

Emancipation by Living: A Typological Reflection - From Political Control towards Designing for Equality

*By Arianna Scaioli**

*In his essay *Enjoy the Silence*, Aureli traces the conceptual origins of a typological discourse in the ritual and ritualisation of inhabiting space. Architectural design has determined and contributed to the spatialisation of gender roles and power hierarchies within the domestic environment. The design of the house, within the modern strategy, has contributed to the translation of a social and political vision in its formal, use-related, symbolic and perceptual dimensions. Positioning itself within a materialist feminist critique of architecture, the contribution reflects on the design of housing spaces, between the dwelling and the neighborhood, as a cultural act of spatial transformation where architecture becomes the object and tool of emancipation. Looking back to the past, to a female and feminist legacy, the contribution reflects on the contemporary instances of the spatialisation of rights, equality and care, considering them as design paradigms capable of modifying not only the way of inhabiting a space, but also that of designing it, influencing a typological discourse. The contribution presents three case studies – Temporary residential centre for homeless women by Vivas Arquitectos, Entrepatrios las Carolinas by SAtt Arquitectura, and 85 Social Housing in Cornellà by Peris+Toral – by dissecting them in spatial elements the interest is to understand the spatial domain of empowerment.*

Introduction: Beyond Housing

In the contemporary scenario, the theme of *housing* has returned to the centre of design debates as a catalyst for rights, from the right to housing to the right to the city. The discussion has shifted away from the specific issue of housing and dwelling toward a more general notion of *inhabiting*. This leads to a reflection on the meaning of *inhabiting* in today's context, considering whose bodies, voices, and needs are taken into consideration. This need is especially urgent today, in a historical moment marked by profound urban and social conflicts¹ that have heightened dissatisfaction with ways of living that no longer respond to contemporary needs.² While in the past this was an issue rooted within the discipline, today we are faced with an explosion and fragmentation of the theme, permeated by ecological, social, and political concerns. It is, therefore, not just a question of reorienting political choices

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1. Sassen, S (2014) *Expulsions: Brutality and Complexity in the Global Economy*. Cambridge (MA): The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

2. This reflection is developed also within the Viennese Pavilion, Agency for better living, at the Biennale di Architettura in Venice, 2025. The pavilion fosters a comparative reflection between Vienna and Rome on collective forms of living and how they promote empowerment and well-being in response to contemporary needs.

and cultural models, but of reconceptualising the theme of inhabiting, starting with a questioning of traditional typologies.

Discrimination by Design

Within this disciplinary renewal, social and gender-based discrimination is prompting a repositioning of design practices, with an understanding of the project's agency in shaping “altering futures”³ and in spatialising rights. The central question guiding this exploratory research is: “What effect does gender inequality have on Architecture? And reversing it: what can Architecture do to tackle gender inequalities?” Space is not neutral but materialises power dynamics: Control,⁴ Moralisation and Domestication,⁵ revealing the intrinsic conflicts.⁶ These dynamics operate on different levels:

- > The hardware or physical dimension: the materiality of spaces.
- > The software: the use of space and the experience of architecture.
- > The symbolic dimension: visibility and representation.
- > The perceptual dimension: thermal comfort, psychological and physical well-being, and sense of belonging to space.

The four categories, which will be used to describe the projects critically, dissect how spaces both reflect and reinforce gendered power dynamics (Figure 1).

ANALYTICAL CATEGORIES	GENDERED SPATIAL ASPECTS WITHIN A FEMINIST CRITIQUE	ANALYTICAL CATEGORIES	GENDERED SPATIAL ASPECTS WITHIN A FEMINIST CRITIQUE
Form	Domestic spaces designed around traditional gender roles (Roberts, 1991) Separate spaces for domestic work and daily activities (Hoyden, 1981) Buildings designed around male ergonomics (door heights, office furniture, etc.) (Karin Weisman, 1992) Mobility infrastructures designed for male commuting, neglecting caregiving routes (See and the City, 2021)	Symbol	Cultural codes that exclude certain social and gender categories, monuments and topography that celebrate predominantly male figures (Catherine, 1992; Agrest, 1996)
Use	Public spaces dominated by male-dominated activities (e.g. football pitches) and poor availability of caregiving facilities (e.g. children's spaces) Segregation of public and private spaces that reinforces gender isolation Places of work and study with schedules that penalise caregivers.	Perception	Perception of insecurity in poorly lit or unpatrolled spaces Feeling of exclusion in places dominated by specific groups (e.g. masculine clubs or swimming) Bodily experiences not considered (e.g. non-inclusive furniture or public spaces)

Figure 1. *Gendered Spatial Aspects*

Source: Drawing by the Author, 2025.

3. Petrescu, D (2007) *Altering Practices*. London: Routledge.

4. Foucault, M (1975) *Discipline and Punish*. New York: Vintage Books.

5. Teyssot, G (1986) “Figure di interni,” in *Il progetto domestico. La casa dell'uomo: archetipi e prototipi*. Milano: Electa.

6. Sassen, S (2014) *Expulsions: Brutality and Complexity in the Global Economy*. Cambridge (MA): The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

The acknowledgment of how these discriminatory forms occur in a situated context and intersect with existing forms of spatial vulnerability, thereby exacerbating conditions of marginalisation, has highlighted the spatial dimension as a fundamental component to be explored in efforts to counter forms of violence, accessibility difficulties, and the lack of visibility and recognition. In some contexts, where fundamental rights are not guaranteed, including Afghanistan, Iran and beyond, the phenomenon of gender apartheid translates into regulatory and design measures that render women's bodies invisible. This is not just a matter of denying access to certain places, but of changing their layout: regulations prohibiting windows in women's communal spaces and the bricking up of existing openings confine kitchens and women's collective rooms to closed environments, producing spatial segregation that normalises gender exclusion. The theme of visibility is central to many feminist reflections, taking on different connotations:

- > Making visible and bringing back to light the biographies and works of female architects who have been erased from history.⁷ Here, care is developed through the act of curating these stories.⁸
- > Making visible the needs, desires and aspirations of non-normative bodies by rethinking forms of living and design;⁹ This involves openness to co-design, experimentation, and prototyping, as well as reformulating the relationship between design and process.
- > Making visible the different forms of discrimination, violence, and spatial inaccessibility, but also manifesting hidden and invisible care work.¹⁰

7. Friedman, A. (1998) *Women and the making of the modern house: a social and architectural history*. New York: Abrams; Harriss, H., House, N., Parrinder, M., & Ravenscroft, T. (2024) *100 women: architects in practice*. RIBA Publishing; Lorenz, C. (1990) *Women in Architecture: A Contemporary perspective*. New York: Rizzoli. Mattogno, C. (2025) Schwitalla, U. (2021) *Women in architecture: past, present, and future*. Hatje Cantz Verlag; Singha, S. (2018) *Women in Architecture*. London: Routledge.

8. Krasny, E., & Perry, L. (2023) *Curating with Care*. London, UK - New York, USA: Routledge.

9. Schalk, M., Kristiansson T. & Mazé, R. (2017) *Feminist Futures of Spatial Practice: Materialisms, Activisms, Dialogues, Pedagogies, Projections*. Baunach: AADR – Art Architecture Design Research; Brown, L. (2016) *Feminist Practices: Interdisciplinary Approaches To Women In Architecture*. New York: Routledge;

10. Federici, S. (1975) *Wages Against Housework*. Bristol: Power of Women Collective and Falling Wall Press; Federici, S. (2012) "Feminism and the Politics of the Commons". In *The Wealth of the Commons*, Edited by David Bollier, and Silke Helfrich. Amherst: The Commons Strategies Group, [Available online]: [http://wealthofthecommons.org/essay/feminism-and-politics-commons](http://wealthofthecommons.org/essay/feminism-and-politics-commons;); Krasny, Elke. 2022. *Scales of Care: Affective Ecologies and Reproductive Urbanism*. Montevideo Architecture Public School Online Seminar, 6 aprile 2022. Disponibile su: <https://www.elkekrasny.at/archives/3200>; Fitz, A., Krasny, E. & Architekturzentrum Wien. (2022) *Critical Care: Architecture and Urbanism for a Broken Planet*. Cambridge, MA - London, England: MIT PRESS.

