

Editorial and Abstracts

Editorial. Designing Interdependence

Maria Argenti, Luca Reale

What does the word “together” mean today, in a time when the individualist paradigm seems inescapable and any sense of collectivity appears almost unworkable? And what defines dwelling, if not shared time?

How has life – especially in cities – changed since the different ages of life no longer stay in their proper places? Children quickly become adults, adults remain youthful, and across Europe – most strikingly in Italy – the population is aging. Young people struggle to become independent; fragility (physical, economic, social) ceases to be an exception; the transition from youth to old age seems like a precipice into which one suddenly falls and from which one struggles to recover, marking a break between active citizenship and assisted citizenship.

As Grazia Labate reminds us, by 2050 the number of people aged 65 and over will rise to 130 million. But how many of them will cross that threshold as if it were a border between good health and misfortune? And yet longevity might also contain the idea of “neighborhood”: daily acts of mutual support within intergenerational living contexts.

From these questions comes the theme of this issue of *Rassegna*: not to chase a keyword, but to seek a design approach to the need to give form to a change that is still fragmented – one that does not yet seem to have a shape and yet, in some way, demands one – and to understand whether intergenerationality can become a new design vocabulary.

This choice is also, inevitably, controversial. On the one hand, because it rests on the assumption that change can truly be designed as it unfolds, rather than being merely the hybrid product of intention and chance; on the other, because it attributes a character of social novelty to the concept of intergenerationality, when one could argue that the home has always been, “by definition,” a neutral device, capable of accommodating any age, and that therefore no new categories are needed. As Gianluca Frediani writes here: “the multigenerational home does not exist as an autonomous residential category.”

But this is precisely where the misconception at the heart of modern collective housing lies – and where it can be resolved: it was conceived with the ambition of serving not extraordinary human and social diversity, but a “typical” user, theoretically universal. Is it not this abstract universalism that has ended up expelling real people, real times, and real needs, producing poorly adaptable housing and cities that separate, specialize, and isolate, instead of being places of increasingly complex and intertwined relationships?

As Stefano Guidarini argues, it is evident that the functional and spatial separation developed in the last century has revealed a growing inadequacy in the face of contemporary challenges and the loss of social and cultural cohesion; and that intergenerational, multifunctional dwelling is one possible response.

For this reason, it is necessary to shift our gaze from forms to conditions; to reflect on how demographic aging proceeds alongside shrinking households, the housing affordability crisis, and the growth of urban loneliness. Dwelling, from a private and stable place, must return to being social infrastructure, a proximity network, an urban device.

If we look at Italy, we can recognize how “old age” has long been regarded almost as a natural condition: a destiny without a project. One changes home only when forced to, and dedicated provision tends to coincide with medicalized or protected solutions. From all this, the intergenerational question re-emerges forcefully as a cultural need, before it is a typological one.

From a historical and geographical standpoint, living between generations is not a recent invention: rather, it is an ancient, time-tested remedy for a contemporary problem. At the same time, its re-emergence occurs within a radically altered landscape: longevity extended as never before, discontinuous work, new mobilities, new forms of agency and desires for active life among older people, together with demands for care and for recognition of dignity. Not by chance, the most systematic experiments take root where cooperative and community traditions exist, and where policies and regulations begin to acknowledge – through different instruments – the social value of cohabitation.

The most common objection is itself an old one: “the family is enough.” But the contemporary home no longer coincides with the extended family, and the intergenerationality that concerns design is not domestic nostalgia: it is an intentional construction of proximity among non-relatives, regulated and negotiated, capable of producing informal security and access to housing. In Germany, experiences have multiplied; in France, cohabitation contracts between older and younger people have been anchored in a recent regulatory framework.

Yet if we reduced the theme to a collection of good practices, we would miss the decisive point: intergenerational dwelling is a design question about how to create conditions for relationships without undermining autonomy. And architecture – as this issue argues – is no longer (assuming it ever was) merely a discipline of form, but an ethical and political practice that constructs spatial conditions to counter social fragmentation through a relational fabric. Architectural, spatial, and urban implications are therefore not a corollary, but a determining factor so that change is not merely endured, but designed: full and permanent accessibility; legible layouts; thresholds capable of modulating proximity and privacy; dwellings adaptable over time; constructive reversibility; shared spaces not as “extras,” but as everyday devices.

The heart of the problem, in fact, is not population aging; nor does the solution lie in the simple cohabitation of people of different ages. The issue is the absence of concrete projects for intergenerational social integration, so that different vulnerabilities and different capacities (memories, attitudes, desires...) can become mutually useful. Inter-

erationality works when it transforms a limit – loneliness, loss of autonomy, poverty of networks – into a common good; and when it creates the conditions for undervalued resources (those of the older and those of the younger) to be recognized and activated. Eugenio Arbizzani expresses this clearly through the idea of a “servicing home”: the home not as a passive container of services, but as an active node which, through spatial provisions and equipment, encourages inhabitants to produce care and proximity.

