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# Barcelona and the challenge of demographic change

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Population ageing is one of the main challenges facing our society. In Barcelona, one out of every five residents is over the age of 65, and according to the forecasts, that figure will rise to one out of four by 2040. There are currently over one thousand centenarians in the city, most of whom are women. In 2018, Barcelona City Council approved its Demographic Change and Ageing Strategy, in order to respond to this challenge from a new standpoint. This article analyses the challenges of ageing for the city, in the areas of housing, care, social support, participation and intergenerational relationships. It also highlights the most innovative actions that the Strategy foresees in these areas.

## Introduction

The demographic ageing process that has been going on for decades in western societies is now becoming one of the main challenges facing the urban world. In Barcelona, one out of every five residents is now over the age of 65 and, according to the forecasts, that figure will rise to one out of four by 2040. While it is true that the massive arrival of foreign nationals (with a younger profile) from the turn of the century to the start of the economic crisis helped to stabilise the ratio of elderly people in the city, demographic change is unstoppable. The trend of a relative increase in the elderly population has returned in the last few years and another clear symptom is longevity, which has been steadily rising. Since 2000, the number of people over the age of 85 has doubled in the municipality, and is now over 4% of the total number of residents. In other words, everything points to the fact that in the near future the elderly population will be bigger and older in the Catalan capital.

It is also important to point out that in Barcelona this demographic change is acquiring a metropolitan scope (Antón-Alonso et al., 2019). In recent decades, the ageing process has spread gradually through the first metropolitan ring. In fact, the low-density areas of the Ordal and the Delta are where this growth in the over-65 population has had a greater impact. Furthermore, the forecasts say that it is precisely those areas where the ratio of elderly people will grow most in the coming decades, along with the municipalities of the Vallès that are closest to Collserola. Therefore, the population distribution of senior citizens has become more homogeneous throughout the metropolis, but in spite of this, the central city still has the highest level of longevity, which is also set to spread outwards. As in other big cities around the world, the evolution of ageing and its territorial distribution form major challenges for the present and the future in the metropolis of Barcelona. The Metropolitan Area must become a more people-friendly residential area for senior citizens. The residential environment must favour the social integration of this group and maximise their well-being. The local and metropolitan policy agenda for the coming years must contribute to achieving these ends.

In that regard, in 2018, Barcelona City Council approved its Demographic Change and Ageing Strategy, which contains a set of actions to be implemented in the short and medium term (Barcelona City Council, 2018). The Strategy includes a major conceptual innovation with respect to previous plans: it aims to be not just an action plan for a certain age group, senior citizens, but to include the idea of ageing as a life-long process. For example, this involves taking into account that the living conditions of previous age bands will be fundamental for enjoying old age. That means taking into account the gender perspective for people's entire lives, in order to rethink the model we use for care, among other things. It also means acting while taking into consideration the great diversity that exists in a group of people who are becoming less and less homogeneous and in which the inequalities that affect all the other age groups still persist. It also involves working harder on actions that foster intergenerational relationships and on those that highlight the contributions of senior citizens to society as a whole. Putting this perspective for action into practice in specific policies also involves taking into account a wide range of plans and strategies that Barcelona City Council is carrying out at the same time, such as the 2017-2027 Strategy for Inclusion and Reducing Social Inequalities, the 2016-2025 Right to Housing Plan, the Democratising Care Strategy, the Government Measure for Promoting Community Health in Barcelona and the 2017-2021 Government Measure for Promoting Senior Citizens in Barcelona, among others.

However, the Strategy aims to become the main policy concerning ageing in the city. In order to tackle the big challenges of demographic change, where a new generation of active senior citizens will be a big factor and where there will be an increasing number of very elderly people in need of care and support, maintaining generational variety and complexity, the Democratic Change and Ageing Strategy will include 77 actions divided into 15 operational lines of action and 4 strategic areas. Without wishing to undertake an exhaustive review of all the actions set out in the Strategy, which would not make much sense, this article deals with the most relevant questions that appear in the analyses carried out on ageing in the Barcelona metropolis and how to tackle them in the short term using the Strategy.