Critical Positioning

The contribution reflects on contemporary instances of the spatialisation of rights, equality, and care, treating them as design paradigms capable of modifying not only how we inhabit a space but also how we design it, thereby influencing a typological discourse. Starting from the provocation launched in the ARCH+ issue *Vienna – The End of Housing (as a Typology)*,¹¹ this contribution questions whether the hybrid and open nature of contemporary living signals the *death* of housing typology as we know it, or rather its transformation into new spatial imaginaries grounded in care, collectivity, and gender equality. A challenge to typological conventions seems to emerge, with buildings that are increasingly hybrid between work, caring activities, collective spaces, and home, conceptually moving towards new typologies, as seen in the project Gleis 21 by Einszueins Architektur (2019) in Vienna, which develops the idea of a neighbourhood-building (*Quartierhaus*). The rejection of traditional floor plans characterises this line of questioning; the ground floor is not a generic space left to the market to be acquired. Still, it becomes the threshold between the house and the neighbourhood. This flow between the private, public, and collective recomposes the modern movement's zoning. Moreover, the vanishing of the separation between day and night areas, the de-hierarchization of rooms (i.e., no main bedroom of 14 sqm and a child's room of 9 sqm), and a reduction in room size, favouring collective areas, contribute to this reformulation of traditional types. These subversions open up a rethinking of living space based on subjectivity rather than predefined roles. Building on these premises, this paper investigates how these issues translate into concrete design practices through case studies that, in different ways, embody a typological and processual transformation oriented toward gender equality.

The research proposes a methodological approach that, by dissecting space into its elements, reinterprets them through a feminist lens. It discusses how architecture becomes both the object and tool of, and for, emancipation through the process of thinking and building. The thesis guiding this contribution is that housing typology, far from being a neutral or purely functional form, is a political and cultural tool capable of conveying – or counteracting – gender inequalities. In this sense, women's empowerment can also be read as a process of typological transformation, in which the home becomes a space for negotiation, resistance and imagination.

Structure and Objectives

The paper is structured into the following sections. Section 2 introduces gender equality as a design issue, relating to architecture, type, and the politics of space. Section 3 outlines the research methodology, framing the criteria used to present the case studies. Section 4 presents three case studies located in the Spanish context to define a cultural and spatial unit. The Spanish context was chosen because there is a strong convergence between political ideology and typological experiments linked

11. Arch+ (2024) *Vienna – The End of Housing (as a Typology)*. Spector Books.

to new forms of living,¹² with a robust tradition of social housing and typological studies¹³ on collective living. Yet, these remain underexplored from a feminist perspective. These projects explore the theme of female/feminist housing in different ways: the first, Temporary residential centre for homeless women by Vivas Arquitectos in Barcelona (2023), is a women-centred housing project, while the second, Entrepatis las Carolinas by SAtt Arquitectura in Madrid (2020), is designed with explicit reference to gender criteria, working on the idea of a care infrastructure and a democratic space beyond the traditional family, the third, 85 Social Housing in Cornellà de Llobregat by Peris+Toral (2021) explores the theme of the total de-hierarchisation of space to eliminate gender roles and spatial stereotypes, promoting forms of equality. Section 5 critically discusses the projects in relation to broader challenges, and Section 6 concludes and outlines potential research directions.

Gender (In)Equalities in Space: Architecture, Type and the Politics of Care

“Architectural types do not emerge from a natural evolution or from some universal and timeless principle [...] Type is the nexus of all the factors that contribute to the production of architecture: norms, budget, class, gender, space [...] they are devices that spatialize the way people relate to each other.”¹⁴

From this perspective, the architectural project faces a crucial challenge: whether and how these experimental prototypes of living can serve as a typological reflection on gender equality, care, and women's empowerment as design paradigms. The typological theme re-emerges not as abstract cataloguing but as a tool for design and negotiation. Typology, in this perspective, becomes an opportunity for disciplinary renewal. The dimension of use of space is linked to the activities performed within it, where everyday life becomes a field for developing forms of freedom and empowerment. Specifically, according to the Gender Equality Index 2024,¹⁵ in the domain of time, care work (encompassing housework, childcare, and family care) remains predominantly a female task. Gender roles have an impact on which spaces are used in everyday life, with constraints in accessing local infrastructures and services (childcare, health centres, public transport), in higher rates of poverty, especially in female-led households, and subsequent difficulties affording decent housing, as well as unemployment, barriers to education and experiences of violence and street harassment. The argument is that we should begin this reflection by examining how women have historically, and continue, to perform caring activities “not to naturalise housework

12. Novella, A., Sánchez de Madariaga, I. (2024) *Designing Daily Life Spaces. Gender Criteria for Housing Design and Public Procurement*; Ajuntament de Barcelona, Institut Municipal de l'Habitatge i Rehabilitació. (2019) *Flexibilidad e igualdad de género en la vivienda colectiva* (Qüestions d'Habitatge, n. 22).

13. Cánovas Alcaraz, A., Espejel, C., De Lapuerta, J. M., Martínez Arroyo, C., & Pemjean, R. (2016) *Vivienda colectiva en España: 1992–2015*. Valencia: General de Ediciones de Arquitectura; Cánovas, A., Espejel, C., De Lapuerta, J. M., Martínez Arroyo, C., & Pemjean, R. (2013). *Vivienda colectiva en España. Siglo XX (1929–1992)*. Valencia: General de Ediciones de Arquitectura.

14. Aureli PV (2024) Enjoy the silence. The case for typological design. *In Burning Farm* 10: 1-14.

15. European Institution for Gender Equality. 2025. Gender Equality Index 2024. Available at: <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/2024>.

as a female vocation [and the author adds: nor feminism as a women's issue]. It is refusing to obliterate the collective experiences, the knowledge and the struggles that women have accumulated concerning reproductive work, whose history has been an essential part of our resistance to capitalism. Reconnecting with this history is a crucial step for women and men today both to undo the gendered architecture of our lives and to reconstruct our homes and lives as commons."¹⁶

One of the critical aspects that emerges from reading Federici's work, a feminist philosopher and activist, is how the re-collectivisation of care work can be used as a strategy to promote gender equality and empower women, particularly in the context of addressing female poverty and building new "communities based on quality relations, principles of cooperation and responsibility to each other and the earth, the forests, the seas, the animals."¹⁷ It is precisely this cross-cutting perspective that is the key to interpreting a discourse that begins by observing women's lived experiences to understand how to challenge the norm in the contemporaneity. This canon has traditionally been male. Starting from women's lived experiences serves as a methodological lever because it highlights structural dynamics that are often invisible in traditional typologies: the distribution of care work, the fragmentation of time, spatial insecurities, and a lack of everyday services. These dynamics are not essential properties of a single group, but rather manifestations of spatial vulnerability that cut across age, disability, socioeconomic conditions, and gender orientation. Using a feminist perspective, therefore, means starting from cases where these dynamics are most visible to derive design principles that can be transferred to other bodies and contexts, beyond the norm, the standard, and the habit.

From Power to Empowerment

This condition calls for a reconceptualisation of domestic space and its role in the distribution of care, moving beyond traditional family structures and proposing more collective and cooperative alternatives. In his essay *Enjoy the Silence* (2024), Aureli traces the conceptual origins of a typological discourse in the ritual and ritualisation of inhabiting space. However, through rites and the subsequent organisation and composition of domestic environments, architectural design has helped shape and reinforce the spatialisation of gender roles and power hierarchies. When we consider architecture and rights in the context of critical and design thinking, we are also reflecting on architectural and political praxis. These two concepts are not separate entities; instead, they are interconnected: the political is embodied and operates through architecture, from the design utopias of Ledoux and Boullé (18th Century), who imagined new types of buildings that would bring about a social reorganisation according to egalitarian ideals, to the utopian communities promoted by Fourier (18th Century), which were able to spread across the Atlantic and inspire new forms of living in collectivity such as New Harmony and the cooperative

16. Federici, S. (2019) *Re-Enchanting the World Feminism and the Politics of the Commons*. Oakland, Canada: PM Press, 165.

17. Federici, S. (2012) "Feminism and the Politics of the Commons." In *The Wealth of the Commons*, edited by D. Bollier and S. Helfrich. Amherst, Available at: <https://wealthofthecommons.org/essay/feminism-and-politics-commons>.

colony of Topolobampo, to the avant-garde architecture of the Soviet revolution. However, regarding form, it is essential to recognise that it is not merely a physical form independent of social, economic, and contextual values. This relates to Ernesto Nathan Rogers's understanding of form as a socially constructed entity.

