ReHousIn

REDUCING
HOUSING
INEQUALITIES

Photo of the first block of new housing, to be delivered in June 2026, in Ponent, Tarragona

Case study report: Tarragona

An extract from Deliverable 5.1, *'Case study reports on green transition initiatives and their impact on housing inequalities,'* of the ReHousIn project

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The ReHousIn project aims to spark innovative policy solutions towards inclusionary and quality housing. To achieve this, it investigates the complex relationship between green transition initiatives and housing inequalities in European urban and rural contexts, and develops innovative policy recommendations for better and context-sensitive integration between environmentally sustainable interventions and socially inclusive housing.

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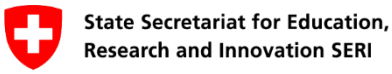

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1 Introduction

1.1 City/Town profile, challenges around just (housing and ecological) transition

Tarragona is a medium-sized coastal city in southern Catalonia with approximately 138,000 inhabitants and a population density exceeding 2,300 inhabitants per square kilometer. It is the capital of Tarragona province (pop. 860,000). It is one of two medium-sized cities in the Camp de Tarragona region, along with Reus, a city of 112,000 located 12km away, site of the principal airport of the province's Costa Daurada. Considering these relationships, Tarragona and Reus form part of a Functional Urban Area as defined by OECD methodology. The city occupies a strategic position within the Camp de Tarragona metropolitan area, benefiting from port infrastructure, major road corridors, and regional rail connections. Historically, Tarragona's urban form has been shaped by its Roman origins, its later role as a military and administrative centre, and — most decisively for contemporary inequalities — its rapid industrial expansion in the second half of the twentieth century (Oliveras i Samitier, 2025). The Camp de Tarragona contains 65% of the province's population, whose economy is driven by the coastal petrochemical and tourism industry, with an agricultural inland. Governance is primarily municipal and sector-based, while the Camp de Tarragona metropolitan governance initiative (2023) seeks to increase metropolitan-level governance and planning.

From the 1960s onward, the implantation of petrochemical industries along the lower Francolí River and the expansion of the port generated a sharp increase in labor demand. This triggered intense internal migration from other regions of Spain and later international migration. **Large sections of the city's western periphery — Torreforta, Bonavista, Campclar, Sant Salvador, and related neighbourhoods collectively known as Ponent — emerged through a combination of informal self-built housing, company-sponsored worker estates, and later public housing developments, often constructed with minimal planning, limited services, and weak long-term integration into the wider urban fabric (Plaza, 2025).**

These neighbourhoods were structurally shaped by transport and industrial infrastructures. Railways, highways (N-340, T-11), and logistics corridors were routed through or alongside Ponent, creating physical and symbolic barriers that reinforced its peripheral status. Urban scholars describe Ponent as an "entrevías" territory — defined more by infrastructure crossings than by civic integration — where industrial and metropolitan functions were prioritised over residential quality and connectivity (Oliveras i Samitier, 2025).

Since the 19th century, Tarragona's population growth has been closely tied to economic modernization and successive waves of labor demand, moving from a port-and-services city into a major industrial and metropolitan node. Since the late 1800s, demographic expansion was driven by commercial activity, port functions, administrative roles, and early industrialization, reinforced by improved rail and regional connectivity that linked Tarragona more tightly to the Catalan economic system. The city's most decisive growth phase came in the 1950s–1970s, when Tarragona absorbed large-scale internal migration from other parts of

Spain as jobs expanded in petrochemicals, energy, construction, and port-related industry, producing rapid urban expansion in western districts such as Ponent and consolidating the Tarragona–Reus metropolitan system (Plaza, 2025). From the 1990s onward, population growth became more diversified and metropolitan in character, supported by service-sector expansion, regional public institutions, tourism in the wider Costa Daurada, and continued industrial-port activity, alongside rising immigration from outside Spain — particularly Morocco, Romania, Colombia, and Italy, and more recently Venezuela, China, and Ukraine.

Tarragona stands at the crossroads of industry — centered on its industrial port, the second largest in Catalonia and sixth largest in Spain, and tourism — the historic center sees increasing tourist flows to the UNESCO World Heritage Site of the Archaeological Ensemble of Tarraco, containing a variety of Roman-era monuments. The main tourist flows are focused in and around the historic center (Part Alta) and non-industrial waterfront areas. Tourism and industry converge at the city's second-tier cruise terminal (approximately 120-130,000 passengers annually), which was expanded and modernized in June 2024, following an earlier wharf upgrade completed in 2020–2021. The cruise terminal is located on a dedicated passenger berth in close proximity to the industrial port, whose activities are primarily focused on petrochemicals and chemical industry logistics, connected to ChemMed Tarragona Mediterranean Chemical Cluster, the principal infrastructural-logistical cluster for petrochemicals in Southern Europe. The neighborhoods in focus in this study—those of the Ponent—are located just north of this site, on the western edge of the city.

A key structuring element of the city is the Francolí River, which is a key symbolic and physical barrier in the city. The majority of the city's postwar expansion, under the Franco regime, was west of the river in the Ponent. Broadly, central and Eastern Tarragona concentrates Roman heritage, tourism, public administration, service and retail economies, university and higher-status residential areas, while the Ponent includes larger working-class neighborhoods and a higher presence of social housing, lower household incomes, and a larger portion of migrant residents (Ajuntament de Tarragona, 2023). While Tarragona overall experienced economic growth and demographic expansion, this development entrenched a pronounced east–west divide. The eastern districts (Llevant) consolidated as lower-density, higher-income residential areas, whereas Ponent concentrated working-class households, migrant populations, and a disproportionate share of environmental burdens. By the early 2000s, foreign-born residents — particularly North African migrants—were heavily concentrated in Ponent neighbourhoods such as Sant Salvador and Torreforta, reinforcing enduring patterns of socio-spatial segregation documented in municipal and academic studies (Gutiérrez and Delclòs, 2014; Achebak and Alberich González, 2015).

Over the past two decades, Tarragona's governance has alternated between growth-oriented development models and more cohesion-focused agendas, particularly following the 2008 financial-housing crisis and subsequent regeneration debates. The 2019–2023 left-wing, independentist mayoralty of Pau Ricomà marked a pivot to social justice, sustainability, and inclusive governance, shaped by the Covid-19 crisis. The *Pla Local d'Habitatge 2021–2026* prioritized residential rehabilitation over new construction to tackle the aging, inefficient building stock — one-third of units were built 1950–1981. Investments targeted lower-income

districts, supported by €8 million in EU funds, but the focus on upgrades reflected budget constraints, and new social housing provision remained negligible. Complementary plans for the vulnerable Part Baixa emphasized both housing and urban resilience, though activists criticized limited social and environmental ambition. In parallel, a moratorium on new tourist rental licenses arrived too late to stem a tide of short-term listings, with Airbnb properties mushrooming, mainly in the Part Alta.

As in Barcelona, Tarragona's inner city has endured a profound transformation: historic areas have been refunctionalized for short-term rental and tourism, while low-income residents are displaced, funneling into peripheral neighborhoods like Barris de Ponent and Sant Salvador — zones defined by social housing concentration, poor-quality stock, and insufficient public services. Urban peripheries, marred by industrial pollution and infrastructural barriers, have seen evictions spike post-2008. Officially protected social housing (VPO) is scarce and highly concentrated: 5,281 dwellings exist, but only 2,531 built since 1993 and virtually none since 2016, with supply chronically lagging behind demand — over 12,000 families were on waiting lists by 2020. Most new housing remains market-rate, and spatial segregation persists.

Recent years have also seen a resurgence of housing activism: platforms like the PAH and the Sindicato de la Vivienda have undertaken direct actions (including occupying public buildings for vulnerable residents) and organize against speculative mega-projects, such as the planned Hard Rock Casino. Yet local government's return to socialist leadership under Rubén Viñuales (since 2023) pivots again toward growth-centric redevelopment, privileging public space modernization and transport, while interventions in social housing provision remain reactive and fragmented.

The city's "Tarragona GreenBelt26" project, a cornerstone of the current urban agenda partially financed through EU NextGen funds, focuses on littoral ecological restoration and the connection and addition of pockets of green space. This project encapsulates the city's dual economic identity: a drive for green transition paired with the consolidation of tourism, a trajectory fueling debate over whether future prosperity lies in energy ("sustainable" or otherwise) or mass tourism, and, critically, accentuating widening housing inequalities. Beyond activities in the municipality itself, the proposed megaproject Hard Rock Entertainment World in the nearby Camp de Tarragona towns of Vila-seca and Salou remains stalled and highly contested, a matter of political debate throughout Catalonia. Critics argue such approaches risk deepening territorial pressures—particularly by prioritizing land and infrastructure for visitor economies at a time when housing affordability, environmental risk, and broader social sustainability are rising concerns across the metropolitan area. Housing pressures in Tarragona are recognized across the political spectrum and codified by its inclusion as a "stressed residential market area" under the 2023 Spanish Housing Law and the Catalan Decree-Law 6/2023, especially in light of touristification, particularly evident in the Part Alta.

Much like in Barcelona, debates today focus on the appropriate proportion, targeting, and commercial viability of publicly-subsidized housing, with acute policy attention to regulatory loopholes and the slippage from long-term to seasonal or tourist rental contracts. Tarragona's "soft" intervention—prioritizing building upgrades and urban greening over structural increases in affordable housing stock — thus exacerbates persistent inequalities in access, tenure security, and spatial justice. The simultaneity of climate adaptation and tourist economy

consolidation reinforce both the visibility of, and limits to, progressive housing interventions. As public policy cycles between leftist inclusiveness and centrist growth, Tarragona's experience continues to reflect deep contradictions in the search for equitable urban futures: a city haunted by both its speculative legacies and the intractability of housing precarity under ongoing marketization and financialization.

