

Alternative Models of Access to and Production of Housing in Spain: The Bottom-up Processes

Modelos alternativos de acceso y producción de vivienda en España: Los procesos bottom-up

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Abstract

Different economic and social crises in recent decades in Spain have driven alternative models of access and housing production to the conventional ones promoted by the inhabitants. This paper conducts an exploratory study to define the historical framework in which these phenomena appear and establish a classification according to their main characteristics. Through a review of specialised literature, the fundamental concepts necessary for an initial categorisation of these processes have been selected. It has been concluded that there are two fundamental categories: one seeking a solution to emergency situations and the other seeking consolidation over time. The most representative cases have been selected to illustrate the different categories through an online search and visits to four of these projects. This analysis aims to fill a gap in the knowledge of the current Spanish housing system, related mainly to the form of tenure of main-dwelling, concerning these alternative models, which could allow the development of new measures to correct existing problems.

Keywords

Housing; Spain; Access; Production; Tenure; Bottom-up Process.

Resumen

Diferentes crisis económicas y sociales en las últimas décadas en España han impulsado modelos de acceso y producción de vivienda alternativos a los convencionales y promovidos por las personas habitantes. El objetivo de este trabajo es realizar un estudio exploratorio que permita definir el marco histórico en el que aparecen estos fenómenos y establecer una clasificación según sus principales características. A través de la revisión bibliográfica especializada, se han seleccionado los conceptos clave necesarios para realizar una categorización inicial. Se ha concluido que existen dos categorías fundamentales: una que busca una solución a una situación de emergencia y otra que busca consolidarse en el tiempo. Se han seleccionado los casos más representativos para ilustrar las diferentes categorías a través de una búsqueda online y la visita a cuatro de estos proyectos. Este análisis pretende cubrir un vacío en el conocimiento del actual sistema de vivienda español, principalmente relaciona con la forma de tenencia de las viviendas principales, en relación a estos modelos alternativos, lo que podría permitir el desarrollo de nuevas medidas para corregir los problemas existentes.

Palabras clave

Vivienda; España; Acceso; Producción; Tenencia; Procesos bottom-up.

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Introduction

In Spain, the importance of housing as a commodity is related to several facts: residential housing accounts for 4% and 5% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), 10% of employment, and it is an investment that capitalizes on family income¹. This is why the housing market is mainly developed as a business², making the housing system vulnerable to financial changes and crises of capital accumulation³.

Between 1990 and 2006, economic conditions for homeownership were favourable in Spain: interest rates were reduced from 15.21% in 1991 to 4.03% in 2002; mortgage amortization terms were extended; and the number of loans granted increased. These factors reduced the effort of families to acquire a dwelling unit from 60% of their income in 1991 to 21% in 2003. In addition, in the last 50 years, residential policies have made homeownership almost the only way to access a home for most of the population⁴: while in 1950, 54% of the population were tenants, this percentage dropped to 12% in 2005 and the European Mortgage Federation (EMF)⁵ set it at 22% by 2013.

The process of private mortgages caused both the tertiarisation and the financiarisation of the economy from 1980 onwards⁶. The growth in the number of foreclosures, from 25,000 in 2006 to almost 215,000 in 2013⁷, and the increase in the eviction rate to 8.96 per 1000 inhabitants in 2012⁸ have an important impact on home access. Faced with this situation alternative models of access to and production of housing have increased to challenge the neoliberal model of financing and privatising this social right⁹.

The objective of this research is to carry out an exploratory study to define the historical framework of the development of these alternatives in Spain and establish a classification according to their main characteristics. Moreover, this categorisation will be illustrated with the most significant case studies to identify the main changes that are taking place to foresee future developments. At present the administration does not categorize these new projects. Because of this, a typological analysis of new models and experiences of housing access alternatives, created and managed by the population to meet their own needs, is necessary for a better understanding of the current Spanish housing system. Furthermore, it would allow the development of new measures to correct existing access problems for part of the population.

To carry out this exploratory study we must consider how housing data is collected in Spain by INE (Spanish Office for National Statistics). Concerning the form of tenure of “main dwelling”¹⁰ categories are: “owned, by purchase, fully paid for”; “owned, by purchase, with outstanding payments”; “owned by inheritance or donation”; and “rented”. In this article the categories have been reduced to owning and renting (figure 1). Nevertheless, there is another category¹¹: “others”, in which all those cases that do not match any of the above categories are included. This category increased steadily in the period analysed by nearly 300% (figure 1). These data are significant enough to explore what changes are taking place in the Spanish residential system. The main problem is that INE does not concretise which type of housing falls within the “others” category.

In summary, this study focuses on establishing an initial categorisation of new patterns of housing access and production, specifically those related to the tenure of main family dwellings. The fact that official statistics do not allow for a distinction of the development of these alternative bottom-up models is the main motivation of this work. Therefore, it is important to inaugurate this new line of research that could broaden knowledge for better policy measures.

