

# 20

## Barcelona Societat

Journal on social knowledge and analysis

### Take stand

**Homelessness:** A Human Rights Crisis

Housing First. The right to housing for the most vulnerable

### In depth

Not having a home damages (a lot) health

Problems with dealing with the mortgage and the impact on health: a study with the platform for people affected by mortgages

Homeless people attention in the city of Barcelona: a historic and future review

Right to inhabit, right to (social) housing

Housing First model in Spain: Habitat programme 12 months- results

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Together we can do more: Y-Foundation and Housing First in Finland

Best practices and models database of the Social Rights Section

Housing First at Arrels Foundation: A change of direction



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### Presentation

Laia Ortiz

Deputy Mayor of Social Rights, Barcelona City Council

I am really pleased to be able to present you Issue 20 of the *Barcelona Society* journal, with which Barcelona City Council relaunches an influential publication for the diffusion of research directly connected to Barcelona. *Barcelona Society* was born in 1993 with the aim of encouraging and sharing social research conducted in the city with the purpose of improving social policies as well as the life of the inhabitants.

We are convinced that working on social policies in a society which is becoming every day more complex, where co-related phenomena and new realities are appearing, demands a thorough knowledge of the social reality. *Barcelona Society* seeks to make available the work of professionals and experts who, coming from the academic field or public management; on a political or technical level; from the state, private or associated sector, take part in the creation of knowledge about the social reality of the city.

After nearly five years without being published, a new period emerges with a number devoted to homelessness and housing exclusion, a face of poverty that is becoming more and more relevant in large western cities. While resources for homeless people managed by local authorities and social organizations are increasing, the number of people excluded permanently from the housing market is also rising.

In Barcelona, data provided by the city counts and the Social Insertion Services point to a rise in the number of people who sleep on the street. If the first comprehensive count made on March the 11<sup>th</sup> 2008 registered 658 people sleeping rough, a count made on May the 18<sup>th</sup> 2016, revealed 941 rough sleepers. This means a 37% increase in eight years. In the same period, the number of people sleeping in accommodation centres, either of social organizations or public ones, has risen by 60%; from 1,190 people housed on March 11<sup>th</sup> 2008 to 1,907 on May 18<sup>th</sup> 2016.

The obvious increase of pressure on the system of attention to homeless people obliges us to examine thoroughly and accurately the severe housing exclusion phenomenon and overcome stereotypes by proposing new social intervention approaches aimed at recovering the housing, economic and emotional stability of the people who go through the harsh situation of losing their home and being forced to sleep on the street.

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Barcelona City Council and all the social organizations that form the Network of Attention to Homeless People have reinforced their commitment towards those people hit hardest by the decline in living standards by designing and presenting the Plan to Fight Against Homelessness. A road map necessary to review and speed up the transformation of the attention services addressed to homeless people and to foster the designing of policies targeted to housing access and the economic and emotional stability of those who have lost everything and need to rebuild their home.

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### Foreword

Albert Sales

*Barcelona Society* journal is relaunched after a five-year break. It returns in a new format and with a commitment to share its contents on a digital platform, maintaining as always its commitment to technical and academic rigour and to serve the city and its citizens. On the basis of this commitment, we devote Issue 20 to homelessness and housing exclusion, bringing together different visions, research and experiences in order to outline one of the challenges all the large European cities must tackle and one to which the citizenship, organizations and Barcelona's municipality have always been very sensitive.

In 2008, the Network of Attention to Homeless People in Barcelona, formed by 31 social organizations and the City Council, launched an effort to systematize data and knowledge on homelessness situation in the city, producing a series of periodical reports fostered by several research methodologies and the exploitation of the register of public and private services currently attending people facing serious problems of housing exclusion. Between 2008 and 2016, the number of people sleeping in accommodation centres of organizations and the local authorities have risen 60%; from 1,190 people housed in different centres on March 11<sup>th</sup> 2008 to 1,907 on May the 18<sup>th</sup> 2016. This increase has helped to contain the impact of housing exclusion, but hasn't reduced the number of people sleeping on the street. While the first count made on March the 11<sup>th</sup> 2008, registered 658 people sleeping rough, on May the 18<sup>th</sup> 2016, 800 volunteers localised 941 rough sleepers. A 37% increase in eight years<sup>1</sup>. Data on these city counts confirm the organizations' and local authorities services' perception and coincide with the trends also revealed in the reports of the Social Inclusion Service of Barcelona City Council's street outreach teams.

During the decades of expansion of the welfare states and, later on, until the 90's, the homelessness problem has tended to be reduced to a street dimension, considering that the solution was to attend people on the street as if they suffered a social pathology and needed social accompaniment. As a consequence, the emergency attention in shelters has been seen as the right moment for social services to recreate bonds with the people attended through the covering of basic needs. From the last 30 years onwards, though, the

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1. 2011 data collected by Sales et al. (2015); 2016 data provided by the Network of Attention to Homeless People from the count of May the 18th.

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increase in the percentage of the population who can't access housing and suffer severe social vulnerability is a common phenomenon in most western cities.

Policies steered by stereotyped images and addressed to the provision of emergency accommodation see the victims of exclusion as though they were affected by a social pathology that needs treatment. Empirical data reveals that the diversity of pathways leading to housing exclusion and the complex interplay between structural and individual factors affecting the people who suffer homelessness and extreme poverty must encourage us to break stereotypes and acknowledge that homeless people share the inability to execute their right to housing. The experts who participate in this number help us to understand homelessness as a consequence of society's failure to guarantee rights; to identify that phenomenon as an ongoing problem, where the rough sleepers are the tip of the iceberg, and to transform intervention approaches which have shaped the social services methodologies to accompany the people attended.

The following pages display an overview from a perspective of rights of the homeless, explain the evolution of attention policies addressed to the homeless people in Barcelona and broaden the scope towards homelessness forms attached to international mobility and legal exclusion suffered by an increasing number of migrants. It is also analysed the revolution of placing housing at the centre of the systems of attention to homeless people, considering the potential of the Housing First approach to introduce a shift in the design of social policies and in the daily practice of the support services.

The mechanism forcing people to live on street is fed by a highly discriminatory housing market, by a labour market inaccessible for many people, by a precarious benefits system and by management of migrant flows that condemns many of our neighbours to fall into an irregular situation. But, even though many structural causes of homelessness go beyond local policies, a better design of the stakeholders' daily interventions can prevent a lot of suffering, transform the social perception of the problem and generate social cohesion spaces aimed at building rights in the city.





**Take stand**

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**Key words: homelessness, human rights, society, poverty, speculation**

### **Homelessness: A Human Rights Crisis**

Leilani Farha

UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Housing

**Homelessness is a global human rights crisis that demands an urgent response. It is occurring in all socio-economic contexts – in developed, emerging and developing economies, in prosperity as well as in austerity – and it is occurring with impunity.**

Describing not only a lack of housing but also a social group, the term homelessness can be problematic as it attempts to couch various understandings of a phenomenon under one umbrella. The common thread that unites people who are homeless is the denial of rights and indignation individuals experience on a daily basis. Misunderstood worldwide as a mere policy issue or social ill, homelessness is a red flag that states have failed to protect the human rights of the most vulnerable in society.

Homelessness is one of the least examined consequences of unabated inequality, unfair distribution of land and property, and poverty occurring on a global scale. It is a result of State acquiescence to real estate speculation and unregulated markets – a result of treating housing as a commodity rather than as a human right. It is rooted in a global privileging of wealth and power, scapegoating and scorn for those who do not have a home.

As a human rights violation, to adequately address homelessness requires human rights responses that tackle the systemic causes of homelessness, as well as changing societal attitudes and structures to ensure it is eradicated.

A worldwide crisis is occurring right in front of our eyes and yet remains largely invisible. Homelessness, a phenomena that no country is immune to, has many faces and nuances, but is bound by common struggles for dignity and the recognition of human rights.

The world is consistently exposed to the realities of homelessness:

In the west coast of Canada, a tent city is erected where people are essentially living under tarps, without any basic services, in make-shift structures teeming with insects.

Wedged between new buildings and older structures that overcharge for appalling housing conditions, the homeless people in this camp are just some of many in the country, with a simple request: provide us with real affordable housing options.

In major cities of India people are consistently confronted with stark inequalities standing side by side: new construction promising a luxurious lifestyle complemented by high-end furnishings and a sense of an elevated social status abutting some of the largest slums in the world where access to water and sanitation can only be imagined, and families live without a sense of security or hope of ownership.

In Europe the numerous stories and images of the migrant crisis illustrate lives put on hold, families fleeing conflict, and the desire for a better life. Millions remain un-housed throughout various countries, desperate for their opportunity to re-join society and move forward.

A woman in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, now travels long-distances to take her child to school, her former community just a memory since it was demolished to make way for the Olympic games. She and her family are now forced to the outskirts of town, removed from social networks, schools and employment.

In my view as Special Rapporteur, homelessness, in its many forms, is symptomatic of governments' failure to address growing inequalities in income, wealth and access to land and property. Simply put, it is governments' failure to implement the right to housing.

#### **What do we mean by “homelessness”?**

In English, 'homelessness' suggests both a lack of physical housing and a loss of a sense of social belonging. In some other languages, the closest word to homelessness would be 'rooflessness', lacking shelter or transience. In French, homelessness is referred to as either 'sans domicile fixe', or 'sans-abrisme'. In Spanish, homelessness is referred to as 'sin hogar' or 'sin techo' or 'en situación de calle' or 'poblaciones callejeras' o 'sinhogarismo'.

Defining people who are homeless simply by their lack of shelter limits the understanding of a much broader issue. Terms like “sleeping rough” or street homelessness reference a small portion of the homeless population, the majority of which are men. This can lead to distorted policy solutions and under-estimating the problem, such as in Japan. When homelessness was defined in terms of those living on the street available data suggested

declining numbers as a result of shelter programs. However, when defined as “lacking access to minimally adequate housing” data showed increasing numbers of homeless. It also fails to capture the depth of the discrimination and exclusion many homeless people face daily in their struggle for dignity.

Narrow definitions can also exclude entire populations. Consider rural Bangladesh, for example, where homelessness is assessed based on whether a household has a regularised plot of land as well a roof overhead.<sup>2</sup> Other definitions focus on being deprived of a certain minimum quality of housing where individuals in precarious or overcrowded housing may consider themselves to be homeless as they lack a secure place to call their own.

In my work and in my report on this issue, I have chosen a human rights definition of homelessness, which provides both a flexible and contextual approach. It recognizes that homelessness is related to personal circumstances, but it also recognizes the structural causes of homelessness. This approach is anchored in three central elements:

1. The absence of home – both in terms of the material and the social aspect housing.
2. Systemic discrimination - “the homeless” is constituted as a social group subject to discrimination and stigmatization.
3. Recognition of homeless people as rights-holders and the broader systems that deny these rights.

### **A Human Rights Framework**

Homelessness is a violation of human rights and as such, requires a human rights response.

Under international law state obligations have been clearly laid out. For example, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), the UN body tasked with monitoring States’ human rights compliance with the right to housing, has said: a State party in which any significant number of individuals are “deprived of [...] basic shelter and housing” is, “prima facie, failing to discharge its obligations under the Covenant.”<sup>3</sup> States

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2. Graham Tipple and Suzanne Speak, “Definitions of homelessness in developing countries” (2005) 29 *Habitat International* 337 at 342.

3. Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, general comment No. 3 (1990) on the nature of States Parties’ obligations, para 10

are required to “demonstrate that every effort has been made to use all resources that are at its disposition in an effort to satisfy, as a matter of priority, those minimum obligations”<sup>4</sup>.

International law makes it clear: states have human rights responsibilities that must be fulfilled immediately. Addressing homelessness is one such responsibility.

Immediate obligations with respect to homelessness include adopting and implementing comprehensive strategies to address homelessness that are based in human rights. These must point to goals and timelines as well as outline the responsibilities of all levels of government. Most importantly, such a strategy should be developed, implemented and evaluated by people who are experiencing homelessness – a critical tenet of a human rights framework.

Measuring the extent of homelessness and reporting on outcomes will help to ensure accountability and must be included in any strategy. However, numbers only tell one side of the story. Testimonials and visuals would complement the statistics gathered and offer a sense of the human element of homelessness as well as the circumstances which lead to this experience. It would bring a tangible component to policy: pictures and stories that describe the unspeakable conditions where people are housed, their fear of eviction, or their heartache as they are called ‘vermin’ or ‘cockroaches’. Civil society organizations can help to gather such content which will offer a more fulsome understanding of the issue.

A human rights approach places people, and particularly the most vulnerable, at the centre. It is a recognition that ‘the homeless’ are individuals – rights bearers - and will set the stage for all state activities with regards to homelessness. This forces a shift whereby all decisions are viewed from the perspective of how they will interact with the rights of individuals, and the goal of eliminating homelessness.

Under this framework combating discrimination is a top priority. It is imperative that states policies, laws and programs are in line with international obligations, and do not re-enforce negative stereotyping. In terms of forced evictions, states must prohibit any eviction that would lead to homelessness and follow a process of consultation as well offering adequate resettlement options. No excuses.

Developers and urban planning would have to ensure human rights are not violated. States have a firm legal obligation to regulate and engage with companies, or individuals to ensure that all of their actions and policies are in accordance with the right to adequate

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4. Ibid

housing and the prevention and amelioration of homelessness. Real estate speculation, urban development and investment cannot trump human rights.

### **Homeless People: Stigmatized, Discriminated, Excluded, Criminalized**

Homeless people have been constructed as a social group. Worldwide their identity is created and then reinforced by people who have more: more money, more power, more influence. It is a vicious circle. Laws, policies, business practices, and media stories depict and treat homeless people as 'morally inferior', undeserving of assistance, authors of their own misfortune, blamed for the social problems they come to represent. Once stigmatized, their needs are further neglected and inequality and discrimination further entrenched.

I have received countless testimonies from homeless people of the constant intimidation and harassment by authorities and the general public; they are denied access to basic services or places to shower, urinate and defecate; they are rounded up and forced out of cities, and relocated to uninhabitable places; they are walked over, and passed by; they are subject to extreme forms of violence including hate crimes and sexual violence; and are often the subject of vilification. At the same time, some forms of homelessness remain totally invisible and neglected, in particular in parts of the global south where it remains relatively unacknowledged or where the distinction between very precarious housing conditions and homelessness may not be easily drawn.

Treated like 'human waste' and often cast aside to the peripheries of society, homeless people suffer humiliation on a daily basis. Categories such as legal/illegal, formal/informal, deserving/undeserving highlight the dichotomy that many who are homeless have to fight against. The rights of the individual are absent from the story.

To be homeless is to be asked to face violence, have your life-span cut in half, be more likely to experience ill health and chronic disease, and to be criminalized for survival strategies - even for eating or sleeping in public space. The Human Rights Committee has also acknowledged that widespread homelessness leads to serious health consequences and death and has stated that positive measures are required under article 6 (right to life) to address homelessness.<sup>5</sup> Yet this recognition has not fueled state action in the same way the torture, or conflict would.

This is not simply a story to tell, but it is the personal experience of billions of people who are homeless or inadequately housed. I have been told, often through tears, that more

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5. See for example, CCPR/C/79/Add.105 (1999), para 12.

than any material security, what they yearn for is to be “seen”, to be recognized and treated by society as human beings with inherent dignity and respect.

Instead of being supported, homeless people are increasingly criminalized through laws and policies that turn them into law-breakers, rather than protecting their rights. Laws are created to render homeless people invisible, to displace them from land or housing and destroy their makeshift shelters. For example, in many places simple activities linked to basic survival – such as eating or sleeping in public - can lead to fines.<sup>6</sup> Laws enable authorities to “rescue” street connected children, depriving them of their liberty without due process or respect for the social networks upon which they rely.

The sad reality is that widespread discrimination on the ground of homelessness has yet to be effectively addressed by national human rights institutions, judicial bodies, or via administrative remedies, and yet is recognized in human rights law as an immediate action states must take to address the issue.

### **How did this happen?**

Rapid urbanization globally has resulted in an astonishing accumulation of wealth for a few, accompanied by increasing poverty for many. Real estate speculation and the concept of housing as a commodity has guided urban development as opposed to need, affordability, and respect for human rights.

Homelessness is one of the least examined consequences of unabated inequality, unfair distribution of land and property, and poverty occurring on a global scale. It is a result of State acquiescence to real estate speculation and unregulated markets – a result of treating housing as a commodity rather than as a human right. It is rooted in a global privileging of wealth and power, scapegoating and scorn for those who do not have a home.

Fiscal crises around the world have also resulted in significant increases in homelessness and have given rise to a new category of homeless - highly educated individuals who had a good standard of living but who, due to an economic crisis, experienced unemployment and ultimately homelessness. Europe has not been immune. The 2008 crisis, for example, and the accompanying austerity measures, caused a massive rise in homelessness in several European countries, including Spain.<sup>7</sup>

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6. See National Coalition for the Homeless, Share No More: The Criminalization of Efforts to Feed People in Need, (2014), online: < <http://nationalhomeless.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/Food-Sharing2014.pdf>>.

7. See for illustration, response to the questionnaire from the Spanish Ombudsman ; Olga Theodorikakou et

Worldwide there is evidence of a consistent pattern: governments have abandoned their critical role in ensuring social protection including affordable housing, have cut or privatized social benefits, and deferred to the private market allowing private actors and elites with access to power and money to control key areas of decision making.<sup>8</sup>

While the causes of homelessness vary among particular groups, often it is the most vulnerable who are affected: women fleeing violence, entire communities uprooted due to natural disasters or conflict, youth denied access to housing due to age and lack of identification, unequal access to land or discriminatory land laws, or persons with disabilities unable to secure adequate employment.

The common denominator in virtually all structural causes of homelessness is government decision-making and policy that is inconsistent with human rights.

#### **Strategic Policy – A tool for Change**

Consultations I have had with experts have suggested that while effective policy responses depend on particular circumstances, strategies must always be multi-pronged, engage a range of policies and programs, and address simultaneously social exclusion and housing deprivation. Most importantly, strategies must be led by stakeholders, and grounded in human rights.

The CESCR has focused on the need for comprehensive housing strategies to address homelessness, framed around the right to housing and ensuring monitoring and accountability with goals, timelines and complaints procedures. Similarly, in the case of street children, the High Commissioner for Human Rights advocates a holistic approach that recognizes rights as interdependent and interconnected, through a coordinated approach across government departments and with the involvement of family and community.<sup>9</sup>

From the creation of national strategies, to implementing a Housing First program, social movements and legal action to the development of local participatory councils, there is no

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al “Neo-homelessness’ and the Greek Crisis” (2013) 7:2 European Homelessness 203 at 205; European Commission, “Homelessness during the crisis” Research Note 8/2011 online: <

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=9847&langId=en> at 4, 8, 15.

8. Response to questionnaire from the Danish Institute for Human Rights

9. A/HRC/19/35, para. 30



universal policy or legislative solution to homelessness. It must be addressed in multiple ways, engaging with the structural causes of homelessness and with consideration for particular circumstances.

Without access to justice rights remain illusory – present on paper but difficult to grasp in reality. Access to effective remedies was the subject of the first case under the Optional Protocol on the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, regarding foreclosure procedures in Spain where an estimated 400,000 mortgage foreclosures took place between 2008 and 2012.<sup>10</sup> The Committee clarified that ensuring effective judicial remedies for the right to adequate housing is an immediate obligation of States since “there cannot be a right without a remedy to protect it”, and held that the State had violated the obligation to provide effective remedies in the context of foreclosure procedures.

Recognizing the power of stating and claiming their rights, some homeless people have taken their fight to the courts. In Argentina, homeless people have the right to assistance, but it is claimed on a case by case basis before the court. For example, in *Q.C. S.Y. v. Government of the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires*, the National Supreme Court ordered the Buenos Aires government to provide adequate shelter for a homeless mother and her disabled son, noting that there should be a minimum guarantee of access to housing for those facing situations of extreme vulnerability.<sup>11</sup>

Any policy or legal avenue chosen must address issues faced by different groups, and support individuals in their own personal struggles as well as recognize them as rights-holders. A survey by European homelessness group FEANTSA found that effective strategies must be evidence based; comprehensive; multi-dimensional; rights-based; participatory; based in statutes or legislation; sustainable; needs-based; and bottom-up.

All levels of government should design and implement policies, laws and strategies to prevent and address homelessness. Failure to do so reflects that homelessness has neither been recognized nor addressed as a violation of human rights. What is lacking at all levels of government is a shared commitment to ensuring the enjoyment of the right to adequate housing – and related rights like life, and health.

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10. *I.D.G. v Spain*, Communication 2/2014. Arrels Fundacio Barcelona in its response to the Questionnaire estimates that for every 100,000 persons, 71 are homeless in Spain.

11. *Corte Suprema de Justicia Nacional, Q.C., S.Y. c/GCBA s/amparo*, 24 April 2012. See Ministerio Público de la Defensa de la Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires, “Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in the City of Buenos Aires”. October 2015, pages 64-67.

Since ensuring enjoyment of human rights is a firm legal responsibility of all levels of government, policy makers can be compelled to incorporate human rights into their laws, policies and programs, such as: consulting with homeless people throughout the policy development and implementation process; incorporating measureable goals and timelines into strategies; including monitoring and review mechanisms to ensure successful outcomes; and providing homeless people with a rights-claiming mechanism and access to remedies. These are essential requirements of the meaningful inclusion of homeless people in the human family, restoring to them dignity and respect and protection of the rule of law.

### **Conclusion**

Widespread homelessness is evidence of the failure of States to protect and ensure the human rights of the most vulnerable populations. It is occurring in all countries, regardless of the phase of development of their economic or governance systems, and it has been occurring with impunity. The nature and scope of homelessness globally suggests society's lack of compassion for the full scale of deprivation and loss of dignity associated with being homeless. It is a phenomenon requiring urgent and immediate action by the international community and by all States.

Instead of being treated as a group of rights bearers whose rights have been systematically violated, homeless people have become a stigmatized group subject to criminalization, discrimination, and social exclusion. Under international law this is simply not acceptable. It has been established that states have immediate obligations to address homelessness. To be clear – homelessness and the needs of homeless people must be prioritized by all levels government.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have offered states an opportunity to adjust housing policies and laws and embrace a human rights approach. I recommend that in line with target 11.1 of the SDGs, all States must commit to eliminating homelessness by 2030 or earlier if possible. This is what is needed if we want to ensure 'no one is left behind'.

Human rights offer the knowledge, framework and standards for states, all that is left is the will to put rights into action.

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**Key words: Homelessness,  
Housing First, right to housing,  
social inclusion**

### **Housing First. The right to housing for the most vulnerable**

Marta Llobet Estany & Manuel Aguilar Hendricksón  
Barcelona University

**The *Housing First* model as a research or intervention approach in the homelessness field, focused on the people who have spent more than a year on the street and suffer severe mental health problems and/or addictions, has emerged as a social innovation. It was tried out for the first time in New York in the 90's, after the effectiveness of the traditional "staircase model" was called into question. It has also been implemented in Canada and Australia and been complemented with extensive evaluation work.**

**It's seen as a change of paradigm because, as opposed to the "staircase system", this approach starts at the end, providing permanent and self-contained housing. The right to housing and self-sufficiency is recognized. The attention is tailored to the needs, pace and options of the person. It's an intervention approach that must be co-produced from the principles of proximity, relationship, accompaniment and respect.**

***Housing First* generates many expectations, but also questions, dilemmas and tensions in relation to both the implementation process and the analysis evaluations and research documented. Some of these questions and dilemmas will be addressed in this article.**

The field of attention to homeless people has been experiencing for more than ten years a small revolution, known as *Housing First*. At the start of the 90's, the clinical psychologist Sam Tsemberis launched a change of approach in the attention to the roofless people in New York, according to which permanent and self-contained housing was the start (and not the end) of the 'treatment' for mental illness. This model became federal regulation in the United States at the start of 2000 and was developed, with evaluations showing good results along with a cost-saving capacity, thus generating great interest in the academic and political field and in the media. It spread into Europe, becoming especially relevant after the European Consensus Conference on Homelessness held by FEANTSA (European Federation of National Organisations

Working with the Homeless) in 2010. Since then, numerous European cities have launched experimental projects focused on this approach.

The diffusion of *Housing First* projects has caused some confusion regarding terminology. The term is used to describe a very particular type of intervention with chronic roofless people suffering mental illness, and also for other interventions focused on other homelessness groups who share the principle of accessing independent, settled and guaranteed housing from the start. Likewise, other terms have also appeared, such as *housing-led*, *rapid re-housing*, *Pathways Housing First* and *housing first light*, among others.

In this article we will try, firstly, to clarify what's behind those terms. Secondly, we will assess the key elements of the "flagship" Housing First approach (known as *Pathways Housing First*). In third place, we will summarize some of the results. Finally, we will try to address some of the dilemmas that can be encountered when implementing this model.

### 1. Housing first without conditions

We will draw on homelessness approaches that stress two key factors. Firstly, that access to permanent and 'guaranteed' housing (with household security) is a first step in the solution to the homeless situation and is not the final step of a long path of previous interventions (staircase system). Secondly, that housing and retention are not conditioned to an acceptance to undergo treatment or to quit habits like drug or alcohol use. In other words, the house is not an incentive or a tool with which to pressure the person to accept or agree to other services he/she might need.

The most adequate term to refer to the diversity of programmes that share these two characteristics is *housing-led* (oriented or 'guided' by housing). This term was adopted in the 2010 Consensus Conference (ECCH 2011) named above. *Housing-led* includes programmes that can have various associated social or health intervention models (or none) and are addressed to a diverse homeless population. It must be pointed out that FEANTSA defines up to 13 forms and grades of homelessness and housing exclusion, grouped together in four big categories. Homelessness can also be chronic, short-term or even imminently threatened. Additional social, health or other problems can also be present.

As a general overview, and taking into account that definitions are used in different ways by various stakeholders, we can distinguish two broad types of *housing-led* programmes:

- Programmes targeted to chronic homeless people (more than a year without a home) with severe mental health problems or alcohol/drugs use. The most well-known model of this kind is the programme *Pathways Housing First*, that is faithful to the principles developed in New York by Sam Tsemberis. The term *Housing First* should be reserved for these types of programmes, but it is not so consistent in practice. A variety of this type of programme is called *Communal Housing First* (Pleace 2012) (congregated *Housing First* or in collective supported housing) and it offers independent and secure housing in buildings devoted to supported housing and not in scattered housing like *Pathways Housing First*. These programmes include an intensive support services offer that, as we will see later, can have diverse forms. This housing with intensive support is also called *supportive housing*, even though these types of programmes can be addressed to different homelessness situations.

- Programmes targeted to homeless people with lower needs or without social or health problems, covering from long-term homelessness to situations of risk (for example, threats of imminent eviction). These programmes can include a lower intensity support services array, or even not include any and refer cases where support is needed to the regular health provider in the area. *Housing First Light* (Pleace 2012) or *Rapid Re-housing* are examples of this second housing-led modality.

The rest of the article is devoted to analysing the first type of programmes, and we will use either *Pathways Housing First* or *Housing First* to discuss this topic.

## 2. How does (*Pathways*) *Housing First* work?

*Housing First* is an intervention approach for homeless people with serious personal, mental health and social difficulties that has the right to independent housing as its core element. It is based on the idea that having self-contained, dignified and adequate housing is the starting point and an intrinsic condition for a person to improve and recover, and not the result of a process. Access to independent and settled housing is provided without prior conditions such as, for example, submitting to psychiatric treatment or quitting substance abuse, and professional support is offered, along with services tailored to the person's needs and according to their individual decision. It is underpinned by the principle that it's easier for a person to be in charge of his own life when he's in his own house than when he is on the street or in temporary accommodation centres (Gaetz et al 2013). Alongside this rapid and autonomous access to housing, *Housing First* is defined by high-intensity psychosocial intervention.

This model constitutes an innovation, a change of paradigm in the health and social attention to the most chronic homeless people. How does this approach work? What's

the difference with respect to other modalities? Is it really more effective than others? What are the implementing costs? How does an intervention based on rights and person-recovery work? To what extent are changes produced when access to housing for very vulnerable people is facilitated?

*Housing First* starts at the “end”; that is, it provides access to stable housing as an element that can contribute to social inclusion (Moulaert et al 2013). This “reversal” of the ordinary intervention order is caused by questioning the efficiency of the ‘traditional’ models which correspond to the ‘staircase system’. These are grounded on the principle that people must overcome diverse stages before being in a good condition to access self-contained housing, accepting as well an intervention plan. The staircase model considers that people with drug abuse or mental illness problems are not housing ready and need to follow a gradual process, step-by-step, towards housing inclusion.

The *Housing First* approach has generated expectations and supporters, especially with regards to the improvement of participants (also called users) and the reduction of institutionalization costs. Several doubts have emerged with respect to the improvement of social relations, as well as questions about how to put it into practice. It has also been criticised when presented as the sole response to end homelessness or when public funding is devoted to this type of model at the expense of others. We will now assess the definition and philosophy of the model, its principles and some critical questions identified in different application contexts (especially North America, Europe and Australia).

### Origins of the model

Before the pioneer experience in New York, two projects with features similar to those of *Housing First* were developed. In Toronto, in the 70's, in the context of the closure of psychiatric centres and a deinstitutionalization process, the organisation *Houselink* promoted a project aimed at moving people discharged from centres with mental illness and drug abuse into housing. This project already considered housing as a right and recognised the person's capacity to make his own choice with the help of a support team. In Los Angeles in 1988 the programme *Beyond Shelter* used for the first time the concept *Housing First* to re-house homeless families, reducing thus the use of shelters and transitory housing (Waegemakers Schiff, & Rook 2012; Gaetz et al 2013). *Housing First* combines then the experience of forms of supporting housing, developed when people are discharged from psychiatric institutions, with its application “from the beginning” to roofless people.

The *Housing First* concept, as we have seen, became popular with the project *Pathways to Housing (PHF)*, seen as a pioneer and useful guide for many other projects. In 1992 the clinical psychologist Sam Tsemberis launched in New York a programme targeted to people with serious mental health problems and drug abuse from the organization *Pathways to Housing* (McCarroll 2002). It's based on the evidence that living on the street deteriorates mental health and that the staircase model hinders their social inclusion, mainly due to three factors:

- The individual stability process is basically linked to clinical stability, often separated from the person's surroundings.
- Users must go through a series of treatment phases attached to specific criteria and rules, which act as a barrier to treatment completion and housing access.
- Alcohol/drugs relapses, despite the fact they might have a therapeutic use, are penalised and can even lead to the person being dismissed from the programme.

Based on this evidence, Tsemberis proposed an attention model that starts at the end with access to housing, called *Housing First (HF)* (Tsemberis et al 2004).

### Principles of the (Pathways) Housing First model

The *Pathways to Housing (PHF)* project originating from N.Y. proposed eight principles which have been used to evaluate the model's application in other countries. The principles for PHF and HF in Europe are the same, but formulated in a different manner. In the case of the Canadian project these principles are reduced to five, putting the emphasis on the participants' integration capacity, both in the community and his social surroundings. These five principles are listed below:

- Firstly, the right to housing as a human right that should be extended to any person and especially the most vulnerable, as is the case of homeless people. When housing is recognized as a right, it is not conditioned to treatment or any other type of requirement. Signing the contract with the landlord is a way of exercising this right. Housing is considered as a means to achieve stability and promote social inclusion (Tsemberis, & Eisenberg 2000; Jost et al 2010; Henwood et al 2011; McNaughton Nicholls, & Atherton 2011).
- Secondly, the *Housing First* model is a type of intervention focused on the right to decide and person-centred. The person must be able to exercise his/her self-determination. The individual must have the chance to choose with regards to housing, according to his needs (type of housing, area, etc.) in order to live the most autonomous way in self-contained housing integrated in the community. He must be

able to choose the types and frequency of support services. For example, when the person wants to stop or reduce alcohol or drugs use or change medication because of the effects it has on them.

- Thirdly, this approach is steered to the person's recovery. Recovery is a concept increasingly in use in the mental health area, and differs from curing. There are various definitions. The US government agency for mental health and substance abuse defines recovery as a "process of change through which individuals work to improve their own health and wellbeing, and to live a sustainable life chosen by them within the community and try to develop their abilities as much as possible". It is, therefore, a process which is neither time-limited nor fixed to a specific goal. It is not defined by "where to get", but rather by in which direction to move forward. Each person 'recovers' in their own way and reaches 'better' situations, but they are different for each person as each has different capacities and limitations. Facilitating recovery means reducing prejudices against people with drug or mental health problems, and engaging with peers and within the community. Recovery is possible when the person has built trust and motivation to improve his wellbeing.
- Fourthly, the person-centred approach acknowledges every person as different, with his own needs. Some will need more intensive support and others will need limited or floating support. The support must be tailored to the autonomy of each person. Access to services or treatment has to be done on a voluntary and personal basis, adapted to his/her culture and when the person asks for it.
- Finally, this model seeks to encourage people to become involved in the community and the society. The access to services and activities is provided to encourage and maintain social relationships, educational, professional and leisure activities in the community he lives in or beyond it, according to his interests. (Tsemberis et al 2003; Tsemberis et al 2004; Stefancic, & Tsemberis 2007; Gaetz et al 2013).

In order to evaluate the model, the pioneer project PHF designed a fidelity evaluation tool, which has been used since then to assess the model's implementation and development (Greenwood et al 2013). With respect to research studies, the evaluation is external, made by a team of experts who know the model and validate it. The role of this team is to supervise and evaluate the process every six months. This validation is made through interviews to the different agents: managers, coordinators and



professional teams, as well as ‘peer workers’ and participants in the project. At the end of every supervision the experts write a report and give feedback to the team in order to point out the specific elements which deviate from the principles and redirect the intervention so that it maintains fidelity towards the model using the outlined proposals (Greenwood et al 2013).

Pathways to housing Estats Units	Housing First Europa	Housing First Canada
Housing as a fundamental human right	Housing First as a human right	Immediate access to permanent housing without housing readiness conditions
User respect, warmth and compassion		
Service user choice and self-determination	Service user choice and control	Individual choice and self-determination
	Commitment without coercion	
Services centered on the person's recovery	Recovery-based orientation	Emphasis on recovery
	Person-centered planning	Personalized support
A commitment to working with service users for as long as they need	Flexible support for as long as they need	
Separation of housing and treatment	Separation of housing and treatment	
Harm-reduction approach	Harm-reduction approach	
Scattered site housing using independent apartments		
		Social and community integration

Source: Own classification from Tsemberis 2012; Gaetz et al 2013 and <http://housingfirstguide.eu>.

