

REASON 11

WE PROMOTE PROGRAMMES TO PROVIDE RENTAL HOUSING FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND THE ELDERLY

Despite the housing bubble, INCASÒL focused on building subsidised housing for families with difficulties accessing housing on the free market, where prices were rising continuously. These housing units were built on plots in new residential sectors developed by the Catalan Land Institute or on land provided by the town councils free of charge or in exchange for other plots. This land was zoned for the various types of subsidised housing laid out in the Government of Catalonia's successive Housing plans. To carry this out, the Institute entered into contracts with the town councils establishing a series of agreements: the housing programme, the main conditions for access and any other aspect considered relevant to the development. At the turn of the century, the General Directorate of Architecture and Housing had determined that most of this subsidised housing should be used as rental properties, addressing the difficult household finances of many families who couldn't buy their own homes. These programmes were the first attempt to create a portfolio of public rental housing at prices set to solve a problem that was already expected to become important, even though it hadn't yet reached the truly worrying level of the following decade. The housing developments created by the Institute increased progressively: 127 units in 2000, 450 in 2003, when there were also 1,126 units in various stages of development and construction. All of this housing was for young people or the elderly, especially young people who hadn't yet left home. So, the economic conditions were very favourable: the average rent was around €150. The leases were for five years, so other young people would have access as the needs of the original tenants changed and the units freed up.



Youth rental homes. Image José Hevia. Architects: Emiliano López and Mónica Rivera

During this reorientation, the type of housing units changed: the rental units would have roughly 60 m², with two large double rooms and designed to incorporate open-plan spaces like kitchen/living area or bedroom/living area. This integration suggests different ways of using the homes and gives them the versatility needed for the variety of household structures.

Innovation in types of housing, and reflections on housing, became a core aspect in those years. One of the rental buildings for young people developed by INCASOL in Sagrera by architects Emiliano López and Monica Rivera even won a prestigious FAD Award for architecture, which rarely went to multi-family housing buildings and much less subsidised ones.

Over time, these programmes would prove insufficient to alleviate the growing difficulties in accessing housing experienced by broad swaths of Catalan society for various reasons: as the crisis neared and deepened, the precarious job market, especially for young people, meant that the intended high rotation of tenants in these units wasn't possible. Furthermore, many other groups began to find it increasingly difficult to access housing on the free market. Unfortunately, when the bubble burst, the administrations' investment capacity was much diminished and the programme couldn't continue, despite the fact that this was when it was needed the most. The portfolio of public rental housing from these boom times was nowhere near enough to cover the needs arising from the situation that was yet to come.



Youth rental homes. Image: José Hevia



Youth rental homes. Image: José Hevia