

The structure of this month's issue of *Arquitectura* has been slightly modified. Instead of a format featuring various topics and articles, this issue focusses exclusively on the theme *Housing*. Included are housing projects by eight architectural firms, a discussion of these projects and an extensive article on the current political and economic situation regarding housing in Spain.

EIGHT MULTI-FAMILY HOUSING PROJECTS

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In Spain the overwhelming majority of housing units fall within the category of multi-family units. This type of housing brings with it much greater pressures exerted on the architect by the many bodies which in some way control or affect the construction of collective housing units (zoning laws, municipal codes, Ministry of Housing regulations, special financing requirements and developers, interests) than is the case in the construction of single family homes.

As a result, one sees a surprising lack of imagination in building types and the repetition of models all ready and well known by professionals.

However, in spite of this situation, attempts are made to vary from the norm, even though many these ideas may not reach the construction stage. In this issue we highlight eight innovative housing projects by architects from Madrid which have been realized or are being constructed. They vary greatly in character and approach (from subsidized units to luxury housing, and from a garden city scheme to plans to recuperate strictly urban elements) and precisely because of this they are so interesting.

THE HOUSING POLICY CRISIS IN SPAIN: ELEMENTS FOR DEBATE

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With this title, Juan Rafols presents a major article which defines and analyzes the housing problem in Spain, traces its origins, and discusses implications and alternatives for the future. Rafols, since earning his PhD. in economics, has worked for the Ministry of Housing in Spain, the U.S. Department

of Housing and Urban Development and has taught at the University of Madrid. The article reflects his expertise in the fields of politics and economics.

The recession of 1974 which was reflected greatly in the construction industry augmented the housing crisis, but the author insists that the static housing policy of the government which has been in existence since the 1950s has more profoundly affected the housing situation. Facts illustrating the magnitude of the current problem include; the 1976 figure for housing starts represents only 53 % of those started in 1973, a decrease in demand in the market can be seen due to the reduction of the acquisitive power of prospective buyers, the 1978 figure for construction workers laid off numbers 250,000 and in 1977 for the first time in recent history, the number of housing units begun was inferior to the number completed.

The author argues that the present problems differ greatly from situations of the past. According to current figures, on a national scale there does not exist a deficit in terms of the number of housing units as compared to the overall number of families. *However, the elimination of the quantitative deficit... does not mean that there does not exist unsatisfied demand or a need for housing units.* The basic problem can be described as a housing shortage in certain geographical areas (specifically large cities which are experiencing unprecedented growth), and a *qualitative deficit* or in other words, a lack of units with basic minimum amenities. (Families which fall into this last category include working families as well as those composed of retired persons or the unemployed.) The free market system guarantees and adequate supply of units for the upper classes, but cannot address the needs of the lower and middle classes. Added to this, the government housing policy does not necessarily channel public funds into the areas of greatest need and with increasing inflation, the elements of housing finance policy (fiscal incentives, subsidies, etc.) have been reduced to insignificant amounts.

In conclusion Rafols calls for coordinated efforts between the different ministries which play a role in housing policy development, a goal of 350,000 housing starts each year, direct programs to serve those in greatest need, and the establishment of a finance market favorable to the housing sector.