### Design, planning and key elements of the intervention

The ultimate goal of *Housing First* is to achieve stability for the person in his housing, where he can feel better and recover, contributing to his social and community integration. This goal is connected to an action framework centred on the person and the recognition of rights, which are reclaimed through a fundamentally personal process.

Recognizing the right (not conditioned to treatment) to housing means renouncing a powerful external tool which could otherwise be used to motivate individual

participation with treatment plans and to promote changes of habits. That implies that the person must be intrinsically motivated, according to his needs, interests and wishes.

This is one of the main differences from the staircase model, which is more centred on external motivations linked to conditions or compensations.

This form of action requires a certain proximity, which can only be achieved by being present, and an accompaniment where the knowledge of how to walk alongside a person and to remain between them and the services is crucial (Baillergeau et al 2009). Whenever possible, risk evaluation of substance abuse or mental illness should be done with the person. It's an acknowledgement practice consisting of listening and trusting the person's point, placing confidence in what they say in order to be able to recuperate his social place (Honneth 2006). It requires a positive view of the person, free of judgements regarding his/her behaviour.

In order to guide the action towards this goal, professionals must act as connectors and facilitators, serving as a bridge between services and the person so he/she can be attended respecting his rights. Housing First calls for a relationship and respect practice focused on restoring relationships of inequality and social exclusion, compensating and rebuilding integration deficits produced before. The intervention must be warm and respect the rhythm of the person in order to help him feel at ease when he returns to live in a home, to feel good again, to improve his physical, mental and emotional health and to continue on towards social and community integration.

The *Housing First* approach requires a programme of activities and services managed either by public or private institutions. Its philosophy and principles call for a global design able to incorporate all the range of support services and teams which will be involved. Some projects have two teams: one in charge of all intervention related to housing and another in charge of the psychosocial support and accompaniment. In other projects, the same team carries out both interventions.

Where teams work separately –yet in a coordinated manner– it's because housing and social intervention is complex and needs to be specialised.

In relation to the psychosocial intervention, teams must be able to cover the needs of the people who enter the programme with regards to their age, gender, cultural or ethnographic characteristics, as well as their physical, mental or social problems.

Some projects provide two modalities of treatment: one addressed to health problems or moderate addictions, and another to moderate problems and needs. They provide an attention model called *Intensive Case Management* and, for severe problems, *Assertive Community Treatment*. The main difference between these two models is that intensive case management is provided by a case manager who carries out the intervention and seeks other professionals if needed, while the assertive community treatment is based on a multi-faceted team able to offer all or the majority of interventions.

The Assertive Community Treatment team (TAC) is a multi-disciplinary team which tackles acute mental problems (schizophrenia, bipolar disorders, depression and severe personality disorder) and for that reason the intervention can't be uniform and standard. Staff constantly evaluate risks and the attention to needs is usually complex. The user to staff ratio is lower than with other teams (between 8 and 10 people per team). One of the objectives of this team is to build a relationship of trust between the person and the team, as opposed to just one professional. All the team members agree and distribute the intervention tasks to be carried out. In order to clarify roles, staff are placed as 'small teams' managers or specialists in the clinical discussions with all the team (Gaetz et al 2013; Aubry et al 2015).

The case management and intensive case management teams (GC o GCI) are made up of staff with a different profile from the TAC, for example, social workers, physicians, specialists in human relationships, criminologist and occupational therapists. This team uses case management, consisting of one-to-one attention, where every professional is the case manager of a number of participants. The staff to user ratio is generally one case manager for 20 users. The intensity of the intervention will vary through time as the person finds stability and improves in different aspects of his life until reaching autonomy. The Canadian project *At Home/Chez Soi* demonstrated that, for a large number of participants, the first three months were the most difficult and the most intense support was needed at this stage to help their progress and recovery (Calgary Homeless Foundation 2011; Gaetz et al 2013).

### The peer worker's role

One of the new aspects of the *Housing First* approach is the role of the 'peer worker'. Peers are similar to the project's users, since they have lived in a homeless situation, they have a mental illness and/or they have been drug users. The intervention by these agents is based on the recognition of their proximity, learning and expertise gained on their recovery pathways, which can serve as a complementary tool to the professionals' technical and theoretical experience (Llobet Estany et al 2012).

Assertive Community Treatment	Intensive Case Management
A multi-disciplinary team of professionals offering all the services	One-on-one case manager to user relationship using a recovery-oriented approach
The team members are available 24/7 and provide real-time support.	Case managers are available during regular hours scheme and coverage is assured in coordination with other professionals;
Regular meetings with the team	The case manager negotiates the access to mainstream services according to the user's needs and options
The team is mobile, often meeting clients in their homes	The case manager often accompanies clients to meetings and appointments in support of their goals/needs.
The staff to client ratio is generally 1 ACT team for 10 users	The staff to user ratio is generally 1 case manager for 20 users
Services are offered on a time-unlimited basis, with planned transfers to lower intensity services for stable clients.	The duration of the service is determined by the needs of the client, with the goal being the use of mainstream services as soon as possible.

Source: Own classification from (Gaetz et al 2013)

Peer workers have practical skills, strength and capabilities they have developed in order to live and reach autonomy with their addictions and mental illness. These new agents join the teams and form a specific group in the project structure. Their role needs to be defined to fit with the project. Despite that, some projects confess they have needed time to adapt and negotiate this role. For that reason, it's important that they are a group. Their role is to provide the users' point of view in the analysis of different situations by the professionals: to welcome and speak with participants in order to defend their rights and encourage their individual and collective participation in relation to community services and resources.

### 3. Results

*Housing First* has been implemented in various cities in different countries such as the United States, Canada, Europe and Australia, with the same chronic homeless populations with mental illness and severe addiction problems, but it has also been used to provide solutions to other homeless groups or populations at risk of becoming homeless.

Research studies have been conducted to analyse comprehensively its impact, comparing a group attended with *Housing First* to another using mainstream services. Results demonstrate the efficiency of the first model and systematically revealed that it improves the situation of the people attended. *Housing First* minimizes their time on the street and reduces hospital admissions, problems with the courts and police and

promotes stable housing occupation, and allows the person to choose a better place to live in than would be possible using regular services, programmes offering supervised housing for example. Data research shows that the model has improved users' health and quality of life and has reduced drug abuse and prompted social inclusion. Accordingly, one of the arguments for launching *Housing First* is the cost effectiveness for the community of the participants (Aubry et al 2014; Latimer et al 2014).

Evaluations effectively show that people attended by *Housing First* programmes use less often expensive services like psychiatric in-patient treatment, shelters and police or justice proceedings. The cost savings in these services are very important. However, this argument needs to be treated with caution. Firstly, the savings vary greatly, depending on each person's characteristics. Research shows great differences between 'costs' generated by people with intensive needs and those by people with moderate needs.

Secondly, attention pathways can reduce the use (probably inadequate or unnecessary) of specific services and increase the use of others, which are necessary. That occurs with *Housing First* services for people with moderate needs, where referrals are made for support services which aren't provided directly. Thirdly, the period of time evaluated provides no evidence about long-term costs saving, which can be different from short-term ones.

In relation to costs, it must also be remarked that part of the savings are not directly recuperated (Latimer et al 2014). A reduction in hospital admissions or shelter services can release resources to attend other people, but it's highly unlikely that this results in a net reduction of expenses. A part of the costs 'saved' are assumed by other 'payers', different from those who assume the costs of the *Housing First* programme. A part of the previous attention costs were covered by sources such as private donations or contributions from organizations who provide the services. Another part of the costs doesn't 'exist' in reality when the person is not attended, or isn't attended by a formal service: a person who sleeps overnight on the street or at a friend's doesn't produce any cost, or at least he/she is not an expense for public services. Finally, according to the institutional configuration of each city, expenses for one local authority can become savings for another and not the one that is charged.

These results demonstrate that putting in place programmes where housing is seen as a right brings positive results, especially for the people who have spent a lot of time on the street and are suffering from serious problems, but the different research carried out doesn't prove that *Housing First* is the overall solution to homelessness.

Homelessness causes are structural and require a systematic and multi-dimensional response. This approach is an opportunity to reduce the number of entrenched homeless, but structural factors, such as employment insecurity, the lack of sustainable social policies providing some sort of income for the most vulnerable or the lack of affordable social rent expose new people to the street.

The attention to the diverse situations of homeless people demands a multi-faceted approach, such as *Rapid Rehousing* in the case of people who have been on the street a short time or *Housing First* with different intensities of support according to the person's needs.

#### **4. Some dilemmas and key questions to develop Housing First**

The *Housing First* model generates many expectations. In people who can't quite believe housing access can be possible without prior conditions or housing readiness. In policy-makers and experts as research evidence encourages them to think it can be a more effective and cost-effective model than the models being applied until now, especially when dealing with a population group defined as chronic and for whom recovery is very difficult. In organizations and professionals, since it means an opportunity to explore other organizational and intervention forms based on "believing in the person" in severe social exclusion situations. It's an approach that tends to be clear from a theoretical point of view, but is challenging to put into practice. This challenge contains difficulties, risks, limits and tensions that should be identified. There's a large bibliography on the topic, but there's little information about the model's intervention and practice.

##### *A. Implementation challenges and organization*

Launching a project inspired by the Housing First model doesn't necessarily mean applying the same type of programme run by the pioneer organizations when it was first implemented –first *Pathways to Housing* in New York and later *Street to Homes* in Toronto. The projects are inspired by others that already exist, but at the same time they adapt to each context's specific features.

The complexity of the project and the implication of different public and private organizations and those related to the third sector demand a definition of the management structure, to be able to plan, design and implement the model. This structure will need readjusting when unexpected factors emerge, since some phases are especially complicated and the project might also provoke criticism and tension.

Different committees, councils or focus groups can form this structure.

It's important to clarify the term of each council and/or committee, its organization and functions, the actors who form it and the regularity of the operative sessions. The Committee is in charge of the strategic and operative management of the project. The Integration Committee is in charge of the running and the connection with the teams and reaches agreements when faced with new situations or problems, such as the non-payment of housing, the participants' access to housing, the impact of the rhythm and regularity of this access on the teams, the teams' roles, etc. The project's implementation provokes reactions in the services for homelessness, mental health and drugs addiction, as well as housing. The Committee integrated by agents of these areas can act as a feedback tool between the agents and the project. Therefore, the project can be addressed in a wider context, contributing to set a joint vision of the services geared to the homeless population according to the different areas and evaluating as well the community interest regarding the project. A collaborating and evaluating posture can be fomented between the actors which are not directly linked to the project who, on one side can see the project as an opportunity, but at the same time question the consequences it can have on public funding once it's finished. People who have lived in a homeless situation and have used the services form the Council of peer workers. Their role is to represent the individual's point of view, welcoming participants to the project, getting involved and encouraging them, activating collective citizen participation in order to defend rights and individual participation.

The members of this committee also participate on other councils or committees.

The *Housing First* option from the political perspective must be accompanied by the presentation of results in economic terms, but above all in human and social policies terms that can improve the life of a sector of the population that appeared to be deprived of resources. The implementation demands available resources, a readjustment and a shift from the support areas for this population –local authorities, services, community, professionals and participants in the project.

The homelessness phenomenon needs a systemic approach and *Housing First* is one more programme with a philosophy and principles that have been applied in different ways and in diverse contexts that have produced different models. The results are encouraging, provide a conception shift based on the recognition of rights in extreme exclusion situations –housing situations, among others– and provide many ideas that can dramatically improve intervention and services, although, as of today and

according to the research and literature, it's risky to present this model as the solution to homelessness.

*B. Design and intervention challenges*

*Housing First* requires an intervention with new components that can have difficulties at the time of putting the model into practice in our context. In this section, we will detect some of these elements along with proposals to develop them.

Firstly, we have no precedents of this practice in our context. Accordingly, the projects launched under the *Housing First* model will have an experimental character and should be attached to an investigation programme, as has been done in other cities, in order to collect data and evaluate the model's usage in our context. It is especially recommendable if the model is to be extended and/or a global review of the intervention system in homelessness carried out.

Secondly, the intervention centred on the subject as a rights bearer requires a system tailored to the person and not the other way round, as usually happens with other intervention models. This model makes us reconsider all the system from different areas, devices and professionals. At the time of re-evaluating the model, the view of the people who know the services and the attention circuit must be taken into account. It implies a culture shift amongst organizations and professionals which is not easy to imagine. On the other hand, the social citizenship and social rights in every context condition the practice. Regarding the Spanish State, the social rights of citizens when dealing with a lack of income or social support needs are limited and fragmented (Laparra Navarro, & Aguilar Hendrickson 1996; Laparra Navarro 2004; Laparra Navarro et al. 2009).

Direct social attention is still influenced by the old public welfare network, according to which the person who has no means of survival has no rights, in a strong sense of the word. People with difficulties report their situation and the local authority has the moral right to attend them, but with the person in an inferior position and the State acting as protector (Aguilar Hendrickson 2010). It is more about a relationship based on humanitarian help, than a citizenship right. Even though the moralistic and paternalist character of these practices has been reduced, the lack of a relationship full of rights has maintained part of this tutelary conception. *Housing First* means to change from this tutelary conception, still very much alive in organizations and interventions, to a civil rights conception. On the other hand, people have learnt to adapt to an intervention model of 'staircase transition', where housing is not a subjective right and therefore they rarely expect and even less demand this right.



Action plans must be reoriented with adequate mechanisms in order to detect and overcome these obstacles. Organizations and professionals must share and integrate values and model principles not only in theory, but also during the intervention. Previous training with real cases can enable this knowledge to be obtained. Cases can be analysed from a clinical and psychosocial perspective in supervision and coordination areas, detecting that way dilemmas, questions and doubts about the practice. Professionals will face situations they must learn to assess in a different way to that which they are accustomed. It's a practice which requires the deconstruction of some of the notions and mechanisms learnt during previous interventions. The coordinator becomes a key figure when tackling difficult or critical situations on a daily basis and teamwork is another integral part of the approach. If having professionals from different fields in the same team is a challenge, having professionals from different operational areas and cultures is even more challenging. Professionals must make team decisions based on knowledge and in a horizontal way, reducing hierarchical powers. This practice based on interaction requires a lot of insight (Schön, & Bayo 1998). For that reason, it's suggested to create a community of practice among professionals to be able to share knowledge and tools gained through first-hand experience. When the practice has an experimental character as in this case, intervention can be a space for self-knowledge, self-training and reflection.

This type of practice forces professionals, who find themselves working much closer with the person, to put their position and power into question, especially when they have to deal with disconcerting situations, as they have to respond in a different way from that which they were used to. It requires very committed professionals who have clear which values to defend and feel motivated to explore and co-produce an uncertain practice which relies on the person's will, stimulates creativity and demands flexibility and a lot of humility. Professionals must be able to accept the relationship's limits and turn to someone, in this case the coordinator, to identify their own limits and difficulties. The team must look after its own mental health and wellbeing by creating common spaces for that purpose.

### *C. Challenges of combining social support and housing policies*

The development of *Housing-led* (*Housing First* and others) initiatives and projects reveal some of the general questions about policies to tackle residential exclusion and the interplay of housing policies, social policies and health services. In this last chapter we will attempt to formulate some of these challenges and any possible development path.

The first problem is to know the range *housing-led* policies can have. Focusing on tiny groups which have used them allows us to obtain, according to known experience, very positive outcomes for the cases attended. On the other hand, they face two important risks: firstly, having limited effect over the global extent of homelessness and housing exclusion, and secondly, in contexts where housing access is difficult for large sectors of the population they can cause perceptions of unfair disadvantages which might erode the legitimacy of these policies. Multiplying efforts in the attention of people who suffer most complex difficulties promotes fairness when the majority of the population has enough support (usually less intense) for their basic needs.

Recent research (Colombo 2016) points out housing market context as a relevant factor. *Housing-led* projects seem to have good perspectives as a framework in the fight against housing exclusion in cities like Vienna (80% of housing is rented, 25% public renting) and are seriously hindered in cities like Budapest, London and Stockholm, with much more difficult housing markets.

A second important question is how to connect housing policies with social support policies and guaranteed income. *Housing First* projects have been broadly developed from social service fields and their continuity, beyond the time limits of the projects, depends largely upon guaranteed income provision (minimum income, rental allowances) and/or 'guaranteed' access to housing (public housing).

Beyond the continuity of the projects, an opportunity is available to review the relationship between social services and social housing. There are a wide range of situations where people need simultaneous personal, social or health support (usually combined) and housing (sometimes adapted). *Housing First* projects are an example, but there are others such as re-housing for eviction causes (emergency housing) or in cases of domestic violence, supported housing for people with dependency needs (from home visits to homes or residences with supported services or housing with service facilities on-site) and other types of supported housing. These types of interventions lack a clear and definitive action plan regarding the roles of public access to housing and social and health services. *Housing First* projects which are launched in Barcelona might be a good occasion to address this question.

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## In depth



December 2016

**Key words: Recession, housing,  
exclusión, health**

## **Not having a home damages (a lot) health**

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**These days, when the global and globalized financial recession has devastated family economies and caused housing deprivation, the life conditions of many people attended by Càritas services are getting worse, creating a deep impact not only on their daily life, but also –and above all– on their health.**

Càritas Diocesana Barcelona presented the Report “With a roof and without a home. The impact of insecure housing. Special mention to families with children”, at the campaign launched every year for Christmas. It was in 2010, and, although the situation has improved, the message displayed in the articles is still valid.

The report came from Càritas’ concern about housing. A concern which already existed long ago, as research and reports published on this issue since 2003 expose. On this occasion, though, a step forward has been made and Caritas has focused the assessment on how the lack of decent housing is affecting people’s health and life conditions.

It’s not a new topic. It’s a cyclic issue and at similar moments in time, when economic recession and migrant flows happen at the same time (six years ago, migration was still a notable issue), the solutions to the lack of housing have been very similar: hostels, sub-tenancy rooms, settlements, etc. Differences between the solutions adopted by our parents and grandparents are minimal in comparison to this generation.

### **What do a roof and a home mean?**

According to the theory, a roof is basically a place to shelter from the weather conditions. ‘Roof’ can’t be defined as a home in a full sense, as a place where the sense of person is developed.

The roof determines a precarious way to live and is defined according to different levels of insecurity and residential exclusion: from the most extreme forms –living literally on the street or living in shelters or emergency accommodation– to sharing dwellings or living in

overcrowded housing. These “under a roof” housing types have been categorized by FEANTSA (European Federation of National Organisations working with the Homeless) – a federation supported by the European Commission– in 13 categories (ETHOS<sup>12</sup>) as ‘situations of housing exclusion’ and the social policies at European level are currently based on this standard. These categories range from living in public spaces or lacking housing to situations of inadequate or insecure housing.

On the other hand, a home is defined by the people and not by the roof protecting them. In the 2008 Homelessness Campaign of Càritas Spanish Confederation, the following statement –very similar to our view– about the concept of home was exposed: “It’s about developing a sense of home, as a feeling and experience that lets me feel the warmth, since I belong and I feel protected, I can grow if I want, I can learn, share, dream, play; because, if I find myself without food or housing, this ‘warm-community’ surrounds me and supports me, and I can use it as a platform to start again. I’ve got a home because I’ve got supporting networks around me, and I interact and build ties the same way the people surrounding me also create bonds” (Olea, 2008: 9).

We can’t forget that, despite the fact that access to housing is a universal right stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and also a civil right for the Spanish population, it is not a real right but rather what’s considered a guiding principal; meaning it’s not enforceable by law.

But we can’t be too ingenious and think that access to housing resolves all the problems, because it doesn’t guarantee integration on its own; what’s more, in particular circumstances (insecurity, precariousness, breakdown), it can trigger social exclusion. The physical conditions, accessibility and the context can determine whether it becomes a home or not.

It’s important to see whether the surroundings can influence the personal and social development of the people involved: poor areas remain poor unless they are invested in. Unemployment, drug abuse or school failure can perpetuate in some areas of cities and towns, creating ghettos where only a few of their inhabitants manage to climb socially and where the majority are condemned to reproduce the same life conditions.

This has a lot to do with the city’s design and how the use of public space is conceived: how these neighbourhoods were created, how they are designed, how they provide

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12. ETHOS: initial of European Typology on Homelessness and Housing Exclusion that allows for the measurement of different types of inadequate housing.



services, etc. But as well how they have been socially treated: social attention, health, schooling, cultural centres... The use of public space is becoming limited and poverty is being criminalized, favouring economic and political interests.

### **A way out in times of crisis**

The common modality of tenancy and access to housing in Catalonia –and also in Spain– since the end of the 20th century and the start of the 21st is ownership. This tendency influences –a great deal– the precarious situations affecting mid and low-income populations regarding the quality of housing.

All the policies, institutional advertising, the entire framework have been geared towards the buying and selling of housing. Back in the years of Francoist liberalism policies, rapid industrialization and social inequalities (period known as *desarrollismo*), housing was seen as a business opportunity and it hasn't been addressed since then as a basic need, but as merchandise.

As is happening in most parts of Europe, renting is the most viable option. In this aspect there has been a change since the report was published, as at that time it was still possible to get a mortgage, but now it isn't for the majority of people in our country. The financial crash has wiped out easy credit, even though the Euro Interbank Offered Rate, the Euribor, is lower than ever. But high rent prices are still a barrier for accessing housing.

As can be seen in *Graphic 1*, we started in 2009 with a sharply rising trend, that became slightly moderated with the crisis, but is now skyrocketing back up.

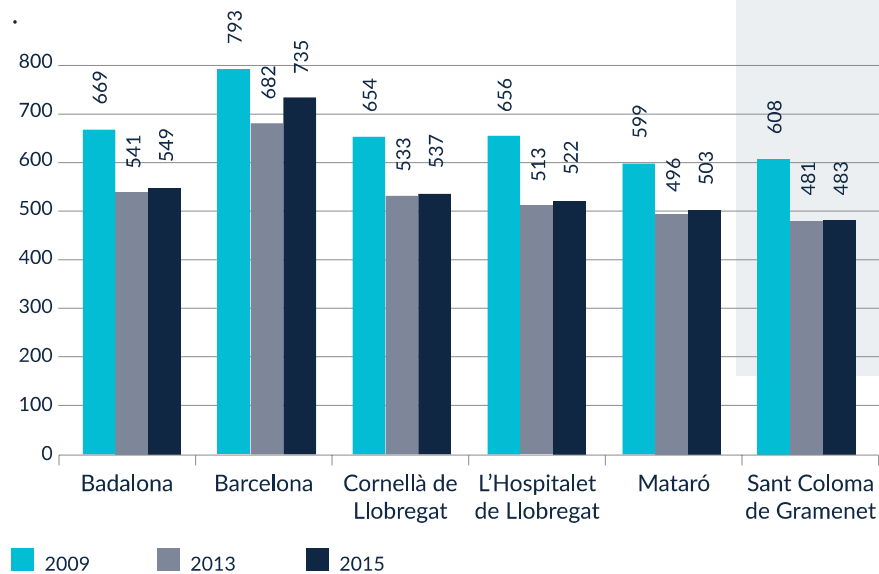
Let's focus on Barcelona. Although in 2015 the average rent is situated under the 2009 figure, from 2013 until now it has increased again by 8%, resulting in a decrease of 7% with regards to 2009.

These prices suppose a heavy burden for family economies if we take into account that the minimum wage has gone from 629€ in 2009 to 648.60€ in 2015, a 4% increase –still 1% below the minimum wage of 2013 (654.30€)–.

These days, housing access is very difficult for many people and families who find themselves economically on the edge. They are people and families without income, or whose salaries come from precarious, underpaid jobs or who are not allowed to work –or have lost the permission– and get scant pensions, especially old people or long-term unemployed.

**Graphic 1. Comparison of the housing rents among the principle cities of the diocese (2009-2013-2015)**

Euros/month. Annual averages.



SOURCE: Catalonia Statistics Institute. Department of Land and Sustainability. Office of Urban Development and Housing.

Furthermore, those people who chose to buy at a time when the prices were relatively affordable and unemployment rates were low (especially in the building trade) found that their mortgages increased and they were laid off, so they find themselves with a flat they can't pay and at the risk of facing the street if they can't find a solution. A large part of the young population and families with small children are facing this situation in this country.

In this situation, the sub-tenancy rooms market is, on one hand, an alternative to hostels (which are usually more expensive) and, on the other hand, a business for some groups taking advantage of this *modus vivendi*. For other people, it simply means some extra money or the way to avoid losing their home.

In that context, social housing could prevent these housing conditions of many families from worsening and it would help to improve life conditions of other families. But there's little social housing being built and that which is available is insufficient. That's the reason why Càritas is committed to creating its own stock of housing available for rent at affordable prices.

During 2015 we had 309 single family dwellings –managed by the Social Housing Foundation promoted by Càritas– and 55 residential centres and shared flats, with 1.292 places in total.

### **Roofs which are not homes: who lives under them?**

The impact that a lack of housing or insecure housing has is dependent on who is suffering the consequences. It's not the same for a single person or a couple without children as it is for a family with children.

When children are involved, the security of a propriety or rental housing unit is usually chosen, even though the financial difficulties to get and maintain it increase greatly. Despite this, it's important to highlight that 20% of families with children attended by Càritas in 2009 –the year we drafted the report mentioned– were forced to live in sub-tenancy rooms, sharing flats with other people. That a fifth part of families with children suffer this insecurity means the social impact in twenty or thirty years time could be huge. As is showed in *Graphic 2*, this rate has decreased considerably. Even then, it's maintained at 11%.

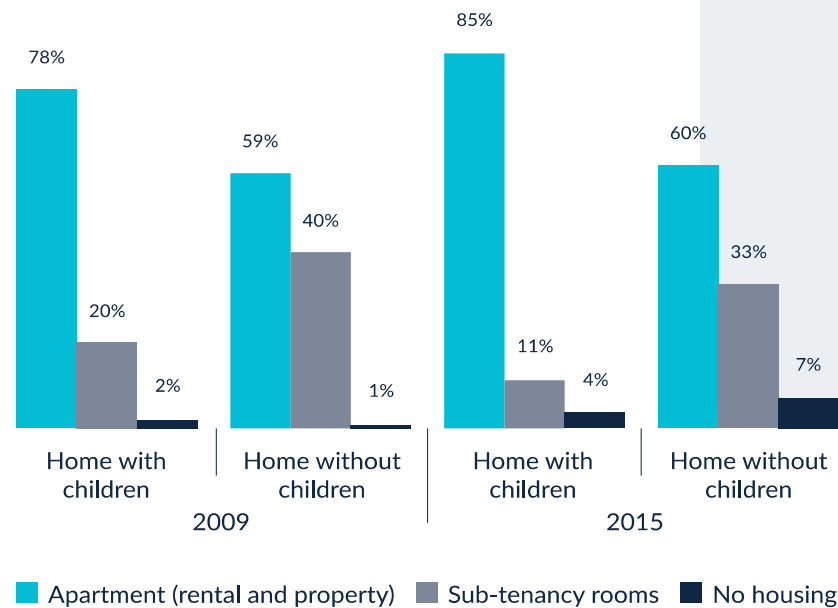
Even more worrying is the increase of families that don't have their own home. In this period, the percentage of families with children has doubled while those without have increased even more, from 1% to 7%.

We can't point out a unique profile of person or family facing these situations of precarious housing as there's a vast array of situations and collectives that are affected, with one common denominator: insufficient economic resources. And what's more: the ongoing recession continues to change significantly this reality.

One of the collectives affected is the roofless population –who, according to the last city count in Barcelona (Romeu i Sales, 2015) is largely formed by men who have been on the street for two or three years, especially non-Europeans (47%) (20% without residence permission), and Spanish (42%), suffering physical or mental illness without treatment, substance abuse, with no income (52%) or minimum income.

In 2009 we were still talking about the overcrowded rooms in flats of the old quarter of Barcelona, in precarious housing conditions; these days, there's a higher rate of people taking refuge in friends' or relatives' houses. Nowadays, as the migrant flow has been reduced, the first phenomenon has almost disappeared, while the second is spreading to more sectors.

**Graphic 2: Types of housing tenancy according to types of home attended by Càritas Diocesana Barcelona. Comparison 2009-2015**



SOURCE: Own comparison based on the homes attended

But the most serious and long-lasting phenomenon is the rooms rented mainly to foreign people without residence permission who've been living between one to three years in our country, but also to other profiles of people (and, as we have seen, also families with minors). They are mainly, according to cases known to Càritas, single men and also now single women with children.

Other populations, like Maghrebians, usually choose to rent a flat or, out of necessity, share a flat with their extended family, also in the old quarter of Barcelona.

### Impact of the trigger factors of exclusion

Exclusion risk factors, if perpetuated in time, can trigger serious consequences, since personal suffering is increased and relationships within families and their surroundings get damaged, but also on a social level, as conflicts rise and cohesion and coexistence gets compromised.

From Càritas' point of view, the trigger factors are:

- Financial: lack of income or not having enough income to deal with housing costs and bills, which forces families to turn to social services and creates a debt spiral very difficult to break; housing access possibilities (mortgage non-payment leads to renting and renting leads to going back to a parent's home or son or daughter's home. It also feeds the housing black market and generates nomadic lifestyles, with a clear impact on access to health care and schooling as they depend on the inhabitants' register);
- Health: physical illnesses worsen, somatised symptoms; mental health deterioration, chronic addictions, etc.
- Coexistence: loneliness, lack of family and social support, social alienation and disengagement. At a family level, marriage problems emerge and divorces and domestic violence increase. Neighbourhood conflicts also increase and coexistence and social cohesion get damaged.
- Employment and education: underground economy increases, along with precarious and underpaid jobs, periods of unemployment get longer. Young people lose the motivation to study which increases school failure and dropout, therefore professional quality decreases and, consequently, lower pensions.
- Social and civil rights: slow procedure of the dependency law and social benefits.

### Impact on daily life

We have considered until now the general mid and long-term consequences, but living in such precarious conditions has a clear impact on daily life. 'Normal' and simple things like having a home where you can be registered can be the difference between integration and social exclusion, as this procedure determines access not only to health attention and social services, but also children's schooling.

Moreover, life under these conditions also leads to routines which impact (or will impact) on personal and family development: living with strange people, in tiny and overcrowded places, having no space to enjoy family moments or having inadequate living space effects the organization of daily life: how many personal objects we can have; how to keep them; how and when we can wash clothes, especially with children, when we can use the bathroom or the kitchen, how and where to do homework, who can take care of

the children so the parents are able to work or look for a job. And not only that: living in a precarious situation also has serious health implications.

Through Càritas' experience, we have seen a direct connection between housing occupancy rate and some illnesses linked to health standards and hygiene, humidity and lack of ventilation, such as tuberculosis and other respiratory diseases like asthma or bronchitis, or infections caused by contact with bedbugs, fleas, cockroaches or rats. And other sicknesses which are more connected to eating habits: stomach problems, intestine disorders, development disorders, lack of proteins and vitamins, overweight and obesity. Problems that can also cause other conditions such as musculoskeletal problems, hypertension or diabetes.

Without mentioning those people who already have an illness and for whom it is difficult to keep up with medical appointments or their prescribed treatment.

If there is a common disorder in people who live under roofs which are not homes, then it concerns mental health.

The psychologist team of Càritas' mental health program warns that living in these situations doesn't necessarily cause mental illness on its own, though it is a stressful factor leading to depression and many somatic symptoms. That is to say, living in inadequate housing conditions can trigger problems related to anguish and stress, depending on the person.

Furthermore, the majority of people attended by Càritas who live under these conditions are migrants, so they might suffer the Ulysses syndrome, which establishes a direct and unequivocal link between stress levels experienced by migrants and the appearance of psychopathology symptoms.

There's no doubt that Ulysses syndrome<sup>13</sup> would appear in the most extreme situations of cases attended by Càritas: when the family is left behind, especially when there are children or old or sick relatives and, there's no chance to go back not even for a visit in order to help them, along with a lonely life, with no family and no social networks, fighting constantly to survive in a harsh context.

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13. Described for the first time by the Doctor Joseba Atxotegi, Head of the Psychopathology and Psychosocial Attention Service for migrants and refugees at the Sant Pere Claver hospital in 2002.

**Greater impact on childhood and adolescence**

Among all the people, young people are the ones who feel most the effects of living in these precarious situations, as what they experience as children will influence them all their life. That's why it's so important to take care of their wellbeing and sense of security. That's why they are a priority for Càritas.

Children, teenagers and young people are dealing with situations that hinder their development, such as the lack of living space, which determines family relationships; the space for games and study; peer relationships. It also provokes inappropriate family routines: sleeping with their parents (in the same room and often in the same bed), being forced to live situations they can't understand or assimilate. They are also exposed to insecure situations, as they often live with unknown people whom they don't trust, in dangerous surroundings, or because their parents are 'invisible', that is, they spend hours alone with no adult supervision as their parents are working long hours with impossible schedules or are looking for a job. Consequently, they become adults before their time. They also move from place to place a lot, so they change constantly from group to group and it can create conflicts with the family and of personality, especially in young people and teenagers. For children, changing school constantly can lead to cognitive and relationship difficulties, which are linked to alienation or socialization problems.

But most worrying is the impact seen on the health of children, teenagers and young people.

It's very probable that some childhood pathologies become chronic. That's the case, for example, of some respiratory conditions like bronchitis or asthma or some other skin-related issues, that can be caused by poorly ventilated housing with poor hygienic conditions. Other pathologies will be cured, but when they are suffered, they highlight the fragility of childhood.

We're also speaking about sleep disorders: they can't sleep properly, their sleep is suddenly disrupted several times, they have nightmares, insomnia... As a result, they get headaches, lack concentration, have cognitive difficulties (lack of memory, slower reflexes, etc.) as well as different symptoms like fear, anxiety, enuresis, encopresis, irritability and even depression. These have an impact on their relationships, especially at school and with the family, and will also have repercussions on their way of dealing with society in the future.

With respect to adults, childhood, teenagers and young people, while many trigger factors which cause health deterioration are difficult to control as they work internally (resilience, personal competences, social skills...), others are external and can alleviate the suffering and improve their quality of life: enabling access to decent housing, guaranteeing health care and social services, implementing family counselling measures, etc.

