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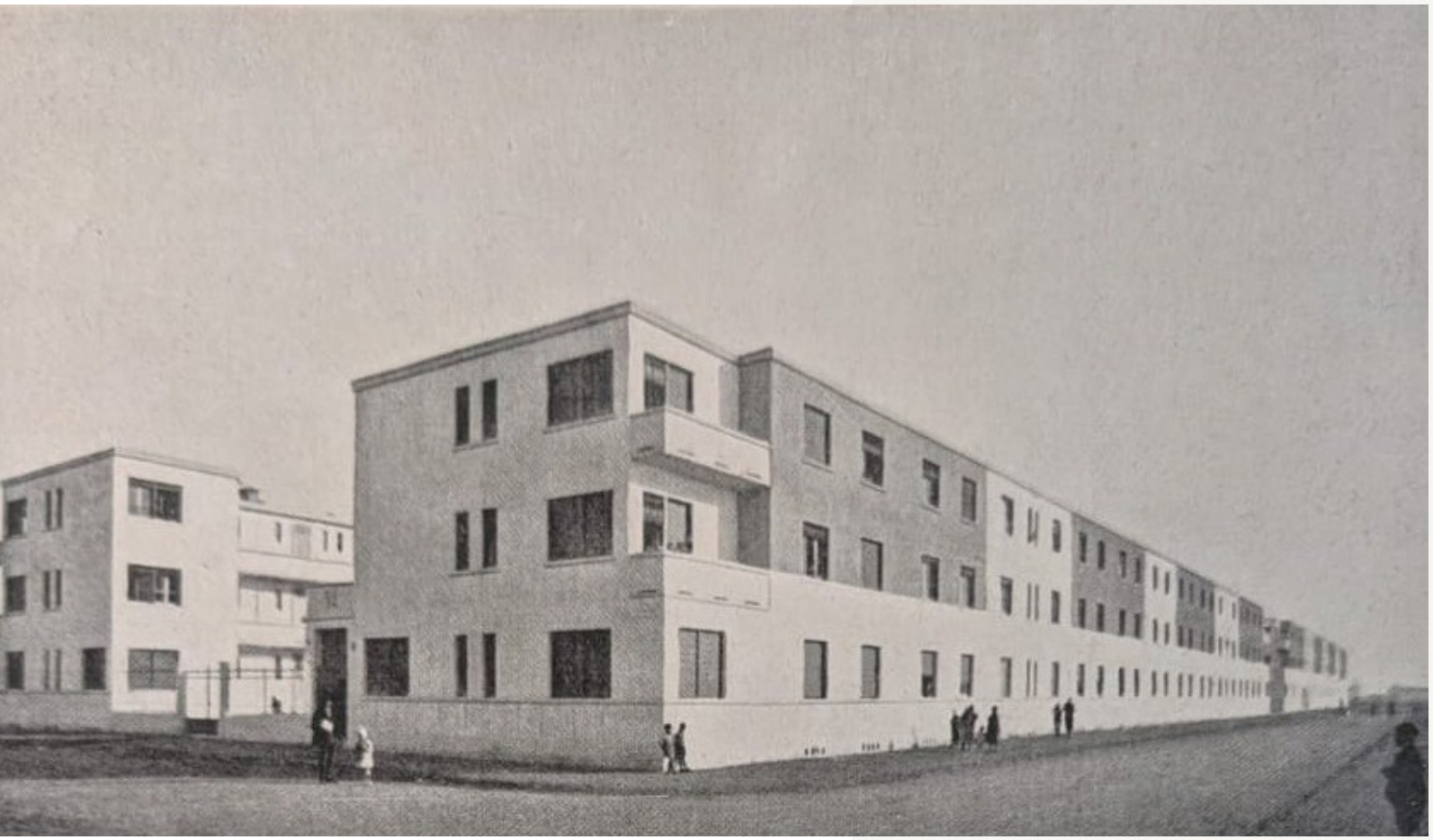
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Vivienda mínima: ¿Producto del hombre o de la máquina?

Minimum Dwelling: a Product of Man or Machine?

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[...] the housing crisis was also being discussed in congresses held by the International Federation of Housing and Town Planning (IFHTP).
A wider and more hierarchical organization allowed a greater impact of the debates and the number of topics covered including both architecture and urban scale, which was essential to rise even more international awareness and to trigger more debate on the potential solutions to the main issues of the 20th-century cities. [...]

