



**Theoretically informed case study accompanying the film**  
**Abitare Solidale- Inter- and intra- generational cohabitation – Italy**



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**QR-Code to the Homepage and video:**  
**Link to the video: <http://www.inno-serv.eu/abitare-solidale>**

*This report is part of the research project „Social Platform on innovative Social Services“ (INNOSEV). INNOSEV investigates innovative approaches in three fields of social services: health, education and welfare. The INNOSEV Consortium covers nine European countries and aims to establish a social platform that fosters a europeanwide discussion about innovation in social services between practitioners, policy-makers, researchers and service users. This project is funded by the European Union under the 7th Framework Programme (grant agreement nr. 290542).*



## 1. Short profile: Abitare Solidale

Abitare Solidale is a project carried out by AUSER together with the municipality of Florence and three small towns in the province of Florence, the association ARTEMISIA and other associations. The project supports inter- and intra-generational cohabitation as an integrated solution to tackle different kinds of social problems.

Abitare Solidale offers an innovative and sustainable solution to self-sufficient older people in need of help with household maintenance and housework to persons experiencing economic difficulties who are in need of an affordable and decent accommodation, as well as to women who are victims of domestic violence and in need of a temporary shelter.

### Specific innovative elements of Abitare Solidale

*New form of service:*

The project promotes the idea of cohabitation as a new form of service, providing an integrated response to different kinds of problems and needs and overcoming classical sectoral boundaries in social services.

*Governance:*

The service is provided by an innovative form of broad and integrated partnership involving public authorities, private actors (architects, artisans), volunteer organisations and paid staff (social workers, consultants, psychologists, legal advisor).

*Resourcing:*

The project is financed by reciprocity resources (private and public resources to retrofit the apartments; public workers and volunteers working together to involve people in the project, and to support and monitor the cohabitation).

*Sustainability*

The project is highly sustainable because it implies the optimisation of the existing housing stock and it promotes social and urban mix.

