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## Typical

Studio Critic: Charles Eldred

*"It must be observed that the general case, the one to which all ~~legal~~ forms and rules are suited, and on the basis of which they are all worked out and ~~written down~~ in the books, simply does not exist, for the very reason that every case, let's say, for instance, every ~~crime~~, as soon as it actually occurs, turns at once into a completely particular case, sir; and sometimes, just think, really completely unlike all the previous ones, sir."*

-Investigator Porfiry Petrovich, in Fyodor Dostoevsky, Crime and Punishment

**Persistence:** Substitute "architectural" for "legal", "drawn" for "written down", and "building" for "crime". Dostoevsky gives us a remarkably elastic characterization not so much of Type itself, but of the perpetually-vanishing flux between the typical and the particular, the critical driver of type for Architecture, for its Subjects, and for their relationship in the City. From the terraced housing of London's Kensington, to the slender walk-up slabs of Barcelona's La Barceloneta, to the brownstones of New York's Harlem, type has constructed the space of the street, the street has constructed the space of the neighborhood, and the neighborhood has constructed the space of the city. Type's generic repetition anchors its value in the Market; type's specific variation stimulates a richly diverse urban grain. A fully realized type is not just ordered from a catalogue. It is an idea, an instrument that embodies both a possible City, and a full life within it.

**The Last Type:** Type is elusive. We may speak of "circulation types", like *double-loaded corridor*, or "zoning types", like New York's *tower-on-a-base*. But the fact that these are bereft of the fuller set of secondary characteristics of entry, room organization, material, structure, and so on (for example, the brownstone's front stoop, or the pre-war's room sequences), makes them so diluted as to be practically meaningless. Where are the new types? In New York, the last new type seems to be the Loft. But this is a contradiction: the Loft was already here, waiting, in the vast, stoic daylight factories, emptied by industry's painful retreat from the City, and only later reconceived as Housing. The Loft is a re-appropriation, not an invention. It simultaneously indicates a great and hopeful programmatic imagination (who could have foreseen *living in a factory?*), but also the utter endgame of typological exhaustion (is this the best we can devise?).

**Frame:** The Loft enacts the enfolded double-origins of the Frame in contemporary Architecture and Development. The original engineer's industrial frames realized the gravity-diverting potential of reinforced concrete or steel structure, while Corbusier's Dom-ino diagram (note: originally a housing scheme), domesticated them for architectural consumption. But even as Corbusier was formalizing the split between structure and infill as his *plan libre*, Real Estate was already assigning the Frame to its Owner-Developer, and the infill to its Tenant. This division, sometimes known as Core + Shell development, inscribes multiple time-scales, multiple designers, and multiple client entities into a project. It exploits the Frame to reallocate Jurisdiction and Control, in a bid to hedge Risk and protect Capital. So what? Isn't the Frame now just simply the type that can make all the other types? Certainly it is a shape-shifter: already in the 1920's, high-end prewar blocks were being made from concrete and steel frames. But the Frame is more—it is an organism, competing and evolving. From Berlin to Rio to Mumbai to New York, the Frame has devoured type and conquered space, and subjugated difference in both places and people. Could this endgame of type be related to the inability of modernism to construct a humane, sustainable City?

**Resistance:** Now re-read Dostoevsky's quote, but this time substitute "human" for "legal", "pictured" for "written down", and "body" for "crime". When people want to control other people, they often label them as *typical*. Yet we all still embody the resistance of unique qualities "really completely unlike all the previous ones". What "completely particular" individuals will choose to live on these blocks along the Grand Concourse in the Bronx, and why? Will architectural-type constrain their potential, their health, their social connectedness? Or more fully release it?

The studio will engage the persistence (and possible revitalization) of type from the Bronx to Berlin and back, and speculate on how typological diversity, hybridization, and transformation might intersect with subjectivity and value in the design of Housing.