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ARCHITECTURE AGAINST CITY. ENCOUNTERS BETWEEN COLLECTIVE HOUSING AND PUBLIC SPACE

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Abstract:

For decades, the collective housing project has been repeating practices and habits inherited from the Modern Movement, with rigid programs that understand the building as a container (sum of housing capsules behind a facade), and with little regard for the boundary between the building and the adjacent public space. So far the problem of housing has been reduced exclusively to a problem of numbers and means, trusting in the effectiveness of the block, the tower, the row, etc.

The research that is being developed tries to demonstrate that an exit to the problem of contemporary collective housing and the search for new types would happen by rethinking the limit between the building and the public space.

The architects from the Modern Movement's third generation, react against the rational housing standards, looking for new ways to break the limit using two strategies: *systematization* and *contextualization* (context: surroundings, environment, atmosphere...).

These two strategies create different project mechanisms, which have been collected by some of the contemporary architects, seeking to recover the third generation's speech, their proposals and their statements.

The dissertation's purpose is to investigate in these proposals and strategies's origin, and detect the different design mechanism which the third generation used, by analyzing relevant housing programs, in order to find new formulations for the contemporary collective housing.

Keywords: Collective housing, Architecture design, Modern architecture, City, Public space

1. Introducción

Before the planning of the Weissenhofsiedlung, Mies van de Rohe stated "*The problem of the new housing is an architectural problem, despite its technical and economic side. It is a complex problem and therefore can only be solved with creative forces and not through mathematical means or organizational measures*" [1]. Despite the fact that his proposal thought collective housing in a way that was distant from the principles of the Deutsche Werkbund (which sought repetition and mass production) collective housing has always been reduced to a problem of numbers and economic means, as it was focused on the first calls of the International Congresses of Modern Architecture (CIAM), relying on the block, the tower or the row, without rethinking the types of collective housing.

This approach, repeated in reports, magazines and other publications, has ended up generating a certain typological crisis: the housing project has been reduced to a living capsule that is behind a facade, radically separating the building from the city. The meeting places between the neighbors are not considered, nor is the nature of the boundary between the dwelling and the public space, even though those elements were present in the traditional architectures; this has ended up creating, in the new neighborhoods, streets without people and empty squares. The *capsule syndrome*¹ is approaching and the only solution is to rethink how collective housing is related to public space.

Despite the repetition of this model, there have always been examples in modern architecture that have struggled against repetitive housing proposals, projects that sought more than an economic and logistical solution. Most of these examples are among the architects who are part of the third generation of the Modern Movement. Groups such as Team10, Dutch structuralists and Japanese Metabolism (among others), sought in their proposals to dissolve the boundary between housing and public space from different project mechanisms, inspired by both new technologies and vernacular architecture.

¹ Chermayeff and Alexander (1963), described the capsule syndrome as the tension produced by the confinement, with no possibility of escape from the city, the environment, for them "*An urban form that could adequately reflect all the pressures of our time tended the quality of maintaining a balanced life within itself without the need for escape ... if the design problems are solved there will be no capsule syndrome*" [2]

These planning strategies have been collected by some of the contemporary architects who, like the architects of the second postwar period, are looking for an alternative to the block or the tower. Contemporary architecture wants to rethink the established typologies of housing and its reinvention depends on rethinking the boundary between architecture and public space, recovering the mechanisms developed by the architects of the 1950s and 1970s.

2. State of the art

Research on collective housing has focused mainly on the adaptation of the housing cell to new ways of living in contemporary culture such as Fernandez Lorenzo's thesis of 2012, "*La casa abierta. Hacia una vivienda variable y sostenible concebida como si el habitante importara*" [3], defended at the Polytechnic University of Madrid, the adequacy of housing regulations, such as the research of Nieto Fernández "*Normalizar la utopía. Un proyecto de sistematización de la normativa en vivienda social*" [4], also defended at the Polytechnic of Madrid in 2014 or historicist research on third generation architects, such as that of Serrano Rojo in 2012, "*Contextos habitados. Del movimiento moderno al Team 10, evolución de dos proyectos residenciales: Cordiales-Toulouse le Mirail*" [5] defended at the University of Granada.

