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## **AGING IN PLACE WHEN PLACE BECOMES ALIEN: THE EXPERIENCE OF THE ELDERLY LIVING ALONE IN BARCELONA (SPAIN)**

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## PAPER AS PART OF A RESEARCH PROJECT

“Profiles, environments and identities of the coming sociability: Geosociology of one-person households in Spain”, funded by the Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness of Spain (ref. CSO2015-67066-R)



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## GENERAL OBJECTIVE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

Analyze the current and future sociological implications of the growth process of one-person households in Spain

## GROWTH OF ONE-PERSON HOUSEHOLDS

### Households according to household size in Spain (2017)

	Hogares	%
Total	18.472.800	100,0%
1 persona	4.687.400	25,4%
2 personas	5.620.700	30,4%
3 personas	3.860.400	20,9%
4 personas	3.251.900	17,6%
5 o más personas	1.052.400	5,7%

One person: 14,0% in 1991

Source: Statistics National Institute of Spain

**The individual residential way of life is strengthened**

We are in front of a **salient social process** with a number of not minor implications in terms of sociability as well as of welfare-related policy planning and intervention



**ELDERLY LIVING ALONE... AGING IN PLACE**

## AGING IN PLACE

### Decision of elderly to continue residing in their own homes

- Positive view: “live at home wanting to live at home”
- Extending autonomy as long as possible: quality of life
- Emotional attachment of the elderly to their homes
- Extending their daily life in the local community
- Rejection and costs of a residential mobility

Stimson et al., 2002, in Costa-Font, Elvira, & Mascarilla-Miró, 2009; Venti & Wise, 1989, 1990

- Elderly who have lived in their home for some time prioritize living in them, rather than: 1) home of a family member or 2) residence for the elderly

Burholt & Windle, 2001; Costa-Font et al., 2009; Feinstein, 1996; Fernández-Carro, 2013, 2016; Gitlin, 2003; Gott et al., 2004, in Costa-Font et al., 2009; Hillcoat-Nalletamby & Ogg, 2014; Olsberg & Winters, 2005; Sabia, 2008; Sixsmith & Sixsmith, 2008

## AGING IN PLACE

Some factors with effect on aging in place:

- Loss of health and functionality in elderly, reduces aging in place
  - In Spain: family homes (except younger and more educated elderly)
  - In UK: institutionalization (residence for the elderly)
- Close network of friends and family in case of need
- Economic incomes (home care services, adaptation of housing to needs, face a rise in rental prices or municipal fees)
- State of conservation of the house and the building (also ramps, elevators, shower trays)
- Location of the home in the neighborhood (shops and services, gentrification)
- Maintaining an active life Vs. loss of social relations
- Institutional support (taxes property, subsidies, reverse mortgage, telecare services)

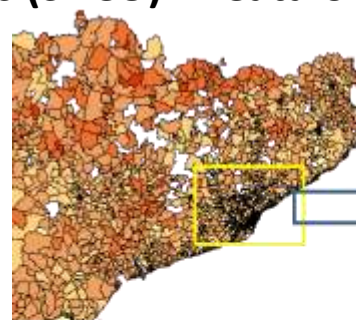
Burholt & Windle, 2001; Costa-Font et al., 2009; Fernández-Carro, 2016; Hillcoat-Nalletamby & Ogg, 2014; Jong et al., 2012, in Hillcoat-Nalletamby & Ogg, 2014; Meil, 2011; Oswald et al., 2010; Rolls et al., 2010; Sabia, 2008; Sixsmith & Sixsmith, 2008; Wasi & White, 2005

