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POST-FAMILIAL COMMUNES IN GERMANY

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- Skepticism arises especially from the concern that no one will take care of or feel responsible for spaces divided in a new way. But changes in the way people work will allow for a more successful communal existence than in the past. If work can be done at home, then someone is always there – to take care of and use the space. Children can spend time with other parents and children and eat with other occupants in the option spaces, simplifying childcare through greater options. Nuclear families, or what is left of them, can dissolve into the extended family space. For single parents and their children, this is clearly a helpful arrangement – but one that benefits nuclear families as well. (Maak, 86)

- If 30 people are gathered together for a family celebration, then one person’s bad mood – or absence – matters much less to the collective. It is precisely the presence of so many people in an extended family that makes the private sphere possible. (Maak, 86)

- Moriyama House by Ryue Nishizawa (2005): a core space for intimacy is still guaranteed. Instead of just a room, like in classic communes, everyone has a micro-house with a bathroom and a cooking plate. (Maak, 87)

- The concept of privacy prevalent in Western Europe and the United States is shaped by an aggressive concept: the Latin word privare means “to deprive” or “to rob.” Being in private thus means being in a space wrested from a collective whole, which must be defended. Hence, the private sphere is conceived of as robbery and the emergence of property as an act of aggression against the community: one robes something and makes it inaccessible to others. Only then does it become possible to be apud se, chez soi, at home. (Maak, 88)

- House before House by Sou Fujimoto (2009): the concept of privatum itself predetermines the relationship between individual and community. In a conception where there is initially a collective – say, common land – from which an individual splits, the private will invariably have a negative connotation: intrinsic to the act of privatization is exclusion. … Another conception would be that the individual came first and only later joined forces with other individuals. … The first case is an act of closure; the second is one of opening. … In Japanese architecture the individual or “private” is thus not defined as an act of “robbery” form collective space, but rather as a prerequisite for the latter. (Maak, 88)

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Niklas Maak, “Post-Familial Communes in Germany”, Harvard Design Magazine No.41 - Family Planning, 2015.