Over the centuries, a process of domestication of social life and moralisation of the population, especially women and poorer groups, has developed through the organisation of the home and its various forms. Notable in this sense are Henry Roberts' model houses (1851) in England, which serve as the basis for the modern housing project, in which each room is linked to a specific function, promoting the segregation of the sexes through spatial division and introducing the concept of privacy. Through his houses and the multiplication of functional rooms, he sought to reduce and counter what the bourgeois saw as sexual immorality and depravity of working-class people living together in overcrowded dwellings. This critique builds on Tafuri's position in *Theories and History of Architecture* (1968) on the "typological critique", which emphasises the necessity of acknowledging the historicity of the type and the ideological contingencies behind it, thereby offering a more comprehensive interpretation than a formalist reading. It also explores how a specific form can (or cannot) influence the way we build, think about, and inhabit a space. Within this condition, women have sought to construct and carve out a space for themselves within the home and expand into the city, paraphrasing Virginia Woolf, taking the form of a room of one's own or a book. In this place, they can think and build their own architecture and cities, even if only imagined through words.¹⁸ This process can be observed both in the writings of Catherine Beecher and the housing typologies designed for single working women in the 1920s-1930s in Vienna by Margarete Schütte-Lihotzky, the so-called Donna "Tipo Tre"¹⁹ (Type Three Woman: not a wife or mother, nor the object of pleasure, but an independent, modern woman) by Notari (1929), attributing to the project an emancipatory connotation. These cases highlight the need to rethink housing units to ensure autonomy and to provide accessible, safe communal care spaces. Tracing the genealogy of a typological discourse from the perspective of women inhabiting space reveals how women's emancipation, through the search for a *Habitat au Féminin*,²⁰ has sparked a series of typological experiments at various scales, thereby becoming a transnational movement that has entered contemporary discussions. The themes that emerge are therefore: the rationalisation of the house, the liberation from care work, the production of safe places for physical and psychological support, and the development of cooperative forms of

18. Bernege, Paulette. 1928. *Si les femmes faisaient les maisons*. Paris: Mon chez moi; Frederick, Christine. 1914. *The new housekeeping. Efficiency studies in home management*.

19. Notari U (1929) *La donna tipo tre*. La Vita Felice, Milano, 2013.

20. Paravicini U (1990) *Habitat au féminin*. Lausanne: Presses Polytechniques et Universitaires Romandes. The term habitat au féminin refers to an idea of space that stems from the awareness of the need to seek forms of living that meet the needs of women at different stages of their lives, whether single, in a couple, with or without children, or divorced. An individual space of independence and freedom.

living. Beguinages,²¹ Kitchenless house,²² Boarding House,²³ Maternity and Childcare Village,²⁴ Cooperative housing,²⁵ Single Mother's house,²⁶ Women's center²⁷ Anti-violence center²⁸ are typologies that reformulate the relationship between body-space and space-rights working on the concept of a care infrastructure that takes the notion of everyday needs and use of space at the centre. This idea of care infrastructure is central to the project *Manzanas del Cuidado* (Care Blocks) in Bogotá. "Who takes care of those who care?" It is an attempt to create a support network for caregivers (especially women) in marginalised conditions. These are spaces where women spend time in job training, doing sports, or studying, and staff members take care of their family members who may need it. On the one hand, the theme is that of building forms of mutualism and support through the definition of different ways of living, with the case of Canadian feminist housing cooperatives in the 1970s and 1980s, which gave rise to a national phenomenon,²⁹ up to contemporary experiments in Barcelona and Zurich, with the projects *La Borda* (2018), *La Morada* (2025) by Lacol (Barcelona), *Kalkbreite* (2014) by Müller Sigrüst Architekten, and *Mehr als Wohnen* (2016) by Schneider Studer Primas (Zurich). On the other hand, the theme of protection, support, and the reconstruction of economic and social independence involves projects that integrate aspects of short-term housing, but also spaces of learning, as in Sharon Davis' *Women's Opportunity Center* (2013) in Rwanda or *Yasmeen Lari's Women's Center* (2011) in Pakistan,³⁰ as a safe place even in conditions of environmental disaster (Figure 2).

21. A city within a city, with workspaces and accommodation. Places where women could choose not to marry and find a form of freedom and emancipation based on their own subjectivity.

22. Precursors of contemporary cohousing, with centralized communal kitchens and rational accommodation. Of particular interest is Schutte Lihotzky's project for a single working woman. Through collective care services (nurseries, laundries, etc.), the project itself contributed to building a community, anticipating practices of sharing and domestic cooperation.

23. A type of regulated accommodation for working women: private rooms with shared facilities, designed for mobility and economic independence but often governed by rules of cohabitation linked to morality or religion.

24. Residential cluster that integrates housing with childcare services and healthcare facilities; a project that aims to support young mothers abandoned by their families.

25. Collectively owned and managed housing: private units flanked by adaptable common spaces, a device for self-management, mutualism, and the reorganization of care practices.

26. Housing designed for single mothers that combines protection, privacy, and shared support spaces; a project that addresses single-parent living as an opportunity for networking rather than isolation.

27. Non-residential multifunctional center for training, counseling, and meeting; spatial hub for symbolic production, empowerment, and collective political practices.

28. Protected shelter with temporary housing and legal and social support services; combines spatial discretion and pathways to housing autonomy.

29. Scaioli, A (2024) "Her Space: Women's Collective living as a form of emancipation." In *Athens Journal of Architecture*, Volume 10, Issue 4, October 2024, 407-438.

30. Scaioli, A (2024) Empowering Women through Architecture. The humanistic approach of Yasmeen Lari. In Rosa Tamborrino (Ed.) "Città che si adattano? Adaptive Cities?" Book 4 - Strategie di adattamento e patrimonio critico. Adaptive Strategies and Critical Heritage. Series: Insight, AISU International, Torino, 295-308.

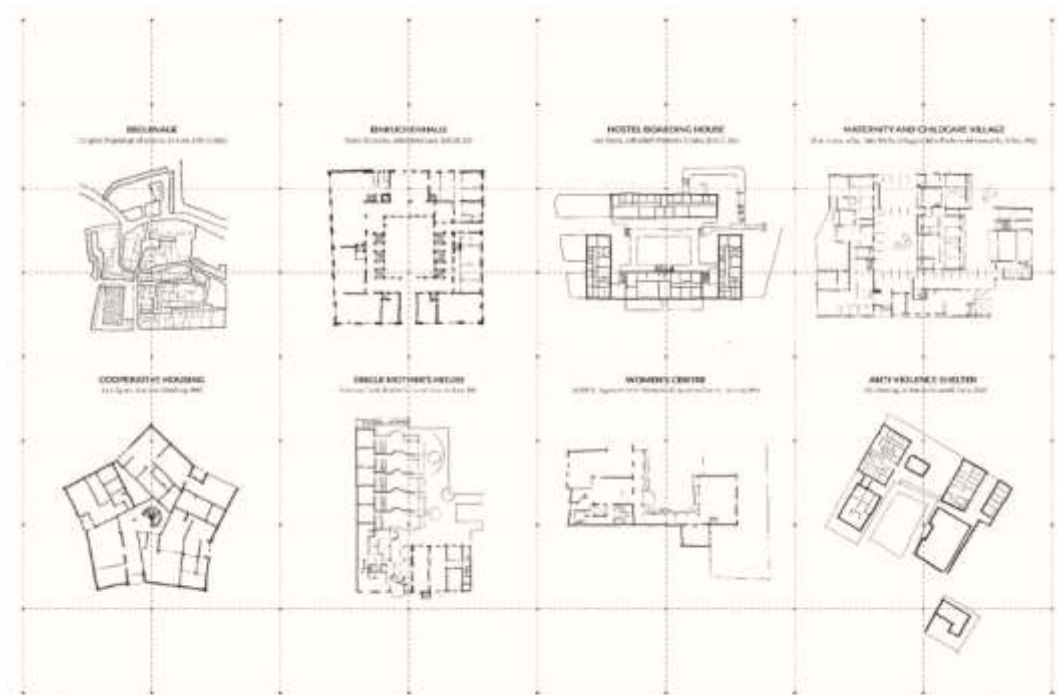


Figure 2. *Female and Feminist Forms of Living. Typological Experimentations*
 Source: Drawing by the Author, 2025.

This attitude prompts reflection on forms of living that accommodate families of varying geometries, whether expanded or contracted, as well as on what could support and revolve around the house, where care and gender equality could generate forms of emancipation through the project itself. *Emancipation by and through design* was at the core of Myra Warhaftig's reflections in the 1980s later materialised in the *Emanzipatorische Wohnung* for the IBA in Berlin (1984), which broke with traditional typological schematics and introduced spatial de-hierarchization. The kitchen is repositioned at the center as the hub of care: no longer a closed and hidden space, or the “Camera della Donna - Woman's Room” as it was called in the Casa Elettrica by Bottoni (1930), but the permeable and open heart of the home, connected visually and physically. This configuration allows considerable organisational flexibility and the remodelling of interior spaces in response to the variable number of inhabitants. This idea was revisited in contemporary exploration. Looking at Sophie Delhay's Unité(s) projects (2019), Summacumfacher's San Riemo (2020), or 85 Social Housing in Cornellà by Peris+Toral (2021), the relationship between the entrance, kitchen, and distribution in its sequences and hierarchies takes on comparable typological characteristics (Figure 3).