### Key characteristics of the service

*User groups*

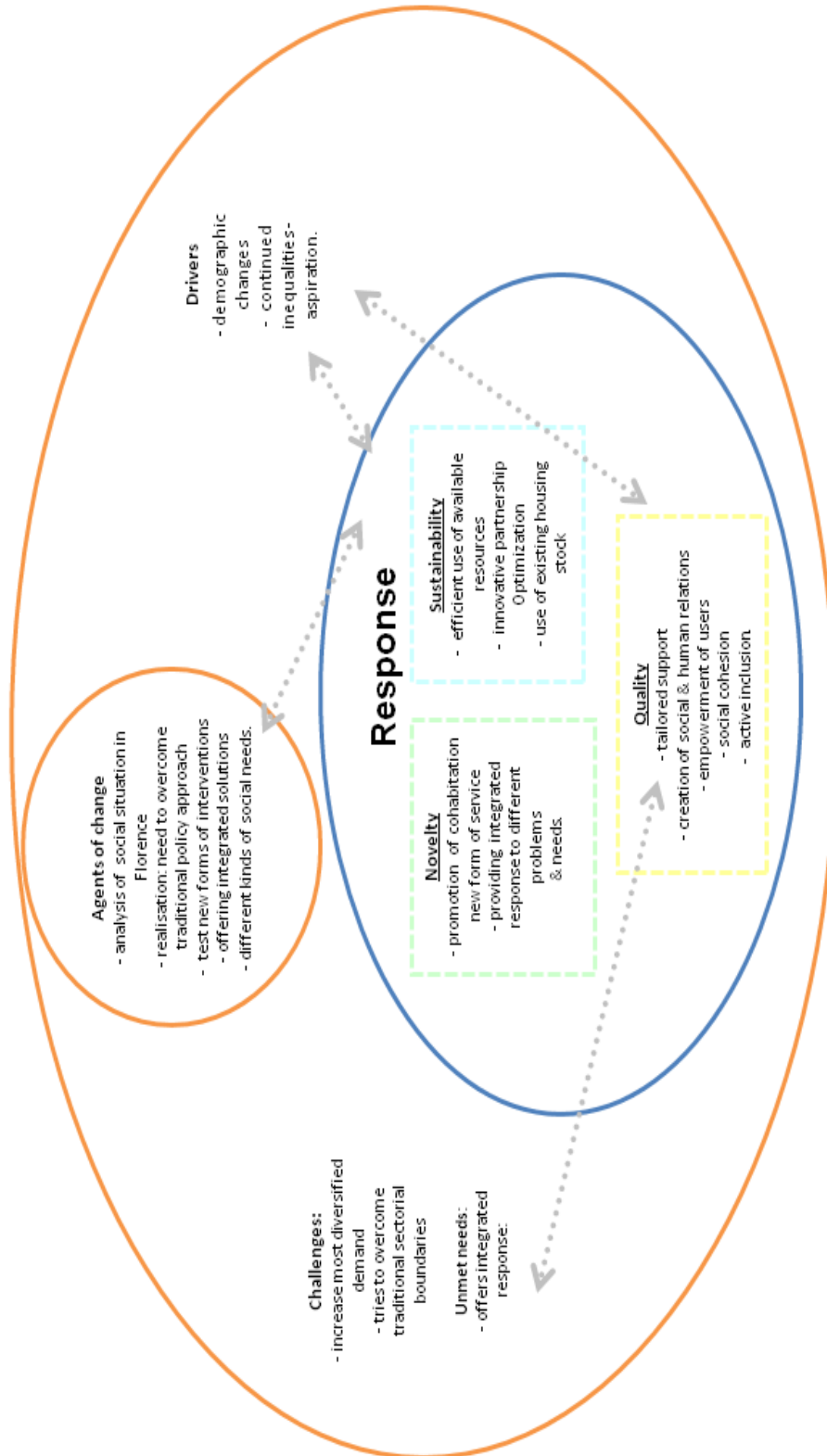
- *Older people* living in apartments, which are too big or not adapted to their needs, who risk to lose their self-sufficiency and to be isolated from society.
- *Older people's relatives* in need of new care solutions more adapted to their needs and their life style.
- *Disadvantaged people at risk of poverty* and in need of decent and affordable housing. These are mostly represented by families of migrants, unemployed people and students.
- *Women who are victims of domestic violence* in need of a temporary shelter to start a new life.

*Driver(s)*

The province of Florence is characterised by:

- *demographic change*: older people mostly living alone in houses that are too large for their needs,
- *continued inequality*: population at risk of poverty and new forms of social exclusion: unemployed people, divorced parents, women victims of violence, precarious workers.

