# PEACE ACTION WEEK:

## The Right to a Healthy Life, Food and Housing

*5th to 13th of September 2015*

*Hosted by SCI Catalonia, Barcelona, Spain*

## Activity Report

# Contents

# Peace Action Week Barcelona – Activity Report

## Introduction

The Peace Action Week on the Rights to a **Healthy life, Food and Housing** took place in Barcelona from 4th to 14th of September 2015. Organized by CCIVS and hosted by the International Civil Service (SCI) Cataluña, this Peace Week is the second out of three that took place as part of the Raising Peace global campaign.

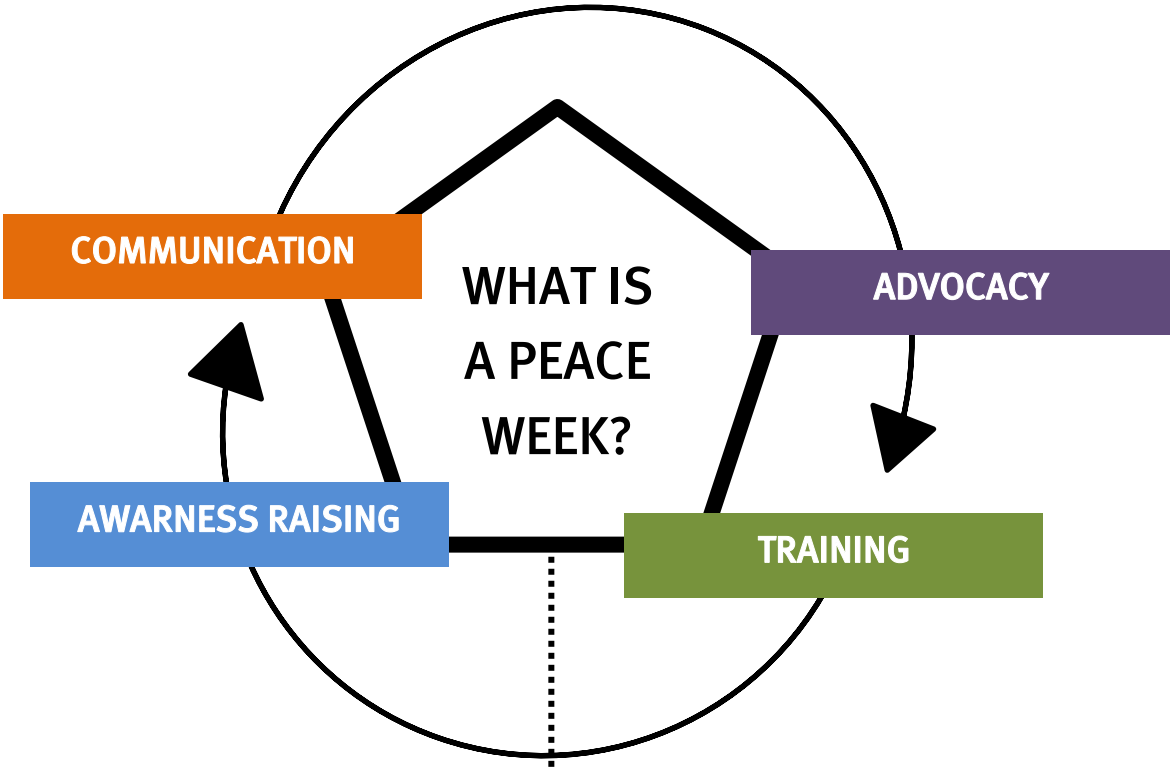
The Raising Peace campaign was launched in 2014 with a **Declaration** drafted by the representatives of IVS networks on the situation of human rights and the role of citizens and International Voluntary Service (IVS) to promote them, protect them, and guarantee them. The aims of the campaign are multiple: gathering networks and members of the International Voluntary Service movement, empowering their volunteers and activists, making advocacy through diverse channels and networking with other civil society organisations to build together a culture of peace with guarantee of human rights for every person.

In 2015, the campaign developed around three different Peace Action Weeks: the **Peace Week on the Rights of Migrant People** held in Brussels in May; the **Peace Week on the right to Healthy life, Food and Housing** held in September in Barcelona and the **Peace Week on the Right to the Own Body and Sexuality** that took place in Warsaw at the end of November.

The Peace Week in Barcelona on the Rights to a Healthy life, Food and Housing was facilitated and coordinated by Oriol Josa from CCIVS, David Guardia from SCI Cataluña, Gergely Kiss from Egyesek and Nerissa Latchis from SCI Cataluña.

Considering the topic of the project, the accommodation provided to the participants made part of the learning experience too. For the first three nights, participants slept in tents at Can Masdeu, an historic squat in Barcelona. For the rest of the week, they were hosted in a building in the city centre, squatted by PAH, a popular anti-eviction movement very active in Barcelona.

Before starting to go into the activity report, it is important to set the framework: what is a Peace Week?




## The **structure** of the Peace Week

### The Framework

**Understanding human rights and the situation in Europe regarding the topic;**

### The topic

**Interacting with reality: meeting organisations, advocacy, and street action:**

### The Future

Getting involved and planning the future.

## The **objectives** of the Peace Week

To provide participants with a better understanding of **Human Rights in Europe**, and in particular about the rights to Food and Housing;

To promote the **exchange of experiences and knowledge** between experts and participants

To develop **activism** and **advocacy** skills; and to enable participants to gain experience in the organisation of awareness activities;

To light a spark and commitment for new actions on **Human Rights** and **Peace** in the **IVS movement**

## Participants

The Peace Week gathered 18 volunteers, trainers and staff member from different European organisations, including two non-European participants from Mauritius and Jordan.

1. *SCI Germany* - David Brose
2. *SCI Belgium* - Alexandra Vanoussis;
3. *SCI Belgium* - Florence Guastella
4. *Service Civile International* - Helene Van Ngoc
5. *Concordia UK* - Victor Petersson
6. *SVIT UKRAINE*- Iana Nyzhegorodova
7. *SCI Hungary* - Eranyak (Achik) Oganova
8. *SCI Hellas* - Elpida Karmali
9. *United Network Of Young Peacebuilders* - Chloe Desesquelles
10. *SCI Cat*- Teresa Finez;
11. *SCI Cat*- Nerissa Latchis;
12. *SCI Cat*- Judit Batlló
13. *Volunteer Action for Peace UK* - Paul Winter
14. *INEX-SDA* - Eliška Drábková
15. *IBG*- Julian Reichle
16. *SCI Italia* – Fabrizia Camplone
17. *Solidarités Jeunesses* - Jean Martinant
18. *Jeden Świat (One World)* - Ada Malczynska

Coordinators, trainers and facilitators

1. *CCIVS* - Oriol Josa Fresno
2. *CCIVS* - Cristina Cardarelli
3. *CCIVS* - Justyna Zielonka
4. *Egyesek* - Gergely Kiss

Support Staff

1. *SCI Cat* - David Guàrdia
2. *SCI Cat* - Ariadna Gàlvez

## Programme of the activities

| Day 1 | Day 2 | Day 3 | Day 4 | Day 5 | Day 6 | Day 7 | Day 8 | Day 9 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 7:30 – 8:30 Breakfast | | | | | | | | |
| **Session 1**<br>Introduction to the programme | **Session 1**<br>Observatori DESC | **Session 1**<br>Moving to the PAH | **Session 1**<br>Street action with la PAH | **Session 1**<br>Volunteering with the PAH | **Session 1**<br>Workshop: CCIVS and RP campaign | Free day | **Session 1**<br>Next step: sharing best practices | **Session 1**<br>Projects presentation |
| 10:30 – 10:50 Coffee break | | | | | | | | |
| **Session 2**<br>Path to HR | **Session 2**<br>Economic ; Social and Cultural Rights | **Session 2**<br>Cleaning our space | **Session 2**<br>Street action with la PAH | **Session 2**<br>Volunteering with la PAH | **Session 2**<br>Workshop: Group discussion | | **Session 2**<br>Summary of the activities | **Session 2**<br>Group discussion on the projects |
| 13:00 – 14:30 Lunch | | | | | | | | |
| **Session 3**<br>Right to Food and Housing + Map of Europe | **Session 3**<br>Food sovereignty | **Session 3**<br>Right to Housing and presentation of the PAH | **Session 3**<br>APE Presentation at la PAH | **Session 3**<br>Institutional day at La Fede | **Session 3**<br>Mid-term Evaluation: where are we now? | | **Session 3**<br>Raising your voice, video making | **Session 3**<br>Group project presentation |
| 16:00 – 16:20 Coffee break | | | | | | | | |
| **Session 4**<br>Problems and solutions | **Session 4**<br>The projects of the Val of Can Masdeu | **Session 4**<br>Assembly with the PAH | **Session 4**<br>Coordinating Assembly with the PAH | **Session 4**<br>Institutional day at La Fede | **Session 4**<br>Mid-term Evaluation: where are we now? | | **Session 4**<br>Cooking &dinner preparation | **Session 4**<br>Final Evaluation |
| 18:30 Reflection groups | | | | | | | | |
| 20:30 Dinner | | | | | | | | |
| Free night | Intercultural night | Free night | Free night | Visit to the bunker | Movie night: FoodInc | | International dinner | Final Party |

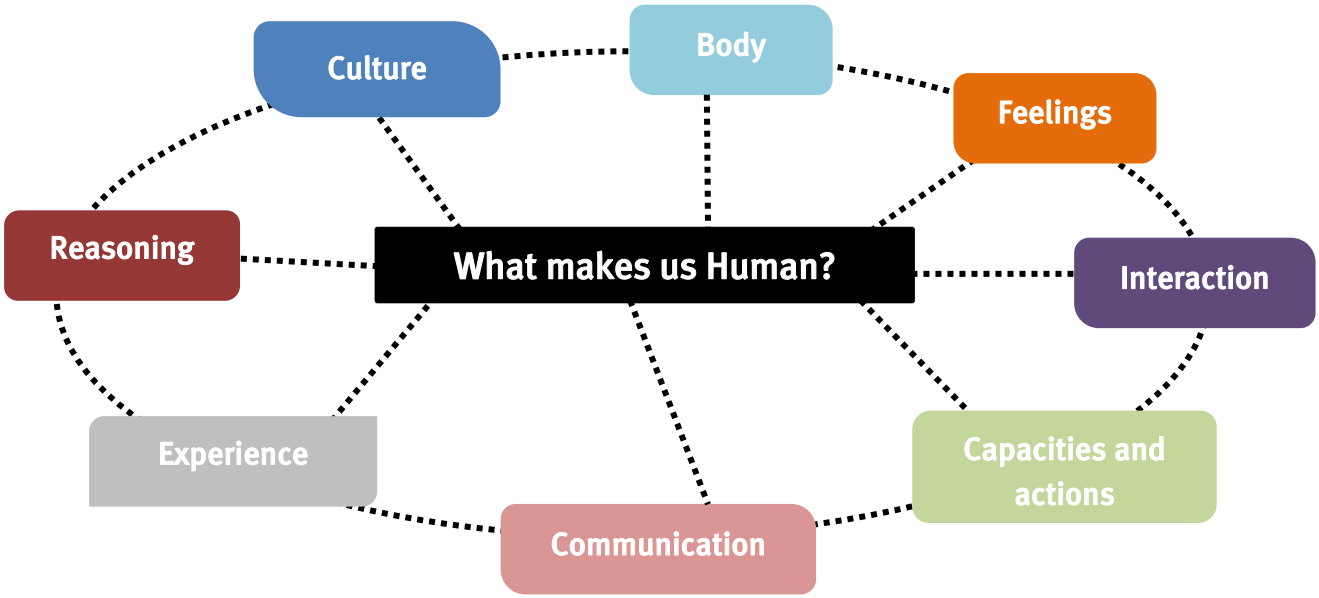
# Chapter 1: A Framework to Human Rights

The Peace Week started in Can Masdeu with a welcoming ceremony where the participants got to know each other and the team. They were asked to close their eyes and concentrate on their senses, while being led by a team member into a room well prepared with music and incense to offer a full sensorial experience.

In the room, they spent some time trying to answer one simple, yet challenging question that opened officially the Peace Week: what makes us human?