Thesis have began to appear in where the research paid attention to the neighbor's relationship spaces, as is the case of Núria Salvadó Aragón's dissertation "*INTERVALS HABITATS. Aproximacions a l'espai de transició de l'habitatge col·lectiu (1990-2007)*" [6] in which the autor made an analysis of these spaces in some contemporary architecture examples, by making and inventory of the different object that appear in this spaces, as a proof that spaces are used by the neighbors.

The thesis presented in this communication wants to take a step further and identify and understand from where the mechanisms that allow the linking of housing and city buildings arise, through the analysis of projects in which that intention is present.

3. Objectives and Object of study

3.1. General Objectives

The doctoral thesis presented has as its ultimate goal to demonstrate that there are alternatives to the most widespread types of collective housing, understanding that these appear when the limits between architecture and public space are rethought..

In this way it is proposed:

1. *Study* the cultural currents affecting the architects of the 1950s.
2. *Locate and analyze* the written production of the post-war architects on which their projects are based.
3. *Classify* the different aspects of the discourse of the third generation architects of the Modern Movement, and thus establish how they intended to carry out these ideas
4. *Find* examples of collective housing in which the idea of breaking the boundary between housing and public space is reflected.
5. *Defining* the design mechanisms that allow dissolving these limits (spatially and through other behaviors).

3.2. Object of study

The filter for the search of projects of collective housing in which it is wanted to approach the house to the public space, and thus to approach it to the user, is established by a series of concepts:

The Second World War generates a change of thought in the Western world. The positivist idea of progress for progress enters into crisis after the war, generating a boom in the social sciences and raising questions throughout Western society. The renaissance of philosophical thought, with the existentialist current, the structuralists, or personages like Heidegger or Henry Lefebvre and his idea of the "right to the city", added to the new social sciences (anthropology, sociology ...) or anarchist movements like Provo² in Holland, will generate a field of culture that will influence the post-war architects; hence the starting point is the work and ideas of the architects who began their career in the 1950s.

² Under this label we can group a serie of students with a desire to provoke the system through a combination of absurd humor and "non-violent" aggression of Gandhist inspiration. They acted until 1968 and carried out their "white plans" to raise awareness about public transport, pollution, female health etc.

It is therefore that the thesis that is presented in this communication has as object the study of housing buildings, made in the 50s, 60s and 70s, in which it is desired to dissolve the boundary between architecture and public space.

4. Methodology

The research for the different project mechanisms is carried out from the interested review of bibliography and primary sources, such as architectural publications of the 50s, 60s and 70s. Once the different groups, movements and architects are located, a selection of works is made and a comparative analysis of the different projects in which this intention of dissolving the limit between the building and the space that surrounds it is carried out. The comparative analysis will allow to locate common characteristics between the buildings that will show the different mechanisms that break the boundary between housing and public space and merge the dwelling with the environment.

5. Content of the doctoral thesis

The body of the thesis that is being developed is composed of three blocks: two fully theoretical blocks and one analytical graph.

5.1. Part 1: Socio-cultural situation

The first part of the thesis proposes an approach to the cultural state of the postwar period, as a preliminary step to understand the reason for the change of mentality of the third generation architects. The warlike conflict generates a change of mentality in Western society. This turn is accompanied by a rebound in the social sciences, and also a change in philosophical thinking: existentialism, situationalism and structuralism will affect all arts and therefore architecture.

New sciences such as anthropology and sociology also emerge, which will provoke a new way of looking around the young architects, to understand that the architectures and spaces of the city are not only a stage but also base many of their dispositions in life in society (Fig.1).

Although in the thesis we focus mainly on the architects who begin their professional work from 1950, we must understand that the great masters of architecture are also influenced by these changes and therefore also appear in some parts of the thesis.

The cultural landscape of the 1950s is also influenced by the pop movement and consumer society. For this reason, in the architectural sphere, it appears the idea of understanding architecture as an element



Fig. 1 Children Playing in the ruins after the Second World War.

<http://www.spiegel.de/lebenundlernen/schule/grosseltern-im-zweiten-weltkrieg-opa-und-der-hitlergruss-a-1032651.html>

of consumption, of "use and throw", and this mentality is reflected in the utopian proposals of Archigram, Archizoom, Japanese metabolists or Constant and Yona Friedman. His theories will be reflected in his collective housing proposals.

