

Dense and Quality Urban Living: A Comparative Study on Architectural Solutions in the European City

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Abstract : The urbanization of the last decades and its resulting urban growth entail problems both for environmental and economic sustainability. From this perspective, sustainable settlement development requires a horizontal decrease in the existing urban structure in order to enhance its greater concentration. Hence, new stratifications of the city fabric and architectural strategies ensuring high-density settlement models are possible solutions. However, although increasing housing density is necessary, it is not sufficient. Guaranteeing the quality of living is, indeed, equally essential. In order to meet this objective, many other factors come to light, namely the relationship between private and public spaces, the proximity to services, the accessibility of public transport, the local lifestyle habits, and the social needs. Therefore, how to safeguard both quality and density in human habitats? The present paper attempts to answer the previous main research question by addressing several sub-questions: Which architectural types meet the dual need for urban density and housing quality? Which project criteria should be taken into consideration by good design practices? What principles are desirable for future planning? The research will analyse different architectural responses adopted in four European cities: Paris, Lyon, Rotterdam, and Amsterdam. In particular, it will develop a qualitative and comparative study of two specific architectural solutions which integrate housing density and quality living. On the one hand, the so-called 'self-contained city' model, on the other hand, the French 'Habitat Dense Individualisé' one. The structure of the paper will be as follows: the first part will develop a qualitative evaluation of some case studies, emblematic examples of the two above said architectural models. The second part will focus on the comparison among the chosen case studies. Finally, some conclusions will be drawn. The methodological approach, therefore, combines qualitative and comparative research. Parameters will be defined in order to highlight potential and criticality of each model in light of an interdisciplinary view. In conclusion, the present paper aims at shading light on design approaches which ensure a right balance between density and quality of the urban living in contemporary European cities.

Keywords : density, future design, housing quality, human habitat

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