

## Exploring/debating theoretical themes

### **HOUSING.LIVING.BUILDING**

Acts of living and building separated, when previously they were related.

#### **Forms of living**

Planning/living in various forms of house is not accidental.

The form of living, the way of appropriating private – and by extension, public-space is a reflection of values and cultural beliefs.

Architects developed their design ideas in the course of designing small houses (Haraguchi, 1988: 6). The individual house also influenced the design of collective housing.

Collective housing – communal living

A house reflects different forms of thinking, of seeing the world, of lifestyles and of design strategies.

The duality between different ways of thinking and of inhabiting space is identified,  
For example in comparing Andy Warhol's 'factory' with his 'over stuffed bedroom'.

Abalos refuses to make judgements of this, but rather to see it as an indication of the limits of our domestic modality, thus allowing us to widen our expectations.

Design strategies: "are not neutral, but instead limit and embody the whole capacity for critical capacity our work has." (Abalos)

The Garden City Movement took up the idea that people's behaviour was conditioned by their environment.

Behaviourism – learning, perceiving, reacting

"...this leads to the assumption that human behaviour can be regulated and human response can be predicted." – an input/output system (Osman, 1995: 43). This leads to a stereotypical view of people. Janet Daley strongly rejected this saying that these disciplines are: "...verging on a new intellectual fascism which could have most frightening results." (1967: 74).

## **Design**

Picturesque – asymmetrical – an approach to design based purely with beauty in a visual sense (Haraguchi, 1988: 15). Found in vernacular architecture – irregular, disordered plans (ibid). Medievalism – rejects regularity (ibid).

Classicism – regularity – rigidly ordered – symmetrical (ibid)

“...separating spaces into individually articulated units, giving each its own structure and light source, and gathering them to create a whole complex” (Haraguchi, 1988: 69) on Lois Khan (1901-1974). He shifted his approach from the central axis, stripped away ornament.... Leaning towards modern architecture (ibid).

Modernism – spatial design.

**Collective housing – communal living** (Chiba, 2003: 6-7): “To provide continuity – not only inside each particular building but in the exterior spaces as well as the interior – is the most important thing in the design of collective housing.” On vertical interlocking assembly, Chiba says: “Having openings on all four sides, besides producing a more comfortable living environment, also allows flexibility in working with the problem of psychological distance. In the conventional gallery-type collective housing building, for example, there is a rigid spatial hierarchy leading from the hall to the exterior, and as such, a kind of spatial gradient that is fixed in one direction. This allows just two choices of having contact with the outside. With openings on four sides, however, you can flexibly choose your distance from the surroundings and the neighbours. Being able to choose, as you like, the place you want to be gives you personal control over your distance from the surroundings. As such, the designer does not simply manipulate borders between interior and exterior but does more to set up choices for the resident at the planning level.”

## **Collective housing – manipulating scale** (Sakamoto, 2003: 6):

“An interesting feature of collective housing is that, unlike with houses or other buildings, you can manipulate the scale by clustering the units in different combinations. The scale will differ depending on how you cluster them or what approach you take.... Because it offers different possibilities in terms of scale, collective housing can be a kind of tool for the design of city space...”

## **Collective housing – looseness and sustainability**

## **Collective housing – the potential of collective housing**

## **Houses of modernity**

When visiting a house you become a user – actually experiencing the house, the domestic order and the life it contains, what Abalos calls the ‘deprofessionalized gaze’.

Abalos identifies some key concepts governing the design of the houses of modernity:

## **Existential consistency**

Two directions of thought are identified: Rationalism and existentialism. The latter pertains to the view that human life as paradoxical. The same importance is attributed to belief or disbelief claiming that there is no rational ground for either.

The existential ideas of 'choice' and the focus on each individual's unique vocation are what determine the difference between the rationalists and the existentialists. An existential exploration of what the built environment 'means' would lead one to a sense of belonging.

Consistency in thinking – a return to the past

Returning to basic issues

Essence of human being

The house as materialization of life

Developing around existential and not chronological time  
experienced according to one's subjectivity

The house of the subject who questions himself about himself

Influenced the revisions of modernity at the end of the 70's

Building/inhabiting/thinking

Heidegger's hut- Philosopher/paternal authority- nostalgia for  
consistency

Place memory and nature versus space, time and technology

Refuge/nature/authenticity/privacy

Non-technification/natural materials/artisanal work/



## Phenomenological intensity

There is a thin line between existentialism and phenomenology, defined as **the descriptive analysis of subjective processes. The phenomenological approach identifies 'things' through experience rather than description.** It focuses on cognition and perception. Dwelling occurs when people are able to create an association with their environment.

