing these emerging questions in the form of experimentation: not simply a house, nor just an office but a productive home.

Design Brief

The city of Rotterdam aims to introduce by 2050, 50.000 new homes, in the attempt of fulfilling the increasing demand of housing. The CBD is getting emptier and needs a redefinition of a lost identity. Rotterdam CBD has an interesting singularity when compared to other CBDs in major cities: instead of being relegated to external and peripherical areas, it lies at the core of the city.
The CBD needs to redefine its identity and adapt to the economical shifts caused by digital technologies. By embracing the shift from corporate to community productivity, the CBD can reorganize as a neighbourhood and production hub.

A diversification of functions and the integration of residential space can turn the area into a connected creative network and a working and living community. A neighborhood of digital professionals; young, vibrant and connected.
The projects lies at the intersection of

two busy streets. Weena, the street which connects coolsigel to Central station. Many office building are forming its ground-line. Their plinths presents usually retail functions, although a considerable amount of them are simply closed off. This is what happens to the Shell Building right next to the desired plot, where the ground floor does not reveal the interior of the building, nor it connects it somehow to the street. An opaque curtain wall closes any visual connection to the inside. The second street is Ljinbaan, Rotterdam shopping street. Busy during the day it is at the heart of inhabitants leisure sphere. The intersection of these two elements gives good opportunity for the development of a project which needs to create a visual and physical connectiom to the public.
Next to the plot, another residential tower has been scheduled to be built: Lumiere. One of the main intervention at ground level of the project is to leave accessible the passage which connects the project to the parallel street towards Central Station. As a result, the design brief of the *productive home* needs to take into account the relevance and the prominent role of each of these three street in order to create or implement their re-activation.
The main function of the project is Housing, where the living and working spheares are investigated in the forms of experimental units. Coworking spaces to be rent out by users of the city have been added to the program: while functioning for the whole city, this also allows possible expansions and growth in businesses of the productive home's users. Workshops and shopfronts are an integral part of the Complex: the users of the project can build their own prototypes or finalized ideas and sell it at the same location, embracing the shopping character of Lijbaan.

Massing and Program arrangment

From the base fully extrusion of floor area to the plot, a cut in the massing has been done in order to have the public space facing the Ljbaan street. The public space will be therefore in connection to the shopping street but also with the Lumiere passage: it will be indeed the end point of its trajectory. Given the total amount of sqm, a tower building is desired. The positioning of the tower has been studied thought solar studies, especially considering the new development happening around the site. The Rotterdam municipality visualize in its program the possibility of designing high rise building in order to fulfil the increasing residential need within the centre. For this reason, it has been of significant importance the study of overcasted shadows on the project site but also the ones caused by the project massing. Placing the tower at the southern bottom of the plot will allow the project to gain maximum daylight and avoid ovecasted shadows for some hours per day from Lumiere project.

A second block has been rotate 90 degrees: in this way, the considered volume will gain maximum sunlight, facing now south. The workshop and shops will be place in this location. Lastly, with further small adjustments in order to maximize floor area, the tower massing has been finalized as pictured in the last axonometric drawing.

