

# Housing and immigrant population in Barcelona

**Blanca Gutiérrez Valdivia**

Centre de Política de Sòl i Valoracions, UPC

blanca.gutierrez@upc.edu

**Pilar García Almirall**

Centre de Política de Sòl i Valoracions, UPC

pilar.garcia.almirall@upc.edu

## Abstract

Demographic change occurred in the last decade by the arrival of immigrant population has produced significant social and physical transformations in the Spanish cities. This article is part of a research on the residential and urban conditions of immigrant population in the Metropolitan Region of Barcelona. In this study we have analyzed through case studies the relation between immigration and city through the study of the use of public space and housing characteristics.

The immigrant population is generally a very diverse collective. We propose that points in common can be drawn from analyses that take into account other major characteristics, beyond country of origin, such as gender, economic situation and education level. Through observation of groups in public spaces, especially squares, it is possible to identify aspects related both to social status and to gender roles assigned by their original and adopted cultures.

This paper focuses on Metropolitan Region of Barcelona, and analyzes its reality based on concrete data and specific in case studies, to verify and compare the initial proposal.

To be able to determine parameters for comparison, we have worked with a methodological strategy based of several quantitative and qualitative tools to get an insight on residential and urban conditions of the immigrant population. The main technique used was the participant observation, involving direct observation and presence in different interaction spaces: streets, squares and public facilities. The observations involve two dimensions to make the analysis and the comparison between different fields of study easier: Physical dimension and Social dimension. This made it possible for us to become aware of the different uses made by immigrants and by the Spanish population based on their activities, gender, age, and interaction with other persons.

Keywords: immigrant population, case study, urban characteristics

## **01.- Introduction**

The maintained arrival of immigrants and its installation in the Spanish society are supposing a social transformation that it can compete in depth and implications with which has taken place in our contemporary history. Its impact in multiple spheres and facets of the Spanish society already is remarkable in the present, and is called to being it much more in the future. (Arango, 2004: 161)

To understand the magnitude of this phenomenon is enough to note the increase in population for the period 2001-2009. In 2009 the immigrant population represents 12.08% of the immigrant population in Spain, whereas in 2001 the immigrant population only was reaching 3.33 % of the total population. This supposes an increase of 8.75 % of the immigrant population in only 8 years. This is even clearer in the Metropolitan area of Barcelona and in Barcelona where the percentage of immigrant population in 2001 was 3.87% and 4.84%, while in 2009 this percentage reached 14.84 and 17.54 respectively. This rapid increase of the immigrant population has produced important changes in the physical and social configuration of the Spanish cities.

This dynamics is not a Spanish particular case, but it is framed in a change of the European migratory system, characterized by the conversion of the south of Europe in a zone of attraction of international the migratory flows (King, 2002; King, Fielding and Black, 1997).

This paper presents some of the results of the research project "Immigration, housing and city housing conditions, urban and access to housing, urban and social consequences and performance criteria for Barcelona and Madrid", funded by the Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation with reference (CSO2008-04337).

This research takes as its starting point, the results of a previous research on seven main metropolitan areas in Spain, which was located in the city areas where immigrant populations are concentrated.

With this was possible to determine that in these metropolitan areas there are not high levels of spatial segregation, although it was found that immigrants were located in urban areas that concentrated most deficient housing stock. Low levels of spatial segregation conceal a real problem of spatial marginalization (Arbaci, 2008).

This project is the continuation of such research, so to complete the information it has changed the scale of analysis from macro (metropolitan area) to micro (neighbourhood).

For that it has been applied to the study of cases at different neighbourhoods with different characteristics and a high concentration of immigrants.

This paper shows the results obtained in 3 neighborhoods of Barcelona, where it has studied the urban characteristics, the residential conditions of immigrants and their access to housing.

## **02. Methodology**

To find out about residential characteristics of the immigrant population to a neighborhood level, research has focused on several case studies. The case study method is based on the analysis of a concrete experience in order to convey specific knowledge. In this case, we have selected 3 districts of Barcelona with demographic characteristics and different urban realities illustrate the residential that has the immigrant population in this city.

