

Sants: seeking autonomous self-management from below

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In this report we will analyse a 1.7 km² case study area encompassing the traditional Sants neighbourhood and another small neighbourhood called la Bordeta. We will refer to this wider area of almost 60 000 inhabitants simply as Sants.

Sants is an urban area characterized by a strong sense of identity. It combines the fact of being a working class neighbourhood with the legacy of having been a rural village in a distant past. Its recent history, however, ought to be understood in terms of the impact of Industrial Revolution in the area, especially with respect to the workers' movement. During the second half of the 19th century, Sants witnessed the birth of various industries that transformed the neighbourhood into a hub of manual workers. The neighbourhood also increasingly developed commercial activity around Carretera de Sants, which connects it with the rest of the city. Barcelona's growth made the neighbourhood increasingly important and, nowadays, the commercial hub of Creu Coberta and Carretera de Sants has been planned not only at city level but also connecting Sants to many other urban areas of the Baix Llobregat County. Additionally, the Barcelona-Sants railway station has - especially since a high-speed rail link was established in 2008 - acted as a motor for economic revitalisation, spurring on the development of the tertiary sector.

The remodelling of the railway lines resulting from the arrival of the high-speed rail link has in fact been a recent trigger of contestation in the neighbourhood. A broad-based mobilization of residents held that the rail line was dismembering the neighbourhood and proposed to situate the tracks underground. The residents' wishes were, however, left unfulfilled by the then City Council, which argued that the proposal was too expensive to be implemented in a time of economic scarcity. The City Council instead did an urban project to hide the railway line, a solution which did not heal the scar on the urban fabric caused by the tracks. In sum, the high speed rail link has been an urban transformation that has resulted in a significant change in the neighbourhood.

Nowadays Sants is characterized by mixed use development, with the tertiary sector prevalent. Around the Carretera de Sants there is a preponderance of commercial activity while the historic heart of the neighbourhood reflects its industrial past, with many factories, most of them today converted into public facilities. Examining the socioeconomic structure, it is important to note that the neighbourhood is currently also mixed, with people of different socioeconomic categories coexisting. Sants is not an extremely vulnerable neighbourhood, but a low-middle class area. Demographically, Sants has a balanced age pyramid. However, an economically precarious but culturally important class of people are gaining importance among youth activists.

1. Unemployment, evictions and small business decay

According to the department of statistics of the Barcelona City Council, in 2014 the family income index in Sants was 85.5 per cent of the city average, while in la Bordeta it was 76 per cent. It is also important to highlight the huge contrast between Sants and the neighbourhoods that border it to the north, which are noticeably above the city average, such as les Corts (125.4 per cent), and those to the south. The southern part of Sants borders some of the poorest neighbourhoods of the city, such as La Marina del Port (72 per cent) and Poble Sec-Montjuïc (66.3 per cent). Thus, unlike Nou Barris Nord, Sants is not an area of notable poverty.

Nevertheless, it has traditionally been a working class neighbourhood and, even though it evolved to a middle class area, it has become poorer as a result of the 2008 economic recession.

Another significant effect of the Great Recession in Sants relates to small businesses. In many of the neighbourhood's historically commercial areas, such as Creu Coberta and Carretera de Sants, the worsening of the crisis led to a proliferation of empty stores, up for rent or sale. A direct and visible effect of the crisis has been the closure of historic neighbourhood stores, many of them replaced by large franchises. The opening of large shopping malls near the neighbourhood, such as Les Arenes and Gran Via, has also had a negative effect on local small businesses. The small business decay has been related to another significant problem in the area: unemployment. The Sants-Montjuïc district has in fact been one of the districts of Barcelona where unemployment has grown most during the recession.

Unemployment is one of the hot issues when comparing Sants pre- and post-recession. Neighbourhood social movements, especially in La Bordeta, have been attentive to the effects of increasing unemployment. In 2007, la Bordeta in fact received a grant from the Catalan government aimed at improving deprived neighbourhoods which included a labour orientation programme (carried out from 2007 to 2009). This programme offered training in the creation of CVs and has served to encourage people to engage with Barcelona's publically run employment agency (Barcelona Activa) and other specialist organizations. Although the representatives of the neighbourhood association say that the programme was implemented without follow-up on the profile of users of the programme, it appears that most people engaging with it were South American migrants.

Rising house prices and the absence of rights to housing, in addition to the historical real-estate pressure to transform the neighbourhood, is also reported as a problem that actually preceded the economic recession. Many families that had lived in the area for generations were forced to leave the neighbourhood, a situation that was perceived as a significant problem – a reaction demonstrative of the idea of Sants as an area with a strong sense of identity, as a community.

What has happened in the neighbourhood of Sants is that many people, after living in the neighbourhood for many generations, have had to leave as a result of difficulties in finding housing because it is too expensive in this neighbourhood. It has also become more densely populated. There has been poverty, also [affecting] a significant part of the immigrant population, that we, from the social movements, have great difficulty reaching because they have other sets of problems (Can Batlló, Activist).

Another set of issues reported in the neighbourhood are those related to the existence of over-crowded apartments, including informal settlements and housing which lacks minimum decent living conditions. This is especially the case in those areas affected by new urban development projects. Actually, according to data from the PAH, Sants-Montjuïc is the district in the city that has had the second highest number of evictions.

Finally, we should note that the effects of the economic crisis in Sants have also eased tensions in some aspects. Mainly, in relation to the weakening of the real-estate pressure on the neighbourhood. The neighbourhood had suffered tenant harassment practices even



before the recession and neighbourhood associations had been committed to assessing residents affected by real-estate mobbing and even to reporting some of the cases they identified. Although these practices stopped with the recession, they are now returning and gentrification is perceived as a real threat.

2. Cooperativism, collaboration and contestation.

Sants has a rich community life, with more than 300 registered community or socio-cultural organizations in the area. The types of social organizations that we find in this area is highly diverse, from leisure time activities, to sportive and cultural organizations, and various political organizations, among others. The existence of the *Secretariat d'Entitats de Sants* [Sants secretariat of community-based organizations] is not only evidence of this but also a sign of coordination among civil society organizations in the area. This association of social organizations was created with the return to democracy in Spain following the end of the Francoism, and now includes a variety of organizations, including: social action organizations, neighbourhood associations, small business associations, cultural entities, organizations defending civic and social rights, educational projects, sports clubs, organizations for the elderly and religious associations. The main objectives of this association include promoting associative coordination, networking and participation around strategic issues.

I think it is the legacy of when here there were large factories. The workers organized themselves; they organized spaces for leisure, and consumers' cooperatives. It is very important. (...) Yes, in general there are a lot of social organizations. There are very active ones, others that are focused on the traditional Catalan cultural activities – diables, bastoners, gegants, castellers – and others that are smaller. But, as I say, there is lots of collective activity, and this creates a social practice that leads people to spend time in public spaces, they are more open, there is [also] the Festa Major... (Can Batlló, Activist).

