



Barcelona  
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Capital Mundial  
de l'Arquitectura



ANYS

AMB

Àrea Metropolitana  
de Barcelona

# THE NEAR FUTURE

TRANSFORMING  
METROPOLITAN PUBLIC SPACE

Port Vell, antiga terminal de Drassanes  
**EXHIBITION 11.06 – 25.10**

Beyond  
the  
challenges





**Albert Gassull**

The exhibition is organised around a series of specific challenges because it was necessary to construct a narrative, and because making visible, separately, issues that are now central to public space helps us explain its transformation. The challenges we propose are interconnected, and both the territory and the projects operate through overlap and interdependence. Adapting also means caring, recovering or moving better. Reconnecting also means making the city more liveable, more accessible and fairer. Equipping means thinking about use, energy, flexibility and everyday life. And inhabiting, ultimately, runs through all the others, because it is in the way we live and experience spaces that everything finally acquires meaning. The challenges are therefore a way of entering into a shared reality that is complex and necessarily interdependent.

This perspective is also rooted in a trajectory. The projects presented here do not emerge independently of what has come before. Rather, they are shaped by accumulated experience, by lessons learned and by transformations that have gradually forged a particular way of designing public space. The near future is not opposed to the recent past; it engages with it, revisits it and reformulates it.

For this reason, designing means working with relationships, processes, different scales and simultaneous effects. It means working, from the outset, with water, soil, greenery, mobility, energy, uses, time, maintenance, accessibility, health and everyday life. These are now fundamental starting conditions, and they are

also the factors that guide the material, formal, spatial and technical decisions that ultimately define a project.

This way of looking also shifts the very nature of the project itself. A project must be understood as a way of intervening in open realities shaped by time, use, what already exists and uncertainty. Designing means working with what is already there, with what is changing, with what adapts and with what can be reconsidered. It means acting upon public space, but also upon the relationships, environmental conditions, forms of mobility, institutions, habits and expectations that accompany it. This demands a different way of working, one in which the convergence of perspectives, knowledge and disciplines is no longer an optional addition but a necessity, and in which different forms of expertise, disciplines and responsibilities increasingly operate within the same field of decision-making. It also changes the standpoint from which we evaluate projects. This often means accepting risks and incorporating into the very idea of quality decisions that were not previously considered part of it. Project quality can therefore no longer be measured solely by its finished form, but by its capacity to integrate diverse variables, to reuse, to adapt, to better assess its effects and to remain relevant over time.

The projects in the exhibition make this visible. A single project can increase green surface area, infiltrate rainwater, reduce heat, save potable water, provide shade, enhance biodiversity, enable new forms of walking and cycling, reuse existing structures or reduce energy





consumption. This accumulation of effects is probably one of the most important issues currently before us. Data help us make visible what previously often remained diffuse, and help explain the environmental and social benefits that a well-conceived transformation of public space, public facilities and everyday life can generate. But data alone do not design. A project still depends on judgement, expertise and the ability to integrate all these factors into a coherent proposal.

This is also why many of the projects presented here are shown while still in progress. They do not appear as closed objects or self-contained results, but as living work: still open, still debatable and still subject to adjustment, testing and decision-making. This condition is important because it reveals that designing is not simply about arriving at a solution, but about sustaining a continuous process of formulation and verification.

Yet this publication can do something else as well. The exhibition presents projects, data, territorial visions and ways of working, while the publication can widen the lens and make room for aspects that the exhibition format can only hint at: the ecological dimension of urban transformation, the relationship between the city and its metabolism, the persistence of inequalities and fractures, the value of what already exists, the need to rethink public facilities, the everyday condition of inhabiting, or care as a practice sustained over time. In short, it can unfold the questions posed by the exhibition and give them a depth that the exhibition

itself, for reasons of clarity and synthesis, cannot fully accommodate.

In this sense, the exhibition cannot contain everything, and perhaps that is as it should be. Many things that are also part of this work remain outside its scope, or appear only indirectly: political and administrative negotiation, conflicts between uses, the inequalities that run through the territory, economic and material constraints, the tension between a changing and unstable present that demands adaptability, speed and flexibility, and a public administration that operates through long timescales, procedural safeguards and highly regulated frameworks; everyday management, maintenance, the long-term practice of care, accumulated learning and even mistakes. A significant part of what happens before a project takes shape and after construction is completed also remains outside the frame. Yet all of this is present, even if it does not occupy the centre of the image. That is why this publication can help broaden the focus and remind us that transforming public space is not only about building, solving or responding. It is also about observing, connecting, anticipating, adjusting and thinking again. Perhaps this is, ultimately, what the exhibition seeks to place on the table: not only what projects we undertake, but from what perspective we undertake them; not only what answers we provide, but how we learn to formulate better questions. Because the near future is not an image of what is to come, but the concrete place where we are already learning how to design differently.



# Adapting



Albert Cuchí

*As it grows, the great modern city overwhelms and destroys the landscape. The formidable forces that drive urban progress — industry, overpopulation and traffic — demand all available space for themselves. Land with trees disappears, replaced by building plots, roads and industrial areas.*

*The city dweller is thus separated from Nature.*

**Nicolau Maria Rubió i Tudurí**  
**'The Open Spaces Problem'**  
**Barcelona, 1926**

If there is one place where the conflict between industrial society and nature is most evident, it is the city. As Rubió i Tudurí observed a hundred years ago, the industrial city sweeps away the pre-existing landscape and dismantles the nature–society relationship characteristic of traditional societies. Yet this force is not confined to the city, which is merely its epitome.

Today, our industrial society has intervened in the landscape on a global scale, altering the geobiochemical cycles that govern landscapes and affecting the stability of many natural systems, including the climate and ecosystems. This disruption is leading us into a global ecological crisis that threatens the very survival of our society.

We need to transform our industrial productive system and align it with a dynamic capable of sustaining a nature compatible with our existence, both social and personal. The separation from Nature lamented by Rubió i Tudurí is far more than a sentimental loss: it is an existential problem that must be confronted. And it must be confronted also, and above all, from the city.

The city is not only an area of high population density — Rubió's overpopulation — but also a highly concentrated node within the material dynamics of our industrial metabolism, of our exchange of materials with the environment. And this metabolism is connected to many other places, many other landscapes, from which it draws and to which it sends a large proportion of the materials involved in these processes.

