



LA CASA

ESPACIOS DOMÉSTICOS
MODOS DE HABITAR

ABADA EDITORES

LA CASA

ESPACIOS DOMÉSTICOS MODOS DE HABITAR

II CONGRESO INTERNACIONAL CULTURA Y CIUDAD
GRANADA, 23-25 ENERO 2019



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La Casa. Espacios domésticos, modos de habitar
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Vivienda moderna y apartamentos dúplex: estudio de discursos y prácticas de una tipología

Modern Housing and Duplex Apartments: Study of Discourses and Practices of a Typology

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Resumen

Este artículo se propone comprender cómo se dio la idea de la vida moderna entre los emprendimientos vinculados al movimiento moderno utilizando como objeto de análisis los apartamentos dúplex, tipología relacionada originalmente con la idea de la economía en la construcción y el discurso de la funcionalidad espacio que sugiere nuevas prácticas domésticas. Este trabajo se propone analizar las primeras propuestas habitacionales que presentan la organización en dos niveles y cómo la tipología se transforma. Deberán ser analizados los diseños de los apartamentos de ocho conjuntos habitacionales construidos entre los años 1920 y 1960 de manera a comprender el énfasis dado a cada uno de los tres sectores de la casa (áreas sociales, íntimas y de servicio) y las prácticas domésticas propuestas. Además, se propone establecer un curso de este tipo diseños, incluyendo la circulación del contexto de ideas, cambios, modificaciones y adaptaciones a diferentes contextos culturales.

Palabras clave: arquitectura moderna, vivienda, domesticidad, diseño

Bloque temático: El proyecto doméstico como núcleo de modernidad: casa singular y vivienda colectiva, del Movimiento Moderno al siglo XXI

Abstract

This paper aims to understand how the idea of modern life in the projects was carried out by the architects connected to the modern movement. Duplex apartments are the object of analysis of this paper. This typology was originally related to the construction economy idea, and to the discourse of space functionality related to new domestic practices. This work proposes to analyze the first housing proposals that presented the organization in two levels, and how the typology changed. The present study analyses eight clusters built between the 1920s and 1960s to understand the emphasis given for each of the three sectors of the house (social, intimate and service areas), and the domestic practices proposed. In addition, this study proposes to establish a course of the typology, including the movement, displacements, and transformations of ideas, and its adaptations to different cultural contexts.

Keywords: modern architecture, housing, domesticity, design

Topic: The domestic project as the nucleus of modernity: singular house and collective housing, from the Modern Movement to the 21st century

Introduction

The home has been a frequent object of debate and experimentation among architects. For those connected to the modernist architecture movement, the subject often fostered attempts at creating new spatial arrangements that allowed for new domestic practices and ensured a healthier and more stimulating life.

In Europe, this interest was linked directly to a shortage of housing in cities that were transformed in the 19th century by the impact of the Industrial Revolution and the subsequent population boom — due to a large number of people migrating to cities in search of opportunities — as well as the destruction inflicted by the World War I during the beginning of the 20th century. One of the objectives of the architects and urbanists of this period was the construction of spaces that would help to improve cities and the quality of life of their inhabitants.

As part of the search for a solution to this housing issue, several pioneering complexes made use of the duplex apartment to optimize domestic spaces. The spatial arrangements of this typology were originally related to a desire of reducing building costs, as well a discussion regarding functionality of space, which suggested new domestic practices, taking into consideration women's entrance into the workforce, as well as their participation in the organization of the family home.

This article seeks to understand what this typology represents and how it has changed over time. The analysis of the designs chosen for this article, dating from 1920 to 1960, attempts to understand how ideas supporting them have spread and developed in different cultural contexts over the decades. To this end, floor plans of housing complexes and apartments were redesigned and analyzed according to the logic of three different types of spaces: social (red), private (blue), and utility areas (yellow). We thus seek to understand the continuity and change in the domestic dynamics proposed by these modern housing units.

1. The Soviet model and the discussion regarding minimal spaces

The Soviet complex Narkonfim (1928-1930) was the first modern building to utilize the duplex typology in an attempt to propose a different way of life than that of the traditional bourgeois family over the first decades following the Soviet Revolution. Designed by Russian architect Moisei Guinzburg, then coordinator of the State Buildings Committee, the housing complex brought to life the studies of Soviet modernist architects of the 1920s regarding the communal house, an idea that was explored and discussed extensively by architects of the time.

