

DEFINITE SPACE –

*FUZZY RESPONSIBILITY*

# BOOK OF PROCEEDINGS

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## **PROCESSES IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF PUBLIC SPACE: BOTTOM UP VERSUS TOP DOWN PROCESSES. INFORMAL SPACES AND ALTERNATIVE USES.**

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### **Abstract**

*Historically there have always been two different genealogies of public space (Rowe,1981; Sennett,1997 Trachana, 2014). On the one hand there have been spaces created by human societies over time, based on evolution, empirical knowledge, daily life and the real needs of communication and exchange among citizens. These are places full of life that persist over centuries in our cities (De Certeau, 1999). On the other hand, there are instant spaces, planned, designed, and imposed from above. These spaces are governed by a geometric, abstract and symbolic order. They are regulated or regulatory spaces that impose certain patterns of use and behavior that have prevailed from the Renaissance and Baroque to modern and contemporary times in terms of urbanism. Today the effectiveness and professionalism in urban design that local administrations and economic powers have promoted and always justified by the common good, is being questioned.*

*The main issue addressed here is how some practices that are being spread nowadays, can be justified. This paper is a critical review of different urban actions that are taking place in Europe (with special emphasis in the case of Spain) and Latin America, and that are an alternative to the public sector in urban planning. Some of the most common actions are the occupation of empty sites, urban gardens, ephemeral transformations of public space for social and recreational uses, and other practices that generally respond to citizens's real needs in depressed neighborhoods and impoverished urban areas. These practices constitute effective responses with little means adapted to the current socio-economic situation that imply austerity in public resources and an optimization in the use of technological tools within easy reach by both, professionals and citizens. They are made possible by the network connectivity resulting in collective actions in the physical space. The new models of performance have not only begun to be supported by the public sector but have been adopted and are actually promoted by them.*

### **1. Introduction**

In this paper we deal with some alternative processes to those that control the government and the usual promoters. These are processes managed by the citizens, through their associations and groups formed by interdisciplinary professionals. The latter belong to a new generation of professionals who investigate new forms of intervention in the city. They also seek career opportunities in Spain and in many European countries where the public sector has significantly reduced their budgets for building work and improvements in their neighbourhoods. Many of these new initiatives have emerged from the economic and social crisis and replace the institutions and where they fail to intervene or make mistakes. They are acting on the micro-scale level of the city with limited resources but they often have a great impact as they stimulate responsible communities in opposition to governmental institutions which in turn are stimulated by these initiatives. These are formulas based on citizen participation and the use of new technological tools and social networking. There are many categories such as urban art, ephemeral occupations of public space, urban gardens and community gardens, occupied plots and vacant areas that are reclaimed for social and recreational uses, obsolete industrial

areas and other waste and degraded spaces creatively reused. We call these interventions “soft urbanism” (Trachana, 2012) and in other places we have also referred to them as hybrid spaces, as they have as a main characteristic, the ability to integrate people within its creation, through their opinions by the use of networks and also by their physical participation *in situ* (Trachana, Martín Castillejos, 2014). These are non-business like interventions and focus instead on the enjoyment of the citizens and for the citizens.

The Madrid urban action group called “*estoesunaplaza*” (“this is a square”) provides us with a formula through a methodological manual of urban action that has been developed and that indicates the basic issues to consider before starting an intervention strategy on an urban site. The group recommends the setting up of a good multidisciplinary team to develop a strategy of action in order to convince, attract and get the different elements required to carry out the action, and above all, to get the necessary support and public sponsorship. For them, a workshop, an exhibition or a party are highly social events, either artistic or cultural (without seeming merely commercial-promotional) that leave their mark in the liberated space, and can mobilize expectations and get institutional or financial support. The creative process finally takes place when all the elements are gathered together as it requires people, action and dissemination, policy and administration. The participation in the process of the people for whom the space is intended, is absolutely essential, so that they can feel their involvement in the creation of the space, calling it their own and providing a continuity in time. Without people, neighbors or groups involved, an urban action would not make sense (Moradiellos, 2009).

## 2. Conceptual framework

The historical city has produced spaces where the conditions of everyday life have been altered and where extraordinary rituals take and have taken place. History reveals how a city, when planned as a whole unit or when arisen from synergies over time, forges a structure consisting of a series of architectural events and unique collective spaces, with artistic will that clearly differs from the typical production processes, i.e, the reproduction of stereo-types. It is the leisure activity spaces that are the essential fields of expression, of confrontation and cultural production, this is one of the diverse forms of expression of the material and spiritual existence of human beings. In their essence, these spaces are public. They are spaces that give energy and help develop the daily and community life. The elements that shape these spaces sometimes express the world of ideas, discourses and utopias of the city. But its meaning cannot be reduced to its layout, design, architectural construction, forms of occupation and planned use. They depend, fundamentally, on their interpretation and the spontaneous use given to them. Their use can, therefore, be outside the forecasts and planned programs.