The health, social and economic cost which having a large part of the population in a desperate, vulnerable and precarious state will have on our society is difficult to predict. However, social services and health care centres for adults and children have already noticed an increase in demand.

#### **The impact on health: a comprehensive analysis**

The report “With a roof and without a home” which we refer to now was published in 2010, and its conclusions allow us to analyse in depth which are the health consequences on the people attended. On one hand, it's important to know in order to give an adequate response to their needs. On the other hand, this knowledge contributes to one of the main aspects of our institutional action: expose unjust situations.

With that goal in mind, the Barcelona Public Health Authority and Càritas Diocesana Barcelona collaborated within the European Project Sophie's framework (Evaluating the Impact of Structural Policies on Health Inequalities) in order to promote research on the health impact with regards to housing conditions and the policies which affected them. The first step was to analyse the social, financial and health features of a group of Càritas users. The report, published in December 2013 and entitled “Health and housing in a vulnerable population”<sup>14</sup> (Novoa, Ward et al.; 2013), reported life conditions much worse than the general Barcelona population, as well as in comparison with people sharing the same social and economic status.

The situations of inadequate housing with infestation problems (mice, cockroaches, fleas, etc.), humidity, overcrowding and others were the most common features of the group of Càritas First Support Teams (EAD) users where technicians had identified as a priority the need to improve the living conditions of these people, rehousing them in dignified housing units. A second group analysed was formed by individuals who were receiving support from the Housing Advising Service (SMH), which seeks to individually help

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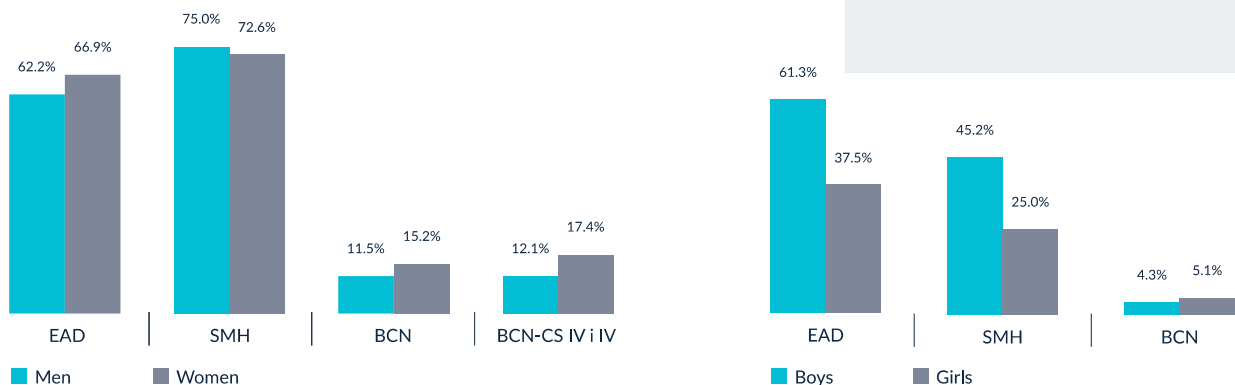
14. It was first published as the third chapter of a more extensive report entitled “Home, housing and health. Action and housing prevention”. Apart from focusing on health, the report assessed the social and economic context, Càritas' social base in Barcelona and the social action on housing affairs.



people to deal with mortgage or rent payments, offering mediation between the owner and the person affected, regardless of it being a financial entity or a person. While the prospect of losing the housing is the main problem of this second group, some of the EAD's users problems outlined also affected them, and vice versa. Two out of three interviewees from both groups thought he/she could lose his housing in the next two years.

These precarious housing, social and economic conditions were added to poor health. As an example, 70% of adults and 42% of minors had poor mental health in comparison with 15% and 5% respectively in the general population of Barcelona.

Graphic 3. Proportion of adults and children having poor mental health, according to gender, attended by Càritas Diocesana Barcelona.



Barcelona's data are standardized according to Càritas's users different ages. BCN: Barcelona; SC: Social class; FAT: First Attention Teams; HAS: Housing Advice Service.  
SOURCE: Own research for the report "Housing and health for vulnerable people".

The same people were interviewed again after roughly a year in order to outline the changes in the social and economic conditions as well as housing and their impact on health.

This type of longitudinal research enables more reliable causal relations between Càritas services –especially rehousing– and the changes in housing and life conditions. It has also allowed causal links to be established between life and housing conditions and health.

While the previous report outlined comparisons between the sample group and data regarding to the general population of Barcelona, the second report (Amat, Malmusi et

alt.: 2015), published in 2015, focuses on the comparison between people interviewed at the end 2012 and these same people roughly a year later, being supported throughout that time by CDB.

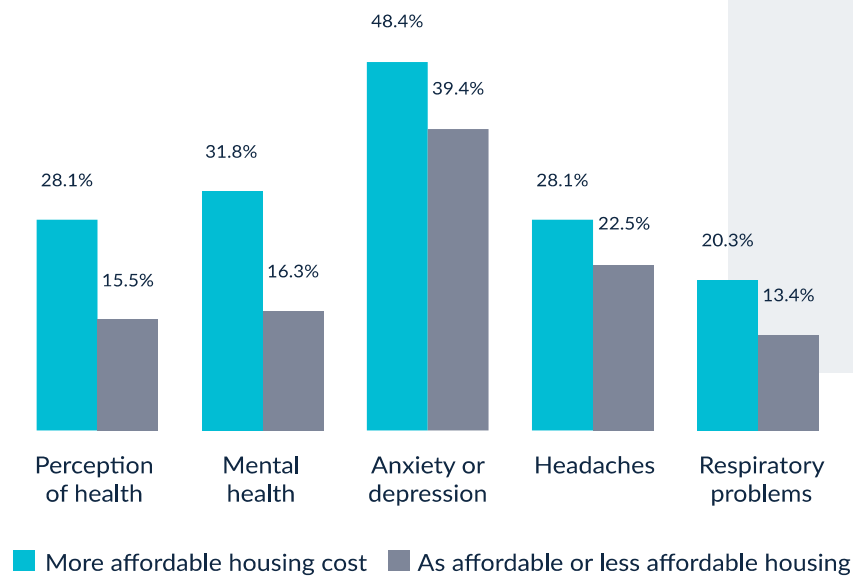
In this second round of surveys, 232 adults responded, 72% of whom were surveyed initially. The social and economic situation was still very precarious, despite some improvements in some subgroups, especially in the case of people rehoused by Càritas whose housing conditions (physical and financial) improved remarkably.

The health indicators were still much worse than the average indicators of Barcelona's population, but a relative improvement is seen, mainly in mental health indicators with regards to both adults and children. Furthermore, mental health improved more in those people who had economic improvements (increase of income in the home) or housing improvements (like less risk of losing housing or problems attached to inadequate housing).

*Graphic 4* displays a relationship between the increase in housing affordability and general improvement of health of the person interviewed. People considered to be in a better situation with respect to affordable housing (cost/income proportion has been reduced to under 50% or 30%) have enjoyed more frequent health improvements than people who remained in the same situation or worse.

It seems clear therefore that all policies and interventions aimed at improving the financial situation and access to affordable and adequate housing for people affected by the financial recession can improve not only their life conditions, but also their health.

**Graphic 4. Physical and mental health improvement of people attended by Càritas Diocesana Barcelona surveyed for the second time for the Sophie project according to changes in housing affordability**



SOURCE: Own research for the report "Changes in housing and health in vulnerable situations. Monitoring of a group of Càritas Diocesana Barcelona users".

### Positive attitude

Càritas has prioritised for the coming years improving the quality of life conditions for children, a population group that suffers subsidiary consequences of poverty, and doesn't have the chance to fight against it.

Different objectives have been targeted. Some of them are internal actions aimed at protecting children: continue broadening the network of centres for young people and children; academic and schooling support, maternity support, increasing the number of nursery schools places or fomenting sports. Other objectives have been addressed to improve the single family or shared housing stock for different family situations.

Other goals are out of our control, as they depend on different municipalities and have to do mainly with current legislation:

- Guarantee a minimum level of income for the person's dignity and self-sufficiency regarding habits (food) and financial capability, and housing stability. With special attention to families with children.
- Unify and simplify social benefits as civil rights, not dependent on Government budgets.
- Broaden the social housing stock and increase rental benefits with market- based rents.
- Reject the State Government decision to present before the Constitutional Court the law 24/2015, of the 29th July, known as Housing emergency and energy poverty, since that's the only legal instrument we can currently use to prevent evictions and the later loss of housing.
- Reinforce the mental health attention network, especially for children and young people (reducing waiting lists and increasing the frequency of visits).

These measures can't be ignored by Càritas and have to be demanded in line with –as explained above– one of their principle duties: to denounce. In this sense, reports like this are essential.

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**Key words** health, mental health,  
mortgage, public policies

### **Problems with dealing with the mortgage and the impact on health: a study with the platform for people affected by mortgages**

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Public Health Agency of Barcelona

The objective of this study was to evaluate the health of people who had problems in dealing with their mortgages in Catalonia and who were represented by members of the Platform for People Affected by Mortgages (known in Spain as PAH) and compare it to the general population. It has been observed that the probability of poor health suffered by people affected by mortgages nearly trebles that of the Catalan population. In particular, the percentage of men surveyed who declared having poor health (regular or poor) was 40%, while of the total Catalan male population it's 15%. Concerning women, around 55% declared having poor health, compared to 19% of the total of Catalan women. Regarding to mental health, the results were even more shocking. Among the people affected by mortgages, 84% of men and 91% of women had poor mental health, while a percentage of 10% and 15% corresponds to the total Catalan population. This study has found out that people facing problems to pay the mortgage and therefore suffering foreclosure procedures have worse health than the general Catalan population. Public policies such as social housing, second opportunity mechanisms or the assignment in payment are necessary and urgent in order to revert this situation.

#### **Introduction**

The object of the study is to evaluate the health of people who deal with problems to pay their mortgages in Catalonia, represented by members of the Platform for People Affected by Mortgages (PAH), and to compare it to the general population. A secondary objective is to gauge the health of people of the PAH in the different phases of the foreclosure procedure.

The co-related aspects linked to the recession, housing and housing policies in our surrounding are henceforth reviewed, as well as the health impact of the eviction processes, before providing the methodology, results and conclusion.

### The economic recession and the housing impact in the Spanish State

After the explosion of the *subprime* mortgages crisis in 2007, the great restriction of loans at international level had a deep impact on the Spanish real estate sector, which had been one of the most relevant sectors in the country's economy. At the same time, increasing unemployment –from 8% in 2007 to 26.6% in the second trimester of 2013– was produced, resulting in an inability to pay for thousands of families, many of them overly indebted due to the liberality in credit standards during the years of the housing boom (Alemany et al., 2013).

This situation triggered that the loss of housing has become a severe social problem (Daponte, Mateo, & Vásquez-Vera, 2016). Between 2008 and the third trimester of 2015, in the Spanish State, 630.896 foreclosure proceedings were started, 430.403 evictions were ordered and 276.186 executed. The majority of these corresponded to first homes (for example: 77% during the period 2013-2014) (Bank of Spain, 2015; General Council of Justice, 2015). Nevertheless, this situation is not only affecting people with mortgage debts, but also people who can't afford rent payments. In fact, in the period 2013-2015, 54.3% of evictions were due to non-payments of rent, while 41,2% were caused by foreclosure proceedings (General Council of Justice, 2015). Concerning to mortgages, the issue is more serious, since only a fraction obtain the assignment in payment (for example, 39,7% in 2014), meaning that many cases have to maintain the debt as well as being forced to leave the housing (Bank of Spain, 2015).

### Local Authorities' policies and measures to deal with the housing crisis

Until now, municipality responses to the housing crisis have failed to find a solution and state-level measures have been insufficient. For example, in 2012 the Legislative Decree 6/2012 ruling of March 9th was approved, about urgent measures of protection for mortgage debtors without resources. This decree drafted a “code of best bank practices” aimed at protecting the families affected, with measures such as negotiated assignments in payment.

However, the voluntary basis of the measure, the lack of rules obliging its execution by banks and the strict conditions addressed to the families in order to access the benefits caused it to fail (Pisarello, 2013). A similar situation occurred with the Royal Legislative Decree 27/2012 of November the 15<sup>th</sup>, which, instead of re-negotiating the debt, sought to stop temporarily the evictions of the most vulnerable families. The difficult conditions to access the moratorium, along with other controversial aspects, such as the family being obliged to go to the same bank that had evicted them in order to ask for housing, made the measure once again unsatisfactory. Later, in 2013 the Law 1/2013, of 14th May was approved, as an alternative to the Popular Legislation Initiative (ILP) launched in 2010 as

a legal proposal to regulate assignment in payment, evictions and social rent, which was rejected by the Spanish Parliament.

This law 1/2013 introduced another series of measures to reinforce the protection of the mortgage debtors. Measures such as more flexible conditions for families to be able to halt an eviction (especially, an increase in the limit of income), measures to protect the guarantor, limitation of financial interests linked to the delay in payment, prohibition of the anticipated expiry date of the debt until three non-payments are produced, more regulation of the mortgage market, etc. However, it wasn't supported by the community, even though it was presented as an alternative to the ILP by the government, as the possibility to regulate a general assignment in payment was denied and most of the ideas included in the ILP were not considered (Agüero Ortiz, 2013). These days, there are hopeful experiences, such as the popular legal initiative on measures about housing emergency and energy poverty converted in Law in Catalonia (Law 24/2015) –which, unfortunately, has recently been halted by the Constitutional Court– or the local-level measures applied by more and more local authorities.

### **The social response: Platform for People Affected by Mortgages**

Facing this lack of response from the local authorities, people affected and those sensitive to the housing crisis have organised themselves as an alternative for the families affected by the crisis and the problems linked to paying the housing. In fact, some experts suggest that the lack of confidence towards formal political organisations leads the citizenship to organise itself. This increase in participation would bring about positive effects on the population; among them, an empowerment or health improvement. This effect would be more decisive in more unequal societies (Coburn, 2004; Islam, Merlo, Kawachi, Lindström, & Gerdtham, 2006).

In 2009 one of the most influential current social movements in the country was formed: the Platform for People Affected by Mortgages (PAH). The objective was to respond to a situation affecting thousands of families, who endure a legal framework which, as of today, has failed to protect their interests in front of a robust opponent such as the financial entities implicated in the mortgage contracts (Colau & Alemany, 2012). Initially, the main premise was to modify the mortgage legislation in order to allow the assignment in payment and foster the people's capacity to organise themselves, many of them psychologically affected, promoting this way greater collective effectiveness (Alemany et al., 2013). On that psycho-social level, one of the great successes has been reducing the sense of guilt and frustration felt by the people affected, helping them focus their attention on the responsible stakeholders of the phenomenon on a structural level, thus encouraging them to find more effective solutions.



Due to the complexity of the task, PAH has planned short and mid-term objectives such as: impede the evictions of families, obtain adequate re-housing alternatives and advocate for a rise of the social housing stock (Alemany et al., 2013). Its strong impact on the media has moved the housing problem into the public arena, adding the interest of other social agents. It contributed to the promotion of the previously mentioned Popular Legislation Initiative in 2010 and 2015.

Today, the Platform has more than 220 groups extended throughout the Spanish State and has managed to stop 2.045 evictions and re-house 2.500 people. Moreover, it has launched a series of campaigns that have placed the housing problem on the actual agenda, both inside and outside the Spanish State, fighting for the right to housing and lessening the suffering of thousands of families (PAH, 2016).

### Health and risk of eviction

These days, the connection between housing and health is broadly accepted. In fact, back in the Victorian period, it is possible to find research that links housing conditions, such as poor hygiene and overcrowding, to health problems such as tuberculosis (Bonnefoy, 2007). But it's not only the physical aspects of housing that affect health, but also psychosocial, legal, and economic aspects. Different theoretical approaches have tried to explain and focus housing as a health trigger factor. For example, in 2014 Novoa et al. designed a model that describes a series of structural factors (such as housing system and welfare system policies) that influence the access to adequate housing.

This would be composed by four dimensions: two linked to the housing itself (physical aspects, legal and economic aspects linked to affordability, costs and stability) and two connected to the conditions of the area (community and physical aspects). All these dimensions would have an impact on the mental and physical health of the population, but in different range and frequency, according to the inequality axis such as age, gender, ethnicity or socioeconomic status (Novoa et al., 2014).

If we consider just a part of this theoretical framework, we can see how the legal and economic aspects of housing (also influenced by structural political and economic factors) can affect health. Regarding that, and mainly since the start of the recession, some evidence has been provided about how the risk of being evicted influences negatively on health (Tsai, 2015).

Most of the scientific evidence shows that people who live under the threat of eviction suffer mental health consequences. Some studies reveal higher levels of depression, anxiety, psychological distress and even a higher suicide rate among the people affected,

in comparison to the population not exposed to this problem (Batson & Monnat, 2015; Bolívar Muñoz et al., 2016; Cannuscio et al., 2012; Cook & Davis, 2012; Gili, Roca, Basu, McKee, & Stuckler, 2013; Houle & Light, 2014; Prohaska & Lichtenstein, 2014; Vásquez-Vera, Rodríguez-Sanz, Palència, & Borrell, 2016).

It has also been observed that this type of housing insecurity affects physical health and increases the risk of hypertension or other chronic illnesses, domestic violence and children being mistreated, along with the fact that people affected have a worse self-perception with regards to health (Bolívar Muñoz et al., 2016; Collier-Goubil, 2010; Frioux et al., 2014; Jones, Squires, & Ronzio, 2015; Vásquez-Vera et al., 2016).

Finally, living under the threat of eviction could trigger unhealthy habits like an increase in alcohol consumption (Mulia, Zemore, Murphy, Liu, & Catalano, 2014; Murphy, Zemore, & Mulia, 2014; Zemore, Mulia, Jones-Webb, Liu, & Schmidt, 2013), smoking, a diet low in fruit and vegetables or inactivity (Bolívar Muñoz et al., 2016).

In the case of Spain, there are studies that confirm this trend. Gili et al., used data from primary attention patients to demonstrate that from 2006 to 2010 there was an increase in doctor appointments for depression associated to mortgage problems or evictions (Gili et al., 2013).

On the other hand, Novoa et al., evidenced that people with housing insecurity problems attended by Càritas Barcelona had worse health than the general population, even when comparing them to the most vulnerable social classes. Moreover, those who improved their conditions in terms of affordable housing after a year of monitoring also improved their health conditions (Amat et al., 2015; Novoa et al., 2015). Finally, Bolívar et al. found that adults under a foreclosure proceeding in the city of Granada were more prone to suffer psychiatric and cardiovascular problems, along with unhealthy habits, in comparison to the general population in Andalusia (Bolívar Muñoz et al., 2016).

Mechanisms that explain the relationship between eviction processes and poor health are not completely clear. On one hand, it is thought that the eviction process affects health because of the material housing loss, hence a lack of health protection factors inherent to a household. On the other hand, the process itself also has an effect, and some studies based on a psychosocial perspective suggest that fear and lack of control, impact on social status, shame or a sense of failure would explain the connection between the eviction process and health (Nettleton & Burrows, 2000; Ross & Squires, 2011).

### Methods

This is a transversal study based on an online self-administered survey. It forms part of the European research SOPHIE (<http://www.sophie-project.eu/index.htm>) and has been made in collaboration with the DESC Observatory of Cultural, Social and Economic Rights, PAH and the group Emigra of the University of Barcelona. The survey was launched on September the 8<sup>th</sup> 2014 via the internet through the PAH website and using the free software Survey Monkey. It was closed on November the 20<sup>th</sup> 2014 with 2.688 answers coming from all parts of the Spanish State. From these answers, the chosen ones were those which: 1) came from Catalonia; 2) the surveyed person was directly linked to the mortgage and 3) the person had reached the last window of the survey and had therefore answered all the questions. In total, 905 answers were collected (344 men and 561 women).

Only one member of a family unit was asked to complete the survey; some sections were related to the surveyed person and others referred to the family unit. The survey was structured in different parts. Some were linked to housing and the housing situation, others were about socioeconomic factors, some of them centred on the impact on children, and there was a specific part on the health of the surveyed person and his/her children (in the case that they had them).

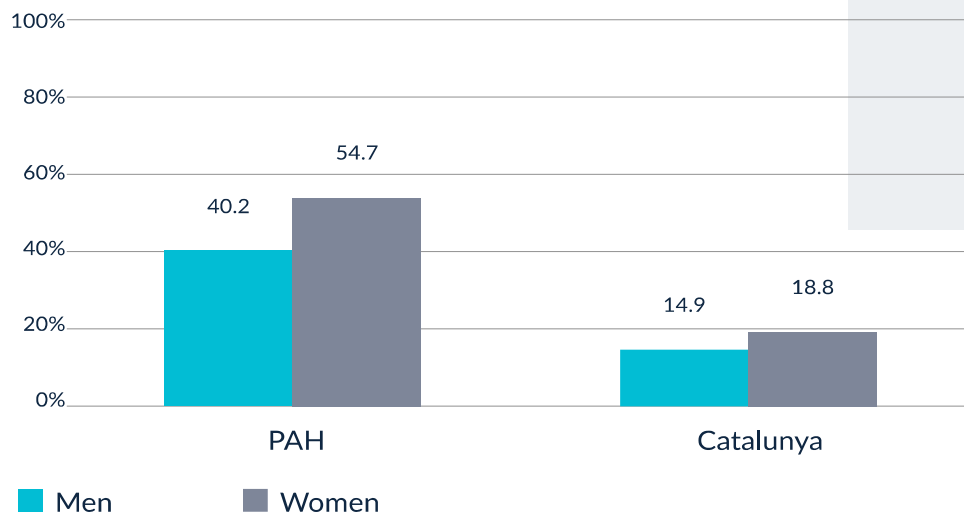
This article will only report the health results of the surveyed people. In particular, self-perceived health, poor mental health and frequent headaches of people aged 18 or older will be discussed. In order to see the health conditions of the people affected by mortgages and whether the situation of economic and housing precariousness is affecting their health, results have been compared to those of the general Catalan population using the Catalonia Health Survey in 2013 (ESCA, 2013). These last percentages have been standardized according to the PAH survey age sectors distribution, so that the different age distribution doesn't affect the results. It was important to show the evolution of health during the process of the foreclosure procedure, and for this reason the health results are shown in the different phases. More detailed results have been previously published (Vásquez-Vera et al., 2016).

### Results

Graphic 1 represents the self-perceived health. The self-perceived health is a question about how the person feels about his/her health. It reveals the physical and mental perception of health and it has been shown that it's a good predictor of disease and death (Idler & Benyamini, 1997). It is observed how the percentage of men surveyed who confess to having poor health (regular or poor) is 40%, in contrast to 15% from the total of Catalan men. Concerning women, nearly 55% confess to having poor health,

compared to 19% of the total of Catalan women. In both cases, the probability of having poor health nearly triples that of the general Catalan population.

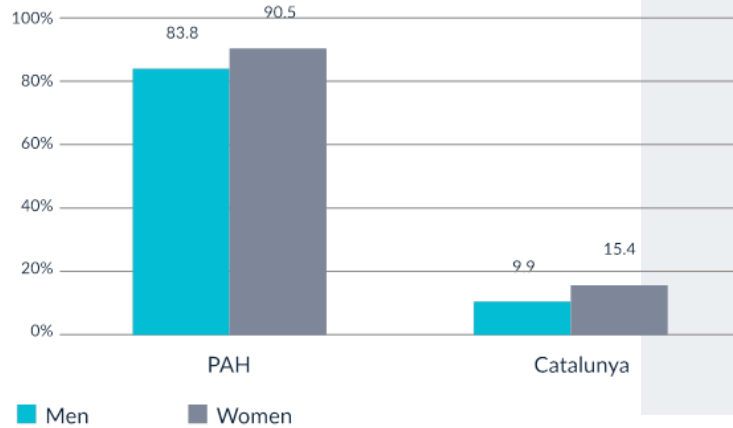
**Graphic 1: Percentage of men and women with a regular or poor self-perception of health among the people surveyed (PAH) and across Catalonia**



Graphic 2 represents the percentage of people with poor mental health. This indicator has been created based on 12 questions that form part of the anxiety and depression scale of Goldberg's General Health Survey (Shapiro, Skinner, Kramer, Steinwachs, & Regier, 1985) and reveals the current level of mental problems. It's able to detect anxiety and depression, social dysfunction and lack of confidence.

It's observed that, among men affected by mortgage problems, 84% would have poor mental health in contrast to 10% of Catalan men. In women, these percentages are 91% corresponding to those affected by mortgage problems and 15% from the total population. It seems then that the mental problems would be those related to losing a home or being at risk of doing so, since the prevalence is much higher in people affected by mortgage problems (9 times more in men and 6 times more in women), where almost all the people would have mental sickness.

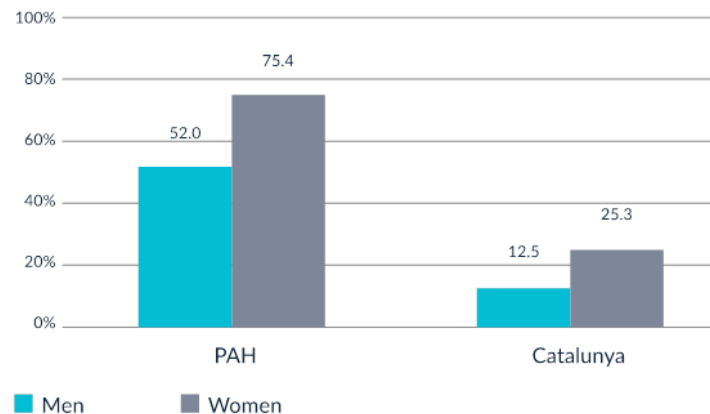
**Graphic 2: Percentage of men and women with poor mental health among surveyed people (PAH) and across Catalonia**



The presence of frequent migraines and headaches has also been studied. This is a disorder affecting a high rate of the population that could be linked to the stress and anxiety of foreclosure proceedings.

More than 50% of men and 75% of women surveyed declared suffering frequent migraines and headaches in the last 12 months. In relation to the general population, these percentages decrease to 12.5% in men and 25% in women (graphic 3).

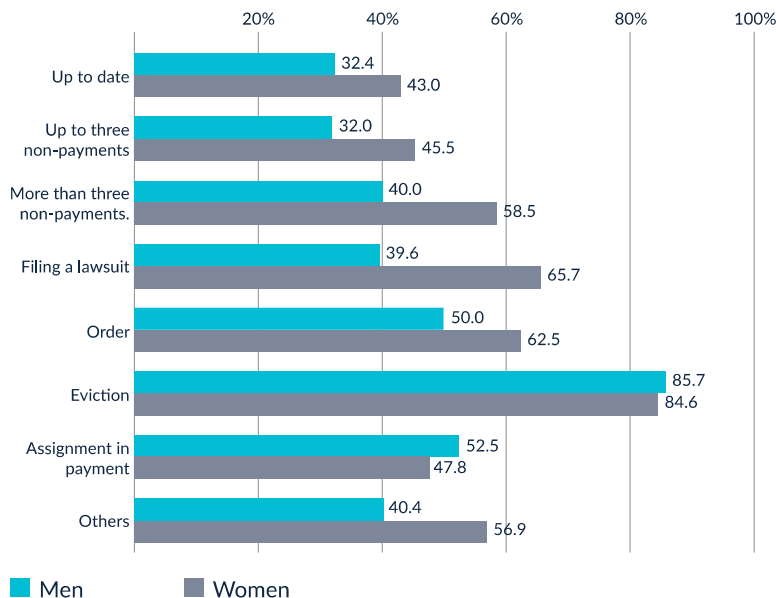
**Graphic 3: Percentage of women and men with frequent migraines or headaches in surveyed people (PAH) and across**



It needs to be highlighted that, in all the indicators, women register worse health than men. This matter has been extensively treated in research. The gender inequalities in health are caused by women's life and work conditions (less power, status and economic resources) and also because they suffer more chronic diseases through their life (Arber & Khlata, 2002; Malmusi, Artazcoz, Benach, & Borrell, 2012).

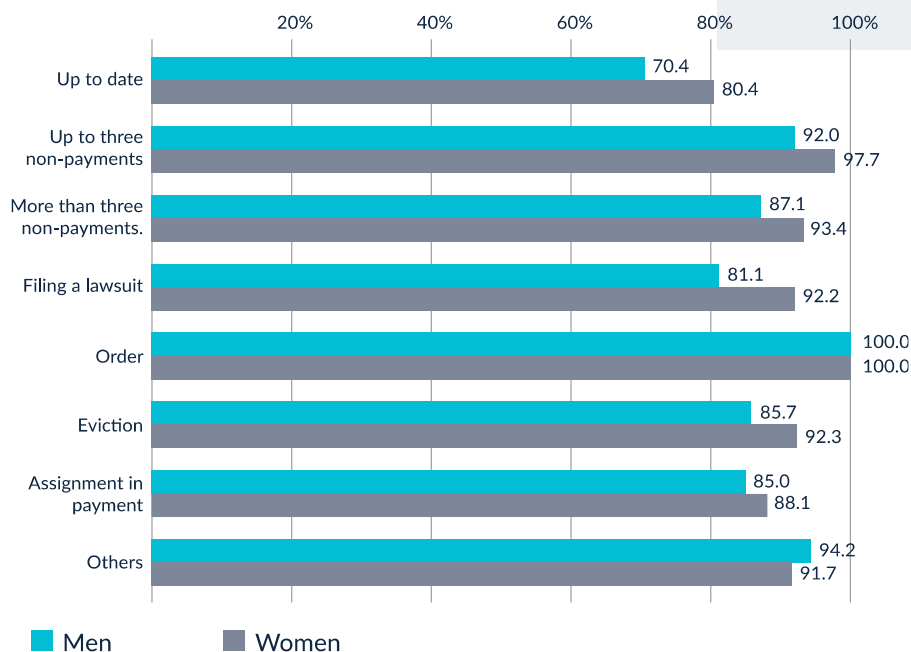
The connection between health and the phases of the mortgage situation of both men and women can be seen in graphic 4. These phases would be: up to date with payments (even though there may be some difficulties in paying); having up to three non-payments; having more than three non-payments but still not received written notice of lawsuit; having received notice but no order of eviction; have been evicted but having managed to get assignment in payment (with or without social rent). Both men and women's health seems to be connected to the phases of the mortgage situation (even though in women it's statistically significant and in men no). For example, around 32% men who are up to date or have up to three non-payments, have poor health; of those who have more than three non-payments –having received notice or not– 40% have poor health; 50% of those who have received an order of eviction have poor health, while the percentage of poor health among those evicted is 86%. It's clearly observed, thus, that poor health worsens as the eviction process continues. It also seems that people who have got assignment in payment would be in better health (53% poor health), than those evicted people who didn't get it.

**Graphic 4: Percentage of men and women with poor or regular health perception according to the phase of the mortgage situation**



Concerning the relationship between poor mental health and mortgage situations, even though in this case the prevalence of poor mental health is very high in all the cases, the lowest rates are found in those who are up to date with the payment (70% of poor mental health in men and 80% in women). The highest prevalence is seen among people who have received the eviction order (100% poor mental health), possibly related to the stress of knowing that, at any moment, they can be evicted. Following them, the people who accumulate up to 3 non-payments (92% poor mental health in men and 98% in women), maybe for the great effort of trying to cope with payments. In this case, the mortgage situation is particularly associated to the poor mental health in both men and women.

**Graphic 5: percentage of men and women with poor mental health according to the phase of the mortgage situation**



### Weaknesses and strengths

Firstly, it's important to say that this study accounts only for people with mortgage-related problems who got in touch with PAH or accessed the PAH website and therefore it doesn't represent all the population with mortgage problems. Furthermore, insofar as the survey was written in Spanish, it's possible that migrants who don't dominate this language would be under represented, along with the people with no Internet connection,

even though the PAH departments were provided with computers and volunteers helping to fill in the survey.

Nevertheless, it has been a first overview of the health impact connected to mortgage problems and foreclosure proceedings in a context where the topic has been studied little, as is the case of the Spanish State. On top of that, it allowed us to study a population that is difficult to contact, of whom there are no official statistics in this country.

### Conclusions

This research has found out that people with problems to deal with their mortgage, and who suffer foreclosure procedures, have worse health than the general Catalan population. Public policies such as social housing, second opportunity mechanisms or the assignment in payment are necessary and urgent in order to revert this situation.

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**Key words: Rooflessness,  
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## Homeless people attention in the city of Barcelona: a historic and future review

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The city of Barcelona has a long history of attention to homeless people. The city council program of attention to roofless people provides solutions for the most vulnerable situations through the provision of services and resources for the various phases of social exclusion. These devices have increased and become more diversified, adapting thus to the changes in society. At the same time, different non-governmental organizations have carried out important work throughout the years. As a result of this joint work, in 2005 the Network of Attention to Homeless People was born.

However, important challenges need to be faced, such as the implication of other protection services, especially with regards to health, and lead the fight against homelessness beyond the territorial limits of the city, involving therefore other cities and local authorities.

### 1. Historical background

Homeless people have been the focus of attention by politicians throughout history. Since the 15th century, most European countries started implementing measures due to the impact of urban development, in which poverty played an important role. Their main objectives were control and confinement in the charitable institutions managed by local governments (Beltrán, 1997:86).

Shelters were one of the principal assistance solutions for the poor. According to Cavillac (1975:60), these resources were a new version of the *Cases de Misericòrdia* (Almshouses).

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The difference is that beggars were picked up during the night and during the day went out to beg or to work before going back again at night. Barcelona city council started using that care approach in the 19th century. As García Roselló says, before 1936 the city had three public care institutions, two of them addressed to women (located on Cid street and at Santa Caterina market) and another one for men (found at Calàbria street). In the 40's the Valldoncella shelter opened, which would operate in the city throughout the second half of the 20th century, before being closed down in 1998 (1999:79).

In his book "An unsuspected world in Barcelona" (1945), Vilaró makes an interesting description of the begging routes and the care intervention control measures implemented in the city. According to the laws "Law of lazy people and villains" and "Local ordinance" (in vigour until 1979), begging was prohibited and had to be controlled, which is why cities employed various measures against it. In Barcelona, the police were in charge of this task and had a Begging Station<sup>18</sup>. A van (named "la piojosa", "lousy") drove through the streets following a route named "rondín" (little round), where all the beggars and indigents were picked up and distributed to specific centres of the city<sup>19</sup>. The day after picking them up, they were taken to the corresponding centres according to their situation: old people went to the Park Home; professional drifters and men and women with disabilities were housed in the industrial community Nostra Senyora del Port, passers-by were taken to night accommodation facilities, 'accidental' or 'good faith' cases (the cases were examined) and children went to the Asil de la Infància Mendiga home (Vilaró, 1945: 24-25).