Through the arrangement of the apartments and the presence of communal facilities, the housing complex sought to liberate the working woman from domestic activities and childcare and promote a more intense communal life among the residents — a new space for a new kind of family and social organization. According to historian Jean-Louis Cohen, in order to change people's daily habits, the buildings needed to be what they called "condensadores sociais",¹ which were meant to accelerate changes in the mentality of the population.

¹ [Author's translation: social condensers]. Jean Louis Cohen, *O futuro da arquitetura desde 1889: uma história mundial* (São Paulo: Cosac & Naify, 2013), 166.

Ginzburg proposed a variety of housing typologies, such as apartments with one or two rooms, a living room with a built-in kitchen, and a lavatory (in some cases bathrooms), and smaller spaces where citizens could have a little bit of privacy (the F unit model). In addition to this format, it is also possible to find the K unit typology, presenting full bathrooms and compact kitchens, designed with family members in transition in mind. These small units varied between 27 and 30 square meters in size, and served as small spaces where single people and small families could carry out activities that required privacy: relaxing, sleeping, caring for one's personal hygiene, and engaging in sexual activity.

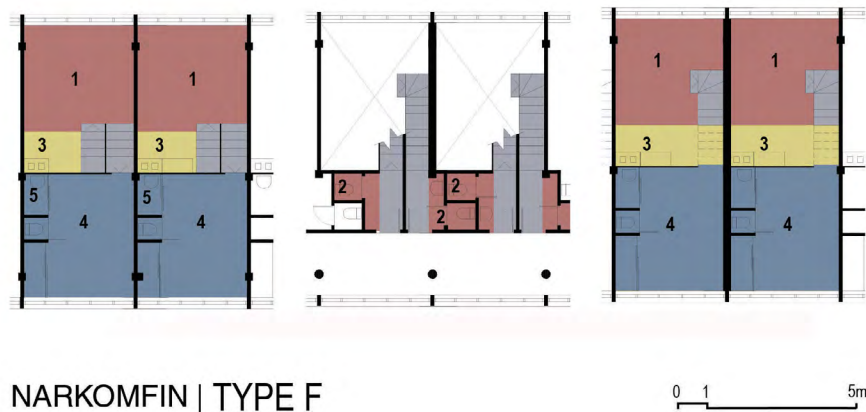


Figure 1: Narkomfin – type F apartment (1928-1930)
 1. living room, 2. bathroom, 3. kitchen, 4. bedroom, 5. w.c.
 Source: S. Fontenele (2018)

Meanwhile, domestic activities were to be conducted collectively in large facilities located in another area, such as communal kitchens and dining rooms, laundry rooms, utility rooms for a cleaning service, daycare centers, sports gyms, libraries, and communal terraces. This way, residents would have to live and interact more intensively with each other.

The ideas of the Soviet modernist architects were aligned studies of minimal spaces and reductions in space carried out by German architects during the first decades of the 20th century, which were widely disseminated in publications, expositions, and manifestos. The discussion regarding basic housing gained momentum at the International Congresses of Modern Architecture (CIAMs).

2. Large modern housing complexes

In the post-World War II period, the duplex typology was used for mass housing in France. Le Corbusier was familiar with the discussions and designs of the Soviet architects, as he had made several trips to Russia in 1930. The duplex typology was employed there for the first time by Le Corbusier in 1930, when he and Pierre Jeanneret designed the Inmeuble Clarté in Geneva, which housed 48 apartments (16 duplexes or *appartements à double hauteur*).

Nevertheless, it was the Marseille Housing Unit (also known as the *cité radieuse* or Radiant City), built between 1946-1952, that made use of a typology very similar to that of the Soviet model — the type F unit, with a hallway running through every three floors. This was an attempt at solving large-scale housing issues by reducing construction costs while taking maximum advantage of the internal space.

