

Neighborhood reconstruction, community identity, and place attachment: mixed experiences from the mass social housing complex of Sant Cosme, Barcelona.

Raquel Colacios

Assistant professor, UIC Barcelona School of Architecture
C/ Immaculada 22 08017 Barcelona, rcolacios@uic.es

Carmen Mendoza-Arroyo

Associate professor, UIC Barcelona School of Architecture
C/ Immaculada 22 08017 Barcelona, cmendoza@uic.es

Isabelle Anguelovski

ICREA Research Professor, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona
Passeig Lluís Companys 23 08010 Barcelona, Isabelle.Anguelovski@uab.cat

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ABSTRACT

While recent scholarship on place attachment has focused on the social construction of the people-place relationship, few studies to date have examined the role that (1) processes for neighborhood reconstruction and designing public space and (2) the configuration of the public space itself play in generating community identity and place attachment. This paper attempts to contribute to this debate by analyzing through an innovative mixed-methods approach the extent to which both neighborhood reconstruction together with the physical characteristics of newly built open space and the procedural dimension of its design influence the creation of feelings of identity and attachment in historically marginalized mass housing neighborhoods. Through the analysis of the level and nature of citizen participation in the reconstruction of Sant Cosme, a mass social housing estate in the periphery of Barcelona, we argue that when a reconstruction process does not further build identity beyond the home space and marginalizes civic participation, it eliminates opportunities to develop the self-esteem needed to create a more empowered and pro-active community, and it produces social separation and segregation within the neighborhood itself. Second, when the design process marginalizes civic participation and disregards everyday experiences, socially constructed places, places of significance, mixed uses and social mixity, and the community needs and visions regarding memory and shared history, it creates disconnected public spaces from the residents' imagery and expected uses.

INTRODUCTION

The polígonos¹ built in Spain under the dictatorship of Francisco Franco have historically been a clear case of territorial stigmatization associated with the country's industrialization and residential migration from rural Spain to larger cities. These speculative housing developments were built in isolation from the city with no services or facilities, and lacked quality construction and design. Their urban and architectural limitations along with the social profile of these neighborhoods, mainly low-income migrant families from Galicia or Andalucía, led to acute socio-spatial segregation. While several urban regeneration and social programs² developed over the past twenty years have attempted to address existing social conflict and marginalization, polígonos are still perceived by many as low-income urban ghettos in or around Spanish cities.

However, despite this socio-spatial isolation, previous research has shown that many low-income residents from historically segregated neighborhoods rely on their neighborhood for social networks and self-help (Wacquant, 2008; Anguelovski, 2013). Many have developed a strong sense of community through the daily interactions and connections they have formed in their neighborhoods (Anguelovski, 2013; Gilbert, 2011; Mendoza-Arroyo, 2013; Dovey, 2010). Beyond a sense of community, in some cases, existing urban degradations and social stigma have actually played a role in establishing a positive bond of attachment (August, 2014; Gotham & Brumley, 2002). Literature on place attachment argues that residents can construct a meaningful attachment to place by cultivating spatially defined social networks and holding them as a repository of shared memories and events (August, 2014; Cochrun, 1994; Corcoran, 2002).

While scholarship on place attachment has a long tradition of studying how both everyday experiences and historical events shape identity and attachment (Hummon, 1992; Irazábal, 2008; Manzo, 2014) the level of community engagement and the role of the design process as part of neighborhood rebuilding have been given less attention, especially when considering the people-place relationship. More attention also needs to be given to public space design characteristics and qualities in lower-income neighborhoods and the ways in which they (re)shape social processes, including community identity and place attachment. In this context, it is especially relevant for scholars to focus on neighborhood regeneration within stigmatized mass public housing developments -- and on public space in particular -- since (1) public space is generally lacking in quality in Spanish mass housing complexes of the 60's for low income

¹ Polígonos is the Spanish name to define a specific form of urban development built during the 60s and 70s in Spain. Privately owned and developed, the massive low-quality social housing developments were isolated from urban centers and lacking in basic services.

² One of the most common social programs in Catalunya is the "Pla de Desenvolupament Comunitari" (Community development plan) which, as described by the Catalan Government, applies a transversal approach.

populations, as is the case of Barcelona (Bohigas, 1986; Ferrer, 1996; Busquets, 2004; Hernandez, 2010), and, on the other hand, (2) place attachment can play a positive role in the construction of a collective identity that challenges stigma and can trigger political or social activism (Anguelovski, 2013; Wacquant, Slater, & Borges Pereira, 2014).

In this paper, we ask: To what extent do community reconstruction processes within stigmatized peri-urban mass housing complexes promote both community identity and place attachment? We find that depending on the level and nature of community participation in the reconstruction process, the identity and place attachment is enhanced or not. In the next section, we review existing scholarship at the intersection of territorial stigmatization and reconstruction, public space, and place attachment. After introducing our research design and case study – the reconstruction of the mass housing complex of Sant Cosme in the periphery of Barcelona – we present our findings and discuss their theoretical relevance. In addition to theoretical contributions, our paper proposes new analysis methods to the field by combining qualitative research with urban design analysis tools.

TERRITORIAL STIGMATIZATION, PLACE ATTACHMENT, AND PUBLIC SPACE

Studies on territorial stigmatization traditionally analyze how the configuration of space—including mass-produced public housing—impacts the daily lives and movements of residents in denigrated districts (Wacquant, Slater, & Borges Pereira, 2014; Corcoran, 2002). In many cities across the Global North, certain neighborhoods which have been cut off from urban centers have become pockets of self-inflicted and self-perpetuating destitution. These districts, viewed as no-go areas, have acquired informal names that reflect those socio-spatial conditions, for example, *banlieue-ghetto* in France, *Problemquartier* in Germany, and *Krottenwijk* in the Netherlands (Slater & Anderson, 2012; Wacquant, Slater, & Borges Pereira, 2014). Such a definition aptly describes that of *polígonos* in Spain, neighborhoods where incidents of deviance or violence are still routinely sensationalized (Morán, 2010; Wacquant et al., 2014) and seen as evidence of social disintegration. They are seen as places of isolation, disorganization and danger (Slater & Anderson, 2012; Morán, 2010).

