

## The Social Dimension of Housing

In a context of global crisis, collective housing can contribute to creating stability and restoring the trust that seems to have been lost in many layers of today's society. Trust in our neighbors, the ability to rely on them, the generation of a community where we can feel supported and able to seek support whenever we need it: this is a basic necessity today and one where architecture has a decisive role to play. The profession can help to reverse the trend towards isolation and individuality, and instead foster communication, relations with our neighbors, physical and verbal contact, so that the neighborhood can function as the primary social structure within society. Building 111 in Barcelona researches and experiments with this issue, seeking to generate a setting that favors interaction between neighbors.

The center of the project is a large empty space, occupied by three trees and a fountain, surrounded by balconies and terraces, resembling a grand theater whose stalls are surrounded by boxes and galleries all facing inwards. Here, the residents emerge to spend time on their balconies, to speak to someone, or to gaze at the landscape through the expansive opening that frames the Torrebonica park. This communal courtyard is a platform for social interaction, where people from very diverse backgrounds and cultures communicate and build friendships: the large empty space brings them together. Just as in the theater, the dimensions and proportions of this space were key so that the tension between neighborly boundaries and interaction found the right balance.

This central void is reached by an aperture in the great mass of the building. The façades act as a textured carapace, which with its light and shadow enters into dialogue with the surrounding pine wood. The complex presents itself to the visitor as a massive boulder in this landscape of pine trees and dry ravines, that erodes just as the landscape does to create passages and connections between the volumes of housing. There is a balance between this unitary exterior, which resembles a single house, and the multiple interior, where the 111 houses are expressed in folds and balconies in all their individuality: this powerful and expansive façade, with its ancient gravity, contains and balances a fragmented, friendly interior.

The route across this courtyard from the street to inside the apartments is modulated into a sequence of scales and progressive change from the most open and public to the most intimate and private. The closures are blurred and deployed in overlaid folds to enable each extreme to meet, working on the boundary to graduate this relation between public and private. From one extreme to the other, from the bedroom to the street, the route is varied and always different. The greeting to the family merges with the greeting to the neighbors in the courtyard, which becomes an extension of the family nucleus, where friends and acquaintances accompany our day-to-day lives on a secondary plane of privacy.

The ease with which parents allow children to play in the courtyard, where the daily shop can become a collective activity, or where the door of the house opens with such naturalness to invite another in, all confirm that architecture can help to produce a space of trust, and generate an urban fragment that fosters a culture of sociability.

