GETTING BY IN BARCELONA:

A portrait of life before basic income

March 2019

THE YOUNG FOUNDATION

ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report explores the lives and experiences of the residents in three neighbourhoods of Eix Besòs in North-Eastern Barcelona. Since December 2017 these communities have been part of a radical experiment – B-MINCOME - to tackle urban poverty and social exclusion in the city. B-MINCOME is a pilot study of a minimum income and active opportunities (related employment, community and social enterprise) for 24 months for around 650 people in 10 neighbourhoods. The story of how people experienced B-MINCOME and the impact it had on individuals, families and communities will be told in a series of reports by The Young Foundation and other project partners through 2019.

This report aims to provide a rich portrait, built from in-depth ethnographic research between July and December 2017, of what life was like in the three neighbourhoods prior to B-MINCOME - a contextual 'baseline' against which we can explore what, if any, changes B-MINCOME creates in residents' lives, and their understandings and experiences of this.

This portrait has been built based on 77 interviews and countless observational and informal visits to places and events in each neighbourhood by a team of Barcelona-based researchers. The Young Foundation team worked closely with them to analyse their insights and distil them into the snapshot of life shared in this report. As with all qualitative research, it is important to remember that although the research was conducted over six months, it represents only a moment in time for each place. It also cannot claim to be perfectly representative of all residents' views, feelings or experiences. Nevertheless, as explored in this report, common narratives and experiences did emerged through our research.

B-MINCOME is a collaborative project funded by the European Union through Urban Innovative Actions. The Young Foundation has worked in partnership with Barcelona City Council, as well as the other B-MINCOME project partners: The Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB), the Institut Català d'Avaluació de Polítiques Públiques (Ivàlua), Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya, BarcelonaTech (UPC), and the International Institute for Nonviolent Action (NOVACT).

ABOUT THE YOUNG FOUNDATION

The Young Foundation finds new ways of tackling major social challenges by working alongside communities, using the tools of research and social innovation. We run a range of national and international programmes, and work in partnership with leading organisations, thinkers and policymakers to achieve this.

We have created and supported over 80 organisations including: Which?, The Open University, Language Line, Social Innovation Exchange, School for Social Entrepreneurs, Uprising and Action for Happiness.

Find out more at www.youngfoundation.org

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INTRODUCTION

Setting the scene

In late 2018 Barcelona is at the end of a decade of economic, social and political upheaval. Many of these changes, especially economic, were shared with the rest of Catalunya, Spain, Europe, and globally, in the wake of the 2008 global financial crisis.

Like many other places, the economic crisis led to a sharp rise in unemployment across Spain, and in Barcelona.. Between 2007-2013, unemployment in the city rose from 7% to 23%.[1] Job losses were particularly concentrated among young people, immigrants and lower-qualified male workers – many of whom worked in the construction sector.[2] As a result, the proportion of families where the principle earner was male dropped from 55% in 2006 to 40% in 2011 (whereas female headed households went up from 16% to 27%.[3] This represents a significant change in gender roles and responsibilities for many households.

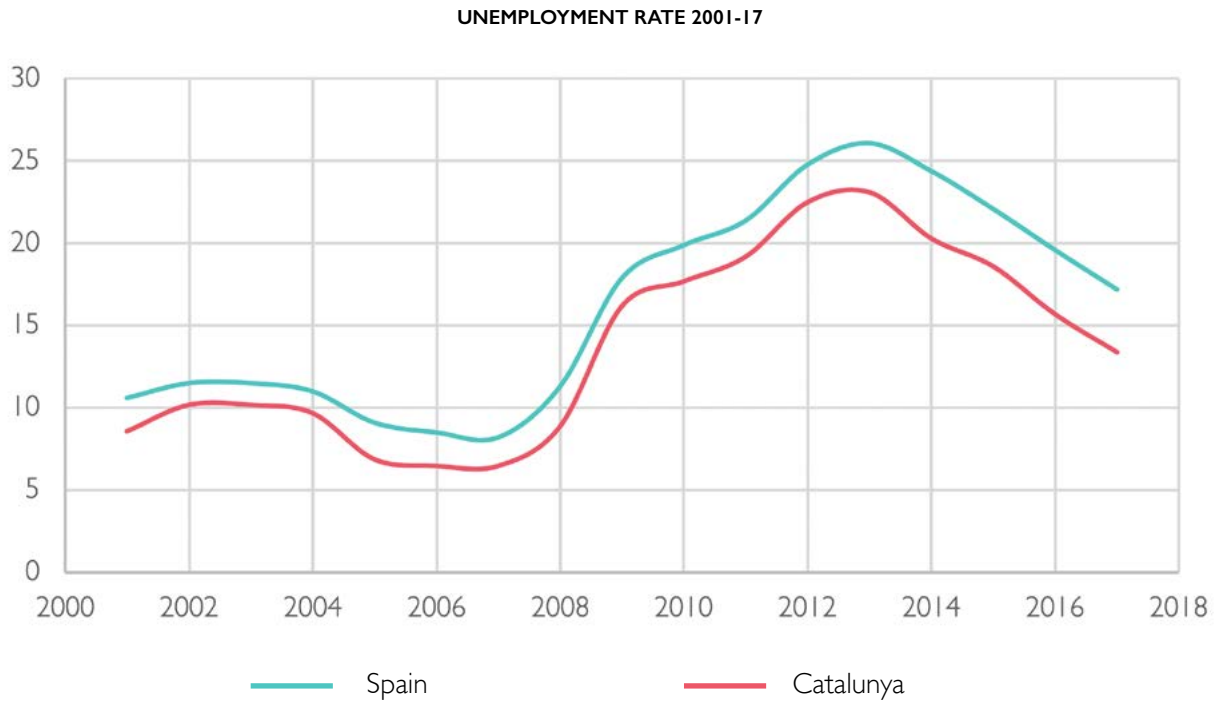


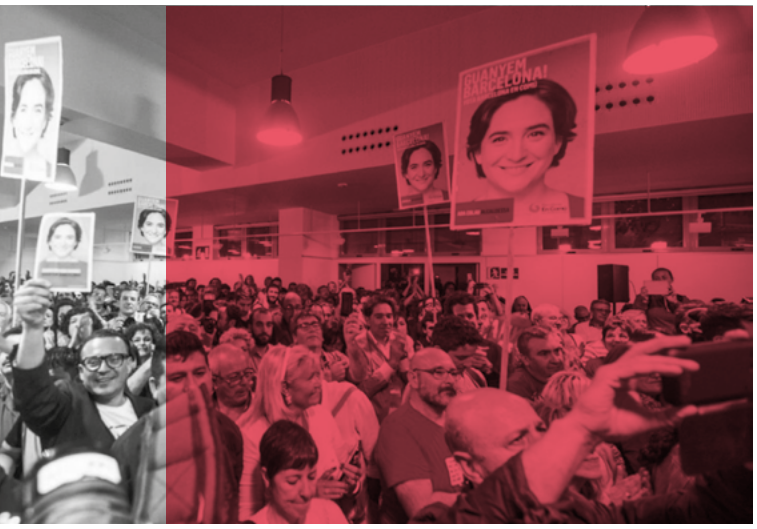
Figure 1: Unemployment rate in Catalunya and Spain.[4]

Photo of Barcelona skyline[5]

The value of properties across Spain plummeted in 2008. In Catalunya, the sale of houses dropped by 42% in 2008, the highest percentage of any state in Spain.6 People struggled to keep up with their mortgage payments and foreclosures became widespread, with around 349,438 initiated across the country between 2007-11.7 In Barcelona alone, 35,234 evictions took place between 2008-15.[8] Accompanying this was a rise in squatting ('ocupación') of evicted properties across the city. In Barcelona, over 2,000 homes remain unoccupied across the city[9] whilst levels of homelessness reached previously unrecorded levels in 2013.[10] [11] [12]

Anti-eviction protesters outside BBVA bank in the city of Mataro, Catalonia. Sign read 'Stop Desahucios' (Stop Evictions) [11]

Barcelona en Comu Rally, May 2015[12]



Unemployment and evictions, accompanied by welfare cuts, provoked a rise in poverty and inequality in Barcelona, and in Spain more broadly – leaving the country with the highest income inequality of any country in Europe.[13] The rate of severe material deprivationi increased from 6% in 2008, to 8% in 2013.[14] Today, in Barcelona 10% of the population are in work but with incomes below the poverty line.[15]

As well as the dramatic shifts reflecting global forces, some of the recent changes at play in Barcelona have a uniquely local flavour. A critical backdrop to these socioeconomic developments is the long standing independence debate in Catalunya, a region that is home to 16% of Spain's population, but which generates around 20% of its GDP.[16] A metropolitan city which combines global, regional and local identities, Barcelona also faces existential questions of its own. The city's status as the fourth most visited destination in Europe[17] has brought social challenges as well as economic opportunities. The process of 'tourist gentrification' and associated hike in the cost of living has led to rapid out-migration of long-standing residents.[18] At the same time, Barcelona has seen an increase in immigration, with a quarter of the population now born outside of Spain (compared to just over one-fifth at the start of the millennium).[19]

This backdrop of socioeconomic change and widening inequality has brought with it a growing distrust of the established political order. Spain's administrative elections of May 2015 brought housing activist Ada Colau and her party 'Barcelona en Comú' (Barcelona in Common) to power.[20] Her administration's policy agenda has been explicitly to prioritise tackling inequalities within the city. As a result, Barcelona City Council has substantially increased its budget for tackling social exclusion and poverty.[21] This has included the launch of several new policies including the Tarjeta Solidaria (Solidarity card) – a form of economic aid of €100 a month which is granted to families that have children aged 0-16 years old to cover food and basic necessities. In line with this agenda of tackling social exclusion and poverty, the idea of B-MINCOME was born.[i]

i Severe material deprivation rate is a measure used by the Social protection, indicating the percentage of the population that cannot afford at least three of the following nine items: to pay their rent, mortgage or utility bills; to keep their home adequately warm; to face unexpected expenses; to eat meat or proteins regularly; to go on holiday; a television set; a washing machine; a car; a telephone. See: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Glossary:Material_deprivation

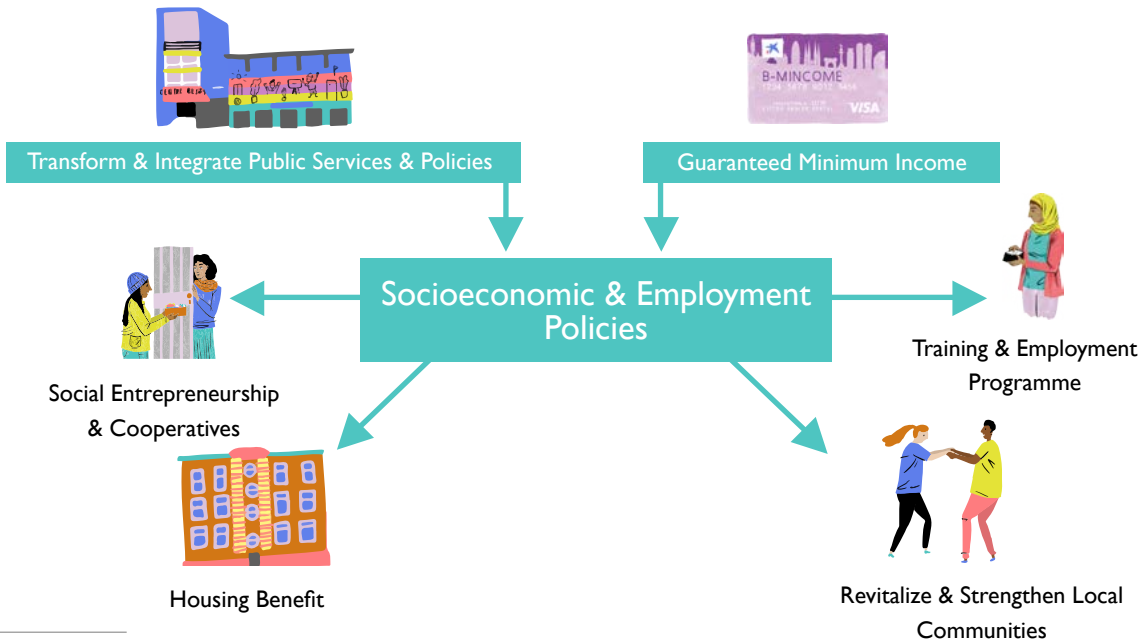
ABOUT B-MINCOME

B-MINCOME is a pilot project for combating poverty and inequality in Barcelona's deprived areas. It is funded by and is part of the EU's Urban Innovative Actions programme. The project aims to test the efficiency and effectiveness of combining 'passive' economic aid, in the form of Municipal Inclusion Support (MIS i.e. a guaranteed minimum income), with active social policies in ten neighbourhoods in Barcelona's Eix Besòs area in the north east of the city.

The MIS – of between €100 and €1,676 per month per household - is being provided to 644 households[ii], who have been randomly selected from eligible applicants (see Appendix 1). Only households where at least one household member is of working age and have incomes below a minimum threshold were eligible to apply.[iii] A control group of 385 randomly selected comparable households who are not participating in B-MINCOME have also been recruited. To test how different versions of SMI affect people's behaviour and outcomes, some of the participants receive their SMI conditionally, others unconditionally, while some people's income is capped, other people's isn't. A full breakdown of treatment groups can be seen in Appendix 1.

The B-MINCOME pilot is also trialling SMI payments made in a new, local, social currency distinct from Euros, with the intention of promoting local commerce and strengthening community ties. At present, 419 of the households receiving B-MINCOME receive 25% of their income in the form of a Real Economy Currency (REC).[iv] This is a digital currency which can be accessed via a mobile app or a card with a QR code to make participants at selected local shops and businesses.

Figure 2: B-MINCOME overview



ii As of December 2018.
iii See Appendix 1
iv As of December 2018.

As well as receiving the SMI, around half of the B-MINCOME participants also take part in one of four 'active' social policies:

Active policy programme	Description
Training programme and employment plans	Employment programme lasting 12 months, preceded by a three-month vocational training course
Social economy programme	Participants supported in creating cooperative, social, solidarity economy and community-interest projects.
Community participation programme	Participation in projects which benefit local organisations and community associations
Housing renovation programme	The main goal of this active policy called "Housing rent aid" is to encourage improvements to the houses owned by the household participants. This policy will allow new family incomes through the rent of available rooms of their houses.

The pilot neighbourhoods

B-MINCOME is operating in 10 neighbourhoods in three districts of Barcelona: Sant Martí, Sant Andreu and Nou Barris. These districts and neighbourhoods are in the north east of the city, along the left bank of the Besòs River, an area known in Catalan as the Eix Besòs (the Besòs Axis).

Our study and this report focuses in on three neighbourhoods, selected to include one from each district with variability in terms of socioeconomic and geographic characteristics: Ciutat Meridiana in Nou Barris, Bon Pastor in Sant Andreu and Besòs i el Maresme in Sant Martí.

Arial view of the Besòs River, Barcelona[22]

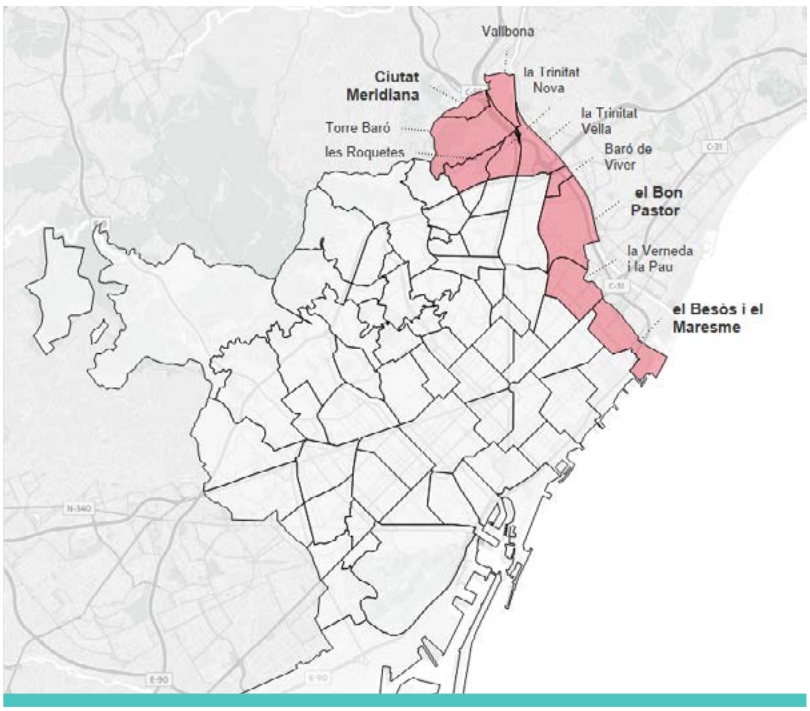


Figure 3: B-MINCOME neighbourhoods in 10 districts –Ciutat Meridiana, Bon Pastor and Besòs i el Maresme highlighted.

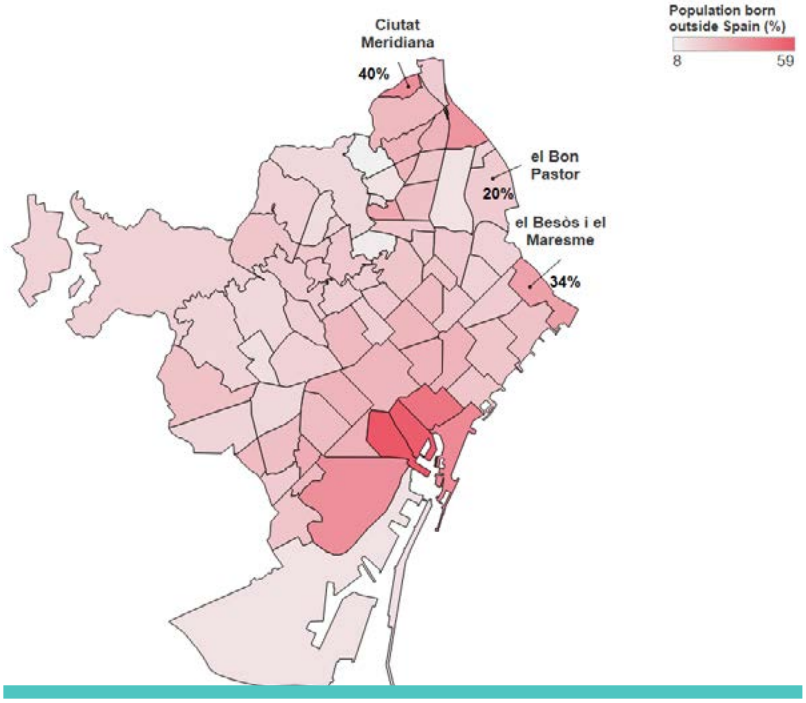


Figure 3: Population born outside Spain (%) by neighbourhood in Barcelona (2018) [26]

Eix Besòs has long been a known location for newcomers to the city – originating from informal shantytown settlements which became home to immigrant workers who arrived from elsewhere in Spain, which were replaced with modern build blocks from the 1950s onwards.[23]

In Eix Besòs, a slightly higher proportion were born outside of Spain (28%) compared to Barcelona (25%).[24] In some of the neighbourhoods of study the proportion is much higher, such as Ciutat Meridiana (40%) and Besòs i el Maresme (34%). Among B-MINCOME participants, a disproportionally high number were born outside of Spain (over half of recipients), compared to the averages of the neighbourhoods.[25]

Eix Besòs is the area of Barcelona with the highest levels of poverty. According to Barcelona city council, there are 60,000 households at risk of poverty in the area.[27] Social deprivation in the city is mostly concentrated Eix Besòs, alongside areas of high deprivation elsewhere in the City in nearby El Carmen, La Teixoriera and in the South West area bordering Zona Franca.[28] All 10 neighbourhoods in the B-MINCOME trial are in the lowest quartile in terms of household income (Figure 4).

Although levels of unemployment in Barcelona have been in decline since 2013, the rate of unemployment in Barcelona overall is now at 7%.[29] In turn, the Besòs neighbourhoods have some of the highest rates of unemployment in the city, and the district of Nou Barris has the highest levels of unemployment of all. 13% of people in Ciutat Meridiana, within Nou Barris, are unemployed. For those in formal employment, Eix Besòs also has a high concentration of manual workers.[30]

Socio-economic and demographic data, however, can only tell a small part of the story. While the three neighbourhoods which are the focus of this report share many features, they are all unique, with social, cultural, historic and geographic characteristics that shape the lives of the people who live there.

