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Publication Date

2013

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

EXPERIMENTS IN PARTICIPATORY URBANISM:

Reform and Autogestión as Emerging Forms of Urban Activism in Barcelona

By

David Scott de la Peña

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

Requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

In

Landscape Architecture and Environmental Planning

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Louise A. Mozingo, Chair

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Professor Margaret Crawford

Spring 2013

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Abstract

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This project is an attempt to recuperate citizen participation in urban design and planning from the top-down attitudes that make them less and less relevant to informing the complex, dynamic ways that public space is actually produced. It critiques the status quo modes of practice and conceives of urban activism as reactions against that system, reactions that follow particular dispositions between preservation of the status quo to revolt. It focuses on two modalities of urban activism that hold promise for transformation--reform activism and *autogestión.* The dissertation specifically examines experiments in participatory urbanism in Barcelona, through which urban activists engage with institutions, organizations, and residents to either reform existing systems or to build alternative systems that are semi-autonomous (*autogestionado*). Using archival and ethnographic methods, this study offers insights on emerging activist roles that designers and urbanists are assuming in an effort to give citizens more local control over urban space. Understanding these new roles is important not only for aspiring urban activists but also to officials and other professionals who likewise must negotiate the dynamic terrain between institutions, professionals and publics.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Rurbar

It is February in Barcelona, 2012. Eight urban activists (Catalan, Peruvian, Paraguayan, French, Italian and Filipino-American) sit in an ecological cafe in an agricultural valley of the Collserola nature park debating urban wilderness, sharing artisanal brownies and sipping organic chai out of mismatched cups. We are trying to come up with a plan. Literally, we are sitting over a map of the city, plotting a course, a citizen's walking tour, or *dérive*, that is part of a protest action—an alternative submission we are preparing for the city's latest design competition called *Setze Portes* (Sixteen Gates). Months earlier, politicians declared that the city should have better access to the large nature park that it encircles, and they charged the city's urbanism department with creating a project. Behind closed doors, the city's expert technical staff identified sixteen "gates" to the park and selected 112 architect-led design teams to spend three months on a "participatory" ideas competition.

On its face, the project looked good. Who would argue against connecting with nature? Citizens were even invited to workshops and to vote for their favorite schemes, in keeping with one of the stated goals of the competition: "to involve the neighbors of the districts in this regeneration project, seeking maximum participation" (Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2012). But what the city calls "maximum participation" is not viewed positively by many activists, one of which regretted the lack of trust citizens have in their government:

> There's a rejection of everything the administration says; it's hard to do a participatory project where the people agree because a lot of people won't be there. (Rodriguez, 2012)

Our group agrees: the city's process is flawed. The decision-making is hierarchical and opaque; despite promises, the neighbors aren't initially consulted; and the potential ecological harm from "improved" access to nature seems unconsidered by officials. As the team plans its strategy, one member reminds us that the goal isn't to win the competition. Instead, our entry is meant to encourage the city to reform its practices and to embolden local autonomy in managing the processes of urban transformation. It will demonstrate an alternative way to conceive of public urban projects—one that is transparent, that starts from the people, and uses multidisciplinary approaches. The urge to reform planning institutions is not new to this group. It is as old as professional planning itself and derives from an optimistic attitude that existing practices can be improved. In this project it is manifested through the actions of these activists and in the incremental steps that some city officials are taking that make participation more meaningful. Although there remains much to criticize about top-down participatory processes, reform activism has opened a dialogue with officials that has transformative potential.

The Rur-bar cafe in which we are seated offers a blueprint for undertaking another kind of grassroots ecological advocacy. A short time ago, the building it occupies was an

abandoned leper hospital on city's rural edge; since its "liberation" in 2002, the complex, Can Masdeu, has become one of the most important *okupas*, or squats, in Barcelona.[1] In 2003, the *Ajuntament* (City Hall) forcefully attempted to evict what it perceived to be trespassing anarchists, but supportive neighbors showed up to defend them. Today, the city reluctantly recognizes, if not the right to occupy, at least the benefits that this place provides to the community and to the city as a whole. As an *okupa*, Can Masdeu offers a model of *autogestión*[2] or self-management that sidesteps conventional urban planning and development. It practices subsistence agriculture, supports a barter economy, provides community garden plots, acts as steward of an ecologically sensitive valley, organizes workshops and excursions, hosts educational events, and provides housing for many who do not fit the mold of public housing programs. *Okupas* like Can Masdeu have become sites of community innovation, existing alongside but yet autonomous of the dominant political, economic and cultural structures.

