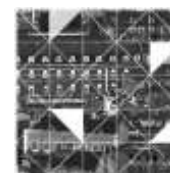

CIDADES, Comunidades e Territórios



Negotiating the middle-class city. Housing and equipping post-war Turin, 1950-1980.

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Abstract

The article explores the pattern of fragmented public spaces and collective facilities built in Turin between the 1950s and the 1970s, as the result of negotiation processes conducted between public institutions, private developers and professionals over the design and construction of housing devoted to the middle-class. Considering three developments – the complexes of Moncalieri and Collegno located at the outskirts of the city, and the new residential district of Quartiere Ippodromo in the southern sector – the article observes public facilities as the outcome of a set of different policies, mirroring the encounter between an heterogeneous set of actors and initiatives: from the scale of the playground close to the condominio to the public park at the edge of the new residential sectors, from the neighborhood's kindergartens and primary schools, to the community and sports centers in the new districts. During this period, houses devoted to middle-class and new public facilities were negotiated, designed and built simultaneously, bringing light to the fragmented process of construction that generated post-war Turin, implemented through series of punctual agreements between private and public actors. Through an uncommon approach, that aims at combining traditional sources with the analysis of less explored planning tools (mainly the convenzioni urbanistiche and the piani di lottizzazione), the article contributes to a deeper understanding of the development of post-war Italian cities, by looking at the aggregation of houses and facilities as two dimensions of inhabiting/living – closely interrelated in middle class housing – that together contribute to actively build the “ordinary” city. Nowadays this interrelationship still represents a focal point of social cohesion, urban quality and liveability.

Palavras-chave: Middle-class housing; Post-war Italy; Turin; Urban facilities; Building Agreements..

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1. Beyond housing: reassessing the study of post-war Italian growth

Like several other European Countries, Italy experienced an extraordinary process of economic growth and social and cultural change between the 1950s and the 1970s, while deep transformation affected the territorial distribution of the population and the way of living of the different social groups (Ginsborg, 1989; Crainz, 1996, 2003). These changes, profoundly altered the structure of the metropolitan Italy during the years of the so-called golden age, encouraging the renewal of previously built areas and the construction of new neighborhoods in the fast-spreading zones of urban expansion. While the needs of an increasing population with growing requirements in terms of living comfort were met by a massive building development, middle classes were the main protagonists of this process and their houses had a decisive part in the process of post-war urban growth. They populated the greatest part of the new neighborhoods and it was their expectations, their cultures, habits and residential aspirations that shaped the expansion and transformation of many Italian cities, leaving unmistakable traces on the contemporary urban landscape.

One of the main assumptions of this article is that it is not possible to investigate the post-war Italian city looking separately at houses, services and public spaces. In middle-class housing complexes, in particular, the two dimensions of “living/inhabiting” – the residence on the one hand, facilities and equipment on the other – are closely interrelated and the aggregation between houses and collective spaces contributes to bring light to the fragmented process of construction that shaped the post-war Italian city, implemented through series of punctual agreements and negotiations between private and public actors. However, a set of fundamental features still need to be addressed: which has been the role of middle-class houses in building new parts of the Italian cities in those years, in adding and designing not only houses, but also new streets, sidewalks, parking lots, parks and playgrounds, schools and sport centers?

Facilities and housing have mainly been studied separately and in a quite “sectorial” way (from both the theoretical and the operative- procedural perspectives), as the product of processes, programs and policies that are rarely interweaved. On the one hand, the history of post-war Italian housing has mostly focused on the major public programs and projects (Di Biagi, 2001; Di Biagi et al., 2009), rarely addressing the nuanced and multifaceted relationship between the ordinary stock built by the market for the middle classes and its facilities³. On the other hand, recent international scholarship mirrored a growing interest for the history of facilities, addresses mainly through a typological perspective (Wagenaar, 2006; Clarck, 2006, 2010; Lewi, Nichols, 2010; Pietsch, Muller, 2015; Darian-Smith, Wills, 2017) or from a political standpoint, principally looking at the institutionalization procedures often in between bottom-up and top-down processes.

The study of the building processes, of the stories of the places made of the aggregation of houses and facilities, as well as of their relations and transformations, brings light to the importance to re-define strategies to implement this interrelationship that still represents a focal point of social cohesion, urban quality and livability⁴. Housing and equipment, meant as indivisible aspects of the same question, represent together a material legacy to be addressed through integrated regeneration programs, and a fundamental resource (in terms of urban quality) in the agenda for the 21st century city. Furthermore, this wide “urban stock” built between 1950 and 1980 is experiencing today processes of technological obsolescence as well as of generational and societal changes, bringing light to several concerns related to its punctual re-use and re-evaluation (Caramellino, Zanfi 2015; Renzoni 2015).

³ This perspective has been adopted only by a limited number of studies mostly dedicated to the story of some neighborhoods (Sotgia 2010; Bonomo 2007, 2009; Viccaro 2007; De Pieri 2010).

⁴ On the one side, the study is in keeping with the renewed interest for the middle classes and for the process of “fragilization” that characterize this social group today, which affected both historical studies and social sciences in the recent years (See Bagnasco 2008, Maurin-Gaux 2012, Bosc 2008). On the other, the article stem from recent scholarship on Welfare State and on the negotiation between collective and individual rights, universalistic public actions and personalized demands., together with an increasing attention that is being given to the ‘built reality’ of welfare state policies which have accumulated inside and outside Europe over the last century (Avermaete, Swenarton 2014; Renzoni 2013; Munarin et al. 2011; Gosseye, Heynen 2010; Rykewaert 2011).

Figure 1. Centro Europa District, Turin.

Source: Photography by Michela Pace, 2013.

The article focuses on the case of Turin, and adopts an unconventional approach, combining the research conducted on “traditional” sources (municipal archives, professionals’ private archives, familiar sources), with the analysis of urban and building agreements. In particular, the paper chooses as the main point of observation two specific planning tools: the *convenzione urbanistica* (building agreement) and the *piano di lottizzazione* (parceling plan / detailed plan)⁵. If the *piano di lottizzazione* is an executive planning instrument based on the initiative by private owners, its implementation is based on an agreement (*convenzione urbanistica*) between the municipality and the owners of the land, who accept to offer part of the land for public use and construct infrastructures, services and facilities at their own expenses. Significant urban sectors built in the booming Italy were in fact the result of articulated processes of negotiations between public administrations and a plurality of actors (developers, land owners, real estate promoters, architects...). However, while the Italian planning culture of the 1960s focused on the debate over the design and the study of *quartieri organici*, *città satelliti*, *insediamenti autonomi* and *quartieri integrati*, a significant amount of urban public facilities took shape through the individual initiative of single stakeholders involved in the construction of middle-class housing, implemented through a process of continuous negotiations between private actors and the local municipal administration (Zanfi, 2013).

2. Housing and Equipping Post-war Turin

Within the frame of cities that constitute the backbone of Italian economy during the years of the boom (Rome and Milan), Turin offers an interesting case from the standpoint of the social changes, mirroring several specificities. The narrative of the modernization of post-war Turin – deeply influenced by the presence of the FIAT factory – has been strongly oriented by the image of the company-town, while the attention of both specialized and non-specialized literature has focused on the history and the culture of the working classes (Musso 2005, Cardoza-Symcox, 2006).