In these spaces, then, freedom of expression, participation and the exercise of citizenship are accomplished. In general terms, today, they have little or no interest at all for the economic powers, and the developers of urban space. It is not surprising, therefore, the low profile with which they are developed in the emerging city given their zero economic profitability as their essence is enjoyment, not productivity. It is not that today's cities lack social and recreational spaces, but they are built, occupied, regulated and managed without having the concept of public space. They don't form the part of the budgets and components of civic identity. Leisure spaces developed by institutions, trading companies or a consortium of both, often privately exploited, do not exactly respond to the natural impulses of spontaneous individuals and collective activities that arise from complete freedom (Trachana, 2014).

The theoretical approach to the ‘areas of reference’ are derived from the Situationist theory. The Situationists advocated the construction of situations or isolated events and fragmented urban projects as opposed to the objective and unitary character that urban planning sought to give to the city's image aimed at the ‘society of the spectators’ (Debord, 1967 and 1988). The Situationist ‘*dérive*’ consisted of the non-productive experimental use of urban space. The city would have spaces dedicated to games and the well being of the people. This idea was certainly indebted to the spirit of Laugier and shared with the Romanticism and the Baroque in the daring adventures and discovery of spaces as the result of travel and the assimilation of cultures. The new conceptions of art today are connected to action,

participation, involvement and commitment with reality and with the collective. Art is no longer conceived as an isolated work but has been brought out of the galleries in the street to provide us with a stronger and more intense perception of reality (Perniola, 2002, p.17). This idea of contemporary art that emanates from the Situationist notion, conceives the city as a collective of dynamic art works. It has the potential of a ‘total’ artwork place or an environment all inspired and carried out by and for the community without being distracted from everyday life.

The concept of "place", on the other hand, involves the inter-communication as opposed to the “non-places” or places lacking in communication (Augé, 1994). In these places the memory of ephemeris manifests itself, the historical and social identity is reaffirmed by repeated civic events and religious rituals. They are places of significant density, complexity and up-to-date in that they continue being live scenarios of society. They are, therefore, “structural or primary elements of the city” (Rossi, 1971). Since ancient times these areas have been regulated, i.e. generated architectural types and have been part of the management of the city. Today they continue being direct references for the creation of new urban spaces. In these structures one would have to add those little shaped and sometimes ephemeral or improvised some sectors of modern society can promote, those that may arise from the bases as demand for living space. But would, above all, reclaim quality spaces from the hands of the professionals who are ready to investigate, experiment and work in collaboration with those more sensitive sectors of citizens and administration. The public space project would integrate social and cultural needs with solutions to the environmental problems, re-introduce nature to the urban areas, recover the degraded and wasted areas and preserve the festivals, games and traditional rituals in their original places for celebration.

In different regions of the world, ancestral formulas of popular occasions and games have survived and continue to captivate popular appeal. Some are carried out in spaces that are especially prepared and others in popular multi-purpose plazas. They acquire all their meaning and sense thanks to their ability to convene the people to the evocation and memory that constitutes the hallmark of the people. In these scenarios the identity, nationalism and regionalism are updated and revived through the architectural buildings. But the majority of times it is the streets and the open spaces in the city, the undefined spaces, which temporarily absorb these popular occasions. It is the very people of the city who make up the social spaces and not the defined spaces which shape the society.

The construction of spaces for festivities, games and rituals in society reflect their historical and fabled identity, built as a decisive and inescapable condition of life both individual and collectively. In Spain, for example, the games of rural origin, the processions of Holy Week and bullfighting itself constitute a mnemonic persistence of which, however, form part of the formal strategies and operational modes of certain politics and powers that be.

In the first decades of the twentieth century, the architectural avant guards advocated the disintegration of the street and all highly organised public space, promising in exchange an area of freedom and enjoyment close to nature where the border between the private and the public would be abolished. The “free area” as a spatial continuum could only facilitate the “demands for freedom, nature and free spirit”. The naturalist space, free and unlimited was considered superior to any structured space. The claim for free time was associated to this concept of “free space” of the modern society: leisure, sport, health, closeness to nature. But, as it turned out it was just a fantasy embedded in the modern city that started to fade and be recognized that the ideal of “free space” and its indiscriminate neutrality or equalised uniformity was barely attainable and not even desirable (Colin Rowe, 1981).

But this debate had already been surpassed in the second half of the twentieth century when the principles of the modern city went into crisis for having surrendered to the interests of real estate speculation and for having produced effects of uniformity, monotony and low spatial quality. The critical platform that addressed these phenomena counted with the Situationist movement among its different components, which started a new way of seeing and experiencing urban life. Instead of being prisoners of a daily routine (voiced by modern rationalism under the terms of “work, rest, move” with the subsequent zoning of the city), the Situationist proposed creating situations as specific emotional

moments of life, deliberately constructed for collective organization. Guy Debord (1957) considered urban transformation as the possibility for an orderly intervention on all the complex and interacting factors of the material part of life and behavior involved. The concept of a “unitary urbanism” would integrate all the arts and techniques as a means by which they contribute to a comprehensive composition of the environment. It can be said that the Situationist utopia becomes a possibility today thanks to a connectivity that encourages citizen activism that is spread by the social networks.

