BKK-3 Architects Vienna, Austria Miss Sargfabrik housing collective

Architects’ statement: Sargfabrik, meaning coffin factory, is the name of our first collective residential complex of 120 flats, completed in 1996. The original coffin factory buildings were demolished to make way for the new development. A second communal residential complex built nearby, Miss Sargfabrik, containing thirty-nine apartments, was completed at the end of 2002. The impetus behind these two collective housing developments was the prospective tenants’ disillusionment with the traditional range of standardised dwellings on offer. By setting up a cooperative building company, we could design and build independently of the real estate market.

The two-year planning process for Miss Sargfabrik was geared around tenant participation and grassroots democracy. We initiated discussions and brainstorming sessions with the thirty to fifty potential tenants. We wanted to design an affordable alternative form of housing that combines living and working spaces. Some of the questions we al asked together were, what is desired by individuals, and what by the communal group? Will the building be as functional in twenty years’ time, when the average age of dwellers is slightly higher and the forms of labour have changed towards home and teleworking? Can certain building units that prove to be marginal now be converted later into more useful places? What happens if couples separate?

We looked at long-term programmes for instance, eliminating the idea of sleeping units per se, and creating apartments around a pattern of sleeping, working and living.

Common facilities include a multi-functional library and IT space with teleworking stations, a fully-equipped kitchen and dining area for dinner parties and celebrations, a laundromat, and a barroom for teenagers (managed by them).

We were interested in different generations living together; a supportive social mix, a communicative environment, hybrid residential, working and cultural programmes, unconventional dwellings, ecologically sustainable combustion. We considered as the minimum standard the use of low-energy infrastructure, low-temperature heating, noise insulation.

Most people were open to new ideas. One of these was sloping floors, which can account for approximately a third of the overall area of an apartment. The apartments with sloping floors were the first to be rented. An ordinary developer would not have taken such a marketing risk.

The social element is at the core of the housing collective. Collective dwelling highlights the importance of communication, interaction, integration and sense of responsibility. And the architecture can facilitate this. For instance, an access gallery ensures that residents meet whenever they pass each other. There is also enough space to allow people to use the access gallery as a balcony, with tables and chairs outside front doors.
This New York project instead featured a cooperative with the government for funding. The housing cooperative has some, some necessary area is then social housing, which is required under local housing requirements. The new cooperative building, which is a combination of these two elements, is designed with a large space for community activities, which is a requirement under local building regulations. The total area of 4,000 square meters includes all the necessary social and educational spaces, which are required by the government.
The dual process understanding that enforcing workable standards and promoting healthy community spaces was an important outcome of the social revolution that industrialized societies in Europe experienced around the turn of the twentieth century. This creation of a healthy right to housing had an ethical and moral context, but there was also economic benefits to having a healthy and content workforce. It was not until the 1880s, following the Russian revolution, that architects aligned with an ethical agenda, working with local heath authorities and sanctioned by the most prominent developers and building firms. It was a 1940s vision of the development of social housing that these ambitious experiments were largely abandoned by the early 1950s. They would not be revisited until the post-war period. The history of communal living was once again investigated through many alternative experiments during the 1960s, in rural communities across the United States, and in cities throughout Europe. The idea of the 1960s is a rallying point for the architectural and design movement known as the "New Community," which emerged in the 1970s as a reaction to the overcrowding and disorganization of the traditional housing stock. The movement was characterized by a focus on creating small, self-sufficient communities that were able to provide a high-quality living environment for their residents. The New Community Movement sought to create a new vision of housing that was both environmentally sustainable and socially equitable. The movement was led by a group of architects and designers who were committed to creating communities that were more than just dwellings. They sought to create spaces that were designed to encourage social interaction and promote a sense of belonging. The New Community Movement was a response to the housing crisis of the 1970s, which was characterized by a lack of affordable housing and a shortage of decent housing. The movement was also a response to the environmental crisis of the 1970s, which was characterized by a growing awareness of the impacts of pollution and climate change. The movement was a response to the social and economic forces that were shaping the housing landscape in the 1970s. The movement was a response to the need for a new vision of housing that was more than just a place to live. The movement was a response to the need for a new vision of housing that was designed to benefit society as a whole. The movement was a response to the need for a new vision of housing that was designed to benefit society as a whole. The movement was a response to the need for a new vision of housing that was designed to benefit society as a whole. The movement was a response to the need for a new vision of housing that was designed to benefit society as a whole.