

Collective Domesticity. The transition space as a system between home and city

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Keywords

Collective Housing, Transition Spaces, Threshold, Porosity, Collective Living

Partner Institutions

Expected Future Partner Institutions

City Councils; Arquivo Forte Sacavém (SIPA) – DGPC;

IHRU - Institute of Housing and Urban Rehabilitation

OBJECTIVES

Having the in-between space as a conceptual framework, the research project aims to study transition spaces produced by collective housing buildings in Portugal, mainly throughout the 20th and 21st centuries. The aim is to interpret how this moment of articulation between home and city constitutes different modes of collective use and how it assumes itself as a space for the extension of the house, and simultaneously, as a continuation of the collective meeting space. To this end, the research uses some case studies, which will exemplify part of the Portuguese reality and at the same time open the discussion of the theme. Through a morphological and systemic decomposition, the aim is to identify the main types of transitional spaces, ordering different porosity relationships between home, building and city and what are the impact on the ways of inhabiting that space.

This exercise intends to contribute for the support of teaching architecture, but also to inform current housing production by opening the debate to new models of living. On the other hand, the embryo project is the first step in a wider investigation that in the future will expand its field of study to other building typologies with the aim of systematizing different processes of urban transformation and the way we live the public space created by some building formal features, emphasizing transition spaces as a place of urban friction and activator of urban life.

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ABSTRACT + IMAGES

"Beyond the more or less two-dimensional plastic values that are traditionally associated to the facade, this fringe can be seen as a spatial entity within which the possibilities to live at a different scale are simultaneously recognized and explored".