In the ideological basis of such interventions underlies the wish to please that is always associated with personal pleasure from the aim of creating a space for the enjoyment of a group, diluting the personal into the collective. As opposed to the typical interventions where personal projection prevails over architectural design, originality and innovation, this is rather, intelligent management by the people. It's not about occupying space selfishly but about opening moments of freedom and leisure in urban areas that lack space for recreational and socialization activities. The areas are redefined to escape the 'totalitarian' control of the 'star designer' projects that public spaces suffer in the city of today. It is about trying to find the formulas in which people become involved and participate in creating public space, so that they can take it over and give it a temporal continuity. Without people the intervention would have no sense or life. Many spaces designed by prestigious authors in fact fail because they stop considering people, to be there for the people, as they have the ambitious aim, for it to become an event for a “society of spectators”.

We have, nevertheless, historical forerunners who think of the architecture of the public space for everyday life and present needs, which responded effectively to the special circumstances of each place and have been approached by several very good architects in the past. Let's remember how Aldo Van Eyck of the municipal services of the city of Amsterdam, transformed vacant lots and residual spaces in playgrounds. After the destruction of half of the city as a result of air bombardments during the Second World War, he transformed these areas with scarce resources and a lot of ingenuity. When the financial crisis knocked down many buildings in Manhattan, the Green Guerillas in New York devoted themselves to the creation of urban gardens. Lina Bobardi, in the 70's, did some work to transform the heart of Bahía (a degraded environment and closely linked to very active popular uses). They were focused on rescuing popular traditions and local building knowledge that also involved the revaluation of popular cultures. From the 90's on there is an awareness in several European cities that urban spaces are not dead places but 'areas of opportunity'. Residual areas could accommodate emerging ways of life, that are an alternative to those proposed by the city council and then the creative reuse of degraded industrial areas could begin. We have enough examples of projects that cross the frontiers between formal and informal works and where the architectural discipline breaks its barriers. The new parks in the Ruhr valley in Germany where the mining and steel industries were abandoned are good examples.

Thus, against the typical transformations of squares and open spaces in urban centers and historic districts by the local administration, where there is, generally, total disconnection between citizens, future users (mostly neighbours), architects and authorities, today we can see several initiatives that are starting to develop. Nowadays, opportunities for direct action, formulas to act autonomously, that are independent from political programs and where professionals can get out of usual commissions and become involved in more daring ones are produced continuously. Moreover, when the economic crisis has truncated the public works, the young professionals have the ability to see new project opportunities, to detect new needs, to look for different promoters and to seek solutions to urban problems. Thus, interdisciplinary professional groups have been created displacing the personal ego in order to carry out different activities where the focus is no longer on specific and stellar works that become an emblem for institutions and capital. They are professionals who identify the final users and meet up with them using the new technology and innovative marketing tools.

Further, the ineffectiveness of the reconfiguration processes or the restoration of public spaces, always conceived from the point of view of the interests of economic and political elites, is more than clearly demonstrated. More positive forms of intervention necessarily involve interdisciplinary processes that imply the participation of local intelligence by conversing with professionals who coordinate them.

More than ever we can say that today what is needed is not so much in new initiatives, but rather, to add value to what already exists, by transforming, enhancing their own characteristics and inventing new possibilities of appropriation. In this sense, we have an increasing number of examples of good professional interventions in given situations designed to be effectively functional, sustainable, natural and popular.

### **3. Emerging tendencies of informal spaces**

There are numerous examples of necessary spaces for pleasure, urban transformations that are able to offer a temporary use such as *container city*, or the widespread urban vegetable gardens, the creative management of social spaces such as the Tabacalera Building Madrid or a gym created under a highway in Sao Paulo by the ex-boxer Nilson Garrido and his wife Cora Oliveira. Other unusual places have been brought about outside the conventional channels to mitigate social problems like unemployment, leisure, poverty, drugs and crime. There are also practices of dissent concerning temporary occupations devised from the ingenuity, the recycling and the parasitic actions. The "a-legality" in which they move, the survival practices and the marginality with their flexible mechanisms in order to stay within the city; the city with an economic crisis must develop new mechanisms of spatial configuration through recycling, the inclusion of residual spaces, etc.

The running of the contemporary city with regard to the dynamics of community life extends well beyond entertainment, tourism or consumerism in the new networks (ephemeral, changeable, transformable) of collectively used spaces, residual spaces that are temporarily activated by the people who occupy them, acquiring a collective meaning. The city is inhabited by practices that do not leave permanent traces, which appear and disappear, such as the Plaça dels Angels in front of the MACBA in Barcelona, which is activated by the presence of groups practising skateboarding or the Plaza de Colón in Madrid used in a similar way for different sports. With small behavior patterns like these new relationships with the public arise and new dimensions of life that transform, in their own way, the usual features that are involved in the public space.