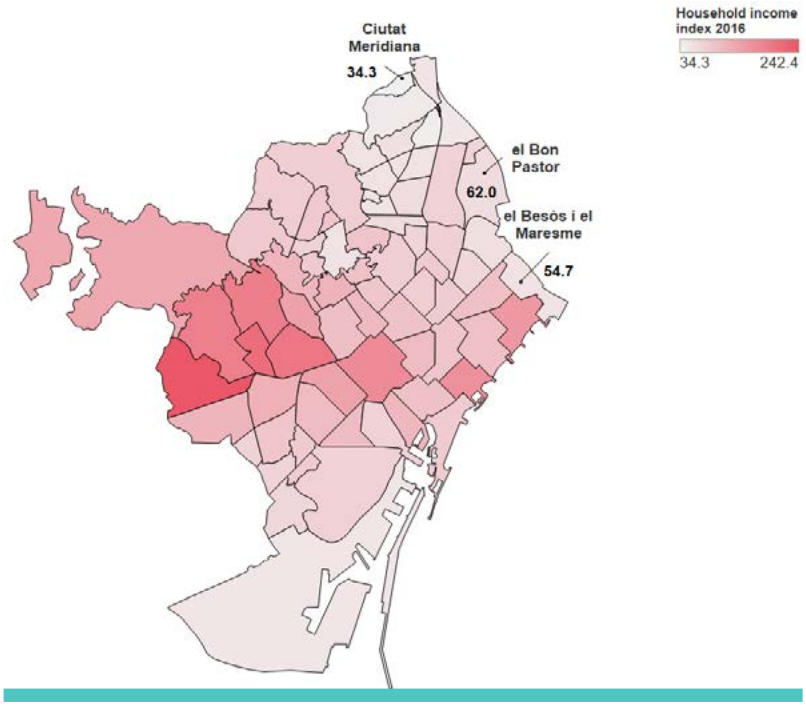


Figure 4: Household income index by neighbourhood in Barcelona (2016)[31] [v]

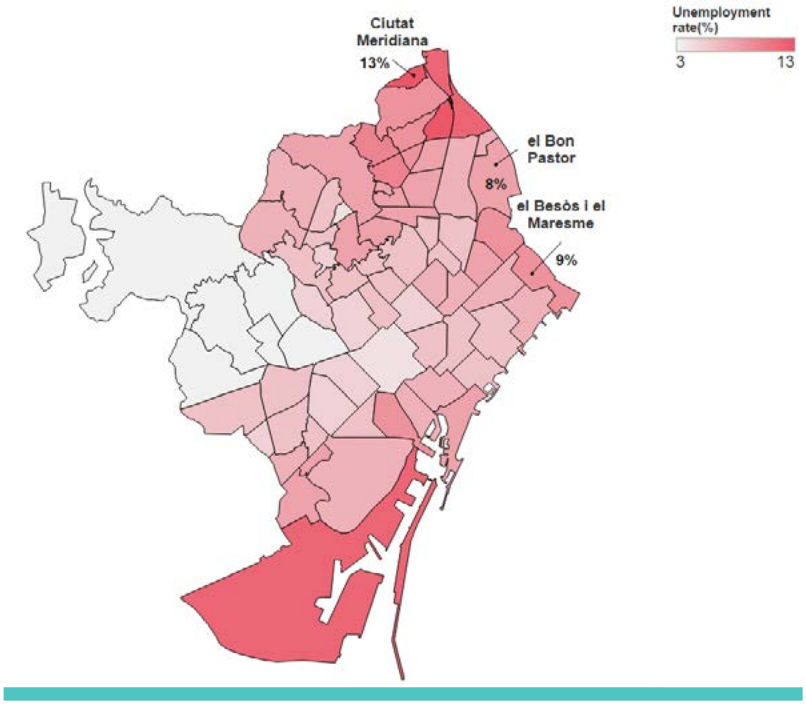


Figure 5: Unemployment rate by neighbourhood in Barcelona (2018)[32]

v An index of 250 is used to compare to the Barcelona average household income of 100

RESEARCH SITES IN FOCUS

The following section highlights some of the key features of the three neighbourhoods of study, based on desk research, primary research and observations. Some of the characteristics described such as immigration, unemployment and eviction and squatting, are shared by two or three of the neighbourhoods.

CIUTAT MERIDIANA

In steep and verdant valley in the northern-most tip of Barcelona's Nou Barris lies the neighbourhood Ciutat Meridiana, an area often referred to by residents as a town in its own right. The valley is peppered with peach and orange tower blocks which were built around the 1960s, initially to cater for the city's emerging migrant population.[33] Prior to the construction of these blocks, and within living memory, Nou Barris was known as a shantytown without paved roads.[34] Visitors are immediately struck by the dramatic topography of the neighbourhood. The steep and irregular slopes are dotted with escalators and 'el papa móvil' (the 'pope-mobile') lift – public infrastructure intended to connect the 'upper' and 'lower' parts of the neighbourhood. The air quite literally feels different in this part of the city, and is often humid and foggy.


EL PAPA MÓBIL
CAN CUIÀS
CIUTAT MERIDIANA
CARRER DE LES AGUDES
CENTRE CÍVIC ZONA NORD
Centre Cívic Zona Nord
MERCAT NÚRIA
Mercat de Núria
UPPER
LOWER
CARRER DEL BRULL
TORRE BARÓ VALLBONA

The location of Cituat Meridiana and its distance from Barcelona city centre brings with it a feeling of tranquillity and closeness to nature which many residents take pride in. However, these same conditions can make Ciutat Meridiana feel like an isolated neighbourhood and even a separate town altogether, cut off from wider opportunities within Barcelona.

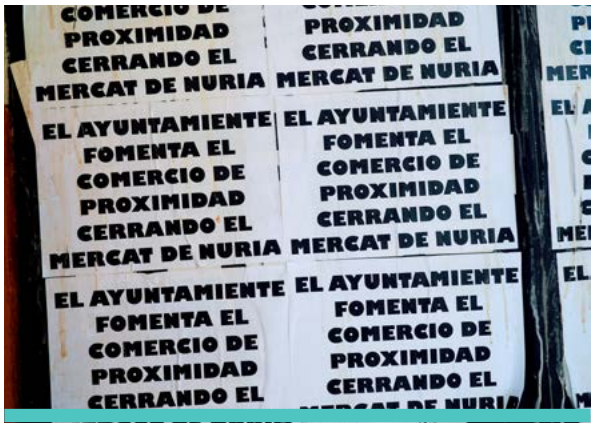
Residents often speak of not being able to access public services and food outlets which are taken for granted in other parts of the city. The unemployment rate in 2018 was 13%, the highest in all of Barcelona.[35] The neighbourhood is also known for having the lowest income in Barcelona. Those who do work often spend long periods travelling to the city centre due to a lack of local opportunities.

While the green mountains overhead bring a feeling of peace for some residents, others complain about the lack of cleanliness of their surroundings. Residents speak of being afraid to let their children play outside, in part due to fear of wild boar which come down from the mountain in search of food. At times overflowing bins and vermin reduce the appeal of public spaces and reinforce the sense that this area has been forgotten by the rest of the city.

A neighbourhood divided

The sense of living on the periphery is felt particularly acutely by residents in the upper part of the neighbourhood, who face additional accessibility and communication challenges. The lower part of the neighbourhood has primary health care, buses, library, a civic centre, supermarkets, a regular flea market and bars. By contrast, the modest commercial area of the upper part of the neighbourhood consists of a single bar, bakery, pharmacy and one other shop. The municipal market, the local market - Mercat de Núria was closed earlier in the year, now standing empty, adorned only by the activist signs reading "We need a food shop now" and "Closed market fall of the neighbourhood's economy". All this means that when the elevators and escalators break, residents in the upper side of the neighbourhood feel cut off from the rest of Ciutat Meridiana. The extension of the L1 metro line to the upper part of the neighbourhood (Can Cuiàs) in 2003 represented an improvement for many residents, offering crucial improved accessibility to the rest of the city.

Activist posters in protest of the closing of Mercat de Núria



"No, no, my neighbourhood is good, it's in the mountains… It's very peaceful here, I can breathe the natural air, and what's most important: you can see the green area"

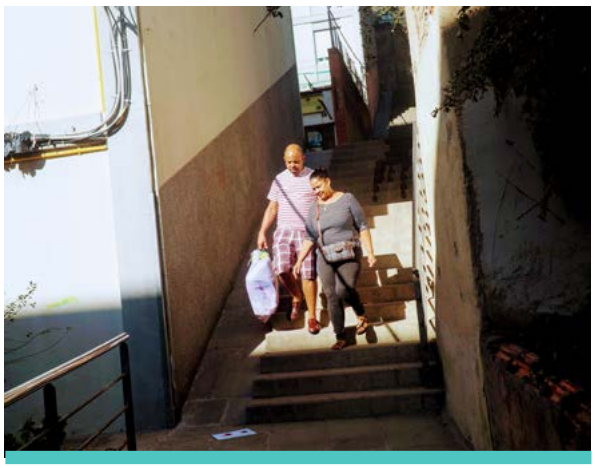
(Algol, 51, Dominican, Ciutat Meridiana)

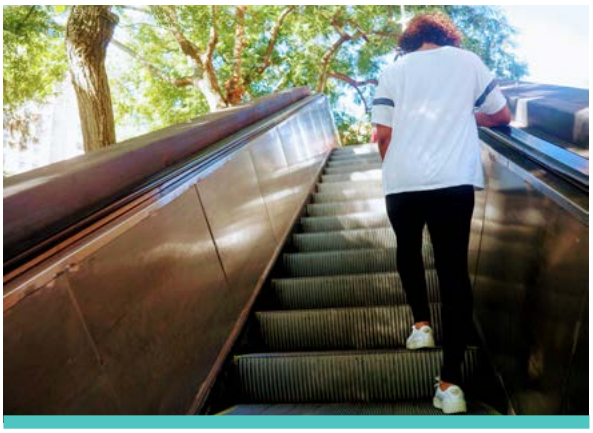
Movement and isolation

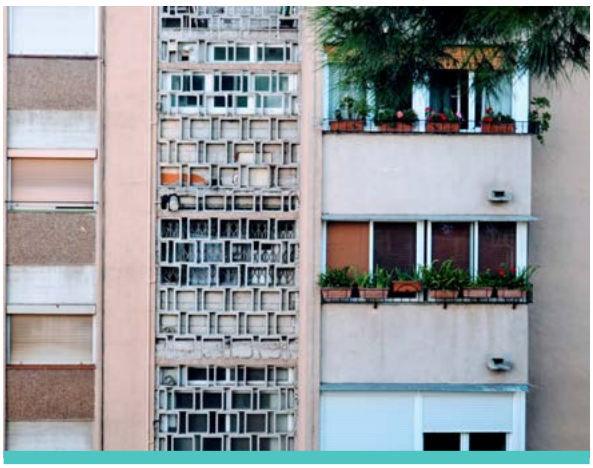
The escalators and elevators connecting the upper and lower sides are known to break down often, limiting mobility of older and less mobile residents struggling with shopping bags or children, who are said to frequently fall over. In addition, the majority of blocks in the neighbourhoods do not have elevators. 11% of residents are registered as disabled, higher than the 9% Barcelona average.[36] Many speak of choosing to stay indoors rather than contend with the steep slopes unless they have no other choice:

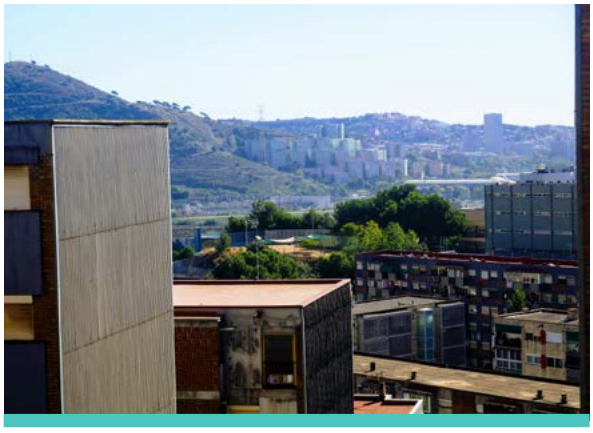
"Well, I would say that the escalators work for few days and, then, for the rest of the week they are broken down. I do not know if people ruin them on purpose but the point is that there are old people that need them. Without escalators, those people are forced to use the stairs and they are not capable of doing so." (Mira, 19, Spanish, Ciutat Meridiana)

It is not only the steepness which makes the physical environment of Ciutat Meridiana feel challenging to certain residents, but also a sense of unsafeness and insecurity. Known occurrences and sometimes stories of violent crime and drug use and dealing result in many parents expressing fear of their children playing outside. A 61 year old man, Costa, who has lived in Ciutat Meridiana for his entire adult life told us of a common rumour that if the police are called they will first ask if there is any blood, and if not, they won't come.









'Eviction City'

Nou Barris was among the Barcelona districts worst affected by the 2008 economic crisis. High rates of employment in construction, as well as the targeting of subprime mortgages to residents were key contributing factors.

Before Spain's housing bubble burst, home ownership among low income populations in Ciutat Meridiana was high (88%, vs. 68% in Barcelona in 2001).[37] During this period, homeownership was directly promoted at low income groups, in particular newly arrived migrant population. Newly arrived residents without family members to act as guarantors, often relied on 'cross guarantee' loans from banks which encouraged friends or relatives to also get a mortgage.[38] Prevalence of financial deregulation and speculation was particularly high in Ciutat Meridiana, with the most precarious strata of society becoming profit targets for mortgage lenders.[39]

Like many people across Spain, vulnerable residents in Ciutat Meridiana's blocks inevitably struggled to meet mortgage repayments after the point of crisis, resulting in an acute wave of foreclosures in the neighbourhood. Around 20%[40] of the neighbourhood's apartments have been involved in eviction proceedings since the crisis leaving Ciutat Meridiana with the nickname 'Eviction City'.

Due to these evictions many families faced homelessness whilst homes stood empty. Squatting has become widespread in the neighbourhood, with some evicted families having no choice but to illegally occupy apartments they had previously bought, or other empty properties.[41] Other squatters come from the 'squatting mafia' – posing as landlords and occupying flats and installing new locks in order to rent them to newcomers in the neighbourhood. These newcomers are often immigrant families, deceived into thinking they are paying rent to legitimate landlords.

Ciutat Meridiana Neighbourhood Association is well known for taking an active role in advocating for the rights of local residents who are squatting and facing eviction, as well as campaigning for local authorities to better support the housing needs of vulnerable groups.

Living together

Ciutat Meridiana has the highest proportion of the population born outside of Spain of any Barcelona district (40% in 2018)[42] reflecting the multicultural nature of the Nou Barris district. The most prominent nationalities are Pakistani, Ecuadorian and Moroccan. The neighbourhood also has the highest population of Nigerian immigrants in the city, with two Nigerian places of worship.

There are several programmes aiming to improve cultural integration in the neighbourhood. In the civic centre in Ciutat Meridiana, Zona Nord, there are many programmes for children and teenagers, including "Vozes", a community music project which works with young people from different backgrounds, offering an opportunity to play, sing and make friends.[43] Ciutat Meridiana is also one of the neighbourhoods involved in Barcelona's 'Anti-Rumour Strategy' initiative,[44] aiming to dispel rumours and stereotypes about cultural diversity in the city, as part of Barcelona's "interculturality" plan. The Tumblr page "Dades contra rumors"[45] (Facts against rumours) produced by Ciutat Merdiana's Neighbourhood Residents Committee aims to dispel some of these most common negative stereotypes about immigrants through storytelling.

A neighbourhood activated

In recent years, Nou Barris has become known as an area of strong left-wing social and political activism. The anti-austerity 15M movement which emerged throughout Spain had a particularly strong presence in this district, a direct response to the pronounced local impact of the crisis. Mobilisation of a grass-roots activist response to the widespread evictions in Ciutat Meridiana was particularly notable. In some cases local people protected their neighbours from evictions through physically barricading themselves in buildings.

Many recent improvements that have taken place in the neighbourhood are the result of the local residents' demands through the Ciutat Meridiana Neighbourhood Association. For example, the neighbours highlight the constant fight for more escalators and elevators and the redevelopment of the former football field. Many residents find the Neighbours Association to be a great support in generating a community network based on mutual trust.

BON PASTOR

Bon Pastor, a neighbourhood which sits along the bank of the river Besòs in the district of Sant Andreu is described by residents as a neighbourhood with a 'fighting spirit'. The spirit of 'la lucha' (the fight or struggle) and residents fighting to get what they want is evident in community activism. In recent years this neighbourhood has experienced rapid changes to the built environment – and to the social relations therein - changes which are both praised and lamented by the local community.

Past and present lives

Residents talk of a Bon Pastor of years gone by which had a reputation to outsiders as a no-go zone, an area which taxi drivers would refuse to enter. For many years, Bon Pastor was an isolated neighbourhood – the river Besòs cut it off from the more affluent Santa Coloma to the East (the connecting bridge was only built in the 1970s), and rows of factories and railways created a border from the rest of Sant Andreu to the West.[46]

The neighbourhood today presents a different picture. Following significant public investment, the land by the river Besòs is now one of the biggest green areas in Barcelona. The conversion of the former ship and freight car factory into the La Maquinista shopping mall in 2010, and the arrival of the metro station in the same year, brought with it employment opportunities and connections to the wider Barcelona area. This was experienced as a 'life line' among some people in Bon Pastor. Nonetheless, residents still speak of the inequalities between Bon Pastor and the more affluent neighbouring area of Sant Andreu.

Casas Baratas

Of all the changes the neighbourhood has experienced, the most prominent is the story of the Casas Baratas ('cheap houses'). A group of 784 single-stories houses, Casas Baratas were built in 1929 to cater for the growing population of manual labourers in Barcelona, many of whom originally came from southern Spain.[47] Throughout the 60s to 80s many Gypsy families were relocated from shanty towns of Barcelona to the Casas Baratas, a period in which they started to be known as a Barrio de Gitanos (neighbourhood of gypsies).[48]

The tree-lined streets surrounding the Casas Baratas are fondly remembered for their community spirit; places where neighbours shared sangria and cigarettes on their front porches, older residents would sit and socialise, and children would play. However, at the turn of the century they also became known for poor conditions – small and cramped, frequently without hot water, and inadequately built to withstand humidity and extreme temperatures during summer and winter.

These factors contributed to the Council Housing Office's plan to demolish the Casas Baratas in a series of phases, rehousing residents within newly built housing blocks, as part of their "Urban Renewal Plan.[49] In 2003, a non-binding referendum was held on the matter, in which residents voted in favour of the plans.[50] To this day, local opinion remains polarised between those who support and reject the demolition of the Casas Baratas.[51]


EL BESÒS
PARC FLUVIAL DEL BESÒS
SANTA COLOMA
CARRER DE LA CIUTAT D'ASUNCION
INSTITUT ESCOLA EL TIL·LER
CASAS BARATAS
LA MAQUINISTA
La MAQUINISTA
FOOD BANK
LOS NUEVOS BLOQUES
CARRER DE SAS
CARRER D'ALFARRÀS
CARRER D'ARDÈVOL
CARRER DE BIOSCA
PASSERA DEL MOLINET
BON PASTOR
SANT ANDREU
CARRER DE SANT ADRIÀ
CARRER DE L'ESTADELLA
LIBRARY & SOCIAL SERVICES
CENTRE CÍVIC BON PASTOR
RONDA LITORAL
CARRER DE SANTANDER
VERNEDA

In 2007, the first wave of relocations began, shortly followed by the first demolitions of houses.[52] While the majority of Casas Baratas residents have now been rehoused, the process has been controversial, with some relocations following forced and violent evictions.[53] Those who remain complain of a ghost town feeling and a lack of security, as the few remaining families speak of their fear of robberies.

Residents describe the newly built flats as being more spacious and thermally insulated with plenty of natural light. However, there is a longing with which Casas Baratas residents speak of their former homes – the loss of intimate communal space outside their front doors brought with it a new coldness and dwindling of social life. The demolition of the Casas Baratas, along with other changes to the area such as small local businesses being outpriced by the new Maquinista shopping centre reflect broader sense that the economic investment in the area over the past decade has been at the expense of the community spirit of the neighbourhood.

Casas Baratas

Casas Baratas

'Buen Pas' identity today

It is not uncommon to hear residents also attributing community change to perceptions that many new residents have arrived from outside of Spain in recent years. The population born outside of Spain in Bon Pastor (20%) is nonetheless lower than Barcelona as a whole (25%), and the average (28%) of all ten neighbourhoods participating in B-MINCOME.[54] Whilst there is a general sentiment that people from different backgrounds get on well together, there are some tensions reported between different groups of gypsies, particularly between those who have arrived in the last 10 years from other parts of Barcelona, and longer standing residents. As a response to this, a project called On Vius ('Where do you live?') has recently been implemented, in part to tackle conflict between Gypsy families, which involves recruitment of gypsy mediators from within the community.

Given the scale and pace of change to the area, the mixed response to Bon Pastor's recent regeneration is understandable. Nonetheless, there is a deep sense of belonging and pride in the 'Buen Pas' identity, positively expressed by recent and longstanding residents alike. Whatever the future holds for the neighbourhood, there is a sense that injustice and indigation will not be quietly sidelined.

Activist graffiti at a new construction site in Bon Pastor reads 'Vecina si no te luchas nadie te escuchas' (Neighbour, if you do not fight, no one will listen to you)

BESÒS I EL MARESME

"I was working as a builder, and for this job I had to move a lot. And, once I came here to work and I saw that it was close to the ocean and I saw the Rambla Prim…my eyes shone! I thought it would be a beautiful place to live with my family. So, I brought them."
Azad, 41, Pakistani, Besòs i el Maresme

Besòs i el Maresme is part of the Sant Marti district in the south east of Barcelona, bordering the Mediterranean Sea. Besòs i el Maresme is not a neighbourhood isolated from the city, but rather, one which is within touching distance of neighbouring areas of extreme wealth and poverty. This is a neighbourhood of diversity and contrast – having experienced great changes in the past decade which has led to these sharp juxtapositions.