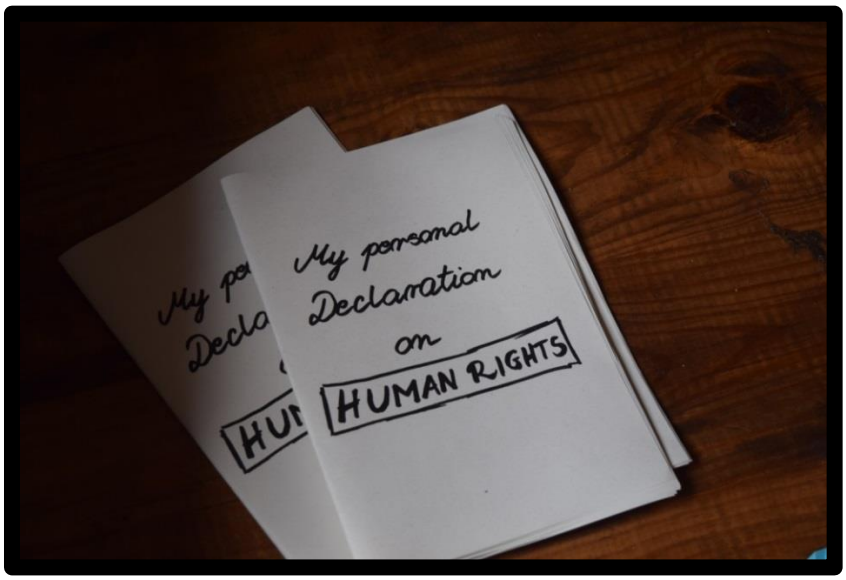
Participants were free to interpret the question in different ways. Pencils, pens, colours and papers were at their disposition to help them use their imagination and creativity to answer the question by drawing, writing, crafting and playing with what they had. After a moment of personal reflection, participants were asked to share with the others and with the team what meant for them being human.

The result was very diverse. Each volunteer had in fact a personal view of what makes him or her human. However, there were many common points that emerged during the presentation of their artistic creations:




There were several concluding reflections, among which, two of them to be underlined: human is not only the capacity to do good, but also the capacity to do bad, thence to control or promote this, and to decide. Second, as a final message for this activity, is that all those things that people consider that make us human are really common for all of us; people did not disagree with any of the other's proposals. So it is about all these things we all have in common that make us human; and that all these common things are what we defend, when we defend human rights.

It is about understanding that defending Human Rights is not defending the rights of others, of "vulnerable people we don't know about"; it is about defending our own rights, our own humanity.




Following this session of reflection and creation, a hand-made booklet was provided to each volunteer. The Booklet named ***"My Personal Declaration on Human Rights"*** intended to be a personal tool to use during the Peace Week to reflect on the topics presented and report all the things mentioned and worthy to remember, from inspirational quotes to personal reflections.

## A Path to Human Rights

The first part of the afternoon session was meant to provide participants with an overview of the concept of human rights. Participants were divided in three different groups and followed the "Path to Human Rights".

The Path to Human Rights is an interactive activity to introduce some key concepts, definition, actors and challenges that concern the notion of human rights. There are three different sections:

- What are Human Rights?
- The International System of Protection of Human Rights
- The Actors involved in Human Rights

In each section, a facilitator leads the conversation. Participants, divided in three groups, rotate from one section to the other, spending around 20 minutes in each station where, through a dynamic approach, the topics are presented and discussed with participants. Each section complements the other and the final aim is to set the framework for the coming days.

### What are Human Rights?

In order to discuss a bit more on the meaning of human rights, this section aimed to offer participants space and time to present their opinions and doubts over the concept of human rights. Participants were hosted in a room, where different inspiration quotes on Human Rights and articles of international human rights treaties were put on the walls. The group was asked to walk around and follow the walking gallery, trying to reflect on the meaning of the quotes and identify the most inspirational and controversial ones.

Then, sitting together and with the help of the facilitator they tried to take the most out of the quotes they selected. Many interesting points emerged during the conversations. They can be overall summarised in the following way:

### Universality of Human Rights

*"All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood."*

- Art. 1, Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Although sometimes it seems hard to see that, human rights are universal by definition. They apply to all human beings, no matter what race, colour, gender and opinion they have. They need to be universally respected as well as implemented.

Participants reflected upon the concept of universality of human rights, going back to the question *"what makes us human"*. We are human because we breathe, because we feel, because we share and we interact. But fear and oppression make also us human. From this understanding, the group also spent some time discussing over the controversies arising when talking about the universality human rights. If we focus on certain current dynamics, for instance the current refugee crisis, it emerges that human rights are not universal at all and they are trumped by other elements, such as economic needs and security. In this scenario, participants agreed on the necessity to be more and more active in order to counter this tendency of not respecting basic human rights.

## The Need to Act

"*You have to do the right thing... You may never know what results come from your action. But if you do nothing, there will be no result*."

- Mohandas K. Gandhi

The groups shared a lot on the importance of being active citizens today. Even though we might not be able to change the world, small actions are always the starting points for bringing change. Some of them shared their own experiences and described small actions that they do or did in their own country with their association. Overall, participants had the chance to exchange important information and start discussing about ways to get involved into a practical action.

## The Importance of Having the Support of the Government

"*The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions. The States Parties will take appropriate steps to ensure the realization of this right, recognizing to this effect the essential importance of international co-operation based on free consent.*"

(UN in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Art. 11)

Considering that the topic of the Peace Week was the right to housing and healthy food, particular attention was given to this statement. Participants discussed the importance of supporting governments for the full enjoyment of human rights, as well as the importance of the civil society in filling in the gaps when governments do not act for the implementation of human rights.

## The Importance of Education

*"Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world."*

— Paulo Freire, Pedagogy of the Oppressed

The role of education emerged as fundamental for the fight for human rights. In fact, each group identified that education is the key element for empowering younger generation as well as the necessary tool to fight against a system that does not provide the respect of basic human rights.

### The International System of Protection of Human Rights

While the first session allowed participants to brainstorm generally over the meaning of human rights, this section aimed to give a brief introduction of the international and regional treaties and corresponding treaty bodies that are meant to protect, implement and verify the enjoyment of human rights.

The facilitator prepared a flipchart with diagrams that schematise information on the most important international and regional human rights treaties. The diagrams were however empty and all the information were written in separated papers.

Participants had to position the papers in the right place in the diagrams, trying to match the treaties with the treaties bodies.

With the help of the facilitator, this exercise helped them to have a general overview of existing human rights legal framework. At the same time, it helped to point out and discuss some of the benefits and limits of this framework.

1. International Treaties

The first global expression of interest for the safeguard of human rights is represented by the ***Universal Declaration of Human Rights,*** adopted by the United Nation General Assembly in 1948. Starting from this point, an increasing number of international human rights treaties and other human rights legal instruments emerged. The horror of the World Wars, the decolonisation and several human rights abuses that happened at that time worked as a driving force to develop the modern human rights legal instruments. In this scenario, many new actors emerged as promoters of the new human rights legal instruments. Today, among the public institutions, the United Nations (UN) on the global level and the Council of Europe at the regional level, play a relevant role in this field.

Although the *United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights* sets a general common standard for the achievement of human rights, it is not a legally binding instrument. Therefore the states that signed the declaration have no legal obligation towards the respect of the provisions presented in the text.

However, the rights set out by the UN Declaration have been transformed into a legally binding framework of international human rights through international treaties/ conventions and their optional protocols, nine of them are considered as the Core Treaties. Today, together with the customary law, the nine international treaties (and one Optional Protocol) adopted by the UN represent the backbone of international human rights law. Besides, further related instruments such as declarations and guidelines adopted at the international level contribute to the understanding and development of the international human rights law.

<u>An Insight to the Process of Adoption of a Treaty</u>

This process has been was very long and not without obstacles. The adoption of the text of a treaty normally needs the consent of the states participating in its drafting or the majority of them. Once the text has been accepted, the convention enters into force only after the minimum number of states specified in the treaty has expressed consent to be bound by it. The consent is expressed both by the signature; and after that, still there's the step of the ratification of the treaty to consider it legally binding for a country.

By signing the treaty, states give a preliminary endorsement and show their commitment to the treaty. After the signature, each state will deal with it according to its own national procedures and legislative requirements.

If the provisions of the treaty are in accordance with the constitutional and legal provision at the national level, states are free to ratify the treaty and become “State Party”. If however, the treaty is not in conformity with the national provisions, in some cases the treaties allow the states to express reservations upon ratification. In them, states declare under which conditions they consider themselves to be bound or not by

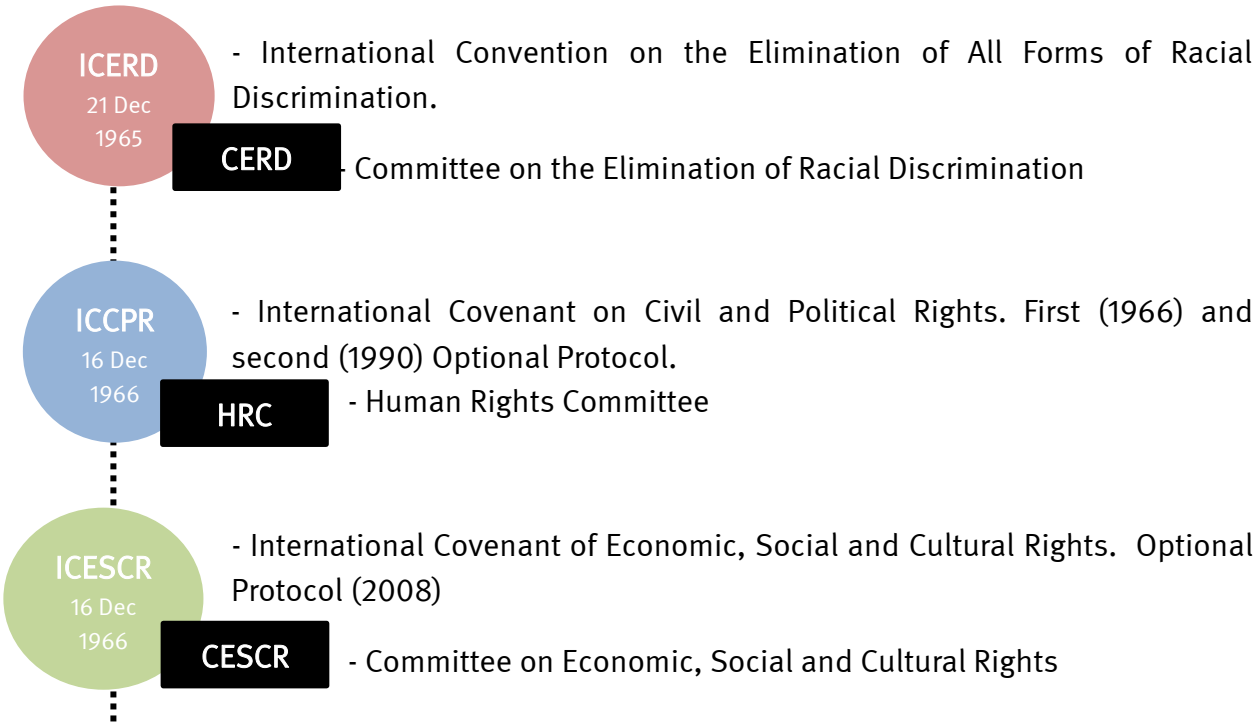
the treaty. The reservation is rejected if is found to be contrary to the spirit of the relevant treaty.

