
Relevance of the use of ETHOS in the Assessment of Housing Exclusion: Proposals for Discussion from the Spanish Case

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› **Abstract_** *This paper aims to contribute to the debate on the suitability of the ETHOS typology as a means of measuring housing exclusion and homelessness in Europe. To this end, a review of the conceptual model that theoretically supports the typology is proposed. Additionally, a number of new indicators extending and enhancing the original classification are presented in order to address the wide range of forms of housing exclusion in a more comprehensive way. Finally, an analysis of ETHOS is conducted according to the available data and statistical sources in Spain, including objective and subjective indicators of housing exclusion.*

› **Keywords_** *Housing exclusion, ETHOS typology, homelessness, measurement*

Introduction

A home is a basic space where the structures of the individual, the family and social life are shaped. As such, homelessness can be regarded as a consequence of social exclusion processes. In 2009, some 30 million people in the European Union (6 percent of the EU population) suffered from severe housing deprivation. This group is regarded as living in substandard dwellings that are usually overcrowded and are characterised by at least one of the following: leaking roof, lack of bath/shower and flushing toilet, and darkness (Eurostat, 2011). The estimated figure for 2012 is somewhat lower: 5.1 percent of the EU population (Eurostat, 2014). Several

studies approach the measurement of housing exclusion as another symptom of wider social exclusion, while others focus on the assessment of exclusion in the housing context only. Most of the studies that specifically examine housing exclusion focus on housing and environmental conditions. In a recent study carried out by the European Union (Eurostat, 2011), four major housing-related issues were analysed: overcrowding, housing conditions, environmental conditions and overburden of housing costs.

A dwelling is an essential component of social integration; hence, housing deprivation may become “the factor that triggers exclusion processes” (Antón *et al.*, 2008, p.349). This is the concern expressed in the Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on ‘The problem of homelessness’, approved in October 2011 (European Economic and Social Committee, 2012). This document explores the use of the ETHOS typology – which was created by the European Federation of National Associations Working with the Homeless (FEANTSA) – in order to align homelessness statistics at European Union level and encourage the use of common definitions and indicators in the analysis of housing exclusion.

ETHOS, the European Typology on Homelessness and Housing Exclusion, was launched by FEANTSA in 2005. Following a two-year review process, it became the main reference for the study of homelessness in the European Union (Pleace *et al.*, 2011). ETHOS is a conceptual and analytical tool that also provides a framework for debate and reflection on how to address housing exclusion. FEANTSA (2010, p.5) states that “ETHOS is an open exercise which makes abstraction of existing legal definitions in the EU Members States”, providing a common conceptual framework that is to be adapted to the uniqueness of each European country. According to ETHOS, three domains are defined as constituting a home: legal, social and physical. The legal domain implies having a legal title to occupation (owning or renting), which results in security of tenure and exclusive possession. The social domain involves being able to maintain privacy and enjoy relations within the home. And the physical domain involves having a decent dwelling that is adequate to meet the needs of the household (Busch-Geertsema, 2010).

Deficiencies in one or more of these domains lead to the four main concepts of homelessness, which are categorised as follows (FEANTSA, 2010): *rooflessness* (people living rough), *houselessness* (people living in temporary accommodation, such as hostels and institutions), *insecure housing* (people living with no legal tenancy, or under threat of eviction or domestic violence) and *inadequate housing* (people living in huts occupying land with no legal rights, in dwellings unfit for habitation or in extreme overcrowding). These four categories are subsequently

divided into thirteen operational categories that can be used to analyse the consequences of homelessness and the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies (European Economic and Social Committee, 2012).

This paper aims to revise the ETHOS typology, highlighting its strengths and weaknesses when applied to the assessment of housing exclusion, and underlining the need for suitable indicators for measuring housing exclusion. We intend, therefore, to contribute to the debate on the conceptualisation underlying the ETHOS typology and suggest new proposals to extend it. To this end, the paper is structured as follows. First, we discuss the suitability of the ETHOS typology as a tool for studying housing exclusion, drawing on several authors who have participated in this debate. Then, ETHOS is examined in a new light, combining ETHOS with another model developed by a Spanish author. The inclusion of new subcategories is proposed, and the availability of data and statistical sources in Spain is examined using objective and subjective indicators. Finally, the main conclusions of the study are drawn.

