Vita activa: From Home to Factory. Two Round-trip Commutes in Le Corbusier and SANAA

Javier Pérez-Herreras, Jorge Tárrago Mingo
PhD, professor, Director of Master in Architecture, University of Zaragoza. Spain | PhD, associate professor, Director of Master in Architecture, University of Navarra. Spain
perez.herreras@unizar.es | jtarrago@unav.es

Keywords: inhabit; house; work; factory; Arendt

A New *Vita activa* Between House and Factory

Hannah Arendt divides the "active life" of individuals, from the Middle Ages onwards, into three spheres: labor, work, and action. Each corresponds to the fundamental conditions that shape human life on Earth and each is related to one of the three corresponding dimensions of human existence: life, worldliness, and plurality.[1]

"Labor is the activity which corresponds to the biological process of the human body, whose spontaneous growth, metabolism, and eventual decay are bound to the vital necessities produced and fed into the life process by labor. The human condition of labor is life itself," argues Arendt in *The Human Condition*. To this activity, men have traditionally assigned the home — their dwelling. "Work provides an 'artificial' world of things, distinctly different from all natural surroundings. Within its borders, each individual life is housed, while this world itself is meant to outlast and transcend them all" — she continues.[2] For this second activity, modern, contemporary individuals have established workshops and factories. The third sphere of this "active life" is action — the activity that takes place in the artificial space shaped by labor and work, where people engage in discourse and make decisions about what they wish to do, that is, about their destiny.

The coexistence under one roof of the time of labor and the time of work has been a common feature of past societies. Historically, a single building often accommodated both activities, with rooms adapted accordingly. Workshop-houses are the clearest example of this arrangement. In the Roman *domus*, for instance, the *tablinum* — a room located at the end of the *atrium*, opposite the entrance — served as the space where the *pater familias* worked and received guests (Fig. 1). In medieval homes, a single large room was used for everything, adapted to the trade of the inhabitants. Later, bourgeois homes, typically organized vertically, assigned the ground floor for work areas and the upper floors for household functions.

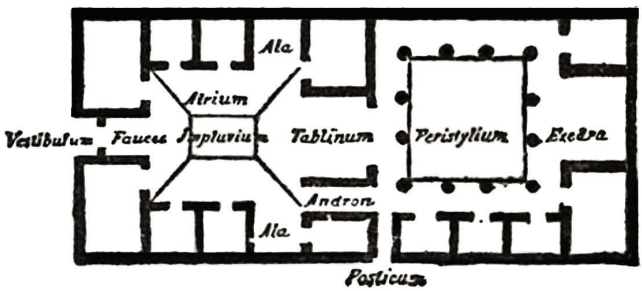


Fig. 1: Roman house. Vitruvius

1 Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958), 7.
2 Ibid.

In these contexts, the home was the space of both life and worldliness. Action, however, was reserved for others, a minority tasked with imbuing labor and work with a destiny. As Arendt notes, "action would be an unnecessary luxury, a capricious interference with general laws of behavior."[3]

With the arrival of industry and factories, productive activity was no longer confined to the physical space of labor, and work was no longer connected to the space where men and women extended the everyday nature of life itself. The home ceased to be the workplace; life and worldliness settled in different spaces. The size and location of factories rearranged cities and new routes soon connected them with workers' homes. These routes gradually became permanent round-trip commutes — from home to work and back again. In the comings and goings of those anonymous men and women, new forms of organization began to emerge — almost unconsciously — somewhere between the efficiency of the productive space and the time of rest, the public need for effective, collaborative production and the independence and privacy of family life, ultimately converging in the culmination of labor and work. And within that entanglement — initiated by the very individuals Arendt references — lay the potential for a destiny of their own, an action of their own.

In this constant shift, architects demonstrated that the life of commuting between home and work heralded a new time and a new man who, driven by the novelty of industry, reached a new domestic homeland — one that announced a time grounded on the worldliness of its inhabitants. It is in this daily commute that men and women had the opportunity to become authors and actors of their destiny — as Zygmunt Bauman[4] might put it — or of a personal action, as Hannah Arendt would say. An action and a destiny achieved and celebrated in a permanent *vita activa*.

This article investigates how Le Corbusier and SANAA structure the three fundamental human activities identified by Hannah Arendt in her conception of *vita active* — labor, work, and action — as expressions of the three dimensions of human existence: life, worldliness, and plurality. To ground this connection, the article traces two round-trip commutes that link life in collective housing and work in a factory. In the aftermath of World War II, Le Corbusier developed nearly simultaneously a hosiery factory in Saint-Dié and the emblematic *Unité d'Habitation* in Marseille. Seven decades later, amid a fresh wave of social upheaval — the global economic crisis of the early 21st century — SANAA designed, also almost simultaneously, a furniture factory in Weil am Rhein, Germany, and a residential condominium on Avenue Maréchal Fayolle, in the 16th arrondissement of Paris.

On the Way Between the *Unité d'Habitation* in Marseille and the Factory in Saint-Dié by Le Corbusier

In 1945, after the end of World War II, France's Minister for Reconstruction and Urbanism, Raoul Dautry, commissions Le Corbusier to design and build a *Unité d'Habitation* in Marseille. The commission is no coincidence: by that time, the architect had already made the modern domestic activity of modern man the driving force behind his architectural laboratory. The home is conceived as the setting for establishing a new *vita activa* and the *Unité* is envisioned as its principal domestic homeland.

Le Corbusier proposes a concrete structure 140 m long, 24 m wide and 56 m high above ground level. Inside, he sought to recreate a world lost to war. Everything that lay ahead — a new time, a new man, a world yet to plan and determine — lay outside. This powerful concrete form shelters a way of life that breaks with the past, now reduced to ruins and devastation at the feet of those who have survived the war. The world is a place in waiting — a place to be seen — while the home serves as a tool for understanding that world and a time yet to come. The *Unité*

3 Ibid., 8.

4 Zygmunt Bauman, "We, the Artists of Life" in *The Art of Life* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2008), 99.