Diversity and change

With a third of the population born outside of Spain, the cultural heritage of the neighbourhood is incredibly diverse – with Spaniards, Moroccans, Pakistanis, Chinese, Nigerians, Algerians, and Latin and Central Americans, among others, living side-by-side.

This is also the neighbourhood of Eix Besòs that has seen the highest increase in its foreign-born population between 2016-18 (of +4%). Today, following rapid period of construction, Besòs i el Maresme is a neighbourhood with a reputation as a destination for people who have recently arrived into Barcelona. This includes low-income immigrant groups as well as a growing number of more wealthy foreigners who have begun to drive the process of gentrification in the wider area.

Within the streets of Besòs i el Maresme, this diversity is palpable. Anyone walking through the neighbourhood is likely to pass by Pakistani grocery shops, Chinese coffee shops, Latin American bars and restaurants, and various cultural and religious spaces, from a Gypsy association, to a Mosque.

Making ends meet

Unemployment in Besòs i el Maresme in 2018 stands at 9% - higher than the Barcelona average (7%), and just below the average for the B-MINCOME neighbourhoods (10%). Among those who are employed however, many have precarious contracts, and of the 73 neighbourhoods in Barcelona, Besòs i el Maresme is ranked 11th in terms of lowest income.[55] For some of the immigrant population, a lack of documents and Spanish or Catalan language skills present barriers to finding a job. Like other parts of Eix Besòs, residents often speak of the black market and informal economy of the neighbourhood, with many families' main income coming from "scrap selling" or from other forms of informal labour.

Invisible boundaries

Residents of the Besòs i el Maresme neighbourhood often say that outsiders perceive where they live as a dangerous place, in part due to its proximity to La Mina. La Mina, the area that lies just East of Besòs i el Maresme, is a neighbourhood with a reputation notorious across Spain for drugs and crime. The extended blocks of La Mina, built during Francoist Spain, create a 'fortress-like'[56] structure. Whilst a single street divides it from the rest of Besòs i el Maresme, these invisible boundaries are potent – with many long-standing residents never crossing what they describe as the 'border'.


BESÒS
CASAL DE BARRI
RONDA DE SANT RAMON DE PRIM
LA MINA
CAP
RAMBLA DE PRIM
BESÒS MAR
CENTRE CÍVIC DEL BESÒS
PARC DEL FÒRUM
EL MARESME/ FÒRUM
AVINGUDA DIAGONAL
PARC DIAGONAL MAR
RONDA LITORAL
PLATJA DE LLEVANT

The street at the heart of the community

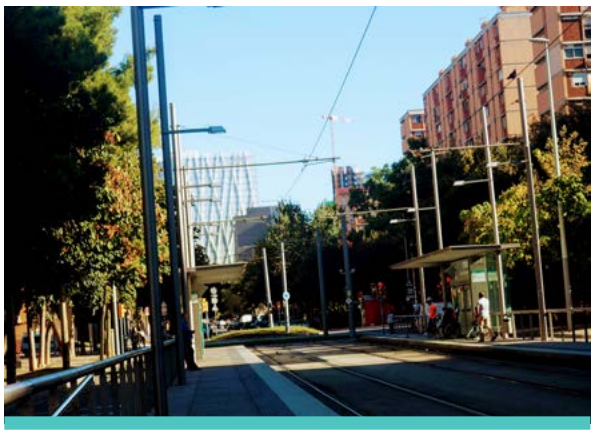
By contrast, the area surrounding La Rambla Prim - the main street in the neighbourhood which stretches towards the sea – is considered a safer and more accessible public space. The area is known as a place where children enjoy playing. The "Festa Major of Besòs-Maresme", takes place here at the beginning of June and represents a celebration of the many different cultures of the neighbourhood. The Casal (community centre) and the Civic Centre are also key community spaces where exhibitions, concerts and community workshops are regularly held.

The transformation of La Rambla Prim is still within living memory. Until 1960 "La Rambla" was unpaved, with open sewers. The neighbours association protested against the poor conditions of the street and 1992 the redeveloped La Rambla Prim, as it is now known, was born. As a result of this, there is a strong sentiment among residents that this public space "belongs to them".

In the shadow of the glass tower

In stark contrast to La Mina to the north east, the areas bordering the South and West of Besòs i el Maresme are marked by extreme affluence. The glass tower which marks this boundary, visible at the end of Besòs i el Maresme's Rambla, is a sharp reminder of the material inequality which characterises this neighbourhood – where skyscrapers and luxury hotels sit adjacent to dense housing blocks.

The 'Parc del Fòrum' area on the coastline bordering Besòs i el Maresme was redeveloped in 2004 to host the 141 day 'Universal Forum of Cultures' event, which enhanced the reputation of the 'Barcelona model' of redevelopment.[57] The area boasts a natural history museum, international conference centre and hosts the annual Primavera Sound music festival.[58] The festival is controversial among residents who complain of the disruptive noise and anti-social behaviour including drug-use. The myriad of new constructions, including a new university campus and the arrival of several hotels have contributed to continual hikes in rent prices and a growing presence of tourists in the area.



The zone around the Fòrum is flush with cranes, a reminder of the restless transformation the neighbourhood continues to undergo. Amongst the constant talk of change and further gentrification, many local people are doubtful that these rapid changes will serve the interests of local residents.

Besòs Parc del Forum[59]

The 'Barcelona Model'

Beginning in the run-up to the Olympic games in 1992, in the late 1980s Barcelona established a reputation for using international events as a catalyst for regeneration and investment. This approach has since been replicated elsewhere, known as the 'Barcelona model'.

During this period, many areas of the city including parts of Sant Martí were heavily redeveloped – including cleaning up and making the beachfront more accessible, as well as building new housing on formal industrial areas, and improved transport connections.[60] These transformations contributed to Barcelona being thought of as an international city and established it as a world-renowned tourist destination.

SECTION 1: PRECARITY AND INSECURITY

While each of the three communities of Ciutat Meridiana, Bon Pastor and Besòs i el Maresme have unique characteristics, they also have much in common. In particular, the people we interviewed describe their lives in a way that reflects multiple forms of precarity and insecurity.

Precarity can be defined as "life without the promise of stability",[61] a way of being marked by indeterminacy that is less the exception than the condition of our times.[62] For people in Eix Besòs precarity is something that residents grapple with on a daily basis, impacting their lives not only in practical terms, but also their sense of control and agency, and physical and mental health and wellbeing.[63]

Precarious (un)employment

One of the main causes of precarity in Eix Besòs is a situation of unemployment:

"There's no work, there's a lot of need for work, there's a lot of unemployed people. And there's young people that can work, like my husband, who's 23 years old, and they cannot find a job... And of course, everyone has the right to work."
(Alcor 21, Gypsy, Bon Pastor)

The three neighbourhoods have relatively high levels of unemployment. Many of the residents (or a member of their household) worked in construction, a sector which saw particularly large employment losses.[64] However, precariousness, in relation to work, is not simply about employment or unemployment; the situation in Eix Besòs reveals a more complex picture.

The term 'precarious employment' has been broadly used for decades[vi] to recognise that there is a class of workers for whom irregular and uncertain employment dominate,[65] so much so that it has been argued that the 'precariat' have emerged as a new and distinct social group with separate conditions and interests from other workers.[66]

One feature which is seen to define the precariat is distinctive relations of production – that is the economic relations that people must enter into in order to survive - where employees are habituated to accept insecure labour status.[67] For the people we spoke to in eix besos; insecure and precarious labour status is part of daily life. This precarity comprises a number different elements in the way that people experience labour or work.[vii] The work that people are doing is often poorly paid and unreliable. People often do not know what hours they may work from week to week and contracts are often short with no guarantee of renewal:

"Now I have a job of six hours. Before I had one of four hours. Once I had almost three months of a full time job but it changed. For the moment I have four, or six hours… The contract ends on 30th November. I don't know if they are going to renew or not or if they will tell me that there is no more work, or come back in January if not February... that's what happened to me before." (Sahar 38, Pakistani, Besòs-Maresme)

vi In sociology, economics, and political sciences, as well as in the media, and French writers studying the nature of work have long recognised that there is a group within the population whose lives could be characterised as precarious, invoking the concept of *précarité de l'emploi.*

vii Although work can be considered a much broader concept than labour, we have used the terms interchangeably, reflecting the dominant way in which work is understood; as paid labour.

We were told many stories like this, with people moving from job to job in a range of insecure roles. Almost nobody who we spoke to enjoyed a permanent contract, reflecting the national picture of a volatile employment situation, and the loss of temporary jobs following the 2008 crash.[viii] Even when people have been working for the same firm for many years, they are often still on short-term contracts:

"Yes, he [my husband] is working, he's working. He has been in that company for seven years, with a contract of works and services[ix]… but he has been working there for seven years [she laughs ironically]. And the salary is very low" (Pilar, 46, Bon Pastor)

This short-term contract denies Pilar's husband the benefits associated with a permanent contract, yet the fact that he has remained working for this organisation for so long, despite the conditions, demonstrates how the balance of power is weighted in favour of the employer. A further example of the conditions that people are often forced to accept is around the amount, and regularity of pay:

"My husband was two years unemployed, and he had always worked in construction. And of course, he couldn't find a job… Now he's working. He's underpaid, but he's working. At the moment, look, it's the 4th and he hasn't been paid yet. And we don't know when…

I: He doesn't get paid on time?

…He never gets paid before the 10th, more or less. Every month. And maybe a month he gets paid the 10th and gets only half of his salary.

I: He gets paid half?

Yes, and later they paid the rest. You cannot count on the money, you cannot count on it." (Dolores, 46, Spanish, Besòs-Maresme)

Dolores begins here to touch on one of the main effects of precarious employment – the inability to count on what you may get from month to month, and therefore be able to plan. Yet, to argue against these conditions may entail the risk of losing the job altogether. People in Besòs have few, if any, resources to fall back on should they experience a shock such as job or housing loss, meaning that precariousness could very easily become sustained poverty. In these circumstances an insecure job is often preferable than the alternative of no job at all.

viii Data show that in 2016 26.1% of dependent employment in Spain was temporary, one of the highest of any OECD countries. This makes for a much more volatile employment situation. For example, in 2010 OECD estimated that 85% of the jobs lost in Spain following the financial crash were temporary. See: Standing, G. (2011) The Precariat: The new dangerous class. London: Bloomsbury, p. 35; and OECD (2018), Temporary employment (indicator). doi: 10.1787/75589b8a-en (Accessed on 30 May 2018)

ix A contract of works and services is a temporary contract which is a contract established for the provision of a service different to the activity of the company. The implementation of this type of contract has an unknown duration but should be limited to a maximum time of three years (European Youth Portal (2014) Types of work contracts in Spain. http://europa.eu/youth/es/article/58/21216_en (Accessed 30th May 2018)).

Precarious homes

However, the lived experience of precarity in Eix Besòs is wider-reaching than just employment and seeps into many aspects of people's lives. One key domain where precarity is experienced and amplified is through housing, which is often insecure, unaffordable, and/or inadequate.

For example, Algol, 51, was born in the Dominican Republic and came to Spain 19 years ago to participate in an international artisan fair and to share his skills in cutting precious stones, especially amber. He decided to stay because he felt that Spain offered him a better chance of life. For some time his hopes were fulfilled but he was deeply affected by the economic crisis:

"What happened is that in Spain, at least in the construction industry, the field that I used to work in, was going well. And then construction, real estate … fell apart. And that's one of the reasons why I've lost the flat. There's no work, and I owned one of the flats. And since I was out of a job, I couldn't keep paying it. And since I didn't pay, the bank kept it. They kept the flat and I kept a debt."[x]

Algol explains that although the bank now own the flat that was previously his, he has been able to remain in the flat, but in a state of limbo:

"The flat was mine, but now it's the bank's. They keep me there, and they are supposed to make me pay a social rent, but they haven't said anything to me in two years and a half, you see. So anytime they want to kick me out of it, they can - any time they want." (Algol, 51, Ciutat Meridiana)

Precariousness can also be defined as "a state in which (perceived) exposure to an adverse event is increased".[68] Algol has a house, but his tenure is not secure; he recognises that at any time he may be 'kicked out', yet he doesn't know how or when this might happen. Algol lacks power over his housing situation, and lives with the threat of homelessness. Many people explain that they or their neighbours have had to resort to 'squatting', either homes that they previously owned or homes from which other people have been evicted. Clara and her husband are from a Gypsy family in Besòs i el Maresme. After they were married they needed a home of their own but due to unemployment few options were affordable to them. They found an empty flat 'with an empty door' which they and their four year old son moved into. However, as with many vacant flats, the kitchen and water pipes had been destroyed by the bank to ward off possible squatters. They lived in these conditions for a year and a half.

Many people we spoke with, both renters and squatters, are living with the looming threat of eviction and often rising debts as they struggle to pay for their housing:

x In Spain, when homeowners can't make their payments the bank takes the house and the once-owner keeps 40 percent of the debt. Therefore, the individual is rendered jobless, homeless, and an average €80,000 in debt, according to Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca (PAH). In addition to the 40 percent, the former homeowner must also pay legal fees and interest on the debt. See: https://www.barcelona-metropolitan.com/features/no-place-like-home---squatters-dilemma-in-barcelona/

"[Rent prices are] super expensive, super expensive. Very expensive. If I have to live far from Barcelona, then for me it's hard to work, to look for a job. Here, I can look for a job more easily but then I have problems paying the rent. And now 'my boss' told me that he will raise the rent or if not I should find another flat." (Sayd, 38, Pakistani, Besòs-Maresme)

Sayd refers to his landlord as 'the boss', a term that suggests that this is another area of life where he feels like someone else has power and control over him, leading him to feel sick and depressed. In 2017, rent in Catalunya increased by an average of 10%. At €12.39 per square metre, rent prices are 52% higher than the figure for Spain as a whole.[69]

Precarious employment means that many people in Eix Besòs are having to spend the majority of their income on housing costs. Nouver is 43 and originally from Armenia. She lives with her daughter in Bon Pastor and was having to spend €700 of her €900 monthly income on mortgage repayments - she is thankful she was able to negotiate a lower 'social rent'[xi] with the bank to enable her to retain her home.

xi In some cases, such as Sahar's, the banks allowed people who were unable to negotiate, and who may have otherwise had their homes repossessed to remain in their flats in return for a "social rent" (often thanks to the mediation of social or housing services). In addition, some low-income home-owners who were unable to afford their mortgage were able to negotiate a reduction of their monthly mortgage payment in exchange for their bank extending the duration of their mortgage payment (up to 40 years, in some cases).

Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca (PAH) (Platform for People Affected by Mortgages)

PAH is a Spanish grassroots organization that takes direct action to stop evictions and campaigns for housing rights. The PAH was set up in Barcelona in February 2009 and now has 150 branches across Spain. It has been instrumental in pushing banks to negotiate 'social rents' with owners of properties who cannot pay their mortgage. It was established in response to the 2008 financial crisis that triggered the bursting of the Spanish housing bubble. The platform uses civil disobedience and direct action to stop evictions by calling on its members to gather at the door of the homes of people who have been served with eviction notices and preventing law enforcement officers from entering and carrying out the eviction. PAH has prevented over 1135 evictions in the city.[70]

However, precariousness and unequal power relations are not simply in the threat, or experience, of eviction and homelessness; they also exist in people's housing conditions. Tenants frequently describe problems with poor electrics, damp, broken appliances, coldness, blocked drains, and overcrowding, among other issues, which sometimes present risks to health and safety. For instance, Karima, a young Bangladeshi mother of two children in Besòs i el Maresme explains that:

"I don't like this building because it has a lot of humidity and my daughter suffers from bronchitis. Every winter she gets sick and I need to take her to the hospital and she has to stay there… the room is too small and we don't have enough space. We only have one bed where we sleep and nothing else".

For Karima, as with many parents we spoke to, the consequences of poor housing are particularly painful when it was something that they could see their children having to endure as well as themselves. Housing conditions are also a safety concern for some, fuelled in part by instances and stories of harm caused, such as a fire in an apartment in El Besòs i el Maresme in 2016 which killed two children.

Remaining residents of the Casas Baratas in Bon Pastor who have yet to move into the new apartments, are particularly prone to telling stories of poor housing conditions. Pili currently lives in one of the Casas Baratas with her two young children and elderly mother, which she refers to as "A playmobil house". The house is scarcely more than 40 square metres, and she describes their living situation as 'a little bit like Tetris' trying to fit everyone and everything in. Moreover, there are serious problems with dampness, with their clothes ending up rotten despite airing the house every day, even in winter. She worries about her children's health and is looking forward to being rehoused in the new flats that have been built in the neighbourhood. Yet this brings its own worries:

"I am afraid to know how much I will have to pay for the rent. I have applied to get into the draw for one of those flats, but later we will have to see if we are going to be able to pay it."

Pili is being to forced to move as her home is being destroyed but she is insecure because she does not know what will be expected in terms of rent when she moves to her new home. While the new flats in Bon Pastor have created better housing conditions, the development and regeneration has also been associated with change, instability and unpredictability.

In summary, many residents in Eix Besòs are facing multiple forms of precarity including unemployment, underemployment, housing insecurity, and debt, which often compound each other. For many people, the economic and housing crises triggered or compounded experiences of precarity, the impacts of which are still rippling through their lives and communities.

Getting by

In the face of poverty and precarity, the people of Eix Besòs are far from passive. They are finding many and varied ways to survive and sometimes thrive in the face of often very challenging circumstances. These strategies include:

- Work-for-living, which consists of various forms of unpaid labour which people have to do to get by with very limited resources.
- Borrowing and lending, including entering into formal and informal debt.
- Informal labour through engaging in work which is not officially recognised, such as street-selling, cleaning and care work.
- Breaking the rules and engaging in criminal activity, such as theft.

Work-for-living

The most common way of managing precarity is through the fastidious management of limited and unpredictable resources. It has been argued[71] that a key feature of the precariat is 'work-for-labour'; activities such as form filling, queuing, commuting in search of jobs, commuting to job training. However, people in Eix Besòs can also be seen to have an increased burden in 'work-for-living'; the additional work which they put in to managing everyday life with limited resources. In wellbeing terms this may be understood as the extra work that it takes to achieve the quality of life or capabilities as someone who is not living precariously, for example the work of feeding oneself and one's family.

For instance, Mendez (see next page) relies on fastidious management of money and food to be able eat; the convenience of ordering a "tele pizza" is completely unthinkable to him. Mendez' situation is not uncommon and many people told us of the work that goes into finding the cheapest shops, for clothing and food. Some of the 'work-for-living' also involves traveling to find the cheapest options:

"My daughter's friends laugh at me because I'm always looking for the offers. I go where the offers are. I take the shopping trolley and I go to Santa Coloma…I look for the offers, and I go shopping where the offers are. I don't stay in the neighbourhood." (Antonio, 47, Bon Pastor)

Antonio makes a joke of how he travels around looking for offers but it is clear that he is putting in a lot of work to mange to support himself and his family.

Getting by and working to survive: Mendez's story

Mendez, a man in his late 50s, has lived in Besòs i el Maresme for five years with his son and they struggle to get by on a combination of social security and his son's salary. Mendez did not always live in such challenging circumstances. He explains mournfully that 10 years ago he was in charge of a construction company employing more than 10 people, he owned a house, went on vacation and *"didn't have financial problems"*. This all came crashing down when he discovered that his business partner and financial manager had been cheating him and the business collapsed. As this was during the financial crisis Mendez struggled to get another job in the construction industry, often doing work which he wasn't paid for. He lost his home and ended up living in his van and says he felt, "*destroyed, very nervous, very bad*". At the behest of his son he ended up going to social services for financial and psychological support.

He is doing better now and living with his son in an apartment in Besòs i el Maresme but they have struggled to pay the mortgage of €438 as their income was until recently only €409, and there are clearly other costs to consider. Although improved, their financial situation means that there is still a very fine line between them being able to eat and not:

"I go to the fruit shop where they sell a bag of fruit for 0,50 cents. [laugh] They sell, apples… They do this offer; a bag of apples or a bag of bananas for only 0,50 cents. So, I buy fruit to make juices…maybe it will have one which is bad, but it´s worth it! That´s how I do it, because I can´t put… [breaths] … I can´t prepare two meals a day; lunch and dinner.

So, there are some days, I have to prepare lunch and dinner with two euros.

I: With two euros? How do you do it?

Well, making soups, I make some pasta… pasta for four people, three euros. I have everything calculated. It´s pasta with Roquefort cheese. The Roquefort will cost me three euros; the pack of pasta, not even one euro; the onion, 0,20 cents. So, three plus one plus 0,20. I have enough for two to make this pasta twice.

I: Sure.

You have to count everything. If I take two apples, three eggs, I can make a pie like this [he makes a circle the size of pizza with his hand] I don't buy sweets for my son, I make this pie, and we have desert for three or four days. For example, four chicken thighs I pay three euros in Mercadona, so with this I have meals for two days. I put the thighs with potato in the oven - that's dinner. When I can, I prepare with Jamon, with chickpeas, with bacon… I prepare a broth and I have food for two days.