My co-conspirators at the Rur-bar share with Can Masdeu residents a critique of the status quo system of urban governance: specifically, they believe that citizens should have more say and local control over the production of public space. The actors around the table belong to two separate groups of activists who make up our competition team and the case studies examined in this dissertation. The first, Raons Públiques, is a reform-minded multi-disciplinary nonprofit associated with Architects Without Borders, which works on the topic of participation and "seeks to involve citizens in the making of their own city" (Raons Públiques, 2012b). The second, LaCol, is an architect's collective that has been closely involved in reclaiming a factory complex called Can Batlló, which is now being self-managed (*autogestionado*) by and for the working-class community of Sants. The experiences of these two groups point to two distinct but complementary approaches to participatory urbanism: reform activism and *autogestión*. These two approaches are the subject of this dissertation. They offer insights on emerging activist roles that designers and urbanists are assuming in an effort to give citizens more local control over urban space. With varying degrees of success, the groups have used their social and intellectual capital to position themselves with respect to city officials and citizens, and to engage in actions that range from dialogical to material. Despite the tactical and ephemeral nature of their approaches, the groups have already contributed to some durable changes in the way that at least a few public spaces in Barcelona are being produced.

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[1] Squatting as an organized endeavor originated immediately after World War II in Europe, especially in the Netherlands, the UK, Germany and Italy, and were full social movements by the 1960s and 70s. This phenomenon is described in detail by Hans Pruijt (Pruijt, 2013). In Spain, squatting, or *okupaciones*, began in the late 1970s in Madrid, Barcelona and Bilbao.

[2] *Autogestión* (*autogestió* in Catalan) does not easily translate into English. Literally, it means "self-management" but in Latin languages it implies a more assertive approach, akin to a seizure by users of obligations formerly administered by the state. First theorized by the anarchist Pierre-Joseph Proudhon in the 19th century, it was revived through student movements especially in France and Italy in the 1960s and 70s. *Autogestión* also corresponds with certain notions found in the Marxist Autonomist movements, though it does not share their explicit goal of overturning the governing capitalist systems. I will use the Spanish term throughout this dissertation to preserve the nuances that are lost by calling it self-management and to avoid the numerous and varied connotations associated with autonomism.

1.2 The Problem with Participation and Urban Activism

The activities of engaged urbanists such as those mentioned above have garnered many labels, including design activism, creative activism, urban activism, tactical urbanism, or spatial agency (Awan, Schneider, & Till, 2011; Bell & Wakeford, 2008; Crawford, 2011; Thorpe, 2012). The truth is that none of these exactly captures the nature of actions being undertaken by designers and urbanists to change the ways that public space and cities are made and remade. For the purposes of this dissertation, I will refer to them as simply urban activism, with the understanding that I am omitting other forms of political and social activism that happen to occur in cities. In Chapter 2, I detail more completely the entire range of positions and actions that are encompassed by the term.

Urban activism of course is not unique to Barcelona, though its exaggeration here is the principal reason I have chosen it as a study site. Whether it is here or elsewhere in the developed world, the phenomenon would not exist but for a broad dissatisfaction with conventional ways that urban design and planning practice have engaged communities. In large part this is a problem of citizen participation, which Guy Benevente called "the Achilles heel of planning" (in D. Day, 1997, p. 421) and which has consumed much planning theory since the 1960s (eg, Arnstein, 1969; Healey, 2006; Hester, 1990; Innes & Booher, 2010).