Manuel Aires Mateus

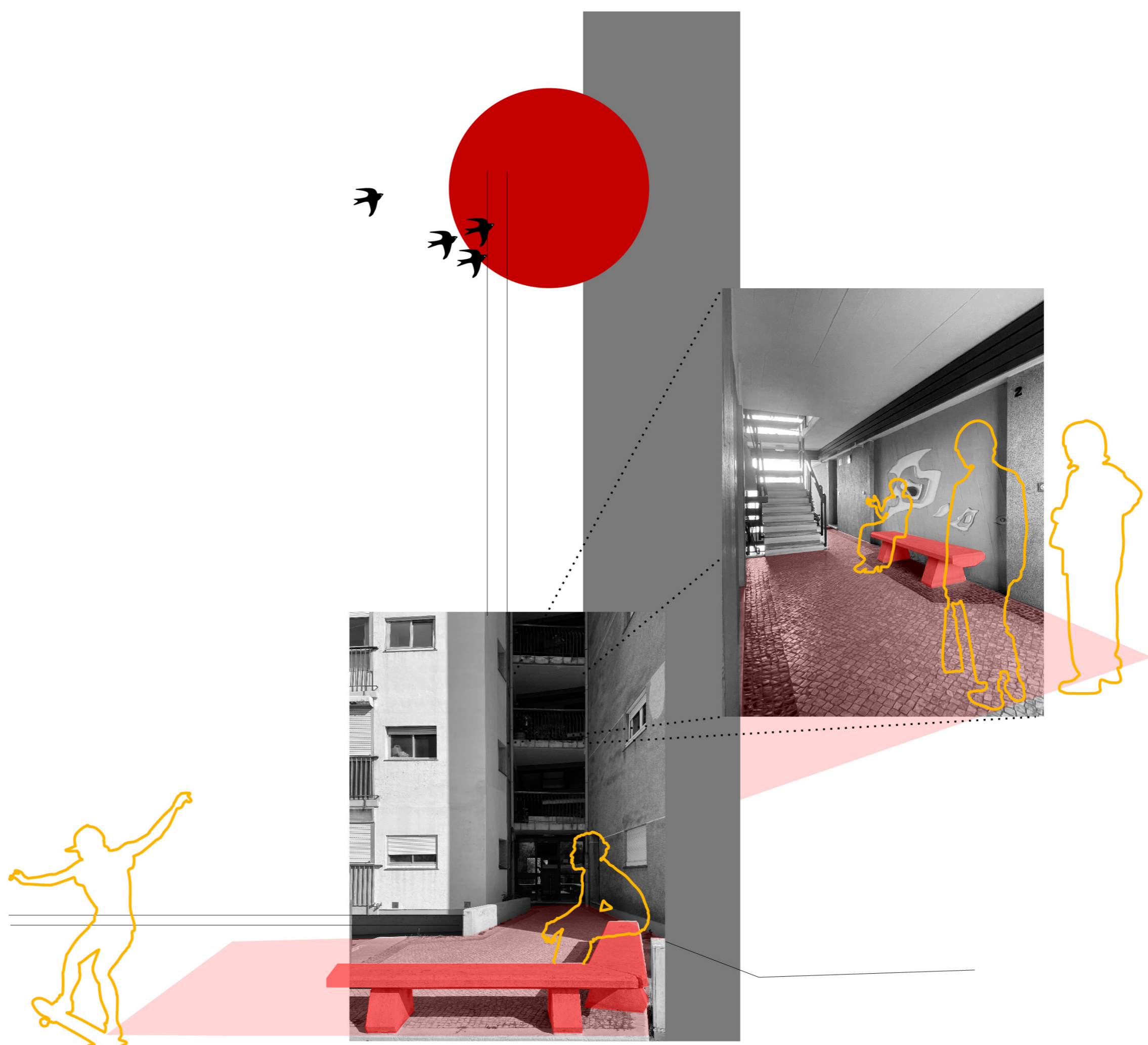
Public space is the structure, the spatial layout of the city (Sòla-Morales, 1997). It is the place of sharing, of meeting the collective (Gehl, 1971), of democratic freedom; it is the space that sediments the urban habitat. Even so, it is in the limit space between public and private that some spatial tensions are established that shape the way we live in the city. Housing constitutes, on the other hand, a large part of the built matter that silently embodies the structure of the city, given the protagonism of public space (Monteys, 2013; Serpa, 2015). The house, its typological models and ways of living, influence the conceptual and spatial principles of collective living. The collective housing building, as a system, represents a moment of articulation between the more domestic space and a public place for sharing and socializing the collective – public space. It is on spaces in between that current trends in architectural thought reflect on the value of spatial ambiguity as a producer of porosities that reconfigure the limits and modes of appropriation and permanence in public and private space (Monteys, 2010), recovering the conceptual memory of Rome plan by Nolli (1748), where the public space extended beyond the physical limits of the individual buildings, understanding its interior space as a continuity of the city public space. The transition spaces appear as a complement, on the one hand, to the public space, reinterpreting theoretical reflections pointed out in the Modern Movement and by the Team 10 group in the 1960s (Hetzberger, 1991), on the other hand, to the private space, as an extension of the house, redefining the limits of domesticity (PLOT 50, 2019).

Thus, the embryonic project focuses on the study of transitional spaces in collective housing buildings, seeking to reflect on their relevance as spatial devices of articulation between home and city. It also seeks to interpret how these spaces generate morphological conditions that encourage social activities of sharing and collective experience, transforming this transitional system into a place. The space between the house and the city refigures the limits of the house and transforms the way we inhabit the city. Taking the Portuguese mainland as a context, the embryo research project will seek to take advantage of the

material produced and systematized by the research project, recently completed (December 2022), "Building Typology", developed by the research group formaurbis LAB under the coordination of Carlos Dias Coelho and funded by FCT, as a way of building a wide universe of case studies that will naturally be enriched by other scientific studies, or Portuguese institutions, whose areas of action or lines of research are directly linked to Collective Housing. Methodologically, the study is based on morphological and systemic decomposition processes (Dias Coelho, 2013) underlining permanence and distribution systems (Boettger, 2014) of several collective housing buildings produced throughout the 20th and 21st centuries. The research intends to realize a typologically interpret and systematize different types of threshold space linked to the dwelling building, stressing its formal and spatial qualities, what are the articulation mechanisms that are established between the house and the city and how the transition system contributes to the establishment of collective activities of sharing and socialization.