Meanwhile, the contemporary urbanism still poses a dichotomy between the planned and the unplanned city. And the informal, that appears to be the problematic and is seen as a visual disorder, has however, an aspect full of life, that reveals itself as an enormous interaction of social energy. For this reason and facing exclusion (in its many codes that contemporary cities have developed) we would have to assess the emerging forms of urban intervention assimilating natural tendencies, and reversible, ephemeral and sustainable actions; such as the inclusion of, the reuse and recycling of spaces and disposable elements and materials; the spontaneity with which citizens generate and regenerate living spaces aside from the 'power' and the production systems; the learning process that communal living and citizenship generate and the knowledge transferred to the academy and the institutions involved.

*Container city*, for example, constitutes one of London's architectural oddities. It is a conception of flexible spaces that are adapted to different lifestyles. Containers can become a very flexible method of modular construction, very strong, very quick and economical from the structural point of view. They are easily adaptable and transformable with regards to their image. They can be reversibly dismantled and remounted releasing the occupied ground for other purposes when required. Today with this method, they have created several units of affordable rooms, low cost youth residences, social and cultural centers, lecture halls, offices, artist studios, workshops, medical facilities, and all kinds of habitats. Some of them are self-built and others are part of the innovations of architectural design.

Other notable examples of informal occupation are the wagenplatz in Berlin constituted by trailer-dwellings that colonize different empty plots formed after the fall of the wall. The wagenplatz or bauwagenplatz, urban settlements consisting mainly of trailers, cars and site offices are communities that originated in Germany in the years after the end of World War II, due to the housing shortage. Currently several of them remain in Germany and other countries like the Netherlands or Switzerland.

Their rise began in the 80s, from the movements of occupation as an alternative way of living to the capitalist's system. There is as much a variety of wagenplatzs as settlements. There are those that are installed directly on occupied land, others that rent the ground after years of negotiations, or even those that offer a service to the community in exchange for its use. In any case, they serve as a reference for physical spaces where resistance and counterculture are defended day after day by means of everyday acts such as the preparation of food for the community, the exchange of second-hand clothes, cleanups, etc., besides collaborating actively in the anti-fascist struggles, against real estate speculation or racism.

These ways of understanding the urban phenomenon are presented as an alternative to the excessive planning that supports the fact that politics resembles surveillance and that justifies a neoliberal state control that empowers corporate forces to exercise repression in the name of the public good. In the impoverished economies prevailing today, to use bland urbanism or to use self-built, ephemeral, fast, lightweight, removable, strictly functionalist and why not, effective aesthetic formulas, is to answer to the needs that many people have in whatever part of the world that depends on them. That makes us wonder what can be done and what is still not being done.

The informal appropriation of urban spaces for temporary uses, we believe, is an extremely important aspect for the future of urban space. The different formations with a casual connotation such as spontaneous occupations with recreational activities, the organization of parties or trade activities, markets or spontaneous malls have arisen in slums. This is where legal activities mix with illegal and others have been accepted by the state and its system of formal organization. In most cases, the obsession for security has transformed the paradigm of temporary into a real strategy of control and repression, which is exactly the opposite for which they were originally destined.

There are also architectural and artistic interventions in the cities which are sensitive to the anthropic, by trying to respond to immediate needs and improve the people's spirits. Gordon Matta-Clark and the Anarchitects, the Stalker group, Lacaton and Vassal architecture, among others, give us a glimpse of their principal ethical behavior and aesthetic criteria that reflect a willingness to conceive natural, uninhibited and positive responses, even at low-cost but no less strategic in the current situation. The traditional conceptions of form/design are surpassed by a certain informality and openness of a multiple interaction with the users, the environment and with time itself.

Many paradigms of alternative urban actions have been placed in European cities as well as in other continents (Martín Castillejos, 2014), carried out in multidisciplinary ways and with the participation of academics and students who are facing the new social and economic situation with new ideas and new techniques. The peculiar mode of action of the Basurama group, whose office is a website, has been spread across the four continents with a different approach towards the waste that surrounds us and towards recycling in general through workshops and urban actions. Worth noting is the work of L'Atelier d'Architecture Autogérée (AAA) that is developing urban community gardens in Paris with the support of local authorities.

The so called 'open source' communities develop online collaborative design methods that attempt to cut costs and experiment with recyclable or biodegradable materials and components, formulas of self-build, etc. Other projects try to recover the artistry of the urban voids by focusing on the urban dynamics through architecture, urbanism and art, taking into account the perspective of citizen participation, collective intelligence, urban revitalization and public space. This is precisely what groups like PKMN, Studio Bijari, Bruit du Frigo, Esterni, Supersudaca, Raumlabor ..., etc. do. These are groups that develop urban activities as a way of instantly intervening in the cities and workshops as a direct experience and who seek political provocation through their critical interventions. All these groups and many others investigate new ways to build civic spaces with reduced, ecological and sustainable resources using ICTs as a *leitmotif* (Trachana, 2014 p.218)

