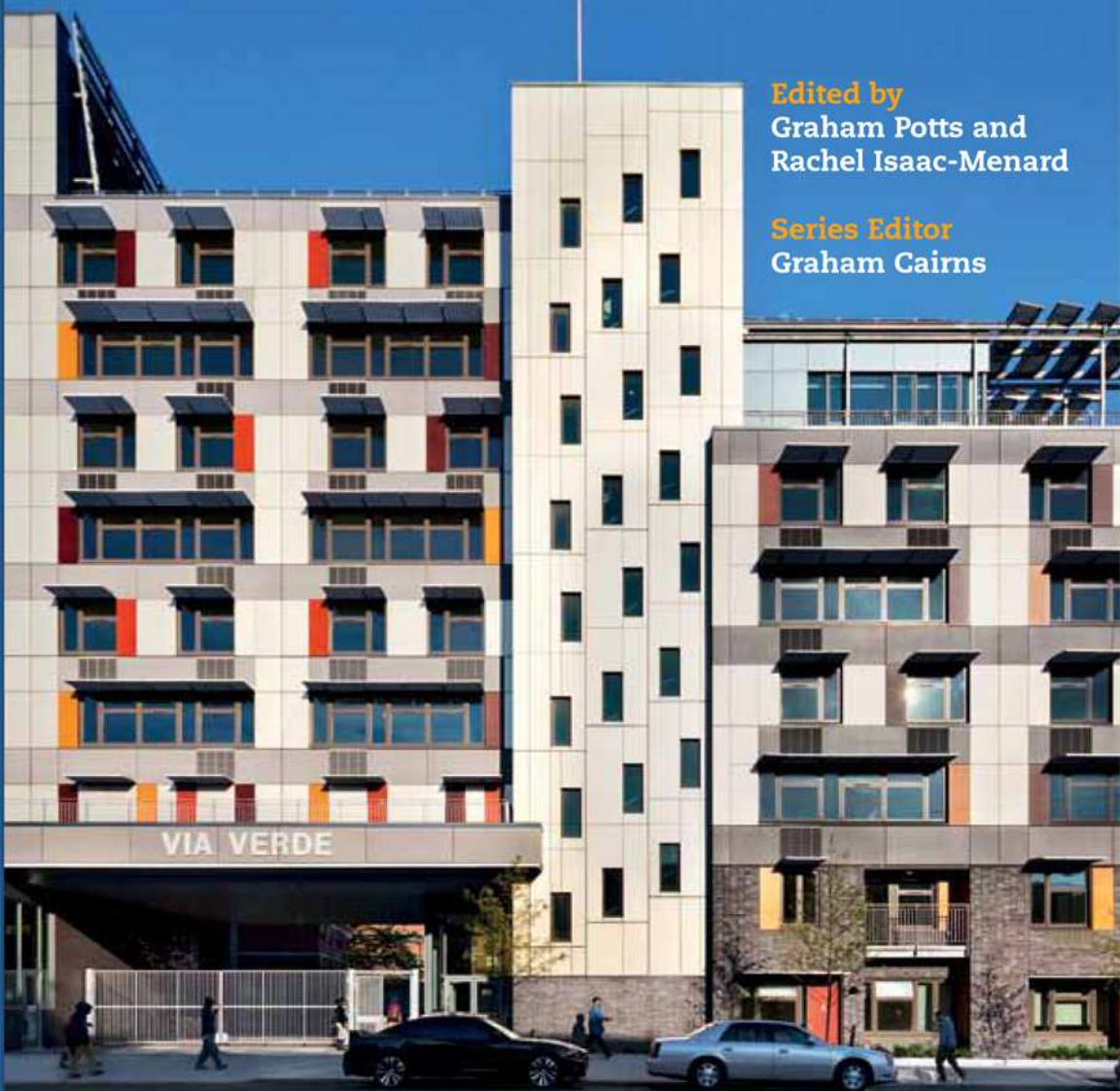


Housing the Future

Alternative
Approaches for
Tomorrow

Edited by
Graham Potts and
Rachel Isaac-Menard

Series Editor
Graham Cairns



HOUSING THE FUTURE

ALTERNATIVE
APPROACHES FOR
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SERIES EDITOR
GRAHAM CAIRNS

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EUSEBIO ALONSO GARCÍA ARCHITECTS

Eusebio Alonso García Architects was established over 30 years ago. It pays special attention to the issue of housing and has won several public awards. It is interested in creating contemporary and flexible domestic space and beneficial relationships between the interior and exterior in the context of public and collective housing. Among its projects are a 48-unit public housing project in Benta Berri, San Sebastian, which won First Award in a national competition in Spain and a proposal for public housing that was shortlisted for the European III Award in 1994.