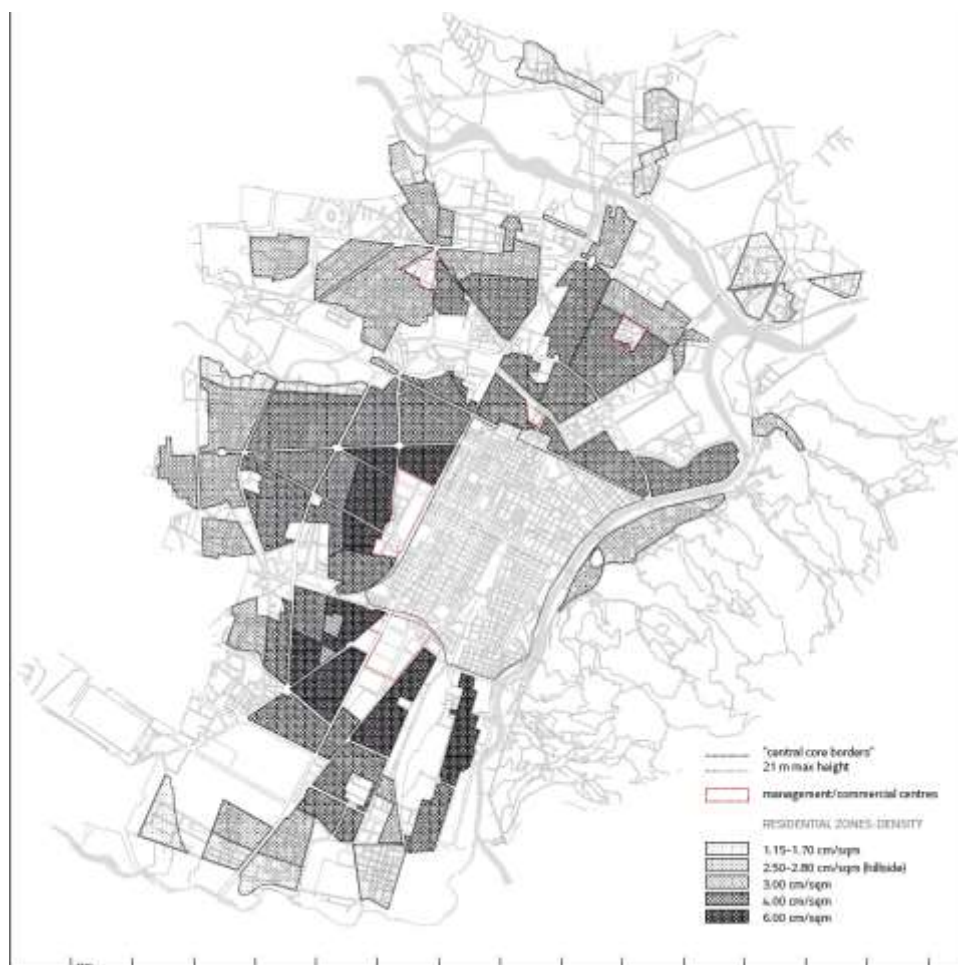
⁵ In Italian planning culture the *piani di lottizzazione* and *convenzioni urbanistiche* played also a relevant role in the post-war planning practice. In 1968 Italian government promoted a wide survey aimed at documenting this widespread phenomenon and its distortion (Ministero dei lavori pubblici – Ministry of Public Works-, 1968).

However, even if ignored by the main narratives on the city, middle-class cultures had a significant role in its transformation, affecting diverse sectors of a real estate market that operated at different scales: from the integrated large-scale building complexes to the fully equipped *condomini*, from the slab-blocks for the lower-middle classes to the palazzine for the upper-middle classes. The core of these transformations was represented by the metropolitan area, which grew, along with its outskirts, touched by the diffusion of bourgeois ways of life. In these new residential sectors the construction of collective buildings has been combined with a plurality of new medium and small-sized public spaces and facilities, from the scale of the playground originated close to the *condominio*, to the public park at the edge of the new residential sectors, from the neighborhoods kindergartens to the primary schools and sport centres in the core of the new areas (Olmo-Mazza, 1991).

Mirroring the spatial forms of urban divisions originated in the first half of the century (Falco-Morbelli, 1976), different urban sectors in post-war Turin were converted into residential neighbourhoods for the middle-class through a process of spatial distribution that was also profoundly touched by the growing privatization of some natural resources (as in the case of the shores of the Po river) and often supported by public policies in the field of public services and infrastructures (Caramellino, De Pieri, Renzoni, 2015).

However, it seems necessary a deeper understanding of the planning tools, professional practices and decision processes that generated – and in many cases encouraged- the implementation of middle-class housing in the city and in its outskirts.

Figure 2. The General City Plan of Turin, 1959.



Source: Drawing by Cristina Renzoni, 2012.

During the period addressed by the article, the Turin General City Plan was under development, as a preliminary document during the first ten years and already adopted as planning tool during the second decade.

Drawn up by the council offices and by an Executive Committee chaired by the engineer Giorgio Rigotti (in charge of the general coordination and flat part) and the architect Molli Boffa (hilly part) starting from 1951, the new General Plan was adopted by the city in 1956 and approved by the Ministry of Public Works in 1959, right in the midst of the economic miracle. In the meantime, the city grew from 700,000 (1951) to over one million inhabitants (1961) and its urban transformation developed according to precise spatial logics: on the one hand the process of urban development was guided by the planning discourses implemented over the first two decades of the 20th century; on the other, it answered the requests coming from the medium and medium-large protagonists of Turin market and entrepreneurship (Falco, 1991 ; Ramello et al., 2014). The reconstruction of the city and its expansion occurred, in fact, outside of the debate on the elaboration of the new town plan, « confirming a routine to use flexible tools – made up of exceptions to the planning tools in force – which had already marked construction development during Fascism» (De Magistris 1999, 207). Over the 1950s and 1970s the planning agreement has been the main form of implementation of the on-going city plan (1959) in Turin (Falco, 1991): a sort of a “spotted” and “negotiated” city-making procedure that brings light to the real interrelation in the construction of whole parts of the city, of houses and facilities through the involvement of a multiplicity of actors.

Beyond promoting numerous interventions of replacement in the city center (through demolition and reconstruction of small plots), the most relevant programs elaborated between the 1950s and the 1970s, supported the development of detailed plans in the new areas of urban expansion for the construction of residential sectors and equipped complexes for the middle classes, that often became the occasion for the implementation of public facilities such as kindergartens, schools, playgrounds, parks...

On the one side, stakeholders such as real estate promoters, building contractors, housing developers, insurance companies produced during the decade several studies for the construction of new residential urban sectors aimed at strengthening the public image of the promoters through reconvertng marginal areas, for the construction of homes for the market or intended for an agreement foreseeing the sale to employees. On the other, on several occasions, still unknown local professionals – in cooperation with the owners of lands occupied by small industrial activities and often interested in converting their properties in residential neighbourhoods – promoted and carried on the urbanization of entire new sectors and, through a long negotiation process with the local municipality, arrived to build a significant percentage of facilities and services.

Private developers had in fact the possibility to transfer to the Municipality part of their land properties for the construction of public facilities by the public administration. In change of this land, the amount of inbuilt cubic meters was allotted to the properties of the developers, who were able to increase the square meters, the density standards and the height of the residential interventions built on the remaining properties⁶.

The application of these planning tools broke in some ways the equilibrium between the residential stock and the facilities, as envisioned by the Turin city plan through its application the Turin Municipality achieved to build only in a few years – between 1960 and 1964 – an unexpected stock of public facilities, acquiring – through more than 50 urban agreements – 367.000 square meters of land for their construction for a cost of 7 billion of lire⁷.

⁶ These long administrative procedure and processes of negotiations, carried on by the professionals or by the stakeholders, were regulated by a local law defining the urban agreements between the Municipality of Turin and the promoters, approved on the occasion of the inauguration of the local General City Plan (see the art. n. 6-34 Norme Urbanistiche Edilizie di attuazione del PRG).