Look, I can´t afford to call "tele pizza" it´s 20 euros! [laugh] I can´t spend 20 euros on pizza. With this money I filled the fridge."

Recently Mendez' benefits have been increased from €409 to €776 with the introduction of the RCG benefit[xii] from the Generalitat. Although shopping isn't so stressful with this additional income he doesn't feel that he can rely on this help indefinitely.

xii The Renta Minima Ciutadania is a benefit administered by the Generalitat de Catalunya which was established in September 2017. It is a benefit payment of between € 400 and € 500 that is given to unemployed people to cover basic living costs, although reports suggest that not all eligible people have been able to access this support (for example, see: https://www.elperiodico.com/es/sociedad/20181122/comision-renta-garantizada-exige-auditoria-sobre-incumplimientos-ley-7162605)

This 'work-for-living' is also experienced in other aspects of life. For example Perla, a Spanish single mother in Besòs i el Maresme tells how she and her daughter have to time their showers — one in the morning and one in the afternoon – as they can't afford to replace their main gas boiler:

"They repaired the boiler and then it broke down again and I was like, 'man, I'm not paying 150 euros again'. I put in a 30-litre heater and I haven't had gas for a year and a half. Showers, five minutes but super low water bills!… [My daughter] showers in the morning, I shower in the afternoon… because in the middle of the shower you are frozen. I had radiators and heating but I took it to the junkyard for 85 euros in order to buy food. This is the kind of help you're looking for all by yourself."

Perla not only has to think about when she can shower and how long for but also talks of looking for help 'all by herself', to emphasise the struggle that she faces. Life is a constant juggle for many in Eix Besòs, constantly having to work out what they can sacrifice (i.e. heating, social life) for other essentials in life (i.e. being able to eat, providing children with school materials). Almost inevitably, when people are unable to make these trade-offs, and especially if they don't have a social network to rely upon, they start to experience debt and its associated problems.

As well as facing additional work to live with scarce resources, people often feel that their lack of resources itself, creates additional costs. This can be understood as a 'poverty premium', where they have to pay more for essential goods and services:[72]

"There are not many shops, actually. And they take advantage of it by raising prices. They can do it because there are people that cannot go elsewhere, who have no option but to do their shopping in the area." (Mira, 19, Spanish, Ciutat Meridiana)

People are struggling to do the best that they can with their money. Some people are able to travel, despite the increased work this requires. However, as Mira touches on here, for people who are less mobile, who cannot travel to access cheaper goods, they face increased costs and therefore their lives are even more precarious. There is a similar poverty premium that exists around utilities:

"O: Do you have gas?

No, I have butane, these butane cylinders, you know? The majority of people of Bon Pastor have them; just a few people have the city gas."
(Carla, 45, Spanish, Bon Pastor)'

The use of bottled gas, which is more expensive than piped gas, is more common in parts of the city with poor housing.[73] It is not a 'one-off' poverty premium but a constant expense which can significantly drain the resources of those at the bottom of the income scale. The experience of constantly struggling to make ends meet, and the effort required to manage the precarious situations in which so many find themselves, is emotionally and physically draining. We found many residents become agitated and visibly upset when telling us about their lives. Some spoke with a sense of despair about living daily with poverty, and how it leaves room for nothing else:

"I'm not thinking about that at the moment, I'm thinking about my life. You know, the thing is, when you are happy, you can think about other things. But when you are not happy, you only think: 'Where am I going to take my family?' Because I don't have a job. This is the thing."
(Fénix, 38, Nigerian, Ciutat Meridiana)

As Fénix expresses, when people experience scarcity, the extra 'work-for-living' that they have to do comes with a cost, the psychological effect of reducing 'bandwidth' or cognitive ability, meaning that capacities can be reduced for other activities.[74]

Borrowing, lending and debt

Almost everyone that we spoke to who has experienced precarious employment and income has turned to borrowing from family, friends and sometimes 'money lenders' to meet their needs.

Lending and mutual aid within families is a vital and major way in which people manage precarity in their lives. For instance, Sayd from Besòs i el Maresme has an on-and-off construction job and, since his family moved to Barcelona from Pakistan, he has struggled to "make it to the end of the month". He relies on support from his brother who gives him €200-300 each month. Similarly Lucrecia, who is in her late 40s and from a Spanish

Gypsy family moved to Besòs i el Maresme with her husband to care for her parents-in-law: "we always helped each other… my parents-in-law too, they have always believed in us". Often people were only able to obtain work because of a family member or friend who gave them a job or helped them to secure employment.

There is also a high level of mutual support within families - with people sharing homes with their children into adulthood, or living with adult siblings, and sometimes their children as well, in order to pool resources. Indeed Spain has high rates of households with multiple generations living together.[75]

Such support based on familial and kinship ties have long been a predominant feature of Spanish society and have shaped the way welfare services are provided.[76] While this is a very common and often essential mechanism for survival, the assumption that families will meet social needs bring with it particular disadvantages for those who lack familial support. In particular, those without a family safety net may be forced to rely on borrowing from formal sources, such as money lenders and banks, which can be more costly sources of support.

"Many people are making a living [low voice] … as moneylenders. A big fish that eats a small one and I don't want to judge, God forgive me, but they make me so angry." (Clarisa, 54, Spanish, Bon Pastor)

Many people said that they had fallen into debt with a range of creditors, including energy companies, schools, social services, local shops and, most commonly, the banks. These debts are 'burdens' to carry which sometimes bring stress and anxiety.

A reliance on family support also tends to place a disproportionate burden on women who are more likely to take up caring and solidarity responsibilities.[77] Many of the women in Eix Besòs experience a type of 'time squeeze'. For instance, Julia is a young mother, originally from Honduras, who lives in Besòs i el Maresme and juggles caring for her four children with looking for paid work:

"Look, yesterday I went to a house cleaning job and I asked if I could start at half past ten, because I have to take the kids to school, she says "no, no, you can leave, there is no such schedule". Man, you feel bad because you're looking for work and the schedule you're looking for… Imagine my son gets sick and I can't leave him in another house because everyone works. I begged my son's father for so long to come and he didn't want to come."

Julia's account exemplifies how the experience of precarity for women in Besòs is accentuated by the competing demands of unpaid caring labour and employment. This is particularly true of immigrant women, who are more likely to rely on informal domestic labour for their family income. In addition, a lack of affordable or accessible childcare for young children in the neighbourhoods was frequently highlighted as a barrier to work for women, both while their children are young and then in terms of re-entry to work once they start school.

Informal labour

Informal labour is characterised by work undertaken by an individual outside the regularised economy – in this 'grey market', people do not benefit from an employment contract, sick leave or holiday pay. Neither the worker nor their employer pays tax (and so the worker does not accrue welfare entitlements) and employers can evade health and safety and other regulations. It is estimated that the informal or unreported economy in Spain is estimated to be worth around 20% of Spain's GDP and it expanded while the recorded GDP fell following the crisis.[78] For the people of Eix Besòs, this means work activities such as cleaning and care work, metal collection and recycling on the street, selling new and second-hand goods in markets and on the street, and working more hours than contracted.

For example, Clarisa relies on a mixture of informally selling things to her neighbours and local businesses, some welfare support, energy theft and debt to meet the needs of her and her family. Similarly, when Denébola 51, from Bon Pastor, came to meet us with she brought a pushchair filled with socks and underwear and explained that, "I always take something with me, to try to sell it to get some money for food. Some days I earn €15, other €200… What else am I supposed to do?" Among those willing to discuss their experience of informal labour it is usually portrayed as an option of last resort and desperation.

Residents are often more comfortable speaking about the involvement of their neighbours and other people in the community in the informal economy. Such activity is often described in a negative or fearful way, with concern for the reputation that this brings the neighbourhood. Eustaquia, originally from Peru, who lives in Besòs i el Maresme explains what she doesn't like about her neighbourhood:

"Because, they go with those trolleys and collect scrap metal and this doesn't look like a neighbourhood of Barcelona… this reminds me of a neighbourhood in Ecuador…do you understand me?" (Eustaquia, 40, Peruvian, Besòs i el Maresme)

Estaquia believes that people who make a living in this way would benefit from more education and training to access formal labour.

For others, informal labour is problematic because it prevents the fair allocation and distribution of welfare assistance. For instance, Anais, a 47 year-old woman from Ecuador who now lives in Besòs i el Maresme, explains that in her view, "there are some people who really don't need the help but they still ask for it… and they also work on the black market". She goes on to describe one family in particular in which:

"The husband has a good job position and he is earning like €1,500 per month and it's not understandable that they also have a help for paying the rent. And she [the wife] is working in the black market. If they do an inspection she will get caught. She is working from 2pm to 7/8pm and she is earning 700 euros. Her elder son is also working. In that house they are earning like 3000 euros."

According to Anais people come to Besòs i el Maresme because it is viewed as a neighbourhood in which it is easier to get support. However, Anais is by no means alone in feeling that this support is unfairly distributed, especially where people are also earning from informal labour, undetected by social services. This sense of unfairness – of not playing by the same rules - is one source of tension between neighbours.

The Manteros of Barcelona

In Barcelona, the term 'Manteros' has slipped into usage in recent years to describe unlicensed street sellers working in Barcelona's tourist areas. The word '*mantero*' (derived from 'manta', the Spanish word for blanket) is used to describe the sellers, who usually spread their wares of replicas of branded designer products such as shoes and handbags on blankets in the streets of Barcelona. The majority of these Manteros are male undocumented migrants, and mostly from West Africa (with the largest number from Senegal).[79] These men are among the growing number of undocumented refugees and migrants who arrive on the shores of Spain each year, with scarce options for employment.[80]

Around 84% of Manteros live in Barcelona, with the majority having lived there for around 4 years.[81] Besòs Maresmse is one neighbourhood where communities of Manteros are known to share flats and store materials, often in overcrowded conditions. Due to their undocumented status, many live in squatted apartments without the rights afforded by a rental contract.[82]

Manteros typically work in groups, and there is a supportive dynamic amongst sellers[83] They are highly visible in the most touristy parts of the city, and are often seen coming into contact with the *Guardia Urbana* - local police who are ordered to confiscate goods and make arrests.[84] Manteros are increasingly criminalised, with a reform to the law in 2015 now meaning that selling counterfeit goods can result in a prison sentence of up to two years.[85] SOS Racisme Catalunya is one of the groups speaking out against what it calls the 'excessive and sometimes violent repression against street vendors' and the 'hunting of the undocumented'[86].

There has more recently been a fight-back against the criminalisation of Manteros. The '*Sindicato Popular de Vendedores*' (Popular Syndicate of Sellers) was recently formed as a union of Manteros aiming to put pressure on the council to support their working rights and reduce the use of police violence against them. The syndicate's slogan is 'survival is not a crime'.

Making ends meet through informal labour: Clarisa's story

Clarisa, 54, is one of the few willing to speak openly about her own informal labour. She is a gypsy originally from Portugal and now living in Bon Pastor. She struggles to cover her family's basic needs: *"When I arrive on the fifteenth day, I have nothing and I pay for everything in dribs and drabs"*. She is illiterate and her husband lost his construction job and has been suffering from depression for a long time since. Despite these challenges she didn't want to ask for help, *"I was trying to get ahead by myself, to fight; if other people can I can too."*

For five years she worked in a restaurant in La Maquinista and in order to fulfil the orders she had to practice all the recipes at home first, so she knew what to put in each meal even though she couldn't read the tickets. She used to supplement this income from going to San Pedro Pescador, a small town north of Barcelona with several orchards, to pick apples, peaches and pears.

Now, as she is unable to leave her husband and 10 year old son for long periods, she relies on selling things to her neighbours or to the local Chinese bar as well as drawing some welfare benefits. She taps electricity and water and is four months behind on her rent. Clarisa and her family often have to go without; she can't afford to pay her son's football sessions and has been unable to afford a holiday for 37 years. This has a significant impact on her wellbeing: *"Do you know how I feel? I have a tight knot here [she point the chest], my soul is hurting, but I have to be strong"*.

"I was trying to get ahead by myself, to fight; if other people can I can too."

Breaking the rules

As well as turning to informal and illegal work for income, people also sometimes resort to other forms of rule breaking, such as theft, to meet their needs. A minority of people told us that they themselves steal to get by, most commonly the tapping of gas and electricity. For instance, Alkaid who is 34, Spanish, and lives in Bon Pastor with his three children steals fuel to make ends meet:

"I have no problem in someone coming to see my place. I'm not ashamed to say that I tap into the utility line of electricity and gas. I just can't pay it. And when I go to the social worker, she tells me she can't help me because I'm working. So we live with €700 a month. But under those circumstances they shouldn't be surprised if I sell drugs, steal or do something like that. What should I do? Sit down and hope for the best? I have three children, and I asked a lot for benefits and I don't get them."

Alkaid feels that his financial situation and the lack of support that she is receiving from social services justifies his actions if it is in order to support her children.

While very few people are willing to admit that they have resorted to illegal activities to survive, many people talk about problems of theft, robbery and drug-dealing in the neighbourhoods, albeit usually acknowledging the economic situation which drives the behaviour. Laura who is 25, Spanish, and lives in Bon Pastor with her husband and two children. The main thing she would like to see in the neighbourhood is reduced drug-dealing but that for this, "more well paid jobs are needed, and that's missing". People also told us about being the victim of theft or mugging in their own neighbourhood, such as Samia, Moroccan woman in her mid-thirties who lives in Besòs i el Maresme and whose phone was violently robbed by three women who surrounded her. The Facebook group of Bon Pastor is often used to share information about belongings which having been stolen, asking people to keep an eye out for lost possessions.

Clearly a minority of residents of Eix Besòs resort to rule-breaking to make ends meet and to manage precarious livelihoods. While this can feel necessary for those struggling with limited resources, it also has real and negative consequences for trust, and the sense of safety and cohesion within these communities.

The effects of precarity

As the experiences of Mendez and Clarisa and others show, precarity has far-reaching implications for how people are able to live, In particular, issues of poor physical and/or mental health and wellbeing frequently arise in conversation as a direct consequence of the strain under which people are living. In some cases this is directly related to living conditions:

"My house has a problem of dampness... It has been happening for two or three years… My children had pneumonia twice last year. My daughter is already getting bronchitis, and she needs to take a special medical treatment for the whole winter to prevent this sickness." (Pili, 34, Bon Pastor)

Pili directly relates her children's poor health to the problem of damp in her house. She has asked the council's housing department to help but was just told to clean the house with water and lye, something that she knows is not a lasting solution. Others relate poor physical and mental health directly to their financial situation, such as Jazmin, a young Spanish woman living in Bon Pastor, who is "always stressed, checking out if they have paid me the Plan Prepara."[xiii] These stories chime closely with the findings of a study of the impact on health of the economic crisis in Spain. Gili at al., used data on patients attending Primary Care Centres in Spain in 2006-07 and 2010-11, before and during the economic crisis. Data show a significantly increased frequency of mental health disorders and alcohol abuse, particularly among families experiencing unemployment and mortgage payment difficulties.[87]

In some cases, families experience material poverty because of health issues, such as Azas in Besòs i el Maresme who is unable to work because he has an illness in his stomach: "for a family, which is in poverty, which is my situation. I can say this, but it´s really hard to accept it. Before I was fine, and now due to my sickness my family is in a real bad shape". Azad and his wife, in their early 40s, are originally from Pakistan and his wife is unable to speak Castilian or Catalan which means she cannot work. For this family, as with many others, the experience of being immigrants brings with it additional challenges, such as not speaking the language or not knowing the 'right' people to ask for help when needed. Indeed, statistics show that the crisis had a particularly negative impact on immigrants as well as lower qualified male workers.[88][xiv] Precarious work has also affected many people's immigration status. During the crisis and because of the precarious employment they experienced, family members, especially women and children, went back to live in the countries they were born in. While they sometimes returned to reunify with family members, usually male spouses/fathers, who had stayed in Spain, the precarious work and income status of the people who remained means that returning family members cannot always access legal documentation to live in Spain. Nazir, for instance, who is 46 and from Pakistan, explains that his work is not officially recognised and therefore his wife "doesn't have the legal documents to be here".

Experiences of precarity and poverty have forced people to give up certain aspects of their daily lives,[xv] particularly their social lives. Many residents of Eix Besòs often feel like they have to prioritise the essentials and are unable to pay for any extras; they cope by surviving at a subsistence level, as we saw in the case of Mendez's. All too often this results in social exclusion and isolation:

"In the street, nobody talks to me. In some places, yes, but for example, coming here to talk to you or to talk to the social worker, this is not "having a social life" … social life is, when you have your mind free! It´s when your kids are dressing good clothes, not the one from the Chinese store… do you know what I mean? (Azad, 41, Pakistani, Besòs-Maresme)

Azad touches here on his experience of social exclusion; of being unable to fully participate in the kinds of activities which are considered 'normal', or at least broadly accepted as standard in wider society.[89] He goes on to talk about how this is particularly hard when it is his children who suffer from not having enough:

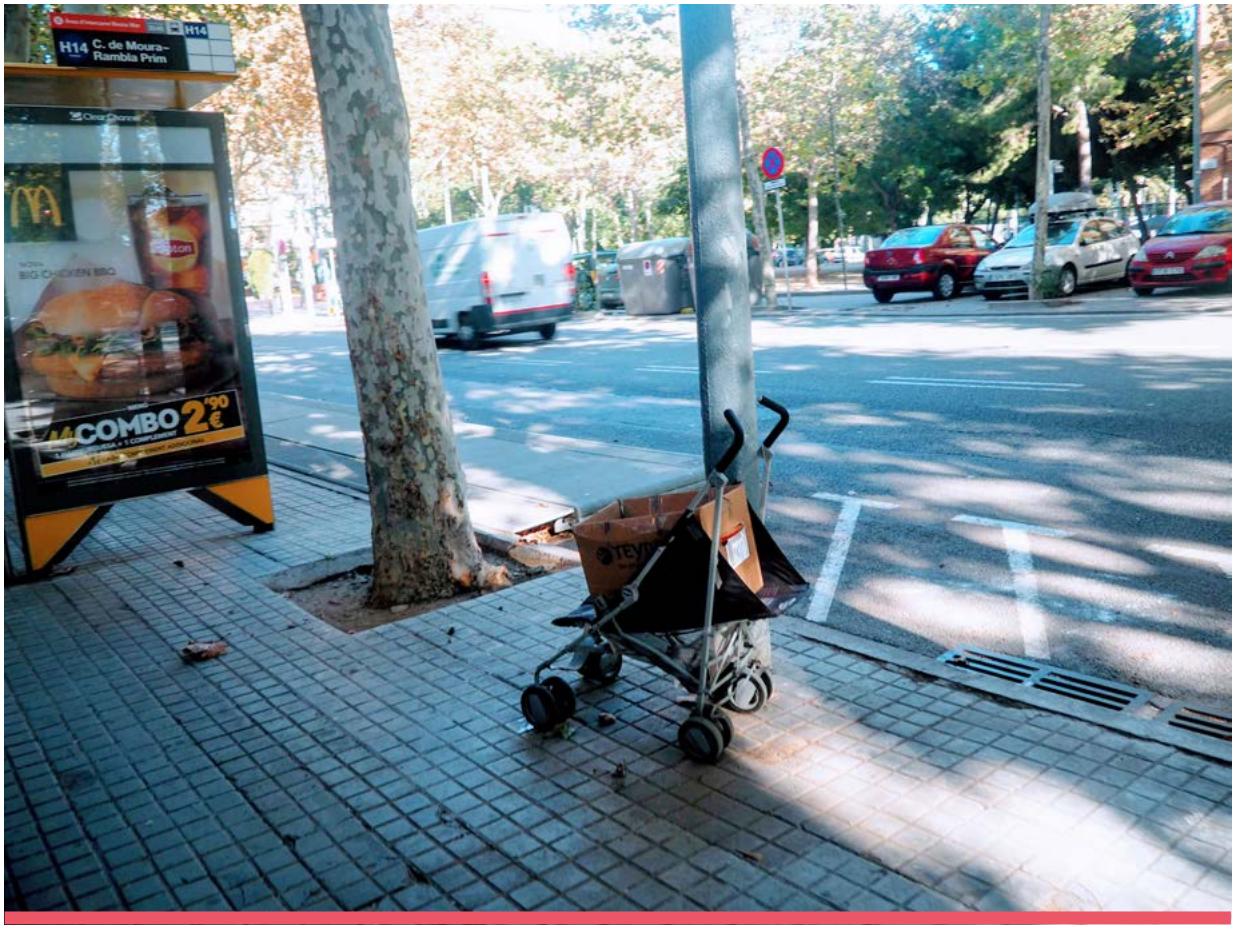
xiii 'Plan Prepara' is an unemployment welfare policy in Spain – recipients receive a monthly payment of up to €450, conditional on their attendance of employment training sessions.

xiv In 2016, the unemployment rate among the Spanish foreign-born population was 27% compared with 19% among Spanish-born citizens.

xv Amartya Sen, in his capabilities approach directly relates wellbeing to people's ability to be and do. These beings and doings, which Sen calls 'functionings', together constitute what makes a life valuable. Functionings include working, resting, being literate, being healthy, being part of a community, being respected, and so forth. (Sen, A. (1999) Development as Freedom. Oxford; Oxford University Press).