Resumen

Este estudio analiza la evolución de la vivienda social en Italia y España en la década de 1930, centrándose en el concepto de vivienda mínima. Ante el rápido crecimiento demográfico y la migración urbana, ambos países enfrentaron graves crisis habitacionales. En Italia, la ideología fascista promovió la estandarización tipológica y el uso mínimo de recursos, lo que resultó en bloques periféricos con servicios limitados. Proyectos como La Trecca en Milán reflejan una transición hacia los ideales de la arquitectura racionalista y económica. En España, el GATEPAC o el proyecto Casa Bloc en Barcelona impulsaron, en un contexto de fuertes presiones económicas, viviendas higiénicas y socialmente progresistas. El análisis comparativo revela cómo los contextos políticos y culturales influyeron en las soluciones arquitectónicas. Aunque se buscaba garantizar un alojamiento básico, la vivienda mínima a menudo generó segregación social y peores condiciones de vida. El estudio subraya la tensión entre el racionalismo arquitectónico y la dignidad humana, destacando el papel del diseño en entornos urbanos inclusivos.

Palabras clave: Migración urbana; *Case popolari*, Minimum dwelling; Estandarización tipológica.

Abstract

This study examines the evolution of social housing in Italy and Spain in the1930's, focusing on the concept of the minimum dwelling. In response to rapid urban migration and demographic growth, both countries faced severe housing crises. Italy's approach, shaped by Fascist ideology, emphasized typological standardization and minimal resource use, often resulting in peripheral housing blocks with limited services. Projects like La Trecca in Milan illustrate the shift to cost-efficient housing designs. An economically constrained Spain developed similar responses through GATEPAC and the Casa Bloc project in Barcelona, promoting hygienic and socially progressive housing. The comparative analysis reveals how political regimes and cultural contexts influenced architectural solutions. While aiming to provide basic shelter, the minimum dwelling often resulted in social segregation and lower living standards. The study highlights the tension between architectural rationalism and human dignity, emphasizing the role of design in shaping inclusive urban environments..

Keywords: Urban migration; Case Popolari*; Minimum dwelling; Typological standardization..*

Introduction

By the end of the 19th century and up to the early 20th century, a substantial imbalance emerged in the rapidly and uncontrollably expanding cities of Europe between the demand for housing, facilities and infrastructure that such a large influx of people required, and the spatial and economic capacities available within those urban environments. This phenomenon, theorized by economist Thomas Malthus in the 18th century, has a practical example in industrialized, fast-growing urban contexts. In order to address and lessen the effects of overpopulation and resource scarcity as rapidly as possible, new architectural and urban structures were developed and implemented. (Azzarelli, 2019).

In this critical background, the concept of minimum housing emerged as a fundamental topic to face the health and hygiene emergencies that afflicted major cities in Europe.

The Modern Movement consolidated and evolved as a response from a group of intellectuals excelling in fields such as engineering and architecture, technological innovation and materials research, who employed ever-more-accurate and sophisticated methodologies. This movement embodied an innovative concept and approach to developing living areas from an aesthetic and practical perspective. The industrialization processes already reflected the principles of standardization, optimal application of innovations in technology, and a research aimed at attaining maximum efficiency with minimal material use.

Essential protagonists of XXth century architecture in Europe, like Le Corbusier and Walter Gropius —the main representative of the Bauhaus movement in Germany— paved the way to a design practice that would envisage the housing unit as a "machine for living." In this setting, the main role of the architect is to assemble and organize every part of the dwelling according to logical spatial principles. (Azzarelli,2019). The cultural and social development of this period led to the organization of the CIAM congresses (Congrès International pour l'Architecture Moderne) in October 1929, and more specifically, to the II CIAM, in Frankfurt. It became a pivotal moment in the history of architecture, as it served as a dedicated occasion to draw the concept of the "minimum dwelling" under the spotlight. Known as *das Existenzminimum* in German, it shapes the narrative and development of housing as the final result of an accessible, rationally and scientifically designed product, able to address the social housing crisis phenomenon efficiently, especially after World War I (Kallis, 2020).

At the same time, the housing crisis was also being discussed in congresses held by the International Federation of Housing and Town Planning (IFHTP). A wider and more hierarchical organization allowed impactful discussions regarding both architecture and urban scale, which was essential to rise even more international awareness and to trigger more debate on the potential solutions to the main issues of the 20th-century cities. Within the IFHTP, debates on housing types were central, as seen specifically in Paris in 1928. The main topics of debates which, largely focused on building typologies, would also concern health, spatial organization, construction technologies, and the integration of green spaces, as well as the reconfiguration of historic city centers. The dual pressures of addressing slum conditions and adapting historic urban cores to modern needs were widely discussed, notably in the 1931 Berlin and 1929 Rome congresses, where heritage preservation was considered along with contemporary urban requirements (Riboldazzi, 2012).

