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The background of the cover is a detailed architectural floor plan of a housing estate, rendered in a light blue color against a dark blue background. The plan shows a large, semi-circular arrangement of residential blocks, with various internal courtyards and service areas. The lines of the plan are thin and precise, highlighting the layout of the buildings and their connections.

HOUSING ATLAS

EUROPE 20TH CENTURY

Orsina Simona Pierini
Carmen Espegel
Dick van Gameren
Mark Swenarton

**HOUSING
ATLAS
EUROPE
20TH
CENTURY**

Orsina Simona Pierini
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Mark Swenarton

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Foreword

This book provides a fresh approach to European urban housing of the 20th century. This was the time, and the place, when housing became a major focus of architectural endeavour – and when many of the formats and typologies with which we work today emerged for the first time. The aim of this volume is to produce understanding not just for its own sake but also in order to draw important lessons for the design of housing today.

The project was conceived by Orsina Simona Pierini (Politecnico di Milano, Italy), who invited three housing experts from other parts of Europe – Carmen Espegel (Universidad Politécnica de Madrid, Spain), Dick van Gameren (Delft University of Technology, the Netherlands) and Mark Swenarton (University of Liverpool, United Kingdom) – to join her on the book. While each brings their own distinctive perspective, they all share a commitment to the use of drawing as a method of architectural research.

Starting from an initial worldwide list of representative cases of housing, an intensive period of deliberation and discussion between the four authors led to the final selection of 87 projects from across Europe. The focus is on the relationship between the public and the private realms, the urban and the domestic, the city and the dwelling. The selection includes projects that are well known but also a number that will be unfamiliar but which the authors consider of interest and relevance today.

In making the selection, we tried to include the different ideas of cities that this vast experience offers. Within the almost countless versions of urban living offered by the European city, we can identify a much more limited number of invariants, which correspond to different ways of relating and creating community and collectivity. For example, the aggregation of dwellings into neighbourhoods, the densely compacted urban block and the dispersal of houses across the land constitute opposing models: ideas of the city that guide individual projects in different ways. Rather than attempting to chart 'progress' or evolution, the projects are presented in chronological order, allowing the reader to identify recurring themes and perhaps discover that the most up-to-date experimentation finds its origin in some ancient idea. The projects have been chosen for their interest in terms of the relationship between the dwelling and the city, and how buildings relate to each other to create urban spaces and connections. We can say that each example represents not the 'rule' but rather a variation on an urban theme.

The selected projects are presented through drawings specially made for the *Housing Atlas*. This is a deliberate choice, as it underlines the importance of being able to see, understand and compare the case studies in a uniform and equivalent mode of documentation. It will bring forward in the

clearest way possible how the designers addressed the complexities of the site, the plans and elevations and how these elements were brought together. By comparing the drawings, one can discern the wealth of variations, differences and similarities between the 87 projects. It allows us to see them as an outcome of design research, exploring the many options between theory and practice. How did the projects build on previous experience and experimentation, and how did they generate new knowledge?

By studying and understanding these lines of development and innovation, designers, researchers and teachers can start to address the issues and complexities of the design of housing for today, looking through the many lenses that are offered by the 87 documented projects. Together they transmit knowledge as built manuals of ways to connect social, cultural, political and economic realities to the design of spaces for collective living in which individual and communal identities meet.

The 700 drawings documenting the projects have been prepared to a standard scale and format. In the graphic presentation, the data is standardised to allow projects from different periods and locations to be compared, omitting what is not relevant for our purposes. Three different scales are deployed to document each project: at the level of, respectively, the site and the city, the building ensemble and the individual housing type. The scales used are 1:10000 for location in the city, 1:1000 or 1:500 for the definition of the complex, and 1:250 for the description of the housing types. The combination of drawings on these three scales weaves together the relationships between the parts – from the bedroom to the city – and presents the design as a single entity, rather than a series of fragmented themes to be tackled one by one. Just as the buildings and housing types are presented in the context of the city, so the dwellings are shown in the entirety of the building body – not simply as individual ‘cells’. Complementing the analysis presented by the drawings of each project is a summary giving the name of the architects, design and execution dates and geographical location, plus project description and period photographs.

The book begins with introductory essays by each of the four authors, exploring some of the major themes of 20th-century housing. While the selection of the projects and the accompanying descriptions represent a collective endeavour, the introductory essays present the distinctive interpretation of each individual author based on the understanding of 20th-century housing that each has developed over decades of study.

Author Biographies

Orsina Simona Pierini

Orsina Simona Pierini is full Professor in Architecture and Urban Design at the Department of Architecture and Urban Studies at the Politecnico di Milano. Her books include *Nelle case: Interiors in Milan 1928–1978* (2023); *Case Milanesi 1923–1973: Fifty Years of Residential Architecture in Milan* (2017); *Housing primer* (2012) and *Passaggio in Iberia* (2008).

Carmen Espegel

Carmen Espegel is an award-winning architect and professor at the School of Architecture, Universidad Politécnica de Madrid. Her books include *Collective Housing in Spain: 20th Century (1929–1992), vol. I* (2013) and *Collective Housing 1992–2015, vol. II* (2016), as well as *Women Architects in the Modern Movement* (2018) and *Domestic Dawns* (2022).

Dick van Gameren

Dick van Gameren is Professor of Housing Design and Dean of the Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment at Delft University of Technology. He is the founding editor of the journal *DASH* (Delft Architectural Studies on Housing), launched in 2009, and also of the *Global Housing* book series, launched in 2020. His most recent book is *Dutch Dwellings* (2022).

Mark Swenarton

Mark Swenarton is Emeritus Professor of Architecture at the University of Liverpool, editor of the journal *Architectural History* and formerly founding editor of *Architecture Today* (1989–2005) and head of the Oxford Brookes School of Architecture (2005–10). His recent books include *Cook's Camden* (2017) and *Architecture and the Welfare State* (2015).

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HOUSING ATLAS

EUROPE

20TH CENTURY

In *Housing Atlas*, beautifully drawn plans, sections and elevations document 87 of the most important European housing schemes of the 20th century. This was the period when architects addressed the multiple challenges of modern urban living and responded with an array of innovative solutions.

Today, architects are revisiting these designs as they seek answers to the housing crisis.

Chronologically ordered, this is an essential survey of these key housing projects, produced by a pan-European team of leading scholars. Complete with contextual essays, the studies each include a history and analysis of the projects and the drawings are presented in a way that makes them all readily comparable.

ORSINA SIMONA PIERINI is Full Professor of Architectural and Urban Design at the Politecnico di Milano

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'This book is a cracker . . . rammed full of old favourites as well as a whole bunch of extraordinary buildings that I've never seen before. Each of the entries is really comprehensive and it's so great to see the plans. This is fascinating for those with an interest in housing and indispensable for people who work in the field.' – Peter Barber

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