ETHOS Typology: A Discussion

There is an established consensus on the need for a typology such as the ETHOS (FEANTSA, 2007) when conceptualising housing exclusion and homelessness. It is now widely used throughout Europe as a means of defining and classifying the population that is in a difficult living situation. However, given the complexity of homelessness and housing insecurity, several proposals have been forwarded as a means of improving the typology over recent years. This debate was particularly lively following the proposed critiques of Amore *et al.* (2011), which were refuted by the works of Edgar (2012), Sahlin (2012), Roman (2012) and Amore (2013). Emerging from this debate were arguments relating to the advantages of the instrument (especially in Edgar, 2012; Roman, 2012), as well as the weaknesses of the conceptual model proposed by Edgar (2009), through which the different living situations are defined. The debate has focused on the relevance of the thresholds distinguishing the most severe forms of homelessness from other forms of housing exclusion that are less acute. The conceptual model proposed by Edgar (2009) states that homelessness takes place when living situations are deficient in the three domains that constitute a home: legal, physical and social (or at least, in the legal and social domains), whereas Amore *et al.* (2011) extend the definition of homelessness to include living situations that are lacking in two of the three domains, regardless of which ones. In other words, Amore *et al.* propose a looser definition, which includes the population that are living in unstable living conditions even if these residents are not excluded from one of these three domains.

We agree on the desirability of avoiding arbitrariness in fixing unequivocal thresholds that demarcate which living situations can be defined as homelessness. Otherwise other situations that actually present equivalent levels of deprivation would be ruled out. If that were the case, the subsequent problem is that there would be a mismatch between the conceptual model and the typology, which could also fail to place each situation in the appropriate categories. An accurate assessment of the worst situations is undoubtedly important for institutions to take effective action. Nevertheless, every form of housing exclusion, regardless of the causes and the degree of seriousness, entails different hardships that directly affect the daily lives of the people involved. Therefore, the tool cannot merely measure the most severe situations lacking in at least two of the three domains, as suggested by Amore *et al.* (2011) in their proposal. It should rather embrace all scenarios of residential exclusion in a continuum ranging from those at risk of homelessness to severely excluded populations (Edgar, 2012). In this sense, when speaking of homelessness in the narrower sense (roofless and houseless) or in a wider sense (insecure and inadequate housing), Cabrera (2009, p.4) emphasises the term 'homelessness' instead of the broader term 'residential exclusion': "All this has meant the organisation of the concept of homelessness ('sans-abrisme') as a continuation of situations in relation to accommodation and housing."

In our opinion, Sahlin usefully proposes (2012) to keep the original typology categories, which are deemed adequate, but does not seek to establish a line between the conceptual categories of homelessness and housing exclusion, since all of them are unified under an umbrella of housing deprivation corresponding to the broader notion of housing exclusion. In an attempt to find a greater convergence between the conceptual model and the operational categories, we propose an integration of the conceptual model with a proposal of housing exclusion analysis for the Spanish case in the following section.

With regard to the discussion on the exhaustiveness of the categories proposed in the typology, as Edgar (2012) and Roman (2012) point out, ETHOS does not aim to be definitive and immovable, but rather a general flexible model to be adjusted to regional specificities. However, like Amore (2013), we understand that the typology should not just offer a variety of categories for each country to use the most suitable ones to their own context, because this would make the comparison across countries impossible, and the aim of working on a homogeneous model at European level would be lost. As Sahlin (2012) points out, it is a complex task to find operational categories that are always valid for all phenomena in all countries, but this should not impede researchers from including additional types of housing exclusion according to different contexts, as a way of potentially improving the model. As such, an extended typology is proposed in this paper for the sake of completeness.

Finally, it is pointless to have a theoretically robust model such as ETHOS if we do not have enough statistical data to measure the magnitude of the problem. Edgar (2012) reminds us that gathering comprehensive data is a difficult task. Data are mostly the result of surveys that collect indicators at a quantitative level, and as they are very often lacking in scale and quality, they are unable to fully capture the wider phenomenon of housing exclusion. In order to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon, objective indicators (which are often unavailable) must be complemented by subjective indicators (which include the perspective of the people involved). This would allow for a more dynamic and comprehensive analysis of varying unstable living conditions, because housing instability can occur repeatedly and recurrently, and this may not be effectively captured in cross-sectional surveys.