"We can't go out. In seven years, I haven't been able to take them for a walk, not even in the "Chinese neighbourhood" [The Raval], in the city centre... I never take them to las Ramblas, Maremagnun. You know why? Because if I do, they will ask me to eat in McDonald's and it costs 30 euros. How can it be? When they see it, they ask for it… For example, when we pass by a toy store our daughters always ask for a game, but we can never buy it."

For Azad, like many other people we spoke to, his financial precariousness is curtailing his ability to have a social life and to actively participate in society. He feels that because he cannot provide for his children, he is unable to live with dignity and this affects his "conscience". Precarity, whether of income or housing, affects many interconnected aspects of life for people in Besòs and goes beyond material poverty to affect people's sense of health, wellbeing and societal and community participation.



The burden of poor health: Camila's story

Camila is 53 years old and has lived with her partner Narciso (55) in Besòs-Maresme for eight years. They like living in the area as there are a lot of shops, services, transport connections and parks nearby. Camila and Narciso also feel that there is good harmony between people of different ethnicities and cultures in Besòs-Maresme.

However, Camila and Narciso do have a concern: drugs. They see drugs are being sold in their neighbourhood and do not like to take their dog to the park because of the syringes littered on the floor. Parents they know do not like taking their children to the park for the same reason. They have reported the issue to local police but feel nothing is being done about it.

Both Camila and Narciso have illnesses meaning they cannot work. In the past two months, Camila has had several operations; she is on dialysis and waiting for a kidney transplant. She also has chronic pain. Sometimes it hurts so much she cannot move. According to the local government Camila is '74% disabled' which determines the amount of support she can receive. Narciso suffers from severe depression, and multiple, chronic physical health problems. He is reliant on medical equipment to help his breathing. Camila talks about the difficulty of both of their illnesses and that 'when one of us is fine the other one is not fine'.

While the couple have a pension, Camila and Narciso owe seven months' rent and struggle to make the repayments along with their other household expenses. The stress of being in debt makes Camila anxious: "you know the anxiety I have at night that I can't sleep because I owe the rent… and it's a lot of money". The couple does not receive monthly benefits but get support for cleaning and caring for 3.5 hours a week. They also received a small grant for refurbishing their bathroom to make it more accessible for Narciso and on occasion they have received food vouchers. Camila and Narciso applied for B-MINCOME but were unsuccessful. They think B-MINCOME will be a positive contribution to the lives of people in their area and to the neighbourhood more broadly; "this could give life to that person and that person would give life to the neighbourhood".

"this [B-MINCOME] could give life to that person and that person would give life to the neighbourhood".

SECTION 2: SOCIAL (IN)SECURITY

As well as getting by through informal means, almost everyone we spoke to is currently or had previously received support from the state in the form of social security or assistance. For many individuals and families, the benefits that they receive, from both national government and regional authorities, are invaluable:

"[The Solidarity Card] helps a lot. Now we can pay for the school dining room and school materials. Before, we couldn´t pay for all the materials and the school was always calling us, to say that. For this reason, the children couldn't go on the field trips or excursions… And we're also doing well for food, because I used to go to the supermarket saying: 'What am I going to buy?', and I was always looking for the cheapest product. The boy wants one thing, and you can't buy what he wants as it is too expensive. So, now, I can buy what they want, not what we can buy them." (Samia, 34, Moroccan, Besòs-Maresme)

For Samia, a 34 year-old Moroccan woman who lives with her husband and four children, the receipt of the Solidarity Card has reduced her work-for-living and will in turn allow her to focus on other aspects of life. However, this form of social assistance from the council, which consists of one hundred euros monthly per child for about nine months each year, is often the only difference between existing precariously and falling into destitution.

For many people the current welfare system is not working as well as it could. Rather than providing a reliable safety net or spring-board to education or employment, it seems that the current system itself sometimes engenders forms of precarity, insecurity and frustration in people's lives.

Figure 6: Family in Ciutat Meridiana

Work-for-support: navigating complexity and bureaucracy in the welfare state

The type of support that is available and the processes for accessing it are broadly perceived as complex and opaque, compounded by a system that is rigid and bureaucratic in the way it responds to people's individual needs.

For many people the sheer array of different benefits that they may, or may not, be entitled to is quite overwhelming. In some cases people 'have no idea' what support is available to them and they hear about particular benefits or sources of support informally, which they would not otherwise have known about:

"And there's people who go to the social worker to get some vouchers to buy meat. And if their kids go barefoot they can buy them shoes. And I had to tell the social worker about the vouchers, because a friend of mine told me about them. Otherwise the social worker wouldn't have told me about them. Even though I have been going to the social worker for several years."(Acrux, 59, Spanish, Besòs-Maresme)

It is unclear whether people feel that this information is being withheld or whether the system is so complex that even social services are not always aware of everything that different individuals are entitled to. In any case, some people, especially those with more social connections and language skills, clearly have more information than others about the availability of social assistance and how best to access it.

Awareness of what is available is only the first hurdle to overcome. Many people describe getting welfare support from the state as hard work, demanding the investment of considerable time and emotional labour. The most generous and protective benefits (prestación de desempleo) are available for people who have worked and contributed to social security for at least a year and are designed to cover a 'gap' between jobs, and hence only provided for up to two years.[xvi] As Sol, a 34, year old woman from a gypsy family in Bon Pastor puts it, "if you apply for a benefit now, they will analyse your income and contributions from last year". In the face of increasingly precarious, unreliable and often undocumented labour options, many people are having to do a great deal of unrecognised labour to access and claim welfare benefits, or are failing to access support altogether[xvii]

For people trying to access social support in Eix Besòs, the welfare system is often experienced as overly bureaucratic and there is a huge amount of 'work' that people have to put in. People report struggling to access the welfare system; they talk of the administrative burden of proving eligibility for benefits. Algol, a Dominican man in his early 50s has been frustrated by the time spent on attempting to contact services which are unable to cope with demand:

"We also came here, to the Social Services … and they gave us a number to call. But the thing is that I call and no answer … It's always like the phone is busy, you know? ... And I went there another time, and they don't give you an appointment; they give you a number to call and that doesn't work."

Algol's experience demonstrates an 'empathy gap' – he does not feel listened to or supported in a human way, and having to repeatedly make phone calls which remain unanswered reflects a devaluing of his time, and therefore a devaluing of him. Others, however, find the system so complex that they do not really even know where to go or who to speak to for support:

"I always ask the assistant of Caritas [for aid].[xviii] And the assistant told me to come here as well. They told me I had to come here, to City Hall, and ask for an appointment, to talk to another assistant. But since I already had an assistant I didn't know if I had to be here or there; I couldn't be asking for the same aid here and there. But in Caritas they told me the regulation had changed, and if I live here now, I have to have social worker here." (Betelgeuse, 36, Honduran, Ciutat Meridiana)

xvi In addition, the overall level of welfare spending is relatively low in Spain despite the fact that it has the second highest level of unemployment in Europe after Greece. See: https://www.statista.com/statistics/268830/unemployment-rate-in-eu-countries/ & https://data.oecd.org/socialexp/social-spending.htm#indicator-chart

xvii Standing characterises this unrecognised labour as: *'work that does not have exchange value but which is necessary or advisable'* such as welfare systems which *'force claimants to go through ever more complex procedures to gain and retain entitlement to modest benefits'. See:* Precariat, p. 120

xviii Caritas Spain is the Catholic Church's official organisation in Spain for charity and social relief.

Similarly to Algol, Betelguese finds being sent to different places and finding the experience of accessing welfare both isolating and disorientating. Immigrants who are not proficient in Catalan or Castilian as well as Spanish people with low literacy, face an additional barrier when trying to navigate this system. The experience of a complex welfare system can be overwhelming - to the extent that some people can't face applying for benefits because they simply find the work that this involves too hard to do. This inevitably adds to their sense of precariousness and insecurity, rather than protecting against it.

It is also clear that finding a point of entry to the system is only the first hurdle. For many of the people the subsequent bureaucratic process of proving eligibility for benefits can be too complex to navigate:

"But to participate in the draw [for social housing], you have to do so many things, pfft, you have no idea!" (Flores, 21, Gypsy, Bon Pastor)

Flores talks here of the work of applying for social housing but this is a common experience across the range of benefits and support available. For some people the 'so many things' that are needed to participate are very challenging and proving eligibility for support is a common problem, especially given precarious experiences of employment and housing which can create additional barriers. For example Karima, a 31 year old Bangladeshi woman living in Besòs-Maresme with her two children, tells us how, in order to register to receive benefits, she needs to show proof of her address. Karima doesn't have any formal documentation showing that she lives there, even though she's been there since 2014, because her landlord had illegally occupied the flat and rented it to her under the presence that he was the owner. Her experience of insecure housing meant that she was unable to access the welfare support that her family needs.

For people in situations of precarious housing and employment, bureaucracy can be a disadvantage, because they are either ineligible for support or are unable to demonstrate that they fulfil all of the requirements. Laura, for example, from Bon Pastor recounts how she felt unsupported when her husband lost his job. They had recently had a baby and she had reduced her hours so they had a very low household income. They were given food aid (vouchers for the food bank) and she managed to increase her hours but they were still struggling. However, by the time social services processed her 'papers' they realized that her income had increased and therefore took away the food aid. At this point Laura comments how they "felt alone". Eventually Laura was able to get the Solidarity card for her daughter but this process wasn't easy:

"This year I have the Solidarity Card, a benefit that the city council provides. ***I had to do lots of paperwork to get it*** *but I did it. Due to the low income of my husband, he wasn't working many hours, that's why they gave it to us."*
(Emphasis added)

Fluctuating salaries make it even harder for people to access benefits; they may be entitled to them one week but not the next.

The bureaucratic puzzle also poses challenges on an ongoing basis and people often speak of losing benefits because they 'missed' deadlines or hadn't filled in the correct paperwork:

"I asked my social worker for the Solidarity Card, but she said I missed the deadline, but I asked for it in April, and it wasn't till June, so I think I was on time."
(Gladys, 41, Spanish, Bon Pastor)

This work can be even more challenging when it is balanced with other forms of work:

"Last year I had the Solidarity Card for all of my children. This year [2017] I received the first month, and then it was cancelled. I asked, and I've been informed that it was because my son wasn't registered in the Padronxix for two months… But I'm telling you, we never moved out. Same school, same flat… Same flat, same contract, but it seems that his NIExx is expired…but I work, and my boss doesn't allow me to... What should I do? Should I leave my job to go and re-issue it? But if I do, I will lose my job."
(Nazir, 46, Pakistan, Besòs i el Maresme)

Nazir struggles to balance the requirements of his job as a lorry driver with the work that he needs to do to claim welfare benefits. For many it is hard to know where to prioritise their time in order to get the best outcome for their family. This is another example of the 'time squeeze' facing those living in precarity.

When people are unable to access welfare support, or any other type of support, this can take an emotional toll on them. Pilar (46) from Bon Pastor has recently lost her disability benefit, despite having multiple disabilities. She is appealing against this decision:

"Well, now I keep fighting….I have gone to the lawyer, I have gone to the Catalan Employment Service and now I have an appointment with the Social Services…But sometimes the anger and the helplessness get to me [she starts crying]. But well, I have to keep going, and that's it."

Pilar hopes that in a year she may have a trial but her anguish is palpable and she and her family are facing a year of further uncertainty and anxiety.

Sometimes, though, the only way residents feel they can bridge the empathy gap experienced by people like Algol is to make clear the distress that their situation is causing. For instance, Carmen in Bon Pastor explained that "you really have to cry a lot so you can get it [benefits]". In situations like this, the experiences that people have in trying to access, and manage the requirements for the receipt of, benefits, can be experienced as further burden rather than as a relief or support.

When state welfare provision falls short, people are reliant on charities stepping in to meet their needs, such as that provided by Caritas and local food banks. Much of the response to rising poverty levels following the crisis was led by NGOs rather than the public sector[90]. For example, in Barcelona the number of people using food banks more than doubled between 2009 and 2011, from 57,000 to 118,000.[91] However, from our conversations with people there was a strong sense that some people, especially Spanish people who had suddenly become much poorer during the financial crisis, felt reluctant to claim this support due to the stigma associated with it, often waiting until crisis point to seek help.

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xix Empadronamiento (Padron) is a certificate given to justify that you live in Spain on a more or less permanent basis. This allows the local government to calculate how many people are living in an area and helps them to petition for grants to improve local facilities.

xx Número de Identificación de Extranjeros (NIE) is a Foreign Residency Number

The challenges of getting help: Zoe's story

Zoe is 34, originally from Bolivia, and has lived in Barcelona for over 12 years. She lives in Besòs i el Maresme with her two daughters aged six and four and her partner. Zoe moved to the neighbourhood from her previous apartment in a more central part of Barcelona (Urgell) about five years ago, due to the more affordable rent in the area. She likes the amount of trees in the neighbourhood, although she worries about the amount of drug use in her block, explaining that the aspect of her neighbourhood she likes least is, "the bad people who do drugs… sometimes they inject themselves no the stairs".

Even with her part time job (working 4 hours in the mornings and her partner is often out of work), Zoe often struggles to meet her monthly rent payments of €280 euros, plus bills each month. Whilst she thinks she might otherwise be eligible, she has been unable to apply for social housing because her youngest daughter and her partner do not have their residency permits, which is a requirement for social housing.

She has received some social assistance, although the amount was less than expected, due to a case of possible error within the administration:

"Yes, yes…there was some administrative error and they said I would receive two thousand euros but they only gave me one thousand and two hundred euros… I don't know…"

"Yes, yes…there was some administrative error and they said I would receive two thousand euros but they only gave me one thousand and two hundred euros… I don't know…"

The help lottery

In addition to the bureaucracy involved in accessing benefits, people's experiences of social services, and social workers in particular, are also complex and varied. A recent report on 'good' and 'bad' help[92] characterized 'good help' as that which "equips people to take positive action in their lives" whereas 'bad help' tries to fix things for people in the short term or encourages them to take action that fits with the services priorities and not their own."[93]

'Good help' is characterized as being flexible and relational,[94] something that Carla feels that her social worker in Bon Pastor offers as she always does "a little bit more" than required. However, for many, their experience lacks this relational element and would be more likely to be classified as 'bad help':

"When I go to Social Services, that is, when I have the visit with the social worker, there is no contact. She wants me to leave as soon as I arrive. She wants me to go, I mean, she won't let me tell her what I... you know what I mean? She doesn't allow me to talk and she says to me: "Do you have the card? Well, we can't do anything else for you," and that's it! Do you know what I mean? I mean, they haven't even listened to what I want to tell them… I mean, I don't feel listened to, when I go to the appointment I don't feel comfortable." (Altair, 32, Moroccan, Ciutat Meridiana)

Altair identifies a number of ways in which the (lack of) support from her social worker could be classed as ineffective. Firstly in not listening to Altair, the social worker may be providing solutions which are not suited to her actual problems. Secondly, this help is experienced by Altair as being 'done to' her. She feels that she is not listened to and her confidence is diminished in the face of support that feels more transactional than relational. Similarly, Laura, mother of two, from Bon Pastor, was angered by the suggestion from a social worker that her son could work as a model to ease the family's financial struggles: "being a model is a job, and he was just a baby". This reflects Altair's experience of feeling misunderstood and unheard. This type of support can reinforce inaction and dependency.[95]

There is also a sense that whether people receive good or bad help can be a matter of chance or 'luck', depending on the social worker that you get assigned to:

"I wasn't lucky with the first [social worker]. It was the first time I had gone, and the attention was really bad… I had problems with my flat, and nothing, they didn't help me at all… She even said she wasn't God. The social worker told me she wasn't God… Obviously, of course. But in those times that you are so in need, it's not what you want to hear." (Mari Carmen, 38, Spanish, Besòs i el Maresme)

Mari Carmen goes on to tell us how she was given a new social worker who she has found to be very helpful, again reinforcing that a warm, empathic relationship can transform the experience of accessing 'help'.

Aside from the perceived lottery of which social worker you will be allocated, the formal processes for determining whether people are entitled to various forms of support are also experienced as opaque. For example Pilar explains her understanding of the system for the allocation of social housing in Bon Pastor:

"So we have entered the social housing plan, and we are waiting for a flat. Till now, they haven't offered us any.

I: When did you ask for it?

Well, about a year ago.

I: And you haven't had an answer yet?

No, till now we haven't entered in any raffle nor have they informed us about a flat that we could get." (Pilar, 46, Spanish, Bon Pastor)

The uncertainty and lack of communication around help and welfare exacerbates feelings of insecurity and precariousness. The fact that elements of the welfare system operate as a 'raffle', which relies on chance rather than certainty or need, exacerbates this feeling of insecurity for people like Pilar; Not only can she not be sure of the outcome, but in addition any outcome she does get (i.e. a house) may not align with her own needs and priorities (i.e. to stay in her current

community). Flores, a young woman who grew up in Bon Pastor is experiencing the same concerns about being able to remain close to her friends and family:

"And then they don't give you the flat according to your neighbourhood, if you are drawn they can give you an apartment in another neighbourhood, maybe on the other side of the city ***and you can't say no.****" (Flores, 21, Gypsy, Bon Pastor)*

Both Flores and Pilar reflect the experience of help being 'done to' them. As with being unable to control how many hours you are able to work and when, not being in charge of how and when you move is disempowering and strips people of control and agency in their own lives.

The complexity of the system, the lack of transparency and accessible information, and the element of 'chance' that is felt to pervade the system contribute to a sense of unfairness. There is a persistent and pervasive narrative of injustice:

"You will always see me smiling but when I go to these places [welfare offices] I get mad because I see so much injustice. Or you can just ask yourself, 'if they are giving help to someone else, why didn't I get one as well?'" (Costa, 61, Spanish, Cuitat Meridiana)

There is a deep feeling that some people 'get' while others do not:

"I only ask for a food grant for my children to have lunch at school, so I can look for a job, or I ask for some of those benefits for families with children under 16, just until I find a job. I do all the right things and I get nothing. And then you see other people that do not really need the benefit and yet they get it. It does not make sense to me." (Pili, 34, Bon Pastor)

People often highlight families they have seen who both own certain 'types' of car – a frequently cited marker of wealth — and receive benefits, perceiving this as a sign of unfair allocation of benefits:

"And then there are people driving a sixty thousand euros car and they have houses and you think "this is not possible", their children eat and drink every day in the bars. And they gave them the cards from City Council… they have food subsidies, ***it's not fair****." (Clarisa, 54, Gypsy, Bon Pastor, emphasis added)*

It links back to the unpredictability of the decisions which social workers make regarding welfare allocation. When this type of story is contrasted with participant's own stories of having their cars stolen, break-down or repossessed, it is easy to see how this would be viewed with a strong sense of injustice. This sense of injustice of welfare resources contributes to feelings of tension and division at a community level.

SECTION 3: LIVING TOGETHER: COMMUNITIES OF EIX BESÒS

There are multiple and overlapping communities within and extending beyond Eix Besòs which are experienced in diverse ways by local people. Stories of good friends and neighbours who help each other out, local celebrations and festivities, and pride in civic activism contrast with narratives of tension, division and, at times, conflict between groups. Underlying this for many is a sense of, or fear of, loss of community and belonging.

A shared place

In all three neighbourhoods there are residents with a strong sense of belonging and pride in the place they live:

"It´s my neighbourhood and I think it is fantastic. I´m very proud of it." (Carla, 45, Spanish, Bon Pastor)

"When you go outside there are a lot of people, you can talk, you can sit with anyone, and there are many friends…" (Sayd, 38, Pakistan, Besòs i el Maresme)

"I know people, I mean, I talk to the neighbours. I trust them." (Altair, 32, Moroccan, Ciutat Meridiana)

Feelings of attachment to their neighbourhood are often underpinned by the presence of close and informal social connections, especially with family and friends. Despite high levels of immigration, there are many residents who have lived in the neighbourhood since birth, with ties across generations: "I have very nice relationships with my neighbours as well, they know me since I was girl, so I never had any problem." (Carla, 45, Spanish, Bon Pastor). These relationships help to tie people to each other and to the places they share together:

"Well, the truth is, it feels very familiar because I have a lot of family around here." (Pamela, Peruvian, 35 Besòs i el Maresme).

"The family…thank God I have the family close by. And the others…well… as I have been living here since I was so young I've known them for a long time and if I need anything they – the neighbours- would help me out." (Ana, Spanish, 35, Bon Pastor)

For some people, connections with friends and neighbours run so deep that there is little distinction between family and friends or neighbours:

"I get along with all my neighbours. There is an old lady who lives next to me and I love her as if she were my family". (Lucrecia, 47, Gypsy, Besòs i el Maresme).

"My children go into my neighbours' houses as if it were their own. They are offered a juice. Or they are asked to come in and say hello to everybody." (Pili, 34, Spanish, Bon Pastor)

Sharing of spaces, such as homes, and resources, from food and drink to tools and skills, helps to solidify these relationships and can help to build and reinforce lasting trusting relationships. This sense of intimate community emerged particularly strongly among those who live(d) in the 'casas baratas' in Bon Pastor. But on the whole, people largely coexist with each other well on a day-to-day basis in all three neighbourhoods. These 'fictive kinship' ties are also highlighted by the language used to describe people's relationships with each other; amongst gypsies in Eix Besòs (and elsewhere) the term 'cousin' is used to describe other gypsies as they are considered to be part of a wider 'clan'.

