Across major European cities today, the increasing visibility of vacant office space is evidence of the decline of the office typology. Such a phenomenon can be explained as a consequence of the emergence of new forms of labour where the distinction between living and working is increasingly blurred. No longer organized by the traditional 9 to 5 workday, contemporary forms of labour involve the entire life of workers and their spectrum of social relationships. Not only work – but also life at large – is thus more mobile, precarious and not containable within rigid typologies. This condition is even more extreme in the case of creative work, where the distinction between the realm of living and the one of working seems to collapse into a common space. Despite this condition, cities continue to be developed around a clear distinction between the workplace and housing, a distinction reinforced by a legal framework that considers living and working as two distinct domains.

The projects developed within the research titled *Living/Working: How To Live Together* for the cities of Brussels, New York, Tallinn and Chicago, together with our proposal for Helsinki can be grouped according to two main lines of intervention. The proposal for Brussels aims at the conversion of traditional working spaces such as offices into housing, taking advantage of the neutral space of the office to imagine alternative ways of living within the city. While the projects for New York, Tallinn, Chicago and Helsinki propose new residential prototypes for living and working which challenge the traditional family apartment by proposing new dwelling spaces where it is possible to live together beyond the family, and to have space for individual seclusion. In both cases the goal is to rethink domesticity in light of an increasingly mobile life, in which domestic labour has become a burden that can be reduced by promoting the sharing of facilities and the reduction of redundant domestic space.

*Living/Working: How To Live Together* is an attempt to shift the focus towards housing as the key element for a large-scale transformation of the city. At the basis of this thesis lies the ambition to rethink the idea of housing as an apparatus where form, economy and dwelling converge. In ancient times the house was the sphere of both reproduction and production and it was completely separated from the public sphere. As such the house was the place of economy (from oikos, house) a term that until the 18th century defined the domestic realm as the management of life. With the advent of industrialization, economy as a managerial apparatus went beyond the house and invested in to the city in its entirety. It was in this context that the domestic space was meant to offer the illusion of a safe refuge for personal affectivity outside the realm of work. Yet today the most typical domestic activities such as reproduction and affectivity, traditionally concealed as they were ‘unproductive’ and ‘servile’, have become forms of exploitation, to the extent that their logic is at the basis of the ubiquitous field of precarious labour conditions. Our project implies a new social contract in which housing is driven no longer by traditional forms of ownership, but by a cooperative contract among inhabitants that allows them to live together by sharing spaces and facilities that would not be possible within the confined space of the single family apartment.
The research begins with a definition of labour. While Hannah Arendt described labour as a process of biological survival (eating, sleeping and taking care of the household) enclosed within the private sphere of the house, in the 19th century Marx already defined labour as the aggregate of the physical and mental capabilities that are present in the human being. Within the rise of capital, labour is the fundamental asset of society and for this reason the city develops as set of institutions (housing, hospitals, schools, universities) whose goal is to maintain and reproduce labour power. In this way not only labouring activities but also life itself is put to work. This becomes even more radical with the rise of forms of ‘immaterial production’ where not just material commodities, but affects, knowledge, images and information are at the centre of the production process.

The contemporary hegemony of immaterial labour implies a new understanding of the role of domestic space. Within the rise of the modern city, domestic space has been increasingly reduced into an appendix of the workplace. The house became disconnected from the workplace not only for technical reasons, but also to reinforce its role of refuge, of a familiar safe haven protected from the harsh and promiscuous reality of work. However, domestic space can be seen as a retreat from production only in an ideological and symbolic way: in reality the house is the very core of production since a population can be productive only if life is maintained and reproduced.

Within the history of capitalism, reproduction cannot be distinguished from production at large. For this reason the advent of ‘immaterial labour’, where life itself is put to work, brings back domestic space as the epicentre of production. This becomes possible not just because new technologies make production ubiquitous, making the traditional workplace (the office, for example) no longer relevant, but because ‘immaterial production’ is based on aspects that until now were typical of the domestic domain, aspects such as sociability, affectivity and care. This exposes both the latent productivity of the domestic space and the rising domesticity of the workplace. Consider the high-tech campuses where the dissolution of spatial and temporal boundaries of work is compensated by the increasing “domesticity” of the work environment.