## METHODOLOGY: Phase1

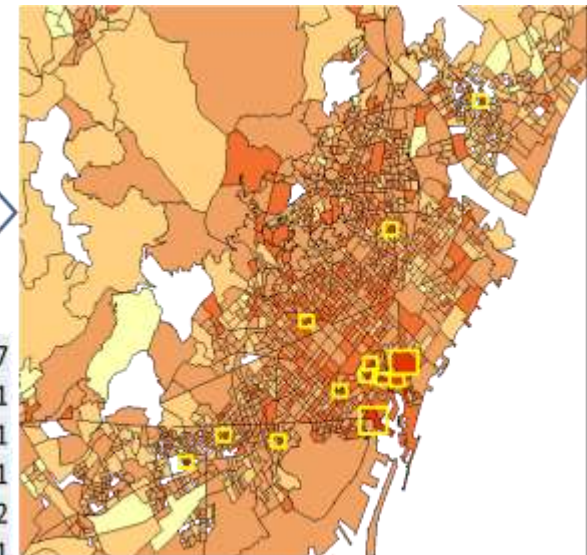
- One-Person Households by census districts and census sections: *Population and Housing Census (2011)*
- 2 enclaves of high concentration of solo-dwellers:
  - Enclaves that mostly harbour young-single-high-educated population
  - Enclaves mostly containing elderly-widow-low-educated population

### Territorial distribution of census sections with 50% or more of their one-person households (SACU) in Catalonia

Location	No. SACU	%
Province of Barcelona	18	60,0
Capital + Hospitalet + Sta. Coloma	13	46,3
Rest of the province	5	16,6
Tarragona	6	20,0
Lérida	5	16,6
Gerona	1	3,3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100,0</b>



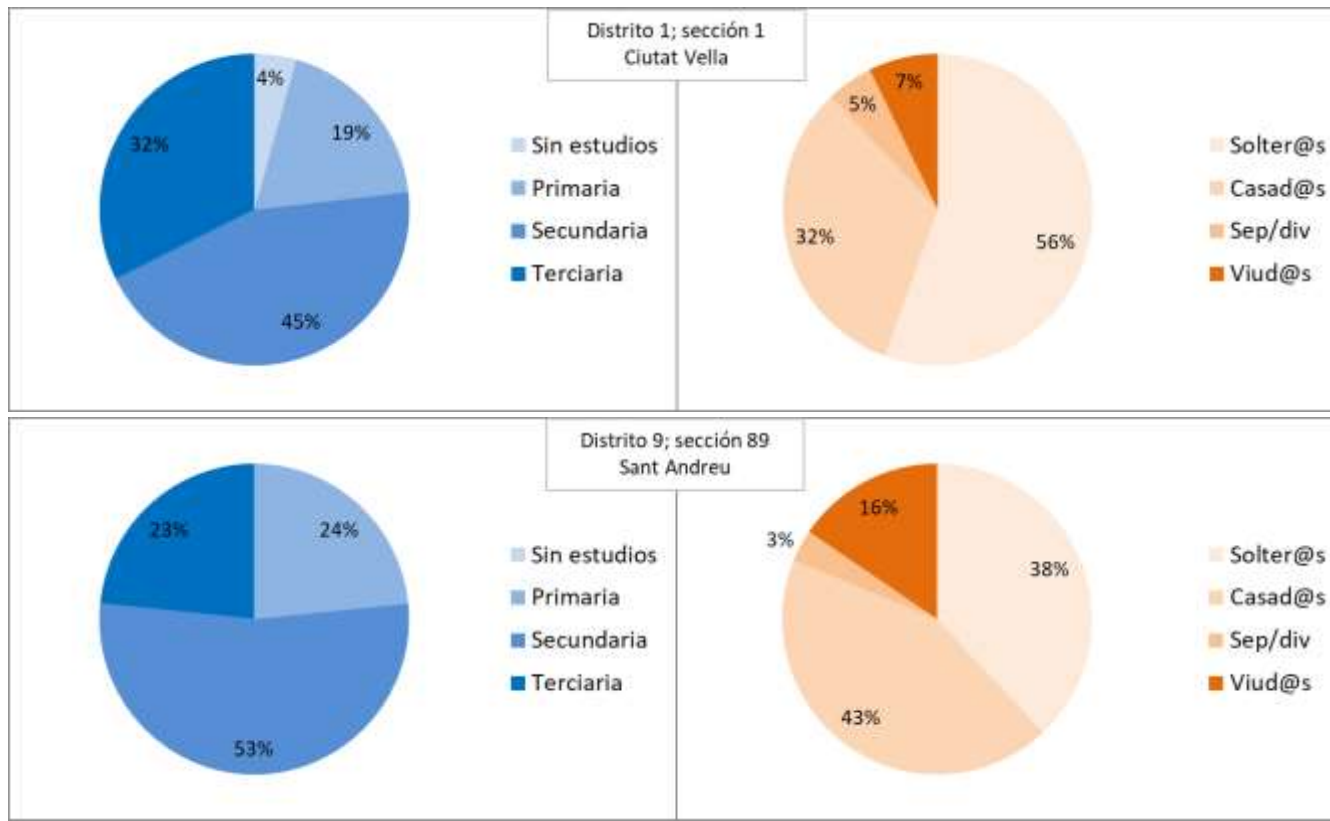
Ciutat Vella	7
Sants-Monjuic	1
Sant Andreu	1
Gràcia	1
Hospitalet	2
Santa Coloma	1