From this follows a further consequence: dwelling is not confined to the interior of the apartment. It is also the weave of shared spaces, indoors or outdoors, and, in a broader sense, urban space. The relationship between private and public is not a boundary, but a gradient. If public space is a network of relationships, urban design can become social infrastructure capable of nurturing, in everyday life, encounters between different ages.

The contributions in this issue insist, each in its own way, on this idea of the “intentionality” of design. The “architecture of cohesion” proposed here by Jacopo Gresleri is not a single model, but a method that builds bonds and permeability, preventing collaborative living from sliding toward communities closed by age or income. And the reading of cases such as Spiegelfabrik in Bavaria and La Balma in Barcelona shows how the quality of thresholds (habitable galleries, passage spaces, courtyards) builds a “neighborhood infrastructure” in which residence, proximity services, and public space blur into one another. In international research, Simon Henley, April Glasby, and Elliot Wang insist that intergenerationality is first and foremost intention: from co-housing courtyards to pedestrian streets in the city, a grammar of spaces in which activity generates community and the community, in turn, sustains activity.

What, then, is the guiding thread we propose to the reader? That intergenerational dwelling should not be sought in a category of buildings, but in a convergence between spatial project and social project. It is not enough to bring different generations together: we must design thresholds, times, and places in which autonomy is guaranteed and, at the same time, dependence – something that sooner or later concerns everyone – can be acknowledged and shared. In this sense, fragility is not a problem to conceal, but a condition to be assumed as the very material of design.

The near future calls for a shift: from specialization to reversibility; from delegated care to distributed care; from the house as an object to the house as part of the city. If intergenerationality is an answer to social isolation, it is so only when it also becomes an urban answer: a way of making the city through dwelling. And so the question – “Toward intergenerational dwelling?” – is not rhetorical: it is an invitation to design, intentionally, interdependence.

DEBATE

Architecture of Cohesion

Jacopo Gresleri

In the context of the social and demographic transformations affecting European cities, inter-generational living is emerging as a strategic field of experimentation for contemporary architecture. In a scenario marked by economic fragility, urban loneliness, and new forms of marginalization, the home is once again taking on a public significance, becoming a place where the possibilities of

coexistence and social cohesion can be measured. In this perspective, architecture is no longer just a discipline of form, but an ethical and political practice that constructs the spatial conditions of relationships. The current debate on collaborative living has shifted the focus from the individual building to the network of relationships that architecture is capable of generating, thus emphasizing that design action does not simply consist of responding to a housing need, but of outlining a model of space capable of supporting interactions, exchanges, and mutual solidarity. In this context, reflection on inter-generational living takes on a paradigmatic value: not as an alternative typology, but as an exercise in “bond design.” With this premise, cohabitation between different generations becomes a tool for countering social fragmentation and regenerating the conditions of urban living.

A Tentative Typology

Stefano Guidarini

Intergenerational Living is a contemporary solution to social, demographic and economic issues that are challenging some of the housing models of the 20th century. In recent years, the Intergenerational Living has been developed in urban areas, mainly by European Housing Cooperatives and Austrian and German “Baugruppen,” in cities such as Zurich, Vienna, Munich, Berlin and Barcelona. These housing experiences share principles of social and generational inclusion, environmental sustainability, affordability and self-management, offering forms of voluntary community living as an alternative to both the property market and single-function residences for specific categories of users. This contribution analyses some types of shared living, highlighting their potential and critical issues, particularly in terms of coexistence between different generations. Through case-studies in Switzerland, France and Spain, it aims to focus the decisive role of architecture in the development of spaces for relationships, in typological flexibility and in the definition of new models of housing welfare. Intergenerational Living thus emerges as a tool for social and urban regeneration and as a way of overcoming the Functionalist conception of housing, reaffirming the relational dimension of Living as an essential component of the contemporary city.

Intergenerational Living: a Definition

Luca Reale

The paper proposes an operational definition of inter-generational living that goes beyond purely demographic criteria. Against the backdrop of ageing societies and growing youth precariousness, multigenerational cohabitation is increasingly common, yet remains weakly theorised and rarely supported by housing policies or design tools. Through the analysis of two recent European projects – Spiegelfabrik in Fürth (Heide & von Beckerath) and La Balma in Barcelona (Lacol) – the paper examines how architectural layout, spatial thresholds and collective facilities can host different life stages and vulnerabilities within ordinary housing complexes. Intergenerational living is described as a residential device able to integrate fragile subjects without resorting to specialised or segregated typologies, by combining flex-

ible private units with a robust system of shared spaces and cooperative governance. The conclusion argues that such models can be read not only as a response to current social emergencies, but as a design horizon for future European cities.