The international climate of debate in Europe recognized modern rationalist thought —aligned with industrial, scientific, and systematic approaches— as a framework of standardized spatial principles. These principles not only reflected a distinct aesthetic and artistic sensibility but also came to serve as guiding paradigms in both contemporary design practices and theoretical discourse. Within the dogmatic framework shaped by the prevailing intellectual climate and the imperative to address pressing urban issues, architectural and urban thought and practice in Italy and Spain developed in a subtle and disenchanted manner. This evolution reflected a cultural and urban dynamic that was only partially aligned with the other European nations.

In Italy, throughout the Fascist period in the 1930s, the tension between nationalism and internationalism is a key lens through which to understand Italy's engagement with CIAM. The Italian architectural movement, in dialogue with international influences, swung between those who instrumentally used foreign architecture to highlight the uniqueness of Italian Heritage Architecture, and those who believed that the renewal of national architecture should have started from avant-garde movements emerging all over Europe. The rising of the architecture team *Gruppo 7* highlighted the strong intention to be linked with a rational international architectural language, rather than the most conservative Italian movements (Terminio, 2023).The

Architectural Journal actively disseminated international urban planning debates and particularly CIAM discussions over the minimum housing, and it is relevant to mention the intervention of the Italian architect Enrico Agostino Griffini, who was notably active in this publication among the Italian CIAM participants .

The Italian architects involved in CIAM never formed a cohesive group, and their participation was limited to a few delegates. However, the need for national representation led to the formation of a broader, though fragmented, network of architects across the country, shaped by the variegated architectural landscape of the 1930s. Although the Italian CIAM group played a more marginal role compared to other countries, like France and Germany, remarkable figures like Rava, Sartoris, Bottoni, Pollini, Terragni, Figini and Bardi had a striking impact on the national panorama, combining international rationalism with the Italian cultural context and its traditions (Terminio, 2023).

This approach and the resulting outcome are comparable to the Spanish context, as the socio-cultural differences, although specific and originating from different factors. The confrontation between Italy and Spain over the the application and interpretation of minimum housing provides a substantial insight in the understanding of XXth century architecural configurations. In that same period, the architectural discussion on minimum housing in Spain was unfolding within a complex economic crisis which led to an intense migration.

A new generation of architects began to engage with the principles of the Modern Movement, and among the most prominent figures was Fernando Garcia Mercadal, a key personality of modern architecture in Spain and a founding member of GATEPAC (Grupo de Arquitectos y Técnicos Españoles para el Progreso de la Arquitectura Contemporánea). GATEPAC, and particularly its Catalan branch (GATCPAC), played a fundamental role in stimulating rationalist architecture and urban planning (Concepción Diez-Pastor Iribas 2003).

The most emblematic architectural manifesto of GATCPAC in Barcelona is the *Casa Bloc*, designed by Josep Lluís Sert, Josep Torres Clavé, and Juan B. Subirana. It was conceived as the first Catalan social housing prototype for rational, hygienic, and socially progressive housing, aimed at improving the living conditions of the working class. This 1932-36 project in the north-eastern quarter of Barcelona, Sant Andreu, showcases European architectural rationalism through its massive, solid, and linear shape, while returning to the inhabitants their sense of belonging through a detailed study of both collective public areas and individual apartment units.

It is precisely the connection between the Catalan case and the minimum housing case studies in Italy that generates a dialogue between the architectural thought of the protagonists who took part in the design and the political and social context. The result effectively reflects this complex scenario and allows a deeper understanding of the dynamics both on a tangible and intangible level. The Italian and Spanish contexts illustrate how architectural debate constantly oscillates between an engagement with international influences and the acknowledgment of a dominant national cultural identity, shaped by the political and historical backgrounds of both countries. As a result, architectural responses —both theoretical reflections and design practices— offer original and distinctive interpretations of the concept of the *minimum dwelling*, closely tied to the intrinsic characteristics of each national context.

Postwar housing challenges

At the beginning of the 20th century, Italy, as well as the rest of Europe, experienced an unprecedented housing crisis, driven by a chain of events that intensified in the aftermath of World War I. The phenomenon of overpopulation caused by the migration movements from the countryside to major cities became a severe emergency to face, considering the financial and institutional limitations of the period (Zenoni, 2022). In addition to the rural exodus, there was a relevant increase in births, as a consequence of the rising rate of new families being formed during the 1920s. In Italy, the mass migration toward the main cities revealed the economic differences between North and South, since northern towns of the country represented the primary destination.