Nonetheless, research in urban sociology reveals that, despite living in poor physical conditions and suffering from social stigma, residents of historically marginalized neighborhoods can value them as an anchor of networks of friendship and self-help. They are communal places defined by shared emotions, joint meanings and a common history where residents can construct a meaningful attachment to place through their use of space and the cultivation of spatially defined social networks (Corcoran, 2002; Gotham & Brumley, 2002). Studies have also demonstrated that there is a social component in the attachment to place, the one of being close to relatives or friends, living close to one's social network is a force that determines where to live (Dahl & Sorenson, 2010). Therefore, place attachment and the construction of an identity play a role in challenging stigma (Anguelovski, 2013; August, 2014; Gotham &

Brumley, 2002; Wacquant, Slater, & Borges Pereira, 2014) through the development of social processes that build a common history and a collective memory. These socially constructed spaces “become a rallying point for building a network of “significant sites” (Mendoza-Arroyo, 2013). Place attachment has also been shown to provide a sense of security and protects memory against the passage of time and against processes of neighborhood disinvestment and abandonment (Anuelovski, 2013). Yet, place attachment has received little consideration as a resource for renovation and revitalization of public housing communities, and has been underestimated as a potential motor in revitalizing declining suburban neighborhoods (Brown, Perkins & Brown, 2003; Tester et al., 2011)

On the other hand, studies on place attachment have mostly considered place as a social environment, measuring the level of attachment by the existence of social relationships in places, this is the social dimension of place attachment (Hidalgo & Hernández, 2001). This social relation relates to the emotional relationship that develops between the inhabitants of a community and their physical environment. It is a social construction, a product of shared behavioral and socio-cultural processes in space (Lewicka, 2011). Thus, here a concrete space becomes a place by the meanings, significance and emotions that people accumulate in it over time, by their multiple experiences in that physical environment and locale (Nogué, 2010; Valera & Pol, 1994; Vidal & Pol, 2005), and by their level of social interactions in that space. In contrast, other studies consider that place attachment cannot be understood without taking into account the physical dimension of a locale (Hidalgo & Hernández, 2001; Manzo, 2014). Here, the physical dimension can be identified and measured through 1) a qualitative analysis to obtain citizen information of people’s perceptions of communal places, and places of shared meanings and social significance, together and 2) the analysis of the built environment, its conditions, and its ability to promote – or not – the use of space and thus promote place attachment.

Identifying the conditions and elements within the built environment (Francis, Giles-Corti, Wood, & Knuiiman, 2012) that strengthen place attachment is thus an important scholarly task. The type and size of housing together with building upkeep and personalization have been shown to play a role in place attachment (Lewicka, 2010). Open public spaces, such as squares or plazas, can also foster place attachment by facilitating chance encounters between neighbors through the social and cultural activities that occur there (Talen, 2000). Third places are a generic designation for a great variety of public spaces that host the regular, voluntary, informal and happily anticipated gatherings of individuals beyond the realms of home and work (Oldenburg, 1989). Oldenburg’s definition emphasizes public access rather than public ownership or management, referring to spaces where communities develop networks of human relationships and which can become cultural symbols (Cooper, 2007; Corcoran, 2002).

Since interactions in public space are a key factor for the development of a sense of place, designing public spaces with a clear social purpose or community involvement in mind will likely contribute to nurturing a network of stronger human relationships. People will reinforce their identity as members of a community by experiencing and using public spaces and by

strengthening their sense of community through regular social interactions (Cooper, 2007). Here, the memories anchored in a specific space serve as social reinforcement (Anguelovski, 2013). Both the quantity and the quality of social interactions are thus important in forming a shared emotional connection within a neighborhood (Cochrun, 1994), and must be thus fostered for place attachment to occur.

While existing urban sociology and planning scholarship provides evidence on the characteristics of a good urban space, sociologists generally consider the physical dimension of space as a container of social processes rather than an independent object of study (Lewicka, 2011). Yet the physical environment is also a social product, where the distinction between the physical and social environment disappears. If the environment becomes not only a stage of interaction but also, as Stokols describes, an element of interaction (Stokols, 1990; Valera & Pol, 1994), participatory practices in public space design can serve as a channel for transferring community identity into the physical environment, thus creating an attachment to place.

Yet, to date, little empirical research has examined the process of neighborhood reconstruction and public space design in mass housing complexes and assessed the extent to which the content and process of community reconstruction both through physical upgrading and public space design are able to promote – or not – community identity and place attachment.

METHODS

For this study, we selected the case of Sant Cosme, a neighborhood of El Prat de Llobregat, a suburb of Barcelona, for two main reasons: 1) Sant Cosme underwent a total reconstruction process from 1979 to 2003, including housing reconstruction and public space design, 2) the neighborhood represents a standard typology of low income housing developments in Spain that are both socially vulnerable and spatially segregated. In addition, this choice responds to the lack of research on peri-urban polígonos and the reconstruction many of them underwent, especially related to public space.

Therefore, with the aim of elaborating the complete history and analysis of the reconstruction process of Sant Cosme, and placing the emphasis on citizen involvement in the reconstruction, we used an innovative mixed-method approach, combining (a) traditional qualitative approaches, (b) participatory and survey tools within an urban design studio, and (c) a comprehensive urban design analysis of the local housing and public space configuration. We conducted 20 in-depth interviews in 2016, which included interviews with members of the municipal government (it is the same party that has governed since 1979), members of neighborhood organizations, neighborhood leaders and activists, and neighbors of Sant Cosme. The interviews not only addressed the history of the reconstruction process and community participation, but also included questions that helped us examine the feelings of identity and place attachment to the neighborhood as well as emotional ties with the existing public spaces. With this in mind, the questions asked were focused on the process of reconstruction, the places

of positive and / or negative significance, places with special significance, and places that are used the most, and places that are used the least. (See Annex 1 for a summary of the results of the interviews).

In parallel, with the objective of assessing the degree of use and interactions in the public space, we conducted observations of 5 different public spaces in diverse sectors of the neighborhood at various times and days. During these observations, we recorded and mapped how and when people used the various public spaces of the neighborhood and measured the level of social interactions in each of them, a factor that has been proven to promote place attachment (Cooper, 2007; Cochrun, 1994).

Additionally, two of the authors of this article were organizers and course instructors for a University workshop studio in Sant Cosme during the month of December 2016, titled “Socio-Spatial Workshop. Fostering Place Attachment in Sant Cosme’s Public Spaces”. The workshop benefited from the collaboration of the local administration of El Prat; the office of the “Pla d’Acció comunitari”; the local organizations ‘Gats’ and ‘Dones Savies’; ‘The Fundació Esplai’ and individual citizens from Sant Cosme. The objective of the workshop was to analyze the use and significance of public space in Sant Cosme, and propose new directions for enhancing its use and spatial quality. For this paper, this studio helped us observe in depth and analyze how, and to what degree, the physical characteristics of the open space influences its use and consequently generated social interactions – and ultimately place attachment. During the workshop, a questionnaire answered by 120 neighbors was elaborated, through which we were able to contrast the use that the neighbors give to the public space and their perception of the neighborhood. The questions intended to examine: a) whether residents in Sant Cosme use the public space of their neighborhood, b) which are the most used spaces, and c) residents’ degree of satisfaction towards them.