The ETHOS Typology: Conceptualising Housing Exclusion

Our objective is to complement the ETHOS conceptual model with proposals for housing exclusion analysis in Spain as suggested by Cortés (1995; 2004). This author defines housing exclusion as the presence of four types of basic accommodation restrictions (Cortés, 2004, p. 42):

- **Accessibility:** the possibility of having a home aligned with the household's disposable income.
- **Stability:** in the temporary use of the dwelling that allows for social benefits.
- **Adequacy:** between the housing conditions and the individual's needs, which vary across the life course.
- **Habitability:** minimum quality requirements in construction, facilities and surrounding locality.

Figure 1 shows an integrated overview of the four main ETHOS categories and the types of housing restrictions proposed by Cortés (2004). In the most severe situations, homeless people would suffer from all types of deprivation (accessibility, stability, adequacy and habitability) and in all three domains (legal, social and physical). And at the other end of the scale – inadequate housing – restrictions would be related to housing adequacy and habitability in the physical and social domains (Brändle and García, 2013).

Figure 1. Housing exclusion and housing restrictions

ETHOS category	Restrictions on housing use			
	Accessibility	Stability	Adequacy	Habitability
Roofless	Legal, Social, Physical	Legal, Social, Physical	Social, Physical	Physical
Houseless	Legal, Social, Physical	Legal, Social, Physical	Social, Physical	Physical
Insecure	Legal	Legal		
Inadequate			Social, Physical	Social, Physical
Fields of use		Legal	Social	Physical

Source: Adapted from FEANTSA (2010) and Cortés (2004)

The social and legal domains may be the ETHOS categories most affected by the impact of different housing restrictions. In the legal domain, the problems of accessibility and stability are present in three of the four categories, from the lowest to the highest degree of seriousness of housing exclusion. However, the restrictions in adequacy and habitability would be predominantly in the social domain. Despite the fact that restrictions in habitability and adequacy, which belong to the physical domain, may be the most evident problems in identifying a housing exclusion situation, they do not seem to be the only aspects to bear in mind, nor the most relevant ones.

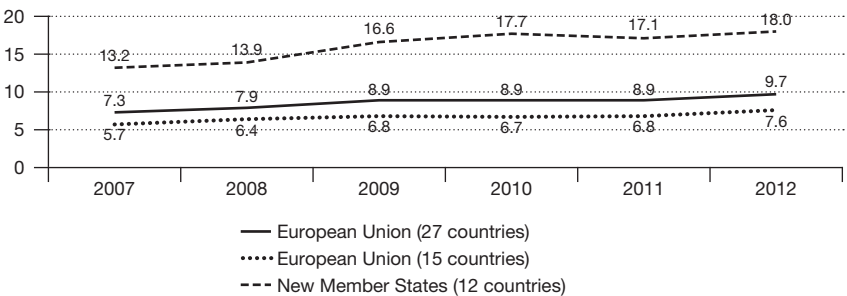
Rooflessness is not only the most severe situation of housing exclusion but also of social exclusion, as numerous social disadvantages are brought about by the lack of accommodation. Sleeping rough can only serve to exacerbate other problems. In fact, “many special or strange behaviours exhibited by roofless persons are just an adaptive response to the extreme conditions they must face” (Cabrera, 2008, p.188). Rooflessness implies that there are deficiencies in all housing domains (legal, social and physical), and all restrictions are evident (accessibility, stability, adequacy and habitability, see Figure 1). Houselessness means that there is guaranteed shelter in terms of habitability and adequacy from the physical viewpoint in the medium to long term. However, when it comes to the legal and social domains, the persons involved have no access to a home of their own and their housing conditions are not stable or adequate for their needs, as the accommodation in this case is usually a collective household. All of the living situations included in the third ETHOS category are insecure regarding tenure (legal domain), which leads to restrictions on housing access and reduces stability in the use of assets (Figure 1). Finally, in the category of inadequate housing, the domains lacking in adequacy and habitability are physical and social (Figure 1). The accommodation is accessible and stable but it is not adequate and does not meet habitability conditions. Under this conceptual framework, the inclusion of new subcategories is proposed by integrating risk situations and housing vulnerability caused by either economic constraints that prevent the household from access to, or from gaining stability in, social and legal domains, or by a degraded housing environment that may end up damaging adequacy and habitability in the physical and social domains.