In the early 20th century panorama, emerging urban contexts reflected the social inequalities accentuated by the alarmingly high number of people forced to live in extreme poverty. On top of that, massive groups of displaced population, forced to leave their homes due to rising rents or demolition plans (Zenoni, 2022, p.26) during the Fascist period, should be taken into account.

Simultaneously with urban demographic growth, another crucial factor affecting socio-economic conditions was the wave of inflation that affected both belligerent and non-belligerent countries (Zenoni, 2022, p.20). Each country, Italy included, was compelled to deal with the consequences of wartime price control measures and to implement allowance policies in the aftermath of the conflict. A combination of factors aimed at reducing social inequality produced unintended consequences, such as the paralysis of the construction industry, which had long served as the main source of private investment.

Italy sought to revive specific administrative policies articulated in earlier phases, before the onset of World War I. The first act to address the housing problem, the Luzzati Law in 1903, along with the subsequent Royal Decree no. 89/1908, represented the Government's initial attempts to recognize public housing as a subcategory of public facilities divided into *case popolari* and *case economiche*. The handling of these two categories is by entrusting the task to autonomous, trusted bodies capable of being mediators between the local and the state levels. (Zenoni, 2022).

Until World War I, public administrations had been reluctant to invest resources in the construction of social housing (Zenoni, 2022, p.46). The government decided to allocate funds to *case economiche*, more secure and profitable construction facilities based on an initially public-use investment, intended to turn into private ownership after a certain period. (Zenoni, 2022). In its first phase, this construction typology remained rooted in the traditional concept of the bourgeois house (Kallis, 2020, p.608). In this scenario, the state's economic conditions deteriorated, and the need to create a clear distinction between the two types -*case popolari* and *case economiche*- and to promote the first one became urgent (Zenoni, 2022). The new *Testo Unico*, Royal Decree no. 2318, marked the first legislative act to take a decisive position in this matter. The decree established a distinction between affordable —*case economiche*— and council houses —*case popolari*— through the adoption of strict criteria based on the number of rooms: six rooms for council houses and ten rooms for affordable houses, later reduced, in 1925, to three and six rooms respectively (Zenoni, 2022, p.53-55).

At the end of the war, it was not only the city landscape that had changed: the war conflict, demanding important national efforts, also modified the popular perception of the State which, as compensation for the sacrifices made by citizens, "now appeared as the debtor to hold accountable for all that was lacking in Italian society" (Zenoni, 2022, p.46). The *Istituto Case Popolari*, ICP, and the subsequent autonomous bodies, *Istituti Autonomi per le Case Popolari*, IACP, assumed greater responsibility within the national panorama by implementing the first social housing plans using new methodologies, technological and urbanistic approaches, in consideration of the growing needs of the population and limited funding. The cities were transformed into experimental open-air laboratories, which irreversibly changed the previous concept of house living and whose most important results developed only after the second conflict (Zenoni, 2022, p.25).

This period set the stage to test the garden-housing speculation both in Milan and Rome. Campo dei Fiori village (Zenoni, 2022), in Milan, and Garbatella in Rome (Kallis, 2020) represent an initial break with the former urban design tendencies. Legislation aside, the Italian state at first showed a quite reluctant attitude by merely acting as an indirect provider of funds (Zenoni, 2022). Later on,during the fascist regime, the state shifted to a clear detachement from any kind of financial support or involvment towards the housing issue and sperimentation.

The rising of fascism generated a great controversy in the management of housing emergencies. In Italy, a new authoritarian movement rose after the First World War, in opposition to the emerging Soviet model. The fascist regime, which lasted twenty years, presented itself as an "ideological and political nonconformist" (Kallis, 2020, p.60) whose influence extended across all spheres, from urban planning to education.

Concerning the issue of social housing, the government adopted an ambivalent role: on one hand, it increased urban migration through the demands for a higher birth rate and the creation of new family units, and on the other, it adopted a declared anti-urban policy aimed at the ruralization of the country (Zenoni, 2022). These principles, combined with an explicit intention to preserve private property, led to the gradual crumbling of all those principles that had previously underpinned the right to housing —and more specifically those enunciated during the IFHTP international conference (Kallis, 2020, p.615)— resulting in a classist attitude that exploited the issue of social housing for propaganda purposes (Zenoni, 2022).

The emblematic case of the experimental garden-housing neighborhoods became vectors of the shift of intentions that instrumentalized hygienic and sanitary needs as an ideological

pretext for expelling the less well-off from historical urban centers through the ruralization of council housing estates (Zenoni, 2022, p.62), pushing them to the outskirts.