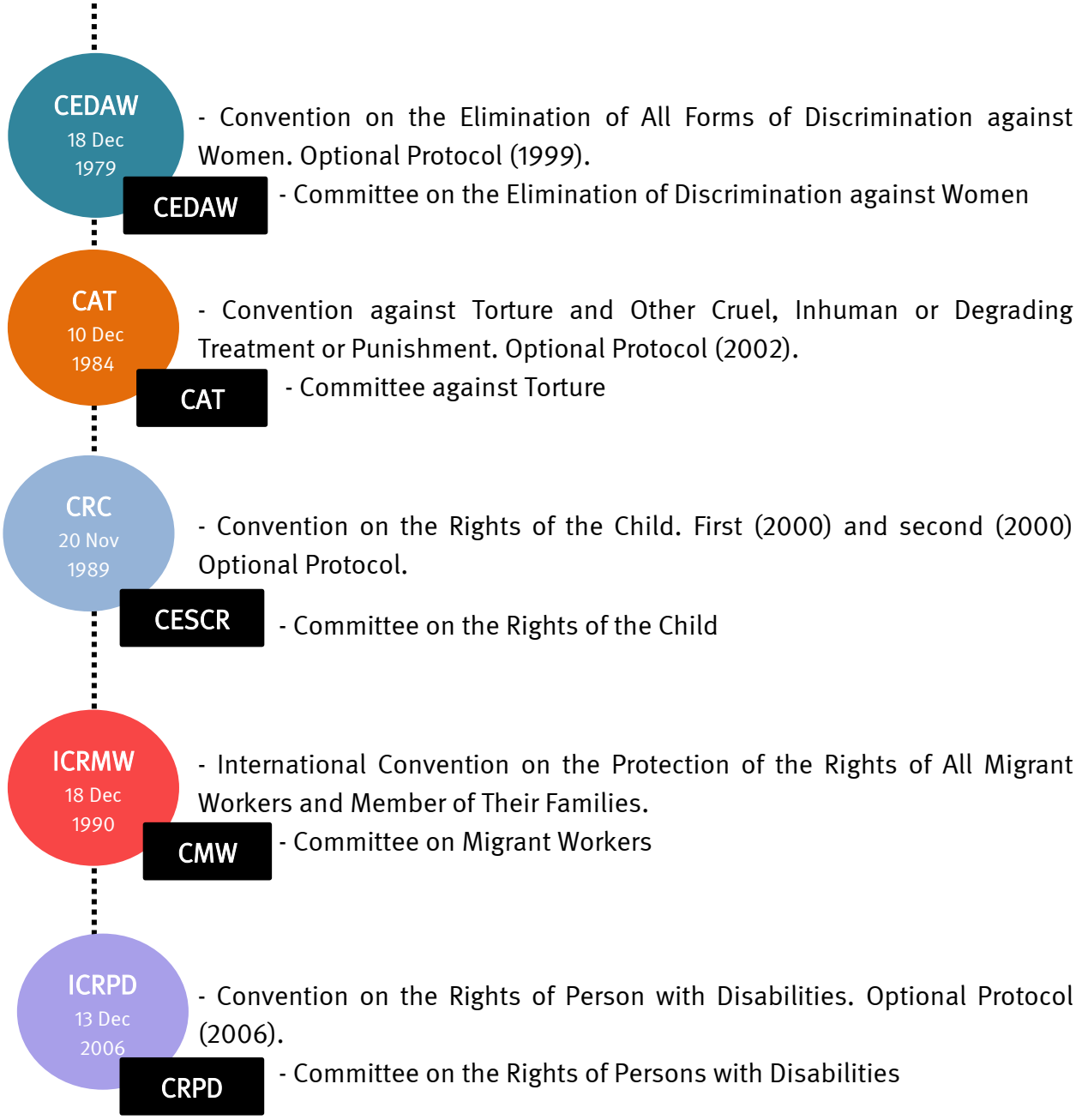
Because of that, both the drafting and the coming into force of a treaty require a lot of years and negotiation among the states. However, once the treaty is ratified the State parties are bound under international law to uphold and implement the provisions of the relevant treaty.

All UN human rights conventions have a **treaty body** to oversee the implementation the treaty and its protocols by state parties. The treaty bodies are international committees of independent experts that perform a number of functions in accordance with the provisions of the treaties that establish them. At the lead of such committees there is the Commissioner, recognised and independent Human Rights expert which signs reports and recommendations of their committees.

First, they review **periodic reports** that state parties are required to send generally every two years. On the base of those reports and further information gathered by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and other UN agencies, the treaty bodies issue concluding observations regarding the implementation of the provisions by the state. Besides, under certain conditions, the majority of the treaty bodies may also receive **individual complaints** regarding violation committed by those states that authorized the treaty body to receive complaints against them. Finally, the commissions have also the possibility to adopt **general recommendations** or comment on the interpretation of certain provisions, as well as on specific thematic.

Here below, a list of the core international treaties and their corresponding treaty bodies:






2. Regional Treaties

Besides the United Nations, each region developed their own international organisations, which also have a level where Human Rights aspects are dealt with, and have dedicated legislation and court for human rights issues.

At the European level, the Council of Europe is a main actor involved in human rights protection and promotion. More specifically, the Council of Europe represents a regional intergovernmental organization whose main role, as they put it, is to ***strengthen***

***democracy, human rights and the rule of law*** throughout its Member States. Its work goes side by side with the work of international organisations such as the UN.

ECHR
1953

- European Convention on Human Rights.

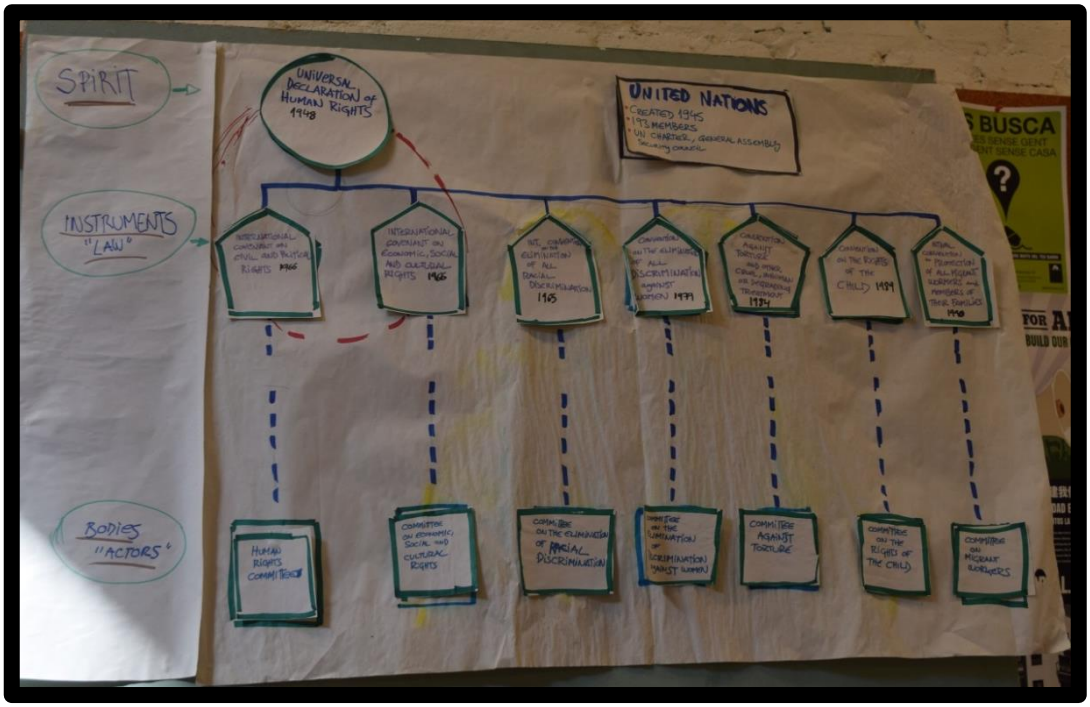
ECtHR

- European Court of Human Rights

The ECHR deals with civil and political rights, and is in that sense similar to the ICCPR. Today, it is considered the main European human rights convention.

The Convention established the ECtHR, an international judicial body responsible for the supervision of the state members' respect of the convention. It is composed of independent judges, equal to the number of member States of the Council of Europe that have ratified the Convention (47). It is based in Strasbourg and since its creation it has been extremely active and effective for the protection of human rights.

Any member states that feel victim of violations of the convention have access to the ECtHR. Moreover, groups of individuals or single individuals who feel the same and are unable to remedy their claim within the national legal system may bring their case to the ECtHR. And it is exactly this mechanism of **individual complaints** that is positively appreciated, as it makes the protection of human rights accessible to individuals and not just states.



After the overall presentation of the international and regional mechanism of protection of human rights, participants were more aware of the legal system that uphold and ensure the respect of human rights.

However, during the activity many doubts regarding the effectivity of these instruments arose. In particular, it has been pointed out that the existence of certain instruments does not guarantee accountability. That is why there is the need to involve other actors too.

**The Actors**

The third dimension analysed in the Path to Human Rights was about the role of each social actor in the protection and/or violation of human rights. Among the categories of actors, the following were analysed:

**International Organizations (IOs)**

IOs are mostly organizations established by a treaty or other instrument governed by international law and possessing their own international legal personality. Their members are states or other entities. Among these, the United Nations has a central role as the global intergovernmental organisation. As other relevant IOs, The UN, the World Bank, IMF, WTO may be mentioned. Their role in human rights protection, promotion or violation is central, as their actions and rules are applicable globally.

**Civil Society**

It includes all the individuals, groups, organisations that voluntarily engage in forms of public participation and action around shared interests. Within civil society, organised groups (organised civil society) may have a leading and visible role: social movements, NGO's, workers unions, etc. In terms of human rights, civil society groups may active in different ways: through solidarity networks, raising awareness on specific topics, doing public protest, petitions, and communication and educative actions.

**Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO)**

NGOs are formed by people interested in defending common aims, and are neither part of governments nor of for-profit organisations. NGO's may have local, national or international scopes. They are often committed to and developed around specific social causes, for example; from human rights to environmental sustainability. Among the actions NGO's develop; they act to protect and increase social goods they defend, educate on the topic; they advocate for specific public policies; and may provide analysis and expertise. Regarding Human Rights organizations, they also may have contact and exchange of information with international organizations such

as the UN or the EU, and monitor countries' situation over specific issues, and advocate for change.

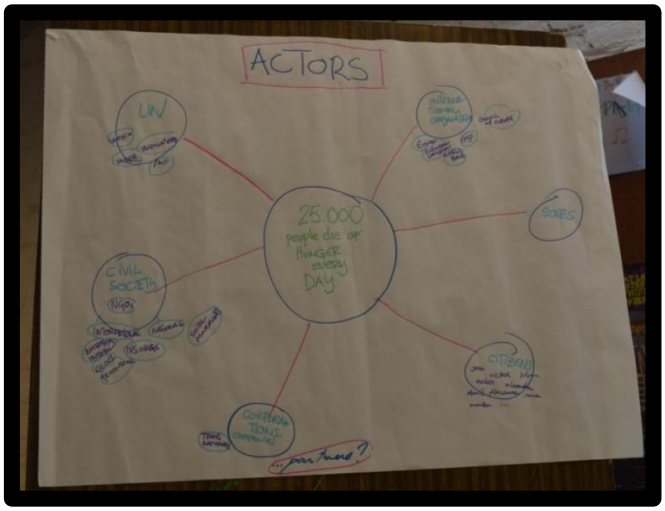
## States

Sovereign states have legislative, executive and judicial powers, and that, in 15 terms of human rights, involves laws to protect (or not) those rights; to effectively protect them and fulfil them (or not); and to judge violations of such laws. **National legislations exist to promote Human Rights as well as access to international human rights law to implement and improve the respect of them.** Very often, they fail in protecting their citizens and the guarantee of basic human rights, and in this sense, it has become more and more clear that in order to have the full respect of rights other actors need to be mobilised.

## Citizens

**Any person has the right to citizenship, which means to be recognised as a subject of rights and duties, and to public protection.** A person, in their dimension as citizen, therefore, may act such citizenship actively, and therefore defend their rights and those of their co-citizens. Besides this, they should be protected by law by their countries and may find access to international protection, such as the case of the European Court of Human Rights for this region.

The session may start either with a brainstorm on the different actors or by presenting them, defining the possible role of each actor; and then imagining a possible case study of human rights violations. From that situation, the exercise goes to see how each of those actors could or would act in defence (or against) the fulfilment of the human rights of the victims.



## Map of Europe

After this initial introduction, participants started to become focused on the topic of the Peace Week. Each of them was asked to fill in a questionnaire; they were requested to present the situation of the right to housing and access to healthy food in their country of origin. The questionnaire helped the team to have an idea about the knowledge, interest and doubts of the participants.

Once in Barcelona, participants were asked to re-take the questionnaire and analyse it again. They were then divided in different groups, and they were asked to discuss the situation of the right to housing and access to healthy food in their country of origin, trying to compare the different realities. In particular, they were asked to prepare a list of the problems and the potential solutions.

Once the discussion was over, a representative of each group had to present a summary of their work in front of all the participants. A big map of Europe was available in a flipchart.

Considering that participants were from different European countries, the activity was aimed at combining the data on housing and access to food from each country in order to offer a general overview of the situation at the European level.

Below, the groups' presentation:

**RIGHT TO HOUSING**

**Group 1:** France, UK, Belgium, Poland and Ukraine

- Difficult access to rights and to the legal system, due to the lack of education and the cost of a legal support
- Risk for the citizens to become dependent to mortgages, due to expensive rents.
- Lack of interest from the political class
- Lack of investment in social housing

**Group 2:** Czech Republic, Germany, Ukraine

- Ongoing process of house concentration in poor areas
- Social benefits offered by NGOs and charities
- The refugees' crisis has increased the need to deal with social housing

**Group 3: Belgium, Greece, Italy**

- Lack of proper social housing policy
- Private sector replacing the state and building social housing
- Increasing gap between rich and poor
- Dependency of subsidies
- Illegal to squat, yet lack of social housing

## RIGHT TO FOOD

**Group 1:** France, UK, Belgium, Poland and Ukraine

- Lack of education on healthy food
- Tendency to perceive the need to have healthy food as a classy, modern and elitist movement rather than a need for the society
- Charities, NGOs, churches represent the first source of food provider for those who cannot afford or survive on their own

**Group 2:** Czech Republic, Germany, Ukraine

- Tendency to waste food
- Widespread existence of a wasteful culture
- Social benefits offered by NGOs and charities
- Local movement born to fight food waste, ex. Collecting food and redistributing it

**Group 3:** Belgium, Greece, Italy

- Devaluation of the role of agriculture
- Use of monoculture
- Impact of market rules of import and export for food production
- High level of corruption in the political sphere and the management of food policy
- Impact of international agreement such as TTIP

Following this group presentation, the facilitators were able to identify and present the common points of the presentation.