The tower will be mainly residential, The secondo block facing south will present workshop, coworking and shops, the two volumes will be connected by exhibition space.
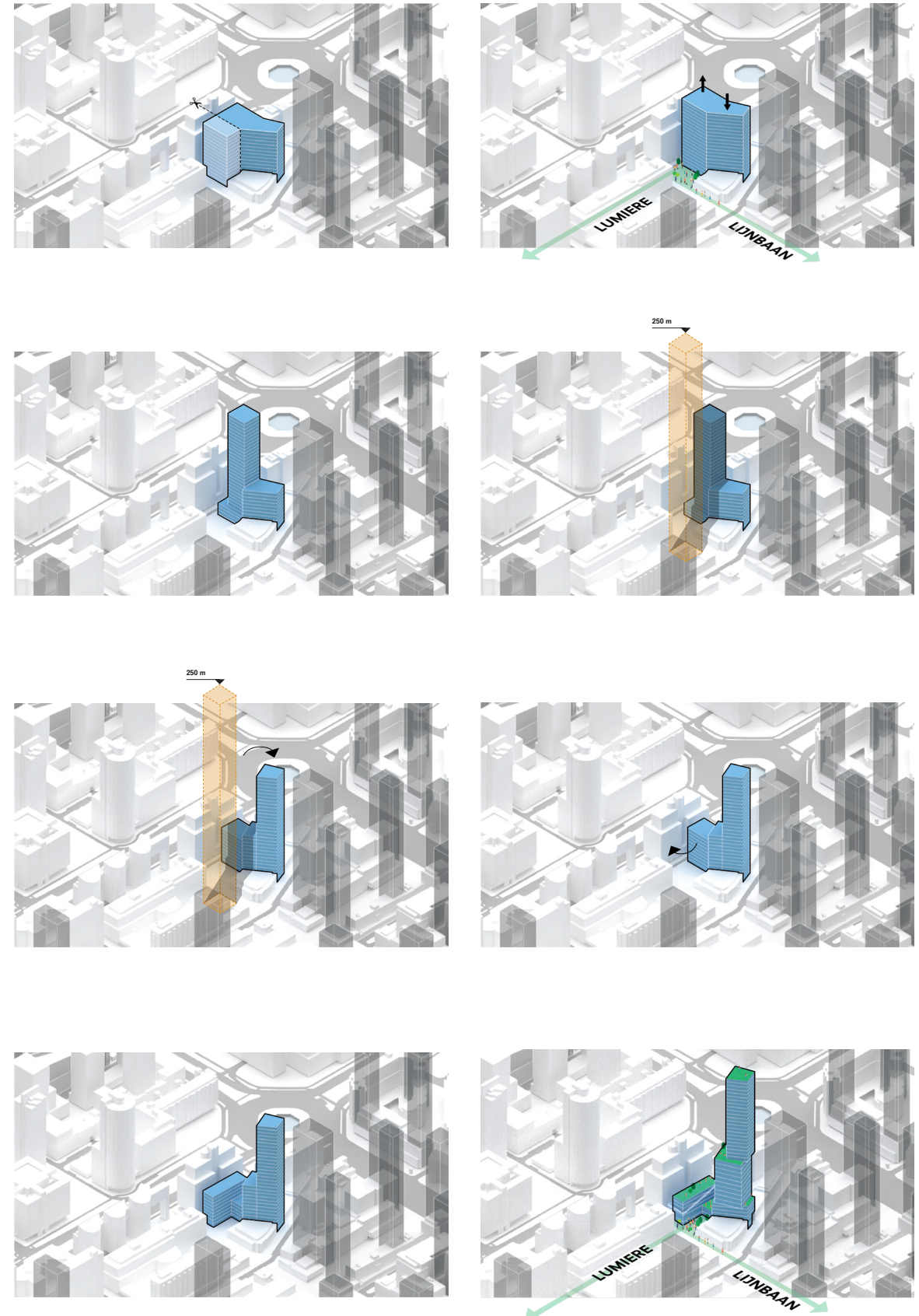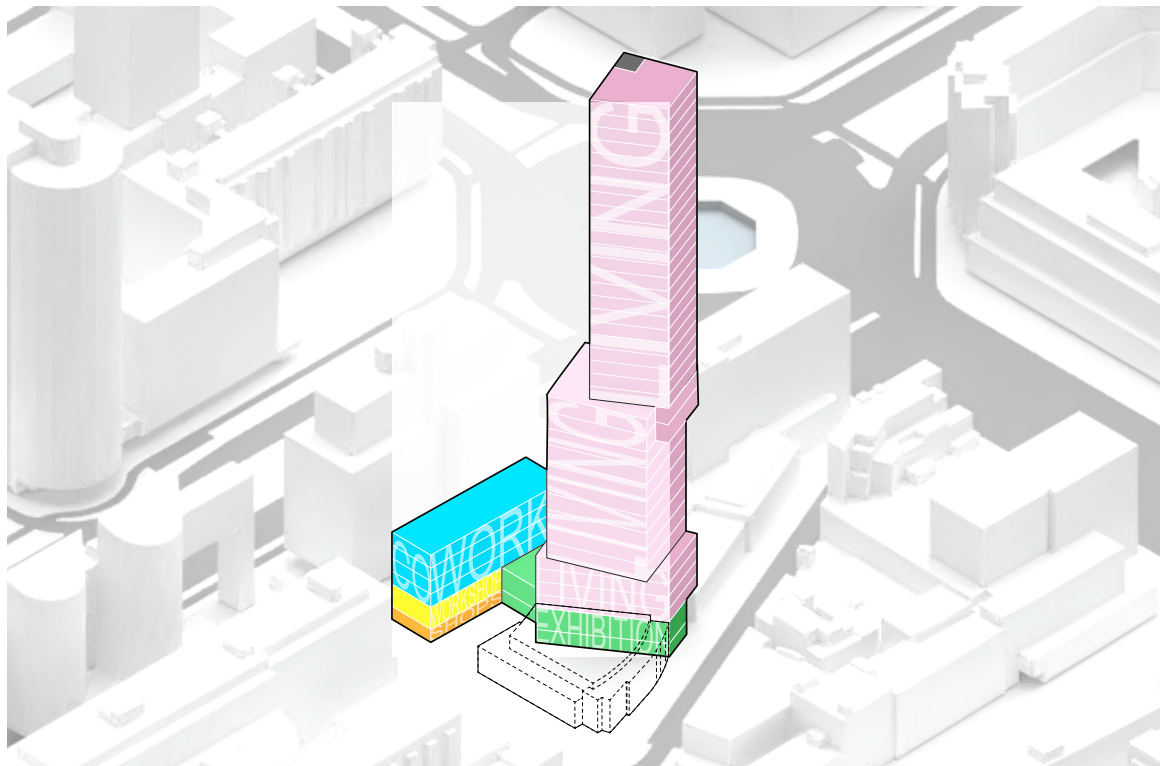
The productive Home

Concept

Different kind of residential units are designed in order to achieve multiple layers of living/ working typologies accommodating a variety of needs: from small individual residential cells supported by immediate collective spaces to larger apartment types where the flexibility of furniture allows the co-existence of the two dimensions of working and living in the same space and ultimately to larger apartments where dedicated rooms can be designed to accommodate the working realm. From blurred to sharply separated the aim is to express the different nuances of the contemporary condition of Labour.

A total of 4 different types (with subtypes) of unites are designed. From the first type to the last, the aim is to unfold in experimental design how the dimension of working and the one of living are once blurring towards each other and once separating in two different realms. The design results in a journey of investigation and experimentation.

Type 1_Working from the bed:

Two sets of curtains allows to perceive the bed – the most intimate space of the house - seaming less once as a productive space, once as a living sphere. One curtain is a chroma key screen, which allows streaming from the bed-workstation while the second curtain is used to hide the productive equipment in order to reveal the living spheres and allow a visual disconnection from the working one.

Type 1+_Habitable wall & Habitable cube.

In Habitable wall, the same area can be once transformed in a living realm, and once in a working realm, unplugging by a light steel structure the necessary equipment. Instead of providing different rooms for different functions, the habitable walls allows a complete transformation and reconfiguration of the whole space, giving equal floor space to both spheres.

Type 1 +_Habitable Cube

In habitable cube, the main functions are plugged in the four different faces of the same cube, which lies at the centre of the room. This allows visual disconnection between functions while having a free space all around it. The aim is to design a space where different functions are not interfering between each other but at the same time not necessarily providing different rooms, which would result having too small area given the total floor area available. While facing one side of the Cube, the whole attention is captured by the plugged function, without having visual distraction taken from the presence of the other dimensions.