And if this metabolism must be transformed, the city is a key place in which to do so, both because of the intensity it reaches there and because of the tools available to citizens to intervene in it; because of the forms of governance that are characteristic of the city and that have extended into other spheres; and because, ultimately, citizenship, public space and similar concepts are urban creations. But how can this be achieved?

Rubió i Tudurí referred to "open spaces" as those not occupied by buildings, roads or industry. Naturally, these are green spaces, spaces composed of natural elements whose dynamics are more or less managed: gardens, parks and, beyond them, the spaces that the city has not yet reached. And they are connected to one another.

This use of natural elements as essential components in the configuration of open spaces, this connection between different levels of urban parks and their links to rural spaces, providing shelter for the social and non-productive activities of urban inhabitants, protected from the noise of traffic and industry, reflects a determination to resist the loss of the natural world.

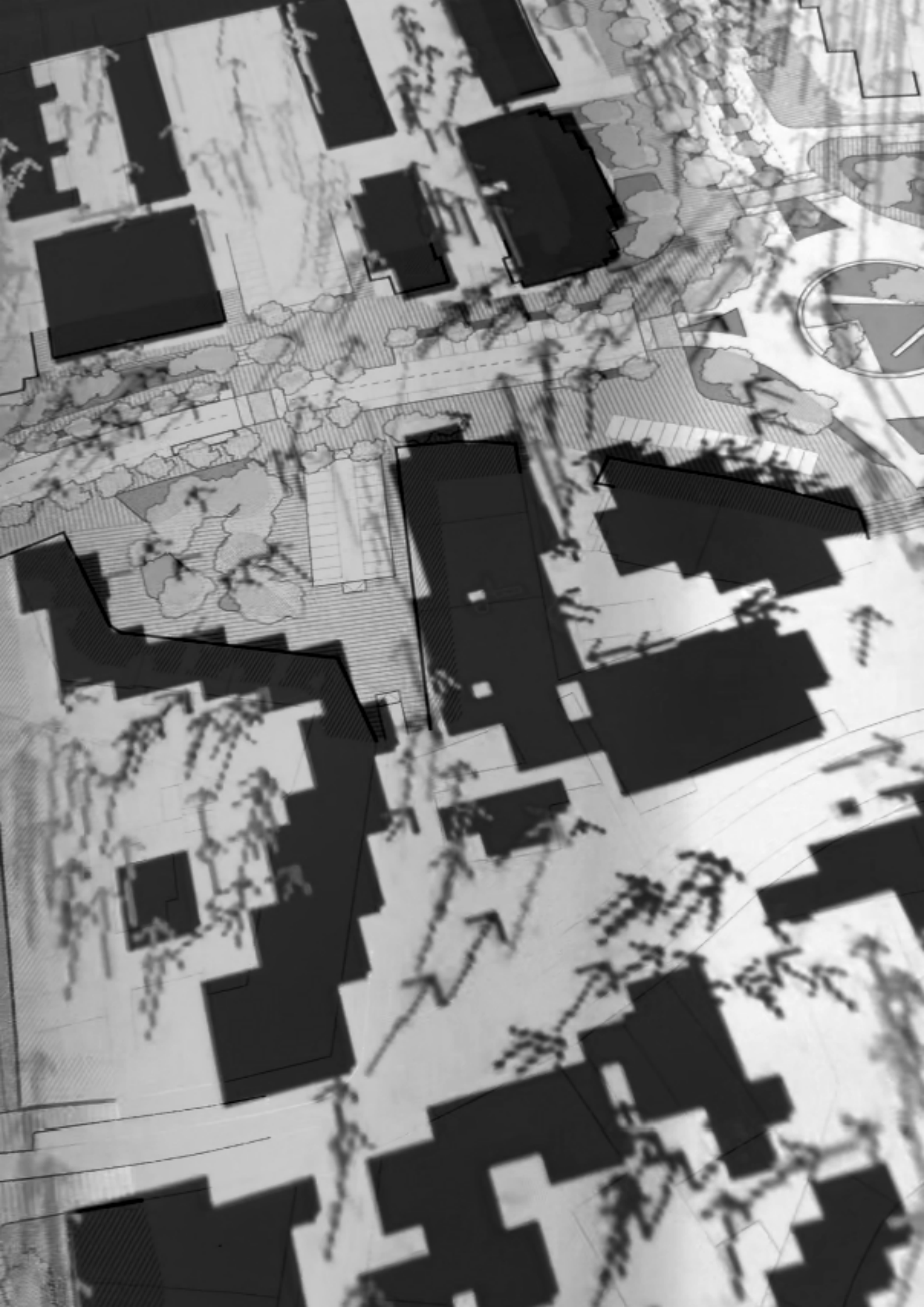
In the face of the ecological crisis, it is more necessary than ever to create urban open spaces with natural elements capable of protecting us from the problems generated by industrial society. Today they are a key tool in responding to global warming — particularly evident in our part of the world — caused by the greenhouse gas emissions generated by our society: our buildings, our mobility systems and our industries. They help us adapt to the new climate that we ourselves have created.

Adaptation means adapting social activities to the possibilities that open spaces can offer. It means adapting the conditions of those spaces to the needs of the activities they accommodate, understanding that they must function as climate shelters for those activities. It also means adapting natural elements — vegetation, fauna, soil and water availability — to the new climate. This requires recovering much of the cultural heritage — cultural in the sense of cultivation and environmental stewardship — through which traditional societies managed their environment, while also developing new forms of knowledge and practice.

But this adaptation must be only a first step towards the ecological transformation that our cities and our society require. Open spaces must also adapt in order to become places from which our cities and our social metabolism can be transformed. Adapting will mean restoring urban metabolic functions to these spaces, recovering and strengthening the productive capacities of green areas, as is already happening through what are known as green infrastructures. Adapting will also mean ensuring that open spaces become places where a critical social awareness and attitude towards climate change and the ecological crisis can be developed.

Because adapting does not mean accepting and integrating ourselves into a future — already present — that we have generated through negligence. Adapting will also mean changing that future.





# Reconnecting



Marta Serra Permanyer

## Thoughts on public space in the metropolitan periphery

This text seeks to initiate a reflection based on a sentence from the introduction to *Cities of Tomorrow*: "After almost a century of urban planning, urban problems in large cities remain similar." Inspired by the English Garden City movement, the author reviewed models of growth through an approach to urbanism attentive to social issues such as poverty, marginalisation and urban segregation, warning that, after almost a century, urban problems remained very much alive.