Multiple identities

Living in and belonging to the same place also gives rise to a sense of connection and shared identity; people in all the neighbourhoods enjoy broader relationships of 'conviviencia' – positively coexisting together – with neighbours:

"Yes, yes. We, the gypsies, are more to be with our family. But when we go out, of course we say hello and sometimes we talk, after all we are all from Bon Pastor, you know?" (Flores, 21, Gypsy, Bon Pastor, emphasis added)

Many people, albeit some more than others, bridge across apparent social difference (such as ethnicity or language) to form connections with people who are different to them in some way. In fact Barcelona has been highlighted as one of the regions of Europe with some of the lowest levels of xenophobia and inter-ethnic tension.[96] For some residents, it is the diversity of their neighbourhood that they love:

"I like the neighbourhood because of the diversity of people; we are from all over the world… In my building there are Colombians, Spanish people from different parts of Spain" (Narciso, 53, Spanish, Besòs i el Maresme)

"There are Spanish people, there's a Chinese person that has moved in upstairs. I think there are also Ecuadorians…yes, we are mixed. But I have a good relationship with all of them, because as long there's respect and education you can get along with everybody." (Capella, 40, Gypsy, Bon Pastor)

Other communities are bonded more closely on the basis of a shared ethnic, national or linguistic identity - and as such their sense of togetherness is somewhat limited to people who are 'like them' and with whom they share common characteristics. For example, Adhara (38, Gypsy Ciutat Meridiana) explains:

"There are people you can coexist with… For example, my neighbour next door, she knocks at my door and she says "What are you doing?" And we chat, because she is Spanish, and we chat, and we understand each other. There's good communication. Besides all the bad things, there are also good people. Hard-working and humble people."

For Adhara it is the fact that her neighbour is Spanish, like her, that facilitates easy communication and connection between them. Yet as a member of the Gypsy community, she also identifies strongly with another group of people 'like her', even though Spanish gypsies and Spanish non-gypsies are at times in conflict.

Some people more explicitly highlight the role that language can play in promoting social connections within groups. For instance, Azad, who is Pakistani, in his early 40s and lives in Besos Maresme with his wife, feels that many Pakistani people in the area:

"…are in their own houses. There are some women who want to learn Spanish, so they go to Cristobal Moura [street where a state community centre is located][xxi]…over there they can learn Spanish and, for example, how to sew. There many Pakistani women in the neighbourhood. It´s okay, but it´s bad. Because they only talk in our language, so they do not learn Spanish very well. My wife spends too much time with Pakistani women and doesn´t practice Spanish."

In Azad's view his wife's connections with other Pakistani women are facilitated by their shared language, which he in turn believes is a barrier to her socialising with Spanish speakers.

Mutual aid

Social relationships, be they based on a shared place or shared identities, or other factors, often form the basis of mutual aid which can make a significant difference to people's ability to 'llegar al fin del mes' (to make ends meet at the end of the month). The reliance on family and friends for social support is a well-documented feature of Spanish society[xxii] but it is clear that mutual aid is also provided by those with whom ties may be less close - neighbours and sometimes even acquaintances:

"I get along well with my neighbours, with the Pakistanis who have their groceries, we get along very well. I am a very sociable person, that's what I tell my daughter "when you go shopping be sociable because they will help you at any time". [Laughs] I get along well with all my neighbours, I don't have any problems…I get along with everybody, gypsy, Moorish, from where ever."
(Pamela, 35, Peruvian, Besòs i el Maresme)

However, people's sense of identity can also affect and determine their willingness and or ability to support others outside their immediate group. In a more exclusionary way, Mari Carmen (Spanish, 38, Besòs i el Maresme) simply stated that, "If I can give 'one' to a stranger or 'two' to my people, I will give to my people". In a time of scarcity, Mari Carmen, like many other people in Besòs, is more inclined to support others who she considers to be 'her people'.

As well as sharing material resources with each other, people also share skills, time, emotional support and knowledge of where, for example, to get the best deals in shops. Laura is 25 years old, mother of two children, aged four and eight, and has lived in Besòs i el Maresme since she was born. She explains how her friends in the neighbourhood have helped her to make ends meet:

"I: You have a lot of friends?

L: Well, yes…maybe five. But they are true friends… I've been unemployed for the last six months with only 200€ from the Solidarity Card. My friends said "Let's go do grocery shopping, I'll pay for you". Or for example, when I had my second kid they would come and help me clean. Or I would need to go to some place and they would say "I have nothing to do; leave the kids with me." People already know each other here. So people won't let another person that they've known forever to be left with nothing."

Similarly, Costa (61, Spanish, Ciutat Meridiana) and his neighbour support each other in various ways:

"We are very good friends. His name is Jorge. And sometimes I help him to clean his garden and pipes because he is living on the garden floor. My wife goes sometimes too, to clean his flat. We know each other for a long time; do you know what I mean? And when I was without money or I was waiting for my retirement payment, he lent me the money. And on the 10th of the month, I would pay him back."

For both Laura and Costa, the support that they receive and give to friends and neighbours is based on deep local roots.

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xxi Cristobal Moura is a street in the neighbourhood where Spanish
xxii For this reason, the Spanish welfare state has been described as 'familist'. See: Flaquer (2004) & Garcia and Kazepov (2002)

Scarcity

While very often the will to support others is there, in a community where scarcity and precarity are shared experiences, it is not always possible for people to help their friends and neighbours as they might wish. Perla, a Spanish woman in her early 30s reflects on her relationship with her neighbour, who is squatting an apartment in Besòs i el Maresme, explained that:

"You'll never deny anyone a plate of food. Imagine my neighbour needs help right now… I don't know, she must have had some problem and she has all my help but I couldn't.... right now I couldn't lend a hand in anything... we're all in the same situation."

Perla and her children previously lived with her grandmother, until they were evicted when the house was repossessed by the bank. When leaving an abusive relationship with her son's father, Perla decided to take up a job as a cleaner in a hotel. She was only contracted to work 10 hours per week, but most weeks she would work overtime to make sure the family could get by. During the separation with her partner she suffered an injury to her legs which left her in a wheelchair and unable to work. Since then, she has only been able to collect 'labour leave' proportionate to the 10 hours per week that she was officially contracted to work, equivalent to €300 per month. The precarious economic reality faced by Perla is at odds with her values of 'never denying anyone a plate of food'. Although she would like to help her neighbour, who is also struggling, she is unable to.

Similarly, faced with the challenges of insufficient income and piling debts, some people are not able to participate in community life as much as they might otherwise want to:

"If a person doesn´t have money to pay all the bills and expenses and is at risk of having their electricity and water cut… and on top of that owes money to bank….I have to pay 700 euros regarding past water bills…

Okay? So, I don't have mental conditions to go to these meetings, and if somebody says: "Hey let's do some puzzles!" I would throw the puzzles through the window! My mind it´s not for that! I can´t!" (Mendez, Spanish, 58, Besòs i el Maresme)

For Mendez, his experiences of debt, and the stress associated with the constant juggling of financial demands mean that he does not feel in a suitable state of mind to participate in neighbourhood association meetings or in the community more broadly. Indeed, a recent walk down to the beach felt very challenging and he only stayed there for two minutes because he didn't "feel good in my mind".

Some people more explicitly share experiences of social exclusion from public spaces. Clarisa, a gypsy woman in her 50s from Bon Pastor, explains being made to feel unwelcome when shopping with her son in La Maquinista in Bon Pastor:

"You can't judge somebody who you don't know, I see it that way. Look at me now how is my appearance, I am wearing a bun, I have my flip-flops. I don't have the will for anything. I am depressed. And maybe I want to go to whatever place, like the other day when I went to la Maquinista to buy sneakers for my son and some shop-assistant was following me all over the shop. Instead of making a big deal I asked her, "Why are you following me? Because of my look? Look, I will tell you something dear, the clothes don't make the monk,[xxiii] *okay, so do not look at me for my appearance…I don't go to a store to embarrass myself for 10, 20 or 30 euros. I prefer, if I don't have the money I will not buy and if I can I will do it."*

Clarisa's feelings of being unwelcome and judged in the shoe shop are based on how she thinks others perceive her appearance, which is tied up with her experience of poor mental health, scarcity and possibly her gyspy identity.

xxiii This colloquial Spanish phrase has a similar meaning to the English phrase, 'don't judge a book by its cover'.

Gypsies of Barcelona

Today, up to 75,000 Gypsies live in Catalunya.[97] The earliest community of gitanos arrived in Spain in the early 15th Century, and to Barcelona in 1447.[98] This group came from North-West Hindustan (now India),[99] and migrated over decades, arriving in Europe from North Africa. Spanish-gypsies continue to live in the region to this day, and do not lead a nomadic lifestyle.

The second group of gypsies known as rumanos have more recent origins in the country – with many arriving to the country from Eastern Europe since 2002[100]. This group traditionally have more nomadic lifestyles[101], or live in more temporary accommodation in major cities. Whilst to many people in Spain, gitanos and rumanos are thought of as a single group, rumanos are often described as being less settled and more marginalised.[102]

Between the 1970s-90s many Gypsies who were living in rural Andalusia migrated to Barcelona, looking for work.[103] They often settled in outer areas of the city in Eix Besòs, such as La Mina. The influence of Andalusian gypsy culture is visible in many parts of Eix Besòs, for example the flying of the traditional Romani flag (a red wagon wheel against a blue and green backdrop) is a common sight outside apartment blocks, and the civic centre in Besòs i el Maresme pays tribute to Flamenco music. Catalan gypsy culture gave birth to the music of 'Catalan Rumba'. This is a fusion of Andalusian Flamenco, Cuban music and rock and represents just one of the rich contributions the gypsy community have made to life in the city[104] The Gypsy community in Barcelona have a strong history of activism, with several groups working towards equality and wider recognition of their rights within Catalan society.[105]

Gypsies in Catalunya have faced significant discrimination and social exclusion and during the Franco era, the gypsy population were explicitly persecuted[106]. Today, the Spanish government has adopted a national strategy for the social inclusion of gypsies[107] but they remain among the most disadvantaged groups in Spanish society. Within Barcelona, many Gypsies live in slum conditions within campamiento Gitanos (Gypsy encampments). [108] Gypsy household are 20% more likely to be at risk of poverty compared to the population of Spain,[109] and only 45% complete compulsory education.[110] Racialized speech against the gypsy community online is thought to have risen sharply in recent years.[111]

Scarcity can also limit the participation of children and young people in activities with their peers. Although education is publicly provided, many families struggle to pay for their children to have lunch in school canteens, to go on school trips or to participate in extra-curricular activities. Samia, a Moroccan woman from Besòs i el Maresme in her 30s with four children, explains how the Solidarity Card means that her children can now participate with their peers:

"It helps a lot. Now we can pay the school dining room and the material. Before, we couldn´t pay all the materials and the school was always calling us, to say that. And for this reason, the children couldn't go on field trips. And now… well, now they are no longer suffering because they can't go to the excursions or because we don't have money."

Individual and household experiences of precarity, especially in terms of income and debt, are major barriers to community participation, including involvement in community meetings, being able to help out one's neighbour when they are in need and enabling children and young people to fully take part in school life. This has implications for the extent to which people feel connected with their neighbours and to their community more broadly.

Divisions and tensions

While for some people experiences of social difference and precarity result in civil but unconnected relationships with neighbours ('hunkering down'), among others there is evidence of more palpable and simmering division and tension between people.

A sense of loss or lack of community and declining trust and cohesion between neighbours emerged through many of our conversations. This perceived trend is understood and responded to in multiple ways by residents. In particular people explain loss or lack of community in terms of:

- Rapid immigration to and high levels of diversity in their neighbourhoods
- The perception that public resources are being unfairly distributed across residents
- Real and/or perceived crime, anti-social behaviour and conflict leading to insecurity and fear

Loss of community

The sense of loss of community is shared by many, especially those who have lived in their neighbourhood for a long time, often since they were born. It is felt in a decreasing familiarity with neighbours, local businesses and a declining circle of casual acquaintances. This in turn weakens the bonds of trust and sense of belonging. Costa, in Ciutat Meridiana, and Franca, in Bon Pastor share this view:

"It was different before, there was conviviencia, I do not know how to tell you. You were next door neighbours, just like in the villages... Imagine you have the door there, you come in". (Costa, 61, Spanish, Ciutat Meridiana)

"Everything has changed: the local business, the people, I´m not only talking about the immigration eh, but the neighbours also have changed. I think it is because the rhythm of life of nowadays, or maybe because we distrust each other. Everything has changed, everything, everything! Before you used to go down the streets and you knew everybody and now we don't know each other. This is my perspective, a person who has been living in the neighbourhood for 50 years. We all went to the same school, my children studied in the same school as I did. Now you think: who are these people? And it hurts. Before we had this sense of community, but now it has been lost." (Franca, 53, Spanish, Bon Pastor)

For both Costa and Franca there is a sense of loss and grief in the way that they have experienced change in their communities – they no longer feel the sense of familiarity and trust in their neighbours which they previously enjoyed and this is undermining their sense of stability and belonging in the neighbourhood. Some people clearly experience social boundaries between themselves and other groups, such as people who have moved into the neighbourhood more recently, which they find it difficult to overcome.

In line with the overall perception of many that the neighbourhoods have lost some of their sense of community, people also comment on a lack of 'public spirit'. This is evidenced, according to residents, by the everyday actions of people that demonstrate a lack of care, for example playing music too loudly, parking on a zebra crossing or dropping rubbish in the street:

"Changes I'd like to see? People being a little cleaner. The thing is that this neighbourhood is very [pause] people have a habit of thinking 'sweepers come here' and they throw it all on the floor. If there was a little bit more public spirit. People don't take care of things, that's why the city council is paid to put in new benches, they destroy the parks. I would like to see more public spirit." (Perla, 32, Spanish, Besòs-Maresme)

These types of behaviour are seen as indicative of a lack of respect for the neighbourhood. Many people we spoke to commented that there were things they should be proud of in their neighbourhoods such as parks, gardens and rivers, yet these things are not respected:

"The thing is, everything here degenerate because people don't look after it… There is a lack of public spirit between manners and cultures. But I believe in the neighbourhood and I repeat the words that my 19 years old son told me, this morning: 'Mama is very simple, I want to be proud of my neighbourhood' and for me, this means a lot."
(Franca, 53, Spanish, Bon Pastor)

One of the key reasons for this loss of 'public spirit' and community according to many residents, particularly long-standing Spanish-born residents, is increasing immigration to and diversity within the area. However, as we explore below, experiences of increased diversity interact with other factors, such as economic crisis and scarcity.

Immigration and diversity

High levels of rapid immigration to these neighbourhoods, as explored in the introduction, is one of the main causes that people give to explain the loss of community. Many people experienced immigration to the neighbourhood as a shock to their way of life:

"It happened abruptly! Like…boom! What's happened?? What´s going on?? I don't know if it's Barcelona now that it´s full of foreign people, full of different cultures…" (Franca, 53, Bon Pastor)

For Franca, the increasing number of foreign people in her neighbourhood created an experience of alienation and disorientation. As Olga, a Spanish woman in her late 40s from Bon Pastor explains, lack of familiarity and connection with new neighbours can be experienced as 'fear of the unknown':

"The people that have lived here all our life, we know each other. The ones that came from outside we don't know them. I don't know… it is that fear of not knowing. Not because they are bad people. I don't know, I just don't know."

Olga emphasises that she does not believe that immigrants to the neighbourhood are bad people, but that she finds it difficult to really 'know' these people. These experiences echo findings from elsewhere that communities which experience rapid immigration tend to respond in the short to medium term by 'hunkering down' –they exhibit less trust and are less likely to be altruistic or cooperate with others.[112]

It is not only Spanish-born long-standing residents who can experience social isolation and disconnection but also immigrants. Leila from Morocco and Sayd from Pakistan both describe keeping to themselves in the face of diversity:

"Yes, there are neighbours and we talk to each other without problems. We say hi, how are you, very well; But as I said, not as friends. How can I say it… they have a… a religion... No, it is not a religion...How can I say it? They have different habits." (Sayd, 38)

"Yes, yes, but no, yeah….at the end, every person is a different world, you know… I don't know." (Leila, 34)

Sayd explains that differing customs and practices can make it harder to connect with other local people. Other immigrants to Eix Besòs are more explicit about their feelings that there is too much immigration to and diversity within the area. Nadia, for instance, who was born in Morocco and now lives in Besòs i el Maresme believes that, "There is too much immigration in Besòs. The people… This one is from Pakistan… this one wears the veil… there are many Arabs…"

One reason that some people find increased diversity in Eix Besòs challenging is that social differences such as language are sometimes associated with experiences of loneliness and lack of meaningful social connection:

"I felt lonely as I didn't know anyone, only my husband. But, well, then lately… little by little you get used to it. While I was learning the language and all that ... [it was] a little difficult."(Acamar, 38, Senegal, Bon Pastor)

Many immigrants have experienced the pain of social ties being stretched and strained over long distances. Julia, for instance, told us that if she could be any animal she would be a butterfly, so that she could fly back to Ecuador to see her two daughters. Karima, 31, explained that she is 'all alone' as most other Bangladeshi people 'live in the centre of Barcelona'.

Some long-standing Spanish-born residents also feel the strain on relationships, explaining that so many neighbours they had previously known had left. Although some loss is due to bereavements, others have moved away and at times this is attributed to the arrival of immigrants. Similarly, some residents are frustrated with high levels of population churn, blaming a perceived transience of immigrants for damaging the sense of community:

"They aren't fond of the neighbourhood, because they haven't been raised here. They come from their countries, stay here for some years, and then go away. Well, they work they send money to their countries, and when they have enough money they go back." (Mari Carmen,38, Spanish, Besòs i el Maresme)

Mari Carmen perceives immigrants to 'take' from the neighbourhood without necessarily investing over the long term. This view was shared openly by a minority of people, such as Pepe, in his early 50s in Bon Pastor, who feels that the neighbourhood has, "changed a lot and mostly due to the arrival of new people in the neighbourhood. I can say it is a matter of immigration. I am not a racist or xenophobe or anything, but there are certain people who simply don't adapt to living alongside others."

Although Barcelona has been celebrated for having largely avoided anti-immigrant sentiment and political movements (unlike other cities in Catalunya),[113] clearly there are people, including at times immigrants themselves, in Eix Besòs who are experiencing challenges – including changing experiences of community - associated with the rapid immigration to and diversity within the neighbourhoods. However, these challenges are often closely connected to experiences of scarcity and a feeling of competition over limited resources.

Competition over resources

Social cohesion is also damaged as a consequence of precarity and scarcity, which forces friends and neighbours into competition and creates fertile ground for feelings of injustice when resources, such as housing and benefits, are not seen to be equally distributed. The mutuality and solidarity with people 'like me' can then slowly twist into resentments of 'others'. This is by no means an inevitable outcome but it plays out more or less overtly and with differing strength across all three neighbourhoods. Lucrecia is 47 and lives in Besòs i el Maresme. Although she thinks that if there is respect between people of different nationalities there is no problem, she nonetheless is resentful of those she sees as incomers, and hence less deserving. She frames this as an issue of fairness – that there should be a more proportionate relationship between what people contribute and what they receive – but it also reflects an 'othering' of immigrants and a desire for policies which discriminate between long-term residents and newer arrivals:

"We are Spanish all our lives, and we have contributed to the community, to rent, we are paying the real estate every year. We are Spanish, so if there is a meal, or there is some help, or there is a home, this should be first for the Spanish…. and after that if there is someone else in need, go ahead…give it to them… but I am telling you, I am not a racist… but first us, and then the others. Because what I don't like is that they come here, they register and after a year or two, come on, they can have a social housing."

Coming from a gypsy family, Lucrecia is a member of a marginalised and often discriminated community herself – but here she feels most strongly about her Spanish identity and the entitlements she feels her identity should afford her versus newer immigrants to the country.

Connected to this, some residents believe that social services are more likely to provide benefits to specific minority groups, with implications for how people relate with each other in their community. For instance, Gladys is a Spanish resident of Bon Pastor who has two children. She is frustrated as she feels benefits are, unfairly, more likely to be allocated to gypsy families:

"I've never been racist, but I think sometimes they force you to be. I have gypsy friends, I know people from outside and they are my friends, I talk with them, and their kids hang out with mine, but there are things that are not ok. Because when a gypsy woman asks for something… all the gypsy women get it… and the social worker said 'it can't be, you are not helping me'. Do you want me to tell you my problems? I can tell them to you, but you are seeing that I'm living with €400, and if it weren't for my partner I couldn't live."

Gladys' feelings of resentment towards those who she perceives to be unfairly receiving benefits from the state are closely wound up with her feelings of resentment at her own financial situation -one in which she is struggling to feed and clothe her children and could hugely benefit from the support she sees being provided to others.

The economic crisis and consequent austerity policies coincided with the peak of immigration to Barcelona in 2007-8. It is therefore unsurprising that some people draw a connection between immigration and their own situations of scarcity. Mari Carmen explains what she perceived after the financial crisis, "Most of the people who have always lived here and had businesses had to close them, and they [immigrants] have opened new businesses". Such narratives and ideas are clearly not limited to this context, with evidence of rising xenophobic sentiment in Spain and in many Western democracies since the economic crisis[114], and often to far greater extremes than in Eix Besòs.