1.2 Green Transition Initiatives in Tarragona

In this study, we focus on the neighborhoods of the Ponent, west of the Francolí River, particularly the areas surround the Anella Mediterrànea — a 28 hectare park and sports facility complex completed and opened to public use in 2017 to host the Mediterranean Games — as well as the Pla Parcial 10 (PP10), a yet-unnamed neighborhood between Bonavista, the Anella, and Campclar, including the construction of 192 social housing rental flats ("Les Oliveres"), slated to be completed in mid-2026 to comply with Next Generation funding guidelines, along with a new hospital and shopping center. Campclar, Bonavista, and Torreforta have populations in their core areas (officially "nuclei") of approximately 9,500 each. The city has put two plots of land for sale to stimulate private development and entered discussions with INCASÒL – the Catalan housing construction and management agency – to build more social housing co-funded by the Generalitat government. Directly to the south of these neighborhoods, on the southern side of the Carretera de València, is a large industrial and port area, while there is a buffer area of agricultural land and transport infrastructure between the eastern limits of the Ponent neighborhoods and the Francolí River.

Tarragona's housing stock reflects this uneven urbanization. A significant proportion of dwellings — especially in Ponent — were built between 1950 and 1980, prior to the introduction of any meaningful energy efficiency regulations. **Technical assessments by the Col·legi d'Aparelladors, Arquitectes Tècnics i Enginyers d'Edificació de Tarragona (COAATT)—the local professional association tasked with technical guidance for applying retrofit subsidies—indicate that over 50% of residential buildings in the city present serious energy efficiency deficiencies, with the highest concentrations in the Ponent** (COAATT, 2023).

The Ponent neighborhoods have a younger demographic profile than the city as a whole, with each neighborhood having a foreign-born population between 16 and 25%. They have also been identified as some of the neighborhoods with the highest levels of residential and socio-economic segregation in Catalan cities (Roquer, Alberich, et al., 2013). A study from 2013 found that targeted interventions in Campclar through the 2004 *Llei de Barris* – a Catalan law geared towards re-investments of historically marginalized neighborhoods – intervention led to significant improvements in public spaces, facilities, and the neighborhood's external image, helping to reduce its physical isolation within Tarragona. Results from the study further showed that social and economic challenges persisted, and that the long-term impact depended heavily on continued public investment and stronger, more sustained community participation beyond the program's duration (Roquer, Gutiérrez, et al., 2013). More recent studies suggest that while public space, facilities, and neighborhood image improved, deep-rooted social and economic vulnerabilities persisted, and long-term outcomes

depended heavily on sustained investment and governance continuity (Espluga Trenc et al., 2024), while such challenges of segregation and lack of participatory social infrastructure, particularly of racialized migrants, stubbornly persist. Such socio-economic vulnerability is heightened by the risks of petrochemical accidents which have occurred several times in recent decades (Rodríguez Giralt et al., 2023)

The Anella Mediterrànea forms part of the Tarragona Greenbelt initiative, one of three sites within the Ponent area that are included: aside from the Anella, the channelized Clar River in Torreforta is undergoing invasive vegetation removal and restoration of autochthonous riverside vegetation, while the western bank of the Francolí River — closer to the city center — is undergoing a 1.05 million Euro renaturalization process and the investment of 150,000 Euro for the installation of solid waste retention elements in rainwater overflows from the urban sewer network to the river.

The aforementioned structural conditions situate the Ponent as a key element of Tarragona's green transition agenda. On the one hand, the energy retrofit potential is substantial: many buildings renovations could easily exceed the 30% energy consumption reduction threshold required by Next Generation EU funding schemes. On the other hand, **the social and institutional conditions necessary to realize this potential are unevenly distributed, raising the risk that green transition policies may reproduce or deepen existing housing inequalities.**

Municipal strategies emphasize building rehabilitation, energy retrofitting, and public space improvements rather than large-scale new housing construction. **While this orientation aligns with climate mitigation goals, it also assumes a level of organizational capacity, financial solvency, and administrative literacy that many Ponent communities lack, particularly in blocks with fragmented ownership, ageing residents, or high tenant turnover, while also presenting a potential risk of the phenomenon of renoviction in homes and buildings undergoing energy-efficient renovation within neighborhoods of a vulnerable socio-economic profile.** These procedural barriers intersect with the socio-economic profile of Ponent neighborhoods. Lower levels of educational attainment and higher employment precarity reduce households' capacity to navigate complex subsidy frameworks, access digital platforms, or assume temporary financial risk (Ajuntament de Tarragona, 2023). In this context, **administrative complexity does not operate neutrally; it disproportionately affects communities already facing structural disadvantage.**

Table 1. Key data on case study area of Tarragona.

	Municipality-wide	**Ponent**
Neighborhood characteristics (general social type, economic activities, density, etc.)	Municipal level	Overall population of "Barris de Ponent": approximately 50,000. Total population of "nuclei" in focus: 28,500. Population density in nuclei: 18,000-24,000, approx. (Density calculated using Idescat nucleus (NP) population divided by the ICGC 'Population areas' settlement footprint polygon) (population source: IDESCAT
Duration	Tarragona Greenbelt: Project selected for NextGen in 2022 with budget of ~€3.47 million Euro Implementation: 2023-present (due to finish 2026) Anella Mediterrànea interventions under completion. In Summer 2025, The City Council carried out an intervention to clean up the area, remove invasive species, and install floating islands to enhance the attraction and presence of birds in the area. Retrofits of large-scale working-class housing and new construction of housing	Anella Mediterrànea (for Mediterrariean Games): 2014-2017 Tarragona GreenBelt Implementation: up to 2026 Key element: to reduce invasive species and foster biodiversity and to renature grey/urban parts of the Riu Clar and the artificial lake in the park of the Anella Mediterrànea Retrofits of large-scale working-class housing and new construction of housing (for example 9,3 millones de euros para rehabilitar 446 viviendas públicas en el Camp de Tarragona to be finalized by Summer 2026)
Funding *(be explicit if public/private, nonprofit, etc.)*	Primarily financed by EU NextGen funds, with support of Fundación Biodiversidad (under Spain's Ministry for Ecological Transition and Demographic Challenge), Spain's Recovery, Transformation, and Resilience Plan	Anella Mediterrànea: 76% private EU Next Generation (public housing development, GreenBelt renaturalization, residential retrofit)
Actor constellation *(aka stakeholders)*	See "funding", plus list of civic groups, private actors, etc.	See "funding", plus list of civic groups, private actors, etc.
Aims and objectives	Overall municipality-wide aims and objectives re: NBS, retrofit, densification	Case-specific aims and objectives re: NBS, retrofit, densification, especially in a historically under-invested and socially fragile area
Specific physical measures	See above	See above
Accompanying housing		6.7M Euros for the Camp de Tarragona renovations. the objective is to reduce

policy/regulatory measures		energy consumption from non-renewable sources by between 30% and 60%, depending on the building block and the corresponding stairwell. Moreover, the energy required to heat or cool the dwelling will decrease by between 70% and 80%. Work coordinated/sponsored by the Agència de l'Habitatge de Catalunya
Key social tensions or/and benefits between greening and housing	It is uncertain if greening can be part of a realized, long term strategy or is just "adjacent" to new housing construction and tourism development	Risk of concentration new housing in already over-stigmalized areas; Risk of not accessing funding for building retrofit and lack of support so that working class residents and buildings can navigate the system and the process from start to completion. Risk of long-term lack of new green space maintenance. Risk of reproducing past mistakes in urban renovation (partial process, no long-term vision, lack of continuity)

2 Methods

This case study draws on qualitative research conducted in 2025, combining semi-structured interviews and documentary analysis. The methodological approach was designed to capture civic and institutional perceptions of green transition initiatives and their relationship to housing inequalities in Tarragona, with particular attention to governance processes and neighborhood-scale impacts.

In total, 7 interviews were conducted. Interviewees included municipal and district-level policymakers and technical staff, neighborhood association members, activists, and politically engaged architects. Interviews were conducted in Catalan and Spanish. Profiles of interviewees, who have been given pseudonyms, may be found in **Appendix 2**.

Sampling of policymakers and technical staff drew on contacts established during the preparation and participation in the ReHousIn Policy Lab (March 2025) and through researchers' participation in workshops and public events related to housing and green transition initiatives organized by public, cooperative, and non-profit institutions. Additional participants were recruited through snowball sampling.

Community organization representatives and neighborhood activists were identified through their public engagement in media, participation in civic initiatives, or involvement in neighborhood assemblies and campaigns related to housing, urban redevelopment, and environmental issues. Initial contact was made through institutional email addresses associated with their organizations or, when requested by participants, via WhatsApp.

Interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent and transcribed in their original language. Audio transcription was carried out using an offline version of the AI-based software Whisper for Spanish. Spanish-language interviews, with personal identifiers removed, were then translated using an offline version of DeepL and subsequently reviewed, corrected, and cleaned by the research team. Catalan interviews were transcribed directly by the researchers, translated using the SoftCatalà platform with personal information removed, and subsequently cleaned. Transcript verification was conducted while listening to original audio recordings to ensure accuracy.

Analysis and coding were completed in English, for later comparability with other case European case studies, using Atlas.ti following a shared codebook developed by the Autonomous University of Barcelona ReHousIn team. Coding focused on recurring themes related to housing access and affordability, perceptions of green transition initiatives, participation and governance processes, distribution of benefits and harms, and neighborhood identity and recognition.

Documentary analysis included municipal and district planning documents, policy reports, technical studies, academic literature, and grey literature produced by neighborhood associations, advocacy organizations, and media outlets. These materials were used to identify interviewees, contextualize findings, and triangulate claims.

Several limitations should be acknowledged. While the interview sample includes a range of institutional and civic actors, it does not fully capture the perspectives of all resident groups

affected by redevelopment, particularly more precarious populations with limited organizational representation or those who do not identify with dominant civic/social movements in Tarragona. The rapidly evolving nature of the redevelopment projects examined means that findings reflect perceptions and expectations of *ongoing processes* rather than fully realized outcomes.

3 Civic Perceptions of Green Initiatives in Case Study Areas: Tarragona

3.1 Precedents and implementation

Civic perceptions of green transition activities in Tarragona are structured by a long historical narrative of uneven urban development. Civic actors do not describe current initiatives as discrete or novel policy actions, but as interventions taking place within a deeply unequal urban system that has concentrated vulnerability, infrastructural deficits, and territorial stigma in the Barris de Ponent. This frames how implementation is evaluated.