There is an actual real world that surrounds us, and there are individual perceptions of it. **A phenomenological approach to architecture involves a 'return to things', as opposed to abstractions and mental constructs of the rationalists.** *Things* consist not only in the concrete phenomena of our life world, but also comprise more intangible phenomena such as feelings.

Phenomenology emphasises perception and cognition. Attention to the character of dwellings and how they are made is important in achieving a phenomenology of place. Phenomenological approaches bring the idea of existence, the notion of doubt/uncertainty, as well as faith in the correctness of choice and individual experience, to architecture. **Phenomenology values mental intuition, rather than merely relying on empirical reasoning.** Inquiry thus focuses on 'encountering' as it is directed to objects.

Picasso's house

Experience of things and of oneself

Unity of world and life- self/world, subject/object

Supremacy of perception

The child's view

The house as a half-open organism- A space of transition

Ad hoc materiality

Sentimentality/intimacy

Open spaces

Collage

**Positivist**

**visibility**

Repressive transparency

Order and unity- the house as a machine for surveillance

The model family

The importance of the plan

The quantification of 'house'

Hygiene

Moralizing

## **Communal**

## **appropriation**

The family house, in many traditions, is based on the patriarchal system. The phenomena of dictatorial totalitarianism revolves around the charismatic leader and internalised mechanisms of authority. The idea of the commune was to destroy authority, create non-hierarchical forms of living and to extend the freest sort of creativity to the domain of intimacy. This could be the debated. Perhaps Warhol was the charismatic leader, the authoritative figure in a structured set-up that appeared to be loose and haphazard? Perhaps the apparent anarchy was disguising a different form of power structure?

New forms of living, of thinking and constructing private space appeared to be disordered. Despite their seduction they gave rise to new problems:

division of tasks

rotational nature of tasks

formation of couples

obtaining of economic support

Abalos explains that at the end of the 50s and during the 60s the commune represented the apprenticeship of the anti authoritarian spirit in the sphere of intimacy that today forms part of the tradition of a movement, that of the squatters.

What the commune, the loft and the squatter settlement have in common are: abandonment of family and isolation, minimum privacy, no hierarchies, no rigid layout and no spatial specialisation all achieved within the simplicity of a neutral container. The critique of family meant a critique of the positivist ideological model and its production/consumption model.

In the new habitational paradigm there was no quality other than size/volume. Warmth was a negative attribute with its connotations of bourgeois consumerism. The cheap and the free was the best – appropriation was the technique

**Pragmatic**                    **theory and practice combined**

Opposite positivist house

More a method than a philosophy

Everyday present into a creative force

Everyday, banal instant as an aesthetic experience

The liberal women

## **WORK.LIVE dialectic relation. merged contradictions**

Changing technologies, communication and work methods are challenging outdated zoning patterns in town planning.

Issues of sustainability, economic viability also affect our decisions about work and living domains.

Work

Travelling to it

Dwelling:           action  
                          repose (Le Corbusier, 1953: 16)

He adds:

Domestic work

Leisure (ibid)



## **Domestic work**

Abalos describes how Catherine Beecher's writings on domestic work influenced the design of houses.

Helped in the development of the pragmatic house

The professionalisation of domestic work

Efficiency

Using up-to-date technology

Low maintenance

Flexible space and small areas

The development of the technical central core

## **PRODUCT DESIGN. HOME DESIGN audacious. Reserved**

Product design is more experimental, and innovative designs are more accepted generally.

House design is complicated because of the symbolic associations of 'house'.

People are less open to experimentation in house design.

In the descriptions communal living and the 'appropriation of the loft', Abalos explains the 'retro' as the valorising of what the speeded up cycle of fashion has abandoned, converted into old modern, a micro memory of a brief duration.

Recycling and its related aesthetic were embraced.

A new domesticity was constructed out of 'decontextualized objects'.

This meant the incorporation of elements at odds with the tradition of the 'house'.