



Lina Bo Bardi, Casa de Lina, São Paulo, Brazil, 1951. © Instituto Lina Bo e P.M. Bardi. Fotografia: Lamberto Scipioni, 2014.

## The House, the Home and the Housing Question

ANA TOSTÓES

Chair of **docomomo** International

This issue of the **docomomo** Journal is devoted to the theme of Housing — “housing” in its broadest meaning covering multi-family apartment buildings, single-family houses, privately-funded housing as well as government — and institution — funded social/public housing.

Housing is a central program in contemporary architectural production. Incorporating civilizing values of 19<sup>th</sup> century culture, the house arrives in the 20<sup>th</sup> century at the time notions of private space and domestic comfort come to the fore in Western Culture as values inseparable from the emergence of the family in domestic space: the home. In 1951 Martin Heidegger (1889–1976), in his *Darmstader sprache*, “Bauen, Wohnen, Denken”, relates the word building (*bau*) with the verb “to be” and the action of “being” (*bin*), to conclude that “dwelling is the fundamental trait of being, the mortals’ living condition.” Looking to reframe the sense of construction and to identify the meaning of “being”, Heidegger’s criticism is moved by the failure of the so-called rational materialistic solution, and opens the discussion up to the re-evaluation of the design action as a unique, magical and creative action.

In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with the *Arts and Crafts* movement, a process focused on finding comfort and a sense of intimacy and privacy in the dwelling is begun. Espoused by the vanguard of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, housing became a tool of the ideological agenda of the modernity. The analysis of dwelling conditions implies an understanding of the occupation of space: related spaces, uses and functions. Addressing the act of living as a cultural fact, the house reflects the time and manner of its production. In its internal organization, the house responds to the mode of existence that the environment, culture and civilization suggest. Its design reveals the time and taste of the inhabitants, the family’s habits, and it offers many clues about the nature of social relations. The rapid changes in domestic architecture that followed the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century have profoundly altered the boundary between public and private space.

Following Engels’ housing question (1872), the idea of a home for all or, as it has been stated in the ‘60s, for the “greatest number”, addresses architecture practice at a political level, becoming to be understood as a determinant social factor.

With a new twist, modern homes brought to the debate themes of public and private life, intimacy, exposure and gender. The house, seen from the cell, the module, the system, and expanded across the city, constituted the fundamental issue debated within the architecture of the Modern Movement. CIAM discussion forums triggered profound consequences,

both in the organization of the family house unit and of the multi-family housing blocks. The theory of the minimal house, based on the *Existenzminimum* concept, was present, not only in models for social housing, but also in the bourgeois house program. It was Sigfried Giedion (1888–1968) who, in 1929, wrote about modern forms of housing showing the house’s “magic formula” for the future: light, air and openness while launching, in the same year, the theme of CIAM II: “Minimum Housing.”

**docomomo** acknowledges the major relevance of reflecting on Modern Movement heritage, focusing on these main issues: house and housing. As Joan Busquets argues “in the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, housing became a science due to the huge efforts of progressive architects and their great interest in addressing this issue that had been raised with major political impact by Engels”.

I wish to thank Josep Maria Montaner and Zaida Muxi who acted as guest editors for this issue of the Journal. Due to their commitment and research in the field, together with the knowledge of the range of researchers who agreed to share their work, and their analysis and creative interpretation that focused on some key architectural houses or housing complexes — from Barcelona’s innovative experiments to Robin Hood Gardens’ symbolic destiny, social housing cases from Valencia to Bogotá, from Buenos Aires to São Paulo, and from cultural to technical or gender aspects — it is possible to extend this debate by reflecting on the link between design and housing, and the house and the home.

The challenge of considering sustainability as the urgent contemporary issue facing momo buildings and neighborhoods was reflected in the main **docomomo** forum discussions held during the 13<sup>th</sup> International **docomomo** Conference in Seoul, South Korea, in September 2014. A result of the discussions was the establishment of the **docomomo** ISC on Sustainability. Apposite to the emerging theme of sustainability, the student workshop that preceded the Seoul conference comprised a design discussion on the future of *Sewoon Arcade*, the Seoul modern commercial and housing mega-structure recently threatened with destruction. Thanks to the efforts of many people the demolition has been averted and a new, economically — and socially — sustainable life is now envisaged for this amazing structure.

**References:** Martin Heidegger, *Bauen, Wohnen, Denken, Vorträge und Aufsätze*, G. Neske, Pfullingen, 1954 [1951]; CIAM II, *L’Habitation Minimum*, Zaragoza, COAA, 1997 [orig. German, 1933]; Sigfried Giedion, *Befreites Whonen*, Leipzig, Orell Füssli, 1929.