The chosen methodology is exploratory, as has already been mentioned. Through a review of specialised literature on bottom-up processes, the key concepts necessary

- 1 María Teresa Sánchez Martínez, *La Política de la Vivienda en España. Análisis de sus Efectos Redistributivos* (Granada: Universidad de Granada, 2002). Luis Cortés Alcalá, *La Cuestión Residencial. Bases para una Sociología del Habitar* (Madrid: Fundamentos, 1995).
- 2 Naredo Pérez, “Perspectivas de la vivienda. Consecuencias de la evolución demográfica en la economía”, *Información Comercial Española, ICE: Revista de economía* (2004): 815. Estefanía Calo, “Vivienda y territorio en España”, in *Dinámicas territoriales en España: problemas y tendencias en la estructura y ordenación del territorio*, Carmen Lamela, José María Cardesín, Manuel Docampo (coord.) (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 2014), 171-200.
- 3 Julie Lawson, “A review of structurally inspired approaches in housing studies- concepts, contributions and future perspectives” (conference presented at RC 43 International Conference Housing Assets, Glasgow, 4 September).
- 4 Jaime Palomera, “How did finance capital infiltrate the world of the urban poor? homeownership and social fragmentation in a Spanish neighborhood”, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 38 (2014): 218–235.
- 5 EMF, *Key Figures* (Brussels: European Mortgage Federation, 2015).
- 6 Saskia Sassen, *Expulsiones. Brutalidad y Complejidad en la Economía Global* (Buenos Aires: Katz, 2015).
- 7 Juan Manuel Parreño Castellano, et al, “Real estate dispossession and evictions in Spain: a theoretical geographical approach”, *Boletín de la Asociación de Geógrafos Españoles* (2019): 80.
- 8 Ada Colau & Adrià Alemany, *Mortgaged Lives. From the Housing Bubble to the Right to Housing*. (Los Angeles. Leipzig and London: Journal of Aesthetics and Protest Press, 2012).
- 9 Cesare Di Felicianantonio, “Social Movements and Alternative Housing Models: Practicing the Politics of Possibilities in Spain”, *Housing, Theory and Society* 34 (1), 38-56.
- 10 “Main dwelling” is defined by INE as those which are the habitual residence of at least one person. “No-main dwelling”, that is, secondary or empty houses, are not taken into account in this study because these are not used regularly.
- 11 There is a category called “transferred for free or at a low price” that is not considered in this study because the data are not statistically significant for this research.

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	1991	2001	2011
% Ownership	82,82	84,82	81,32
% Rent	15,17	11,38	13,48
% Others	2,01	3,81	5,2

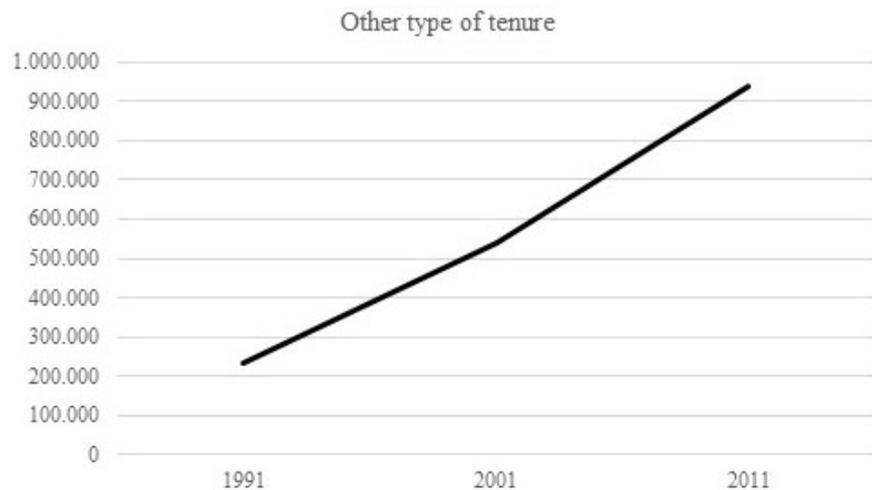


Figure 1. Top, Percentage of house tenure of main dwellings in Spain. Bottom, Evolution of the main dwellings with other type of tenure.

for an initial categorisation have been selected: occupation and consolidated models (cooperatives-cohousing)¹². The second phase was an Internet search, reviewing 86 websites dedicated to the direct promotion of these projects¹³. Subsequently, two variables have been included in this categorisation: the motivation of the inhabitants and the territorial location. The former refers to whether the processes are a response to an emergency or whether they look for a change in the structure of the residential system. The latter explores whether these initiatives take place in urban or rural areas in order to analyse the possible differences between these habitats. To complete this exploratory study participant observation was carried out in some of the examples chosen to understand their development.

In the next section the article briefly explains the development of the Spanish residential model. This is important to understand the historical context in which alternative models have emerged. The article then discusses the constructed categories and provides examples of each one. Finally, it reflects on the significance of these new models when collecting data on the tenure model of primary residences to enhance our understanding of the housing system.

