

NEW FAMILIES, NEW CONSUMERS

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1. INTRODUCTION

Through this text, an attempt is made to analyse dwellers, how family models and cohabitation units have changed in these last few years and which effects these changes have on the habitat, as well as the alternatives presented by the habitat professionals.

A description will thus be given of which family models are emerging, this being especially significant information in order to understand who the new emerging consumers are, and what the needs of these new groups are. In order to grasp this new reality, it is essential to address how these new family models have evolved and emerged and to understand what these units that make up the home are like, how they behave, what their values are and, in short, what type of house and products they need or want.

Proposals are being drawn up and actions are being taken, some of which are experimental and others more generalized, which seek to reflect these changes in town planning, architecture and products that make up our homes. Interest in home architecture is currently being renewed, especially thanks to public housing tenders, but also to the reduction in demand and, along with it, the consequent search for the added value of these houses.

With respect to products, which are witnesses to the way we do things, we are asking for wider-ranging products, i.e. products with more uses, which are emotional and give us experiences of all types including games, surprises and well-being, but which are also in line with our ethics and the way we use them. They are interactive and flexible, but also simple. All in all, they are products that are closely linked to the user, since the user takes part in creating them, interacts with them or is united to them by an emotional tie.

Among city planning, architecture and the interior of our homes, ceramics are also subject to this continuous evolution in adapting to the changes in their users. Thus, ceramics functions are extended, their properties are constantly improving, they are transferred to other elements of the home and can even be customized.

Knowledge about the user is vital to enable companies to adapt to the profound changes that are occurring to dwellers and their homes, in order to bridge the gap between what a company offers and what a dweller needs.

1.1. Main changes in home units.

1.1.1. Pluralisation of cohabitation modes in Spain.

Consequences of the plurality of the types of homes (Source: *Survey on Family Trends*, the UNED):

- Increase in single-parent homes.
- Increase in single-person homes, whether this be a desired situation or not.

- Increase in reconstructed families.
- New composition of complex families.

1.1.2. Reduction in average home size.

Between 1991 and 2001, the number of homes increased by almost 20% in comparison with only 5% of the population growth (Source: 2001 Census). It is therefore deduced that there are more homes, but the number of home members is lower. This places the European average below 2.4 members per home.

1.1.3. The shared home.

On the other hand, among other reasons, due to the delay in children's age of emancipation, homes made up of three or more adults with no family links have increased. In Spain, this type of home has a much higher relative presence than in Centre and North European Union countries. Thus, in 2006, 23% of the Spanish population was living in this type of home, while in Scandinavian countries, this was only 2 to 3% of the population, with a European Union (EU-15) average of 11%.

2. NEW HOME UNITS

2.1. I am my family.

This family unit is made up of **one single person** characterized and accepted by the open and tolerant society in which he/she lives. In other words, this is a person who **freely** decides **to live alone** in an **independent** manner. In this case, individualism and the search for **personal satisfaction** are the characteristics that guide his/her life in a society with a multitude of lifestyles.

How many single-person homes are there?

1 out of every 4 homes in Europe is a single-person home. This means 27.7% of European homes, or what is the same thing, over 54 million Europeans live alone.

Source: *Evolution of the Family in Europe, 2008*. Family Policy Institute.

In the face of these data, we can say that the type of home that has increased most in the last few years is the one formed by one single person. We can identify three main causes of the increase in these homes:

- Young single people who decide to live alone (of which there are two men for every woman).
- The increase in the number of separations and divorces (mostly male homes).
- The ageing of the population (mostly female homes).

What is the person who decides to be his/her own family like?

These are young people aged between 25 and 35, mostly men, with a favourable work and economic situation who decide to live alone. This group is also characterized by a **chosen late emancipation**, i.e. they decide to leave the parental home through their own choice and not out of necessity.

In general these are people with higher consumer rates than other homes with two or more people. This group concentrates **13% of national expenditure** in high consumption products (Source: TNS Worldpanel).

How does the person who decides to be his/her own family live?

Given their individualistic character, they look for houses and products that reflect their personality, with a high presence of technology. Other preferences of theirs are functionality and flexibility of spaces, as well as products that facilitate their everyday actions, but they also take advantage of the space in this way.

2.2. Single mother by choice.

These are women who are single mothers because this is what they decided. Although the single-parent family model is not new, what really is a novelty is that it is no longer a family that has reached this point due to circumstances (through a separation or being widowed), but it is something desired and sought.