For civic actors and activists, this historical framing is directly connected to the material condition of housing, the quality of public space, and long-standing patterns of neglect and disconnection from the city. Campclar, Bonavista, and Torreforta are repeatedly described as neighborhoods shaped by post-1970s expansion linked to industrial growth and logistics, where housing was built quickly to accommodate incoming workers, with limited attention to long-term habitability or integration into the wider city. As a result, civic actors evaluate green transition initiatives as part of an unfinished process of correcting territorial imbalances and improving local infrastructure.

This perspective reshapes how implementation is understood. *Implementation* is not primarily judged by the existence of a funded project or formal completion, but by whether an intervention produces stable, lived improvements that residents can feel and use in everyday life. In the case of parks and nature-based solutions, implementation is perceived as successful when spaces become genuinely walkable, accessible, and socially activated. In the case of densification, implementation is assessed by whether new housing contributes to neighborhood integration rather than reinforcing peripheral concentration. In the case of retrofit, implementation is experienced through the ability—or inability—of ordinary households to bridge the gap between technical possibility and financial or procedural feasibility.

According to one long-term neighborhood activist in Camp Clar, the Anella Mediterrània illustrates this civic understanding of implementation as a lived transformation rather than an abstract territorial exercise. He describes how the area shifted from a hostile, asphalt-dominated environment before and during the Games to a space that residents can now traverse on foot, use comfortably, and integrate into everyday routines. The emphasis in his narrative is on changes in atmosphere, comfort, and accessibility. This embodied distinction between “before” and “after” demonstrates how residents define implementation through micro-transformations that accumulate into broader territorial change. For many, the language of greening or regeneration is subservient than the transformation of atmosphere and usability, as there is a shared sense that the area has historically been a sacrificed zone for the functioning of the Camp de Tarragona as a whole.

> Going to [the Anella] before was a bit hostile because it was all asphalt. Either you went by car, which wasn't necessary. You could go by foot but it was all asphalt. All that has changed now (long-term activist, Camp Clar)

However, civic interviewees also express caution regarding the durability of implementation. Improvements are perceived as fragile if maintenance, governance continuity, or complementary measures are weak. In such contexts, the credibility of implementation depends on whether public bodies demonstrate a sustained commitment to protecting and maintaining improvements over time. Interviewees' further perceptions suggest that implementation is evaluated through a distributive logic: which areas are selected for projects, and what the selection implies. Even beneficial projects may raise concerns if they are perceived to reinforce the spatial concentration of vulnerability, rather than distributing responsibility and opportunity more evenly across the Camp de Tarragona.

3.2 Participation and governance (procedural)

Participation in green transition initiatives in Tarragona is widely perceived as procedurally complex and unevenly accessible. Civic actors describe participation less as co-production or participatory than a confusing, laborious, and time-consuming process of navigating administrative systems. This perception confirms prior research on previous urban regeneration initiatives in the area, where the Barris de Ponent, like other more peripheral districts in medium-sized Catalan cities, have a tendency for residents to be expected to "participate" without receiving the resources to do so effectively (Parés et al., 2012).

This perception is particularly acute in relation to publicly subsidized energy-efficient retrofit programs (principally through EU Next Generation), where households and homeowners' associations are required to engage with layered bureaucratic procedures, digital platforms, and technical documentation. This is considered an additional challenge in the Ponent where owner-occupiers and small landlords are less likely to have the resources, knowledge of complex processes of public administration, or a competent, professional property management company working on behalf of homeowners' associations, as would be found in more affluent areas. This creates strain, especially in buildings with ageing populations or limited financial reserves. **Due to the dominant housing typology of apartment blocks in Tarragona like elsewhere in urban Spain, most retrofit subsidies are managed through private property management companies on behalf of homeowners' associations in apartment blocks, organized at the building or stairwell level. As such, mere existence of subsidies or support mechanisms does not automatically translate into perceived accessibility**.

Institutional actors acknowledge these difficulties and describe them as unintended consequences of program design, funding requirements, and regulatory frameworks over which they have limited control, emphasizing that municipal departments are themselves constrained by staffing limitations, reporting obligations,

and externally imposed timelines. As such, participation challenges are framed as systemic rather than intentional and as a trickle-down effect from poorly staffed municipal administrations and poorly-designed funding programs.

A long-term neighborhood activist in Camp Clar describes governance as mediated and slow, requiring residents to navigate complex channels before reaching the relevant decision-maker. As researchers on this project have found, the city's digital infrastructure creates formidable challenges to accessing information. This kind of procedural environment with uneven access to information may weaken trust in transition initiatives, especially when interventions are complex or when residents perceive their neighborhood as already disadvantaged. Governance can feel particularly fragmented and slow, when residents may demand rapid adjustments to prevent harm (e.g., protecting green pockets, ensuring parks remain usable, addressing side-effects of development), leading to a **perceptual gap between the rhetoric of transition and the reality of problem-solving.**

> "If you want to request a meeting, they tell you that you must go through the neighborhood councilor, but the neighborhood councilor *isn't* the one who will solve the problem because they don't handle mobility. In principle, that person will pass it on to someone else, and you'll see that half a year passes and nothing has been solved." (long-term activist, Camp Clar)

In retrofit governance, civic actors note that such interventions are not optional upgrades but high-stakes interventions with major financial implications. Driven by EU directives, **residential properties throughout Spain placed on the residential or rental market that have Energy Performance Certificate ratings of F or G will need an Energy Performance Certificate of E by 2030**, with the minimum expected to rise to D by 2033. **Some homeowners see public subsidies for energy-efficient retrofits as a potential opportunity to fulfill efficiency directives at a reduced cost, but mechanisms are widely considered difficult to understand and navigate.** Indeed, as has arisen in public assemblies around residential energy retrofit in Catalonia, there is also a widespread sense among property management companies that such processes are onerous or opaque.

In sum, civic perceptions highlight a shared awareness that procedural complexity has (re)distributional effects: **communities with greater organizational capacity are more likely to weather administrative processes**, while those with less time and financial resources are more likely to disengage. In this way, participation mechanisms and opportunities to access funding are both perceived as reproducing housing inequality by privileging those already better positioned to manage risk and uncertainty. Civic perceptions indicate that **participation and governance are judged through "governability from below"**: whether ordinary residents can navigate systems without excessive burden, and whether institutions can respond effectively to make green transition objectives attainable. There is a shared perception that participation becomes unfeasible when governance structures externalize administrative and financial risk onto households already facing vulnerability. As such, procedural governance is perceived as a central point where green transition ambitions collide with housing and other socio-economic realities.

3.3 (In)equity (distributional)

The Barris de Ponent are the primary cluster of residential vulnerability and the key area where energy efficiency, energy poverty, and poor building conditions overlap in the Camp de Tarragona (COAATT 2023), and distributional inequity is one of the most persistent frameworks through which civic interviewees interpret Tarragona's housing and green transition activities. Inequity is framed as a territorial pattern of who benefits, who bears burdens, and which neighborhoods gain symbolic recognition through public investment. Within this distributive geography, neighborhoods of the Ponent are repeatedly described as a zone where vulnerability has been concentrated and where the justice dimensions of transition investment are made visible and scrutinized, with proximity to the petrochemical industry creating compounded experiences of exposure and abandonment, precarity and risk.

In the context of residential densification, distributional equity is evaluated through local experience: civic actors and neighborhood activists acknowledge the need for additional housing — market-rate, subsidized, and public — and see the potential environmental benefits of compact development in place of the sprawl that has come to dominate development in the Camp de Tarragona. However, they stress that densification is not inherently equitable if new housing continues to be concentrated in Ponent, reflecting a resentment that its neighborhoods continue to be treated as a receptacle for broader territorial needs, replicating dynamics of peripheralization.

In relation to parks and nature-based solutions, distributional equity is interpreted through access to environmental quality and everyday dignity. Green spaces are valued as contributors to wellbeing, identity, and neighborhood recognition. Though not without its criticisms, the Anella Mediterrània's sports facilities and public spaces are perceived as neighborhood gains that have not, as of yet, generated specific concerns about green gentrification. Baseline environmental conditions have historically been lower and the creation of park-like environments are read as an environmental justice gain. At the same time, interviewees express concern that these gains remain fragile and reversible if green spaces are neglected or not well-maintained, or compromised by other development priorities.

Deficiencies in mobility infrastructures and challenges in securing funds for energy-efficient home retrofit becomes the domain where distributional inequity linked to green transition projects is articulated most sharply. One civic leader in La Floresta's critique of Next Generation funding captures this perception clearly, framing retrofit inequality because of rigid programmatic structure rather than individual choice. From this perspective, households most exposed to energy poverty and thermal discomfort are often least able to access the interventions designed to alleviate those conditions, allocating benefits toward those already positioned to invest.

> That's the criticism of the NextGen funds, that it seems they're more for people who can afford it than for people who can't. And therefore, in all energy efficiency in general, whoever can install solar panels on their own roof is whoever can pay for it and makes the investment. Whoever can improve the efficiency of their windows... if a window doesn't break, I don't change it.". (civic leader)

The same access problem is acknowledged from within the public sector. A municipal housing technician describes the subsidy interface itself as discouraging and highlights how procedural friction generates dropout and demotivation

> I recognize that it's very difficult to request a subsidy, a huge amount of paperwork, the application doesn't work well and it freezes, you have to start again... Many people lose the motivation to apply for the subsidy because the amount of paperwork. (municipal housing technician)

Critics further argue that well-funded, large renovation intermediaries capture a disproportionate share of subsidies, including Effic, a subsidiary of the New York-based private equity firm Blackstone established to take advantage of EU retrofit subsidies, which is also the largest private landlord in Spain and associated with predatory practices in the housing market.