Type 2_The dedicated room

The most standard unit where work can be performed in a different room, equipped and designed for this purpose only. The room is provided by a double access: an exterior one, accessible from the core of the tower, and an interior one, accessible by the residents of the unit. This allows a private enclosure within the individual unit, connected to the other parts of the house but at the same time disconnected if needed (by the arrival of clients, for instance).
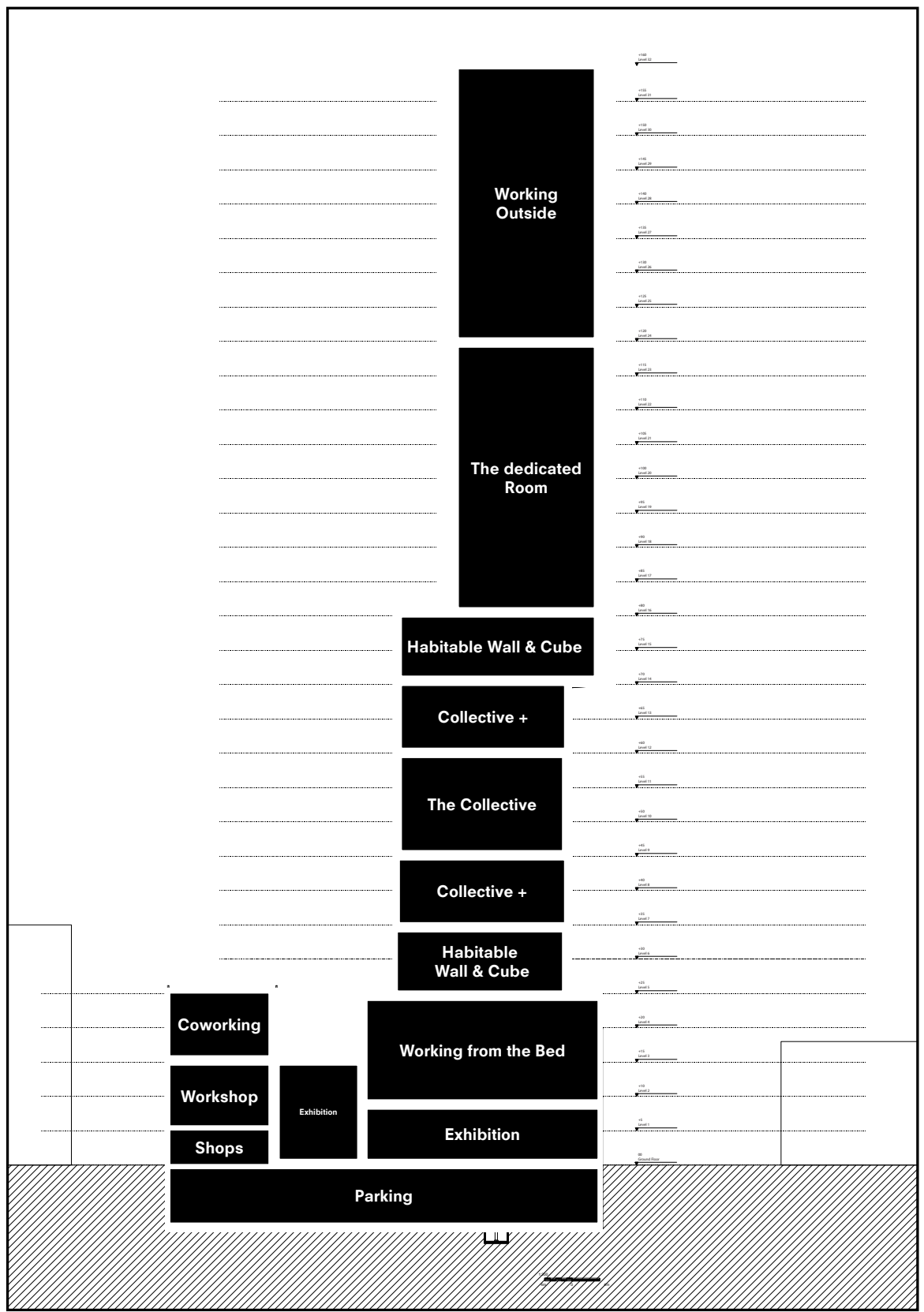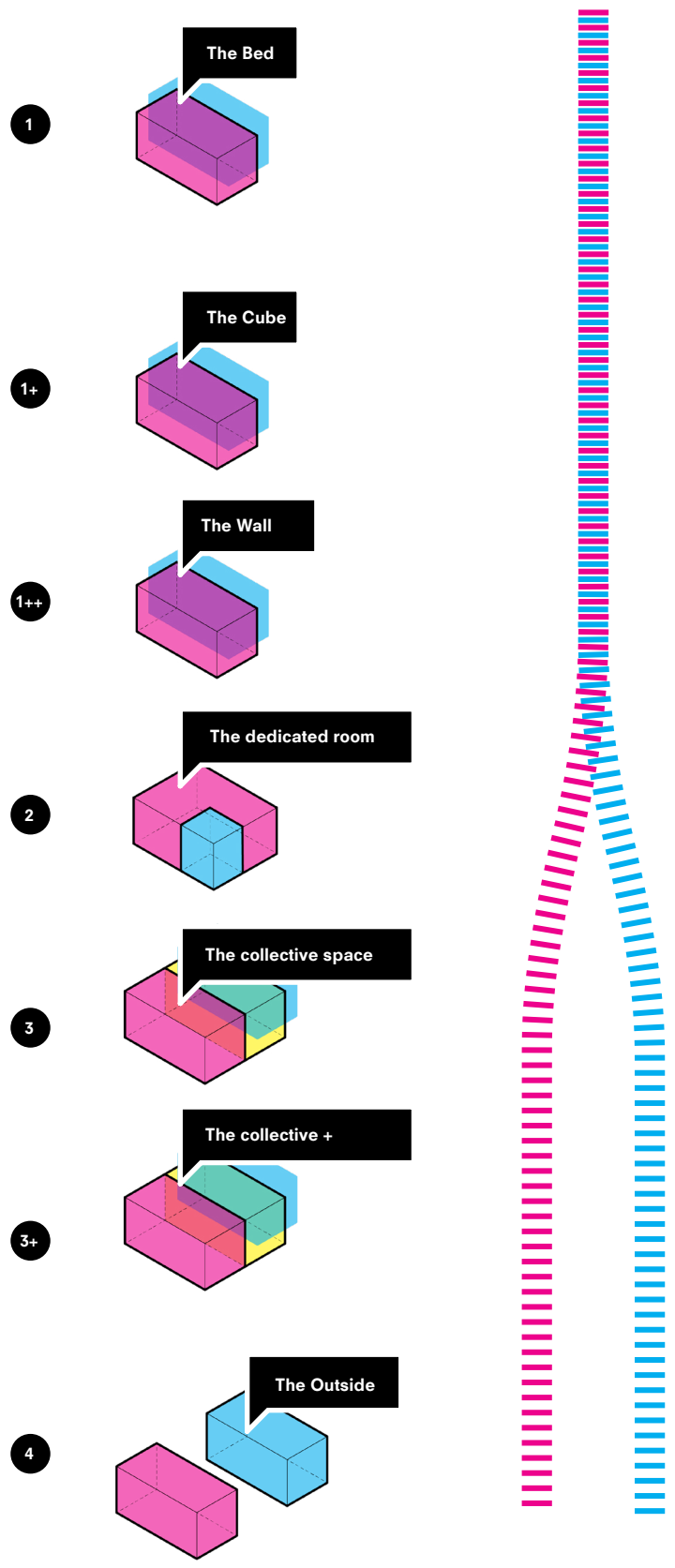
Type 3_ collective

