

ABSTRACT

“La reforma de Sa Gerreria”: a neighbourhood transformation analysis.

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Sa Gerreria is an eight-hectare part of Palma’s historic downtown, located between *carrer Sindicat* and *les Avingudes*.

From the Middle Ages until the nineteenth century, Sa Gerreria was the main neighbourhood of craftsmen and merchants, besides the meeting point for the people from the city and surrounding villages who went to the market. Its medina urban layout with narrow winding streets and with lots of entrance and exits, has been preserved almost intact until today, due to the absence of big interventions.

The decadence of our studied zone starts in the 60’s, with the island tourism boom. Which is when *Sa Gerreria* experiments a social transformation, caused by the substitution of the resident population (which emigrates to *l’eixample*) for an every time more marginal population. Likewise, the commercial activity is relocated in the city outskirts and the new economical activity is not able to adapt to the features of the historic downtown. From this moment, an architectonic and environmental degradation, besides a commercial desertification, starts. This situation is worsened with the arrival of prostitution and drugs; and within two decades the area reaches a situation of complete vulnerability. *Sa Gerreria* becomes *el Barrio Chino de Palma*, an isolated zone among the historic downtown; dangerous, dirty and with a high urban blight.

In the late 80s, the Local Government, aware of the extreme urban decay, decides to take part and launches the *Pla Especial de Protecció i Reforma Interior* (PEPRI). However, the citizen opposition to those interventions and the obstruction of the supramunicipal bodies, postpone the approval of this plan to 1995.

The urban rehabilitation starts with little interventions accompanied by careful social actions in order to achieve their success. Nevertheless, the major capital injection comes with the Community Initiative *Urban- El Temple*, which means a great boost to the PEPRI.

The most important actions, and at the same time the most problematic ones, are the project “*Estel Nou*”, a coordinated public-private initiative which means the construction of an “*ex-novo*” neighbourhood, among the medieval weave with a huge subterranean parking and the construction of the new *Palau de Justicia* for the central government.

The process has not finished yet, however, some urban, environmental, social and economical transformations have already occurred. A few buildings have been restored and new installations and facilities have been introduced; the area looks revitalised although its medina nature has almost disappeared. In the social scope, the area is being gentrified and in the economical scope of a city focused on tourism, the cultural heritage has become a merchandise to be sold and this fact is reflected in the housing prices’ increase, which it’s seen from some sectors as a sign of rehabilitation.

Thus, the territorial aspects and social and economical relationships are being rearranged; searching for capital gain, gentrification and tourism.

As a result of an accurate analysis of the historic downtown interventions, we propose a more intensive evaluation and consequently a more intensive protection of tangible and intangible historic heritage. The rehabilitation and revitalisation process should focus on these tangible and intangible historic heritages and not just on other external agents and factors.