



Research Article

Casa Bloc: Social Housing Project in Spain

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ABSTRACT

The Casa Bloc is a residential building designed by Josep Lluís Sert, Josep Torres Clavé and Joan Baptista Subirana, opened in 1936 in the Sant Andreu the city of Barcelona, Spain. All the Architects were working in (the Catalan Group of Architects). It is a Re-creation of the le Corbusier proposal for residential housing, formulated in 1922 for an urban area with a density of 300 inhabitants per hectare. The Casa Bloc project, aimed at social housing, the design was drawn as a large building with two hundred dwellings for workers' families in the industrial field because many of them were homeless at that time and they still lived in shacks, generally in very poor conditions. but The Spanish Civil War suspend the project of the Casa Bloc for three years. Later, the building was used not only for workers but also for other nations. So that the main purpose of the project and its social and cultural function was wasted. because through the time many changes entered the project. Casa Bloc, Apartment 1/11 is a member of the Iconic Houses, the international network connecting architecturally significant houses from the 20th Century that are opened to the public. Housing policy is governed by the Spanish Housing Ministry with the 'autonomous regions and their municipalities interpreting and implementing policies at a more local level. A right to housing is guaranteed by the Spanish constitution: All Spaniards have the right to enjoy decent and adequate housing. The public authorities shall promote the necessary conditions and establish appropriate rules to uphold this right.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Casa Bloc is a residential building designed by GATPCA (the Catalan Group of Architects and Technicians for the Progress of Contemporary Architecture) group by the most famous architects at that time, first architect was Josep Lluís Sert, and he add a lot for this project, Sert was the main architect of this project. Second architect was Josep Torres Clavé and third architect Joan Baptista Subirana. The project opened in 1936 in the Sant Andreu the city of Barcelona, Spain. All the designers are members of G.A.T.E.P.A.C[1].

For Whom Was This Project Built? In the beginning, this project is a Re-creation of the le Corbusier proposal for residential housing, formulated in 1922 for an urban with a density of 300 inhabitants per hectare. The building was allocated not only for workers but also for the families, widows, and orphans of members of the Nationalist forces and, a little later, to the national police. The resulting density is 1,140 inhabitants per hectare, much lower than that of traditional urban fabrics of closed home islands [2].

Social Housing For Rent In Spain: In Spain, 55 percent of homes with old contracts have not renewed their contracts in order to evade tax, but despite that, the government is very merciful with them, as it forgives families with children or disabled while renewing their contracts in order to become under the protection of the state, as the lease contract from the perspective of The state is protecting the user and protecting his rights before it is just a tax that must be paid. Kattah Housing believes that about one and a half million lease contracts have not been declared and registered with the relevant authorities. The housing sector in Spain supports the idea of ownership over rent for families and individuals, which led to a decrease in the rental shares by fifty percent to 10 percent in 2010. The Spanish government began a journey of support for the housing sector in order to support the Spaniards after the Spanish Civil War, where rental contracts were renewed and laws were put in place to protect the tenant [3].

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2. BRIEF INFORMATION ABOUT CASA BLOC

It is a complex with an S-shaped floor plan formed by 5 long and narrow blocks articulated around 4 vertical accesses by stairs and elevators. So that the complex appears as a single unit. The different blocks have two facades: one that overlooks the adjacent streets and the other that serves as a backdrop for the interior urban space. The corridors-terrace that access to the dwellings simulated the neighborhood relationship that exists on the street and leads to the entrance door [4, 5, 6].

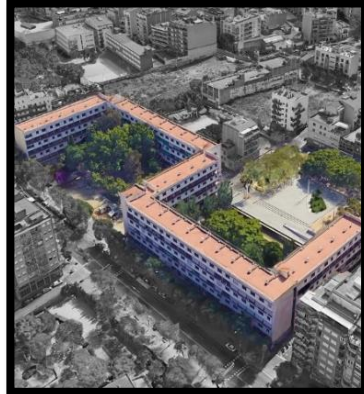


Fig. 1. shows, Casa Bloc according to the Urban Environment, <https://masteremergencyarchitecture.uic.es/2018/01/17/socio-spatial-workshop-with-casa-bloc-refugees-in-barcelona/>

Location: As we see here the project is located in the heart of Catalonia and near many important museums and churches, the project is surrounded by a lot of facilities.