- Lack of knowledge of the issue
- Difficult access to the law to fight violation, as very expensive
- Dependency on mortgages
- High rent
- No interest by the political class to right to housing
- No social housing or allowance
- Illegal to squat
- Refugees crisis, which response for them

- Wasteful society
- Lack of education on food sovereignty
- Access to healthy food
- MRK rules about food imp/exp
- Mass/local production
- Agricultural crisis with monoculture, pesticides and chemical elements
- Seed patenting
- TTIP and impact on both the quality of the food and the small enterprises
- Dependence on subsidies
- NGOs and charities giving subsidies and replacing the role of the state in providing food

After this intense first day of work, the group deserved to relax. Volunteers from SCI Catalonia planned a night out in the close neighbourhood called Horta, where a local concert was taking place.

# Chapter 2: the Right to Food

After having introduced the concept of human rights and the different actors, the discussion started to focus more on one of the two topics of the Peace Week: the right to food, or more precisely, the right to adequate, healthy, sustainable food.

As the group learnt during the Peace Week, according to UN standards, the right to adequate food is defined by the following four elements:

- **Availability**: food should be available from natural resources either through the production of food, by cultivating land or animal husbandry, or through other ways of obtaining food, such as fishing, hunting or gathering.
- **Accessibility**: Economic and physical access to food to be guaranteed. Economic accessibility means that food must be affordable. Physical accessibility means that food should be accessible to all, including to the physically vulnerable, such as children, the sick, persons with disabilities or the elderly.
- **Adequacy**: Food must satisfy dietary needs, taking into account the individual's age, living conditions, health, occupation, sex, etc. Food should be safe for human consumption and free from adverse substances. Adequate food should also be culturally acceptable.
- **Sustainability**: Food should be accessible for both present and future generations.[1]

This topic has become more and more central and there is a growing attention visible in the whole civil society. This is due to many reasons. First, the right to adequate food is an essential condition for the exercise of many other human rights. Unfortunately, our current society does not guarantee this right. Today, the current food system is governed by a small number of big corporations that control much of the production, processing, distribution, marketing and retailing of food. Water, oil, soil and seeds became commodities and the quantity of the production is often preferred to its quality.

In this scenario, our right to adequate food is constantly violated. However, many actors from the civil society are becoming very active in reclaiming this right and offer alternatives to the current system.

[1] http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/ESCR/Pages/Food.aspx

In Barcelona, Can Masdeu is a very active collective fighting the current food system by offering alternatives. At the same time, it is an example of non-violent resistance to eviction. During the Peace Week, the participants had a unique chance to spend three days and nights living in the collective. They got to know some of the pioneers that started the collective, exchange information with them and contribute to daily life by small volunteering actions.

## Vall De Can Masdeu

Introduction to the Vall De Can Masdeu

Vall De Can Masdeu is a historic squat, social centre and community garden in the Collserola Park on the outskirts of Barcelona. Today, around 25 adults and 5 children live there and promote ecology and a self-sufficient system based on agriculture and permaculture.

A former leper hospital, the building had been abandoned for many years when a group of local activists decided to occupy it in 2001. With the strong support of the local community and an intense coverage of the media, they managed to passively resist to a forced eviction by the police.

Since then, there have been several civil and criminal cases brought against the occupants of Can Masdeu, but the community has survived and kept control of the space. Over the years, they started creating a dynamic space, welcoming old and young people to work in their gardens, grow ecological food and contributing to a sustainable lifestyle.

Today, the vast land they occupy is the first source of food sustainability. Within the local community, Can Masdeu is considered to be a successful alternative that is trying to fight the commodification of food as well as the housing system in Spain.

What they do

*Vall de Can Masdeu* includes five different projects:

- Collective movement:
- Community Garden: born as a movement for the re-appropriation of the land, the community garden works as meeting point and exchange platform for anyone interested in the development of ecology, gardening, etc. for a more sustainable lifestyle.
- Punto de Interacción de Collserola (PIC): addressed to everyone, it runs every Sunday with a variety of activities on agro-ecology, health, permaculture, etc. offered for free to the participants.
- Agro-ecologic education activities: mostly addressed to the youth, those activities aim at giving the participants an idea on an alternative lifestyle to the one existing in the city. By getting closer to the nature and the ecosystem, people can learn more about natural resources and their natural cycles.
- Permaculture Project in Barcelona (see below).

# The Right to Food today

During the second day spent at Can Masdeu, Arnau Pujol, a representative of the community and a pioneer in the Vall De Can Masdeu project gave a presentation to the group. He touched upon different topics that are all under what has been introduced before, namely the right to food.

The presentation was then followed by a Q&A session. The section below describe the core issues addressed during the presentation.

## Problems of the Agro-Industrial Model

From the old agricultural model rooted on natural cycles of the resources, we moved to an agro-industrial system that has completely altered the natural balance of food production. In the long term, this shift had a negative impact in our society. Some of the major changes are summarized below:

- **Privatization of Natural Resources**: water, soil, air, seeds, have become commodities. They are not accessible to everyone, but they are owned, managed and exploited by few people and a few multinational companies. Today, the various forms of Intellectual Property Rights became an instrument of privatization that destroys local practices and restrict the use and conservation of agricultural biodiversity.
- **Change in the Use of the Land**: contemporary food production does not follow anymore the cycles of natural resources, instead it responds to market rules. In fact, the introduction of external factors, such as fertilizer, pesticides, greenhouses, etc., the growing deforestation and expansion of agricultural frontiers increased the production of food, having a negative impact on its quality.
- **Land Grabbing**: land grabbing by both the state, transnational corporations and speculative private landowners is one of the most serious and imminent attacks to people's right to food.
- **Change of Food Policies:** both at national and international level, agricultural policies have transformed food into merchandise. Free trade agreements, economic partnership agreements, among others, are a direct attack on the sovereignty of countries and peoples, and the autonomy of States in food production.
- **Introduction of New Technologies**: the continuing development of new technologies serves the interests of big business rather than the needs of humanity. It does not consider the price paid by the environment and the social effect brought to the communities.

- **Global Food Production:** the expansion of the industrial food processing and all the logistics to transport it to the consumers comes at a high price. If we look at food production more broadly to also include emissions from land-use change and deforestation, as well as the processing, packaging, transport and sale of agricultural products, it emerges that between 44% and 57% of gas emission comes exactly from agriculture. Here we have the data:

    - Deforestation: 15-18%
    - Farming: 11-15%
    - Transport: 5-6%
    - Processing & Packing: 8-10%
    - Freezing & Retail: 2-4%
    - Waste:3-4%

Overall, the agro-industrial model has allowed us to increase the quantity of food we produce, but decreased its quality. More than that, this system continues to have a drastic negative impact on the environment, from the degradation of the soil to gas emission.

**Alternatives to the Agro-Industrial Model**

There are viable alternatives that are becoming more and more popular worldwide:

- **Food Sovereignty:** In contrast with the global food system, food sovereignty asserts that the people who produce, distribute, and consume food should control the mechanisms and policies of food production and distribution. It implies shortening the food production chain, by reassessing and recovering the local agricultural habits and traditions.
- **De-growth:** the concept of de-growth is based on ecological economics, anti-consumerist and anti-capitalist ideas. It aims at increasing prosperity by decreasing the consumption and recognizing the limits of our resources. It proposes a framework for transformation to a lower and sustainable level of production and consumption, a shrinking of the economic system to leave more space for human cooperation and ecosystems
- **Agro-ecology:** instead of agro-business, agro-ecology promotes a whole-systems approach to agriculture and food systems development based on traditional knowledge, alternative agriculture, and local food system experiences.
- **Growing Local:** to counter the tendency of the commodification of natural resources such seeds and soil, there is a growing movement of urban agriculture all over the world. Small communities are in fact occupying or just using urban gardens to start small agricultural activities.

- **Permaculture:** Permaculture is an ecological design system that can be applied in different fields, from construction to gardening. It is a lifestyle approach aimed at finding solutions for sustainability. Applied to gardening, permaculture is designed to mimic natural growth and interaction between species so that no fertilizers or pesticides need to be used.

Overall, the presentation served as an introduction to the current food production system and the necessity to create alternatives to it. Can Masdeu, thanks to the projects developed along the years, represents a successful example to show that alternatives are possible.

Although they are not fully self-sufficient for what concern food production, they are successfully investing in the natural environment and living out of it. Their view, which is very much shared by a large part of the Spanish civil society, is based on the idea of de-growth and food sovereignty.

After this presentation, the group had a bit of time to discuss what has been exposed. Many points were raised and few participants had the possibility to share their own project of urban gardening and exchange with the other tips and suggestions on how to improve it or start it from scratch.

Finally, the participants went for a walking tour in the Vall and were showed all the different activities that the community is taking care of. In particular, they spent some time exploring the permaculture garden and discussing about the benefits that come out of it.

The last part of the session was then dedicated to some volunteering works in the community garden.

The day concluded with an international night: each participant brought one special drink or food from their countries and they shared them with the team and some members of the community of Can Masdeu.

# Chapter 3: The Right to Housing

Another focus of the Peace Week was the right to housing, or to be more precise the right to adequate, healthy and sustainable housing. Like the right to food, it is a fundamental right that is essential for the enjoyment of other human rights.

As the group learnt during the Peace Week, according to UN standards, the right to adequate housing is defined by the following elements:

- **Legal Security of Tenure**: Regardless of the type of tenure, all persons should possess a degree of security of tenure which guarantees legal protection against forced eviction, harassment and other threats;
- **Affordability**: Personal or household financial costs associated with housing should not threaten or compromise the attainment and satisfaction of other basic needs (for example, food, education, access to health care);
- **Habitability**: Adequate housing should provide for elements such as adequate space, protection from cold, damp, heat, rain, wind or other threats to health, structural hazards, and disease vectors;
- **Availability of Services, Materials, Facilities and Infrastructure**: Housing is not adequate if its occupants do not have safe drinking water, adequate sanitation, energy for cooking, heating and lighting, sanitation and washing facilities, means of food storage, refuse disposal, etc.;
- **Accessibility**: Housing is not adequate if the specific needs of disadvantaged and marginalized groups are not taken into account (such as the poor, people facing discrimination; persons with disabilities, victims of natural disasters);
- **Location**: Adequate housing must allow access to employment options, health-care services, schools, child-care centres and other social facilities and should not be built on polluted sites nor in immediate proximity to pollution sources;
- **Cultural Adequacy**: Adequate housing should respect and take into account the expression of cultural identity and ways of life.[2]

Together with the right to food, this right has been at the centre of many debates in the past few years in Europe. In Spain, this topic has become extremely important with the beginning of the economic crisis, when evictions became a dramatic reality for an

[2] http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Housing/toolkit/Pages/RighttoAdequateHousingToolkit.aspx

enormous part of the population. Since then, there has been a strong mobilization of the civil society against eviction and in favour of an improvement of social services for housing.

During the Peace Week, participants had direct contact with two of the main actors in Catalonia that fight for the right to housing, namely Observatori DESC and La PAH.

## Observatori DESC

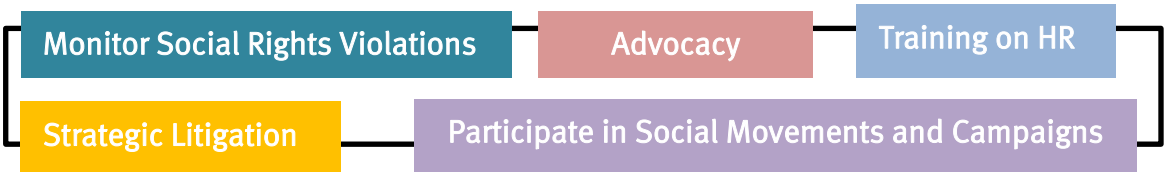
An introduction

Observatori DESC (Derechos Económicos, Sociales and Culturales) is a Spanish NGO created in 1998 that focuses its efforts on overcoming the devaluated perception of economic, social and cultural rights compared to civil and political rights, and as a consequence, its lower guarantee and protection by states and the international community.

Initially, the focus of the organization was mostly around international cooperation in Latin America, but it later shifted attention to Catalonia. Nowadays, both are in the focus of the organization's activity.

