Participation for sustainability. Why looking back to design the future?

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TULOU
Fujian Province
China
11th – 20th century
SOCIETY: Tulous could contain a number of residents, estimated in some cases to have been even up to 800 inhabitants. Although they were the houses for the ruling class, tulous do not stand out for the glory or for the symbols of richness, and they are, indeed, powerful examples of collective life.

FUNCTION: As the image of a fortress can explain, the main function was definitely the defence and security of the clan, which had to protect itself from natural and social constant threats.

PROGRAMME: Tulous were organized with “private” spaces and a collective central space equipped for community life. Buildings were divided vertically between families; each of them could occupy one or more rooms, all of which were similar, regardless of their role within the community.

SPACE: Starting from the central space, the private living units were organized as follows: on the ground floor there was an area with kitchen and living spaces, on the first floor a warehouse and over above the bedrooms. A gallery, which the rooms face, and the stairs are the only distribution elements of these buildings.

SHARING: In the central space, common activities took place and here the facilities could be organized differently depending on the particular case. In the centre there could be common buildings, or open spaces, or simple rooms for the rituals, etc.
SOCIETY | In 2004, 2.1% of Israel’s population lived in a kibbutz, a total of 116,000 people in 266 kibbutzim. The kibbutz perfectly represents a society in which the people’s involvement is linked to only the will of the individuals to participate. In this panorama of total equality, the position of women is identical to that of men.

FUNCTION | The dual aim is to find a link with the original land of their ancestors, and to establish a settlement in which they can discover a new way of life. The main function of the kibbutz is oriented towards meeting the whole needs of the community through what is produced on the kibbutz.

PROGRAMME | Production activities of kibbutzim are organized into different branches, and they have been expanded also to industrial and tourism. Following consensus decision-making, a assembly manages the finances, while the every day management of the kibbutz is supervised by elected committees.

SPACE | The “perimetral” position in relation to the centre of the state of Israel, brought the founders in a hostile environment. The majority of Kibbutzim are organized with a similar plan: residential building surrounds the common spaces and facilities, which can be easily reached through walking or bicycling.

SHARING | External to the residential area there are the production activities and the agricultural fields. All the common areas for the activities related to production and living, where the habitants hold meetings, parties or spend time together, are in the courtyard, under covered verandas, and even in the stables.
CASCINA
Lombardy Region
Italy
15th - 20th century
SOCIETY | Cascina could contain 4 to 20 families: farmers, whose working activities were organized by
the owner. Each farmer participated to the life and production of the whole community through a specialized
job. Typology and spaces of the Cascina were built to correspond to the functional and social structure.

FUNCTION | The main function of the Cascina was farming. Inside the farmhouse there were a wide range of productive facilities, such as stables, barns, silos, dairies, wells, fountains, ovens, warehouses, mills, houses and sometimes taverns or a small church, even a school, gathered together in exemplary architecture.

PROGRAMME | The settlement was owned by a single person who did not live in the Cascina and did not participate in the life of the community. The management was delegated to a head-farmer who organized the activities of the farmers and the shared life of the families, in terms of living, production, and leisure.

SPACE | Usually, the plan of this typology of building was organized around a courtyard, according to these five concepts:

SHARING | The sharing spaces were represented by the courtyard or covered veranda, which were the common areas, where the farmers held meetings, parties or spent time together. In the other bindings, all around the courtyard, there were the agricultural facilities and the farmers’ houses.
Also the contemporary choice of living a shared life is not a romantic decision, but a rational choice.
SOCIETY | This complex was intended to host the youngest workers and employees of Olivetti, one of the most important Italian industries, which is the promoter of the project.

FUNCTION | The main residential function represents a symbol of the general political vision of the industrialist Adriano Olivetti, who tried to place the worker, as a person, at the centre of production.

PROGRAMME | The dream was to reconnect the workers with the nature, allowing a life-style which combines culture, environment, sociality, and work in shared activities and facilities.

SPACE | 82 small semi-underground house units are distributed with a semi-circular shape around a central green hill. On the roof, a common green space follows the building’s shape.

SHARING | Public gardens and public spaces host the common activities and the shared facilities, as it typically happens in an Italian urban space.
PIONEER VALLEY
Amherst, USA
Kraus-Fitch Arch.
1994

SOCIETY | Pioneer Valley was the first co-housing neighbourhood in the Eastern United States and includes 32-units of energy efficient housing with a 5,000 sq. m. of shared spaces.

FUNCTION | Building orientation, super-insulation, partial self-production of food from the common garden guarantee the sustainable approach of the community.

PROGRAMME | The programme is a work in community progress, continuing and improving their values and goals, based on social and environmental sustainability.

SPACE | Single houses are spread around a common house, which can host several shared facilities, such as a multifunctional room, children’s play room, library, and one on-site home offices.

SHARING | The complex is based on the willingness to support community life, providing well structured interactions; e.g., the 2 or 5 shared dinners per week or the walking commute, etc.
SOCIETY | 34 families combine an urban and rural lifestyle in a well-preserved natural environment, sustaining their home-schooling practices.

FUNCTION | The main residential function is provided by town homes; there are common spaces and a natural park, for partial food production; they are committed to the environmental sustainability.