In Collective, a small room is given to the user supported by a large collective space where people can work together. The working realm is not overlapped in this case to the living one. The type is focus on the idea of physical interaction between tower residents in order to address the possible critical point of isolation when working from home. The room has the minimum dimensions for sleeping and showering, while all the other dimensions are happening outside. A collective kitchen lies at the second level of the collective. At the same floor, opposite the core, a series of meeting rooms/ quite rooms are available. This could be taken by appointment for client meetings.

Type 3+_The collective plus

The Collective plus, as for the previous type, has a generous collective space in front of every unit. The individual unit is larger compared to the collective type and it is equipped with a kitchen. An interior mezzanine allows the space to be further divided: this architectural features allow the space to be used also by 2 users. The types gives the possibility of having a private space while creating the opportunity of extremely interaction. In order to access the single room, users are first taken from the collective space. This particular flow allows the users of a diversified experience of the collective, while preserving in the amount of floor private space to possibility of being isolated if needed.
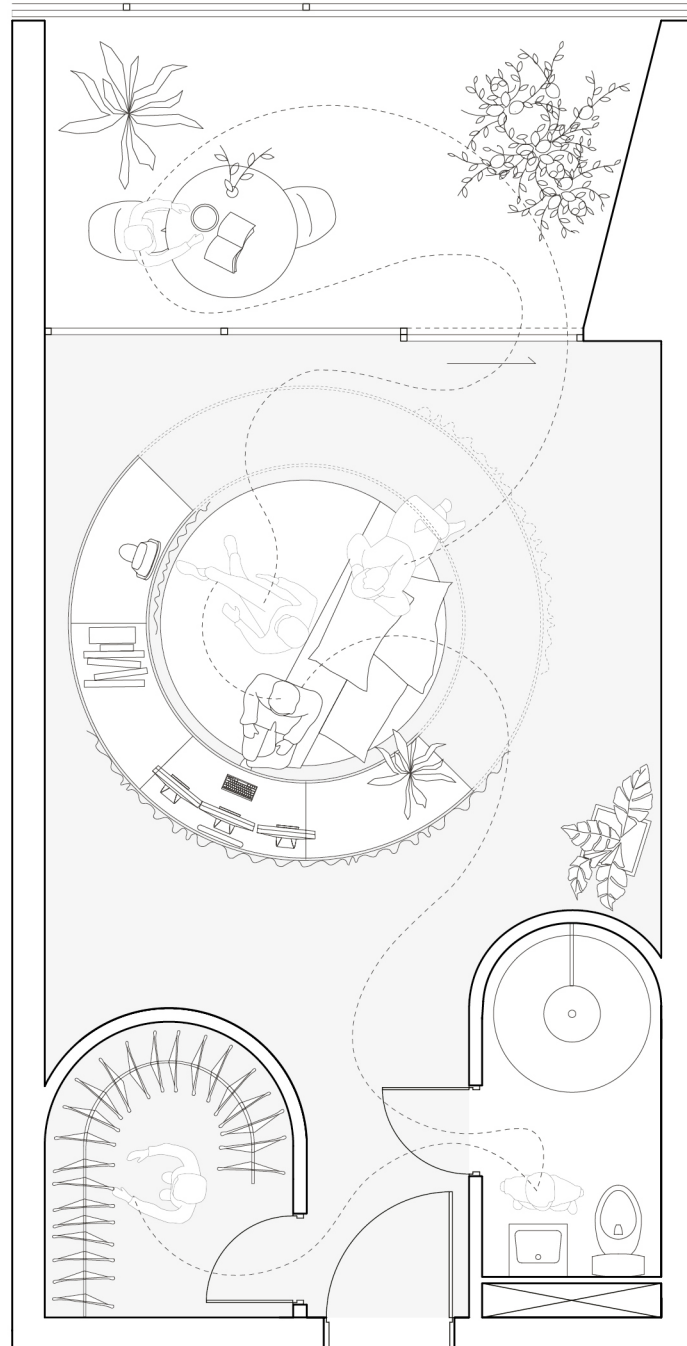
Type 4_ Working from outside.