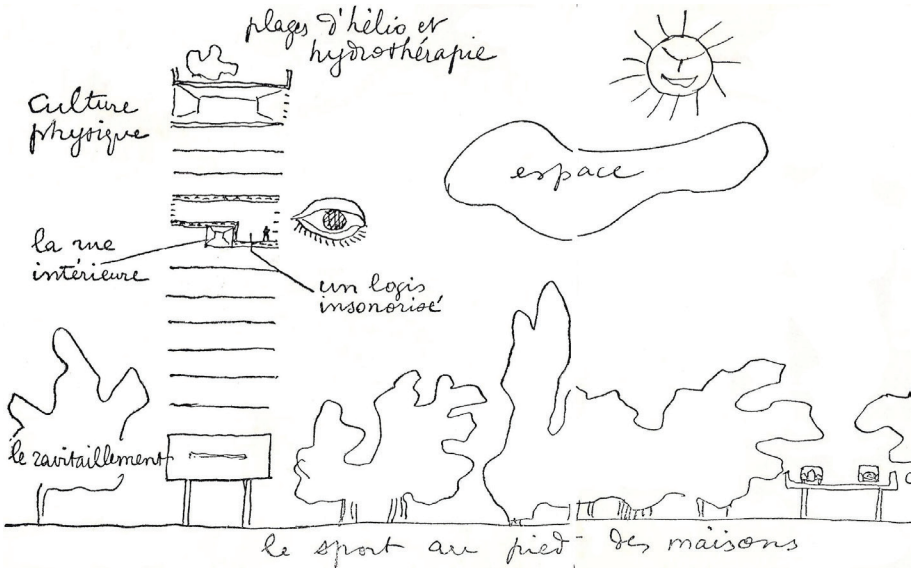


Fig. 2: Unite d'Habitation, sketch. Le Corbusier

emerges as a shelter, where distance from the outside transforms this rough, harsh world into something sublime. As Han notes,[5] the man seeks safety in the inwardness of reason, whose idea of infinity renders everything in nature appear small. This waiting and its risky gaze will open the way to that unknown world.

The cross-section of the project — its seminal document — outlines a volume lifted off the ground and separated from the newly emerging world by *pilotis* supporting a horizontal structure. This anatomy establishes a hierarchy that orders both the dwellings and the lives of their inhabitants. The rigid volume, suspended in the air, accommodates a domestic life where the old man preserves his memories and privacy, while awaiting the conquest of the new world that Le Corbusier envisions as a healing and positive natural environment. Its interior, Boesiger writes, emerges as a void to be filled by the spirit of the modern man and all he strives for.[6] The *Unité*, therefore, becomes the best *boîte a miracles*: a vantage point onto an unknown, dream world. The interior — half magic, half laboratory — houses the expectations of this new world that remains largely unknown.

The inhabitant of the *Unité d'Habitation* lives between two homelands. Inside, the modern man keeps his past, his time and perhaps his sense of self. Outside, the changes envisioned and championed by the architect await. Between these two worlds, the inherited and the forthcoming, the home emerges as a temporal and spatial interlude. The interior offers a space for intimacy with the old world, from which the man observes an unknown exterior that he still does not own. His gaze opens up the possibility of fulfilling the dreams of the man Le Corbusier envisions (Fig. 2).

The 330 apartments of the *Unité* come to represent a new, modern Eden. The bright rooms inside illuminate the promise of a new world to come — one destined for the old man aspiring to be modern. From the large windows, this allegedly modern man bids farewell to the old city that war has left behind, where the tragedy of a vanished society still lingers — a society that only a new man, that who inhabits the *Unité*, can rebuild.

5 Byung-Chul Han, *Saving Beauty* (Hoboken: Wiley, 2017), 35.

6 Willy Boesiger, *Le Corbusier-Oeuvre Complète 1957-1965* (Zurich: Les Editions d'Architecture, 1995), 170.

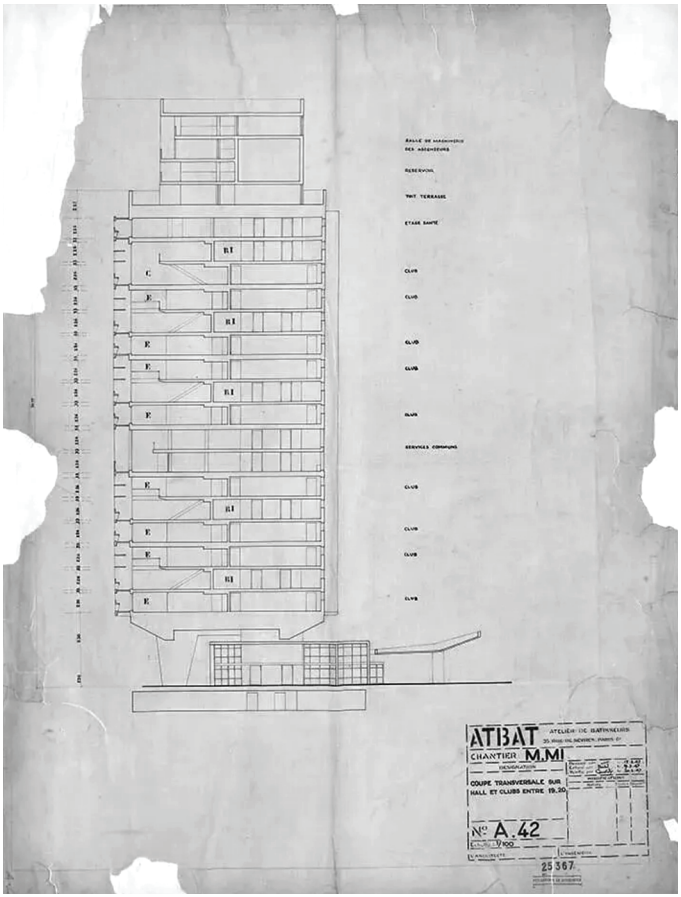
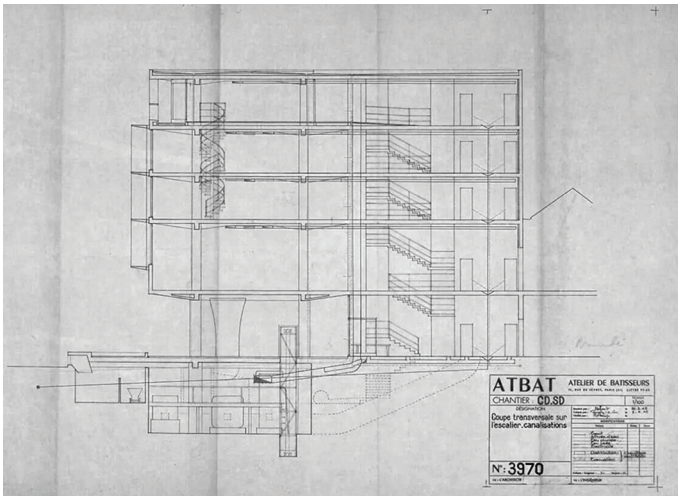


Fig. 3: Above, Factory in Saint-Dié, cross-section. Le Corbusier, 1946.
Below, Unité d'Habitation in Marseille, cross-section. Le Corbusier, 1945



At the large windows of this domestic homeland, time stands still, awaiting a future time and the new city yet to arrive. Elevated above the plane of an expired time, the *Unité* entrusts the old city to a hygienic natural environment charged with the task of healing its shattered destiny. The unknown world outside becomes an object of hope and domestic longing of a new humanity. The new city is now the place the home dreams of from its window, and with it, the new world to which it must offer a homeland. Domestic life is now a community and the *Unité* is an area of common living.[7] A place for a new community structured around the concept of a man envisioned as the unit and measure for a new human organization and whose destiny is designed by the architect himself.