# Abitare Solidale



## 2. Policy Framework related to social services for older people and disadvantaged groups in Italy

Principle/ Guidelines	Key organisations and actors	Services provided by government	Expenditure, Resources																																														
<p><b>Decentralisation of social services</b> (the evolution of the Italian system followed, generally, the same route we can observe in other European states in the 90's).</p> <p><b>Fragmentation of institutional context</b> (as a result of the accumulation of different policies at different levels of government in different social sectors).</p> <p><b>Family-based welfare system</b> (In Italy, as well as in the other Mediterranean countries, traditionally, care for older people, disabled or dependent children is informally provided by members of the family, women in particular. This is due to the persistence of strong legal and moral obligations between parents and their children.).</p>	<p><b>State</b> (providing mainly cash benefits to disadvantaged groups and pensions for older people).</p> <p><b>Local authorities</b> (Regions and Municipalities implementing programmes and providing services)</p> <p><b>Family</b> (elderly care is still, in many ways, a responsibility of the family)</p> <p><b>Private carers</b> (most often immigrant care givers operating in the black or grey market).</p> <p><b>3<sup>rd</sup> sector</b> (strong tradition of not-for-profit and voluntary associations providing support and assistance services to older people, other disadvantaged groups and their families).</p>	<p><b>National level</b> (the State) provides basic <b>cash benefits</b> directly to individuals (c.f. "<i>Indennità di accompagnamento</i>" to older people and disabled adults and family benefits based on family size and income (c.f. If a family member is disabled, the family will receive an increase in the allowance).</p> <p><b>Local authorities</b> are responsible for the joint programming of activities and services in the domain of social services and social protection. Italy depends heavily on the local communities to provide social services to older people, disabled, and needy families. Local authorities can also provide services to schools such as assistance with the supply of food and transportation.</p> <p><b>3<sup>rd</sup> sector</b> Services provided by NGOs and voluntary associations to older people and other disadvantaged groups such as: training, counselling, psychological support, empowerment, employment integration.</p>	<p>The '<b>Fondo Nazionale per le politiche sociali</b>' (<i>national fund for social policies</i>) is provided by the state to guarantee additional resources to local authorities to implement their social programmes in support of families, older people, disabled people, disadvantaged groups. In the last year it has been drastically reduced.</p> <p>2008: 929,3 million Euro 2013: 44,6 million Euro<sup>1</sup></p> <p>In recent years, there has been increased spending on social assistance managed by the municipalities in relation to GDP, from 0.39 in 2003 to 0.46 in 2009. There are large differences at the regional level, with the cost of benefits per capita higher in northern regions, as shown in the table below. Expenditure for social services offered by municipalities in Italian regions (Euro/inhabitant).</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Regions</th> <th>2009</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>Trento</td><td>294,7</td></tr> <tr><td>V. d'Aosta/V. d'Aoste</td><td>269,3</td></tr> <tr><td>Bolzano/Bozen</td><td>228,4</td></tr> <tr><td>Friuli-Venezia Giulia</td><td>215,1</td></tr> <tr><td>Sardegna</td><td>199,1</td></tr> <tr><td>Emilia-Romagna</td><td>174,6</td></tr> <tr><td>Piemonte</td><td>148,6</td></tr> <tr><td>Lazio</td><td>140,5</td></tr> <tr><td>Liguria</td><td>139,5</td></tr> <tr><td>Toscana</td><td>136,9</td></tr> <tr><td>Lombardia</td><td>123,5</td></tr> <tr><td>Veneto</td><td>113,8</td></tr> <tr><td>Marche</td><td>107,2</td></tr> <tr><td>Umbria</td><td>95,4</td></tr> <tr><td>Sicilia</td><td>77,0</td></tr> <tr><td>Basilicata</td><td>63,0</td></tr> <tr><td>Abruzzo</td><td>62,3</td></tr> <tr><td>Puglia</td><td>54,7</td></tr> <tr><td>Campania</td><td>53,9</td></tr> <tr><td>Molise</td><td>35,9</td></tr> <tr><td>Calabria</td><td>25,5</td></tr> <tr><td>Italia</td><td>115,9</td></tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Source: ISTAT<sup>2</sup></p>	Regions	2009	Trento	294,7	V. d'Aosta/V. d'Aoste	269,3	Bolzano/Bozen	228,4	Friuli-Venezia Giulia	215,1	Sardegna	199,1	Emilia-Romagna	174,6	Piemonte	148,6	Lazio	140,5	Liguria	139,5	Toscana	136,9	Lombardia	123,5	Veneto	113,8	Marche	107,2	Umbria	95,4	Sicilia	77,0	Basilicata	63,0	Abruzzo	62,3	Puglia	54,7	Campania	53,9	Molise	35,9	Calabria	25,5	Italia	115,9
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<sup>2</sup> [http://noi-italia.istat.it/index.php?id=7&user\\_100ind\\_pi1\[id\\_pagina\]=108&cHash=c213451c48240f19597ee562ae552614](http://noi-italia.istat.it/index.php?id=7&user_100ind_pi1[id_pagina]=108&cHash=c213451c48240f19597ee562ae552614)

### 3. The social, political and institutional context

#### 3.1 Population/ Government

	Year	Italy	EU27
Total Population	2011	60,626442	502,404702
Population projections 2010-2050		65,915103	524,052690
Proportion of population aged 65-79 years:	2011	14.3	12.7
Proportion of population aged 80 years and more:	2011	6.0	4.8
Old-age-dependency ratio (15-64 to 65+) <sup>3</sup>	2011	30.9	26.2
Life expectancy at 60 (2009) in years:	2009		
males		22.4	21.6
females		26.5	25.1
Expenditure on social protection (% of GDP)	2010	29,875540	29,366166
Expenditure on care for elderly (% of GDP)	2008	0.14	0.41
Pension expenditure projections (% of GDP) 2050		14.7%	12.3%
Population at risk of poverty or exclusion (%)	2009	24.7%	23.1%
Population with severe housing deprivation (%)	2009	7.3%	6.0%