During the Civil War, the centres of attention to homeless people were in deplorable conditions, which is why a new resource was planned to cover all the city's needs. The Valldonzella shelter (located at the street of the same name) was created, with a capacity for 250 people (distributed in four big rooms, two for men and two for women and children) and different services: showers, dressing rooms, washing and disinfection. People were allowed to access the shelter services by presenting cards issued by the Begging Station. This shelter provided night accommodation and food was provided through the soup kitchens placed at the Park Home (situated at Wellington street). In 1979 a second centre of attention to homeless people of the city was created: Sant Joan de Déu shelter (at Cardenal Casañas street) managed by the religious Order of the same

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18. At this Station, from 500 to 1,000 passers-by were picked up monthly.

19. According to data from the Station Files, 80% of beggars in public spaces used to beg as a job. The majority came from other regions of Spain (Murcia, Andalucía, Extremadura and others). One of the measures was to deport them to their places of origin.

name. Barcelona City Council agreed to contract 78 places. This resource improved the attention to homeless people, since younger people with better prospects of insertion started being transferred here.

During the eighties, social organizations focused on the attention to roofless people in the city started growing. In 1986 Arrels Foundation was created, providing attention and services to the most vulnerable people, the entrenched homeless. And during 1987, the social organization Santa Lluïsa de Marillac (from the Filles de Caritat order)<sup>20</sup> was born, addressed to male rough sleepers in need of convalescence.

With the entrance of the first democratic city councils, an important municipal reform was launched and the ten municipal districts of the city were decentralised. According to Castiella and Serra (1998), that model generated a new policies approach based on personal services in the neighbourhoods, promoting proximity and the development of primary attention social services throughout the city. During these first years, various emerging topics were tackled and the network of social centres increased markedly in all the neighbourhoods. The primary attention social services became at the end of the eighties the core element of the State Network of Social Services in Catalonia's first line of assistance care, attending the most vulnerable cases (Matulič, 2004). In the mid 80's, a public intervention network, led by Barcelona City Council through the Program of Attention to Vulnerable Homeless People, was consolidated, attending the roofless and the homeless people in the city.

## 2. Barcelona City Council Program of attention to vulnerable people

The Municipal Program of attention to Homeless People of Barcelona City Council was born in 1985. New services tailored to people's needs were designed, according to their disengagement phase (initial, advanced or consolidated)<sup>21</sup>, going beyond the care assistance view with new approaches aimed at social inclusion pathways. An educators team carried out forward planning tasks alongside the social workers of the Attention Service of Barcelona City Council (which disappeared in 1992). The social workers and social educators formed work teams, focusing on detection and treatment. At the end of the 90's, prospecting research was launched in the different areas, requiring teams specialised in detection and prospecting. The 900 phone line was introduced to improve

20. The religious Community Filles de la Caritat has devoted for 35 years to attend the most vulnerable people in the city. In 1980 Sister Genoveva Masip created a convalescence service in the Barceloneta area for men in a situation of severe exclusion, which became the seed of the current institution.

21. Academic research refers to the three types of disaffiliation phases: initial (up to 3 years without a stable home); advanced (3 to 5 years without a stable home) and entrenched (more than 5 years without a stable home).

# 20

## Barcelona Societat

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the information channels with citizens in vulnerable situations and agreements with private organizations who were already working in the city like Sant Joan de Déu, Filles de la Caritat and Arrels were set.

In 1987, the Permanent Office of Social Attention and Advice was created, located at Comerç street and which dealt with the city's social emergencies. This service works 24 hours a day and coordinates with the primary attention social services, available throughout the city, and the Homeless people programme.

During the period 1995-2002 the programme became more developed and consolidated: an increase of services, coordination circuits were created between the areas involved (mental health, substance abuse, police) and social organizations strengthened their ties and reached agreements. In 1995 Meridiana Day Centre<sup>22</sup> was launched (a pioneer in the Spanish state) to work on socialization aspects.

On October the 28th 1998, the residential centre Can Planas opened (50 places). This centre provides integrated treatment for the residents. As García Roselló (1999) states at the end of the 20th century “a new network of public attention services in Barcelona has grown and been consolidated, with the centre Can Planas, Meridiana Day Centre, the winter shelter, the Permanent office of social attention and the Social Inclusion Service all becoming part of it; as well as the agreements with non-lucrative organizations which are increasing throughout the city” (1999:21).

During the period 2003-2005 the Programme services were diversified and improved, strengthening the bases of proximity and community attention. In this sense, the model of intervention operating in open spaces changed; the teams worked across all the city (designing maps and reports for detailed monitoring) and detection and coordination measures with the different actors such as Prevention Secretary, Police officers, Technical Services and Basic Network of Social Services were set. In that period a cooperation model between the public system and social initiatives was also consolidated, becoming the Network of Attention to Homeless People in the Citizen Agreement framework for an Inclusive Barcelona (Programa Municipal d'Atenció a Persones Sense Sostre, 2007).

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22. This device opened in 1995, offering more places than the First Aid Centre (75 places) to cover the winter months attending homeless people and protecting them from the cold. This device is the seed of the future First Attention Centre.



Within the framework of the Social Inclusion Plan of Barcelona 2012-2015, the Citizen Agreement promotes strategy exchange, an action plan involving government bodies, companies and social organizations in order to work together towards a more inclusive Barcelona, facing together the financial recession's social impact. The support services to roofless people are in line with the action plans outlined in the Social Inclusion Plan of Barcelona City Council approved in February 2005. This plan follows the guidelines of the European Council, which suggests tackling social exclusion from a wider point of view, facing the multi-dimensional aspect of exclusion as part of an inclusive city. The guidelines for a more inclusive city are: fostering and accessing social rights of citizens, launching positive person-centred actions, promoting social and community participation and integrating policies and network strategies. Since the Social Inclusion Plan in 2005, new synergies have been created, and services and actions have been implemented in the city.

Barcelona City Council created the Department of Support for Vulnerable People (including attention to homeless people), which currently depends on the Area of Social Rights. The current City government organisation chart incorporates in this Area Housing, Education and Health, in a way that programs and action plans can be better coordinated, to open up new perspectives on the problem of homelessness.

The structure of services and devices provided by the Department of Support for Vulnerable People responds to the objectives outlined by the public and private network of attention supporting homeless people in their different phases. The following diagram shows the structure of city services and devices:

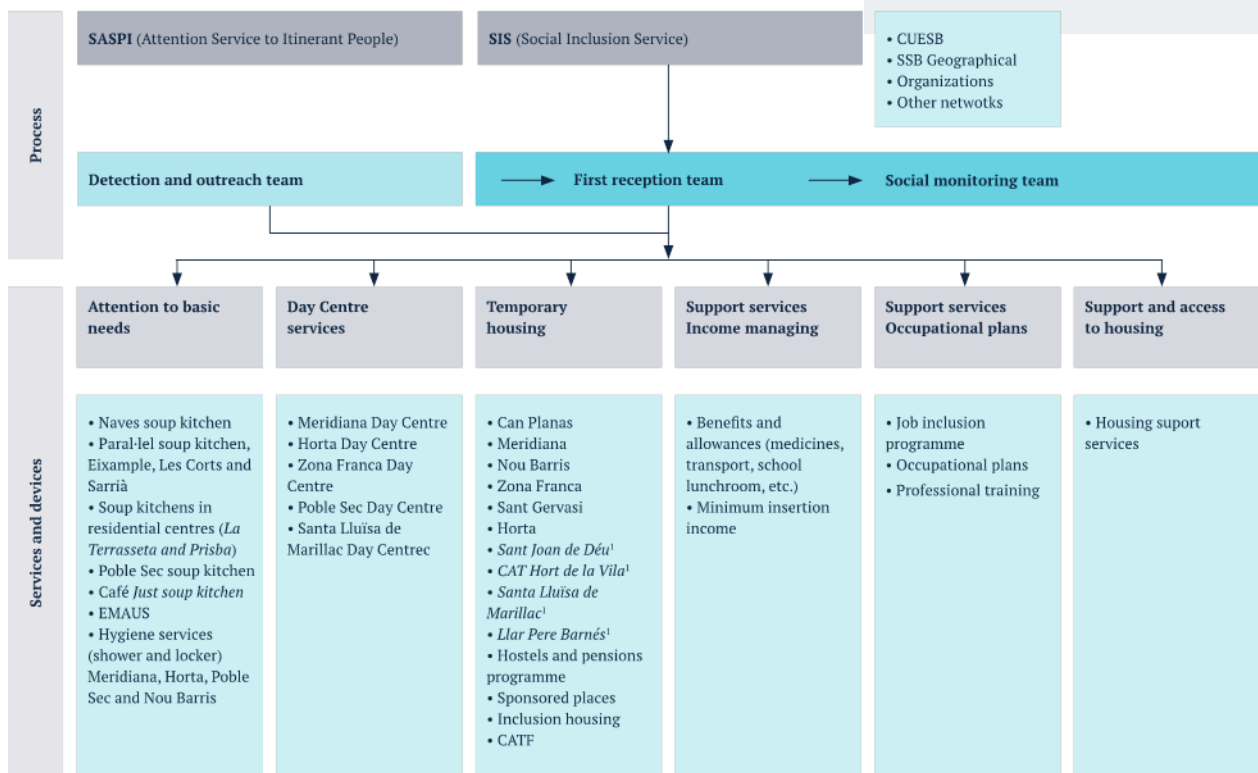
As we can see, the network of services is divided into different attention levels. All the devices have multi-faceted teams of social workers, educators and psychologists attending people on their diverse inclusion paths. Other professional profiles such as community workers, occupational advisors or supervisors are included according to the function of each service. At the first level, we find the Outreach Services, first attention and treatment (SIS) and SASPI (Attention Service to the itinerant Galician-Portuguese Population)<sup>23</sup>. These services are coordinated with other first line resources like the basic social services of the geographical area (SSBT), the Centre of Social Emergencies in Barcelona (CUESB) and other social and health teams and support networks. Among them, we must highlight the task carried out by the Mental Health Teams for Roofless People (ESMESS) formed by nurses, psychiatrists and psychologists. These teams were created in 2007 (after a long fight by the professionals) and they intervene on the street,

23. Currently SISFA Roma (Social Inclusion Service for Roma families with children)

attending situations where mental health problems (severe mental illness and double morbidity patterns) have been neither diagnosed nor treated.

The Social Inclusion Service attends people and families in initial, advanced or consolidated phases of social disengagement. The service is organized into different teams: street outreach, first attention and treatment teams, formed by social workers, social educators and psychologists. The street detection teams work in every area of the city. Their intervention seeks to engage roofless people to the specific resources of the attention network and help them keep to individual support plans concerning aspects such as improvements of routines, information, orientation and monitoring of their complex needs.

Diagram 1: Structure of services and devices



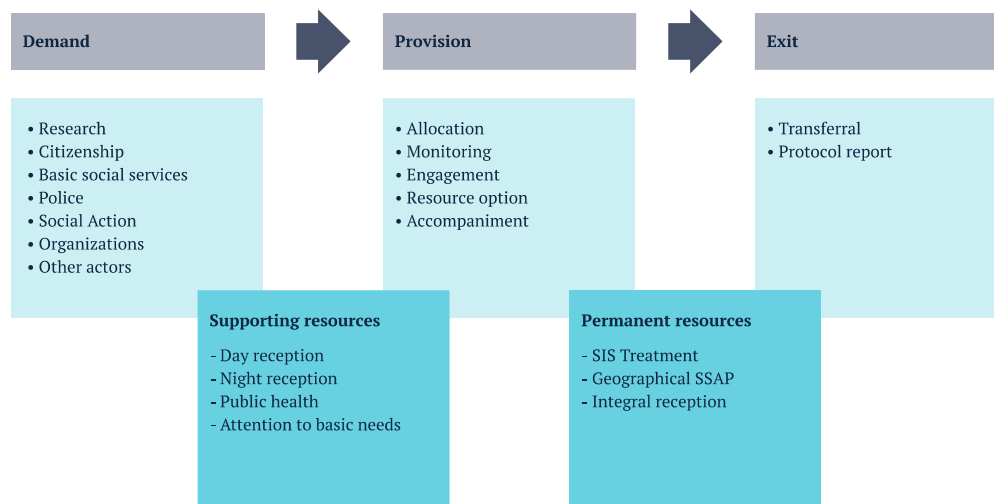
Sponsored in agreement with organizations, NGOs and Foundations

(1) Centres managed by public-private partnership in italics

SOURCE: Programme of attention to vulnerable people. Barcelona City Council, 2013.

The professionals connect these people to the adequate services and monitor their social inclusion process. The treatment teams are in charge of giving support to their individual inclusion pathways, working on a recovery-basis using a proactive approach. SIS has two lines of intervention: detection and social attention to the people who are on the street and management of the impact on public space. Coordinated measures have been designed between all the different city areas to tackle extreme vulnerability situations causing conflict or social concern in a multi-faceted way (educators, technical services, police...). These teams also create monthly maps of people detected on the street (ordered by area), providing a graphical vision of profiles and their evolution. The SIS detection teams' scale of support is described in the following diagram. The Attention Services to Basic Needs turn into centres of palliative attention to stop the process of personal and social deterioration suffered by the people who sleep on the street. The City Program of Attention to Roofless People tends to offer integrated resources, such as Meridiana Day Centre, where diverse services co-exist: centre of housing accommodation for housing needs, soup kitchen, day centre and personal hygiene services.

Diagram 2. Detection Teams circuit



Source: Diagram of the Municipal Model of Intervention for Roofless people. 2011

The Day Centre services provide daytime support to homeless people, attending their basic health, social and occupational support needs, complementing that way the individual support plans initiated by the case workers. There are various private

organizations in the city providing that service along with other activities.

The Temporary Housing Support Services are specialized depending on the different profiles. There are the following types of housing support:

- First attention housing support (access from the street, contact and initiation of the individual support plan), up to a three-month stay.
- Basic needs "low threshold" housing support (addressed to chronic people with little capacity to stick to individual support plans or acquire the commitment to change), up to a year stay.
- Inclusion housing support (agreeing to participate with a support plan geared towards the highest possible autonomy) up to a six-month stay.

The city of Barcelona has many public and private services that offer these social inclusion pathways through care provision aimed at promoting homeless people's autonomy. Residential centres have grown and social inclusion flats rather than large accommodation structures have been prioritised.

The City Council has launched new devices to attend emergent demand. Among them, the Centre of Temporary Housing Hort de la Vila (sponsored by the City Council and managed by the organization Sant Joan de Déu), the social hostel Mambré (a Mambré Foundation initiative) and the Temporary Housing Centre for Families (CATF) created by Barcelona City Council (Sales, 2013).

On a second level are the Social Housing Services for Social Inclusion with Social and Educational Support. These services attend people and families with specific needs in order to finalise their social inclusion path. Barcelona City Council currently has 50 inclusion flats. People are referred there by SSBT, SIS and SASPI.

Throughout 2006 Barcelona City Council provided 1,776 places, distributed in 22 housing centres or support services in the ten city areas. This increase in the number of places and support services tailored to the Social Network according to the Citizen Agreement for an Inclusive Barcelona have contributed to an improvement in the attention to homeless people in the city at the end of the 2003-2007 period.

The Vulnerable People Department which leads the care assistance network has been able since 2007 to quantify and observe the evolution of homelessness in Barcelona using

a series of instruments: city counts every three months, location maps and annual records. According to 2015 data, the places offered have been the following:

Diagram 3: Number of places and centres for vulnerable people. May 2015

Types of service	Centre	Places	
		Night accommodation	Day Centre
Reception	- Zona Franca	120	70
	- Nou Barris	75	30
	- Sant Gervasi	60	-
Basic needs	- Meridiana	45	60
	- Poble-sec		30
	- Horta	30	40
Insertion	- Can Planas	50	
	- Sant Joan de Déu*	52	-
	- Santa Lluïsa Marillac*	34	45
	- Llar Pere Barnés*	25	-
	- Hostels and pensions	100	-
	- Hort de la Vila	90	-
Accommodation centres	- CATF Navas 25 rooms	100	-
	- Maternity centres	10	-
Inclusion housing (50 housing units)	- Zona Nord, Sud i Oest...	221	-
Housing First	- 10 housing units (RAIS)	10	-
		1.022	275
<b>Total</b>		<b>1.297 places</b>	

Places	Places
Hygiene services (4 centres)	Soup kitchen (18 centres)
140	1.567

Housing First launching

Source: Programme of attention to Vulnerable People. Barcelona City Council. 2015

In 2008 Barcelona City Council joined the Focus Group of attention to homeless people within the EURO CITIES Social Affairs Forum (network founded in 1986 bringing together local governments of more than 130 large cities in more than 30 European countries). It operates by holding one or two annual meetings to share and discuss policies and decision-making on different topics; among them, homelessness. The homeless people Focus Group is composed by 12 members, among them a representative of Barcelona's Attention to Homeless People Programme.

The objectives of the network are: share best practices to reduce homelessness, develop principles for quality of services and prevention and outline recommendations on local

and European policies. Among the main actions carried out are: consensus regarding concepts and strategies, catalogue of the functioning of local programmes of attention to homeless people of every participant city, report about programme implementation in every city and design of a comparative instrument to detect the differences between the cities' members –integrated chain–. Topics related to housing have also been dealt with at joint meetings with other groups; housing, migration from Eastern Europe, Housing First, etc.

### 3. The Network of Attention to Homeless People (XAPSLL) in the city of Barcelona

The Network of Attention to Homeless People (XAPSLL) was founded in 2005 with the objective of strengthening the organizational capacity in Barcelona. 33 associations and organizations participate in this network, accompanying homeless people on their social inclusion and recovery process. This network was launched by Barcelona City Council in the framework of the Citizen Agreement for an inclusive Barcelona. The organizations included in the XAPSLL are:

**Table 1. Network of Attention to Homeless People (XAPSLL)**

1. ACCEM	17. Comunitat de Sant'Egidio
2. ADAMA	18. Congregació Servs de la Passió - Llar Santa Isabel i Residència Mare Teresa
3. Amics del moviment Quart Món Catalunya	19. Cooperativa Suara
4. Associació ATRA	20. Creu Roja a Barcelona
5. Associació Centre Acollida Assis	21. Fundació Arrels
6. Associació Dit i Fet	22. Fundació Futur
7. Associació Lligam	23. Fundació Iniciatives Solidàries
8. Associació per a la promoció social Cedre	24. Fundació IReS
9. Associació per la Recerca i l'Acció Social VINCLE	25. Fundació Mambré
10. Associació Prohabitatge	26. Fundació Privada Engrunes
11. Associació Rauxa	27. Fundació Quatre Vents
12. Associació Social Yaya Luisa	28. Fundació Salut i Comunitat
13. CALIU – Espai d'acolliment	29. Llar de Pau
14. Càritas Diocesana de Barcelona	30. Parròquia Sant Miquel del Port Projecte Sostre
15. Centre Obert Heura	31. PROGRESS
16. Companyia de les Filles de la Caritat de Sant Vicenç de Paül – Obra Social Santa Lluïsa de Marillac	32. Sant Joan de Déu, Serveis Socials
	33. Ajuntament de Barcelona

Fuente: Memoria de XAPSLL, 2014:4.

The main objectives of the XAPSLL are: denounce and raise awareness, constant analysis of the real situation, improve services and resources, definition of the support model and information exchange between professionals and services (XAPSLL annual report, 2014: 7-8).

During the first years the bases were created (objectives and goals, members which were allowed to participate, methodology and organization, as well as services and resources that should be run from all the organizations participants) and, from 2007, great progress was made, increasing the number of meetings and creating operational groups. The most important actions have been: the first night count of homeless people in March 2008; two seminars in 2009 and 2010; a catalogue of services available at the City Council website (<http://vulnerables.bcn.cat/catalegxapss>), a participation board of people attended by organizations, focus groups such as the Women with children Focus Group, the people in an illegal situation Intervention Group and the Night Count and Diagnosis Group of homeless people in Barcelona, among others.

The XAPSLL has also contributed considerably to different raising-awareness actions such as the Flashmob, roofless Portraits or different actions of diffusion and raising awareness in the media (radio, press and television). Various discussion groups between the XAPSLL members have been organised to improve both data collection and the organization of focus groups and fundamental topics aimed at improving the intervention with homeless people in the city (XAPSLL report, 2014).

The XAPSLL is currently increasing the number of focus groups and action plans aimed at improving attention and social awareness. These activities are possible through participatory processes with the city organizations working on this theme, as well as with other external collaborators coming from the national and international academic field. In 2015 the *Housing First* model was launched in the city. A Communication Group was also created in the same year, aimed at increasing diffusion of the XAPSLL activities and promoting new synergies between the organizations involved and the citizenship.

#### **4. Intervention approaches addressed to homeless people**

Barcelona is one of the European cities which has a model of attention to homeless people based on the “integrated chain” concept; that is, a group of services addressed to autonomy in a coordinated and integrated way. The system is focused on the staircase model or continuum of care, being a gradual and step-by-step based approach seeking progress, both in care provision (basic needs attention, brief temporary accommodation,

temporary resource until permanent housing) and in regular social intervention. This approach is used in the majority of European countries (Busch-Geertsema, 2012) and is described in the following diagram:

Diagram 4: Staircase model of intervention in the fight against homelessness



Fuente: Busch Geertsema 2012, *On the Way Home?*

Proximity and social accompaniment are the fundamental bases of the social intervention under this model. The proximity enables an intervention methodology based on a proactive, progressive and intensive approach. According to Funes and Raya's definition (2001), to accompany is to progress "alongside"; sharing a common project of social inclusion pathways, complementing the community support and developing social rights, guarantee of income and support resources (Raya and Caparrós, 2014:83).

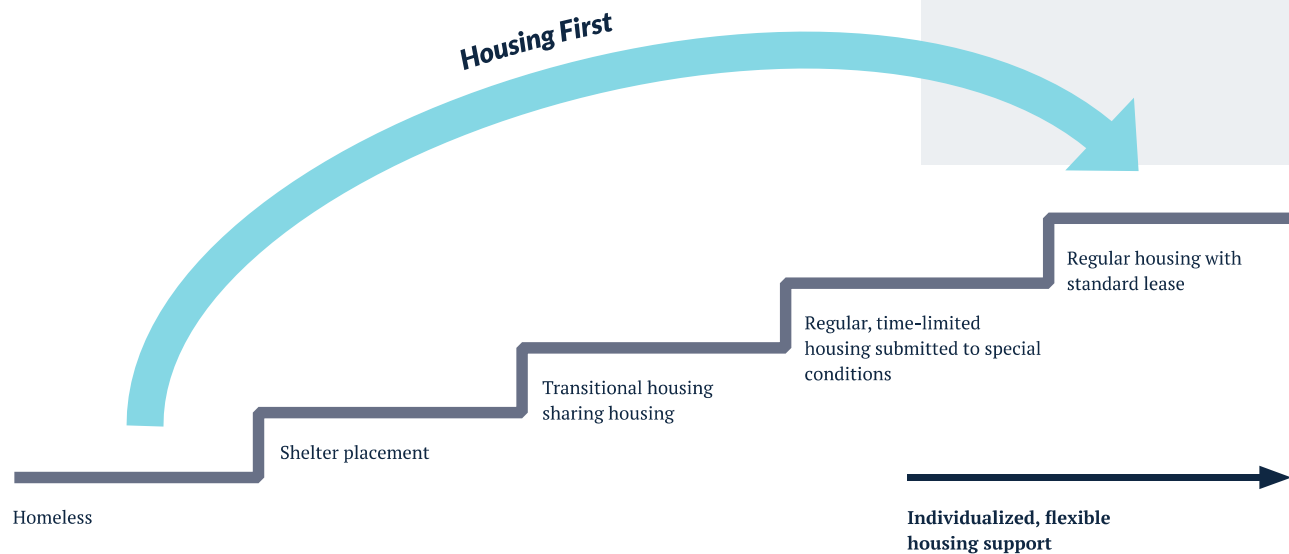
Since 2014, the city Council is implementing new action plans: some of them focused on the creation of new resources to attend people and families in entrenched situations and others oriented to new intervention models. Regarding the second proposal, Barcelona City Council is especially committed to the *Housing First*<sup>24</sup> approach. This model focuses its attention on offering housing first, providing secondary support through professional

24. Housing First approach is based on the *housing-led* strategies and was born from a programme launched in the United States by the organization Beyond the Shelter in 1988.



teams, a marked difference from the staircase model where housing is the last step on the continuum of care. During 2015, through an open request for tenders, the management of two stocks of 25 apartments was awarded to two organizations (Suara and Sant Joan de Déu). These interventions are implemented according to the guidelines of several reports by national and European organizations about homelessness (EAPN, 2013; *European Commission*, 2013; FEANTSA, 2013; FEPSh; 2013; Sales, 2013; Uribe, 2014). We can see it in the following diagram:

Diagram 5: Housing First Model



Source: Busch-Geertsema adaptation, 2013

Housing First implies a change in the balance of power between service providers and users (Busch-Geertsema, 2012). We are facing a new paradigm consisting of transforming the conception of the people attended and the methodology used. The model focuses on the needs expressed by the people attended, working on a multi-faceted level, on the base of principles such as proximity, maximum flexibility and the firm belief that change is possible.

The attention to homeless people in the city of Barcelona currently has two intervention approaches: the staircase model, conceived as a series of stages when accessing social support, and a Housing First model based on the right to housing as the principle core of housing exclusion support. One of the main challenges of the organizations and entities is to tailor their services and intervention models to the diverse social exclusion paths.

## 5. Future challenges

The attention to homeless people in the city of Barcelona has risen remarkably in the last few decades with regards to provision of accommodation and services array. The XAPSELL has been working since 2005, and there is a commitment to the use of new attention approaches based on the right to housing. But during this time a series of problems have also emerged, affecting the different services integrated in the Network. Some of these problems go beyond local competence and correspond to situations and how other services and, even, other local authorities work. In this sense, the approaches are operated on a local level, even though the transversal problems outlined make it difficult to find solutions without the intervention of other local authorities. For that reason, collaboration between municipalities must be established in order to design coordinated and comprehensive policies with regards to people, sharing common policies and objectives.

Despite the increase and diversification of resources, they are not very efficient and promote repeating patterns of intermittent access to the social care system. The system's response is limited to some specific benefits and admissions to temporary accommodation centres which fail to provide long-term solutions. The people sheltered in centres of specialized attention with serious problems of integration, caused by health, psychological and age factors and the people in an illegal situation –to expose briefly some examples easily observed– pass through the different resources without a mid or long-term solution. It has been demonstrated that a percentage of the roofless population receive only a partial response from the current attention services of the network. They're what we could call disaffiliated or enduring a situation of serious chronification; people who, due to a range of causes, won't reach personal and financial autonomy and who, lacking family support, will need continued support. Three groups enduring serious difficulties when tackling their situation are identified:

**1.- People resistant to social attention**, long term rough sleepers, with difficulties of adaptation and associated unresolved problems, preventing their adaptation to the different care centres provided by the network. There's no engagement or continuity with services, frequent abandonments for failing to respect the cohabitation rules and being unable to follow the agreements and actions of their attention plan, regular readmissions in a short period of time.

**2.- People with no alternatives**, who, despite their need to receive attention and care services, can't access them because these systems are saturated or because they lack some of the access requirements. Also, people recovering from illness who have no housing alternatives while convalescing; people with chronic illnesses and without

support who require continuous social and health attention. To summarise, a collective of people that, once all the possible interventions are finished, can't live without support, either because of their age or personal and/or physical disability, among others.

**3.- Migrants in an irregular legal situation.** The problem of attention is clear: the legal situation hinders short-term solutions via successful inclusion pathways, condemning these people to a sort of social invisibility, as they have no legal rights. In these cases, the legal situation blocks effective attention strategies and reduces the support to covering basic needs: health, food and temporary accommodation. These attention frameworks create a *return problem*, that is, people access again and again the care system, which is incapable of breaking this dynamic. The person's inclusion through employment (a large part of them are looking for a job) is impossible due to legal reasons. If one-off attention is demanded to cover basic needs, what is the adequate attention period? If the attention provided by SIS and other accommodation and integrated attention centres is defined as temporary, as a previous step and support to inclusion, what is the best time frame in these cases? Should the legal procedures allow access to a job, income and, as a result, housing? Unfortunately, there are, by now, no answers to these questions. The reality is that undocumented people are recurrent users of the system, which fails to provide anything beyond palliative and temporary solutions, putting the person at risk of consolidating his situation.

To sum up, there are specific situations that contribute to the current attention model's failure to respond to their needs in an efficient and effective way. The conditions of users of non-transitory accommodation services or people without a defined temporality (centres/apartments) must be established to face the social needs of the people with inclusion difficulties, requiring, thus, technical criteria to set these conditions, as well as well-defined user referral channels. However, the new resources, with the exception of the *Housing First* approach in Barcelona, are still temporary, provisional and not tailored to these profiles. The outcomes produced by this experience need to be studied, since it could reflect the current gaps in the care intervention system.

On the other hand, certain legal requirements become *expelling mechanisms*, since they don't recognize people who don't meet specific conditions as having the right to receive attention. The mobility of roofless people, as they try to meet their needs, doesn't adapt to the attention policies based on *geographical roots criteria*. Barcelona and the surrounding cities, even the ones further afield, play the same game, but with different rules. That's why in some municipalities, the residency registration is a must to access certain types of attention, whereas in Barcelona, this registration is not always demanded. In addition, this registration can be ambiguous, as with the registration

without a stable home. This formula allows the registration requirement to access attention to be invalidated: residency in the city can be vaguely proven. So, if we consider, first, that Barcelona has a dense network of attention services for roofless people, bigger and more specialized than in other local authorities and, second, a loose criteria with respect to attention depending on a real relationship with the city, the problem doubles. In first place, the *geographical unbalance* of services and resources in the attention to roofless people or people in situation of extreme poverty makes Barcelona a unique city with respect to attention resources; in second place, while Barcelona applies flexible measures regarding attention criteria based on relationship and affiliation to the city, other municipalities have restrictive criteria based on residency, with registration needed to prove this residence. In this sense, all the municipalities which form the Metropolitan Area of Barcelona, which has more than three million inhabitants, should design policies to deal with this unbalance.

Another key element in the attention to homeless are the social professionals who accompany people on their social inclusion phases. The work carried out by professionals in the current services hasn't been thoroughly examined in order to distinguish which methodologies and praxis have been used and with which results. Until now, what little research has been carried out on this problem in this city has generally been focused on the homeless population characteristics (social and demographic traits, demands, problems...), but doesn't include an analysis of the professionals' intervention. The professionals' knowledge of social work with homeless people must be gathered, using the corresponding mechanisms, in order to be able to help improve new approaches and resources based on internal knowledge, and not on foreign experiences. Therefore, the types of accompaniment and intervention policies which have been successful and provided quality attention need to be examined (Matulič, 2015).

Finally, visualizing the need to include gender in the evaluation and design of social policies. Women face greater discrimination and endure different risk levels, which make them more vulnerable in homelessness situations (Cabrera, 2000; Escudero, 2003; Fernández-Rasines and Gámez-Ramos, 2013; Sales et.al, 2015). The strategies used throughout their pathways must be identified in order to prevent situations of serious exclusion (Matulič, 2016).

Considering all that, four future challenges are of great importance. Firstly, to ensure coordination of the local authorities so that the different services are united under a single action policy in the fight against homelessness with a transversal perspective of the phenomenon, without separating the person according to problem type, as that's not possible as the person is not just the sum of a set of circumstances, but also (and

especially) the connection between these circumstances. This includes not only social and health services, but for all the mechanisms linked to justice, housing and occupation policies, culture and –why not–the promotion of participation in the community and proximity policies. It's especially important to establish a co-production of attention policies with the Catalan Health Service, especially for those cases requiring attention with a health component; and the Government Department in the case of foreigners in an irregular situation.

Secondly, unified policies between local authorities must be established mid-term through a unique action plan. On one hand, to avoid an unbalanced aggregation of services in some areas which forces people to move and uproot themselves from their natural surroundings. On the other hand, to unify a services array tailored to the needs and potential of every municipality and act on a prevention basis.

Thirdly, local authorities must be coordinated to avoid an accumulation of resources which is usually inefficient and doesn't respond to realistic planning criteria. On one hand, the different services and centres operating in a specific network of attention need to be organised. These need to be arranged to prevent duplication and improve efficiency and effectiveness. The action plan against homelessness requires a coordinated response by local social services. The services must be organised to improve detection strategies of unattended situations, not only by the specific network of attention, but also local social services. These services must predict and warn of future homeless situations before they reach the services and centres, working preventively. In this sense, the coordination of programmes with other services of the area is fundamental, such as primary social services, which attend people and families in serious social exclusion situations.

The attention model must diversify the types of attention, with multiple ways in and an adequate distribution of resources tailored to people's needs. Not only are residential places important to face the lack of housing problem, but also housing alternatives to the residential centres. That way, the first problem to tackle is housing. Brendan O'Flaherty (1996) and Cristopher Jenks (1997) define 'rooflessness' as a housing condition. "A person or family finds themselves in a 'roofless' situation because, due to some determined circumstances, they can't live in a better quality of housing than the place they are living in at that time". One of the advantages of such a simple definition is that it goes beyond individual causes and focuses basically on the housing market as the source of the problem. It's urgent to set out solutions in order to broaden social housing stock. Nevertheless, housing is not a unique and definitive solution for everybody. If the circumstances and problems that have caused people to become homeless aren't eased and are not addressed, we can't expect that just providing a home will eradicate these

problems. What's more: in some cases, new problems are generated. Credit defaulting that affects the social housing stock, the problems of coexistence and conflicts are good examples. Because of that, the approach must be tailored to different individual circumstances. Attention based on inclusion housing that provides private facilities and community spaces could be a good option for the future.

Fourthly, it's crucial to study in depth the key elements related to professional intervention in order to identify successful pathways in the different phases of the process. Finally, research on social policies addressed to gender must be carried out in order to outline schemes and professional interventions tailored to the situation of women facing severe social exclusion. These great challenges can be met by a mutual commitment aimed at reviewing and broadening the current social policies in the city tackling the diverse situations of homelessness.