Some people firmly place the blame for their situation of poverty and precarity on the welfare 'system' - for not being able to provide sufficient benefits to meet their basic needs, or unfairly allocating what is available. Others direct their blame to those around them, usually people who they consider to be unlike them, who they perceive to be taking benefits that should rightfully be theirs. Very few residents explicitly blame the 'economic crisis' for their situations or indeed even look to other parts of Barcelona for points of comparison. They are much more likely to attribute their economic struggles to changes that they can see in their own neighbourhoods and lives; one of the most notable of which has been increased immigration.

Evidently competition for public and private resources, in the context of unemployment, poverty and high levels of immigration, are contributing to tension and division between some neighbours in Eix Besòs. Where it does exist, this tension tends to remain below the surface, but at times it bubbles over.

Insecurity and fear

Many people feel, rightly or wrongly, that their neighbourhoods are experiencing an increase in conflict, crime and drug use. Adhara, who lives in Ciutat Meridiana, has regularly witnessed violent conflicts, drug dealing and alcohol consumption on her doorstep, to the clear detriment of her wellbeing:

"[The experiences in this neighbourhood] affect me very much. I'm sad and I don't go out to the street. I feel like I am alone on a mountain, I feel locked in." (Adhara, 34, Gypsy, Ciutat Meridiana)

Adhara, who lives in the upper region of Ciutat Meridiana, uses the metaphor of being 'alone on a mountain' to describe the social exclusion which she has imposed upon herself and her children out of fear for their security. Other mothers talk of not wanting their children to go out alone, or even go to the park, for fear of fights, robberies or exposure to drugs:

"My daughter had a couple of conflicts before the summer – people from outside took away her jacket, then another day her keys… You cannot let them be by themselves in the park as you used to" (Mari Carmen, 38, Spanish Besòs i el Maresme)

As well as keeping indoors, another response to these fears is to leave the neighbourhood as much as possible. Mari Carmen, for instance, leaves the neighbourhood every weekend and goes to the countryside to escape these experiences of fear and conflict. Not everyone has a first-hand experience of crime or disorder; fear also seems to be based on stories shared by word-of-mouth, sometimes second or third-hand. As Laura from Besòs i el Maresme explains, "In the school where my kid used to go, a friend of mine told me that one of his son's classmates took a knife to the school". In some cases, these stories alone are enough to promote mistrust, fear and 'hunkering down' within Eix Besòs communities. As Sofia, a young Moroccan woman who lives in Ciutat Meridiana, puts it: "it is better not to help anybody and stay out of trouble", again reflecting the sense that circumstances are forcing people to act against their own instinctive desire for solidarity and 'conviviencia'.

As Mari Carmen's reference to 'people from outside' suggests, at times both Spanish nationals and immigrants, explicitly associate crime and conflict with certain minority ethnic groups, typically gypsy and Latin American communities. This echoes long-standing and entrenched anti-gypsy[115] and rising xenophobic[116] sentiment in Spain and Europe more broadly. Residents, including children, from both these communities share experiences of discrimination in the neighbourhoods, including from each other at times. For example, Nadia is a Muslim woman from Morocco who lives in Besòs i el Maresme. Like other Muslim mothers we spoke to, she no longer takes her two children to their local park, feeling more welcome further afield at El Forum where they can, "play together without the "…go back to your country!" or "You are the Moro". Similarly, it is fairly common for people to be openly fearful of or discriminatory towards gypsies. Eustaquia comes from Peru and explains that when she sees gypsies behind her building in Besòs i el Maresme "we are afraid because they are very aggressive". In some cases these views are even shared by members of their own community. Flores who is 21 and lives in Bon Pastor feels that although she herself is gypsy, 'the gypsies are too much… they are uneducated, rude".

Evidently for some people experiences of discrimination and at times racism, and negative feelings towards particular people or groups, are undermining belonging and togetherness in Eix Besòs. This is fuelling, and being fuelled by, feelings of fear and insecurity and is contributing to feelings of loss of community among many.

Squatting and insecurity in Besòs i el Maresme: Sahar's story

Sahar is 38 and has been living in Besòs i el Maresme for 10 years. She and her husband both work as cleaners in the centre of Barcelona and live with their four children. In Pakistan, she completed a degree in mathematics but her qualification is not recognised in Spain, meaning she has been unable to apply for graduate level jobs.

Over the period she has lived in Besòs i el Maresme, Sahar says things have got better –10 years ago things felt more rural, '*like a village*', but now the newly paved roads and parks, and the arrival of the tramway and more bus lines mean her quality of life has improved and she feels more a part of Barcelona.

However, the housing situation in the neighbourhood contributes to Sahar and her friends feeling insecure and at times unsafe where they live. The outside of the buildings are in poor condition on the exterior '*almost all of them have broken wallpaper…and the building as well…half damaged*.', and also inside *'the doors are broken and the entrance door is also very bad. The doorbell doesn't work and sometimes we don't have light in the staircase*.'

She explains that, while she legally occupies her flat, many of the flats in her block are *'squatted flats'*, left abandoned after residents couldn't pay the mortgages, and now occupied by new residents - sometimes running water or heating. The temporary nature of squatters stay in the block means a high turnover of residents, and as a result, Sahar's immediate neighbours are unknown to her:

"I: Don't you know your neighbours?

Sometimes a flats is empty and another person enter

I: So the residents are changing frequently?

Yes, a lot... so... and they are renting their rooms... every month a new face is there."

As a result, she is left with a feeling that someone – either a neighbour or somebody from outside – could try and break in and occupy the flats where her family live;

"I've heard that in the neighbourhoods of Besòs and Besòs Mar there are….well, in Besòs Mar, yes, there are a lot of problems. My friends said to me and they are afraid that somebody could enter their house while they are on vacation.

I: Sure, you're afraid that if you get out of the house they're going to come in.

... Other people, because we don't know who are the other neighbours"

Because of this feeling of insecurity, Sahar does not leave her 14-year old child alone. She says she wishes she could feel safer leaving her children and going out with them.

"...they are renting their rooms... every month a new face is there."

Crime and loss of community in Bon Pastor: Franca's story

Franca is 53 year old Spanish woman and lives with her teenage son in Bon Pastor. She has lived in the area for nearly 50 years. We ask Franca about the neighbourhood; she tells us the metro line has brought "good and bad life" into her area. She was once proud of where she lived but tells us she isn't proud anymore.

She feels the sense of community has been lost and worries that her culture will be lost to the new cultures in the area. Franca also talks about the fighting, drug dealing and the robberies in the area and she is worried about her children and grandchildren. She recounts an experience where her phone was stolen while buying bread. Another woman, she explains, was robbed at knife point and the woman who runs the local charcuterie was robbed 5 or 6 times in the past few months. She no longer feels relaxed and safe in the community in the way she used to:

"Everything is worse…I don't know if it´s my point of view or it is because I lived a peaceful moment, where you could go out, relaxed, your children could play in the park, or he could alone and buy the bread with his friends or whoever… I don't know how to explain it."

Franca tell us that local people and the Neighbours Association have tried to report it to the local council, but the situation has not improved.

"Everything is worse…I don't know if it´s my point of view or it is because I lived a peaceful moment, where you could go out, relaxed, your children could play in the park, or he could alone and buy the bread with his friends or whoever… I don't know how to explain it."

SECTION 4: ON THE PERIPHERY

Eix Besòs is located on the Eastern edge of Barcelona, bordered by the Besòs river and the motorway which divide it from the neighbouring municipality. Residents of Eix Besòs are acutely aware of this peripheral position which is experienced in social as well as geographic terms. As Mira, a young Spanish woman who lives in Ciutat Meridiana, sees it:

"I would say that the community is a bit abandoned. Neglected. Sometimes a little abandoned. It is not taken into account as much as other neighbourhoods. We are in the outskirts of the city."

Often this sense of life on the margins comes from the way that Besòs residents feel viewed by people from other parts of Barcelona. The predominantly negative perceptions of others, along with the literal distance from the core of the city, both help to explain why many residents of all three neighbourhoods focus in on their own community – as sources of support and in terms of looking for local explanations and causes for the challenges faced.

Geographic margins

Being located geographically on the periphery can be isolating, and participants talk of the significance of having good connections particularly through public transport, including the recent extension of the metro to Bon Pastor:

"The subway was like an oxygen bag that saved all the neighbours." (Pepe, Spanish, 53)

The important role that public transport plays in promoting social inclusion is well documented.[117] The comparison of the subway with oxygen shows how people experience it as a life line in Eix Besòs. Some people feel that their survival depends on their connection to the rest of the city, particularly as there is little employment in the area and people have to travel for work. It is therefore particularly challenging for people on the periphery when there are problems with transport such as delays and strikes, given the precarious nature of people's jobs. Stories abound of having to walk long distances, sometimes at night, if the metro is unavailable:

"I was very upset about the metro strike… I had to go to work and I walked for almost two hours, there was no metro or anything and I walked home." (Sahar, 38, Pakistani, Besòs i el Maresme)

This is another example of 'work-for-labour' whereby people in precarious forms of employment situated in the outskirts of the city have to invest more time and effort to access employment. People in Eix Besòs are struggling daily against multiple forms of disconnection, including disconnection from the labour market and housing market, as well as physical disconnection and institutional disconnection, all of which are interdependent.[118] Therefore shocks such as a metro strike, or transport changes, such as cancelling a particular bus route, which may be a minor inconvenience to some, are felt more acutely.

Yet ironically, transport infrastructure, when poorly designed, can create barriers within and between neighbourhoods, further compounding feelings of isolation and disconnection. For instance, Olga feels that:

"It's a little isolated, it's not like Sant Andreu … Because here you have to cross the train tracks to go to work, or to go to Sant Andreu ... And if you want to go to Santa Coloma, there's the bridge. This infrastructure makes it isolated." (Olga, 48, Spanish, Bon Pastor)

This sense of geographic isolation and marginalisation is particularly evident in Ciutat Meridiana, with its hills and distance from the centre of Barcelona, and Bon Pastor, a neighbourhood surrounded by train lines, the motorway, and the Besòs river. But in all three neighbourhoods, geographic distance from the centre of Barcelona is experienced as social marginalisation.

Social margins

The marginalisation that people experience is not just physical and at times people in Eix Besòs can also feel that they are located on the periphery socially, which can be understood as a form of socio-geographic inequality.

It is challenging to residents' sense of identify and self-worth when the neighbourhoods they care about are viewed negatively by people from outside the area:

"What idea does Barcelona have of Besòs? Well for them, Besòs is a shanty neighbourhood and they are wrong… And people from Barcelona think that we, from Besòs, are 'bad people'. Look, the other day, an old friend of mine, called me. We haven´t spoken for more than 30 years. He found me on Facebook, and he called me. We talked for a while, we didn't know anything about each other, so he asked me, "Hey where are you living?" And when I answered where I live, he said, 'Ah! You must be having fun, you´re living where the worst of Barcelona is', and I said no." (Mendez, 38, Spanish, Besòs-Maresme)

The idea that Besòs neighbourhoods are seen by the rest of Barcelona to be places where 'the bad people' live is a widely shared understanding. Besòs is known to be associated with crime, drugs, danger and, in some cases, immigrants, by people from across Barcelona. People in Ciutat Meridiana laugh at how people use 'Uff' in relation to their place:

"I have heard people say 'Ciutat Meridiana, Uff!' People sometimes consider the neighbourhood a dangerous place. Usually it is people who don't live here but they say it is a dangerous place. However, I think there are good and bad people, like any other place." (Mira, 19, Spanish, Ciutat Meridiana)

''They say 'Uff' and I ask them 'what is it?', and they say 'Uff, that is far away!' And they also ask me 'can you buy food there?' Of course there is! And that's what I've heard when I tell people where I live! They see it as a place where people cannot live but we can, we can.'' (Betelgeuse, 36, Honduran, Ciutat Meridiana)

There is evidently a disconnect between the ways that people from outside view a place compared to those that live there. Mira and Betelgeuse both recognise but challenge external perceptions of their neighbourhood, affirming that Ciutat Meridiana is in fact a place that people can and do live, and that like anywhere there are 'good and bad people'. People who live here are resistant to a stigmatising narrative of deprivation or danger. While there may be things that they would like to change about their neighbourhood, they do not feel that outside perceptions of their place as wholly 'bad' are fair. When reflecting on whether a museum, planned as part of the redevelopment of the Casas Baratas, would change the way that people in Barcelona think about Bon Pastor, Jesus observes:

"Well, for the ones who have never been here, the ones who have not come to see and know this – because one thing is passing by, and another thing is coming once, twice, to really know what Bon Pastor is like – these people tell you 'I didn't think this area had anything to show to the city!'"

However, the perceptions of outsiders can be powerful and often do influence the way that people think about themselves and the places they live:

"The other day I watched a documentary on You Tube, from [one of the] Public Schools… they talked about [our neighbourhood]. And what they say is, the neighbourhood is very bad and there are too many conflicts. But you have to analyse what they are saying, because the students from the school are the ones talking in the video. So when you see them, it leads you to think: It is true!"
(Flores, 21, Gypsy, Bon Pastor)

The young people in the film seen by Flores are self-stigmatising, reinforcing perceptions about their community which feed into the popular narrative about the area.

Residents also feel that this stigmatised view of Eix Besòs as peripheral to the rest of the city has affected policy and development planning related to their areas. Terms such as 'abandoned' and 'neglected' are commonly used to describe a perceived lack of investment locally:

"[Besòs i el Maresme] is left apart, marginalised… It is very central but it's very abandoned, they abandoned it too much." (Anais, 47, Ecuadorian, Besòs i el Maresme)

Politicians too are singled out for failing to recognise both the need and value of Eix Besòs communities:

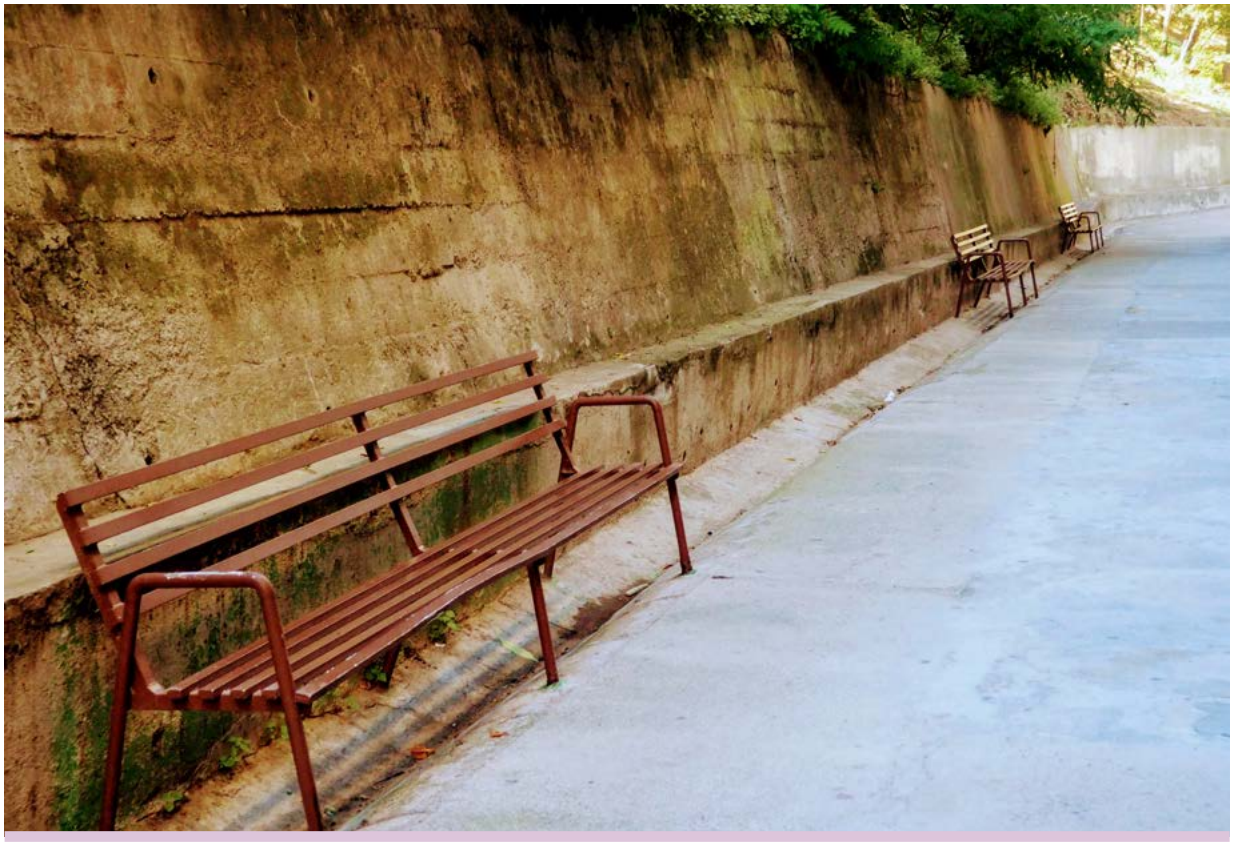
"Lately we ask the councillor when they will get us the social housing. She said there is some offer from the Generalitat with 800 or 1000 social houses. But the question is, are there some for this neighbourhood? Because, we do exist, you know? Are we part of Barcelona or not? Where do we belong? When I asked them these questions they don't say anything… Look what happened at one of the meetings we had… So, someone said that Ciudad Meridiana belongs to Besós [Sant Adrià de Besòs].[xxiv] *I was so angry when I heard that, I couldn't laugh anymore. You can see how valuable we are. And I couldn't forget that sentence." (Costa, 61, Spanish, Ciutat Meridiana)*

Costa feels that Ciutat Meridiana, at the very edge of Barcelona, is neglected and even denied its place with in Barcelona City. It is a positioning that he rejects, affirming that 'we do exist'.

The upset caused by neglect is compounded when any political or policy attention they do receive is often only as a result of an assessment of the neighbourhood as being in a 'bad situation'. Once again, this leaves residents feeling stigmatised and poorly understood:

"Of course, it's normal that they help the neighbourhoods that need it, like ours, but it hurts a little bit... Are we in such a bad situation?" (Pilar, 46, Spanish, Bon Pastor)

This sense of being ignored whilst simultaneously being targeted for 'interventions' which typically require the area to be defined by some negative characteristic is common across many areas labelled as 'deprived', and was especially in evidence among residents in Ciutat Merdiana.[119] It is a form of social exclusion which affects how people think about where and how they live. In this sense residents of Eix Besòs experience inequality of recognition, as well as inequality of resources, forced into constantly challenging perceptions and treatment of their communities as marginal.



xxiv Sant Adrià de Besòs is a separate municipality and city which neighbours Barcelona to the north east.

SECTION 5: FACING THE FUTURE

Like people the world over, the residents of Eix Besòs are hoping for a better future: as well as greater economic security through an improved employment situation and/ or better welfare support, people are looking to secure their futures, and those of their children, with quality education and the opportunity to live in a strong, safe and connected community.

Education

The vast majority of people we spoke to see education as the key mechanism for improving their lives, and parents in particular see education as the main vehicle for improving their children's life chances. However, as with employment, experiences of education and training can be frustrating - there are barriers to access and sometimes qualifications do not lead to the hoped for social mobility or improvement in a household's financial situation.

Nazir, a Pakistani father in his mid-40s living in Besòs i el Maresme is typical of the parents we spoke to:

"Anyway, I just ask for a better education for my children.... A friend of mine studied bank management and now an Arab company has hired him, and he earns 8.000 American dollar monthly."

Nazir goes on to say that he wants his children to study in England, otherwise he fears that "they will become truck drivers or washing the dishes in restaurants". As a truck driver himself, Nazir like many other people, believes that education is the best way to ensure that that his children have a better life than him. In the eyes of most, education remains the key stepping stone to 'getting out': "people who are young and have a bachelor degree, they move out of the neighbourhood, they don't stay here."

Some people, like Azad who is in his 40s and living in Besòs i el Maresme, also from Pakistan, feel very satisfied and grateful for the education that their children are receiving in Besòs.

"All my children go to school here, do you know what I mean? It´s very, very, very important… because when we arrived, we had problem with the language and stuff…So, my children know many people here, the teachers are good, and the principal as well."

Nazir and his wife also received 'child vouchers' through the school, possibly via the church, so that they could buy milk and nappies for their baby, which they say "helped a lot". Many children, especially in Ciutat Meridiana, receive 'dining room scholarships' to cover the cost of their school lunches. Other schools have provided psychological support or things like photocopies of textbooks which parents couldn't afford. In many cases, families find the costs associated with school (even state school) very challenging - books, uniforms, school lunches and school trips all add up to a significant financial burden, particularly at the start of a new school year.

A major factor determining educational outcomes is which school families are able to send their children to, which is closely connected to geographic proximity. More broadly, however, the semi-private 'concertada' schools are considered to offer a better education than state schools, which are associated with poor behavior and poor attainment, especially in areas with lower average incomes:

"Because this [secondary] school here is a like kindergarten. If they are not going to learn, I prefer that they stay at home. Yes, because in the end it's a marginalization, because even though you get a degree here, you are an illiterate. That degree will be of no use in case you want to continue your studies… because you won't have the level. It's of no use that they give way the degree."
(Olga, 48, Spanish, Bon Pastor)

Olga is not alone in insisting that she'd rather her children stay at home than go to certain state schools.

