



Middle-Class Housing in Perspective

**From Post-war Construction
to Post-millennial Urban Landscape**

International Symposium
Politecnico di Milano, School of Architecture and Society
22-23 November 2012

Organizers: Bruno Bonomo, Gaia Caramellino and Federico Zanfi
<http://www.middleclasshousinginperspective.net>



POLITECNICO
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Scuola di Architettura e Società

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PROGRAMMA
FUTURO IN RICERCA

Middle-class housing in perspective

Call for papers

The construction of the middle-class city

During the second half of the 20th century, the middle classes played a fundamental role in the growth and transformation of cities, not just in Europe and America but also in countries all over the world. Specific residential models that were developed to meet their housing needs and social and domestic aspirations significantly contributed to shape the urban built environment. In addition, their settling influenced the transformation of major urban sectors producing new spatial divisions and radical changes in the field of public services and infrastructure, leaving traces that still mark the contemporary urban landscape.

Homes, residential buildings and neighbourhoods built for the middle classes mirrored the urban and political changes of the time. They constituted the focus of planning policies aiming at reinforcing a broad political consensus, and occupied the centre stage of an expanding real-estate market. But they also played a key role in the definition of spatial imaginaries that were increasingly associating the urban middle classes with a certain set of lifestyles, dwelling practices and consumption habits, often combining stylistic and technological models developed in international contexts with more traditional solutions adopted at the local level.

Transformative dynamics

Today, these architectures and urban sectors raise questions about their adequacy with respect to the populations who occupy them, and consequently about the role they can play within a contemporary city. First, the social changes affecting the middle classes have an impact on the buildings themselves, generating a range of transformations according to different specific situations and urban contexts. Second, issues often emerge about the growing age of these vast housing stocks and their relative resistance to typological transformation, which tends to contrast with the evolution of living practices, cultural models and quality standards.

In this sense new relations are arising between so-

cial groups and residential space – from the single domestic units to the neighbourhoods – generating adaptation practices and processes of metamorphosis that are influencing major parts of our cities, and suggest new scenarios concerning the future of this housing stock.

The Symposium perspective

The Symposium aims to investigate the shaping of the residential buildings and complexes built for the middle classes during the second half of the 20th century in different urban and national contexts, putting them into perspective with special focus on how they are transformed by and/or resistant to the present urban condition.

In keeping with the context of a renewed interest for the middle classes and their residential spaces, which affected historical studies, social sciences and the project culture in recent years, the conference aims at rethinking the boundaries between academic knowledge and research methods. The goal is to collect and compare research and case studies – from different perspectives, from the domestic space to the urban scale – with particular attention to the role played by the “architectures for the middle classes” in the development and growth of 20th century cities, and to the entire life-cycle of these complex objects, considering the spatial, social and cultural transformation processes that affect them today.

Submission of proposals

Potential proposals might deal with (but are not limited to) the following topics:

- The construction processes of the buildings and complexes for the middle classes during the second half of the 20th century, paying attention to the existing relations with housing policies and programs, the regulatory plans provisions, the real estate market trends in specific national and urban contexts;
- The role played by professionals (such as architects, engineers and builders) in shaping the physical

features of the habitat for the middle classes, also giving evidence to the mutual influences between their practice and the transformation of mass culture, from domestic habits to consumption patterns and lifestyles;

- The various forms of transformation, adaptation and renovation of this housing stock from its construction to the present, with particular regard to their relationships with the residents' changing lifestyles, needs and aspirations;
- The life stories of the dwellers, trying to underline how the social, demographic and cultural changes let emerge new future scenarios for this built stock, and raise new relevant issues to be addressed by public policies;
- Urban middle-class lifestyles as desire for autonomous and distinctive dwelling practices, as well as an ethos for social mixing, civic participation, environmental sustainability.

Contributions by scholars in the fields of social sciences, architecture and planning, urban and architectural history are welcome. Case studies and papers with a comparative approach are especially encouraged.

Proposals must include: (i) The name, contact and affiliation of the author(s); (ii) A short biography of the author(s); (iii) An abstract of no more than 400 words.

Proposals must be submitted in English, by April 30th, 2012, to submissions@middleclasshousinginperspective.net

Calendar

- April 30th, 2012: deadline for submission of paper proposals
- May 2012: selection of the proposals by the Scientific Board
- May 31st, 2012: notification of acceptance to the authors
- October 10th, 2012: deadline for full papers submission
- November 22nd and 23rd, 2012: Symposium at the Politecnico di Milano

Updates and details about the organization of the Symposium will be released through the web page www.middleclasshousinginperspective.net/

Scientific Board

Bruno Bonomo, Sapienza Università di Roma, Dipartimento di Storia Culture Religioni

Gaia Caramellino, Politecnico di Torino, Dipartimento di Progettazione Architettonica e Disegno Industriale

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Maria Auxiliadora Gálvez Pérez, Universidad Politécnica de Madrid, E.T.S.A.M., Departamento de Proyectos Arquitectónicos, Master in Collective Housing

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Coordination

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The Symposium is organized within the research project *Architectures for the middle classes in Italy: 1950s-1970s. For a social history of dwelling in Turin, Milan and Rome*, funded by the Italian Ministry of University and Scientific Research through the program *Firb Futuro in Ricerca 2008*. For further leads: www.middleclasshomes.net/