⁷ Un'accesa polemica dell'opposizione. Dibattito in consiglio sulle licenze edilizie: in due anni il comune ha acquisito i servizi pubblici 367 mila metri quadrati, concedendo in cambio ai privati maggiori diritti di cubatura, «La Stampa», January 28 1964; Articolo rinviato in Consiglio Comunale, «La Stampa», January 29 1964.

3. Exploring the “ordinary city”: three cases

Many of the new wide urban sectors that were built to fulfil the mass request for housing in Italy between the 1950s and the 1970s, have been considered for a long time as the product of a speculation culture (Insolera, 1993), being mostly ignored by the main histories of Turin modernization (Levi-Maida, 2002). This vast production has not been included in the architectural guides that in the 1980s tried, for the first time, to codify the canons of postwar Italian architecture through a catalogue of *exempla* that, by contrast, carefully analyzed the experimental housing solutions conceived by a limited number of outstanding architects in their attempts to meet the requirements of cultivated clients (Magnaghi, Monge, Re, 1982). However, the diffuse forms of the “ordinary” urban stock (made of houses, streets and facilities), characterized by the repetition of recognizable solutions, met the requirement of a booming market that was able to codify the aspirations and the taste of an emerging urban middle class by producing quality and to answer to their growing requirements in terms of comfort (Bonomo, 2011).

The three analyzed cases mirror two prevailing scales of intervention, where houses devoted to the local middle-class and new public facilities were negotiated, designed and built simultaneously through a building agreement: on the one hand, the scale of the urban block located in the outskirts of the city, as shown by the cases of Corso Roma in Moncalieri (3.1) and “The Sky Residence” in Collegno (3.2); on the other, the scale of a new wide urban district, as illustrated by the case of Quartiere Ippodromo, in the southern sector of the city (3.3).

3.1. A modern “Satellite Town” for 5.000 inhabitants in the Southern expansion of the city

Located in the Southern periphery of Turin, immediately out of the municipal boundaries, the new neighborhood of Corso Roma in Moncalieri took shape along one of the main directions of the expansion of the city.

The plan for the new residential sector originated from a wider urban vision, conceived by the Turin architect Enzo Dolci in the early 1950s for the urbanization of the agrarian land owned by the local industrialist Giacomo Bosso. Never mentioned in the histories of post-war Italian architecture, Enzo Dolci (1926-82) belongs to a generation of local practitioners who have rarely been investigated by the main studies on Turin, even if actively involved in the modernization processes that radically transformed the local urban landscape during the booming years⁸.

Deeply engaged in the construction of the post-war Turin, Dolci was particularly active on the ground of residential architecture and contributed to the definition of a set of housing solutions for the local middle-class⁹: from the individual villas located on the hill and the holidays resorts, to the numerous parceling plans that he elaborated for a number of small Municipalities situated in the outskirts of the city. His work, documented through a heterogeneous set of sources, mirrors his attempts to combine languages and solutions conceived in response to the requirements of the local market, with recent experiences and models coming from abroad¹⁰.

⁸ Along with the work of Dolci we can mention the contribution of many other protagonists of this still unexplored Turin professional milieu; among them are Nello Renacco, Gino Salvestrini, Gualtiero Casalegno, Enrico Bordogna, Elio Luzi, Massimo Cotti.

⁹ Dolci E., *Edilizia Residenziale*, «Vita», September 19 1963, pp. 62-63.

¹⁰ Documents from the Departments of Urban and Building Affairs of the Municipal Archives of Moncalieri and Turin were interweaved with familiar sources, oral sources and records from the private archive of Riccardo Carver (nephew of Enzo Dolci).

Figure 3. Aerial view of the residential complex of Corso Roma

Source: Photo by Michela Pace.

Note: Core of facilities that include the playground, the equipped park, the kindergarten, the elementary school and the social housing development built in the early 1950s.

His awareness of the international debate is confirmed by the project for the residential complex of Corso Roma, where the unusual solution envisioned by Dolci for the ten high-rise towers in clinker echoed the references to the recent CIAM urban discourse (Mumford, 2000). The residential buildings connected through a continuous commercial platform were articulated around a core of facilities that included a primary school, the kindergarten, the playground and the equipped park; however, the solution reflected also the impact of the ongoing debate on the local implementation of the concept of *unità di vicinato* (Neighborhood Unit), that was affecting Italian architectural and planning culture during the 1950s.

In 1954 Dolci proposed the construction of plots of villini for the entire area, already marked by the presence of the public housing settlement built by the Istituto Case Popolari (IACP) for the local working class at the beginning of the 1950s¹¹.

The whole plan took shape over 20 years and went through several phases, informed by a long process of negotiation between the architect and the Municipal authorities. Inaugurated with the Parcelling Plan proposed by Dolci in 1954 for the entire urban sector, the history of the implementation of the entire program interweaves diverse seasons of the local urban discourse, as well as the most relevant moments that marked the definition of local planning tools and urban policies, from the approval of General City Plan of Moncalieri in 1957, to the publication of the proposal for the Piano Intercomunale (Intermunicipal Plan) in 1964¹².

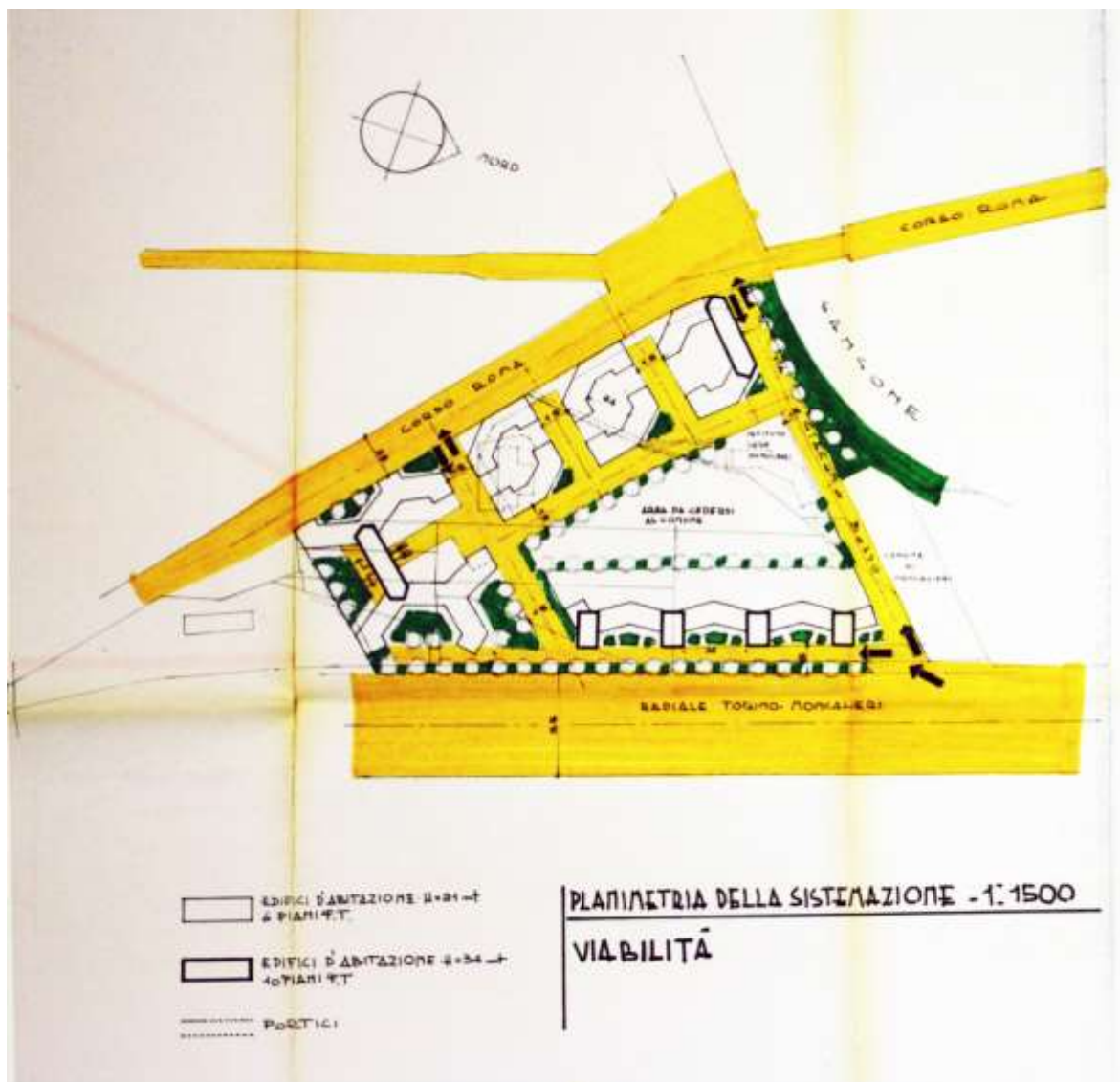
¹¹ Parceling plan proposed to the Municipality of Moncalieri by the architect Enzo Dolci in 1954. Private archive of the architect R. Carver.

