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Significance of Public Space in the Fragmented City

Designing Strategies for Urban Opportunities in Informal Settlements of Buenos Aires City

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Abstract

This article surveys the problem of urban marginalization by one of its more critical expressions in the contemporary city: the slums. The aim is to define an urban design strategy for the integration of those settlements as part of the city context, which enables to find solutions for the conflict improving these communities quality of life.

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1   Introduction: integrating marginalized settlements

From a social point of view, a city is a cultural object, since it produces specific collective meanings through its physical form. Public space is not a physical entity, a mere open space, but a place where social life reflects the values of the community.

This sociocultural approach of the city and public space is also applicable to the concept of peripheral space. Every city has centralities and marginalities, with some locations a concentration of maximum significance and others having no communal value. If it is possible to view, from a solely physical perspective, periphery as a place of 'urban pathologies' (polluted river, rubbish dump, or an unfinished highway, for instance), the peripheral condition, from a cultural viewpoint, also includes places *dis*characterized by the community because of their lack of interaction and sociocultural links.

Furthermore, considered from this angle, peripheral space has an essentially relational dimension, since it is in the interdependence and the vision confronted by both concepts—central space/peripheral space—where individual and shared values and deficiencies deepen. The value of an urban area is not an intrinsic feature on its own—it only acquires significance through reference to areas lacking it. As Canclini (2004) points out in his intercultural maps, these differences should be seen as cultural activities constructed in terms of a distance from 'the other', and it is through this multicultural interdependence that we can recognize our own prestige or stigma.

But this process of differentiation quite often impairs public life in a city, as it can easily develop from the definition of *otherness* into marginalization of that what is different. Thus, in certain urban dialogue, many places in the city that cease to be defined as 'others', begin a process of radical segregation that may culminate even in the racial stigmatization of societies and places (see Auyero 2007).

Today, the existence of the slums (*villas de emergencia*) is not only an expression of polarization and economic marginalization but also has strong sociocultural components of segregation and rejection. The *villa*, a precarious and illegal settlement with high rates of violence and crime, represents a strange and scary urban space for the city's formal inhabitants. Slum populations are stigmatized due in part to their economic distance from the rest of society but mostly because of their identification as *villeros* (villa dwellers).

In the case of Buenos Aires, this dual polarization of the urban meaning became more pronounced during the 1990s, in a context heavily marked by the ruling paradigms of economic neoliberalism.[1] The economic reforms served to increase the gap between the rich and the poor by accelerating the dismantlement of the national industry network and related employment opportunities, and by weakening the state as an agent of redistribution. According to Ciccolella (1999), 80 per cent of the population in the

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[1] According to Prevot Schapira (2002), 'The economic growth in the 1990s didn't stop poverty [...] In Argentina, after almost a ten-year growth period, a strong increase in income per inhabitant as well as a strong drop in inflation coexisting through the decade conjugate simultaneously with high unemployment and an increase in poverty'.

metropolitan area of Buenos Aires suffered tangible losses to their incomes, whereas only the top 20 per cent benefitted (Janoschka 2002).[2]

Despite the global growth in wealth, the increasing social inequity created a dangerous relation between the integrated and marginalized groups, the consequences of which are difficult to reverse (as other Latin American cities had already shown) with respect to environmental aspects as well as marginality and insecurity. This social unfolding produced an asymmetrical growth of the city, evident in the 'shantytownization' of central and peripheral areas as well as in urban fragmentation, while the barriers that fracture the physical and social cohesion of the city are intensifying.

The institutional, economic, and social crisis of 2001-03 became a catalyst in the problem of urban exclusion, as municipal plans concerning the city's deprived areas were modified. The effect of the crisis on all social strata led to the widespread awareness of marginality as an issue that had been ignored for years by urban society and the middle classes. It also led to an understanding of the high level of interdependence between marginalized and integrated populations, and of the permanent nature of the marginalized people who, until then, had always been considered as those living in provisory spaces. Today, strategic planning in development programmes includes measures to resolve the increasing housing shortage as well as validating the legality and civic belonging of marginalized neighbourhoods.[3]

Various action programmes implemented by different city councils (Rio de Janeiro, and Sao Paulo in Brazil or Medellin in Colombia) have been designed to integrate poor areas of the city, utilizing opportunities provided by the informal context. The objective of these experiences was to include, connect, and strengthen marginalized areas by creating new centres for urban, economic, social, political, and environmental development.