5.2. Part 2: An Objective, Two Strategies

The second part focuses on analyzing the theoretical basis of the two great project strategies that we can say are present among the architects of the third generation of the Modern Movement. Therefore the second block is divided into two chapters that define the two strategies: systematization and contextualization (understanding contextualization as everything related to the environment, the environment, the atmosphere of the place ...).

5.2.1. Systematic architecture

Despite being influenced by philosophy or sociology, we have to understand that post-war architects are part of the Modern Movement, and as such, they seek in their projects to find an idea or a system that allows solving future problems of the same nature.

From establishing that housing could be understood as a modular entity (which means that we can now define housing in the Japanese way of *nLKD*³), modulation allowed to establish different types of apartments in the same housing. This variation of the type broke with the infinite repetition of the same house in the International Style buildings, making typologies more suitable for different types of families. But these variations demanded a previous order, an *orthography* that allowed the co-existence in the same building of different types of housing.

This search for different *orthographies*, which we will define as systems, will generate variations of the forms of grouping of housing modules.

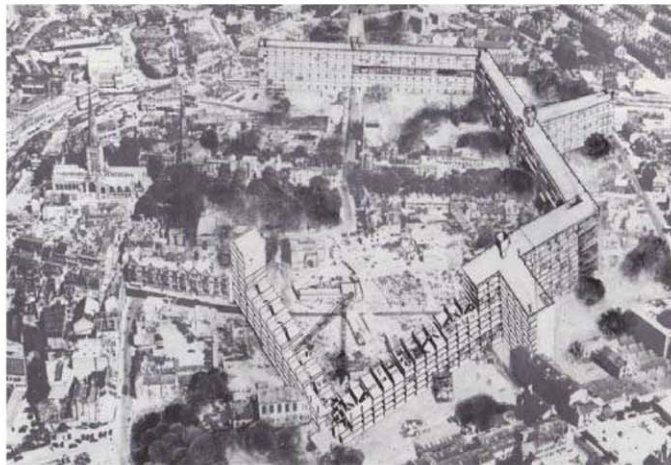


Fig. 2 Photomontage of the proposal of Alison and Peter Smithson for Golden Lane in which they proposed a clustered structure. Smithson, Smithson (1997) *The Charged Void: Architecture*. New York. The Monacelli Press p.89

In this way first appears the clustered structures or stems. These structures are defined as large vertical screens, that should be house structures, with which the architects sought to structure the city. The screens were broken adapting to the place by turning one way or another, structuring the public space (Fig. 2).

Later, continuing with the idea of merging architecture and city, the idea of mat-building appears. Facing the verticality of the clustered structures, mat-buildings have a horizontal and massive character, which gives this system a colonizing characteristic, since, not having a closed contour, it is able to occupy all available free space. With this mechanism was given solution to the idea of *web* that Woods was looking for:

"The "web" must be a highly flexible system in a world of great mobility. At the scales to which urban planners are working today, it is not possible to conceive of a large-scale plan based on spatial relations or a defined composition " "4[7]

³ Where *n* is the number of bedrooms , *L* is for living-room, *K* is for kitchen and *D* is for dining-room.

⁴ Translate by the autor

"Le "web" doit être un système hautement flexible dans un monde d'une grande mobilité. Aux échelles auxquelles les urbanistes travaillent aujourd'hui, il n'est pas possible de concevoir un plan de grande étendue basé sur des rapports spatiaux ou d'une composition définie"

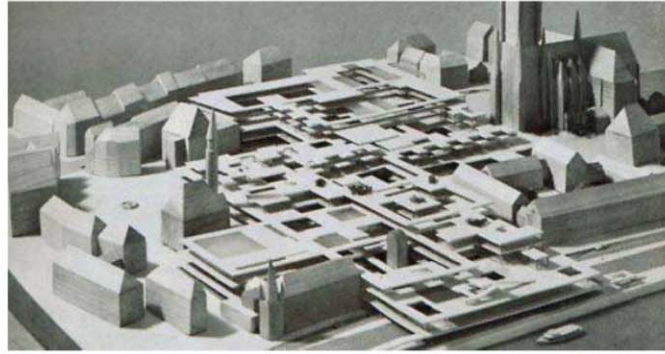


Fig. 3 Proposal for the reconstruction of Frankfurt-Römerberg in which Candilis, Josic and Woods propose for the first time a mat-building. Avermaete (2005) *Another Modern. The post-war architecture and urbanism of Candilis-Josic-Woods*. Amsterdam. Nai Publishers p. 312

The matbuilding made this possible since the system is generated from an order based on the modulation and the game of full and empty, allowing it to continue growing unlimitedly, always preserving the interrelation of its parts (Fig. 3).

