

Learning from Youth Hostels. New Ways of Living.

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ABSTRACT

This PhD research is focused on a dwelling typology which has been spread on a large scale across our cities during the last decade. Urban youth hostels involve an evolution of the ones in the countryside, but the fact of being in the city adds a particular interest as a housing typology. The success of this typology is highly related with the context. The current tendency towards nomadism, the latest technologies that allow people to work from any place or the lack of living space and resources, have fostered the growth of dwellings with collective domestic services such as the youth hostels.

The starting point of the research was my Master`s Degree thesis. It consisted of an analysis of youth hostels situated in converted flats of the *Eixample* district of Barcelona. During five months I visited more than 30 hostels. I observed the guests daily life and behaviour, how they used each service, the areas or the furniture of the accommodation, the relationships between the occupants, or how they organised for instance the kitchen. After that, I compared and classified them. Moreover I drew the plans of six hostels thoroughly as an analytical method to understand them deeply as well.

This former research makes me realize the great potential of doing more research into this typology. The main contribution is the innovative concept of the house split into independent domestic services. The private area is limited to the bed, thus it leads to the need of complementing the house with public services. This way of organization and its way of living show many advantages in order to solve current problems related to housing. For instance, the reduction of private space gives flexibility in order to recycle buildings designed for other uses. In addition, the aspect of gathering multicultural people could be used to face emergency situations such as natural disasters or to integrate homeless people or immigrants in society. On top of this, the strong use of the technologies by their inhabitants could provide ideas to design smart cities.

The motivation for this PhD thesis is an attempt to go further on the analysis of youth hostels from the perspective of inhabiting. The research will cover the national range and will be structured looking different scales: the city, the house and the furniture. The first part will analyse how the typology does affect to urban sphere by selecting some districts where hostels had a significant presence. The second part will focus on the constructed area and the relationships of their inhabitants. And the third one will take the pieces of furniture as the centre of attention, especially the bed, the unique private section. The study aims to trigger deep reflections and challenge pre-established certainties about domesticity, and it is also expected to illustrate possible future solutions.