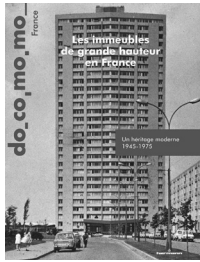


BOOK REVIEWS



**Les immeubles
de grande hauteur en France.
Un héritage moderne 1945-1975
High-rise buildings in France.
A modern heritage 1945-1975**

Edited by: Richard Klein

Publisher: Hermann Publishing

ISBN: 979-10-370-0340-9 / 979-10-370-0654-7

Language: French / English

Year: 2020 / 2021

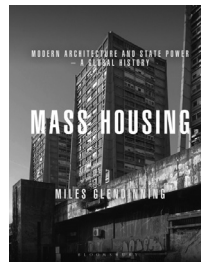
Undeniably indebted to the structural experimentation and advancements in technology that took place in US at the end of the 19th century, high-rise buildings have become a milestone of our recent history reshaping urban landscapes all around the world. Initially recognized as a technical, aesthetic, and financial solution much related to office buildings, this architectural form responded to different uses. But it was the social housing domain that received the harshest criticism. To properly convey the role of this building typology in urban culture, a much wider approach is required to overcome a fragmented one in which these objects are sorted by authorship or functional programs.

The special issue of the *Bulletin docomomo France*, under Richard Klein's supervision, dedicated to the recognition of high-rise buildings built between *les trente glorieuse* [the glorious thirty] as national heritage assets, discusses this theme amidst a diverse group of case studies – over its 15 chapters – spread throughout the French territory. Although a national approach, it reminds us that these objects are elements of a global narrative representing the vectors of the city's modernization process in the second half of the 20th century.

The first two chapters set the tone of the discussion emphasizing that not only the high-rise building is a political object, but their heritage recognition and preservation is a harsh battlefield in which cultural significance is constantly threatened by economic interests. Each chapter updates the historical,

cultural, and material circumstances that supported the creation of these architectural forms in either rectifying current narratives or revealing new actors and achievements. The only way to learn from the past is getting to know it, and this publication points out clear ways in this direction.

Carolina Chaves



**Mass Housing: Modern Architecture
and State Power – a Global History**

Author: Miles Glendinning

Publisher: Bloomsbury

ISBN: 9781474229289

Language: English · Year: 2021

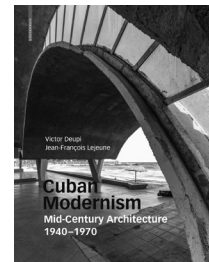
This major work provides the first comprehensive history of one of modernism's most defining and controversial architectural legacies: the 20th century drive to provide “homes for the people.” Vast programs of mass housing – high-rise, low-rise, state-funded, and built in the modernist style – became a truly global phenomenon, leaving a legacy which has suffered waves of disillusionment in the West but which is now seeing a dramatic, 21st century renaissance in the booming, crowded cities of East Asia.

Providing a global approach to the history of Modernist mass-housing production, this authoritative study combines architectural history with the broader social, political, cultural aspects of mass housing – particularly the “mass” politics of power and state-building throughout the 20th century.

Exploring the relationship between built form, ideology, and political intervention, it shows how mass housing not only reflected the transnational ideals of the Modernist project, but also became a central legitimizing pillar of nation-states worldwide. In a compelling narrative which likens the spread of mass housing to a “Hundred Years War” of successive campaigns and retreats, it traces

the history around the globe from Europe via the USA, Soviet Union and a network of international outposts, to its ultimate, optimistic resurgence in China and the East – where it asks: Are we facing a new dawn for mass housing, or another “great housing failure” in the making?