In short, such situations thus articulate retrofit inequalities and situate them as structural rather than behavioral. Beyond the barrier of lack of awareness, **households most exposed to energy poverty and thermal discomfort are often least able to access and pay for the interventions designed to reduce those harms.** Without improved, targeted support mechanisms and complementary funds raised from municipalities or regional governments, green transition interventions risk functioning as "opportunities" primarily for those already able to invest, leaving deeper housing injustices unchanged or compounding them based on the ability to take advantage of public financing.

3.4 Political mobilization

Political mobilization in Tarragona appears in the interviews as localized, pragmatic, and reactive, in the sense that it is typically triggered by moments of perceived injustice or risk. Unlike in Barcelona, civic actors do not tend to describe mobilization as a broad, territorially grounded movement, apart from elements of the housing movement, particularly renters' unions, which operate at a scale encompassing Tarragona and nearby Reus. Rather, it emerges as tactical action used to secure institutional response when transition measures become inaccessible or precarious, pressuring institutions to adapt programs to the realities of vulnerable communities. This is visible in the energy retrofit domain, but also in broader dynamics of redevelopment activities focused on the Ponent.

Perceptions of retrofit opportunities, and mobilization around them, are structured by a basic civic dilemma: the works are necessary, funding may be available, but residents

cannot proceed without guarantees that funds will continue to be accessible and then disbursed swiftly. The threat of losing major external funding becomes both a risk and a mobilizing resource. Civic actors use public pressure to force engagement, framing their demands as a necessary condition for successful implementation. Their argument is that without municipal involvement, the program is designed for failure in communities with limited ability to front costs or absorb uncertainty. The perceptions shared by activists and civic leaders from the Ponent neighborhoods illustrate how mobilization functions as a bridge between technical projects and political accountability. The community did not reject retrofit; it demanded public support so that the intervention could be delivered without exposing residents to unacceptable risk.

> "We did a press action, well, we published a press article in which we asked for the aid. We said that if the City Council didn't get involved and help us, we wouldn't be able to carry out the works and we would lose, adding the two grants together, one million euros between the two blocks. That is, we would lose one million euros of Next Generation funds in the La Floresta neighborhood if the City Council didn't help us." (civic activist, La Floresta).

This form of civic mobilization is rooted in procedural and distributive justice and reveals that **green transition activities' successful delivery may depend on conflictual negotiation rather than smooth, linear implementation, particularly in communities with fewer resources.**

Political mobilization also appears indirectly in the densification and parks/NBS domains. Civic actors describe skepticism and vigilance around large development trajectories in Ponent, suggesting that residents remain politically attentive to whether "regeneration" is designed for local benefit or driven by external investment logics, drawing on previous experiences. Mobilization in this context may not be formalized, but is still interpretive stance, as residents collectively anticipate future conflicts, assess credibility, and form expectations about beneficiaries.

3.5 Socio-ecological impacts/benefits (positive)

Positive socio-ecological benefits in the civic accounts primarily relate to parks and green spaces that have become usable, pleasant, and socially integrated into daily life. Civic interviewees frame the value of green space in everyday experiential rather than environmental terms: how people use it, when it feels welcoming rather than hostile, and when it changes perceptions of what a neighborhood offers. **Civic actors widely recognize that green transition initiatives in Tarragona have generated tangible socio-ecological benefits, particularly in relation to public space and everyday mobility, and there is no expressed concern about green spaces driving gentrification in the Ponent**.

Green space contributes to wellbeing, thermal comfort at the neighborhood scale, and the everyday dignity of place, and in an area with a legacy of strong territorial inequalities, access to high-quality public space is perceived as a welcome form of redistribution after decades of neglect and under-investment. Civic accounts show that this is particularly meaningful in

Ponent, where residents describe older conditions of “asphalt dominance” and limited attractiveness. A local civil leader in particular describes how positive benefits can emerge through discovery and use. The emphasis is not on overarching climate goals but on embodied experience: paths, a lake, ducks, trees—features that invite residents to inhabit the space, through which parks and NBS are evaluated through the social life they enable.

> “Since the sports part [of the Anella] was closed, that area was open because it was a park, and people discovered that there were paths, there was a small lake, at one point there were even ducks and all that, and even if it was artificial, it was still nice. A lot of people didn’t know about it.” (local civil leader)

This quote also suggests that benefits can depend on context: during the Covid-19 pandemic, residents’ attention to and use of outdoor spaces shifted, making the Anella more visible and socially valued.

Positive benefits are present in civic discussions of densification, but articulated more through reflective assessments of urban form and long-term territorial impact by those with technical expertise. Civic actors frame compact density as a positive socio-ecological condition when pursued with quality, intention, and spatial coherence, rather than as an abstract growth imperative. From this perspective, densification is valued for its capacity to reduce land take, limit sprawl, and avoid the continued expansion of low-density forms and infrastructural impacts, but that its socio-ecological value depends on how it is spatially deployed and justified.

> “Density is not bad. [We need] compactness with quality. “But density, how do you place it, where do you place it and why do you do it? …” (architect and environmental activist)

Such statements frame densification as a conditional socio-ecological benefit: one that can support broader environmental goals when embedded within an urban logic that prioritizes quality and integration, but which risks generating resistance and negative effects if implemented without contextual criteria and a clear social purpose.

Last, in retrofit, benefits are framed as potentially transformative at the scale of the building and the home, particularly for owner-occupiers: insulation, better windows, and external façade improvements can enhance thermal comfort and reduce energy costs, with the caveat that the process of accessing public funds to do so are unduly burdensome and, when completed in rental units, the cost is passed on to tenants.

3.6 Socio-ecological impacts/harms (negative)

Negative socio-ecological impacts in civic narratives are primarily framed as *contradictions*: situations where green transition objectives coexist with development or planning decisions

that *undermine* perceived environmental quality and municipal efforts towards green space investment. The clearest harm narratives arise when green spaces are compromised, reduced, or treated as secondary to other priorities. In Tarragona, the PP10 (Partial Plan 10) redevelopment provides an example of this, where development assumptions oriented toward commercial attraction and car traffic can produce direct loss of green areas and are perceived as lived disruptions, even if they incorporate the creation of desired new social housing. PP10 is one of the most important urban expansion areas in the city, strategically located in the western (Ponent) zone, between the neighborhoods of Bonavista and Campclar, next to the Anella Mediterrània. This sector is undergoing significant development, particularly marked by the construction of affordable rental housing and new public facilities.

Civic actors further highlight how certain planning logics treat green areas as expendable and that the Ponent is viewed as an abstract space to be exploited for future-oriented actions rather than a set of neighborhoods (or places), evidenced by the lack of a name for the site. This is sensitive in Ponent because green amenities are seen as valuable precisely due to past shortages or low baseline conditions. When a small green area is removed or degraded, the harm is experienced not only as ecological loss but as a distributive and symbolic loss combined with the feeling that too much new housing is concentrated in certain areas of the city.

One category of perceived harm relates to the loss or fragmentation of existing spaces due to infrastructure works or large-scale developments. Civic actors express concern that green or regenerative projects may coexist with, or be undermined by, road expansion, traffic growth, or commercial development, resulting in losses to neighborhood quality and also drawing into question sustainability claims. As a local civic leader expresses, the construction of infrastructure designed for anticipated traffic flows justified the destruction of a small park and functions as a clear harm mechanism. Even if the larger plan changed later, the episode illustrates a broader vulnerability: green spaces can be sacrificed to accommodate speculative futures, leaving residents with the consequences.

> "A street went towards Rambla de Ponent, a four-lane road that wiped out a green area that was there and connected to Rambla de Ponent where another huge roundabout was planned to connect everything, because the PP10 was designed with the idea that an Ikea would be built there and that it would generate massive car traffic."

Retrofit also carries potential harm narratives, largely through concerns of missing out on available subsidies and stress about imminent rises in efficiency standards. While civic actors broadly support the idea of improving building performance, they stress that **if retrofit is pursued through unstable or uncertain funding structures, it can impose financial stress and risk onto vulnerable households. The harm here is not environmental degradation but social vulnerability (and eventually exclusion from retrofit funding) created through policy design: households can be pushed toward risk or forced to abandon improvements. The risk of debt, the possibility of losing subsidies due to administrative missteps, and the burden placed on elderly residents are**

repeatedly emphasized. The perception of neighborhood leaders reveals how **harm is experienced through uncertainty rather than immediate material loss**. The fear of making a wrong decision or being unable to complete a process becomes a deterrent and a cause of anxiety.

However, from this civic point of view, **these harms are not inevitable. They are interpreted as the result of misaligned implementation approaches that fail to account for social and housing realities in one-size-fits-all approaches.** When green transition measures assume a baseline of financial and administrative stability and capacity that does not exist, they risk deepening insecurity rather than alleviating it while allowing higher-income groups to capture available funding.

The compounding impacts of environmental exposure and socio-economic vulnerability are found in these same districts facing proximity to industrial infrastructures, registering higher social risk indicators (Ajuntament de Tarragona, 2023). This overlap supports interviewees' perception that environmental and housing inequalities are spatially co-produced rather than independent phenomena.

3.7 Tensions and Dynamics Between Stakeholders/Actors

Civic perceptions of green transition initiatives in the Ponent are strongly shaped by experiences of power asymmetry between neighborhood actors and institutional decision-makers, especially when densification and NBS project planning are concerned. Civic actors consistently describe a gap between formal participation mechanisms and actual influence over outcomes, especially where large-scale projects and strategic interventions are concentrated. These tensions are not primarily framed as conflict over environmental or housing objectives so much as decision-making processes, where authority is located, and how neighborhoods are positioned in this relationship. For civic actors, power dynamics are experienced structurally, through repeated encounters with limited influence, institutional distance, and lengthy delays. This perspective highlights how decision-making is perceived as spatially and procedurally removed from neighborhood realities. Such sentiments arise repeatedly and suggest that distance itself becomes a form of power, with decisions experienced as external, difficult to trace, and resistant to modification even when consultation processes are formally in place. The difficulty of identifying where authority is located contributes to civic perceptions of limited influence and reinforces mistrust toward governance processes.