¹² Municipality of Turin, Piano Regolatore Intercomunale. Relazione generale, Turin, July 1964, pp. 223, 264-5. See also De Magistris, 1993, pp. 271-82.

After a long series of negotiations conducted with the Municipality of Moncalieri, Enzo Dolci was able to codify his innovative vision for the urban sector through an ambitious plan for a «very modern satellite town for 5.000 inhabitants». Developed on a site of 60.000 square meters, the plan for the residential complex included apartment buildings, commercial activities, offices, a cinema, parks, playgrounds and «all can serve for the independent life of a rationally settled community»¹³.

However, the project had also the secondary aim of linking the two Municipalities of Turin and Moncalieri through the massive construction and urban densification of the Southern periphery, drew up by the architect along the main axis of growth. This plan mirrored the debate on the southwards expansion of the city in the early 1960s and was influenced by three relevant factors: the foreseen development of these areas, located in close proximity of the site of Italia'61, erected on the occasion of the celebration of the International Expo 1961; the new residential use of the land sanctioned by the 1957 General City Plan (PRG) of Moncalieri and the ongoing debate on the construction of new infrastructures aimed at connecting the city of Turin with its Southern periphery.

Figure 4. First proposal for the residential complex of C.so Roma



Source: Archivio edilizio del Comune di Moncalieri_ Sezione Urbanistica.

Note: Proposal submitted by the architect Enzo Dolci to the Municipality of Moncalieri in 1958.

¹³ “Città satellite” per cinquemila persone fra Torino e Moncalieri «La Stampa» June 10, 1960, p. 9.

The series of proposals and agreements collected at the Archive of the Municipality of Moncalieri (Department of Urban Affairs) shows a long process of negotiation over the final solution, conducted between 1958 and 1964 with the Municipal offices and with the public authority of the IACP, which owned part of the land and the public houses already consigned to public housing development and to the urbanization of the entire land through the construction of lighting, infrastructures, and parking areas. After a long series of master plans submitted by the architect, the urban agreement signed on February 4th 1964 approved the assignment of 10.000 square meters of land owned by the Consorzio Zona 2 – an association formed by the architect, the industrialist and the other land owners – for the construction of all the facilities and works of urbanization, as well as the transfer of cubic meters aimed to increase housing density in the construction of the 10 apartment buildings; beyond that, the agreement approved an height of 15 stories for the northern and southern towers (even if the height allowed by the local building code of Moncalieri was of 10 stories)¹⁴.

The first phase of the real estate operation brought to the construction, between 1968 and 1972, of 10 residential towers with a commercial row set under the archways running along the entire complex. Faced with the clearly recognizable unitary project by Dolci – proposing a quite unusual residential solution in the built landscape of the working neighborhood of Borgo San Pietro – the intervention saw the involvement of a plurality of different stakeholders (local building cooperatives, small-family run construction companies, big national real estate developers and insurance companies like the Istituto Nazionale Assicurazioni –INA), who proposed a variety of diverse residential solutions, with different apartments' layouts, generating a heterogeneous and fragmented social fabric (Caramellino 2013).

Figure 5. Construction of the 15-storey northern tower in the residential complex of Corso Roma, 1970.



Source: Photography courtesy of Riccardo Carver.

¹⁴ Municipality of Moncalieri (1958-64), Convenzione edilizia n. 18104/1939 ai fini di sfruttamento edilizio per consentire la fabbricazione, notary deed of dr. G. Gardini, February 4, 1964. Archivio del Comune di Moncalieri, X.11, n. 4/1964. According to the Italian National Planning Law of 1942, the agreement approves the parceling plan submitted by Dolci: Piano planivolumetrico consensuale di sfruttamento edilizio della zona di piano particolareggiato n. 2, 1964.

A second phase of the operation, carried on by the same Enzo Dolci on the same lands, brought to the construction of other twelve economic high-density apartments buildings along the banks of the Sangone river, between 1963 and 1968, designed by the architect in cooperation with a National real estate developer, the Società Generale Immobiliare (SGI). Active in Italy and abroad (Washington, Montreal, Mexico City, Montecarlo) since the late 19th century, the SGI was responsible for the construction of more than 700 residential buildings in Italy between 1945 and 1975 (Puzzuoli 2003, Bonomo 2007).

Cooperating with the Società Generale di Lavori di Pubblica Utilità (Sogene), established in 1947 to manage building initiatives, the SGI was active in the new areas of urban expansion and was responsible for the urbanization and construction of more than 36.000 cubic meters in Turin between 1951 and 1966. Through diverse forms of intervention (adopting different housing and planning models, forms of funding, construction processes...), the developer was able to codify an heterogeneous set of residential solutions conceived for diverse social groups: from the “integrated building complexes” in the Southern sector of the city (mainly Turin Parc 1 and Turin Parc 2) to fully equipped condomini, from the slab blocks conceived for the lower-middle-class neighborhoods to the palazzine built for the upper-middle class in the city center (the outcome of punctual processes of replacement of existing buildings).

Within the frame of SGI residential programs, the compound of Corso Roma, mirrored the strategies of the company, that adopted a “complete cycle methodology” (that included all the phases, from the urbanization of the land to the construction processes), introducing recent researches on the ground of the “integrated house”¹⁵.

Figure 6. The project of the towers of the Sangone Po complex.



Source: Sgi, *Realizzazioni e studi nel settore edilizio*, 1965, p. 75.

¹⁵ The ability to meet the requirements of diverse parts of the Turin middle class is mirrored by the initiative to create the Istituto di Edilizia Economica Popolare (IEEP), established by the SGI in Turin in 1947 along with Montecatini, Snia Viscosa, Banco di Sicilia, to build apartments for the employees of these companies in the frame of the economic facilitations made available by the existing laws (Shubina 2014).

This second intervention formed part of the same parceling plan for the urbanization of the entire area signed by Dolci at the beginning of the 1950s and was the last fragment to be implemented. As in the previous phase, a long negotiation between the Municipality of Moncalieri and the architect resulted in the construction of five towers and seven slab-blocks, built on the same land occupied by the IACP houses constructed in the previous decade. The intervention was pushed forth in two phases by the Company: a first sector was erected between 1962 and 1964 and the second blocks between 1964 and 1968, taking charge of the renewal of the Sangone banks, designed as a new public green area, and of the construction of streets and services (Società Generale Immobiliare, 1965). This new residential sector hosting more than 560 families, along with the adjacent housing complex of Corso Roma, mirrors the overall experience acquired in the field of affordable housing by Società Generale Immobiliare through the Istituti per l'Edilizia Economica e Popolare during the 1950s and, represents a portion of the ambitious satellite towns envisioned by the architect at the beginning of the 1950s, implemented through different phases and by a plurality of different actors through punctual interventions and a series of negotiation processes that arrived to produce a significant sector of the emerging “well-equipped city”.