The residential system in Spain and its crisis (1939-2008)

In the Post-Civil War period in Spain, the housing stock had to be rebuilt, so the administration focused on social housing construction policies. Later, public policies were oriented to the promotion of access to ownership through social housing¹⁴. Owner-occupancy policies were based on the idea that a country of homeowners would mean a more integrated and more governable society¹⁵. The main measure taken was the development of public subsidies for the construction sector to build housing at a regulated price for owner-occupation¹⁶. From 1939 to 1970 there was a general social housing plan¹⁷ which accounted for 82% of the total number of dwellings built¹⁸. However, this figure has now fallen to less than 10% according to the INE.

In summary, Spanish housing policy since 1939 has focused on ownership, initially with subsidies for social housing, which from 1970 onwards were gradually reduced

12 Concerning the objective of this work, these have been categorised in the same group due to their consolidating intention.

13 Only websites developed by the communities involved in the development of each initiative were chosen.

14 Trilla, Carmen Trilla & Jordi Bosch, "El parque público y protegido de viviendas en España: un análisis desde el contexto europeo", *Documentos de trabajo (Laboratorio de alternativas)* 197 (2018).

15 Jesús Leal Maldonado, *La Política de Vivienda en España* (Madrid: Documentación social, Cáritas, 2005).

16 Moserrat Pareja Eastway & María Teresa Sánchez Martínez, "La política de vivienda en España: Lecciones aprendidas y retos de futuro", *Revista Galega de Economía* 21 (2012): 1-32.

17 These are called in Spanish regulations *viviendas de protección oficial* (VPO).

18 Carmen Trilla, "Una reflexión sobre el modelo español de política de vivienda", in *La política de vivienda en España*, Jesús Leal Maldonado, ed. (Madrid: Pablo Iglesias, 2010), 129-166.

in favour of free market housing. These early housing become gradually obsolete and regenerative measures were applied only occasionally¹⁹. In addition, during this period, mainly in the early 1980s, there was a progressive deregulation of the laws related to rental housing and, because of all these changes, lower incomes had more difficulties in accessing housing.

From 1995 to 2007 more flexible leasing and land laws were developed²⁰. This situation benefited the development of: 1) productive land policies according to the needs of the economic cycle, 2) mortgage policies that link mortgage markets with financial markets through 'holding', 3) housing policies that promote ownership, 4) environmental policies that do not take ecological limits into account, and 5) infrastructure and transport policies that have moved from deficit to excess by benefiting large companies²¹.

The growth of the real estate market in Spain was unique and long. There was an average annual growth of 11.4% between 1997 and 2007, together with an increase of 232% in the price of housing²². Between 1998 and 2005 many homes were built in Spain, more than in Germany, France, and England combined²³ and in 2007, 87% of Spanish families owned a home, when the European average was 60%²⁴.

One of the problems of housing in Spain is that the system has been based on speculative production excluding some social groups²⁵. This meant increasing vulnerability due to the risk of foreclosure or eviction²⁶. Moreover, the progressive concentration of credit in the real estate sector has been encouraged as well as the creation of junk mortgages. Other factors add to this conjunction, such as the low evolution of leasing, the excess of unoccupied new housing, the low development of second-hand housing, the problem of external financing²⁷, or that of empty housing²⁸.

Due to this situation, civil society has developed an open and flexible system to meet its need for accommodation. Alternatives that sought to solve a housing emergency or aimed to transform the residential model through bottom-up processes for access and production of main dwelling expanding forms of tenure.

Alternative models of access to and production of housing in Spain: a new perspective on inhabitation

The fundamental characteristic for a process to be included in this categorization is that it is based on a real participatory process in which the inhabitants play an essential role. Thus, two categorising criteria were used: the motivation of the inhabitants and the type of territory (rural or urban) to check the differences. Of the 86 websites reviewed, 67 are cooperatives-cohousing (46 are called co-housing, 21 are defined as cooperatives), and 19 are occupation initiatives. Motivation can be further divided into two categories: those that respond with insurgent practices to a housing emergency generated by evictions or an inability to access housing²⁹, or those rooted in the tradition of the squat movement; and those that have been consolidated as alternative models of access to housing, related with collective housing such as cooperative and co-housing. In this paper, both are considered processes with "other" type of tenure that can be defined by an understanding of housing as a process and inhabitants' self-management. As a synthesis, a table has been drawn up that also indicates the most significant cases in each category (figure 2).

Housing understood as a process means that the inhabitants stop having a passive role to become active in three levels: the spatial/typological level, the social/participatory level, and the management of the processes³⁰. This idea is based on precedents such as the Habraken Support Theory³¹ or the progressive dwelling or seed by González Lobo³², both antecedents of contemporary projects such as *Las*

19 Noelia Cervero Sánchez, Noelia. "Reciclaje Residencial: Re-Habitando el pasado", *ZARCH* (2014): 94-107.

20 Pareja & San Martín, "The tenure imbalance in Spain".

21 Emmanuel Rodríguez López & Isidro López Hernández, "Del auge al colapso. El modelo financiero-inmobiliario de la economía española (1995-2010)", *Revista de Economía Crítica*, 2 (2011): 39-63.

22 Rodríguez & López, "Del auge al colapso".

23 Rodríguez & López, "Del auge al colapso".

24 Dan Andrews, Dan et al, "Housing markets and structural policies in OECD countries", *OECD Economics Department Working Papers* (2011): 836.