From the publisher



**Cuban Modernism.
Mid-Century Architecture 1940-1970**

Authors: Victor Deupi
and Jean-François Lejeune

Publisher: Birkhäuser

ISBN: 9783035616415

Language: English

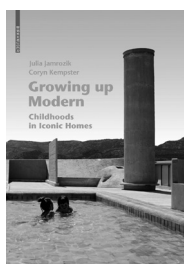
Year: 2021

For several decades in the 20th century, modern architecture thrived in Cuba, and a wealth of buildings was realized prior to the revolution of 1959 and in its wake. The designs comprise luxurious nightclubs and stylish hotels, sports facilities, elegant private homes and apartment complexes, both on the island and abroad. Drawing on the vernacular, these architects defined a way to be modern and Cuban at the same time — creating an architecture oscillating between avant-garde and tradition.

Audacious concrete shells, curving ramps, arresting *brise-soleils*, a fluidity of interior and exterior spaces, impressive murals and other integrated works of art are characteristic of an airy, often colorful architecture well-suited to life in the tropics. The publication highlights virtually unknown and previously inaccessible visual material, both from university and family archives. The stunning contemporary photographs were taken specially for the book and new drawings were prepared for it.

From the publisher

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Growing up Modern. Childhoods in Iconic Homes

Authors: Julia Jamrozik and Coryn Kempster

Publisher: Birkhäuser

ISBN: 9783035619058

Language: English

Year: 2021

Starting from questions such as “What was it like to grow up in an early Modernist villa or housing estate?”, “Did living in such settings change children’s attitudes? Did these radical environments shape the way they looked at domestic space later in life? Were children in Modernist homes self-conscious about their *avant-garde* surroundings, or proud of them?” the authors reunite in the book memories of four persons who grew up in four examples of Modern Movement iconic housing: Rolf Fassbaender, who lived for 12 years in one of J. J. P. Oud’s (1890-1963) Weissenhof Estate row houses (1927); Ernst Tugendhat, the only surviving Tugendhat child who lived in the iconic Tugendhat House in Brno (1930), designed by Mies van der Rohe (1886-1969); Helga Zumpfe, the youngest child of the Schminke family, who lived in the ship-form Schminke House in Löbau (1933) by Hans Scharoun (1893-1972), from when she was two until adulthood; and Gisèle Moreau, who lived almost her entire life in Le Corbusier’s (1887-1965) *Unité d’Habitation* in Marseille (1952).

By interviewing these four former inhabitants, very different emotions from childhood came up, as not all understood the radicality and innovative architecture in which they were living, some just understood it was a special place, and others were more impressed with small details. They even state that some people didn’t like them at all for being too different from the usual, minimalist, or exuberant.

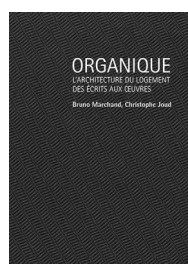
Complementing each interview, contemporary and current photos, architecture drawings, and architecture descriptions provide a new perspective on these buildings, the

architectural perspective from the “outside” and the lived perspective from the “inside.”

And, as children often live some experiences more intensively than adults and are sensitive to, for them, unknown aspects, and consequently somehow influenced in their development and personality by them, the rescuing of memories from childhood gives a unique and different vision of these Modern Movement buildings and demonstrates their impact on the ones who grew up and lived in them. Even though the dwellings were radical these former children feel nostalgia when asked about their childhood there.

So, this publication, as part of a broader project (*Growing up Modern*) that includes an exhibition as well, contributes to an expanded and evolving architectural, cultural, and social perception of these modernist housing. One of the important lessons that can be taken from the project, and underlined in the book, is that we have to be aware “of not only the utilitarian amenities adopted as standard under Modernism, but also the particular generosity that was a feature of at least some of the early examples of the movement,” as while its functional and efficient aspects have been transmitted, often its humanist and social aspects have been left in the background and have to be re-evaluated again.

Joana Coutinho



Organique - L'architecture du logement des écrits aux oeuvres

Authors: Bruno Marchand

and Christophe Joud

Publisher: EPFL Press

ISBN: 9782889152902

Language: French

Year: 2020

This book is based on a surprising observation: the emergence, from the 2000s, of a series of mass housing projects in Switzerland

using irregular geometries, both in the interior configuration of domestic spaces and in the shape of buildings. Are we facing the revival of an “organic” architectural trend?