The associative culture in Sants ought to be understood through the historical role played by what we term here 'democratic cooperativism'. As in other working class neighbourhoods of Barcelona, in Sants you can see the heritage of self-organized worker communities that were developed by the labour movement since the mid-19th century. These cooperatives were at their peak at the beginning of the 20th century before they were abolished following the rise of fascism at the end of the Spanish civil war. Democratic and popular cooperativism has attempted to develop forms of economic relationships based on cooperation, solidarity, and mutual support. Nowadays, many initiatives are developing alternative ways of engaging in economic activities, mainly relating to economic consumption but some also relating to production. Such initiatives are flourishing again in Sants following the Francoist period of repression and control.

In this vein, since 2009 the 'Sants Barri Cooperatiu' project [Sants Cooperative Neighbourhood], promoted by, among other actors, the self-managed cooperative La Ciutat Invisible, has been working on promoting the historical memory and cooperative identity of the neighbourhood. This out-reach project has prompted the development of the Association for the Promotion of the Cooperative and Solidarity-Based Economy in Sants-Montjuïc. In this association you can find a large list of the cooperative enterprises from the neighbourhood,

such as La Ciutat Invisible, La Col, Koitton Club, or some cooperative projects that are being developed in the ambit of Can Batlló (a social initiative that will be analysed later in this report), such as the housing cooperative La Borda, the economic development agency Coopolis or the cooperative school Arcàdia, among others. Now, some people consider the neighbourhood to be in a rich moment regarding the number of cooperatives recently established, a trend that has developed in parallel with the worsening of the economic crisis. There are also cooperative projects such as COOP 57, l'Olivera, Setmanari Directa or the Association of Working Cooperatives of Catalonia, which are based in the neighbourhood. Specifically, most of these projects are located around the Plaça d'Osca square. The existence of cooperative enterprises relating to different areas of activity points to the existence of an agglomeration of the Catalan cooperative movement in this particular zone of the city. This tendency should be analysed in relation to the fact that associations based on affinities and interests have always been prominent in the neighbourhood. It is also notable that this preserves a certain independent 'village' or 'town' type of identity.

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Here in Sants there is still the feeling that this is a 'village' with the virtues and defects [of one] – such as the rumours – but there is this 'certain something' which makes people like to live here because they like to feel connected to each other, even more so if you belong to an association because [if you do] you don't stop meeting people [that you know] in the street (Centre Social de Sants, Activist).

Looking at the presence of the social movements in the neighbourhood, the *Coordinadora de Festes Alternatives* [Platform for the Coordination of Alternative Parties], established around the Sants Neighbourhood Assembly, embodies a meeting point for many of the social entities and political organizations with a grassroots base, in most cases coming from socialist or revolutionary traditions. Within this more politicised sector, it is necessary to detail some emblematic examples of Barcelona's squatters' movement (*okupa*), such as Centre Autogestionari La Hamsa (1996-2004) or more recently the experience of the Centre Social Autogestionat Can Vies. The members of this heterogeneous group of people and organizations committed to the political values of working class self-organization are, in many cases, young natives of the neighbourhood working as partners in some of the cooperative enterprises mentioned above. Often, these people have familial ties to or an organizational affiliation with the social and civic entities in the neighbourhood that are not strictly politicized, such as the Orfeó de Sants, or those entities devoted to fostering community culture. These ties, informal and strictly personal, have (re)emerged in cases of remarkable conflicts.

The Can Vies conflict is one of the incidents that has revealed the existence of bonds and ties between, on the one hand, the more traditional, associative organizations and, on the other, the alternative self-organizing movements. At the end of May 2014, as a result of the attempted eviction and demolition of Can Vies - a squatted, self-organized centre - by the City Council, an episode of contestation and confrontation regarding the demolition took place. The protests engaged a broad portion of the residents of the area and enjoyed support from many social movements and activists from across the whole city. Over a period of three days there were citizen mobilisations and demonstrations of more than a thousand of people, leading to direct clashes with police and some rioting, developments that made the conflict

between the City Council and the social movements that supported the Can Vies initiative increasingly dramatic. Faced with the widespread opposition to the decision of the City Council, the then Mayor of Barcelona - Xavier Trias - opted to halt the demolition of the building. Meanwhile the assembly that coordinated Can Vies's activities began a crowd-funding campaign to support the reconstruction of the building.

As we have seen, then, Sants is a neighbourhood with a high degree of collaboration among social organizations but also with important episodes of conflict and contestation between some of these organizations and the City Council. However, the governance relations between the neighbourhood associations in Sants can be usefully divided in different types according to the role played by the community-based organizations in respect to the regulative role of the administration. Let us demonstrate that in detail.

On one side there is a huge number of socio-cultural organizations and traditional neighbourhood associations. On the other side, there is a broad neighbourhood movement engaging in opposition and advocacy, which is based around the Centre Social de Sants, the Comissió de Veïns de la Bordeta and the Assemblea del Barri de Sants.

This last broad group of people and social organizations emerged in 1971 - with the re-legalization of neighbourhood associations during the final years of Francoism - and has played a key role in making claims for better living conditions and has achieved significant urban improvements at the neighbourhood level. Some of the many processes of bargaining and contestation in which the Centre Social de Sants has led the organized articulation of the residents' interests include: the supply of basic amenities to the area, such as mains gas; the arrangement of public spaces for the neighbourhood use, such as Plaça de Sants; lobbying on projects of strategic planning, such as the County Planning; earning agreements regarding the management of cultural spaces, such as the Civic Centre; claiming for public use the land of ex-manufacturing complexes, such as España Industrial or Vapor Vell; the articulation of the Secretariat d'Entitats de Sants; and the Can Batlló project, which will be analysed in depth in the following section.

Beyond its active role as a neighbourhood association - concerned with the management of aspects of the urban neighbourhood - the Centre Social de Sants has also supported many other claims for improvements affecting the neighbourhood. Since its creation, this organization made its associative experience available in order to facilitate a comprehensive approach to all kinds of social problems. For example, they have recently offered the use of a space to organize activities by mobilised pensioners fighting for their rights.

The Centre Social de Sants is not hierarchically organized, and as such is typical of many neighbourhood associations. On the contrary, the organization fosters interest-based leadership and considers transversality and horizontality as key aspects of its organizational structure. In this vein, the general mode of collective leadership in the neighbourhood is to establish stable collaboration between different social organizations. Different networks overlap each other depending on the issue.

Here the neighbourhood associations' structure of representation did not work because Sants is a neighbourhood that has always functioned horizontally. Nothing very hierarchical has ever worked [here] (Centre Social de Sants, Activist).