Meanwhile, the old society has relinquished the responsibility for its own destiny, leaving it in the hands of each and all the men and women who inhabit those dwellings elevated in the air. They are the new heroes of a community deserted by a lost past, which embraces the ideology of modernity as the soul of its own destiny. But life does not end here.

Every day, the men and women who inhabit the *Unité* in Marseille go to the factories built after the war, following our imagined path to the factory in Saint-Dié. The reconstruction plan for this city in northeast France initially included the construction of eight additional *Unités d'Habitation*, but it was ultimately rejected by the very same Minister for Reconstruction and Urbanism, Raoul Dautry. Unlike the minister, the renowned industrialist Jean Jacques Duval commissioned his friend, Le Corbusier, in 1946, to restore his hosiery factory in Saint-Dié, which had also been destroyed during the war.[8] The reconstruction was completed just months before the housing units in Marseille. This factory — 80 m long, 12 m wide and 15 m high — was to be the only industrial project that Le Corbusier would ever complete.

The cross-section, once again the main document for the project, closely resembles that of the housing in Marseille, although narrower and lower (Fig.3). The entrance and vertical circulation block, which is also connected to a former garment workshop, is located in a wing set back toward the rear façade. Internally, the layout adheres to the functional demands of textile manufacturing process. The circulation of fabrics and garments is independent of that of the workers.

Here, the industrialist joins the architect as a source of inspiration for modern activity. An activity that combines in this *vita activa* of labor and work, the destiny of a modern time capable of recovering from a failed time. To this end, Le Corbusier places the director's and administration offices on the roof of the factory, along with an archive and a meeting room. The housing block in Marseille also features a rooftop but, unlike that of Saint-Dié, it is designed for community leisure: playgrounds, a swimming pool, a gym, a solarium and open-air exercise areas. The Marseille rooftop is not designed for a life of action, but rather for a domestic life as conceived by the architect for the industrialist's employees.

The factory in Saint-Dié, with the same structural strategy as the housing in Marseille, sets out an identical destiny for its workers. Both anatomies are organized in a kind of layered structure that lifts them from the ground. Their respective forms of life — domestic and productive — are raised to protect their inhabitants from a world that has just collapsed. Both buildings boast extremely high interiors: in Marseille, the domestic section of the duplex is resolved with a staircase that its inhabitants use to move from one level to another; in the hosiery factory, a ramp connects the production needs of both floors.

These two buildings were preceded by the tragedy of the war and the destruction it wreaked. While the housing is built upon the ruins of the devastated city, the hosiery factory rises from its own rubble. From their shared elevation, both structures overlook the ruins and rubble, transforming their reality into a scene that Le Corbusier envisions as sublime, dreaming of it as his own homeland. This same structural strategy organizes the productive and domestic lives

7 Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1969), 96.

8 Jean-Jacques Duval, "La bataille pour Saint-Dié," in *Le Corbusier, l`écorce et la fleur* (Paris: Editions du Linteau, 2006), 43-111.

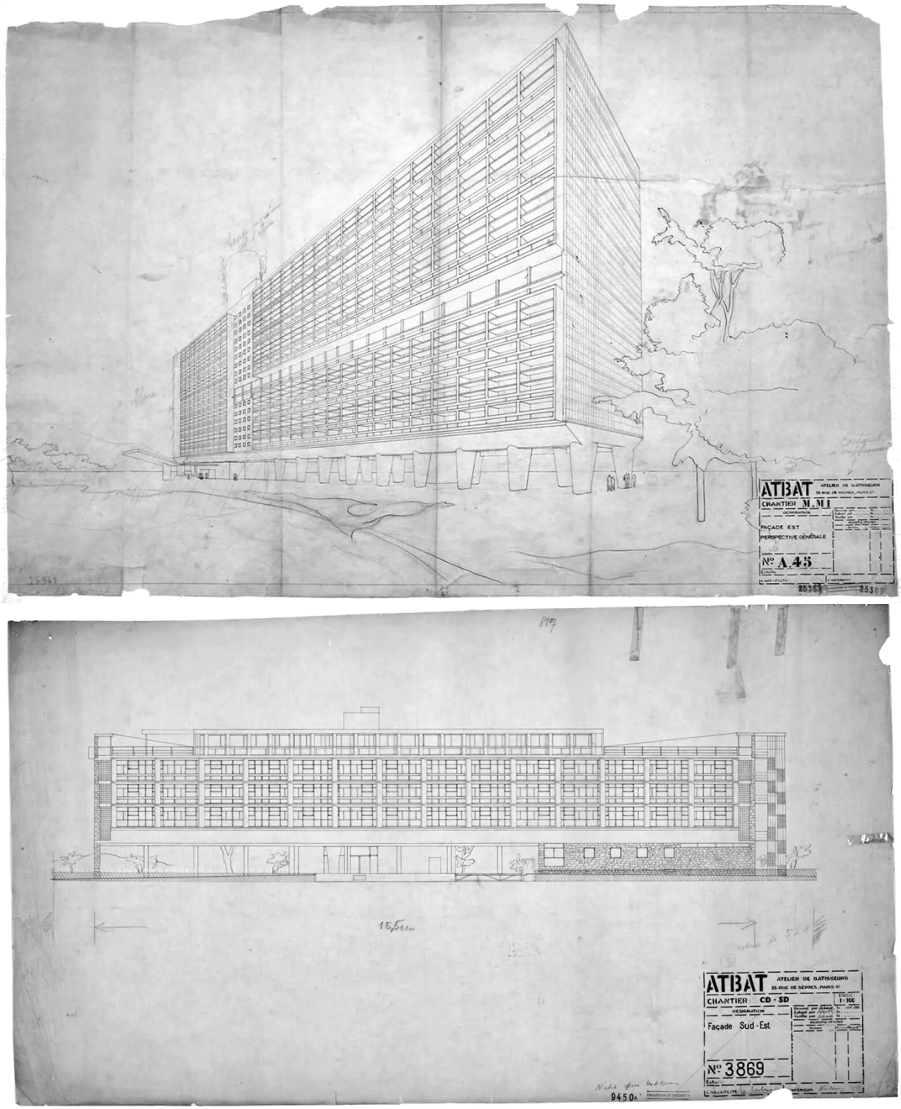


Fig. 4: Left, Factory in Saint-Dié, southeast façade. Le Corbusier, 1946. Right, Unité d'Habitation in Marseille, east façade. Le Corbusier, 1945

of men and women, chosen to be the recipients of an era founded on their work and a new lifestyle. The inhabitant of Marseille and the worker of Saint-Dié celebrate, in an unbreakable *vive et labora*, the determination for a better time — a future time.