Within our research we have investigated radical models of domestic space such as early monasteries, Charles Fourier’s Phalanx, early Soviet experiments on domestic space, the 19th century proposal for a new American Woman’s Home, and loft-living in the 1960’s. In all these case studies, radical forms of life were tested and often failed. Nonetheless, it would be a mistake to consider them as ‘utopian’ (a label that today is assigned to everything that does not fit into the market logic). On the contrary, seen from the vantage point of our current condition, these case studies not only anticipated the merging of life and work but also addressed – within the realm of production – the possibility of finding alternative ways of living together. All these experiments attempted to define domestic space as a space of reciprocity and emancipation rather than of exploitation. With our proposal we aim to recuperate this legacy towards new forms of domesticity in which sharing is first of all an act of solidarity rather than just a necessity.
The Carthusian Monastery

The Carthusian monastery, a series of small independent cells are gathered around a large collective cloister, manifests with utmost clarity the tension between communal life and the possibility of being alone. The Carthusian cell is a small house for one person where a monk lives and works. The cell embodies the monastic condition itself: it is solitary yet communal, meditative yet laborious and silent yet socialized, as all of the monks live in the same condition. Each cell contains a garden, a domestic unit made of three rooms and two corridors. While a short inner corridor acts as acoustic isolation from the noise of the cloister, the longer corridor contains all the services such as the larder and the latrine. Even in its radical isolation, the monk is not independent but shares a number of collective facilities such as the kitchen.

Ivan Leonidov’s proposal for a Garden City at Magnitogorsk (1930)

Critical of the total supercollectivization put forward by Soviet architects in the form of large communal-houses, Ivan Leonidov suggested an alternate form of organization. Imagined as a loose form of collectivization, Leonidov grouped small communities on geometrically organized plots arrayed along a wide transportation artery, bordered by lateral plots providing recreational facilities on one side, and cultural services on the other. The arrangement of the residential spaces represented a much more subtle idea of collectivity in contrast to the traditional socialist one, with the potential for seclusion and for the establishment of a socialist society through small-scale cooperation in the domestic space.

Charles Fourier’s Phalanstery (1829)

The ultimate objective of Charles Fourier’s Phalanstery was to transform work into pleasure, therefore making the inhabitants not only happier, but also more productive. To this end, Fourier proposed a ‘rule’ of his own, dividing the day into slots of 1.5 hours in order to diversify activities, avoid routine, and make labour more interesting. Corresponding to this rhythmic sequencing of time, was a precise spatial choreography enacted through the space of the rue galerie, corridors that played the part of interiorized streets. Heated in winter and cooled in summer, the rue galeries would permit an efficient transition from one realm into another and offer the possibility of encounter and exchange.

Catherine and Harriet Beecher’s proposal for the American Woman’s Home (1869)

Arguing for the independent woman managing her home, the Beecher sisters focused on rationalizing space in the household in order to maximize efficiency. The American Woman’s Home proposes the centralization of the service spaces – kitchen, washroom, closet, heating, stairs – and a very flexible arrangement of the domestic space through a series of moveable screens. The design is such that the woman becomes the manager of the household, mundanely rearranging the dwelling to suit her needs. In this condition, the man is constrained to inhabit the areas assigned to him by the woman, thus diminishing his authority within the household.

Margarete Schutte-Lihotzky’s design of the Frankfurt kitchen (1926)

Designed as part of Ernst May’s planning of social housing in 1920’s Frankfurt, the goal of the Frankfurt kitchen was the reduction of domestic labour through an efficiently organized layout. The result was a minimal space where all furniture and appliances were located along the walls, so much so that the walls that traditionally enclose domestic space have become replaced with infrastructure and the coziness of domesticity is disrupted by the machine-like apparatus of life-reproduction. The Frankfurt Kitchen represents the intrusion of the factory into housing by compressing all these ‘infrastructures’ into a minimal space separated from the living room, allowing the latter to be freed from any household duty and become a space for relaxation and rest.

Andy Warhol’s Silver Factory (1963-1968)

The Silver Factory was Andy Warhol’s studio in Manhattan between 1963 and 1968. On the one hand, a factory because Warhol “worked in the rhythm of the assembly line” for the production of his work and, on the other, the studio was silver to allude to the proto-glam social character of the space that created the Warhol superstars. The abstraction of the open plan, interrupted only by four columns that split the room in nine equal parts, permits a constant re-design of the interior, making it suitable to be used as space of living, encounter and production. With the Silver Factory Warhol understood the potential of the industrial typology that would later become extremely fashionable among artists.