The social fabric of the neighbourhood has significantly changed and evolved over time. After the huge mobilization that emerged during the later years of Francoism, the reestablishment of democratic municipalities led to a period of social demobilisation, resulting in an important loss of the human capital that had been driving a contestatory associationism in Sants. By the mid-1990s, the vitality of the associative fabric had become minimal. In the post-Olympic period, during the second half of the 1990s, the squatters' movement reappeared, bringing with it a renewed antagonism between the neighbourhood movements and the public administration. Nowadays, following the *Indignados* movement, the neighbourhood is again alive and producing social responses to the effects of recession.

At that time, there is a growing opposition between the popular movement in the neighbourhood and the public administration, which are moving in opposite directions. There is a model of civic centres (closed, bureaucratized and ideologically limited), that will lead to the birth of the CSO [self-managed social centres] of the neighbourhood. Political control of the socialist party (for example, not allowing the hanging of banners in solidarity with the movement against military service in Cotxeres de Sants). In general the whole period of socialist government is very confrontational with respect to all issues: squatting, anti-fascism, little support for the needs of the neighbourhood, at the urban level (the covering of railway lines, housing bubble, the Sants railway station project...). It's a District Council totally autistic with respect to the mobilizations of organized residents. They want to promote the individual participation of residents and destroy the fabric of social and community organization (La Ciutat Invisible, Cooperativist).

At the same time, however, during the 1990s significant agreements were made between different sectors of the neighbourhood social organizations and the public administration, establishing spaces for collaboration. Specifically, we found many references to the agreement known as 'Pactes de la Fundació Miró', where in 1994 a co-managing model was agreed between the City Council and the Secretariat d'Entitats de Sants to once again make use of the space Cotxeres de Sants. In 1997 this agreement was extended to another emblematic recovered space in Sants: the Casinet d'Hostafrancs. The co-management of Cotxeres-Casinet by the City Council and the Secretariat d'Entitats de Sants has been organized by the same group of people since that period. The co-management agreement is based on the City Council providing half of the staff, while the Secretariat d'Entitats coordinates the other half of workers who develop workshop activities in the space. This model gives associations and the public administration joint stakes in the project while also determining their governance relations; it is a model that brings with it some inefficiency as a result of the bureaucratic processes inherent within it. At the same time, some elements of the fabric of associations see this close relationship with the public administration as something undesirable.

Cotxeres is the biggest 'Centre Civic'¹ in Barcelona. The problems that it has are derived from everything being run 50-50. There are people contracted by the 'Federació d'Entitats'², and there are people contracted by the municipality. Normally the directors of public social centres are civil servants from the municipal administration. So sometimes there is a barrier, depending on who works there; sometimes it depends on the people at the district council (from whom the administrative personnel contracted by the municipality receive orders), and sometimes it is the

person in charge at the centre that causes a problem in its running (Centre Social de Sants, Activist).

Social organizations in Sants are usually clearly divided with respect to those spaces of citizenship participation fostered by the City Council. On the one hand, there are alternative and self-organized grassroots organizations that distrust these arrangements, instead advocating autonomous and bottom up modes of citizen engagement. On the other hand, there are many traditional social organizations that accept collaboration with public administrations and, in some cases, exhibit a clear degree of clientelism with respect to the main political parties. This tends to be related to a system of subsidies for civic entities that has fostered the obedience of some social organizations to some specific political parties. Underlying this arrangement is a previous époque in which the financial sustainability of many social organizations depended on their partners, and in which the role of subsidies was focused on funding projects that could be seen as activities additional to the organization's basic functioning.

It was, in fact, precisely the opposition of some to the co-managing model that led many social centres in the neighbourhood to search for alternative models, with the aim of developing an identity genuinely at the margins of collaboration with public bodies. This is the case with the Can Batlló platform, analysed in depth in the following section, and is also the case with many other organizations, such as the Ateneu Llibertari de Sants and Espai Obert, all of which have experience of self-organization that correspond with a set of rules aimed at developing autonomy in the management of socio-communitarian spaces.

You will find a sensibility in favour of 'direct action' that does not want to hear anything about the public administration, that doesn't even want to hang the sign of the City Council, rejecting any idea, even if, like in the case of Can Batlló, the City Council is paying for its building renovations. That is to say that there are people that consider that self-management has to be 100%. But there are also people, like us in our neighbourhood association, that consider that, at the end of the day, these are public funds to which we also have rights, as long as collecting these grants does not restrict our freedom or our ideals. So, we ask for and we accept grants. Among other reasons, because we have some expenses as a result of a couple of people being paid for working here – me and another associate. And, as long as this does not restrict our liberty, we accept what they give us, and even more so because a neighbourhood association knows how to survive in a 'war economy' (Centre Social de Sants, Activist).

To sum up, Sants exhibits a highly active and diverse social fabric, where different generations of active residents – who have experienced significant social struggles - overlap and their historical achievements and knowledge accumulate. The democratic cooperative movement has had, and still has, an important role in economic production, consumption and social organization in Sants. Nevertheless, the neighbourhood is socially diverse and we can clearly distinguish between traditional social organizations, usually closer to the city authorities, and alternative and self-organized grassroots organizations. This latter type of organizations often contest public policies but, at the same time, also make important policy proposals. Beyond this significant, and in some sense overly simplistic, division, Sants exhibits a tradition of collaboration not only among different social organizations but also between governmental

and non-governmental actors; what we call civic capacity. As we have seen, in some cases this collaboration has been led by the City Council, but in many other cases it is the result of bottom-up struggles that achieve (or require) some kind of engagement by public bodies.

3. Counter-hegemonic practices in a politicized neighbourhood

The economic recession and the *Indignados* movement triggered a new wave of social responses and social initiatives in Sants. These developments emerged from existing social movements and social organizations but incorporated new activists, with different characteristics, and new social movements which also used new ways of organizing, communicating and functioning. The majority of the grassroots organizations in the neighbourhood specifically point to the recession as having opened a window of opportunity for carrying out processes of collective (re)appropriation. As we will see in the first initiative we will analyse, it is as a result of the recession that the urban development of multiple plots of land in the city came to a halt, which opened up new opportunities for alternative modes of collective management. At the same time, it was the huge citizen mobilization of the *Indignados* movement, which brought together former activists and social movements in Sants, that pushed the new City Council elected in 2011 to reach agreements with the activists. In this context new projects emerged from below started to be implemented in Sants.