This persistence of precarity is evident in former housing-estate peripheries that have developed their own centres of activity and identity, while expressing both oppression and resistance. This dual phenomenon is reflected in bell hooks' idea of the "margin", which she interprets as a complex space that embodies more than one place. One critical space that reveals the main tensions of these margins is public space. Conceived by Richard Sennett as an open system and an unfinished process, public space is often subjected to excessive formal determination and pressure to fulfil ideals of balance and integration.<sup>1</sup>

Within this framework, in the Barcelona conurbation, architecture and urbanism face the challenge of "reconnecting" public spaces situated between distinct worlds: for example, between a former industrial estate that will become a new residential area (which we shall call A) and a central area within a 1960s housing estate (which we shall call B). The strategy seeks to connect the future residents of A with the network of facilities and services available in the neighbouring consolidated district B.

Yet differences in access to resources, imaginaries and practices between A and B may be diametrically opposed. From this condition of contrast, can the population of A enter the world of B? What kinds of dynamics might emerge through contact between A and B? And how can public space design be placed at the service of reconnecting?

From an analysis of the composition of the term itself, the prefix re- affects the verb *ligar* (to bind or connect) in two ways: first, it indicates repetition of an action; second, it lends emphasis and strength to something that is being manifested for the first time. *Ligar* is synonymous with joining or connecting things that are different, but also with agreeing, fitting together or being compatible. At the same time, as a transitive verb, it implies that the action is directed towards someone or something.

Taking these nuances into account, and at a moment when the design of public space in our metropolitan peripheries invokes and embraces the strategy of reconnecting, it is worth reflecting on why this matters and on some of the principal challenges associated with it:

### a. Awareness of ethical principles, alternatives and evaluation:

Underlying the act of reconnecting is a strong cultural legacy that continues the fundamental principles of democracy, justice and equity already pursued in the cities of classical antiquity, a context that evokes the space of the assembly where recognition of the other as a political subject takes place.

At this point, we might ask what would happen in the absence of such a strategy, if there were no awareness of, or desire for, reconnecting. Would we witness a scenario in which segregation between A and B increased? Or would they come together naturally? How would agency and power relations be distributed between the two neighbourhoods? Here emerges the alternative possibility of the spontaneous city through experimental non-planning.

In line with Sennett's approach, experiments based on non-intervention suggest that time and chance are key factors in resilience. This introduces the need for evaluation, something often associated with projects based on temporality, material reuse and the idea of minimal intervention. We should therefore consider what exactly ought to be evaluated in the act of reconnecting, whether in relation to objectives or methods.

### b. Limitations, contingencies and forms of control:

When analysing, planning and implementing a public space project that seeks to ensure compatibility and balance between A and B, it is necessary to recognise a whole system of actants<sup>2</sup> which, from a relational perspective, has the capacity to mobilise each part within the wider whole.

The existing balance between A and B can easily be threatened by the effects of a new intervention and, in order to avoid the risk of collapse, a complementary strategy may be reversibility: the possibility of undoing. In public space, the impossibility of complete control is inherent and, consequently, perhaps what is needed is a greater degree of calculated uncertainty. Among competing actants, we know that hegemonies are sustained through subordinated and excluded groups. Reconnecting, therefore, is less about eliminating forms of power than about redistributing forces towards more equitable relationships. From this derives the agonistic potential of public space as a space of mediation and negotiation.

Yet reconnecting also involves forms of displacement of power in order to prevent either A or B from being dispossessed through the influence of the other. We refer here to disruptive practices, forms of resistance, collaborative creativity and informal appropriations. Might the operation under discussion be understood as part of similar processes?





### 3. Assembling as an alternative to reconnecting:

Ensuring that future reconnected public spaces become permeable places of encounter and can support forms of dwelling and staying, rather than merely movement and transit, requires attention to the idea of interdependence and an attempt to understand A and B through assemblage theory.<sup>3</sup>

This theory proposes that the autonomy of an entity (such as A or B) is not independent but depends on the effects produced by the way we conceive it. Each part modifies and generates effects on the other, and each is itself an assemblage: a historical product subject to continual change. The relationship between micro and macro scales also comes into play, since a “whole” may become part of another whole at a larger scale. This implies taking into account the intermunicipal scale within which we operate.

A reconnected space, understood as an assemblage, is also characterised by variable processes that may stabilise the identity of the space and foster cohesion, or alternatively destabilise the whole by blurring boundaries and connecting it to new, more autonomous networks. Community participation, projects with schools, technical observation offices embedded in the street, and community plans could all be considered examples of the territorialisation of assemblages.

Ultimately, reconnecting responds to the need to address urban fractures in a context of inequalities when relating former peripheries to new areas of urban regeneration. Consequently, the design of public space must incorporate mechanisms capable of confronting the stigmas derived

from urban imaginaries. As the feminist facilitator Robin DiAngelo<sup>4</sup> observed, if we are not aware of the barriers affecting others, we will not see them, and nothing will motivate us to remove them. Nor will we be able to overcome them if they provide us with advantages that we assume to be rights.

Let us hope, then, that reconnecting comes to mean designing in a way that makes us aware of everything that brings us together and everything that keeps us apart.

<sup>1</sup> Richard Sennett (2014). *L'espai públic. Un sistema obert, un procés inacabat*. Barcelona: Arcàdia, p. 57.

<sup>2</sup> Bruno Latour (2008). *Reensamblar lo social: una introducció a la teoria del actor-red*. Buenos Aires: Ediciones Manantial.

<sup>3</sup> Manuel De Landa (2021 [2010]). *Teoría de los ensamblajes y complejidad social*. Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires: Tinta Limón.

<sup>4</sup> Robin DiAngelo (2011). White Fragility. *International Journal of Critical Pedagogy*, vol. 3, num. 3.







# Moving



Javier Ortigosa

## The space that moves us

Urban mobility is fundamentally based on two variables: space and time. Yet in dense metropolitan areas such as ours, it is space that ultimately determines time. In other words, the way we distribute public space, and who we prioritise within it, directly conditions the efficiency of each mode of transport.

For decades, this distribution has favoured the motorised mobility system almost exclusively. We have created continuous, hierarchical and prioritised networks, both through design and regulation, that have filled our streets with traffic.