How many single-parent families are there?

In the first place, we can provide the data on all single-parent homes, i.e. those that correspond both to homes stemming from widowhood, separations or divorces, adolescent pregnancies and homes created out of personal choice. In Spain, there are 1.3 million units of mothers with children, which means an increase of 41% in the 1991-2001 period (Source: NSI (National Statistics Institute)).

What is a family with a single mother by choice like?

In our society, we find ourselves faced with a growing number of women who decide to be mothers on their own and who we can describe as women with a different type of resources to bring up their families on their own. These are mostly single women aged between 35 and 45, with university studies, an economic solvency and who live alone with their children, normally one child.

Generally speaking, these are **smaller, limited homes**, firstly because there is no paternal figure and, secondly, because it is a home with few children. Another factor that has an influence is the process to be followed when having a new child, such as adoption or the assisted reproductive process, processes which are generally very expensive at all levels.

Obviously, this family model would not be possible without woman's independence at all levels, among which, and very significantly, is economic independence, a situation achieved by women thanks to their **mass incorporation into the extra-domestic job market** in the last few decades.

How does a family with a single mother by choice live?

These inhabitants seek to live in flexible homes which avoid at all times the creation of hierarchies and which make it possible for dialogue to be established among the members of the home. The functionality and use of the space are some of this group's preferences.

2.3. The family of two.

This new home model is a true reflection of a new mentality, the one known in sociological studies as a childless couple, where each couple is a world built on the aspirations and wishes of its members, who form part of a new generation of men and women.

How many childless couples are there?

1991: 2 million / 2001: almost 2.5 million... **they have grown by almost half a million in 10 years and there are now more than 2 million homes.** (Source: Census 2001, NSI).

17.3% of the total number of homes... **represent almost a fifth of all homes.** (Source: Census 2001, NSI).

What is a family of two like?

In general, these are men and women aged between 25 and 40 with a medium or medium-to-high purchasing level, who live together as a couple, who are in search of personal, professional and economic fulfilment and who clearly believe that paternity/maternity is more of a decision than a mere biological decision determined by tradition. This is a relatively new model. What makes it different from the model of the past is that it has voluntarily chosen this family situation, i.e. as a symbol of a change in ideals where more independence, individualism, dynamism and a certain purchasing power are top priority.

The expansion of this model has been one of the causes of the strong drop in the birth rates, up to the point that 67% of European homes have no children (Source: Report on the family's evolution in Spain, 2008. The Family Policy Institute.)

With respect to this family model being made official, **civil weddings, cohabitation and** more and more **common-law marriages** – a cohabitation model which has multiplied by 2.5 in 10 years according to data from the NSI – are predominant as alternatives to marriage that allow more prevention where it comes to putting compatibility to the test, seeing how coexisting works between the

members of a couple and being a preventive option in the face of a future which is sometimes uncertain, since the couple is not always for life.

How does a family of two live?

The inhabitants who belong to this type of home unit tend to be young and with a very active attitude. Therefore, spaces and products that allow the user to participate and that can be personalized are sought.

2.4. The negotiating family.

In actual fact, this *negotiating family* does not hide a family model, but a different one from the family formed by a **couple with children** where we find the main change in the way the members of a family mix with each other, especially the parents and the children. As explained by the sociologist, Gerardo Meil Landwerlin, "the term negotiating family includes the essential characteristics of the **change in relationships between generations**. The emergence of the negotiating family is the corollary of the emergence of a new marital pact between the parents, characterized by the consensus and conciliation of interests and different visions between the married couple. This is all the result of the dissolution of the patriarchal family on the border of the individualization process produced throughout the second half of the 20th century".

How many couples with children are there?

The homes formed by a couple with children are the majority in the entire Spanish society and they make up 43% of Spanish homes, according to the NSI, although they are tending to **decrease slightly**, since they are the only type of home with a negative growth throughout the nineties.

What is a negotiating family like?

From a morphological point of view, we could talk about a **small family** which has increasingly fewer members due to people having fewer children. Its other distinctive characteristic is the evolution in relationships that exist between parents and children. As explained by the sociologist, Gerardo Meil Landwerlin, "**respect** as a structuring principle of relationships and as a delimiter of the margins for questioning the authority of parents has been substituted by **trust**".