We used process tracing and thematic analysis techniques to analyze our data and examine the following: 1) the extent to which citizen participation in the decision-making process of reconstruction influenced the development of community identity among long-term neighbors and 2) how the resulting built environment configuration promotes (or not) its use and social interactions and, in turn, place attachment.

In the following section, we delve into the case study background and history of Sant Cosme, paying particular attention to the different phases of the neighborhood reconstruction.

‘POLIGONOS’ IN SPAIN, A CASE OF SPECULATIVE SOCIAL HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

The construction of poligonos in Spain between the 1940s and 1960s represented a form of speculative development (Costa & Bonal, 1981). These developments were comprised of small, poorly built, low-cost homes. In the 1960s, as the private sector led the public housing market

and the real-estate sector at large, construction became a profitable business (Costa & Bonal, 1981).

The construction practice for the polígonos had specific common characteristics: 1) The land selected for the construction was far from urban centers; 2) The process to acquire cheap land occurred through forced expropriations of rural land that was subsequently re-zoned for urban development; and 3) Developers did not abide by usual processes of quality control, often forgoing building licenses, municipal permits, or approval from the architects' association (Costa & Bonal, 1981), further contributing to the poor quality of these neighborhoods. Indeed, this lack of care and consideration was one of the polígonos' greatest weaknesses (Ferrer, 1996). Housing was generally reduced to a limited and sectorial view of mass provision in the design or implementation of such estates (Ferrer, 1996; Sainz Gutierrez, 2011). As a result, the polígonos built on deregulated vacant land presented inadequate building proportions and had no urban landmarks (Busquets, 2004). These urban and architectural limitations, along with the social configuration of these neighborhoods—mainly low-income migrant families—caused a significant degree of socio-spatial segregation and marginalization that has affected their inhabitants to date.

With Barcelona's growing status as an industrial hub during much of the twentieth century, the population of the region of El Baix Llobregat—where El Prat del Llobregat is located—multiplied by 18 between 1830 and 1970 (Burbano, 2013). Located in El Prat itself, the neighborhood of Sant Cosme lies on the southwestern border of the city of Barcelona with a population of 7,070 inhabitants, which is equivalent to more than 17% of the total population of El Prat. Sant Cosme holds statistics of a vulnerable neighborhood related to its residents, such as a high unemployment rate of 19,75% with respect to the 14,2 of Spain, and a very high youth unemployment rate of 18,59% with respect to the 12,31 of Spain (Moran, 2010). These social characteristics, as we will see, are a result of a long history of social marginalization.

Sant cosme, the creation and reconstruction of a marginalized neighborhood

When the initial construction of Sant Cosme began in 1964, it was mainly built to relocate families from the shantytown of Montjuic in Barcelona, who had migrated to Barcelona and were working families originally coming from regions of Southern Spain (from now on group 1). Eight years later, new dwellings were added in the neighborhood of Sant Cosme, most of them were squatted by Roma families (from now on group 2). Sant Cosme was built with low quality materials and houses whose conditions deteriorated quickly (Gracia & Clarés, 1987). In addition, the lack of connection of the neighborhood with the center of the El Prat, the lack of services and facilities together with the lower-income composition of the neighborhood created an image of a social ghetto that has been associated to Sant Cosme since its creation. Furthermore, the two construction phases, together with the different socio-cultural composition of the neighborhood (residents coming from working-class families versus Roma families), created two different groups within Sant Cosme, and later marked the reconstruction process. In

1970, the poor state of the houses led group 1 neighbors, to start a mobilization to demand housing and neighborhood improvements which lasted eight years from 1970 until 1978, when the reconstruction of the neighborhood was approved by the government.

During the following 14 years, the reconstruction of group 1 houses was completed. The legalization of the Sant Cosme Neighborhood Association in 1972, which served as channel for residents' demands, was a key resource in the mobilization as its members acted as the voice of the residents. Those associations played a fundamental role in the democratization of Spain as their organizing went often beyond demanding improvements in neighborhood living conditions (Vilà, 2016; Anguelovski, 2014; Bonet i Martí, J. 2012). As the neighborhood reconstruction unfolded, group 1 residents articulated specific housing demands and became active participants in decision-making processes linked to the reconstruction of their houses.

In contrast with the organization of group 1 residents, active until the 1990s, group 2 residents in Sant Cosme remained disconnected from the reconstruction process and did not mobilize to advocate for the improvement of their part of the neighborhood. As a result, in 1993 the public administration decided to take control and lead this other reconstruction process. In Spain, many local administrations took a more active role in neighborhood transformation after the return of democracy in 1978 and often articulated urban interventions around "PERIS" urban plans (Special Plans for Internal Reform) and the "institutionalization of the participation" (Bonet i Martí, 2012), which approved regulations to manage participation at a municipal level. Those regulations implied a top-down participation model for the period during which group 2 homes were rebuilt.

This very different reconstruction strategy triggered, on the one hand, a strong feeling of identity among group 1 residents but increased, on the other hand, the already existing duality between group 1 and 2, which in turn helps to explain their different feelings of belonging and sense of ownership over the reconstruction. In the next section, we examine in greater depth the role played by the reconstruction process and the resulting design on community identity and place attachment. We use quotes selectively to illustrate our findings

RESULTS

Community identity and place attachment in mass housing reconstruction processes

Our analysis reveals a clear link between the nature and level of citizen participation and the creation of positive feelings of attachment towards the neighborhood. The type of community participation in the housing reconstruction and physical upgrades in Sant Cosme created strong feeling of community identity and pride among a large group of residents. In contrast, the latter reconstruction of the more marginalized sector and the design of the neighborhood public spaces, in which community participation was weak or inexistent, didn't create positive feelings among neighbors. In addition, the new spatial configuration with poor aesthetic and programmatic assets