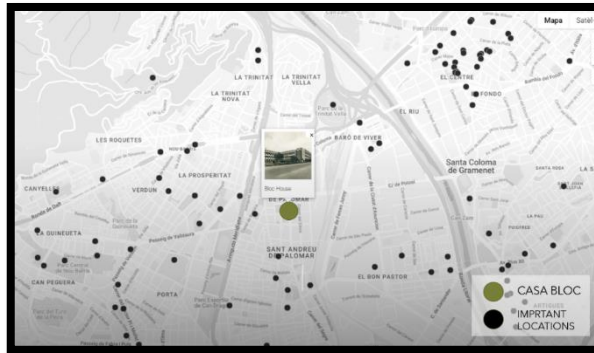


Fig. 2. shows, the location of the project, <https://www.arquitecturacatalana.cat/en/works/casa-bloc>



Fig. 3. A-B shows, the construction of the project, <https://www.arquitecturacatalana.cat/en/works/casa-bloc>

2.1 Construction and Materials

The project is oriented in its greater length from north to south so that the dwellings are always oriented to the south and east, leaving the access corridors in the least sunny orientation throughout the year. Together with this condition, cross ventilation is produced to achieve an optimal degree of well-being and hygiene [7].

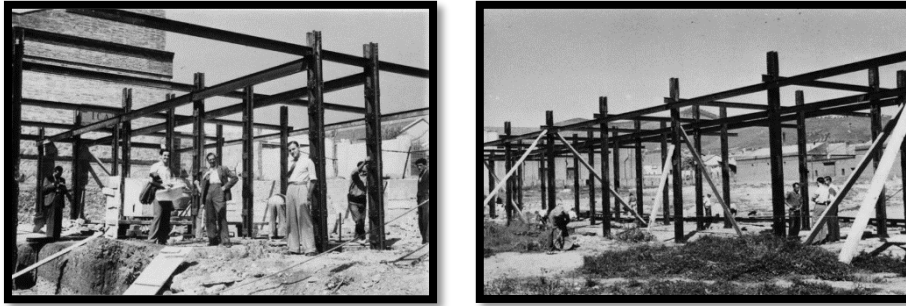


Fig. 4. A-B shows, that Casa Bloc is under construction,
<https://www.arquitecturacatalana.cat/en/works/casa-bloc>

The building is six stories each two floors in all the building is made for complex flats, the building body was built by concrete and steel and all walls were made of red bricks and wood. Later, the facade was covered by white paint and the interior corridors were painted by orange colour. The complex is placed in a north-south direction so that dwelling is always oriented to the south and east, considering wind direction and sun path.

PLAN: Why was the project made in S shape? The architect wanted all flats to have a view and good air circulation.