The consequences are well known. This model has enabled us to connect the territory and guarantee high levels of accessibility, but it has also generated a strong dependence on private vehicles and considerable resistance to change, together with all the externalities and impacts that this entails. Public space has been one of the main casualties, with traffic occupying it intensively and leaving less room for sustainable mobility, social use, greenery and permeable surfaces, while intensifying the urban heat island effect and reducing overall liveability through emissions, noise and other impacts. In short, we have created a network designed to move vehicles that has often overridden other essential functions of public space.

Today, this model is undergoing transformation. Sustainable mobility, adaptation to climate change and growing awareness of urban quality have placed public space at the centre of the debate. Yet this new perspective also brings greater complexity: streets are no longer simply channels for cars, but spaces where multiple forms of mobility and activity converge. The city is becoming increasingly constrained.

This inevitably requires us to rethink disciplines and ways of working in a less specialised manner. It is clear that mobility planning must incorporate new perspectives and sensitivities and can no longer measure everything through large-scale indicators of capacity and level of service. At the same time, urban design must develop a deeper understanding of mobility dynamics and, above all, of network scale and its implications across the territory. The street and the network: two perspectives on the same reality.

The year 2026 marks the Year of Cerdà, commemorating the 150th anniversary of the death of Ildefons Cerdà, and recovering his vision is more necessary than ever. Cerdà did not simply draw an urban grid; he proposed a way of understanding the city based on the relationship between public space, infrastructure and living conditions. Although this vision has gradually been distorted into increasingly specialised networks, it remains the foundation of Barcelona's structure: a grid that multiplies alternatives, human-scale blocks, broad streets designed for pedestrians and public transport, and three major avenues that structure the city and are intended to extend beyond it.

Today, this logic is once again gaining relevance.

The Metropolitan Urban Master Plan (PDUM) of the AMB proposes a structure for the 36 metropolitan municipalities based on a network of avenues and streets that organise the territory. In a sense, it recovers the potential of the Cerdà model, moving beyond a period in which these streets and avenues have been heavily conditioned by vehicle traffic. Segregated roads cease to be the only principal axes, while metropolitan avenues take on a leading role as spaces where public transport, active mobility and urban intensity coexist. These are the great metropolitan projects of the future. We are rediscovering Cerdà.

Projects such as the transformation of the C-245 into an urban corridor across the Llobregat Delta, connecting with the ridge route of the Barcelona plain, or the conversion of the N-150 into the Vallès Avenue, which in the future will connect with Avinguda Meridiana. These projects are not simply about improving mobility; they are about reclaiming public space, renaturalising the city, connecting municipalities and creating new centres of activity. They are large-scale transformation projects involving new variables and a high degree of complexity.

These avenues will not be homogeneous: each corridor will need to resolve its own conflicts and balances. Nevertheless, public space must guarantee certain standards and a degree of coherence, maintaining a connection with citizens. Just as the hierarchy and signage of a motorway provide drivers with confidence and orientation, public space must generate that same sense of trust and comfort. It should guide and accompany us, making us feel at home.

In this context, active mobility has gained an indisputable role in shaping public space, through initiatives such as the AMB's Bicing network, which combines a clear metropolitan network vision with its implementation through specific projects. This is excellent news when we consider the scale and dimensions of the metropolitan area and the potential of cycling. Furthermore, the introduction of cycle lanes is often acting as a Trojan horse for more ambitious transformations: a first piece of human-scale infrastructure that demonstrates what a different city could look like. It opens up new possibilities and new imaginaries.

Nevertheless, we still have a long way to go when it comes to collective public transport. Too often in the past it has been relegated, or even hidden, within urban projects, as though it were an inconvenient element. Yet the opposite is true: it must regain its central role in public space and become more legible for users, while being given a clear hierarchy. It cannot remain subject to the same logics, nor be penalised by traffic calming measures or traffic restrictions. We must protect it and empower it within the projects of the future.

The near future is full of public space projects that must help structure the metropolitan area of Barcelona. A public space that does not merely accommodate mobility, but actively enhances it; a public space that moves us.

There is much work ahead.



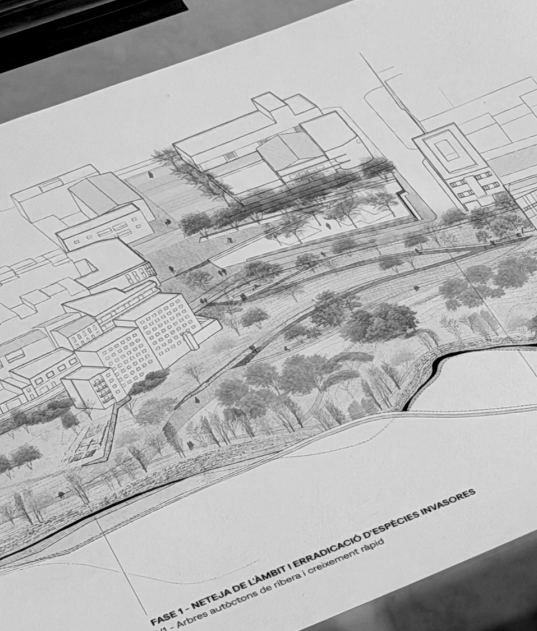






## Recuperar la tipologia

Entrada dels envans, aconseguint  
habilitat i ciutadania il·lustrada



**FASE 1 - NETEJA DE L'ÀMBIT I ERRADICACIÓ D'ESPÈCIES INVASORES**  
V1 - Arbres autòctons de ribera i creixement ràpid

**FASE 2 - CONSTRUCCIÓ DELS CAMINS AMB TÈCNiques DE PEDRA SECA**  
V2 - Barreja d'arbustives autòctones

**FASE 2 - CONSTRUCCIÓ DELS CAMINS AMB TÈCNiques DE PEDRA SECA**

1. Moviment de terres inicial

2. Construcció del mur de pedra seca

4. Acabats i plantació d'arbustives (V3)

3. Execució del camí de formigó i pedra i  
execució de la rasa drenant

**FASE 3 - PLANTACIONS D'ARBRES I ARBUSTIVES**



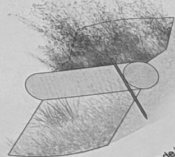
**tipologia V1**  
característiques  
Zones d'estada i ombra de ribera  
zones de plantació  
espècies  
populus alba, populus nigra