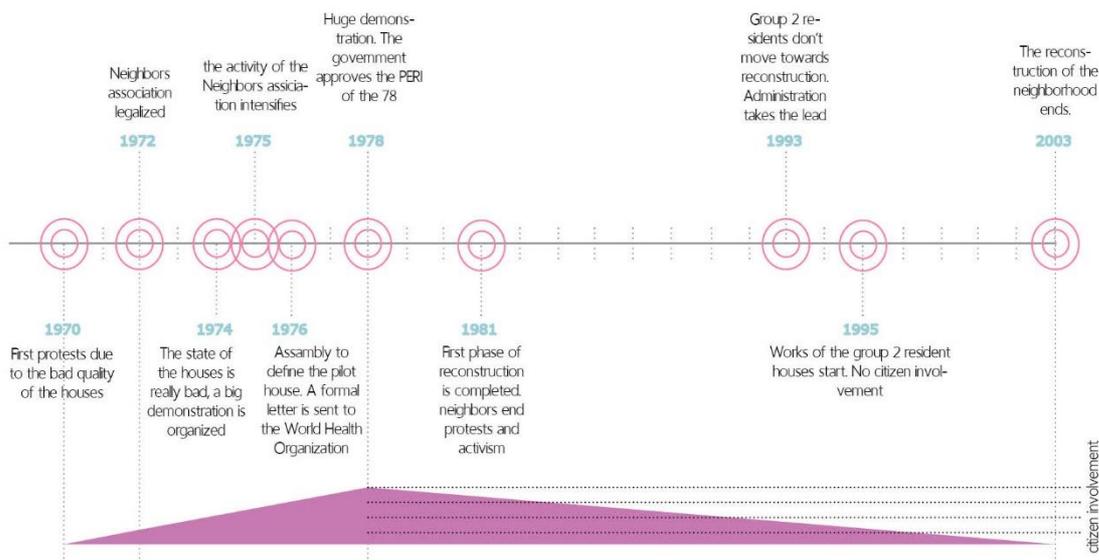
failed to encourage the use of public space and to generate mixed social interaction, common memory, social meaning, and in turn place attachment.

Identity and duality: the outcomes of two opposed reconstruction and design processes

The design of the group 1 blocks of dwellings took place through a self-organized participative process, with neighbors organizing themselves in groups and through assemblies in which they decided the internal design of their home. Residents even built a pilot house to make it easier for the families to decide on final design. During that process, residents also selected a team of architects who based their final housing design on the proposals of the neighbors.

Here, the chronology of the neighborhood reconstruction in Sant Cosme can be directly related to decision making processes. Civic participation increased in Barcelona and beyond until 1978, before losing strength with the arrival of the democracy. However, as the right to political association was legalized, politic parties abandoned citizen's movements as they considered there was a legal framework where citizens were represented (Bonet i Martí, 2012), leading to a participation losing its strength and becoming more consultative. Figure 1 below displays the relationship between stages of reconstruction and civic participation in Sant Cosme.

Figure 1 - Chronology of the reconstruction of Sant Cosme



Source: Authors

The shared history of struggle and the solidarity forged during the process of reconstruction of group 1's dwellings created a strong sense of community identity and pride among long-term community members. Residents consider many of their neighbors as extended family, as the following selected quotes from residents exemplify:

“I am from Sant Cosme, I feel proud of it, proud of what we accomplished thanks to our solidarity and collaboration.”

“It was a time of a great solidarity and support, we were like a big family, I still know the majority of the people living in the neighborhood.”

“I am very identified with the neighborhood because it has prospered”

This feeling of identity and the fact that neighbors are considered as extended family is one of the factors that contribute to create an attachment to the neighborhood, as argued by Mesch and Manor (1998) the higher number of close friends living nearby, the higher the attachment to the neighborhood.

As residents coalesced around a common housing project, their socio-spatial proximity and common planning work also contributed to building community identity.

This sense of pride and shared emotions towards their neighborhood is particularly tangible in the community group Dones Savies, or “Wise Women,” a group of 15 elderly women from the community’s earliest years and who still meet regularly today to discuss neighborhood concerns. There are also smaller manifestations of this sense of identity, for instance, in 2016, many residents complained that the new, and sole, metro station of Sant Cosme, connecting the city of Barcelona to the airport, was named “Parc Nou” (New Park in Catalan) rather than “Sant Cosme.” Neighbors felt stigmatized and ignored, as Juan, a neighbor expressed:

“(…) Parc Nou Metro station? Why didn’t they call it Sant Cosme? They had a chance to reduce stigma. People still perceive Sant Cosme as a problematic place and actions like these don’t help to improve its image.”

Symbolic top-down decisions from public authorities reinvigorate a sense of identity and can trigger new mobilization building on existing relationships between neighbors.

Yet, despite the fact that the reconstruction process of Sant Cosme built a strong community identity that has lasted to this day, it was focused on housing improvements, and most specifically, improvements of the most engaged group of residents, group 1. Once the housing reconstruction was achieved, individual needs and visions prevailed over further community interests and other broader political engagements, limiting the possibility of long-term and comprehensive neighborhood redevelopment. The process ended up with residents withdrawing into themselves and their houses soon after their houses were rebuilt, rather than opening them up to organize proactively around future neighborhood demands. As Alejandro, a member of the neighborhood association recalls:

“When everyone had their new house, the struggle was over and all of us got what we had been fighting for.”

The housing reconstruction was perceived as a long-time mission accomplished for residents on an individual level. Emilia a neighbor and member of the group Dones Savies also recalls:

“Each of us had a problem to solve and that was to fix our living conditions. We each fought for our own home.”

This limited vision of the participatory process left no collective interest to be mobilized around public space, with residents seeing no reason for continuing their community organization and mobilization beyond their homes.

In addition, from 1993 to 2003, the public administration took the lead in rebuilding group 2 resident’s houses, as civic engagement had died down in the neighborhood and group 2 residents felt disconnected from their neighbors and never organized to demand physical upgrades to their homes. During those ten years, the administration failed to include the knowledge and voice of community members in the process. This phase of the reconstruction process followed the formal parameters of the urban regeneration plans of the metropolitan area of Barcelona, where citizen participation shifted from non-formal activism role to taking place within the implementation of formal participation frameworks (Bonet i Martí, 2012; Mendoza-Arroyo & Vall-Casas, 2014).

As this top-down planning strategy unfolded, the municipality exacerbated divisions and tensions among residents and reinforced existing stereotypes, by spatially dividing group 2 from group 1 residents. The clearest example of this segregation is the last set of blocks built for group 2 residents (see Fig 2 below). Built from 2000 to 2003 and located at the edge of the neighborhood and surrounded by large public buildings, these blocks clearly separate and isolate group 2 from the rest of the neighborhood. These groups of blocks are known in the neighborhood as 7^a Fase, (7th phase), and they have become a visible label of stigma.