The organization is based in Barcelona and 10 people work there, coming from different backgrounds such as political science, law, communication, etc. There is a board of directors and there are different members that meet periodically to discuss about specific issues, compare their work and cooperate.

As an NGO, they implement different activities that aim at bringing social transformation in society. Below a list of things that they do:




Considering their work, Observatori DESC is considered to be an atypical NGO as it combines the NGO approach and the social movement approach. In particular, many members of the organisation are active in social movements and there is a constant collaboration between them. In the past few years, members of social movements have entered the political field at the local level. This has been both an opportunity and a limit for the organization. An opportunity, since they gained an institutional channel to talk about certain issues, but also a limit as the risk of being seen as politically affiliated is a risk for the credibility and independence of the organization.

This is also true for the funding system that has been granted by the government from the very beginning of their activity. Overall, they remain economically independent yet close to certain political parties, therefore there is a current challenge to diversify the funding in order to maintain full independence.

More info on the role of Observatori DESC in the fight for the right to housing is available here: http://observatoridesc.org/es.

## The right to Housing in Practice

Irene Escorihuela, a board member of the organization, joined Can Masdeu and gave a presentation on the right to housing in Spain and the role of her organization.


She began with an introduction to human rights, stressing one important conventional distinction between civil and political rights and economic, social and cultural rights. This distinction emerged in the context of the Cold War between West and East. In particular, the market economies of the West tended to put greater emphasis on civil and political rights, while the centrally planned economies of the Eastern bloc highlighted the importance of economic, social and cultural rights. This led to adoption of two separate Covenants in 1966—one on civil and political rights, and another on economic, social and cultural rights.

This distinction is however purely conventional, as human rights are indivisible and interlinked. Nevertheless, there has been a tendency to consider economic, social and cultural rights as secondary to the political and civil ones. More than that, they are often considered to be more “expensive” than civil and political rights. In fact, one common distinction made is between negative and positive rights. Civil and political rights are considered to be negative rights, as governments need to refrain from doing certain actions in order to respect them. On the contrary, economic, social and cultural rights are considered to be positive since governments need to implement certain actions and

invest economically in order to provide those rights. This distinction is in fact reductive and partially true, as in realities for both types of rights the governments should invest and take actions in order to provide their fully enjoyment.

Here below the conventional division:

| Civil and Political Rights (Negative) | = | Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Positive) |
|---|---|---|
| Freedom of speech, freedom of movement, equality before the law, right to life, private property, freedom from violent crime, freedom of worship, right to a fair trial, etc. | | Right to work, right to social security, **right to an adequate living**, right to health, right to education, right to take part in cultural life, **right to adequate nutrition**, right to social welfare benefits, etc. |

Right to adequate food and housing are therefore considered to be economic, social and cultural rights. They are protected under the ICESCR, specifically article 11, which declares that:

> *"The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize **the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions.** The States Parties will take appropriate steps to ensure the realization of this right, recognizing to this effect the essential importance of international co-operation based on free consent.*
>
> *The States Parties to the present Covenant, recognizing **the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger,** shall take, individually and through international co-operation, the measures, including specific programmes, which are needed:*
>
> *To improve methods of production, conservation and distribution of food by making full use of technical and scientific knowledge, by disseminating knowledge of the principles of nutrition and by developing or reforming agrarian systems in such a way as to achieve the most efficient development and utilization of natural resources;*
>
> *Taking into account the problems of both food-importing and food-exporting countries, to ensure an equitable distribution of world food supplies in relation to need."*
>
> (Article 11 - International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights)

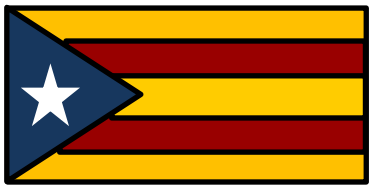
Two general comments complement and clarify the right to housing: *General Comment n° 4 on the right to adequate housing; General Comment n° 7 on forced eviction*. The first

identifies seven criteria for adequate housing (mentioned at the beginning of the chapter); the second specify when and how eviction is legally accepted.

On the bases of the Convention and its General Comments, State Parties have the obligation to do their best to provide those rights.

However, it is quite evident that in many countries the conventional distinction of human rights is often not just conventional and for instance social, economic and cultural rights are less supported by the governments. This is for instance the case of Spain with the right to housing.

**The case of Catalonia**



In the **Spanish constitution**, the right to housing is recognized in article 47. Specifically, the provision stipulates that:

*"All Spanish people have the right to enjoy decent and adequate housing. The public authorities shall promote the necessary conditions and establish appropriate standards in order to make this right effective, regulating land use in accordance with the general interest in order to prevent speculation. The community shall have a share in the benefits accruing from the town-planning policies of public bodies."*

Besides, some **Statutes of Autonomy** contained explicit provisions on the right to housing. For instance in the Statute of Catalonia, the right to housing is recognized and protect under article 26:

*"Those individuals who lack sufficient resources have the right to a decent home, and public authorities shall, therefore, establish by law a system of measures to guarantee this right."*

However, this right has been constantly violated for the past years. In particular, with the beginning of the economic crisis in 2007 housing became a massive problem in Spain.

The roots of the housing problem are traceable in the Spanish urban planning real estate financial model that has been implemented in the past 60 years. As Irene pointed out, dictator Franco (in power from 1939 to 1974) launched the moto: "make workers owners, they will start fearing changes"; since then Spanish urban policy has been characterized by treating the construction of housing and infrastructure as a source of investment and speculation rather than in terms of its link to people's needs. In this way, the residential needs of the population have been subordinated on numerous occasions to the interests of the banks and the larger real estate companies.

In brief:

Economic boom (1997 and 2007)

- **Boom of the Housing Sector**: The construction of housing and infrastructure soared. This process did not follow any specific urban planning or environmental criteria, but was rather boosted by two business sectors: the real estate-construction sector and the financial sector.
- **Land Re-zoning**: Several areas originally intended for green spaces or public facilities have been used for the construction of houses and infrastructures mostly owned by the private sector. The construction of housing has exceeded disposable income and has developed independently from population growth.
- **The Private Sector**: The housing policy has promoted access to housing through private ownership, favouring the growth of the real estate and financial markets rather than the citizens' wellbeing.
- **Over-indebtedness:** Despite the increase in available housing and the drop in wages, the cost of housing tripled. Government promoted, and financial institutions granted mortgages to citizens who did not have the conditions, but that wanted to access housing, leaving hundreds of thousands of citizens over-indebted.
- **The Political Sector**: Construction companies and banks had and still have today strong ties with the public administration and political parties. This relationship largely explains the main corruption processes that today are the object of criminal investigation.

Economic crisis (2007)

When the economic bubble exploded, the result of this policy emerged and housing became a serious problem.

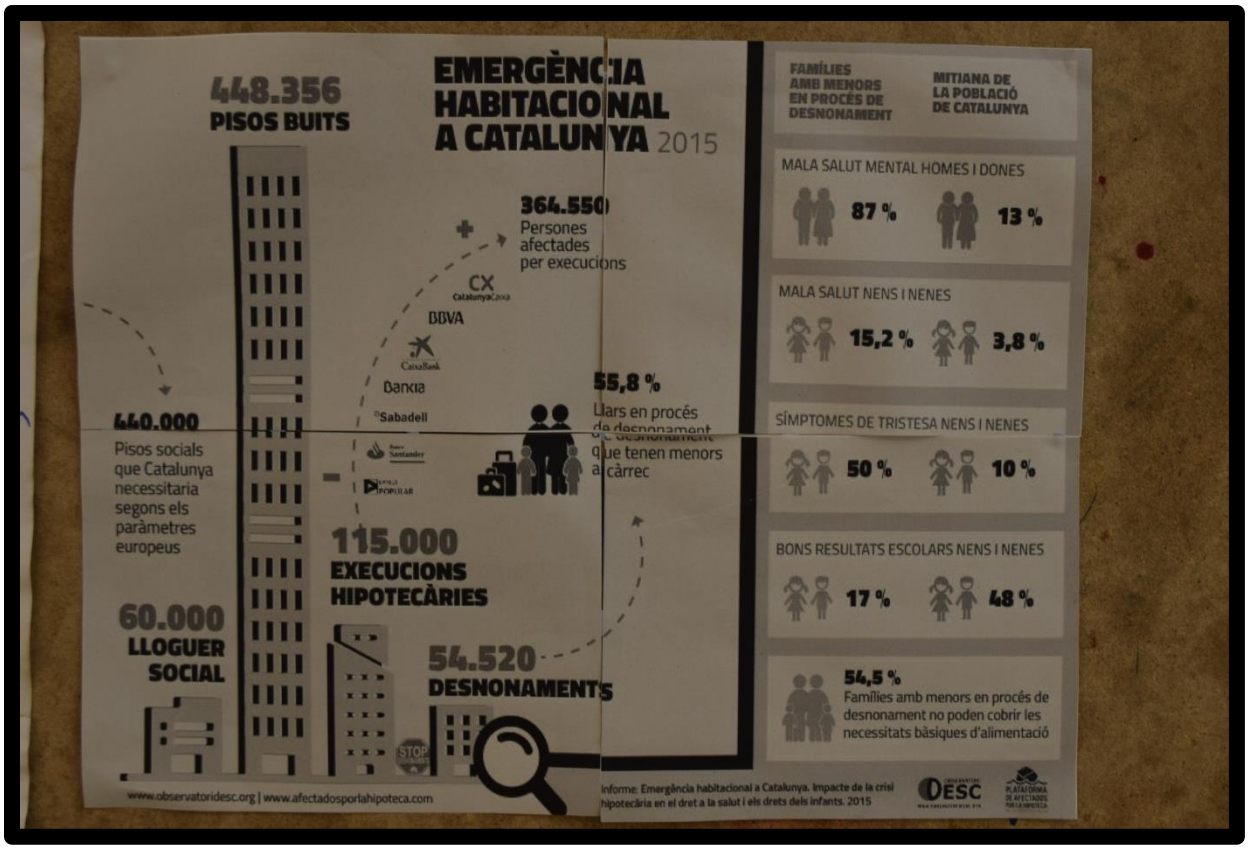
- **Impossibility of Paying Mortgages or Rents**: the over-indebtedness of the middle class and low-wage families became unsustainable with the rise of unemployment. Data shows that from 2008 and until the first trimester of 2013, 547,966 foreclosure procedures were initiated.
- **Evictions**: due to the growing impossibility of paying the debts or the rents, it has calculated that volume of evictions reached 327,872 (homes, not individuals). This process of eviction was also facilitated by the Spanish legislation. Also many frauds have been discovered in the mortgage contracts, some of which only through the European Court of Human Rights are being revised.

- **Lack of Official Data**: The official data of the public administrations regarding eviction are inadequate. For instance, it makes no mention of the profile of those affected, that is, to the existence or not of minors or vulnerable persons. This implies that the problem of evictions due to non-payment of rent for the most vulnerable groups still does not receive the attention it deserves.
- **No Social Housing**: Unlike many other European countries, the investment in social housing in Spain remains very low. Besides, for many years public subsidized housing has been mainly offered through private ownership rather than the public one.

Ultimately, housing policy has been used exclusively as a part of financial policy, without any regard for the nature of housing as a basic human right.

Initially, this situation has not been considered an emergency and the government has not taken the responsibility for the deterioration of the housing system. The general reaction of the public administration was to blame people affected, by evictions or mortgages.

On the other end, the reaction of the civil society has been quite remarkable and it helped to fill the gap of social, economic and moral support that the government has not been guaranteeing to the victims.



## The Role of Observatori DESC

In this scenario, the work of Observatori DESC became extremely relevant both at the social level and the institutional one. As explained by Irene, their work touches upon different levels. On one side, they put pressure on the government for taking actions in the name of the right to adequate housing and help drafting new laws in line with it; on the other side, they work closely with other civil society actors, like social movements that are particularly active in the topic. One of them is the PAH (Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca) which will be presented in the next section.

Popular legislative initiative (ILP)

In 2010 , the Observatori DESC, together with the PAH (the CCOO and UGT), the Confederation of Neighborhood Associations (CONFAVB), and the Third Sector Committee (Taula del Tercer Sector) decided to promote a popular legislative initiative to the Parliament. In the Spanish context, ILPs are a way to start legislative processes, forced by popular petition (minimum of 500.000 signatures), from outside the parliament. The one presented by the group of organizations listed above had the following objectives:

- to enable retroactive *datio in solutum* for primary residences,
- to establish a moratorium on evictions,
- to allow those affected to stay in their homes paying a social rent.

After two years of impasse, the proposal received surprisingly 1,402,854 signatures in 2013, showing an enormous popular support.

The ILP was then discussed in the Spanish Parliament, which, through the lead of the governing party (PP), changed drastically the initial version, distorting the core nature of the ILP. This brought a lot of public indignation, in particular members of the PAH started a non-violent public exposure (“escraches”) of the members of the governments, which automatically criminalized the PAH and all its actions.