The term citizen participation, unfortunately, already brings to mind a certain kind of structured, top-down exchange between officials and citizens. This is one way to engage publics and it is the dominant mode used by institutions. Direct participation, however, can take other forms that are more collaborative and bottom-up. All of these forms will need to be brought into play within the planning and design fields so that local citizens can help officials and designers foster more sustainable and equitable communities. Today, fast-forwarding from the 1960s, much more is at stake. There is growing consensus that the challenges of climate change, resource depletion, pollution, disease, and economic inequity require not only technological solutions, but also creative social ones (Wheeler, 2012; Hester, 2006; Bookchin, 2005). These solutions must be realized at a local level, with community buy-in.

The need for grassroots solutions coincides with a groundswell of pop-up culture, street art, flash mobs and wildflower bombs. These are the more ludic, seemingly innocuous expressions of an anti-authoritarian zeitgeist whose more forceful repertoire includes massive protests and occupations of public space. The Spanish *okupas* and the *indignados* of the 15-M movement[3] are part of this global phenomenon challenging power hierarchies. Since 2011 in the streets and plazas of Barcelona, Madrid, Wall Street, Oakland, and Cairo, citizens have been exercising their constituent power in the face of authority. These movements are influenced by anarchistic theories and are also

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[3] 15M takes its name from the date of the first major nationwide protests, in Madrid on the 15th of May, 2011 and the following day in Barcelona. These protests were organized through social networks especially among youth who are indignant about the structural political and economic conditions that have paralyzed the country since 2008, disproportionally impacting the younger population.

highly organized--horizontally not hierarchically. They also defy simplistic categorization—they are grassroots, leaderless, rhizomatic, and not easily appeased by token concessions. In the fields of urbanism, it would seem that planning institutions and the vanguard of professional design culture are ready to tap into this energy and to embrace grassroots approaches to city making. In leading academic, professional and popular journals, authors have given ample attention to a "tactical turn" (King, 2012; Nettler, 27 February 2012; Newcombe, 2012). In contrast to normative spatial planning strategies, the pragmatism of tactical urbanism suggests a short cut and an economical way to achieve immediate urban change. Emerging scholarship on these trends in urbanism thus far has been mostly limited to a cataloguing of the multitude of activities that fall within its reach. The more significant of these efforts include Bell and Wakeford's *Expanding Architecture: Design as Activism* (2008) and Till, Awan and Schneider's *Spatial Agency* (2011). Concurrently, scholars of art practice have explored "relational aesthetics" and "social justice art," some examples of which clearly fall under the rubric of urban activism and are inventoried in Nato Thompson's *Living as Form (2012)*.

Last fall, the US pavilion at the Venice Biennale architecture exposition was titled "Spontaneous Interventions: Design Actions for the Common Good." It compiled 124 examples of what curator Cathy Lang Ho called "provisional, informal, guerrilla, insurgent, DIY, hand-on, informal (sic), unsolicited, unplanned, participatory, tactical, micro, open-source" projects (Lang Ho, 2012). These were categorized under the themes of information, accessibility, commodity, economy, sustainability, and pleasure; they were presented to be "a useful archive of actionable strategies that could be replicated" (Lang Ho, 2012). This exposition is a valuable contribution to scholarship on urban activism. However, one problem inherent in this type of compilation, and in studying activism in general, is that activists are not usually theorists; their modus operandi is doing, not writing (Martin, 2010; Rootes, 1990). Because Spontaneous Interventions and other edited volumes rely on individual submissions, the actions depicted can be prone to exaggeration or self-promotion. Because the contributors' motivations are so varied, patterns of intention, disposition, and methodology are not easily teased out. Interviews conducted with various entrants in the Spontaneous Interventions suggest that there are patterns and that some framework around urban activism would be useful. The challenge in theorizing these actions, according to Margaret Crawford, is that "offering alternative concepts that can accommodate and encourage these activities without prematurely judging them is more than an academic question—it can help shape these activities' creative potential going forward (Crawford, 2012). Avoiding premature judgment, however, does not preclude careful theoretical analysis, which is a task that is taken up here in proposing a framework of urban activism.