This unit has been design with the aim of provided a individual residence for users who are not in need of working from home, but that they most likely will work elsewhere. The type is also organize at the top of the tower: it has a generous floor area which allows 3 or 4 users.
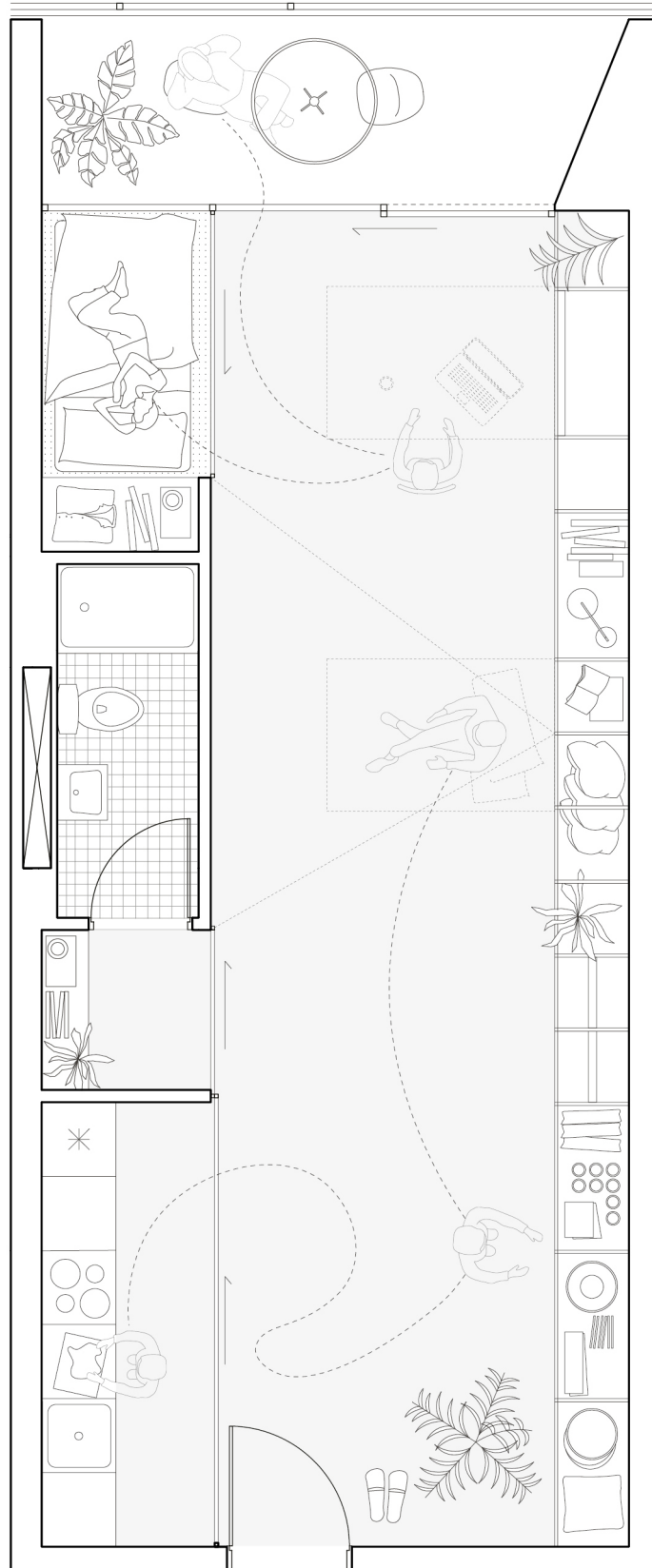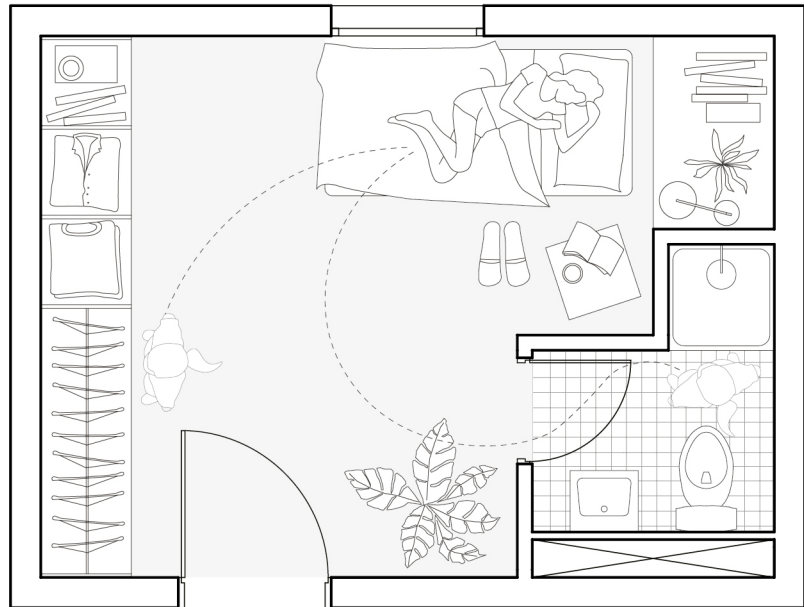
The Bed