To answer this question first involves a “revisiting” of the theoretical texts and conceptual principles founders of such a trend. The work of protagonists such as Frank Lloyd Wright, Hugo Häring, Hans Scharoun and Alvar Aalto (the Top Four), among others, has thus constituted a “hard core” of observation making it possible to grasp the diversity of these conceptual principles, limited to the field of mass housing and approached according to two distinct periods: the inter-war period and the second post-war period. Finally, contemporary architectural production is questioned through the prism of (possible) continuity with the organic thought of the last century.

Generously illustrated, with archival drawings in particular, this work aims to be a critical, theoretical and historical account of what certain authors have called “the other tradition of modern architecture.”

From the publisher



Habitat: Ecology Thinking in Architecture

Authors: Dirk van den Heuvel,

Janno Martens and Victor Munoz Sanz

Publisher: Nao10 Publishers

ISBN: 9789462085565

Language: English

Year: 2020

Habitat became a hotly debated topic in architecture in the 1950s, when this ecological term was introduced in the avant-garde circles of CIAM (Congrès International d’Architecture Moderne) and Team 10. Next to rethinking the housing question the notion of habitat brought a profoundly new way to conceive architecture and urban plan-

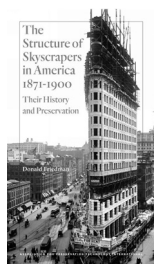
BOOK REVIEWS

ning. No longer could one consider cities and buildings as discrete, isolate objects but instead they were to be understood as part of a larger whole, an environment or habitat.

In light of contemporary environmental awareness *Habitat: Ecology Thinking in Architecture* offers a transhistorical perspective to reflect on design principles from the recent past, reinvigorate current debates while offering suggestions for future architectural research.

The publication contains contributions by Frits Palmboom, Erik Rietveld, Hadas Steiner, Georg Vrachliotis, and Leonardo Zuccaro Marchi, combined with generous visual documentations of the work of renowned architects Aldo van Eyck, Alison and Peter Smithson, Van den Broek & Bakema, and many more.

From the publisher



The Structure of Skyscrapers in America 1871-1900: Their History and Preservation

Author: Donald Friedman

Publisher: Association for Preservation Technology

ISBN: 9780998634715

Language: English

Year: 2020

In this long-awaited book, award-winning author Donald Friedman presents an illustrated history of the development of the structure of skyscrapers during the last quarter of the 19th century. In the first 190 pages, he details the context for the emergence of this new building type and thoroughly explains the cutting-edge technology of construction. Preservation problems are examined in depth.

A separate 200-page section provides construction dates and images for every known building taller than nine stories erected in the United States between 1871 and 1900 – a total

of 443 individual buildings, both extant and demolished, in 36 cities all across the country, from Boston and New York to San Francisco.

This definitive new book is essential reading – and an unrivaled reference – for anyone who is interested in early skyscrapers and in identifying the more than 300 engineers, architects, and contractors who designed and built them.

From the publisher



Les Multiples vies de l'appartement-atelier Le Corbusier

Authors: Franz Graf and Giulia Marino

Publisher: Cahiers du TSAM

ISBN: 9782889152131

Language: French

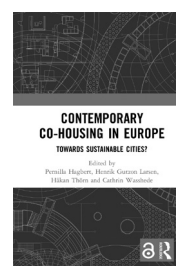
Year: 2017

Le Corbusier's studio-apartment is an iconic object of the 20th century, combining the indisputable material values of the building with the intangible "sense of place" of an architect's home. Le Corbusier, who lived there from 1934 until his death in 1965, treated it as a permanent construction site - a unique place of spatial, plastic and constructional experimentation.