## 1. Housing, a pillar of well-being

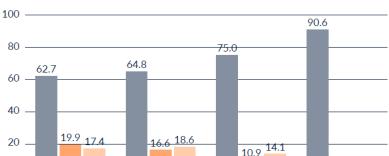
For most of Barcelona's population of senior citizens, housing is now one of the most important pillars of well-being. Over 70% of the people aged 65 or over currently live in homes they own, without any pending payments to the municipality (if we extend the scope to the Metropolitan Area, the percentage rises to 80%). Clearly, this fact signals major economic differences between this group of people and the rest of the younger population, who have to assume the burden of much higher expenditure on housing. Not having to pay mortgage instalments or a monthly rent for their homes more than compensates for the drop in income associated with retirement. This has helped to place senior citizens as one of the least vulnerable groups in socio-economic terms, since the start of the Big Recession in 2008, without losing sight of the fact that there are also segments of this population group where this is not true and who are suffering difficulties, especially the very elderly population, mostly women who live alone (Porcel et al., 2018).

However, for the time being, there are serious doubts about whether privately owned housing's protective role in old age will remain as significant in coming decades as it is today. It is well known that, as a consequence of increased housing prices, due to the last property boom (1997-2007), access to housing is becoming more difficult for the younger generations. This means that in coming years, there is likely to be a progressive increase in the number of senior citizens who have to assume mortgage or rental payments, with the consequences that this increase may have on their income from retirement pensions. This fact, in conjunction with the gradual disappearance of old-style rental agreements and the current scarcity of social housing, leads to the conclusion that if we do not start to act now with regard to the future, with housing policies that broaden the range of affordable residential options available to senior citizens, in coming decades situations of risk and social vulnerability for elderly people in the city may increase drastically.

Furthermore, it is also well known that most senior citizens (87.3%) wish to continue living in their own homes while they are able to do so (IMSERSO, 2010). In the case of Barcelona, we know that as people get older, they also increasingly wish to remain in their own neighbourhoods (Graph 1). Over 90% of people aged 80 or over state that, in circumstances where they could and wished to change their residence, they would choose their current neighbourhood. This indicator shows the importance of the local relational network for senior citizens, as well as living in a residential environment that they know. Whether these people can voluntarily remain in their homes depends on a wide range of factors, including the type of ownership, their state of health, how accessible and adapted the home is, the possibilities of receiving social support and care at home, and the presence of local relational networks and nearby relatives.

4.8 4.6

80 or over



60 to 79

Graph 1. Where you would go to live if you had the chance and the means to change your residence. according to age group. Barcelona. 2016

They would stay in the same neighbourhood

They would go to live in another Barcelona neighbourhood

They would go to live outside Barcelona

18 to 39

Source: Barcelona City Council. Municipal Services Survey. 2016.

40 to 59

From a broad perspective, in order to deal with this question relating to housing, the important thing is to keep increasing the pool of public housing, especially rental homes, for all age groups. The Strategy establishes actions for helping senior citizens to remain in their own homes and for seeking new housing solutions. With the former, a fundamental point is to reinforce and innovate home-care services, as well as support for carers, whether they are family members or professionals, as explained in the following section. But grants for adapting the accessibility and safety of the building and the home are also of fundamental importance. In that regard, the Strategy foresees an increase in budgetary allocations for the renovation of homes and stairways by the Municipal Institute of Housing, including a line of subsidies for vulnerable people, who may be able to receive 100% of the cost of the work. Along the same lines, there is now an online website-guide containing recommendations for adapting homes to the ageing process, which includes possible functional and architectural adaptations, advice on furniture, everyday objects and energy matters, accessibility and safety, along with their corresponding grants and subsidies. At the moment, the districts with the most senior-citizen residents (Ciutat Vella and Nou Barris) are the ones that have the most buildings without any lifts. Housing is also located in surroundings that must become more accessible and people-friendly for senior citizens than they are at present. Barcelona's 2018-2026 Universal Accessibility Plan aims to continue with improvements concerning accessibility to municipal services.

In regard to housing solutions, the Strategy includes the creation of new adapted rental housing with the necessary support for senior citizens, and extending the existing ones. It is planned to build 11 new housing developments (approximately 650 homes) with services for elderly people by 2022. Meanwhile, the intention is to explore "senior cohousing" and provide support for groups that are already working in this area or who wish to promote it, given that this kind of experience does not exist in the city today.

