

# Changing the change

Design Visions, Proposals and Tools

An international conference on the role and potential of design research in the transition towards sustainability

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## PROJECTING NEW FORMS OF NEIGHBOURHOODS.

The creation of a link between the inhabitants as an answer to changes in society.

### Abstract

The present age is not characterised by a particular architecture of the house and it's very hard to identify a new type of physically describable spatiality as an answer to the needs of contemporary living<sup>1</sup>. Anyway everywhere changes in the family's structure as well as in the ethnic and social composition of the cities demand a change in dwelling spaces and we can detect some common demands formulated within different social groups and cultural areas<sup>2</sup>. One of these is the demand of the inhabitants for more space, consequent to the new and different ways of using spaces of the house<sup>3</sup>. If the time spent by each inhabitant within the domestic walls diminishes progressively as the complexity of life increases, it is nevertheless true that the activities taking place inside the house are many, and increasingly varied. At the same time the role and meaning of the family in our society have changed, correlated to variations in cultural, economical and demographic concauses. This involves a re-thinking of the domestic design and the ensuing spatial consequences are heterogeneous and diversified, depending on the geographical environment and the design tradition in which they are formulated and experimented.

The sharing of areas and services is nowadays one of the main proposals in many European and American countries<sup>4</sup> - including recently Italy - who see in this a possible answer to the new needs in terms of habitation. Such a proposal allows to increase the space available for the inhabitants, virtually extending the surface of their house by including the common areas; at the same time, it can help the appropriation of spaces, and, above all, the creation of links between the various users<sup>5</sup> stimulating

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<sup>1</sup> (Cornoldi 1994, 253)

Cornoldi, Adriano. 1994. *Architettura dei luoghi domestici. Il progetto del comfort*. Milano: Jaca Book.

<sup>2</sup> The contemporary European living scenarios were analysed by the student of Ph.D. in interior design of the Politecnico di Milano during a research in 2006. The results of these survey are published in the book Bosoni, Gimapiero and Piardi, Silvia and Manfredini, Manfredo. 2006. *Advanced Living Scenarios. Contemporary trends in European housing*, Milano: Virus  
A wider version of it will be published in 2008 in double languages, English and Chinese.

<sup>3</sup> Farè, Ida and Piardi, Silvia. 2003. *Nuove specie di Spazi*. Napoli: Liguori Editore.

Bonesio, Luisa. 2003. *Attraversare la soglia*. In *Paesaggi di casa avvertire i luoghi di casa*, ed L. Bonesio and L. Micotti, Milano: Mimes.

<sup>4</sup> As example the co-housing, co-working and senior co-housing experience successfully undertaken in these countries.

<sup>5</sup> Hertzberger, Herman. 1998. *Lessons for students in architecture*. Rotterdam.

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relations between the various users of a space or a building. The project thus carries an increased social responsibility, playing a fundamental role in the creation of a network of the different actors, indispensable today to face the rapid urban, demographic and social changes in the making. Creating links between people can be also one of the possible strategies to prevent social troubles, the development of fractures and the phenomena of social, ethnical and generational ghettoization<sup>6</sup>.

Looking at the European scenario, trends of active research in this field of investigation have been found in the Danish context, which has produced theoretical and experimental results of interest. The research and some projectual experiments are looking for a way to reinstate the social role of the house. The analysis of some cases study can provide suggestions for a new way of projecting new domestic spaces and new ways of housing.

An international workshop at the Tsinghua University of Beijing in December 2006 provided the opportunity to check the capabilities of these planning approach also in a not European context.