Never Stop Planning Your Future

Giordana Ferri

The text examines how rapid ageing in Europe and changing household structures are reshaping housing: from a private, stable place into a social infrastructure enabling relationships, mutual care and urban proximity. In Italy, later life is often treated as an “age without a plan”: moving home tends to happen late and out of necessity (health decline, isolation), also because provision has long been dominated by medicalised or protected options. The paper argues for intermediate solutions – sheltered flats, cohousing and housing with light, flexible support services – that preserve autonomy, domestic identity and choice, supported by guidance through the housing transition. Across Europe, cohousing and coliving highlight the benefits of co-design, shared spaces and participatory management, especially in intergenerational settings. The French *habitat participatif sociale* (e.g., Le Village Vertical) shows common spaces as structural elements and residents involved early in the process. In Italy, Milan’s Borgo Sostenibile and the Grace project combine generational mix, proximity services and therapeutic facilities open to the neighbourhood. The conclusion frames intergenerational living not as “housing for the elderly,” but as an inclusive way of living together that sustains autonomy, social roles and everyday ties throughout a now extended life stage.

Living the Three Ages

Maria Argenti, Serena Cecchetti

The article develops a theoretical and design-oriented reflection on the concept of living in public, understood as condition, process and use, to investigate public space as social infrastructure. Drawing on Heidegger and Arendt, it proposes overcoming the dichotomy between private and public, recognizing their complementarity in the construction of urban humanism. Public space is described as a living palimpsest of shared relationships and practices, in constant transformation, where each generation contributes in specific ways to redefining forms of belonging and collective identity through different uses, needs and imaginaries. Through reflection on select representative projects, the article shows how urban space becomes truly inhabited thanks to daily interaction and shared practices. In this perspective, designing means imagining dynamic and inclusive places, where relationships between people define the very form of contemporary living.

From the Serviced Home to the Servicing Home

Eugenio Arbizzani

In recent years, the evolution of urban housing models has led to the spread of two distinct yet interconnected paradigms: the “serviced home” (a home with services), a dwelling equipped with professional services

to support residents, and the “servicing home” (a home that serves), an emerging form of collaborative living in which residents themselves generate services and value for the community. This article analyses the characteristics, social and economic dynamics, and urban planning implications of both models, outlining a theoretical framework to understand the transition from housing based on individual comfort to one based on reciprocity and cooperation.

Intergenerational Housing Models and Innovative Technologies

Adolfo F.L. Baratta, Fabrizio Finucci, Antonio Magarò

Alongside the growing difficulty young people face in achieving housing independence, population ageing is the major challenge to be addressed in the coming decades, as these phenomena have a clear impact both on the demographic composition of individual countries and on the implementation and management of a welfare state aimed at the well-being of all citizens. Since the beginning of the millennium, to tackle closely related issues, programs funded by governments and initiatives undertaken by local communities have been developed to regulate and promote intergenerational cohabitation. This essay aims to present the state of the art of multigenerational living, with reference to national and international initiatives and experiences in terms of planning and funding. It also highlights the use of the most innovative technologies, including those based on artificial intelligence, as assistive and enabling technologies integrated into housing for older people, identifying their features of social innovation while also pointing out some critical issues.

RESEARCHES

Longevity in the Age of Possibilities

Grazia Luciana Labate

Europe is undergoing a rapid demographic transition: by 2050, people aged 65 and over will number nearly 130 million, with a rise in chronic diseases and growing pressure on health and social care systems. In this context, longevity cannot be understood merely as an extension of life, but as an opportunity to rethink health, welfare, and housing models. Within this framework, intergenerational living and shared housing emerge as key tools to promote inclusion, prevention, and social cohesion. Through European examples of cohousing and “age-friendly” urban planning, this contribution reflects on an integrated model in which health, social, and housing policies work together to transform longevity into a collective resource. Investing in “good longevity” means not only improving older people’s quality of life but also strengthening economic development and community resilience.

