LAN

Press Release / *Novembre 2015*

79 Collective Housing Units Bègles

Imagining a space of possibilities.

Technical information:

PROGRAM: Construction of a complex of apartments, shops and business premises.
LOCATION: District Terres Neuves, Bègles, France
CLIENT: Ataraxia
COST: 8 M EUR HT
COMPETITION: 2009
STATUS: Built 2015
SIZE: 6,980 m2
TEAM: LAN Architecture (lead architect), Agence Franck Boutté (HEQ consultant), Batiserf Ingénierie (structure), Michel Forgue (quantity surveyor), LBE (fluids).

Architects today have more battles to fight than ever. In a world where prevailing opinions leave no room for other voices, projects have become our own acts of resistance. They are opportunities to set precedents that, just as in law, we can then cite as an established right.
We built these two buildings in Begles in this spirit, with the idea of being able to say, "Look, it's possible."

The ground was fertile. Begles is one of the few cities in France where one can still carry out such a project. It's governed by the Greens, very open minded, and in full reconstruction after the demolition of a "grand ensemble," an entire neighborhood that was razed to the ground in order to start over on new terms.

Such a tabula rasa meant that the project had to address issues that were much larger and overarching than simply the locale itself. The problems we encountered in Begles are the same ones that we have observed in many places across the world since then.

We have to build at higher density to use up less ground, and whenever we can't, we need to design systems to increase that density.
We have to give people of limited means the chance to live in a place that will change with them, accompanying them as they undergo the major transitions in their lives: living together, marriage, children, and old age.
We need to reinvent collective housing, or at least envision intermediate habitats that marry a desire for intimacy with the pleasure of socializing.
We need projects to show that the current price of construction is the result of a crazy equation in which the service economy is calling all the shots.
We need to conceive climate models which are not just in response to a regulation or a radical ecological trend, but which instead thoroughly consider the true implications of climate change in our world.

This project is our response to these 5 battles.

Begles is not a finished project, rather a "form in movement," a la Paul Klee. It is an envelope that can double its size tomorrow, and thus, double its density. Each apartment can access its winter garden to increase its living area; inhabitants can do this themselves without having to obtain building permits. In response to the growth of a family, they can add a room within a framework that has already been constructed, and why not, they can remove it once the kids have left the house!

Just as in a freestanding house, each apartment has 4 façades, three of which are exposed. In fact the apartments have the same qualities as a single-family home (the sense of privacy, individual exterior spaces, independence, and strong sensory contact with the outdoors) without the latter's disadvantages in terms of environmental impact (stretching networks, visual and atmospheric pollution, excessive consumption of ground).

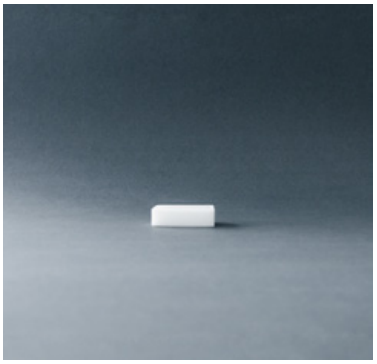
This project also demonstrates how absurd the economics of building architecture has become. Begles was built at a cost of 1,000 € per m², in full knowledge that the m² of the loggias are not factored in. This is much below the current price in this region, and at twice the surface area. To do this, beyond all the rationalization, prefabrication, budget control and management, and a certain architectural sobriety, we cut out all the middlemen, the service economy. This means that the habitats go from the person who builds to the person who buys with as few steps in between as possible.