People feel that the place in which they lived determined the quality of the schools their children can access. For example, Sara, originally from Argentina and now living in Besòs i el Maresme explains that, "if you live in a neighbourhood like Gracia, the public schools are all more or less good, but here there were a lot of conflicts in the schools, conflicts of violence, to begin with". As with other tensions in Eix Besòs, a minority of people explicitly attribute this difference in education quality to who goes to each school, with the perception that minority groups, particularly gypsies and immigrants, hold back or disrupt the learning of other students.

In this context of educational inequality, some families put all they have into getting their children into their preferred school. Sol "decided to wager all for her and I started to work precarious jobs" just to get her daughter into a certain school in Bon Pastor. There are also many stories of getting into debt to cover school fees or 'fighting' and 'appealing' against school allocations.

Sign outside Mercat de Nuria reads 'necesitamos un comercio de alimentacion Ya' (We need food shops now)

Public spirit

The cultivation of public spirit, and the creation and protection of community assets, are seen by many as core to the future prosperity and success of their neighbourhoods. Within Eix Besòs there is evidence of people working to encourage community cohesion and solidarity. For example Fer, originally from Dominican Republic and in her 30s, lives in Cuitat Meridiana and talks of the ways that she tries to bring up her children with a sense of public spirit:

"Because we live in a block where the majority of the neighbours are elder persons and we don't have the elevator, so I always say to my children how they should help them. And to my eldest son more, [she said to him] 'If you see somebody downstairs with bags, you more or less already know where they live, you need to help them and leave the bags on theirs doors because while you go up and down they are still on the first floor'. I always say, if they can't get off the bus they should help them, take the bags. I repeat them, they should never stop helping people, ***because if you don't educate them with empathy, we are doing something wrong"*** *(emphasis added)*

Likewise, people and formal community associations are creating events and opportunities for people from diverse backgrounds to come together:

"Well, we organize a party and everybody needs to bring some traditional food from each country. Because, of course, we have Muslims here and they don't eat the same food. So, for example, somebody makes food for twenty people, and another neighbour makes some other type of food. And the Neighbours Association is paying for this food. And then we put all the food together and whoever wants can eat." (Costa, 61, Spanish, Cuitat Meridiana)

Community events and other community infrastructure, such as neighbourhood and social associations (such as parents associations, a Gypsy Association (The Path to Freedom), the Peace Association of Nigeria, and an animal protection group) and civic centres, are vibrant parts of the social fabric in each neighbourhood – providing opportunities and resources for people to come together around shared interests. Each neighbourhood also has at least one Facebook group which is used to share information and socially connect, such as the Besòs i el Maresme group which is called 'El Besòs, un barrio con encanto' ('Besòs: A charming neighbourhood').

Community action

Long-standing residents in all three neighbourhoods speak proudly of a history of civic engagement and activism – whether that is demanding involvement in the demolition and replacement of the Casas Baratas, or lobbying for improved transport infrastructure and public space. In the absence of the investment and support from the state that they would like to see – such as a more effective police presence, improved schools, and a better quality social welfare system - some people are taking these issues into their own hands, working together to create the change they want to see in their neighbourhoods.

In all three neighbourhoods we see that communities have come together to fight for improvements to the places and spaces they share together, and this is a continuing process:

"Of course, because we don't have security here, we have nothing. And we are trying to resolve this problem through the Neighbourhood Association. I help them with banners, I paint them and we are going to the demonstrations about the neighbourhood." (Costa, 61, Spanish, Cuitat Meridiana)

"We came to the streets and all the neighbours would go out saying, 'we need traffic lights', 'we need a health centre.' And we all went after the health centre." (Carmen, 56, Spanish Bon Pastor)

"We went to the streets to demand the things we wanted…like for example, the traffic lights, or public transport, or more leisure spaces. For example, the football field in Maresme was donated to the neighbourhood by its owner, and they wanted to build flats there, and people locked themselves inside it to protest, and now it's a green space."(Acrux, 59, Spanish, Besòs i el Maresme)

Whilst most people participate in community activities and events from time to time, only a minority of people, such as Sol, are heavily involved in community action, such as Sol.

Community action in Bon Pastor: Sol's story

Sol, who is gypsy, is 34 years old and has been living in Bon Pastor for as long as she can remember. She lives with her partner Mateo and her son and daughter. Her partner's construction company folded after the 2008 financial crash and Sol had to work in many physically demanding precarious jobs where she also faced psychological abuse. Sol explains they were, at that point, not entitled to any social benefits as the benefits are based on a household's economic situation from the previous year. She feels that because she does not look like or speak like a 'typical' gypsy social services didn't think she needed support. Sol describes being overwhelmed, desperate and at the point of selling her reproductive eggs to have enough money for food. Last year the couple were struggling to pay rent and their expenses. They lost their home and they had to leave their neighbourhood to stay in a shelter. Sol now lives with her partner in social housing back in Bon Pastor. She tells us that they had to fight hard to get this. Her independent nature and her fighting spirit is something, she says, she inherited from her mother.

We ask Sol how she would describe her neighbourhood; she explains *"it is very familiar, close and rich, because there is a lot of wealth…culturally speaking"*. Although she does comment that Bon Pastor is in a *"precarious situation"* and that many people, especially older gypsy women who have always worked in the flea market and who are often uneducated, are struggling to compete with larger shops and supermarkets. She also adds it is difficult for local people to access services in the area. Personally, when she was struggling she found many *"closed doors"* and *"prejudices"* in the welfare system she feels this may be because of her gypsy identity. She explains her personal experience of using the welfare system, *"I found that the current protocol and the system were horrible, I mean, totally ineffective. I have seen myself starving, I have seen myself in the street."*

Sol was discriminated against at school because she was a gypsy, but she is keen to continue her studies and volunteers for a group called 'The Path of Freedom' (Drom Kotar Mastipen). She describes the group as *"association of gypsy and non-gypsy women of different academic profiles and grassroots women"*. There are over 300 women in Catalunya who meet in large and small groups and share experiences and learning. Sol wants to learn and be a positive example for her daughter in the future. Sol participated in a local mediator course and now works as a community mediator for the council. Her role is about cultural and ethnic integration and she tries to challenge stereotypes that different groups have of each other. She tells us about the understanding she tries to create between people;

"The mediation has a part where you have to empathize with the other person in a very assertive way, even if you don't share the opinion or ideology that person has. The fact that you don't share the way that person has to do things doesn't mean you can't have a relationship or a conversation with him."

Sol is also working on a project called "Transform Bon Pastor" which was has three parts; working with neighbours and local shops, young people and women. She is a strong advocate for education and says, *"we have skills and competencies that make us special. We are born with abilities from a very young age, all that adds up is not subtracted, everyone is necessary, and everyone contributes good things."*

B-MINCOME

In the run-up to its launch, many of residents of Eix Besòs expressed hopes, as well as concerns and fears, about B-MINCOME and the impact that this policy might have on them and their neighbourhood.

Most people feel supportive of the policy in general with a sense that it can help to address many dimensions of poverty in Besòs. For instance, Fer, a Dominican woman in her 30s who lives in Ciutat Meridiana, explained that:

"Yes, I think it could help. One thing that caught my attention was that they are concerned about the improvement of the neighbourhood, to bring some things that we don't have here but which we always needed. So, yes, I find the project very useful, really. There are many people out of work and this could be an opportunity for them. We all have so many needs and it could help us not to get stuck and to pull us forward."

For Fer and others, B-MINCOME offers a new sense of hope for the future, both for themselves and for their community. Notably, it is as much the active social policies of B-MINCOME as it is the financial support which appeals to people. Nevertheless, the hope is tempered by doubts about the potential of B-MINCOME to truly address their needs or to bring about long-term change.

Hopes about B-MINCOME

The possibility of B-MINCOME provided some people with a sense of hope for the future, particularly in terms of alleviating the most obvious material impacts of not having enough money to make ends meet. For example, Azad, originally from Pakistan, in his early 40s and living in Besòs i el Maresme, believed that B-MINCOME would help to lift him and his family above the poverty line:

"Before I was earning the minimum to be able to live in Europe, at the line of poverty. With this [previous welfare] "help" you eat… I have been told that we can now receive up to 1500 or 1700 euros a month [from B-MINCOME]… So, it´s better. And our situation is… I mean, my children the 17 year-old and the 14 year-old always ask for fancy clothes, and I can't buy them… maybe now I will be able to…"

Like Azad, many other people felt particularly hopeful about the potential of B-MINCOME to help them create a better future for their children. Clarisa, a Spanish gypsy in her early 50s and living in Bon Pastor, felt that the B-MINCOME would help to offer predictability of income which would allow her and her children to "get ahead":

"I think it would change a lot because it would help me, my home, my family and I know I would get ahead. I try to do it even without the opportunities and if I would be given one, for sure I would use it with all my might. I consider myself a warrior woman and I know that sometimes I have a bad day that I don't have the strength to get out of bed but by having the stability of knowing that I could get ahead and that with this help I could plan my future and the future for my baby boy… Because my life is little bit complicated and I think that would open other doors for me and it would give my children some future especially to my baby boy and I could help my youngest daughter, who is twenty four years old, I could help her with her baby."

Expectations for B-MINCOME went beyond material impact; people hope and expect that the financial support of B-MINCOME will help to provide "peace of mind" and to alleviate the stress and anxiety associated with a precarious income. As Azad sees it:

"What I want from this benefit is a "mental help" … Don´t think it's for food, it's for…To move on…To move on, to have my mind free…that's what I think. There are people who think differently."

Reflecting this, Pili, who is in her 30s and lives in Bon Pastor, thought that B-MINCOME would mean that she no longer has to live in fear of bills and unexpected costs, such as rent increases, or her car breaking down, because she would be "financially stable".

In addition to the financial support, it is the active social programmes and opportunities provided through B-MINCOME which fuelled positive expectations, especially the social enterprise, employment and training, and community programmes. Echoing the desire of so many people to work, rather than to receive financial aid, many people were particularly hopeful of the potential of the employment and training programme. Eustaquia, in her 40s, originally

from Peru and now living in Besòs i el Maresme, explained how B-MINCOME would go further than any other support she'd received in this regard:

"I would like the program of training and employment, becoming more independent… I would like to learn new things… I like hairdressing… I would like to learn… I never had this opportunity before… The only social benefit I had was the voucher that the social worker would give me to collect the food supply or the card for my children…. and that's it."

Clearly Eustaquia believed that B-MINCOME would go beyond previous benefits, such as food stamps, and instead allow her to make a lasting change to her earning potential. As an alternative route to greater earning potential, the social enterprise programme of B-MINCOME also excited some people, appealing to their entrepreneurial spirit:

"I think creating small business it's very good, because around here there's a lot of people who want to work, but they don't want to work for someone else, or that doesn't fit them…so a lot of people, including me, would like to open a business." (Sayd, 38, Pakistani, Besòs i el Maresme)

"Well, B-MINCOME is good, it's interesting. There are some things that I like. The fact that they help to create a business…to help you be an entrepreneur… and also the economic help, that would be good for certain families." (Mari Carmen, 39, Spanish, Besòs i el Maresme).

Some people even had a specific idea of the business they would want to create through the programme, such as Clara who hoped she could open a rotisserie restaurant in Besòs i el Maresme which she would call 'The Little Chicken'. She jumped for joy when she found out that she was selected to participate in the social enterprise programme, hoping that it would allow her to realise her entrepreneurial dream.

Other people hoped that B-MINCOME, through its community programme, would allow them to meet and help others:

"I like the fact that some of the help isn't economic… when I went to the informative sessions they talked to me about the volunteering. And the truth is that I thought "Wow, that's what I need, to go out of my house". (Pilar, Spanish, 46, Bon Pastor)

"What I want is, for example, to help an old lady to go the doctor, or to feed an elderly couple…I don´t know, something like this; or going for a walk with a grandma because she needs to walk…. So, I would love to do something like this, I think it would be good for myself as well." (Mendez, Spanish, 58, Besòs i el Maresme)

Like Pilar and Mendez, people shared a hope that B-MINCOME could bring about a transformation in the wider community, as well as improving their own personal wellbeing.

Concerns about B-MINCOME

While some people felt wholly positive and hopeful about the potential of B-MINCOME to bring about positive change in their lives, and the lives of their communities, other people shared concerns, questions or doubts about the policy.

In line with experiences of other forms of welfare, some people felt that as B-MINCOME is targeted in particular neighbourhoods, it would further perceptions of Eix Besòs as deprived or marginalised:

"Look, I want to work, I don't want help, help goes well, but I've never been short of it. I think it's for the poor, and I don't want you to tell me, 'these poor people'." (Nazir, 46, Pakistani, Besòs i el Maresme)

*"The only thing that I didn't like is that they treated us like a marginal neighbourhood. Of course. You think "they won't do something like that in the Eixample", no? Well, I understand that they don't need it there. But it's like "F***, we must be really f***ed up if we need this"." (Pilar, 46, Spanish, Bon Pastor)*

For Nazir and Pilar, among others, B-MINCOME would be associated with the existing narrative of stigma of poverty and neediness which they reject.

On the other hand, people also shared concerns about how far B-MINCOME would be effectively targeted at those who most need the support, especially because B-MINCOME was allocated to eligible households through a lottery system. For instance, Laura who lives in Besòs i el Maresme,

felt that, "if they do it by draw they won't take into account who needs it more or less." Other people worried that they would not be eligible for B-MINCOME due to administrative errors or inflexible eligibility thresholds:

"The thing is that I was supposed to get a letter at home, from the Social Services, because it was them who did it, right? But we didn't receive the letter. It didn't arrive to most of the people who used to live in the Casas Baratas, because they hadn't changed the address to the new flats, and they were returned." (Alkaid, Spanish, 34, Bon Pastor)

"We'll probably end up being unlucky. They took away my wife's support because I had €3 more than the sum they allow." (Costa, 61, Spanish, Ciutat Meridiana)

Perhaps reflecting previous experiences of false promise, a small minority of people suggested that B-MINCOME could be some kind of scam. Adhara, a gypsy woman in her 30s in Ciutat Meridiana conveyed a sense of distrust for B-MINCOME:

"Honestly, sometimes I asked myself whether it's all a lie. A lie so they can get money, or…I don't know… Maybe they ask us to complete the survey but then it's a lie. They can just tell us we didn't get it, or that we have been denied the aid. They say there are going to be one thousand beneficiaries, but maybe they won't call us".

For those who did think that B-MINCOME is a legitimate effort to address local challenges, there were also concerns about how long it would last, and what this would mean for participants and the community. For example, Sara is sceptical of the long term impacts of the social currency (through which a proportion of B-MINCOME participants receive their benefit) on the local economy where she lives:

"I would say that this [social currency] is going to revitalize the area for some time and when the project is finished, that is to say, they are going to finish with these businesses… Because the businesses that were already working, that were already doing well before for them it's ok…but those that are waiting for this help… people will buy while they have this social currency and then when their situation changes and they don't receive the help I don't know if they will buy in these businesses." (Sara, 33, Argentine, Besòs i el Maresme)

Similarly Mendez was concerned that like other forms of time-limited welfare, B-MINCOME would only allow for, "bread for today, and hunger for tomorrow".

However, despite feeling a mixture of hope, expectation and some concern, most people remained open-minded about B-MINCOME and the impact that it could have on people in Besòs. Perla, a Spanish 32 year old living in Besòs i el Maresme, explained the multiple possible futures she saw for B-MINCOME:

"Yesterday I was explaining it to a friend of mine and he said, what do you think? And I told him, look, two things can happen, one is that it really works and that people start to collaborate with each other, support each other and grow, or people continue to do the same thing.... that only few will be given the help and people will abuse it and stay all in the same situation as they were before. Well... it's worth trying."

APPENDIX 1: ABOUT B-MINCOME

Eligibility criteria

Selection criteria for inclusion in the pilot

- Age. At least one member of the household must be aged 25 to 60 on 31 July 2017
- Living situation. All members of the household must effectively live together throughout the project.
- Residence. All members of the household must have been registered as Barcelona residents since June 2015, live in one of the Eix Besòs neighbourhoods.
- Income. Economic threshold (monthly):
- < 402.6€ (first adult)
- 148€ (second adult)1
- 148€ (each household member aged between 14-17)
- 148€ (each household member aged below 13)
- Social service status. They must be service users with an open Social Services file or have applied for and met the requirements for obtaining an allowance for children and/or adolescents aged 0 to 16 in 2017; or be taking part in the Làbora programmexxv or have taken part within the last 12 months, or be a Social Insertion Service (SIS)xxvi user.
- Consent. They must voluntarily accept the conditions for receiving the benefit, accept monitoring to compile household information, consent to monitoring for the purposes of carrying out anonymous evaluation studies, agree to provide information on additional income they might receive, and consent to an app being installed in their mobile phones that will manage the information, payments and activities associated with the project.

xxv Làbora programme is an employment programme run by Barcelona City Council which works to prioritise employment opportunities for people at risk of social exclusion in the city – also known as 'Barcelona Reserved Job Market'

xxvi Social Insertion Service (SIS) is specialised support programme for unemployed people in Barcelona which offers individual tutorials and occupational guidance

Treatment groups

Figure 6 shows the different 'treatment groups' which make up the B-MINCOME experiment. It has been designed to compare outcomes across different variables of interest (such as conditionality or active policy programme).

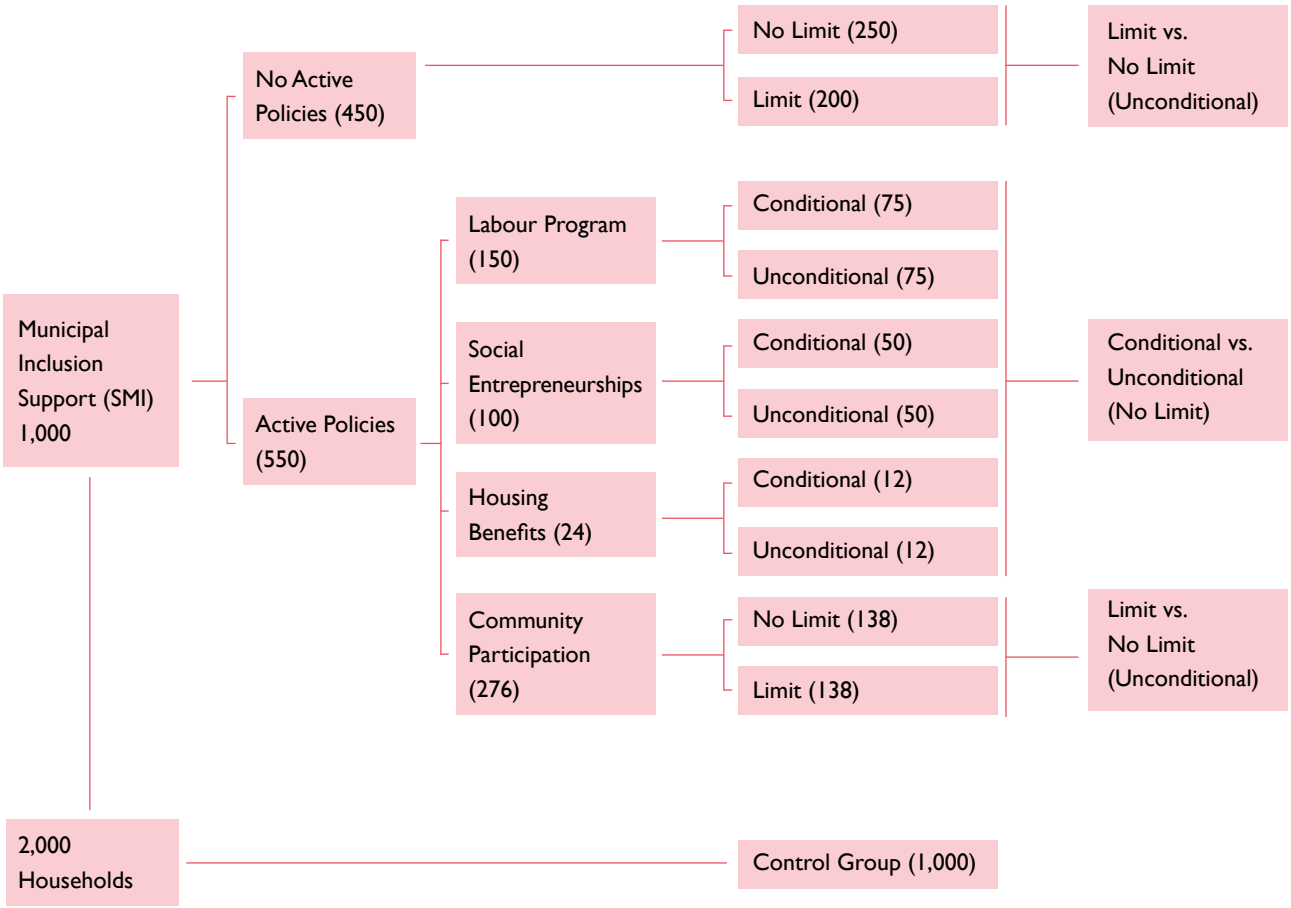


Figure 6: B-MINCOME treatment groups

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