Proposal for the inclusion of new subcategories

We understand that economic constraints in the household may cause housing insecurity. For instance, economic hardships could push the household into a financially compromised situation, forcing it to take exceptional measures to ease the burden of housing costs and perhaps causing it to fall behind on the mortgage, rent or utilities (electricity, water, etc.). It is clear that if such a situation were to continue, the risk of housing exclusion would be heightened. The current economic crisis, characterised by large-scale unemployment and high household debt, is a clear call for the inclusion of a new ETHOS subcategory of insecure housing. This new subcategory, which could be named 'people living in insecure accommodation for economic reasons', would encompass situations of housing insecurity due to financial constraints.

In Europe, nearly two out of three people (65 percent) think that living in a decent home in their area of residence costs too much. This opinion is particularly common in Cyprus (91 percent), the Czech Republic (88 percent), Luxembourg (86 percent) and Spain (73 percent) (European Commission, 2010). The housing cost overburden rate was used by Eurostat (2011) and was defined as the share of the population living in households where the total housing cost accounts for more than 40 percent of household disposable income (net of housing allowances). The term 'housing cost' refers to the monthly costs related to the accommodation itself as well as utility costs (water, electricity, gas and heating). According to Eurostat (2014), 11.2 percent of the EU-28 population faced this situation in 2012. This figure is considerably higher in poorer sections of society whose income is 60 percent lower than the national average (39 percent). From a subjective point of view, 36.9 percent of the EU-28 population believe that housing costs are a heavy burden; this percentage rises to 55.5 percent among poor people.

Figure 2. Delay in the payment of utility bills in the EU, 2007-2012 (percentage of total population)

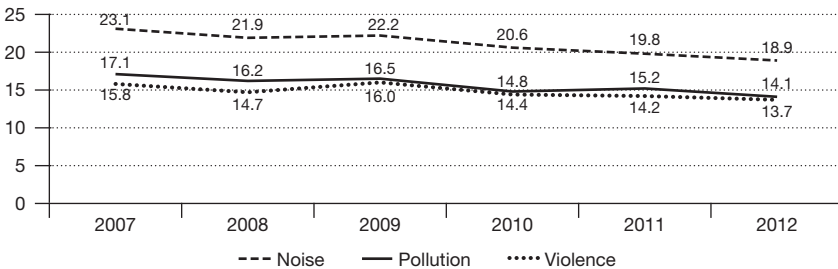


Source: Eurostat (2014), EU-SILC

There is no doubt that insecure housing gets worse when the household fails to pay housing-related costs. One of the first symptoms is delay in the payment of expected housing expenses, such as mortgage, rent or utilities. If the late payment situation lasts too long, it could lead to eviction and/or deprivation of basic services (electricity, water or gas). Eurostat's data (2014) corroborate this fact. The share of people who admit to having fallen behind on utility bills in the last year increased in EU-27 between 2007 and 2012, especially in the new member states, where percentages are much higher than the EU-27 average (Figure 2).

There is some consensus that the following living situations must be taken into account when considering the basic dimensions of housing exclusion: lack of basic facilities (running water, wastewater removal and indoor flushing toilet), existence of structural problems (leaking roof, damp walls, rot in floors, window frames or doors), problems related to the environment and access to certain services from the dwelling, and overcrowding. Notwithstanding the conceptual comprehensiveness of ETHOS, which includes the poor conditions outlined above, we argue that the housing environment also needs to also be considered.

Figure 3. Problems related to the environment of the dwelling in the EU-27, 2007-2012 (percentage of total population)



Source: Eurostat (2014), EU-SILC

Problems related to the environment of the dwelling (noise from neighbours or the street, pollution, grime, vandalism or violence) are important and affect a significant proportion of the European population (Figure 3). That is why a new subcategory within *inadequate housing* is proposed. It would be referred to as 'people living in an inadequate environment', which would encompass problems related to the environment and accessibility to certain services. The characteristics of the housing environment, which in some cases are deplorable, can hamper the normal progress of daily life for people living in such environments. In short, our proposal does not

change the names of the main ETHOS categories, which are understood as a continuum of situations of housing exclusion; rather, the new subcategories would be included within each of the last two main categories (Table 1).