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Journal on social knowledge and analysis



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# 20

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**Key words:** Inhabit, habitat, housing,  
right, city, urban

### **Right to inhabit, right to (social) housing**

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**Related concepts such as housing, social housing, habitat, inhabit, right to housing and right to the city are explored. The article seeks to understand the current situation where cities are wavering between choosing social justice and rights or Neoliberalism and social inequalities. A historical and up-to-date analysis of the right to the city allows us to tackle the right to inhabit and how this is executed in relation to the right to the city and in opposition to the habitat logic, all of which is connected to the right to (social) housing. It's concluded that the place to live can't lead by any means to the inhabitants' social and political disaffiliation, since that would invalidate urban life. Without urban life, there's no housing and there's no freedom without housing.**

#### **Introduction**

In recent times and from a rights perspective, different terms directly or indirectly related to housing are employed. These concepts are linked, yet the connection is not clear, as they can complement each other and also be contrary.

It's worthwhile, thus, to align terms and concepts –as they are part of the same whole– such as: *housing, social housing, habitat, inhabit, right to housing, right to the city*, since the linkage is shown when some of these rights are isolated and presumably met but, once compared as part of that whole, this compliance of rights becomes automatically questioned.

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It seems obvious that *housing* is not the same as *right to the city*; *habitat* is different to *right to housing*. *Inhabiting* is clearly not the same as *habitat*. But these must be discussed and argued in order to understand the current dilemma occurring in some societies that are wavering between choosing rights and social justice or Neoliberalism and social inequalities.

It's a narrative that is interconnected, since the same relationship between housing and free development of urban life is always discussed: exchange value ahead of use value. Property speculation, gentrification, right to housing and to social housing, social space as a market space, urban life, freedom, rights... the co-relation of these concepts is stronger than it seems, and therefore we should be more aware of it.

### 1. To inhabit, habitat, housing

The starting point of this discussion is focused on *to inhabit*, *habitat* and *housing*. Despite sharing common features, these terms are not synonyms. They are similar, since they are not antagonistic, but divergent.

#### 1.1. To inhabit

Throughout history, *to inhabit* has meant “to take part in a social life, a community, village or city” (Lefebvre, 1969: 32). According to that, *inhabiting* is understood as belonging to a social collective experience linked to the site of residence. That is, belonging to a group, beyond the acquisition of an own dwelling space where the residence is allocated and the sense of belonging is executed and maintained. The answer to the question “Where do you inhabit?” would stress not only the exact place of the housing, but also the contextual personal aspects regarding the place the person forms part of, the community. *To inhabit* as a whole, not only in relation to housing, is also understood as being part of a group, of a community which the person inhabits.

We might agree that this approach reaches full meaning if we take into account the essence of urban context: a space that holds and accommodates people, temporarily – briefly or not– or permanently, insofar as members of a community that interact, develop and socialize simultaneously in time and space.

From the concept *to inhabit*, we can assume that social life is what brings body and meaning, what defines the particular shape of the city –constantly being rebuilt– through people’s usage and flows –buildings, distribution of spaces according to use, connections– and not the other way round, as is happening more and more often.

Historically, a group has conquered a place and has settled down, establishing itself in a stable manner until the space has become architected and urbanized. Urban life introduced, maintained and modified the fact of inhabiting. Not the other way round. From this view of human settlements as spaces for social experience, social sciences have considered the notion of *city* by merging different concepts in order to understand what is co-produced and created at every moment from the group of individuals, different from the simple arithmetical addition of individual traits. In other words: this sort of social energy that produces what might be called “the own character” of a community.

Georg Simmel, one of the philosophers encouraged to discuss it, refers to “nervous energy” of the current life in the cities (Simmel, 1986(2)), a nervous energy that takes place through an unstable movement of relationship trends in an unceasing flow of change, in permanent construction, at every time and every place of the urban network, made by social relations which are constantly performing and changing. Constant social creation integrated by every interaction and by the sum of all of them. An urban life that could be explained by the co-existence of multiple and infinite social algorithms, if it wasn't for the fact that these haven't, as yet, been figured out.

A movement that, according to Simmel, assumes urban essence as something unlinked to the political order. Not only that: it is often produced behind the political order's back, as this tries to make the city renounce its emergent and contradictory character.

This discussion points at the differences between urban city and urbanized city. The city “under construction”, using the metaphor of the magnificent José Luís Guerín film, and the city that aims to be predictable, basically static in shape and depth and always ready for submissive planning-making. But: What is the city, if not the life inside of it? What would be the point for the people if it wasn't like that? So: Would it be possible to accept the city as a scenario where the urbanized –planned, designed, expected– is the most important thing, in aggressive opposition to the urban –that experienced in real time and fed with the possibilities of change, improvisation and instantaneous agreement–? A city where urban life doesn't prevail is not a city: it's a landscape. Made of concrete and metal, but landscape anyway (Simmel, 1986).

However, the narrative of what is planned instead of experienced seems to have prevailed over the stubborn praxis of unexpected urban life. An example of a recent class exhibition where children had to answer a question by drawing a picture seems quite revealing. The question was “Draw the city of the future”. All the pictures depicted from a bird's-eye view a skyline of buildings connected by well-designed streets. Only in some pictures –by mistake?–, tiny and lonely figures of human bodies were seen: the city, according to that maybe common vision, wouldn't be an urban phenomenon: it would be

basically an urban planning phenomenon, a landscape with a story unattached to the people who legally live there; an organization responding to an efficient order in accordance to economic productivity.

From that, *to inhabit* –which hasn't fallen into misuse by chance–, raises again questions which were common in the past but today are under conflict: the analogy of living in housing as an integral part of something we might call a community, group, social experience; the connection between the right to build city from the right to build urban life and not conditioning the possibility of urban life to the planned configuration –built and fabricated– of the city; the loss of social value of the housing space that is subordinated to the exchange value, to the market value of this urban-architected entity.

*To inhabit* seems a useful concept to assemble all the pieces, according to what Richard Sennett suggested in *Personal Identity and City Life* (Sennett, 2002) in order to understand that it becomes part of a totality that should be undivided, whereas, on the contrary, it has been splitting and its pieces have been disconnected from the narrative and from its understanding over the last decades.

## 1.2. Housing

What we acknowledge today as a *home* –the space we inhabit and where we develop our privacy and intimacy–, derives, as many authors suggest, from an empowered bourgeois invention across a large part of nineteenth century Europe as a response to the risks attached to the “outside”. This ‘outside’ turned out to be an awkward space, full of risks which were not only physical: also moral. Faced with them, only the home could guarantee refuge, free from external rules and common practices and even outrages, serving as a security measure from the public space, often shared and in certain places with what the bourgeoisie perceived as ‘riffraff’ (Delgado, 2016).

Simultaneously, and from another very distinct point of view, with the massive arrival of the working masses to the big cities, it became necessary to include housing rights along with their fight for working rights (Pisarello, 2011: 30). Over time, the demand for healthy, sufficient, dignified and secure housing became one of the main goals of the labour movement –while the manufacturing spaces where housing and place of work were integrated, was at that time a common domination strategy against the working class, in order to dominate them with the possession and control of the surroundings they inhabit.

In that particular context, after the 1848 Revolution, according to Lefebvre, an initiative linked to housing allocation for the working class was launched by the Parisian bourgeoisie: the creation of *habitat*.

### 1.3. Habitat

It is defined, thus, by a double necessity: the working class's for dignified housing and the Parisian bourgeoisie's. The latter group, which had the means to generate change, felt threatened by the labour class and the 1848 Revolution confirmed its fears. On the other hand, peasantry kept on arriving and setting up by the city walls, aiming to join the working class at the factories. Despite what Paris Haussmannization had brought about – reproduced extensively until today –, the 1871 Paris Commune managed, among other successes, to make the working class return to the urban centre, raising fears and annoying the bourgeoisie who kept the power.

It is then when, according to Lefebvre's, "(...) a few notables, discover a new notion. The Third Republic will insure its fortune. It will conceive the notion of *habitat*." (Lefebvre, 1969: 32).

This notion explained by Lefebvre can be seen in what we could call today dormitory towns, working class areas, suburbs, housing facilities, warrens, industrial areas of residence, satellite towns, peripheral areas, vertical slums, industrial units, among others, and are just the creation of housing cores for the working class at the limits or outskirts of the city.

The author points out: "At the end of the nineteenth century the notables isolate a function, detach it from a very complex whole which was and remains the city, to project it over the ground". And he remarks that, despite the fact that the notables didn't pretend to carve a way for speculation, but wanted to generate life beyond the workplace and a better-quality everyday life with better expectations for the labour class, it's proven that estate market wealth started growing around the city and the labour class became damaged by the extent of speculation.

In fact, this was the "award" assigned to the working class: trading their expulsion from the city and their forced allocation in specifically designed suburbs for the chance to access a household, and, with that, strive for better future possibilities where they didn't depend on the employer to access housing.

In that measure, the personal desire-necessity of accessing private housing was progressively standardized, which, at the same time, meant a progressive disaffiliation of the concept of group, community, which produced another cost which the working class had to pay to access housing, as they obtained capital in *habitat* form: with that, they had to submit themselves to a system of suburban conformation where they had to move to buildings which weren't even provided with the adequate elements for an urban life.

*Habitat* was restricted to that network of buildings that people used "to sleep in";

'dormitory towns', where "neighbours don't know each other" and they don't need to, since "they don't spend their time there": an urban and architected organization devoted to take in bodies in every housing unit, where there's no chance of ensuring a sense of community, platform for a life and ongoing sociability. Inhabitants of habitats had to fight and are still fighting to build and maintain networks, sometimes coping with the authorities' reluctance.

It's understood, thus, that one of the principle objectives that *habitat* appears to have is to neutralize the political and dialectical means of the common space, the urban, the experience through the context provided by the plot, street, neighbourhood, town or city as a result of a common project made from a common practice.

In that sense, *habitat* was constituted as a setting where a type of ecosystem was built in order to provide the main structure to survive in terms of housing dignity. The concept of *inhabiting*, widespread then and understood as being a constructive and narrative part of a community, became more and more irrelevant over time. In exchange, segregated *habitat* was assigned to labour classes –and not to the elite, who continued inhabiting the city– as something of their own, literally theirs, since they could buy it as slots or households, in exchange for renouncing the community, social participation and urban life. In a few words: renouncing their political dimension.

*Habitat* excluded from "the centre" of the city, makes the core activity of its inhabitants production, as well as the maintenance of their *habitat*. The working class kept on losing the sense of personal participation in urban construction and has eventually identified itself with the sense of property and consumption. In accordance with that, city has also become to be seen as space consumption instead of a space for social practice and social experience.

To summarize, *habitat*, as seen by Lefebvre, is a complete way of living (functions, prescriptions, daily routine), which is inscribed and determined by an abstract character and signifies itself in this *habitat*, while the concept of *habitat* excludes the fact of *inhabiting* (Lefebvre, 1969: 36).

The urban and architectural models conceived by the *habitat* concept use a formalism – they lack content and sense– and aestheticism –applying old models by their beauty– which intend to rationalize and provide 'coherence' to *habitat*, when the chaotic reality of

urban life is, in fact, deprived of it. These models acknowledge that logic as a means to – presumably– systematize their model. At the same time, they encourage promoters who, apart from property and buildings, sell urbanism, often even as a principle stimulus of their market offer.

*Habitat* describes as well the technocratic and centralized public urbanism sector, which, according to Lefebvre, “would not hesitate to raze to the ground what is left of the city to leave way for cars, ascendant and descendant networks of communication and information. The models elaborated can only be put into practice by eradicating from social existence the very ruins of what was the city.” (Lefebvre, 1969: 42), a hypothesis launched in the mid twentieth century which depicts what the children answered when they were asked to draw the city of the future.

In essence, *habitat* logic belongs to “the planning of these administrators linked to the public (State) sector” (Lefebvre, 1969: 41), who in their role as managers in the design and implementation of public policies, base themselves on that logic.

One of the most important signs of this logic at trans-national level is seen through the United Nations Agency named Habitat. UN-Habitat defines its function as the need detected at the start of the 1970s “to manage the rapid and uncontrolled growth of the cities” (UN Habitat, 2016). UN Habitat was created to serve that real necessity of attending global population growth and moving groups of population from scarcely populated or no populated areas to urban places. The agency “envisions well-planned, well-governed, and efficient cities and other human settlements, with adequate housing, infrastructure, and universal access to employment and basic services such as water, energy, and sanitation” (ONU Habitat, 2016).

There’s an imperative need to reach the Agency’s objective: to accompany the massive displacement of the world population to the cities, in every part of the planet. An evident need that demands efficient governance, planning and prevision. Nonetheless, it seems symptomatic that, despite having addressed social affairs at various points, the agency has failed to tackle this issue comprehensively and people or societies have been scarcely or sporadically mentioned, while the economical and designing subjects (to build, to regulate) have been prioritized, along with efficacy, resources and productivity.

In fact, it prioritizes approaches that, beyond the ‘impersonal’ notion, attempt to set a logic of automated control over the city’s physical elements. For that purpose, technologies and processes are used. All of this for one objective: efficiency and rationality. Smart cities are formulated under this approach, to name an example.

The common approach of these proposals seeks to avoid social unpredictability, a polarized approach from Ilya Prigogine's suggestion about the social order, when he stated that: "The new problems of physics determined by the possibility that, at a certain distance from the equilibrium, from certain critical threshold, the stationary state that allowed the purely macroscopic laws to be forecast may no longer be stable; that local perturbations, instead of running out, can, under these conditions, invade all the system and transform its functioning, are susceptible of modifying thoroughly the definition of the physical object itself" (Prigogine, 1983: 105-106).

And they pretend to do so through the presumed predictability which, they assume, is provided by the intelligence systems and, still not satisfied, to raise the proposal to a grand scale: systematized city planning –urban approach– according to the criteria and needs of the institutional order and the leading mass-production system. The idea, as Fernández suggests, is to offer irreversible results insofar as security and efficiency with regards to production, sustainability and to a certain equilibrium proposal (Fernández, 2015: 39).

From that particular approach, UN-Habitat addresses areas like: legislation; urban land; governance; planning and design; economy; water and sanitation; energy; mobility; security; insecure housing and settlements; reconstruction; resilience; climate change; gender; youth and human rights, against a background of radical change of the planet, as it is expected that, in the next 20 to 40 years, the world's population will reach 9.5– 10 billion compared to the roughly 7 billion of inhabitants today.

Furthermore and, according to the General Secretary of United Nations and Executive Director, Joan Clos, the number of people living in cities is expected to double: from 3.5 billion to 7 billion. Precisely, during his speech in the opening conference of Habitat III European Regional Meeting in Prague in April 2016, he emphasized the United Nations Agency's duty to growth sustainability, which he linked to development and 'urbanization' –by being planned and architected, not socialized– as the key element for development. This development, according to him, was linked to economic changes and the leading role of cities in the economic models of the future.

The project being worked on by UN is underpinned by the "New Urban Agenda", that, still in draft form and depending on the Habitat III world conference which will take place in Quito in October 2016, focuses its goals in relation to the previous edition, celebrated in 1996 in Istanbul, by: "(...) recognizing the linkages between urbanization and development". The idea is that these two concepts can work together for sustainable development. The first documents on the New Urban Agenda suggest that this will



especially highlight the ‘development enablers’ and ‘operational enablers’. The idea is that, together, these two factors will be able to consolidate the relationship between urbanization and sustainable development. The ‘development enablers’ can be considered as regulation and institutional frameworks that seek to foster global growth out of multiple and usually chaotic urbanization forces, improving conditions in all the system. Examples of ‘development enablers’ named by the new Urban Agenda are urban national policies; laws, institutions and governance framework and the extended urban economy” (Citsicope, 2015), a clear message focused on reorienting the so-called urban ‘chaos’, putting the emphasis on the ‘development’ driven by global growth, urban economy, policies, laws, institutions and governance framework.

It’s undeniable how difficult it must be to find a balance between policies aimed at channelling governance necessities, coordination and stakeholders participation, directly or indirectly involved in the world change proposed by this Agency. However, at the same time, it should be essential to set a basis of respect and to promote and consider social praxis freely chosen by people in communities and urban contexts.

It is important to remark that refusing to do so means to put an emphasis on *habitat* and to ignore the fact of *inhabiting*, reproducing a well-intentioned objective on one hand, but which has been so utilized by the speculative estate market and the general neo-liberal system, on the other. The dream of this system has been to provide habitability structures specifically addressed to the occupants’ survival at the highest range of efficiency according to their nature as people who join the integrated economical system which represents the city, understood as a macrostructure system of production. For that purpose, a presumed possibility of systematized prevision is applied, planning by all means what is and what occurs within the urban context. Everything is calculated by questioning and limiting everything which occurs outside, or attempts to.

That way, responses offered by the logic of *habitat* when trying repeatedly to hold back the social and labile aspect of urbanism –that is, the most human aspect–, coexist with other projects that seek to compensate the gaps and risks triggered by *habitat*. Throughout the course of history, these approaches have arisen across a framework of rights and over the last forty years, several formula have been offered with the ultimate objective of establishing again the *right to inhabit* as the core element for a social life.

## 2. Right to inhabit

After the Second World War, Europe tried to recover. Industrialization and massive displacements –often on a trans-national scale–, which took a colony-metropolis or rural-

urban route. All this linked to a post-war housing crisis and a capitalism that ignores housing construction because it is not profitable enough, compared to other production sectors. This is the starting point for our reality today on the right to housing.

Some European States assumed they had to take responsibilities with housing construction within the context of pursuing the European dream, which had to authenticate a presumed common identity of global prestige. Likewise, during the 1950s and 1960s the project of a united Europe emerged, whose unique hallmark would be the pledge of a welfare state as one of the keystones with regards to rights.

Lefebvre holds that public powers, with the housing construction, took charge of what hitherto was part of a market economy. But housing did not necessarily become a public service –universal and acknowledged as a right. Although the right to housing emerged in the social awareness, it didn't go farther than a general recognition which, basically, never managed to materialize itself.

A gap between this clear perception of housing as a right and the half-way involvement of the States was produced. The States started supplying social housing stock but failed to address housing as a universal right or to guarantee an appropriate provision. As Lefebvre pointed out in 1960, "Construction taken in charge by the State does not change the orientations and conceptions adopted by the market economy (...) Moreover, what guides public and semi-public initiatives is not a conception of urban planning, it is simply the goal of providing as quickly as possible at the least cost, the greatest possible number of housing units. The new housing estates will be characterized by an abstract and functional character: the concept of *habitat* brought to its purest form by a State bureaucracy" (Lefebvre, 1969: 35).

If the right to *inhabit* is executed from the right to have a space to live –to reside–, under *inhabitable* conditions –to form an active part of the social construction–, and with a guarantee of the right to do it, it is undeniable, thus, that the concept of *inhabiting* needs guaranteed housing, secure, in healthy and dignified conditions, freely chosen. *To inhabit* is not achieved whatever the housing is or, more aptly put, with any housing structure or organization model.

That way, it can be seen that, according to the market value of the real estate market – which indeed limits housing access–, the right materialises when there is sufficient social housing to guarantee it for all the people who need it. Without sufficient social housing, there are populations who cannot fully develop their condition as society members.

Free society won't be possible as long as parts of the population remain homeless or there are people living in insecure housing. Real conditions to *inhabit* –to build society– won't be met as long as the need for a common space addressed to some population sectors is questioned –or even punished– up to a degree that restrains, in fact, their chances to use and enjoy the whole society.

Without right to *housing*, there is no right to *inhabit*. And being deprived of the right to *inhabit* means having no rights to participate actively and freely in the urban experience, in the social construction, and having to do it from the underground, persecuted or even repressed.

This right to the urban experience is partially understood by what today is called as *right to the city*, as a container concept and under construction, defined as “the right to a collective space where all citizens must find adequate conditions to develop their political, social, economical and environmental life” (Guillén, 2011: 24) and that, insofar as an emergent human right is concerned, it would understand three basic elements: an applicable right for all the residents of the area; a legitimate right based on the principle of human dignity and a universal right, as it is executed in every city area or populated area.

Accordingly, we join Pisarello on his study, moving from the right to housing to the right to the city (Pisarello, 2011: 29), in order to confirm that the second can't be met without the first and, binding the right to the city to the concept of *inhabiting*, that without right to housing there is no right to *inhabit*, neither therefore *right to the city* beyond the prevalence of the speculative and landscapist habitat over the concept of *inhabiting* in the city, or urban context.

### 2.1. Right to the city

Several premises have contributed to develop and articulate the concept of right to the city, among which two are highlighted. On one hand, a great part of Henri Lefebvre's research, and, in particular, his book *The right to the city* (Lefebvre, 1969), along with *The production of space* (Lefebvre, 2013), that, contextualized by his ideas, place the integral focus between the urban and political on its subsequent development.

The other great precedent is the work and figure of Jane Jacobs. Activist and opponent of urban life disaffiliation in the cities, as well as of planning action before the use and free election of the inhabitants in planned urban areas. Her works live on above all through her classical and universal “The death and life of great American cities” (Jacobs, 1972). A recent edition's prologue points out that: “Jacobs understood the importance of

preserving the nature of the street as a place for meeting and exchange, used in a versatile way and encouraged for all types of individual or collective appropriations; (...) while she emphasized positive values of urban vitality, she condemned the despotism coming from ignorant and even hostile urban developers and the practices and followers of this intense urban existence that attempted to impose their logic of plans and scale models" (Delgado, 2011: 15-16). Muxí thinks that: "far from being an urban planning detractor, Jane Jacobs is an advocate of 'another planning'; that which embraces the daily experience and the people's needs" (Muxí, 2011: 12).

Possibly, Jacobs' claims and criticism on the urban reform plans undergone during the mid twentieth century in the United States and the destruction of public space have influenced –from a rights perspective – later conceptions in other contexts concerning the concept of *right to the city*.

But, in which context does the *right to the city* develop and start becoming real? On one hand, social inequalities haven't stopped growing among populations belonging to the

formerly so-called 'wealthy area' of the world and its effects have increased, in the form of poverty and criminalization, housing exclusion and *habitat* logic. On the other hand, from the second half of the twentieth century onwards, a broad range of the world's historically deprived population has progressively entered into trends of wealth acquisition and distribution as well as social and political activity and training access, until becoming, then, today, worldwide models of a more comprehensive defense for the integrated fight for housing and political, social, cultural, economical, healthy and education rights, among others.

Nowadays, areas of the world which were formerly far from each other concerning that matter have converged and there's opposition to the institutionalized logic of *habitat* and a need to reclaim housing and society construction from a perspective of rights. South America leads the discussion on the concept of *Right to the city*, where it has gained great attention. Its approach is steered by the right to *inhabit* and attempts to hold back the exchange value, introducing instead the use value that the city should have.

María Lorena Zárate, President of the Habitat International Coalition (HIC), explains "the urgent necessity for a solidary urban reform with respect to rural reform", related to "new paradigms and alternative social practices of production and of benefit to human settlements" (Zárate, 2011: 58), in the background of the relationship between urban reform and right to the city at this part of the planet.

Several events are seen as crucial with relation to the first initiatives concerning the Right to the City: the Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit, in 1992; Habitat II, in Istanbul, in 1996 and the first World Assembly of Human Inhabitants 'Rethinking the city from the grassroots', in Mexico City in 2000 (Zárate, 2011: 59).

The first significant proposal as a platform for worldwide dissemination was the World Charter for the Right to the City (ONU-Habitat, 2009). Signed in Quito, at the Social Forum of the Americas in 2004 and from a Latin American vision, it was proposed on a global scale, reaching an importance that has been largely documented: The Preamble states that "The Right to the City is defined as the equitable usufruct of cities within the principles of sustainability, democracy, equity, and social justice." The 1<sup>st</sup> article conveys, in section 1.2: "The city is a culturally rich and diversified collective space that pertains to all of its inhabitants" In section 1.5, "For the effects of this Charter, all the persons who inhabit a city, whether permanently or transitionally, are considered its citizens". Nor is it a coincidence, according to this article, that article XIV is devoted to the Right to housing, in terms of secure tenancy, guarantee of income for vulnerable people and prevention measures against speculation, among others.

Another important document disseminated worldwide for its vision and reach, despite being launched as a result of internal protests in Brazil –as part of this country's history on the fight for housing and land rights– was the City Statute, approved in Brazil in 2001.

Developed in accordance to the 10.257 Law of 10th July 2001, it is defined as "the result of an intensive process of negotiation for over ten years, in and out of the National Congress involving social and political forces. The Statute confirmed and broadened the fundamental legal-political role of the municipalities as formulators of urban planning guidelines" (Polis, 2002: 11-12).

The objective was to subvert the general thought according to which the country's growth was being 'chaotic' and 'unbalanced', when, on the contrary, it was being submitted to "a perverse interaction between social-economic processes, planning options and urban policies and political practices that builds an exclusionary model in which many lose and very few gain" (Polis, 2002: 20). The objective intends to operate using the so-called "new concepts, new tools" (Polis, 2002: 27), operated by the City Statute through "four main dimensions: consolidate a new legal and political framework for the right to the city, provide elements for the interpretation of the constitutional principle of the social functions of urban property and of the city; regulate new instruments for the construction

of a different urban order by the municipalities; the indication of processes for the democratic management of cities, and the identification of legal instruments for the comprehensive regularization of informal settlements in private and public urban areas” (Polis, 2002: 27).

Nevertheless, it’s symptomatic of the difficulty and complexity in applying effectively these articles –some of them legally developed like the City Statute in Brazil– that the same protests, fights, claims and negotiations continue today in the same territories where they have been approved. One of the many examples which demonstrate how long is still to go in this respect can be found in projects like the Urban Charters, a documentary series that forms part of a project of the Laboratory of Housing Studies of Ceará Federal University (LEHAB/UFC) team, launched by the Metropolitan Observatory of the Science and Technology National Institute in Fortaleza, Brazil. The project discusses the right to the city through “a critical analysis of the social disparities and the fight for the right to the city” (Observatório das Metrópoles, 2015) through which is seen to what extent “in that context of fighting for the land and the territory for housing purposes, emerges the collective struggle. Through a broad and effective popular fight, communities manage to remain in their regions and deal with real estate capital with the aim of enjoying equally the benefits offered by the city” (Observatório das Metrópoles, 2015).

Recovering the concept of *Right to the City*, another important document on the matter is the World Charter for the Right to the City in 2010: “The City Statute in Brazil not only demands the execution of human rights in the city, but also, adopting Henri Lefebvre’s insight, describes the contents and demands the right to the city, understood as a political claim for the need for a different society, profoundly human, that holds urban space as a relevant stage for social change” (Zárata, 2011: 62).

It’s from this Latin American leadership shared with other stakeholders from several areas of the world where the Global Platform for the Right to the City has been constituted, assembling a great number of the principle movements on the right to the city. One of its objectives is to work on the particularities of every area in the world, aimed at building a consensual framework on this right.

There is still a long way to go on the effective recognition of these initiatives, as well as issues to respond. Among them, the lack of recognition of the emergent human rights concept; the political limits on the concept of right to the city; the interpretation of the social dimension through the concept of public space, applicable in many, and often contradictory, ways; the varied interpretations of the city and its potential legal and

political statute in the future as a social, political and economical actor and source of power, as well as the synergies, tensions and contradictions –often unresolvable– between all them.

Whatever the case, it seems undeniable that the right to *inhabit* is constructed around the approaches suggested by the *right to the city*, in opposition to the *habitat* logic of the market and the exchange value, by trying to contain and reverse the advance of urban invalidation and to bring back the use value of the city, from which, as Pisarello suggests, two fundamental principles arise: “The democratic management of urban space, seen as a collective creation, and the establishment of the social and environmental function both in urban property and in the city” (Pisarello, 2011: 39).

For that reason, it's logical that defense movements for the right to the city like HIC (Habitat International Coalition) or CLGU (Commission for Social Inclusion, Participative Democracy and Human Rights), the Global Platform for the Right to the City itself, along with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner, the European Federation of National Organisations working with the Homeless (FEANTSA) and XAPSELL (network of organizations attending homeless people) in Barcelona, released a document within the context of the Habitat III regional meeting held in Barcelona in April 2016, where, among other aspects, it was stated that: “We strengthen our commitment to human rights, the Right to the City and the Right to Adequate Housing as one of its most important components.” (Global Platform for the Right to the City, 2016). The text lays down a paradigmatic cause-effect relationship between human right, right to the city and right to housing. Concerning the issues defended in this article, a relative difference of approaches between movements and organizations serving that purpose can be observed, yet, at the same time, it is also noticeable to which extent they would be aligned.

## 2.2. Right to housing

What happens with the *right to inhabit* and the *right to the city* if there's no right to *housing*? We have observed to what extent they are connected and how the relevant actors perform transversely with them, as a consequence of being incapable to execute one without the other.

One possible example of a real episode closely related to the right to housing is suggested by Pisarello (Pisarello, 2011: 30-51). The 1915 British Law, referring to rent costs control and mortgage interests, tackles comprehensively “the mercantilist logic of housing provision” (Pisarello, 2011: 31); housing policies promoted in Vienna in 1920 by creating around 64.000 places of affordable public housing, or the constitutional

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recognition of the right to housing at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century carried out in several European countries. However, as the author suggests, these advances had their own limits; among them, paternalism or the construction of dormitory towns –as *habitats*. More recently, and especially since the 1970s, Europe goes backwards and forwards: Thatcher starts dismantling housing policies across the UK and focuses the benefits on the Housing Associations, which were not mercantile beforehand; there's a general regression of rights in Europe –also housing rights– due to the neo-liberal advance. At the same time, other legal frameworks such as the Scottish or French, aimed at guaranteeing housing access as a subjective right, have contributed to a remarkable reduction in homelessness in Scotland while the DALO law in France implements access to housing, even if it has faced some official limitations.

An updated and detailed analysis on the Spanish reality with 2013 data (Olea, 2015), reveals 21.6% of the Spanish population are at risk of poverty, and around 30.000 people live on the street; 9.2% of housing tenants are incapable of maintaining themselves and the shocking data of more than 500.000 evictions from 2008 to 2013 of single persons or families. At the same time, the Spanish state has more than 3.000.000 empty flats –from which 750.000 could probably be used as a first residence- and, as is known, Spain has designed the housing system around devices determined by the market: housing as an investment. A space for profit. But not only that: housing is merely a market niche. It is not an effective right and effective social housing policies don't exist. What's more: over decades, the creation of social housing stock in Spain has been addressed basically as a mixture of occupation policies and as a complement for the speculative economic market, displaying a purchase–oriented product with prices lower than the free market, yet they could never be considered as 'social' housing.

Olea presents an article of detailed data on the legal initiatives carried out in some Autonomous Communities, specifically within the period 2013-2015 –Andalusia, Navarre, Canary Islands, Euskadi, Catalonia-, as well as the cutbacks and restrictions for filed or appealed judicial reviews. Among these initiatives, in Catalonia we highlight the 1/2015 Decree Law on March 24th, about exceptional and urgent measures to mobilise housing provision after foreclosure proceedings; the 14/2015 Law on July 21st, about the tax over empty flats and about modifying tax laws and the 3/2012 Law and 24/2015 Law on July 29th, about urgent measures to deal with the emergency in the housing issue and energy poverty.

These laws, recently approved in Catalonia along with other measures carried out in Andalusia, Navarre, Canary Islands and Euskadi and presented in the mentioned article,



are used by the author in order to establish two philosophies that we consider opposed and possibly incompatible: on one hand, housing as an economical matter, according to the national area determined by the philosophy and legal framework of the Spanish state and, on the other hand, housing seen by the Autonomous Communities as a human right with a social function. (Olea, 2015).

It becomes evident, then, that the right to housing fails to be a subjective, universal and effective right. Some of the successes achieved have gone backwards in different global contexts over the last thirty years. In fact, even in the same state –Spain, without going too far–, the right to housing can be contemplated legally and juridically from contrary views, making it even more difficult to overcome the problem in favour of the people, society and social justice.

In that sense, and in a global context, the United Nations Special Rapporteur's reports on the Right to Housing are clear on the matter: The report *Adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living* in August 2015, concludes with a clear intention: "With the right to adequate housing as a pillar, a human rights framework can provide the coherence and consistency sorely needed to achieve sustainable, inclusive cities for all" (Farha (1), 2015: 20), calling for the opportunity that UN-Habitat Agency, during the October 2016 meeting in Quito, can offer to the world as long as the New Urban Agenda project is based on human rights, with the right to adequate housing at its core.

In her report *On adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context*, the Rapporteur focuses the lack of housing as a worldwide crisis of rights that has been produced because "housing has increasingly been treated as a market commodity rather than a social good and a fundamental human right" (Farha(2), 2015: 3), linked here to the *habitat* notion and the speculative logic attached to housing.

The report develops her recommendations from a rights perspective employing a three-dimensional approach: the first dimension refers to the lack of housing both from the material aspect –the physical space– and the social aspect of a secure place to "establish a family or social relationships and take part in community life" (Farha(2), 2015: 6), criterion clearly linked to the meaning of *inhabiting* presented here. A second dimension that sees lack of housing as systemic discrimination and social exclusion and a third dimension, that recognizes homeless people as resistant individuals in the fight for survival and dignity, as well as potential trigger agents for change insofar as right holders.

Continuing the discussion of the relationship between the effective denial of the right to housing and the impossibility to exist in a free society, it is worth making the following statement: without right to social housing as one of the responses to stimulate right to housing with respect to dignity and will of the people, it is impossible to carry out the right to housing and, accordingly, the right to inhabit and the right to the city.

Tackling these issues separately –right to housing, right to inhabit, right to the city- is a mistake.

### 3. The right to social housing, today

The European Parliament resolution of 11<sup>th</sup> June 2013 on social housing in the European Union (2012/2293(INI)) stipulates that (...) “access to housing is a fundamental right that can be seen as a precondition to the exercise of, and access to, other fundamental rights and to a life in conditions of human dignity; and whereas guaranteeing access to decent and adequate housing is an international obligation incumbent on the Member States, to which the Union must have regard, given that the right of access to housing and to housing assistance is recognised in Article 34 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, Articles 30 and 31 of the revised European Social Charter adopted by the Council of Europe and Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human rights, as well as in many Member States constitutions”; (...) that “affordable, adequate and secure accommodation is a suitable tool for achieving social justice and cohesion” and stipulates, among others, the need to foster the social and economical role of social housing, progressing towards a European policy on social housing.

