By preventing social interactions, the 2020 lockdown led us to question and rethink forms of social relationships. Bubbles or communities allowed us to propose intermediate scales of sociability. Since they depend on specific spatialities, they helped architecture to have a leading role as a mediator between scales. This apartment building in Barcelona is a remarkable example of that.
The program – mixing social and free-market housing in coexistence and without differences – demands practically the consumption of the available building volume. This constraint and the demands for efficiency and simplicity that we impose on ourselves, represents a challenge for developing a project with some added value. To this end, we look for the hidden powers of a proposal that is both pragmatic and at the same time sensitive to external stimuli.

We began by laying out a typical floor with twelve housing units. We limit circulation areas to the absolute minimum by introducing one central vertical core equipped with two interlocking ‘scissors’ type staircases, two lifts, and two installation shafts. We will, therefore, obtain a single public entrance centralizing all connections on the ground floor and allowing for an optimized commercial space on the street level and an efficient underground parking layout. All apartments provide living rooms and bedrooms connected with the exterior façade, while individual accesses, kitchens, and bathrooms connect with hallways that are shared by micro-communities of three units. From this scheme that solidifies the available volume, subtraction operations are
Secuencia detalles plantas niveles 2, 3, 7 y 8 (izquierda a derecha) / Detail sequence from levels 2, 3, 7 and 8 (left to right)
E. / S. 1: 500
carried out. They allow a new morphology to be sculpted, generating generous collective and individual terraces while facilitating cross ventilation and diagonal views that orient the building towards the most attractive landscapes.

The exterior facades are built up by repetitive bays with moveable panels of adjustable louvers that function as sunscreens while effectively allowing for natural ventilation and contributing to the recognizable and monumental image of this residential building so fortunately surrounded by public space. The facades of courtyards and corridors create a distinct quasi-picturesque environment of the communal spaces with colorful latticework and traditional Catalan ceramic tiling on the walls and floors reminiscent of the local popular domestic culture.
The Caracol Building, designed by estudioHerreros and MIM-A, won the first prize in the national competition organized by the Metropolitan Institute for Land Development (IMPSOL) of the Barcelona Metropolitan Area. The work has been awarded with the Architecture Award and the Opinion Award of the FAD 2020, and has recently received a nomination for the Mies van der Rohe Award 2022. ARQ
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estudioHerreros is an internationally awarded architecture office, published and exhibited with offices in Madrid, New York and Mexico City that reflects the 35 years of experience of Juan Herreros (PhD Architect, Polytechnic University of Madrid, 1994), Chair Professor at Madrid School of Architecture, and Full Professor of Architecture at Columbia University in New York, together with his partner Jens Richter (Architect, University of Kassel, Germany, 2002), with whom he shares the A+ Career Achievement Award. estudioHerreros has completed projects in Spain, Norway, France, Panama, Argentina and Colombia. Their latest projects are the Munch Museum in Oslo and the Ágora Bogotá Events Center in Colombia.

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MiMa is the result of the sum of the efforts by Mariona Benedito (Architect, ETSAB, Polytechnic University of Catalonia, 2000) and Martí Sanz (Architect, ETSAB, Polytechnic University of Catalonia, 2000) in the professional field of architecture and landscape. Since its foundation in 2007, MiMa understands architecture as an open practice and collaborates with other architectural offices as well as with members of other disciplines in order to achieve new challenges and broaden knowledge. In the same sense, MiMa’s members also participate in teaching and research on architecture in several Universities and workshops.