25 Aitana Alguacil Denche, et al., *La Vivienda en España en el Siglo XXI. Diagnóstico del Modelo Residencial y Propuestas para Otra Política de Vivienda*. (Madrid: FOESSA, Cáritas, 2013).

26 Sánchez Martínez, *La política de vivienda*.

27 María Soledad Castaño Martínez, "La eficacia de la política de la vivienda en España", *Economía de la Vivienda en España* 847 (2012): 7-21.

28 Pareja & Sánchez, "La política de vivienda en España".

29 Melissa García-Lamarca, "From Occupying Plazas to Recuperating Housing: Insurgent Practices in Spain", *Int J Urban Regional* 41 (2017): 37-53.

30 Eva Morales Soler et al., "La vivienda como proceso. Estrategias de flexibilidad", *Hábitat y Sociedad* 4 (2012): 33-54.

31 N. John Habraken, *Variations: the systematic design of supports* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1976).

32 Carlos González Lobo, Carlos, *Vivienda y ciudad posibles* (Bogotá: Escala, 1998).

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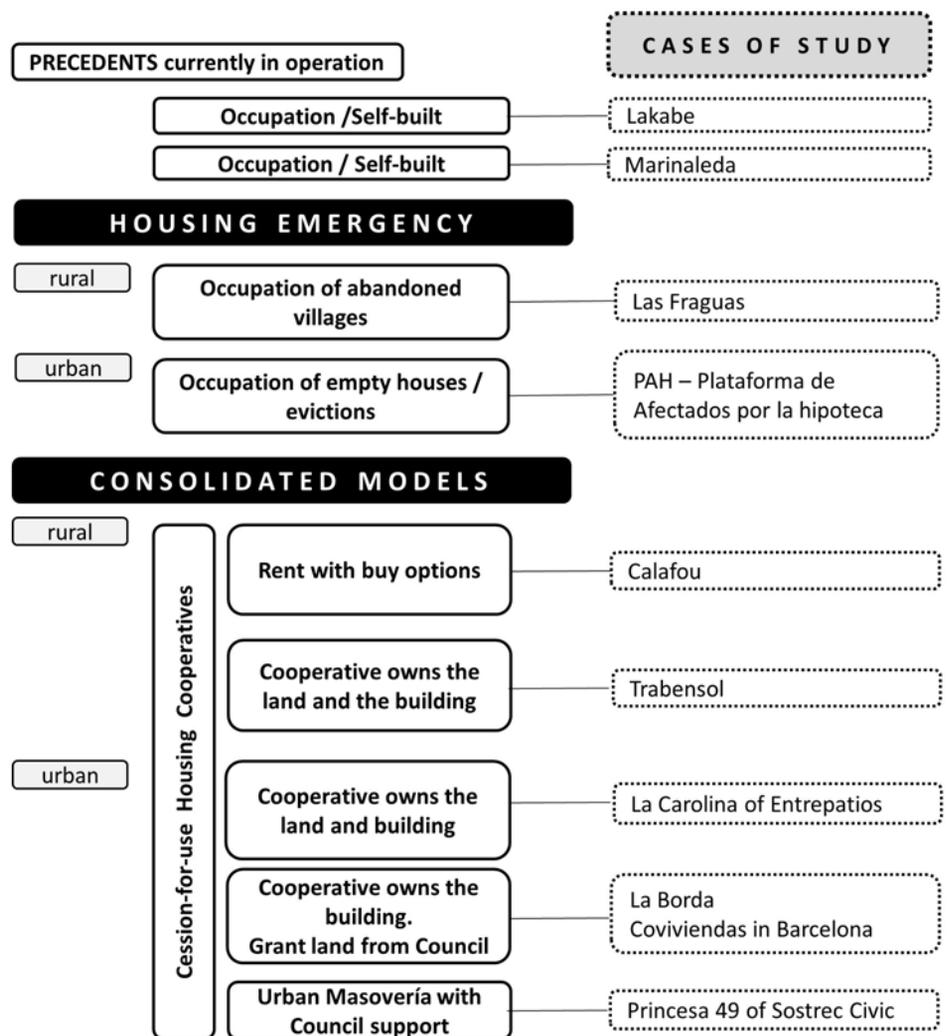
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Figure 2. Alternatives to housing access since Spain's 2008 crisis. Classification, precedents currently in operation, and case studies.

Casas de Quinta Monroy in Chile 2004, by the Pritzker Prize Alejandro Aravena. In bottom-up processes, future inhabitants are fundamental for self-management in the collective process of housing. The term self-management is used because they are internally organized, open, assembled, and carried out by their drivers without being directed by external agents³³. In short, against housing as a finished product placed on the market unaware of its future inhabitants, the different alternative cases match what Ortiz Flores³⁴ defines as the social production of the habitat.