We can't forget the *space cities*, although this idea is perhaps more related to the 70, prefabrication and POP culture. Space cities were considered as large, elevated structures that housed the infrastructure and supported the city, as defined by Banham in the Archigram publications:

"If the units are simply spread out on the ground, then the circulation of men and vehicles among them will become a determinant the layout" (...) "If the units are stacked vertically (...) then some form of external structure will be needed to take up their cumulative weight; and if any substantial number has to be serviced with water, air, gas, piped music or you-name-it, then those services are going to thicken up into some pretty impressive ducts and trunking in places. So you reverse the proportion. The generalized structure becomes the source of power, service and support, and the specialize clip-ons become the habitable units" [8]

Space cities may not show us mechanisms for collective housing, but they reflect a change of mentality that is related to understanding the housing in a more systematic, more modular way and at the service of user needs rather than a typological imposition, always taking into account the idea of prefabrication and mass production.

It also seeks to systematize the dwellings from the study of vernacular constructions, as a way to "legitimize the architecture" [9], to bring it closer to the user. According to Giedion:

"The relationship of the third generation with the past does not consist in cutting details out of their original context. It is more intimately related to an inner affinity, with a spiritual recognition of what, from the abundance of architectural knowledge, relates to the present and is, in a sense, capable of strengthening our inner security"[10]

That is, it is about recovering the previous knowledge and applying it to the new architecture. Some architects focused their analysis on finding organizational systems different from the mega-structures and the massive constructions; is the case of Fumihiko Maki, who in a publication for the University of Washington, in June of 1964, makes an analysis of the different forms of collectivity in his essay "Investigations in collective form". Maki describes three typo forms: "*Compositional form, megaform and group form*" [11], from the comparative study of architectural projects over time, from the popular architecture to the modern architecture, including the classical temples.

Next to the dissertation was a text called "*Linkage in collective form*", in which Maki, with Jerry Goldberg, analyze ways to convine the *different collective forms*.

In the text a reference to Aldo Van Eyck line of thought is made; Van Eyck was studying the northern african vernacular architecture, looking for "*a substantial club to the natural process of human association in urban situation*"[12], Van Eyck calls this idea *grand vernacular*, referring to an "*architecture-that is, a vernacular that transcends its modest origins to be something that is larger than life*"[13], an universal system after all.

All this different systems appear from the same idea: generate an universal system, that allows the project to adapt to the different places. After all, as same as the International Style architecture, they keep looking for an unique solution for the same problems.

5.2.3. Contextualization

The architecture *contextualized* with the place, with the environment, responds to a series of ideas that were collected by Kenneth Frampton in his essay "Towards critical regionalism, 6 points for an architecture of resistance." Concepts such as place, topography and tectonics were analyzed by the theorist in 1981 in his essay, but were already present in 1949, agglutinated under the habitat concept that the seventh congress of CIAM began to look for.

The reconstruction of the cities after World War II had revealed the failures of the functional city in which urban space was divided in a simplistic way into four functions: to inhabit, to work, to recreate and to circulate. Peter Smithson reflected this satiety with the functional city in an *Architectural Review* in 1954, but also an interest in creating something new:

"It is necessary to create an architecture of reality (...) An architecture that starts from the 1910 period - from Stijl, Dada and Cubism - and ignores the damage that occurred after the four functions. An art preoccupied by the natural order, by the poetic relation between living beings and the environment. We want to see cities and buildings that do not make us feel ashamed, that we are not ashamed of our inability to realize the potential of the twentieth century, that philosophers and doctors do not consider us fools, that painters see us as insignificant. We live in cities made by imbeciles. Our generation must prove and give prove that men have set to work "[14]

This intention to create an architecture of reality, in which there is a relationship between the living beings and the environment, will make the third-generation architects to look for inspiration around them, specifically in the traditional city and the vernacular architectures, both from their place of origin and from other cultures. This vision will give architects different ways of approaching the problem of the new architecture, which will ultimately be reflected in their collective housing projects.