One feature that characterizes these families is the fact that they often form **shared homes**, or as they often tend to be called, **multi-generational homes**, since 3 or more adults live together in these units. This has usually occurred in Spanish homes. The difference is that, nowadays, the reason is mainly due to the phenomenon of young people's late emancipation which creates coexistence among adults due to the young people prolonging their stay in the paternal home.

How does a negotiating family live?

In this family model, the balance between the **individual spaces** (in search of that individuality and freedom) is especially important, at the same time as common spaces in search of a **relaxed atmosphere**, which reflects the new relationships between parents and children. On the other hand, they show great interest in **products that make their everyday life easier**, ones that are versatile in adapting to the changes being produced in the home and those that invite participation.

2.5. The reconstructed family.

In spite of the general idea that it is a new phenomenon, this is a new cohabitation unit which has traditionally coexisted with the family unit. What has changed significantly over the years is the type of person that forms part of these homes. Traditionally, they were formed by couples in which at least one of the members was a widow/widower. It may be noted that about 15% of the weddings celebrated in Spain at the beginning of the last century were between people of whom at least one was not single (at that time, a widow/widower), but, nowadays, the major cause is divorce, for the spouses of the reconstructed family tend to come from previous marriages.

How many reconstructed families are there?

There is very little information available on the number and characteristics of this type of family, even though it is a reality that can be seen more and more. According to the definition of the NSI, which requires the presence of children who are not common to both partners in a couple's home for it to be considered a reconstructed family, we have the following figures: in 2006, **2.3% of all homes** were reconstructed families. Source: estimate using data from the SRC (Sociological Research Centre) 2006 Survey. "New types of families in Spain and in the EU". Lence and Guzman, 2007.

What is a reconstructed family like?

This family model responds to a way of thinking and living that is open to changes in which, due to different circumstances of life, this way of life is established with changes in the types of cohabitation in successive stages of life.

This is a complex family model formed by pieces of previous families, i.e. it consists of a couple that has already formed part of a previous union in which children of previous relationships are brought into the new one, plus the children that the marriage has in common. This family's organization and coexistence is much more casual, less formal and, therefore, less hierarchical, which creates situations with more equality among the different members.

Within this family, what is known as the “**travelling children**” phenomenon arises, where the children of separated or divorced couples alternate living between the two families.

How does a reconstructed family live?

In general, we can talk about cohabitation units in which they have different needs as their life evolves, especially due to the often constant increase and decrease in family members, so flexibility and the possibility of spaces and products being changed and adapted will be one of the priorities.

2.6. My other family.

Just like other previously mentioned home units, this type has always been present in our society. What has changed is who forms part of this cohabitation unit. In the past, it was generally made up of adults with blood ties who had not formed a family or who had been widowed (e.g. an uncle or an aunt with his/her nephew and two cousins or sisters). Nowadays, although this type of unit still exists, new members are emerging in this cohabitation unit, such as young people with no family ties among them.

How many homes without a nucleus are there?

Although the weight of **homes without a nucleus** within all the homes is still very small and is no more than 5%, there are more and more of them. It is one of the homes that have increased most in the last few years after the individual and single-parent homes – they multiplied by 2 in the 1991-2001 period, according to the NSI.

What is “my other family” like?

There are different reasons for this type of home to be formed. In some cases, people see it as the only possibility of independence in the face of economic insecurity and, in others, they see it as a possibility when there is a delay in the couple and the family being formalized.

We can find different social, economic and demographic causes that explain the increase of this type of cohabitation unit such as the **late emancipation of young people, the increase in life expectancy, the high price of housing, the low pensions or the extension of Mickey Mouse contracts.**

How does “my other family” live?

Within this cohabitation unit, it is important for each one of the members to be able to have his/her own room space. However, the common spaces become a highly interesting area due to the large amount of activity carried out. At the same time, products are expected to be economic and simple.

3. CHANGES IN HOME PRODUCTS. EVOLUTION OF CERAMICS

We have just seen what our homes are like and how they are changing to adapt to new ways of being, of living and of living together. Within these receptacles, our homes' second skin is found. These are the products that accompany us daily in our most day-to-day actions. These products talk about us, about how we do things, how we think, what our tastes are and also what our concerns are.

So, how are our products changing? What do we ask of them and what do they offer us? All things considered, what new ways of doing things are emerging?