The urban centers thus witnessed a dual migratory movement, the first being centrifugal, from the countryside to the cities; the second, centripetal, from the center to the urban periphery (Samonà, 1935). The latter action, which was also encouraged by the increase, during that twenty-year period, of demolition policies, revealed the regime's intentions to promote dynamics of privatization and clientelism, to secure greater consensus from the middle-class bourgeoisie (Zenoni, 2022, p.48).

The increase in the number of evictees urged to foster further housing policies in the 1930s (Zenoni, 2022). The efforts made over the course of a decade, as well as the economic income from the rents of the first council houses, had failed to meet the growing demand. The need for an immediate containment policy to limit the use of available resources became increasingly clearer. A pioneering role was assumed by the Milanese institutions, which by the end of the 1920s had already implemented an strategic plan of low-cost housing complexes, the *Case popolarissime* or *ultra popolari,* which were council houses specifically designed to temporarily house evictees (Zenoni, 2022, p.73-74).

Interesting applications developed from these plans, such as the XXVIII Ottobre and Soleri neighborhoods in Milan. Thanks to their location in the urban area, these projects managed to preserve the heterogeneity of the city's social fabric, while anticipating a segregating tendency to enclose each social class within a specific space, a trend which would become even more recognisable during the 1930s.

This theory, although at the center of the typological debate beyond the Alps, constituted a definition at Italian level that was far from the original concepts of *Existenzminimum*, but nonetheless came closer to the state requirements of minimum use of economic resources. In the 1930s, we finally witnessed a new generation of *Case popolarissime* or *Ultrapopolari* called *Case Minime*: housing complexes located on the outskirts of the city, whose concept of the minimum was the key to their architectural and urban composition: minimal in space and minimizing costs for technology and services.

Eviction and Urban shift

As the architect Alberto Sartoris stated in an interview, "*En Italie quand on parlait d'une maison minimale c'était terrible*" (Terminio, 2023, p.115). However, it was not until the second generation of *case popolarissime* in the 1930s the so-called "Case Minime for evictees" (Zenoni, 2022, p.78), that the concept of minimum housing became a recurring theme that accompanied planners from the earliest experiments on council houses in the early years of the 20th century.

This thesis is presented, rather than as a reflection on the concept of living, as the arithmetical result of the application of health and hygiene standards on the one hand, and economic constraints on the other, leaving a narrow margin of interpretation on the design level. A remarkable addition within this matter is the quotation extracted from Casabella's article on Milan's IACP, describing the competition on the Francesco Baracca and Reginaldo Giuliani's neighborhoods, and highlighting the Italian interpretation of the concept of minimal housing:

"Ensuring that the upgrading of a large number of families in a new block of flats is carried out with minimum inconvenience from a health and moral point of view, creating the right conditions for a harmonious rhythm of development and for a large number of people of different origins and ways of life by accustoming them to living in a minimum of space, will mean that, having taken the services and comforts that modern life demands, reconciling the freedom of the individual with the quantity of needs rendered and those who look to the projects of the council house, will be able to see that the efforts for which it is built correspond to them." (Tartaglia, 1970, p.15).

A deeper analysis of the text also reveals that just as social housing became a state responsibility in the post-war period, the government itself expected citizens to show recognition for its unwavering commitment—even if that meant accepting a new, albeit restricted, way of living.

The new and ambiguous field of action on which the planners were called upon to operate witnessed different moments of intense activity on the part of the two main players: On one side, the powerful role of IACP, and the freelancers on the other (Zenoni, 2022, p.62), in a ten-year process subdivided into different phases. An initial surge of activity in architectural and urban research, still anchored in the local building tradition, was followed by a second

phase of typological adaptation closely linked to ever more strict spatial regulatory constraints (Kallis, 2020), and finally the exploration for a standardized application model (Zenoni, 2022, p.58). The final result thus provided a vast and articulated range of actions, culminating in the identification of a replicable minimum housing cell that eventually had the potential to shift the focus of design research to its urban dimension.

As the architect Giovanni Broglio, director of Milan's IACP, extensively displays through his work, the urbanistic scale progressively takes an increasingly central role in the field of social housing, relating to design interpretation and ideology. Urban public space, specifically the street front, allows social integration by interrupting the discriminatory nature inherent in council blocks. This approach will witness, since the III CIAM in Brussels, the affirmation of the Italian urban planning approach in the international panorama.

