

Modularity is a theme that has been extensively explored in architecture over the last one hundred years and it had a crucial role in development of the Modern movement starting from the 1920s.

In 1929 Walter Gropius, the German architect and founder of the Bauhaus school stressed the importance of revisiting architecture's role in relation to the profound changes that were occurring in the economic sphere of our city and as consequence in their social and physical conformation.

The rapid growth of industrial economies at that period had many consequences on our cities as well as on the new masses of people that working in factories started to crowd emerging metropolis. This phenomenon resulted in a serious lack of houses for the new working class.

The management of the manpower in assembly line within the factories, as suggested by Taylor's theories, specialises the individual in a specific role within the production chain while tiding him to the capitalist system in a permanent way.

Working in a factory did not only change the system of production but it got also translated in a series of rules (both economic and social) that soon became deeply rooted in the city having as a result the homogenisation of the urban population in its daily life.

The urban need for houses together with the behavioural aftereffects brought by industrial economy gave birth to a new concept in architecture the one of *existenzminimum*, so the European architectural discourse started to turn around the definition of the minimum dwelling for the new proletarian families.

The debate on the topic of the minimum dwelling in those years rapidly touched on the theme of the architectural typology. This required to find points in common between the various practice of inhabiting the house that existed at that time in order to define types (of plan mainly) that were suitable for every type of person.

The knowledge of the human body's biological functioning was the first source of inspiration used to define various *existenzminimum*'s configurations. These attempts were aimed at accommodating all the needs that were shared by the majority of the people that got condensed in an abstract idea, the common man, the average member of contemporary society. To do so architects took advantages from new technologies and strategies of standardisation.

What is worth to be highlighted is that the standardisation that happened in architecture was a consequence of a standardised idea of man that came first.

The best example of this new attitude can be found in the work of le Corbusier. According to the Swiss architect before the project of the space there was the project of the inhabitant's body and of its domestic behaviours and rituals. This inhabitant is an abstract figure, a common man, *Le Modulor*. The *Modulor* is a system of proportion formulated by le Corbusier that was meant to be used to find the most suitable dimensions for every space and object in the house in accordance with all the abstract inhabitant's possible movements and positions.

Applying this methodology to the design of domestic spaces le Corbusier attempted in foreseeing all the actions that could have happened in the house and at each of them gave the most efficient architectural response. Le Corbusier through his residential projects draws a sort of living-in-the-house choreography for the 20th century's habitants of the industrial metropolis.

Going back on more practical point of view working we can say that the employment of standardised housing modules had many advantages in that specific historical time. This way of doing architecture was obviously very effective and largely appreciated by local administrations because it was able to respond to the demographic growth of the cities within short time and with limited costs.

Ludovico Quaroni in one of his book stated:

*“Modern Architecture’s biggest achievement was the replacement of the object-module with the measure-module”*

Ludovico Quaroni, “Progettare un Edificio, Otto lezioni di Architettura”, 1977 Gangemi Editore, Roma.

But working with an abstract idealised user simplify the job way too much. Approaching the problem this way reduces the variables embedded in the reality of our cities to the features of an ideal-non-existing subject. The result cannot match with the multiplicity of aspects contained in every urban population. In this type of architecture a silent violence is used upon people that get forced to change habits and to change themselves in order to resemble that common man for which their spaces and cities were designed.

History teaches us that all the architectural reflections and attempts on the theme of the *existenzminimum* soon arrived at a standstill because this model did not envisage any change in the economic and cultural structure of the society it was supposed to serve and because it was based on an anachronistic and too general reference.

My projects despite using a modular system is very distant to the Modernist idea of modularity and standardisation. This because my module, my essential tool is originated from site specific reflections that take into account several aspects of the area in which it is employed, namely the morphology, the cultural/identity background and the dynamics of the community that inhabits it.

The system I am proposing tries not to carry any behavioural or aggregative precepts leaving a very high degree of freedom for employment and customisation in the hands of the users so to meet the requirements of the individual as well as to ones of the community.

Being dynamic and able to change through time my project should be seen as an attempt. The goal was to define a way of doing architecture that is fluid and changeable as the society, that is supposed to house in its spaces, is.

Before we discussed the way in which economic models perform a sort of violence on society through impositions, that are also carried by the strategical use of architectural forms and typology. Being cut out from the capitalist economy’s game la Perseverancia has the opportunity to establish its own micro-economic system whose formal outcome contains the principles of an architectural strategy base on its specificities while being the direct result of the wills and of the work of its community.