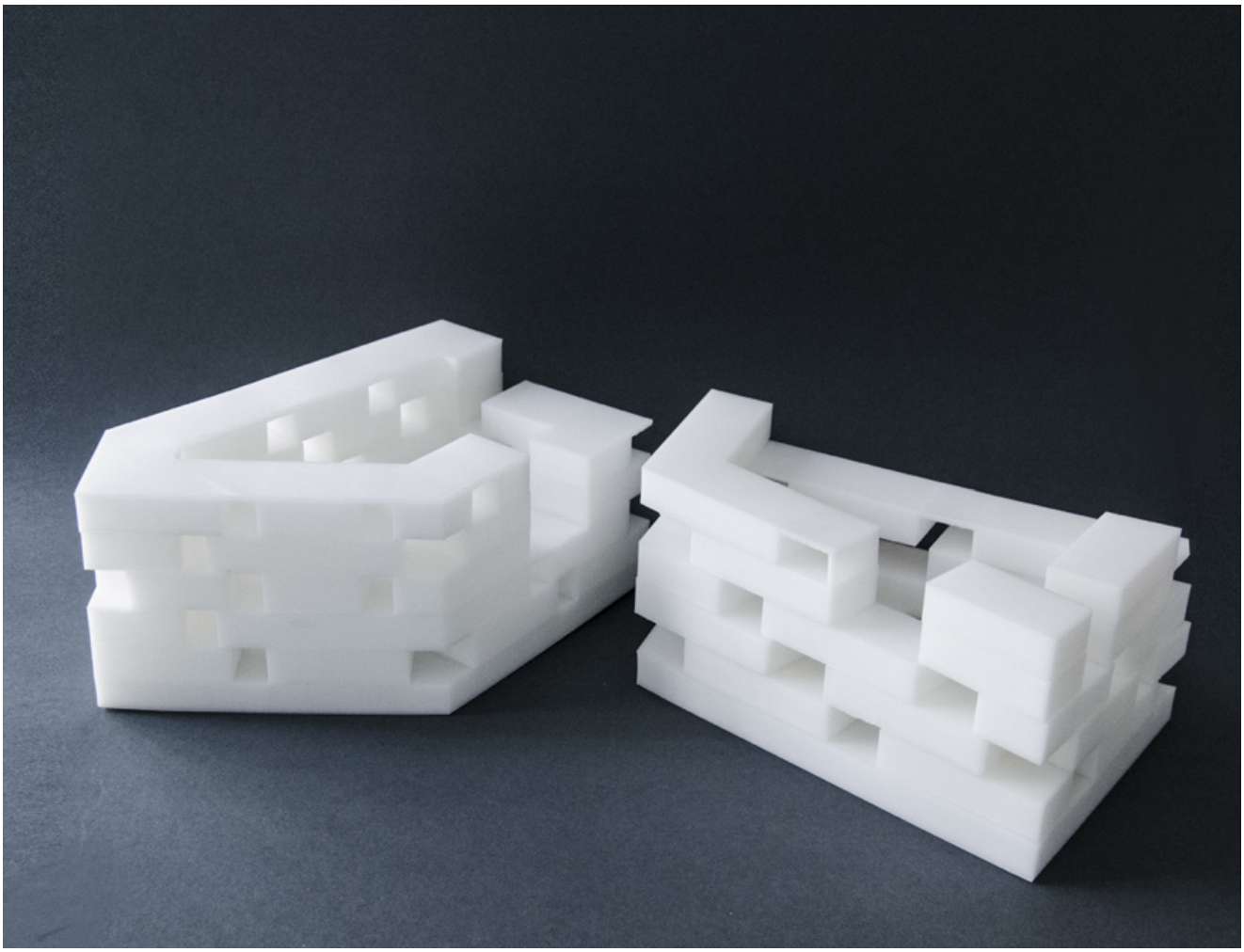
The formal part, which was implemented in function of the urban planning requirements, also allowed us to use a hybrid climatic model that corresponds to the climate of this part of France. The bio-climatic design is halfway between the heavily insulated Nordic model and Mediterranean patio-style architecture. It's based on the principle of variable compactness, which introduces the notion of the housing's adaptability to the rhythm of the seasons or even of the day. Everyone can use their outdoor space as a windbreak, a greenhouse, or, to the contrary, as a cooling unit. We call this inter-seasonal architecture.

There's nothing standard about this project. Despite the fact that the building is only 7 meters thick, built like a parking garage and ornamented with industrial motifs, it is a fundamental piece in the definition of the public space of this site. We wanted to show that something radical can be expressed even by using a simple, everyday architectural language.