However, when people are unable to remain in their own homes or in other housing solutions, there is still the public and private resource of day centres or even institutionalisation in residences for the elderly. Barcelona currently has 13,051 residential places and 2,736 day-centre places, including public, subsidised and private centres, which are distributed very unequally among the city's districts. The ratio of residencies per 1,000 people over the age of 65 in Barcelona is 32.9 places in residencies and 7.8 places in day centres, while these ratios for Catalonia as a whole are 43.2 and 13.5 places, <sup>1</sup> respectively. For the time being, there is an obvious lack of residential places. In 2018, there were nearly 4,000 people on the waiting list who were still living at home or in temporary residential accommodation. This means long waiting times, which vary according to type of centre (public, subsidised, collaborators, private accredited centres) and the geographical location of each residence. Generally speaking, the waiting period varies from 13 months for residences in Ciutat Vella to 56 months for those in Sant Andreu. This may be one of the factors that explains why the city has a net negative annual migration of 1,600 people over the age of 80, <sup>2</sup> although this may also be combined with other factors, such as a change of residence because people wish to be closer to children who already live outside the city.

#### 1.1 Care and care services

One of the most important factors explaining the ageing process is the constant increase in life expectancy, something that has been happening for decades. In Catalonia, the current life expectancy is around 83.5 years. Needless to say, living longer is clearly a good thing, but it is also necessary to say that the number of personal-dependency situations is increasing among the very elderly. In Barcelona, more than half the people over the age of 75 find it difficult to carry out basic everyday activities themselves, including getting dressed, washing, eating, etc. Care of elderly people is becoming more and more central to political debate, mostly due to the resulting social impact. In 2006, Zapatero's government approved the Dependency Act,<sup>3</sup> which provides for either an additional benefit for dependent people or recognition by Social Security of the work done by carers (most of whom are women) in the form of contributions. This is a clear indication of how important this matter is. The approval of that Act was undoubtedly a major step forward in this area, but its deficient implementation, which was seriously affected by the period of economic crisis, means that it has never been able to provide optimal cover for the problem.

In the municipality of Barcelona, out of the population aged 65 or over who have difficulty in carrying out basic everyday activities, 60.4% receive help from their partners, other relatives or friends, and in the surrounding metropolitan area this percentage rises to 75.5% (Table 1).

These results speak for themselves. The care of dependent elderly people is mostly based on an informal system created by the family circle. This ends up increasing gender and class inequalities (García-Calvente et al., 2004). Gender inequalities, because the care falls mainly to women, who are most affected by the cost of care: health problems, which can be both mental and physical, employment difficulties, which may affect the work-life balance in terms of care and working life or even job placement, and social relationships, which can become minimal due to the lack of available time. There is also a clear class factor, because informal care is more frequent among working-class families. The typical stereotype of a carer is that of an unemployed woman with a low educational level. In that sense, in order to progress towards a more egalitarian model, it would be necessary to contemplate a transition towards a more institutionalised care model, which would begin with the proper implementation of the Dependency Act.

I. According to the 2015-2017 territorial programme of the Catalan Ministry of Social Affairs, Employment and Families, the aim of the programme was to achieve 23.7 places for every 1,000 inhabitants over the age of 65. In the case of day centres, the aim for 2012 was a ratio of 6.2 places for every 1,000 inhabitants over the age of 65, for the whole of Catalonia

<sup>2.</sup> Calculation made by analysing the 2011-2016 period (Barcelona City Council, 2018).

<sup>3.</sup> Act 39/2006, of 14 December, on promoting personal self-sufficiency and care for dependent people.

Table 1. Help provider according to place of residence. Population aged 65 or over suffering limitations to their everyday activities due to health problems. Barcelona metropolitan Area. 2016-2017

	Barcelona	The rest of the metropolitan Área	Area metropolitana de Barcelona
Does not receive help from anyone	22.5	14.8	19.0
Partner, other relatives or acquaintances	60.4	75.5	67.1
Privately-contracted person	11.1	6.9	9.2
Social Services	3.4	1.4	2.5
Others	2.7	1.4	2.1

Source: IERMB and Idescat. Metropolitan statistics on living conditions. 2016-2017.

Until that occurs, Barcelona City Council, through its Democratisation of Care Strategy, is deploying new support services for carers, such as the Care Information and Resources Centre, with the aim of fostering services and support for care. The Strategy also includes the expansion of Respir Plus, an economic-subsidy programme that enables dependent elderly people to temporarily stay in a private residential care centre for senior citizens, when their families need them to.