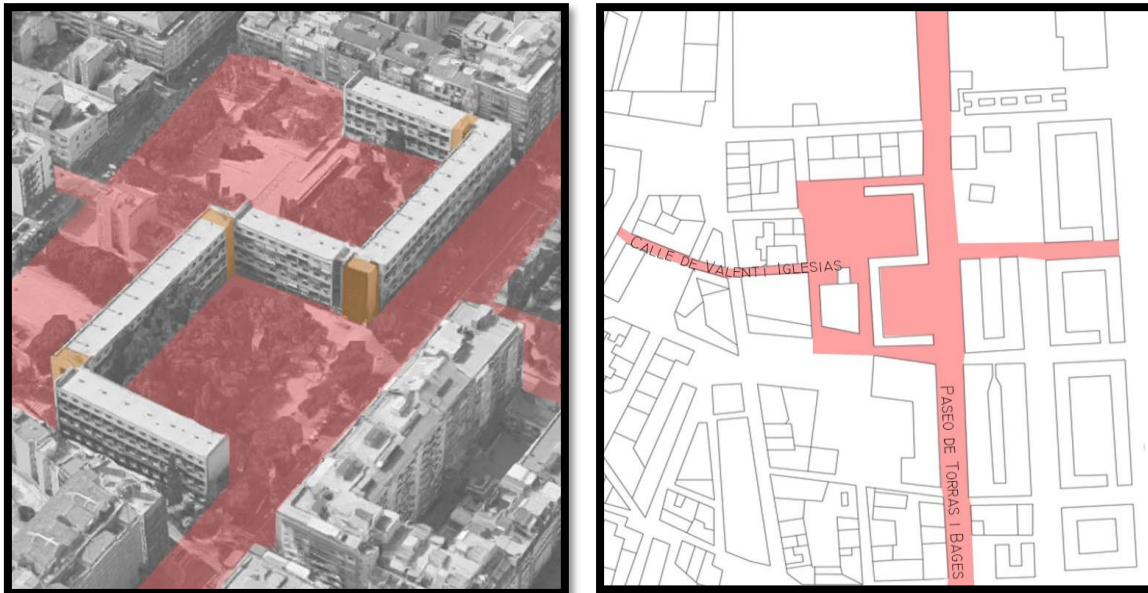


Fig .5. A-B shows, CASA BLOC AND THE SURROUNDING,
<http://www.doyoucity.com/proyectos/entrada/9885>

Green area and outside environment: In some sections of the ground floor, the space is freed, leaving only the supports, which in turn leads to communication between the interior green spaces with the urban environment outside the complex due to the shape of its floor plan.

PLAN:

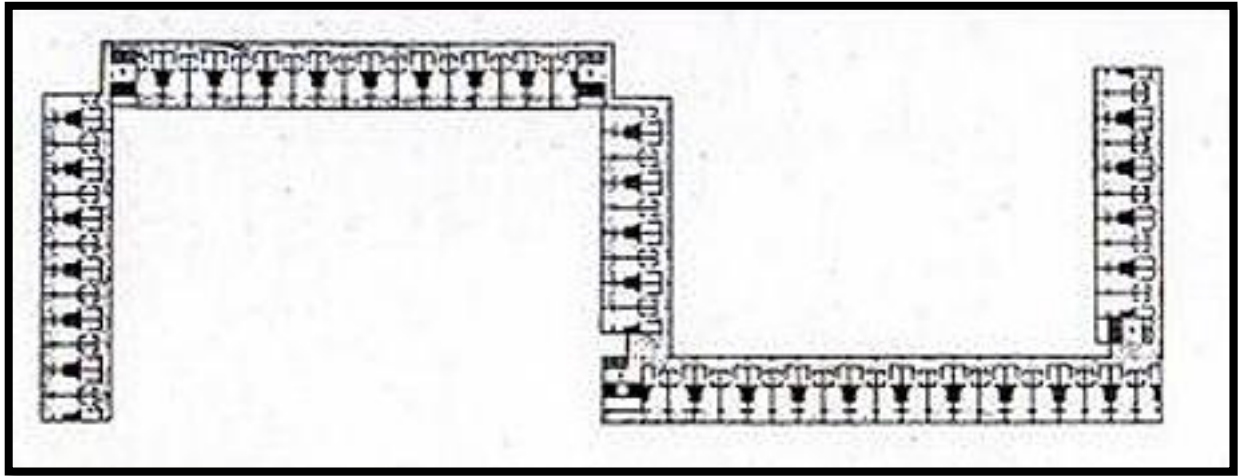


Fig. 6. shows, First Floor for each duplex and its unique shape,
<http://www.doyoucity.com/proyectos/entrada/2494>

