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Honors theses

Unité d'Habitation - une remise en ordre

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The thesis has been conceived **in** order to accomplish a double degree graduation, between the universities of Politecnico di Torino and Ecole Supérieure Nationale de Marseille. The site of the project is located south of Marseille agglomeration, adjacent to Le Corbusier *Unité d'Habitation*, and is currently occupied by a sprawl of temporary warehouses. A series of observations were raised about strategies concerning both the relevant presence of the Unité and the revisitation of the typical dense mediterranean environment, as a possible remedy to the sprawl of the “generic” urban periphery.

A first set of observations engaged the comparison between the size of the contemporary residential neighborhood with that of the modernist cell. Therefore the proximity with Le Corbusier's Unité, have, one more time, triggered the will to investigate the concept of “machine for living”. Thus the project retrieves the theoretical number of roughly 1600 inhabitants (*Unité d'Habitation* capacity) as the threshold of new residents to be settled in the proposed development. Numerous examples related to the design of a repeatable housing unit were gathered, mainly belonging to the architectural production of the twentieth century. For each case a specific quality was highlighted. The purpose of establishing an ideal framework of knowledges and operations, storable in an operative “design machine”, was the design of a low-rise residential housing unit prototype, suitable to fulfill all the needs of contemporary living , among other requirements related to repeatability and economic feasibility.

A second set of considerations derived from the territorial, large scale, survey. A double level of analysis was then undertaken. A first survey on-site, led to the collection of morphologic data and built fragments, of relevant value, concerning the historical and cultural heritage. These elements, later embodied in the project, included: 18th century *Bastides*, a group of twentieth-century residences, artificial traces related to the historical water supply network and the infrastructural axes. A further level of analysis concerned cartography, together with the evolution of planning strategies able to influence the physical growth of the territory. From the land subdivision representation dating back 1804 (Napoleonic Cadastre) an important sign was then extracted. Related to an important historic path, that for centuries crossed from north to south the territory of Marseille, this path was subsequently restored as a new boundary for the new proposed settlement. A third group of observations was formulated in relation to the urban scale. More specifically this attempt was targeted to straighten out the conflict among the incoherent urban morphologies overlooked by each of the three sides of the planning area. Preliminary remarks were undertaken on the theoretical researches of Kevin Lynch about the "image of the city" in order to reinforce the perceptible aesthetic quality of each of the three distinctive built part of the actual city facing the planning site. Following the logic of the hyper-dense low-rise settlement, the project opposed an internal compact and homogeneous pattern to a specific individual treatment for each of the three boundary sides. The side facing the Unité d'Habitation was therefore constituted by opaque walls setting up a monumental background. On the other hand the two other sides opened towards the urban surroundings through articulated shapes and façade configurations meant to stimulate the interaction with the public.

One of the main qualities of this thesis refers to the central role ascribed by the set of operations that anticipate the final form of the architectural design. The process is seen as an integral part of the project, insofar as images, texts and representations are at the base of any further processing.



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