To analyze such a complex reality and get reliable results be made for methodological triangulation as a methodological strategy to be developed. The strategy is to combine different probing techniques to achieve additional findings and develop knowledge on a particular object of study.

First it is made a quantitative approach to the study area. Statistics are drawn from various sources and then analyzed.

In this case, it has consulted data on population characteristics and socioeconomic conditions and urban residential areas of study from the Population and Housing Census 2001. Also discussed are data on the origin, sex and age of the population in the Continuous Census Population Register. Finally, we analyzed data on housing and urban characteristics of the neighborhood from the Cadastre. It has worked at the level of census tracts for Census data and the Continuous Census and plot for cadastral information.

With these data, we made a brief statistical use and were subsequently used Geographic Information Systems in the territory to map statistical results, bringing the field phenomena and problems in the area.

Quantitative information has been supplemented by qualitative information. The use of qualitative tools in urban analysis allows us to incorporate non-quantifiable data within the statistical data and work at a level of detail for which no data are available. In developing the qualitative research techniques were used.

To analyze the use of public space that makes the immigrant population it has been used participant observation. This technique allows the verification of quantitative data and primary information difficult to quantify in statistical phenomena. It consists of a series of techniques for collecting and analyzing data and allows approaching the social reality of trying to observe it directly, whole and in its complexity, no tricks, no simplifications and when it happens the phenomenon under study. Allows a total view of reality, taking into account the context and unfragmented real. No social phenomenon can be understood outside of their space-time references and context. (Vallés, 2003)

The observation consists of a sequential analysis in different areas for each of the selected contexts at different times of day (morning, afternoon, evening) and on different days (weekday, Saturday, holiday)

To collect information from the observations using a series of chips, which display the most relevant then to classify information according to two dimensions which facilitates further analysis.

-Physical Dimension: characteristics, accessibility, infrastructure, health, beauty, furniture ...

-Social dimension: who use / live in space (gender, age, origin), with whom, how, how...

These two dimensions have been used both for the study of public space for the study of housing, although the schedules established for each of the spaces have been different based on information that he wanted to get each of them.

On the one hand observations were made on houses in the fields of study. The observation has comprised a sequential analysis of each of the neighborhoods. Observations information has allowed contrasting and validating the statistical information.

For complete information on housing conditions have been conducted in-depth interviews to learn the residential conditions of immigrants and their access to housing. 15 interviews have been conducted in Depth immigrants of different nationalities and with different immigration status (irregular, regular, nationalized) and demographic characteristics (gender and age). Also tried to collect other personal information such as relationship to activity, training and migration project type (individual or family) that

seem to condition the residential character of the immigrant population and their access to housing.

It has also been conducted in depth interviews with key informants belonging to NGOs, neighborhood associations and associations of immigrants.

### **Research Context**

The scope of the research are five neighborhoods in the Metropolitan Area of Barcelona (RMB), and five districts in the Metropolitan Area of Madrid (AMM), where, according to previous research of this Centre is located a percentage of immigrant population over the average of the RMB and RMM. (Fullaondo, 2007) The areas selected have different socio-demographic and urban characteristics to check the impact of these variables on residential and urban conditions of the immigrant population.

In this article we present the results of three study areas of Barcelona. These contexts are the Raval, Escorxador and Ciutat Meridiana.

Illustration 1 Research context in Barcelona

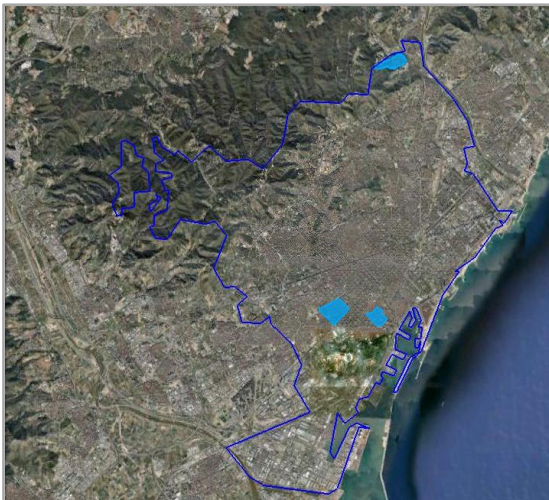


Illustration 2 Ciutat Meridiana



Illustration 3 Raval



Illustration 4 Escorxador



The Raval neighborhood is located within the Old Quarter of the city of Barcelona. Due to the complexity and density of the neighborhood for this study, we selected one of the areas of Raval, where most immigrants are concentrated.