In this section we will focus on two different socially innovative initiatives in Sants. The first, Can Batlló, is an amazing example of a large-scale initiative that has emerged from its historical and geographical context. The initiative was launched in 2011 but should be understood as the result of long-standing neighbourhood struggles for public facilities and green areas in Sants. The second, the Platform for Mortgage Affected People (PAH), is an initiative that emerged in Barcelona in 2009 to help cope with the dramatic increase in foreclosures during the recession. The PAH has had a huge impact at a national level and has spread across Spain through more than 240 local assemblies. The headquarter of the organization is now in Sants, where the PAH also has an occupied building which they use to provide social housing. Nevertheless, the PAH did not grow up in Sants but has rather settled in that area following the organization's flourishing.

Although the two initiatives are established in Sants for different reasons, respond to different events and have different goals. The leadership of both share some features based on democracy, cooperation and empowerment. Moreover, both of them are reframing discourses in a highly political and transformative way, which clearly fits with Sants' historical and geographical characteristics. The idea of fostering counter-hegemonic practices, rather than only addressing specific social problems, is a common feature of the two initiatives.

3.1. Can Batlló

Can Batlló is a 14-hectare former textile manufacturing complex which dates back to 1878. The complex was the backbone around which the urban structure of La Bordeta's neighbourhood is organized. In its most prosperous moment it was developed as an authentic manufacturer's town, home to more than 2000 workers. The business closed as a textile factory at the beginning of the 1960s, leaving space for the occupation of the warehouses and workshops by various small businesses, a transition that generated a particular industrial ecosystem. In 1976

Barcelona's General Metropolitan Plan responded to the demands of residents for public facilities and designated the land of Can Batlló as an area for public facilities and green spaces.

Up until the 1990s, the focus of urban transformation in Barcelona lay away from the Sants-Montjuïc District. In 2000, however, a significant transformation was planned through Gran Via, a major avenue that crosses Sants, connecting Barcelona with nearby l'Hospitalet. The objective was to develop a new economic district around the Gran Via, with the extension of the Fira de Barcelona exhibition centre and the construction of the so-called 'Ciutat de la Justícia' (an area housing the principal bodies of the Catalan justice and legal system). This urban development raised new expectations on the part of the owners of Can Batlló, who hoped to transform their plots into housing developments.

In 2002 more than 200 small industrial businesses were operating in the Can Batlló complex. In 2006 the City Council passed an urban redevelopment proposal which would conserve the manufacturing complex, provide for a green area of 4.7 hectares, and approve a significant development of housing stock, including 300 apartments dedicated to social housing. This plan did not satisfy the expectations of the multinational enterprise (Gaudir) that owned the land and which instead requested approval for the building of more extensive, high-rise apartments. The operation was subsequently suspended following the bursting of the housing bubble, leaving Can Batlló's lands and buildings as they had been, with some workshops still functioning inside the manufacturing complex.

Since 1975, the residents of Sants had - through several waves of mobilization, using various repertoires of collective action - been calling for a reclassification of Can Batlló as a space for green zones and public facilities. In 2009, several neighbours and social organizations launched a platform called *Recuperem Can Batlló: Can Batlló és per el barri* [Reclaiming Can Batlló: Can Batlló is for the neighbourhood]. Various types of social collectives and organizations, such as Comissió de Veïns de La Bordeta or Centre Social de Sants, joined this platform. They established a specific date, June 1st 2011, by which they wanted the public administration to have made a decision, and said that in the absence of a decision by that date they would occupy the complex to reclaim the space. June 1st 2011 was precisely the date on which a new conservative Mayor took office. The change of the City Council took place in a social climate of citizen mobilization and effervescence led by the *Indignados* movement. In this context, the new Mayor decided - having reached an agreement with the owner - to assign the management of part of the Can Batlló complex to the residents' platform. Specifically, Recuperem Can Batlló was granted the management of a 1500 m² building known as 'Bloc Onze'.

A year later, the platform Recuperem Can Batlló had renovated and transformed the Bloc Onze, creating a bar, an auditorium, a library and other spaces. Some of the resources that enabled the development of these spaces came from the City Council, but the autonomy of the management of the process was always maintained by the organization. The platform Recuperem Can Batlló is organized around an assembly that carries out monthly meetings and distributes its work throughout various commissions.

We have a committee devoted to negotiation, which was the one that had (and still has) relations with the public administration, when we have to ask for things, when they give us more spaces, etc. In general we have many committees now (...) Those [committees] that are more related to the general operating of the space are the activities [committee], the bar,

communication, design of the space – run by the people of LaCol –, economy, strategy, infrastructures, negotiation, administrative... Then there are other commissions that are projects which, as we have found new spaces, are made available to people that had the desire to do other things. There is a carpenter's open to the neighbourhood for people who need to do or fix something. Now, one of the latest committees is the beer workshop that is promoted by the bar. There is also the climbing wall upstairs, which is one of the first things that was built by everybody... (Can Batlló, Activist).

The platform also has three large projects focused on managing other spaces beyond Bloc Onze. These projects are oriented toward addressing various social challenges in the area and represent a clear faith in networking by neighbourhood associations as a response to such problems. These three large projects are: the housing cooperative La Borda, the self-managed school Arcàdia, and the agency for the promotion of a cooperative and solidarity-based economy Coopolis. Each project is in fact self-organized even though they maintain a relationship with the whole Can Batlló³ initiative. Each of these projects also has a distinct, and autonomous, relationship with the public administration according to its magnitude, scope and needs. Can Batlló is, then, a social initiative where things are being achieved through a network of commissions and autonomous projects, each of which is horizontally managed according to a rationale of democratic cooperation.

The complementarity and the holistic and integrated ambition of these projects, developed in the ambit of a communitarian initiative makes Can Batlló highly original. The platform establishes a variety of objectives in areas such as culture, basic resources, housing, and education, among others; all exhibiting different kinds of open, empowering and participative formats (Subirats & García-Bernados, 2015). Within the initiative a cooperativist rationale and a communitarian approach are especially significant.

The activists involved with the platform are aware that the Bloc Onze is only a very small portion of the 14 hectares that constitute the whole complex, the rest of which is expected to be transformed through a new urban development plan. The platform aims to expand beyond what they currently manage, hoping to gain more space and to influence the new urban development plan.

There is a consciousness inside the assembly of the importance of not being distracted by the management of this space [Bloc Onze] because it is [only] 1,000m² out of 14 hectares. That is to say, the important thing is the overall plan. Then we have created several groups or committees with the awareness of them forming different pillars, where, for example, we can find the “work” [committee], which started up the Coopolis project. [Or for example] the education project with the Arcadia school – which is in progress – and we have the housing project [La Borda]. So, starting from the idea of not wanting to limit ourselves to the library and little else, after a short period – at the end of our first year – the initial nucleus of people began to meet in order to start-up the housing project (LaCol, Cooperativist).