Precedents currently in operation

In the 80s there were precedents for alternative access to housing in Spain, some of them still working such as Marinaleda (Seville), a town with 1,200 inhabitants. The City Council organizes the participatory process and provides land and technical assistance³⁵ to improve access. The *Junta de Andalucía* (Andalucía's regional government) contributes to the architectural project and economic support for materials. Finally, the future inhabitants provide the workforce and participate in design decisions. Ninety percent of the village, about 350 houses, has been built through this process whereby inhabitants are part without to apply for a mortgage (figure 3). This case follows design principles for Common Pool Resource institutions described by Elinor Ostrom³⁶.

In a different context, the Lakabe (Navarra) eco-village emerged in 1992 driven by the Basque antimilitarist and feminist movements (figure 4). A group of young people occupied an empty village owned by the Provincial Council³⁷. Some houses have been rebuilt, others are newly built, in both cases with bioclimatic criteria. It is a self-managed project, with about 40 inhabitants who reach agreements through consensus decision-making with a high degree of autonomy concerning basic needs and economic activity³⁸.

33 José Luis Carretero Miramar, *La autogestión viva. Proyectos y experiencias de la otra economía al calor de la crisis* (Madrid: Queimada, 2013).

34 Enrique Ortiz Flores, *Integración de un sistema de instrumentos de apoyo a la producción social de vivienda* (Mexico: Habitat International Coalition HICAL, 2007).

35 Emma López-Bahut & Luz Paz-Agras, "Landscape as the spatial materialisation of democracy in Marinaleda, Spain", in *Defining Landscape Democracy: A Path to Spatial Justice*, Egoz, Jorgensen, & Ruggeri, eds. (Cheltenham, UK and Northampton, USA: Edward Elgar, 2018): 178-188.

36 José Candón-Mena & Pepa Domínguez-Jaime, "La autoconstrucción de viviendas en Marinaleda desde la perspectiva del gobierno de los bienes comunes de Ostrom", *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies* 19 (2020): 684-706.

37 Mabel Cañadas, *La ciudad boca abajo. Lakabe 1985-2005* (Navarra: Asociación Lakabe, 2005).

Figure 3. The “José Retaquín” complex is an example of a self-construction housing. Arch. Antonio Carrasco Fernández, 2013, Marinaleja (Seville).

Figure 4. General view of the occupied village of Lakabe (Navarra).



From the housing emergency: occupation

During the 2008 crisis the number of people who were evicted from their usual house increased due to foreclosure or the non-payment of the rent, without rehousing alternatives available. Households in this situation must return 50% of the appraisal value to settle the debt plus interest and court costs, so mortgaged people are left in a debt situation and have difficulties accessing another home³⁹. Since this crisis the housing emergency has generated occupations of empty dwellings, each featuring different characteristics depending on their location.

In urban areas, support groups for the evicted emerged. In Barcelona, the *Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca* (PAH, or Platform for Mortgage-affected People) was founded in 2009, soon spreading throughout Spain. It is a model of social movement that demanded a form of self-organization and the defence of those affected at the political-legal, individual and collective level⁴⁰. They carry out actions of empowerment and resistance in the defence of what their activists regard as a human right⁴¹ (figure 5). The purpose of the PAH platform is to peacefully prevent evictions. When unsuccessful, members proceed to the occupation or “recovery” of the building, especially of empty ones which belong to the banks. This process can be recognised by the following actions: they arise as a basic and urgent need for dwelling resulting from an eviction; access is carried out by squatting empty and unused houses; they are not individual actions but collective, organized, and assembly operated. Depending on the options available, a shared or single dwelling is chosen and, on many occasions, communal areas for meetings and activities are provided.

In 2018 there were 10,340 villages in rural Spain without inhabitants and abandoned, according to INE. In this conjunction, alternative housing recovery

38 Luis del Romero Renau, “Ecovillages in Spain: Searching an emancipatory social transformation?”, *Cogent Social Sciences* 4 (2018).

39 Observatorio DESC & PAH, *Emergencia habitacional en el estado español: la crisis de las ejecuciones hipotecarias y los desalojos desde una perspectiva de derechos humanos* (2013).

40 Colau & Alemany, *Mortgaged lives*.

41 Joe Hoover, “The human right to housing and community empowerment: home occupation, eviction defence, and community land trusts”, *Third World Quarterly* 36 (2015): 1092-1109. Eduard Sala, “Crisis de la vivienda, movimientos sociales y empoderamiento: una revisión sistemática de la literatura”, *Documents d’Anàlisi Geogràfica*, 64 (2018): 99-126.

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Figure 5. Neighbours stand against upcoming evictions on Argumosa St., Madrid.

processes appeared. Most of them are focused on the construction of ecovillages. Following Lakabe's example, empty villages were occupied with a view to eventually legalizing their situation. The case of *Las Fraguas* (Guadalajara), a village that had been abandoned due to forced expropriation during the Francoist dictatorship in 1969, is remarkable. In 2013, the village was squatted by a group of young people who began to inhabit it and rehabilitate it⁴². The squatters were eventually denounced by the administration and ultimately sentenced for land usurpation and actions against the planning of the territory. Consequently, they decided to abandon the project in early 2023.