This area has an area of 27.64 hectares and a population of almost 18 000 inhabitants, this area makes it the most densely population of Barcelona.

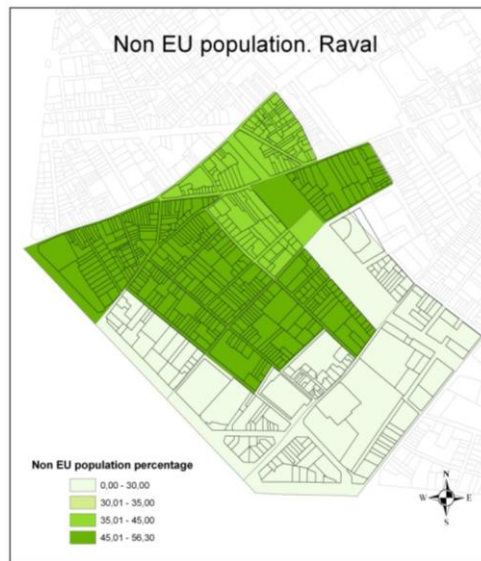
The origin of Raval goes back to the time of the fall of the Roman Empire, but throughout the Middle Ages when the heart of Raval grows. However, was in the early eighteenth century, when industries are beginning to settle in the neighborhood, when the Raval begins to take shape as it is today.

Due to the humble origins of its population, and the deterioration and abandonment of its space, traditionally has been associated with an image area of marginality. The neighborhood has seen strong proletarian demands from the eighteenth century to the early twentieth century. In more recent times, the neighborhood has enjoyed strong social net.

This area has traditionally been a location neighborhood of immigrants, but has been in the last decade, when this phenomenon has intensified in Spain, when the Raval has become one of the main reception areas of Barcelona population immigrant.

The study area has a 51.01% of foreign population, of which the predominant population is from Pakistan (14.32%), followed from Morocco (4.66%) and Ecuador (2.54%). Also noteworthy is the presence in the neighborhood of a significant percentage of population from the European Union (6.57%).

Illustration 5 Map of Raval



The location of this population in the district has produced significant demographic changes. The sex ratio of the area is 138.05, a number that increases to 214.28 when it comes to people outside the Community. The arrival of this population has also helped to rejuvenate the structure of the population pyramid.

The physical configuration of the Raval is composed of a historic urban fabric, consisting of a dense urban fabric that is articulated through many narrow streets. The area is lack of public spaces. This lack of public spaces for gathering and socialization causes the interstitial space appropriation of poor quality for the development of these activities. The situation of the Raval in a central area of the city, and the fact that in the neighborhood are located facilities and city services, cause the neighborhood is an attractive constant flow of people, further enhancing the use of space public, which already runs a deficit. In addition, despite having multiple city-scale facilities, the area is not provided with adequate facilities for the population that lives in the neighborhood. The main housing typology is mixed-use building on half blocks with share party wall building and commercial premises on the ground floor. Commercial use of the ground floor contributes to the vitality of the neighborhood streets. The housing stock is deteriorated, as a very high percentage of housing (57, 64%) was built before 1900. In its origin the construction quality of these homes was not very good quality, to this situation there is to add the lack of remodeling and care in maintaining the buildings,

which has caused living conditions do not meet standards current habitability and that 51.58% of households in the district are in a deficient situation.

In the last years the structural situation of the neighborhood has coexisted with a social and urban gentrification, although in the case of the Raval, this process has particular characteristics. The gentrification is characterized by the residential occupancy of urban centers by the upper classes, which move to live in these areas and thus moving the lower income residents who occupy them.