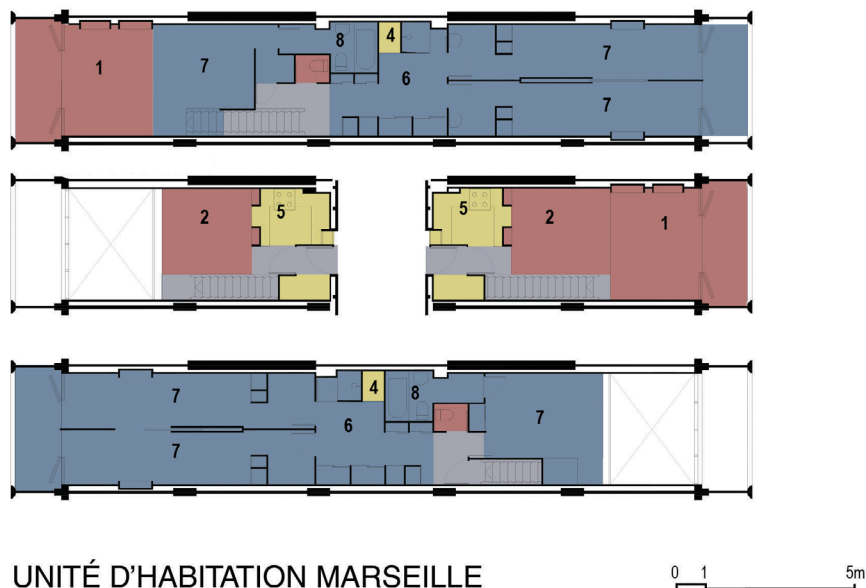


Figure 2: Unité d'habitation Marseille (1946-1952)
 1. living room, 2. dining room, 3. bathroom, 4. laundry, 5. kitchen, 6. room, 7. bedroom, 8. w.c.
 Source: S. Fontenele (2018)

Commissioned by the Minister of Reconstruction and Urbanism of France, Raoul Dautry, the housing complex's 337 apartments are distributed across a 15-story rectangular block 100 meters in length and 30 meters in width. Entrances are close to the kitchen and residents can go up or down a flight of stairs to enter the bedrooms.

Kitchens of the Marseille Housing Unit were designed by Charlotte Perriand and were instrumental in suggesting modern dispositions in smaller spaces. Occupying an area of 4.8 square meters, all kitchens were the shape of a "U", providing the family with the means to store and prepare food, as well as clean utensils and dishes. Counters were stainless steel, furnishings were colorful, and kitchens were integrated with the living room through an opening. Again, the spaces were conceived with the intention of making domestic life more convenient and less tiring, providing women with a certain level of relief in their daily workload around the home — however, it should be noted that relief did not mean liberation from these obligations. This can be seen in typical photographs of these duplex apartments from the inside, in which women are commonly depicted sewing, caring for children, or in the kitchen.

In addition to the housing complex in Marseille, other three Housing Units were built in France following the same approach to the use of space: Nante-Rezé (1952), Briey-en-Forêt (1959), and Firminy (1960). These are also large buildings with communal facilities and duplex apartments, similar to an F-type unit.

The creation of the Marseille Housing Unit and its apartment disposition influenced architects of all kinds. In Mexico, the housing complex Multifamiliar Preseidente Miguel Alemán (President Miguel Alemán Multi-Family Complex) is one example of Le Corbusier's direct influence. Designed by architect Mario Pani and funded by the Dirección de Pensiones Civiles y de Retiro, it was built for government employees as the first affordable housing complex.

The housing complex has a capacity for approximately 5,000 people (1080 apartments) who were to form a cohesive and independent community. Pani argued that an organized concentration of people and services would contribute over the long term to a regulated and rational growth of the city. Thus, the housing complex is made of six short buildings (with three stories) and nine tall buildings (with 13 stories). In general, duplex apartments are as follows: a kitchen and dining room on the lower floor, and a bathroom, bedroom and family room on the upper floor. In larger buildings, the elevator stops at every three floors, similar to the F-type unit.



C. URB. PRESIDENTE ALEMÁN

Figure 3: Multifamiliar Presidente Miguel Alemán (1947-1949)
 1. living room, 2. dining room, 3. w.c, 4. bedroom, 5. bathroom, 6. kitchen
 Source: S. Fontenele (2018)

Among its communal facilities, of note are a school with a capacity for 600 students, a laundry room, daycare center, medical clinics, casinos, and spaces for practicing sports. In an intricate study conducted with the residents of the housing complex, Graciela de Garay demonstrated how its female residents managed to create a social network characterized by mutual trust and how communal spaces played a central role for these women, serving as a safe place for conversation, childcare, grocery shopping, and mutual aid. Thus, they became an extension of the residents' homes.

