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# THE FUTURE OF MUSEUMS OF CITIES

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# The Future of Museums of Cities

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**AT HOME. WORKER HOUSING AS A PARTICIPATIVE  
NEW BRANCH OF BARCELONA CITY MUSEUM**

**ABSTRACT**

Within a museum's narrative, worker housing is one of the best means of talking about migration, city settlement, integration into urban life and social cohesiveness. It is also a way of breaking down barriers between the centre and the peripheries, giving a glance at the city from outside to inside.

It is in this context that the Barcelona History Museum (MUHBA) has opened a new branch with the conversion to a museum of four of the so-called "Cheap Houses" in the Bon Pastor neighbourhood. Bon Pastor was one of the first public housing estates built in Barcelona to rehouse shanty town dwellers displaced by the International Exhibition of 1929. Obtaining a house meant going from an "informal city" to a "regulated city".

Rather than taking an approach based on an ethnography of the ways of popular life, the museological project for this new MUHBA branch aims at offering a historical narrative capable of explaining the evolution of social conditions among the working classes over the course of more than a century, from extremely harsh conditions to the fight for social improvements. This is how the Museum places houses and heritage within the urban history of the city.

The initiative for the new site arose from MUHBA's collaboration with several entities, such as the Bon Pastor Residents' Association and the University of Barcelona, to create a space for history and memory in the homes that people left behind when they moved to the new social housing. Thanks to this collaboration, the Museum's team, led by Carmen Cazalla,\* has collected more than three hundred items of furniture and personal effects to illustrate historical living conditions in the suburbs of Barcelona, focusing particularly on the Bon Pastor neighbourhood in 1930, 1955, 1980 and 2015.

The site, created according to strict historiographical and museological criteria, is set to become an extraordinary heritage ensemble of general interest, as it helps build Europe's contemporary identity. A place for Barcelonians and foreign visitors alike.

**Key words:** Worker housing, participation, collecting, citizenship, Bon Pastor, Barcelona

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\* In June 2018, the team was managed by Joan Roca and Carmen Cazalla and also formed by Anna Butí, Marta Delclòs, Natàlia Hervàs, Aina Mercader, Sònia Pons and Paula Ustarroz.

## Industrial urbanisation, a shared identity

The mark left by the industrial age in European countries speaks to us of a shared experience, a common identity forged in parallel with social processes. The great economic and social transformations caused by all this changed European society and, in consequence, cities and their citizens, generating similar results throughout the continent.

We speak of the European experience of urbanisation with the explicit intention of emphasising the term “urbanisation”, one that goes beyond the word “heritage”, to refer to urban complexity from the standpoint of the dynamic process of growth and urban development itself. Within this concept of urbanisation, we will highlight the categories of work and housing as well as factories and housing, two concepts that fluctuate in urban life.

The interest in the material evidence of industrialisation began to grow during the last quarter of the twentieth century when museums began to open in Europe that were specifically devoted to the forms and evolution of work and workers’ living conditions. Thanks to the recovery of industrial heritage, these museums were installed in old abandoned factories, thereby emphasising the historical status of work. However, such centres failed to focus on the work-city binomial, the relationship between the two concepts, in short, the way that different types of work have helped model the city.

As a consequence, a wide diversity of examples of the conservation of this industrial heritage, preserved for its historical value, is found all over Europe. However, the conversion of industrial sites into museums tends to place history within heritage, in the factory itself, furnishing it with historical content that justifies its choice as heritage worthy of conservation. However, should city museums not reverse this operation and place the heritage within the history of the city? Such would require us to study and understand the phenomenon of work as a historical category and to place its trajectory within the general history of the city, interpreting industrial work and the great transformations it has generated, its relations with and within the urban social order.

The other concept that we link to work within this so-called industrial urbanisation is the housing issue. Regarding the present subject, as it will follow, we focus on worker housing. However, we should not forget that we can also talk about the houses of the wealthier classes, attaching the same level of importance to them, given that they, too, form part of the same historical narrative of the city. Indeed, if we look at how much worker housing has been preserved as heritage around Europe, we will readily note that the housing of the better-off classes has received considerably less attention.