Despite the articles' content, the reality reveals the opposite: the study *2012 Housing Europe Review. The nuts and bolts of European social housing systems*, points at 2% of social housing stock in Spain. The average for the 27 State members of which information is gathered is 8,4%. Only four countries show a lower percentage compared to Spain and one country registers the same. Therefore, 21 countries out of 27 registered in 2011 have a higher percentage, among which are, Austria 23%, Holland 32%, France 17%, United Kingdom 18%, Italy 5,3% and Portugal 3,3%. (Cecodhas, 2011: 23-24). There's a tiny percentage of social housing in the Spanish State, whose housing market was in crisis in 2014, according to the European Commission (FEANTSA, 2015).

Not only that: from a European context, the regression both in terms of percentage and management of social housing is worrying: the dismantling of housing stock by Thatcherism in the 1980's in England, has been imitated by the Neoliberalism system in Europe. In that line, the enlightening and at the same time penetrating analysis of Fernández in his comparison between Germany, Spain, Finland and the United Kingdom

concerning access to social housing for homeless people, concludes that, among other aspects, there's a general withdrawal of social action concerning social housing. A great part of social housing stock is being transferred to private investors and developers. In that sense and with regards to Spain, FEANTSA confirms that some Spanish local areas are selling their limited housing stock to private investors, putting their legal occupants at risk of having problems with the tenancy or even at risk of eviction (FEANTSA, 2015).

This is causing a reduction in the social housing market –when it is as necessary or more necessary than in the past–, guided towards a rental market which is not ready to attend the needs of the most deprived population –damaged by the speculative market–, threatening tenancy stability –security–, guarantee of affordable costs –security–, adequate allocation and living standards –adequacy and habitability. (Fernández, 2015: 395).

This dismantlement is causing, in several countries of Europe, not only problems, but tragedies, and they increase year after year, nourished by the dismantlement of such a necessary social housing stock.

This data, combined with Olea's prior analysis, reflect to what extent housing is a market matter and not a rights one. And to what extent the neo-liberal approach puts the exchange value before the right to inhabit; to have a place to live in a dignified, safe and free manner, which is the condition to join a society which doesn't have to be any more ordered and planned than its members' will at every moment, according to their wishes and needs. There's no freedom without housing.

Life space can't be controlled nor bound to the social and political disaffiliation of the inhabitants. If that happens, there's no urban life, free and ongoing definition of social agreement, of coexistence, of the daily adventure that ought to mean society construction.

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**Key words:** Housing First, fidelity test, homelessness, evaluation results, social experimentation

## Housing First Model In Spain: Habitat Programme<sup>26</sup> 12 months- results

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The Habitat programme, launched in 2014, is the first Housing First (HF) approach being systematically implemented in Spain. This article displays, on one hand, the different stages and difficulties found during the launch process, such as defining the profile of the participants, selection of the clients and how to refer and place them in the programme or the services provision. These are some of the challenges faced by the Habitat teams, yet at the same time are seen as relevant learning processes. On the other hand, the article also presents the methodology and first results of the comprehensive Habitat evaluation. The evaluation seeks to provide evidence on the effectiveness of the HF model in the Spanish context as well as identify difficulties and strengths. Programme results regarding the users after 12 months are very positive, at the same level as other international experiences. The housing retention rate is 100% and improvements have been observed in all areas, especially in the perception of wellbeing, family relationships and the financial situation. The comparison showed that participants in the group attended by the mainstream services model experienced less improvement than the people participating in the Habitat model. Moreover, a fidelity test of the pioneer approach has been made, revealing a high fidelity to the HF principles.

### Introduction

The widespread diffusion of results and research projects of the Housing First (HF) programme to support homeless people has been crucial for the expansion of the programme in the last decade. Since the first publications about the programme *Pathways to Housing*, at the end of the '90s (Tsemberis & Asmussen, 1999; Tsemberis & Elfenbein, 1999), the number of studies and evaluation reports about the Housing First model have risen remarkably. Among others, in the EUA (Tsemberis, Kent & Respress, 2012), Canada (Aubry et al, 2015), Australia (Johnson et al, 2012) and other European countries (Busch-Geertsema, 2014) have addressed general and specific aspects about model implementation.

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26. Data update after 12 months, according to the original article which will appear in the 10th edition, n°1, of the European Journal of Homelessness of FEANTSA.



Despite the limited methodology, this research has provided solid evidence of the effectiveness of the HF model, with users managing to remain in their accommodation and other aspects are also benefited, such as substance abuse, quality of life and the reduction of hospital admissions (Groton, 2013; Waegemakers Schiff & Rook, 2012). This evidence has prompted the introduction of the HF model during the last few years in the Spanish context.

With the launch of the Habitat Project in 2014, RAIS Foundation<sup>27</sup> is the first organization to systematically implement the HF model in Spain. Since then, other organizations and local authorities have been increasingly interested in the model and its implementation.

As the first programme HF in Spain, Habitat has faced challenges on different levels. Some related to strategic aspects, such as the need to change the mentality among professionals and responsible figures on homelessness in local authorities in order to take on an innovative approach, while others are more operational aspects, such as the difficulties of having no previous experience in the implementation of the model.

This article aims to present the experience of the implementation of the Habitat programme for the support of homeless people in Spain, the evaluation methodology and the most relevant results, bearing in mind also some of the challenges of introducing the HF model in a new context.

### 1. Homelessness context in Spain

Homelessness policies in Spain have been traditionally geared to attend emergency situations, providing attention to homeless people's basic needs, but failing to include structural measures aimed at ending homelessness and its impact on the person. The great majority of the current services for homeless people (from soup kitchen or outreach teams to day centres, emergency centres, hostels or sub-tenancy rooms in apartments) perpetuate the so-called staircase model and fail to provide long-term responses to homelessness. According to INE<sup>28</sup>, (National Statistics Institute), the amount of services for homeless people in 2014 included 794 shelters in Spain (7.7% more than in 2012) with 17,572 professionals covering these services (8.8% more than in 2012) and an average of 16,687 beds offered daily. However, the average occupation of these services was 81.8% (4.8% less than in 2012), suggesting that the model is not working efficiently.

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27. More information at [www.raisfundacion.org/en](http://www.raisfundacion.org/en)

28. National Statistics Institute. *Encuesta sobre centros de atención a personas sin hogar, 2014* (Attention Centres for homeless people Survey)

Aware of this, some organizations started to believe in the need for long-term solutions for the entrenched homeless. This position had an impact on the National Strategy for the Homeless People 2015-2020, approved by the Ministers Council on November the 6<sup>th</sup> 2015, which proposed, in the Strategic Line 7, a progressive implementation of the HF model in Spain, along with the development of other type of services for homeless people<sup>29</sup>.

## 2. Housing First model implementation in Spain: the Habitat Programme

RAIS Foundation launched the Habitat programme in July 2014 as the first systematic experience of HF implementation in Spain. Habitat's objective is to provide a permanent solution to the most complex and entrenched situations of homelessness. Following the HF model, Habitat is addressed especially to those people who, on account of the complexity of their exclusion process, have no access to traditional support services (staircase model). Habitat users are provided with immediate access to housing, not subject to housing-readiness conditions, with a wide array of services delivered based on the consumer's choice and self-determination (see Tsemberis' HF principles, 2010).

Habitat started as a pilot project in three Spanish cities: Madrid, Barcelona and Málaga, and some data is provided in this article. It has also started in Seville and at least three more cities will launch the Habitat programme during 2016. It started with an initial group of 28 users in 2014, 10 new clients were incorporated in 2015, and at least 200 people are hoped to be housed in 2017. Aiming to provide evidence on the efficiency of the model in the Spanish context, the programme includes a comprehensive evaluation based on a methodology of experimental design using a longitudinal random assignment, with repeated measures during two years addressed to the Habitat users (experimental group) and another comparable control group.

### 2.1 Habitat participants' profile

Participants, both in the experimental group and the control group, meet a number of criteria at the time of entering the programme that defines the targeted population:

1. Older than 18.
2. Sleeping rough at the time of entering the programme (ETHOS<sup>30</sup> 1 or 2).
3. Enduring long-term homelessness (3 years in ETHOS' categories 1, 2 or 3; or over a year in ETHOS 1 or 2).

29. <http://www.msssi.gob.es/ssi/familiasInfancia/inclusionSocial/docs/ENIPSH.pdf>

30. ETHOS is FEANTSA European Typology on Homelessness and Housing exclusion (2005)  
<http://www.feantsa.org/spip.php?article120&lang=en>

4. Meeting one or more of the following exclusion factors added to their homeless situation: mental illness, substance abuse and/or some disability.

This profile was determined taking into account prior experiences of HF implementation, especially those made in a European context, assessed in the project *Housing First Europe* (Busch-Geertsema, 2014). In these experiences, the participants suffered mental health problems and/or substance abuse. The disability was included as an inclusion factor for Habitat, as it was defined as a relevant exclusion aspect which generally remains hidden in homeless people<sup>31</sup>. The participants' average age in the evaluation is 48 and they have experienced homelessness for 9.5 years on average. The percentages of the social exclusion factors are listed below:

Table 1. Added exclusion factors\* of Habitat participants at the start of the programme

Additional exclusion factors	Habitat group		Grupo de Control	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
Mental health problems	9	32.14 %	26	44.82 %
Substance abuse problems	23	82.14 %	39	67.24 %
Disability	6	21.42 %	19	32.75 %

\*28 (Habitat) and 58 (control) people in total are affected by these three factors

## 2.2. Habitat participants

RAIS selects people for the Habitat programme by contacting the local network's services for homeless people in the cities where the programme is implemented. Private and State organizations supporting homeless people (especially those offering street outreach or emergency services) are requested to identify people who meet the profile criteria. The corresponding professional fills in a report with a brief description of the person's current situation and some key aspects regarding the criteria profile.

The evaluation team receives the report (250 were submitted in Madrid, Barcelona and Málaga) along with other relevant documents which confirm the criteria is met, such as social records or disability certificates. The cases are evaluated with the corresponding professionals when there is a doubt over the criteria being met, eventually creating a final list of cases as well as a waiting list to access the programme (192 people in Madrid, Barcelona and Málaga). From that list, both groups are randomly assigned: the experimental group (Habitat users) and the control group (users of traditional services).

31. Research conducted by RAIS Foundation in 2013 revealed that, despite 12% of homeless people in Spain having a recognised disability, at least 23% of homeless people suffered a disability according to users and professionals' perception (Panadero and Pérez-Lozao, 2014).

All Habitat participants who are provided housing receive enough information to facilitate their entry process into the programme. The HF teams hold different initial interviews where a detailed explanation of the four commitments a Habitat user assumes when participating in the programme is included:

1. Accepting at least one weekly visit by the HF team.
2. Provide 30% of any income. If the person has no income, the programme will cover rent and basic needs (rent, bills, food and hygiene).
3. Adhere to basic rules of coexistence in the community, like any other citizen.
4. Evaluation interview every 6 months.

28 people moved into their homes from August 2014 to January 2015. The progressive start let the teams devote enough time to entrance processes. One of the challenges in this phase –also pointed out in the project *Housing First Europe*– was to guarantee quick access to state or private market housing, while also enabling users to choose between different housing units. The housing supply and the allocation of the first 28 people was complex, and in some cases up to 1.5 months passed between the notification of a place being assigned and the person entering. On the other hand, the knowledge brought by this initial process enabled quicker entry processes to be achieved for the second group of users, who started in 2015 and the people who are being incorporated now.

Moreover, in this initial process, there were seven people who didn't join the programme. In the majority of cases, it was due to people with complex exclusion processes and/or severe mental health problems giving up their place. To tackle this situation, the team extended the inclusion process up to 4 months and during that time the people were visited daily by their case worker at the time. These cases were fully analysed and the knowledge gleaned taken on board.

### 2.3. Housing: search and preparation

The structure of the real estate market is one of the features that can affect the adaptation of the HF model in Spain. Spain has just 1% of the social housing total in Europe and the amount of social housing changes notably between regions. However, due to the last few decades' real estate boom, 30% of the empty flats in Europe are in Spain<sup>32</sup>. All this could have an important role in the future development of the model in the country.

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32. Further information at Amnistía internacional Spain, “Derechos desalojados” (*Eviction of rights*), Madrid, 2015. [https://grupos.es.amnesty.org/uploads/media/informe\\_vivienda\\_jun\\_15\\_Derechos\\_desalojados.pdf](https://grupos.es.amnesty.org/uploads/media/informe_vivienda_jun_15_Derechos_desalojados.pdf)

These are the following Habitat housing features, met in all cases:

- Self-contained dwellings; the majority have one room and some have two.
- Scattered-site housing, allocated in different city areas.
- Integrated in apartment blocks in residential areas with access to basic services and public transport.
- Basic and adequate supplies (hot water, central heating, furniture, bed clothes and services, kitchenware, etc.)

Housing for this first group was provided both by the private rental market (10 in Barcelona and 7 in Málaga) and the state market (10 by the City Company of Land and Housing in Madrid and 1 in Málaga by the Housing City Society). Direct rental contracts were made between the users and RAIS Foundation.

#### 2.4 Support services for Habitat users

Habitat provides users with a level of support based on a user-centred approach. Due to the characteristics of the Spanish welfare system an intervention approach based on Intensive Case Management (ICM) is employed by Habitat. This approach has been the support modality used in many HF European programmes (Busch-Geertsema, 2014). General and specific support is provided in the context of the user's tenancy and further intensive support is provided through the regular health and social services network if needed (health, substance abuse, employment). This use of the available networks is seen as another community integration strategy, since it focuses on building or restoring the person's broken bonds with society.

The programme has a relatively high professional/user ratio, with differences seen between the three cities. The ratios are 1:8 in Málaga; 1:5 in Barcelona and 1:10 in Madrid.

The variety of services provided to Habitat users is also quite broad: from general information about the neighbourhood and support with paperwork to housework tasks, accompaniment, emotional and financial support and mediation.

After a year of the programme being implemented, we know by the qualitative information laid down by the HF teams, that, in general terms, intense support has been provided on a permanent basis, although there's a greater level of autonomy. The current support centres more on the deepest processes of users, linked (to a higher or lower degree) to emotional support, active listening and the need to share personal processes.

### 3. Habitat Programme evaluation

#### 3.1. Objectives

When the Habitat programme was designed, the inclusion of a comprehensive evaluation was considered necessary, given that the HF model was a new approach with no previous experience in the Spanish context. The evaluation allows us to appraise the programme results and provide evidence for policy decision making, as well as monitor the project's planning and implementation by identifying discrepancies with the original HF model and, therefore, detecting challenges with its implementation.

Consequently, the specific objectives of the evaluation are:

- Identify problems or difficulties during the launch and implementation of the programme, as well as possible discrepancies with the original model.
- Know the programme results and compare them to the traditional intervention approach aimed at homeless people.

This article presents the main results after 12 months of implementation, linked to these objectives.

#### 3.2. Methodology and evaluation results of HF approach fidelity

Over the last few years, research on HF approach fidelity evaluation has been developed across international programmes. Some of them have outlined fidelity test instruments (Guilmer et al, 2013; Stefancic et al, 2013; Watson et al, 2013) and have served as groundwork for the application of the fidelity test in other HF programmes. With regards to the programme evaluation results about users, the fidelity test is important, since it can confirm the HF approach as being responsible for the results observed.

To evaluate Habitat, it was decided to adapt the methodology ***Pathways to Housing*** used in different EUA and Canada programmes (Goering et al, 2014; McNaughton et al, 2015), evaluating not only Habitat's fidelity –and identifying contextual discrepancies with the pioneer approach– but also providing knowledge which could be shared with other HF international projects.

This evaluation methodology uses a combination of quantitative and qualitative strategies, aimed at identifying possible obstacles and favouring circumstances in the programme's implementation. This combination can help to take a closer look at the evaluation processes, minimizing bias in every method.

In relation to the quantitative strategy, the first step was the translation and adaptation to the Spanish context of the self-assessment scale *Pathways HF Fidelity Self-Assessment Scale* (Stefancic 2013 et al.), composed of 38 items gathered in five areas: housing process and structure, housing and services, service philosophy, service array and team structure/human resources.

The HF team in every city conducted a survey for the different areas. The survey's quantitative results formed the base of a comprehensive interview of the programme coordinators in the three cities and after that, a discussion group was organized with the participation of the three local coordinators and the national programme coordinator. The goal of this group was to analyse all approach discrepancies; the contextual elements in need of adaptation and the difficulties found when being implemented, along with the decisions taken to tackle all these aspects.

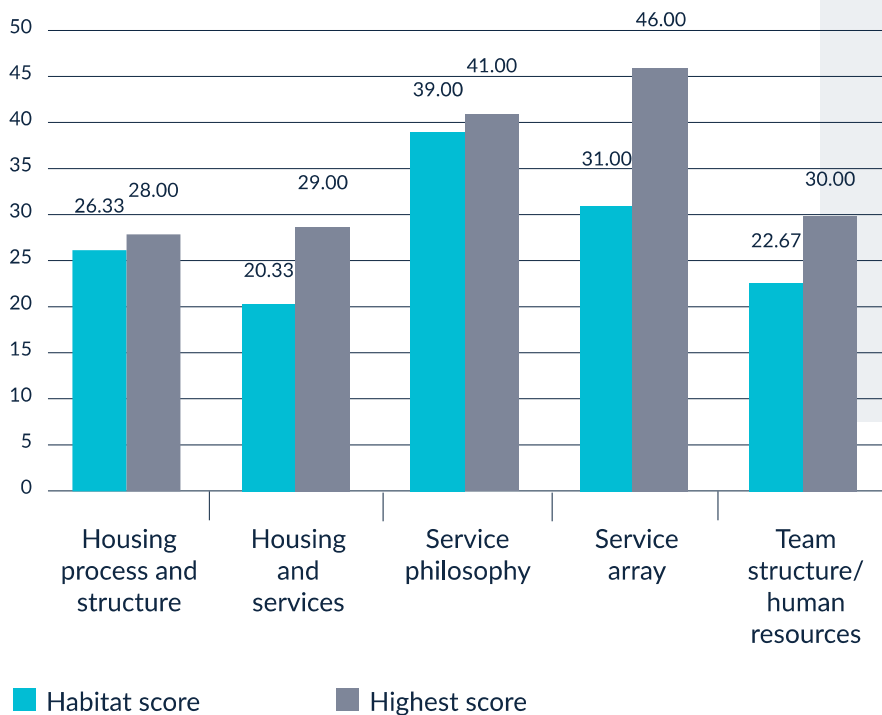
The results displayed in Graphic 1 show the quantitative information gleaned from the pilot application of the self-assessment survey *Pathways HF Fidelity Self-assessment survey*. These results must be considered with care, as difficulties with understanding some terms in the Spanish version and finding the right equivalent of some items in the Spanish context were observed. According to that aspect, RAIS Foundation is currently co-leading the transnational research into HF fidelity evaluation, promoted by the Doctor Tim Aubry, which will help to adjust the instrument to the Spanish context<sup>33</sup>.

Beyond that methodology perspective, the fidelity test survey results suggest that the Habitat programme presented a meaningful fidelity to the approach, especially in the areas of housing and structure and service philosophy.

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33. The fidelity test preliminary results, made in this transnational context, specifically in the Madrid programme between February and June 2016, confirm the evaluation test results (made from July to August 2015) collected in this article.

**Graphic 1. Habitat HF fidelity test self-assessment survey results**



On the other hand, the qualitative information collected during the interviews of the coordinators and the discussion groups allowed differences between the programmes in the three cities to be detected. The majority of these adaptations were contextual, such as the different types of social services provision in every region or the type of housing availability (state or private market); also, some operational differences, such as the time invested in accessing housing. The complete process has allowed thoughtful feedback to be carried out about the experience after the first months of implementation and has helped to identify areas for improvement.

### 3.3. The evaluation of people-based results

The evaluation methodology of the results about Habitat programme users was designed taking into account previous experiences of evaluations in other HF programmes, especially the projects *At home / Chez soi* and *Housing First Europe*. A social experimentation strategy was designed with an experimental group and a control group



determined randomly. Both groups of participants were evaluated at the launch of the project and then again every six months, during a 24-month period.

The two groups of participants met the criteria for accessing the programme at the time of their incorporation. In this sense, the size of the participant's group in the Habitat programme was restricted to the number of places available in the programme. The number of houses available at the programme launch was 28. This number also determined the size of the control group, which was decided to be double the number of places available. The decision of doubling the number of participants for the control group was reached taking into consideration some characteristics of the homeless population, which could mean a high loss rate in the control group due to the instability attached to their situation (Panadero, 2004).

The social and demographic features of both groups were compared after the initial interview (M0). Both groups were similar in all the social and demographic variables considered: age, nationality and education. The initial similarity between the two groups in other areas like health, employment and homeless pathway was also analysed. No meaningful differences were found in the subjective quality of life, income or legal situation.

Statistically relevant differences were only found between Habitat and the traditional intervention system in some variables related to:

- Social support: a higher percentage of people in the control group answered yes to the question "Is there someone you can rely on in case of need or difficulty?" (61% vs. 36%).
- Employment situation: the participants in the control group had a longer history of unemployment (112.30 months vs. 70.42 months).
- Health: a lower percentage of participants in the traditional attention group answered yes when they were asked if they had told the doctor they suffered a chronic disease or severe disease (57% vs. 30%).

Twelve months after the initial interview, the second monitoring evaluation was made of the two groups. At that moment, 28 people in the Habitat group were interviewed (all of them continued in the programme), but only 34 users in the control group were interviewed. 24 participants either weren't located or refused to be interviewed.

The evaluation areas were defined taking into account previous HF programmes evaluation experience, presented in different revisions (e.g. Groton, 2013; Waegemakers Schiff and Rook, 2012). The areas assessed in the project *Housing First Europe* (Busch-

Geertsema, 2014) were especially considered with the aim of facilitating a comparison within the European context. Apart from the social and demographic features, other areas were also considered such as housing situation, health, social attention, community integration and service provision and use.

To measure these areas in the Habitat evaluation, the use of standardized instruments whenever possible was prioritized, like the *General Health Questionnaire* in its 28 items version (GHQ-28; Goldberg, 1996) for the evaluation of general health. When it wasn't possible, the recommendations of *Social Experimentation. A methodological guide for policy makers* (J-Pal Europe, 2011) were followed. This guide suggests using *questions from existing surveys which have already been carried out on large populations as opposed to designing new questions* (pp. 22). Accordingly, many of the questions for variables where standardized instruments which fitted the evaluation needs weren't found were selected from different surveys used by the National Institute of Statistics (INE), as well as the Homeless people survey (2005, 2012) or the *National Health Survey* (INSE, 2011-12).

These areas are evaluated both for the experimental and the control group, except for programme satisfaction (applied only for the Habitat users)

The obtained data in every measuring is included in a database specifically designed for the programme evaluation.

### 3.4. First people-based results of the Habitat programme. Users' situation after 12 months

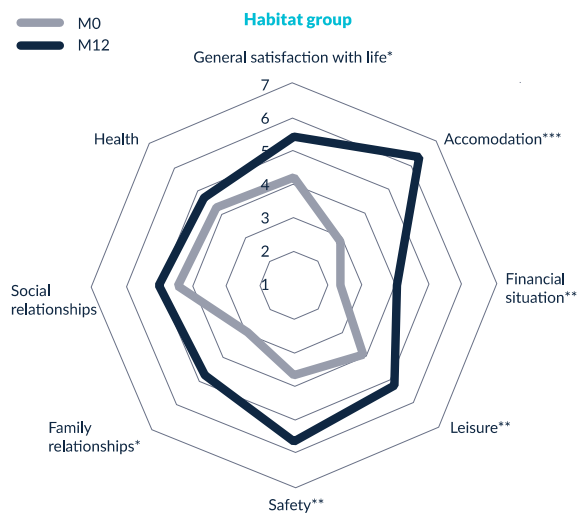
The results presented in this section refer to the initial interview (M0) and the second monitoring (M12).

Twelve months after the launch of Habitat, a high retention rate in the programme is seen: 100% users accessing the Habitat programme continued in their homes, which would correspond to the high retention rate of other HF programmes (80 to 95% the great majority).

Apart from housing stability, other aspects were considered, such as the users' perception of different areas of life. Graphics 2 and 3 show the Habitat users and the control group's subjective perception regarding to different areas of their life (M0 and M12). In the Habitat group, statistically significant improvements were found in some areas apart from the housing situation, like the financial situation, leisure, safety and family relationships.

With regards to the control group, changes were only found in two areas: social relationships –which had worsened in relation to the initial situation- and financial situation –where the perception had improved.

Graphic 2. Changes of living standards observed by the Habitat programme users (QoL)



\*p ≤ .05; \*\*p ≤ .01; \*\*\*p ≤ .001

Graphic 3. Changes of living standards observed by the control group (QoL)



\*p ≤ .05; \*\*p ≤ .01; \*\*\*p ≤ .001

Information about their living standards was also collected, with changes in diverse variables being seen, as shown in Table 2. It must be highlighted that with respect to basic needs like meals, a significant decrease in the percentage of people in the Habitat group who had skipped any meal during the week prior to the interview is revealed (from more than the half of users in M0 to less than 18% in M12).

Moreover, some changes in the financial situation of Habitat users were found. Although the amount of money wasn't particularly different during the first twelve months, the type of income did change. The percentage of people begging reduced (39.3% to 10.7%) and there was a significant increase in the percentage of users getting Income support.

Regarding the vulnerability of Habitat participants to different assaults and crimes, a statistically significant reduction in the number of insults and threats received after 12 months was observed, in relation to the initial situation. In the control group, there were no statistically significant changes in the victimization area during the first 12 months.

The discrimination felt by the programme users was also reduced during the first 12 months of their participation: in M0, 43% of users referred to not having experienced discrimination; in M12 this percentage increased to 75%.

Table 2. Changes in participants' living standards

	Habitat M0 participants (n=28)	Habitat M12 participants (n=28)	(1)	Control group M0 (n=34)	Control group M12 (n=34)	(1)
<b>Basic needs: Food</b>						
During the last week, have you skipped any meal once or repeated times through the day?	53.6%	17.9%	*	43.1%	22,6%	
<b>Financial situation</b>						
In the last month ...						
Have you received Income support?	17.9%	35.7%	*	17.2%	25%	
Begging	39.3%	10.7%	*	27.6%	9.4%	
Leisure and free time						
Did you practice any hobby during the last month?	35.7%	67.9%	*	42.9%	36.7%	*
<b>Safety and victimization</b>						
Have you been beaten during the last 6 months?	14.3%	7.1%		16.1%	6.7%	
Have you been robbed (money, belongings, documentation) during the last 6 months?	28.6%	10.7%		32.1%	20%	
Have you been a victim of any sexual abuse during the last 6 months?	3.6%	0%		1.8%	0%	
Have you been tricked during the last 6 months?	7.1%	0%		12.5%	3.3%	
Have you been insulted or threatened during the last 6 months?	35.7%	10.7%	*	33.9%	13.3%	
<b>Discriminación</b>						
Have you felt discriminated during last 6 months?			-			
Never	42.9%	75.0%		43.1%	34.5%	

(1) Test "t" test was applied for the repetition of measures in continuous variables, McNemar for dichotomous variables and Wilcoxon for the rest of the categorical variables \*p ≤ .05; \*\*p ≤ .01; \*\*\*p ≤ .001

In contrast to the control group results, the programme users' family relationships increased in terms of contact. This occurs in the two different ways of establishing contact:

the percentage of people who kept in touch frequently with their family by phone (daily or weekly) rose from 7.2% to 35.8% after 12 months; and the people who hadn't physically seen their family decreased from 89% to 78.6%, although that change wasn't significant in statistical terms. In both cases, there wasn't any particular change in the control group.

The results also suggest a reduced sense of loneliness among Habitat users during the first twelve months of the programme. The percentage of people who didn't feel abandoned or alone increased remarkably during that period (from 25% to 64.3%). As in the previous section, in this case there weren't any significant changes in the control group.

Changes related to health and substance abuse during the first 12 months were more limited, although some statistically relevant improvements were observed in all the areas of the GHQ-28 scale (Goldberg, 1996): somatic symptoms, anxiety and insomnia, social dysfunction, and severe depression, as well as in the global scoring. The GHQ-28 total score decreased significantly from 7.39 a 3.52, which implies an improvement regarding the health of the Habitat programme participants.

#### 4. Conclusion

The Habitat programme is the first systematic experience of HF model implementation in Spain. RAIS Foundation has faced two great challenges with this programme: promote a shift in mentality of the professionals working on homelessness in the local authorities towards an innovative model and operate with a methodology lacking prior experience in the country.

In this sense, one of the key aspects of its success has been the recognition of goals and the importance of informing the different stakeholders', as well as the type and communication means used. The selection process of profiles of potential participants in the programme become a fundamental part of the promotion of the HF approach and in making it understandable for the professionals and social services network users.

Furthermore, as happened in other European experiences of HF implementation, the distinctive features of the national context (in Spain, especially the social services network and health system for homeless people and the real estate situation) have determined some of the model's adaptations.

The didactic scope of the solid evaluation of Habitat programme has helped to overcome some sceptic voices, providing evidence of the efficiency of the HF model and identifying its strengths, difficulties or paths to follow towards its adaptation in the Spanish context. The evaluation results also help to avoid objections to the introduction of an innovative model.

The programme participants have met the profile criteria by following a comprehensive control of the profiles and a random allocation for the experimental group and the control group. This has been a crucial aspect with respect to demonstrating the efficiency of the HF model for this specific profile of homeless people with high support needs. Carrying out the HF model fidelity evaluation has also been useful to prove that the Habitat programme results are the consequence of the HF intervention.

A combination of validated quantitative and qualitative methods for the fidelity evaluation has revealed a high fidelity of the Habitat programme to the HF principles. The fidelity evaluation suggests that areas such as the array of services or human resources need special analysis, since these might be influenced by the Spanish context and/or the programme configuration. Although more work needs to be done in its validation, the translation and adaptation to the Spanish context of the tools developed in the original fidelity evaluation model of the programme *Pathways to Housing* enable a comparison and exchange of knowledge between international HF programmes to be made.

The first results seen in Habitat evaluation after 12 months of implementation are in line with the main results observed in other evaluated projects and outline the improvement of the users in some key areas like housing, security or health.

The retention rate is 100% after 12 months of the Habitat programme, and this is one of the main objectives of the HF model and the Habitat programme: ending homelessness. Linked to this successful housing stability, the security (both subjective and objective) is one of the areas where great improvements have been found. Other current research points out that housing is the basis of 'ontological security', which would serve "the basis for constancy, daily routine, privacy and identity construction; a stable platform for less stigmatization and a more normalized life" (Busch-Geertsema, 2014). These two results suggest that the HF model is an effective method for tackling the problems of long-term homeless people with high support needs.

Other improvements have also been seen in areas such as daily life and leisure. The desire to re-establish family contact (and manage to make it) confirms that the security of the person and his perception about his situation and about himself has improved enough to make this step and, furthermore, it can be a good starting point to join the family network. On a general level, the feeling of loneliness or abandonment is reduced and the perception of being able to turn to someone you can rely on improves.

12 months after the start of the programme, changes have been observed in the areas where evolution had been previously slower, especially on health issues, where clear improvements can be seen, linked to different aspects of mental health: reduction of

anxiety symptoms, insomnia, depression, social dysfunction and somatic symptoms. It's possible that improvements of these aspects need more time to be detected than in other areas, which are quicker and easier to identify by the person himself, yet it's important to see that improvements are already occurring.

Comparing these results to those of the control group's, Habitat evaluation again confirms the efficiency of the HF model. Furthermore, we have proved that it is possible to make rigorous evaluations in this context, which are able to provide relevant information and make the programme's decision-making easier.

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# 20

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## **Housing access for Roma migrants: a comparative approach between Turin and Barcelona**

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**This report presents a comparative approach about the housing exclusion processes of particular stigmatized groups, the Roma migrants, in Italy and Spain, setting as examples the cases of Turin and Barcelona. From a diachronic point of view, the housing strategies of these groups are integrated in (and shaped by) the different historical housing policies trajectories in an Italian and Spanish context. From a synchronic point of view however, similarities are seen in the daily routines and economic survival strategies of these groups regardless of the different social, historical and policy framework contexts: in both scenarios, housing insecurity is a daily matter of fact and the economic survival strategies are often criminalized and repressed.**

### **Introduction**

This report draws up some aspects of residential exclusion in Barcelona and Turin. In particular, a comparative analysis is realised of discriminatory practices targeted to a specific group of 'undesired' and stigmatized migrants: Romanian migrants ethnically referred to with the umbrella term 'Roma'. A doctoral thesis on Roma settlements in Turin and the political agenda aimed at eradicating them complements this research, which provides some elements that can help understand the so-called 'Roma issue' in the metropolitan area of Barcelona and, in general terms, those informal housing and economic situations, linked to the denial of citizenship rights.

Turin and Barcelona have seen a transition –in different political and economical contexts– from the 'classical' industrial city model to a post-Fordist or neo-liberal city. These processes of social and economic readjustment would lead, at local level, to discriminatory practices towards an unrecognised sector of the population whose individuals would elaborate, in response, different housing strategies. From the occupation of abandoned urban land to building precarious housing (shacks or huts), to renting or occupying overcrowded flats, the stigmatized groups have found and continue

to find, in different contexts, different responses in the face of the impossibility of accessing regular housing.

In fact, the so-called “Roma issue” can be considered a phenomenon through which to detect global forces imposing considerable social transformations at local level. Sassen (2014) argues in this way the characteristics and functioning of the ‘systemic edge’ (“the logic of expulsion and inclusion”): “The systemic edge is the point where a condition takes on a format so extreme that it cannot be easily captured by the standard measures of governments” (cit.: 2011).

It’s important to highlight that we are referring here to the most stigmatized and disadvantaged sectors of Roma populations (called the “unwanted migrants”): it’s a necessary explanation to avoid an essentialist categorization which is, in contrast, much more complex and heterogeneous. It’s also important to note that, while Turin data is provided by doctoral research already concluded, data referring to Barcelona comes, on one hand, from bibliographic and documental sources and, on the other hand, from some immersions in the field corresponding to an initial investigation stage. The assessment in this article is therefore presented as a working paper

### **1. Theoretical framework. Contextualizing the “Roma issue”**

Only recently has scientific research started getting involved in a task whose need was already pointed out by Willems: “Gypsy studies field idles in a splendid isolation” (1997: 305-6), encouraging to break that isolation and address a fundamental debate to a broader academic public.