Nevertheless, the protests were considered legitimate by several courts and in 2013 the European Parliament, in fact, decided to award the European Citizen’s Prize 2013 to the PAH for its "work in the defence of human rights at the European and transnational level".

However, the PAH and Observatori DESC implemented a new strategy by which they achieved that the law which was not approved in the Spanish Parliament, was approved (unanimously) by the Catalan Parliament, also starting through an ILP in the Catalan context. Such new law established measures to strengthen the protection of mortgagers, debt restructuring, and social renting. It allowed mechanisms to be put into practice that

end evictions and indiscriminate cut-offs to utilities, while also enabling empty houses to be put into use as social housing. The existence of the new regulation is however not sufficient to offer durable and sustainable solutions and reflects the tendency of the government not to impose public service and general economic interest duties on the financial institutions.

Today the situation is still extremely critical, but there is more attention and guarantees given and recognized to the problem. As a matter of fact, the new law sets an important precedent in establishing the right to basic services so as to move towards a more just model of access to housing and services.

More info available here http://afectadosporlahipoteca.com/2015/07/29/catalunyan-peoples-legislative-initiative-against-evictions-and-fuel-poverty-is-unanimously-approved/

To conclude the conversation with the representative of the Observatori DESC, participants took part in a small exercise. They were asked to find solutions and alternatives to implement the law when the government itself is not doing it. After group discussions, the result was presented to the plenary. Although there were different priorities, all participants supported the idea of a bottom-up approach, with a deeper involvement of civil society with the local municipalities in order to help them understand the needs of the citizens.

## The PAH (Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca)

After having spent three nights in the Vall De Can Masdeu and getiing to know the community better and the Observatori DESC, the Peace Week group got ready to move to the next hosting place.

Early in the morning they worked together to remove the tents where they had been sleeping and clean the environment. Before leaving, participants decided to show their gratefulness to the community that hosted them for three nights. Divided per groups, they created videos, poems and crafted some goodbye cards to give to the hosts.

When everything was set, they left the Vall and reached the PAH headquarters in the city centre. Before starting the activities, participants had a bit of time to explore their new accommodation, a building squatted by the PAH very close to their headquarters. Then, they spent the afternoon at the headquarter getting to know better the PAH.

## The Grassroots Movement

To begin with, participants watched a short documentary that explains shortly what the PAH is. The *Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca* (PAH) is a grassroots social movement, made up of volunteers working to "fight against the violation of the right to a decent home". It emerged in Barcelona in February 2009, as a response to the financial crisis, and today it is a widespread movement across Spain that counts several offices that cooperate at the national level.

It is already a European symbol in the fight for the right to housing; in fact in 2013 it won the Spanish national prize for human rights, and the European Citizens' Prize. More visibility to the movement has been given by Ada Colau - one of the founding members of the PAH and spokeswoman until 2014 – who is the current mayor of Barcelona since June 2015. Today, PAH's message is spreading also beyond Europe and it is now reaching activists in the US enriching the network.

The movement is made up of thousands of volunteers who commit their time and efforts. There is no hierarchy among them and they are all bound together by the mission of the movement: to combat peacefully and actively towards the defencelessness of the hundreds of thousands of citizens threatened with eviction from their homes.

### The Work in Practice

The social movement operates at different level, functioning both as an informative platform for the victims and an operative one. On the one hand, they empower people in risk of eviction, with the knowledge of their rights, and possible strategies in front of such risk; at eventual situation of actual intent of eviction, groups of volunteers try to

stop the eviction and negotiate with authorities. On the other hand, their actions aim at putting pressure on the government and the political parties and make them change the law and public action. At the same time, they work to attract the media and popular attention in order to increase visibility at the local, national and international level. Their work is often developed in collaboration with other actors from the civil society that are sensitive to the right to housing. Their regular activities can be divided in the following way:

**Welcoming Assembly**

Once per week, the PAH organizes an Assembly open to anyone interested to know more about the movement. People can go and share publicly their situations and get information on how to deal with procedure for eviction, mortgages, social housing, etc. The conversation is facilitated by senior volunteers and anyone is free to ask, intervene and share their personal case and ask for advice.

**Coordinating Assembly**

Once a week, the volunteers have a Coordinating Assembly where they sit together to discuss the work of different commissions, global strategies and proposals, and the overall coordination of the movement.

**Mutual Help Group**

Volunteers run also Mutual Help Groups for newcomers or for those people with sensitive situations. During such sessions, victims can share their stories with other people and confront their situation with the others. The aim of this session is to give personal support to those who are starting their own fight for the right to housing, or to treat specifically complicated cases.

**Commissions**

Several thematic commissions are organised and meet during the week, in order to plan actions, proposals, logistics, etc.

**Actions**

The platform uses civil disobedience and direct action to stop evictions. Examples of civil disobedience are: protesting on the street, gathering at the door of the homes of people about to be evicted and preventing the police from entering the house, occupying banks and empty building, etc. Most of the time; those actions are successful. From 2010 to 2014, thanks to campaign 'Stop Desnonaments' (Stop Evictions), the movement has in fact prevented 1135 evictions in Spain.

**Regional and Nation-wide**

Catalan coordination is on Saturdays and nation-wide approximately every trimester.

Through all these activities, the strategy of the movement is implemented.

There's a main factor which makes PAH's strategy unique: it seeks for collective empowerment. Cases are analysed within the group and not singularly; the group gives collective advice and discusses publicly the steps to take. This helps the victims to realise that they are not alone and that there are plenty of people in the same situation; and that together and with a big effort they can change a very complicated reality. Secondly, the movement is a platform not to protect victims, but to empower them so that they will find the way to guarantee their own personal and collective rights. For example, thanks to the mutual help group as well as the assemblies, PAH members learn with tools to set their own case and fight their battle.

## Engagement with the PAH

During the week spent at the PAH, participants had the opportunity to engage with the PAH in different ways.

### Volunteering

First of all, they volunteered with cleaning and tiding the space both at the headquarters and the squatted building where they were hosted for one week, but most importantly where evicted families are temporarily living.


### Assemblies

They also attended the weekly Welcome Assembly and the Coordinating Assembly. As the official language used by the movement is Spanish, in both the occasions the language barriers did not help to follow the whole discussion. However, a few translators helped to give the participants an idea of what was going on.

In the Welcoming Assembly, a few newcomers arrived and presented their case. Among them, there was a family that had given the notice for eviction and wanted to have information on how to proceed or what to do next. The Assembly offered them information as well as support. The eviction was planned to happen few days after the Assembly and members of the PAH decided to go and show their support. Some participants joined them.

In the Coordinating Assembly, members focused on the next action on the agenda: a Press Conference taking place in front of the delegation of the Spanish government to address publically specific requests to political parties. The Peace Week group joined the action.

## Getting to know other Social Movements

Participants had also the chance to get to know another social movement that collaborates with the PAH: **APE "*Alianza contra la Pobreza Energética".***

APE is a social movement that fights for the right of basic facilities, such as water, gas and electricity. They constantly collaborate with the PAH and other actors that stand together for the right to adequate housing. Members of the APE gave a short presentation of the movement and broadcasted a video that summarize the current situation in Spain, in particular they highlighted two points:

**Monopoly**: In Spain there are 4/5 groups that have the regional monopoly of gas, water and electricity. Having a monopoly in one region implies that if the client is not able to pay the bills, no other companies are available to stipulate a contract.

**Conflict of Interest**: Many politicians today are part of the board of the companies that hold the monopoly. The whole legal system supports the monopoly business, rather than the diversification of providers, and that is also why it is very hard to change the system.

Similarly to the PAH, APE work is organized around an internal coordinating meeting with the volunteers, Assembly open to the public and actions. During the assemblies, victims are welcomed, informed and empowered to set their own individual case. If there is no viable institutional way to solve the case, APE organized actions that most of the time implies the occupation of the gas, water or energy company building. Their work is very much based on collective struggle and not singular one, that is why companies most of the time are willing to cooperate and find a compromise with their demands instead of calling the police.

Considering the situation, their demands are the following:

- Set a minimal and standard service for all the facilities for all the citizens;
- Companies should create a safe budget to cover the expenses of the bills of those vulnerable families that cannot pay by themselves;
- When there are facilities cut, the numbers of cuts need to be publish for transparency reasons;
- Before cutting facilities it is important to know to whom the facilities are going to be cut and know their own social situation, in order not to worsen already precarious situations.

### Press Conference

As introduced during the Coordinating Assembly, members of the PAH organized a Press conference to launch a new campaign called "Exigencias PAH". The conference was originally supposed to happen in front of the delegation of the Spanish government, but the police forced the protesters to move in another authorized place nearby.

In light of the coming elections, the movement wanted to send a public message to the political parties and encourage them to present a programme that fulfilled their request on the right to adequate housing. Their requests were the following:

1. Fresh start: giving back the house to cancel the debt;
2. Affordable and steady rent (reform of the Law on Rents);
3. Put the empty housing as social housing;
4. Guarantee basic facility needs;
5. Create an observatory to monitor the housing

The political parties had one month to communicate what they will do about it and how they will integrate those requests in their programme. On their side, the PAH and other organizations offered their help in suggesting viable options.

The political parties had two options: to accept the demands and collaborate with them; not to consider them. Either way, the impact would have increased the visibility of the requests and give more attention to the PAH.

The conference was very quick and most of the time was spent trying to inform the people passing by on the action. Different media were present and were reporting the situation.

Participants from the Peace Week joint and supported the action for the whole morning and helped PAH volunteers with logistic things. In this occasion, they had the chance to see how the movement works in practice.


During the reflection time, each of them shared his or her impression about the conference and the action day. The conversations touched upon the use of the public space for raising awareness and the role of the media. In particular, to what extent social movements can use and play with the media to sell their causes without going too far

## International Dinner

Another moment of engagement with the movement and its members was the international dinner. Participants decided to cook different national dishes and prepare an international night for the PAH volunteers and their fellows as a symbolic gesture to thank for the hosting.

Considering the limited resources of the squatted building, the preparation of the dinner was a real example of cooperation among the participants. First, they all agree on a specific menu. Then they were divided into teams and while one group was cooking the others engaged in other activities. The result was very successful and everyone enjoyed the night.

## Institutional Day

On day 5, a roundtable on the right to dignified housing was organized at La Fede Catalunya, a network of organizations working for the promotion of human rights and social liberties. The talk wanted to be a review of the first 100 days of the new City Council, which had recently presented new measures to solve the housing problem in Barcelona. The speakers invited were the following: Observatori DESC; the PAH; Sostra Civic; La Borda; a representative of the Can Masdeu community and a representative of the City Hall.

During the roundtable, the speakers first presented their organizations and how they are involved in the fight for better housing, then they discussed the new initiatives proposed by the City Council, such as:

- Implementation of the social house services by giving money to those unable to pay the rent;
- Construction of around 4000 new social housing;
- Use of empty buildings and houses for relocation.

## Observatori DESC

The talk was opened by the representative of the Obervatori DESC, it was particularly regretted to see that, during the public presentation of the new measures, the Council did not mention the new law 27/2015 passed in July and presented by them, together with the PAH and APE. The representative of the NGO gave then an evaluation of the most urgent problems and feasible solutions to tackle the housing problem and presented a few elements that the Council should take into consideration:

- **Empty Houses**: there is the necessity to update the date on empty houses, by monitoring those which are already available for relocation;
- **Private Market**: There is also the need to act in the private market, where the rent is really high and is not definitely helping the recovery of the house system;
- **Squatting**: the increasing number of squatters should be seen as a direct consequence of the high rent and the inability to pay it.

## The PAH

The floor was then given to the representative of the PAH.

Although he also declared his disappointment in the fact that the Council had made no use of the new law; the new measure on the rent that allows people with no salary to have basic house benefits was positively welcomed. However, few points were raised with the regard of the efficacy of the other measures:

- **Construction of New Buildings**: according to the PAH, this is not the most effective solution in terms of affordability and time consumption. It is rather more advisable to invest on empty buildings and try to make use of them;
- **Law**: although there was no announcement related to the application of the new law passed in July, there is still the option to use the 2007 law that facilitates the use of empty buildings by the City Council. For example, if a building has been empty for two years, the City Council can directly get in contact with the owner, which is most of the time a bank. If they receive no answer from the owner, the City Council can make direct use of the empty building.

## Sostra Civic

We then moved to another organisation active in this topic, Sosta Civic.

Sostra Civic is a not-for-profit cooperative. They operate at different levels. First, they monitor the empty houses and negotiate directly with the owners for potential reuse of the houses. They also take care of the refurbishment of the buildings, which after being empty for many years need to be adjusted.