Fig. 4 Photo of Stirling's Preston Housing Project. <http://www.msa.mmu.ac.uk/continuity/index.php/2007/08/20/stirlings-preston-housing/>

Look at the industrial or the traditional city, after all looking at the street, will give them clues about the spaces of relationship and encounter, how the transition takes place between the public spaces and the more private spaces. For James Stirling, the street presented a much more interesting space than the ones that were proposed from the early years of the modern movement:

"You pass perhaps twenty or more front doors coming to your own; with children playing in the roads, parents chatting on the pavement and sitting in doorways, and the old peering through windows...the 19th century solution seems more dynamic than later planning solutions for mass housing"[15]

The street becomes a place of study, a place to look and to be inspired by, a place to be build in the new architecture, closer to social reality (Fig. 4).

Far from the search of different agroupation systems that could be closer to the traditional buildings, there is a search in, as Peter Zumthor describes, how to connect to the surroundings:

“The first of my excesses, of my transcendent incursions, would be to affirm: architecture as environment. I love the idea of making a building, be it a large complex or a small one, that becomes part of its environment. In a Handkian sense (...). It is, for me- and not just for me- the environment that begin to be a part of people's lives, a place where children grow up. [...] Trying to make architecture as an environment” (Zumthor, 2006) [16]

Architects started to take into account the different living styles of the people who was going to live in their buildings, it is no longer a question of finding the ideal house, but of find the perfect house for each place. In this way, examples appear where the different arrangement of the rooms of the traditional house were taking into account, like recovering the idea of patio houses, or houses that can grow with a family.

Just as forms of traditional houses are copied, constructive systems are recovered; the flat white houses, that belong to the Mediterranean vernacular architecture, and were used by the international style and exported it to all latitudes, regardless of the climatic conditions or the extravagance of a white box in an environment completely different to the characteristics of southern Europe. The architecture started to rethink which was the most correct way to build in the place where the house was going to be constructed, the inclined roofs, the cover spaces... Also, a material connection with the surroundings is sought, it is the end of using white plasters as an aesthetic decision, architecture begins to accommodate other materials present in its surroundings, which tie architecture to its environment.

All these ideas are intended to contextualize architecture, as a further way of dissolving the boundary between housing and public space.

5.3 Part 3: Analytical-comparative process

The study of texts, interviews or the different writings of the architects of the 1950s, in the first part of the thesis will give us tools to locate housing examples and the mechanisms proposed in them. This process gives us a solid basis from which to choose projects for the second part of the research.

The examples are chosen for the relevance in their time and the impact between coeval architects and later ones, also some examples from before the International Style or buildings that are not properly housing buildings will appear in the selection. The examples have been temporally ordered to, once the mechanisms have been located, analyze more easily the evolution of the different mechanism.

This would be the timeline first approach:

1920-1949: Housing complex in Spangen, Michael Brinkman, Spangen(1922); Narconfin Building, Moisei Gizburg, Moscow (1928), Patio Houses, Mies Van der Rohe (1931), Obus Plan, Le Corbusier, Argel (1931), Housing Complex “Pedrogulho”, Affonso Eduardo Reidy, Rio de Janeiro (1947)

1950-1959: Golden Lane Proposal, Alison y Peter Smithson, London (1952); Patio Houses Carrieres-Centrales, Michel Ecochard, Casablanca (1952); Nid d’abeille’, George Candilis y Shadrach Woods, Casablanca (1952); Park Hill, Jack Lynn e Ivor Smith, Sheffield (1953), Kingo Houses, Jorn Utzon, Helsingor (1958)

1960-1969: Plan for the Tokio Bay, Kenzo Tange, Tokio (1960); Siedlung Halen, Atelier 5, Berna (1960); Amsterdam’s Orphanague, Aldo Van Eyck, Amsterdam (1960); Toulouse-Le Mirail, Candilis, Josic y Woods, Toulouse (1961); Housing in Preston, James Stirling, Preston (1962), Housing complex El Polo, Rogelio Salmona, Bogotá (1962); Frankfurt-Römmberg reconstruction proposal, Candilis, Josic y Woods (1963); Habitat 67, Moshe Safdie, Montreal (1967); PREVI Lima, protects from Charles Correa, Aldo Van Eyck y James Stirling, Lima (1969); Byker Wall, Ralph Erskine, Newcastle-upon-Tyne (1969)