The limit is understood as a thick fringe of spatial dimension and not just as a surface that simply crosses (Van Eyck, 1962). The limit constitutes a place where one lives and where seemingly opposing concepts – individual / collective, unity / diversity, interior / exterior – are combined in a unique spatial dimension. The study seeks to open the debate in contemporary architectural production on the importance of these systems as transition devices between the most domestic and collective space (Schmid, 2019), and may even constitute a moment of dilation of public space. At a time when the production of collective housing is at the center of the debate in Portugal, it is important to reflect on how we can produce living spaces that are more integrated and continuous with the rest of the city's structure and avoid past mistakes where certain architectural and urban options contributed to segregation processes social and urban.

Finally, it is important to emphasize the potential that the subject has in future investigations. Transition spaces as devices for the composition of collective space appear in different built typologies regardless of the functional program and cultural context. In future moments of research, it is expected the expansion of the theme approached in the embryo project the different built typologies, trying to systematize different spatial relations established between the building and the city and how the latter plays an active role in the production of a place of public use or semi-public. It is intended to collaborate for the composition of referential frameworks of architectural production that operate on spatial ambiguity, taking the porosity as a strategy to activate the urban life (Wolfrum, 2018).



SCIENTIFIC RELEVANCE FOR THE DISCIPLINE

The main scientific relevance of the project involves reinforcing the importance of the in-between space as a meeting place and permanence in the articulation between home and city.

On the other hand, the project intends to consolidate an analysis methodology based on the critical interpretation of transition spaces (in collective housing) by decomposing and decoding the main morphological characteristics and their influence on a way of inhabiting that same space. In this way, not only is a set of relationships between the form and the inhabiting of the space systematized, which enables the synthesis of the formal elements of connection between home, building and city and how they constitute continuous spatial promenades, but sufficiently capable to build successive filters of domesticity and intimacy.

Thus, the reading and analysis process assumes an operative sense, as it also becomes an important support in the creative process of new housing buildings, encouraging the creation of richer and more diverse spatial systems that interconnect the structure of the city to the building.

EXPECTED ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL IMPACT

This research promotes a reflection on the way in which contemporary architectural production allows for the reinvention of spatialities and urban relations, working at the same time as a reference tool in the creative design process. This potential is revealed above all in the moments of transition, in the creation of spatial links between the collective housing buildings and the urban fabric, promoting the collective, the common, a public sense. As an example, it is important to look how the recent covid-19 pandemic crisis highlights the urgency of critical thinking about spatial flexibility and how the collective housing building should contain common open-air spaces as a form of extension of the house and the city's public space.

The in-between space has enormous potential as a space of opportunity for building stronger social bonds, between the residents but also the closest urban space. The transition space consolidates the establishment of a community and support and proximity networks. The transition space thus represents an important moment in the design of new housing typologies and should be assumed as an extension of the house and simultaneously of the public space of the city. The transition space is the domestic place of a collective and can redefine new housing models that are more prepared for the challenges of the 21st century.

RESEARCH PLAN AND TASKS

The research plan seeks to systematize a set of actions or tasks that will respond to the proposed objectives, that is, initially stabilize a conceptual framework on the subject underlying the research (the space in-between home and city) and then to focus on the analysis of case studies decomposing and decoding different types of transition spaces in order to constitute a reference framework to support the architectural design (academic and professional) that synthesizes common formal qualities but also spatial variations.

As an embryo project, the research is structured through a set of initial tasks that involve the closest involvement of the different team members, taking advantage of the basic knowledge of each one, so that later the work will be fundamentally focused on the responsible researcher duly supported by a research fellow to be hired.