**tipologia V2**  
característiques  
Zones d'estada i ombra del parc i de  
sotaneu domestic, prunus dulcis, acer  
monspessulanum, celtis australis



**tipologia V3**  
característiques  
Barreja d'arbustives autòctones  
acompanyament dels nous camins de  
pedra seca  
zones de plantació  
espècies  
doryonum pentaphyllum, pectica lenticosa



**tipologia V4**  
característiques  
Actuacions de bioenginyeria  
zones de plantació  
espècies  
vitis agnus-castus, amonum latifolius

les connectivitats



# Recovering



Dolores Huerta



Bruno Sauer

The subtle differences in meaning between the various verbs that seek to occupy the space of action within the world of the circular economy invite reflection on what we actually want to achieve. *Rehabilitating* is usually associated with illness or deterioration; *renewing* implies bringing something back into use; *recycling* suggests reuse, often with some loss of quality. *Recovering*, by contrast, conveys the idea of acting with care in order to regain something valuable.

The word *recover* derives from the Latin *re* and *capere*: to re-grasp, re-take, re-collect. Inherent in these words is the act of appropriating, of internalising their characteristics, their DNA. This, in turn, means becoming part of that past, of that pre-existing reality.

Recovering built, urban or landscape heritage means, first and foremost, inheriting its culture, its customs, the social impacts of its past, the traces left by people and the ways in which it has been used. Understanding this inheritance is a first step in the act of recovery; it means recognising the intrinsic value of what already exists. In the transformation of an urban environment, acceptance by the surrounding community is built upon an understanding of its social imprint.

Part of this social inheritance is the physical and economic effort involved in extracting, transporting and transforming materials in order to build the city. Allowing that effort to go to waste, by destroying or ignoring what has already been consolidated, requires strong arguments demonstrating that society as a whole will benefit from the transformation.

We cannot treat the city as we have treated nature for centuries, extracting or destroying without returning value to the whole. This means that if what has been built still retains value, then we must make use of it rather than discard it. We must revalue and recover its social value, its memory and culture, as well as its environmental and, of course, economic value.

Yet nothing is eternal. Society changes, people change, the climate changes, and the demands placed upon the city also change. The task of recovery requires adding complexity to what already exists, interpreting and assessing what can remain *in situ* and what can be put to use elsewhere. It means learning lessons from each place in order to enrich others.

Recovering a structure, a well-used path, long-established uses, a sense of community, urban views, a naturalised space, or simply materials, is an act of sensitivity, intelligence and common sense. From an environmental perspective, it is almost an obligation — an urgent necessity if we are not to exceed the planetary boundaries that make a safe life on Earth possible. From a social perspective, it is a way of showing respect for the past, for culture and for collective memory. From an economic perspective, in most cases, it is simply the most sensible course of action.



Daniel Cid

## Over Time

Caring means recognising that the city is a living organism, shaped by time, intensive use, wear and constant transformation. It means taking responsibility over time, and that responsibility is profoundly political.

Time is not the enemy of the project; it is its material. The territory ages, erodes, is reused and reinterpreted. To design means accepting this condition and working with it: not only building, but caring before, during and after.

Before: listening, understanding vulnerabilities, acknowledging mismatches.

During: intervening with respect, with time and with restraint.

After: accepting that the unforeseen is not a mistake, but the continuation of the project.

Caring is a practice sustained over time, made up of small decisions, often invisible, that accumulate and shape those yet to come. Caring also means inheriting past decisions and working with them.

## With What Is Already There

This way of understanding the city shifts the urban project from the object to the ecosystem.

In this shift, the urban project moves closer to the conditions of use. It works from within, with what is already there. It embraces wear, intensive use and unforeseen adjustments as part of the process.

Caring is not only about managing uses; it is about working with what changes, what deteriorates and what disperses.

Shade, flexibility, everyday permanence.

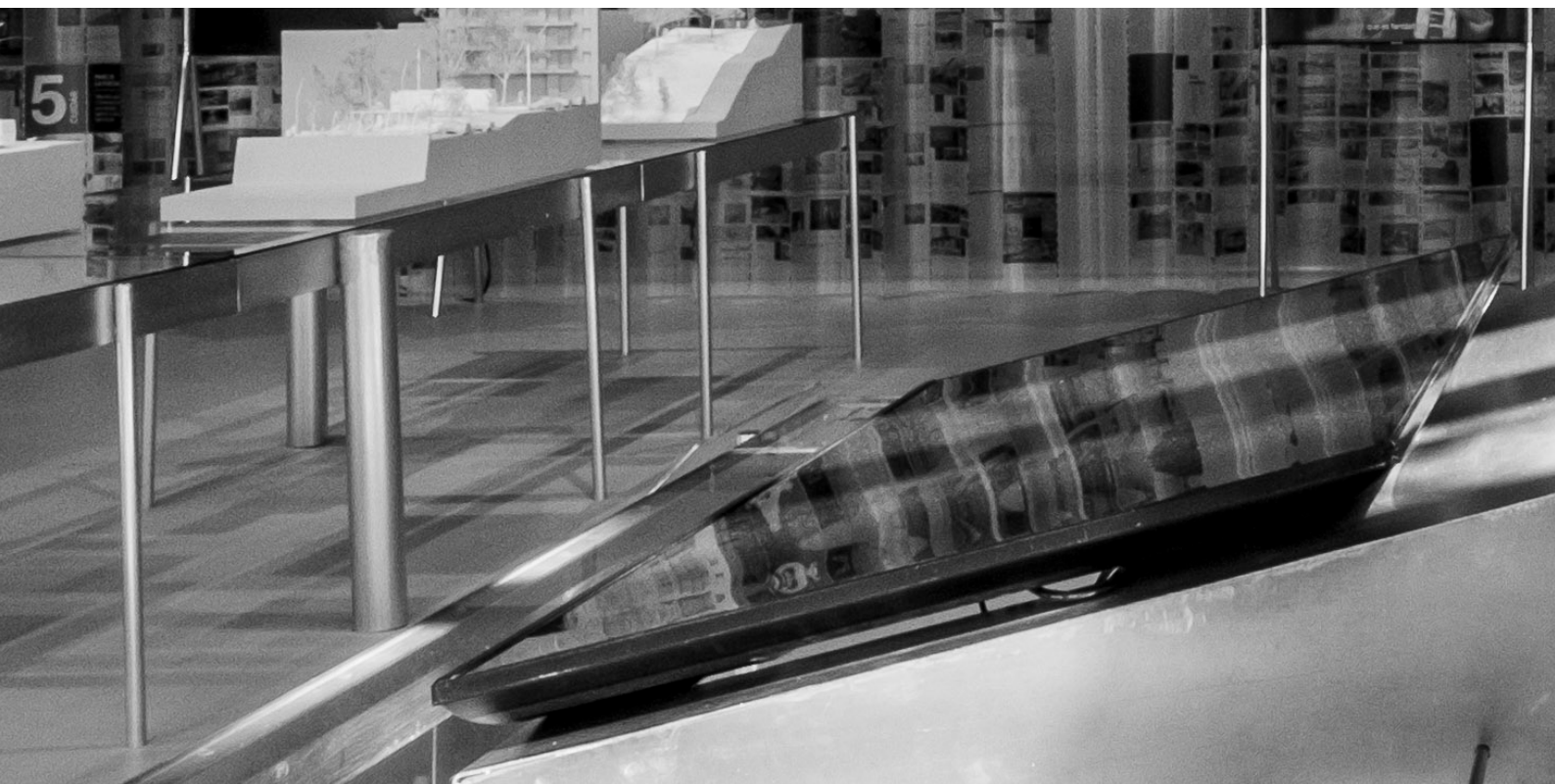
Rather than producing singular forms, the aim is to sustain liveable situations over time.

