

Another way of dwelling: the portuguese experience on cooperative economic housing

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Abstract

Unlike the regular collective housing buildings and the social housing production, we can presently say that the portuguese housing economic cooperatives (CHE) built in the seventies and in the eighties were able to structure urban territories as well as to promote a spatial and social diversity by the means of the architectural project.

In this article/presentation we would like to explore this circumstance as a starting point to a wider reflexion about the importance of architectural design as an instrument of programmatic and social mixed urban spaces.

In Portugal, the cooperative economic housing sector was largely invested both by architects and the populations in order to counterweight the private housing market (inaccessible for a wide range of families) as well the distant and insufficient public offer (incapable of providing more than a quantitative response to the housing problem). Being sure that the processes by witch these cooperative houses were conceived and built are a key to understand both the value of a moderate participation of the futures inhabitants and the importance of an early comprehension of populations' specific needs and preferences, we would like here to focus mostly on the richness of the architectural project as a vehicle and a condenser.

The approach is based on case studies that allow the confrontation of the architectural device and the user experience. This being said, our approach fits under the socio-ethno-architectural methodology and the post-occupancy evaluation in order to nurture an architectural reasoning on the potentialities of space as a significant frame of possibilities for families.

Typological diversity and the importance of a spare room are some of the topics that structure the referred architectural reasoning anchoring on concepts such as inhabitant competence (Raymond, 1966), diversity/complexity of needs (Chombart de Lauwe, 1967), use (Pinson, 1993) and device (Eleb, Debarre, 1984).

Key words: architecture; cooperative housing; participation; everyday life