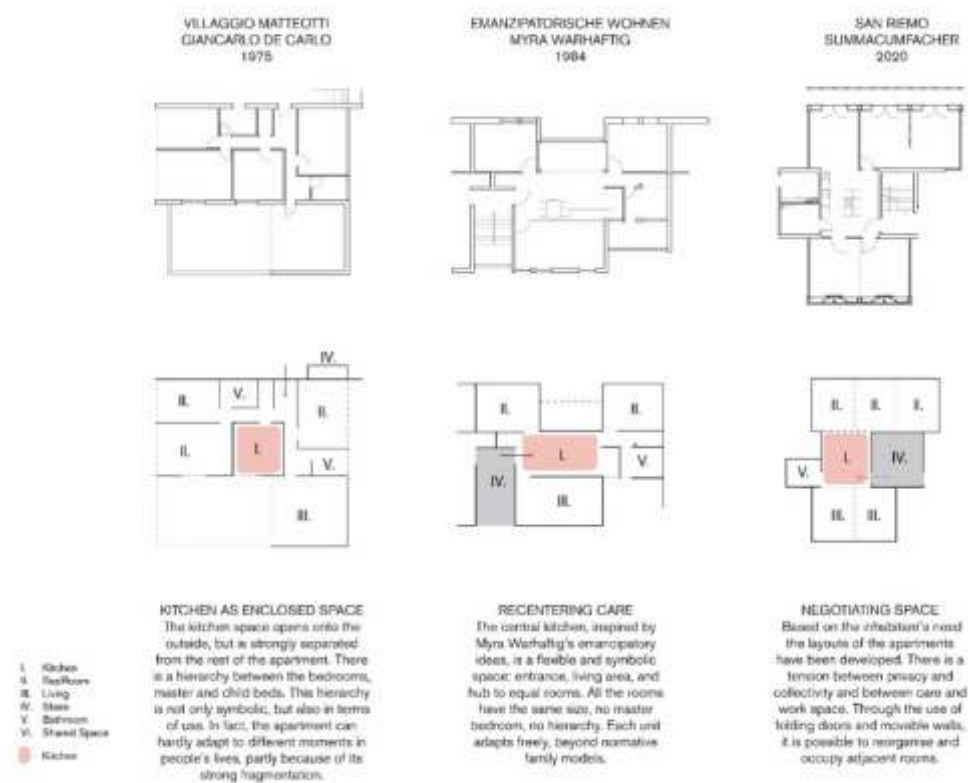


Figure 3. *The Progressive De-hierarchisation of the Domestic Space*

Source: Drawing by the Author, 2025.

Methodology

This work was conceived within the Milanese framework and engages with a cultural and historical background rooted in morphological and typological studies.³¹ Specific attention is given to the form of space, character, materials and environment, as defined by Rogers (1955) as *ambiente*. This ongoing research project aims to look from the “margins to the centre”, in the words of bell hooks, and to understand how issues derived from feminist philosophy, sociology, geography, and politics can inform the poetics of space. Currently, feminist conceptualisations focus on reappropriation through temporary practices and actions, such as walks, pavilions, and critical mapping. However, there is a need for reflection on the project of inhabiting by working on the form, use, symbolism, and perception of space in synchrony. The paper's originality lies in its attempt to bridge gaps between spatial justice, feminist theory, and architectural design, reframing typologies within a feminist matrix. Within the framework developed in this thesis, the corpus of the work draws on various methods

31. The paper is based on reflections carried out as part of the doctoral research project: *Spaces of Care and Equality: A feminist design reflection between morphology and process* at the Politecnico di Milano supervised by Prof. Ilaria Valente and Prof. Emilia Corradi.

that lie at the intersection of theoretical and design-driven approaches,³² including a literature review, redesign of the projects, and critical diagrams, which seek to interconnect different disciplines, thereby substantiating this reflection. This concept is intended to be interpreted in multiple ways, aligned with the various moments of the research, which comprise a review of the state of the art, case study research and analysis, and the definition of design strategies. The methodology adopted is based on a design matrix that intersects spatial categories and thematic dimensions to decode how feminist principles are embedded in architectural choices. The matrix is not prescriptive or evaluative, but deconstructive: it reveals the tensions and strategies that shape each project, between individuality and collectivity, from the apartment to the commons. The contribution assumes the need to consider in a systemic and cross-cutting way the issue of how gender influences not only the perception of space (the perception of safety, appropriateness, etc.) and how a space is used (different activities, different patterns of use, etc.) but also how it influences, in a more subtle way, the symbolic aspect (spatial hierarchies, *hidden* care spaces and activities, standardized dimensional aspects referring to a universal user etc.) and how all this affects the morphological and material element of the design. This method allows us to observe spatial elements and understand their potential for aggregation in sequences that promote equality, care and empowerment. Typology, understood as a synthesis of transcalar and thematic relationships, is configured as a relational device that brings form, subjectivity and power into dialogue. Spatial matrices transform typological exercise into a process of action research, in which each diagram serves both as an operational tool and a lens of investigation. The projects have been selected within the Western context, following the collection of more than 30 design experiences across Europe (Figure 4).



Figure 4. *An Atlas of Shared Practices*

Source: Drawing by the Author, 2025.

32. Fraser M (2013) *Design research in architecture: an overview*. Ashgate, Farnham; Roggema R (2017) Research by design: proposition for a methodological approach. *In Urban Science* 1(1): 2; Schoonderbeek M (2017) A theory of “design by research”; mapping experimentation in architecture and architectural design. *In Ardeth* 1: 62-79.

The case studies selected for this contribution are all located in Spain, in peripheral areas, where the spatial challenges to gender equality are analogous. While these three cases are not the only ones to contain traces of feminist design, they stand out for their ability to make these traces legible, discursive and analysable. Their selection enables us to develop a broader, more nuanced analytical narrative that challenges the role of architecture. The categorisation of the case studies builds on the one proposed within the doctoral research. The thesis, following the analysis of case studies, identifies three major strands concerning how these projects interpret, translate, and encapsulate gender equality, care, and women's empowerment. These are as follows: women-centred housing, gender-sensitive housing, and emancipatory housing. This categorisation is not intended to be rigid; rather, it is a method for identifying analogies and potential interpretations of how the themes of gender equality, care, and women's empowerment are manifested in the current design landscape, integrating an intersectional perspective. The first project is temporary housing for homeless women; the second is collaborative housing for non-normative families; and the third is multifamily housing for individuals from diverse backgrounds.

Case Study 1 / Women-Centred Housing: Temporary Residential Centre for Homeless Women by Vivas Arquitectos in Barcelona, 2023

Women-centred housing projects prioritise the housing needs of women at various life stages, including single women, divorced women, women with children, and older women. These projects address diverse requirements, such as affordability, marginalisation and the need for a safe space due to domestic violence, as well as the desire to live in a like-minded community. These projects, predominantly initiated by feminists, provide living spaces where women can explore new forms of cohabitation. These interventions include autonomous projects promoted by self-organised groups seeking architects capable of translating their values, demands for emancipation, and need for care into spaces and architecture. The Temporary Residential Centre for Homeless Women project by Vivas Arquitectos in Barcelona is located in the Sarrià-Sant Gervasi neighbourhood, where another shelter already existed. The project aims to establish a space that provides more than just an emergency shelter. It seeks to promote emancipatory housing practices for the approximately 100 women living there. This commitment is reflected in three key actions articulated within the project's typological reflection: defining a safe space for women in need, promoting socialisation and co-creation and offering a welcoming, accessible environment. Homeless women often find it difficult to access safe accommodation in shelters, as they are frequently victims of gender-based and sexual violence at the hands of other residents. The theme of dignified, safe, and welcoming housing is reflected in the design, which employs several design solutions to achieve each objective. The building has been designed as a linear structure, with a communal ground floor intended as a place of care. All the services related to supporting, reintegrating and emancipating residents are located here. A range of support services, including psychological counselling, communal meetings, and socialisation rooms, is available to assist women throughout various social, work, educational, and medical stages. These services are designed to support

women in rebuilding an independent life. These spaces overlook a private garden, and the transition between interior and exterior occurs through an open yet covered space. The metal sheet façade features a regular rhythm, clearly demonstrating the intention to ensure transparency and natural light in the spaces, while simultaneously promoting a strongly introverted character. Here, excavations, loggias, and gardens do not break the unity of the façade but remain discreetly behind it. Focusing on the public-collective-private relationship, the project redefines how spaces are used, with a focus on the in-between and the theme of thresholds to break down forms of isolation within living units. These spaces include terraces, corridors, loggias, and covered passageways. These spaces can be transformed into areas where potential encounters may occur as “habitable spaces between things” (Figures 5-6).