Agreement on the construction of a housing block using an alternative model - land use trust cooperative - has been reached between the Barcelona City Council, the LaCol cooperative and the Recuperem Can Batlló platform. The project is known as the La Borda housing cooperative and clearly underlines the integral and transversal approach taken by the platform in all its

actions. This project aims to build more than 40 apartments through a land use transfer cooperative, which is a highly novel arrangement in Barcelona. The land on which the block will be built is a municipal plot that the City Council has agreed to lease to the cooperative for 75 years. The project will be partially funded by FIARE-COOP57, another cooperative hosted in Sants that works in the area of ethical banking.

The Coopolis project is a bottom-up plan inspired by democratic cooperativism which will aim to address the unemployment not only in the neighbourhood but also in the city as a whole from the specific prism of the solidarity-based economy. The project is designed to foster the cooperative economy by providing advising and training and by facilitating a 'living lab' of projects. It is being developed by the Association for Fostering Sant's Cooperative and Solidarity Economy, and has gained the institutional and financial support of the Barcelona City Council, as well as support from other bodies. It is a project that will have two dimensions. On the one hand, at the neighbourhood level it will try to find a solution to the high unemployment rates in the district. On the other hand, it has the city-wide aim of representing a place of reference for all with respect to social and solidarity-based economic activity.

The Coopolis project, along with the technical coordination provided by the Ciutat Invisible and La Col, is located in a 4000 m² ex-industrial building, constructed on different levels, with plans for public spaces, space for training activities, and 42 spaces to be rented out - with a maximum occupancy of three years - which are designed to facilitate the starting up of various initiatives. It also will provide space for industrial cooperatives as well as different consolidated projects of the social and solidarity-based economy that might further attract newly created initiatives. With respect to financing, the economic plan of Coopolis is based upon the City Council financing the building renovation and initially contributing to the costs of human resources. The project aims, however, to be financially autonomous and self-sustaining following the first five years of functioning. So, the project organizers advocate autonomy but nonetheless recognize the usefulness of collaboration with the City Council for the project's success. Nonetheless, they reject the traditional forms of management through public-private partnerships. They are reframing forms of governance and rethinking how new forms of collective management might be established.

One of the points of friction between the project presented and the municipal council is how and by who will the future [Coopolis] facility be run and managed. Its advocates want its direction to be mixed and broad: with the presence of the City Council, representatives of the social and cooperative economy, the Can Batlló Assembly, the high-schools and vocational training centers of the area, and community-based organizations. (Clara Blanchar, El País, 12 de abril de 2015).

What we have in front of us is a new type of economic promotion, but also [another type] of governance, both in its aims and in its forms (La Ciutat Invisible, Cooperativist).

These three projects beyond the Bloc Onze - Arcadia, La Borda and Coopolis - demonstrate that Can Batlló is an on-going initiative where different projects and activities are being fostered through leadership that is both autonomous and networked. These three projects remain, however, in early stages. So, let us focus on how the assembly of the Bloc Onze works. For several years this organization has used the fiscal umbrella of the local neighbourhood

association but is currently in the process of creating its own legal identity. That means that, according to legal requirements, the organization will need to elect a board and a president. The assembly has already stated, however, that this will only be a formal procedure and that the organization will maintain its horizontal way of functioning, taking its decisions democratically through the assembly.

Regarding governance relations with the Barcelona City Council, the platform has accepted that issues related to the infrastructure of the spaces are addressed with the collaboration and guidance of the City Council's technical services and human and material resources. Thus, even though Can Batlló is conceived as an autonomous project providing services and activities beyond the state and the market, in some aspects they are willing to collaborate with the public administration in order to achieve their goals. As noted above, the platform is not the owner of the space but rather has the right to use it on the basis of an agreement with the City Council. Accordingly, the platform states that it is appropriate to take advantage of the City Council's resources for the refurbishment of the spaces.

A further issue is the management agreements that imply financial collaboration between the City Council and the platform; on this point, the platform's internal debates have been intense. A culture of preserving the autonomy of civil society organizations - something strongly rooted among many Sant's associations, as explained above - has been readily apparent with respect to Can Batlló. Until now the tendency to emphasize self-management has been maintained as a priority, always being chosen ahead of alternative options, such as co-management with the public administration. However, there remains debate on this issue and new arguments are developing that may change the platform's position. In this vein, the main issue is the need to promote professionalization with respect to some of the tasks carried out in Bloc Onze. During the first four years of the functioning of Bloc Onze as a space for socio-communitarian activities, volunteering has provided the basis for its daily functioning. Nevertheless, as the space and its activities have grown, some voices have argued for professionalization, an issue that has produced strong debate within the assembly.

The profile of activists that take part in the assembly, beyond the more active members of the neighbourhood movements, also include community based organizations and associations working in the area of culture, youth, schooling and architectural collectives. Further, there are also many local activists involved who are committed to social movements in general and who have a strong sense of belonging to a culture of mobilisation related to self-management, communism, libertarianism, and autonomy. Without doubt, the success of the initiative can be explained by the fact that the neighbourhood has a rich and diverse associative network, but also by the capacity of the initiative to bridge differences among this diversity through leadership practices that make cooperation possible.

When I explain Can Batlló in other places, I say that it is a lovely thing and you can do it too. But you can't do it in the same way; don't kid yourselves. In Sants, the squatters of Can Vies and the people of the Catholic Centre that is in front of it work together on some issues. In things like Can Batlló, people fighting for completely different things are capable of reaching an agreement and working together. I do not know if this happens in Poble Nou or Gracia. I mean, it is quite unique. And apart from this, there is a critical mass; and there are many cooperatives, squats, lots of youth clubs, boy-scouts, at all levels. The fact that makes a difference is that they are able to advance as one. In Can Batlló you can see this because there

are many different ways of working that sometimes clash, but they have been collaborating for almost 5 years now and they manage to go even further, and you find the two structures: social centres, or more traditional associations, that are more pyramidal and have their ways of doing things, and it's difficult for them to understand the assemblies. But our ways of working must also be difficult for them. I mean, everybody has its own way of doing things and their own directions, but in the end everybody manages to give their best for a common goal. It is very clear: the older people from the more traditional associations are those that know how to navigate within the City Council and they know how to talk, who to call, and they have the time to do it because the rest of us we are not retired. But the younger people, we bring new ideas, energy, contacts with the press. I mean, everybody is capable of bringing something, and this doesn't happen everywhere (La Col, Cooperativist).

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We can state, therefore, that within the platform, old and new leaderships are combined. On the one hand, Can Batlló incorporates traditional experiences developed through the Centre Social de Sants and the Comissió de Veïns de La Bordeta. On the other hand, it also incorporates new forms of activism derived from the squatter movement and the cooperative movement. The fact that the taking over of the ex-manufacturing complex took place concurrently with the emergence of the *Indignados* movement produced an interesting mix of activism. That activist mix triggered a successful initiative that could be understood as a citizen response that was based on the emergence of new subjectivities that took place in the context of systemic crisis.