The Milanese case constitutes an interesting design laboratory where it is possible to observe not only the progressive morphological and typological evolution of working-class houses, known distinctively as *case popolari* and *case popolarissime*, built between the two wars, but also the metamorphosis of the concept of the minimum housing. Starting from the Garden City practice to the minimal houses, a sub-branch of the *ultra popolari* arose, and in Milan it is possible to witness the La Trecca neighborhood, in addition to the Solari and XXVIII October districts. These projects showcase a transition from the bare minimum to allow basic human living conditions, promoted by the *Existenminimum*, to the search for the minimum necessary space. As a consequence, there was a gradual impoverishment of social consideration towards the users for whom this type of building was intended, which also had an impact on the intellectual quality of the design of the architects who conceived them (Zenoni, 2022, p.84), as well as on the communities.

Besides economic limitations, one of the main factors affecting the design of minimum houses was the extreme simplification of the concept of "minimum", reduced to a mere spatial perspective. The Italian regulations centered their attention on the number of rooms as the determining factor for the main housing typology, thus focusing only on the quantitative rather than the qualitative outcome.

A space-saving perspective allows to adopt various formal expedients which increasingly distanced the popular complexes from traditional architectural features towards a *de facto* rationalism (Zenoni, 2022, p.110), gradually closer to transalpine architectural interpretation. The courtyard configuration, later replaced with the open block, and the re-proposition of the galleries, already present in the peninsular culture, constituted the first typological features of popular complexes in contraposition with the past practices (Zenoni, 2022). The architectural typology shift evokes in the common imagination a sad analogy to the "[...] panopticon Benthamiano e più in generale alla forma reale delle tipologie carcerarie da essa derivate" (Zenoni, 2022, p.90).

Following a strict and severe sequence of principles, the fascist regime held the explicit intention, particularly in the very popular houses, to base the architectural practice on the application of three notions: "hygiene, care and surveillance" (Terminio, 2023, p.154). It clearly contrasts with the first implementations of the Soleri district, in which the distributive system research approached not only the spatial optimization of rooms, but also the quality level of internal comfort (Zenoni, 2022). The new popular and minimum housing blocks experienced a typological standardization, a social uniformity and a desire for control, as well as an undeniable sense of discrimination, that likened them with *ghettoed* sectors intended for undesirable people (Zenoni, 2022, p. 74-78). The social condition was furthermore reflected in the morphological characteristics of the building: "the poorer the future inhabitants were, the smaller the project; therefore corridors, entrances, pantries and everything that was not strictly necessary could be eliminated" (Bosworth and Dogliani, 2011, p.99). These factors, in the case of the rapid grouth of minimal housing, contributed to the drastic reduction of sanitary and public services

The neighborhoods of minimal houses built in Milan between 1933 and 1938 (Zenoni, 2022, p.79) prove a tendency to standardize the housing typology (Tartaglia, 1970, p. 24) towards a Taylorist thought, oriented to minimize economic efforts and spatial waste thanks to a functional sequence of actions. Among these, the district of La Trecca (Figure 1), initially characterized by a reduced housing typology (studios and two-room apartments), anticipates distributive and formal solutions recurring in follow-up interventions of minimal construction. The characteristic architectural features displayed in the novel housing typology include dual exposure, an external corridor distribution system, and the intermediate service areas providing spatial filtering between indoor and outdoor spaces. (Figure 2). Additional attributes of the spatial configuration