3. The contradictions of the first Brazilian models

In Brazil, discussions regarding minimal spaces in housing and the Soviet model first arose at the National School of Fine Arts, in Rio de Janeiro. The city was also the first in Brazil to have a complex of similar design, the Santo Antonio do Morro Complex, built in downtown Rio, in 1930. Its architects, Maurício Roberto and Marcelo Roberto, chose the duplex typology to increase the number of units, reduce the number of elevators, and preserve the use of a convenient gallery lighting system. The architects presented their project in a Brazilian magazine and explained that their proposal «nós não inventamos o sistema 'duplex' [...] foram alcançados pelo estudo das soluções dos russos e dos espanhóis».²

² [Author's translation: we didn't invent the 'duplex' system [...] they were achieved by studying the solutions of the Russians and Spanish]. Marcelo Roberto and Milton Roberto. "Um edifício tipo 'duplex' no Rio", *Arquitetura e Construção*, Rio de Janeiro, n. 638 (1939): 42.

The 48 duplex apartments are divided between two different floor plans and arranged in four units connected by an internal corridor. The primary floor plan shows a small living room and kitchen on the lower floor and two bedrooms and a small bathroom on the upper floor. The other typology consists of apartments with even smaller rooms and no kitchen.



Figure 4: Santo Antonio do Morro Complex (1930)
 1. living room/dinning room, 2. bedroom, 3. bathroom, 4. kitchen
 Source: S. Fontenele (2018)

Government housing initiatives that used the duplex typology were common in Brazil during the mid-20th century. One of said initiatives is the Japurá Complex (officially known as the Armando de Arruda Pereira Residential Complex), built in downtown São Paulo and designed by architect Eduardo Kneese de Mello. This housing complex marked the landscape with two residential towers, a shorter building with small apartments meant for young singles and a taller building with 14 floors housing 288 duplex apartments.

Social areas (living room, kitchen, pantry, stairway) within the duplex apartments are found on their lower floors, while the upper floors hold two bedrooms, a bathroom, and a utility sink for washing clothes. There is no area in the apartments specifically for washing and drying clothes.



Figure 5: Japurá Complex (1945-1954)
 1. living room/dinning room, 2. kitchen, 3. bedroom, 4. bathroom
 Source: S. Fontenele (2018)

The architects' drawings published in magazines illustrate how the common areas of the apartments can be utilized. They also show how small spaces in the apartments should be occupied, depicting a closet under the stairs, a utility sink in the bathroom, a sewing machine in the hallway to the bedrooms, and so forth. The images reveal the architects' intent on promoting their ideas on modern ways of living, where women are portrayed engaging in traditional activities: sewing, doing laundry, taking care of children playing in the recreational area, or fixing their hair and nails.

4. Large, exclusive, and privileged spaces

Nonetheless, in contrast to the aforementioned minimal spaces of housing complexes promoted by the State, several private undertakings envisioned large spaces for duplex apartments. These were designed for wealthy families who wished to live in multi-family complexes, as long as spaces for traditional living were to be preserved. Thus, their rooms are designed with a generous amount of space, the separation between private, social, and utility areas is clear, and high-end materials were used to convey an image of sophistication. According to Marins, «o receio de decair socialmente, advindo do desprezo com as coabitações, foi vencido com a adoção de acabamentos custosos utilizados nos revestimentos externos e nas áreas internas de circulação dos edifícios».³

In the city of São Paulo, the first modern complex to utilize duplex apartments is the Esther Building (1937). On the lower floor, one can find a living room with a high ceiling, foyer, stairway, dining room, kitchen, pantry, and the attached servant area. The upper floor houses three bedrooms, a bathroom, and a washroom. There are several entrances to each apartment, two for each floor. None of the drawings or photographs published at the time of the building's inauguration illustrate how residents could best utilize its spaces. The building was notably featured in the Brazil Builds exhibit, which took place at the MoMA in the 1940s, where it was said that «it would be difficult to find more modern living arrangements than those provided by this handsome São Paulo apartment house».⁴

Designed by Álvaro Vital Brazil and Adhemar Marinho, also graduates from the National School of Fine Arts in Rio de Janeiro, the building was originally designed to house shops, office spaces, medical and dental clinics, and basic apartments (with and without kitchens) on the ground floor, and duplex apartments spread across its eleven upper floors. Diverse options in floor plans allowed for residents with different needs and means to live in the building.

Upon analyzing the floor plans of the duplex apartments, one element sticks out: a maid's room. The presence of both a bathroom and a washroom on the upper floor is also worth noting. This indicates that the apartments were generally intended for upscale residents. In this building, the duplex typology was not intended for optimizing space, rather to attract a clientele who was interested in multi-family housing in a region with high property values.