The Roman group Stalker was named like that, in their attempt to find another way of doing architecture, to address the transformations of space and to interact with these transformations in a city

of the future, chaotic, labyrinthine, multi-ethnic and multicultural. In recent years, they have investigated marginal issues, the residual spaces, the non-places that are, according to them, the genuine places to investigate, create, build; to understand the city of the future and to change it. The Campo Boario, in the very historical center of Rome, is an example of the new phenomenon of where these emerging places are appearing, and although marginal they have not been forced to the outskirts. In the Campo Boario, the Stalker acted without having a project in mind. Stripped of prejudices and preconceptions, just by watching, they understood "what the thing was, that was going on there," and how they could, somehow, wrap up this situation, "making it go from a form of degradation to something interesting". They collaborated with the transient Kurdish immigrant community and local artists and students to organize events at Campo Boario, including Kurdish festivals, workshops and competitions for the site and other art exhibitions and performances. It was not a topic that they could resolve in terms of form; their approach was not presenting an architectural or urban project, they operated through a "a work of woven relationships," by trying to get the diverse "realities" that were coexisting in the same space, to get along together. This took place through a playful approach where they act as artists who organized the Campo Boario Games: "Global Game", "Boario Lunch" and a number of playful actions that were carried out so that the participants could forget their everyday problems and get involved in the game as an artistic performance that spoke about themselves. In addition to the physical transformation of the space the Stalker distinguish a mental one through a modification that makes reference to a new perception of the space.

Specifically in Spain we can find several collectives. There are about 50 in total, among others, [recetasurbanas.net](http://recetasurbanas.net), [straddle3.net](http://straddle3.net), [caldodecultivo.com](http://caldodecultivo.com), [estonoesunsolar.com](http://estonoesunsolar.com), etc. stand out. These groups have managed to make vacant lots, temporary buildings, civic participation, employment plans emerge from the legal vacuum; all of them are a series-of actions that change the rules of the game through a new logic to undertake projects. They all seek to renew the concept of public space in the public domain. Architects, engineers, landscapers and workers consider their work as "opportunities for learning and cooperation" with an ideology willing to provide the means to get to see a change in their cities. Beyond design (most of the time there is no time to draw plans), they are responsible for the construction of projects.

The intervention carried out on the municipal site in Doctor Fourquet Street in Madrid was the fruit of two years of intense collective work by the Milanese Esterni Group and the following institutions in Madrid: la Casa Encendida, COAM (Colegio Oficial de Arquitectos de Madrid) and the Central District Council. They were able to make a square for the neighborhood residents, with its trees, its garden, its allotment, its square for exchanging goods, its stage for performances, its football field and its silent disco. Today there is a complete and complex project of joint management of the space with the 300 residents who signed the petition to the Council in order to be able to keep on using this space during the time that is available. The authors of this intervention have been encouraging citizen creativity to initiate more interventions on potential urban sites or to present proposals and program ideas for the 'urbanaccion2' competition, which has been launched together with the Competition Office of the COAM. The group thinks that the more ideas people put on the table, the better the cities where we live will become.

Other references in Spain are: Andrés Jaque with his so-called Office of Innovation Policy. It is a platform for experimentation and generic research that develops projects, interventions, performances, exhibitions, critical reflection on architecture and the city. In those projects, certain aims and uses are pursued in order to transform everyday life. According to Jaque, the idea is to subvert the "modern project" in order to create situations (following the Situationist manner) and encourage people to enjoy them. The final goal is "that architecture fosters situations instead of making situations depend on the spaces that architecture imposes."

Urban ecosystem is a group that works in Spain and abroad holding workshops and doing projects. The Ecobulevar of Vallecas in Madrid, designed by them consists on some artifacts (artificial trees) that aim to improve environmental comfort, promote social exchange and design a more sustainable public space. They create, therefore, a space of a more social character between traffic lanes with very

few resources. The materials used are mostly recycled; they also use alternative sources of energy and air conditioning systems by using passive cooling techniques commonly used in the agricultural industry. Being aware of the fact that the best reconditioning of the public space would consist of sufficiently dense and good sized trees, material that would need about fifteen or twenty years to properly show itself, they opted for an "emergency" performance that serves as the seed for a regenerative process of the public space. The three pavilions or "air shafts" function as open supports for multiple activities chosen by their users. Installed in the "non-city" as temporary prosthesis they will only be used until the inactivity has been corrected and the trees have grown. Sufficient time allowed, these devices should be removed, leaving the premises they occupied as clearings. The goal in the Vallecas project was to create an atmosphere that invited and promoted activity in an urban public space. It is not part of a marketing strategy, creating reconditioned environments in which the citizen plays an active part in the public space.

Santiago Cirugeda, from 'Urban Recipes' ([www.recetasurbanas.net](http://www.recetasurbanas.net)) addresses issues such as ephemeral architecture, recycling, strategies of occupation and urban intervention with the incorporation of prosthesis for existing buildings or public participation in decision-making processes on urban issues. He takes advantage of legal vacuums to carry out alternative solutions for the benefit of the community. By means of interventions that investigate the legal frameworks that govern the city, he develops protocols to be used by groups or citizens, both to improve urban fragments, as well as carrying out individual projects that resolve housing problems. In particular, many of the "urban recipes" that he proposes as "subversive" and "revolutionary" take advantage of the regulations that allow the temporary installation of items such as tanks and furniture in public spaces that have not been equipped by the administration and also scaffolding and roof constructions to create extensions and finding habitable solutions in available spaces after getting the neighbours' agreement. He defines himself as a social architect. His work developed with many groups that work on the urban field (hackers, planners, activists, architects, etc ...), has achieved the creation of a network called "Collective Architectures", that uses as working and information tools, both face to face meetings and digital platforms.