## METHODOLOGY: Phase 2

- Contextual observation of the enclaves
- Selection of the ideal enclaves for the objectives
- Location of informative links (neighbourhood associations, leisure centres, parishes)

### Sociodemographic characterization of two SACUs in the city of Barcelona





# METHODOLOGY: Phase 3

Semi-structured interviews

Solo residents aged 65+

Census districts and census sections: Ciutat Vella, Sant Andreu, Gràcia y la Barceloneta (Barcelona)



Se trata de **contactos personales**: gente que nos puede llevar hasta unipersonales o unipersonales que ya conocemos previamente



Se trata de **enclaves específicos**, es decir, espacios sociales o personas que se asocian directamente con la sociabilidad de los hogares unipersonales



Se trata de **enclaves informativos transversales**, es decir, espacios sociales que incluyen a personas que viven solas y personas que no viven solas

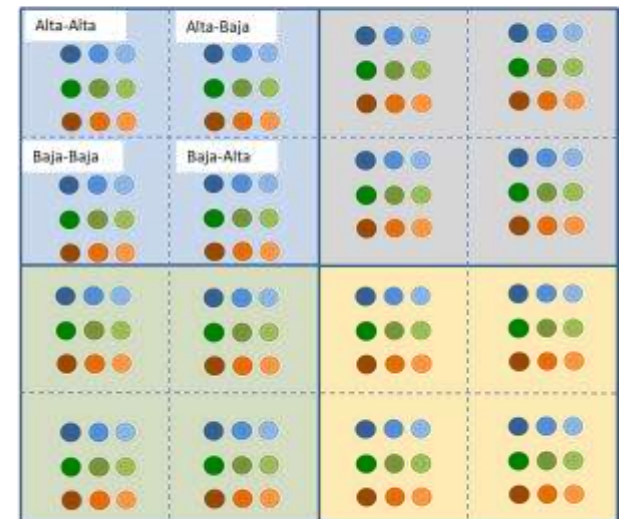
Tipologías contextuales o de entorno



Tipologías o perfiles sociodemográficos



Rejilla tipológica de representatividad ideal del muestreo cualitativo





## THE ELDERLY LIVING ALONE IN BARCELONA

- Security of the known (memories, routines, autonomy)... stay at home

«I'm rooted here, in my house. For that reason I live alone»

«When you're older like me, it's a little scary to go out alone. In case you get lost, fall or something. But I prefer to continue being at home, in my neighborhood, even alone»

- Disappearance of their social environment (departure/death of neighbors and friends)