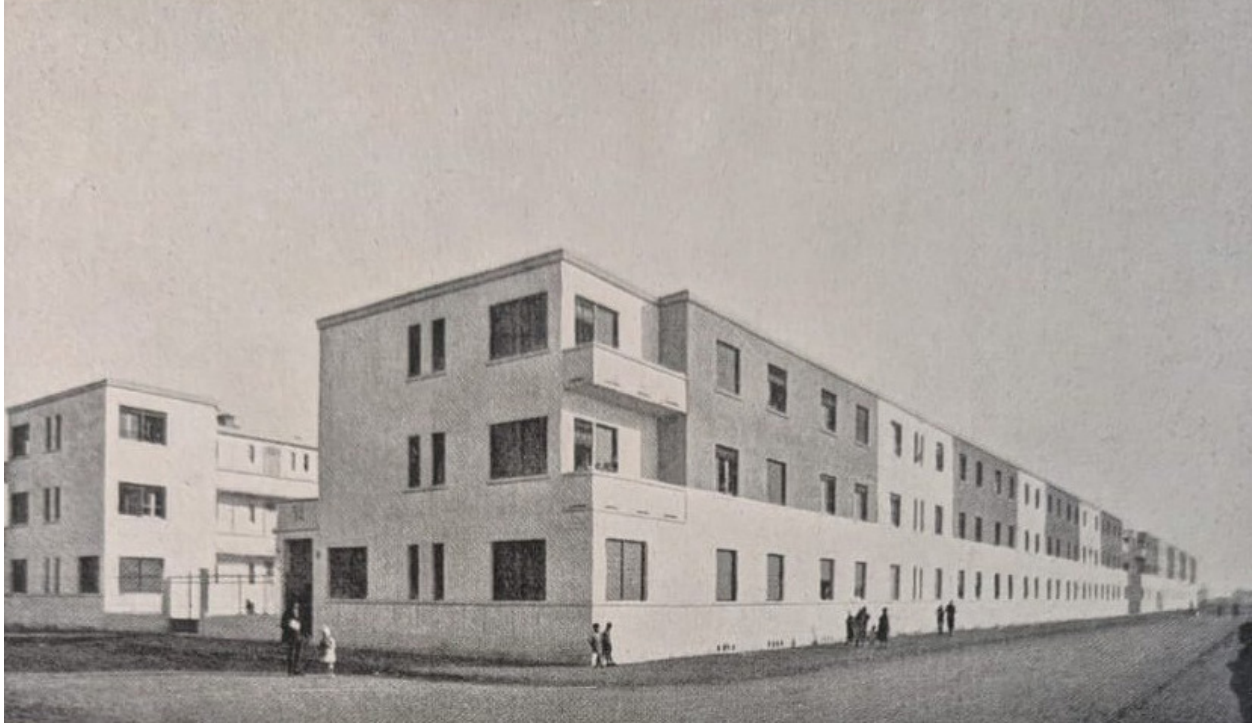


Figure 1: Case minime: Trecca neighbourhood, Milan.

concern the adoption of the flat roof system, a shared open internal courtyard strategically positioned between residential blocks, with a hierarchical arrangement of window openings, meant to be minimized on the courtyard-facing side to enhance privacy (Zenoni, 2022, p.113–122). This compositional and formal logic is also intended to be applied in the neighborhoods of Bruzzano, Vialba and, albeit partially, in Renzo and Mario Mina residential quarters.

The constructive choices follow an intentional political plan whose ideology integrates into the neighborhood public facilities such as kindergartens, primary schools, aggregation centers and libraries, with the mere purpose of educating the inhabitants in fascist ideology (Zenoni, 2022, p.78). The IACP cooperated with the regime in the first phase of its council housing projects, while it later developed a rationalist approach (Zenoni, 2022, p.107). The rationalist movement in Italy intended to display a revolutionary way of thinking that aimed at overturning previous ideologies and breaking with tradition, ultimately converging at times into the representation of a singular ideal and assuming the role of the regime's architecture (Kallis, 2020, p.607).

In this perspective, architectural language has a clear objective (Terminio, 2023, p.46) to formally respond to the constructive logic that generated it in the first place (Tartaglia, 1970, p. 15). The projects, as the architect Broglio stated during the Milan exhibition of Rational Architecture organized by CIAM II Frankfurt, give evidence of the necessary choices dictated by community needs and economic constraints of the period (Zenoni, 2022, p.110).

The combination of these multiple factors leads to a clear typological definition of *case popolari*, possible as well because of a manual-production approach aimed at standardizing design practices (Zenoni, 2022, p.58). In the architectural journal «La Casa. Rivista mensile di edilizia ed urbanismo» (Terminio, 2023), examples and developments in minimum housing are shown alongside the regulatory process that happened in this period. In the 1930s, a recurring minimum common denominator of minimum housing is identified in northern Italy: a cell characterized by the dual exposure and the external corridor distribution system.

The minimum cell designed for the minimum unit, which is the household (Zenoni, 2022, p.85-91), embodies, in the Italian architectural landscape of social housing, an essential component of a broader spatial hierarchy: from the building block to the neighborhood, and ultimately to the city, which increasingly became the primary benchmark.