One of the challenges described by the activists interviewed relates to the ability to gain the support of those residents that are not directly linked to the associative movement. This is an especially important challenge when considered in the context of both the aim to promote citizen participation in a broad sense and the general objective of becoming a place that fosters neighbourly interaction. Some of the interviewees stated that, beyond those people engaged in specific collectives and organizations that involved in the space, it can be difficult to integrate residents into participation in the project. In this sense, despite the vitality of Sants' organizations, the activists that have promoted the initiative sometimes feel a degree of rejection on the basis of the project's perceived ideological affiliation.

We have to make ourselves better known outside the initiative within the neighbourhood. Everybody knows what Can Batlló is, but not everybody has been integrated into it. I mean normal neighbours and more traditional groups. For example, to make it so that the choir of Sant Medir would come and ask us for a place to rehearse, because sometimes it seems they are not quite comfortable with us. Also, sometimes people say that we are anarchist squatters despite the fact that politically we try to be careful – it is written in our statutes. Sometimes during electoral campaigns we have found people wanting to use the spaces for [political] activities, but we don't want to be labelled a concrete [political] colour (Can Batlló, Activist).

One of the most interesting aspects of the leadership practices of the Can Batlló platform is how they have reframed the discourse of the common space. The platform was born through social networking and clearly frames Can Batlló as an alternative way to understand the city and the relationships between citizens and institutions (Subirats & García-Bernados, 2015). The management model developed in Can Batlló strives for shared decision making, evident in

the desire for autonomy for the social initiative and in the valorisation of the public, or collective, which is implied in the platform's ways of making decisions and doing things. The platform holds 'the public' to go beyond the public administration, a position that is probably one of the most important discursive impacts of the initiative and challenges ideas that are deeply rooted in the Spanish collective imaginary. Instead, they hold 'the public' to be that which is recognised and defended by the community.

Nevertheless, the historical referents from which the initiative takes inspiration, and which drive socially innovative dynamics, provide a refutation to the notion that Can Batlló may be having too great an impact on the public sphere. This comparison with the worker education in the 20th century suggests that:

The 'Ateneus'⁴ of 20th century – such as the Ateneu Enciclopèdic that became active again after the end of the dictatorship – And I think that the difference is the type of people that participated and their objective. It was a progressive, educative place, the Ateneu! And now, unfortunately, it is difficult to reach the whole population in many of the things that we, the social movement, do. Rather, much of the time they are for internal consumption (Can Batlló, Activist).

Regarding the transferability and systematisation of the experience gained at Can Batlló, it is important to note that the platform has done a worthwhile job of producing and spreading the narrative regarding its own initiative. Inside the platform there have been various initiatives oriented toward disseminating what it has done and what it has achieved. Examples of this include the video 'Com un gegant invisible' (2012), which frames the experience in the context of the broader transformation of the city, and the book 'Inventari de Can Batlló: teixint una història col·lectiva' (2014). These works have gathered a lot of material and documentation on the history of Can Batlló, drawing attention to the process of more than 30 years of the claims of residents over the space and to the efforts to promote a social and solidarity-based economy strongly rooted in the neighbourhood. This narrative produced by the platform reframes the claim over Can Batlló (and the socially innovative processes instituted there) as a more general critique on the way the city has been constructed and transformed over the past three decades.

Throughout its existence, the platform has established along the way a dense network of contacts with other projects and collectives, such as Flor de Maig in Poblenou, Ateneu La Base in Poble Sec, Ateneu Harmonia in Sant Andreu; Can Masdeu and Ateneu Popular de Nou Barris in Nou Barris; Espai Germanetes in l'Eixample, among others. It is also important to highlight the connection made with collectives of professionals working principally on urban issues, such as LaCol, Straddle or Raons Públiques.

They come to find us from other countries because it is a model that it is not usually seen. It's a model between a public social centre and an occupied social centre; we are in the middle because we are neither one thing nor the other. It's a self-managed centre, built by everybody, so I would say that, yes, it has had an impact that makes people from many places interested and want to know about us. It's true that this growth scares us a bit, because you worry that we don't have substance, that we're only a facade without content (Can Batlló, Activist).

3.2. Platform for Mortgage Affected People (PAH)

The Platform for Mortgage Affected People (PAH) was created in 2009 in Barcelona in response to the growing numbers of foreclosures in Spain following the bursting of the real estate bubble; a development which is still affecting hundreds of thousands of families across the country. It is worth recalling that the law that regulates mortgages in Spain guarantees the right of financial entities to payment but does not provide for a right to housing. According to this law, if you cannot pay your mortgage and the value of your debt exceeds the value of your home, the repossession of your home by the lender does not clear your debt. That is precisely the situation that was applicable to many after the 2008 crash. Since then, more than 400,000 families have been evicted from their homes. Most of them are indebted for life as, despite losing their home, they still have to pay the bank the difference between the value of the mortgage and the value of their home, which is always lower than the price they originally paid for it.

The PAH is self-defined as a horizontal movement, non-violent, non-partisan and assembly based, which works to transform the legal framework with respect to housing rights. The original objective of the platform was to stop housing evictions but, as we will see, the organization has since grown and diversified combining three main strategies of collective action: resistance, incidence and dissidence. They combine both contentious and conventional actions (Romanos, 2014). Thus, at the same time as resisting systemic problems (such as stopping evictions or contesting public policies), they try to get influence to the system proposing alternative public policies and legal reforms, and they also produce dissident responses to the failure of authorities to address the problem. In this vein, they have directly negotiated, case by case, with financial institutions to prevent evictions, and they have occupied empty buildings owned by banks to make them available to evicted families. Between 2009 and 2016 the PAH prevented more than 1600 evictions, rehoused over 2500 people and had occupied more than 30 buildings.

Since 2014 the headquarters of the organization has been located in Sants, having previously been situated in Ciutat Vella and, then, els Encants. In Sants, in 2015 the PAH occupied an entire building, known as 'Bloc la Bordeta'. The building is owned by SAREB, a public-private company created to take on the toxic assets of those banks saved by the national government. The PAH has occupied this building in order to rehouse evicted families. The platform has not only moved its headquarters but has also spread out throughout the country through multiple autonomous local assemblies that function on a neighbourhood level. Through this process, a great growth of the platform took place rapidly since its foundation, demonstrating the success of the initiative (Romanos, 2014). To better understand how this success was achieved, the leadership practices of the PAH ought to be analysed in depth.

Locating its headquarters in Sants, occupying the Bloc la Bordeta, and mobilizing to stop evictions in the neighbourhood demonstrate how active the platform is in the area. Nonetheless, the PAH is a fairly de-territorialized initiative in the sense that it is less dependent on geographical context than the other examples of social innovation analysed in this project. As we will see, even though the PAH is most active in those neighbourhoods where the foreclosure crisis has had a significant effect, the initiative is better understood through its leadership practices than through the features of the neighbourhood in which it is located. In

fact, even though some neighbourhoods have specific local groups and assemblies, the PAH is organized and acts at the city level.