#### 3.2 Information about the specific Welfare State: Italy

##### *Social policies for self-sufficient and non self-sufficient older people in Italy*

The Italian social welfare system is family-based and this value is embedded in the culture. The state is responsible for providing mainly cash benefits, such as the '*indennità di accompagnamento*', which is provided directly to adults with disabilities, meeting given law criteria<sup>4</sup>. However, this measure was not originally designed to respond to the care needs of older people but mainly as form of individual support to people with disabilities. Latterly, it can hardly be framed as an intended long-term care policy, though it represents the most significant form of support for older people. Traditionally, members of the family (in particularly women) take care of the needs of dependent and/or self-sufficient older relatives. This is understood as a moral value. However, increased life expectancy in Italy, changing social rules and family structures, and women's increased engagement in the labour market make the practice of familial reciprocity difficult. Most of the time, this problem is solved thanks to the availability of immigrant caregivers (the so called '*badanti*'), mostly operating in the black or grey market and representing a cheap alternative to residential care. Other actors, such as voluntary associations and civil society can have an important role if integrated in policies and activities run at the local level.

##### *Social policies for disadvantaged groups in Italy*

In recent years, the welfare and social protection systems are strongly challenged by the increase and diversification of demand as well as by the decrease of available resources. The combination of these elements makes the traditional policy approaches inadequate, as they are too "sectorial" and inflexible. The weakness of previous responses is represented by the following elements:

<sup>3</sup> This indicator is the ratio between the total number of elderly persons of an age when they are generally economically inactive (aged 65 and over) and the number of persons of working age (from 15 to 64). Source: EUROSTAT.

<sup>4</sup> Kazepov, Y., Arlotti, M., Barberis, E., da Roit, B., Sabatinelli, S. (2006), *Rescaling Social Welfare Policies in Italy*. Rescaling Social Welfare Policies - A comparative study on the path towards multi-level governance in Europe, national report. Available at: <http://www.euro.centre.org/rescalingDocuments/files/Italy.pdf>

- Inappropriate housing policies
- Inappropriate home care services provided at institutional level
- Inappropriate social policies to protect unemployed people and other disadvantaged groups from poverty

There is a steady increase of expenditure in benefits in kind of social protection benefits (including social services), that shows the growing meaning in comparison to social protection benefit in cash. The table below presents the social protection expenditure of selected countries.

### Social protection expenditure: Aggregated benefits and grouped schemes in millions of Euros

Time	Expenditure for social protection benefits in millions of Euros		Increasing benefits in kind	Part of benefits in kind of social protection benefits	
	1996	2010		1996	2010
EU 27	/	3,605,678.95	/	/	34.07%
Italy	241,249.28	463,992.0	127.52%	21.86%	25.86%
Germany	565,683.07	765,717.82	52.53%	30.79%	34.69%
Belgium	60592.78	106492.16	110.88%	24.18%	29.01%

Source: Own calculations based on EUROSTAT 2012

## 4. Challenges and Drivers of Innovation

### Drivers and Challenges<sup>5</sup>

The results of analysis of the social situation made by AUSER in the province of Florence has led to the development of new interventions offering integrated solutions to different kinds of social needs.

The project represents a solution for both of these target groups: they can have free housing in exchange for support. It is giving them a chance to have the basic right of decent and affordable accommodation, to be able to exercise other rights through an active participation in society (*aspiration*). Leaving the cohabitants to decide the conditions of cohabitation, the project not only provides answers to current problems, but it also builds the basis for a relationship of mutual support that, with the help of volunteers and professionals, is becoming more mature and sustainable (economically and socially).

