

## Contested 'beehive' housing arrives in Barcelona on the sly

March 13 2019, by Daniel Bosque

---



The housing initiative by the Spanish start-up company Haibu, which means beehive in Japanese, is made up of around 20 tiny living pods, which include a bed and nightstand.

For the past few weeks Harry Kajevic has been sleeping in a 2.4-square-metre capsule flat in a clandestine location.

He is one of the first residents of a "beehive"-style [housing](#) project, inspired by those in Japan or Hong Kong, which has opened in Barcelona despite not having a permit from the city authorities.

The initiative by the Spanish start-up company Haibu is made up of around 20 tiny living pods, which include a bed and nightstand.

They are housed side by side in a building with a shared kitchen, bathroom and terrace—all for 200 euros (\$225) a month, at least in Kajevic's case.

Furniture is sparse, limited in the communal area to a few tables, chairs and a wardrobe for each resident which is too big for the rooms.

Haibu, which means beehive in Japanese, argues that the project is a solution to a shortage of affordable housing in the Spanish city.

But Barcelona's left-wing city hall says that such tiny accommodation is unfit for humans and violates local building laws.

"For me, this is decent housing. I go out into the streets clean and fed, I rest when I sleep," said Kajevic, a 42-year-old burly Austrian truck driver, who just moved back to Barcelona after a previous period in the city.

Faced with the opposition of city hall, which forced Haibu to close its showroom, the project's promoters are cautious.



Residents are housed side by side in a building with a shared kitchen, bathroom and terrace—all for around 200 euros (\$225) a month

For fear of being spotted, entry to Haibu's first "beehive" is through a shop. The blinds of the building, which is still undergoing work, are drawn to hide the tenants' presence.

And promoters of the housing project switch their mobile phones to flight mode when they go to the building because they are afraid of being tracked.

**'Better than the streets'**

"It's alright for a while, until I find something better," said Hector Cabanol, boiling water in a microwave in the communal kitchen to prepare an instant coffee for lack of a stove.

The 36-year-old electrician, who got divorced last year, earns 800 euros per month at his part-time job.

Almost all his salary, 600 euros (\$900), goes to pay child support for his daughters and a mortgage he still shares with his ex-wife.

"If it wasn't for this, I don't know what I would do. I survived by dipping into my savings, but they ran out. This is better than being on the streets," said Cabanol.

At the end of last year, the average rent in Barcelona was 954.29 euros, a 40-percent jump over the end of 2013, according to figures from the regional government of Catalonia.

Real-estate websites rarely list rooms for rent in a shared apartment for less than 300 euros a month.

Citation: Contested 'beehive' housing arrives in Barcelona on the sly (2019, March 13) retrieved 2 August 2024 from

<https://phys.org/news/2019-03-contested-beehive-housing-barcelona-sly.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.