From a global perspective, without entering into geographic or chronological differentiation, late-nineteenth-century Europe is characterised by a migrant population. The large industrialised cities faced the challenge of absorbing a growing population that was leaving rural areas to seek new employment opportunities in the urban environment. However, this population growth could not be accommodated by the real physical capacity of the city, which did not expand in the same proportion, thereby generating a climate of building speculation and new models of slum housing. One of the consequences was the growth of the informal city, shanty towns,<sup>1</sup> a phenomenon that was not limited to Europe but spread around the world.

The move towards the construction of housing in working-class neighbourhoods signified not only a step towards the regulated, official, formal city but also a move

<sup>1</sup> On the phenomenon of shanty towns and their integration as heritage sites in the Barcelona History Museum with the museum conversion of Turó de la Rovira, see the article by Roca i Albert, J. (2017). The informal city in the city museum. *Museums of Cities and Contested Urban Histories*. ICOM / CAMOC. 26-37, based on the communication presented in Mexico at the CAMOC Annual Conference in 2017.



Aerial view of the Bon Pastor neighbourhood (Arxiu Fotogràfic de Barcelona). © MUHBA

towards a city that consolidated areas of vulnerability which went beyond visible spaces of exclusion to establish processes of domination in working-class neighbourhoods with low construction quality and insalubrious areas lacking in services.

These characteristics make working-class neighbourhoods the domain of the disinherited, where, besides the physical distance, which creates poverty in the most positivist sense of the term, a symbolic distance prevails: a world of little miseries, as Bourdieu would say.<sup>2</sup> Everyday miseries that led those who lived there to a feeling of disenchantment, finding themselves locked into a system of domination that deprived them of all possibility for active participation in the public space. In other words, they were denied the right to the city.<sup>3</sup>

This situation has sparked a lively, ongoing theoretical debate all around Europe about the forms of working-class housing. Although the housing models adopted vary according to context and feature adaptations of the original idea, if we take a highly synthetic approach we can reduce them to two categories. Firstly, models generated by a more reformist vision that focus particularly on questions of hygiene. These take the form of small, one-family houses with a garden, located in low-density areas with a prevalence of green spaces and an adequate system of communication with the city centre. This is a model somewhat reminiscent of the English garden city and was also widely adopted in the Nordic countries. Secondly, models that embody a more rationalist approach to urban planning, typical of Central European countries, in which the city is conceived in a more “concentrated”, compact way, with apartment blocks in large collective buildings and community services. These large residential blocks were aimed at improving the workers’ quality of life in an affordable manner. In Vienna, the Karl-Marx-Hof, a great municipal tenement complex with 1,300 apartments with entrance through a large garden courtyard, is an outstanding example of this second model.

Just as we have spoken of heritage conversion of factories, nowadays we can also visit worker housing transformed into museums, although, in this case, fewer examples exist. In Tampere (Finland), for instance, we can find a museum organised around a block of houses in the working-class district of Amuri, where 29 such blocks were built. These one-storey houses, with shared services between them, were rehabilitated in the 1970s, when they were replaced by apartments. In this case, the decision was made to save one block of houses in order to conserve the memory of the district. Each of the five houses preserved illustrates a different historical period and is accordingly furnished.

Another example is the Työvaenasuntomeo, a worker housing museum that forms part of the City of Helsinki Museum and comprises nine houses decorated in the style of different periods. Finally, the Arbejdermuseet, in Copenhagen, features reconstructions of two apartments that belonged to working-class families in the early twentieth century. In all cases, an ethnographic model is adopted in order to give visitors a glimpse of everyday life among working-class families from different periods of the twentieth century. In short, these are exhibitions devoted to lifestyles in which ordinary, everyday objects take a central place in the discourse.

### **Growth in the periphery: Barcelona and the Bon Pastor neighbourhood**

In the first third of the twentieth century, industrialisation also generated an extraordinary population growth in Barcelona, due to the influx of immigrants, whether internal migrants attracted by the need for labour or foreigners fleeing from the Great War. This sharp, rapid demographic increase, which saw the city’s population double to one million inhabitants, was accompanied by a housing deficit, which led to a proliferation of poorly-built housing, slums or shanty towns.

