

NEW WAYS OF DWELLING (SUMMARY)

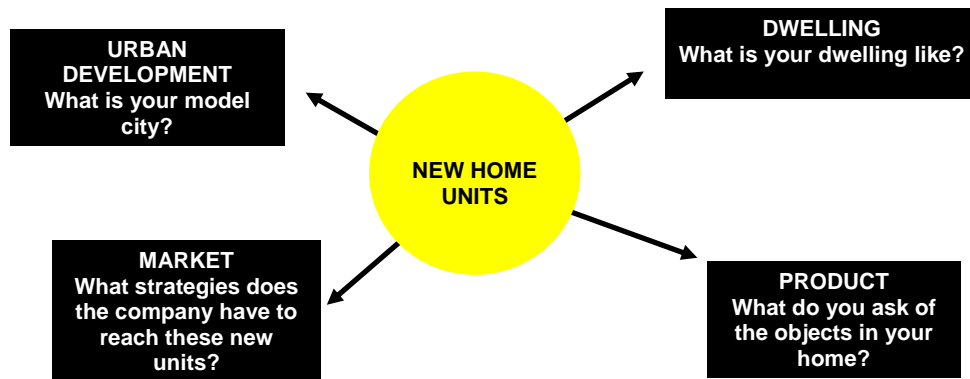


INTRODUCTION

The Habitat Trends Observatory® has undertaken various research studies on how our habitat is evolving and how it will evolve in the future, with the aim of providing habitat companies and professionals with tools for innovating and developing high-added-value strategies and products. This added value must be focused on consumers, in particular on dwellers, which explains why our goal is to identify and understand them.

In our most recent study we have analysed dwellers, how family models have changed in recent years and what repercussions these changes have had on our habitat (our cities, dwellings, and possessions), and the alternatives offered by habitat professionals.

This is a summary of a soon-to-be-published study entitled 'New Ways of Dwelling', which seeks to show the principal changes that are taking place in the way we live in our cities and dwellings, and in the everyday objects around us. To understand these changes it is essential to examine how new family models have emerged and evolved, and to identify the units that make up the new homes, how they behave, what their values are and, in short, what type of dwelling and possessions they need or desire.



In modern societies, we can see how new family models and living units are becoming increasingly varied. In Spain the spectacular increase in single-person homes, which rose from 13% in 1996 to 21% in 2007 (source: UNED, GETS); the ageing of the population – 1 out of every 5 Europeans is over 65 (source: IPF) – or the reduction in the average size of families, which went from 4 members in 1960 to 2.4 in 2005, illustrate the magnitude and speed with which these

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changes are taking place and which will undoubtedly affect the make-up of our homes and possessions.

Generally speaking, we are going to see a world in which the definition of the family has changed and the predominant family model, which corresponds to the nuclear family, has become splintered, giving rise to a broad spectrum of possibilities and an environment in which various ways of conceiving the family coexist. This has been brought about by a series of social, economic, and demographic factors that affect all the habitat-related sectors, sectors that are gradually proposing lifestyle solutions for the new dwellers.

The monograph 'New Ways of Dwelling', which is about to be published, is destined to become a tool that will link all these changes in the new home units with new proposals for the dwelling and everyday objects, in addition to introducing innovative market strategies that are more in tune with these new users. This information will enable companies to adapt to the profound changes taking place in the dwellers and in their homes, thus bridging the gap between what companies offer and what dwellers need.

Principal changes in the habitat

The dwelling

The conception of the *home* from the point of view of the users has changed much more than the housing concept put forward by the public and private sectors, resulting in two very different approaches that have grown apart, making it necessary gradually to narrow the gap that has developed.

This likely and necessary interest in updating and innovating the dwelling goes far beyond aesthetics and finishes. Thus, the new dwellings will tend to reflect the diversity of lifestyles by providing flexibility and they will need to strive for the sustainability demanded by the users and concurrently required by public authorities.

The main changes that have occurred in relation to the housing concept are as follows:

- A change in home composition: young people leaving home later, or the drop in the birth rate and smaller average number of children per family, among other factors.
- Sustainability: this refers not only to the energy efficiency of buildings but also to what is known as the closed cycle (the 3 Rs – reduce, reuse, and recycle) and even the role the trades play in improving the environment, such as cleaning the air by means of green frontage or the integration of natural structural elements.
- Flexibility: this is one of the most widely used strategies for adapting to the changes in home units and in the mentality of unit members, and for coping with changes in their economic circumstances or the way the space in their homes is used.
- Other ways in which change is heading: issues such as dweller protection (development of a healthy home that does not merely offer protection, but also provides physical and mental benefits), the possibilities for experimentation (the dwelling being understood as a place for daily creativity, a particularly important aspect since the development of the digital home), or personal development in the home (whereby the home becomes an expression of the individual and the individual's life achievements).

The monograph 'New Ways of Dwelling' describes different strategies that are being adopted by architecture in response to the new winds of change.

The objects in the dwelling

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Quality and functionality are demanded of course of everyday objects, but these basic requirements are intrinsic to good design and have, therefore, already been met. From the start, the aim and essential purpose of design has been to solve specific problems and offer solutions that enhance the person-object relationship, hence improving the person's quality of life. A great number of products are available that fulfil the same need, so that consumers seek alternatives. It has become necessary, therefore, to examine what additional aspects are demanded of objects.