Figure 5. *Vivas Arquitectos. Shelter for Homeless Women*

Source: Collage by the Author of photos by José Hevia. Redrawings by the Author.

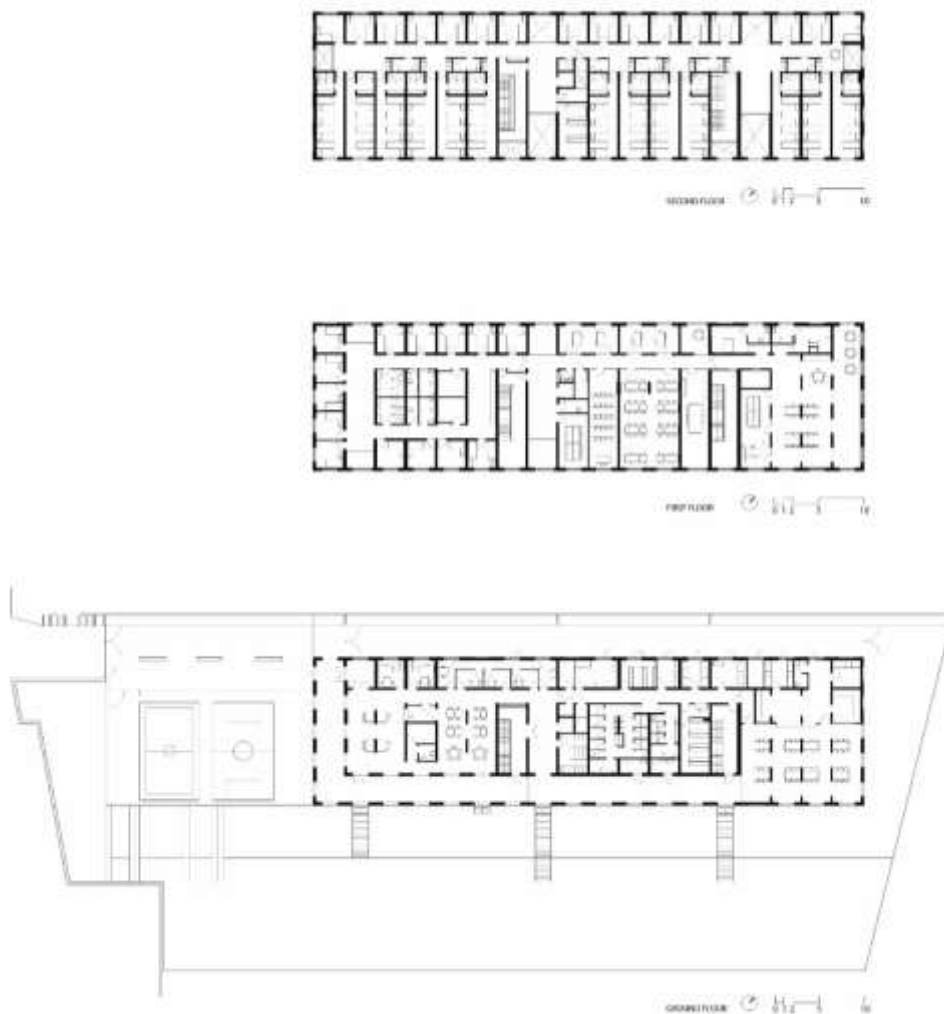


Figure 6. *Vivas Arquitectos. Shelter for Homeless Women*

Source: Redrawings by the Author.

There are different types of accommodation, including shared rooms with four beds and private bathrooms, as well as rooms with two beds and shared bathrooms. This diversity of housing typologies is designed to address the diverse requirements of women in care. It acknowledges that each woman faces unique and complex circumstances and that a one-size-fits-all approach to achieving independence is not feasible. The project, therefore, offers not only a haven but also a reflection on the typological approach, displaying how flexibility and care can foster democratic and empowering relationships. In this sense, the centre is more than just a temporary location; it is a spatial device that accompanies and supports the emancipation process.

Case Study 2/Gender-Sensitive Housing: Entrepatrios las Carolinas by SAtt Arquitectura in Madrid, 2020

Gender-oriented housing projects are designed to address the specific needs of women, children, older adults, and individuals with disabilities. They propose new forms of housing that reflect the diverse needs, aspirations and lifestyles of these groups. By challenging traditional stereotypes and hierarchical forms of housing, gender-oriented housing projects aim to create more inclusive and equitable living spaces. Unlike women-centred projects, which promote gender equality by focusing on the emancipation of women throughout the entire process, from conception to realisation, maintenance and ownership, these projects aim to create the material conditions that enable men and women to thrive and enjoy equal living opportunities. In this regard, criteria stemming from gender mainstreaming are introduced throughout the project process. Furthermore, despite focusing on the central themes of safety and accessibility, these projects promote greater openness towards the neighbourhood, addressing scales of living and care that extend beyond housing and individual buildings. Entrepatrios Las Carolinas, located in the Usera neighbourhood of Madrid, is a pioneering example of ecological collaborative housing. Since its establishment in 2018, it has operated under a right-of-use regime. A significant proportion of the neighbourhood comprises small, unstable homes constructed during the initial waves of migration in the 1950s and 1970s. These are in addition to unoccupied land and dilapidated workshops. The result is a neighbourhood in transition, currently marked by socioeconomic inequality and mistrust between old and new residents, stemming from the expulsion of the first inhabitants in favour of precarious communities displaced from other areas. The absence of high-quality public spaces and a strong community fabric, which can help reduce social distance and build ties among residents, has led to a fragmented neighbourhood. In this complex context, Entrepatrios aims to establish shared, inclusive spaces and situations that will contribute to the creation of a more equitable community fabric.

This project was designed by sAtt Arquitectura and developed through a co-design approach with the Entrepatrios Cooperative, involving fifteen workshops. This project integrates a gender and feminist perspective into its design process and outcomes, focusing on material and immaterial aspects related to a symbolic dimension. Specifically, the incorporation of gender considerations was pivotal in reshaping traditional residential architecture, while also emphasising reproductive and productive activities, making them explicit through design, and acknowledging the diversity of household patterns and residential needs over time. The architectural design integrates spaces for habitation, care and work, with an emphasis on accessibility and integration with the surrounding community. The objective is to establish "comunidades de comunidades de vecinos": a transformation that extends from our homes to our city, encompassing our buildings (Entrepatrios).

The project adopts a comprehensive sustainability strategy, emphasising care as a vital component of safety, accessibility, and a sense of belonging. It integrates social, environmental and economic dimensions to deliver a democratic, inclusive, non-hierarchical, climate-sensitive and economically accessible intervention. The project comprises seventeen flexible apartments, with a focus on shared spaces. These spaces,

located in key areas of the building and the surrounding neighbourhood, extend the available living areas. The complex's residential architecture is characterised by its permeable, visible, and accessible design, featuring workshops, communal laundry facilities, a rooftop vegetable garden, a spacious common room with a kitchen, and various open spaces. These elements are intentionally designed to be integrated into the overall community space, rather than confined to individual dimensions or used to host activities that should remain private. These communal areas function as thresholds, hosting activities from both the neighbourhood and the community, thereby extending the notion of inhabitation outward. This approach aligns with the concept of 'eyes on the street,' contributing to a heightened sense of security in immediate urban surroundings. The reimagined entrances, including the space adjacent to the main entrance, which is accessible from both the communal courtyard and the street, foster greater permeability (Figures 7-8).



Figure 7. *SAtt Arquitectura. Entrepatrios las Carolinas*

Source: Collage by the Author of photos by SAtt. Redrawings by the Author.