We take it for granted that, of course, we ask for quality and functionality in products, but this basis is inherent to what a good design has to be and, therefore, it has been superseded. Since its origins, the objective and essential purpose of design is to solve a problem, to offer a solution that improves the person-product relation and, therefore, to improve his/her quality of life.

One of the aspects that has changed most in these years is the emotionality with which we do things, which is translated into an incessant search for experiences in our homes and the search for an affinity or links among the products and the user him/herself, i.e. that these be a ramification of the way we are, our ethics and our tastes. Wenceslao Rambla, and expert in aesthetics, talks about object memories, "which in a certain way are unique and they have a strong emotional bond with the subject/owner".

Let's give an example. It is no longer a case of eating, but of taking care of oneself, enjoying or experiencing. So let us think how the act of cooking has evolved in these last few years, from cooking to survive to almost professional or signature cooking, from the pressure cooker to the kitchen blow torch, from the spice jars to the small greenhouses of aromatic plants.

This questioning and search for new functions lead to a series of products that expand and multiply their uses, so their value perceived by the user increases and is closer and closer to the user involved. They are expanded products.

Through this paper, we analyse which paths companies and designers are pursuing to develop this type of product, which is much closer to the way we have of doing more interactive, flexible, efficient and especially emotional things. These will be the products that will accompany us from now on in our daily routine.

Within this complex context of expanded products, we introduce 7 lines that are currently being developed. These lines are produced thanks to two main factors: the user's participation in the product and material or social innovation of the products.

3.1. Multi-functional and versatile product.

Due to the constantly increased reduction of spaces and their multipurpose

nature and flexibility (rest, socialising, leisure, etc.), a great versatility is looked for in objects so that they can respond to different situations and needs.

These are products that can be transformed, sometimes hidden, which acquire different functions throughout the day and adapt in situ to the different actions of their users. The multipurpose nature and profitability of the objects and the space are sought. In fact, ceramic products that cover surfaces can actually create hidden spaces for storage or include various functionalities.

3.2. Facilitating and intuitive product.

Aspects such as safety and well-being are increasingly valued in home products. The objects are designed to facilitate everyday actions and are more ergonomic, more intuitive and easier to use thanks to a technology that is put at the service of the human being.

So, we find ceramic coverings more and more ergonomic, safer and more hygienic, with domotic integrated systems and sensors that make them interact with the user.

3.3. Product with an unusual and creative use.

Unusual or non-traditional uses of materials and products are created. So, an exploration of the physical and technical characteristics of the materials is produced: their properties are put to the test, some materials are inspired on others, etc.

A transfer of materials is made from some sectors to others. In it, ceramics start to form part of the furniture, and this way their high technical performance features are used in other types of products.

3.4. Responsible and efficient product.

These are objects that make our everyday actions more sustainable and that are in line with a new idea of well-being. This implementation of the sustainable design not only takes care of the productive part, but of the use and life of the objects.

In this sense, ceramic production systems are continuously being improved; they are increasingly efficient, consume less energy and resources and even the ceramic material is recycled. With respect to use, mechanically installed tiling systems are being developed that allow ceramic tiles to be easily replaced and disassembled.

3.5. Interactive and participative product.

We see how information technologies are also beginning to expand to objects that surround us in our houses, offering innovative functionalities. As an example, it is now possible to personalize products thanks to flexible production technologies and to the ICTs that connect the user with the production centre. This is the

case of the ceramic claddings that reproduce *ad hoc* images.

3.6. Simple and remade product.

This stems from a change in attitude with regard to consumption: consuming less but better. These are objects made to last, that can be repaired and modified in the course of time, either by adapting to the user's needs or by acquiring other uses.

These are ingenious and creative objects made using minimum resources in which a search is made for the essential. Ceramics become neutral and basic, with the objective of remaining timeless, while mechanical installing systems are being investigated for interiors that allow repairs of the home's structural elements that are ever easier.

3.7. Experimental and sensorial product.

The continuous research and development of new materials, their applications and the use of hybrid materials is helping everyday objects acquire properties and uses that have never been imagined before in which the user is highly involved.

A generation of materials and objects is emerging that go from being passive to being active. These are intelligent objects that now accommodate other functions like giving us information in a very subtle manner or they interact with the user through sensors. That is when surfaces change colour with heat, or they react in our presence..

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