Hackitectura architects are from Seville and they define themselves as "architects, programmers and artists designing in the convergence of physical and digital space." Their research is about the different ways of hybridization between the network (cyborg) culture and "open source" communities. Zoohaus is a multidisciplinary work platform made up of individuals and collectives and born in Madrid in 2007. It functions as a network depending on the availability of its members to be more flexible when planning a job or responding to a request. It develops all kinds of projects that focus on urban dynamics through the fields of architecture, urbanism and art, from the perspective of citizen participation, collective intelligence, urban revitalization and public space.

In Latin America, Carlos Teixeira is a Brazilian architect who complements its commercial architecture with projects of artistic recovery of urban spaces using public cultural funds. The Bijari Studio is a studio in Sao Paulo interested in political provocation through critical interventions in urbanism and the occupation of abandoned buildings. Supersudaca is a collective of architects located in five Latin American countries whose research is based on new formulas related to the "sudaca" territory and tourism. Raumlabor builds civic spaces with very scarce means. The list goes on but shows concerns widely shared today by young architects and other professionals.

Public institutions, that are increasingly becoming more involved in alternative projects of this type, are seconded by corporate institutions. The municipality of Zaragoza, for example, has promoted the occupation of twenty sites in less than two years. They have been carried out by the Esonoesunsolar group creating parks, orchards, social spaces with sports fields, playgrounds and other activities, and have become in such a way, a municipal employment plan. The Madrid College of Architects, COAM, has promoted the creation of 'Madrid Think Tank', a platform-open-lab for new ideas, in which the participation of companies, administrations, institutions and individuals is sought with the aim of building a collective urban project for Madrid thereby improving the city and quality of life

of its inhabitants. Through public calls for ideas they intend to propel innovative initiatives that foster citizens' participation.

#### **4.Implications of ICT in new configurations of public space**

The new paradigms of transformation of the urban space that we observe today are imaginative, open and implemented by technological processes; they start on the network and are verified in situ. So, the development of these projects implies the participation of different entities that act from below, from the baselines of citizenship, instead of being directed from above, from the governments and professionals. These are projects that are usually tackled from different disciplines and not only from the point of view of urbanism and architecture, and that use new technologies as a catalyst. The new trends in the design of the urban environment that are not exclusively architectural, point towards new learning based on sensitive perception, with the induction and the imagination of citizens who act as interpreters and managers of information generated and shared with technological tools and telematic means that they choose or design themselves.

The new technological tools for everyday use come with great spontaneity and ease which enables the development of expressive and communicative skills not only by those with expertise in the architectural design of the environment but also by all citizens. In such a way, a new generation of public space projects is emerging thanks to the connectivity in the virtual environment that stimulates the creativity of citizens. So, instead of remaining passive confronting the world, they are no longer willing to adapt themselves, in one way or the other, to the external circumstances. The new active inhabitants of the city can now imagine that they are creating and recreating the conditions of their environment and of their own lives.

We refer, therefore, to the citizen's ability to take initiatives and undertake unconventional projects, sometimes in conjunction with professionals that act outside the usual regulations; or react to urban planning in order to rectify mistakes that the public administration is unable to solve or where architects and planners are making a mistake, by demanding changes and introducing reforms. Thanks to the resources available for communication and citizen interaction as a common denominator, the emerging trends in the design of the public spaces affect not only the external transformation of places but the people that inhabit them.

As Juan Freire (2010) says, we are witnessing a process of "hybridization" that is modifying, our individual identities as much as the community and territorial ones. The distinction between physical space and virtual communities is being updated. Internet, which has contributed to the development of global networks, is now beginning to have a significant influence at local levels. Digital technologies are radically changing the way in which we organize and interact with our environment. The telematic means of communication and interaction increase the citizen's options for participating, constituting an open and dynamic tool that is constantly being updated.

Development of skills and creative abilities point towards more realistic guidelines, as well being more imaginative and innovative in the design of the Environment. These are capable of regenerating the architecture and building sector in crisis from a more anthropological than aesthetic perspective. The traditional architect educated in the responsibility of designing and constructing their work, can nowadays, assume much broader and diverse tasks recovering a more humanistic and global view of the architectural space as an experiential space.

In fact, the classical paradigms of modern architecture are reviewed from a wider point of view. So we are seeing a shift "towards strategy" in opposition to an interest in the pure expression of the architectural project that requires new procedures and tools both theoretical and practical, more adequate to their time. We are at the crossroads of new *poietics* that break with conventions in order to establish new educational and cultural habits and explore new proposals by claiming reflection and lifetime commitments.

