

Thirty Successful Experiences of Redistribution, Reduction,
Recognition, Remuneration and Representation in Care Work

Private Initiative:
**Santa Clara de
Málaga residence, Los
Milagros Andalusian
Cooperative Society,
Spain**



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Country or location of implementation: Malaga, Spain

Instances responsible for its implementation: Los Milagros Andalusian Cooperative Society without State involvement

Specific issue covered and beneficiaries of the action or policy

Santa Clara is a residential home for the elderly, created by a group of people concerned about the problems of senior citizens reaching retirement. These people formed a cooperative to build a residence equipped with all the necessary care services for this stage of life. Today, they live in a building with 76 apartments that provide the privacy of individual homes. This initiative is part of what is now known as co-housing.

Aurora Moreno (cited by Polini, 2019), main promoter of this action, regales that when she was young, she used to sing and play music in nursing homes. These experiences made her think about her own old age. She observed that, although in nursing homes the elderly did not lack care services, there was something intimate missing: affection and friendship. She wanted to do something different for herself and her friends.

Thus, at the age of 33, Aurora shared the idea with her closest friends, who considered the project crazy and utopian, but, in spite of this, decided to work together to achieve it. Thirty years later, this idea began to take shape, and in 1991 Los Milagros Andalusian Cooperative Society was founded. Then, in 1997, the first stone was laid for the Santa Clara Residence, which began housing its first residents in 2000.

This residential facility for people over 50 years of age has a total of 76 apartments, with an area of 50 square meters, and offers a number of ser-

vices such as a bus from the city center, a dining room, laundry and ironing, cleaning and maintenance of the apartments, medical and geroculturist services, sick rooms, physiotherapy services, occupational therapy, etc. (Moreno, 2012, p. 227). Access to these services requires the payment of an entrance fee (non-refundable) and six Cooperative certificates, as well as a monthly fee for the services contracted.

The founding member says they cannot be considered a nursing home because most of them are capable and able to perform the basic activities of daily living, but there are also people in a situation of dependency who receive the professional care they require, and those who do not need it now, have the assurance they will receive it here. [...] [She says:] we think of providing our help so as not to be a burden to families and society as I have initially stated, self-managing our future while creating jobs, indirectly in the construction, and directly in the care and assistance of the people who currently live in the Santa Clara residence. (Moreno, 2012, p. 227).

Results expected from and obtained with the action or policy

The objectives of its founding partners were to age in a space that is their own home, but with the peace of mind of having all the necessary services for their care needs. In fact, they considered situations in which dependency would increase. In that sense, Aurora explains (Cited by López Villodres, 2020):

With the project underway, the architect and I had proposed that part of the building should be fitted out for when we became ill and were older. We built an area with six rooms to care for the sick, now we have eight [...]. Increasingly, you need more and more help [...]. Those who entered at the beginning are now going, but at least they are surrounded by friends.

Aurora Moreno (cited by Castillejo, 2021) thinks that this was the first senior housing cooperative or “senior co-housing” in the country, in Europe, and perhaps the world. She points out, when reviewing the dates of the development of other cooperatives of this type, that they came later. In addition, due to their impact on public conversation, people from all over the world began to ask for their advice on the subject and learn from their experience.

The efforts of Aurora and her friends show it is possible to establish alternative models of coexistence, and there are good reasons to bet on co-

operative residences: they represent a model that benefits the elderly and themselves, who will live much better in the company of others; they are beneficial to society because they create employment; and, finally, they are a tool to empower the elderly, as owners of their own futures (Polini, 2019).

Obstacles and challenges in the implementation of these policies and actions

The realization of the project and its implementation faced several obstacles: the cost of the land and construction, the legal incorporation as a cooperative, lack of knowledge concerning appropriate procedures, the limited capacity of the existing laws to adapt to a project with these characteristics, the bureaucratic obstacles, and more recently, the COVID-19 pandemic. On this last point, it is important to emphasize that this model offers an alternative to the traditional geriatric or nursing home model. Aurora states (cited by Castillejo, 2021):

Fortunately, what we have here cannot be bought with those residences. We were all confined to our apartments, which are 50 square meters, and we did not go out because our food was brought to us. Besides, we all have a magnificent terrace. That is how we have been able to endure everything that has happened.

Justification of compliance with the inclusion criteria

Although this practice belongs to the private sector and is more of a care service offered by the market (as payment is required to access residential care), the cooperative and co-housing model is very interesting and is worth including in the analysis. It is an innovative action which provides an alternative for people who require increasingly intensive care due to their advancing age. It reduces the amount of care that must be provided within the framework of families and, in addition, its provision in this “common” framework of coexistence generates well-being among the people who receive it.

For more information, visit residencialsantaclara.es/