## Taking a Position

Caring also means making decisions. It is neither a neutral nor a technical gesture: it involves responsibilities, priorities and trade-offs.

These decisions become visible in public space, where questions of equity, access, health and coexistence intersect.

It is here that the city is put to the test. Especially in relation to the most vulnerable forms of life, which reveal the extent to which care is real or merely proclaimed.





# Caring

## Being

Caring for public space is not about making it pleasant, but about making it possible. Being there is not about occupying it, but about becoming part of the relationships that make it possible.

Not all spaces receive the same treatment. Not all lives carry the same weight. When friction is removed, it is often displaced. And in that displacement, some bodies cease to have a place.

The ways in which we regulate, attend to or intervene in spaces do not simply respond to situations: they shape them. What is named, what is classified, what is made visible. This is how ways of being are defined.

Even when it seeks to support, every intervention positions. It opens possibilities, but not always in the same way. An almost imperceptible gesture upon which depends who can be there, how they can be there, and for how long.

Meanwhile, more and more people are making public space a place where they can spend the night. The only place available to them.

## Letting Things Happen

Caring also means paying attention to how the city is made: not only to what is designed, but to what is allowed, what is maintained and what is left unresolved.

Sometimes, care that is too strict ends up driving away what it intended to welcome.

Caring does not always require intervention. It can also mean resisting the urge to fix everything, leaving room, allowing things to happen. Recognising the value of what remains outside the plan: residual spaces, forms of life that do not conform to an anticipated logic.

Yet even choosing not to intervene implies deciding under what conditions things are allowed to happen, and for whom.

## Sustaining

Caring is not about controlling, but about sustaining. Sustaining the conditions that allow life — human and non-human — to continue.

Accepting that the city is never finished. That it is never resolved. That it remains open. A continuous process made up of shared dependencies and vulnerabilities. Beginning from that fragility, rather than seeking to eliminate it.

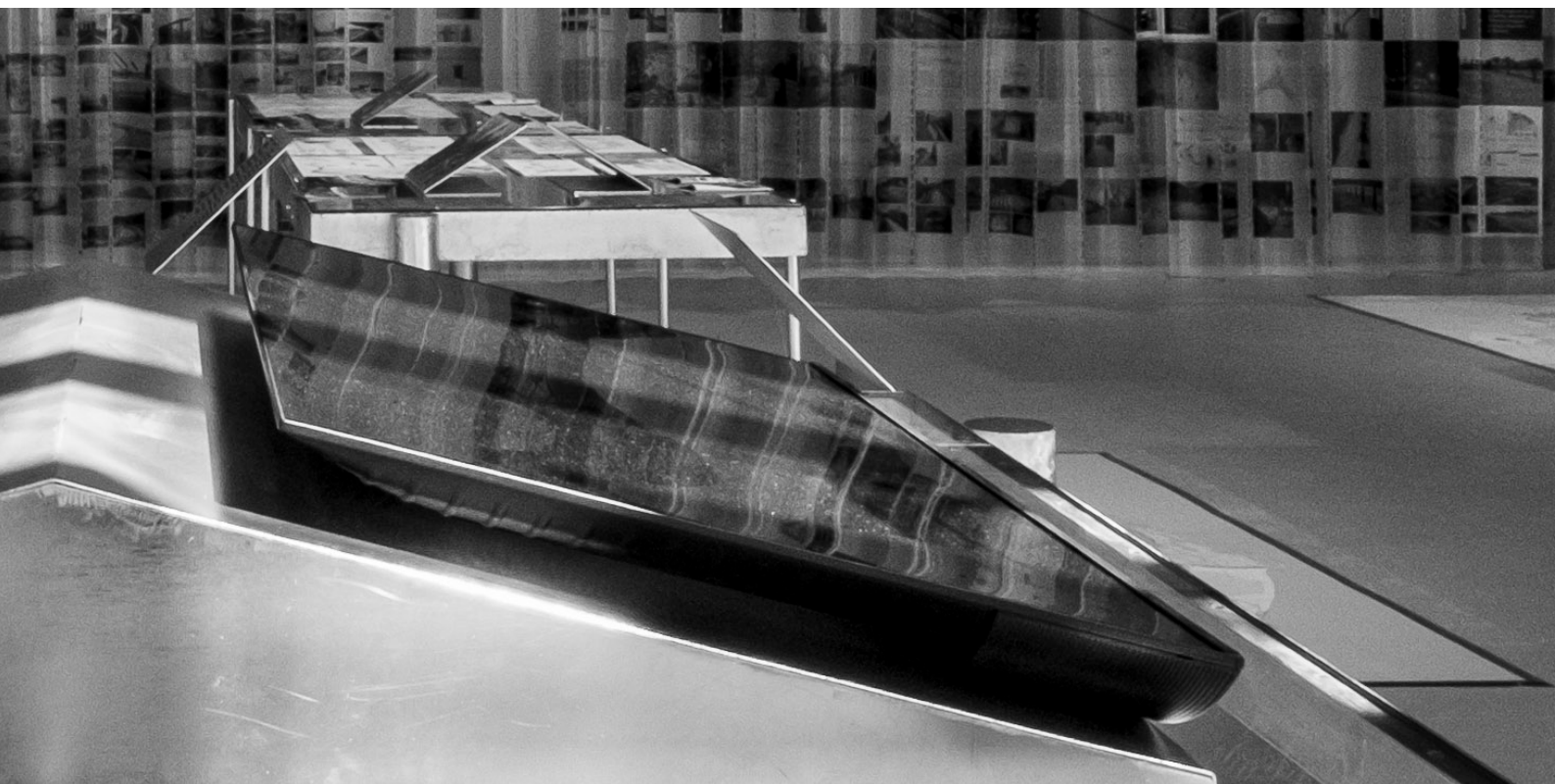
Caring does not mean simplifying or closing down possibilities, but sustaining what cannot be reduced to a single form.