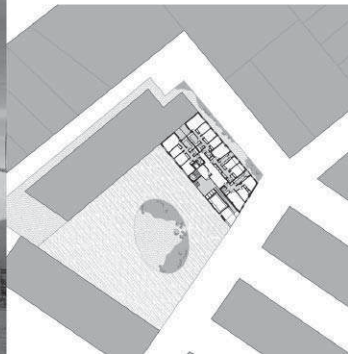
Other projects include a nine-house unit in Valladolid in Delicias Street, 1993, which respected the scale and context of its popular district. The project explores the possibility of generating public space on the ground floor while linking to the dwelling units themselves, operating as a point of access as well as a social space for meeting neighbours. A later project to build 12 public housing units in Ciudad de Osma (Soria), 1998, won first prize in the competition of the Council of Castilla and León. The houses are arranged in a continuous and compact block that is articulated volumetrically to reflect the complex topography of the site. Key to the project was the reinstallation of a small square to the village which also doubles as access to the publicly funded housing units.

The concerns for the integration of daily life into the infrastructure of the housing units and the incorporation of public social space into the fabric of the housing block that characterized previous projects was also evident in 19 public houses built on the outskirts of the village of Santa Cristina de la Polvorosa (Zamora) in 1998–2001. Receiving awards from the Council of Castilla y León, the VI brick Architecture Prize, and Hispalyt, this project was designed to incorporate the three distinct courtyards accessible from each of the dwellings, thereby helping to articulate different levels of privacy and facilitate urban gardening.

In recent years, the studio has been interested in typological research, developments necessary in housing for new social contexts, and the increasing importance of



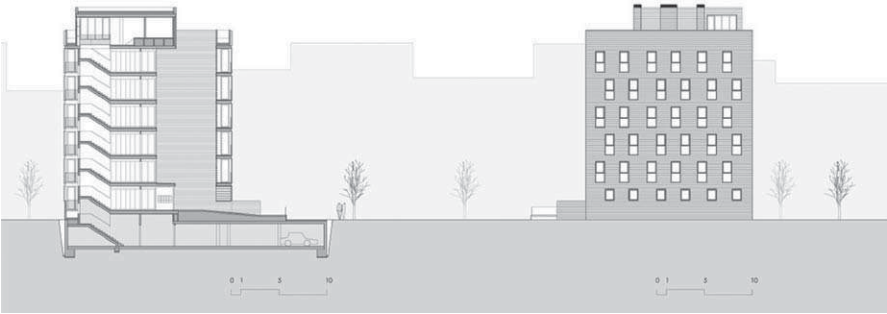
Figures 1–3. 16 Public Houses in San Adrián Las Villas in Valladolid.





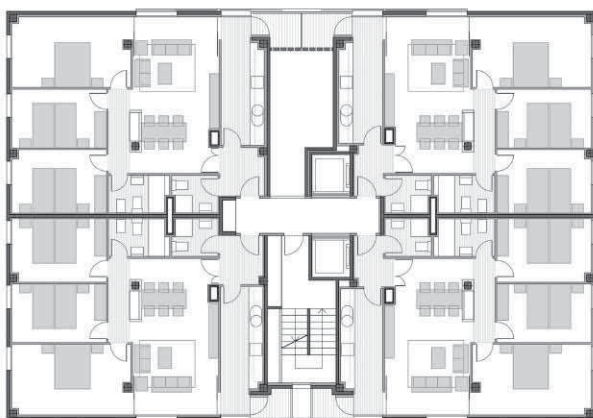
environmental issues. This is reflected in a project for 50 homes for young people in Palencia, 2007, and 16 public housing units constructed for the City Council of Valladolid, 2006 (Figures 1–3). Both these projects received multiple national awards. In the latter of these, the layout formed a square in a neighbourhood that was in the beginning stages of regeneration, the materials were seen to reflect its ‘urban condition’ and the plan permitted different forms and levels of accessibility by designing steps from the square and a ramp from the street, as well as a lift for people and a separate one for cars.

The Project for Valladolid adopts various strategies including attention to the structures and characteristics of the existing urban context through reducing the circulation systems of the site to a single clearly defined route; opening up views to the more traditional areas of the district; and creating new useable public space for residents. In addition, its aesthetic treatment is based on combing brick with vertically orientated windows on the north and east facades along with ecologically sound and energy efficient materials – a concern for the environment reflected in the project’s incorporation of solar panel



Figures 4–6. 48 Public Houses in Santos
Pilarica in Valladolid.





