A compact Italian apartment for ageing people

Research at the Politecnico of Torino (Italy) focuses on the two main challenges for the future: domotics and a proper organization of spaces¹. The plea of older persons to remain living independently in their own apartment is increasingly heard and taken care of. This approach diminishes social costs and increases comfort. Organizing little spaces into a high quality living quarter for older and disabled citizens is a winning solution even in case of the restoration of ancient buildings.

The 'Casa Agevole' model may be considered as a best-case example in Italy. Designed by architect Fabrizio Vescovo² it has been realized in Rome in 2003, in the area of the Clinica Santa Lucia, a private hospital hosting a rehabilitation centre (Figure 1). In only 60 m2 surface area are designed an entrance, a living

> room, a kitchen, two bedrooms and bathrooms. two This compact model of space organization completed in all its details and with all the furniture. The main goals of the 'Casa Agevole' are accessibility, easv use of all the parts of the dwelling. psychological comfort and a pleasant ambience even in non-conventional spaces. In the bathroom, for instance, innovative solutions were applied to host all necesfunctions sarv comfortably in a space of 100x150 cm² only (Figure 1C, 2).



(centre) with photographs taken in different rooms designed by letters: A: Toilet and shower facilities; B: Bedroom with the design-house a pleasant ing architect, F. Vercovo, showing the remote control of one of the beds; C: Bathroom; D: Wardrobe

Everyday problems have been carefully considered and were solved in order to make this space not only for aged or disabled

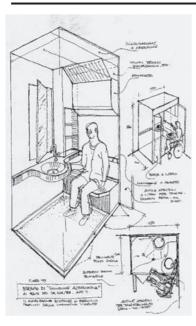


Figure 2. The original design of the bathroom in the 'Casa Agevole' model: different functions located in a small space with fitting furniture⁴

people but also for everyone else. In the last two years it has been tested by a number of visitors. Most of them were surprised that everyday living can be so improved with low-cost layout changes only.

The different parts of the house have been designed with care. The rooms, divided with sliding doors, are flexible and can host two independent persons or disabled and their assistants. The living room is separated from the kitchen with furniture only, creating a fluid space for flexible use. The two bedrooms can be combined without moving the beds, and all the tables and wardrobes are easily accessible to both older persons and persons in wheelchairs.

It is remarkable that most of the furniture in the apartment comes from standard production. This shows that the market offers sufficient opportunities if carefully screened. The model of the 'Casa Agevole' can be used to design and realize town houses or terraced houses. Different combinations of the basic module are possible, but always with each residential unit opening to an outdoor space, such as a terrace or a garden.

The 'Casa Agevole' model may also be used when upgrading or restoring existing buildings. The current Italian housing stock in cities and towns originates from the medieval era, the Renaissance as well as modern times showing an extensive diversity in construction and design.

Often older persons are living in the ancient centre of the towns, and the 'Casa Agevole' model may help to upgrade these residences. The historical background in combination with an extensive knowledge of ancient and modern construction techniques may lead to interesting results, especially when relevant modern technologies, such as the Hometronic system of the Italian Power Company³, are integrated in the upgraded design.

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