One of the peculiarities of the Raval is that almost simultaneously in the district have settled immigrants with low incomes and people with a middle or upper socioeconomic status. Both groups have very different economic situations and participate in the housing market in the same area, despite not reaching the same submarkets. (Sargata, 2001).

In the last two decades, the Raval has been the scene of multiple urban interventions, however, these interventions were not always prioritized the welfare and needs of the people who live in the neighborhood.

The Escorxador area is located in the Eixample district, within the neighborhood of Eixample Esquerra. Due to the size of the neighborhood has been selected an area with the highest concentration of foreign population.

This zone covers an area of 54.82 hectares and a population of nearly 24000 people, so the density is of 436.22 people per hectare. Density remains high but lowers that in the Raval.

The Eixample is an original project engineer Cerdà that forms a grid street layout, with octagonal block with chamfered street corners. It was built during the industrialization of Catalonia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century's. La Nova Esquerra Eixample is consolidated in the early twentieth century with industrial buildings and rental houses, a fact that confers social disparity in their origin. The neighborhood transformation starts in the 70's to late 90's with the replacement of industries and military buildings for housing, public spaces and facilities.

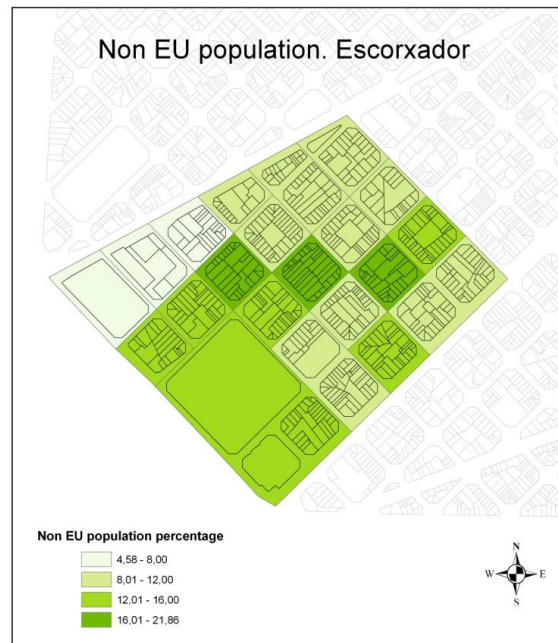
The study area has a foreign population of 16.98%. Populations most important are from Peru (1.34%), Ecuador (1.23%), China (1.17%) and Colombia (0.98%). Although this neighborhood is the area with highest percentage of immigrant population in



Eixample district this percentage is slightly below average in Barcelona.

Even though the immigrant population has increased in the quarter on a 30.13%, which has led to changes in the demographic structure of the population, the neighborhood is still characterized by having a very aged population, with an aging rate of 30.13%. The district's population is slightly feminized with a sex ratio of 85.64%.

Illustration 6 Map of Escorxador



The urban fabric of the neighborhood is expansion plan. The neighborhood has enough public spaces in which they can develop different activities: sports, games, care... The network equipment is largely in line with the needs of the population and there is good connectivity between public spaces and equipment. Predominantly indigenous and specialized trade but trade are also present run by or directed at immigrants, especially around the Consulate of Morocco. The trade is mainly located on the ground floors of residential buildings which contribute to maintaining the vitality of the neighborhood.

As in the case of the Raval, the main housing typology is mixed-use building on half blocks with share party wall building and commercial premises on the ground floor. Commercial use of the ground floor contributes to the vitality of the neighborhood streets.