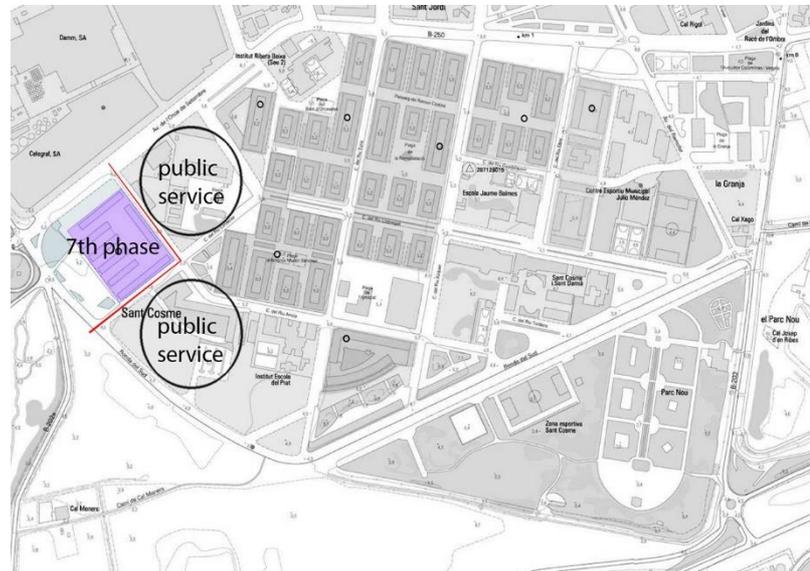
During the 7th phase reconstruction (2000-2003), the municipality of El Prat intentionally designed the physical configuration of the neighborhood to control and further marginalize the most vulnerable and conflictive sector of the population. A member of the public administration who worked on the reconstruction process confirms this imposed and built-in spatial segregation:

“The 7th phase was spatially segregated intentionally, because the public administration chose to designate that area for those who had ties to the mafia.”

“At an urban level it is like a ‘fence’ that creates a ghetto, it is like this and inhabitants there feel it like this”

As the reconstruction unfolded, spatial segregation translated into social isolation and control.

Figure 1 - Chronology of the reconstruction of Sant Cosme.



Source: Authors

This intensified division translated into feelings of “detachment,” social separation, and self-differentiation among residents from group 1. Those feelings clearly manifested when we asked residents about the places in their neighborhood they liked the least: All the places they named were located in areas constructed during the 7th phase. Further, some of the residents’ comments revealed existing internal stigma and lack of connection towards the 7th phase:

“People there are bad although I have never been there and don’t know anyone there”.

Other residents talk about a “rotten sector” when referring to the 7th phase.

In sum, the contrasting experiences of Sant Cosme’s reconstruction process produced mixed outcomes among group 1 residents: While the sense of community identity expressed by many group 1 residents was built and became stronger over time thanks to the participatory design of their homes and centered around the areas inhabited by this group of residents, their connection to the rest of neighborhood became weaker and socio-spatial segregation exacerbated through the reconstruction of the 7th phase for group 2 residents.

Isolation and lack of social interaction in the design and organization of community common spaces

In Sant Cosme, not only did the public administration fail to achieve a cohesive and integrated neighborhood in the reconstruction of group 2 houses, it also exacerbated isolation, segregation and social separation through the lack of the open space participatory design, through the system of physical surveillance it instituted, and through the very low density of the neighborhood in general.

The absence of resident participation in the design of public space and of its functions along with the low appropriation of this space over time have created empty and mostly desolate open spaces which residents use as spaces to pass through rather than places to stay, or develop active use, socio-ethnic mixing, or commercial activity. During the design process, local planners neglected to dedicate more attention to more comprehensive neighborhood revitalization and to include residents in this process.

This absence of community voices in the design process failed to bring residents together outside their homes and promote new types of social interactions. There was no common interest developed for open and outdoor spaces, and thus no real “need” or “obligation” for residents to communicate, exchange views, and build new ties.

In addition, out of all the public buildings or programs existing in the neighborhood—a police station, courthouse, health center and administrative office—none are the types of cultural or sports public facilities that could encourage more interaction and participation. Those public offices do not constitute a source of regular social contact between residents for social, cultural, and other recreational activities. Residents only resort to them in case of emergency, health issues, or special need or obligation. The formal and top-down presence of the public administration is also exemplified by paternalistic programs, such as the Programa de support a les escales “Program for the support of communities of owners,” aimed at preventing street conflicts between groups” and which the municipality sees as an “all-seeing eye whose purpose is to prevent conflict” (interview municipal staff officer). In that sense, the public administration has maintained a constant supervision and surveillance of public spaces, and of the activities taking place in them, as residents and municipal technicians expressed, rather than a co-production and co-design of the space, thus preventing residents from developing new more informal and spontaneous interactions and uses. Carmen, a 20-year employee of the municipal office sums up these patterns: “It is a highly supervised district, and it is 100% publicly owned. This goes beyond the housing; people always expect handouts.” As the public administration worked to prevent conflicts between residents from Group 1 and Group 2, the emergence of citizen-led place-making activities that could transform public space and its use and would reflect residents’ needs and visions did not take place.

Further, from a design standpoint, to this date Sant Cosme’s street design and content do not promote social interactions in public spaces or place attachment. Oversized streets used mainly for parking span from 12 to 20 meters wide, negatively affecting pedestrian connectivity and

accessibility. Residents walk or drive through them but do not frequently stop to engage in small talk with neighbors or organize a social activity (see Figure 3 and 4 below). Our analysis here reveals that the level of use and social interactions in public spaces (i.e., neighborhood streets, and squares) are very low and those spaces are mostly empty of people and activity (see Fig. 5 below).