As we have said, one of the Strategy's objectives is to support the wish of elderly people to remain in their own homes. The most prominent actions aimed at making progress in this area of care include a redefinition of the Home Care Service<sup>4</sup> (SAD), what has been called "social superblocks" or "care islands". In the previous term of office, Barcelona City Council began eight pilot programmes in the neighbourhoods of La Marina, Sant Antoni, Vilapicina and Poblenou. This consisted of a new SAD supply model, based on the creation of teams of around 12 professionals caring for between 40 and 60 users within a small geographical area. In this case, the aim is to offer an efficient, local service, so that people are able to enjoy certain social, cleaning and health services in their own homes. The central themes of this initiative are in line with the current geriatric model of "Ageing in Place", which is becoming more and more popular internationally. This trend is based on the benefits of conserving people's physical and social environment during old age.

At the moment, the results of the pilot programmes are positive, both in terms of the improved quality of the service and the working conditions of the professionals involved. For that reason, the Strategy aims to extend the new model to the city as a whole, when the new SAD tender has been resolved, reinforcing the coordination of this service with other local services and facilities. Along the same lines, another feature of the Strategy consists of improvements to the telecare service, with the application of new devices and better technologies than the current ones, as well as integrating it with the other services. An increase of 4,600 new users a year has been recorded in recent years, i.e. nearly 13 new people every day.

## 1.2 Company for loneliness

The process of ageing is associated with a progressive reduction in social contacts, due to factors that include the loss of working relationships, children leaving home, the death of friends, partners

<sup>4.</sup> There are currently 23,811 people using this service in Barcelona, 72% of whom are women, an increase of 2,300 compared to the previous year, or more than six new people per day.

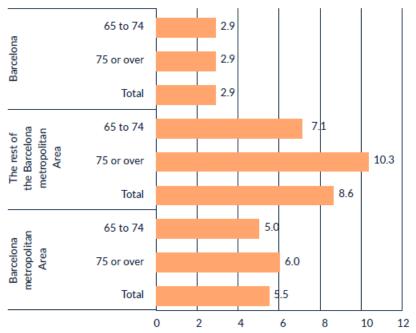
or relatives, as well as other aspects relating to levels of income and health (Jehoel-Gijsbers and Vrooman, 2008). This process can lead to the interpersonal relationships of the elderly being confined to close relations and to situations of loneliness, precisely at the time when social supports are becoming more necessary (Canal, 2016).<sup>5</sup>

Residential solitude among senior citizens is a phenomenon that is directly related to age, so that the most elderly people are more likely to live alone in their homes, mainly because they are widows or widowers. At present, 35.9% of Barcelona residents over the age of 75 live alone, although these are not all necessarily cases of loneliness. However, it is important to broaden the focus of sociability to a wider residential environment, the residential neighbourhood, and beyond a person's partner. In that sense, it should be remembered that the territorial proximity of family networks is a relevant factor, in terms of being potential sources of emotional and physical support. This phenomenon is especially common in southern Europe, with a context shaped by the existence of a Mediterranean Welfare regime. However, in recent decades in Barcelona, in parallel with the process of metropolitanisation, the distance between relatives has increased, mostly due to the residential dynamics produced during the recent property boom (Porcel i Navarro-Varas, 2014).

The availability of relatives who live in the same neighbourhood currently depends on two clear patterns in the Barcelona Metropolitan Area. The first pattern is related to age. In the metropolis as a whole, the proportion of people aged 75 or over who have relatives in their residential neighbourhood is higher (55.1%) than for the population between the ages of 65 and 74 (43.4%). This situation may be due to strategies of residential proximity among relatives as people get older, in order to facilitate care in two senses: for the elderly people who have health-related problems (disability, dependency) or for the grandchildren. The second pattern is of a territorial nature. The municipality of Barcelona has a higher proportion of elderly people with a family network in their immediate surroundings, and this is especially true for the most elderly population. According to data compiled in the Strategy's analysis, in general, high levels of social support and low rates of loneliness are registered in Barcelona, although this figure may be above 10%, Ciutat Vella and Nou Barris stand out for having the lowest self-perceived rate of social support (an average of 80 points), as well as higher percentages of people who often feel lonely (11% and 8.9%, respectively). The districts of Sants-Montjuïc and Horta-Guinardó are at the other end of the spectrum, with average social support above 95% and lower percentages of people who often feel lonely (3.3% and 2%, respectively) (Barcelona City Council, 2018).