A significant portion of homes are damaged (34.91%), a high percentage of housing (39.71%) were built before 1940. The rental housing stock is limited (34.2%), which

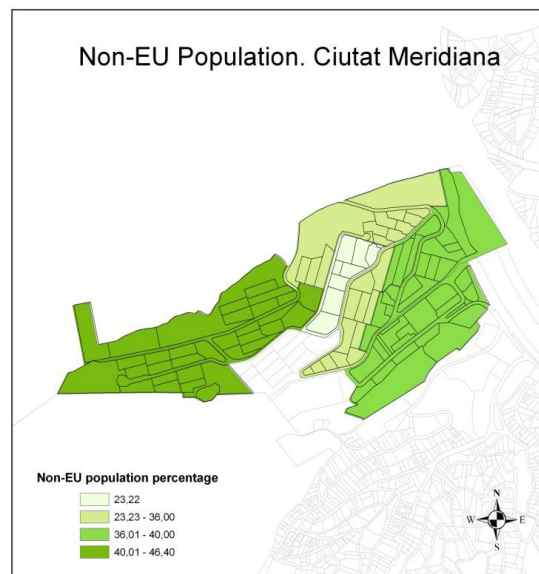
makes difficult the arrival of new population to the neighborhood. The construction quality of housing is very heterogeneous.

The last area of study is the district of Ciutat Meridiana in the Nou Barris district. This area covers an area of 35.96 hectares and a population of nearly 10000 people, so that the density of 276.94 people per hectare, one of the lowest densities of Barcelona.

The neighborhood is built in the 60's, due to strong housing demand of immigrants from other places of Spain. The neighborhood is built in a hilly area so the steep slopes have led to numerous problems of accessibility and communication in the neighborhood.

This area concentrates 36.63% of immigrant population; the foreign population more numerous is from Ecuador 9.59%, followed by people in other countries like the Dominican Republic (3.65%), Morocco (3.24%) and Pakistan (3.02%).

Illustration 7 Map of Ciutat Meridiana



The neighborhood is a housing estate with an irregular grid. Public spaces are scarce and they have structural faults. In the neighborhood there are many interstitial spaces that are used as informal meeting places. The facilities are adequate but are far from certain areas of the district. The commercial network consists of small commercial areas that supply to the neighborhood scarcely. In recent years has proliferated trade for

immigrants and trade led by immigrants that is mixed with the traditional trade. The neighborhood has very active associations.

### **Results of participant observation about use of public space**

- In relation to the use made of public space has also been shown that in the case of men, the different sources within the immigrant population are those that mark the use made of public space (Pakistanis, Moroccans ... ), and among the different backgrounds are very diverse practices. At the same time, most women, whether immigrant or indigenous from different, always make use of public space related to reproductive tasks.
- There is a relationship between housing and related space to the extent that the spaces used for recreation and meeting are those close to housing.
  - One of the assumptions of this research was that when housing conditions are very poor, an intensive use of public space. However, this research has found that this is not always so, and that the intensive use of public space is more related to the origin and hours of paid work. There are groups of immigrants who tend to use housing as a social space, and still do even though it is in poor condition.
- In the case of the use of public space is essential to understand the dichotomy between productive and reproductive work since it is this dimension that the source that marks the use of public space.
- It has established a relationship between the rate of migration (whether family or individual) and the use of public space that is given. It seems that when migration is familiar, the male presence in public space is smaller, and the predominant uses are related to reproductive tasks, whereas individual migration is more men on the street doing entertainment-related uses and sociability.
- In this limited use of public space a main factor is the quality of public space, and whether this space is adapted to the needs and experiences of people who use it.
- Most of the tasks performed in the public space for immigrant women, are related to the reproductive role has been traditionally assumed by women. This relationship between the use of public space and gender roles, is also visible among indigenous women.
- It is also quite remarkable the presence of children of immigrant origin unaccompanied on the streets and public squares. As noted above, it appears that they are given more autonomy and also trusts that care for older kids.

- Who uses a particular space and how it is, in other words, its physical and social settings are crucial when people use or not a space