Models of collective management of the convivial space are taking place on the internet, from where they are extending in situ. New communication and relationship dynamics, able to improve the cohesion of communities are developed on the internet. They are presented as an alternative "place" for social relationships, differing from the "traditional" ones. Digital relationships call face to face relationships and on the net the perspective of community as a "place" is generated. We can then speak of a hybrid identity of spaces which are digital and, at the same time, produce face to face relationships. We can speak of "territorial activation from the digital culture". The new "hybrid spaces" emerge from the integration of digital technologies in the physical space. They are configured as places where the free exchange of information is guaranteed and where management transparency is encouraged. With the design of these public spaces, a key role to restore the vitality of these places is given to society by returning to these places the vitality that they seem to have lost (Di Siena, 2011).

The *Campo de la Cebada* Project in Madrid, for example, is a neighborhood initiative to temporarily reactivate the urban space that occupies the site (the previous plot of the demolished La Latina sports center) in the Central District of Madrid. The project consists of the generation of dynamic neighborhood meetings with collective interests for the development of participatory, recreational, cultural, educational, non-consumptive activities, necessary for the community. The *Campo de la Cebada* is a space, historically unique in the center of the city that has been made available so that people can play, skate, cycle, run, meet ... This initiative has neighbors who come from different professional, sociological and ideological backgrounds. It is planned as a temporary alternative to revitalise a closed and abandoned site, only during the time that the works planned for reuse are not carried out, and it is expected to have to wait for some years before that happens. It is a space where priority is given to the human relationships rather than the projects themselves. The project is open to all constructive proposals and initiatives in line with the demands and the parish's needs that are key to the design process where the neighbours maintain a constant dialogue with the respective institutions.

The result is a strange structure that is a mixture of architecture, self-construction, self-management and where something is inaugurated every day. The content is constantly changing as it is not just a physical construction but the construction of an environment where the neighbors provide their services for free. The place becomes, therefore, an educational and cultural field, an area of social construction and a space to perform all kinds of projects with the active participation of people. It already has multiple facilities and all kinds of events and festivals are organized. 'Edumeet', for example, consists of informal meetings every 15 days, in which there are debates on education, learning and culture and a horizontal structure is maintained. Communicating and sharing is more important than authorship. The fact that these meetings take place in the *Campo de la Cebada* prevents the space from determining their identity and authorship. The announcements, dissemination, communication and interaction obviously happens through the net. Certainly such spaces are initially constituted as a digital entity. (<http://elcampodecebada.org/>).

The hybrid paradigms mentioned before, created outside the established channels of architecture and urbanism are beginning to have an extreme interest in urban areas. These new generation spaces are almost always created on the border between the need and the creativity of their "users". This innovation gives priority to the creation of social life and political culture rather than the physical construction of the space. Most of the time, the creation of these spaces is alien to the cultural policies, moreover, it acts in substitution of them, because they do not exist.

The group Ecosistema urbano provides another example of how to carry out projects of a hybrid nature. 'Dreamhamar' is a project among others that have been conducted in a workshop format where they have promoted the process of citizen participation through the network to redesign Stortorget Square in Hamar, Norway. The Hamar commune has chosen a pioneering approach for the construction of the new square. Instead of giving the citizens of Hamar a finished space, they have chosen to participate in a process of collective reflection that will determine the new configuration of Stortorget. The architects created a design process in the network -Think Tank- in order to share with the Hamar citizens the way they saw their city and the way in which they imagined their square. All

the residents in Hedmark were invited to participate in on-site workshops so that they could say how they wanted this main space to be. (<http://ecosistemaurbano.org/>).

Digital technology, on the other hand, is being adopted to encourage feedback between citizens and institutions, even though these platforms still work in a precarious way bilaterally. Nevertheless, they have information and provide services electronically, saving time and energy for citizens. There are, in fact, a wide range of public and private, local, national and European level initiatives (for more information see Trachana, 2013, pp. 45-46). But nevertheless, there still exists much work to be done in order to develop the potential of ICT in the transformation of cities. Today we speak of the "open source city", an expression that makes reference to the free access to urban information which public administrations provide for the citizens, and we also speak of smart cities that through digital technologies offer a diversity of advanced services related to street lighting, traffic, pollution, waste, etc. But the truth is that the transformation of the urban reality is more in the hands of citizens than that of the technology itself as a product, a mere consumable and business object. It depends on the Citizens' creativity as it continues to find new solutions to new and old problems in the city, those that are feasible due to the infinite possibilities of choice. We understand creativity as the ability that citizens have as individuals to capture and transform reality, by generating and expressing new ideas. According to Florida (2009), as long as the citizens acquire the ability to make this become their way of life, one can envisage that new possibilities to create and recreate the living environment that will emerge, and that should improve people's living conditions and coexistence.