#### Demographic changes

- The project represents a solution to cope with the problem of isolation and social exclusion of older people;
- It allows older people to stay longer in their homes improving their active participation in society;
- The project improves older people's independent living and self-determination;

<sup>5</sup> Hawker, C. and Frankland, J. (2012) Theoretical trends and criteria for 'innovative service practices' in social services within the EU. INNOSERV Work Package 2 report

- It represents a solution to the decreasing availability of informal care givers (women, family networks);
- It represents an alternative to retirement homes, which are not sustainable in a long-term perspective for structural and environmental reasons.

#### *Continued inequality*

- The project helps people in need to find affordable and decent accommodation allowing them to actively participate in society;
- The project offers an innovative solution to new causes of poverty and social exclusion: precarious jobs, migration, people not entitled to public protection schemes and/or to public care services;
- Through the idea of mutual aid, the project represents an alternative to the isolation and stigmatisation of people facing economical or personal difficulties.

#### *Aspirations*

- The project improves the independent living and self - determination of older people, allowing them to stay longer in their homes and to participate in a mutual aid activity based on the idea of solidarity between generations.

#### **Structural weaknesses of the system:**

Inadequate housing policies and insufficient social policies to support young adults, families of migrants, young mothers and unemployed people. This implies the need to provide integrated services and to overcome sectorial boundaries.

**Innovation:** Ideas, criteria, levels and added values

The following innovative aspects have been identified in the selected project

- **New form of service:** The project promotes the idea of cohabitation as a new form of service providing an integrated response to different kinds of problems and needs and overcoming classic sectorial boundaries in social services.
- **Governance:** The service is provided by an innovative form of broad and integrated partnership involving public authorities, private actors (architects, artisans), voluntary organisations and paid staff (social workers, consultants, psychologists, legal advisor).
- **Resourcing:** The project is financed by reciprocity resources (private and public resources to retrofit the apartments; public workers and volunteers working together to involve people in the project, to support and monitor the cohabitation).

#### Governance

The service is provided by an innovative form of broad and integrated partnership involving public authorities, private actors (architects, artisans), voluntary organisations and paid staff (social workers, consultants, psychologists, legal advisor).

### Resourcing

The project is financed by reciprocity resources (agreement with the Municipality of Florence, protocol agreement with the Municipalities of Bagno a Ripoli, Scandicci, Sesto Fiorentino, Cascina; private and public resources to retrofit the apartments; public workers and volunteers working together to involve people in the project, to support and monitor the cohabitation).

### Sustainability

The project is highly sustainable because it implies the optimisation of the existing housing stock and it promotes social and urban mix.

### Principle and other innovative aspects:

The project is based on the idea of mutual aid and it represents:

- an alternative solution to retirement homes for older people;
- an affordable and decent housing solution for people at risk of poverty and exclusion or experiencing economic difficulties (families of migrants, students, unemployed persons);
- a shelter for women who are victims of domestic violence.
- It involves various and different target groups and stakeholders;
- It provides the use of legal tools that have been created to legally formalise the cohabitation (the Housing Covenant, and the Free Use of Property<sup>6</sup>).

**Positive** impacts of the project are:

- it is environment-friendly: it is based on the optimisation of the existing housing stock and it represents an alternative to retirement homes which are not sustainable on a long-term basis for structural and environmental reasons.
- social inclusion and integration: the project facilitates the creation of interpersonal relationships and promotes the value of solidarity between generations as a way to actively participate to society and combat isolation. Moreover, the project shows the added value of volunteering by, and for, older people to active ageing, solidarity between generations and active citizenship.

### **Agents of Change**

The volunteer organisation AUSER is to be considered as the most important agent of change. AUSER carried out an analysis of the social situation in Florence and it turned out that demographic changes and the current socio-economic situation drive the need to overcome traditional policy approaches and to test new forms of interventions offering integrated solutions to different kinds of social needs.

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<sup>6</sup> Please see also page. 9



## 5. Key innovative elements of this example

Field of service	Welfare
Establishment of organization	2009 and 2012 first partnership with local authorities
Type of organization	Combination of private organisation – non/not for profit and voluntary association
Financing	Reciprocity resources (agreement with the Municipality of Florence, protocol agreement with the Municipalities of Bagno a Ripoli, Scandicci, Sesto Fiorentino, Cascina; private and public resources to retrofit the apartments; public workers and volunteers working together to involve people in the project, to support and monitor the cohabitation).
Size of the organization	Number of staff: 70 (50 volunteers, 1 coordinator and 2 people as AUSER professional staff, 2 psychologists, 1 lawyer, 12 social workers. So far, 59 cohabitations have been realised, involving 118 families. Number of users: Total number of interventions in 2009: 2.260.804 (an intervention can be offered many times to the same person) Number of members (of network): 298.000 (of which 152.000 women) Other : Volunteers 45.800 (of which 17.300 women)
Members and participation	Broad and integrated partnership involving public authorities, private actors (architects, artisans), voluntary organisations and paid staff (social workers, consultants, psychologists, legal advisor). AUSER Association is a member of SOLIDAR, a European network of 59 NGOs active in over 90 countries working to advance social justice in Europe and worldwide.
Contacts Name of the innovative example Homepage	www.auser.it Contact: abitaresolidaleauser@gmail.com

AUSER is an Italian association, which aims at promoting the self-management of services and actions for solidarity, supporting the right of older people to continue to play an active role on a social and economic level by making the most of their specific experiences, skills and abilities. The mission of the AUSER Association is to promote older people's work as volunteers in several areas of activity such as training and education, social utility and international solidarity. On a European level, AUSER Association is a member of SOLIDAR, a European network of 59 NGOs active in over 90 countries working to advance social justice in Europe and worldwide.

Abitare Solidale involves 50 volunteers, 1 coordinator and 2 people as AUSER professional staff, 2 psychologists, 1 lawyer, 12 social workers. So far, 59 cohabitations have been realized, involving 118 families.

The following stakeholders are involved in the project:

- AUSER: voluntary association working with older people
- ARTEMISIA: voluntary association working to protect women and children who are victims of violence
- Municipality of Florence, Bagno a Ripoli, Scandicci, Sesto Fiorentino, Cascina
- Housing Agency of the Municipality of Florence (public authority)
- Private architecture offices providing retrofitting services at favorable prices (because of certain agreements with the public authorities) (private actors)

- Confederazione Nazionale dell'Artigianato e della Piccola e Media Impresa (National confederation of artisans and SMEs) offering small repair services (trade association)

The municipality of Florence presents the following characteristics':

- A large number of older people living alone in houses that are too big for their needs and, as a consequence, in need of support for household maintenance and housework;
- A large number of social needs connected to (and in some cases derived from) inadequate housing policies (young/ unemployed people looking for affordable and decent accommodation, women victims of domestic violence looking for a safe shelter);
- A very well developed network of voluntary organisations and associations used to working together and providing mutual support.
- The willingness of the municipality to work in partnership with the civil society to improve social services.

The following phases can be distinguished in the project:

- 1) Through the use of its network and its national hotline, AUSER gets in touch with older people living in houses, which do not respond to their needs (too big, not retrofitted) or who are in need of help with housing duties (small reparation, housekeeping) or who wish to experience cohabitation.  
Other voluntary organisations active at local level get in touch with people experiencing economic difficulties who are in need of affordable and decent housing solutions as well as persons in need of temporary shelter (i.e. women victims of domestic violence).
- 2) People willing to start cohabitation have preliminary meetings to get to know each other and exchange their ideas. A group of experts (psychologist, social workers and volunteers) supports, monitors and evaluates this process.
- 3) The cohabitants start a "trial period" of cohabitation signing the Housing Covent (*Patto Abitativo*), which is a written agreement between cohabitants containing reciprocal commitments.  
The cohabitants share responsibilities on the household maintenance and household errands according to their needs (it is important to underline that the cohabitation does not replace personal and care services but it is based on the idea of mutual aid).
- 4) The apartment is suited to cohabitation and facilities are retrofitted using public and private funds.
- 5) The cohabitation is officially recognised using an *ad hoc* legal tool: the Free Use of Property Covenant (*Comodato d'uso gratuito d'immobile*), which is a new legal instrument, developed for the purposes of the project and registered with the local public authority, which officially recognises the cohabitation and guarantees the opportunity to stop living together in the case of a violation of the Housing Covenant .

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