One highly varying aspect in recent years has been the issue of emotional input when doing things, which translates into a constant search for experiences in our homes, and for affinities or connections between objects and the actual consumer: in other words, objects that act as projections of our personality, ethical stance, and tastes. Furthermore, we want the objects we use to have a dual function, allowing us to manipulate them, creating the new role of the user as participant, these being objects that invite us to experiment and that use feelings and senses as a way of communicating with the dweller.

This chapter of the monograph will identify the strategies that companies and designers are proposing in order to develop these types of objects, which are much closer to the way in which we do things, and are more interactive, flexible, efficient and, above all, emotional. These will be the objects that accompany us, going forward, in our daily lives.

The new family models

Stemming from the social changes that began in the 1960s, we have witnessed how, in recent decades, our conception of the home has been modified by a series of values that have gradually permeated modern societies. Generally speaking, we can use the analogy of a map containing a multitude of family models that differ from the traditional nuclear model.

'[...] Currently there are a multitude of types of families and their family life is different to the European norm. In other words, the modern conception of the family is a broad one. **Perhaps the best definition of the contemporary family is a group of two or several people who generally live together for sentimental or legal reasons, or because they are related...**' (Copenhagen Institute for Future Studies, *Family life and daily life towards 2017*.)

The aim of the forthcoming monograph is to explore the new types of homes that have emerged in modern societies and their causes, and at the same time to form some kind of idea of which models display the greatest growth or are likely to grow most in the immediate future. This knowledge of the dweller will be the tool that enables companies to create products adapted to the new needs of individuals.

From a sociological perspective, family experts describe this transformation as a **splintering of the family model**. In other words, the changes in the dominant social values, together with a series of economic and demographic factors, have led to a modification of the family model, and a range of very different ways of creating families have emerged.

Nowadays families are smaller and the two-parent nuclear family is being replaced by other more varied and plural alternatives. The increase in the number of single-person homes and the rise in the number of single-parent families and childless couples, or couples with only one child, highlight this trend.

As a whole, the ways in which people share a home have become much more diversified and homes are much smaller than in the past, as a result of the changes indicated above. Thus, there are more single-person and single-parent homes, both as a result of the spread of divorce and the

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difficulty of forming a stable relationship with a partner, together with the desire to remain self-sufficient and independent. On the other hand, there are also fewer homes with children and, in fact, large families have become a rarity.

New home units

The monograph 'New Ways of Dwelling' describes the new forms of home-sharing that are emerging in our society and the factors that have prompted change, and provides data that confirm the variation in the way homes are made up.

- My other family: the increase and importance of cohabitation among people who are not blood relations; in other words, more and more homes are shared by people who are unrelated, whether young people, adults, or the elderly.
- Single mother by choice: in our society we are faced with a growing number of women who decide to be single mothers and who we could describe as women with inner resources that equip them to bring up their families on their own.
- The two-member family: this new family model is a true reflection of a new mentality, known in sociological studies as a DINK (double income no kids) couple, an arrangement in which each partner, who forms part of a new generation of men and women, is free to express his or her aspirations and desires.
- I am my family: these are persons that, of their own free will, decide to live on their own, independently. In this case, individualism and the search for personal satisfaction are the principles which guide the individual's life in a society with a multitude of lifestyles.
- The restructured family: also known as the extended family, this is the result of the extension of collateral kinship networks, a situation in which children from different marriages live together. It is a phenomenon that has increased notably, owing to higher rates of divorce and second marriages.
- The negotiating family: the term negotiating family embraces the essential features of the change in intergenerational relationships. In the negotiating family, a new marital pact has been established, characterised by consensus and the conciliation of different interests and viewpoints.

How to communicate with the new dwellers

The changes observed in dwellers are reflected in the new forms of consumption. A growing individualism encourages a greater demand for the personalisation of products and services, in the same way that relinquishing old social stigmas permits greater freedom in the types of products that are marketed and the ways in which they are purchased and used. The abandoning of dogmas and the acceptance of a world in a state of constant flux provide the ideal terrain for the emergence of a type of consumption that expresses personal identity through objects or, going even further, through experiences.

These factors have fostered the appearance of a type of consumption in which emotional and social aspects have greater weight, and a meaning is sought for consumption decisions that go beyond the usefulness of the products purchased. This is why it is indispensable to understand how society changes in order to comprehend the changes that are currently occurring in the markets. Concepts such as the shopping experience or social networking cannot be incorporated into the language of business unless the realities underlying each are grasped.

An entire chapter of the monograph 'New Ways of Dwelling' will be devoted to the new contexts that are emerging in the market: the shopping experience, social networking, and virtual worlds.

The shopping experience

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The shopping experience can work on various levels, ranging from the generation of experiences based on the decorative elements of sales outlets to its maximum expression in the form of **concept shops** (*Flagship Stores*), where the consumer is offered a brand immersion experience.

Social networking

The creation of new means of communication will be an essential area of work for companies in the new technosocial environment*, in which individuals demand dialogue on an equal footing with companies. Knowing the actors that intervene in the social networks will be crucial to creating these new routes.

Virtual worlds

Despite the falling business investment in virtual worlds, the technological advances predict a prosperous future for these worlds. As surfing the net becomes simpler and more immersive, their use will become more widespread, not only for leisure purposes, but also as a tool for communication and work.

In virtual worlds, an enveloping culture is created with its own institutions (groups of friends, companies, headquarters of political parties, etc.). However, a fundamental key is how users express their identity by means of an avatar or virtual embodiment with its own characteristic appearance, movements, and even sound.

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