In rural areas, occupying empty dwellings is a means to counteract the rise in the number of uninhabited towns and face the phenomenon known as "Empty Spain". In cities the benefits are similar and, although the reasons why these homes are empty are varied, many have become the property of vulture funds that speculate in housing. The occupation of these homes by right housing movements is a way of claiming that the right to housing must be above the possibility of doing business, as a grassroots resistance to the financialization of housing⁴³.

Consolidated models of collective housing through cession-for-use

There is a large group of proposals that seek to be consolidated as an alternative to owning or renting. They do not arise from a housing emergency situation but they try to develop an alternative model struggling with the prevailing system as a form of activism. These processes look for a stable and permanent housing solution in collective housing, adopting the model of housing cooperatives and cohousing. They are self-managed and, in some cases, the public sector is part of the project. Different from the traditional cooperatives in Spain, they are run by a group of partners carrying out the promotion of a block of flats partially aided by private entities without a self-managed participatory process. At the end of the process, each partner acquires one of the dwelling units, and the cooperative is dissolved.

42 Raquel Gamo, "Fraguas: ¿un pueblo okupado o repoblado?", *El Diario*, 30 April, 2017.

43 Miguel A. Martínez, Miguel & Javier Gil, "Grassroots struggles challenging housing financialization in Spain", *Housing Studies* (2022).

Figure 6. Nave Blanca building in Calafou, old paper mill, 1794, Vallbona d'Anoia (Barcelona).

Figure 7. Exterior and common gardens of Trabensol. Archs. Equipo Bloque, 2013, Torre-mocha del Jamara (Madrid).



According to the alternative models analysed, ownership is always linked to cooperatives, and the use of the dwelling is assigned to the user through an indefinite duration contract or a rental agreement⁴⁴. In both cases, the property is collective, and, therefore, any speculation and commodification of the houses is prevented. In addition, a community is created to manage both communal areas and housing, even if those cooperative members are replaced. They meet the McCamant and Durrett⁴⁵ co-housing definition, which is based on a participatory process, with a design made by the community with private houses and communal areas, a non-hierarchical structure conducted by consensus decision-making.

This paper proposes to categorize the “consolidated models” according to the mode of tenure -rent or ownership, differentiating the land and the building- to determine the future viability of the project. This can be more practical than the categorization of the cooperative-cohousing depending on the kind of member, such as senior or intergenerational cohousing⁴⁶. In this group of “consolidated models” of tenure, the difference between rural and urban areas is mainly the localization and the kind of buildings.

There are cases in which the cooperative only owns the building because the land belongs to the administration (state, province, or council), which has ceded it for a certain number of years. The long-term future rests in the hands of the public sector. However, in other cases the land and the building belong to the cooperative, so the continuity of the project depends solely on the cooperative.

44 Marina Lora Chapela, “Cooperativa de vivienda de tenencia colectiva. Análisis de experiencias para el fomento de modelos alternativos de acceso a la vivienda en Andalucía” (PhD Thesis, Universidad de Sevilla, 2017).

45 Kathryn McCamant & Charles Durrett, *CoHousing: A Contemporary Approach to Housing Ourselves* (Berkeley: Ten Speed Press, 1994).

46 Aitziber Etxezarreta et al., “The emergence of housing cooperatives in Spain”, in *Affordable Housing Governance and Finance: Innovations, partnerships, and comparative perspectives*, (London: Routledge-Taylor & Francis Group, 2018), 25-40.

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Likewise, there are cases in which the land and the building are publicly owned and the cooperative carries out the necessary rehabilitation works to inhabit it. In this case, once again, it is the administration through its policies that controls part of the process. Finally, there are projects in which the land and the building are privately owned and the cooperative takes over the rehabilitation works in exchange for the right of use. These kinds of cases happen in Catalonia, traditionally in rural areas, and are known as “*masovería*”⁴⁷.

In the rural area of Cabrera d’Anoia (Barcelona) outstands *Calafou*, “a post-capitalist eco-industrial colony”⁴⁸. The cooperative rents the right-to-use of an old, abandoned textile factory. Its rehabilitation began in 2011 and embraces 27 homes spreading over 28 thousand square metres of productive space for rent, with shared resources and services (figure 6). The goal is that after several years of renting the cooperative can buy the building, although the state of the project is still precarious⁴⁹. In the category of land and building owned by the cooperative, we can point out *Trabensol*, in Torremocha del Jarama (Madrid). Driven by elderly people⁵⁰, it includes 54 private apartments and communal spaces (figure 7). Its founders have self-managed the entire project, from location search to coexistence and care management⁵¹.

La Borda (Barcelona, 2019) is an example of a grant-of-use model of public land and building owned by the cooperative (figure 8). It was born from a neighbourhood movement with the occupation of the former factory site of Can Batlló in 2011. In the building there are 28 apartments and communal spaces and services. Barcelona City Council gave the right to use the land for 75 years and the cooperative owns the building and the members have an indefinite duration contract. The design of the architectural project and its management have been carried out collectively, with a strong participation of future inhabitants⁵² representing a model of social and economic innovation⁵³. With the arrival in 2016 of Mayor Ada Colau, an activist of PAH, the “Barcelona Right to Housing Plan 2016-2025” was developed and *La Borda* was a reference for its replicatio⁵⁴. In addition to different political measures for its development, in 2017 a public tender was launched for the construction of 110 dwellings on 5 municipally owned plots of land under the co-housing formula, which are currently under development.

