



THE HOUSE FOR FIVE WOMEN: A FRAMEWORK FOR RESILIENCE AND RENEWAL

Posted on April 23, 2025 by Dima Fadel



Categories: [expanding design practices](#), [Low Density](#), [Politics and economics](#), [Project](#), [xavi gonzalez](#)

Tags: [Adaptive reuse](#), [artistic collaboration](#), [caregiving architecture](#), [collaborative process](#), [community design](#), [facade design](#), [landscape integration](#), [NGO partnerships](#), [post-conflict architecture](#), [resilient design](#), [Self-determination](#), [shared living](#), [social architecture](#), [women's housing](#)

Located in the rural surroundings of Gradačac, Bosnia and Herzegovina, The House for Five Women offers shelter and support for women who have endured war, violence, and social injustice. Conceived as more than just a home, it serves as a living framework for care, community, and self-determination. This project champions a model of cohabitation rooted in shared responsibility and the freedom to reinvent identity in everyday life. Initiated by Hazima Smajlović and brought to life over seven years, the project is the result of a deeply collaborative effort between the architecture collective TEN, Engineers Without Borders, Vive Žene, the municipality of Gradačac, and numerous individual contributors. The development was sustained by an open and transparent management process, where resources were gathered and allocated through community support, formal reports, and collective decision-making.



The architectural design arose from a deep understanding of available resources and contextual dynamics. Rather than impose a predefined aesthetic or rigid program, the design evolved through partnerships with local metalworkers, carpenters, car painters, and artisans. This grounded, participatory approach embedded the building within its environment while extending its reach into broader societal conversations. The employed design is used as a tool for social change, producing

not just space, but agency. Through collaboration with landscape architect Daniel Ganz, the grounds were cultivated into a productive garden. Simultaneously, artist Shirana Shahbazi transformed the facade and interiors into a mutable visual composition—crafted in situ and at a local car painter's workshop—where domestic repetition became a form of creative expression.

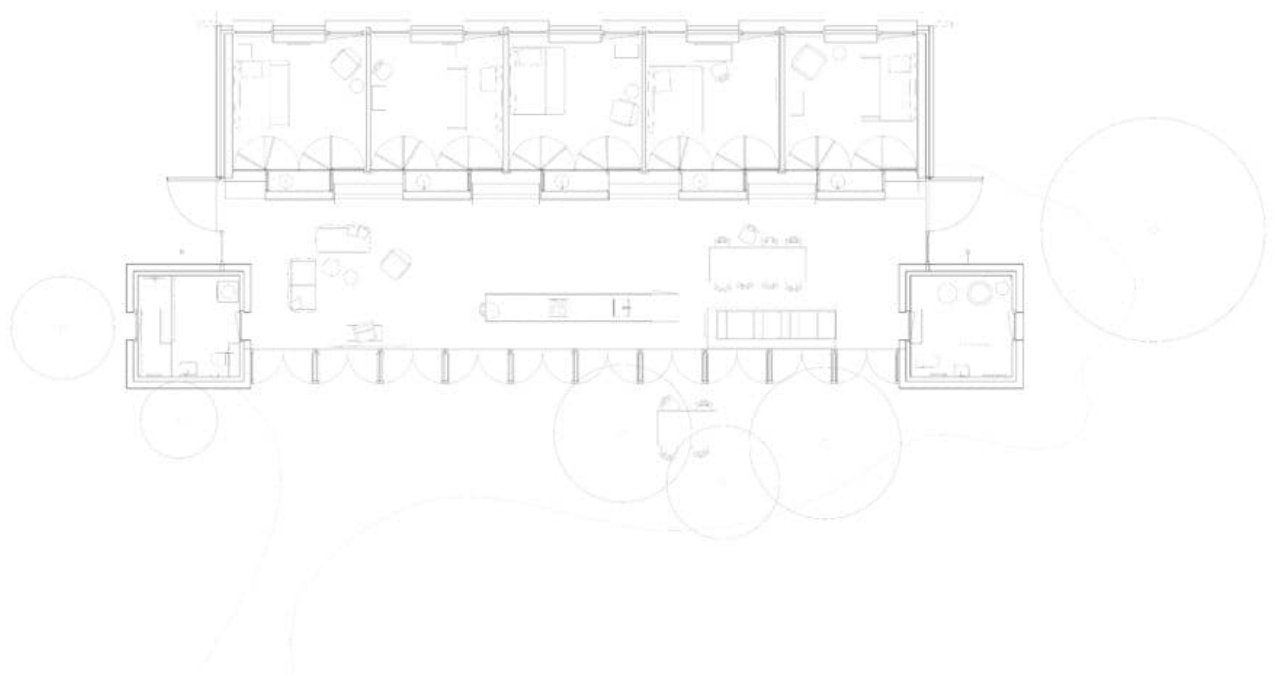
A defining feature of the house is its twenty-panel facade that opens toward the road, creating a 25-meter-long threshold that blurs boundaries between interior and landscape. This gesture makes the home visibly welcoming and symbolically open. Internally, the house balances private autonomy and collective experience. Each of the five residents is offered an equally sized room, complete with kitchenette and cabinetry, while shared spaces—such as the 90m² common room—invite communal activity, from cooking and gathering to resting and reflecting.

urbanNext Lexicon

The House for Five Women: A Framework for Resilience and Renewal
<https://urbannext.net/the-house-for-five-women-a-framework-for-resilience-and-renewal/>



ISSN : 2575-5374



A multifunctional upper-level room, inspired by pastoral storage typologies, serves diverse seasonal needs and supports the project's flexibility. Constructed with a metal space truss and timber-lined interior, this elevated space opens through a sequence of movable panels, introducing a quiet rhythm of adaptation. Throughout, the use of robust, modest materials reflects both durability and warmth, echoing the strength of the women who inhabit the space. The architectural language embraces non-standard dimensions and rawness, promoting a form of comfort that is collectively defined.

Residents are invited to stay for as long as they wish, supported by a caregiver and encouraged to

participate in the cultivation of the land. This framework of independence and care transforms the house into a self-sustaining ecosystem of shared life. The NGO Naš Izvor remains involved in its stewardship, ensuring the home continues to evolve with its occupants. This project defies traditional architectural expectations of closure and control. It embraces open-endedness, interdependence, and the unexpected as central design values. By bridging disciplinary and ideological divides, the House for Five Women exemplifies the capacity of architecture to foster intersubjective experiences and social resilience. In doing so, it embodies TEN's vision of a new, impact-driven design paradigm—where architecture is both a medium of expression and a platform for healing.

urbanNext Lexicon

The House for Five Women: A Framework for Resilience and Renewal
<https://urbannext.net/the-house-for-five-women-a-framework-for-resilience-and-renewal/>



ISSN : 2575-5374

urbanNext Lexicon

The House for Five Women: A Framework for Resilience and Renewal

<https://urbannext.net/the-house-for-five-women-a-framework-for-resilience-and-renewal/>



ISSN : 2575-5374