The platform began to negotiate eviction cases with financial entities and to offer support to affected families even before the city councils and other public authorities started to act; it was performing a task that public bodies had a responsibility for but were neglecting (Blanco & Leon, 2013). Thus, even though the platform was not able to resolve all the cases, they were nonetheless being more effective than public authorities. In this context, many city councils collaborated with the PAH in a variety of ways: funding it, providing spaces for it to use, or even redirecting affected people that came to the city council for support to the PAH. As the social emergency has clearly overwhelmed local social services, public bodies tend to collaborate with the PAH in order to together ameliorate the situation. In Barcelona, the City Council has an agreement with the PAH, funding a third entity (Observatori DESC) that hires three activists who provide assessments and organizational support for the PAH. From its side, the PAH also collaborates with the City Council and the Catalan regional government, providing consultancy. For example, the PAH collaborates with the City Council in reviewing its protocols, and they have weekly meetings with the Catalan government to follow-up on the implementation of the law⁵ recently approved by the Catalan Parliament to address the social emergency.

Some of these forms of collaboration have raised doubts and debates inside the organization, but its members share the sentiment that the key issue is to avoid being co-opted by the public administration. As a result, the activists continue to receive funding while maintaining their autonomy and, if needed, are highly critical of the City Council and its social and housing policies.

At the end of the day, the conclusion that always comes out the times that we have discussed it is that this [public] money is our money, and who could make a better use of that money than organized civil society? (PAH, Activist).

One of the most interesting aspects of this organization is that it brings together activists for housing rights with people affected by foreclosure processes, the latter of which are for the most part immigrants coming from different cultures. More recently the platform has also engaged tenants (rather than home-owners) at risk of eviction and evicted families in need of rehousing.

The PAH evolved out of an older organization called 'V de Vivienda', that since 2006 had been campaigning for housing rights. Essentially, V de Vivienda was a social movement formed by young activists engaging in acts of contestation against the real-estate bubble in many Spanish cities. The PAH founders were, thus, social activists that had a high level of education and knowledge and who did not themselves have mortgages. Essentially, they were making a claim for affordable housing. We certainly cannot understand the growth of the PAH and its replication across Spain without taking into account the mix between activists and affected people that it attained in its organization. Particularly important is that affected people were empowered through the PAH and consequently became social activists themselves, not only against the mortgage injustice in Spain but also campaigning for decent housing as a social right.

This combination of a broad variety of types of people in the PAH demands leadership practices that bridge inter-class social groups. Precisely how the members of the PAH managed this - engaging affected people in the organization not as guilty parties but as victims who could be mobilized to help other affected people - is one of the key elements that explains the success of the PAH.

When we founded the PAH, we wanted to work on social housing from the point of view of social majorities and not small, self-referential groups; we wanted to break through the limits of the more classical social movements. (...) We address a problem that cuts across many issues, affecting many people, and we do it using an integrated approach. We speak people's language. (...) And, the most beautiful thing we have done is that we have empowered the 'have-nots'; a whole load of people who arrive here, who can't even talk, who don't know how to explain what is happening to them. And after a process of self-education, a process of empowerment, with the support of others, now they are able to confront their problem, to resolve it and to help others! (...) And this is a key point – to understand that this is a collective struggle (PAH, former Spokeswoman).

Hence, as the following quotation shows, the platform achieved this mix of social activists and affected people through a process of empowerment, which is also a process of unleashing the human energies of those affected by the housing problem:

People arrived at our meetings convinced that their problem was the worst of all, that it was impossible to resolve, that it was their fault, that they were failures... Arriving there, they found themselves among a hundred people that were in as bad or worse a situation as themselves. And this in itself is a transformational experience. And then we gave them assessments, training, and made them responsible, telling them: "here we don't perform miracles, here we're all equals. What we do here is to find tools to defend ourselves and to resolve our cases". We have produced a lot of useful documents to enable people to go themselves to the bank to make a demand, or to go to the courts (...) In an afternoon you can become perfectly well-informed about mortgages. This alone restores your self-esteem and makes it so that you are able to go and speak to the bank as an equal (PAH, former Spokeswoman).

The most important challenge the organization had to face during its first few years was to break the stigma of poverty felt by those who came for help. Thus, the PAH acted as a platform for legal support but also provided social and emotional support for people who were in a difficult situation. Collective assessment through regular meetings and assemblies was a key practice to cope with this situation (Mir Garcia, França, Macias, & Veciana, 2013). In this vein, reframing the discourse with respect to the issues of mortgage payment was the most significant leadership practice carried out by the PAH, and probably the one that had the most important impact.

The system rests perfectly on this idea of the culpability of the weak: 'everything that is happening to you is your fault'. There is no alternative and, more and more, you have no power to change that. And we have changed that! It has been a process of changing the collective understanding, [a process] which has been multiplied in some way by the 15M ... That's it! To

start to redefine the reality. While they called it 'crisis', we called it 'scam'. We go to the street and we say: 'we are not alone, we have no fear!' (...) This change in the collective understanding is the most difficult thing of all. And that is what it's producing. We have won (PAH, former Spokeswoman).

The PAH works horizontally through territorial assemblies and depends on the voluntary work of its members. The organization has 240 nodes spread around Spain. They are networked and collaborate with each other, even though each assembly has its own autonomy. At the same time, though, the platform also had an important spokeswoman - Ada Colau - who was not only highly engaged but also had a charismatic presence and took advantage of her communication skills. Colau does not recognize herself as a leader of the movement but undoubtedly played a significant role in making the PAH visible and enabling it to be successful in its aims. Colau left the organization in 2014 and, through a new political coalition (Barcelona en Comú), successfully ran for Mayor of Barcelona in the 2015 local elections.

I'm not the leader of the PAH. I could be a figurehead, but not a leader. For me a leader is something individual, hierarchical, a boss... While a figurehead is something different. It doesn't have a place over and above any others. There could be many figureheads! (...) If you compare hegemonic, vertical power with pure assemblyism, I don't like either of them. (...) I believe that intermediary paths are being explored that are more interesting. Assemblies, yes! I think they are the forms [of organization] that we most want, to the extent that we create horizontal relations, that we want a distribution of roles and tasks, that we want a shared protagonism in processes of transformation... And in this sense, yes, I identify myself more with assemblies. But an assemblyism that is well thought-out, mature, not naive. And it's clear that to be organized it is necessary to make committees, working groups, and decisions can be delegated at certain moments (PAH, former Spokeswoman).