In the case of *Las Carolinas de Entrepatis* (2020), it is the cooperative that owns the land and the building. The building embraces 17 homes, a patio and common spaces (figure 9). The initiative resulted from people linked to Madrid’s social movements. Following the model of *La Borda* initially they tried to negotiate grant land with the City Council, but they were forced to buy the land to build, and this was the most difficult part of the project.

Traditionally, in the Catalan countryside there were *masovería* contracts, which are now also taking place in the urban environment. Project *Princesa 49* (figure 10), run by the cooperative *Sostre Civic*⁵⁵, was granted the permits that allow the community to inhabit the premises for 75 years, with the cooperative overseeing the rehabilitation of the building (apartments and communal spaces), following the model developed in *La Borda*. This model, linked to rehabilitation, is introduced into the Plan as “Fostering urban *masovería*”⁵⁶.

In the same way as in the emergency group, collective housing needs to be developed so that this form of tenure and production is considered a valid and more widespread alternative. This tenure model allows for greater participation of the inhabitants, who can make decisions from the beginning of the process to meet their needs. In this sense, it seems necessary to increase the support of the public administration in terms of land transfers, building permits, and regulations for the use of housing.

47 ‘*Masovería*’ is a unique form of sharecropping originated in Catalonia. On top of ceding the farming lands in exchange for part of the yield, the owner cedes the buildings, whose upkeep and renovations are undertaken by the inhabitants.

48 *Calafou*. Post-capitalist eco-industrial colony. Available at <https://calafou.org/web/index.php/inicio> (accessed 22 August 2023).

49 Diego Miralles Buil, “La vivienda cooperativa autogestionada como vector de una nueva cultura del habitar. El caso de la ‘colonia ecoindustrial postcapitalista’ de Calafou”, *XV Coloquio Internacional de Geocrítica “Las ciencias sociales y la edificación de una sociedad post-capitalista”* (Barcelona: Universidad de Barcelona, 2018).

50 Lora Chapela, *Cooperativa de vivienda de tenencia colectiva*.

51 Álvaro Moreno Marquina, “La cooperativa. Didáctica y dialéctica en la génesis del proyecto arquitectónico participativo”, in *Conclusiones del Congreso de Crítica de arquitectura Critic All* (Madrid: Critical Press, 2014), 797-802

52 Tania Costa Gómez & Adriá García i Mateu, “Transition Design: Investigación y diseño colaborativo para procesos de emancipación ciudadanos”. *Revista de Estudios Globales y Arte Contemporáneo* 3 (2015): 66-84.

53 Eduard Cabré & Arnau Andrés, “La Borda: a case study on the implementation of cooperative housing in Catalonia”, *International Journal of Housing Policy* 18 (2018): 412-432.

54 Plan para el Derecho a la Vivienda de Barcelona 2016-2025 (Barcelona: Ayuntamiento de Barcelona, 2016). Available at: <https://habitatge.barcelona/es/estrategia/plan-derecho-vivienda>.

55 This cooperative has different projects that would fit within other categories. However, here we focus on the project *Princesa 49* in which the way of tenancy is the *masovería*, see note 10. Available at <https://sostrecivic.coop/es/proyectos/princesa49/> (accessed 22 August 2023).

56 Plan para el Derecho a la Vivienda de Barcelona, 70.



Figure 8. Posterior façade of La Borda. Archs. Lacol, 2018, Barcelona.