These interventions were based on three main objectives: keeping residents in the area they were occupying, supporting components of community development such as public health, and environmental education, and regularizing each area's public space. The proposals/programmes for improving infrastructure and social services, as well as for creating employment were actively supported by residents. As a result of these programmes, the following observations were noted (Janoschka 2002):

— improved life standard of the residents in the neighbourhood and surrounding area;

— improved health conditions;

— increase in the value of housing;

— lesser risk among the most vulnerable groups, and

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[2] To Janoschka (2002), the abandonment of the management and control of urban development by the state, and its appropriation by private actors resulted in the appearance of saleable, profitable, and valuable urban forms useful for the market. This new spatial redistribution focused on new urban forms like shopping malls, urban enterteinment centres, private schools, and gated and guarded residential communities, without general public access.

[3] As we will see later, the case of Villa Tranquila is paradigmatic of this new official approach for understanding and managing the urban marginality problem.

— improved competitiveness of the residents through work training programmes, increasing their chances of finding a job or even reaching a certain saving capacity.

Achieving the permanent improvements mentioned above requires a special type of urban project. It is not enough to simply focus on a physical and infrastructural approach to marginality: proposed projects need to create places that can be symbolically appropriated by the inhabitants. In order for the process of urban integration to become viable, it is necessary to strengthen existing sociocultural interaction as well as identification/differentiation relations, both in an internal and neighbouring context. The aim is that each new urban project becomes a sort of 'urbanization germ' from which a settlement's other inner, evolutionary forces and inertias will reinforce and develop its social and symbolic structure.

Proposed urban projects, instead of attempting to establish a definite design, should aim to generate a process that is conducive to viable future evolution; thus, plans should be flexible, able to adopt any modification or resolve any limitation that may come up through its development, and to satisfy the requirements of the inhabitants involved.

The premises that guide urban intervention entail the identification of pre-existing urban and social conditions in the place of interest. Socialization networks, patterns of daily life, and the cultural signification of the community in the *villa de emergencia* are therefore key parameters. These should constitute both the starting point of any project (as they will be its guidelines), as well as its finishing line (the ultimate project conceived to solidify these sociocultural networks).

Strategy that is based on the existing social structure can improve integration, interconnection, and interaction opportunities through a network of public places consisting of spaces for community activities and equipment, infrastructure, and internal and external movement. In this manner, an urban design strategy for integrating marginalized settlements, both internally and with the formal context of the city, should enable these to develop into neighbourhoods with an identity and sociocultural significance.

2   Public spaces

The idea of the city as a cultural object confers a particular human dimension on the concept of public space. From a cultural point of view, public space is a central factor in the symbolic life of a city because is where the experiences and daily routines of inhabitants converge and where the community life is being physically represented.

Therefore, public space can be considered to be more than just the physical space owned by the state based on property regulations. It is the space owned by all, and which, from a sociocultural point of view, is the community expression of the contact and communion among individuals. As a spatial embodiment of the community, the 'public' can then emerge spontaneously from the natural dynamics of the city and the behaviour of people, conferring such a characteristic on spaces that juridically do not have it or were not planned as such (see Borja and Muxi 2003).

Based on the premise of physical rationality and equality, as well as on hygienist values over the role of nature, modern cities,4 changed this human and political notion of public space, defining it instead according to physical conformation, abstract values, and a general, almost physiological, conception of the individual's needs.

Urbanism has always sustained functionalism based on efficiency as its central value, with results that were, almost invariably, the application of sectarian policies instead of actions reflecting the diversity and complexity of urban demands. Thus, in big housing projects, each operation is targeted to a certain social segment, and priority is usually assigned to road infrastructure, both as an ordering element and as investment. By confusing urbanism with housing and public works, present-day public policies have forgotten the potential value of public space as an integral and cohesive element of the city (see Borja and Muxi 2003). This limited view of public space, for instance, has led to perceive the street as a simple transit area, or a park as an urban oxygenation centre, thus neglecting the crucial roles of both elements as social interaction junctions.

According to this approach, the city has to be redeemed through planning, through a new start based on a rationalist urban concept in which the human being is a fixed and measurable datum. Everything pre-existing is to be considered as accidental, and not only has to be ignored but also eliminated in favour of the rationalization of the city.

In the present-day globalized context, this facet of the modern movement has tended to be reproduced. Today, all urban transformation projects agree on the need to work in a decontextualized vacuum, seen as spaces where it is possible to realize the ideal vision of the 'best place for life, work, and education' (ibid.). Vacant areas of the city, usually produced by obsolete infrastructure, have become the perfect ground for experimentation, since these new urban spaces are void of historical and cultural references precisely because of their emptiness of content and their isolation from the interweave of traditional functions and events.

