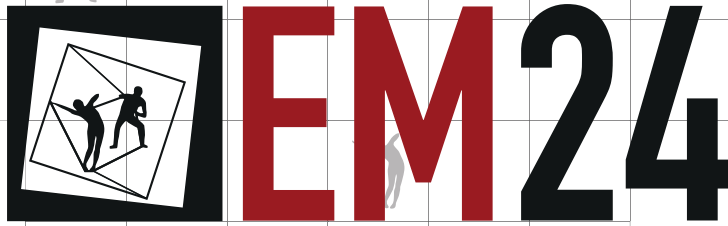


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EURAU - EUROPEAN RESEARCH ON ARCHITECTURE
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**IN-PRESENCE /
THE BODY AND
THE SPACE**

The role of corporeity in the era of virtualization

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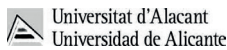
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The Department of Architecture and Urban Studies of the Politecnico di Milano organises at the School of Architecture Urban Planning Construction Engineering (AUIC), EURAU Milan 2024 "IN-PRESENCE / THE BODY AND THE SPACE - The role of corporeity in the era of virtualization", the eleventh edition of the international conference, which takes place from 19 to 22 June 2024.



/ EURAU Milan 2024

11th INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

EUROPEAN RESEARCH ON ARCHITECTURE
AND URBANISM INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

IN-PRESENCE / THE BODY AND THE SPACE

The role of corporeity in the era of virtualization

For those who deal with the city and the territory, space refers to the body
(C. Bianchetti)

The EURAU Milan 2024 Conference aims to unpack the significance of corporeality in contemporary times and its relevance for the upcoming years. Specifically, the focus is on the relation between body and space and how this relates to architecture, the city and the environment, interpreted as physical facts and processes. Within the background of a technological turn, the focus is now on what has changed or will further change in this relationship and what, on the opposite, remains unalterable, inherently bound to the material and impervious to the virtual.

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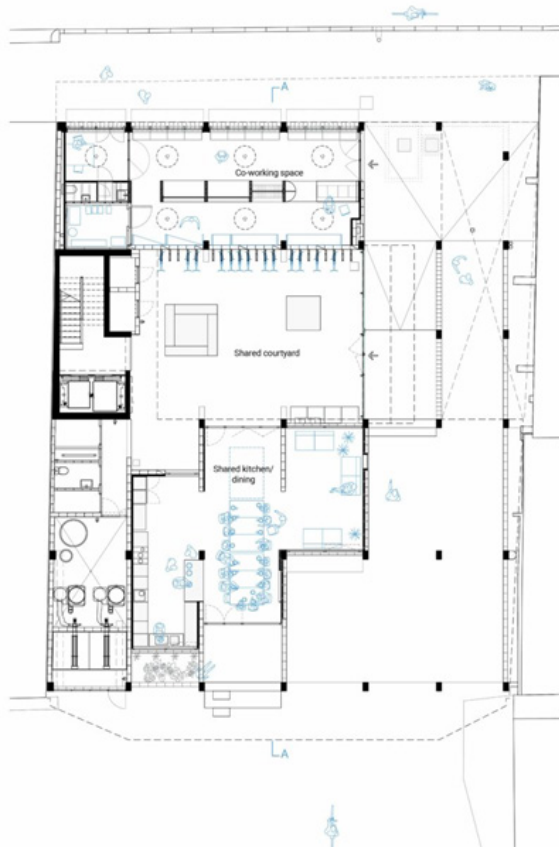
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Ground floor plan



Michela Bassanelli ¹, Carola d'Ambros ²

^{1,2} Politecnico di Milano, Dipartimento di Architettura e Studi Urbani

¹ michela.bassanelli@polimi.it ² carola.dambros@polimi.it

Bodies, Work, Care.