Public space is where different uses, rhythms and presences intersect, not always compatibly.

Caring does not mean forcing coherence, but maintaining a balance in which different things can continue to exist.

Keeping open the possibility of shared life. A possibility that is exposed, unstable and always in progress.

What is done so that everything can continue. A day at the beach, a day in the park.



# Equipping

H Arquitectes



Xavier Ros



Roger Tudó



David Lorente



Josep Ricart

## The architecture of institutions

*"A world within the world";  
"a center around which existential space is organized"*

**Louis Kahn**

The collective organisation of space has always required territories and cities to be equipped with strategic constructions. From the earliest settlements through to ancient civilisations, we have always needed collective infrastructures to satisfy — and sometimes protect — what is most essential to the community. The specialisation of these infrastructures gradually evolved into a clear architectural typology. Spaces became increasingly distinctive, acquiring autonomy and character until they emerged as fully recognisable institutions.

Buildings such as the market, the theatre or the library were clearly distinguishable from one another and perfectly accommodated their specific rituals. The clarity and strength of these constructions reinforced the public meaning of their purposes.

Over the last hundred years, however, the unchecked growth of cities has multiplied needs and radically transformed the management and complexity of these public buildings. Institutions have grown larger, often replicating themselves mechanically, becoming simplified and moving away from their most original and fundamental qualities. They have gradually become blurred. We have witnessed a rapid metamorphosis from institutions into facilities. A regression from unique and meaningful spaces towards generic and operational ones.

Today, institutions — whether schools, libraries, theatres, museums, courts, hospitals or town halls — tend to be conceived primarily through programmes and through an often hyper-functional approach based on immediate needs. Public buildings are becoming little more than facilities dispensing services. These operational approaches, shaped by short-term thinking, contain an element of common sense and necessary pragmatism, but they are often also the result of haste, a reluctance to rethink established models, or a lack of courage in decision-making.

Every time a new facility is built, there is a tendency to replicate everything that (apparently) worked well in previous examples and to avoid taking risks with the unknown. Rather than imagining or rethinking spaces anew, we tend to repeat. This process of systematic cloning has turned most contemporary facilities into competent but soulless buildings that no longer respond to their original mission, but only to problems identified in earlier buildings.

Instead of exceptional buildings with high-quality spaces that engage with citizens, facilities are becoming artefacts of prevention. Spaces that survive the small problems of everyday life but become increasingly detached from their purpose. An architecture that is often too cautious and defensive, neglecting the potential of the extraordinary to give collective spaces a more transcendent meaning and a more positive impact on the community.

Perhaps the time has come to reconsider this model. We have equipped the city in an excessively assistential manner, guaranteeing the service without fully understanding the motivation behind it. We need to move beyond the operational idea of the facility and reconnect with architecture and its more suggestive condition. We need to recover the exceptional quality of spaces, the solemnity of certain moments, the public character of institutions, generous proportions, natural light and natural ventilation. We need to make institutions pleasant and special once again, to distinguish them from one another, to give them character and personality, to allow them to stand on their own terms.

We propose questioning everything, every time, and doing so with freedom, purity and even innocence. As if it were truly the first time we had faced certain questions. As if nobody had ever designed a "school" before. Questioning, therefore, all the schools that have come before us, even questioning what apparently worked well and what we would otherwise tend to repeat.

Trying to hold back our fears and pre-established answers in order to open the door to others that may bring us closer to redefining the idea of "school", and help us understand the issues that truly relate to the nature of each institution. This is not about change for its own sake, nor about always starting from scratch, nor about seeking architectural forms that have never existed before. Rather, it is about finding special, clear and pleasant spaces that help us better understand the institution and that become a precise synthesis of its purpose.

It is a persistent search to return — whenever necessary — to the point of departure, through its rituals, stripping away what is superfluous and identifying its most radical and authentic condition. An existential approach that qualifies and gives meaning to space. In other words, allowing institutions to be reborn from what is truly alive: not from the programme, nor from precautions and preventive measures, but from the very actions that define them — learning, performing, sharing, reading, listening, caring, exchanging, and so on.

The challenge is to find the architectural response that connects these essential rituals with place, space, climate, structure and materials. We must once again create spaces that guide and inspire both institutions and citizens. We must once again take pleasure in architecture and in institutions.









## HABITAR

Vivir en el espacio propio y convivir en los espacios compartidos, transformando la vivienda en un lugar vivo que responda a las necesidades personales, de la sociedad y del entorno.

## INHABITING

Living in private space and coexisting in shared spaces, transforming housing into an evolving place that responds to personal, social and environmental needs.

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# Inhabiting



Imma E. Maluenda



Enrique Encabo

## The art of inhabiting

**1.** Right at the midpoint of the twentieth century, Ray Bradbury imagined the daily life of an abandoned home. In *There Will Come Soft Rains*, the story that concluded his *The Martian Chronicles*, domestic robots continued their routines impassively after the extinction of human life: "The house was an altar with ten thousand attendants, big, small, serving, attending, in choirs. But the gods had gone away, and the ritual of the religion continued senselessly, uselessly." Machines, certainly; inhabiting, much less so.