The employees of the hosiery factory engage in a work activity guided by the efficiency of their newfound modernity. The factory serves as the container for work that the man performs within the vertical arrangement of four strata: access, warehouse for inbound and outbound goods, production, and management. The packaging plant is the border for the exchange between the two worlds. The worker is therefore the anonymous and individual actor who fulfills the mission of achieving both worlds. If the house is a machine for inhabiting, the factory is a machine for working (Fig. 4).

Upon returning home, the worker finds an identically organized space. Its sole purpose is to fulfill the mission envisioned by the architect: the conquest of a world free from hardship and danger. As in the hosiery factory, the man of the *Unité* once again rises above a heroic concrete structure. From this vantage point, the modern man gazes at a world from which he has been violently torn, one he regards with suspicion as part of the past, and whose future he only knows through the plans of the industrialist and the dreams of the architect. It is no coincidence that Le Corbusier himself included the factory in his manual for the city of the future, published in 1945 in *Les Trois établissements humains*:

> "The linear industrial city creates, on the contrary, *pure* peasant reserves, vast reserves, and establishes a more intimate contiguity between the earth and industry, between the life of the land and the life of the factory, the industrial worker and the peasant, between a clean, revitalized, whole land, and an industry that is brilliant, optimistic, gleaming with order, intensity, and beauty."[9]

However, the promise of order and beauty was not enough for the man moving between the *Unité* and the hosiery factory. Le Corbusier's modern man was unable to inhabit the external part of his life. His destiny could not be fulfilled without that world left outside. "How, I wondered, could 1,600 of this essentially 'agora-minded' and volatile community ever be happily contained in this great rectangle on the outskirts of the town" wrote Kenneth Easton[10] in the account of his visit to Marseille in 1951. At this point, in the gaze that sublimates the horror of the wreckage, and of a ruined time, emerges the plea of the poet Rainer Maria Rilke before the torso of a young Miletus, also defeated by time: "For there's no place from which you can't be seen. Begin now: you must change the life you are."[11]

Armed with his own individuality, this modern man ventures into the public exterior he once feared. Beyond the raised boxes — sometimes home, sometimes factory — and standing on the shoulders of an ever-restless modernity, the inhabitants and workers would discover the reasons for this unexpected world. In the round-trip commute between home and the modern factory — between Le Corbusier's *Unité* and the hosiery factory — the modern man explores the possibilities of another world and a new being: the *being-in-public*.[12]

The conquest of this exterior world will transform this modern man into a new man, perhaps into the very man and time he once feared; a man increasingly at ease being in public and having a new space to display his newly acquired privacy; a man who succumbed to the intoxication of the community, as argued by Hesse,[13] and to the loss amid the crowd of a personality once kept safe. This new man does not settle for the world glimpsed from those houses and factories as the home of his desired being-in-public. On the contrary, he finds in its exteriority the ideal space for a new form of privacy.[14] The interior of the house and the factory gradually shift toward an exteriority that establishes its own boundary (Fig. 4). This boundary then becomes a transitional zone: an exterior space reimagined as interior, a façade traditionally facing outwards now turned inward, as Geist writes.[15] The best room was therefore located at the boundary between house and factory. The interior space of these magical boxes shrinks until it becomes its own boundary. This journey makes the interior of the modern laboratory disappear, only to be re-established within its own boundaries — boundaries as ephemeral as the new destiny of the men and women who inhabit them.

---

9 Le Corbusier, *Les Trois établissements humains* (Paris: Denoël, 1945); citation from the Englisj translation *The Three Human Establishments* (Chandigarh: Punjab Government, Department of Town & Country Planning, 1979), 112.

10 Kenneth Easton, "Views on Le Corbusier's Unite d'Habitation," *Architectural Review* (May 1951): 295.

11 Rainer Maria Rilke, *New Poems* (New York: Camden House, 2015), 173. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Ästhetik und Poetik I: Kunst als Aussage* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1993), 125.

12 José Luis Pardo, *La intimidad* (Barcelona: Editorial Pre-Textos, 1996), 59.

13 Herman Hesse *Steppenwolf* (New York: Bantam, 1970), 159.

14 See Terence Riley, *The Un-Private House* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1999), 12.

15 Johann Geist, *Passagen, ein Bautyp des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Munich: Prestel, 1969), 11.

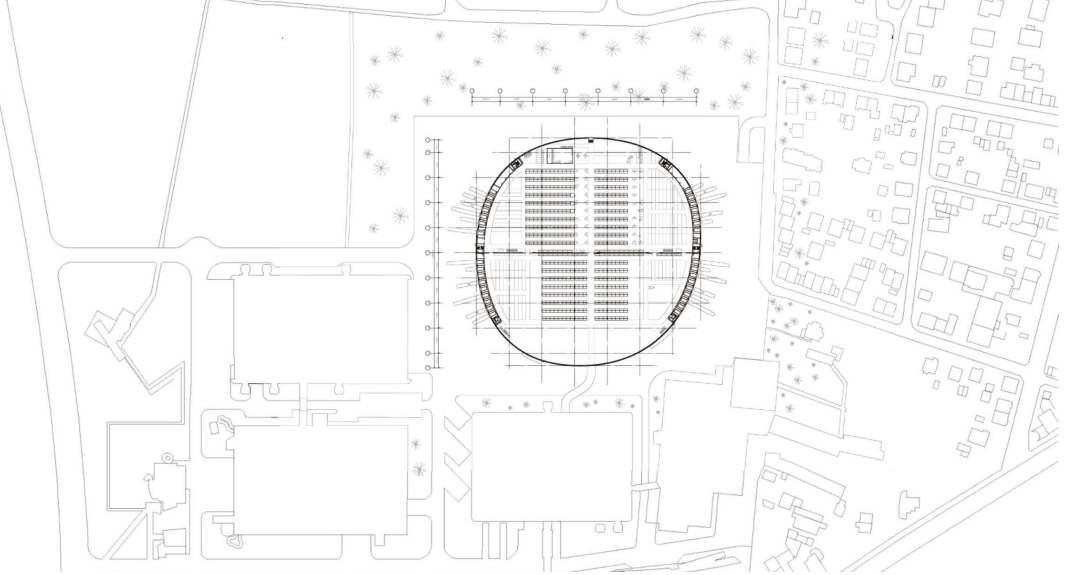


Fig. 5: Vitra Factory Building, Weil am Rhein. Ground floor plan. SANAA, 2006–2012