Home is Multigenerational

Gianluca Frediani

The home is multigenerational by definition, because it should always be able to adapt to the needs of resi-

dents of different ages and backgrounds. From the post-war period onward, private housing became the symbol of individual independence but also the place of social isolation. Today, in particular, in the face of new housing needs and the ageing of the urban population, the need to promote inclusiveness in housing policies is re-emerging. In Northern European countries, multigenerational housing has developed from the tradition of community living (co-housing), where older people, young adults and families share spaces and services while maintaining strong autonomy and rich social interaction. This article reviews some emblematic projects in which intergenerational integration is expressed through typological flexibility and a wide range of collective services. More recent models, such as cluster residential buildings, experiment with new forms of community living in an innovative balance between private and shared spaces. These experiences show how multigenerational housing can, on the one hand, redefine the core elements of living together and, on the other, seek new and unprecedented urban relationships.

An Architecture of "Intention"

Simon Henley, April Glasby, Elliot Wang

Intergenerational housing is less a definition of a typology and more a question of intention: how we choose to live together, and how architecture can enable that choice. The paper considers three themes: *Intentional Communities; Is Intergenerational Housing an Architectural or Cultural Question?* and *So, can Cities be Intergenerational?* The first introduces the idea of the intentional community through Bertrand Russell's 1935 essay *Architecture and Social Questions*. With reference to two UK co-housing projects – Copper Lane and Marmalade Lane – we argue that, while the co-housing model plays a part, it is the architecture itself that cultivates connection. The second, *Is Intergenerational Housing an Architectural or Cultural Question?* looks to public housing in London in the 1960s and 1970s to architects – Neave Brown, Peter Tabori and Kate Mackintosh – who sought to modernise the city, and more recently to a contemporary alms house. *So, can Cities be Intergenerational?* highlights the unintentionally intergenerational city of the working class and the more recent experimental inner city projects that encourage sociality. We argue that intergenerational housing is more than just a form of housing, rather it is intentional morphologies which enable intergenerational exchange, be it at the scale of a bench or an urban block.

The Emergence of the SPA-Carehome

Ara González Cabrera

The integration of housing models for the young-old with facilities of interest for all ages can act as mediators of social interaction, fostering active aging within the framework of inclusive planning. Specifically, the article argues the interest in an emerging SPA-carehome model, situated halfway between a spa and a residential facility. The virtue of this model lies in the spectacularisation of everyday activities – exercise, hygiene, and body care associated with physical decline. This spectacularisation reveals, rather than conceals, the deterioration of the body, celebrating the raw beauty of aging, while simulta-

neously promoting encounters between people of all ages in an atmosphere of leisure and hedonism. Social interaction takes centre stage in this emerging hybrid model. SPA-carehomes are presented as a speculative new typology for elderly – temporary and permanent –, housing. Water facilities are presented here as therapeutical landscapes – staged and phenomenological spaces –, which not only activate the body, but also generate a mental state of positivism for a healthy aging.

A Home to Stay In

Daniele Frediani

Contemporary collective housing is still largely shaped by a functionalist paradigm based on a standardized, age-neutral user, resulting in dwellings that are poorly adaptable to changing life conditions. Within this framework, accessibility and spatial adaptability emerge as central strategies to support ageing in place, reduce residential mobility and counteract the social isolation of older populations. The Îlot Starlette complex in Strasbourg is presented as a case study of an alternative approach to housing design. Designed by Dominique Coulon & Associés, Tatiana Bilbao Estudio and HHF Architekten, the project pursues full and permanent accessibility across public spaces, buildings and dwellings, despite recent regulatory setbacks in France. Conceived as a dense mixed-use urban block, the project integrates housing, offices, commercial activities and extensive shared spaces within a compact and permeable masterplan. Reversible building systems, adaptable domestic layouts and generous collective amenities support long-term dwelling and promote everyday social proximity. Rather than proposing explicit intergenerational management models, Îlot Starlette fosters intergenerational coexistence through an inclusive, non-discriminatory built environment capable of accommodating diverse life trajectories over time.

Architectures of Interdependence

Anda French, Jenny French

Architectures of Interdependence argues for an optimistic rethinking of domestic life in the United States. While industrial modernity consolidated the privatized nuclear household and spatialized autonomy, it also diminished the proximities that once sustained shared labor, care, and everyday sociability. Drawing on the work of Dolores Hayden, whose history of domestic reform reveals how architecture encoded gendered labor divisions; Beatriz Colomina, who demonstrates how media technologies reconfigured the interior as a site of production and exposure; and Robert Putnam, whose account of declining "social capital" diagnoses the erosion of everyday civic ties, the essay reframes social isolation not simply as a cultural condition but as an architectural one. In response, it advances interdependent living as a design project that embraces adjacency, porosity, and adaptability. Through *Bay State Cohousing* in Greater Boston (MA, US) and the speculative prototype *Something House*, the essay explores how shared kitchens, open circulation, movable thresholds, and layered domestic types can cultivate reciprocity without sacrificing autonomy, positioning housing as a civic framework for renewed kinship.