Overall, **they work both with the institutions at the local level and with citizens, trying to fill the gap between the needs and the actions**. Concerning the new measures proposed by the Council, Sostra Civic can be a referential point and facilitate the implementation of new laws.

More information available here: http://masqueunacasa.org/es/experiencias/sostre-civic.

### La Borda

On the same line of Sostra Civic, one representative of La Borda presented their project and commented on the new measures.

La Borda is a housing cooperative in regime grant of use and is located on the premises and in the future urban transformation of Can Batlló. The aim of the project is **to promote a new sustainable way of social housing by generating forms of collective property that put the focus on the effective use of living space, rather than its exchange value in the capitalist market**. At the same time, the project promotes communal forms of living, which facilitate the interrelationship between neighbours and the division of housework and care needs through communal spaces.

Overall, their role is to fill in the gap between the needs of the society and the actions of the government. The measures presented by the Council are a positive step forward, yet there is a growing interest in bolstering those new local initiatives and it is fundamental to open a direct dialogue with the cooperatives involved.

More information available here: http://www.laborda.coop/?page_id=712.

### Can Masdeu Community

One representative of the community also gave a short presentation of the five projects that the Val is working on, focusing then on the Community. He defined the Val as an experiment on a different level:

**De-growth**: there is a re-discussion of the type of economy we are living in. Climate change and de-growth are the drivers for supporting the implementation of a new economic model based on:

- The concept of economy beyond growth
- Fight for competitiveness and profit
- Commodification of goods
- A more assertive Public Administration that needs to assure alternatives that go beyond the current logic of economy for profit

**Accept the conflict**: supporting those initiatives implies fighting for the right to do things for our wellbeing, often countering the mainstream actors such as multinationals and banks;

**New Source of Legitimacy:** legitimacy is different from legality. In this society, there is the need to redefine what legitimacy is and create new sources not on the base of permissions and papers, but rather on the bases of our rights. Legalization of this legitimacy comes after.

Considering the measures presented, the representative of the Community demonstrated his disappointment in realising that there is still the tendency to think that "building more is the solution". According to his vision, this is a counterproductive measure that misses the point of the housing problem and social wellbeing.

### City Hall Representative

Finally, the floor was given to the representative of the City Hall, who was once part of the social movement and had recently moved to the institution.

In his speech, he reiterated some measures that Council had proposed, trying to frame the situation from the point of view of politicians. In particular, he claimed that **all the measures presented aimed at promoting a change in the house system**. Increasing benefits of social housing, building new houses, avoiding eviction, reusing empty houses held by financial institutions, are just first steps to start the process.

As a politician, he also stressed the need to solve social problems while thinking about the future. In this regard, the role of organisations and the overall civil society is fundamental as they complement what the institutions cannot see or perceive as a necessity most of the time.

Once all the speakers gave their presentation, a space for Q&A was given to the audience. Here below a summary of the discussions:

**Q:** It is really necessary to build new houses? Is there the risk to postponing the problem while creating new peripheries?

**A:** This is part of the mainstream notion that in order to move the economy you have to create new houses. To counter this tendency it is necessary to rehabilitate, rather than construct."

**Q:** From a social movement perspective, is it possible to change the institution from within?

**A:** The problem of co-optation is very hard to solve. Of course it is a big challenge to fight from inside the institutions, but in this moment our hope lies in the new Council that is sympathetic with the cause.

**Q:** When the need of social housing will decrease, how will all the social movements react?

A: From a social movement perspective, there is the need to redefine and reshape according to what will happen. By the time there will be no more issues with the housing system, both institutions and social movements will be empowered by the success and that is the moment to use the achievement for mobilizing citizens (ex. Referendum)

# Chapter 4: Communication

During the Peace Week, communication was an important goal and helped broadcasting the message and reporting daily activities. From the very beginning, all the participants got involved and with the help of the CCIVS Communication Assistant, they all contributed to the creation of daily messages to share online.

Considering the locations and the limited resources (ex. limited Wi-Fi), the communicati on daily basis was sometimes difficult. However, the whole team managed to be pretty active on all the platforms used to communicate about the Peace Week.

In particular, the communication tools used to cover and report the Peace Week where the following:

**Pictures** were taken during all the activities both by the team and some volunteers. They were often published in other social media and in general they offered a chronological and visual report of the Peace Week

**Facebook** was one of the most active tools used to report daily activities. In particular, participants helped the creation of post to share on the **Facebook page**.

**Twitter** was also used a lot, mostly to send quick message. Participants created their own tweets to share on the official **Twitter account**.

The **Raising Peace blog** was updated by the CCIVS Communication Assistant and was used to report a summary of the daily activities, included pictures.

**Videos** were mostly used for the **Raise Your Voice** activity. Each participant prepared a small message on the topic of the Peace Week and recorded a 2 minutes video.

Here below, some pictures of the Raise Your Voice preparation. The Participants prepared small messages trying to stress what is the Right to housing and Food for them and why all of us should care. The final result with all the videos was then broadcast to the group at the end of the week.

# Chapter 5: The Future

One of the aims of the Peace Week is promoting the exchange of experiences and knowledge between experts and participants. This is a key component for the creation of a strong network and potential cooperation in the future. But it is also fundamental for the success of the whole Raising Peace campaign and the empowering of participants. In this regard, the last three days were dedicated to think about the future starting from the present.

## Workshop and Midterm Evaluation

On day 6 in the morning, the facilitators organised a workshop meant to review the impact of the Peace Week and evaluate the activities done so far. Participants were divided in three groups and rotated to three different workstations dedicated respectively to:

CCIVS and the Raising Peace Campaign

Communication Tools of the Peace Week

Role of the Media for Human Rights Activists

In the afternoon, participants reached the SCI Cat office in the centre of Barcelona where the midterm evaluation took place. The first part of the evaluation wanted to be a summary of the workshop developed in the morning.

Therefore one representative per group reported to the whole group some key elements emerged during the morning session. This lead to a bigger discussion, focusing on some positive and negative aspects of the Peace Week, along with suggestions for the improvement of the Raising Peace campaign. Here below the results divided per section:

## CCIVS and the Raising Peace Campaign

Overall, the evaluation of the group was **positive**. However, participants admitted that there is **room for improvement**.

### The Raising Peace Campaign

Not all the participants of the Peace Week know CCIVS and its role as global network. Therefore giving a macro overview of the role of CCIVS, together with the campaigns it runs, was fundamental for the participants to frame the Peace Week and its goals. However, they suggested having this presentation at the very beginning of the Peace Week, rather than at the end, as it gives immediately a bigger picture of both CCIVS and the Peace Week.

### The Peace Week

The idea of developing thematic Peace Weeks was evaluated positively by the majority of the group. In particular, the combination of different activities together with the involvement of many actors worked well. Yet, considering the timeframe, the majority of the participants noticed that there were perhaps too many activities and not enough free time needed to relax and digest all the information given.

### The Budget

Considering that the campaign is funded by the EU, there was a discussion regarding the benefits and the limits of dealing with requirements set by the donors. In particular, some participants considered this system to be too much EU dependent and therefore EU-centric. However, this doesn't decrease the value of the project.

**Communication Tools of the Peace Week**

**Daily Communication** was one goal of the Peace Week. Twitter, Facebook and Blog posts were the main tools used to communicate online and report on the activities, together with some short videos where participants raised their voice on the right to adequate housing. Both the Participants and the Communication Assistant worked hard to develop daily posts, however there were some difficulties that limited both the quality and the efficacy of the communication

According to the group, the communication of the Peace Week **was the main part that needed to be improved**. On one side, the locations and the resources during the week did not help a lot, as the general lack of Wi-Fi did not allow both the participants and the team to be socially active. Here below some remarks made by the participants:

- **Define a Clear Strategy**
- **Proofreading**
- **Introduce the Communication Tools from the Beginning**
- **Supervise the Content**
- **Create an official #**
- **Put one Computer at Disposition**

## Role of the Media for Human Rights Activists

The idea to talk about the role of the media for human rights activists emerged after the **press conference of the PAH**. During the daily reflection moment, there was a specific controversial issue that divided the group in terms of opinions. In brief, after consultation with the police, La PAH decided to move the Press Conference from the delegation of the government to another location where the police gave the permit. However, on Twitter they put the image of the press conference happening in front of the delegation of the government. This decision gave a lot of food for thought to the participants, in particular the decision to respect the police permit but then put that image with that sentence was considered to be not a reflection of the reality.

This led to a long discussion, where the major question was: **to what extent human rights activists can play with the law to have more visibility and speak up without losing credibility and legitimacy?** In this case, the majority agreed on the decision of the PAH, as their "white lie" was a lot smaller compared to what the state does in terms of housing rights. Their goal was therefore bigger and justified the fact that they did not report correctly what happened at the Conference.

From here, there was a general discussion about the role of the media in the society and how activists should use them. Overall, those points emerged:

### Politicized Media

Media are often driven by a **political agenda** and there are too many mono-oriented opinions broadcasted.

### Non-conventional Media

**Blogs, journals dived by topics, slow press,** etc. are the strongest media for activists both in terms of collecting reliable information and delivering a message.

### Freedom of Speech

In several countries, **Freedom of Speech is not guaranteed.** As activists, there is the need to take into consideration political vulnerable environments.

Midterm Evaluation Activity

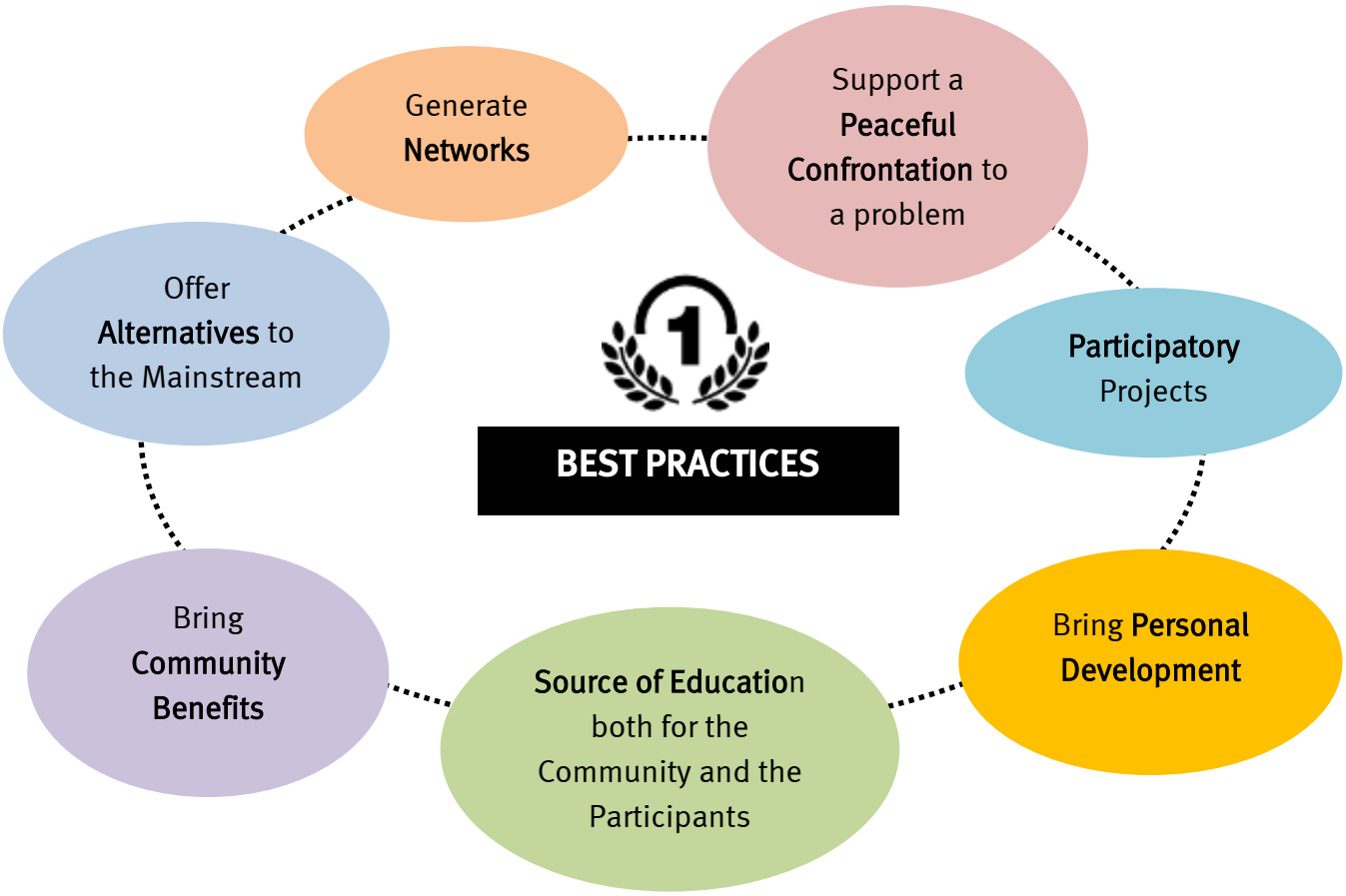
The second part of the evaluation was an interactive activity. Considering that the Peace Week was almost over, participants had to think about the added value of this experience and imagine positioning themselves in a moving train.