Noel Mamere, Mayor of Begles

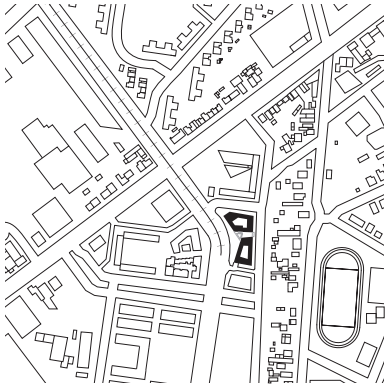
LAN (Local Architecture Network) was founded by Benoit Jallon and Umberto Napolitano in 2002 with the intent of exploring architecture as the intersection of several disciplines.
This approach has today become a working method, and it has allowed the firm to explore new territories and to develop a vision that encompasses social, urban planning, functional, and formal issues.
The firm's projects consider this universe of possibilities at all different scales and contexts, and they have been recognized on multiple occasions in France and across the world, be they sophisticated architectural objects such as the EDF National Archives or experimental housing developments (Paris, Bègles, Beirut), commercial buildings (the Euravenir Tower in Lille), cultural projects (the Théâtre du Maillon and most recently the Grand Palais) or urban planning projects (the Brossette neighborhood in Île de Nantes and the Neue Hamburger Terrassen housing development).
In 2004, the firm was included in Nouveaux Albums de la Jeune Architecture (New Editions of Young Architecture, or NAJA), an award bestowed by the French Ministry of Culture and Communication.
En 2009, LAN was honored at the International Architecture Awards (Chicago Athenaeum), the Archi-Bau Awards, and it won the Special Prize at the 12th International Triennial of Architecture in Sofia.
En 2010, the firm received prizes at the AR Mipim Future Projects and Europe 40 Under 40 Awards.
En 2011, the firms received the Best Sustainable Development prize at the LEAF Awards, a prize at the SAIE Selection Awards, and the AMO Prize from the Fondation d'Entreprise Excellence SMA.
LAN was nominated for the Prix de l'Équerre d'Argent in 2011.
In 2012 the firm brought home the Silver Medal from the Fassa Bortolo International Prize for Sustainable Architecture.
In 2013, it received a «Commendation» at the Civic Trust Awards, the WAN Residential Award, and the BIGMAT 13 France National Prize.
In 2014, the Euravenir Tower received the Prix SMABTP-Pyramides d'argent prize.
LAN is an active participant in international architectural debate. The firm is strongly committed to the dissemination and interrogation of the values underlying contemporary architecture, whether in an academic setting (TU Graz and Università degli Studi Roma Tre in 2011, the Berlage Institute and the Welsh School of Architecture in 2012, Università di Ferrara in 2013, the Bergen Architecture School in 2014, among others), or at major institutions and cultural events worldwide (MoMA in New York, MAXXI in Rome, Garage in Moscow, Archifest in Singapore, the