Planta Tipo.

systems as naturally as possible. In short, it is a project that on a limited design and construction budget has helped regenerate the neighbourhood; that integrates with, and improves its public spaces; and which limits running costs for low income residents by its use of energy efficient materials and systems.

Built at the same time, the Santos Pilarica project in Valladolid involved the development of two small towers containing 48 public housing units next to the ring road of Valladolid (Figures 4–6). The recipient of multiple awards, these towers form a landmark whilst also respecting the small scale of the typical housing unit. Designed to have a versatile and flexible plan, they respond to changing lifestyle preferences and create visual interest externally through the incorporation of mobile shutters on the curtain wall, enabling the formal resolution of two scales: landmark block and individual house.

The principal issue in the design of this project is the fact that it is a new community. In this context it is necessary to create an 'identity' for particular buildings but also, and more importantly, for the wider area and neighbourhood. It is an area that, as with all new urban residential projects, has a quickly growing community, often with young families whose needs change as the family grows – and ages. Consequently, the adaptability of the interiors is a primary concern. In terms of visual identity as a means of facilitating community identity, the project uses visibly recognizable perforated aluminum sheets contrasted with brick and has two towers that are immediately recognizable. In addition, these define an area of common public space between them, intended to create a sense of shared space and shared form.

More recently, the studio has engaged with designs for institutions: a Health Centre in Mombuey, 2010, and a Centre for Entrepreneurs in Torrelavega, Santander, 2013. It has also participated in international competitions, including the Gosan Public Library in Daegu, Korea, 2012 and the ZIM Residential complex in Samara, Russia, 2014. In all of these projects the studio's ethos of integrating public and private space, of allowing for changing uses and ways of living remains paramount.

When dealing with housing one is obliged to think beyond the house as a unit and consider the context in which people are housed – their neighbourhoods and urban settings. It is thus a question of operating at various scales – of creating spaces adequate for the way an individual lives, and spaces adequate for how we interact as communities at the urban scale. These are generic themes that have only been underlined in recent years in countries like Spain where the economic conditions in which housing is produced have been extremely difficult.

In these conditions, as with many other countries across Europe, this has focused attention somewhat away from new build and towards the renovation of existing housing stock which, in the context of the social housing of Spain, was largely built in the 1960s and 1970s. This raises a series of further issues that the projects described here have all engaged with in their distinct ways. This housing stock, although designed and built according to norms that are now out-of-date, do have an advantageous commonality – they are generally located near the centre of Spanish cities. This,

together with the fact that are large in scale, makes the question of housing inseparable from the question of the urban.

To deal specifically with these issues in the Spanish context, it is arguable that there are three principal lines of action required. Firstly, we have to adapt the domestic spaces of these complexes so they meet the needs of today's smaller, more individual-focused and multi-cultural families that increasingly see the home as a workplace. Secondly, we have to deal with ways of improving the public spaces that were built during this period and which have to now host quite different social activities at different times of day, and involving different types of people and communities. Thirdly, it is unquestionable today that any work we do on actual houses or their urban settings, has to have an awareness of limited energy use at its core. These three strands are evident in every project outlined here and will be essential to what is likely to be the next wave of housing projects in countries like Spain – projects focused on renovation.

Housing The Future – Alternative Approaches for Tomorrow offers three perspectives on the problems of housing today with an eye on tomorrow. It brings together world-leading practising architects with academics from seven countries and teams of international students. World leaders in the field of residential design, such as UN Habitat Award winner Avi Friedman, present built projects whose design criteria and aims they lay out in text. Academics from the UK, the USA, Spain, Germany and elsewhere follow these project descriptions with extended essays from a more theoretical perspective but remain focused on the realities of practice. Finally, ideas on current housing problems from the next generation of designers are brought together in student projects from Europe and North America. With an introduction by Dr Graham Cairns, this book highlights the practice of residential design internationally at a time when affordable housing provision is seen as a critical issue by designers, planners and policy makers alike. This book is the first in the 'Housing the Future' series.

Graham Cairns, series editor, is based at Columbia University, New York and is Honorary Senior research Associate at the Bartlett School of Architecture, UCL. He is principal editor of the scholarly journal *Architecture_MPS* and director of the research group AMPS (Architecture, Media, Politics, Society)

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