First Floor for each complex

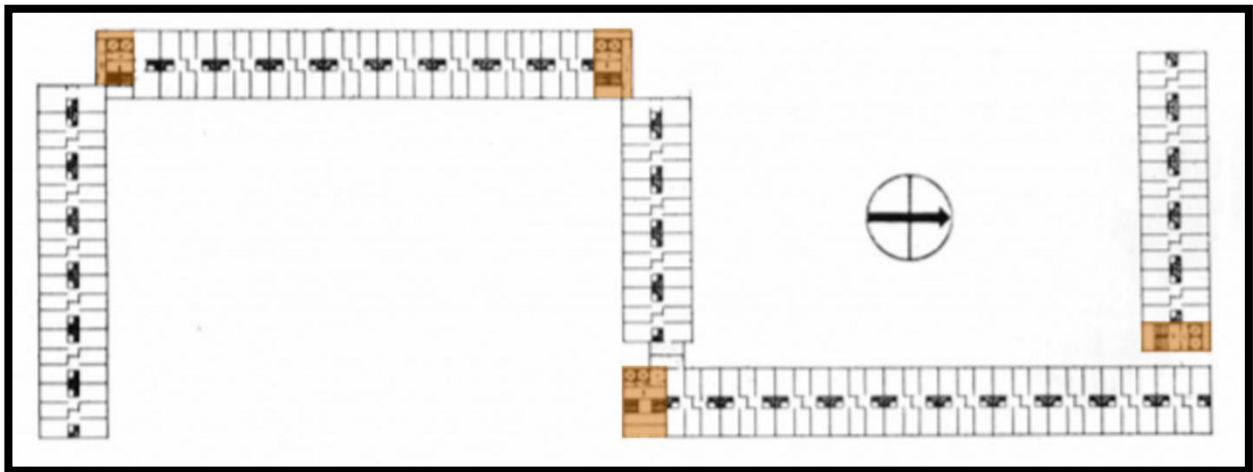


Fig. 7. shows, **Ground Floor** that is specified with the collective services (Shops, Cafes, playgrounds and Pools),
<http://www.doyoucity.com/proyectos/entrada/2494>

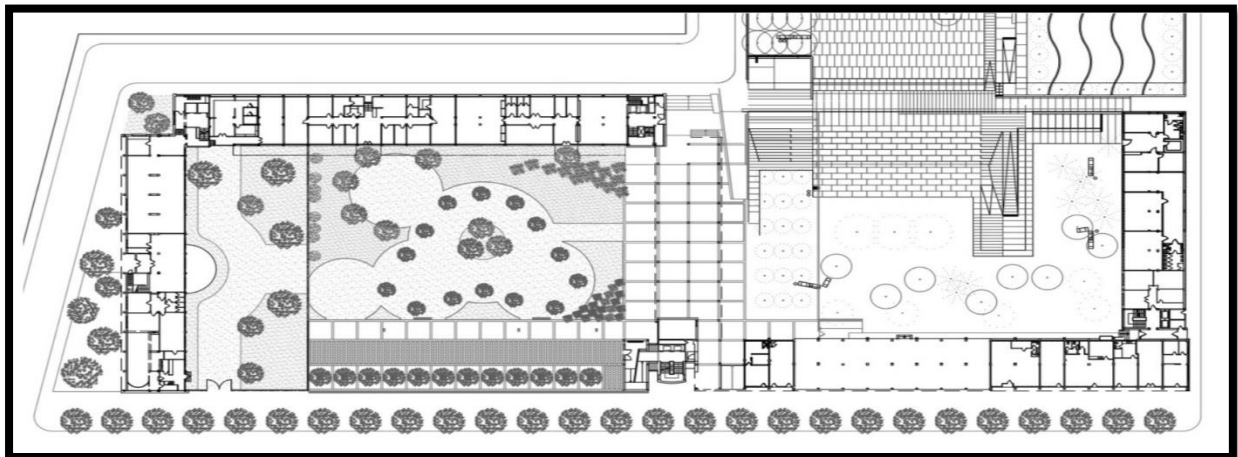


Fig. 8. shows, First Floor for each duplex contains about 70 flats distributed in un-equal numbers according to the core's locations within each block, <http://www.doyoucity.com/proyectos/entrada/2494>