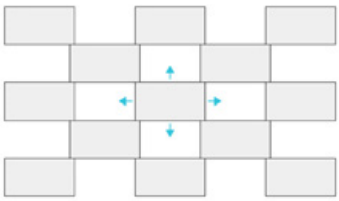
Hybrid housing

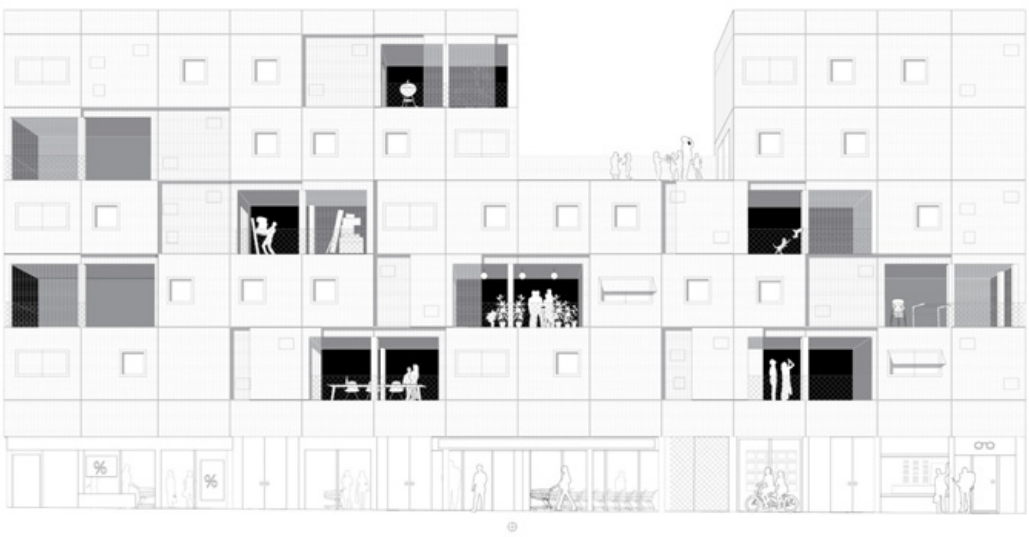
Can the iconic image of collective housing be approached in a way to compete with the icon of the house? The challenge of this project is to build collective housing with the same qualities and advantages of the single-family home (the sense of privacy, the outdoor space, autonomy as well as strong sensory contact with the outdoors) with the addition of social public space and without the latter's disadvantages in terms of environmental impact (stretching networks, visual and atmospheric pollution, excessive consumption of ground).



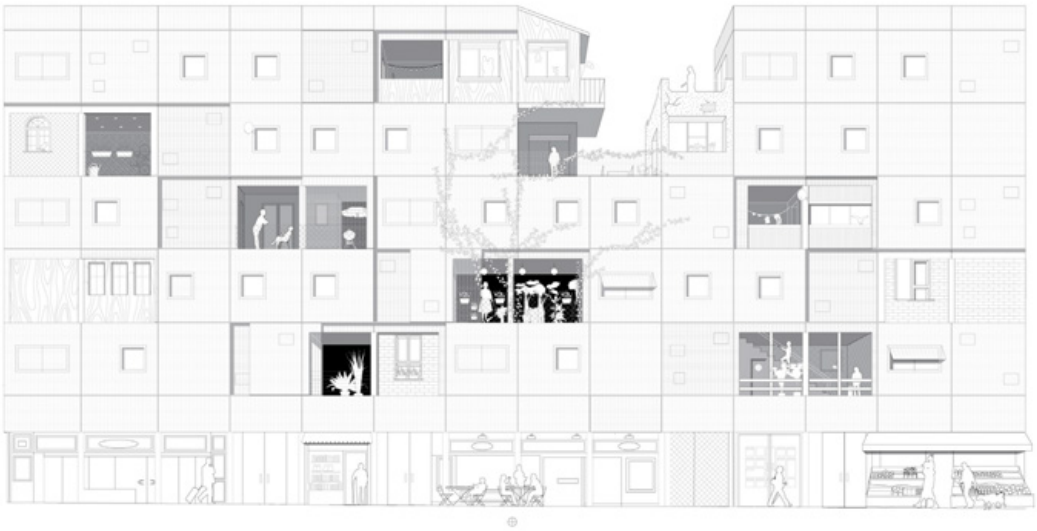
Efficient envelope

Begles is not a finished project, but rather a “form in movement”. It is an envelope that can double its size tomorrow, and thus, double its density. Each apartment can access its winter garden to increase its living area. In response to the family growth, the inhabitants can add a room within a framework that has already been constructed, and remove it once the kids have left the house





Facade of the building in 2015



Facade of the building in 2030

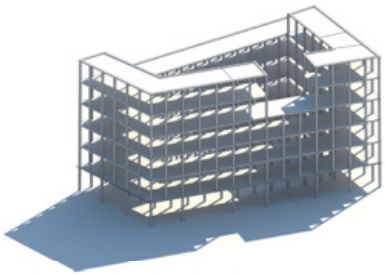
Durabilité et evolution

« La forme d'une ville est toujours la forme d'un temps de la ville, et il existe plusieurs temps dans la formation d'une ville ».