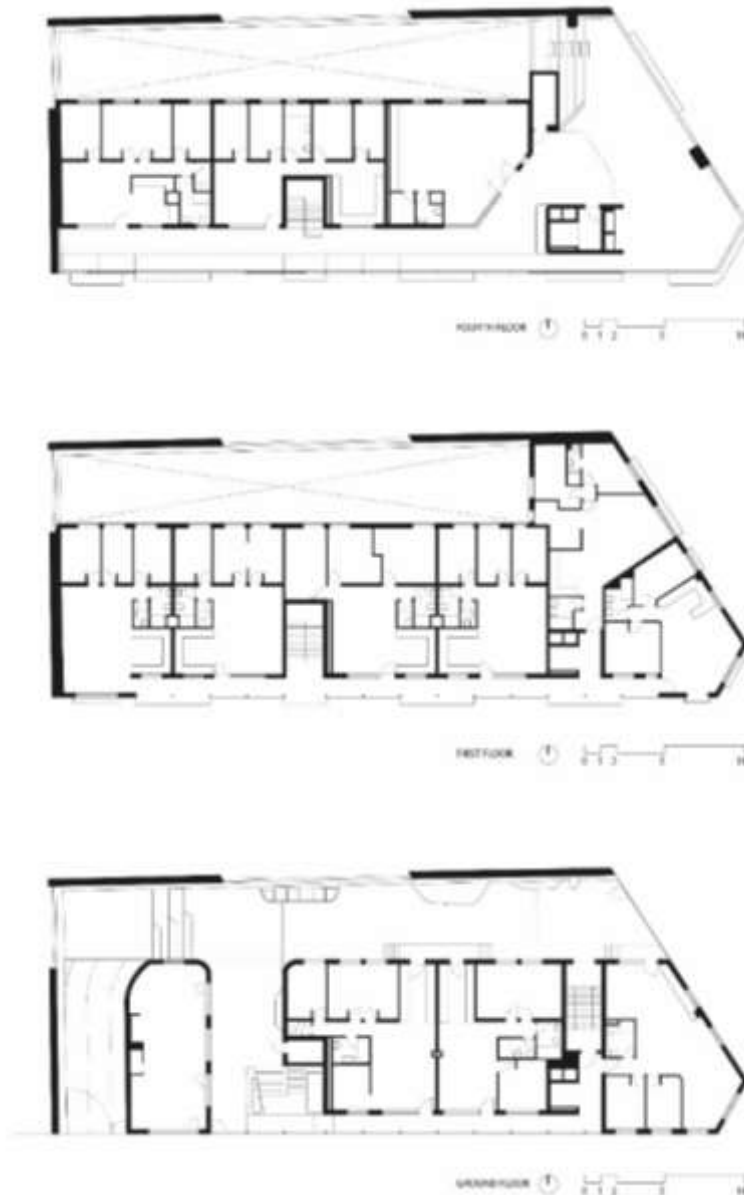


Figure 8. *SAtt Arquitectura. Entrepatis las Carolinas*
Source: Redrawings by the Author.

Case Study 3/Emancipatory Housing: 85 Social Housing in Cornellà de Llobregat by Peris+Toral, 2021

Emancipatory housing projects promote gender equality, care and women's empowerment. Although they do not explicitly introduce a gender perspective, these projects nevertheless have a positive impact on gender relations. Concepts such as democratic living, equity-focused design and the right to live are promoted through spatial organisation, as is the breaking down of hierarchies within dwellings. This concept encapsulates the spatial and compositional essence of these projects, which

are realised at different scales. Within these projects, the theme of hierarchies is reinterpreted in an emancipatory way, in which the equality of spaces across both dimensions and relationships is intended to support gender equality and the equitable use of space, without prioritising certain activities over others. The project, located in Cornellà de Llobregat, was developed by the Catalan studio Peris+Toral and comprises 85 social housing units across five floors. It creates the courtyard building typology based on a repeated 3.6 m x 3.6 m structural module. Initially, the tatami module generates a matrix of communicating rooms, arranged around a collective courtyard. By using this repeated module, typological innovations are introduced in relation to the theme of de-hierarchization of space. The project embodies typological flexibility, non-hierarchical living, and adaptability to diverse lifestyles, thereby transcending the traditional model of the nuclear family. This is achieved through the implementation of a timber construction system, comprising beams and columns, which also serves as a poetic and architectural element of the project. The building is organised around a patio that articulates a sequence of intermediate spaces that function as commons. On the ground floor, an open but covered space opens towards the city, mediating the relationship between the public space and the neighbourhood patio, which becomes a small square for the community. The four vertical cores are located at the four corners of the courtyard, allowing all neighbours to converge in the square, thereby creating a safe space from a gender perspective through the concept of “eyes on the street”. The dwellings are accessed through the core and the private terraces that form the outer ring overlooking the patio (Figures 9-10).



Figure 9. *Peris+Toral. 85 Social Housing in Cornellà*

Source: Collage by the Author of photos by José Hevia. Redrawings by the Author.

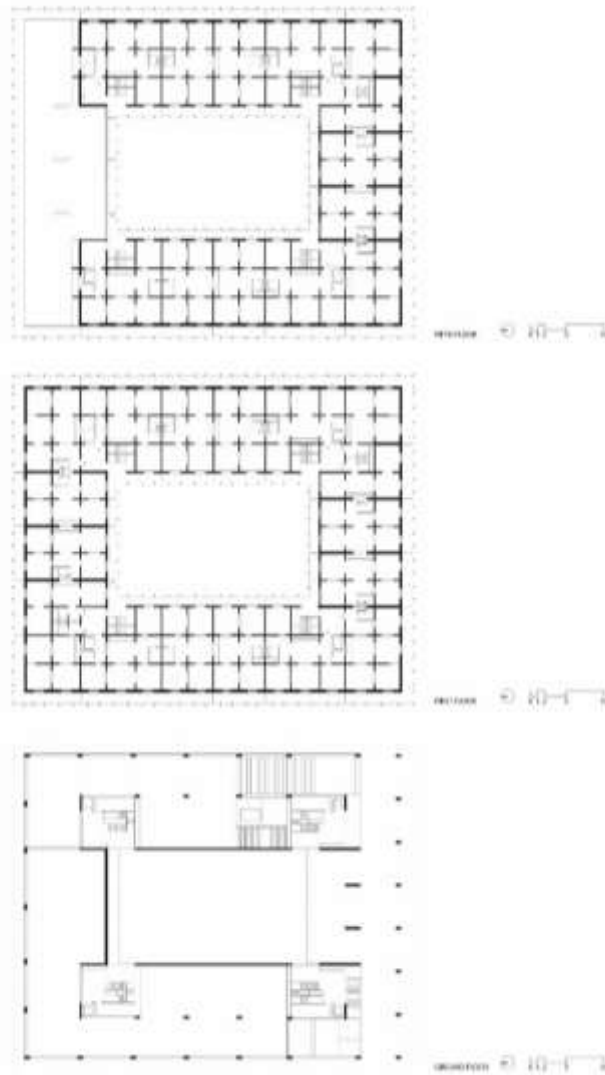


Figure 10. *Peris+Torral. 85 Social Housing in Cornellà*

Source: Redrawings by the Author.

The houses consist of five, six or seven modules, depending on whether they have two or three rooms. The open and inclusive kitchen is situated in the central room, serving as a distribution point that replaces corridors, making domestic work visible and challenging traditional gender roles. This recalls the typological experiment conducted by Myra Warhaftig with *Emanzipatorische Wohnung*, in which the kitchen became the heart of the home, assuming a central role both spatially and symbolically. The size of the rooms, in addition to offering flexibility based on the ambiguity of use, thanks to the repetition of the module, allows the layout of the homes to be freely modified according to the needs of the inhabitants. In this sense, the Cornellà project exemplifies how spatial design can become a tool for emancipation, even in the absence of an explicitly feminist agenda. By rethinking domestic hierarchies, promoting flexibility, and placing care at the centre of the spatial narrative, the project contributes to a broader redefinition of housing as a democratic and inclusive infrastructure. It

demonstrates that typological innovation can be a quiet but powerful agent of social transformation, capable of fostering more equitable and caring ways of living together.

Comparative Reading of the Three Projects

This reflection takes as its starting point the need to codify a shared feminist spatial theory, building a design culture that systematises spatial practices and morphological reflections, consciously assuming a political and cultural position on the architectural project. In this sense, the contribution proposes a reflection on the design of collective forms of living conceived as catalysers of inclusive and democratic practices that can foster gender equality through design. These forms of collective living extend beyond the traditional notion of housing, permeating the space between buildings and their context, with new forms of domesticity, care, and equality, with the intention of *making common space*. In this context, the housing project becomes a field of negotiation. In a scenario in which gender equality, women's emancipation, and care are considered design issues, it is essential to reestablish the project's necessity. This involves redefining its cultural values and reframing the relationship between a political and poetic approach. But can these spaces, informed by a feminist standpoint, highlight inequalities and foster more equitable forms of living? How should they be designed? Through the construction of a legacy of female and feminist living, the contribution has identified several aspects which, in their forms, use-related, symbolic and perceptive dimensions, are present within the selected case studies:


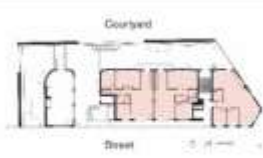
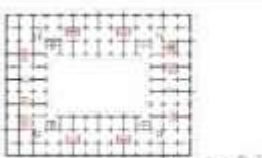
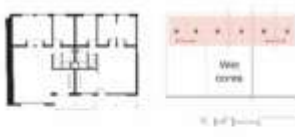
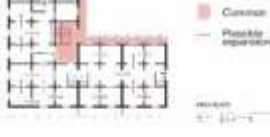






- > Safety, spatial configuration can offer protection from violence and promote psychological safety.
- > Accessibility, design allows access regardless of physical ability, age, or social status.
- > Affordability is key to sustainable housing solutions for women in precarious situations or with a single income.
- > Diversity, organisation of space accommodates heterogeneous family compositions and practices.
- > Commons promote mutual support, collective care, and non-commodified forms of life.
- > No-Hierarchies allows a spatial distribution that avoids rigid separations and enables fluid, egalitarian use of domestic environments.
- > A room of one's own, design guarantees autonomy, privacy, and the possibility of intellectual or creative retreat.
- > Adaptability, typology can evolve according to changing needs, life stages, and forms of cohabitation.