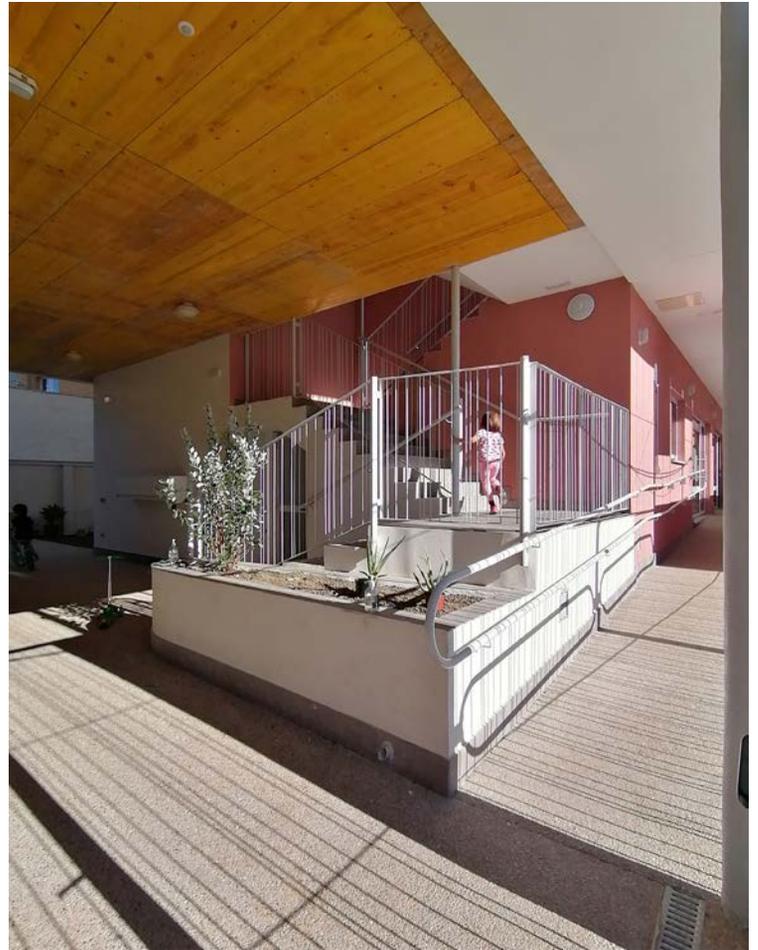


Figure 9. Exterior and common area of Las Carolinas de Entrepatrios. Archs. sAtt, 2018, Madrid.

Final reflections

The housing system in Spain is marked by residential policies that have historically been ineffective in covering the housing needs of some social groups, causing social and territorial imbalances, poor socializing areas, and dysfunctional cities⁵⁷. To correct this situation, some alternative models of access and production have been developed by a group of small but innovative communities. With the purpose to expand knowledge on this topic, a first exploratory approach has been made and these new residential projects have been categorized into two types: those that arise as a search for a temporary solution to a housing emergency and those that seek consolidation as an alternative model of access to housing.

What sets these projects apart from the main system is their bottom-up processes. They are based on participatory consensus decision-making and self-management. They are not market-run and do not adapt to a standard “product” but decide the characteristics that best meet their needs from the start: they generate their habitat⁵⁸ and look for a new way of tenure of their main dwelling. This should be considered by the administration when it comes to collecting data for a better understanding of the housing system and future changes and policies. This is why the categorization made in this paper and its possible future development is fundamental.

The question that can be asked is whether they are single cases or models that will be replicated and constitute a new residential system. To be able to answer this question reliably, it is necessary to move forward and go further in the knowledge of this reality. As we could see, the municipal level is the one that seems to be most in touch with these new realities. The case of Barcelona is especially significant because beginning from *La Borda* as an experimental experience for a new model of urban housing, and thanks to the commitment of the City Council, we have started to focus on “how to incorporate changing values and urban cohabitation cultures into institutionalised

57 Jorge Borja & Manuel Castells, *Local y Global, la Gestión de las Ciudades en la Era de la Información* (Madrid: Taurus, 1997).

58 Enrique Ortiz Flores, *Integración de un sistema de instrumentos*.

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Figure 10. Princesa 49. Archs. Joan Barba Encarnación, Ángel Martín & Daniel Molina, 2018, Barcelona.

planning decisions”⁵⁹. *Las Carolinas* model in Madrid, without any institutional support, is also replicated and is generating new self-managed communities. These initiatives are being identified at the state level, such as *Otra Forma de Vivienda* (A Coruña)⁶⁰, but they are still in the early stages and with difficulties in being defined. Other projects consolidated their developments, such as the cooperative *Sostrec Civic* in Catalonia, which embraces 14 active projects of housing cooperatives with very different characteristics as we have already mentioned.

In conclusion, this new social reality is still in an embryonic state. However, we cannot deny a trend towards an alternative model of access to and production of housing. These models could be the beginning of a new “residential mentality” in which housing is a need that is covered from a broader perspective, not as a product but as a process that the inhabitants must be part of in all its phases. Moreover, this trend reflects a new conception of society that seeks to challenge the neoliberal model in all its forms and to defend the social rights of the continuing privatization to which they are subjected. Therefore, owing to the importance of this potential social change, it is necessary to investigate further these lines of research that expand and improve knowledge of these practices.

Authorship

Authors have contributed directly to the intellectual content of the work, having participated and having been responsible for the conceptualization, data processing, research, visualization and writing of the article, both the original draft and its review and editing. There is therefore no conflict of interest.

Image Sources

Figure 1. Own elaboration from the Population and Housing Survey, INE (Spanish Office for National Statistics) 1991, 2001, 2011.

Figure 2. Own elaboration.

Figure 3. Photo by the authors.

Figure 4. Photo by Inma Gasteiz Inma Gasteiz. Available at https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Lakabe,_valle_de_Arce,_Navarra.jpg (accessed 17 September 2023).

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60 *Otra Forma de Vivienda* is available at <https://otraformadevivienda.org/es/> (accessed 22 August 2023).

Figure 5. Photo by the authors.

Figure 6. Photo by Calafou. Available at <https://calafou.org/web/index.php/inicio> (accessed 17 September 2023).

Figure 7. Photo by Trabensol. Available at <https://trabensol.org> (accessed 22 August 2023).

Figure 8. Photo by Iacol. Available at <http://www.laborda.coop/> (accessed 22 August 2023).

Figure 9. Photo by the authors.

Figure 10. Photo by Princesa 49. Available at https://sostrecivic.coop/biblio/biblio_359.pdf (accessed 17 September 2023).

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