## Future Projects

The last two days were spent thinking about future projects and how the experience in Barcelona could have helped.

On day 7, the morning began with a session aimed at sharing good practices. The participants gathered together and shared their own personal experience in the development of their own projects, or in the participation to other projects connected to the right of housing and food.

In general, the best practices presented by the participants had all the following points in common:




Following this initial session of brainstorming, all the volunteers went through a walking gallery prepared by the facilitators. The gallery was a summing up of all the activities done and a visual presentation of all the key points emerged during the week. The aim was to present the path from the very beginning, to see where to go next.

For the rest of the day participants helped with the preparation of the international dinner with the PAH and the recording of the videos used to "raise their voice" on the right to housing and food.

Personal Projects

On the last day, each participant presented to the group his/her own project to implement in the future.

From the projects description, 4 groups were created according to the common aim/topic. Each group took some time to discuss the possibility to create connection and collaborate for a common project. Here below some ideas:

## GROUP 1: Develop Workcamp/Trainings on **sustainability**


### TOPICS

- Sustainability
- Food
- Housing

### PARTICIPANTS

- Interested in the topic
- 18+
- Local and International

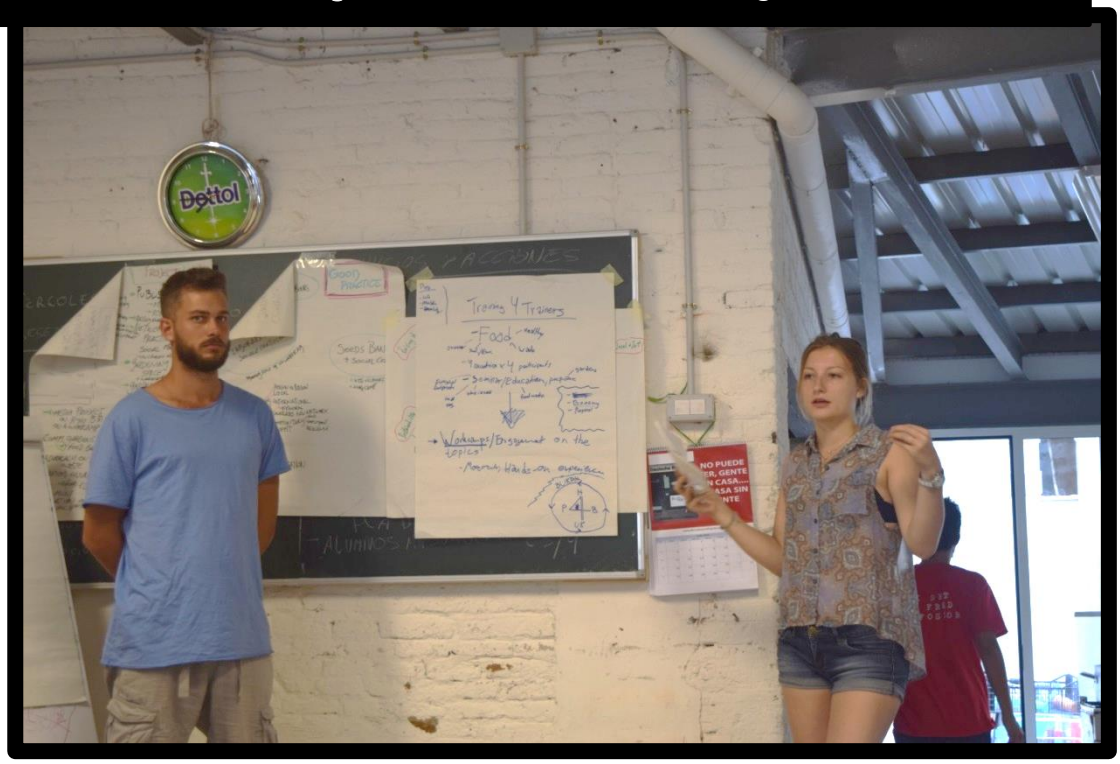
### AIMS

- Raising Awareness
- Empowerment
- Be Active Citizens
- Develop the Projects
- Connect with the Nature

### IDEAS

- Living in Community
- Cleaning
- Inviting Experts
- Cooking non-used Food from the Supermarket
- Watch Movies on Specific Topics
- Sensibilisation in schools
- Disco Soup
- Collaborating with Associations

## GROUP 2: Create **Training for Trainers** & Educational Programs on Food Waste




### TOPICS

- Food Waste
- Healthy Food

### PARTICIPANTS

- 4 Countries
- 4 Participants

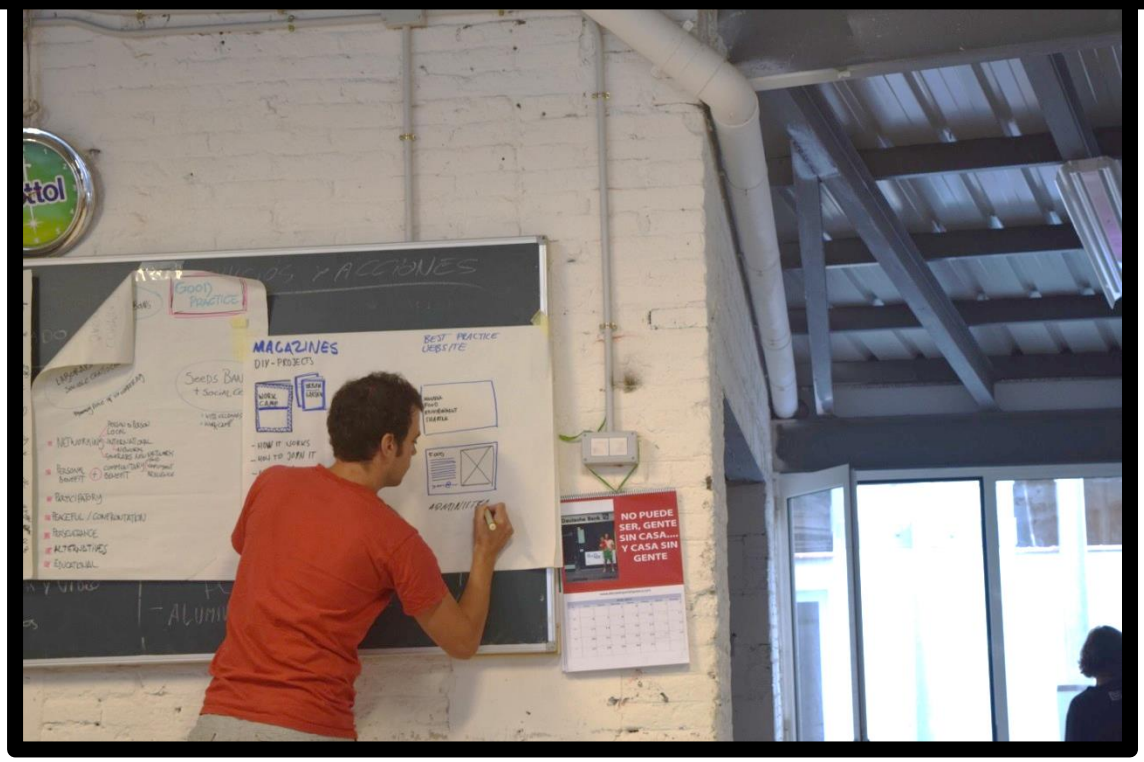
### IDEAS

**Education: Develop Seminars on the Topics**

**Workcamp: Engaging in the Topic**

**Multiply Effect: Let Participants Recreate the Projects**

GROUP 3: Projects on **communication** (Workcamp Presentation; Good Practices Website)




**TOPICS**

- Workcamp
- Best Practices

**PARTICIPANTS**

- Open to all Potential contributors

**IDEAS**

**Magazines on Workcamps**

- What is a Workamp?
- How to Join One?
- Contacts of Organisations
- Distribution (online - paper)

**Website on Best Practices**

- Divide per Topic
- Using Info Graphics
- Contacts of Organisations

## GROUP 4: Projects related to Refugees, Focusing on Integration and Welcoming.

### TOPICS

- Refugees

### PARTICIPANTS

- Open to all Potential Contributors

### IDEAS

- Integration through Cultural Projects
- Communication and Sharing Stories of Refugees
- Projects on Welcoming

## Final Evaluation

The last part of the day was dedicated to the final evaluation (oral assessment and written), which took place in an occupied garden next to the SCI Catalonia office.

The oral evaluation aimed to be a moment for both participants and the team to share their feelings regarding this experience and the impact of the Peace Week on them. Through a group dynamic, each participant had the opportunity to wrap up what the Peace Week had meant for him/her.

Despite the shared sensation of tiredness, the atmosphere was extremely positive and people demonstrated to be more and more committed to their own projects as well as more aware of the need to talk more about the right to housing and food.

# Conclusion

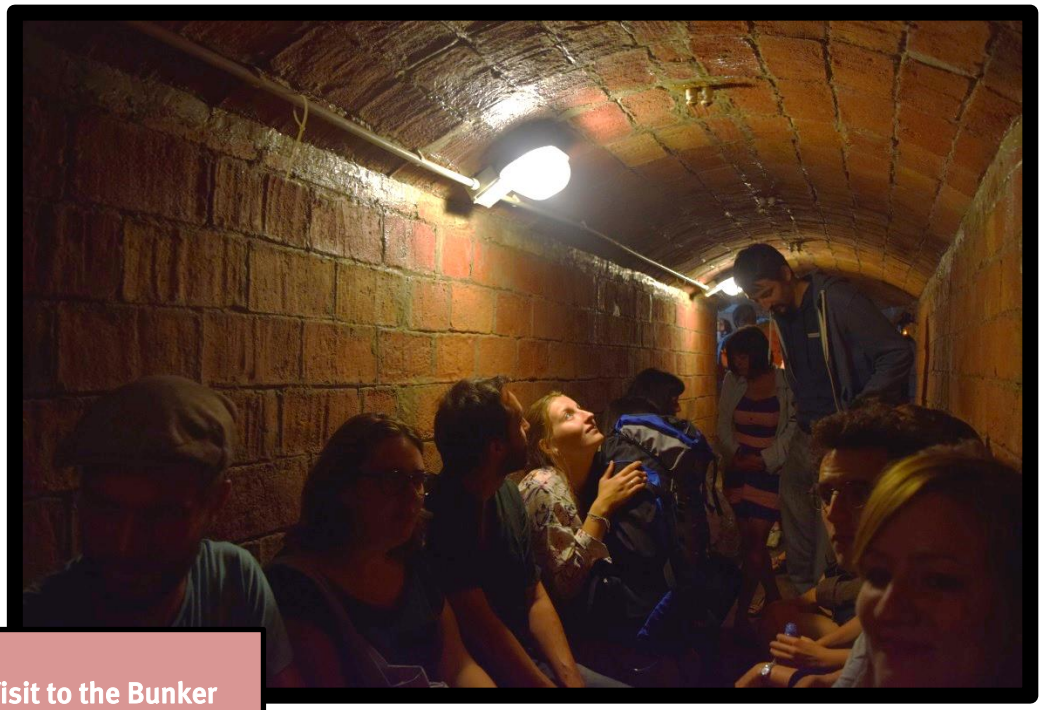
The Peace Week on the right to housing and food that took place in Barcelona was a unique experience. In ten days, participants from all over Europe had the great opportunity to learn more about the right to housing and food in Europe and particularly in Spain.

Thanks to different activities and the collaboration with Spanish organisations, the Peace Week had a positive impact both on the participants and the community they were staying in, particularly Can Masdeu and the PAH.

Overall, the coordinating team and the volunteers managed to make this experience successful, but this would have been impossible without the huge support given by the hosting organisation - SCI Catalonia.

In particular, SCI Catalonia helped with the coordination with the local actors both before and during the Peace Week. Besides, volunteers from the associations organised the evening activities during the week, aimed at getting to know Barcelona and the Spanish culture. A big thank to all of them for making this project possible.

Here below some snapshot from evening activities:



Visit to the Bunker

Movie Night

Intercultural Night

And a final group picture ☺

**Editorial group:**
Cristina Cardarelli
Oriol Josa Fresno

**Graphic Design:**
Cristina Cardarelli

**Photographs by:**
Justyna Zielonka

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