Table 1. ETHOS: Typologies of housing exclusion

Category	Operational Category	
Roofless	1	People living rough
	2	People in emergency accommodation
Houseless	3	People in accommodation for the homeless
	4	People in women's shelter
	5	People in accommodation for immigrants
	6	People due to be released from institutions
	7	People receiving longer-term support (due to homelessness)
Insecure	8	People living in insecure accommodation
	9	People living under threat of eviction
	10	People living under threat of violence
	11	<i>People living in insecure accommodation for economic reasons</i>
Inadequate	12	People living in temporary/non-conventional structures
	13	People living in unfit housing
	14	People living in extreme overcrowding
	15	<i>People living in an inadequate environment</i>

Source: FEANTSA (2010) and own elaboration.

As shown in Table 1, our proposal would extend the scope of the original typology to include situations that, despite not being among the most extreme and intolerable examples of housing exclusion, could negatively impact on daily life and wellbeing. It is true that by including more subcategories to ETHOS, there is risk of overestimating the problem of homelessness, whereby housing situations may be included that have not yet resulted in a significant problem of residential exclusion, thus perhaps deflecting attention from more severe situations. But despite these potential inconveniences, we argue that the typology should not be limited to the most severe forms of homelessness but extended to a broader range of residential deprivation, which, over time, could involve real risks of housing exclusion. Moreover, these situations are adequately reflected in various statistical sources, such as EU-SILC (European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions), and this could help to determine the magnitude of the phenomenon before the situation worsens. In this sense, there is no doubt that the sooner the problem is known, the faster actions can be taken to mitigate the situation.

Measuring Housing Exclusion in Spain

This section discusses the statistical sources in Spain through which the main ETHOS categories are examined, distinguishing between objective and subjective indicators.

Objective indicators

In Spain, statistical data on roofless and houseless people are scarce and uneven over time, as well as insufficient at a regional level. Additionally, ETHOS provides a breakdown in the classification of these situations that is impossible to apply in Spain due to the lack of statistical data, e.g., data on people due to be released from institutions. At a European level, adequate statistical information is key for understanding and forming homelessness policies. This information can be gathered through surveys with stakeholders, street counts of homeless people, data from public or private institutions, or censuses (Edgar *et al.*, 2007).

The Survey on Homeless Persons (SHP), conducted by the National Statistics Institute of Spain (INE) in 2005 and 2012, is the main information source available to explain the most relevant socio-demographic characteristics of houseless and roofless people in Spain – how long they have been without accommodation and their living conditions.¹ The INE also carries out a biannual survey of institutions for homeless people called Survey on Support Centres for Homeless Persons. However, it only provides information on the number of users, and no distinction between houselessness and rooflessness is made. The SHP underestimates the impact of homelessness, since it only collects information on people using supported accommodation or food centres provided by institutions in cities with a population of over 20 000, leaving out individuals who do not access such services and those who live in smaller villages or rural areas. In any case, the INE data do not correspond directly to every category in the ETHOS typology. First, there is no distinction between long-term and short-term shelter; therefore, one of the categories included in rooflessness (night shelter) cannot be estimated. Similarly, most accommodation centres for illegal immigrants are not included, and a large number of shelters for women suffering from domestic violence declined to answer the questionnaire because they considered that these women were not homeless. This means that the situational and operational definition of 'homelessness' proposed by FEANTSA and assumed by the INE in its fieldwork is not completely accepted by those on the ground (Cabrera and Rubio, 2008).

¹ A socio-demographic overview of the ETHOS categories of rooflessness and houselessness can be found in Cabrera (2008) using the 2005 SHP data, and Cabrera and Rubio (2008) with the additional information of the street counts carried out in Madrid and Barcelona.