On the Way Between the Vitra Factory and the Maréchal Fayolle Apartments by SANAA

Seven decades after the construction of the *Unité d'Habitation* in Marseille and the hosiery factory in Saint-Dié by Le Corbusier, and amid a fresh wave of social upheaval caused by the great economic crisis of the first decade of the twenty-first century, SANAA builds, also almost simultaneously, a furniture factory for the company Vitra in the German city of Weil am Rhein (2006-2012) and the apartments in the Maréchal Fayolle Housing Complex in Paris (2016-2018).

The new Vitra factory abandons the orthogonal streets and prismatic volumes that Le Corbusier championed as manifestations of his modern homeland. SANAA envisions a new kind of industrial architecture, where logistics and production are no longer rigid or hierarchical. Those magical concrete boxes are transformed here into a single white, curvilinear curtain drawn across the ground plane. Its geometry establishes a new naturalness that challenges with its whiteness the artificiality of the modern city (Fig. 5).

The curtain encloses[16] a structural framework open to the sky. The interior consists of a single space that houses the four major areas Vitra had previously organized into four separate prismatic volumes. The result is a large horizontal space, almost circular —160 m in diameter and 11 m in height. A single space resolves therefore the time of work. The employees occupy an open area, governed by the company's production rules and processes, yet open to variable organization. All together, they create a public scene in which they participate for a time — the duration of the workday. This achieved plurality, where all men are equal in their humanity, yet uniquely different from one another, constitutes the condition of human action as defined by Arendt.

The Vitra factory, like Le Corbusier's hosiery factory, emerged after a fire that destroyed much of the previous building. However, SANAA's renewal establishes a new place rather than a new building: a forest of props, beams, and sheet metal roofing, transformed into the wireframe anatomy of a new nature that appeals to an irremediable temporality. This single space is drawn across the ground like a great curtain, which doubles to accommodate a sort of parlor[17] — a place for exchange of people and goods (Fig. 6).

16 This enclosure, in the terminology of Eugenio Trías, is a limit that is deployed in three ways: a limit that appears, a borderline limit and a third, hermetic limit. See Eugenio Trías, *Lógica del límite* (Barcelona: Ediciones Destino, 1997), 30-36.

17 We use the term "parlour" as a reception room or public space. In medieval Christian Europe, the "outer parlour" was the room where the monks or nuns conducted business with those outside the monastery and the "inner parlour" was used for necessary conversation between resident members. See Bill Bryson, *At Home: A Short History of Private Life* (London: Penguin Random House, 2010), 202.

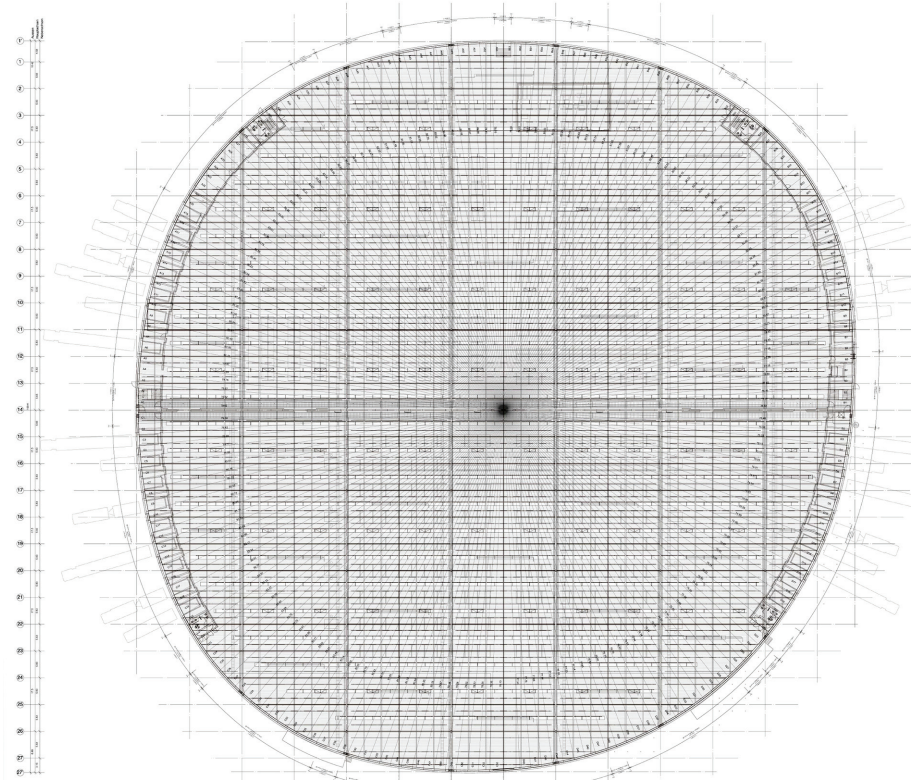
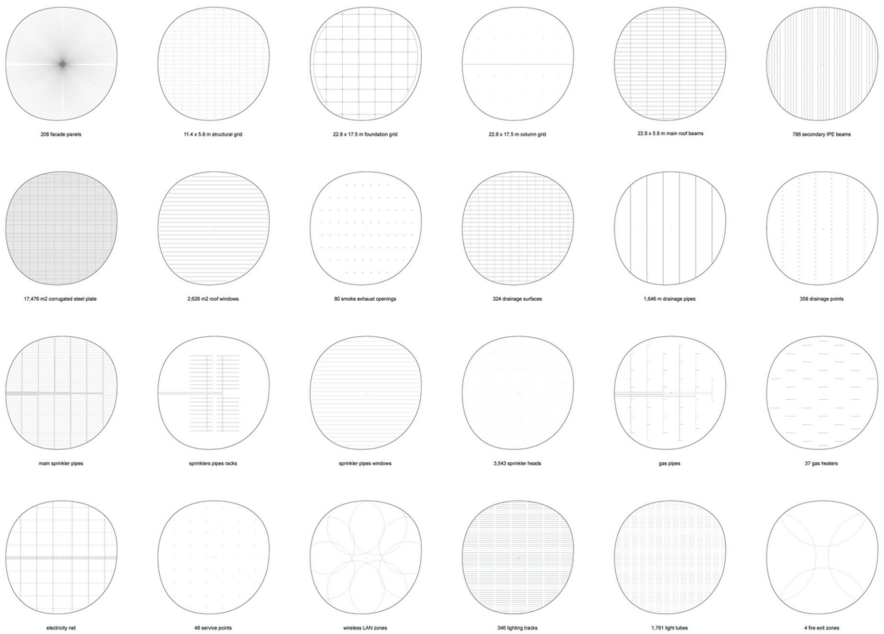