1

The Cube

1+

The Wall

1++

The dedicated room

2

The collective space

3

The collective +

3+

The Outside

4

Working
Outside

The dedicated
Room

Habitable Wall & Cube

Collective +

The Collective

Collective +

Habitable
Wall & Cube

Coworking

Working from the Bed

Workshop

Exhibition

Exhibition

Shops

Parking

27

28

The productive Home
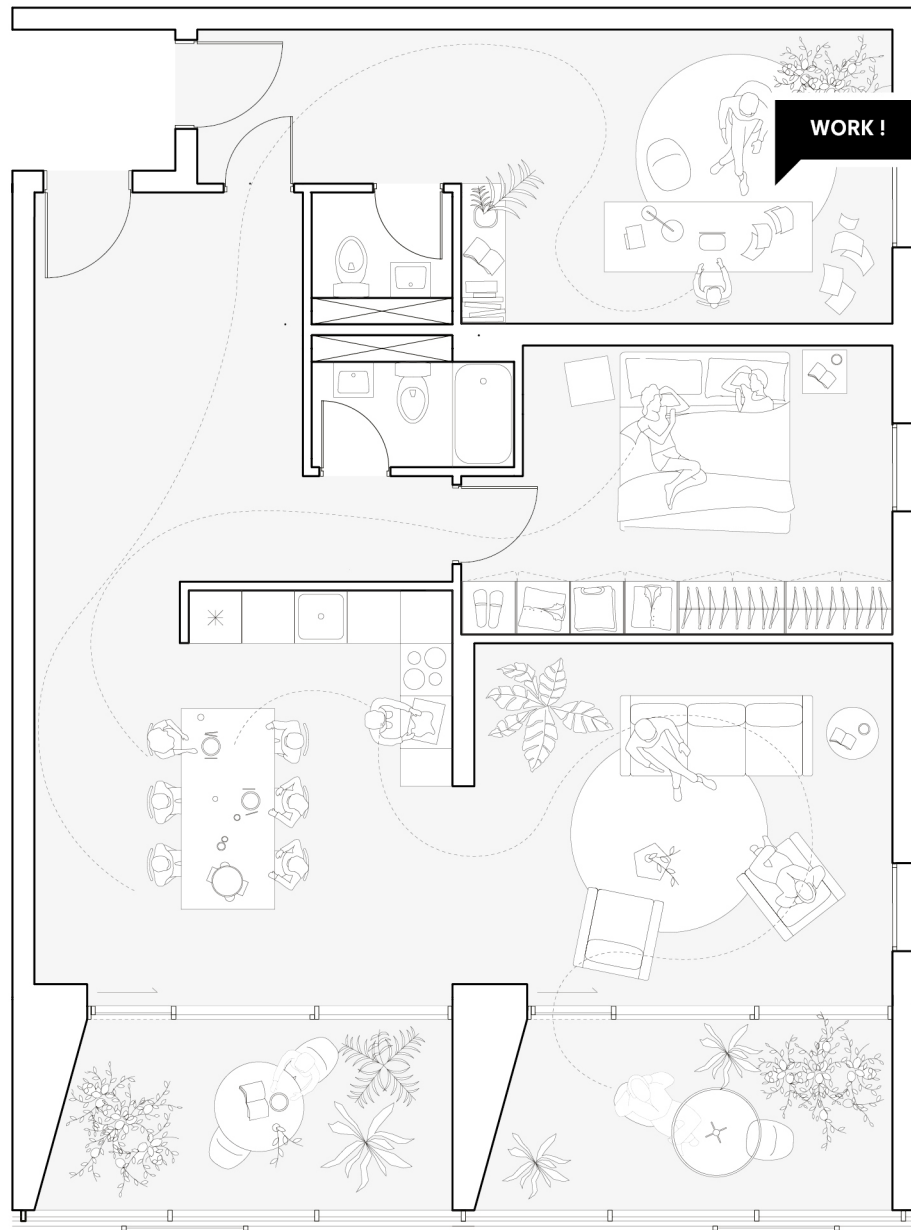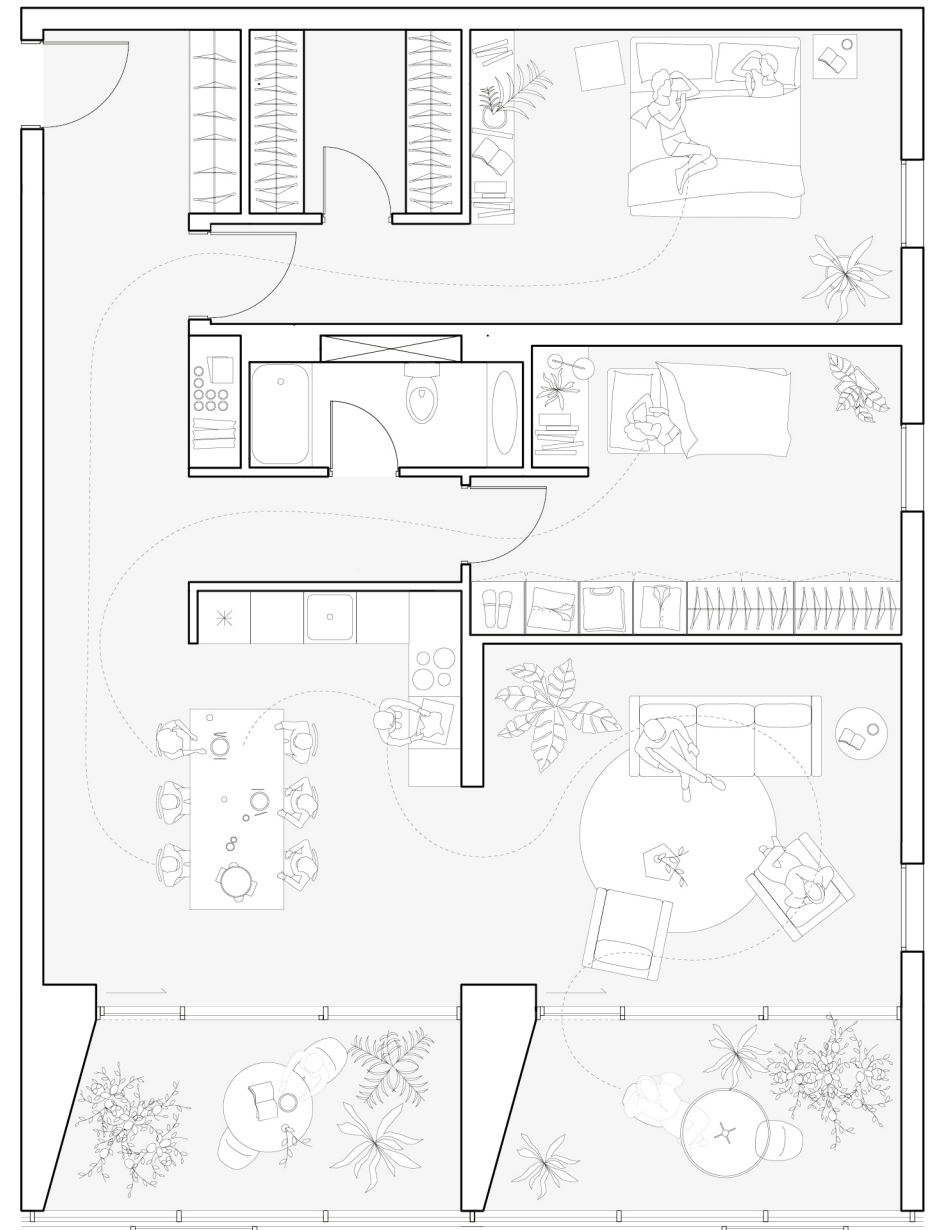
Working From the Bed