Street counts are a technique to ascertain the number of roofless people who do not make use of emergency accommodation, and who spend the night on the street. In Spain, this type of estimation has been carried out on a regular basis in Madrid and Barcelona. The results provide useful information on the socio-demographic profile of roofless people, their living conditions, how long they have lived in these conditions, and the use they make of available social resources (Cabrera and Rubio, 2008). Even though these are partial data, this type of census can facilitate information on the characteristics and needs of the individuals that remain outside of the social support network, and it may be crucial for defining the intervention policy aimed at reducing the population of those sleeping rough (Cabrera *et al.*, 2008).

In terms of obtaining data from registers, the Common Information System of Users of Social Services (SIUSS), maintained by the Spanish Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality since 1994, could be a relevant information source on homelessness and housing exclusion in Spain. However, due to its limitations in the coverage of territory and the poor quality of its databases it cannot be used for these purposes at present.

In terms of private institutions, the Spanish Red Cross has developed annual reports using their records of users since 2006. The meaning of homeless in this context tends to refer to roofless and houseless people living in hostels and institutions (Malgesini, 2011). Nevertheless, it collects considerable data over time and space and therefore possesses a series of indicators for analysing the needs of houseless and roofless people and developing social intervention strategies. These indicators should reveal who the homeless people are and how long they have been living in these conditions, which are determining factors in the process of both exclusion and integration.

Information on the ETHOS category of insecure housing is also lacking in Spain. This is due to the instability of housing situations and legal confusion over this category. Even though there is no clear distinction between subcategories (temporarily living with family/friends, no legal (sub)tenancy and illegal occupation of land), there are some sources that shed some light on these situations. The first is the Living Conditions Survey (LCS), which emerged as part of cross-national statistical operations for EU countries and is the national survey used for the EU-SILC database. It is the main source of information for the assessment of inequality, poverty and material deprivation in Spanish households, and also includes a series of variables related to living characteristics and conditions. Likewise, the LCS collects data on socio-demographic variables, employment, and the educational and health status characteristics of adults and households in every Spanish region, but the sample is insufficient for the purposes of conducting a combined analysis of variables in most cases.

The Living Conditions Survey for Spain, like EU-SILC for Europe, demonstrates how some households enjoy rent-free accommodation and identifies other tenants and subtenants whose rents are subsidised. However, as a recent Australian comparative report notes, only where households are able to access rental housing as a first option is secure occupancy possible (Hulse *et al.*, 2011). When the rental housing reflects a combination of lower socio-economic status, lower quality houses and less desirable neighbourhoods, then insecurity, instability and a lack of control over accommodation become increasingly prevalent (Hulse *et al.*, 2011).

With regard to people living under the threat of eviction, data on the number of evictions are provided by the Spanish General Council of the Judiciary (CGPJ, 2011a). There is no information on people living under threat of violence, though police records on domestic violence incidents exist (CGPJ, 2011b). It is clear that a significant number of these reports are not due to insecure housing situations. However, this group should be deemed significant, despite the fact that by their very nature, these experiences remain mostly hidden from view. The indicators for the new subcategory suggested for inclusion, 'people living in insecure accommodation for economic reasons', could result from both the LCS and the Household Budget Survey (HBS), or more specifically from the point of view of well-being that was only elaborated in 2010. Both statistical sources provide diverse information on cost and delay in payments related to the main dwelling.

On the other hand, the Census and most household surveys in Spain, like LCS or HBS, are helping to collect information about habitability conditions related to the lack of basic facilities, structural problems and overcrowding.² With regard to the proposal for including the new subcategory 'people living in an inadequate environment', the LCS includes a set of indicators that provide relevant information for defining the main problems related to the housing environment, such as noise, pollution, bad odours caused by traffic or factories, and crime and vandalism in the area.

Subjective indicators

Subjective information on how houseless and roofless people perceive and assess their own housing situation is scarce. The SHP provides little subjective data on how homeless people assess their own health status or the help provided by social services. In 2012, 44 percent of roofless and houseless people stated that the help provided by social services was little or non-existent (INE, 2012). This lack of information is partly made up for by some qualitative research studies (Comunidad de

² Measuring overcrowding is a complex issue. There is a wide range of criteria in the literature establishing numerous techniques for measuring overcrowding, in particular the minimum criteria to determine overcrowded conditions. Among others, see Colectivo IOE (2004), Leal and Cortés (2005) and Eurostat (2011).