<sup>2</sup> Bourdieu, P. (1993). *La misère du monde*. Paris: Seuil.

<sup>3</sup> For more in-depth consideration of this subject, see: Lefebvre, H. (1968). *Le droit à la ville*. Paris: Éditions Anthropos.

In response to this situation, characterised by an accelerated, disorderly urban growth with countless deficits, the first measures in housing policy ever to be taken in the city were enacted. In 1911, the first Cheap Housing Bill was passed. A second bill entered the statute books in 1921. In 1927, the Barcelona Housing Board was established and charged with the mission of promoting, on a state-wide basis, social, rented and officially protected housing for the more disadvantaged classes. However, these measures had little effect and did not resolve new needs for housing in the city. The turning point came with the Universal Exposition, which the Catalan capital would host in 1929, when the Housing Board decided to promote a very first type of protected housing, known as *Cases Barates* (“Cheap Houses”). This measure obeyed, above all, a drive towards improved hygiene in the city, as the authorities sought to rehouse the inhabitants of the shanty towns on the sides of Mount Montjuïc, the Expo venue.

Accordingly, parallel to the construction of the Eixample district, where the new bourgeois classes took up residence, growth also took place in the periphery of Barcelona, where the working classes would be housed.<sup>4</sup> The Housing Board built four groups of homes in the outskirts of the city (Eduard Aunós, Can Peguera, originally known as Ramon Albó, Baró de Viver and Bon Pastor, originally known as Milans del Bosch), in some cases, even outside municipal limits. Of these, we shall focus our attention on the Bon Pastor estate, the largest of the four developments, located in the municipality of Santa Coloma de Gramenet (absorbed into Barcelona in 1945) to the east of the city, on the banks of the River Besòs.

### From cheap houses...

The project for the Bon Pastor estate, with characteristics very similar to those of the other three, entailed the construction of 784 houses grouped into modules, each with two rows that were repeated over the entire site. This was a “mass produced” landscape occupied by small, one-storey houses, each with an area of between 38 and 54 m<sup>2</sup>, and two or three small bedrooms where several families could live. The construction materials and finishings were of low quality. Due to this elementary construction system and its location near the river, the neighbourhood suffered severe flooding on several occasions. This is a neighbourhood built in a suburban area, unconnected to the city, with communication and transport difficulties and a complete lack of services. Thus, a neighbourhood created to be forgotten, but where, nevertheless, the residents would struggle ceaselessly to fight for better conditions. In fact, Bon Pastor is often referred to as one of the most revolutionary neighbourhoods of the city. Moreover, reinforcing this isolation even further was the repetitive, uniform urban structure, which defeats all attempts at individualisation, with little houses all painted white, arranged along streets without a name, differentiated only by the cold distinction of a number.

All this notwithstanding, and despite these precarious conditions, these were houses with electricity and running water, equipped with hygienic features such as a laundry-washing area and an individual toilet for each home. Although this toilet was just a hole in the ground, it was located in a separate room and connected to a central sewage system in each block.

The structure of the Bon Pastor estate helped it become a living community, where the relations between individuals wove a social system of its own. The model of rows of houses left, in its middle, a space where domestic life could be prolonged. The houses were small, opening directly into the street itself, and it was in the street that the residents conducted many everyday activities. The lack of space in the houses, where several families often lived together, made the occupation

<sup>4</sup> For a more in-depth study, see the following articles in *Vivienda obrera y colonias industriales en la península ibérica*. 2008. Proceedings of the Symposium (2002) and the Congress (2005) at the National Museum of Science and Technology of Catalonia: Tatjer, M. Los orígenes de la vivienda obrera en Barcelona (1753-1859), 43-53; López, P. La Primera Revolución Industrial y el nacimiento de la vivienda obrera en Barcelona, 54-63; Oyón, J.L. and Andrés, G. Las segundas periferias de Barcelona: vivienda y formas urbanas, 1917-1936. 115-120.



of the street as a prolongation of the home a necessity. It was common to see laundry hanging there, chairs at doorways where the residents would meet to chat and children playing outside together. In short, conditions served to strengthen community ties in a neighbourhood conceived as a “horizontal city”,<sup>5</sup> where the inhabitants felt as part of a great family. We might well say, in this case, that the site encouraged a certain type of social relationships among the inhabitants of the Bon Pastor neighbourhood.