Figure 3 - Image of Av Riu Llobregat



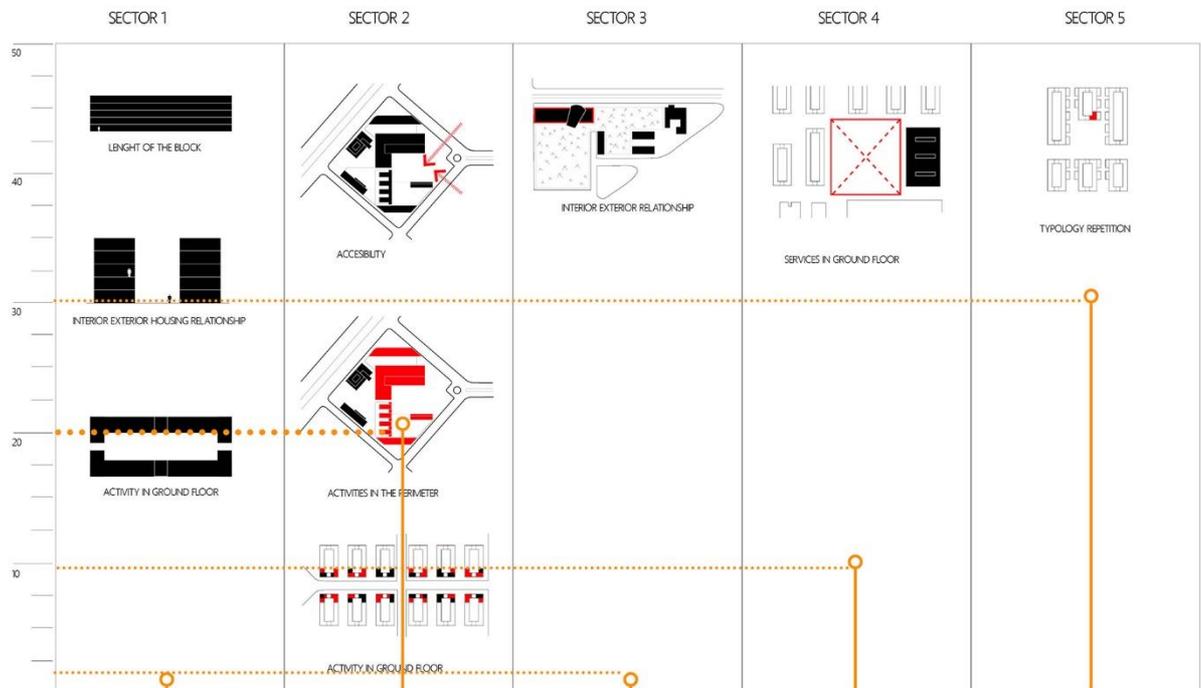
Source: Authors

Figure 4 - Image of Riu Xuquer Street



Source: Authors

Figure 5 - Chart summarizing the measurement of the level of social interactions and activity in the representative public spaces of Sant Cosme. The numbers refer to the maximum number of people observed in the different times the observation and mapping was done.



Source: Authors.

In addition, the neighborhood also lacks third places, that is places engaging street life and favoring encounters between residents. Ground floors are mostly residential and, of the commercial spaces that do exist, many of them have recently closed – some of it due to the financial and economic crisis, others because people retired, in addition to the big shopping malls that in recent years appeared in the borders of the neighborhood Today, the scarce commercial activity is concentrated on one of the neighborhoods’ wider streets (the Avinguda Riu Llobregat), (see Figure 6). In Sant Cosme, low density combined with limited ground floor activities evidences a neighborhood mostly dedicated to residential use rather than mixed use, and resulted into residents underusing existing public spaces. Today, when people leave their house, they mostly use their neighborhood as a point of passage on their way to work or to shopping rather than a destination or a place for social interaction among groups.

Figure 6 - Ground floor uses. Grey for housing, red for commercial and orange for public facilities.



Source: Authors

Coupled with this configuration, the absence of other types of businesses and economic activities limit the presence of people in the neighborhood to only those living there and further reduces opportunities for increased pedestrian activity. Being used to top-down neighborhood interventions outside their homes, residents consider that the local administration should be the actor in charge of creating new economic schemes to promote commercial activity. Even public officials confirm this role assigned to the local administration, as Sergio, a member of the municipal government, highlights:

“There are no people in the open space because it is a very low-density neighborhood. People from El Prat don’t come here either, because there is nothing to do here. We [the public administration] should start to think about economic incentives to attract more street-level activity.”

Without an active role played by municipal authorities to reconfigure local economic development, Sant Cosme residents do not seem incentivized to jumpstart or create new business and economic endeavors in which public and open space use could eventually be integrated.

Furthermore, as mentioned above, for place attachment to occur, the built environment must offer places of collective memory and social meaning. In Sant Cosme, because participation

did not inform the configuration of public space, planners and designers never identified or contributed to building focal places of memory. Today, the neighborhood lacks public places of collective meaning where residents can build memories, strengthen their collective identity, and develop emotional ties. To the question, what are the spaces of Sant Cosme that have a special meaning for you? 90% of respondents answered "none"; the same answer was obtained to the question of what are the spaces of Sant Cosme that have a positive meaning for you? While respondents valued the availability of public space in a positive way, they did not identify specific places. As Juan explains:

“The physical change of the neighborhood has been huge; there is no element that reminds us of what was there before. So I can’t think of any places that are special or memorable.”

Or as Maria a neighbor says:

“I don’t have any place with special meaning.”

More specifically, the five main squares in Sant Cosme never attracted much activity and many events, and in turn opportunities for social memory and meaning. While public squares can be very positive in their role as meeting spaces (Talen, 2000) or as places for community-strengthening and place attachment-related activities (Anguelovski, 2013), Sant Cosme’s squares are characterized by a lack of activity along their perimeters (See figure 7 and 8 below). In addition, even though two of the squares have playgrounds for children, the other squares are scantily equipped with basic urban furniture (benches, trees and lighting) and host no ground floor activities. As a result, the surveys we conducted about residents’ preferences for public spaces reveal the preference of the inhabitants of Sant Cosme for spaces outside the neighborhood. Only 33% of surveyed residents take their children to play in public spaces of Sant Cosme. In sum, while public space is abundant in Sant Cosme, it lacks an ability to produce collective meaning, memory, identity, and, in turn, place attachment.

Figure 7 - Image of the Barri d'Orcasitas square



Source: Authors

Figure 8 - Image of the Remodelació square



Source: Authors

Lastly, the low permeability of the interior of the housing blocks (see Figure 9 below) do not promote recreation and social meaning. Our analysis reveals that the large but highly inaccessible interior of the blocks have a very limited visual and physical connection to the surrounding streets. The access (see Figure 10) via a small entrance makes these interior spaces seem private when walking by them. This low connectivity with the rest of the public space system deters further social interactions and renders these interior spaces underused. No regular social event and activity that could be built on the residents' shared – recent and less recent – history and past is being organized.

Figure 9 - Interior of a typical block of Sant Cosme



Source: Authors

Figure 10 - Entrance to the interior of the blocks



Source: Author

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUDING REMARKS: THE FAILURE OF PRODUCING PLACE ATTACHMENT DESPITE STRONG COMMUNITY IDENTITY

Many recent studies in environmental psychology and urban sociology have examined the construction of community identity and place attachment by analyzing the relationship between place and people. They have demonstrated the importance of social interactions and human relationships in space to develop a sense of place (Cooper, 2007; Corcoran, 2002; Francis et al., 2012; Lewicka, 2011). Yet, to date, little attention has been paid, using both qualitative research and urban design analysis tools, to how the process of neighborhood reconstruction and public space improvement in socially marginalized neighborhoods, along with public space design and its physical characteristics, can influence (or not) the creation of interactions, networks, and memory and, consequently, the formation of place attachment. To this end, in this paper we have examined how the level and type of community participation in the neighborhood's reconstruction process along with the use and configuration of public spaces in the polígono of Sant Cosme have shaped and influenced the construction of feelings of identity and place attachment among residents.