Both Olivera (2015) and Vitale and Aguilera (2015) have provided evidence on the persistence of informal settlements on the outskirts of industrial cities resulting from sustained regulation, narrative and stigmatizing practices that would intend to reabsorb and eradicate them. These authors have shed light on the connection between the emergence of informal settlements of Roma families on the outskirts of Spanish, French and Italian cities and the long history of migrations to industrial cities. Deconstructing the so-called ‘Roma issue’ helps researchers to contribute to the academic discussion about urban development, urban regeneration and slum eradication (Abrams, 1964; Bannerjee-Guha, 2010; Benjamin, 2008; Davis, 2006; Harvey, 2008; Mahmud, 2010; Roy, 2011), on housing access for families and individuals with low incomes (Allen et al. 2004; Forrest & Lee, 2003; Power, 1993; Tosi, 2008) and, in general, about “dangerous classes” (Chevalier, 1958) and territorial stigmatization processes (Wacquant, 2008).

Moreover, the so-called “Roma issue” at the start of the 21st century can’t be isolated from the current European ‘migration crisis’. Authors like Rigo (2005), Rygiel (2011), Andrijasevic (2010), Walters (2006) have observed that the European space has been transforming, while the organization of the labour market has been dividing and becoming more hierarchical. Balibar (2004) talks about an ‘European apartheid’, constituted by a massive increase of ‘internal borders’ that produce a segmentation and fragmentation of the concept of ‘European citizenship’.

After the EU Eastern expansion in 2004 and 2007, approximately two million Roma people have become European citizens and members of the largest European ethnical minority (Romani populations ), officially “free” to move through the Union territories. Roma migration flows from Eastern to Western countries can help us to understand the social change the introduction of the new neoliberal order at European level has brought about. In fact, these migratory flows can’t be analysed without taking into account historical and geopolitical factors: the dismantling of the Soviet Union, wars in the former Yugoslavia, market liberalism processes in former socialist countries and the resulting exclusion and pauperisation processes, cutbacks in welfare systems in western European countries, the recent EU expansion to the East and the “Schengen area” (Sigona and Trehan, 2009).

The entry of Romanian citizens ethnically connoted as ‘Roma’ in Europe, as fully legal European citizens, has undoubtedly produced a wave of anti-Gypsyism among European political leaders (see the state of emergency declaration from Italy with regards to the Roma settlements in 2008, or the massive deportations in France in 2011 (Clough Marinaro and Sigona, 2011; Van Baar, 2014). The moral panic provoked by the mobility of these groups reveals how, indeed, this issue doesn’t only reflect a problem of “cultural difference”, but also questions of socio-economic inequalities.

The new geopolitical order that has re-drawn the map of Europe after the fall of the Berlin Wall have been accompanied by the assertion and consolidation throughout the continent, but more clearly in the European Union and its new satellites, of the neoliberal economic doctrine. In countries that have followed this inspiration, an increasing number of people that, for various reasons, have not found any adequate and socially acceptable position in the new order have been pushed to the margins and impoverished: among these, there are millions of Roma people, for whom chronic unemployment and social exclusion have become the norm. (Sigona and Palidda, 2009: 54)

The “Roma issue” contemplates hence the phenomenon of internal economic migrations in the EU, as well as issues related to economic and social rights access linked to

European citizen status. The movement of these groups, victims of pauperisation and marginalization, reveals the limits and contradictions of the current neoliberal European order.

Since 2007, the year when Romania entered the EU, the “Roma issue” has become more and more important in national political agendas, with notable effects in terms of securization (Sigona, 2008 and 2011; Sigona and Trehan, 2011; Van Baar, 2013), dehumanisation, nomadisation, differential inclusion (Van Baar, 2011, 2012 and 2015), and poverty ethnicizing (Olivera, 2011; Templer, 2006). These processes co-occur with a general process of right wing ‘individualization’ –where individuals have to meet requirements– and contingency, abandoning progressively the previous universalistic paradigm (Sassen, 2006; Nyers, 2011). It can be observed, thus, how the rights of being a European citizen, including the right to residence, can be, in practice, formulated in a conditional way by central or local powers, binding them to meet economic requirements..

## 2. “Housing for Roma” policies in Turin: ethnopolitical limits

In several European countries, policies and practices targeted to the Roma population have been almost exclusively focused on housing access, in a discriminatory way with regards to other unadvantaged sectors of the mainstream society. In fact, different ways of space segregation have emerged with the creation of special areas, ‘fields’ or ‘encampments’ for families ethnically connoted as Romani, often allocated on the margins of urban areas. The areas for travellers in the United Kingdom or for *gent de voyage* in France, are an example of these types of policies. Italy is a paradigmatic model of segregationist policies addressed to Romani groups. By using the controversial concept of ‘nomadism’ – feature assumed to be inherent in ‘Romani culture’– local regulators have fostered, since the end of the 70s, the official construction of *campi nomadi* (nomad encampments) on the outskirts of urban areas, as a concentration and control device for these populations. At the same time, the informal shack settlements (commonly named the same as the official ones, *campi*), have been regulated by repressive practices of cyclic evictions or the opposite, their existence being tacitly allowed (as long as it didn’t compromise other interests).

In this way, while between the 50's and the 80's working class housing was managed (if failing to cover all the demand) through universalist social policies (by building a social housing reserve called *case popolari*), that specific sector of the population ethnically connoted as Roma, also a victim of housing exclusion, was the object of distinguishing regulation: the encampments policy. In Turin, different neighbourhoods of shacks, in

different periods, have been reabsorbed in different ways according to the ethnicity of the inhabitants: while internal migrants, settled in shacks on the margins of the industrial city during the post-war years, could often benefit from policies for social housing, the Roma shack dwellers of the 80's and 90's have been re-housed in *campi nomadi*, based on the stereotyped idea about their presumed 'nomadism' (and, therefore, their inability to live in a flat).

Furthermore, in the absence of an authentic asylum system for refugees in Italy, an indirect consequence of the Balkan Wars in the 90's has been the subsequent "gangrening" of the encampments system, conceived as the only possible solution to the housing emergency of families running away from the war, fugitives and yet labelled as 'Roma' (see "nomads") instead of refugees (Sigona, 2002 and 2014).

The most recent migratory flows, coming from Romania and also 'ethnicized' from a general society perspective, have also been managed with this framework. As a result, these days in Turin there is a coexistence, often side by side, of neighbourhoods of *case popolari* (buildings of social housing, as part of a public housing reserve which is currently almost entirely privatized), official encampments for 'nomads' and informal encampments (neighbourhoods of makeshift shacks).

My research in Turin is focused on three principal aspects of the 'Roma issue':

- a) Management capacity of the encampments' inhabitants (both formal and informal): housing and financial strategies, everyday resistance mechanisms and 'powerless' (Scott 2003), adaptation processes and subjectivation.
- b) Public policies targeted to Roma population.
- c) Intersection between informal strategies of the encampment inhabitants and the formal markets –in particular, housing and labour markets.

Accordingly, the investigation is focused, on one hand, on the strategies carried out by settlement inhabitants "from below" and, on the other hand, on the public policies addressed to this population "from above", providing evidence on the eventual incompatibilities and gaps between both. This approach shows the reasons of the failure in the encampments eradication policies and the persistence of stigmatized territories at urban edges. Moreover, the 'Roma issue' is stressed, describing its economic aspects, revealing its connection to wider processes: the growing exclusion of an increasing range of population sectors from the real state market and the labour market, the capitalist processes of 'creative destruction' (Schumpeter, 1951) and the 'neoliberal turn' in social policies.

Thus the research examines the intersection of different areas and disciplines profoundly bounded and yet rarely addressed together: the so-called 'Gypsy studies', urban anthropology, urban studies, studies about migration, encampment sociology and political economy, broadening in this way the analytical potential of each one of these fields.

Choosing Turin as a geographic framework provides certain advantages due to different reasons. Turin represents a paradigmatic example of a post-Fordist city, severely affected by the transition from an extensive regulation of capitalist accumulation to a flexible one (Aglietta, 1976; Boyer, 2004), from industrial production to an economy of finance and services. The destination of remarkable migrant flows in the decades following the Second World War, Turin has dealt with the issue of housing access for working-class families in the 50's, 60's and 70's by building case popolari. Turin was, in addition, the first city in Italy where an official campo nomadi was built, in 1978, and which has recently implemented a re-housing project aimed at eradicating the largest informal settlement in the city, populated by around a thousand inhabitants, most of them Roma people from Romania.

The investigation, carried out from 2009 to 2015 (a total of 20 months of participant observation) has allowed for qualitative and quantitative data to be collected and for extensive interviews to be done. These data show the emergence of some meaningful phenomena.

It has been confirmed, indeed, that the camp as a "total institution" (Goffman, 1972), has become a decisive turning point for the social and housing pathways of its inhabitants, who today include up to the third generation of 'son of the camps' (that is, people who since they were born, have known only this housing type). For the families who live on a refugee camp, this means a sort of 'black hole', capable of executing a centripetal and centrifugal force at the same time.

Depending on the legal status, the economic and social resources of families, as well as their strategies, objectives and goals, the camp can be a source of precariousness or insecurity, from which some of the inhabitants try to run away at all costs, using their own resources and according to their own strategies (a process comparable, in some aspects, to others of 'escaping' by the middle class from stigmatized areas, like the well-known Black flight in the United States –see Wiese, 2004 among others). But the encampment can also represent, for deprived families, an attractive strategy to access housing in a context of lack of alternatives, insofar as social housing policies no longer exist and the impossibility of accessing the housing market. In this context, the fights for the "right to

the city” (Lefebvre, 1968) would be reduced to the “right to the camp” (Grbac, 2014): conflicts between legitimate beneficiaries of housing in the camp, on one hand, and aspiring candidates, on the other, who in some cases even ‘invade’ and occupy illegally plots in the camp. The research has allowed therefore parallel processes of camp entry and exit from different families to be observed.

In addition, it is worth remarking that leaving the camp often doesn’t mean accessing formal housing, but rather remaining in a ‘grey area’ of semi-formal housing through the purchase of land devoted to agricultural use, used as a space for shacks, caravans or makeshift shelters. That way, families adopt their own strategies to access a ‘cheap house’, and they settle in plots legally acquired which are, nevertheless, not allowed to be built on.

It’s important to highlight as well that the few Roma families that were able to benefit from social housing in the 90’s, and who joined the labour market, were those that displayed the most remarkable social climbing paths, leaving behind definitively the social marginality of living in a camp.

After the recent reappearance of informal settlements on the edges of the urban areas, local authorities in Turin have recently operated a re-housing project addressed to the inhabitants of the largest shacks settlement in the city. Between 2013 and 2015, a settlement populated by around 1.000 people –most of them Romanian Roma– has been progressively dismantled. The project’s characteristics are meaningful, as they represent in many aspects the ‘neoliberal turn’ in contemporary social policies. The project’s underlying logic is that it is necessary to separate the people living in settlements into ‘deserving’ and ‘not deserving’ families, according to moral order criteria. For the second group, eviction has been the only planned measure. For the first, however, re-housing has been provided by promoting the access to free market housing, at a historical time when both the idea of ‘public housing’ and the ‘camp’ seem anachronical. This insertion has been made with the accompaniment of small local NGOs. My investigation looks at the impact of these types of re-housing projects. Are these types of policies adequate for the access to housing in relation to the means, resources, capital, objectives and strategies of the shack inhabitants?

As other researchers have shown, (Tosi, 2008) the innovations of the local regulators in the field of housing policies –as a response to new social demands, but also as a consequence of the neoliberal turn in social policies– don’t seem capable of tackling the structural forms of housing exclusion, the most radical and naturalised forms of



stigmatization, where the problems of housing access are combined with other forms of social exclusion.

The investigation has therefore revealed that, in a context of labour exclusion, the access to the free housing market can be an unrealistic objective and an unbearable weight for a deprived family. It can also trigger new forms of precariousness and loss of social capital due to the separation from the extended family and the breakdown of social bonds with former neighbours. In general, a number of people have been forced to move out to the city centre. Other pre-existing informal settlements have grown as a result of the displacement of people who were excluded from the project, on one hand, and because of a lack of sustainable housing solutions offered to the project's beneficiaries, on the other.

### **3. The housing market in Barcelona: housing crisis and rise of informal markets**

Spain is usually referred to as a 'best practice' model in relation to the Gypsy population, considering the antigypsyism situation at European level.

Effectively, in Spain there are no refugee camps being built and no massive expulsions of Romanian people of Roma ethnicity like the ones in France in 2011, nor has a 'state of emergency' been declared with regards to the Roma settlements as Italy did in 2008.

On the other hand, as one of the most relevant researchers on the 'Roma issue' in the metropolitan area of Barcelona, Óscar López Catalán, points out, comparing the political management of the foreign Roma in France or in Italy with the –relatively generous– policies addressed to the native Gypsies in Spain would be a mistake. Spain has adopted, at least initially, a relatively more permissive approach than in France or Italy in relation to the access of European citizens to work permits, education, social housing and a series of social allowances. Despite that, Parker and López Catalán (2014) observe that the daily experience of the Roma families from Romania present also clear similarities between the different contexts of Spain and France – and, it could be added according to the groundwork in Turin–, also in Italy.

Certainly, the legal situation in Spain for marginalized EU citizens such as Roma has been more favorable than the one encountered in France, where a systematic policy of exclusion has been driven from the center. Thus, in many ways, a comparison of these two contexts serves to illustrate the ways in which EU citizenship is interpreted and can consequently be experienced, in quite different ways in different EU spaces. [...] We might suppose that the different legal conditions would make for very different lived experiences for Romanian Roma residing in France and Spain, this is not necessarily the case due to a

range of local laws and practices which interact with national and EU law. [...] [Considering] the “everyday” lived experiences of Romanian Roma in a local Spanish context, we argue that there may be more subtle mechanisms at play through which migrant Roma are excluded. (cit.: 388)

The context in Barcelona is very different from that in Turin, and this is due, firstly, to the diverse housing policies historically implemented in Spain and Italy. The social policies encompassing the vertiginous and badly-managed Italian ‘economic miracle’ of the 60’s and the 70’s, if questionable from the point of view of public housing provision (very limited with respect to demand) have undoubtedly represented a policy approach much less liberal in respect to the housing access policies promoted by Franchism. Franchist liberal policies, whose consequences are still visible today through the importance of the building sector and the real estate promotion in the Spanish economy, have strongly influenced on the process of housing financing that has produced the recent “housing crash”. This crash is at the basis of the current economical crisis and has brought about – and still does– severe processes of housing exclusion affecting a broad range of the Spanish population, not only those groups traditionally stigmatized.

If the Italian model has enabled a double policy of social housing for the most vulnerable sectors of society, on one side, and an ‘ethnopolicy’ of camps for Roma population, on the other, the Spanish model, with the high profile given to free housing, has fostered the development of an informal housing market that is nourished by the needs of the groups or individuals excluded from the formal market. Overcrowded flats are an example of this type of informal market.

Furthermore, although in Spain the ‘camp’ model hasn’t been established, the quality of social housing on peripheral roads where many families who used to live in shacks have been rehoused (many of them Gypsies) is far removed from the minimum conditions of dignified housing (it’s not by chance that, regarding to some particular peripheral roads of social housing, the expression “barranquismo vertical” (vertical slums) is used. From the point of view of the experience of the ethnicized and stigmatized population, results are similar regardless of the different planification models.

Barcelona’s expansion has led to a situation of full occupation of urban land, with the exception of empty sites which have become, in some cases, informal settlements whose size and extension can’t be in any way compared to the slums like Lungo Stura Lazio or Germagnano in Turin, neither with the slums of Barcelona in the last century. The phenomenon appears, from that point of view, more invisible, more reduced and, if possible, even more precarious, disseminated and fragmented. In these conditions, the

consolidation of social bonds is more difficult, as is the creation of extended networks between the individuals who suffer the same type of exclusion.

With the neoliberal turn in terms of social and urban policies, the housing problem has often been reduced to its urban dimension and absorbed by urban policies. The integration between social policies on housing access and urban policies, the reduction of the urban issue to aspects essentially urban are especially problematic, and yet supported by speculative interests attached to the reclassification of land and the 'regeneration' of city areas. Steering the housing issue towards this dimension is particularly inadequate, since in many cases it's the regeneration processes themselves that generate new forms of social exclusion (see gentrification processes), leaving unanswered questions regarding to what extent urban policies can contribute to the problem of housing access and under which conditions.

In this context, which strategies are developed at ground level, between those "unwanted" migrant groups, for whom housing access is particularly difficult?

These days, a few thousand Romanian citizens, ethnically connoted as Roma, live on the outskirts of Barcelona: most of them, in the districts of Badalona and Santa Coloma de Gramanet. While a small part of them have a regular job and live in 'standard' dwellings, life conditions of others are much more insecure: access to housing is made by renting in overcrowded conditions (more than one family per flat), occupying empty flats or empty plots or industrial units (in shacks or shops), ensuring income by the use of informal strategies (begging, cleaning windows at traffic lights, street trading, scrap pickup).

The housing conditions of the Roma migrants in the metropolitan area of Barcelona are not the result of directly discriminatory policies such as the segregationist policy of the encampments, which was implemented in Italian districts. Nevertheless, the housing strategies of these migrants must be integrated in a context of historic scarcity of social housing, due to a political agenda that, at national and local level, has promoted for decades the real estate business and fostered home ownership. Long before what is called the 'neoliberal agenda' was affirmed, in Spain an expansive liberalised market of home ownership was created, supported by mortgages and by highly expansive urban policies. This context has inevitably encouraged the emergence of an informal housing market, which leads in any event to forms of social and housing segregation.

Beyond the forms (not heavily extended) of shantytowns, the majority of migrant Roma families in the metropolitan area of Barcelona live in flats, gaining access through a segmented and often irregular rental market, managed mainly by Pakistani citizens. These

could access mortgages during the Spanish estate market bubble in the 90's and the start of 2000, according to an institutional framework that made housing investment very attractive, as it ensured an important capital gains tax relief and favourable tax return.

It must be highlighted that the overcrowding conditions in these flats have worsened after the subprime crisis (highly risky bank loans) in Spain from 2007 (Lopez and Rodriguez, 2011: 20). People who rented flats to Roma families, usually migrants, faced great difficulties to pay the increasing mortgage payments and have therefore loaded these difficulties on these "confused newcomers" tenants and without alternatives (Parker y López Catalán, cit.: 390) through high rents, fomenting, that way, the 'overcrowded flats'.

The notable aspect about low standard housing (either a shack or an overcrowded flat) is that the civil registration of the inhabitants can become more difficult, as a consequence of some discretion, from the local authorities, towards the criteria required to make the civil registration. The civil registration is a prior requirement for accessing a series of social and economic rights linked to citizenship (education, health, social housing, social allowances). That way, denying the registration in the council register becomes an obstacle to access these rights. Although the Spanish law accepts the registration also in cases of low standard housing (including informal housing and even public spaces), at a local level significant differences in the registration practices between the different districts are seen and there's "an evident lack of criteria in the registration of citizens who have just entered the European Union" (Catalan ombudsman 2008: 143). The civil registration in the city councils of Santa Coloma and Badalona has been denied in some cases to Romanian citizens, who presented their national ID card, but who were asked to show their passport as well.

Moreover, in Santa Coloma and Badalona, the situation of overcrowded flats has been tackled with restrictive laws in the access to the civil registration (Parker and López Catalán, cit.). In these districts there's a limit in the number of people registered in the same flat. Roma migrants, despite having legal permanence in Spain as European citizens, have faced severe restrictions to get registered. In some cases, registered inhabitants were unregistered when overcrowding conditions were detected; in others, the citizen registration couldn't be done because the previous occupants of the flat hadn't changed their postal address (Parker and López Catalán, cit.).

In practice, Santa Coloma and Badalona city councils don't register people who live in insecure conditions, despite the current legislation establishing they should be registered and should benefit from social assistance.

The precariousness situation can trigger forced mobility and displacements, as a consequence of occupied or overcrowded flats evictions, and the marginalisation of its dwellers. López Catalán (2012) provides the example of a family who has moved 12 times in six months between Badalona and Santa Coloma. On ten occasions, these forced displacements were caused by police interventions, with no intervention by the social services.

#### **4. Semi-formal and formal economic strategies in the post-Fordist city**

The position of 'unwanted' and stigmatized Roma people is often a 'grey area', a middle point between a formal and informal situation, not only concerning housing access, but also regarding economic survival strategies. These strategies, that, despite not being criminal, are often criminalised, are developed in specific socio-economic contexts.

Turin is a city whose economic growth, during the 'miracle' decades which followed Second World War, has been based on the automotive industry and related industry, mainly structured around a unique economic 'driving force', constituted by Fiat. In fact, Turin has quickly transformed, since the start of the past century, into a city defined by economists and analysts as a one-company town (Locke, 1995: 134). The contraction of the industrial production from the 80's has therefore affected profoundly the local economy. Unemployment has increased remarkably and large abandoned industrial areas have been appearing on the suburban landscape.

The local economy reconversion from the second to the third sector is a process which has affected as well, but in a different manner, Barcelona. In fact, it is meaningful to observe that the economic strategies of the marginalised population are quite similar in both contexts (Turin and Barcelona): self-employment in the scrap sector, begging, street trading, cleaning windows at traffic lights, occupying empty sites and industrial units.

These strategies are perfectly integrated in the economic re-structuration processes which are currently affecting many cities. It's worth pointing out, for example, that the price of some metals such as copper has trebled since 2008 due to the financial crisis. The scrap market has become particularly attractive, especially for those marginalized sectors that the recession has expelled from the labour market.

It's significant that, both the dwellers of shantytowns in Turin and the inhabitants of overcrowded flats in Badalona and Santa Coloma, as well as many other stigmatized groups, survive everyday thanks to the leftovers of a consumer society. It has to be remembered that waste management is an important sector in Western societies, a sector where the inhabitants of stigmatized areas would represent the last link of the

chain. It's difficult to reconcile the idea of 'waste management' with capitalist ideas of employment, labour and production, and therefore talking about waste or rubbish means referring to loss, degradation, impurity, contamination, even death. This is certainly a paradox, since it's known, that, in semiotic and biological terms, every system needs to exchange constantly 'live' material with 'death' material to reproduce itself (Rennó, 2013).

In fact, as recycling some materials is starting to get a commercial value, it offers the possibility of an income for the dwellers of marginalised spaces in many worldwide cities. As Rennó suggests (cit.), the pressure on the ecological importance of recycling waste and 'sustained growth' creates a concern about the material, but that concern forgets that it can be used as a subsistence form: the job of 'recycler' or scrap dealer is seen as almost illegal, with no labour rights and high risk. In effect, inhabitants of the official encampment in Germagnano in Turin, despite being considered as criminals, develop their activity of scrap pickup registering themselves as self-employed and paying monthly the corresponding taxes.

According to Marxist theory, capitalism intends to produce the rapid obsolescence of objects; however, the same way in which discarded objects are considered surplus, the person who makes a living from them would be considered as 'surplus human material'.

Both in Turin and Barcelona, street scrap dealers are often repressed and criminalized and the rules regulating their activity have been hardened in the last few years. In Turin, legislation about the buying and selling of scrap has become more rigid, while in Barcelona local policy measures have been promoted to strictly limit the use of public space for the stigmatized groups (see 2204 citizen ordinance), pushing the informal scrap workers towards subsequent marginalization.

## 5. Conclusions

In spite of the different historical backgrounds and legal frameworks, both in Turin and Barcelona exclusion practices occur at different levels, and are experienced in a similar way by Roma migrants in their daily life.

In Italy, the stigmatization of these groups of 'unwanted' Roma people has triggered a distinguishing policy of housing access, the 'camps policy', creating specific pathways with regards to other low income families who are 'non-ethnicized' and who have been able to benefit from social housing acquisition.

In Spain, where social housing policies have been traditionally insufficient, policies aimed at fostering home ownership have contributed to a situation where the main housing

access for Roma migrants has been renting in the free market, often in overcrowded situations, or squatting. The Spanish housing market collapse, from 2008, has been crucial in the worsening of the overcrowding conditions in these flats. The “issue of the Roma Romanian” and the overcrowded flats has been therefore used as a pretext for the stigmatization and denial of the civil registration – with the associated social rights– instead of intervening through social policies.

Be it a shack in an encampment or a squat or overcrowded flat, the housing, hygiene and public order rules might have been applied in a discriminatory way towards these groups. In both contexts, housing insecurity is experienced daily, and economic survival strategies adopted are often criminalized and made illegal.

Exclusion always occurs within a complex legal framework that develops over various levels (central and local; police authority and care assistance). In that context, local regulation about citizen registration, begging, scrap selling and buying and rules of public space use help to justify particular bureaucratic practices and particular forms through which these laws interact with, and are legitimised by, the local policies.

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# Experiences

December 2016

**Key words:** Housing First,  
homelessness, Finland, Y-  
Foundation

## Together we can do more: Y-Foundation and Housing First in Finland

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**Finland is the only country in EU where homelessness is decreasing. This is due to persistent policy work as well as finding new measures to decrease and prevent homelessness. Key thing in the process have been united forces. One active partner in this cooperation for over 30 years has been the Y-Foundation<sup>34</sup>.**

### Policies to tackle homelessness

At the end of 2015 there were 6,785 single homeless people and 424 homeless families in Finland. These figures are in line with the declining trend in homelessness data collected every year from local authorities and social services<sup>35</sup>. Over 80% of these homeless are people living temporarily with relatives or friends, not just rough sleepers or people in overnight shelters.

Thirty years earlier the situation was much worse: the number of homeless people was almost 20,000. Thousands of people were living in institutions because of lack of suitable housing and in Helsinki alone, over 2000 people were housed in dormitories or overnight shelters. Homeless people also often occupied sub-standard housing which other people had abandoned.

Since then reducing homelessness has almost continuously been part of Finnish government programs. Measures have varied over the years and progress has been made. However, all people could not find a permanent solution matching their housing and support needs. They ended up homeless repeatedly or stayed in hostels for long periods. That's why a new approach was adopted in 2008. Housing and services for long-term homeless people were now developed by applying the Housing First principle. This meant building new housing, renovating hostels completely and creating new services<sup>36</sup>.

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34. <http://www.ysaatio.fi/in-english/>

35. <http://www.ara.fi/en-US>

36. [http://www.housingfirst.fi/en/housing\\_first/homelessness\\_in\\_finland](http://www.housingfirst.fi/en/housing_first/homelessness_in_finland)

### Why Y?

One of the driving forces in promoting this new policy based on Housing First has been Y-Foundation. It already had long experience in providing normal housing for homeless people and developing facilities for supported housing. The foundation also had a wide network of partners among cities and service providers.

When measures to tackle homelessness were planned in 1980's there was a huge shortage of small rental apartments suitable for single homeless people. Buying housing from private market was considered to be the quickest way to get more housing for the homeless. That's why in 1985 a foundation was established and buying housing was its main model of operation for many years. The letter "Y" in the name of Y-Foundation comes from the Finnish word yksinäinen (lonely), representing the original object to provide small rental apartments for single homeless people.

The founding members of the foundation were a wide range of non-profit organizations including five largest cities in Finland (Helsinki, Espoo, Vantaa, Tampere and Turku), The Evangelical Lutheran Church, The Finnish Red Cross, The Finnish Association for Mental Health, The Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities, The Confederation of Finnish Construction Industries RT and The Finnish Construction Trade Union. Even today these bodies have representation in the board of the foundation.

Y-Foundation aims at ending homelessness in Finland. According to the charter its basic duty is to support health and social welfare by providing affordable, good quality rental housing, matching human dignity, to people who have difficulties in finding accommodation in the general housing market. Housing financing must be arranged in a way that rents match the solvency of tenants. Income from rents and other assets are used to increase the housing stock. As a non-profit housing provider the foundation is entitled to state subsidies and grants in construction.

Over the years needs have changed and new groups needing housing have emerged. At the beginning of 1990s the foundation started to buy housing for refugees coming to Finland. Several real estates have been built to improve living conditions of people suffering from mental health problems. From 2008 onwards the foundation has provided both scattered and congregate housing for the National Programme to Reduce Long-term Homelessness. Also various types of mixed housing have been built. Congregate supported housing with service facilities on-site can, e.g. be situated as part of a normal rental real estate.

The original policy was renting the apartments as secondary leasing in cooperation with local authorities, parishes or NGOs. The foundation arranged housing; local partners selected tenants and arranged support services when necessary. Nowadays the foundation also rents apartments directly to homeless people. Tenants are selected together with organisations offering support for their special needs clients.

Today the foundation also offers normal social rental housing via its daughter company for anyone to apply.<sup>37</sup> Especially in the Metropolitan area more and more people are vulnerable to homelessness only because it is hard to find affordable housing. A new way of action started in 2016 is renting apartments from private landlords and letting them to homeless people. Availability of affordable rental housing is, however, the key thing in tackling and preventing homelessness.

### **Y-Foundation housing**

The Y-Foundation housing stock is over 16,400 apartments. Some 5,300 flats are scattered housing bought from the private market and almost 10,000 apartments are normal social rental housing. The rest is supported housing facilities for tenants with special needs. These include, e.g. homes for long-term homeless people, service housing for elderly people and supported housing for people recovering from psychiatric problems.

Key features in Y-Foundation housing are:

- Needs based solutions
- Affordability
- Good quality
- Safe tenure
- Central location
- Supportive networks

The most important factor in buying and building housing is quality. The foundation provides normal housing, no shelters or temporary solutions. No matter if the apartment is in scattered or in congregate housing, quality is the same and the apartment enables independent living. In congregate housing the communities are always supported by building room for shared activities (a living-room, kitchen and room for group work) even though the tenants also have fully equipped homes of their own. Living is based on a normal lease.

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37. <https://m2kodit.fi/>



In construction one key feature is central location. Especially tenants with special needs benefit from a local community and it is important that services are easy to reach. This empowers people to take responsibility and makes support work more effective. Scattered apartments in private housing companies help to tackle segregation. Providing social housing in owner occupied housing stock gives former homeless people an option to get a good quality home and a quiet neighbourhood.

### **Building partnerships**

Y-Foundation complements housing markets by offering tailored housing solutions based on local demand. Foundation's key partners are local authorities as they define city specific targets for cooperation. Partners assess needs and suitable housing options are planned together. When necessary cities also help to arrange building sites. This is vital in order to keep rents on a reasonable level.

The foundation takes care of property management; local partners arrange necessary support services. Cooperation is based on a contract, which defines roles and responsibilities of each party involved. As an independent organization the foundation has been able to build partnerships also with church social work and several NGOs developing support for their target groups. The possibility to arrange housing via Y-Foundation has enabled many organizations to develop services matching the special needs of their clients.

Today the foundation has cooperation with over one hundred partner organizations all over the country. This means a lot of networking to do. Yet it is worth the effort: in tackling homeless joint forces are more effective than separate projects. The wide network has benefited foundation's development work. It has been easy to find partners for new projects and disseminating results has also been efficient.

### **Finances**

The two main sources of financing core activities are RAY, Finland's Slot Machine Association<sup>38</sup>, and ARA, the Housing Finance and Development Centre of Finland<sup>39</sup>. RAY funding covers 50 % of purchasing costs in scattered housing. RAY and ARA also finance housing support and advice services which enable effective networking with local partners and service providers to prevent recurring homelessness. ARA grants interest-subsidy loans and subsidies for construction and renovation of social housing. Invest subsidies for special-needs groups can reach the maximum of 50 % of approved investment costs.

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38. <http://www2.ray.fi/en>

39. <http://www.ara.fi/en-US>

Y-Foundation uses also loans from banks and other financial institutions. Residential rental return is used to cover the costs of running the organization, capital expenses and the costs of housing management. The profit is used to cover repayments of loans and the remaining amount is invested in new apartments for special-needs groups.

### **Personnel**

Y-Foundation works nationwide and has flats or housing units in 56 different cities and municipalities. Our main office is in Helsinki but we have also regional offices in 6 cities. The staff of 116 employees has varied professional background. The main departments or units are: customer service and rental, construction and renovation, real estate management and maintenance, finance and administration. We have also units for development work, housing services and communication. Recently we started also a pilot project for preventive housing advisory services.

### **Sustainable housing**

The aims in providing housing are good quality and longevity. National regulations on construction by the Ministry of Environment steer building activities and promote greater energy-efficiency and use of renewable energy sources. In Finnish climate conditions these are important goals. ARA evaluates building plans before granting financing in order to ensure quality in social housing. Among other things this means good insulation, airtightness and triple glazing in windows. The foundation uses good quality materials, dependable appliances and the apartments are well-equipped.

Professional property management and good upkeep are important to lengthen the service life of constructions. Necessary renovations must be done in time. Energy efficiency is monitored and technical inspections of heating and ventilation appliances are done regularly to improve energy efficiency performance. One essential feature in environmental sustainability is location. Central location as well as good transport links reduce private motoring. Public transportation makes it possible to use the money in buildings and reduces the need for expensive parking spaces.

### **Promoting welfare and inclusion**

Permanent home and safe tenure are crucial for wellbeing. Over the years we have become convinced that it is possible to tackle even severe problems and difficult life situations in safe circumstances. Yet, realism is needed: all people can't climb the steps of staircase model housing services and some need support on a regular basis. There isn't one right housing model; the solution must be based on people's needs.

Good housing benefits also the welfare system. Treatment or rehabilitation is more effective in proper living conditions. A safe home gives an opportunity to focus on other things in life and membership in a community is an effective way to promote welfare. Investment in supported housing is also cost-effective. Evaluations on the Housing First - facilities and services have proved that adequate housing and support decreases the use of expensive emergency services<sup>40</sup>.

Every now and then the work of Y-Foundation has been challenged by attitudes and fears of the surrounding community. Some building projects have been delayed because of complaints from the neighbourhood. At the end, however, all projects have been completed. This NIMBY-phenomenon has mainly been due to prejudices against people with mental health problems. Nowadays this kind of pressure is easy to tackle since we have many good examples to show the critics. It is remarkable that in spite of resistance, all complaints have ended after tenants have moved in.