This situation hides a very different reality in which the urban space has been homogenized and privatized. The city is no more an instrument of interaction and social integration; on the contrary, these areas have a much more homogeneous social composition than the traditional city. Integration among different social and economic groups is not necessary, since everybody belongs to the same stratum. As Sennet (1994) observes, the absence of diversity, the sense that we all are peers, and the feeling that there is nothing to negotiate are the values for such societies composed of 'communities of equals, of those who belong to the same class and share the same opinion' (Sennett 1994).

The disappearance of public space as the forum for integration and interaction among different social groups generates within each of these areas of 'equals', a sense of non-belonging among the inhabitants that deepens the disintegration of local forms of solidarity and community life (Bauman 1999).

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4 Le Corbusier developed his principles of planning most fully in la *ville contemporaine* (1922) and *la ville redieuse* (1933). 'The key was the famous paradox: we must dicongest the centers of our cities by increasing their density. In addition, we must improve circulation and increase the amont of open space. The paradox could be resolved by building high on a small part of the total groud area [...] therefore the existing centres must come down'. The way in which this new structure was to be achived was to correspond to a specific, segregated social sructure: one's dwelling depended on one's job' (Hall 1988: 209).

In this new type of urban scheme, inhabitants of economically integrated sectors evaluate the city according to two priorities: personal security and accessibility of the areas where their everyday lives evolve. These requirements are becoming the new value standard of urban space, displacing traditional strategic aspects such as heterogeneity and social diversity. In this process of dissolution, fragmentation, and privatization, the city is affected by the weakening of public space as a civic space, resulting in the ungovernability of a territory now characterized by products, inequality, and marginalization.

Nevertheless, an alternative theory of homogenization views the global and local identity in terms of their reciprocal relationships. According to Beck (2000), globalization can be as much a process of homogenization as the one that reinforces the identities and characteristics of a place. As it is not possible for local identity to emerge from global identity, in the globalization process there is an implicit recognition of the importance of the local level. Therefore, a city may find the opportunity to cultivate its uniqueness within the globalized context and, thus to realign itself with the outside world. In this manner, the local sphere can introduce the seed for a new form of international integration that is related to various aspects of its identity. Recognition of a place as the valuation point of the city based on a local-global relationship realigns. 'Cities promote themselves locally by resignifying the marks consolidated in the global context, and by globalizing the uniqueness of their particular identities.' (Beck 2000).

Globalization and its effect on local identity is an undeniable process. It entails a deep change in the processes of cohesion, identity, and civic belonging in each metropolis. But in our opinion, this paradigm of strategic planning has not managed to replace public space as a central tool for urban transformation, because public space has the cohesive capacity to promote symbolic identification, expression, and cultural integration (Borja and Muxi 2003).

In the symbolic dynamics of social life, each society reacts in a particular and singular way to space—even with regard to identical spaces—that mirrors the specific urban vision of the group (see Lindon 2007). This is clearly the potential value of public space: it is a key differentiating element whose culturally determined appropriation makes the consolidation of urban identity possible.

This multiple dimension of urban space can, therefore, be appreciated not only in the quality of its physical form but also, as Jordi Borja points out, 'in the intensity and quality of the social relations it facilitates, in its potential to make groups and strengths interact, and in its capacity to encourage symbolic identification, expression, and cultural integration' (Borja and Muxi 2003). This is why it is only by projecting public space as a place of community domain that cities were able to reconquer and requalify their historically disarticulated peripheries, linking them to the city as a whole.

The transformation process initiated during the 1980s in Barcelona clearly shows the use of public space as part of an urban view founded on integration and non-exclusion. The strategy of 'making a city within the city' was based on the construction of public spaces of all scales, and the resultant positive impact on degraded environments. The plan of new centralities designed by the Spanish architect Oriol Bohigas (which included multiple dispersed interventions of various size, programme, and contents) made it possible to promote both the development of the outskirts, and to recognize public space design as an essential tool in strategic urban planning. The methodology of

city construction was based on the 'revaluation of the place, of public space, of urban habitat, of life quality, of the dialectic between the city and its districts, and on the city polycentrism'. This kind of intervention clearly defends a concept of 'urban' which considers urban space as a daily experience (what Canclini calls 'micropolis').

Based on this view of urban space, is it possible to envisage an alternative option for city production? The urban intervention should aim to generate intensity points as 'events' that would be capable of creating symbolic identification and social integration. These events would be intermediate spaces, spatially communicative, not intended as permanent or unchanging but rather as evolving, adaptable events, places of seduction[5] produced in the 'common' place of a society. The essence of their meaning and success would no longer be the vision of a planner trying to impose solutions, but rather their use and appropriation by the community itself.

3   The project

Next, we explore the experiences related to the creation of new strategies for urban design in one of the slum areas of Buenos Aires. Based on the framework of public space and daily events, the objective was to design alternative forms of public space so as to have influence on some of the social, urban, and environmental problems faced by slum residents.

The project under review was developed by A:BJ&C Blinder Janches Architects and Max Rohm, and received financial support from the Dutch Foundation Playspace. Its main goal was to stimulate socioterritorial integration through a network of public space for the slums' youngest inhabitants. Recognizing the spatial and programmatic specificities of each space, the project plan's objective was to generate various levels of communication and integration according to the needs of the community, neighbourhood, institutional and family associations.

Even though the problem of *villa de emergencia* (slums) stems from deficiencies in the social and economic structural conditions, in these settlements, nevertheless, there are creative strategies for everyday life that constitute, even if precariously, structures of positive social relationships. It is therefore important to view these strategies as the strength of the villa population. They should be acknowledged as key elements in any urban design that seeks to reinforce the villa organization and its civic awareness.

Taking advantage of the opportunities and potential existing in these places, the proposed plan and attendant network try to repair the community values that reinforce the city character of this urban fragment. In this manner, the new scheme could safely generate transformation that has impact not only on the specific projected places but also those places within their area of influence.

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[5] As referred in Baudrillard's (2001) terminology. He calls these events 'places of seduction', 'because in their dual character the object is confronted with the real order, the visible order that surrounds it. In the absence of such confrontation—which has nothing to do with interactivity or context—it does not take place. An accomplished space, i.e., that exists beyond its own reality, is a space that gives rise to a dual relationship, a relation capable of withstanding deviations, contradictions, even destabilization, but bringing face to face the pretended reality of a world and its radical illusion'.

The synergy from the overlapping of *layers* (new and existing) can produce different evolutive transformation processes. The daily indifference of a place can be the starting point in the process to reverse the present level of decay and abandonment. Thus, the inhabitants themselves should be just as much involved in both the intervened space as well as the surrounding areas in defining the architectural project and the adaptations to the final product. This process of spontaneous development is part of the proposal: its modifications, expansions, and adaptations complete the initial plan and bring it to life.

The different topologies and typologies of future public spaces should be linked with existing infrastructure, and with the physical or social factors that will determine the choice of place and possible programmes to be used. This will facilitate the inhabitants' acceptance of what is being introduced if some of elements had already been a part of the marginal community, and were thus familiar.

Two main objectives defined the project:

(1) *The programmes* should: (i) respect pre-existing elements; (ii) complement existing conditions, and (iii) incorporate new activities.

(2) *The place* needs: (i) to promote internal-external integration, and (ii) reverse internal fragmentation.

Identifying existing practices, habits and routines, both ordinary and extraordinary, enables to determine the general interaction of association, tension, conflict, and balance within the settlement to be surveyed. Based on the results of this survey, a possible process of intervention and transformation can be suggested.

In the case of the Villa Tranquila project, these values were gauged through multiple meetings, exercises, and interviews with different social groups within the neighbourhood. The aim was to define personal desires and aspirations as well as the need for general programmes and specific spaces that would constitute the future network of public spaces. The survey and the resulting analyses were developed within a study by the Graduate School of Design at Harvard University.[6] The models used in these information-exchange processes enabled us to construct an urban cartography in which specific aspects of the work place (whether recognized or not, valued or not, existing or potential) are reflected.

Consequently, the future network of public spaces proposed by the project will be based on the complex dynamics of small urban events and elements in the daily life of the villa inhabitants. The project's respect for the pre-existing everyday life strategies will, as already stated, be one of its strengths. The decodification of this open spaces logic was accomplished through non-arbitrary analysis processes. Places with possibilities for transformation were classified according to physical and programmatic characteristics.. The new proposal takes as its starting point the villa's spaces for social interaction, and tries to reflect these in the urban layout to be developed. In this sense, the external-internal invasion develops into a mutual process in which both interact and integrate. The result is an interdependent network of centres and links that impacts (with

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[6] Participants included Professors John Beardsley, Max Rohm, Flavio Janches and students working on the study 'Non-formal Buenos Aires: Public Space Strategies for Emergency Settlements', Graduate School of Design. Harvard University (2005).

alternative hierarchies and at different levels) on the manner of social articulation through its own internal synergy. By recognizing this internal dynamics, and acknowledging the pre-existing social factors, the resulting map provides a guideline for re-establishing the exchange and its inside-outside linkage systems.

The aspects evaluated in the mapping of pre-existing elements included:

— a study of the larger urban context;

— review of projects underway by other institutions;

— analysis of the villa's physical urban structure (whether built or not built; quality of open space; inventory of spaces; survey of elements); and

— analysis of the social urban structure within the villa (mobility systems; catalogue of activities; recorded ambitions and expectations of villa community members; preferences and alternatives concerning the programme; preferences regarding space, everyday customs, main routes used, etc., and a map of the social network).

The premise governing the project was the result of data collected during interviews with community members and municipal technicians. The programmes and place of intervention were defined according to diverse evaluation parameters based on the physical location of a community and combination of elements that would allow integrative capacities to deepen.

Thus, existing vacant spaces, integrative and connective potentiality both within and outside the space, and the pre-existence of social, cultural, commercial, religious, or any other natural structure that is capable of generating a focal point for the new centrality is taken into account in defining the location of public spaces and their programmatic distribution. The design of the intervention scheme also takes into account internal mobility so that future interventions can be incorporated in a public spaces network, which, through its associative activities, would, in time, also reinforce the interdependence of the community.

Community intervention is based on the following criteria: (i) places should be located near a daily trajectory that is significant for the neighbourhood (school or transportation); (ii) places should be adjacent to *commercial or cultural structures*; and (iii) places are to be located in an open space.

Guided by these premises, existing or potential public spaces identified in the interviews with villa inhabitants and municipal representatives make up a network of places with different levels of connective capacity. The three public space categories above are complemented with a system of passageways and streets that links all operations into a complex and interdependent network. When superposed on the existing functional structures, the network will in the community generate reactions that were not contemplated in the original plan. In this way the final project will be not what has been designed but the way in which the inhabitant modify it and its surrounding according to their own dynamics.

This project combined intervention paradigms that stem from a holistic conception of the targeted urban settlement, a concept based on the articulation of the existing social, economic, and cultural potentialities. This approach made it possible for community

values to be represented in an architectural project. These interventions were not intended to produce projects aimed at creating urban spaces from scratch: on the contrary, the starting point was always an analysis of what already existed. Based on this, the project, through urban planning, had the opportunity to shape and consolidate the pre-existing network of social, economic, and cultural activities. As a result, the newly created places had the potential to develop into focal points that could enhance integration processes, both in the internal and immediate context.

The examples presented here also helped us to understand the project's potential as an alternative method for intervening in the city's marginal areas. It constitutes a new approach to the relationship between inhabitants and their environment, offering insight as to how new areas of symbolic centrality can be generated through this relationship. The 'villa' would then become a '*barrio*', reviving the dynamics of integration and differentiation between peripheral and central spaces, in which each fragment of the city establishes dialogue with the others.

We can define this type of intervention on two axes. On the one hand, the plan aims to intervene on specific and pre-existing conditions, that is, to transform concrete elements, consolidating the already existing social structures, so that later development will evolve on a spontaneous and self-managed basis. On the other hand, this type of project aims to encourage the communication and integration networks already in existence among the different communities, as a way of integrating and stabilizing the intervened areas to the formal city around them. The purpose is then to promote not only the morphological dimension of the settlements but also the existing values and opportunities within the neighbourhood, as well as its links to the environment.

5   Observations emerging from the project

In conclusion, we would like to mention some characteristics and consequences of our project that have already been empirically proven. Some of the outlined strategies were applied in an actual intervention experience in Buenos Aires.

The project received financial support from the Dutch Foundation 'Playspace', which had been specially created to fund construction of the multi-functional public programmes defined in this project for children and adolescents living in Villa Tranquila.

Realization of the model designed during the research effort not only allowed a part of the proposal to be set up, but also to find new possibilities and opportunities that complemented and added greater versatility to the strategy for integration and socioterritorial recovery. The available budget was certainly not enough to run the full project, so it was decided to restrict the intervention area, and to focus efforts on a part of the proposed inter-connective network. In line with the foundation's principles, programmes were targeted towards the youngest villa residents. The final proposal was subsequently discussed, prepared, modified, and defined during weekly meetings with children, adolescents, and parents, that is, the future users of the public spaces to be created.