3.2. The Western expansion: the Sky Residence in Collegno

The second case is situated in the western outskirts of Turin, in the municipality of Collegno, along the Corso Francia, one of the main outgoing axes of the city, connecting Turin with Rivoli and the Susa Valley, in the direction of France. The residential complex “Sky Residence” consists of two perpendicular 11 story-blocks, placed on top of a commercial court, and it represents an interesting case for two main reasons: the first one is related to the long process of negotiation of the “Sky Residence” masterplan between the architect, the building company and the public municipal office, and its final realization; the second one is related to the interesting connection of professionals involved in this experience.

With its concave façade on the street and its modern white and blue lines, the Sky Residence does not go unnoticed. Not only due to the architectural vocabulary – which is very different from the typical apartment blocks built in Turin after WWII – but also due to the dimension of the blocks, which strongly encourages the dialogue not with the pre-existing urban settlement of Collegno, but exclusively with the axis of corso Francia: it is not linked to the outskirts of Turin as to this large urban avenue running east-west. Seen from Collegno, the Sky building emerges like a white transatlantic from the largely pavillonnaire surrounding urban fabric (Renzoni 2013).

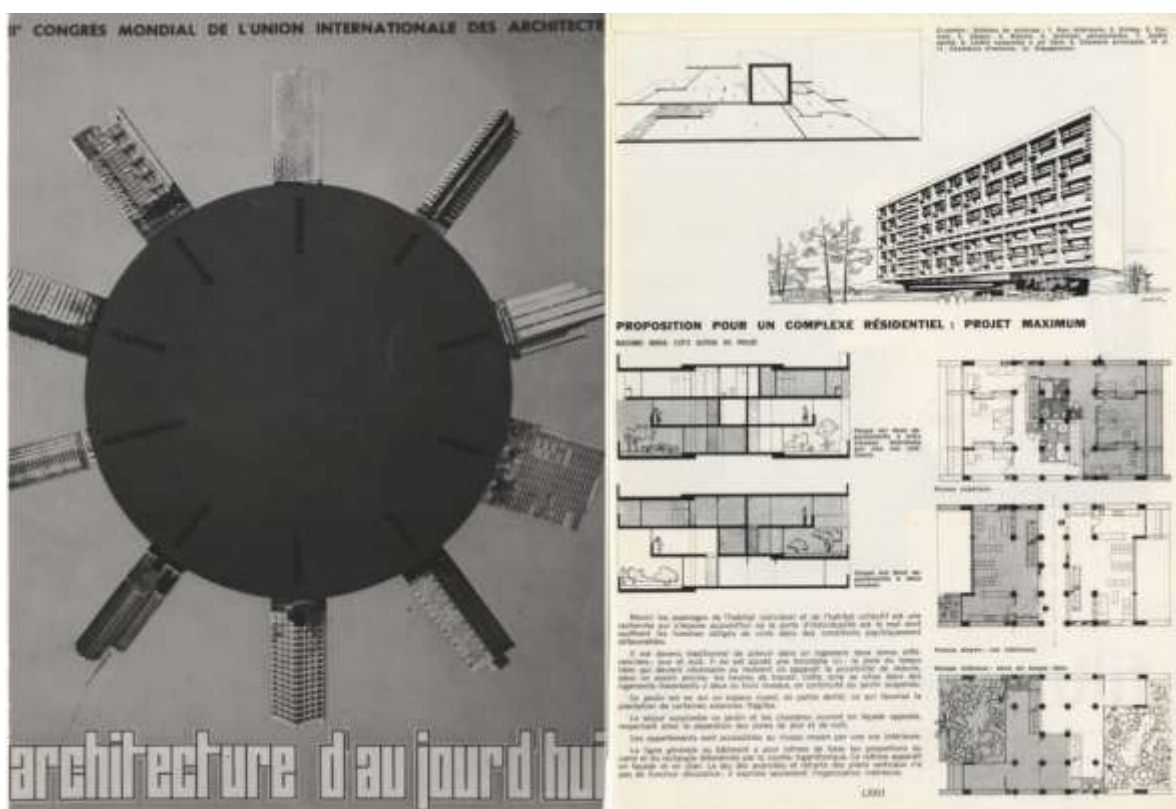
Figure 7. Sky Residence, Collegno (Turin).



Source: Photography by Michela Pace, 2013

Designed between 1963 and 1964 by Massimo Cotti, the complex was built by the Campiglia building company between 1964 and 1972. Massimo Cotti was, in the early '1960s, a young *geometra*, with a good natural talent for architectural and interior design. In those years, he started attending the evening school for the admission to the University courses, in order to become an architect and obtain his license to build. In those years, he was the designer of the façade solutions for the main residential building constructed by the building company lead by Angelo Campiglia, an ambitious entrepreneur that built a few residential interventions around the city centre. The collaboration between Campiglia and Cotti characterized the whole production of the company during the 1960s. Meanwhile, Cotti obtained his degree in Architecture in 1975 – having previously studied engineering in Switzerland and then architecture at the Politecnico di Torino. During the whole 1960s and the first half of the 1970s, Massimo Cotti worked as a sort of “ghost-designer” for relevant and visible buildings and complexes, conducting his own firm and collaborating with private owners and small and medium-sized building companies. This condition on the one hand, and its architectural style, on the other, mostly far from the mainstream in Turin in those years, contributed to keep his works out of the main narratives on post-war architecture in Turin. These reasons can explain the lack of attention that characterized Cotti's architecture within the main professional network, while many of his realized buildings and projects were published between the 1960s and the 1970s on international specialized journals, such as *L'architecture d'au jour d'hui* and *DBZ*¹⁶.

Figure 8. Architect Massimo M. Cotti, Proposition pour un complexe résidentiel: projet Maximum.