Phases of change at "24NC" are overlaid as a palimpsest, and the apartment's "many lives" create major philosophical problems for conservation. A study of its material history over time reveals a simple fact: the "stratigraphy" itself, hard to unscramble yet rich in meaning, is key to the object's importance.

This first monograph on the studio-apartment, richly illustrated with largely unpublished visual material, presents research undertaken by the TSAM for the Foundation Le Corbusier during preparatory investigations for the program of restoration.

From the publisher



Contemporary Co-housing in Europe: Towards Sustainable Cities?

Edited by: Pernilla Hagbert, Henrik Gutzon Larsen, Håkan Thörn and Cathrin Wasshede

Publisher: Routledge

ISBN: 9781138325913

Language: English · Year: 2019

This book investigates co-housing as an alternative housing form in relation to sustainable urban development.

Co-housing is often lauded as a more sustainable way of living. The primary aim of this book is to critically explore co-housing in the context of wider social, economic, political and environmental developments. This volume fills a gap in the literature by contextualizing co-housing and related housing forms. With focus on Denmark, Sweden, Hamburg and Barcelona, the book presents general analyses of co-housing in these contexts and provides specific discussions of co-housing in relation to local government, urban activism, family life, spatial logics and socio-ecology.

From the publisher



A l'intérieur - Les espaces domestiques du logement collectif Suisse

Author: Christophe Joud

Publisher: EPFL Press

ISBN: 9782889151707

Language: French · Year: 2016

A l'intérieur is the perspective adopted by this theory notebook. A particular point of view

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that focuses on the theme of interior space and the devices and elements that characterize it, in the context of the architecture of mass housing and, in particular, of Switzerland. Inserted in a sort of imaginary path, unfolding from the inside to the outside, the entrance, the corridor, the foyer, the door, the “interior window,” the window and finally, the balcony are successively analyzed by a collective of authors, in the form of richly illustrated articles that immerse the reader in an unprecedented vision of contemporary domestic interiors, in the light of major historical references.

In a current context where an eclecticism of lifestyles and a breakdown of family structures dominate, the architects seek to induce or anticipate a variety of spatial practices, by questioning the current devices, of functionalist inspiration, and by investing in a stronger characterization of their atmosphere. Thus, the modes of representation are diversifying and revealing new material and sensitive experiments applied to housing, renewing the famous question: how to live today?

From the publisher



Post-War Middle-Class Housing

Edited by: Gaia Caramellino
and Federico Zanfi
Publisher: Peter Lang
ISBN: 9783035194708
Language: English · Year: 2015

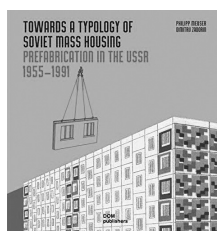
Post-war middle-class housing played a key role in constructing and transforming the cities of Europe and America, deeply impacting today's urban landscape. And yet, this stock has been underrepresented in a literature mostly focused on public housing and the work of a few master architects.

This book is the first attempt to explore such housing from an international perspective. It provides a comparative insight into the processes of construction, occupation and

transformation of residential architecture built for the middle-classes in 12 different countries between the 1950s and 1970s. It investigates the role of models, actors and policies that shaped the middle-class city, tracing geographies, chronologies and forms of development that often cross national frontiers.

This study is particularly relevant today within the context of “fragilization” which affects the middle-classes, challenging, as it does, the urban role played by this residential heritage in the light of technological obsolescence, trends in patterns of homeownership, as well as social and generational changes.

From the publisher



Towards a Typology of Soviet Mass Housing: Prefabrication in the USSR 1955-1991

Authors: Philipp Meuser
and Dimitrij Zadorin
Publisher: DOM publishers
ISBN: 9783869224466
Language: English
Year: 2015

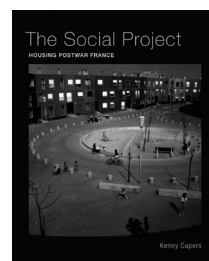
Towards a Typology of Soviet Mass Housing is the first comprehensive overview of prefabricated mass housing in the USSR. Due to the joint efforts of Philipp Meuser and Dimitrij Zadorin – two relentless experts on the matter – it is now possible to contemplate an unbiased introduction to the subject.