Rather than opposing environmental or housing objectives as such, civic actors emphasize how decisions are experienced as predefined, with participation occurring after key parameters have already been fixed: as a sort of pantomime. As a civic leader describes, a frequent pattern exists in which neighborhoods are informed but rarely positioned as decision-makers:

> "Many times, they come with the project and **what they do is explain it to you**... you can give your opinion, but everything is already very defined... and in the end, **the decision has already been made somewhere else... and you just have to adapt to it**." (civic leader)

This account highlights a central perception that ostensibly participatory processes are informational rather than transformative. Opportunities to comment may exist but are experienced as occurring after strategic decisions have already been taken, and residents feel they are expected to absorb the consequences of interventions without having shaped their direction. Such perceptions match closely to those in the La Marina case of Barcelona as well, suggesting a more systemic problem of participation in planning processes.

In the domain of parks and nature-based solutions, stakeholder tensions are visible in the perceived vulnerability of green spaces to competing planning agendas. Civic actors express strong appreciation for green amenities and recognize their contribution to everyday wellbeing and neighborhood livability, including interventions associated with the Tarragona GreenBelt, but observe that these spaces can be compromised when commercial, infrastructural, or mobility priorities dominate and, in the end, might take existing green spaces over for new "grey" construction.

In relation to subsidies and support regarding energy-efficient retrofit, civic interviewees highlight that institutions and professional intermediaries are better positioned to absorb delays, administrative complexity, and financial risk, whereas individual households—particularly in vulnerable neighborhoods—are not. As a result, retrofit becomes a domain where justice is understood to depend on shifting risk away from residents and perceived as reinforcing inequality, even when stated objectives are progressive.

As a result, civic actors call — implicitly rather than programmatically — for green transition activities that are not only technically sound but counteract historical power asymmetries based on location and socio-economic realities, in which utilitarian and universal approaches do not allow for a level playing field. These perceived power dynamics shape trust, expectations, and willingness to engage, and form a critical backdrop for the more explicit civic–institutional perception gaps explored in Section 3.10.

3.8 (Civic perceptions of) innovative governance mechanisms

Civic perceptions of innovative governance mechanisms in Tarragona are characterized by a **pragmatic, problem-solving orientation, in which innovation is evaluated according to its capacity to reduce disruption, uncertainty, and risk for residents. Innovation is valued when institutional objectives are translated into forms that residents can realistically engage with**. However, civic actors emphasize that many transition initiatives in reality fail not because of opposition in principle, but because proposed solutions do not fit lived realities. A civic leader articulates this understanding of innovation when reflecting on how projects are received at the neighborhood level:

> "When things are thought through with the neighborhood in mind, when they adapt to what is already there, then people see them differently. The problem is when solutions arrive that don't fit the reality of the place." (civic leader)

This statement highlights how innovation is perceived as a matter of contextual fit rather than technical sophistication.

Civic actors also describe innovation in more technical terms, particularly in relation to energy-efficient retrofit. Here, specific design choices are understood as governance mechanisms because they shape residents' willingness and ability to proceed. Marc's detailed description of external insulation systems illustrates how technical solutions can function as enabling innovations by lowering perceived and actual risks. As have been observed in perceived best practices of retrofit of apartment blocks in urban Catalonia, such as the Sant Ildefons neighborhood in Cornellà de Llobregat, publicly subsidized interventions implemented on building envelopes and windows while residents remain in their homes are perceived to be more socially just and accessible for those on lower and moderate incomes rather than larger-scale and -investment ones that might require (temporary) relocation:

> "We're talking about installing insulation on the outside of the building with an external insulation system, which are panels attached to the exterior facade. That means no work has to be done inside the apartments, which was very important, that was a requirement on our part. Changing windows will only involve installing them over the existing frames. So there's no major interior work." (Civic leader)

The significance of such policy and physical interventions lie not only in their energy performance, but in their social effects and management. By avoiding interior works, these approaches reduce disruption to daily life, eliminate the need for temporary relocation, and lessen fear among residents, which are all factors that civic actors repeatedly identify as barriers to participation.

Beyond technical design, **civic actors also point to the role of intermediary support structures—such as trusted technicians, project coordinators, or neighborhood-based advisors—as another form of innovation**. Where such intermediaries are present, residents experience greater clarity and confidence in navigating complex processes. However, these mechanisms are described as unevenly distributed and often dependent on specific projects or individuals rather than universalized arrangements.

Civic perceptions emphasize that **innovative practices tend to appear as exceptions rather than norms**, **often associated with pilot projects or particularly attentive implementation processes that are not replicated at scale**. As a result, while such mechanisms demonstrate that participation barriers can be reduced, they do not fundamentally alter the broader distribution of responsibility and risk identified in earlier sections.

3.9 (Civic perceptions of) tourism and market pressures

Civic perceptions of market dynamics and development pressure in Tarragona are shaped by the territorial specificity of the case study, particularly the fact that interviews with civic actors focus on the Barris de Ponent, while the most intense tourism pressures in the city are concentrated in the Part Alta and non-port coastal areas. As a result, tourism does not emerge as the dominant market pressure in civic narratives of Ponent, but is acknowledged as central in relation to overall concerns about the planning and economic model of the city. Instead, **tourism is understood as a broader contextual force**, **operating alongside other economic dynamics** and playing a central influence in overall socio-spatial and environmental dynamics. **Path-dependent development trajectories are viewed with pessimism: that east-west territorial disequilibrium will continue to exist, and that Tarragona's only possible economic models are energy industries** (whether petro-chemical or "green", with concerns about atmospheric contamination and a legacy of industrial accidents in the Ponent), **and/or a tourism-oriented service economy**, an issue that arises in terms of a precarious labor market rather than in housing in the Ponent.

Within the Ponent, the dominant market pressure narrative relates more strongly to large-scale development trajectories and investment logics than to tourism or property speculation. Civic actors interpret the future of its neighborhoods through uncertainty surrounding PP10 and the wider development accompanying it: commercial activity, infrastructure, and institutional investment. These projects are perceived as capable of reshaping the neighborhood's position and connectivity within the city, but their implications for existing residents remain unclear.

From a housing justice perspective, anticipatory market pressures intersect with the three core themes of the green transition examined in this case. Densification and new housing supply take place within a market environment where land values, investment priorities, and developer interest shape what is feasible and for whom. Civic actors are attentive to the risk that new housing delivery, even when framed as socially oriented, may reinforce existing spatial inequalities if it is not accompanied by measures ensuring accessibility for current residents. However, as of yet, **green transition activities within themselves are not perceived as directly related to rising housing costs**, which are attributed to broader overall housing trends.

3.10 Gaps in Perceptions Between Civic Groups and Public Agencies

A central finding of the Tarragona interviews is that civic actors and public-sector representatives often share broad concerns about inequality, climate adaptation, and the need for housing intervention, yet frequently interpret *what is feasible*, *what counts as progress*, and *where the main bottlenecks lie* in different ways. These differences a reflect a structural mismatch between the everyday social realities of households and neighborhoods, and the operational logics and budgetary limitations framing how public institutions design and implement green transition initiatives.

For civic interviewees, the green transition becomes meaningful only when it produces tangible changes in everyday life. Parks and public spaces matter when they are used, perceived as safe, and experienced as dignified; densification is acceptable when it is clearly justified, fairly distributed, and does not reproduce territorial stigma; and retrofit programs are viable only when they are accessible without imposing unacceptable financial or administrative risk on vulnerable residents. In contrast, public-sector actors tend to describe the transition primarily through institutional constraints, funding frameworks, legal pathways, administrative sequencing with long timelines, departmental mandates, and the scope of formal programs. These different interpretive frames generate perception gaps, where civic actors are more likely to evaluate success through lived experience and feasibility at the individual or household or building level, while institutional actors evaluate success through deliverability, compliance, and the ability to mobilize resources within constrained governance environments.

In the domain of public and social housing delivery, institutional perspectives emphasize that recent large-scale interventions depend heavily on extraordinary funding opportunities and accelerated implementation mechanisms. A housing specialist and technical staffer in the Municipality of Tarragona frames the city's social housing delivery efforts as being made possible by Next Generation funding and shaped by strict procedural and temporal requirements:

> "We did the construction of these 192 homes through a direct award… with the timing requirements set by the Next Generation funds, we took the leap… it wasn't easy to justify it even though the regulations themselves allow it… Without those funds, the 192 homes would not have been possible." (housing specialist and municipal technical staff)

This institutional framing aligns in part with civic actors' recognition that new social housing supply is necessary but differs in emphasis. **Public-sector narratives foreground the administrative conditions of delivery — speed, legality, and funding opportunity — more than the *where* and *how* that new supply becomes embedded in the city's geographies of existing and continuing inequality.** Those contrasts with civic activists asking for density to be of quality and planned through equitable spatial distribution and proper long-term planning. They **evaluate densification through the lens of territorial fairness and legitimacy, while public-sector actors tend to frame it through deliverability, funding windows, and compliance constraints.** These positions are not opposed, but they can lead to different conclusions about prioritization: institutions value feasibility and speed; civic actors value justice, distribution, and avoiding the reproduction of territorial stigma and concentration of lower-income housing.

The territorial dimension of inequality emerges as one of the strongest shared themes, yet is a source of considerable divergence in framing. A long-term housing expert in Tarragona provides an illustrative institutional perspective that links present-day interventions to the **long-term historical production of segregation** in Tarragona. Reflecting on post-1970s urban expansion tied to industrial growth, he explains the role of locational choices and building concentration of large-scale housing development for workers:

> "Tarragona has gone through a process of growth that has clearly marked the city. Campclar, Bonavista, Torreforta... these neighborhoods were created very quickly, linked to the arrival of the chemical industry, and this generated a concentration of more vulnerable populations in very specific areas." (long-term housing expert, Tarragona)

This statement situates current housing and green transition initiatives within a structural and historical context, rather than treating them as isolated policy responses, expressing a sensitivity that **interventions in the Ponent carry heavy symbolic and political weight** and underlining that institutions and their actors are not monolithic.