³ [Author's translation: The fear of social decline stemming from these families' contempt for collective housing was overcome with the use of expensive finishing for both the outside and inside of the buildings]. Paulo César Garcez Marins, "Habitação e vizinhança: limites de privacidade no surgimento das metrópoles brasileiras", in: *Da belle époque à era do rádio: história da vida privada no Brasil*, edited by Nicolau Sevcenko (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1998), 187.

⁴ Philip Goodwin, *Brazil Builds: architecture new and old, 1652-1942* (New York: MoMA, 1943): 118.



ESTHER BUILDING

0 1 5m

Figure 6: Esther Building (1937)
1. living room, 2. dinning room, 3. bedroom, 4. bathroom, 5. w.c.
6. kitchen, 7. laundry, 8. maid's bathroom, 9. maid's restroom
Source: S. Fontenele (2018)

The same can be seen in Parque Guinle (1948), in Rio de Janeiro, a housing complex formed by three buildings (Nova Cintra, Bristol, and Caledônia). Designed by architect Lucio Costa, its floor plans vary between 286 and 604 square meters, with six duplex apartments in each building. With regard to spatial organization of the two-storied apartments, located on the lower floor is a large living room separated from the utility areas (kitchen, laundry room, maid's room and restroom) by a stairway that accesses the upper floor, where three bedrooms, a bathroom, and a private balcony can be found.

In downtown São Paulo, the Eiffel Building (1951-1953) is home to 54 duplex apartments of varying sizes. It was designed by Oscar Niemeyer in collaboration with architect Carlos Lemos. The entrance to the apartments is on the upper floor, where the living room, kitchen, and utility area are located, while bedrooms and bathrooms are on the lower floor.

The apartments are basically divided into two types. Those located on the central body of the building (type 1) are smaller and include a living room, kitchen, and a small utility area on the upper floor, and two bedrooms and a bathroom on the lower floor. Apartments on the side arms of the building (type 2) present four bedrooms and two bathrooms on the lower floor, and a living room, ample kitchen, and utility area on the upper floor.

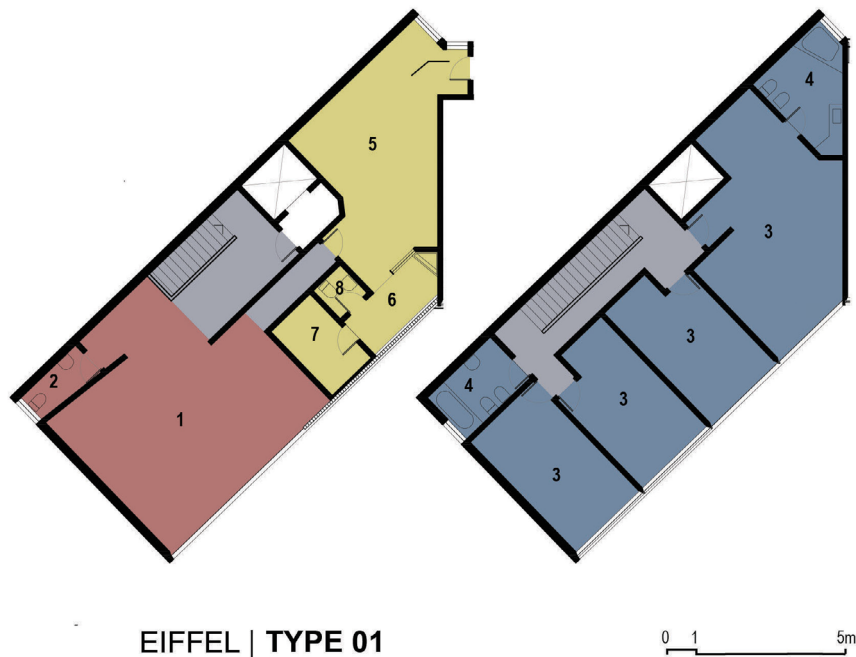


Figure 7: Eiffel Building – type 1 apartment (1951-53).
 1. living room/ dining room, 2. w.c., 3. bedroom, 4. bathroom
 5. kitchen, 6. laundry, 7. maid's room, 8. maid's bathroom
 Source: Sabrina Fontenele (2018)