The book is divided into two main parts: “Typology”, written by Philipp Meuser, and “Catalogue”, written by Dimitrij Zadorin. The first part – “Typology” – analyses the USSR mass housing types through the lenses of ten correlated parameters. They approach issues such as the structural organization, the construction and creative aspects, as well as the influence of production and assembly on architecture. The second part – “Catalogue” – presents the systematized documentation of several major typological series, organized chronologi-

cally by three distinctive generations.

Together, the two parts of the book allow the reader to study and grasp a theme that, until now, had been absent from architectural discussion. Nonetheless, they confirm one of our deepest fears: an architecture mostly focused on productivity parameters, even more in an undemocratic country, can only lead to its own irredeemable and monotonous loss of quality.

Jaime Silva



The Social Project: Housing Postwar France

Author: Kenny Cupers
Publisher: University of Minnesota Press
ISBN: 9780816689651
Language: English
Year: 2014

Even its public transport has a different name. To visit the other Paris, you take not the metro but a different network of regional express trains. You cross underneath the périphérique, the circular highway that has replaced Paris's nineteenth-century city wall but has the same effect of demarcating the center from the rest. After this threshold, still the official city limit of Paris, the familiar city quickly peters out through the window. Then suddenly, the other Paris – perhaps the truly modern one – appears. Housing slabs and towers blocks in bright white, daring pink, and drab gray. Palaces for the people, giant but mostly less than glamorous. Ten-story pyramids imitating Mediterranean hilltop villages. Expansive multilevel plazas and exuberantly designed playgrounds. Graffitied concrete and postmodernist cladding. Well-intentioned community centers and monstrous shopping-mall megastructures.

This is the city where tourists do not go, but where most Parisians live. In it, we do not find the monumental splendor and richness of the historic center of the French capital, but the hopelessness of suburban landscapes, whose massive housing complexes are often

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called “concentration camps”, “silos for people”, “rabbit cages”, “dormitory cities”. The setting of movies like *Terrain Vague* (1960) by Marcel Carné or *Deux ou Trois choses que je Sais d'elle* (1967) by Jean-Luc Godard, or from novels like *Les Petits Enfants du Siècle* (1951) by Christian Rocherfort's.

The history of post-war housing estates is usually featured as a triumphant and utopic rise, followed by a monstrous and dystopic fall. The first tells the story of nations rising from the ashes. In France, WWII ended with 3 million homeless people, 1,400,000 homes damaged and 300,000 completely razed. 48% of French homes had no running water and 80% had no shower – consequences of a mostly rural country that had little development in the first half of the century. *L'État-providence* [the welfare state], regulating the country's social, political and economic life, would guarantee the necessary public services and the protection of the population. As far as housing is concerned, in these well-known *les trente glorieuses* (1946-1975), the French State was willing to modernize the country through the massive production of state-aided mass housing on the outskirts of the existing cities, while providing housing for the greatest number. Then, usually comes the story of the so called “dystopia”: the description of these areas as social ghettos, with high rates of crime, unemployment, drug addiction, that house nowadays the most disadvantaged sections of society, the unemployed, families of low income and ethnic minorities. This is often accompanied by the story of the “failure of the Modern Movement,” in which architecture is blamed for the failure of public or social housing: the monotony of the facades, the inflexibility and reduced size of the spaces, the poor materials, the lack of sound insulation, etc. It is a convenient black and white story, with the seesaw of the world simplifying the narratives of History.