How office and domestic space is changing

Key Words

Care spaces, Working spaces, Remote work

Studies emerged during the pandemic have pointed out that the adoption of telecommuting (erroneously referred to as smart working) has led to an overload of daily commitments for those who perform care work (raising children, caring for elderly relatives, household management) and which correspond to various figures such as mothers, “new fathers”, singles and caregivers in general. Hiring of this new contractual form known as smart working has continued to grow despite some slowdowns in the last two years. The latest document of the Observatory on Smart Working of the Politecnico di Milano shows continued growth in large enterprises, while the decline is in micro enterprises and Public Administrations [Osservatori 2023]. While the advantages are well known in terms of environmental sustainability, reduced pollution, and the new importance assumed by neighbourhoods and suburbs, for office workers, middle managers, freelancers, the workplace has become synonymous with super-work without hours or limits, with the co-presence of online commitments and with a lack of human relations and empathy [Bassanelli, Forino 2021].

Among the main repercussions of the spread of remote working is the transformation of corporate workspaces in order to reduce and dematerialise the office, abolishing workstations or modulating their use on a time basis [Bassanelli, Forino 2022]. At the same time, people start working from home without always having the conditions to recreate work-friendly solutions. For many people, the home has become the only place where they can carry out their work outside the office and, as a result, they have had to equip themselves - mostly at their own expense - with faster web connections, purchase modern IT devices, change family habits, reorganise living spaces to have more privacy, improvising studios in the bedroom, living room or kitchen [Meloni 2021]. These new working habits are in addition to the transformations in the idea of the family, moving from the traditional nuclear one to “family constellations”, which include different cohabitation patterns and figures: the single person, the couple, the couple

with children, separated couples - with children and differently recomposed -, the elderly, either alone or in couples [Guetto, Pirani 2021]. In Italy, for example, one in ten family is a single-parent family, most of them composed of women, but the trend also shows an increase in those formed by fathers alone.

The paper, resulting from the ongoing national research "ESCAPES-Experimental Sustainable & Collective Architectural Places for Employes-Carers" [1] (PRIN2022), aims not only to offer a critical state of the art on the topic, but also to analyse some case studies that can offer a better balance between work and care commitments. The theme of new forms of work must absolutely be considered in the design or redesign of domestic and working spaces. The organisational structure of non-manufacturing enterprises, especially those engaged in advanced services, will undergo substantial transformation in the coming years [Capitani 2022]. Central offices will have increasingly limited physical space. At the same time, individual production will be entrusted to the domestic environment, although not everyone will have the opportunity to create suitable furnishing solutions for work activities in their own homes. Reflection on the house becomes an opportunity to reconsider an idea of care and thoughtfulness that has often been lacking in our cities in recent decades. Scholars are putting back at the centre of the project a different idea of care, not only related to practical tasks but also to those of one's relational and physical environment, local development and solidarity. The impact that new models of smart working, and thus of home-office combination, have on the general wellbeing of the individual and, even more specifically, on psychological wellbeing, is a firm point of ongoing research. The goal is to avoid the erroneous consideration of smart work as the sole and unequivocal means of protection for "fragile workers" - albeit a valid one - in a broader view of the healthy relationship that the individual can enter into with his or her work space, also considering the risks of technostress and overworking [Osservatorio Smart Working 2023]. On the one hand, the text focuses on the transformations of offices by analysing those presenting spatial solutions that respond to worker care needs [Otero Verzier, Axel 2018]. Flexible and modular projects that allow space to be used individually and privately but also intended to accommodate group activities, fostering social well-being and a sense of belonging to a team. Multi-purpose spaces, capable of satisfying multiple needs and at the same time recreating a domestic, intimate and welcoming dimension. Spaces that combine work with areas dedicated to relaxation, reading, sports, sharing meals, and environments intended to become nurseries for employees' children. These are projects that, as the architect Massimo Roj claims, transform the idea of the "work place" into a "living place" [Mancini 2020], where the main objective is to reconcile private and work life.

On the other hand, it is necessary to rethink the configuration of the house: from collective/public to indoor/private spaces. The typologies of contemporary housing supply, of which the notion of flat is a synthesis, do not respond to complex and diversified housing practices. Several examples will be analysed, on a micro-scale, which, starting from the co-housing experiments widespread in northern Europe since the 1970s, up to contemporary co-living, show strategies for containing costs and sharing ways of living, in which the network of solidarity between inhabitants predominates and where care work acquires a different value. Finally, will be presented new housing typologies that combine work spaces within domestic environments.

ENDNOTES

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FIGURES

Fig. 1 - Lacol, La Borda ground floor, 2018, Barcelona. Image source courtesy of Lacol.

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