«In those days we were a family of friends. But many friends are dead. We are alive more women, although only two friends of mine are alive»

«I am the one who carries every birthday. But now I only count the friends who die. Last week another person»

- Feelings of loneliness

«Being alone is very hard [...] At first I also had a little depression. Even if you have a son, a daughter-in-law, as soon as you walk through the door, you are alone»

## THE ELDERLY LIVING ALONE IN BARCELONA

- The neighborhood changes
  - Traditional shops have disappeared

«I love the neighborhood. I would not leave the neighborhood. It has been my neighborhood of all life, but... is dead. Is that there is nothing. You go to Carrer de Sant Pau and all shops are foreigners. It's not like before. Before you knew people. In my street there were, one, two, three,... three bars, a chocolatier, a printing press,... Now there is only one bar show. There is nothing more. The neighborhood is dead»

- Insecurity, crime and even the presence of criminal activities

«This neighborhood is not what it was before. Before it was a neighborhood that you could go quiet on the street. There were thieves but not like now; thieves who assault you or hit you with a stick [...] Now you can't go to nothing alone. They want to sink this neighborhood and they will sink it»

«When the junkies started coming ... they started robbing pharmacies. Pharmacies closing, hairdressers closing, tobacconists closing»

## THE ELDERLY LIVING ALONE IN BARCELONA

- The neighborhood changes
  - Mobility problems for pedestrians

«At that time [when he went to live in the neighborhood] there were not so many traffic problems. Now there are cars stopped all day [...] Before there were not so many cars. The avenue is fatal»

«My children live outside and to come here they have it difficult, because in this neighborhood there is no parking. You can't park on the street. And if you park in a prohibited place... the last time they came by car, they were fined and the car was taken away by a tow truck»

- Gentrification process

«Squatters came into my house to stay [...] I had been renting for 60 years [...] But I think the owner cheated. Because he brought the squatters in and they threw me out on the street. Because I went to the police to report him and they said "nothing can be done»

«I know there is a German. Because I am also very nosy. And in front of my apartment another German. Upstairs every day I see new faces, I don't know them. It's not like before. But not only here, in all neighborhoods. In the opposite building I knew them all. And now I don't know anyone»

# THE ELDERLY LIVING ALONE IN BARCELONA



“Save the neighborhood”



“No tourist apartment”



“No injecting rooms” (supervised injecting centres), “no to drugs”

## THE ELDERLY LIVING ALONE IN BARCELONA

- Living alone implies having a minimum of economic resources

«I have a person who comes every 15 days to clean my house»

- Public social services, NGO,...

«The house is not that of a lifetime. In 1992 they threw us the building to make a park. And they "gave us" this flat. "They gave us" no, we had to pay a good part. I recently finished paying the mortgage»

«The City Council has given me an apartment. I have given my apartment, and they have given me another apartment with elevator. I lived on a fifth floor, with 84 steps! [...] I'm fine because I have the bathroom inside the room. I'm doing very well, because I get up 20 times to go to the bathroom at night. I'm very happy»

«A very old friend, who lives alone, has a "car" that goes up and down the stairs. Once a week a social service man comes to help her. And he goes with her for a walk [...] She was seen crying like a little girl. And she said "you have made me the happiest woman in the world!"»

- Other realities: renting rooms

«There are older people who live alone, who have very little government pay. So they have decided to rent a room in their apartment. They also take away a bit of loneliness. And give them a little money»

## THE ELDERLY LIVING ALONE IN BARCELONA

- Collective resources such as *casals de gent gran* (associations for the elderly) are also basic: active aging

«In the elderly association we are open from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. And from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. But Saturdays and Sundays included! [...] Now we are approximately 80 or 85 partners»



- The other side: social isolation
- The preference of the elderly is to continue living alone at home

«My daughter tells me to go with her. Or for someone to come keep me company. And I say "I don't want anyone. I want to continue living alone, in my house. I can fend for myself"»



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