Revealing other pieces of the puzzle, *The Social Project: Housing Postwar France* helps us to deconstruct these myths. With a broad narrative spectrum that spans the three post-war decades, and a precise explanation of the processes that were at the origin of the urbanization of the French peripheries, this publication proposes a relational history of architecture correlating the multiple disciplines and actors involved: France's centralized state apparatus, government and civil society institutions, architects and planners, social scientists, construc-

tion companies and engineers, inhabitants and residents' associations, developers, journalists and popular media; politics, economy, design, building technology, and social life. It deconstructs the common linear and rigid understanding of history, to reveal that the complex field of experimentation that accompanied the proliferation of post-war housing estates in France resulted from continuous revision processes and efforts invested in several disciplines, in which architecture and urbanism evolved — or tried to evolve — in direct relationship to the permanent mutation of daily life, sustained by the evolution of an emerging domain of specialization – social science.

To map this evolution, this study is organized in three main chapters, according to the three mentioned decades: “1950s: Projects in the Making”, “1960s: Architecture Meets Social Science” and “1970s: Consuming Contradictions”. In the first one, “1 - Streamlining Production” presents the housing policies that led to the conception of the *grands ensembles* as the new paradigm of urban development in the immediate postwar years, and “2 - A Bureaucratic Epistemology” demonstrates how social science emerged to adapt architecture to the needs of inhabitants, having become a central instrument of a centralized state committed to modernize the country. During the 1960s, the rising economic prosperity and mass consumerism saw inhabitants to become “users”, envisaged as active individuals instead of passive beneficiaries. “3 - Animation to the Rescue” introduces us to the notion of “animation” as a social and technical tool to promote community life and lively neighborhoods, “4 - The Expertise of Participation” the development of citizen participation in planning and architecture, contesting “the right to the city” and “5 - Programming the Villes Nouvelles” presents the method of programming in the design of the *Villes Nouvelles* as a way to design new urban centers based on functional diversity, as *grand ensembles* were commonly criticized for being too isolated and mono-functional. The 1970s chapter describes the rise of private development over public housing: “6 - Megastructures in Denial” discusses about the attempts to give the urban sprawl new urban centers, envisaged as giant megastructures and “7 - The Ultimate Projects” illustrates the time when the rising purchasing power of the middle-class and its mobility increased the discon-

tent with mass housing and the preferences for the return to single houses, giving rise to alternative housing models such as the *habitat évolutif* and the *habitat intermédiaire*.

Giving continuity to the work undertaken by French scholars in their native language (Annie Fourcaut, Antoine Picon, Bruno Vayssière, Danièle Voldman, Jean Fourastié, Joseph Abram, Le Goullon, Rémi Papillault), this book fills an important gap in the literature for an international audience of English speaking scholars.

The Social Project is not an architectural book focused on the usual masters, nor on the sweetest gem of the discipline. Of course, Cupers does not leave out Le Corbusier and CIAM, Chombart de Lauwe and Henri Lefebvre, but insists on revealing that the history of French postwar social science, architecture and urbanism cannot be understood by the work of “great men”, having instead been developed by plural, and sometimes dispersed, almost anonymous, huge mass of studies promoted by the State, popular inquiries, journalistic reportage, and academic research.

In the 1980s, more than 700 of the postwar housing estates built in France “have been officially marked as ‘urban problem areas’ by the French government, stigmatizing more than 5 million inhabitants.” While this publication does not offer the reader a position on the discussion between demolition versus conservation, it is a fundamental piece of research to understand the housing policies, experiments and initiatives promoted by the French state, in the three decades following WWII, in political, architectural and social terms. Connecting phenomena developed within politics, architecture, engineering, planning and sociology, it provides a clear understanding of the evolution of the post-war dwelling environment in France, from the welfare state panorama to the rise of mass consumerism.

In the overall context of neo-liberal policies, it is imperative that works like this are developed, read and spread, before the products of the Welfare State disappear before we have begun to understand them. In case such research as this is not enough to restore the idea of the right to housing, at least it can contribute to informed decisions when dealing with the future of post-war housing estates, in France, and beyond.

Zara Ferreira