[task 1. Conceptual systematization and perception of the phenomenon – national and international context] :: Duration: 2 months

Team Members at this task: João Silva Leite, Alessia Allegri, Filipa Serpa, Jorge Spencer Sérgio Fernandes, Pablo Villalonga, Tiago Mota Saraiva and Youri Spaninks-Amaro.

The task 1, presupposes the stabilization of concepts through a literature review, linked to the idea of threshold, consolidating pre-acquired knowledge and, at the same time, orienting the research towards the fulfilment of the proposed objectives. This task purposes to synthesize this understanding of a habitable fringe, that exists between the space of the house and city public space, constituting a place of transition where the collective finds a certain domesticity and ability to develop sharing activities.

For the execution of this first task, it is foreseen the need to complement the theoretical-conceptual study with the observation and analysis of some international experiences that test architectural solutions that question housing models that are too crystallized in prototypes of family and society that are already outdated. In this way, an attempt is made to build a panoramic view that knows how to contain tradition and historical knowledge but, on the other hand, projects the research thinking into the near future.

At this initial moment, the research seeks to add to the prior understanding on the subject by the principal investigator the maximum existing knowledge in the different profiles of each member of the team. The team combines specialists in the area of housing (Filipa Serpa, Pablo Villalonga or Tiago Mota Saraiva) with intellectuals of Portuguese architectural production (Jorge Spencer), or even experts in the study of urban form (Sérgio Fernandes) without ever forgetting the inclusion of contemporary trends of looking at and analysing the current city (Alessia Allegria, Youri Spaninks-Amaro)

[task 2. workshop – Portuguese case studies selection] :: Duration: 1 week

Team Members at this task: João Silva Leite, Alessia Allegri, Filipa Serpa, Jorge Spencer Sérgio Fernandes, Pablo Villalonga, Tiago Mota Saraiva and Youri Spaninks-Amaro.

After the conclusion of task 1, it is important to discuss the knowledge extracted. In this sense, task 2 is proposed to carry out a sharing and synthesis workshop. With a sense of brainstorming the whole team (integrated and external members) is brought together in this task in several meetings over the course of a week with the purpose of identifying and stabilizing the selection criteria of the case studies at work throughout the embryo project.

In addition, it is also sought that these set of meetings between the various team members makes it possible to discuss and rehearse a basic matrix of the methodological approach of analysis and decoding of representative and previously identified case studies. What are the questions to be characterized, how and what graphical representation tools should be used.

[task 3. Field work, case studies specific documentation collection and stabilization of the methodological] :: Duration: 3 months

Team Members at this task: João Silva Leite, Alessia Allegri, Sérgio Fernandes and Youri Spaninks-Amaro.

Task 3 focuses on the concrete definition of the case studies to be addressed. These pilot cases, located in Portugal and produced since the beginning of the 20th century, are of particular relevance in the research because the spatial decomposition methodology will be applied and measured on them.

Through the analysis of about 5 pilot case studies, an attempt is made to look at a sufficiently diverse universe that exemplifies different types of morphological solutions and spatial systems that constitute different relationships between home and city.

This task also includes collecting information on the diverse case studies based on different vectors: 1- Database produced and systematized by the FCT research project "Building Typology. Morphological Inventory of Portuguese City"; 2- Consultation of municipal archives and other Portuguese institutions linked to housing (such as IRHU); 3- Contact with the authors / architects with the aim of conducting short interviews that can explore the project's design process understanding and its spatial assumptions/ programmatic; 4- study specialized bibliography; 5- field survey, for observation of the work, registration of spatial details and perception of the transition systems and for the last photographic record.

[task 4. Reading and decomposition] :: Duration: 5 months

Team Members at this task: João Silva Leite, Youri Spaninks-Amaro; researcher fellow

Task 4 embodies one of the most relevant moments of the embryo project, which involves the production of a critical and interpretative matrix to read the case studies. This should allow decoding the space not only in formal terms or in its essential elements of composition but also in the ways of living or even of spatial perception by people.