As shown through the case of Sant Cosme's reconstruction, the phases during which community participation was more pronounced produced a strong feeling of community identity and pride that still remains today among a large group of residents from a specific part of the neighborhood. In contrast, the reconstruction of the more marginalized Sector and the design of the neighborhood public and open spaces, in which community participation was weak or inexistent, did not generate positive feelings among neighbors, and only exacerbated division through spatial segregation and increased resident dependency on the public administration. Here the public administration failed to achieve an integrated neighborhood due to the lack of participation of its residents, resulting in greater dependency, community surveillance, and reinforced stereotypes, and an increasingly divided community.

The case of Sant Cosme also demonstrates how a spatial configuration lacking in certain aesthetic and programmatic assets fails to promote public space use and is thus unable to generate mixed social interaction, common memory, social meaning, and in turn place attachment among residents. Because the local configuration of public space does not allow for social interaction and community activity, residents have not been able to use plazas, streets, or other open spaces as tools for community building and later community organization and engagement.

Those findings have two clear implications for the creation of attachment to place in territorially marginalized neighborhoods, such as peri-urban mass housing complexes. First, when neighborhood revitalization and upgrading does not further build identity beyond the home space and marginalizes further civic participation, it seems to eliminate opportunities to develop the self-worth and self-esteem needed to create a more empowered and pro-active community (Thwaites, Mathers, Simkings, 2013), and it produces isolation, social separation, and segregation within the neighborhood itself. Second, when the design process for public spaces marginalizes civic participation and disregards everyday experiences, socially constructed places, places of significance, mixed uses and social mixity, and the needs and visions of the community regarding memory and shared history and meaning, it creates public spaces that are disconnected from the residents' imagery and use. As a result, such a reconstruction process like in Sant Cosme, while strengthening community identity among a portion of involved residents, fails to create place attachment among residents and greater opportunities for community participation.

In sum, in Sant Cosme, neither (a) the neighborhood reconstruction and public space design process nor (b), the public space design itself, generated feelings of attachment towards the open spaces nor the neighborhood itself. In fact, they constrained the development of people-place relations. This experience reveals the importance of developing public spaces through participation processes that can help nurture the network of human relationships capable of transforming these spaces into culturally symbolic places and creating new community memory and identity. Therefore, a specific focus on participatory public space design and on a configuration of public space promoting social interactions, reinforcing community identity, and encouraging socio-spatial interaction and memory building could help foster place attachment. Here, planners can and should facilitate participatory processes in the reconstruction of

marginalized neighborhoods, especially their public spaces, and promoting an attractive, dense, and mixed-use urban configuration. Our belief is that conscious participation, together with active public spaces, can empower community residents, conjure a sense of pride, help citizens re-appropriate the public sphere and create shared memories, and ultimately contribute to addressing socio-spatial inequality and segregation and enhancing community engagement.

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ANNEX 1

Summary of the interview results.

		History and Urban Changes	Use of the neighborhood spaces	Place attachment	Community Involvement	Identity
#1	Woman Social Worker from the Municipality of El Prat de Llobregat Works in Sant Cosme, doesn't live in Sant Cosme	Strong duality among the reconstructed part of the neighborhood and the non reconstructed	Under used public space. Public services but non of the kind that generate activity around them (Court, Police, Health Center...)	Those from sector 1 P.A. towards their house, they are the activists that went from the shack to the appartment.	Involvement only when is lead by authorities, not community led.	People that came initially feel their identity is linked to Sant Cosme
		Sector 1 was a citizen led process, while sector 2 was an administration led process	No activities in the interior space of the blocks, no activities allowed	Sector 2 are disconnected as the reconstruction was given to them		New generations don't have this strong sense of identity towards Sant Cosme
		Fragmentation of phase 7, spatially segregated	Parc nou is the only used space, many people from the rest of El Prat use it			
#2	Man Public administration of El Prat de Llobregat Doesn't live in Sant Cosme	El Prat was a very small town, and suddenly a new neighborhood was built, it was a huge challenge	Only neighbors from Sant Cosme use the space, no people from El Prat.		He doesn't feel people are very involved nowadays in community actions. It has become a very much subsidized neighborhood, so people are now used to receive.	people from Sant Cosme feel proud of their neighborhood because is a product of their effort and activism action
			Very low density neighborhood, feels there is no people in the street.			
			Public buildings don't promote activity and socialization (Court, Police Station, Health center)			
#3	Woman neighbor 62 years old	When we first move to Sant Cosme coming from the Shack this was amazing	pecially likes and uses Parc Nou	She doesn't have a significant place where she feels attached to	We were very much involved with the reconstruction process, when that was over the involvement in neighborhood issues disappeared	She feels his identity is linked to Sant Cosme, because of the involvement in the reconstruction process
		In some years we started to see the deficiencies of the blocks	The promenade to the beach is what she likes the most			
#4	Woman neighbor 58 years old	The administration thought as we came from the shacks we would be happy with anything they gave to us	She buys and uses spaces out of Sant Cosme, but she likes Parc Nou	She doesn't feel attached to any place in the neighborhood besides her house	There was a lot of community action in the first period of reconstruction, when that was accomplished involvement and action disappeared	She feels Sant Cosme is her place because she had to fight for it and overcome stigma
#5	Woman neighbor 68 years old	When she first arrived in the 72 the bad conditions were evident	She mentions "Plaza de las Aguas" as a place she likes	She doesn't have a significant place where she feels attached to	When people had when they were fighting for (their houses) community action disappeared	She proudly says I'm from Sant Cosme, the stigma has to end
		People were united to claim and work for a better neighborhood				
		When people had what they were claiming the fight was over				
#6	Woman neighbor 59 years old	We were very organized to claim for the betterment of the houses	No activity in the public space, commerce is out of the neighborhood	She feels attached to her house, but no attachment to any public space	Not involved in community groups, expects public administration to always lead activities	"I am from Sant Cosme and my identity is linked to this neighborhood"
		Neighbors built a pilot house to take decisions				
#7	Woman neighbor 67 years old	the neighborhood was in very bad conditions, neighbors organized themselves to get a decent neighborhood	What she most likes is the promenade to the beach, she does her daily activities between Sant Cosme and El Prat	She doesn't have a significant place where she feels attached to	New generations need to be organized. No interest in the neighborhood among the young people	She feels very proud of being from Sant Cosme
#8	Woman neighbor 72 years old	the neighborhood was in very bad conditions, neighbors organized themselves to get a decent neighborhood	The place that she likes the most is Parc Nou	She doesn't have a significant place where she feels attached to	She is member of the Group "Dones Savies", a group of old women who meet to discuss issues of the neighborhood, but is not relevant in the decision making processes of the neighborhood	She feels her identity is strong towards Sant Cosme
#9	Woman neighbor 75 years old	the neighborhood was in very bad conditions, neighbors organized themselves to get a decent neighborhood	She argues that many commerces have closed during the last years because people tend to shop outside Sant Cosme, she likes the Parc Nou	She doesn't have a significant place where she feels attached to	She is member of the Group "Dones Savies", a group of old women who meet to discuss issues of the neighborhood, but is not relevant in the decision making processes of the neighborhood	Her identity is linked to Sant Cosme
#10	Woman neighbor 73 years old	the neighborhood was in very bad conditions, neighbors organized themselves to get a decent neighborhood	Not much use of the public spaces of the neighborhood, she sometimes goes to "Plaza de las aguas" but she mainly goes to the center of El Prat	She doesn't have a significant place where she feels attached to	She is member of the Group "Dones Savies", a group of old women who meet to discuss issues of the neighborhood, but is not relevant in the decision making processes of the neighborhood	She feels very much identified with Sant Cosme and less with El Prat, she says I am from Sant Cosme