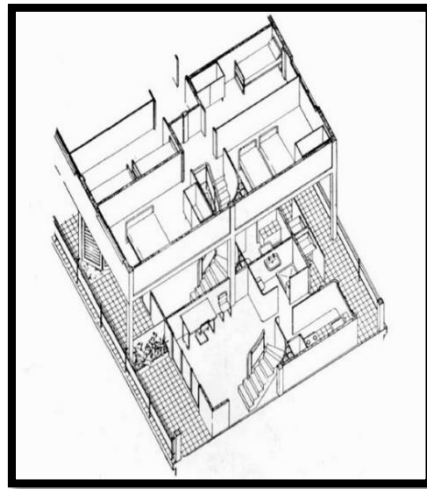


Fig .9. shows, Second Floor that is specified with the bedrooms for each duplex,
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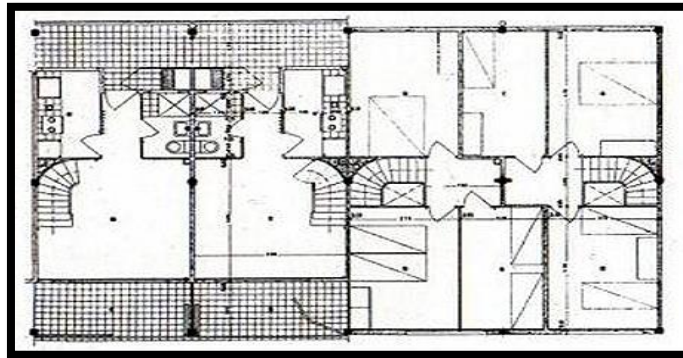


Fig .10. shows, the plan of two row flats for each duplex
<https://historyofbarcelona.weebly.com/gatpac.html>

3. RESTORATION TIMELINE

The project over time has restoration phasing and many changes entered the project. Later, the main purpose of the project and its social and cultural function was wasted. At 0 level some shops, cafes, and stores were open. The arrangement of the functions is considered in order to gather the water network on the facade of the dwellings that opened to the view of the neighbourhood. So that the kitchen and the bathroom dominate at the front of the dwellings, and with this condition, the ventilation is produced to achieve optimal degree of hygiene. And the function of intimacy in the background. So that the living room is located there [7].

While after restoration, the set that the architects designed included collective services at street levels, such as a nursery, library, cafeteria, toilet, warehouses, and shops. All of these are below the housing blocks and with at least one of their faces facing the street [7].

Ground floor according to the restoration phasing: In some sections of the ground floor below the dwellings before the restoration, the space is freed, leaving only the supports on pilotis, which in turn leads to interrelating the interior green leisure areas with the urban environment outside the complex.

3.1 Apartment 1/11

Casa Bloc, Apartment 1/11 is a member of the Iconic Houses, (the international network connecting architecturally significant houses organization) opened Flat 1/11 from the 20th century to the public. Flat 1/11 is opened and furnished just as its creators had originally designed it. So that this flat gives us the chance to live the experiment for that period of the time and watch the interior details as they were (**Museum-Apartment at the Casa Bloc, Dwelling 1/11**).

Finally, my paper argues the Subsidies for Homeownership in Spain, during the period of construction of the project: the Spanish housing sector is characterized by providing clean and well-served housing that suits the needs of families at reasonable and low prices compared to the local market prices, where the housing sector and the government provide support to families with limited income apartments at very low prices, but in order to protect them from any commercial exploitation or from traders. The housing is protected for a period ranging from 20 to 30 years, as the owner cannot sell that apartment again, except to families with limited income and at low prices, as he bought it, and those prices are determined by the government and the housing sector in Spain [8, 9]. Also, **in the fifties and sixties, the period of home protection ranged between 20 to 50 years, until in the last period, after 2008,** the period of protection became only 30 years. The Spanish rent law in the old days is similar to a contract of ownership, where after the housing is acquired after providing the required conditions and that you are in need of support, you will not be required to pay any fees or rent, so keeping the property for a long time is an incentive so that they can benefit from the price of housing in the end [10].

4. CONCLUSION

The Casa Bloc project was created to solve a residential problem, and the approach followed was Le Corbusier's approach to modern and functional architecture. Casa Bloc was opened in 1936 to accommodate a large number of families. The building has been subjected to many changes and repairs, and there is a change in the interior design of the dwelling, which led to the loss of the original identity. Despite that, Apartment No. 1/11 preserved the original design and the furniture proposed at that time. So that we can see the old body of the designed apartments through that flat 1/11. This site was chosen to be in the heart of Catalonia, surrounded by many services and public facilities, which increases its importance. But today people may pass front of this building without knowing that this building is considered one of the most important projects of modern architecture in Barcelona.

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Conflicts Of Interest

The author's affiliations, financial relationships, or personal interests do not present any conflicts in the research

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