### ... to blocks of flats

In the third quarter of the twentieth century, Barcelona’s periphery saw the appearance of new housing estates formed by blocks of flats, with a lack of investment that established considerable differences to other European countries, as this great urban expansion occurred in Spain during a period when there was no democracy. Once democracy was restored in 1979, with the first local elections, reforms began to be carried out in neighbourhoods, both in the heart of the city and in the periphery where the situation was most precarious. The first plans to build services and rehabilitate the “cheap houses” in Bon Pastor were unveiled in the 1980s.

However, despite the improvements, the neighbourhood and its houses continued in a precarious state and, in 2002, the amendment of the General Metropolitan Plan in the Bon Pastor area was approved, envisaging the renovation of the entire *Cases Barates* estate. The project entailed replacing the single-storey houses with blocks of flats built in the area in order to rehouse the residents, who were offered grants to help buy them. The citizen debate between the alternative of rehabilitating the houses and the local authority’s proposal to build new homes was intense and left an enduring mark, with the majority supporting the second option. The construction of the new buildings, planned over several phases, began in 2004.



### Placing worker housing in the urban history of the city

Around 2010, with the process of replacing people’s houses well under way, the idea began to form among residents and various local government representatives of maintaining the external appearance of one of the blocks in order to house neighbourhood services and to serve as a heritage site that would provide a succinct illustration of local history. From this initial idea, a proposal began to take shape between 2016 and 2017, through lively conversations between the Residents’ Association, the Barcelona History Museum and the Sant Andreu District Authority. The initiative also aroused interest of the Municipal Housing Board (now known as Barcelona Municipal Institute of Housing and Rehabilitation) and support from the Neighbourhood Plan, once it was launched.

The conversion of a group of “cheap houses” into a museum offered the possibility of presenting worker housing in Barcelona and interpreting Barcelona from the perspective of Bon Pastor in what was both a city-wide and a neighbourhood project.

With the opening of MUHBA Bon Pastor, the Museum continues to advance along its strategic line of action, placing heritage – in this case, worker housing – in the history of the city, and recognising the active role that this type of housing played in the construction of Barcelona. As a heritage site, Bon Pastor is not just another point on the Museum’s map, and be as it may, the Museum does not merely aim to establish as many points as possible. Quite the opposite: its aim is to link up those sites that are strategically necessary in order to suggest a coherent narrative of the

Heritage sites of the Barcelona  
History Museum in the city.  
© MUHBA

<sup>5</sup> A term that Stephano Portelli uses in the title of his work (2005): *La ciutat horitzontal: urbanisme i resistència en un barri de cases barates de Barcelona*. Barcelona: Temes d’Etnologia de Catalunya; 26.

city's history. Accordingly, Bon Pastor enables us to complete the discourse on housing and worker housing in Barcelona, and to describe its development in the urban context in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In this conceptual

aspect, Bon Pastor is closely linked to several other Museum sites, including two in particular: Turó de la Rovira and Park Güell. Turó de la Rovira was the site of an anti-aircraft defence facility used during the Spanish Civil War and occupied by shanty dwellers after the war. Consequently, Turó de la Rovira represents informal housing in the city as a phenomenon inextricably linked to the conceptualisation of worker housing. Whereas Park Güell, apart from many other qualities as a great universal work, functions as the representation of a type of housing designed by the elite classes in the early twentieth century. One of the tasks that city museums should perform is that of suggesting a plural discourse, embracing both majorities and minorities, as it regards the trajectory, in this case, of the contemporary city.

### **Bon Pastor in the Besòs museum axis**

The Bon Pastor also takes on special significance due to its geographic location near the river Besòs, in the city's eastern periphery, where little attention has generally been paid to cultural and museum aspects. The MUHBA has made great efforts in this area of the city for the last decade, integrating its historical discourse into that of the city in the most global sense. Through appropriate heritage sites, bringing together narrative, objects and urban resources, we can suggest a more integrated view of the city's history. To structure the Museum is to structure its different rooms and heritage spaces, according to an urban discourse that considers all possible interrelations in order to present multiple narratives that form the multi-faceted mirror that is the city.