PROGRAMME | For the management of life and activities, the community uses consensus decision-making about how to combine leisure, food production, and a sustainable approach to living.

SPACE | 34 town homes are arranged in two rows divided by a covered pedestrian street with a common house in the centre (460sm); the surrounding space is characterized by a shared natural park.

SHARING | Communitarian life is promoted by scheduled shared meals, workshops, multipurpose rooms, and guestrooms.
SOCIETY | 5 different social types comprise this community: single owner families; co-operative associations; young people on rent; older people and people of all ages renting.

FUNCTION | The main residential function is oriented to strongly combine sustainable life and sharing experiences through, e.g., waste recycling, sustainable construction techniques, etc.

PROGRAMME | There are five committees that manage the operations and represent the five communities, whose activities are mainly addressed toward sustainability and social production.

SPACE | The buildings are organized into the shape of five horseshoes, in a radial disposition around an old common farmhouse. Every community has its own common spaces and facilities.

SHARING | The central common house supports many common activities: cafe, vegetable shop, gift shop, office space for rent, sleepover room for rent, workshops, and storage spaces for rent.
SOCIETY | Boalhosa was an agricultural colony in the 1950’s, restored with the aim of settling a new eco-community, combining landscape quality and social housing in a rural context.

FUNCTION | The residential function is combined with the Environmental Observatory, which develops research activities on landscape protection.

PROGRAMME | Encouraging the development/supply of essential services for the territory, the project improves the quality of life of the local population in non-urban locations.

SPACE | New spaces have been added to the existing buildings, facing the challenge of a dense wooden context, while the existing buildings has been reorganized to host new functions.

SHARING | It creates spaces and essential facilities in the field of social services, giving priority to the recovery of the architectural and natural heritage. The environment is an active side of the shared life.
TULOU HOUSING
Guangzhou, China
Urbanus
2009

SOCIETY | This urban community is comprised of low-income families, many of whom are migrant workers, and it proposes a new typology of housing.

FUNCTION | Reinterpreting the historical tulou typology, this project offers affordable housing, recreated not just by the tulou’s shape, but also by a communitarian attitude.

PROGRAMME | The attention to social problems is supported by careful attention being paid to the common activities and spaces, but also by considerations taken with respect to the building orientation.

SPACE | The 220 apartment housing complex is a clear reinterpretation of the traditional Hakka buildings, creating an intimate atmosphere by striking a good balance between private and public spaces.

SHARING | Besides the residential private spaces, the complex hosts several complementary functions and a variety of communal and public spaces.
LILAC (Low Impact Living Affordable Community) is a self-developed community composed of 20 families who want to live in an eco-friendly environment.

An ecological approach is the main community goal: one pond, the shared garden and a children’s playground are the core functions of the community.

The ecological approach is accompanied by the lifestyle of the co-houses, in which the residents sign a pledge which commits them to the eco-philosophy of the community.

20 houses organized around a common green space, which is meant to reduce the community’s footprint. The courtyard arrangement increases the opportunities for socializing and sharing.

LILAC has a strong level of sharing life also with respect to the wider local community. The common house located at the main gate hosts events and permits access to the facilities.
Almost twenty women between 50 and 80 years of age, coming from different life experiences, who do not want to live alone, comprise the social group of this co-housing project.

The main function comes from the willingness to offer and receive mutual support and to live in an environment which fosters exchanges and relations.

A long phase of participatory design has come to define this program for a community suitable for elderly people and based on sustainability and respect for the urban context.

OWCH wants to become a resource for the local community and reference for elderly people; monthly meetings are organized to explain the aims of this project.
SOCIETY | The regeneration of the Wencun Village is devoted to give new social life to the rural community, affected by social depletion caused by the Chinese rapid urbanization.

FUNCTION | The project’s goal is to reinforce the existing functions, with the aim to rediscover a rural life, featuring traditional knowledge, culture, social harmony, and environmental respect.

PROGRAMME | The life in the village is organized by the inhabitants, according to their needs and private lives, and developed within a wider set of opportunities for social participation and collaboration.

SPACE | 14 houses and several public shared facilities compose a dense urban fabric, which coheres with the vernacular architecture and the urban scheme of the rural village.

SHARING | The inhabitants find new opportunities to share facilities and activities, according to the traditional common life of the village, in a renewed urban space.
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<th><strong>HISTORICAL CASES</strong></th>
<th><strong>CONTEMPORARY CASES</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>SOCIETY</strong></td>
<td>Clear and fixed roles for the residents inside the community, with the organization depending on the cultural social rules.</td>
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<td><strong>FUNCTION</strong></td>
<td>Residential function is connected to defensive aims and to productive activities that are strictly linked with the territory.</td>
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<td><strong>PROGRAMME</strong></td>
<td>Activities are organized according to systematic schedules and customs, held regularly on the basis of temporary occurrences.</td>
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<td><strong>SPACE</strong></td>
<td>Private and common spaces, present in variable ratios, are combined with clear and different typologies adapting to the environment.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>SHARING</strong></td>
<td>High levels within the community, in terms of education, assets, production and residential activities.</td>
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A cultural, free choice of living in a close relationship with the environment, developing activities and collaborations in shared and common spaces in order to achieve complete sustainability.
presentation and video of the research available on the website

www.core-a.info

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