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		History and Urban Changes	Use of the neighborhood spaces	Place attachment	Community Involvement	Identity
#11	Woman neighbor 57 years old	When everyone had his/her house the interest in common problems or issues of the neighborhood dissappeared	She uses mainly spaces outside the neighborhood, she likes Parc Nou and the promenade to the beach to walk on the weekends	She doesn't have a significant place where she feels attached to	No involvement in community actions or groups, regrets that young people is neither involved	She feels her identity is linked to Sant Cosme
#12	Woman neighbor 58 years old	We had to fight not only for the houses but for public services like the school or public transport	Space is not very much used, there is very little commerce	She doesn't have a significant place where she feels attached to	Not involved in community groups	She feels very proud of being from Sant Cosme
#13	Woman neighbor 74 years old	Nowadays it seems a clean and nice neighborhood but there are coexistence problems	She values the quality of the public space in Sant Cosme, wide sidewalks and availability of squares but regrets that there is no activity so there is not much people in the streets, and sometimes there are places in where people use the space in bad ways	She doesn't have a significant place where she feels attached to	She is member of the Group "Dones Savies", a group of old women who meet to discuss issues of the neighborhood, but is not relevant in the decision making processes of the neighborhood	She feels his identity is linked to Sant Cosme, because of the involvement in the reconstruction process
#14	Woman neighbor 63 years old	Remarks how the changes were firstly led by neighbors and for second phase there was no community involvement It was a housing based reconstruction	Outside the school you see people in the times when kids go out. She likes Parc Nou	She doesn't have a significant place where she feels attached to	Not involved in community groups	She feels her identity is from both, Sant Cosme and El Prat
#15	Man member of a civic association 36 years old	Neighborhood has changed a lot, but the involvement of the people has dissappeared	He reflects on the way people use public space, and precisely because of the lack of use, his organisation tries to organise activities that happen in the outside space when possible		member of Gats, an association to promote civic actions for the neighborhood, founders of the group are not from Sant Cosme	
#16	Man Social worker of the public administration 38 years old	We take care of coexistence problems. No activities or spaces to promote exchange and communication	He reflects on the way people use public space but specially on the spaces around and inside the blocks, what would be considered a common space, the way it is used by different sectors of the population living in the same block creates conflicts and tensions		Social worker, not involved in civic groups from the neighborhood	
#17	Man neighbor 32 years old	People think a lot on how neighbors were united but it is not anymore, we can't live in the past, the situation now is that the neighborhood has problems and people don't do anything	He regrets on the huge lack of cultural programs in the neighborhood, he reflects on the situation in the present which is that there are no cultural activities in the neighborhood at all	He doesn't have any significant space where to feel attached to	Not involved in community groups	He doesn't feel his identity is linked to Sant Cosme
#18	Man neighbor 45 years old	Very different now as it was in the first years. First Union, then disconnection and now disinterest	He states that "Avenida 11 de Septiembre" the avenue that divides Sant Cosme from El Prat is acting as a frontier or barrier basically for the people from outside Sant Cosme to go into the neighborhood. He also reflects on the lack of commerce	He has a significant feeling with an area he used to play in his childhood, the area around the Church, right now it has changed so much that is not recognizable anymore	Leader of a community group of the neighborhood, he is involved in community activities from Sant Cosme but also from El Prat. Very active	He feels his identity is very much linked to Sant Cosme, he is proud of being from the neighborhood. But regrets there is a lot of stigmatization still.
#19	Man neighbor, co-president of the neighbors association 47 years old	He recalls very much on the years of fight and action, highlighting the great force of people in the reconstruction of the neighborhood (nostalgia)	The neighborhood had much more activity in the past years, when the reconstruction was in process. Right now very few activity	He remembers when in his childhood he used to play and hang out around the former block in which he used to live, with the reconstruction these spaces dissappeared so there is no place he feels as significant	Neighborhood association	identity very much linked to Sant Cosme
#20	Woman neighbor, co-president of the neighbors association 43 years old	Reconstruction of sector 1 was exemplar, we could even decide who we wanted our neighbors to be. That got lost with the reconstruction of sector 2	From the neighborhood association there are not activities organized in order to promote the use of public space, they dedicate more efforts to help neighbors with daily problems (elevators in this moment)	She feels attached to her house and recalls that significance spaces have dissappeared with the reconstruction	Neighborhood association	identity very much linked to Sant Cosme

SHORT AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY:

Raquel Colacios is assistant professor at the Universitat Internacional de Catalunya School of Architecture. Her research interests are centered on the role of design to foster spatial justice through new forms of governance, innovative forms of space production and innovative analytical processes to identify existing potentials for socio/spatial transformation.

Carmen Mendoza-Arroyo is associate professor at the Universitat Internacional de Catalunya School of Architecture. Her research interests include: urban regeneration, reconstruction and resilience in the field of emergency architecture, and urban integration strategies for displaced populations and refugees. She has published in: COSUST: Journal Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability; JAPR, and Landscape Research.

Isabelle Anguelovski is ICREA Research Professor at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona-Institute for Environmental Science and Technology. Her research interests are centered on planning for sustainable, healthy, and equitable cities. She has published in journals such as Nature Climate Change; Cities; City; and Progress in Human Geography