**2.** Fifteen years later, the British critic Reyner Banham embraced domestic technology with such optimism that he considered dispensing with everything else. If air conditioning or heating, a good washing machine or a telephone line were enough for us — if being in the world were merely a matter of equipment — why would we need a house? Had he been a frugal man — as a child of the war, he was rather consumerist — Banham might have argued that Adam and Eve only built themselves a roof when they had no other choice. God may have been a difficult landlord, but those were the days of the garden, *à la belle étoile*.

**3.** Although it may seem that Bradbury and Banham were arguing opposite things — without us, machines are nothing; for us, they can be everything — they shared something in common: they knew that the stories and theories that matter are not those that allow us to escape reality, but rather those that remind us that our reality is inescapable.

**4.** As an active verb, inhabiting can only be performed by a subject: someone, us, you. What do we know about you? We know that your comfort temperature at rest is slightly higher in summer than in winter (between 21°C and 26°C, depending on the season); we know that you need roughly 50% humidity and a little air movement, but not too much. We know all of this, yet reducing it to a formula is to reduce it to absurdity.

**5.** We have very precise ideas about how our homes should be until those ideas are overtaken by life itself. If households are statistically smaller — families now average 2.5 people and single-person households are increasingly common — perhaps it no longer makes sense to cook in a separate room, hidden away; if the living room is no longer a space for receiving guests, perhaps it does not need to be so large; if good solar exposure, effective shading or natural ventilation are the best responses to climate, perhaps there is no need to burden façades with air-conditioning units, take pride in oversized radiators or wrap ourselves in layers of insulation. Perhaps we simply need to inhabit better.

**6.** Better means, for example, being selective about nostalgia: we have accepted without hesitation that the flamenco dancer no longer fits on top of the flat-screen television — technology is useful for something after all — yet giving up an old armchair seems much harder. As Junichiro Tanizaki wrote: "What is generally called beautiful is nothing more than a sublimation of the realities of life."

**7.** Better also means adapting. Formulas and generic solutions are only effective up to a point. When we are taught that painting means staying within the lines, what we are really being taught is obedience, not painting. The same applies to chewing with your mouth open or turning on the heating in April regardless of the weather. Rules exist so that we can behave without needing to learn, but learning to draw and learning how to behave at the table happen in exactly the same way that we learn to inhabit. It should not be difficult to admit it.

**8.** Yet formulas and generic solutions also have their advantages. The independent republic of your home was not, originally, anything special: rooms with (perhaps) a warm floor, windows, doors; spaces both good and bad at the same time. Gaston Bachelard wrote: "The person who has a castle dreams of a hut; the person who has a hut dreams of a palace. More than that: each of us has our hut-hours and our palace-hours." The point is to have both.

**9.** Nor should we be naïve. Yes, there are better and worse houses, but in a world worth living in they should also depend on us, the users, rather than simply being given to us. Architecture is a companion. When it is bad, it is a corset. When it is better, it is a teacher. The process of inhabiting lies in this dialogue, in learning from and adapting to our surroundings.

**10.** Álvaro Siza once said: "Living in a house, in a real house, is a full-time occupation." Just as there are no courts for victory, only courts for play, there are no houses "ready to move into", only houses "ready to live in". Places in which to work at life, little by little.

# Making a metropolis



Ramon M. Torra

Over the past forty years, the Barcelona Metropolitan Area (AMB) has played a fundamental role in shaping and transforming the metropolis through public space. This contribution cannot be explained solely by the sum of the projects delivered, but rather by a sustained action across the territory, aimed at providing form, continuity and urban quality to a metropolitan reality that is diverse, complex and deeply interdependent.

Throughout this journey, public space has been an essential tool for territorial cohesion. It has served to connect municipalities, structure urban areas, reclaim degraded spaces, introduce new parks, civic axes and public facilities, and strengthen cohesion between often fragmented urban pieces. It has also been a tangible way of building the metropolis: of giving shared meaning to a territory that is discontinuous in form, unequal in many respects and plural in its identities, and ultimately a way of fostering social cohesion across the metropolitan area.

From the early years of the metropolitan institutions to the present day, an important part of this work has consisted of addressing accumulated deficits and providing many places with an urban quality from which they had been deprived for decades. The recovery of streams and waterfronts, the creation and consolidation of the Metropolitan Parks Network, the development of new public spaces, neighbourhood improvement projects and the provision of public facilities have all contributed decisively to building a metropolis that is more accessible, more balanced and more liveable.

This action has been particularly significant in a territory made up of highly diverse municipalities, with different social, urban and landscape realities, yet strongly interconnected. In this respect, the metropolitan contribution has also consisted in making possible a series of balances: between centre and periphery, between consolidated areas and transforming districts, between infrastructure and everyday life, and between local demands and a broader territorial vision. Making a metropolis has often meant intervening where it was necessary to reinforce continuity, reduce fragmentation, improve shared territorial conditions and extend the urban quality traditionally associated with the centre to the whole territory, regardless of geographical location.

This contribution has gone far beyond addressing immediate needs. Over time, the AMB has consolidated a way of intervening in the territory based on cooperation with local councils, direct knowledge of municipalities and an overarching vision capable of placing each intervention within a wider territorial structure. This metropolitan perspective has made it possible to understand that every park, every square, every promenade, every connection and every public facility forms part of a broader system of relationships and balances.

It has also enabled continuity in a technical and institutional effort sustained over time. Persistence has been one of the values guiding the work of the AMB. Many of the transformations that today form part of everyday metropolitan life are not the result of a single intervention, but of long-term processes, shared work and a persistence that often remains invisible behind the finished project. This continuity is, in itself, one of the key values of metropolitan action: the ability to maintain a direction, accumulate experience and adapt without losing sight of the bigger picture.

Over the years, this way of working has expanded and become increasingly complex. Today it is essential to incorporate, in a more decisive and transversal manner, issues such as sustainability, mobility, green infrastructure, accessibility, environmental quality and the relationship between the urban system and the natural environment. Yet the guiding thread remains the same: understanding public space as a fundamental infrastructure for territorial cohesion and metropolitan quality of life.

This trajectory accompanies the exhibition and demonstrates both its achievements and its continuing relevance. Looking back, it allows us to recognise the value of work sustained over decades. Looking forward, it highlights that the transformation of the metropolis remains an ongoing process, and that public space will continue to be one of the principal tools through which to address its challenges and build its future.

For more information:

