Understanding the processes of symbolization of public space in transformed urban areas: A multidisciplinary approach.

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PROHABIT is conducting an interdisciplinary research encompassing environmental psychology, architecture and urbanism, **to analyse the impact of urban transformations in the neighbours of three districts of Barcelona:** Trinitat Nova, Vallcarca and Plus Ultra.

The purpose of the research is to understand -with the participation of professionals and citizens- the uses of space at various scales, the construction of the symbolic value of lived space, and the processes of creation of a collective identity linked to the sense of place.

1. Project description: Objectives
Case studies
Case studies: LOCATIONS

Three neighborhoods in the periphery of the city:

- Trinitat Nova
- Vallcarca
- Plus Ultra
- **Trinitat Nova** was built in the **1950s** as social housing estate. It became obsolete in the 1990s because of deficiencies in construction; the neighbours’ initiative led to a renewal of both the buildings and the public spaces.

- **Vallcarca** started to be urbanized in the **1900s** with second residences for the summer; density has been steadily increasing since then under the pressure of private developers; neighbours have reacted against the gentrification.

- **Plus Ultra** was built in the **1920s** at the edge of legality, as informal settlement surrounded by green areas. Later, all the surroundings have been built according to a Master Plan, letting the old settlement as an island in the middle of an urbanized area.
3. Methodology
METHOD

Technique: Non participatory Observation

- 5/6 public places were observed in each neighbourhood: old and new ones / provided by local authorities & appropriated by neighbours
- 3 periods of time: mornings, evenings and nights / during different days of the weeks and weekends = 270 observations
- Types of register:
  - Descriptive narratives
  - Mapping people activities / movements
  - Taking pictures and videos
METHOD

Technique: Semi-structured interviews

- 10 interviews x neighbourhoods: antique and new inhabitants / moved neighbours to new houses & key informants
- Questions about private and public spaces (housing, infrastructures, interstitials spaces, participative experience, etc.)
- Types of register:
  - Audio register / transcription
  - Taking pictures and videos
- Analysis: Atlas.ti
Trinitat Nova
Original housing type with access through galleries
TRINITAT NOVA: Historical evolution

New housing types:

2011

First development

2015-2016

Second development under construction
Sociopetal setting → Settings that **facilitate** social interaction

Sociofugal arrangements → Settings that **discourage** social interaction
TRINITAT NOVA

6 areas of observation
TRINITAT NOVA:
Areas 2 & 4
2- Case studies: TRINITAT NOVA
2- Case studies: TRINITAT NOVA
New public spaces provided by local authorities

Case studies: TRINITAT NOVA

TRINITAT NOVA:

Historical evolution
Vallcarca
Case studies: VALLCARCA
VALLCARCA: 1 & 2 Areas
Jaume Fuster Library

Vallcarca Av. > Park

2- Case studies: VALLCARCA
(mis) Uses of new public spaces

2- Case studies: VALLCARCA
VALLCARCA: Area 4
VALLCARCA: Appropriation of vacant lots

Farigola Square
VALLCARCA: Appropriation of vacant lots

Garden created and managed by neighbors
Plus Ultra
PLUS ULTRA: Historical evolution

Original houses
2- Case studies: PLUS ULTRA

New public spaces provided by local administration

PLUS ULTRA:
Historical evolution
2- Case studies: PLUS ULTRA
2- Case studies: PLUS ULTRA

PLA D'OBRER DE MILLORA
URBANITZACIÓ DELS CARRERS
DELS AVIADORS DURAN,
FRANCO I RUÍZ DE ALDA

Us comunicem l'inici d'aquestes obres que tenen per objecte la implantació de plataforma única amb prioritat per als vianants, per tal de millorar l'accessibilitat a la zona.

També es farà el soterrament de les línies aèries existents, d'hi col·locarà nou mobiliari urbà, nou arbrat, i s'adecuaran els sistemes de reg i drenatge.

Aquesta actuació inclou la remodelació de les tres plaçetes adjacents dels carrers.

Pensant en les persones,
Impulsant Barcelona.

Data previsió finalització: Abril 2015
2- Case studies: PLUS ULTRA
4. Some conclusions
CONCLUSIONS → Participative process

- Participative process take long time and there is a gap between people’s expectative and final result

- Elongation of transformation processes generate fragmentation of social fabric

- In active participative process (i.e. Vallcarca case), new users/actors (okupas) appear and they claim an idealized past

- Due to social complexity (more of social class than cultural), proposed solutions are contradictory and very hard to get consensus

- Strong participative process are not follow by next generations
CONCLUSIONS → Renewal of public spaces

- Improvement of environment seems to produce citizen immobilization

- Improvement of public environment have generated a less use by neighbours: (some hypothesis)
  - Change in lifestyle (for global tendency)
  - Spaces of design inhibit appropriation /transformation of spaces
  - Better connectivity delocalize daily life
WHAT MAKES A GREAT PLACE?

PLACE

SOCIABILITY

USES & ACTIVITIES

ACCESS & LINKAGES

COMFORT & IMAGE
What makes a great place:

**Access and Linkages:** how well a place is connected to its surroundings both visually and physically.
What makes a great place: **Comfort and Image** are key to whether a place will be used.
What makes a great place:

**Uses and Activities:** are the reasons why people come in the first place and why they return.
What makes a great place:

Sociability

When people feel comfortable interacting with neighbours (and strangers), they tend to feel attachment to their community.
PROHABIT – Multidisciplinary analysis of the lived environment to promote the implementation of the right to the city.

PROHABIT is a participatory and a multidisciplinary research project dedicated to analyse the impact that urban transformations have on the dwellers of three neighbourhoods in Barcelona: Plus Ultra, Vallcarca and Castellar Tímitat Nova. This analysis is done developing a methodology that covers the fields of environmental psychology as well as of urbanism and architecture. The study covers the different dimensions (physical and social) and scales (domestic space, public space and interpenetration) in each neighbourhood.

The comparative analysis of the case studies enable to make recommendations for the administration and private entities, organisations (neighbourhood associations, professional associations) professionals (architects, planners, psychologists) and citizens to be able to participate in a more effective manner in decision-making processes that affect the transformation of the inhabited space.

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