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“Houses Specifically Designed for Low Income Workers”

The District of Seijo in Tokyo (Japan) is one of the most expensive urban areas in the world. About ten years ago or so I had the chance to observe the entire process of conceptualizing, planning, building and selling an outrageously high-priced residence called: “Corte Serena – Duke Scala Seijo”, there.

When the building was finished a lot of people in the Sales Department were worried. They thought it would take too much time to sell all the apartments, too big for Tokyo standards, with all those finishing, customized furniture and hand-made accessories.

At the main entrance, the architect designer had chosen a rare exquisite selection of Italian Marble (Giallo Reale) and no Japanese citizen would have been ready to pay that amount of money, just for an entrance flooring. That’s what the Sales Personnel thought.

To confirm their anxiety, 15 days after the Grand Opening of the sales only one apartment was sold and the contract not signed yet. Late in the evening a TV anchorman went there to take information and in total contradiction with what they were saying, he observed that, for his “necessities” indeed those apartments were too small and in fact he needed two of them, connected. So some restructuring was imperative and inevitable. Of course, he insisted on “having the complete flooring of those two apartments in “Giallo Reale - Marble”.

To give you a rough idea of the money this man was prepared to pay just for the marble ... with the same money he could have easily bought 5 apartments in the historical center of almost any Italian city.

He is a celebrity, so after he bought two apartments in there many others followed his lead and the entire residence was completely sold out in less than 6 weeks.

Rich people take care of themselves. They do not need the government to step in and help them and not only in relationship to houses, which is not the case for the poor. After WW2 the world had an impressive growth and there are many billionaires today.

Is this a great achievement ??? I am not sure about that.

What we have got seems to me pretty foolish or even moronic. Today in the world the first 85 richest men at the peak possess wider wealth, more money and larger patrimony than the poorest 3.000.000.000 people (than the poorest three billion people) at the bottom !!!

There is nothing more unreasonable and disgusting than this, in my mind. I hope that China will follow a different path. It is time to start thinking seriously about housing for low income workers, in China. It will create enthusiasm and admiration from everywhere else, in the world.

Many other countries in Europe have tried to build low cost houses for middle-income citizens, but they failed miserably in the field of houses for the poor mostly in relationship to appearances and target prices.

The final price of those “houses for the people” (that’s how they call them in Italy) was not affordable enough and their look was a sort of “reminder of poverty”. Even though you are planning to spend less money it doesn’t mean that you have to renounce to design and comfort.

But, in order to be able to pay for good design and ergonomic solutions it is necessary to have a large scale project at national level (not at local level). A medium size City Hall doesn’t have the resources to manage it on its own. The State does !!!

Another mistake they made in Italy was to start with projects for middle class workers and now 65% of Italians possess their own house, but the poorest are still without it.

In the end, the Italian authorities wanted to build regular houses and then they tried to help the poorest part of the population by giving them some financial support to buy those houses, paying for them in 30 or in 40 years.

They didn't realize that being poor create itself the impossibility of planning to spend money for such a long period of time. No matter how "low cost" that mortgage is ... it will be always too costly for a poor family !!! Indeed it was not a good way to help poor people.

A better way to attack such major problem would be through pre-fabricated housing, with really good design, with the use of extremely poor materials, integrated inside a solid structure and with a sustainable project characterized by eco-friendly, low cost solutions.

The People Republic of China should not give those houses as a present (for free) to the poorest part of her population. Citizens have the tendency to underestimate the value of what they do not earn on their own. But the final price should be really affordable for any poor family who wants a house, which should not be available on the market, for richer parts of the population. In fact, without this last condition, any other plan will fail.

What happened in Italy was a continuous request from richer families of improvements of those houses (by changing the doors, the accessories, the bathroom area and so forth) which in the end transformed the "poorest version" of those "houses for the people" into something else, not "convenient to build" for the Developers and much more expensive and unattainable for lower income workers.

The entire project should be strictly only for low income workers, exclusively available for them only. It will be revolutionary and incredibly cherished by any capitalistic society for which the Chinese will settle the example to follow and it will give China a much greater image, throughout the terrestrial globe than any other high tower or any other mega-construction will ever do.

And, by the way, it will simply be the right thing to do.