### **Results of statistical analysis and observation about housing**

- Although the residential properties of the different neighborhoods are very different in the three it has been shown through fieldwork and statistical information available, that the immigrant population is located in poorer households and there is a clear relationship between immigrant and substandard housing. The immigrant population live in the homes of lower market value, both property and rental. The spatial, constructive and accessibility characteristics determine the low quality of living conditions.
- In buildings without elevator housing is starting to repeat a pattern that occurred in the Barcelona bourgeoisie of the late nineteenth century, where the upper classes were installed on the lower floors and as it descended floor rising social class. Currently, this situation occurs but with the immigrant population. We find that the original population is concentrated in the lower floors while the immigrant population is in the upper floors.
- Tenure within the immigrant community is both the rent and the property. In the current crisis, unemployment is common among the immigrant population and many families are facing problems in paying the mortgage, which in some cases causing many families who already had a residential unit itself have to return to rent rooms or in the worst case, the return of family unity to the country of origin.
- Among the substandard conditions or situations, the population is most vulnerable are those who are renting.
- Besides focusing on the most deficient housing, is common among this group the cohabitation of extended family members, causing overcrowding problems.
- Especially those who suffer these conditions are poor immigrant women, since, on the one hand are the most used indoor and the other for being the most into and out of home.
- Although the residential conditions are not optimal, the housing has an essential role in the socialization of immigrants, especially the Moroccan, as it is here that held family reunions. Can be interpreted so that the houses supplement to other social spaces such facilities or public space.
- The most common problem of these buildings is the lack of accessibility, the structural problems, deterioration of buildings and lack of ventilation and lighting. Some of these

problems are consequences of the age of the buildings and have made insufficient remodeling. Another part of the housing problems are structural to the type of urban fabric and are difficult to solve

- The search for affordable housing has been part of the immigrant population to use as residence a local on the ground floor of a commercial or industrial local. This leads to specific problems such as lack of adequate facilities or gaps in service delivery.
- A phenomenon that has spread in the last decade is the rental of rooms. This phenomenon was limited to students or young people, while currently the principal means of access to housing for the immigrant population, at least in the early stages of the migration process. This general type of residential occupancy cause specific problems such as overcrowding.

### **Interview results**

The following summarizes the significant results that have been drawn from interviews with both immigrants as key informants.

- The informal market rent of rooms is very dynamic and the offer is renewed every few days. The room rates are quite high, if you compare the price relative to the surface, it is cheaper to rent a house than a room. The length of stay in a rented room is usually short (months) with the emotional, economic and physical consequences that entails. Families (and single mothers) with children have more difficulty to find rooms for rent.
- In the formal market access to housing requirements imposed by the property (bank guarantee, several months of deposit ...) are difficult to assume for anyone but become an insurmountable barrier to the immigrant population, as people more precarious employment situations and lack of social networks that provide financial support, it is impossible to comply with these conditions.
- The economic crisis has particularly affected to the immigrant population that has higher levels of unemployment than the Spanish population (30% unemployment of immigrants compared to 18% of the Spanish population)<sup>1</sup>. This limits their access to housing, and families who rented a house for the family have had to rent a room and people who rented a room have been left without jobs and without money to pay rent

---

<sup>1</sup> Elias, Joan (2011) "Inmigración y mercado laboral: antes y después de la recesión" Documentos de Economía de la Caixa N° 20

(even modest) as that have come to share singles rooms or even live on the streets, shelters, cars ...

- The situation of extreme economic deprivation sometimes forces to develop strategies regardless of the legality as the occupation of empty houses or industrial buildings.
- Took Spanish nationality, or a regular situation doesn't improve the conditions for access to housing.
- The nationality is the most important variable in access to housing, immigrants from Africa are those who find it most difficult. While the gender variable is less relevant, but having children limit access to housing.
- The main criterion that determines access to a room or house is the economic front to another as the existence of social networking or the location. When there are similar prices, the location is a decisive factor as it eases the development of activities of everyday life.
- Living with people outside the family unit is very troublesome. When they do choose to share housing with people from their country but does not guarantee that they will not be problems of coexistence.
- The satisfaction with the neighborhood of residence is quite high and the valuation of the number and quality of facilities and public spaces is very positive.
- In relation with living conditions, families (or mothers) with children find more problems, since when they share housing do not have space for the right development of children (places to play, do homework ...) and in many cases only can use the house to sleep.
- Housing is a critical factor for the integration of immigrants. In Spain, registered in the Continuous census of the City guarantee access to universal public services (health and education), however, some homeowners deny their tenants register so it is deprived of access for these people to basic services .
- Even are detected racism and discrimination problems in access to housing and other environments (work, public space) relationship with neighbors is considered good.

## **Conclusions**

- Although the residential properties of the three neighborhoods are very different have been able to confirm through field work and the statistical information available, that the immigrant population is located in poorer households and there is a clear relationship between population immigrant and substandard housing.

According to the work done in these neighborhoods has been determined that substandard housing in relation to possible scenarios may possible:

-Conditions of substandard housing. It is when there are objective conditions of substandard housing as structural problems or lack of ventilation, which are more or less easy to detect through statistical data.

-Substandard housing situations. There are cases where although the quality of housing is good, there are situations where the use to which the residential space that make substandard housing, such as overcrowding or the use of spaces that are not intended for housing. It is very difficult to find substandard housing situations.

- According to these first results it seems that there is no relationship between poor housing and substandard housing or intensive use of public space. It has been shown that despite the situation of poor housing is not given a heightened use of public space by the immigrant population, and that use fairly similar to what would make Spanish person.
- As has been determined in the cases studied, in the case of access to housing the variable that determines access to a better or worse housing is the source linked to social class, whereas in the case of the use of public space the crucial variable is the gender over the origin of the person.
- As noted with regard to the type of housing, immigrant community living in the homes of lower market value, both purchase and rental. The spatial, constructive and accessibility determine the low quality of habitability.
- According to the work done, it has been determined that social cohesion is not a dichotomous variable but there is a progression; there are different degrees of social cohesion. According to this, we believe that we can measure the social cohesion of a neighborhood by the level of interaction with immigrants and Spanish population in public spaces of daily life. Different degrees: segregation, coexistence, integration.
- Women are who suffer the more precarious conditions, since on the one hand are the most used indoor and the other to be the most entering and leaving home.
- In previous research of the Centre, were noticed in access to housing is very relevant to the type of person's immigration bill, if a family or individual project. This project has been to reaffirm that this is so and it has been observed as the immigration project type also influences the people make use of public space.
- To achieve a social balance in neighborhoods and public spaces need to integrate policy actions aimed at social cohesion of the population of the district and on the other

interventions in public spaces that allow the coexistence of different social groups by integration of different uses and activities in the same public space. There are also different scales of action, a state level, public policies that ensure equity of the population, municipal policies, and policies for intervention on neighborhood specific issues.

## References

- Arango, Joaquín “La inmigración en España a comienzos del siglo XXI” Fundación Fernando Abril Martorell “Informe sobre la situación demográfica en España” Madrid, Fundación Fernando Abril Martorell, pp 161-186
- Arbaci, Sonia. (2008) “Hacia la construcción de un discurso sobre la inmigración en las ciudades del sur de Europa. La política urbanística y de vivienda como mecanismos estructurales de marginación étnica residencial” Revista ACE Número 8 (pp 11-38)
- Elias, Joan (2011) “Inmigración y mercado laboral: antes y después de la recesión” Documentos de Economía de la Caixa N° 20
- Fullaondo, A. y García Almirall, P. (2007). “Foreign immigration in Spain: Towards multi-ethnic metropolises”. Ponencia presentada en el European Network of Housing Research Conference, Rotterdam.
- Fullaondo, Arkaitz. (2007) “La inmigración en España: Una aproximación metropolitana comparada”. en revista ACE (Arquitectura, Ciudad y Entorno), n°4.
- Leal, Jesús (2004) “El diferente modelo residencial de los países del sur de Europa: El mercado de viviendas, la familia y el Estado” Revista Arxius de Ciències Socials Núm 10 Junio
- Sargatal, Ma Alba (2001) “Gentrificación e inmigración en los centros históricos: el caso del barrio del Raval en Barcelona” Scripta Nova. Revista Electrónica de Geografía y Ciencias Sociales. Universidad de Barcelona [ISSN 1138-9788] N° 94 (66), 1 de agosto de 2001
- Vallés, Miguel (2003) “Técnicas cualitativas de investigación social: reflexión metodológica y práctica profesional” Madrid, Síntesis