This framing reinforces the civic insistence that the Ponent cannot be treated as a neutral site, while civic actors' narratives about the transformation of the Anella Mediterrània illustrate how **civic actors interpret green interventions as changes to dignity, atmosphere, and everyday belonging**. In this sense, essentially, civic actors interpret parks and NBS in the Ponent as a potentially transformative intervention. Both civic actors and housing experts converge on the idea that the **green transition must be read through inequality, but civic actors focus more on lived change, while institutional actors often emphasize abstract historic patterns and technocratic administrative categories.** A municipal technician summarizes how the Tarragona Greenbelt project is embedded within EU NextGen funds requirements.

> "So, this Tarragona Greenbelt project is funded by the Fundación Biodiversidad [drawing on EU NextGen funds]. It has been 3.5 million euros... It's a project that lasts two years... and it includes actions both in renaturalization and in education and awareness.... In the end, nature-based solutions come with a project, with a budget, with a series of objectives you have to fulfill." (Municipal technician working on the GreenBelt initiatives)

As a result of their professional activities, public-sector actors are more likely to frame parks and nature-based solutions through programs, departmental mandates, and external funding structures. As the quote above suggests, NBS projects such as the Greenbelt/Anella are tied to the existence of a funded project, with a budget scale and a structured environmental objective. This differs from local civic leaders' framing, for whom "green space" is evaluated through everyday usability and discovery. These two framings can complement each other, but not necessarily: a funded NBS program may not automatically produce a space that residents use or value, while residents may value spaces that are not formally framed as "NBS" in project terms.

Problems about social equity regarding energy-efficient retrofit are shared by civic and institutional actors. While framing retrofit and housing projects through funding streams, eligibility rules, and administrative sequencing, a local technician from the municipal housing service highlights the complexity of the process.

"The problem is not that there are no subsidies. The problem is that the process is very complex, and we don't always have the tools to accompany everyone in the way we would like." (local technician from the municipal housing service)

Housing experts similarly acknowledge the multiple burdens of information access, legibility, and technical isolation experienced by residents, while emphasizing the difficulty of altering institutional systems:

"We are asking a lot of people. **Many communities don't have the capacity to manage these processes, and we know that. But the system is designed in a certain way, and changing that is not simple.** The vast majority, 70% of residents of the city of Tarragona, probably don't have money to pay for a property manager, so the poor president of a building's homeowners' association must first find out that Next Gen funds exist, that there are subsidies, and then learn how to apply for them. When they see the bureaucracy in the documents they must submit, which they don't even understand... many people are outside the system because they may not have internet access."

Importantly, the civic critique is not that institutions are *doing nothing*; it is that institutional mechanisms do not match the real capacity of vulnerable communities to assume risk. This mismatch produces a justice problem: retrofit becomes accessible primarily to those who can front costs, coordinate works, and survive financial uncertainty, while those most exposed to energy vulnerability may remain excluded.

In this context, as housing technicians from the municipality frame housing problems as multifaceted, they illuminate the institutional tendency to interpret retrofit barriers as part of a broader complex system rather than as a single solvable bottleneck. Institutional actors more often describe interacting constraints: market pressures, administrative fragmentation, and the difficulty of aligning multiple policy domains. In contrast, civic actors are more likely to identify this complexity as risk and point at this risk transfer as the central injustice. The more dimensions involved, the less predictable outcomes become for vulnerable households that cannot afford failure. This is why civic narratives consistently return to the need for guarantees and accompaniment: complexity strengthens the case for stronger public responsibility, not for slower action. This difference in diagnosis can produce different political priorities. Civic voices demand guarantee structures; institutional voices tend to emphasize systems coordination and multi-level complexity.

Institutional actors, for their part, see serious flaws with the way they are meant to implement EU retrofit funds, seeing them as too narrowly focused and difficult to tailor to broader needs, particularly with an aging and economically vulnerable population.

> **Most EU retrofit funds here have gone to single-family houses**. It's the owner-occupiers that have more money. "Hey, for the Tesla they gave me 5,000 Euros, so…." **It's money that's not going where it should go. If they are public measures they should go to where there is need.** They have carried out some energy efficiency work on buildings in Campclar, but if you come here and say "do you want to renovate this building? It's going to cost you x", they say "what I want is a doorknob on the front door… and I have a broken window and I don't know how I'm going to pay for it." So, at that point, you say "well, forget about rehabilitating *that* building"…. They have to consent, and if they're a vulnerable community, they're going to say no. **Energy efficiency is all well and good, but… I think accessibility should be prioritized and elevators should be installed where there are none, that homes are accessible and in inhabitable condition, *then* you think about energy efficiency**. European funds should prioritize accessibility too. It is a priority for the Housing Council because the group working on refurbishments also includes accessibility. (housing specialist, City of Tarragona)

Such a position of a figure with technical and policy influence in the city suggests, as was also found in discussions during the ReHousIn policy lab with local experts, that **there is a challenge to dealing with EU funds focused specifically on energy efficiency when the needs of residents in apartment blocks — especially those on lower incomes or with disabilities — are widely seen by housing experts as more urgently needing accessibility improvements to accommodate aging people with mobility barriers, so they can remain in their homes**. Funds can be used at the same time for the installation of elevators, as happens in some cases, but the narrow focus of NextGen retrofit funds present challenges in terms of streamlining processes, and are seen as driving priorities that do not match the most immediate needs of residents, particularly those on fixed incomes.

Finally, tourism and market pressures also reveal subtle perception differences. Institutional actors often emphasize evidence-based assessment, while civic actors are less likely to speak in regulatory terms than interpret market pressures through development trajectories that feel tangible in their neighborhood environment (e.g., PP10, commercial logics, future investment uncertainty).

In sum, the Tarragona interview material suggests that **the most consequential gap between civic and public-sector perceptions is not about whether the green transition should happen, but about who should carry the burden of making it work**. Doing so requires institutional arrangements that reduce up-front household risk, prioritize the social usability, preservation of existing green spaces, and long-term maintenance of new green infrastructure, and that distribute responsibility for densification and retrofit across the city in ways that build legitimacy rather than reproduce inequality.

4 Critical Analysis: Tarragona

This section develops a policy-facing critical synthesis of Tarragona's housing justice and green transition trajectory over roughly the past two decades by placing interviewees' lived perceptions and interpretive frameworks at the center. As demonstrated in Section 3, interviewees consistently evaluate the green transition

through the lens of housing condition, territorial equity, and accessibility of financial support (see also Bustamante Picón et al., 2022a, 2023).

From the point of view of several civic actors, Tarragona's transition is often experienced less as a coordinated strategy than as a series of fragmented interventions that are distributed unevenly across space. This perception is historically grounded. Several Ponent neighborhoods—most notably Campclar — experienced not only rapid housing construction but subsequent phases of institutional failure, including halted works, mismanagement of public resources, and long periods of abandonment (Plaza, 2025). These experiences help explain why contemporary green and housing interventions are evaluated by residents less on stated intentions than on their durability, maintenance, and capacity to avoid repeating earlier cycles.

In practice, the strongest "justice test" of the green transition is housing affordability and security: whether residents are able to remain in place with adequate or improved habitability, affordability, and thermal comfort, and whether improvements reach those most exposed to vulnerability rather than those already best positioned to take advantage of public programs. **This perception-based diagnosis "green transition equity" aligns with critical social science research on Tarragona's uneven urban development, where socio-spatial inequalities have been shaped by long-term territorial separation and fragmentation, contested development trajectories, and a persistent center–periphery (and East/West) distinction** (Alberich et al., 2021; Sole Gras, 2022; Zaguirre Fernández and Solé Gras, 2019). **The territorial concentration of vulnerability in Ponent gives this justice test empirical weight.** The city's own reports (2023) demonstrate that Ponent records significantly higher rates of unemployment, lower income levels, and elevated indicators of social exclusion relative to Tarragona as a whole. In this context, **the distribution of green transition benefits cannot be separated from the spatial distribution of enduring socio-economic disadvantage.**

Tarragona's position as a medium-sized Catalan city is an important part of the story, as it functions as both a provincial capital with historical and cultural assets and a node in wider networks of mobility, service concentration, industrial businesses, and tourism pressures — dynamics that increasingly interact with housing access and affordability. Tarragona has long been described as a city where long-term development pathways have generated persistent spatial imbalance and contested planning and redevelopment approaches generate tensions, particularly in the Ponent, which has historically been shaped by infrastructure, industrial land use logics, and marginality. Like in Barcelona, this context emphasizes that civic society actors frequently interpret green transition activities not as a purely technical or ecological agenda, but one that brings to light ongoing disputes over urban inclusion, recognition, and distributive equity. Yet, unlike Barcelona, civic movements are more sparse and localized.

Tarragona's transition is interpreted territorially where the city acts matters as much as what is does

A consistent interpretive frame across the interviews is that Tarragona is not experienced as a unified urban system. Instead, it is perceived as a territorially fragmented city, where neighborhood location strongly conditions access to services, symbolic

recognition, and trust in public intervention. Interviewees describe neighborhoods relationally: in terms of proximity to the center, infrastructural connectivity, stigma, and whether public action is visible in everyday environments.

Historical accounts of the Ponent further indicate that this territorial fragmentation was reinforced by governance practices that weakened neighborhood-level collective power over time. Strong post-1970s place-based movements were gradually diluted through institutional fragmentation, parallel associations, and the political absorption of civic leadership, shaping a present-day context in which participation is often experienced as consultative rather than decision-making (Plaza, 2025), and this perspective is supported by contemporary civic actors. This territorial reading aligns closely with Tarragona-focused urban scholarship that conceptualizes the city through discontinuities and uneven integration between central and peripheral districts, produced by historical land-use choices, industrial infrastructures, and planning decisions (Zaguirre Fernández, 2015, 2020; Zaguirre Fernández and Solé Gras, 2019). In such a context, green transition interventions are interpreted politically. Investments are read as acts of recognition, while absences or delays are interpreted as a continuation of neglect.