Likewise, the creation of these spaces incorporated demands from the new interlocutors of the neighbourhood concerning certain functional needs. In some cases, this improved the prospects of the future project, whereas in others it caused conflict, as members opposed programme and space suggestions defined by other groups. These sessions were, nevertheless, particularly enriching, and confirmed the success of the project's adaptation capacity without having to change the strategic essence of the methodology.

This network was also extended to public space and community activities for sports, games and educational centres for kids and younger inhabitants. These recreational spots for kids were built on a modular system basis, using a parts-kit that allows original schemes to be adapted to the scale, size, activity and budget of each place. These parts-kits are easily moved, repaired, modified, with materials that are cheap and must be capable of working on interventions. This type of modular system allows communities to effectively resolve not only problems related to self-construction (economic aspects, limited number of people to work with, lack of big construction tools), but also to take existing physical and social conditions into account. These elements as part of a cellular organization can also interact between other elements defining places with different scales and programmes.

Another important aspect of this modular system is that it enables communities to proceed in steps and to produce partial results. This is a fundamental part of the project. Even though the potential of the project is in its interaction between other internal and external public spaces, each project plays an important role within the relevant community. Once intervention is complete, the community should always recognize 'ownership' for each project. This is because time also plays a role in the intervention. According to Ayuero and Swistun, these communities of informal populations, have been waiting endlessly for forthcoming programmes that would/could allow them to improve their lives. This constant waiting is giving way to scepticism that can produce doubt, mistakes and contradictions about the project, its methods and its possible results.

Networks themselves are also a part of intervention because these will create the safe linkage between places, the construction of new infrastructure, and promoting interaction between communities within and beyond the neighbourhood.

Based on the strategy of place distribution, the network identified several sites that have the potential to become centralities with different hierarchies. These centres, as urban magnets, will embody programmes that will identify each place of the villa. The interrelation between these locations and the uniqueness of each place, reflecting the needs of its own residents, will enhance the sense of belonging in each community.

6   Conclusion

This project aspires to provide an answer to the preliminary questions that originally guided the effort, i.e., the capacity of an urban project to influence the reconversion of marginalized areas. The concept of the project, resulting from an action-reaction dynamics, enabled us to understand the crucial role of pre-existing urban and social configurations in any design process for intervention, since the latter is seen as a

strategy that only becomes obvious in the light of the settlement's future evolution, which the research on pre-existing configurations tried to anticipate.

The experience highlighted different perspectives that should be applied to slum upgrading projects:

— *Specificity of place*: Although the social circumstances and conflicts in the project area are common to any community at the urban or even global level, proposals need to be specific to the work-place. In order to achieve the hoped-for process of a participative and self-managed recovery, proposed projects must stem from a concrete diagnosis in which the social and idiosyncratic characteristics of the neighbourhood in question are identified.

— *Respect for daily events*: Strategies that have an influence at the neighbourhood level as well as those affecting the immediate proximity should be generated from a specific study that targets the everyday and domestic level. This is the dimension where it is possible to reinforce or modify the events envisaged by both the neighbourhood and external populations, and which will provide the transformation process with vitality.

— *Public space as a catalyst for transformation*: Public space has the potential to resolve infrastructural and environmental conflicts as well as the social and cultural needs of the villa. That is why work on public spaces can modify or improve the level of association and relationship between the neighbourhood and the villa inhabitants.

— *Time as a project tool*: The concept of urban transformation was developed to promote future progress; thus, time and sociocultural modifications are relevant factors in defining a project, which has to be flexible enough to accommodate them. This ensures that a proposed project is based on a flexible and bottom-up approach that will allow it to expand and change in the years to come depending on how the villa grows.

— *Strategies as a project tool*: The application of strategies enables transformation to be projected as tendencies and flows, not as predictable results. Instead of proposing concrete, formal project solutions, strategies make it possible to design an intervention in which the initial guidelines are defined from specific or unique circumstances with respect to place and people, but whose proposals may later face limitations because certain elements were transformed, adapted, reinforce, or even ignored during project design.

This approach of urban intervention offers an architectural alternative for participating in the city. Its proposals can physically and tangibly define the singularity apparent from the research, as well as define its capacity for sociospatial articulation, adaptation, transformation, and promotion of the place as a sociocultural experience. Thus, the understanding of the villa's systematic growth and identification of the pre-existing values help to consolidate and strengthen the identity of a community as being a part of the city.

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