Fig. 6: Vitra Factory Building, Weil am Rhein. Structural geometry. SANAA, 2006–2012

Fig. 7: Vitra Factory Building, Weil am Rhein. Functional and service layers. SANAA, 2006–2012



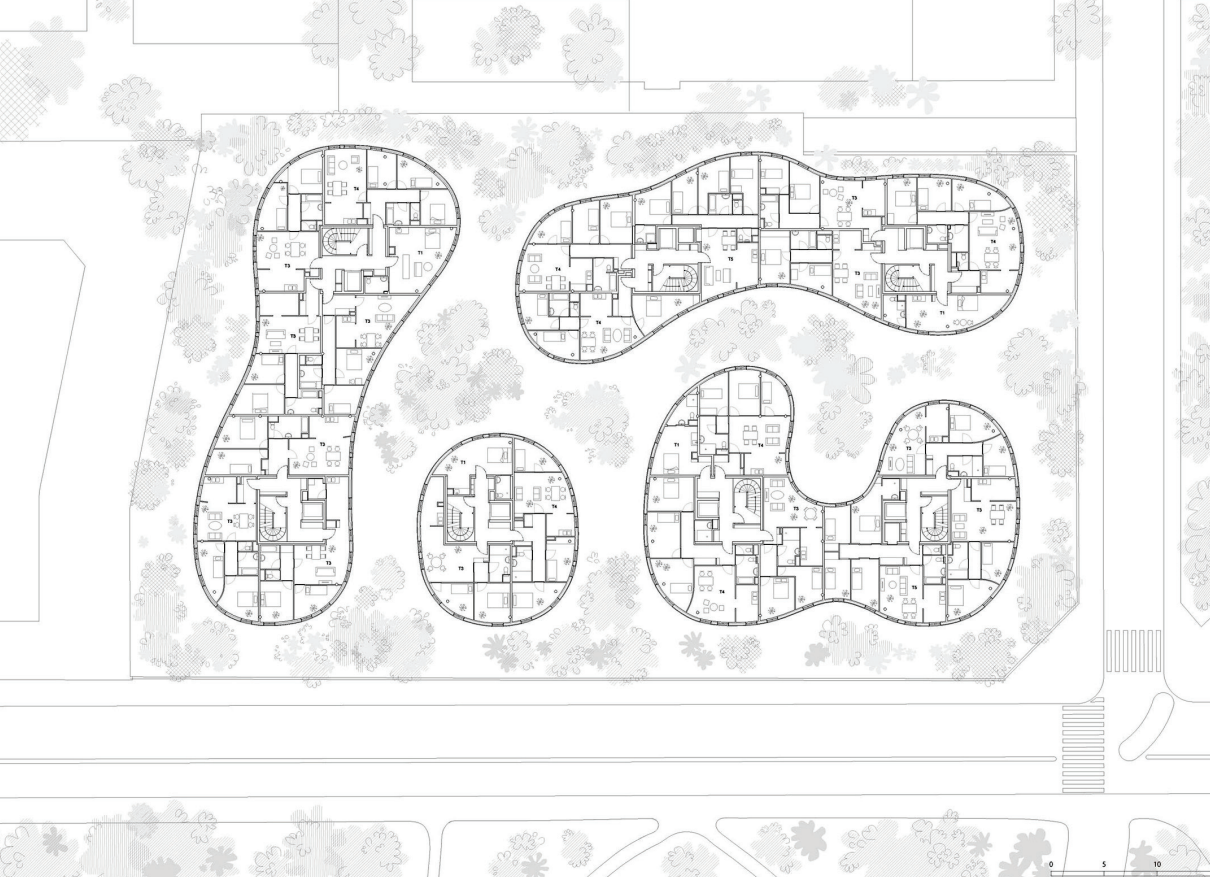


Fig. 8: Apartments in Avenue Maréchal Fayolle, Paris. Housing plan. SANAA, 2016–2018

The ground plan is oblong, breaking away from abstract, timeless geometry to share habitation with the natural environment and embrace its geometric vitality (Fig. 7). Buildings with an undulating perimeter are topologically equivalent to those with elementary figures, and they maintain the most important aspect, "that the outline is a single line", as argues Sejima.[18]

In the terms of Arendt's *vita activa*, the Vitra factory celebrates the worldliness of humanity. It no longer claims to be the new cathedral extolling redemption through work, because contemporary men and women have moved past the belief in the transcendence of work. Instead, its interior offers a space free from hierarchies, firmly rooted in the earth yet open to the shifting light from above — a place constantly transformed. Beneath its roof, envisioned as the sky of a renewed nature, a woven zenithal light filters through folds in the structure, suffusing the interior. This pronounced horizontal design anchors the workers' lives to the ground, creating a new and reliable homeland (Fig. 7).

The vast curtain stands poised, awaiting the labor of contemporary men and women who breathe life into this new place and its natural environment. As Bauman would say, the workers, not the factory, now serve as the containers of labor performed within a limited timeframe — a time in which the permanent future once sought by the workers in Le Corbusier's factory slowly fades.