The territorial lens is particularly pronounced in the Ponent, which functions in interview narratives as the city's most sensitive zone for housing justice. It is consistently described as a territory that concentrates vulnerability, stigma, and unmet needs—a "pending urban project" — and therefore becomes the clearest test of whether Tarragona's transition is distributive or selective on a territorial level (Alberich et al., 2021; Plaza, 2025). Academic work describing Tarragona's "oil stain" structure — a consolidated core combined with spread-out, polarized periphery—helps explain why transition interventions are experienced unevenly unless territorial cohesion and restructuring is explicitly embedded in program design.

This territorial sensitivity is not new. The 2005 Catalan Llei de Barris intervention in Campclar explicitly framed the neighborhood as a site of "integral" regeneration, combining urban, social, and environmental dimensions. However, the Campclar experience from two decades ago demonstrates how integrality depended heavily on institutional stability and coordination. The management team for the *Pla Integral d'Intervenció* changed three times, and overlapping programs complicated the delimitation of competences and responsibilities. These governance instabilities weakened continuity and complicated accountability. This history helps explain why contemporary transition initiatives in Ponent are interpreted cautiously: residents have experienced ambitious regeneration rhetoric before, but also the fragility of institutional embedding (Martí-Costa et al, 2009).

Green improvements are valued when they change everyday "livability", not only when they exist as projects

Across interviews, environmental improvement is valued most clearly when it produces tangible changes in everyday life. Legitimacy is evaluated less through abstract ecological objectives and more through effects on comfort, mobility, safety, and neighborhood usability. This reflects a recognitional dimension linked housing justice as a linked condition to environmental projects: residents are concerned not only with whether interventions exist, but whether they translate into a place that supports everyday routines with dignity.

This perception resonates strongly with Tarragona-specific research on green space accessibility and quality, which shows that urban parks in the city often score low on quality indices and that access is unevenly distributed along socio-economic lines (Puigbó Testagorda, 2018; Solé-Gras and Solà-Morales, 2023), in accord with studies underlining that green infrastructure and densification through urban infill become justice interventions only when they improve daily wellbeing in neighborhoods that have historically lacked environmental assets, and when they are maintained over time.

The interviews also highlight a fragile trust in green improvements. Civic actors note that projects can feel partial or unstable when maintenance regimes are unclear, governance continuity is weak, or green spaces remain vulnerable to competing development agendas. This fragility is especially visible in relation to the Francolí River corridor: besides being the principal boundary between the Ponent neighborhoods and industrial areas and the city center, it is where ecological ambition intersects with flood risk management, land-use pressure, and multi-level governance. The renaturalization proposal developed by Ecologistas en Acción explicitly frames the Francolí as both an ecological and social corridor, arguing that accessibility, long-term maintenance, and risk-aware design are essential if renaturalization is to deliver public value and ecological restoration rather than symbolic greening (Ecologistas en Acción, 2021). This also speaks to the petrochemical and infrastructural legacy of the city, as a key barrier to renaturalizing the waterfront are buried pipelines.

Housing is the core justice aspect in civic assessments of the green transition

Housing emerges across interviews as the clearest site where Tarragona's green transition succeeds or fails: Civic caution toward housing and retrofit programs is also shaped by a longer memory of failed social interventions. At various historical moments well-funded social welfare and community programs in Ponent were undermined by poor coordination, rotating technical staff, and ineffective administration, reinforcing a rational skepticism toward initiatives that transfer risk or responsibility onto residents without strong public guarantees (Plaza, 2025).

Interviewees across institutional and civic groups repeatedly emphasize that the central housing problem in many neighborhoods—especially in Ponent—is not only affordability, but habitability: ageing buildings, limited accessibility, and persistent deficits in comfort and thermal performance.

This diagnosis aligns with technical and professional assessments of Tarragona's housing stock, which document widespread energy inefficiency and structural ageing, particularly in multi-family buildings, as underlined by the local professional association of technical architects (COAATT, 2023). **Interviewees consistently describe a two-stage problem: first basic rehabilitation (structure, accessibility, moisture, safety), and only then energy upgrading. In this sense, transition policies that focus narrowly on energy metrics risk missing what residents experience as the most urgent housing needs and as other health risks.**

From a housing access and affordability standpoint, the Local Housing Plan of Tarragona recognizes the structural gap between housing need and affordable supply, identifying social rental expansion and rehabilitation as priority challenges. Recent reporting indicates that Tarragona remains significantly below its estimated social housing requirements, with a persistent shortfall relative to projected demand. This structural gap reinforces **interviewees' perception that housing condition and access, rather than abstract climate targets, define the justice horizon of the transition.**

Institutional actors also acknowledge this misalignment, noting that European energy-efficiency frameworks are not always well adapted to Mediterranean housing typologies and ownership structures. This reinforces the idea that housing justice in the green transition depends on recognizing uneven starting points about quality and affordable housing access, rather than assuming a uniform baseline of housing adequacy.

Retrofit is widely perceived as necessary, but structurally inaccessible

While retrofit is broadly recognized as desirable, interviews reveal a persistent **access problem**. Exclusion is produced less through explicit eligibility rules than through **capacity inequalities**: differences in administrative literacy, digital access, availability of property managers, and collective organization within housing communities.

This perception aligns with Spain-wide evidence showing that although rehabilitation activity has increased sharply due to European funds, uptake remains uneven and administratively bottlenecked, particularly in vulnerable contexts (López, 2024, 2025). This local experience mirrors national reporting that Next Generation rehabilitation funds have encountered administrative bottlenecks across Spanish autonomous communities. The European Urban Initiative's Building Decarbonization report (Lorimer, 2024) similarly emphasizes that integrated renovation programs require strong local facilitation capacity and coordinated governance structures to avoid uneven uptake. Tarragona's experience in Ponent illustrates how capacity gaps at the building and household level can transform formally universal programs into stratified interventions.

Interviews reveal how many communities simply cannot navigate Next Generation rehabilitation systems because they lack property managers, digital access, and the time or ability to manage complex bureaucracy. With such challenges, **program design can reproduce inequality when funding is theoretically universal without stricter social-economic criteria and feasibility assessments.** If access depends on administrative scaffolding (property managers, technical intermediaries, stable internet access), then the transition becomes easier in higher-capacity buildings and harder in lower-capacity ones. This aligns with broader scholarship on how policy complexity often externalizes burdens onto households, producing stratified outcomes (even when overall funding is progressive) (Gutiérrez and Delclòs, 2017).

The Campclar regeneration as a result of the 2005 Catalan Llei de Barris revealed a structurally similar dynamic (Martí-Costa et al 2009). Although funding was territorially targeted and explicitly redistributive, implementation depended heavily on technical intermediaries, stable administrative teams, and clearly defined competences. The documentation of team

turnover, electoral-cycle disruption, and overlapping program frameworks demonstrates how even well-funded interventions can lose coherence when institutional coordination is unstable. In this sense, the retrofit bottlenecks and complexities described by interviewees in Ponent reflect not a new failure, but a recurring governance pattern in the neighborhoods' experience of public intervention.

Together, these perceptions indicate that Tarragona's retrofit bottleneck is not mainly about whether households value efficiency or comfort. It is about whether households can engage with the system safely and realistically and without assuming greater financial risks. For housing justice outcomes, this implies that transition policy requires more than "available grants": it requires facilitation capacity, technical accompaniment, and risk reduction mechanisms, particularly in neighborhoods with vulnerable residents and older housing stock.

The COAATT report (2023) underscores why this is structurally significant in Tarragona. It documents the predominance of multi-family communities, identifies extensive energy deficiencies, and points to the scale of housing located in Ponent neighborhoods (including Torreforta and Campclar). If these communities cannot access rehabilitation systems, the city's overall transition potential becomes structurally constrained. Both civic and institutional interviewees point to the same structural issue: program design assumes organizational and administrative capacity that many housing communities — especially in Ponent — do not possess. As a result, the transition becomes harder in those most exposed to vulnerability. **This confirms that retrofit justice requires not only grants, but facilitation capacity, technical accompaniment, and risk reduction**, **particularly in neighborhoods with ageing housing stock.**

In considering this, it is essential to note that there are deficiencies in the roll-out of retrofit subsidies and support structures: under the Next Generation–funded residential energy-efficiency programs in Spain, implemented in Catalonia through the regional recovery plan, **there was a clear intention to create "one-stop shops" (*oficinas de rehabilitación* or *ventanillas únicas*) to accompany homeowners through the technical and administrative process; however, in practice, these offices have been unevenly developed**, with well-staffed and clearly identifiable one-stop shops concentrated mainly in Barcelona, while many other parts of Catalonia have relied on more fragmented arrangements involving regional agencies, municipalities, and professional bodies with limited visibility and effectiveness; **in the case of Tarragona, there is no widely recognized, stand-alone local "one-stop shop" equivalent to Barcelona's Municipal Rehabilitation Office, and property owners are instead typically directed to the heavily-burdened Catalan Housing Agency, local municipal services for initial guidance, and private or professional technical offices** (such as the COAATT) to navigate subsidy processes, with the effect that access to these funds exist without clear local accompaniment**.**

Densification and "where growth lands": Call for compactness with quality, but rejection of macro-project logics

Housing justice in Tarragona is also shaped by perceptions of densification and development priorities. Interviewees do not reject density per se. Instead, they emphasize that **densification must be evaluated by where it is emplaced, what it replaces, and whether it improves everyday urban conditions**.

This position resonates with research on intermediate cities and territorial planning in Catalonia, which shows how large-scale projects and competitiveness narratives can intensify tensions around who benefits from growth (Varo, 2024; Vidal and García-Duch, 2024). In Tarragona, distrust is directed less at density itself than at development logics perceived as privileging private return while externalizing social costs to already vulnerable neighborhoods.

Contemporary debates about Tarragona's development model—particularly tensions between tourism, large-scale private investment, and "green industry" narratives—shape how densification is interpreted. Public discussion around strategic projects such as Hard Rock Tarragona – the large-scale leisure industry project just southwest of the city – reinforces civic sensitivity to where growth is located and who benefits. In this context, interviewees' calls for "compactness with quality" can be read as a demand for socially embedded density rather than macro-project urbanism.