Strongly supported by drawing as a decomposition and analysis tool for the architectural object (and its relationship with the city), it seeks to produce a set of graphic elements that make the building's spatial structure more readable, decoding the different spaces (Schimd, 2019; Boettger, 2014), which constitute transition areas where the collective interact and also highlight what kind of architectural elements contribute to transform a simple articulation system into a place to stay and share collective activities.

Through this systemic decomposition (Dias Coelho, 2013) the spatial matrix is evidenced through the drawing (a tool of representation but also of critical interpretation) which represents an important synthesis exercise to support the interpretation of the fundamental spatial characteristics of each case study and which the qualities it understands and introduces into the relationship between collective housing buildings and the surrounding urban structure. In this way, the understanding and corresponding systematization of these qualities makes the case studies as didactic objects of learning, not only of academic utility but also with application in the creative design process. To a certain extent, mechanisms and elements of spatial composition become evident that can be reinterpreted as design tools in new structures to be built.

Task 4 takes advantage of the experience accumulated in some research work previously carried out by the principal investigator, as well as the knowledge already produced by the researcher Youri Spaninks-Amaro, currently carrying out a PhD on threshold spaces of Lisbon. It is intended to combine the methodological knowledge gained by participating in multiple research projects with methods for characterizing the transition spaces explored by the doctoral student.

[task 5. Presentation and dissemination of results] :: Duration: 2 months

Team Members at this task: João Silva Leite, Tiago Mota Saraiva and researcher fellow

Task 5 and the last one, is intended for the results dissemination but also for the results validation by their peers. In addition to the discussion of the material produced in scientific seminars related to the theme, it is also planned the publication of at least one scientific article, in an indexed magazine (with peer review), as a way of validating the results.

It is also understood as an action for the dissemination, the setting up of a seminar for debate and work presentation. At this meeting, not only the scientific and academic community, but also civil society in general and professional practice, come into the debate. The seminar would be based on debate sections, type roundtable, involving 3 fundamental pillars: academic specialists, architects and actors of the local public administration. In this way, not only are the results presented, but also they are discussed and placed in the thinking of the local authorities and in the professional practice of architecture and urbanism. At the same time, the seminar will be accompanied by a small exhibition and booklet to dissemination of its contents.

EXPECTED SCIENTIFIC RESULTS

The scientific results produced by the embryo project are fundamentally based on two aspects.

The first in the sedimentation of a methodological process of morphological analysis and appropriation of space that allows decoding the different features of transition spaces. Although the focus of the embryo project is on the reading of collective housing buildings, it is believed that the methodological approach will be able to be applied to the interpretation of other types of transition systems constituted by typologically distinct buildings. The method of decomposition and description of the ways of living in these spaces analyzed constitutes a reading matrix that will serve as a basis for new critical understandings that intend to synthesize architectural elements and sequences of spaces that are fundamental for the articulation between more intimate (or private) areas and places-of more public or collective meaning.

The second aspect involves the dissemination of the results obtained at the same time as they are validated by the scientific community. The publication of at least one indexed article with peer review seeks to test and validate the quality of the work carried out, while the holding of a seminar points to the debate with national and international experts and specialists in the subject.

BUDGET: € 7.500,00

The present project structures its budget in three fundamental parts: 1. Human resources; 2. Field Missions; 3. Dissemination.

It is intended to have the support of a research fellow, linked to the disciplinary area of architecture and urbanism, mainly in tasks 4 and 5, fundamental phases in the production and presentation of a set of graphic and written elements of systematization and explanation of the results produced by the research.

In some case studies it will be expected to carry out field missions, with the aim of observing and recording (photography and small diagrams) the processes of occupation and ways of living in the transition spaces.

Finally, it is anticipated that part of the budget will be used for logistical and operational support for holding the final event for disseminating the results, the seminar that will convene the various members of the team and some professionals who have sought to carry out architectural experiments that test new models of inhabiting the common space of collective appropriation and simultaneous articulation between home and city.