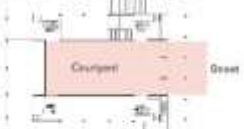


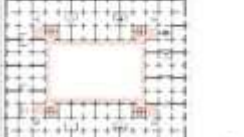


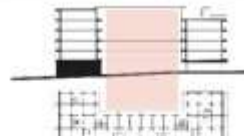



To further articulate these reflections, the following table synthesises the key characteristics of the three case studies, highlighting how each project interprets and translates the themes of gender equality, care, and empowerment through typological and spatial strategies (Table 1).

Tables 1-3. Comparative Analysis of Three Housing Projects, Temporary Residential Centre (Barcelona), Entrepatis Las Carolinas (Madrid), and 85 Social Housing in Cornellà (Cornellà de Llobregat), Highlighting their Respective Approaches to Gender Equality, Care, and Typological Innovation

	WOMEN'S CENTRED	GENDER SENSITIVE	EMANCIPATORY
TARGET	Homeless women, women victims of violence, women in vulnerable situations	Non-normative households	Diverse users: families, elderly, women, children
THEMES	Safety Accessibility Affordability Room of one's own Diversity	Safety Accessibility Affordability Room of one's own	Safety Accessibility Affordability Diversity No-Hierarchies
APPROACHES	Top-Down approach with support system (psychological, physical, economic)	Bottom-up cooperative model with participatory design workshops	Top-Down model of Collective Housing
FRAME	Explicitly Feminist: focused on women's empowerment through a caring perspective	Non-speculative gender oriented design; considers non-standard bodies	Implicitly equity focused: de-hierarchisation of space breaks down traditional gender roles

FIREPLACE

	WOMEN'S CENTRED	GENDER SENSITIVE	EMANCIPATORY
HARDWARE	 <p>TYPOLOGICAL VARIATIONS The different types of accommodation allow how, within a single "cluster" present, there are different ways of being, going beyond the idea of standardisation in housing solutions.</p>	 <p>DOMESTIC GROUND FLOOR On the ground floor, the residential units open toward the shared internal courtyard. Privacy is marked by a rowing of the courtyard level, so the apartments remain directly connected to it through a series of stairways.</p>	 <p>OPEN INFRASTRUCTURE Modular structure based on the repetition of a cell, which generates non-hierarchical spaces. Allows to organise and change the living structure through their flexibility. Provides non-romantic living arrangements.</p>
SOFTWARE	<p>COMB Shared Bathroom with bathroom</p> <p>CLUSTER Bergen / Double Bathroom with shared bathroom with separate entrance</p> <p>LINE Single / Double Bedroom with shared bathroom</p> <p>DEGREES OF INTIMACY It's not only a degree of privacy, but also of psychological support for women who have faced violence and discrimination.</p>	 <p>ADAPTING TO LIFE CYCLES The apartments adapt to the different life cycles of the families who live in them, with varying degrees of adaptability. The main concept is the de-hierarchisation of space, diversity of uses and the coexistence of different people.</p>	 <p>NEGOTIATING SPACE Based on the inhabitants' need the layout of the apartments have been developed. There is a balance between privacy and collectivity and between care and work space.</p>
SYMBOL	 <p>A ROOM OF ONE'S OWN These temporary residences for women or difficulty serve to promote the idea of a room of one's own, as a form of personal empowerment, empowerment following violence or economic need.</p>	 <p>RECONCILE CARE AND WORK The project offers a basic infrastructure that allows to reconcile care work and paid work. Moreover, it opens up to the city through the ground floor and the space for associations and events.</p>	 <p>RECENTERING CARE The central kitchen, inspired by Mass Worfel's emancipatory ideas, is a flexible and symbolic space. All the rooms have the same size, no master bedroom, no hierarchy. Each unit adapts freely beyond normative family models.</p>
PERCEPTION	 <p>PRIVACY WITHIN COMMUNITY Even within shared rooms, attention is paid to individuality with patterns and personal storage. The space is not overly characterised, but neutral, becoming a canvas.</p>	 <p>EYE ON THE COURT On the street side, the visual relationship is mediated by a corridor, which serves as a lookout space, and a filter between inside and outside. In the internal courtyard the relationship is direct, unmediated by filters.</p>	 <p>FLUID SPACE The perception of space in the home is dynamic, fluid, constantly changing and changing. The lack of hierarchy in the space allows the home to be adapted to each individual's needs.</p>

COLLECTIVE CIRCULATION AND SERVICES			
	WOMEN'S CENTRED	GENDER SENSITIVE	EMANCIPATORY
HARDWARE	 <p>ENCLOSED SPACE The ground floor is a space defined by many thresholds. The central threshold, a wall, ensures security and privacy. The central one, on the other hand, becomes an active threshold, a possible meeting space.</p>	 <p>CENTRALISED ACCESS The circulation system is centralised within the main courtyard, increasing security. The access to the residential part is via a covered but visually permeable passageway.</p>	 <p>CENTRALISED ACCESS The circulation system is centralised within the main courtyard, increasing security. The access to the residential part is via a covered but visually permeable passageway.</p>
SOFTWARE	 <p>BREAKING THE BOUNDARY This highly integrated design, however, suggests that become points of visual but not physical contact with the outside world. Furthermore, the common area becomes extensions of the connecting spaces, creating fluidity within.</p>	 <p>COLLECTIVISING CARE Allocating a part of the apartment surface area to common spaces transforms practices that are traditionally invisible and considered a working job into collective and public acts. It also reduces costs.</p>	 <p>PRIVATISATION OF THE CORES The courtyards are private spaces. Access to the flats via the external corridor in the courtyard. This is not accessible along its entire length, but there are some floors that can be opened and others that cannot.</p>
SYMBOL	 <p>A ROOM OF ONE'S OWN On a symbolic level, these temporary residences for women in difficulty serve to provide the idea of a room of one's own, as a form of personal representation, following interest in economic need.</p>	 <p>REVERSING HIERARCHIES Collective space prevails over residential space. When the reversal of these hierarchies emerges to break down the idea of the isolation of the individual forms.</p>	 <p>THE HEART OF THE COMMUNITY The courtyard in its sequence of spaces vertically and horizontally, becomes the heart of the control but also of the neighbourhood itself. A guardian of the place, which reaches and cares for it.</p>
PERCEPTION	 <p>ACTIVE GROUND FLOOR The transparency towards the road helps to increase a sense of security given by informal control. Furthermore, from the corridor it is possible to see all the way to the entrance, without any obstacles.</p>	 <p>SEE AND BE SEEN Bright, transparent, with no blind spots. These characteristics allow the space to be perceived as safe and accessible, especially by women. The access to the private courtyards is informally 'controlled' by the residents.</p>	 <p>INFORMAL CONTROL The access to the houses is located on the common corridor. It becomes an informal control mechanism for the common space. Here we find the concept of "eyes on the street" by Jane Jacobs.</p>

Source: Elaboration by the Author.

The table synthesises key design strategies, spatial devices, and feminist dimensions, illustrating a spectrum of engagement from explicitly women-centred to implicitly emancipatory models of housing.

This comparative reading reveals a spectrum of feminist engagement, from overtly women-centred design to more implicit forms of spatial emancipation. While the Barcelona project prioritises protection and support, the Madrid cooperative fosters openness and integration, and the Cornellà housing model promotes flexibility and equality. What unites them is a shared commitment to rethinking the domestic realm as a site of care, collectivity, and transformation.

