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LIVING TOGETHER

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* The exhibition at the Vitra Center in August 2017, “Together!,” offered a timeline of collectivity, a model city of contemporary collective architecture, a 1:1 prototype of a cluster apartment, and an exhibition space featuring four firms who focus on different aspects of creating collective architecture, from financial structures to programmatic combinations.
* The introduction essay in the exhibition catalogue offered several insights on the evolution of collective living, emphasizing emerging trends that redefine how we live now. The authors posed that the reorganization of city life into new collective forms is “reinvigorating our cities and redefining urbanity” (38). The combination of collective living with collective work as well as social and leisure spaces softens the border between housing and the city around it, bringing the city into these new housing experiments.
* The architecture of the new collective is happening at three levels: individual apartment, apartment building, and urban space.
* Individual apartment: Cluster apartments, which consist of a large shared living area embedded with smaller studio apartments with kitchenettes, function as a compromise between total independence and total collectivity. As a series of tiny houses within a larger grand house, this formation allows individuals to carry out daily tasks in privacy if they wish, but then also provide a large community space which and an overall infrastructure of pooled resources and responsibilities.
* Apartment Building: Shared domestic facilities, like laundry, library, seminar spaces, workshops, play areas, collective kitchens with an employed cook, are supplementing traditional apartment buildings of individual apartments.
* Urban Space: New apartment buildings that offer space programmed for neighborhood functions. As an antidote to the “stereotypical monofunctional housing developments of the post-war era, which tended to suffocate urban life thanks to the modernist dogma of functional separation,” these new buildings recalibrate the relationship between private and public space, envisioning a city with in which housing does a lot of the work in creating it. The Kalkbreite housing cooperative Zurich dedicated 50% of its program to non-residential functions. These public facilities include a cinema, a packaging-free supermarket, three restaurants/cafes, doctors offices, office spaces, and a public courtyard with playing areas for children. “These programs bring the city into the building and, conversely, make it a genuine part of the city” (38).
* Density control is a part of making this work. In Kalkbreite, there must be at least one person for each individual room, with an average of 33.2 square meters person, which is less than the city and country averages of residential space per person (39).

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Mathias Muller, Daniel Niggli, Ilka Ruby, Andreas Ruby, “Together! On the Renaissance off the Collective in Contemporary Urban Architecture” Vitra Design Museum and Ruby Press, Weil am Rhein (2017).