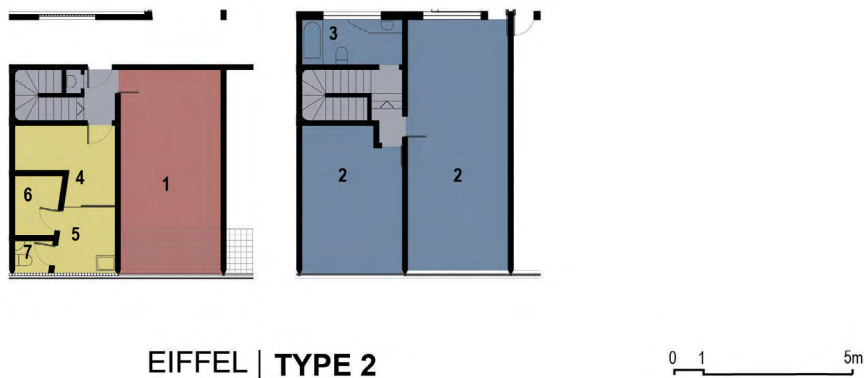


Figure 8: Eiffel Building – type 2 apartment (1951-53)
 1. living room/ dining room, 2. bedroom, 3. bathroom, 4. kitchen
 5. laundry, 6. maid's room, 7. maid's bathroom
 Source: S. Fontenele (2018)

In both of these types of apartments, the maid's room indicates the routine presence of servants in the life these families. Carlos Lemos argues that the presence of spaces meant for servants in these modern apartments demonstrates how middle and upper class families pursued the image of a luxurious and conservative lifestyle. Carlos Lemos argues further that:

Os edifícios deveriam ter 'entradas nobres' e entradas de serviço. O acesso à rua poderia ser uma só, mas dentro, logo no térreo, as circulações passariam a ser diferenciadas. Deveriam ter

cozinha, tanque, banheiro e quarto da criada, pois toda família que se prezava tinha uma empregada morando em casa.⁵

To be seen as respectable, spatial organization should include isolating servants by confining them to utility areas, away from the main parts of the house. According to Paulo Garcez Marins:

A permanência e a circulação mereceram a criação de caminhos e espaços diferenciados, sedimentando para os setores médios uma distinção em que se sente o bafejar dos tempos de escravidão.⁶

5. Final considerations

The search for new ways of living was surely an ambition of modernist architects. In houses, apartments, and housing complexes of the first half of the 20th century, one can identify a belief that, through the use of new spatial arrangements, it is possible to instill new habits and routines and ensure a healthier and more balanced way of life for residents. This was not just about building housing for new industrial workers, people who lost their homes during the World Wars, or groups of immigrants arriving to the metropolises, but also providing quality housing that encouraged workers to experience new domestic practices, liberating — or at least providing relief — residents from the burden of the domestic chores of daily family life. Thus, new designs for kitchens and other utility areas were proposed. Or, in the case of certain buildings, these areas were even eliminated, encouraging new practices that would allow women to be less overburdened.

The discussion regarding minimal spaces and the F-type design occurred during the first decades of the 20th century. Its intent was reducing the construction costs for housing complexes through the restriction of circulation areas and the replacement of individual family utility areas with communal facilities. Over the years, however, the use of said typology lost its economic tint.

Especially upon analyzing the floor plans of large Brazilian properties, it becomes evident that the appeal of duplex apartments has less to do with functionality or practicality of the domestic environment, and more to do with distinction. The presence of maid's rooms and separate entrances for utility and social areas go against the principles of individual emancipation manifested in the European models of the interwar period. It also resulted in an increase in area that affects the typological reading of these properties: in place of compact spaces that would require functional coordination between floors, we see a pile of traditional houses spread out over these same floors.

Thus, the motif of reduction and functionality supported by a variety of figures, diagrams, floor plans, and written text from the first decades of the 20th century was forgotten, as the use of its

⁵ [Author's translation: Buildings presented 'noble entrances' and entrances meant for servants. Even though there could only be a single entrance facing the street, circulation within the building was markedly segregated. All apartments should include a kitchen, utility sink, bathroom, and maid's room, as it was befitting of any distinguished family to have a maid living at home]. Carlos Alberto Cerqueira Lemos. *Cozinhas etc* (São Paulo: Perspectiva, 1976), 162.

⁶ [Author's translation: Differentiating between social and utility areas was common in luxury apartments. Steadiness and circulation warranted for segregated spaces and paths: the faintest breath of slavery up the nostrils of the middle classes]. Paulo César Garcez Marins, "Habitação e vizinhança: limites de privacidade no surgimento das metrópoles brasileiras", in: *Da belle époque à era do rádio: história da vida privada no Brasil*, edited by Nicolau Sevcenko (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1998), 192.

typology has expanded to include larger spaces for social activities and utility areas, in an attempt to attract investors interested both in modern aesthetics and traditional spatial arrangements.

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