Discussion

This contribution analyses projects that demonstrate how architecture can act as a political and cultural tool, challenging spatial hierarchies and promoting gender equality. Rather than being neutral or merely functional, housing typologies emerge

as devices of negotiation, in which the organisation of everyday spaces becomes a contested and transformative arena. Thus, the architectural project is not merely a response to needs, but an intentional and situated act that reflects values, ideologies, and power structures. Reflecting on typologies becomes a space of resistance in which new, more inclusive, flexible, and caring forms of living can be imagined and constructed. In the face of increasingly diverse forms of living and evolving social needs, existing housing models have proven to be inadequate. At the same time, feminist discourse on housing has often focused on use, management, and process, rarely addressing typological and morphological questions. The *death* of housing typology, then, becomes a productive provocation: is it truly obsolete, or simply in need of radical redefinition?

This paper argues for the latter. Typological thinking must be reinvigorated with new design paradigms, such as gender equality, care, and women's empowerment, that can transform not only how we inhabit space but also how we conceive and design it. This aligns with a militant, materialist feminist critique that reinterprets the idea of "a room of one's own" as a starting point for imagining expanded, fluid, and collective forms of domesticity. These new configurations accommodate variable household structures and challenge the gendered division of labour through the collectivisation of care. The three case studies contribute to a transcalar reflection that spans from the housing unit to the neighbourhood, exploring how care and empowerment can be spatialised. They navigate the tension between "a room of one's own" - as a space of safety, identity, and rights - and "a room to the city," where the breakdown of the nuclear family and the hybridisation of domestic forms open up new possibilities for shared living. This tension is materialised through spatial sequences, atmospheric variations, and the reconstitution of the modernist dichotomy between public and private. Heir to a materialist feminist critique of gender from the 1970s, which was built on the demands and experiments of the early 1900s, the research starts from Hayden's provocative question, "What would a non-sexist city be like?", to reflect on the spatial, symbolic, and perceptual dimensions of living space as a place for claiming rights. A work of reconstruction of a design and designerly legacy carried out through literary writings (Perkins Gilman, 1915), manuals (Beecher, 1841), and utopian works (Bernège, 1928), but also linked to a historiographical (Torre, 1971) and critical (Matrix, 1984) exploration.

The matrices presented are not only a product of research, but also a tool for reading and designing. In fact, breaking down the various projects into spatial elements (fireplace, circulation, service, open space) and observing them in terms of their formal, functional, symbolic and perceptual dimensions allows us to outline some of the themes and issues at the heart of a feminist approach to housing design. Possible lines of action are then identified:

- > Deconstruction of spatial and social hierarchies: The deconstruction of spatial and social hierarchies aims to redesign built environments to reduce disparities. The goal is to create environments that do not reproduce pre-existing power and gender roles.
- > Activation of common spaces and the ground floor: The activation of ground floors and common spaces often transforms otherwise passive areas into

places for socialising and daily care. This increases perceived and real safety, strengthens mutual aid networks, and makes urban space more welcoming for everyone.

- > Modularity, adaptability, and typological diversification: Designing with modularity and adaptability means offering solutions that evolve with users' needs over time. Flexible housing types and spaces enable reconfiguration for different families, domestic work, and care services. Typological diversification avoids standardisation that excludes specific needs.
- > Visibility, orientation, and informal control: Promoting visibility and orientation means making spaces easily readable and informally monitorable by the community. Clear paths, active views, adequate lighting, and natural observation points enhance positive social control, discourage dangerous behaviour, and increase perceived well-being.

The matrix is conceived as a conversational instrument that extends beyond prescriptive norms. Existing reports propose gender-aware design through new standards for sidewalk widths, building separations, and the provision and sizing of care spaces. There is the underlying danger of reproducing formal outcomes without considering the motivations behind design choices or how to translate those motivations into the physical fabric of places. For this reason, the research argues for stepping back to create a matrix that integrates design and compositional strategies that express principles of gender equality, care, and women's empowerment across formal, use-related, symbolic, and perceptual dimensions, and at multiple scales, from the body to the neighbourhood. Such a tool is valuable not only as a platform for community dialogue and comparison but also as a resource for practitioners and educators. It functions as both an operational instrument and a framework for generating and analysing projects. The thesis, therefore, proposes a methodological approach to develop a tool that can guide design decisions across diverse contexts. The condensed information in the matrix facilitates mediation of interactions among the various stakeholders involved in a project. Positioned between a manifesto and a practical instrument, the matrix is useful during conceptual development as well as in analytical and interpretive phases.

The three selected projects are representative of a European cultural and design context. They are chosen to address the typological issue and the challenges of gender discrimination in a coherent manner. The methodological approach to interpretation and design proposed in this research is grounded in the idea of its applicability to other contexts. In fact, although the matrix begins with projects located in specific contexts, it abstracts their character, defining design actions that can then be translated in particular ways.

Returning to Dolores Hayden's reflection, what emerges is the need to understand housing not as an isolated unit but as part of a transcalar project of care, in which "the household should be extended to the world."³³ This perspective invites us to blur the boundaries between the public and private, the individual and the

33. Hayden D (1981) *The grand domestic revolution. A history of feminist designs for American homes, neighborhoods and cities*. MIT Press, Cambridge, MA.

collective, and to consider thresholds as spaces of empowerment, justice, and dignity. In this context, collective forms of living become catalysts for inclusive and democratic practices. These new forms of domesticity and care permeate the space between buildings and their urban context, generating what Silvia Federici has called “feminist housing commons”. Cooperative living, networks of sharing, and diverse kinships offer renewed ways of organising the reproduction of life, counteracting gender discrimination and spatial stigma. Ultimately, these projects suggest that typological innovation, when informed by feminist values, can become a powerful tool for reimagining not only how we live, but how we care, relate, and resist.

Conclusion

In conclusion, a comparative analysis of three case studies reveals that housing typology can be a vital tool in achieving gender equality, promoting care and empowering women. Whether through reevaluating threshold spaces, dehierarchising domestic and caring functions, or creating transcalar care infrastructures that combat isolation within and outside the household, typological transformation emerges as a subtle yet potent agent of social change. Alongside a design-oriented reflection, a clear research-action perspective emerges, redefining the role of the architect within what we might call process-based architecture. Activism and architecture have converged in militant approaches, in which social and spatial dimensions have overlapped and influenced one another. The role of the architect, as explored across the three projects, reflects a diversity of engagement approaches: from reactive negotiation within institutional frameworks, as in the woman-centred project; to collaborative co-design with communities, as in the second project; to speculative experimentation with spatial hierarchies, as in the third project. These role-reactive, cooperative, and speculative can be viewed through the lens of design activism, where design is not merely a response to needs, but a means of envisioning alternative futures. In this sense, the architect is redefined not by stylistic authorship, but by their capacity to intervene, mediate and construct spaces of justice.

This reflection calls for the rearticulation and repositioning of a feminist theory of architectural typology, moving beyond formalist classifications to instead interrogate the social, symbolic, and political implications of spatial organisations. Gender Equality, Care, and Women’s Empowerment would serve as design paradigms, enabling the creation of affordable, non-hierarchical, diverse, safe, accessible, familiar, and adaptable spaces. These criteria could challenge and reposition our practice and research, producing a renewed vision for our cities and neighbourhoods. Indeed, the case studies reveal design shifts that, when read critically, suggest a more profound transformation in how we conceive of domestic space and its relationship with the context. The change is not only spatial, but also epistemological, political, and relational. First, traditional housing design is grounded in a functionalist logic, where each room is assigned a specific use and a specific user. In these projects, however, the housing module loses its rigidity and becomes a relational cell, capable of accommodating plural uses and non-normative forms of cohabitation. Second, conventional layouts often replicate internal hierarchies (master/service, public/private)

that both produce and perpetuate gender roles. The case studies propose a more horizontal spatiality, in which thresholds are porous, functions are redistributed, and spaces such as the kitchen or the courtyard become sites of encounter and collective care. Third, in traditional design, the user is often abstract and idealised. In these projects, the user is concrete, plural, and actively involved. Design becomes a process of listening, co-construction, and negotiation. Fourth, the house is no longer conceived solely as a space of individual protection but as a micro-infrastructure of care that supports relationships, interdependencies, and collective practices. The projects demonstrate how care can be made visible, shared, and spatially organised through space.

The three projects exemplify how gender equality, care, and women's empowerment can be understood through approaches and project actions that present different ways of understanding these topics. Although they address the same issues: safety, accessibility, diversity, affordability, commons, no-hierarchies, there is no single or definitive solution. However, the position taken in the paper and more broadly in the research is the recognition of a need to go beyond the performative dimension to understand how these issues impact the form of space based on multiple, evolving needs. The construction of a cross-cutting approach among form, use, symbol, and perception is inherently oriented and centres intersectionality. Ultimately, this paper argues that housing typology, when critically reimaged through feminist lenses, can become a site of resistance, negotiation, and transformation, redefining a new poetic and politics of space.

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