It is through this plurality of relations that the MUHBA seeks to articulate the Besòs museum axis, whose creation as a museum axis in the east of the city the Museum recently proposed to the Barcelona City Council, to which it belongs, and to other institutions.<sup>6</sup> Within the physical demarcation represented by the banks of the river Besòs, the Museum's heritage sites speak of the contemporary growth of the city. Such sites comprise the *Casa de l'Aigua*, a pumping station where the Museum explains the importance of water supply to the urban and historical development of the city; *Fabra i Coats*, a factory that focuses on the world of work, fostering technical and social knowledge of its functions and development; the *Oliva Artés* industrial unit, devoted to various subjects related to the formation and trajectory of the contemporary city (and where a specific exhibition on housing in Barcelona is currently in preparation); and the *Bon Pastor*, where the "cheap houses" illustrate the development of worker housing in the city. In short, sites that speak, respectively, of *providing, working, urbanising and inhabiting* the city, concepts embodied in the metropolitan evolutionary process.

To speak of the Besòs museum axis, as proposed in recent, yet unpublished MUHBA working documents, is to suggest an alternative application of the concept of the museum island (like the *Museumsinsel* in Berlin)<sup>7</sup> or the museum embankment (such as the *Museumsufer* in Frankfurt). While, in those cities, the idea is to create a central cultural acropolis, the Besòs axis is located in the periphery, naturally enough, along the river, which was once a border, and is now destined to become articulation.

Visiting the different spaces entails travelling around the city, interpreting it, understanding it, learning it. Here, the Archaeological Promenade at the Berlin museum island is embodied by the urban fabric itself, which we trace as we discover or rediscover the city by taking a route that is flexible but palpable and is both local and universal. It is the art of following urban walks.

<sup>6</sup> See the article by Joan Roca i Albert mentioned earlier.

<sup>7</sup> In 1999, UNESCO catalogued the island museum of Berlin, formed by five major museums (PergamonMuseum, Bode-Museum, Altes Museum, NeuesMuseum and AlteNationalgalerie), as World Heritage. At present, work is underway at the site to implement a project aimed at shaping a more integrated ensemble by connecting all the museums underground via the Archaeological Promenade, and with a single entrance, the James-Simon-Galerie.



*Plan of the MUHBA Bon Pastor project. © MUHBA*

Each of the museum sites, like necessary links in this interwoven narrative, embodies a project that operates on two scales: at the community level; and at the level of the urban history of the city as a whole. Through all this, we can interpret the city by breaking down the borders between centre and periphery.

### **Converting worker housing into heritage**

The project of preserving a block of “cheap houses” at the Bon Pastor estate was undertaken in cooperation with other organisations that shared the aim of conserving the historical memory of the neighbourhood. Here, as mentioned, the cooperation of the Bon Pastor Residents’ Association, the Barcelona Municipal Institute of Housing and Rehabilitation, the Sant Andreu District Authority, the Bon Pastor Neighbourhood Plan and the University of Barcelona and the production of BIMSA were key. More specifically, MUHBA seeks to explain worker housing in Barcelona, while taking account

of both the neighbourhood and the city as a whole.

MUHBA will establish its museum project in half of the sixteen houses that form the preserved block. On one side, four houses will be restored to represent their appearance at different times (1930, 1960, 1980 and 2015), following a historical rather than a synchronous discourse. On the other side of the block, the Museum will convert further four houses into exhibition spaces devoted to the history of housing in Barcelona. The remaining eight residences will house local services, with spaces for the partner organisations and other shared facilities, such as a multi-purpose room, meeting room and hall, classroom, workspaces, archives and storage rooms.

The MUHBA Bon Pastor is currently immersed in the process of creation, focusing on the conversion of the four houses into museum spaces. In the short term, it is planned to present an “open for works” event to show the backstage activity behind the process and to present the project to the neighbourhood and the city as a whole.