As an environmental activist articulated in an interview, **density can be compatible with quality and sustainability — but only if it is shaped by careful placement, public benefit logics, and "stitching together" existing urban fragments rather than pursuing large-scale speculative schemes**: Interviewees stress that densification without parallel investment in services intensifies everyday pressure. This reinforces the idea that density becomes unjust when population increases are not accompanied by expanded collective infrastructures. In this sense, new housing delivery cannot be treated as a standalone output but must be integrated into a broader package of social and territorial investment.

Community activists further fear that that the arrival of more residents and institutions into the Ponent will generate a sharper experience of the abstract concept of "densification" and that this experience will become more contentious unless public systems, services, and staffing expand accordingly. This perception has direct policy relevance: like in the Barcelona case, **densification becomes perceived as unjust when it adds population without expanding collective infrastructures (services, staff, health systems, local access). Tarragona's transition therefore cannot treat new housing delivery as a standalone output;** it must be planned as part of a broader package of collective investments that make neighborhood growth socially sustainable. Some interviews also stress that densification runs of risk of selectively removing or destroying valuable green space, under the promises of new housing and infrastructure – thus making green infrastructure expendable in the face of ostensibly "green" redevelopment.

New social housing delivery: positive, but territorially sensitive

Overall, interviews report that Tarragona's recent public and protected housing promotion is significant given the city's historic difficulty delivering large volumes of units. Yet these efforts

are perceived as territorially sensitive: where units are located matters, because it affects neighborhood reputation, connectivity, and the distribution of opportunity.

This concern aligns with reporting on Tarragona's social housing deficit and the spatial concentration of new projects (ACN, 2024; Magarolas, 2024a, 2024b) **Interviewees interpret social housing not only as affordability infrastructure, but as territorial restructuring**, **whose justice effects depend on whether it reduces stigma and improves integration or reinforces peripheral concentration.** The 2021–2026 Local Housing Plan explicitly identifies the expansion of social housing, the mobilization of vacant units, and the improvement of residential cohesion as priority challenges. These commitments underscore that new social housing is not framed solely as quantitative supply, but as a territorial cohesion instrument — particularly relevant in districts such as Campclar and Torreforta. Neighborhood activists seek to hold the city accountable to these commitments.

A local housing expert working with the city describes the 192-unit project (located in Campclar/Anella) as both **a large opportunity and a mechanism for "energizing" an area that has been more "isolated" and "stigmatized", while also creating demands for improvements in transport and local services**: social housing is indeed framed by the city in the context of territorial restructuring. Such restructuring can be perceived by civic actors as positive if it reduces stigma and strengthens connectivity, but requires careful coordination to avoid reinforcing patterns of peripheral concentration (Alberich et al., 2021). This theme also connects to broader research on Camp de Tarragona's metropolitanization processes and regional planning tensions, where housing, infrastructure, and growth interact across municipal boundaries (Zaguirre Fernández and Solé Gras, 2019). In Tarragona, this means that new **housing delivery must also be assessed through its capacity to produce integrated urban membership and territorial balance across historically separated neighborhoods** as well as **balance between new housing and preservation of green space**.

Synthesis

Foregrounding interviewee perceptions suggest that Tarragona's green transition activities in the Ponent are not perceived as unjust because residents reject environmental improvement, but because **improvement pathways are selective, difficult to access, and territorially uneven**.

While providing opportunities for new initiatives and improved staffing budgets, **the reliance on extraordinary European funding cycles introduces structural uncertainty into the continuity of transition measures**. As observed nationally, rehabilitation rates have surged under EU funding, yet long-term institutional embedding remains uneven. Tarragona's case suggests that unless facilitation capacity and territorial equity are institutionalized beyond funding windows, transition gains may remain episodic rather than structural.

Three conclusions stand out. **First, legitimacy depends on access, not availability: capacity inequality becomes a hidden exclusion mechanism. Second, compactness is accepted when it improves city-making rather than functioning as a pretext for macro-development. Third, territorial cohesion emerges as the key justice metric. Ponent**

functions as the city's principal distributive test: **when interventions reduce stigma and improve connectivity, they are perceived as just; when they concentrate burdens, they are perceived as reproducing, rather than reducing, inequalities.**

Finally, interviewees highlight dependence on extraordinary funding moments, particularly Next Generation programs. Tarragona's experience under the 2005 Llei de Barris provides a relevant precedent (Martí-Costa el al 2009). The Campclar intervention demonstrates both the ambition and the vulnerability of territorially focused regeneration when continuity, competence clarity, and long-term institutional embedding are weak. The recurrence of capacity and coordination challenges in today's green transition suggests that **the core justice question is not simply whether funding is available, but whether governance learning from earlier regeneration cycles has been institutionalized and will remain upon the expiration of the NextGen funds**. Without such learning and continued funding and support, transition risks reproducing the episodic, project-based pattern that has historically characterized intervention in Ponent.

While enabling significant interventions, project-based funding creates uncertainty around continuity and long-term embedding and concerns that urban planning initiatives are driven by the themes of funding mechanisms rather than the other way around. Evidence from European and Spanish policy analysis suggests that such reliance risks uneven outcomes unless anchored in durable institutional capacity (Lorimer, 2024). **Tarragona's experience suggests that the most urgent work of the transition is therefore not only new delivery, but institutional accompaniment and commitment**: **making improvement pathways navigable and durable for the communities that need them most.**

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6 Appendix 1 – Glossary

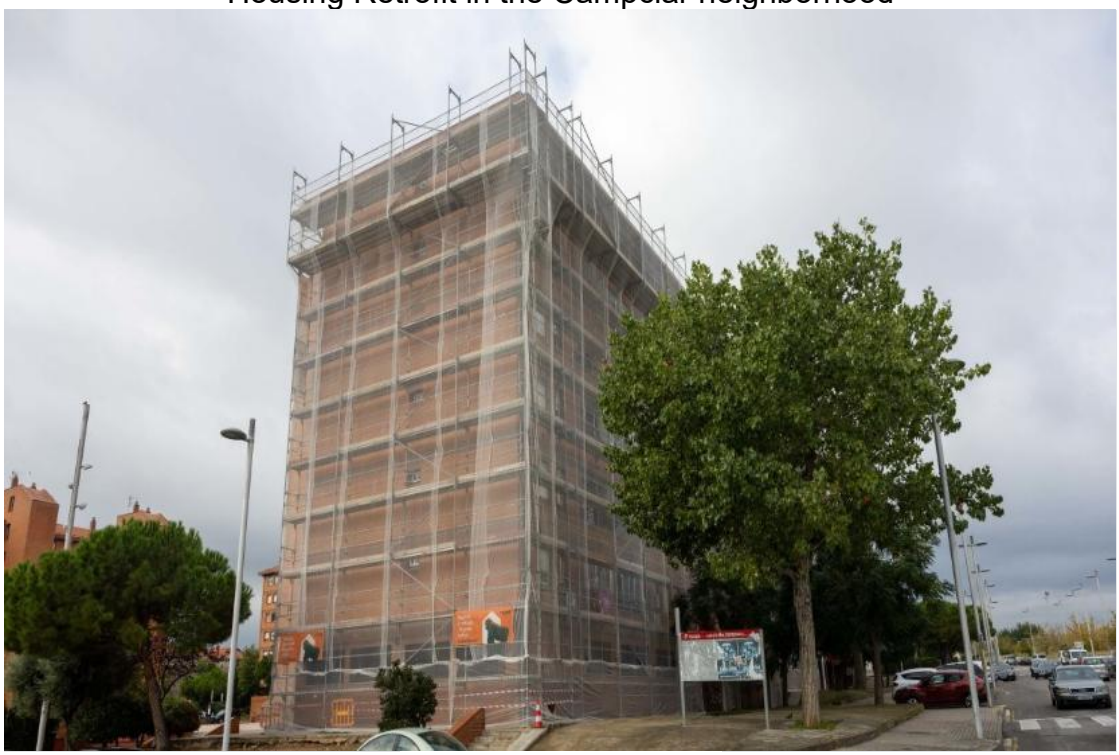
EU	European Union
Generalitat	Government of the Autonomous Community of Catalonia - public body
ICF	Institut Català de Finances Catalonia's public development bank providing financing to companies and public entities.
ICO	Instituto de Crédito Oficial Spain's state-owned development bank that supports public policy financing and business investment
NBS	Nature-based Solutions
PERTE	Proyecto Estratégico para la Recuperación y Transformación Económica Strategic Project for the Recovery and Economic Transformation A Spanish public–private initiative to drive economic recovery and strategic sector transformation
PSC	Partit dels Socialistes de Catalunya Socialist Party of Catalonia, local branch of the national PSOE party
PSUC	Partido Socialista Unificado de Cataluña The Unified Socialist Party of Catalonia was a communist political party active in Catalonia between 1936 and 1997. It was the Catalan branch of the Communist Party of Spain and the only party not from a sovereign state to be a full member of the Third International.
VPO	Vivienda de Protección Oficial Publicly regulated housing offered at below-market prices to ensure affordable access

7 Appendix 2 – Key Interview Data and Transcripts

	Position of Interviewee	Sector/ Organization	Date of Interview	Modality
1	Municipal housing technician	City Council of Tarragona & SMHAUSA	14/07/2025	Online
2	Long-term housing expert	UNESCO Chair in Housing (Universitat Rovira I Virgil)	24/07/2025	Online
3	Housing expert	SMHAUSA	26/09/2025	In-Person
4	Architect and environmental activist	L'ESCAMOT architecture & urbanism cooperative	05/10/2025	Online
5	Long-term civic activist	Campclar Neighborhood Association	20/11/2025	Online
6	Civic leader	Castaño Block	28/11/2025	Online
7	Municipal environmental technician	Tarragona City Council	30/12/2025	Online

8 Appendix 3 – Visuals

Housing Retrofit in the Campclar neighborhood



Source: Diari de Tarragona

Renaturing the Anillo Mediterráneo (project Tarragona Greenbelt 26)

Source: Diari de Tarragona.