1970-1979: Walden 7, Ricardo Bofill, Barcelona (1970); Robin Hood Gardens, Alison y Peter Smithson, Londres (1972); Alexandra Road State, Neave Brown, Londres (1972); Housing in Runcorn, James Stirling, Runcorn (1973); Muralla Roja, Ricardo Bofill, Calpe (1973); Villagio Mattoetti, Giancarlo di Carlo, Terni (1974); Kasbah Hengelo, Piet Bloom, Hengelo (1974); Gallarate Complex, Aldo Rossi, Milán (1974); Cité des Étoiles, Jean Renaudie, Givors (1974); Odhams Walk, Donald Ball y Jones, Londres (1979)

6. Expected conclusions

From the analysis of third generation architect’s writings and their buildings we can say that it is possible to generate other forms of housing by rethinking the boundary between housing and public space. These forms do not respond to established types, as can happen with the block, the tower or the row, but arise from mechanisms contained in the two project strategies: systematization and contextualization.

Systematization leaves behind the rigidity of rationalist typologies, and allows the building to adapt more easily to the environment. Within the systematization we find two different project mechanisms that adapt the building to the environment: clustered structures and mat buildings.

The clustered structures differ from the blocks in which their contour rotates depending on the preexistences. Is possible to the building to structure the public space, generating gaps that are not

residual spaces, but articulated ones for the city. The Smithson's Golden Lane project, Toulouse-Le Mirail of Candilis, Josic and Woods, and Park Hill in Sheffield share this type of design. This mechanism reappears in the contemporary architecture, and we can see it in Kasuyo Sejima's houses in Gifu or in the Interlace in Singapore, from Rem Koolhaas and his office OMA.

Cluster structures are valid mechanisms for spaces of new construction, since it's the own building which structures the adjoining spaces, linking architecture and city. Nevertheless, in consolidated spaces, although they continue to exercise its function correctly, it can appear like a strange element, as it is the case of the missing Robin Hood Gardens in London of the Smithson marriage.

Mat-buildings have been tested on multiple occasions in institutional buildings, such as museums, or universities; Buildings with a repeated modular program that is structured by a plot, which makes mat-buildings an ideal mechanism for collective housing, on the basis that housing is a modular element.

Mat-buildings are considered as buildings that can have unlimited growth since they do not have a closed contour. This makes them the most suitable buildings to occupy residual spaces in the city since they can go colonizing the available space, merging with the constructions or the environment that exists around them.

They also have a massive kind, so they need patios that make allow the building mass to breathe, which is why the dwelling with which they occupy the plots are most often patio dwellings. There are examples as diverse as the housing for the Central Carrieres in Casablanca of Michel Ecochard, the proposal for the reconstruction of Frankfurt-Römerberg of Candilis, Josic and Woods or the Siedlung Halen of Atelier 5 in Bern, that respond to this mechanism. Contemporary architecture has captured this form of design, especially among Dutch architects such as Rem Koolhaas with his Nexus World houses in Fukuoka, or the numerous MVRDV projects in Ypenburg, influenced by the structuralist heritage inherent to the Dutch architects.

Ground-scrappers have evolved into a more complex form of organization which retains that colonizing feature: the fields. We recover for this mechanism Stan Allen definitions of fields buildings; in them the important thing is not the situation of the pieces of the house, or the hierarchy between them, but the relationship between the one and the others. We can find this types of buildings in the holiday homes in Port-Lacaré from Candilis, Josic and Woods, but normally in the contemporary architecture such as SANAA's houses in Seijo, or Christian Kerez's social housing in Porto Seguro.

Perhaps this mechanism is the most difficult to define and even to use but it has the great advantage of using public space as the complex structurer, linking, like in the clustered structures, housing and city, but with the flexibility advantage of the mat-building .