The PAH not only merges activists and affected people, therefore, but also different strategies of collective action (incidence, resistance, dissidence) and even different leadership practices. It is an organization for social change based on democratic and horizontal ways of getting things done. It reframes the relevant discourse, bridges differences and empowers the have-nots. But, at the same time, it also takes advantage of some charismatic individuals, such as Ada Colau.

Through these different leadership practices the PAH has had an important social impact, even though the housing problem in Spain is far from solved. As noted above, the platform has prevented thousands of evictions, has rehoused hundreds of evicted families and has helped to develop municipal regulations and even a regional law in the Catalan Parliament. The platform has also reconfigured power relations, constituting a new actor to be taken into account in housing policies and giving voice to affected people that previously could not be heard. Thus, the PAH has empowered its members and has done so by bridging differences between activists and affected people and unleashing their human energy. However, the main impact that the PAH has had relates to the reframing of the discourse made possible by the platform. It has redefined the way the housing problem is defined and understood by the majority of the population, framing it as a collective problem that goes beyond the specific

circumstances of directly affected families (Flesher Fominaya, 2015). The PAH has responded to a basic social need -housing- by rearticulating this need as a right.

Seven years after its foundation, we can probably say that the platform has entered a new stage in its existence. At least three points should be mentioned to better understand this shift. First, the important work of the platform is widely recognized. It received the European Citizens' Prize in 2013, and a number of its legal aims -such as the Catalan Law for urgent measures to cope with the housing emergency and energy poverty which was passed by the Catalan Parliament in 2015- have been achieved. Second, the 2015 local, regional and national elections led to a changing of the political landscape in all cases. Barcelona City Council is now led by Ada Colau, the former PAH spokeswoman. The conservative Popular Party (PP) lost its majority in the Spanish Parliament. The Catalan Parliament, meanwhile, has become more fragmented and, as a consequence, more open to the demands of the PAH. Finally, the PAH itself is going through a difficult organizational transformation; since many of its activists are now working for the new Barcelona City Council, it has lost much of its human capital and been weakened as a result.

4. Conclusions

Although Sants is a traditional working-class neighbourhood, it has not been hit extremely hard by the recession. It has proven to be less vulnerable than Nou Barris Nord or the South Bronx. Nevertheless, the neighbourhood is poorer now than eight years ago; unemployment has significantly increased, numbers of small businesses have declined and foreclosures rose following the crash, especially in the poorer areas of the neighbourhood such as la Bordeta.

With its character of a small town within a city, Sants has retained a strong sense of belonging among its residents and its social organizations. The area has accumulated the experience of numerous historical struggles and an extremely high level of political activism has developed. Several generations of activists now overlap in Sants. The achievements of these generations, and the social learning stemming from them, have endured while, at the same time, a diverse mix of social organizations not only coexist but also tend to collaborate to campaign for neighbourhood improvements or jointly develop community-based activities. These organizations have also demonstrated a willingness and capacity to collaborate with the City Council, the result of which is a very high civic capacity in the area. At the same time, however, these organizations resist any kind of co-option by public institutions, they strongly defend autonomous ways of getting things done and they frequently contest public policies. So, rather than being state-dependent, they rather collaborate with the City Council as an instrumental way of achieving their goals. Nonetheless, it is precisely the power of neighbourhood organizations and grassroots movements in the area to fight and to struggle that has mobilized public resources to achieve significant neighbourhood improvements.

In this context socially innovative initiatives readily emerge in a context which affords them the potential to be effective and to grow in scale. Social innovation in Sants is not something new. It is not a response to the post-recession situation in the area, but rather the result of a tradition of collective action from below which is historically rooted, diverse and politicized. Thus, in Sants we can see a tradition of cooperativism, self-management and self-organizing. This is a tradition of alternative action, flourishing in the local civil society and both distinct from the state and outside of the market. After the Great Recession new initiatives

emerged which have merged old and new grassroots movements and have taken advantage of all the knowledge accumulated through older initiatives in the area. Moreover, the neighbourhood is home to an economically precarious but culturally important class of people; young, well-educated, politicized people with ideas that go beyond the mainstream. This class of people is playing a significant role in developing some of the social responses we identified above.

This combination of a history of social and politicized activism, a strong sense of belonging, a high degree of civic capacity, combined with the fact that Sants is a less vulnerable neighbourhood, not only makes it resilient and well-equipped to cope with crisis effects but also produces a specific kind of socially innovative response. To sum up, social innovation in Sants tends to be transformative and does not seek large-scale, state-led interventions. Instead the social responses that have emerged in Sants value autonomous forms of self-management from below. The set of initiative associated with Can Batlló, which draw upon the neighbourhood's cooperativist tradition, exhibit this sort of social innovation. Although the initiative takes advantage of some degree of collaboration with public administrations, it is best understood in terms of its emancipatory aim, an aim which has roots in a longer neighbourhood tradition. Can Batlló's success has been possible because behind the initiative there is a large and heterogeneous citizen movement making a claim for autonomy. However, as the experience grows and becomes increasingly institutionalized, new challenges are emerging. The bottom-up yet linked form of governance developed in Can Batlló – initiatives emerging from below that create links with institutional actors – appears as a key point with respect to Can Batlló's future effectiveness and scalability.

The second initiative analysed in this report - the Platform for Mortgage Affected People - demonstrates a very specific, successful and mixed form of social innovation that, though it is headquartered in Sants, has emerged out of Sants' grassroots activism. Thus, socially innovative initiatives are not always inextricably linked to geographical context. In this case, the PAH's leadership practices are especially important for understanding how and why the platform succeeded in having a huge social impact. That is to say, a form of leadership that politically reframes the housing discourse but at the same time applies pragmatic and dissident solutions to help affected people; a form of leadership that bridges differences between middle-class social activists and people directly affected by the foreclosure crisis; a form of leadership that empowers the have-nots and transforms social and power relationships; a form of leadership that combines horizontal, inclusive and highly democratic ways of organizing with charismatic activists as visible faces. A successful form of leadership that is, however, going through scenario moment of difficulty. The platform is widely respected and has successfully achieved important goals. However, the housing problem is shifting and most of the activists, including the PAH's charismatic spokeswoman Ada Colau, have left the organization to take-up various positions in the new Barcelona City Council. Unfortunately, it is still soon to evaluate how the organization will face-up to these new challenges.

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Notes

1 Public social centre.

2 Association of social organizations.

3 From here we will refer to 'Can Batlló' as the whole social initiative, which embeds different social projects.

4 Social and cultural centres.

5 *Llei 24/2015, de mesures urgents per afrontar l'emergència en l'àmbit de l'habitatge i la pobresa energètica* [Law 24/2015 of urgent measures to cope with emergency in housing and energy poverty]. The law has been partially suspended by the Constitutional Court for jurisdictional reasons.