### **5. Final implications as a conclusion or the creative essence of a city**

Therefore, we can see how a new concept of the city starts being clearly described on the horizon. In contrast to the stable city like a monumental and representative image, a new urban condition is emerging. The urban condition is a continuous flow that cannot materialize or stop, it cannot be planned. We are referring to the practices of mobilized citizens; a sphere of and for practices, and specific knowledge that serves a unique organization of coexistence based on perceptual and sensitive values, movement, change and instability as raw material; the citizens' knowledge and participation allows them to organize the 'self-build' of their living spaces. In such a way, public spaces are being returned to the citizens, sensitized and motivated into action by seeking pleasure in working together. (Lefebvre, 1978; Delgado, 2007)

With that, the need and urgency to plan cities should not be questioned. We should not accept the withdrawal of the public administration nor the permissiveness of speculation by the fiercest of liberalism that despoils and makes the city a mere business; that converts their spaces into consumer products; that stimulates ownership but restricts appropriation; which considers the urban utility as an obstacle for good urban marketing and as a source of uneasiness for any form of political power. Urban use, is incapable of being planned, it is only possible to keep an eye on these spaces where urban life passes by contemplating all the unforeseen events. The happenings, the ways to escape and the possibilities of emancipation; the "minimal relationships" that can achieve a high level of intensity, the latent 'placing', a possibility of place or a city. The return to the naturalist spirit already permeates a methodological change in all the disciplines that study and act in the urban sphere.

This eagerness to capture what happens to our senses should be translated in a stronger interest in the environmental conditions and the practices that build an anthropological space. The naturalistic or positivist observation that seemed to have been buried under the pretentious methods of 'high design' based on abstract concepts and under the tyranny of a speech that prevents access to the things themselves, it should be guided by common sense processes, collaborative and sustainable development among sensitive professionals and motivated citizens, committed to the common cause which is that of urban space.

In opposition to an urban planning that is a "predictor of continuous regularities" 'deregulated' spaces are those molded to the real needs and everyday, free and spontaneous citizens practices. The configuration of space through instituted planning is systematically based on models that are based on

mimetic behavior. The 'spatialization' of social experience involves the creation of identity because the individual and collective identity is expressed in terms of space. Each 'spatialization' involves identification and the identification is made possible from the 'spatialization' (Stavridis, 2003, p.59). The neoliberal and globalized tactics transform besides the production of space, each intervention in the urban space, experience and relationship in the space in an commercial relationship. The control of the space expressed as under the official authority regulations for public spaces as much as under the rehabilitation of degraded areas, with the perspective of its transformation into 'consumer-exchange' and the management of these urban pockets; such is the vision that prevails over other perspectives.

With the practices that escape this control a doctrine for a more creative and more intensive use of urban space (Florida 2009) is being spread and a new urban practice, a 'soft and flexible urbanism', of local and particular rules is emerging. A pro-active and creative citizens body, able to create and recreate their own life and their own living space, is taking shape, thus keeping the Situationist philosophy (Debord, 1967; Constant, 1974) alive. This is certainly, an optimistic reading for the future, possibly the only one that can be made of megacities focusing on the urban space that remains outside the controls of regulation: the residual spaces, the 'vague' terrain or areas of undetermined significance, as characterized by Solá Morales (2002) and particularly in the daily and spontaneous processes of intervention and transformation of urban space.

The significant changes that are occurring in the management mechanisms and in the proper design of urban space mainly consider mutant factors of the environment: communication, mobility, everyday uses, activities, perceptions ... against the objectives, quantitative or statistical data. Against permanent structures, representative public spaces, monuments, major infrastructure and equipments, etc., focus on the minimal, informal and irregular practices, the individual and collective experiences that escape any systematization.

The urban and constructive paralysis that is a consequence of the economic crisis is another reason that leads us to a new 'sensitive urban planning' that intercedes with the consequences of excesses (hyper-consumption of resources and territory) and the surplus of unemployed and unoccupied; an alternative urbanism to the planning that has provoked endless extensions of empty apartments to the outskirts of the city (Spanish case), the reduced population in the center of traditional downtowns in the cities and their transformation into theme parks; the fragmentation of cities by the globalization processes that marginalize the poor (informal part with their own laws) and separate the exclusive wealthy (formal part controlled by the government); a conservative planning facing the radical destruction and replacement of obsolete industrial areas that erase the traces of the material culture of industrialization.

In this new situation Constant's forecast seems to have been proved, according to which, as a result of the increasing technology and automation, leisure time would be increased to the point that citizens would be exempt from work, although this occurs today under the most dramatic form of unemployment and lack of occupation. The newbabylons became nomads because a stable habitat and stable relationships were a consequence of a stable occupation. Losing this condition (of a permanent job), they would use their time to build their environment creatively. This raises the challenge, now more than ever, to focus on the creative essence of the city as a permanent change, overlapping of vital processes, of incessant flow of people from diverse backgrounds and cultures, changing representations of life along with goods. It is urgent to rescue the positive values of the informal part of the city. This interest responds to the fact that it is in the city where the new and more committed art developments germinate, where lies an immense creative potential, spaces where intense dynamic exchanges can take place, spaces of communication and of freedom, to fight out the differences and where the individual human being can change from a *homo faber* to a creative human being (*ludens*). In these areas, a dialectic between order and disorder takes place. These are ambiguous spaces in a universe dominated by the rigidity of formality and legality. In this ambiguity we can see how wisdom and an ethical clarity lie, that makes it possible to mix things up and confuse them.

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