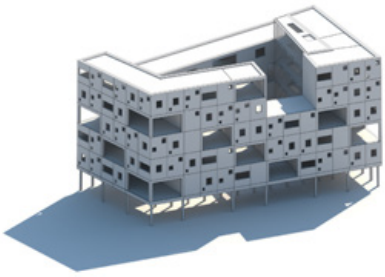
A. Rossi

Aldo Rossi states that the form of a city is always the form of its time, and there are many times in the formation of the city.
This project makes a rupture into the functionalist logic, and somewhat into its program. It is an architecture stronger than its demands, more durable than its policy; an architecture ready indistinctly to survive and adapt to the social and economic changes; suggesting scenarios to face the different needs. We like to imagine that there are some projects that generate potential; and this stock of «energy» in this project is a "non - built» vacuum in space.

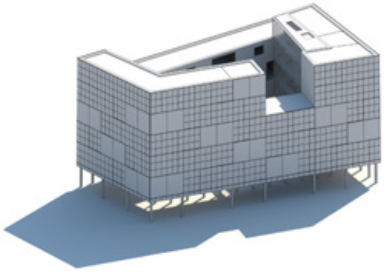
Structure, Prefabrication and prices



Structure



Pre fabricated panels



Double skin

Structure, Prefabrication and prices

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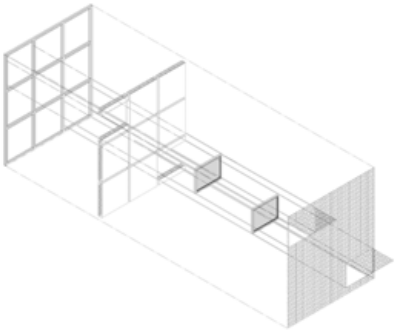
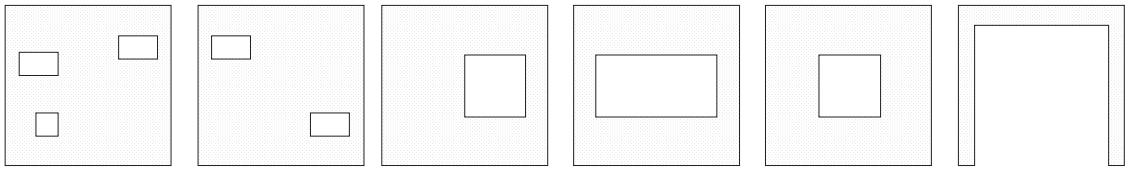
Materiality

The project becomes an architecture made of lightweight material with fine patterns. The facades are defined by two layers; each responding to the different needs and complementing the other perfectly. The first skin, fabricated of light, thin, white metal sheets, reflects the colours of the surrounding area and create with effortless simplicity a certain visual penetration effect. This layer has the role of sun protection and completes the second- a «thicker" layer, which responds to the thermal performance requirements



Day / Night

As result of the perforation and the folds, all is superimposed, creates an inside-outside condition, has a deep reading, appears light, transparent, in reflexion. At night, the light of each apartment reveals the domesticity of this architecture, its character, its function.

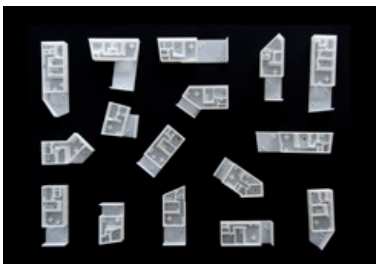


6 modules used for the facade

Typologies

The morphology of each unit derives from the desire to develop housing which allows a multitude of operations without any technical bidding.

All the aoartments are crossed ventilated with an exterior outdoor space on two or three orientations. Their size varies from 25-130 sqm.



The echoppe and the corridor

The idea behind the project is to create a hybrid between the individual and the collective housing. The typology, chosen as the starting point of the concept of hybridization, is the Bordeaux 'echoppes' : one-story houses, built in-depth.

The simple stalls (with a facade between 5 and 6 meters high) have a side corridor, leading to a main room and a communal space next to the courtyard.

Photo report Julien Lanoo

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