Upon returning from work on our imagined route, the employees of the Vitra factory enter their domestic time in the apartments on Avenue Maréchal Fayolle, in the 16th arrondissement of Paris. These dwellings embody a sense of community that reaches the status of a condominium. They claim the ground plan as the foundation where new curtains are drawn, reimagining the natural environment as a new domestic space. Four curtains — concave and convex in

18 Juan Antonio Cortes, "An inquiry into the nature of contemporary space," *El Croquis* 39 (2008): 41.

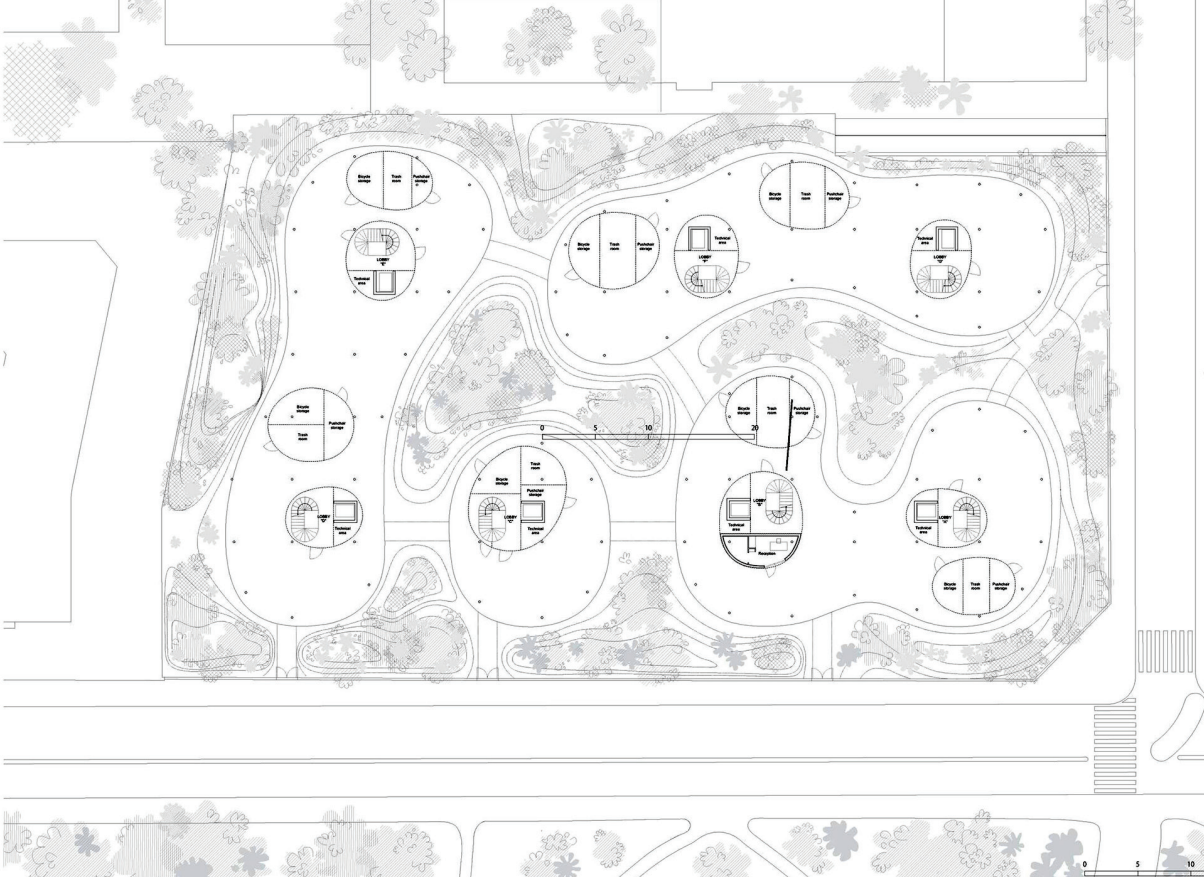


Fig. 9: Apartments in Avenue Maréchal Fayolle, Paris. SANAA. Accesses and natures, 2016–2018

shape — alternate the domestic participation and times of the inhabitants. Through a play of pleats and folds, SANAA defines a continuity of spaces that shift between interior and exterior, together defining a new domestic sphere (Fig. 8).

The curtains serve a dual function, both on their outer and inner sides. While the outer face gathers what domestic intimacy conceals, the inner side hosts the home's more public life. On the outer surface of the folds, the inhabitants occupy an open room where they stage the scene of their new being — a being not invested in permanence but inclined to celebrate a new era: one of human encounters. Through this continuous commuting between home and work, contemporary individuals transform their longed-for exteriority into an encounter with being-in-public — a mode of existence in constant movement across the contiguous concavities and convexities that unfold along the four curtains of the condominium. Among the folds of this domestic curtain, a series of small windows is imprinted on its structural fabric. From these windows, the inhabitants gaze outward, now as spectators of this public encounter — ultimately watching themselves.

Initially, the inhabitant of the interstices between the folds is an actor in a new encounter with being-in-public, while the inhabitant on the other side becomes a spectator-being, observing the scene. The result is an encounter between the individual as a being-in-public and the individual as a spectator. Between them lies a new room in the new home, which shelters a natural environment offered by the architects. The contemporary inhabitants, in contrast to the modern ones, have stopped encountering the others to encounter themselves in a new room that they now share with nature.[19] This new room, enclosed by curtains and drapery, embraces a natural environment nestled within its folds. A renewed domesticity emerges, housing a natural

19 Han, *La salvación de lo bello*, 35.

environment with which humans wish to connect. The contemporary individuals no longer see themselves as settlers in a nature to be tamed and controlled as a symbol of personal progress and a way to overcome the ghosts of the past. Instead, they seek to belong to it — or, better yet, to become part of it. That sublime observation of a painful reality that Le Corbusier once proposed to the inhabitants of Marseille and the workers of Saint-Dié here transforms into what Han would call a dainty, delicate, luminous and tender beauty.[20]

The four curtains on Avenue Maréchal Fayolle frame a never-ending public event (Fig. 9). They act both as curtain and backdrop for a new kind of domestic life: the homeland of a longed-for exteriority in which the members of a renewed human community observe one another. The observation of this endless domestic scene signals the triumphant public status of a contemporary society, now the agent of its own existence. The men and women who inhabit this space among the curtains are, in the words of the British anthropologist Victor W. Turner, "threshold people" or "liminal personae," whose attributes "are necessarily ambiguous, since this condition and these persons elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space."[21]

The time of these new men and women is the time of the everyday. Working at the Vitra factory or living in the Maréchal Fayolle apartments means beginning again each day, as Sejima puts it.[22] These workers and neighbors meet in a continuous, ever-changing collective scene. There, the community watches itself, eroding the significance of the modern man of the *Unité* and with it, their responsibility toward future eras.

The public dimension of this continuous interplay between the contemporary home and factory conjures the dream of an equal, timeless, and unstructured society. Perhaps it is precisely here, within these new architectures inscribed on the ground and transformed into places that these new men and women, having attained their long-sought equality and liberation from structure, now yearn for a lost identity — an identity that, once found, will still represent an original sin in a new social structure that these new men and women will try to cast off again.