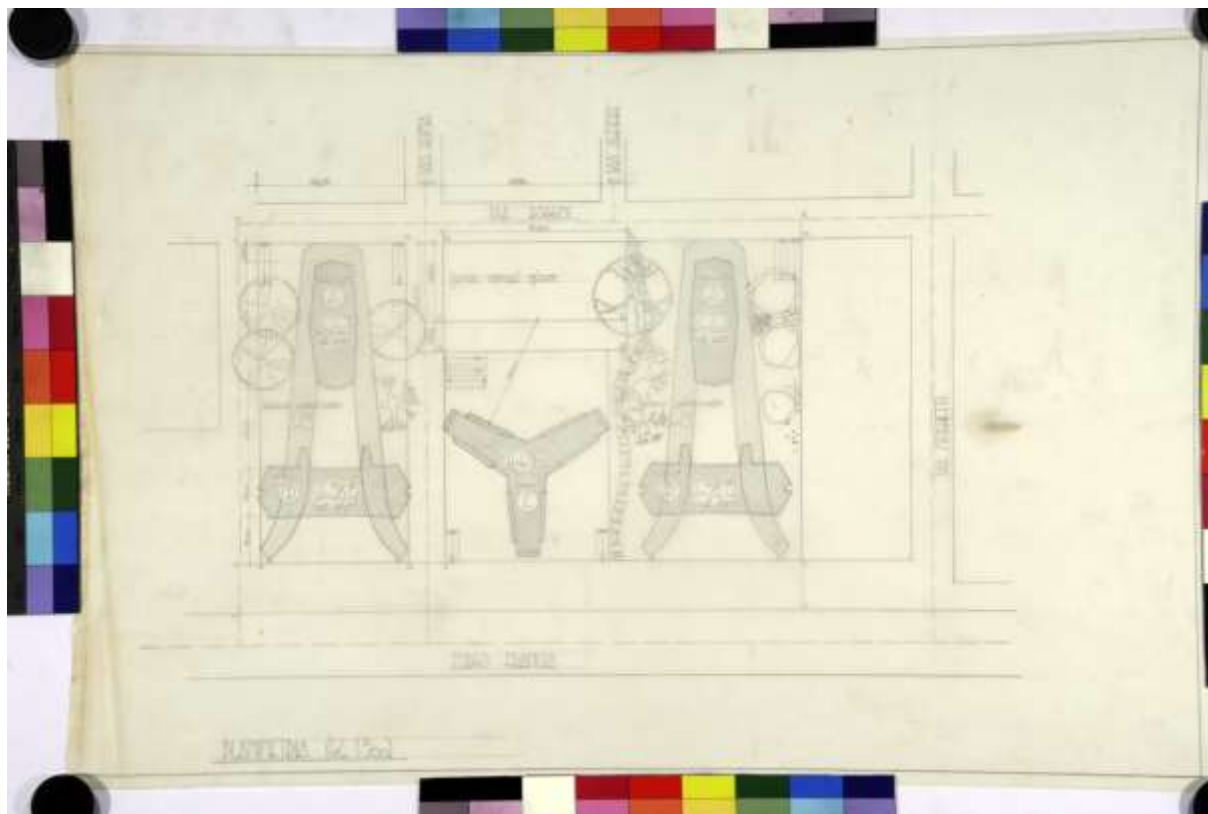


Source: *L'architecture d'au jour d'hui*, 1966, p. LXXII

¹⁶ The work of Massimo Cotti appeared on international specialized journals during the 1960s. See: Proposition pour un complexe résidentiel: projet Maximum, «*L'architecture d'au jour d'hui*», 1966, p. LXXII; Projekt eines Großwohnhauses. Blick über die Grenzen, «*DBZ – Deutsche Bauzeitschrift*», vol. 14, n. 2, February 1966, pp. 175-6; Woninggebouw van maisonnettes. Optimale privacy ondanks samenvoeging, «*Cobouw. Dagblad voor de Bouwwereld*», Zaterdag 27, August 1966, n. 197, p. 1; Wohnanlage bei Turin. Blick über die Grenzen, «*DBZ – Deutsche Bauzeitschrift*», vol. 14, n. 9, September 1966, pp. 1593-4; Sky Residence, «*Kenchiku Bunka*», vol. 22, n. 246, April 1967, pp. 42-3; Mehrfamilienhaus bei Turin, «*DBZ – Deutsche Bauzeitschrift*», vol. 15, n. 12, December 1967, pp. 2067-8; Mehrfamilienhaus in Turin, «*DBZ – Deutsche Bauzeitschrift*», vol. 17, n. 5, Mai 1969, pp. 875-6; Dendratom – Turmstadt, «*DBZ – Deutsche Bauzeitschrift*», vol. 17, n. 10, October 1969, pp. 2047-8, 2051-2; Dendratom – La ville est un arbre, «*L'architecture d'au jour d'hui*», n. 146, 1969, pp. 83-9; Wohnhaus bei Turin, «*DBZ – Deutsche Bauzeitschrift*», vol. 18, n. 11, November 1970; Grundschule in Grugliasco, Turin, «*DBZ – Deutsche Bauzeitschrift*», vol. 20, n. 11, November 1972, pp. 2137-40.

The Sky Residence building stands at the end of a big lot (21000 sqm) which, until the early Sixties, was occupied by the factory of a timber producer based in Veneto Region (Baroni Spa), and was erected after receiving the approval of a «consensual arrangement plan», the result of a building agreement between the Municipality of Collegno and the Baroni company¹⁷. The city of Collegno was provided with a city plan signed by Giorgio Rigotti in 1949 and approved by the Italian Ministry of Public Works in 1956¹⁸: this plan moved the majority of the industrial settlements on the eastern city limit towards Torino borders, and the Sky Residence lot (currently the timber factory) was totally inserted within the expansion of the on-growing residential fabric of Collegno proposed by the new General Rigotti Plan. In the subsequent years, a new City Plan was issued, in order to adapt the development provisions to the exceptional transformation of the first belt of Turin: it was issued by the local engineer Gabriele Manfredi in 1959 and it was approved in 1966¹⁹. In this new planning document, it is possible to find the masterplan of The Sky's area, as designed by Massimo Cotti in the early 1960s: in the new Collegno general Plan, in 1966, the masterplan of the Sky and its layout, issued by the urban agreement, was inserted as an integrated part of the general planning instrument.

Figure 9. Sky Residence, Collegno (Turin).



Source: Public Archive

Note: Scheme of the Building Agreement, 1963, Municipality of Collegno.

In exchange for an increase in volume, all the perimeter and penetration areas were transferred to the Municipality, equipping the entire block with pavements, two pedestrian crosswalks and the tree-lined side road

¹⁷ Municipality of Collegno, Archivio Edilizio, Piani di Lottizzazione, repertorio n. 48.780, del 25.03.1964, notaio Avv. Sebastiano Dell'Arte, fascicolo n. 2.

¹⁸ Municipality of Collegno, Archivio Urbanistico, Piano regolatore generale comunale, Studio A. & G. Rigotti, 1949.

¹⁹ Municipality of Collegno, Archivio Urbanistico, Piano regolatore generale comunale, Ing. Gabriele Manfredi, 1966.

of corso Francia, a typical street layout used in Turin. The “consensual agreement plan” (March, 1964) initially stated the transfer of an area of 2000 square meters in the central part of the plot intended to the construction of a new kindergarten; the lot was articulated in three areas: the Sky Residence block, a new axis perpendicular to corso Francia, and a second double block divided through a pedestrian pathway that would connect the forecast crosswalk on corso Francia with the street behind. This ambitious piano di lottizzazione (residential buildings with a commercial deck at the ground floor, public park and kindergarten with pedestrian pathways) was shaped through the realization of several layouts, which the Campiglia building company and its architect, Massimo Cotti, produced in a few years. One of the first proposal was based on the repetition of the double 11-storey block, situated both symmetrically beside a 17-storey tower. This masterplan, rejected by the municipal building commission, was published on international architecture journals²⁰ and was the one chosen by the entrepreneur for producing a wide-scale maquette model presented to the public for selling purposes. Hereafter, the central tower was, in the masterplan, replaced by a single 11-story block. In the meanwhile, the discussion on the masterplan continued, a part of the masterplan (the “A part”) was accepted and the construction site was settled.

Figure 10. Sky Residence, Collegno (Turin). Model of the Housing Development, 1963.



Source: Courtesy of the architect Massimo Cotti.

After the construction of the first double 11-storey block of the Sky Residence, the remaining part of the lot was sold together with a building permit amendment and a new preliminary masterplan designed by architect Cotti, that totally changed the aspect of the architectural and planning. The executive design was signed by the architect Enzo Dolci (the designer of the above mentioned corso Roma complex in the opposite side of the city) and the two residential slabs (7 floors) were built between 1972 and 1977. This second part of the lot was named “Diorama II” (the “Diorama I” was completed a few years before in Turin in an area of deep transformation of the city). The new buildings, with a “L” and “S” layout, proposed the same façade solution of the Sky Residence,

²⁰ Wohnanlage bei Turin. Blick über die Grenzen, «DBZ – Deutsche Bauzeitschrift», vol. 14, n. 9, September 1966, pp. 1593-4; s.a., Sky Residence, «Kenchiku Bunka», vol. 22, n. 246, April 1967, pp. 42-3.

but in a simplified way. With a new planning agreement (June 1977) the owner of the lot (the Cenisia firm) came to know that the kindergarten would be replaced by a public park with a playground designed by the municipal technical office²¹ and built by the Cenisia itself²². Nowadays the green area, “a small park, but very much used” (as in the words of one of the inhabitants) every afternoon is crawling with parents, grandparents and kids.

