

Foresight Future of an Ageing Population - International Case Studies

Case Study 12: Intergenerational living in Spain

Foresight Theme: Adapting housing

This case study looks at an innovative purpose-built intergenerational housing and community scheme in Alicante that combines housing for older people with accommodation for people under 35 with low incomes who have some community engagement experience. The younger residents get involved with the daily running of the scheme – particularly the social activities on site – on a voluntary basis.

Context

With a population of 46.4 million in 2015¹, Spain is roughly three-quarters the size of the UK. In 2013, Spain had the second lowest fertility rate in the European Union (1.27), after Portugal.¹ The net result is a falling population size, expected to drop to 44.5 million by 2030.¹

Spain has an ageing population as a result of both improving life expectancy and the declining birth rate.

A little over 18% of the population were aged 65 and over in 2015 and this is expected to rise to over 33% by 2050¹ The proportion of the population aged 80 and over is expected to more than double from just under 6% in 2015 to nearly 15% in 2050.¹

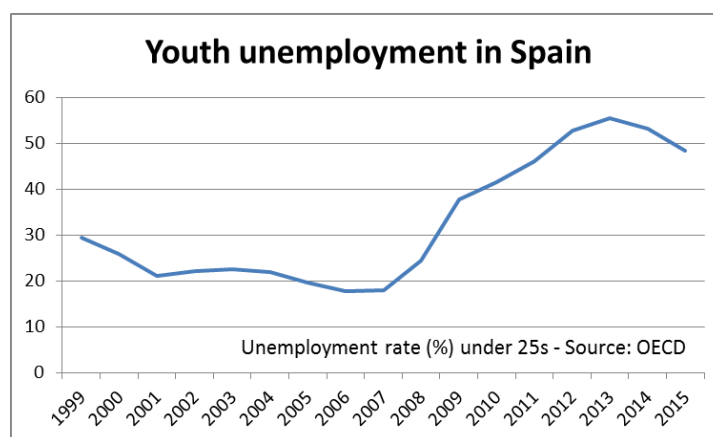


Figure 1

Spain currently has very high levels of youth unemployment. The unemployment rate of 46% for under-25s in the third quarter of 2015 was actually an improvement on a high of 56% in the first quarter of 2013.² [Figure 1]

An ageing population and high levels of youth unemployment could either be a potential breeding ground for inter-generational tension or a fertile place for the development of positive and productive programmes that foster inter-generational co-operation.

History and Implementation

The Intergenerational Residential Model

Intergenerational programmes are “vehicles for the purposeful and ongoing exchange of resources and learning among older and younger generations for individual and social benefits”.³

¹ Source: Eurostat

² Source: OECD

Intergenerational buildings include rental homes for independent older people in which a pre-determined proportion is reserved for younger people who commit to providing services to the community. The building can also accommodate other community services such as day centres for older people, depending on the needs of the local neighbourhood. In this model, the homes are a form of social housing and the building remains in public ownership.⁴

In social terms the main objectives of the model, in addition to providing decent low-cost housing, are to help integrate this group of older people into society, reducing loneliness and social isolation, while providing housing and a sense of community engagement and commitment for a group of younger people in need.⁴ The integration of the intergeneration building with its urban surroundings is also important.

The Plaza de América Building, Alicante, Spain

The Edificio Municipal, Plaza de América was the first of a series of three municipal intergenerational buildings planned by the Patronato Municipal de la Vivienda de Alicante (PMV) as part of a €50 million programme, initiated in 2003, using land owned by the municipality. The building was completed in 2008.

The central core of the development is 72 small (40m²) single-bedroom apartments (56 for older people and 16 for younger people) that can be occupied by a single person or a couple. In 2008 the 72 units held 87 residents.

All units are exterior and enclosed by glazing the entire façade of the building, which is protected by a second façade with adjustable blinds.⁴

The common areas incorporate a TV and music room, workshop and games area, a reading and computer room and a terrace, solarium and laundry. The building also houses a community centre and a health centre.