Open communication with the neighbourhood is crucial in overcoming fears. Yet, it is fair to be aware of risks when people with troubled past are housed. Sufficient support and responding to feedback coming from the neighbourhood are important. Also new work methods like targeted neighbourhood work pave way to better understanding and co-existence.

Participation of people who have experienced homelessness has been promoted in many ways in the national program on long-term homelessness. "Experts by experience" have been training support workers in educational events organized by Y-Foundation. New forms of community work, peer support and low threshold activities have been developed. The foundation promotes inclusion also by an employment project started in 2015. It creates employment opportunities for the tenants. This is linked to another ongoing development project, creating a new concept for affordable social rental housing. For us inclusion means that we make best use of human resources. In doing so we are also building pathways to hope.

This brief overview of the main operations of Y-Foundation gives some idea of the scope of our work. There are certainly several aspects needing further analysis and elaboration in this work model. I will concentrate now on three questions: our role in the national programmes, the importance of affordable social housing and our understanding of Housing First and the principle of normality.

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40. [http://www.housingfirst.fi/files/3313/Presentation\\_Virpi\\_Sillanpaa\\_Cost-effects\\_of\\_Housing\\_First\\_Case\\_Harrmala\\_Tampere.pdf](http://www.housingfirst.fi/files/3313/Presentation_Virpi_Sillanpaa_Cost-effects_of_Housing_First_Case_Harrmala_Tampere.pdf)

### **Y-Foundation and the national programme to end long-term homelessness**

Y-Foundation has been actively involved in implementing national programmes to reduce homelessness. The role of Y-Foundation became even more prominent when the National Programme to Reduce Long-Term Homelessness was started in 2008. As the programme is based on the principle of Housing First, the role of Y-Foundation buying scattered apartments was quite natural. With the 50% financing from RAY Y-Foundation buys yearly some 100 flats from the private market and mainly in big cities. We have continued this core activity also during this latest programme period. The only difference has been that since 2008 all newly acquired apartments in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area have been allocated to long-term homeless people.

Y-Foundation has also taken part in the process of converting former hostels and shelters into supported housing units. The foundation has been in charge of constructing four supported housing facilities. One of them was a former dormitory which was renovated into independent modern apartments; three other ones were completely new buildings for long-term homeless people who used to live in shelters or hostels. These supported housing units have on site -personnel to support tenants. Services are provided by NGOs and municipalities.

For us the discussion about scattered versus congregate housing has been a little bit beside the point as scattered housing has been the prevalent model in Finland already for a quite a long time. The need for supported housing units became evident when the renovation of shelters and hostels was planned. In our understanding shelters and hostels were an integral element of the staircase model. If we wanted to make a paradigm shift towards Housing First, the role of hostels had to be reconsidered. Our experiences showed that hostels as a temporary solution were maintaining a certain culture of homelessness. They didn't provide any privacy and possibilities of recovery and support were very limited.

When the support needs of long-term homeless people living in hostels were assessed it became obvious that there was a group of homeless people who needed more intensive support and services, for example because of somatic ailments, than was possible to provide in scattered housing. So far experiences of supported housing units show that there is a need for this kind of alternative in the service system for homeless people. Certainly most homeless people prefer independent scattered housing but there is a group of long-term homeless people for whom scattered housing brings the risk of loneliness and social isolation. Supported housing unit is an alternative for those who prefer more communal housing and need more services as long as it provides also privacy in your own independent apartment.

The Development team of Y-Foundation has been leading a national development project which has supported the implementation of the national programme<sup>41</sup>. This project has arranged training, networking and developed tools for evaluation. The project has managed to create a national structure for development work in homelessness services and it has activated several hundreds of professionals to take part in the work. It has also brought together professionals from NGOs and municipalities which has been utterly important for the implementation of the programme on the local level.

#### **The importance of affordable housing**

The Finnish housing stock consists mainly (70%) of owner occupied housing, 15% are private rental flats and 15% social housing flats. The share of social housing is quite small compared to some European countries, but its importance is especially big in the Helsinki Metropolitan Area where social housing is the only affordable housing option as market based rents have been increasing rapidly. Social housing is mostly provided by non-profit municipal housing companies.

The role of social housing for homelessness policy is important on many levels. A sufficient stock of affordable social housing is the best preventative measure and social housing is also one of the main routes out of homelessness. For these reasons Y-Foundation in its new strategy in 2014 decided to concentrate efforts to increase the available social housing stock by constructing new housing blocks and also by purchasing social housing flats from other social housing providers.

At the beginning of 2016 Y-Foundation made a deal of buying 8,631 social housing flats in 28 cities from a big national housing cooperative company. This housing stock makes Y-Foundation the biggest nationwide social housing provider and the 4<sup>th</sup> biggest landlord in the country. This social housing stock gives us new alternatives to alleviate homelessness. It also gives us huge possibilities to utilize the human potential of our 16,000 tenants. We are now working intensively with think tank Demos Helsinki to develop a social housing concept of our own. The aim is to find new ways to empower and socially include our tenants for example by creating new job opportunities for them.

#### **Housing first and the principle of normality**

Some key principles of Housing First are easily identifiable in the operations of Y-Foundation: the separation of housing and services, support and services based on individual needs, own apartment and own rental contract and the respect for clients. For us

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41. [http://www.housingfirst.fi/en/housing\\_first](http://www.housingfirst.fi/en/housing_first)

the principle of normality is utterly important and in its actualization you may find some conscious deviations from the original Pathways to Housing HF -model.

We believe that the social inclusion of people who have experienced homelessness is best promoted if they are treated as everybody else, in a normal way, with normal civil rights and obligations. This means that housing should be provided in central places where also other people live and that people have normal rental contracts. But for us it also means that all tenants pay their own rent either with their own income or with general benefits they are entitled to like everybody else. So they don't pay for example 30% of their income to the organization that provides services. For us this is an important element of social inclusion and it also makes tenants less dependent on the organization providing services.

Nordic welfare model is based on the principle of universalism i.e. public social and health services are available to everybody. In implementing Housing First clients are expected to use their civil right for services and for this reason there is less need for multi professional teams like ACT or other service arrangements specially designed for HF –clients. In the Finnish HF –model the role of support worker is more like a case manager and a personal supporter. This is very much in line with our understanding of the principle of normality and the elements that can further social inclusion of people who have experienced homelessness.

### **Together we can do more**

In recent years there has been a growing interest in the work of Y-Foundation and we have had several groups and individuals coming to study visits also from outside Europe. Our work embodies the principles of the Finnish way to tackle homelessness and I think that showing these principles in practice is the most valuable thing we can give our visitors. We are grateful for the interest in our work and also for the international recognitions. We have received the World Habitat Award (2014) and the European Civil Society Prize (2015). These recognitions have given us confidence that we are on the right path and they also have encouraged us to set more ambitious goals for our work.

International cooperation and exchange of experience are crucial preconditions for our efforts. Y-Foundation is an active member of FEANTSA and for us FEANTSA is the key European platform in international cooperation also in the future<sup>42</sup>. But we want to be even more active also on the European level. The Housing First Guide Europe which FEANTSA

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42. <http://www.feantsa.org/>

recently launched has created quite new possibilities to fight homelessness<sup>43</sup>. Awareness of Housing First has risen to a completely new level.

For us in Y-Foundation it is important to strengthen European cooperation in ending homelessness and further the implementation of the Housing First philosophy. For this reason, we have together with FEANTSA launched the idea of a Housing First Europe Hub to build a more solid structure of cooperation for European actors striving to implement Housing First.

Our guests are always astonished of the scope of Finnish cooperation: different partners on the national and local level, NGOs, municipalities and state organizations are working together to tackle homelessness. This cooperation has also brought indisputable results. I think that this is the most important message we in Y-Foundation have to give: Ending homelessness is a realistic goal and together we can do more.

#### **Y-Foundation housing, some examples:**

##### **Tellervokoti in Porvoo**

- 14 flats for supported housing + room for services for people recovering from mental health problems



Address: Mannerheiminkatu 25, Porvoo

Renovation completed in 2002.

Service provider: Itä-Uudenmaan Sosiaalipsykiatrinen yhdistys ry

<http://www.ituspy.com/index.php?id=7>

[www.ituspy.com](http://www.ituspy.com)

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43. <http://housingfirstguide.eu/webste/>

**Taipaleitalo in Porvoo**

- 23 flats (37 – 38 m<sup>2</sup>) for supported housing for people recovering from mental health problems, room for services, 7 flats (78 m<sup>2</sup>) for social rental housing. The service provider hires also scattered housing from Y-Foundation.



Address: Puupolku 2, Porvoo

Construction completed in 2010.

Service provider: Itä-Uudenmaan Sosiaalipsykiatrinen yhdistys ry

<http://www.ituspy.com/index.php?id=8>

[www.ituspy.com](http://www.ituspy.com)

**Pitäjänmäki in Helsinki**

- 111 flats (33-42 m<sup>2</sup>) + service facilities for long-term homeless people



Address: Pitäjänmäentie 12, Helsinki

Construction completed in 2011.

Service provider: Salvation Army:

<http://www.pelastusarmeija.fi/paikkakunnat/helsinki/asumispalvelu>

[www.pelastusarmeija.fi](http://www.pelastusarmeija.fi)



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### Rukkila in Helsinki

- 27 flats (28 – 40 m<sup>2</sup>) + service facilities for young long-term homeless people



Address: Kartanonkaari 29, Helsinki  
Renovation completed in 2011.  
Service provider: Suoja-Piritti ry  
[www.suoja-piritti.fi](http://www.suoja-piritti.fi)

### Väinölä in Espoo

- 35 flats (36.5 – 50 m<sup>2</sup>) + service facilities for long-term homeless people



Address: Kuusiniemi 5, Espoo  
Construction completed in 2014  
Service provider: Salvation Army  
<http://www.pelastusarmeija.fi/paikkakunnat/espoo/asumispalvelu>  
[www.pelastusarmeija.fi](http://www.pelastusarmeija.fi)

**Sotkankoti in Hämeenlinna**

- 25 flats (31.5 – 35 m<sup>2</sup>) in terraced houses + service facilities for long-term homeless people recovering from substance abuse problems



Address: Sotkankatu 5, Hämeenlinna  
Construction completed in 2013  
Service provider: Hämeenlinna A-Clinic

**Koivula in Helsinki:**

- 21 flats (34 – 46 m<sup>2</sup>) + service facilities for people recovering from mental health problems



Address: Lapinlahdentie 6, Helsinki  
Renovation completed in 2005  
Service provider: Alvi ry  
[www.alvi.fi](http://www.alvi.fi)

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### Social rental housing in Helsinki:



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Key words: Best Practices, Database,  
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## Best practices and models database of the Social Rights Section

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The Best Practices Database collects and encourages the use of best practices both in general management and in provision of care from the Social Rights Section of Barcelona City Council, be they the Council's own or with third sector participation or other municipalities. This project seeks to foster active participation by highlighting the professionals' experience which use them, as well as spreading the message of our organization, promoting the diffusion of information, knowledge and workable practices aimed at finding answers to social challenges more efficiently and effectively.

### 1. Origins of Best Practices Database

After many years of experience in the different departments of the Social Rights Section<sup>44</sup>, the professionals have gained a knowledge and expertise that, sometimes, due to the complexity and dimension of our organization, is difficult to show and share.

We must face new social realities that guide us to innovate and improve current projects to guarantee the quality of services. In that sense, new professional approaches, promoting the active participation of professionals in the field of knowledge, prompt us to rethink new formulas which, coming from the same stakeholders (professionals and experts), are called to have an impact in the organization.

The management BBPP<sup>45</sup> project initiated in 2012, from a first definition of the Management Information Plan launched by the Section. A pilot scheme was done during 2013 to test the process, methodology and validation strategies. Improvements were implemented from 2014 and it's currently working on a permanent basis, with an annual evaluation process which guarantees ongoing improvement and adaptability to the needs identified.

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44. It's currently the name of the Section.

45. When the project was designed in 2012, other existing models were considered and the project was adapted to the particularities of our area. Some models are the Best Practices Database from the local governments of the Federation of Municipalities in Catalonia and Pi i Sunyer Foundation, as well as the Centre of Local Studies and International Cooperation.

The Database's goal is to identify, collect and encourage the use of best practices, both in general management and in provision of care from the Social Rights Section, be they the Council's own or with third sector participation or other municipalities

The aim is to foster the active participation of professionals, spreading the knowledge of our organization, promoting the exchange of evidence-based and workable practices, which help us to overcome challenges more efficiently and effectively.

The project's methodology and procedure is innovative, providing effective solutions while at the same time promoting mutual learning and knowledge exchange.

The database's main objective is to promote, encourage and share the technicians and professionals' knowledge. The specific goals are:

- Identify and encourage the use of the Section's Best Practices.
- Acknowledge and emphasize the professionals' work.
- Exchange of best practices.
- Gather common expertise and knowledge.
- Promote learning processes.
- Foster continued improvement in the solutions offered to the citizenship and in the way of working.

## 2. Methodology and validation procedure of best practices

### 2.1. Definition of best practices and quality criteria

Best practices (BP) are the group of useful, relevant and significant actions, (experiences, projects, activities, strategies, methodologies, toolkits, etc.), which have obtained good results in a specific context and which can trigger similar results in similar contexts. These BP can help guide and orientate professionals and/or technicians who want to launch or improve specific actions or projects.

The practices can regard to: projects addressed to different collectives; working methodologies tested and considered useful for the working routine; working processes started and finished successfully; service approaches considered as innovative where work sharing is emphasized, networking, etc. In any case, these practices must be launched and led by the Social Rights Section.

The BP must prove therefore its efficiency and good results, which may or may not be transferable partially or wholly and must have an element of innovation or continuous

improvement. In order to be identified and selected as best practices, projects, practices and/or experiences must meet a group of quality criteria, which have been previously defined and adapted to our Section's specifications, and which guarantee, in an objective manner, the core elements of a best practice.

**Access requirements:**

- **Adequacy and belonging.** Section values: public services, people-based, non-discriminatory, innovative processes and continuous improvement which include quality aspects, criteria and planning and management standards.

**Basic criteria:**

- **Transferability:** capacity of being transferred to other similar contexts.

- **Innovation and continuous improvement:** practices that develop new solutions or introduce improved aspects.

**Value added criteria:**

- **Evaluation and quality:** capacity to adapt to new necessities, giving efficient solutions to the goals set.

- **Planning and process management:** based on a comprehensive diagnosis of needs and planning underpinned by a viable and sustainable management of the processes needed to reach the results concerning the reality where the impact is sought.

- **Leadership and participation:** capacity of a person, service or association to lead actions and manage them, promoting the active participation of the agents involved and group cohesion.

- **Transparency and communication:** level of information and skills oriented to the practice and available in the different organization levels –internal and external.

- **Resource optimization:** providing the means and strategies in accordance to the objectives.

- **Impact and sustainability:** solid results of a practice addressed to a specific collective on a long-term basis, including also the optimization of human and material strategies.

- **Multi-dimensional approach:** teamwork between agents of different areas creating synergy with a common objective, without eliminating their specific dimensions.

- **Integrity:** multi-dimensional solutions and/or multi-faceted in the face of complex needs.

### 2.2. Assessment tool

To guarantee a rigorous assessment of the practices accessing the Database, an objective assessment tool has been designed where each one of the eleven quality criteria is scored from 1 to 10.

For the global scoring, the basic criteria have a greater impact than the added value criteria and the first criterion doesn't count, as it's an access requirement. The qualitative assessments are collected. The practices which access the Database must register a final score greater than 4.

### 2.3. Commission of best practices assessment

When the Database project was designed, an internal assessment committee was created, with diverse and complementary views. This committee is composed by ten technicians from different disciplines with experience and knowledge about different working methodologies attached to the areas of the Section, which guarantee the multi-dimensional assessment of every practice.

An external person, who comes from the academic field, supports the project's methodology.

The Commission members' specific role is "knowledge facilitator". They provide assessment and technical evaluation, searching for the feedback and learning of the practices presented in the Database and based on the eleven quality criteria. The assessment seeks to improve the practice and not control the results.

### 2.4. Internal assessment and acknowledgement procedure

The BP process of assessment and acknowledgement consists of several coordinated actions set by the Technician in charge from the Department of Planning and Process, who coordinates the Database and the Commission. These are the following:

- Practice assessment from the Commission members, based on the quality criteria.
- Feedback. The professionals receive feedback, which is oriented to the improvement and not to control over the results. Suggestions are made to improve the practice, along with proposals, which can be presented to other forums, congresses, exchanges, etc.

- Encourage best practices to be consulted both internally and externally on the different technological platforms.
- Acknowledgement of all the best practices in the Annual meeting. The goal is to value and acknowledge the team's work. In the ceremony, a diploma is given to the best practice and a public speech about the singularity of the most important quality criteria is offered.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Database consolidation and best practices quality

The Database looks for the quality of best practices rather than quantity. There are 29 best practices; five targeted to internal management (methodologies and technical tools) and 24 oriented to citizenship, with a great variety of topics, all them addressed by the Section. These projects have a strong social impact and the majority of them are consolidated and have been working more than four years, readapting themselves throughout using processes of continuous improvement.

Some of them are well developed and advanced, in a phase of expansion and projection beyond the City council; others are still emerging and adapting, but are expected to be consolidated. Around 55% achieve between 10 and 11 quality criteria; only 17% get less than 8 criteria. These are practices of a great quality, which produce good results. The majority can be partially or totally transferred, since they are adaptable.

The majority of the citizenship-oriented practices are used by other collaborators –as well as the City Council– which complement each other and work as a team with other municipalities, the third sector, community networks of different regions, groups, etc. These external agents are very satisfied with the best practices results.

#### 3.2. Effectiveness of the assessment Commission

The Commission's goal is to develop a new knowledge facilitator role, which can assess technically each best practice, taking as a reference the quality criteria previously defined. The projects presented are specially assessed: teams are advised about which aspects need to improve from a management perspective and also internal areas are informed, as is the case of the training department, about those needs identified which can increase the efficiency of the projects assessed.



This role has been introduced since the start of the project, going through different stages: 2012 creation, 2013 redefinition, and from 2014 consolidation. To strengthen this role, the sense of belonging and group cohesion has been worked on, in order to design a common line and a consensus in the assessment.

The assessment Commission holds monthly meetings; there are 10 annual meetings, which last an average of 2.5 hours, with 95% of participants present. The evaluation of each practice takes two or three hours on average.

#### **4. Conclusions, reflections, learning**

Having a Best Practices Database in the Area is very valuable, since it serves to collect systematic and solid experiences using technical quality criteria, easy to locate and well classified by topics addressed by the Area. It must be highlighted that the Database is being recognized progressively in the Area, as well as its importance in knowledge transfer, from different perspectives:

- Recognition of professional expertise. The project is a motivational instrument, which seeks to strengthen the feeling of belonging in the organization and emphasize the professionals' work.
- Learning process. Participating in the BP project is an opportunity for self-improvement for all the professionals, from the assessment process to technical feedback.
- Having an impact on promoting the quality of cooperative culture: systematization, fairness, coherence and rigorous assessment reinforce the criteria and provide information about the aspects to take into account, focusing also on what the organization considers valuable with regards to project management.
- Each of the practices are approaches which can be transferred, either wholly, to apply in specific situations, or partially, using a particular methodology. This transferability fosters organization learning in a cooperation framework, where the professionals can learn from each other.
- Encouraging the use of and making visible the best practices, sharing them with other municipalities outside Barcelona, presenting them to professional forums, as well as creating a section in the Social Rights Area web, promotes collaboration networks and the joining of talent within the organization (inside and outside).

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Finally it must be pointed out that the Best Practices Database contributes directly to updating the record of the organization, showing what is done: expert knowledge as the driving force for innovation.

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**Key words:** homeless, Housing First,  
peer, housing access

## Housing First at Arrels Foundation: A change of direction

Arrels Foundation

More than three years ago, Arrels Foundation focused its attention on a different care intervention approach for homeless people, with an emphasis on access to self-contained, dignified and stable housing, with a person-centred social intervention approach. That's Housing First, and it works successfully in many cities worldwide.

Arrels' commitment to this model has led to a reorganization of its teams, putting into practice new ways of working and dealing with doubts and challenges. If Housing First is addressed to rough sleepers, what happens to those in an entrenched situation, who fail to find any adequate support for their situation? Does living in an individual apartment make the person feel alone? How can the *peer* role be incorporated? And what happens if, because of the financial and social context, there are no affordable housing options available?

### Housing First at Arrels Foundation: a change of direction

At Arrels, we've known Karl for many years. He had been living on the street for years, had alcohol abuse problems and a severe mental illness. When we asked him if he wanted to live in a flat of his own, he said yes, but one day we took him to the new flat without asking him first. The Social Work team and the Housing Support team tried for months to coordinate in order to support Karl, but we failed. We used to visit him several days in one week and then we didn't know about him for two weeks until the next visit; we cleaned the flat with him if it was needed, but we also cleaned it when he wasn't in the house... We were worried that Karl might have had problems with his neighbours resulting in him being forced to leave the flat. And this is what happened.

Karl was the first Housing First case and it didn't succeed. It wasn't Karl's fault, but Arrels', since many mistakes were made. We knew a chronic rough sleeper and we had an individual flat for him, but we lacked both an integrated team based on the Housing First approach, and a clear strategy to reach that objective.

Born in the United States and launched by the organization Pathways to Housing, the Housing First model has clear principles towards which Arrels has focused its attention:

- Housing is a human right
- Respect for all users
- Commitment to work with the person for as long as he/she needs it
- Self-contained and independent housing
- Separation of housing and treatment
- Person's right to decide
- Recovery-oriented basis
- Minimize the consequences of life on the street with a harm-reduction approach (for example, with relation to alcohol abuse)

The model provides entrenched homeless people direct access to stable housing, based on three requirements:

- The person provides 30% of his/her income
- A weekly visit from the professional team for the social support
- Keeping a good relationship with neighbours

At Arrels we knew about Housing First through the European Federation of National Organizations Working for Homeless People (FEANTSA), whom we form part of along with other European organizations. Since 2012, the European Commission has supported pioneer tests of the Housing First model in cities like Amsterdam, Copenhagen, Glasgow and Lisbon while countries like France and Belgium are implementing the approach with full government support.

In order to know exactly what Housing First was, in 2013 we decided to visit European projects using it and we participated in regional meetings about the topic. Each meeting or project we went to encouraged us to commit ourselves to the model, generating at the same time questions about how homeless people are attended, revealing a new approach, seen to be effective, to guarantee stable and dignified housing to long-term homeless people. Considering all that, in January 2014, we took the decision to launch the Housing First model in Arrels.

#### **From staircase model to Housing First**

In March 2014, soon after taking the decision to implement the Housing First model, we were providing housing to 155 homeless people. Of these, 64 were housed in 24 shared flats, 52 were living in rented rooms, 14 were sleeping in pensions in Barcelona and seven people stayed overnight in social hostels. The 18 people left were living in individual flats (eight in apartments managed by Arrels and ten in apartments subsidized by the Municipal

Housing Trust). In addition, Arrels' street outreach team visited 611 rough sleepers, 40% more than the previous year.

As in the rest of Catalonia and the Spanish State, we operated and attended homeless people using the staircase model. In our 2006 annual report it was clearly explained: "People who live on the street and come to Arrels are often individuals without income, so the cost of their housing and basic needs depends totally on the organization. At this moment, they usually access a hostel and, when they have enough autonomy, the possibility of entering a flat is considered".

The intervention model we were using from Arrels ten years ago followed a staircase model but, even then, we believed in something we still defend today: "The person needs stable housing to balance his/her life on many levels. And this is never provided by a pension or any temporary residential centre".

We believe that services must be adapted to people and not the other way round, and that's why we have been searching for different residential solutions based on different formula. In the 90s, for example, we paid for hostels; at the start of 2000, we promoted flat-sharing and created a specific group of social workers to support and provide social assistance to the people who lived in the flats. In 2007, after seeing many chronic homeless people with vulnerable health had no place to go while looking for a permanent place to live, we created the Pere Barnés Home; the same year, in collaboration with Sant Joan de Déu, Filles de la Caritat and Assís shelter, we created Mambré Foundation, aimed at promoting housing access for homeless people through private housing stock and fostering occupational plans.

With more or less success, the objective throughout all these years has been always the same: stable, permanent and dignified housing. That's what we have demanded for years for homeless people, as a strategy to tackling their entrenched situation on the street. And this is exactly what the Housing First approach is committed to, introducing at the same time a different professional and organizational approach.

We spent 2014 discussing the Housing First model and how to put it into practice. A lot of training, meetings with the expert teams and the volunteers team were made and we started explaining it to the homeless people we attended. In one of the meetings, Domènec, who has lived on the street for many years, looked at us, surprised, and asked us: "Did you have to do so much traveling and deliberate so much to get to know that what we need is individual housing?"

It seemed so easy, but so difficult at the same time! At the time of launching the Housing First model, at Arrels there were various aspects in our favour:

- Housing First was proven to work in cultural contexts similar to us.
- We knew the entrenched rough sleepers in Barcelona.
- Our professional approach always looks at mid-term/long term solutions when accompanying the person.
- We were experienced in housing management and we had shared apartments and resources to subsidize other types of temporary housing, while individual flats were sought.

Furthermore, we dealt with new challenges and dilemmas to promote Housing First:

- The majority of cities employing Housing First have started from zero, with entrenched homeless, without taking into account the people who slept in hostels or other accommodation services and in an undignified and severe situation.
- At Arrels, we knew many rough sleepers in Barcelona, but we also knew many others who were on the street intermittently because they were housed in hostels, sub-tenancy rooms and unstable facilities, or were unable to find an adequate resource because of their situation.
- Housing First doesn't just provide the homeless person with one social worker, but a whole team of multi-faceted and complementary workers where peers also intervene; that is, people who have lived on the street and in whom the homeless people accessing the Housing First model can see themselves reflected.

### **Changing the teams to apply Housing First**

Arrels has had to change its approach to accompanying people, training the professionals and the volunteers' team and merging teams.

Before starting with Housing First, there were two different teams charged with the task of supporting the person: on one hand, the Social Work team, formed by social workers and in charge of the social support of the person, paperwork, etc; on the other hand, there was the Housing Support team, constituted by social educators and Community Support workers who were committed to empowering the homeless person who accessed housing to reach the highest autonomy possible.

These two teams don't currently exist and they have merged into one team, the Support Team, subdivided into three teams formed by 4 or 5 professionals with complementary profiles and the support of a volunteers' team.

"The main change is the flexibility achieved by this new team", says Ester Sánchez, Head of the Support Team. "For instance, the professional roles have been mixed. Before, a social worker was responsible for social support, procedures, interviews with the person, etc; but now he also makes educational and home care tasks, and the other way round. If the homeless person who lives in a flat needs help in the shower, for example, this duty is assumed by a team member without considering if he/she is a social worker, community support worker or educator".

This change in the manner of working has also meant a shift for the homeless people we attend, since their individual relationship with their social worker has become a relationship with all the team where all the professionals are case managers.

Furthermore, before, the homeless people linked to Arrels who accessed housing or other accommodation did it after building a relationship with Arrels' Day Centre. Now however, with the Housing First model, people living on the street who are visited by Arrels' street outreach team –but have never or rarely come to our centre– have the opportunity to access stable housing without going through all the staircase process.

#### **A flat and a way to support the person**

Housing First means the house first. In this attention model for chronic homeless people, self-contained, stable and permanent housing is an indispensable condition. It's also imperative that the organization or municipality responsible accompanies the homeless person throughout all the process, in a different way: respecting his/her choices, not putting conditions on the housing such as having to quit drinking or take medication, respecting his/her process.

In 2015 Arrels attended 1.798 people, the majority -89%- men aged between 35 and 64 and 16% older than 65. The street outreach teams visited 550 people who were sleeping rough and 232 people were offered housing.

All these people live or have lived in a chronic situation on the street for many years; many of them have alcohol abuse problems and others have mental illness. A high percentage live on the street and others live in undignified accommodation, such as hostels or sub-tenancy rooms with no hot water supply, where the person can't cook or wash his clothes and where it's difficult to maintain personal hygiene.

Faced with this situation, doubts emerged when we launched the Housing First model: should we focus only on the people who were sleeping on the street? What happens with the people who sleep in a hostel on and off and who don't adapt to other types of resources? And what happens if we can't find self-contained affordable apartments?

“At Arrels, we consider Housing First to be a valid intervention model for the entrenched homeless, but also for the chronic homeless who have been intermittently on the street for many years, unable to adapt to any type of accommodation” explains Ester Sánchez.

In this sense, we decided not to start from zero, applying the model only to rough sleepers, nor exclusively on the condition of a self-contained flat. As Sánchez says, “the most important thing is that Housing First promotes a people-centred approach”, the relationship with the person, the weekly visit, strengthening his/her link with the community and providing stable, dignified and permanent housing.

“We have evolved. We respect the person's process and don't force situations, working on the access to a self-contained flat on a voluntary basis, not as a prize. Another important change: we don't put conditions on the housing. If the person who enters the flat has problems with the neighbours and his/her situation becomes untenable, the solution is not a return to street, but instead we negotiate with them to find a housing alternative”, comments the Head of the Support Team.

#### **How do Housing First users show improvement?**

As we described above, Karl was Arrels' first Housing First case before we shifted our approach and the professional teams. In these two years, we haven't forgotten about Karl and he now lives in a shared flat with social support based on the Housing First model.

In total, 19 rough sleepers have started living in a self-contained apartment since we launched Housing First in 2014. “One person entered the flat absolutely overjoyed and another person remained silent; another threw away all the furniture because he wanted to have his own furniture; another one couldn't believe the apartment had so much light...”, exposes Anna Rodríguez Titos, Head of Arrels' first attention team and their street outreach teams.

Lluís is one of these people. When he left the street to enter an individual flat we had already reconfigured the Support teams and taken on board the Housing First model, but, despite that, we had doubts. The main one? Loneliness.



Lluís was excited when he entered the flat. At first, he spent most of the day on the street and returned to the flat to sleep but, little by little, he started becoming withdrawn and stopped going out. He didn't eat; he didn't clean; he drank too much. The apartment was in

Barcelona, but far from the area where Lluís had lived all his life; his support team visited him twice a week. Until he hit rock bottom and his health suffered. Lluís' case has opened discussions between Arrels' professionals: Are we doing Housing First well? Is an individual flat an option if the person's situation worsens due to loneliness? How can it be tackled?

As of now, Lluís has happily returned to the flat and has quit drinking of his own accord, though his case has revealed the difficulty of tackling loneliness. "When a person starts living in a flat on his own in an area he/she is not familiar with, adapting to the neighbourhood is a slow process and it also depends on his capacity to socialize" suggests Ester Sánchez.

Anna Rodríguez Titos shares the same view, and also remarks how the situation of rough sleepers has improved after entering a flat under the Housing First model. "You can see how health improves, how consumption is reduced and how their hygiene improves because they can have a shower whenever they want and how their self-esteem improves".

### **Challenges in the shift towards Housing First**

Two and a half years after starting to implement Housing First in Arrels, the shift continues. In May 2016, the organization provided housing to 162 people, 49 of who were in individual housing. The number of people who live in shared apartments is similar to 2014, but, on the other hand, the number of people living in rented rooms has decreased from 52 to 34. All the people housed, no matter where they live, have social support based on Housing First and housing stability has risen remarkably.

In order to know if we are applying the Housing First model correctly, in June 2016 the Support Team participated in a survey that tests the fidelity of the model, a survey that is also used in other countries where this model of attention is promoted. The evaluation focuses on housing access and requirements, the person's social support and the alternatives he has in case of losing the housing; the types of services offered, the economical contributions of the clients and the housing benefits, structure of the teams etc.

In total, there are around 40 indicators and the top score is 100% fidelity. The result of Arrels' survey was 72% fidelity.

We face many challenges. Some of them are very difficult and have to do with the difficulties in our social and political context, like the high housing prices or the difficulties

people have to obtain a sufficient and stable income, either through employment and jobs adapted to their reality or through social benefits.

Other challenges we can and must face:

- Reinforcing teams with *peers*. In other European cities where Housing First is used, the support teams include people who have slept on the street and offer their expertise. In the process we have started at Arrels, this is a pending challenge which we need to understand better and, as of today, some people who have lived on the street collaborate and accompany people on some occasions; for example, to medical appointments.
- Facing loneliness. When a person lives on the street, he/she breaks almost all –if not all– his social bonds and to leave it a huge effort to create a new social network and deal with loneliness is needed. When the person enters a flat and starts living alone, loneliness is also present and must be handled in order to offer the person more options than just staying at home watching TV or going to Arrels' centre.
- Accompanying couples entering a flat under the Housing First model. It sometimes happens that a person enters an individual flat and he/she is followed by his partner soon after. At Arrels, we respect these decisions, since they decide what they want to do with their lives and the apartment is their home. The difficulty with the social support starts when there are relationship problems linked to loneliness and lack of respect, and when the flat is managed by Arrels.
- Finding individual housing at an affordable price. Arrels is currently offering housing in Barcelona, Cornellà, Granollers and Hospitalet de Llobregat. Finding small apartments for less than 500€ is becoming impossible, due to the situation of the real estate market. In these two and a half years of implementing the Housing First model and looking for individual flats, we have also encountered unwillingness from landlords, as they are reluctant to let a homeless person live in their apartment.

- Preventing a person who has lost his housing from returning to the street. At Arrels, we believe in self-contained and stable housing as a very good solution for the chronic homeless who have tried to live in other residential facilities such as hostels, rooms or shared flats. Sometimes, though, problems with neighbours (keeping a good relationship with the neighbours is one of the Housing First requirements) force the person to leave the house. The challenge is to find other housing solutions; temporary resources we still lack or even don't know of which would prevent the person from returning to street.

There's a sixth challenge as well which is also very important and worries us: what happens with the people who sleep on the street and who tell us that they don't want to live in a dignified and stable housing? We have encountered these situations, especially with people suffering mental illness, and we ought to know how to tackle them. Maybe for these cases, individual housing is not the solution and we should be more imaginative. Nevertheless, what we do know is that offering them social support following the Housing First approach enables us to respect their decisions to the fullest.

Our experience with Housing First confirms to us that it's a valid model for fighting homelessness in Barcelona, where there are currently 941 people sleeping on the street. It will be a challenge and what can be done in the meanwhile also needs to be taken into account, to stop rough sleepers suffering from the weather conditions, the insecurity of sleeping rough, the lack of intimacy and the difficulties in exercising their right to dignified and stable housing.

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