3.3. The scale of the urban sector: the case of the Quartiere Ippodromo

Situated in front of the Fiat Mirafiori office building, in the southern part of the city, the Quartiere Ippodromo (Hippodrome neighbourhood) was built between 1958 and 1975 on the land where the former city hippodrome was placed during the 1920s. It represents an important example – from both the quantitative-dimensional standpoint, as well as from that of the results – of an urban planning agreement between the city and the land owners (Murgia 2015). We can call it a sort of *ante-litteram* “consensual urbanism”, where it is possible to follow an interesting intersection between the professionals involved (the same planner of the ongoing Turin General City plan), private landowners (organized in 7 associations), builders (58 building companies involved), and municipal planning offices.

The district is built around a central backbone of services, articulated in two public parks, a kindergarten, a primary school, a cinema (that was transformed in a disco during the 1980s), a religious centre and a sports facility. The settlement hybridizes the type of the courtyard block of flats, where the repetition of six blocks is rotated through the insertion of two bigger symmetrical blocks and is concluded, on the eastern part of the plot, by a group of slabs connected by low-rise commercial buildings. The whole complex is provided by with covered pedestrian paths that strongly characterize the district: they open onto the central spine of facilities and onto the semi-collective green areas of the residential buildings. The height of the buildings decreases from the central spine (where the 11 corner towers overlook) to the external borders of the neighbourhood: the 15-storey corner towers rise from the average height of the buildings – between 6 and 10 floors, connected by a series of 2-3 storey buildings, originally built for tertiary service activities, nowadays converted to residential uses.

Figure 11. Quartiere Ippodromo (Hippodrome neighbourhood), Turin.



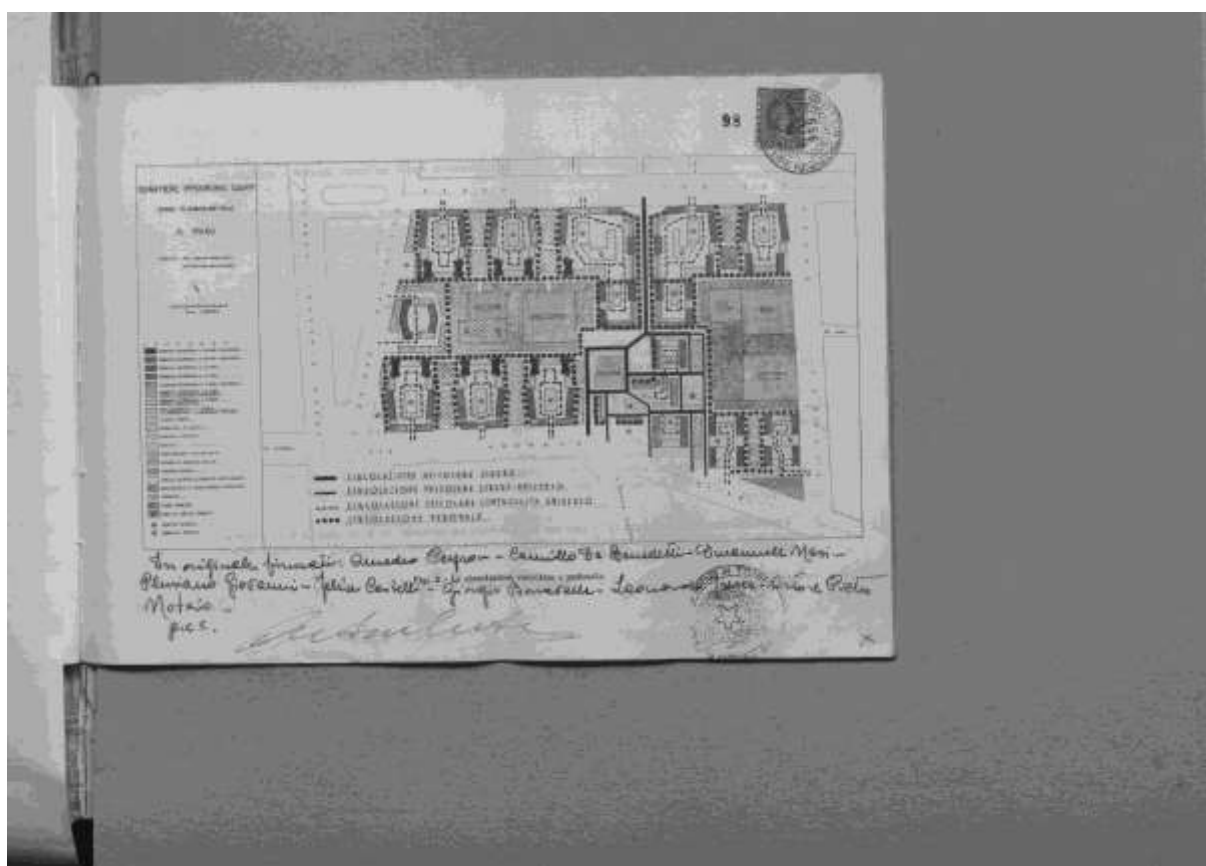
Source: Photography by Michela Pace, 2013.

²¹ Municipality of Collegno, Archivio edilizio, fasc. «Corso Francia 218-220-222, Diorama», Ufficio tecnico, Progetto n. 1006 bis, 14.4.1977.

²² Municipality of Collegno, Archivio edilizio, fasc. «Corso Francia 218-220-222, Diorama», 4 July 1977.

The first negotiations regarding this area and the moving of the existing hippodrome to build a residential neighbourhood started in 1956, the same year of the adoption of the new local city plan (April 1956). It is relevant to notice that the whole negotiation process was developed exactly during the years between the adoption of the plan and its approval (October 1959). In fact, the agreement for the new Quartiere Ippodromo was approved by the city council in September 1958²³ and defined with a notary act in May 1959²⁴. These chronological coordinates are interesting, mainly because the professional commissioned for the development plan was the engineer Giorgio Rigotti, together with the architect Rosamaria Renoglio (as mentioned before, Rigotti was, in those years, the responsible of the Turin city plan). This superposition of appointments casts an interesting light on the relation between professional practices, planning norms and city building: it traces a soft edge between the inside and the outside of a planning instrument, such as the General City Plan, in those years of turbulent growth.

Figure 12. Quartiere Ippodromo (Hippodrome neighbourhood), Turin.