The apartments are supported by the Patronato Municipal de la Vivienda de Alicante (PMV) and the community centre is supported by the Valencia Regional Government. Apartment rents of €169 (£133) per month are 35% below the maximum allowed. The building is also part-financed by a public car park in the basement and, to help finance the development, PMV took out a mortgage of €2.5 million, repayment of which is covered by the rents on the apartments.⁵

³ Hatton-Yeo A and Ohsako T (Eds) (1999) *Intergenerational programmes: Public policy and research implications - An international perspective*, Beth Johnson *Foundation* and UNESCO Institute for Education

⁴ Garcia S and Marti P (2014) *Intergenerational architecture and public space*, ARQ (Santiago) no 86 Santiago abr. 2014

⁵ <http://www.worldhabitatawards.org/winners-and-finalists/project-details.cfm?lang=00&theProjectID=9D92B0AD-15C5-F4C0-99906DB94FA39F77>

Admission requirements

To live in the accommodation, an older person has to be over 65, be able to live independently, have no other habitable dwelling and have an income below €21,000 per year.



The requirements for a younger person are to be under 35 years of age, willing to commit to provide services, not already have adequate accommodation and have a personal income of about €21,000 per year. ⁶ The duration of the tenancy for younger people is five years, while for older adults it is open ended, providing security in later life.

Younger tenants are committed to carrying out four hours a week of

activities and community service as well as being a little more attentive to their older neighbours, as a "Good neighbour".

The Social Programme

The social programme provides a framework within which the younger tenants organise activities and has been developed by PMV in collaboration with the tenants.

The programme is made up of five components

1. "Vuelta a la tierra" – return to the land - through working on a small vegetable garden within the building
2. "De lo cultural a la información" – from culture to information – activity linked to videos, books, music and newspapers
3. "La Fiesta" – parties – every year 6 different parties are organised in the building
4. "La tecnología en tu mano" – technology in your hands – introducing the older tenants to new technologies, not just computers, reporting its activities in a monthly blog <http://plazaamerica.wordpress.com>
5. "El buen vecino" – the good neighbour – in which younger tenants help older residents with some of their domestic chores or accompany them to the doctor or pharmacy.
This is separate from the commitment in which every younger tenant looks after four older tenants on his or her floor, with a coordinator stationed on every floor.

Every year workshops on home cooking, specialist cleaning, ironing and domestic budgeting are run by the older tenants and workshops on first aid, home repairs and the management of electrical household appliances are run by the younger tenants. ⁷

⁶ <http://www.alicante.es/es/contenidos/alquiler-viviendas> (In Spanish)

⁷ Patronato Municipal de la Vivienda de Alicante (2015) *Intergenerational Housing: Plaza de América Building*

Alicante Social Department designs, coordinates and monitors the intergenerational programme through monthly meetings with the younger tenants.

Resident participation is a priority and a 'Co-ordination Committee', made up of both younger and older residents, meets weekly; a 'Participation Committee' evaluates and improves the participation in activities; and a 'Communication Committee' coordinates and organises media visits and prepares statements of principles, for example the 'Articles of Community' for PMV or the 'Articles of the Intergenerational Association'.



Impact

In early 2016 occupancy of the Plaza de América Building was at 98%. As new residents arrive, programmes are adjusted to take into account their needs and views. This process of integration has been viewed as a positive experience.

The most recent annual evaluation, in 2015, found that the degree of satisfaction with the physical environment and housing was very high. For older and younger tenants the location, proximity to amenities and the quality of the housing produced a high rating on quality of life.

All the younger residents and 85% of the older residents say that the benefits of intergenerational relationships and conviviality are great, with an overall rating of 4 out of 5. The most important aspects being support received, the exchange of experiences and the breaking down of stereotypes.

While younger residents value the social responsibility, opportunities for learning, motivation and value, the older residents emphasise the support, improved vitality and the company.

The response to the programme has been positive with participants comparing the community to a large family, thereby demonstrating the impact that intergenerational conviviality can have on these age groups.⁸

In 2012 the Plaza de América Building was one of twelve finalist in the World Habitat Awards⁵ because of its architectural merit, its work to create a family-like environment, enabling older residents to maintain their independence as they age and stay in their own homes for longer, and its contribution to the wider community and regeneration of the surrounding area.

⁸ Gema Muñoz Alcaraz, Patronato Municipal de la Vivienda de Alicante (2016) *Personal communication*