Conclusion

The social housing aggregates constructed under the supervision of Istituto Autonomo Case Popolari (IACP) in 1930s Italy had a strong fascist regime influence, and catered to the

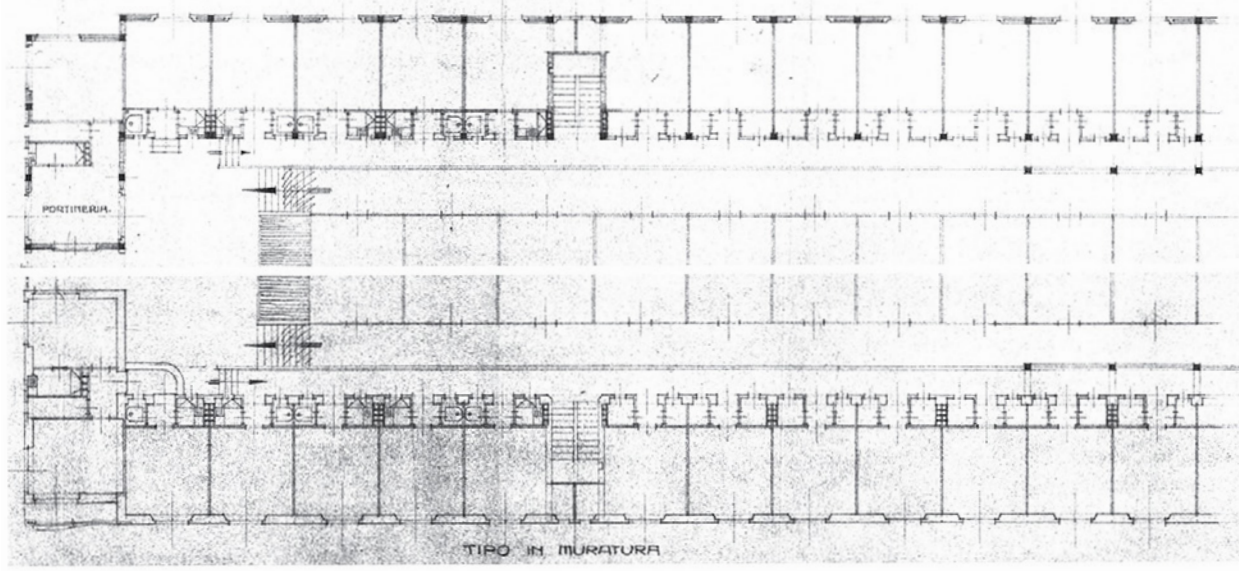


Figure 2: Trecca Neighborhood – First Lot Plan.

necessity of sheltering a considerable number of workers and displaced people. The conceptual basis focuses on measurable functional performance, where the arrangement of spaces is kept purely structural. In such circumstances, architecture serves as an instrument for control and discrimination, created by a socio-political fascist government which favored extreme standardization. In this panorama, housing developments took place in the peripheral suburban edges with minimal spatial integration, lacking urban connections.

Despite these constraints, architects like Giovanni Broglio, who led the design team of La Trecca urban project, managed to introduce experimental solutions within the rigid framework of mono- and bi-room units. He reimagined spatial layouts and redefined the use of shared spaces, incorporating public facilities such as kindergartens and health clinics. His interpretation of the minimum dwelling resulted in a massive residential block with a considerable urban footprint. However, due to its location and spatial layout, the project ultimately contributed to the social and physical marginalization of its inhabitants, isolating the development from the broader urban setting of the city of Milan, failing both architecturally and in terms of urban planning.

Nevertheless, Broglio's work reveals a typological experimentation that, while ideologically and contextually distinct, shares compositional affinities with the Casa Bloc project in Barcelona. The spatial definition of Broglio's units follows similar circulation patterns and organizational logic to those found in the Catalan design. However, unlike Casa Bloc —where duplex apartments ensure a clear separation between day and night zones, thereby enhancing residential comfort— Broglio's Milanese designs remained confined to single-level units, constricted by economic and political limitations.

Italy's social and economic setting generated a housing response that ran very differently to the wider European debate about sensible norms and type-based new ideas. The Italian approach was shaped by systematic rules, often decided using unhelpful policies and resources. The dominant design thought— "minimal waste, maximum efficiency"— led to a step-by-step making of housing plans, creating architectural and urban outcomes of varying quality based on the level of human and valuable investment in the process.

The sectorialized use of resources, associated with the difficulty in execution, often compromised the functionality of standardized schemes. In many cases, including the Trecca, this resulted in the failure to achieve the set goals, leading to abandonment and eventual demolition. Ultimately, architecture is filtered through a human lens: it is the interpretive ability of the architect that determines whether mechanized processes can be reconciled with economic and social requirements, and whether they can boost livable and sympathetic environments. The positive or negative outcome of a housing project in the 1930s —particularly in the application of the minimum dwelling model— depended on the architect's ability to read and respond to the urban and social fabric into which the architecture was located. Integration, continuity, and empathy towards the needs of the end users are essential. The minimum dwelling, at its essence, is not merely about spatial saving; it is a principle that affirms the intertwining of living space and human dignity.

When space is diminished to the point of eroding well-being, it ceases to serve its original fundamental purpose.

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