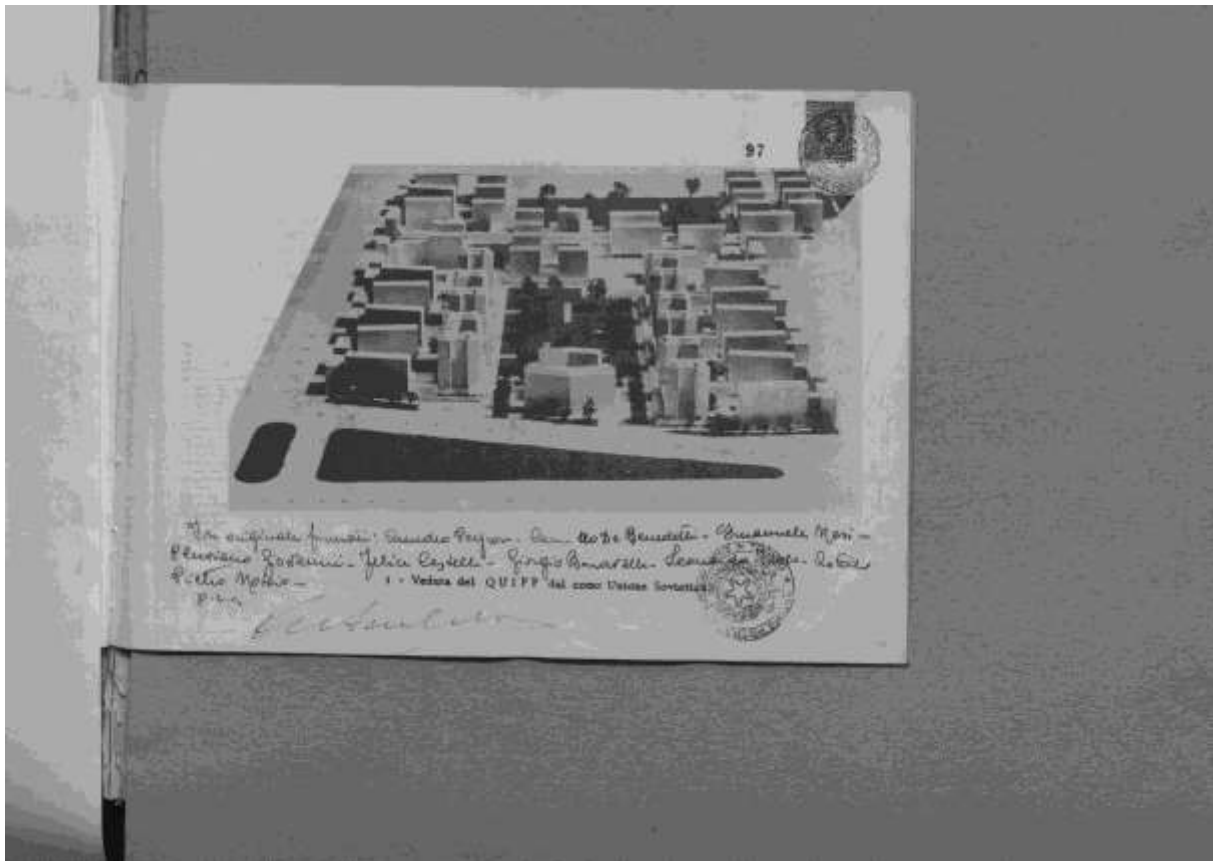


Source: Public Archive

Note: Scheme of the Building Agreement, 1959, Municipality of Turin.

²³ Municipality of Turin, City Council, 22 September 1958, Società Campo di Mirafiori, Avv. Marangoni Carlo, Pluviano Giovanni, Società Pinky e Mirella, Ovazza Giorgio e Ovazza Celeste in Segre, "Piano di Lottizzazione e sfruttamento edilizio di aree di terreno in località Mirafiori costituenti l'Ippodromo, Convenzione, approvazione", ASCT - City of Turin, Historical Archive.

²⁴ Municipality of Turin, Notary Deeds, Convenzione edilizia tra la Società Campo di Mirafiori e il Comune di Torino, May 15, 1959, ASCT - City of Turin, Historical Archive.

Figure 13. Quartiere Ippodromo (Hippodrome neighbourhood), Turin.

Source: Public Archive

Source: Model of the Housing Development, 1959, Municipality of Turin.

The General Plan for Turin fixed for this wide area (330.000 sqm) a maximum of 1.320.000 cubic meters for new buildings. The planning agreement between the City of Turin and the landowners was approved in September 1958 and established that for the whole area the owners should give to the city 140.500 square meters (42,57% of the entire area) to be devoted to services: 75.000 sqm for the infrastructural network, and 65.000 sqm for a set of public services (parish centre, nursery school, primary school and junior high school, district market, public green area, sport facilities, and community centre). In exchange the area took advantage from an increase of built volume (about 125.000 cubic meters).

If we compare this data with the whole increase of volume that the city granted between the end of the 1950s and the late 1960s through several *convenzioni urbanistiche*, we can notice that the Quartiere Ippodromo represented less than the 7% of the whole increase of volume for new buildings, while providing the 27% of public areas transferred to the Municipality for new public facilities. We can consider the Quartiere Ippodromo as an example of virtuous plan promoted by the private sector, in the same years in which a great effort was dedicated to the construction of “public housing” complexes. The Quartiere Ippodromo represents the story of a part of the city built by private developers and for mostly middle-class clients; the extension of the facilities included in the plan gave it, however, a strong public character.

Conclusions

The history of the planning, design and construction of the three residential sectors in Turin introduces a number of crucial concerns, challenging shared commonplaces and consolidated narratives on the history of the city, and contribute to create a deeper understanding of the complex and multifaceted frame and conditions that regulated the post-war urban growth, radically transforming Turin built environment.

The “ordinary city” generated by the private initiative contributed to shape the post-war public realm: middle-class housing complexes, while providing new houses, built new urban sectors or radically transformed existing ones, supplying new public facilities and collective services at different scales. Addressing these two dimensions of the construction of post-war Turin (houses + facilities) the article allows us to look at the negotiation processes with local authorities and to the planning tools; to deals with the ways of life, taking in consideration not only the “dwelling habits”, but also the everyday practices outside the domestic sphere; to analyze the emergence of new demands of welfare and new citizenship rights that shaped the urban dimension of post-war Italian cities; to deal with a multiplicity of urban portions, a patchwork of fragmented collective spaces implemented through series of punctual and diffuse agreements and negotiations between private and public actors.

However, the analysis of the three residential sectors also brought to the light the weakness of the quite ideological separation between public and private initiatives in the process of construction of post-war Italian cities. As shown by the cases, property developers have a central role in the definition of housing and urban policies both inside and outside the main planning instruments (often using public funds and lands) and they contribute to build public houses and facilities – schools, playgrounds, parks and gardens – in order to fix *ex post* the urban needs for the new inhabitants. It seems therefore necessary to problematize again, through an observation over the two decades, the relationship between public and private sectors, looking more closely at the negotiation processes between the municipal and regional bureaucracies and the forms of participation of the private initiative, questioning some dichotomies: the distinction between private housing and public services; the relationship between the building from the bottom of the demand of welfare and the forms of the institutional intervention; the opposition between top-down or bottom-up policies and the construction of opposing paradigms between technocracies and instances of participation. The boundaries between these opposing concepts these days seem increasingly blurred and their reinterpretation would enable the definition of new strategies of observation, new chronologies and new narratives.

Finally, the study of the residential stock produced in Turin between the 1950s and 1970s bring light to an unexpected and multi-faceted professional panorama: not only the cultural hegemony of architects is not taken for granted but a plurality of other professional figures acquired a central role, mirroring the existing divorce between the main narrative of Turin post-war architecture and the history of the professional culture that was effectively active in the construction of the “ordinary” city. The analysis of the housing programs and the building policies of some of these stakeholders now active in Turin, along with the investigation of the residential stock they produced during these years, brings forth a set of heterogeneous residential models, interventions methods, forms of funding and settlement strategies, even if several common features emerged in their agenda.

In conclusions, considering post-war Turin as a “negotiated city”, or, to be more precise, an “agreed city”, shaped by localized, punctual and fragmented agreements, both inside and outside the main city plan instruments, the article contributes to provide a deeper understanding of the processes of transformation and urban expansion experienced by the majority of Italian cities that grew through a patchwork of local fragmented local implementations.

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