New Forms of *Vita activa* Between Home and Factory

The man who lives midway between the *Unité d'Habitation* in Marseille and the factory in Saint-Dié becomes actor of a life and a worldliness shaped by the architect's plan and the industrialist's conviction. In the factory and at home, he performs work and labor that speak of a life of modern action. He is not the author of this life, but he is of the new reality. His existence weaves together home and work within an architecture that gazes upon a world to which he does not yet belong. And to do so, he rises — through similar structural sections — above the ruins of a bygone era. Standing on the two foundational sections, the modern man appears before a world that must first be conquered in order to be enjoyed again. The new world will thus be the creation and the fortune of this new man. This is his destiny and time — a time that surely extends beyond the span of their individual lives. This new domestic and working life belongs to a being-in-privacy who always gestures toward a time to come, a future time.

The life of the factory and the life of the home replicate in a single organization and mission, intertwined in the action of the architect and the industrialist, authors and promoters of the destiny of that modern destiny. The man who lives and works between his home in Marseille and the factory in Saint-Dié holds onto the possibility of its achievement, an achievement that would prove to be elusive.

As Hermann Hesse recounts, the modern man — actor of lives envisioned by others —decid-

20 Ibid.

21 Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process. Structure and Anti-Structure* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell Paperback, 1977), 95.

22 Koji Taki, "Conversation with Kazuyo Sejima," *El Croquis* 77 (1996): 6-18.

ed to shift his life and worldliness to a new public homeland, becoming not only actor, but also author of his own destiny. A new man, weary of the strenuous demands of modern life, will abandon the protective anatomies of a worldless world, and step into it — as part of that long-promised future and of a nature that, until then, had only been observed. At that point, he assumes responsibility for both life and destiny, even if that choice entails a new kind of defeat.

The men and women living midway the apartments on Avenue Maréchal Fayolle and the Vitra factory decide to enter that world that the modern man once distrusted, becoming authors of a new life and worldliness shaped by their own actions. The time for this destiny is that of their own lives, as fleeting as their existence. In the factory and the home, they stage the work and labor that speak of them, as creators of a new homeland whose nature they inhabit. Their achievement was as ephemeral as the life cycle of the ecosystem of which they are part. In their own name alone, they act as accomplices to a nature they allow to pass through the curtains of their factories and homes, now drawn on the plane of a land to which they are attached.

The men and women at the Vitra factory stage a voluntary compliance with the work guidelines established under the spectators' gaze of the rest of their peers, without the supervision of a business owner who cannot be identified in the actual factory. They all work on the same ground plane. They all embrace a behavior that was shown in open, community action, where each worker embodies the worldliness announced by Arendt. Back home, carrying that worldliness with them, they move through the folds and refolds of domestic spaces to inhabit that reclaimed nature and, with it, the world itself. In a new and gratifying "seeing and being seen," they achieve a public and shared worldliness, becoming the stage for life itself. The individuals returning from work are actors in a new inhabitation of the home, ultimately creating a new stage: the nature-room.

These men and women commuting between the Vitra factory and the apartments on Avenue Maréchal Fayolle unfold into a being-in-public and a being-spectator. Contemporary individuals are both authors of a nature they are part of and actors within it, in an architecture framed by curtains. Their action is, in Arendt's words, part of a new story. They are, therefore, authors and actors of a new *vita activa*: their own.

The men and women for whom Le Corbusier and SANAA provide habitation — as half-dwellers and half-workers — scour those round-trip commutes between home and factory for the possibility of a new existence, of a new *vita activa*. While Le Corbusier's foundational structures elevate the work and domestic life of a modern man whose destiny transcends the time of his life, in SANAA's contemporary individual, the curtains drawn across the ground stage the new domestic and industrial life of a destiny that matches that of their own lives. While the modern man conducted a *vita activa* in an architecture that combined labor, work and action as a being-in-private, the contemporary individual celebrates this *vita activa* in an architecture that illuminates the promise of a permanent being-in-public.

REFERENCE LIST:

Arendt, Hannah. *The human condition*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1958.
Bauman, Zygmunt. *El Arte de la Vida*. Buenos Aires: Paidós, 2009.
Boesiger, Willy. *Le Corbusier-Oeuvre Complète 1957-1965*. Zurich: Les Editions d'Architecture, 1995.
Bryson, Bill. *At Home: A Short History of Private Life*. London: Penguin Random House, 2010.
Cortes, Juan Antonio. "An inquiry into the nature of contemporary space." *El Croquis* 139 (2008): 41.
Duval, Jean-Jacques. *Le Corbusier, l`écorce et la fleur*. Paris: Editions du Linteau, 2006.
Easton, Kenneth. "Views on Le Corbusier's Unite d'Habitation." *Architectural Review* 653 (1951): 295.
Geist, Johann. *Passagen, ein Bautyp des 19. Jahrhunderts*. München: Prestel, 1969.
Han, Byung-Chul. *La salvación de lo bello*. Barcelona: Herder, 2015.
Hesse, Hermann. *Steppenwolf*. New York: Bantam, 1970.
Le Corbusier, *Les Trois établissements humains*. Paris: Denoël, 1945.
Pardo, José Luis. *La intimidad*. Barcelona, Editorial Pre-Textos, 1996.
Riley, Terence. *The Un-Private House*. New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1999.
Rilke, Rainer María. *New Poems*. New York: Camden House, 2015.
Taki, Koji. "A Conversation with Kazuyo Sejima." *El Croquis* 77 (1996): 6-18.
Trías, Eugenio. *Lógica del límite*. Barcelona: Ediciones Destino, 1997.
Turner, Victor. *The Ritual Process. Structure and Anti-Structure*. Ithaca, New York: Cornell Paperback, 1977.
Vitruvius. *The ten books on Architecture*. Translated by Morris Hicky Morgan. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1914.

ILLUSTRATION CREDITS:

Fig. 1: Excerpted from Vitruvius, *The Ten Books on Architecture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1914). Public domain.
Fig. 2: Fondation Le Corbusier.
Fig. 3, 4: https://lecorbusier-worldheritage.org/en/manufacture-a-saint-die/; https://lecorbusier-worldheritage.org/en/unite-habitation/.
Fig. 5, 6, 7: Excerpted from SANAA. Sejima & Nishizawa, 2007-2015. AV Monographs, nº 171-172.
Fig. 8, 9: Excerpted from https://archello.com/es/project/apartments-on-ave-marechal-fayolle.