

LaCol are something like the new masters of cooperative housing in Barcelona, and are also organized as a cooperative and working group themselves. The current group of 13 architects came together while studying at the architecture faculty of the Polytechnic University ETSAB and founded in 2009 out of the university. The group is a real counter-model to the – still prevailing – classic definitions and ideas of the architect figure. LaCol have played a major role in shaping the Barcelona residential construction panorama in recent years and have changed it in their own way, not to say revolutionized it a bit. Their beautiful, rather quiet, simple and functional, yet flexible and individuality-promoting residential buildings, which rely on the sustainable building material wood and climate neutrality, are one thing above all: they were designed together, work in community and thus also stand for a new model of living .

Their cooperative building La Borda in the Sants district, which has received multiple awards, is the first of its kind in the Catalan metropolis. And following history – at least since the urban awakening of the eighties – the structural innovation is an interplay of demands from citizens' initiatives and the intelligent reaction to and ultimately cooperation with the ideas "from below" on the part of the architects. The project was created in the context of the severe housing crisis around 2012, where the primary aim was to counteract the serious consequences of the previous real estate and investment boom and its ultimately abrupt end.

The former Can Batlló factory site should have been privatized and become anything but a public place with affordable housing, against which a citizen movement stood up, with members of LaCol taking action in their roles as architects and neighbours. A collective and self-organized library in the old factory complex marked the beginning. Ultimately, "Salvem Can Batlló" becomes an urban outcry against the real estate crisis and against the sale of non-profits and a strong movement for a rethinking in housing construction. For LaCol, the motivation to develop new forms of collective and affordable housing and for social housing is growing.

The La Borda project is based on five principles in the development and use process: autopromoción or self-promotion and direct participation of all partners, leasehold use, promotion of community life and strengthening of relationships between residents, sustainability in terms of sustainability on energy consumption, size of the apartments and lack of parking spaces and finally the affordability, in which the cooperative is also an alternative for low earners. It becomes clear that LaCol is less a style than an architectural attitude. Their architecture shows that building is a social gesture and can be a crucial act of a sustainable economy. LaCol's architecture creates common good, space for co-creation and new forms of urban coexistence and is at the same time a step towards climate protection. The collective undoubtedly contributes to making a metropolis like Barcelona a little more livable, where rents are constantly rising under speculative pressure and access to affordable housing is becoming increasingly difficult.

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