Madrid, 2006; Cruz, 2006; Bachiller, 2010), which deal with the processes, opinions and behaviours of people living in housing exclusion, and assess the limitations of the social services system.

Finding information on households' perception of housing insecurity is not an easy task. In any case, a subjective indicator allowing identification of housing deprivation is the one that can tell whether the relevant housing-related costs are a burden that households are struggling to afford. In this sense, the LCS collects data on the share of households affirming that the total housing costs (including mortgage, rent, insurance, electricity, etc.) are an excessive burden, an affordable burden or no burden at all. Unlike the rest of the ETHOS categories, there is some subjective information available on 'inadequate housing' – information that is collected by most household surveys.

As such, it may be interesting to complement the assessment of overcrowding, which varies greatly between studies, with the subjective perception of the people living in overcrowded conditions. It seems that the subjective perception of the existence of overcrowding is somewhat greater than objective information would suggest. In fact, as Navarro points out (2006), when mining the data from the ECHP (European Community Household Panel) survey, just 25 percent of households who declare a lack of living space suffer from overcrowding.

In any case, we think it is also interesting to look at individuals' subjective assessment of their own housing situation in greater detail. Individuals will have different perceptions of the same housing conditions depending on their own personal experiences, wishes and expectations. In keeping with this, in addition to information on the existence of certain problems, the 2007 and 2012 LCS provide subjective information on problems of access to common and necessary services for daily life (shops and food outlets, banks, post offices, public transport, primary health-care facilities and schools). Finally, a subjective assessment of housing conditions can also capture degrees of satisfaction. This indicator is interesting for the analysis, since it ascertains the degree of connection between the objective material conditions of the dwelling and perceptions of the housing situation. As Navarro points out, "the higher the degree of dissatisfaction (very unsatisfactory or totally unsatisfactory) with the own living conditions, the greater the impact of housing deprivation on the household" (2005, p.186).

Conclusion

Housing is a basic human need, as there is a strong parallel between adequate housing and the development of a life project. A home is not only the place where private life takes place, but it is also a gathering point where cohabitation and social integration occur. The features of housing exclusion are closely related to the ones defining the general terms of social exclusion. In other words, it is a structural, dynamic, heterogeneous and multidimensional phenomenon; it involves many factors; it includes a subjective or individual element; and it can be addressed from the perspective of public policies (Hernández, 2008; García and Hernández, 2011).

Given the magnitude of the phenomenon, it is very important to have a robust tool to measure and address the problem of homelessness. Furthermore, the diversity and depth of the problem in each region has triggered debate on the need to find a model for covering all possible situations of residential deprivation in a more comprehensive way. Several authors have considered the suitability of the ETHOS typology for this purpose.

When assessing housing exclusion, there is no doubt that the subjective experiences of housing and how this relates to more objective material deprivation is vital. Personal experiences are related to social and cultural grouping and belongings as well as personal aspirations, and the everyday reality of being part of a social group can differ greatly from personal expectations (Brändle, 2007). This is why an interesting housing deprivation indicator could be one that provides information on the differences between what is perceived as a need and what is really affordable.

This corroborates the difficulties that exist in defining and measuring housing exclusion. As has been previously discussed, information on this in Spain is scarce, uneven and insufficient at a regional level. However, this paper argues that ETHOS should be extended to include other situations of exclusion and risk. These new dimensions were outlined in this paper and include those in insecure housing due to economic reasons, those experiencing environmental degradation in their surroundings, and a better incorporation of subjective assessments of people affected by these processes. As we have already highlighted, this proposed extension of the ETHOS typology may have certain limitations in terms of widening the net of those who are included under these definitions, but it would offer an important understanding of real situations of risk in a way that attempts to understand problems before they get worse.

Finally, there is no doubt that an adequate system of indicators for characterising and measuring housing exclusion is key for public policy intervention but, at the same time, the availability of information must be enhanced through bolstering the scope and explanatory power of surveys on housing exclusion in Spain. As regards

surveys addressing homeless people, it is necessary to collect information on a regular basis. And in household surveys (LCS, HBS, SHF), it would be desirable to expand the sample at both territorial level (for a better analysis of different regions) and at vulnerability level (social groups such as youngsters, immigrants, poor people) in order to advance our understanding on these matters further.

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