

Council Houses

In **Italy**, the problem of cheap and healthy housing for low-income people led to the passing of the 1903 Luzzati Act, which stipulated the setting up of public, non-profit, local Housing Agencies to build and rent flats to meet the needs of an increasing urban population. Those agencies were reformed in 1938 but still deal with council houses; the ranking to get a council flat, and the fee, is **means-tested** and open to immigrants. In 1962, the Act n.167 encouraged the purchase, by local authorities, of land to be used for council houses; even if this intervention mitigated the need for council flats, it led to the construction of **dorm** quarters without residential services that were cut off from the centre of towns and which since 1978, have had to be the object of requalification policies.

(adapted from Wikipedia)

In **Britain**, social housing has come to mean something negative, something that only poor people should be interested in. The property-based economy that has developed since the 1960s, and took a **boost** with the “Right To Buy” schemes of the 1980s, has meant that social housing is now seen to be only for the poor and those who cannot afford a **mortgage**.

But this is most definitely not how it should be viewed, and is far from the ideals in the minds of those who created the modern **blueprint** for social housing in the 1850s.

The first proponent of social housing in Britain was Prince Albert, Queen Victoria’s husband. From the 1890s, local authorities took over from philanthropists as the main builders of social housing. The London County Council



An ATC (Agenzia Territoriale per la Casa), i.e. a local housing agency, in Turin (Italy).

were the leaders but other cities, particularly Liverpool and Glasgow, were also enthusiasts. During the 1930s, this housing became generically known as ‘council housing’, and much of it built to high construction standards. Some superb housing on garden estates was built between the two World Wars and nearly all is still standing. Things started to go wrong in the late 1960s when cheap, poorly built and designed tower blocks started to be put up all over Britain. The quality was lost and their day-to-day management was not a priority, and it is taking a long time for authorities and charities to recognise the original methods of building and management were, and still are, the best.

From: <http://www.socialhousinghistory.uk/wp/>

blueprint: *progetto*
to boost: *spinta*
dorm: *dormitorio*

means-tested: *analisi della situazione patrimoniale*
mortgage: *mutuo*



Read the two texts and decide what the following dates or decades refer to.

1850s	
1890s	
1930s	
1938	Reformation of local Housing Agencies in Italy
1960s	Development of property-based economy in the UK.
1962	
1978	
1980s	