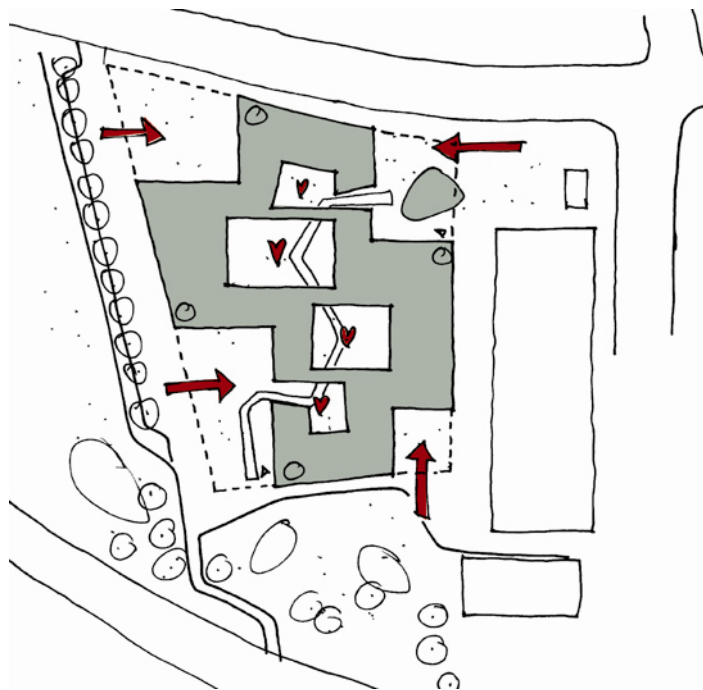


Fig. 1: A city for all ages – 3X Nielsen architects.

The project won a competition for the requalification of the area in 2003. The architects placed in the building three substantially different functions and grabbed the opportunity to integrate generations with a proposal that would rethink generation blending in the city.

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<sup>6</sup> Glancing at the newspapers, we can unfortunately find many examples of this situation: the riots in Paris and the disorders in the Chinese quarter in via Paolo Sarpi in Milan are only the most evident, but we cannot refrain from thinking of the recent and rather frequent news reports about elderly people “forgotten” on trains or in apartments in the outskirts of our cities, of fights between neighbours that end in tragedy, or of undisturbed armed robberies in the apartments.

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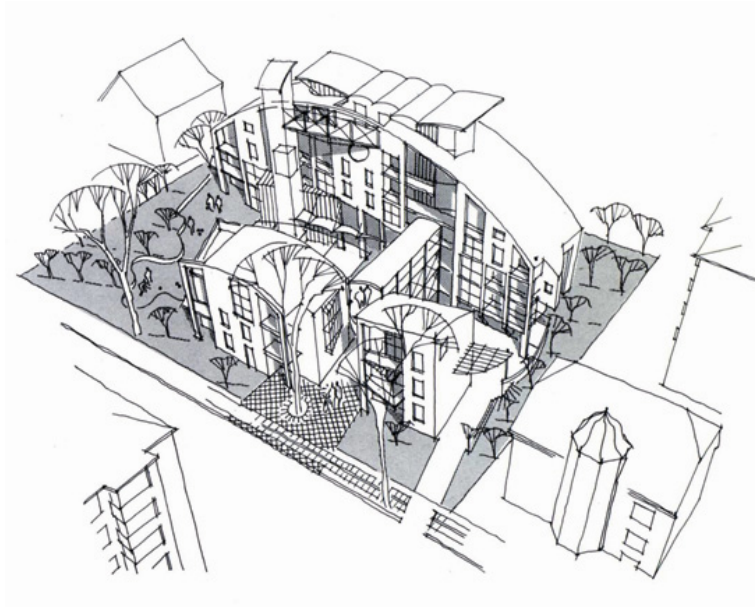


Fig. 2: Senior Co-housing \_ Box25, Copenhagen.

The Mariendalsvej senior co-housing was built in 1993 with the collaborations of an academic team. The architects paid a lot of attention to the ecological aspect of the project and they tried to create a suitable, safe and pleasant environment for elderly people.



Fig. 1: International Workshop, Tsinghua University Beijing.

During an international workshop in December 2006, the student was asked to think about the requalification of an old part of the ancient city of Beijing with some traditional houses and they tried to work on the concept of "linking people".

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