### **Participation as a way of breaking down barriers**

The MUHBA Bon Pastor project is far more than the materialisation, in the most visible sense of the term, of the conversion of houses in the neighbourhood into a museum; the Bon Pastor will also enable us to speak of migration, integration into urban life and social cohesion. It is necessary to describe the development of social conditions among the working class that, in extremely precarious conditions, constantly fought for social improvements. We need to recognise the key role played by the working class (as well as the bourgeoisie) in the city’s development, its place in the city as an active, transforming agent. Our responsibility as a city museum is to identify the voice of social diversity, that is, to recount the history of the city through the diversity of its frameworks of reference because there is not one single account; instead, multiple narratives coexist. We must, therefore, aim to show and describe this social construction of the city, making all voices heard and placing them within the urban history, rendering them visible and, thereby, participants in this history.

This inclusion is, from the Museum’s standpoint, a way of extending citizen participation. Recognising diversity and disseminating its interpretation requires work in different formats to cater to the multiple sensibilities that exist. That is why we create explanatory frameworks based on urban materiality, our heritage, and present its discourse through various formats, such as exhibitions, seminars, publications, routes, concerts, among others. The Bon Pastor project embraces

all these formats and is already beginning to shape them into different activities that will form part of the future programme. This is how the Museum builds citizenship, constructs knowledge, breaks down the barriers between research and dissemination to generate a more inclusive and, in short, participatory social context. The right to form part of the city rejects segregation in order to embrace inclusion and, in this sense, enables a non-managed, two-way movement between the centre and the periphery.

### Participating, collaborating, contributing

In a more active, systematic fashion, given the flexible nature of the term, participation also takes different forms in the MUHBA Bon Pastor project.<sup>8</sup> Firstly, participation as a collaborative model. In this case, the project became feasible thanks to the collaboration of different organisations in the neighbourhood, as referred to earlier. The links that the Museum established with these bodies have intensified in recent months.

We should particularly highlight the key role that the Residents' Association played at the fieldwork stage. The Association made it easier to introduce the MUHBA team into the neighbourhood. We should keep in mind that the social structure of the Bon Pastor neighbourhood is particular, and one needs to generate local codes that require understanding in order to interact successfully there. The Association's presence and experience enabled us to integrate into the local environment quickly and easily. Partner social agents worked to persuade the residents to become involved in the project, enabling the initiative to develop satisfactorily. When the Museum first arrived in the neighbourhood, it was clearly considered an external agent, invading the people's everyday environment. Indeed, the residents looked at the Museum with certain misgivings and distrust, and these were barriers that could have greatly limited the results of the project. However, thanks to the collaboration and dedication of the various social institutions, the Museum was able to become integrated to such an extent as to change the preconceived image that the local community had formed. The residents not only accepted the presence of the Museum but came to appreciate the work it does in the neighbourhood and to understand the relevance of the project.

Secondly, there is participation as a contributory model. The residents of Bon Pastor have contributed directly to the project, bringing vital material to the Museum. Having conserved material evidence, they enabled objects to be recovered that will assist the museum conversion of the houses. For instance, they have contributed with many personal effects (furniture, everyday objects, decorative items, photographs, among others) while also sharing their personal experiences. The residents have been generous by sharing their life stories, and this testimony has been key to recover the oral memory of Bon Pastor. Accordingly, objects and accounts help reconstruct the history of families on the Bon Pastor estate, the neighbourhood as a whole and, ultimately, the entire city. "Small" histories form part of the "great" history, multiplying the value and substance of both.

The residents of the block of houses where the Museum is working have now moved into new apartments provided by the Housing Board. We should remember that the process of remodelling the neighbourhood has taken place in stages over the last decade, and is now in its final point. Over the last few months, the residents have moved out, and this has, without doubt, affected the rhythm of work at the Museum. Adaptation to individual and social processes was essential in order to interfere in the dynamics of the phenomenon as little as possible and to approach it in the most natural way possible. In order to form a reliable register, all the fieldwork was recorded on photographs and video, and a logbook was kept on every work session to describe in detail the progress made. All this material will also be used to produce a "making-of" to recount the process, showing all the preliminary activity required to create a museum space.