The most serious cases of loneliness are those of social isolation. The loneliness index, based on the Coexistence and Neighbourhood Relations Survey (ECAMB), measures the population that does not have any contact or relationship with other people, whether they live in the same home or not (Graph 2). These are the people who either have no one to talk to about everyday things, or those who do not have any kind of contact with relatives or friends, or who cannot count on anyone if they are in need. In the municipality of Barcelona, only 2.9% of the people aged 65 or over are in this situation. This figure is a lot lower than the one for the surrounding metropolitan area (8.6%). Furthermore, while there are no differences between age groups in Barcelona, those differences do exist in the Metropolitan Area, where the most elderly people show higher levels of social isolation (10.3% against 7.1% among people between the ages of 65 and 74). In accordance with this data, providing company to combat loneliness is another big challenge that will need to be tackled in coming decades, especially in the surrounding metropolitan area (Graph 2).

<sup>5.</sup> This is why social-support programmes and intergenerational contact become key factors for the physical and psychological well-being of elderly people who are in situations of loneliness (Coscolla et al., 2016).



Graph 2. Loneliness index. according to age and place of residence. Population aged 65 or over. Barcelona metropolitan Area. 2018

Source: IERMB. Neighbourhood Relationships and Coexistence Survey in the Barcelona Metropolitan Area. 2018.

Meanwhile, in the central city, it seems that the programmes carried out to date are giving positive results, and for that reason, the Strategy also includes them. Such is the case of the Radars Programme, a community-action project for detecting and preventing situations of risk for the elderly and mitigating the negative effects of loneliness and isolation. The programme began in the Camp d'en Grassot neighbourhood in 2008. It has now been expanded to 40 city neighbourhoods, with 13 more being added in 2019. It is also planned to reinforce the home-companionship programme for senior citizens, where a volunteer visits the elderly person in their home once a week for around two hours, thereby establishing an emotional bond. In addition to activating volunteers and forming a local network, the idea behind VinclesBCN is to strengthen relationships with family members and broaden relationships with peers, through the use of new technologies, something the Strategy also aims to reinforce. As the people who socialise using these digital tools reach the age of retirement, their use and access to them will noticeably increase among senior citizens, along with the potential for mitigating social isolation through these tools. However, in spite of this improvement, it should be emphasised that there are still major differences among senior citizens and the rest of the population: 92.6% of the people between the ages of 16 and 64 have internet at home, while only 63% of people aged 65 or over are connected online. The gap is wider when we consider the use of social networks: only 17.4% of senior citizens participate in them, while nearly 70% of the rest of the population take part (Barcelona City Council, 2018). The Vincles BCN programme app is tackling this with improved design and usability, as well as ensuring that senior citizens know how to use them.

## 1.3 Social participation and intergenerational relationships

The best way to ensure healthy ageing with social support must surely be social participation. Recent studies (Age UK, 2017) indicate that social and community participation is as, or more, important than social and economic inequalities as factors for ensuring the quality of senior citizens' lives. Feeling connected, involved in life and in the world surrounding you. In previous stages of life, this mostly happens through work, but in old age, it is basically channelled through social, cultural and community activities. At the same time, having this involvement provides enormous potential for the social and economic development of society as a whole. However, there are various obstacles that must be overcome in order to reinforce and value the participation

of senior citizens, and one of them is age discrimination. Innovative campaigns to combat ageism, such as Barcelona City Council's "I'm old, so what?", aim to foster recognition for the contributions of senior citizens and break away from these kinds of obstacles and stereotypes.

With regard to associations, one significant fact to take into account is that more senior citizens belong to them than any other age group, at around 35.6%, and they are mainly members of social, cultural and health organisations, as well as local-resident associations. In spite of this positive data, there are other indicators that show a lot of room for improvement: senior citizens take part less in community activities (political, cultural, charitable, religious, etc.) than the other age groups, especially where women are concerned. And when asked about attending organised group activities, most senior citizens state that they do not do those kinds of activities. However, there is a very active minority of senior citizens: 65.1% of people aged 75 or over state that they never attend activities of this kind, while 15% say that they take part in them several times a week. In any event, we know that as people get older, they increasingly prefer to do activities in their own neighbourhoods, and therefore the local factor takes on new relevance: 44% of people do activities in their own neighbourhood, while 36% do them as much in their own neighbourhoods as outside them. By contrast, in this age group, people who do this kind of activity outside their own neighbourhood drops to 19.6% (Graph 3).



Graph 3. Places for doing community activities. by age group.

Source: IERMB. Urban Cohesion Survey. 2017.