Habitable Wall

Habitable Cube

The collective
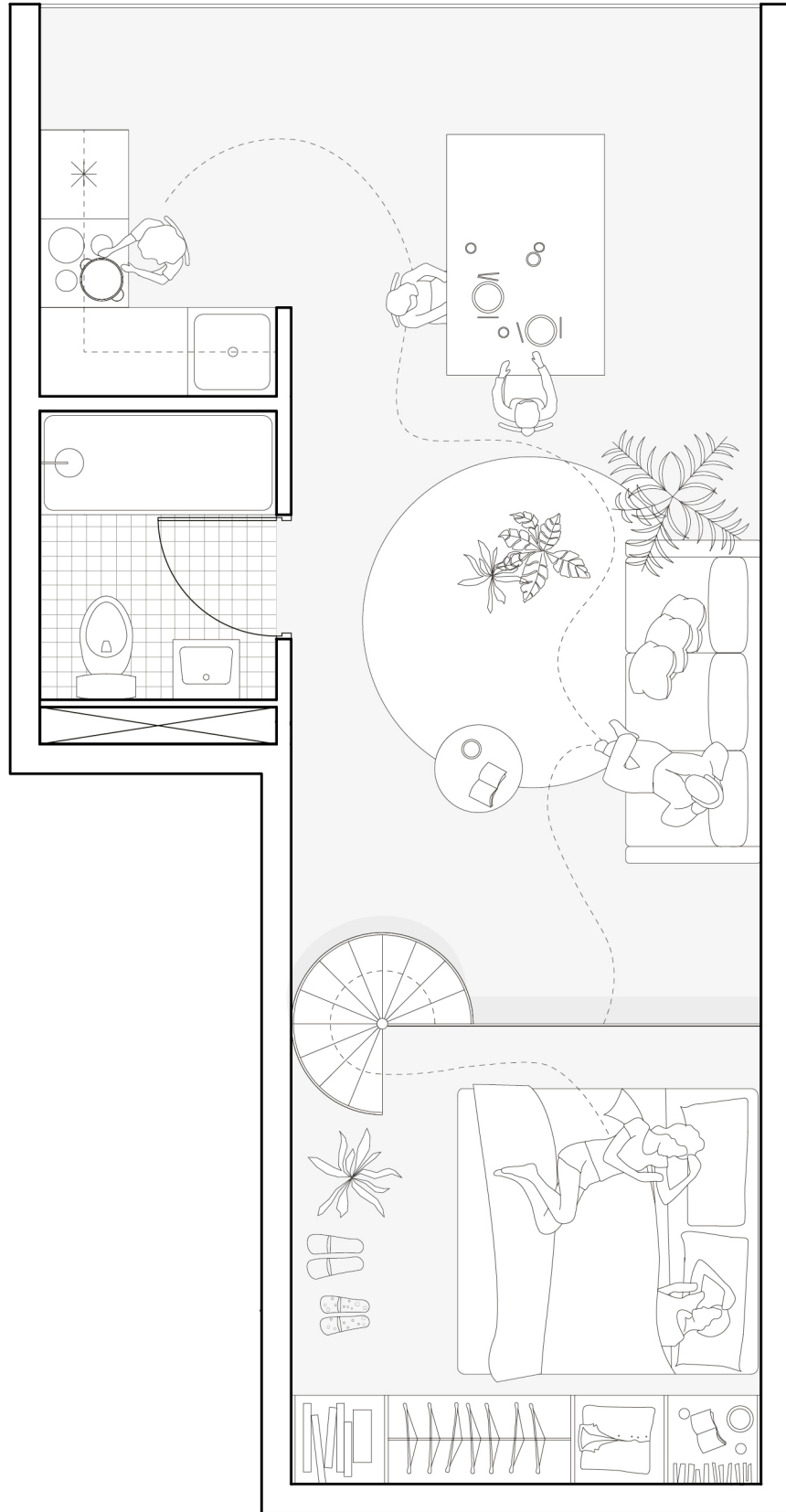
The dedicated Room

WORK !

41

Working outside

42
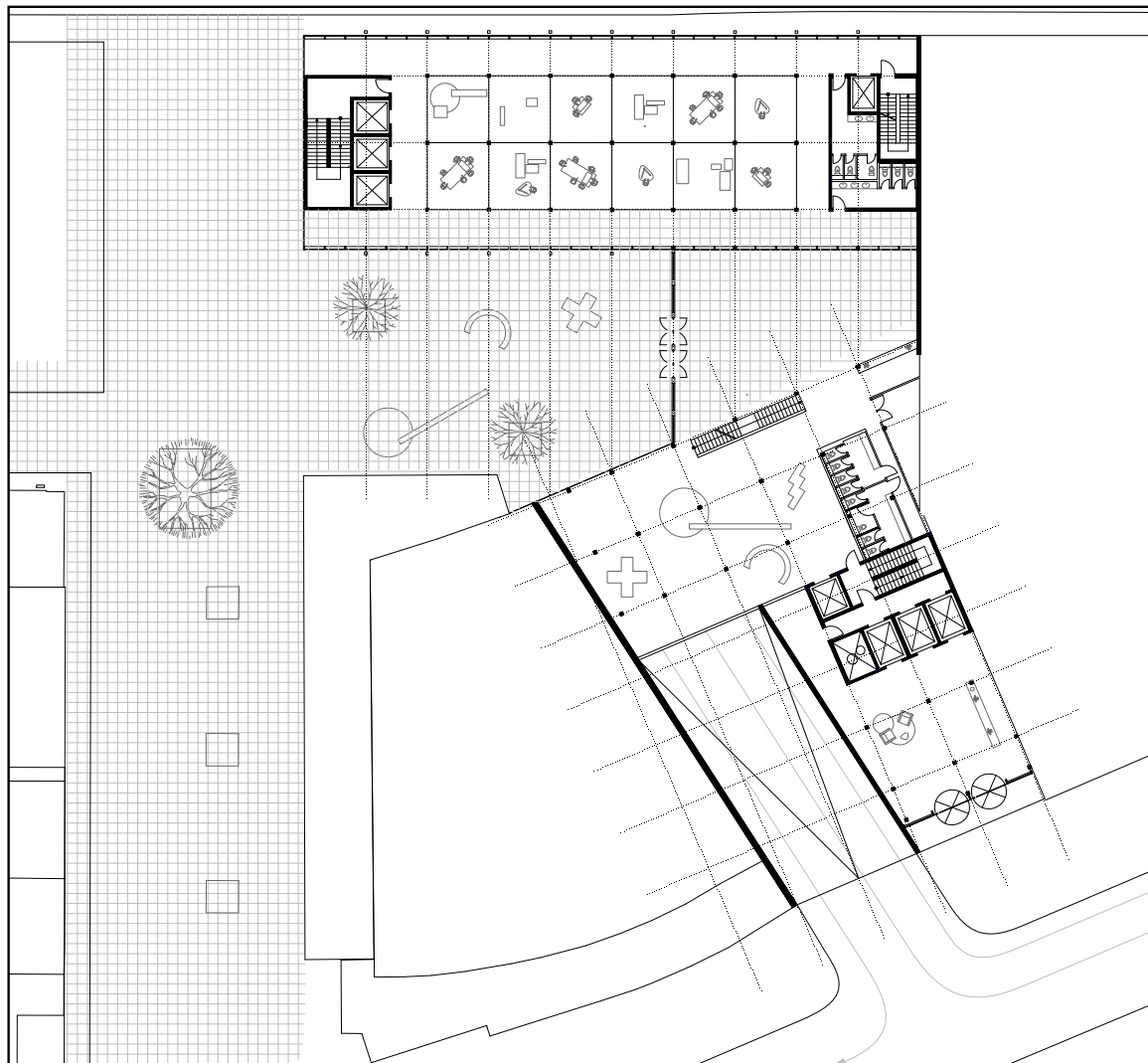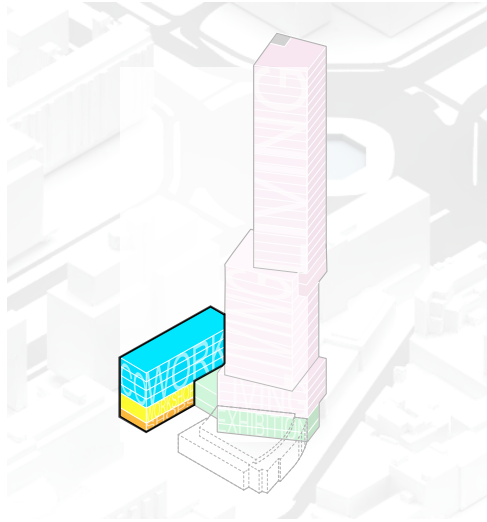
The workshop