Contextualization uses copying mechanisms of what exists to fuse, as Zumthor says, with the environment, or to create new atmospheres⁵. Most of the mechanisms of the contextualisation strategy go through looking at the spaces of the traditional architecture or the spaces that surrounds the building. For example *the streets in the air* become a way to take the street to the cluster structures, since their high height separate radically the houses from the ground, and therefore of the spaces of relation. The high streets were, after all, a copy of what happened on the floor. We can see these streets in the examples of clustered structures we have talked about before (Golden Lane, Toulouse-Le Mirail, Robin Hood Gardens ...) but also appear in examples of smaller height: James Stirling uses the high streets in his Preston Proposal, raising it only one floor, and also presents itself as a good system to separate the pedestrian traffic from the pedestrian, as does Giancarlo de Carlo in the set of houses of Villagio Matteotti, or Stirling himself in the Runcorn complex.

Although the Smithsons advertise this mechanism as their own, *streets in the air* are already present in buildings from the the modern movement's first years, such as the Narconfin dwellings of Moiseis Ginzburg or the ensemble in Spangen by Michel Brinkman. It is necessary to take into account that both examples used the mechanism of the streets in the air with the same intention that would later use the architects of post-war: to generate spaces of encounter. In the case of Ginzburg from the communist movement point of view, in which both workers and foremen had to mingle and interact for communism to function in society, and in Brinkman's case from the theosophical⁶ point of view that fostered life in community

From the street itself, and even from the streets in the air, the in-between spaces arise. We can define these spaces as those places (very present in traditional architectures) where you do not know where the house starts and where the street or public space ends. They are usually places where the house

⁵ Atmospheres as used by Peter Zumthor's term:

"I enter a building, I see a space and I perceive an atmosphere, and, in a tenth of a second, I have a feeling of what it is." (Zumthor, 2006) [17]

⁶ Theosophy has a doctrinaire side and an eminently practical side, since the life of the Theosophist should be adjusted as much as possible to the doctrine it holds. The values that govern the life that ideally has to lead are related essentially to an altruistic life, oriented to the service to the others: The disinterested action, the consideration of the other as a subject and not as a mean, the handling of the own egoism, and the brotherly affection for all are examples of values that theosophy fosters.

is projected outwards without it being part of the house itself. Christopher Alexander defines these spaces as privacy thresholds, locks, which generate a certain hierarchy between the street and the house.

Of course these mechanisms have been collected by contemporary architects, giving even a turn to these meeting spaces, generating high *plazas* such as the 10 Post Office Homes in Paris by Philippe Gazeau, or the well-known examples of MVRDV housing Viewpoint in Madrid or the Parkrand Building in Amsterdam.

Another way of contextualizing is through the analysis of vernacular housing typologies. The vernacular architecture has undergone an evolution in function of the environmental and cultural needs of a place, therefore they usually present the most correct solution for that environment. For example the typology of North African dwellings are characterized by being patio dwellings, a typology suitable for places with great heat, as it casts shade, and closed to the outside to protect themselves from sandstorms. The position of the courtyard is out of the center of the house because of a cultural issue: in this way you can not see the interior of the house and its inhabitants (in the traditional Arab culture: women). From this analysis of vernacular typologies arise two types of mechanisms

The use of *new vernacular typologies*, in which the architects rethink the traditional houses of the place where they are going to build. For example, the Casablanca's houses in the Central Carriers, both the Ecochard complex, and the Nid d'abeille complex of Candilis and Woods, rethink the traditional Moroccan courtyard dwelling (of which we spoke in the previous paragraph), but passing through the filter of the modern movement, as if it were a typological update. This sensitivity to the existing constructions passes through an understanding of the life forms of the people for which the houses are being built, in this way the collective housing buildings are integrated with their surroundings, with the existing constructions.

The other mechanism responds to a *formal-material connection*. Recovering the Zumthor's idea of linking architecture to the environment, this formal and material connection is proposed: The formal copy, the recovery of houses with inclined roofs, has to do with suitability to the site, both climatic and formal. The use of the materials from the area roots the buildings to its place, making the houses closer to the user, since they use a language known for them and more respectful to their surroundings.

Therefore, we can say that there are other ways to design collective housing, beyond the block, the tower and the row, and that they are only possible if we rethink the limit between housing and public space, dissolving that border so present in the rationalistic architectures.

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