*Fieldwork at Bon Pastor.*  
© MUHBA

<sup>8</sup> A more in-depth study of the diversity of participatory models applied to museums is found in Simon, N. (2010). *The Participatory Museum*. Santa Cruz, California: MUSEUM 2.0.

Before leaving their homes, many residents opened their doors and allowed the Museum to visit their houses and record the spaces. Moreover, in several cases, we were able to record interviews with the residents, who also gave us access to their photography collections. The residents' involvement enabled us to recover personal memories of great value to the Museum. We might as well say that the documentation at this stage of the project formed a living, participatory record.

This moment, with the Museum staff inside the houses with the residents, was particularly important, as it signalled the beginning of negotiations with them aimed at obtaining objects and furniture that, although the occupants did not now want, could be of interest to the Museum. Accordingly, establishing a good relationship of trust and understanding was vital for the benefit of both parties.

On the day the residents finally left their homes to live in their new apartments, they gave their keys to the Institute, and the Museum team collected the furnishings agreed by both sides, taking them to the storage space near the block itself. The moment of moving and the resulting recovery of objects was the turning point. It was when the Museum stepped away from theory to confront reality and to evaluate the material results of these relationships. Then, suddenly, the system of codes that we felt we had addressed sprang up once more, and we realised that the complexity of the neighbourhood required time. What is agreed may or may not be honoured, depending on the circumstances. A particular bed, which would perfectly illustrate a bedroom in the 1980s, now belongs to a resident in greater need than the one moving out. The bonds between people in the neighbourhood are strong, the relationships intense, and it is necessary to understand that, often, the residents' priorities are not the same as the Museum's.

For this reason, the task of awareness-raising was added to the work of acclimatisation and negotiation conducted by the Museum staff. Constant awareness-raising was required among the residents about the importance of the project, to reinforce their involvement. Awareness, then, of the importance of preserving the historical memory should also be a new role and responsibility for all city museums.

Once all the objects were taken into storage, they were inventoried, catalogued, described and identified. The work of systemising information carried out by the Museum curators followed the same protocol as it would be applied at any other archaeological site. Quickly, on the same day of the relocation to the new apartments, the houses had to be bricked up and "vandalised" to ensure that they could not be occupied by intruders. Finally, the process continued by following the residents to their new apartments. This ended the fieldwork stage, which was followed by a new stage, that of designing the museum project itself. The site is expected to open next year, but in the short term, the Museum plans to present the project with an "open for works" event to show the work achieved to date.

### **Conclusion**

The presence of MUHBA at Bon Pastor represents another step forward in reconstructing the historical trajectory of urban housing in contemporary Barcelona. In this way, the Museum generates a historical narrative of the city, built up through the relations between its different heritage sites. At Bon Pastor, the Museum continues to work at two levels, that of the neighbourhood and that of the city as a whole, to present a narrative that is rooted in the territory and interacts with a network. As a result, the project has benefitted both the network of associations in the neighbourhood and its more intraurban links.

The work of converting a block of houses in Bon Pastor into a museum revealed the city as a place of conflict, but also of negotiation and shared memory. History is an inclusive phenomenon, and the Museum needs to be able to suggest an account built up by all, for all, a plural, transversal narrative generated by the different

voices that shape urban reality. By breaking down the barriers between the centre and the periphery, between research and dissemination, we articulate a model of a museum that is cohesive and inclusive; in other words, participatory, where everyone takes part in the city. It is this act of overcoming limitations, which on its turn enables the Museum to cover the different interpretational codes of citizens to achieve an inclusion that is viable without being condescending. The use of different formats in the exhibition of knowledge is key to achieving this. These may well be among the roles and responsibilities of future city museums, a subject that CAMOC has encouraged us to think about at this conference.

#### **BIOGRAPHY**

Elena Pérez Rubiales is a member of the MUHBA team and head of Museum and Citizenship. She holds a PhD in Production and Consumption of Culture from the Autonomous University of Barcelona, where she has taught in the Humanities degree course. She bases her scientific research on participation and the relationship between the museum and its users.