An integral part of the project takes form as a volume facing south where workshops, coworking spaces and shops are present. The volumes has been studied in order to fulfil the demand of a possible growth in business by the users of the tower but at the same time, it functions as an informal working sphere given to the city. Specialized rooms using high tech equipment will provide professionality to the users of the space. The shops will be place at the ground level as a continuation of the Ljibaan shopping street and as an opportunity for workers to sell their product on site.

This last function will allow the project to be perceived as a complete system where the productivity of the tower does not end with their immaterial knowledge, but is taken further in prototypes and actual products to be ultimately sold to the public. The production of knowledge perceives in the shops the end product of the working process.

The connection to the public is further strengthen in the use of the pavement: The ljibaan presents a particular design of dark and light stone throughout its whole street. The same pavement will be used in the plaza, in the corridor and in the exhibition space at ground level to be perceived as an extension of the public reality of this particular piece of Rotterdam.
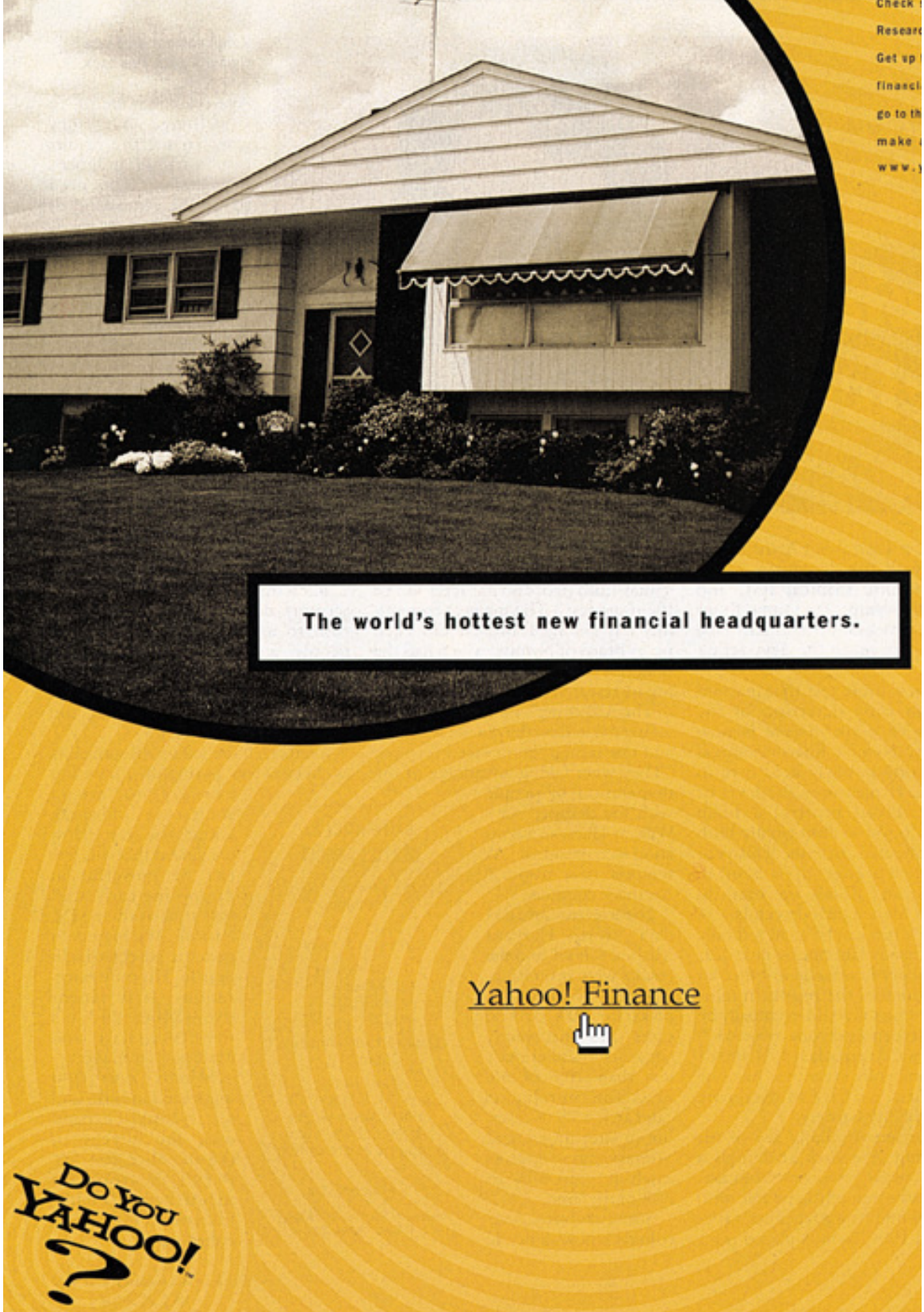
Conclusion

The productive home aims in the form of experimentation to address the changes happening in the working society due to digital technologies. The project has been thought out as a series of designed scenarios, with no right or wrong answer.

Each individual unit addresses a particular mode of remote working, once focusing on the necessity of flexibility, once on the necessity of interaction in a world not only built upon digital relationships.

The project aim to reflect on the ever changing condition of labour unfolding the blurred line between working and living.

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