In and outside their neighbourhood or residential area

Therefore, it is necessary to reflect on how the public authorities can facilitate contributions and improve senior citizens' capacity for getting involved, e.g. with new forms of the reciprocity economy, the transfer of experience and knowledge, self-organisation of services and provisions and active participation in the decision-making and design of public policies. The 2017 Citizen Participation Survey shows that, along with the younger age groups, senior citizens are the people who know least about Barcelona City Council's participation channels and venues. The Senior Citizen Advisory Council is the leading participation body in this area, and the "Voices of Senior Citizens" Convention, which is held every four years, is the main forum for debating and reflecting on policies for fostering active, healthy ageing. At the last convention, which was held in March

2019, a significant number of proposals were created concerning three main areas: ageing with rights, ageing with dignity and ageing while participating.<sup>6</sup>

Furthermore, since 2009, the Senior Citizen Advisory Council has lent its support to the "Barcelona is friendly towards senior citizens" project, an initiative that favours the well-being and health promoted by the World Health Organisation (WHO).

In the area of active ageing, it is necessary to note two major contributions made by the Strategy: showcasing a battery of actions to promote education and culture throughout life and another to foster intergenerational relationships. In the coming years, it will be necessary to explore both areas further. In the first block, the Strategy includes support for university programmes aimed at senior citizens, a promotional campaign in adult-education schools and reinforcing the participation of senior citizens in the city's cultural policies. The second block includes the programming of intergenerational cultural activities in libraries, museums, civil centres, neighbourhood centres and other cultural facilities. Furthermore, it also aims to reinforce intergenerational projects in the Educating City programme, as well as university extension courses for senior citizens and redefining the model used in senior-citizen centres.

## **Final reflections**

The time has come to begin adapting the city to the new demographic structures that will become progressively more established in the near future. If not, it will be too late. As the demographer Juan Antonio Módenes recently explained in an illustrative way during the "Ageing, housing and environment" talks organised by the Barcelona Metropolitan Housing Observatory (OHB): "Ageing does not mean making more policies for senior citizens, but rather continuing to make policies for the population as a whole; what we have to remember is that most of that population will be older". This is the problem: to be more aware of the demographic change that is occurring and the need to respond in a cross-cutting way through all public policies.

Until recently, Barcelona City Council was increasing care for senior citizens in the area of social services and it was also dedicating major efforts to promoting the participation of this age group. It has also integrated this standpoint in other sectors in a more indirect way, such as urban planning and transport, by significantly improving accessibility for the population as a whole. But it is with the Demographic Change and Ageing Strategy that Barcelona City Council has finally introduced this change in perspective in a more decisive way. This is made clear by the stated objective "to achieve a Barcelona for all ages, with gender justice and generational equality, attention to diversity in life cycles and ways of life, and to do so with the participation of the various social and generational groups, through actions based on proximity and placing the care and self-sufficiency of people at the heart of policies".

The Strategy organises and aligns a set of actions around a series of strategic objectives and areas. Some of these actions are new. The others already existed, and the idea is to reinforce and improve them. It will be necessary to see how to promote the implementation of a strategy, which is certainly ambitious and cross-cutting, within the new municipal organisational structure, so that it is not just a document with a set of actions that are more or less well organised, but rather that it acts to achieve its proposed objectives. Among the most relevant are: a) to promote services and support for care; b) to provide support for people who wish to remain in their own homes; c) to combat loneliness in senior citizens; d) to work towards accessible public areas and local transport and commerce for everyone; e) to promote education and culture throughout life; and f) to guarantee good treatment and to work towards preventing mistreatment, among others. For that reason it is necessary to develop suitable governance forums among the various City Council councillor's offices and services, while also counting on the monitoring and participation of senior

<sup>6.</sup> The conclusions of the 5th Convention can be studied at: <a href="https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/dretssocials/sites/default/files/arxius-documents/5a">https://ajuntament.barcelona.cat/dretssocials/sites/default/files/arxius-documents/5a</a> convencio veus persones grans conclusions.pdf

citizens themselves, e.g. organised through the Senior Citizens' Advisory Council or the Municipal Social Well-being Council's ageing group, which were involved in the drafting of the Strategy. The approach is correct and therefore what is lacking is consolidating it and to observing its effects.

Throughout the article we have taken an in-depth look at some of the aspects of the ageing process that may become more critical for the city's social cohesion in the near future. We have talked about housing, care, loneliness and social integration based on citizen participation. As we have explained, the Strategy foresees actions in all of these areas, which can then be shaped to improve their effects. But it will be necessary to deal with one more challenge, which concerns the territorial aspect of the phenomenon. Barcelona is metropolitan, and the progression of the ageing process offers a new sign of this aspect. The metropolis needs to be governed as a whole, in order to favour its cohesion. Why not opt for a metropolitan strategy then?

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