One of the looming questions in this discourse over urban activism is how it will impact planning institutions. As city planners in Fort Worth, Texas discuss ways to "harness the energy" of tactical urbanism and planners in Barcelona launch a project to encourage temporary interventions on vacant land, it is important to consider whether bottom-up tactics can or should be appropriated by top-down institutions. How do institutional actors sympathetic with these trends, which Blaine Mercker of the San Francisco urbanist firm Rebar calls "guerrilla bureaucrats," incorporate direct participation into their processes? And conversely are the activists who implant these

tactics within institutions reforming a system or effectively extinguishing the grassroots energy that birthed them in the first place? In order to understand these dynamics, scholarship needs to delve below the surface of the various urban interventions to understand how they work in context. Behind the spontaneity of these actions are motivations, attitudes, goals, relationships, networks, and methodologies whose analysis can establish where urban activism is now, so that it can move forward productively.

1.3 The Argument

Status quo practices of engaging publics in urban design and planning practice are problematic, flawed and in some cases counter-productive. Urban activists position themselves and act in response to perceived failures of capitalist, democratic cities as well as planning institutions and the professional design fields of architecture, urban design and landscape architecture. Many urban social movements and theorists reject the system in which these norms dominate, demanding revolutionary change (or Chomsky & Pateman, 2005; see for example Harvey, 2012). But neither the status quo nor wholesale revolution is a likely or desirable outcome. Urgent problems will not be solved by following the same trajectory; nor will complete revolution provide a stable basis from which to solve problems as complex as climate change or poverty. In-between, two other approaches—reform activism and *autogestión*—offer complementary approaches to improving existing institutions while also allowing for innovations that may eventually transform or supplant them.

Reform and *autogestión* are examined as themes in the case studies in this ethnographic study of urban activism in Barcelona. This is a unique city that geographer Tim Marshall called an ideal laboratory to study urban transformation and politics and which architect Manuel de Sola-Morales called an "urban workshop" (Marshall, 2000; Solà Morales & Colegio de Arquitectos de Cataluña, 2008). It is a city whose urban design is well-regarded, whose officials promote their participatory processes, and whose democratic ideals are mixed with an ongoing history of anarchistic influence (Dolgoff, Bookchin, & Paul Avrich, 1974; Esenwein & Paul Avrich, 1989). Since the transition from Franco's dictatorship in the mid 1970s, nearly every public space in the city has been transformed through an aggressive mode of urbanism that has increasingly combined public private partnerships with global capital to finance large infrastructure and building programs (Marshall, 2004). To attract investor and tourist income, administrators have actively branded the city, touting its democratic, participatory processes. Ironically, the failure of these same processes, namely in the urban projects of the 2004 Forum and the 2010 Diagonal, helped arouse dormant anti-authoritarian tendencies that run deep in Catalan culture.[4] These tendencies are exhibited in a network of collectivist, cooperative and autonomous entities that include

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[4] The 2004 Forum project was executed by mayor Joan Clos and included the gentrification of the city's eastern oceanfront as well as the conversion of former industrial areas into convention spaces and new housing. The Diagonal project was a political disaster for mayor Jordi Hereu, who sought a new urban design for the city's most important street but proceeded through a poorly conceived public input and voting process that left citizens feeling disempowered and manipulated. These projects are discussed further in Chapter 3.

social centers, *okupas*, and other non-governmental organizations. The combination of urban design, participation, strong planning institutions and associations make Barcelona a good place to study their interrelationships. The current crisis adds to the urgency by which reform is being undertaken and within which alternative approaches are being sought by activists and officials.

The two case studies here allow a deeper look at the attitudes, positionality and actions of urban activists working in Barcelona. The first highlights Raons Públiques, which takes on a reformist disposition. The group is self-reflexive, self-critical and conciliatory. Its goals are broad and thematic, pertaining to improving citizen empowerment and to activating public space with social uses. They position themselves carefully in order to bridge networks of community entities, other urbanists, and powerful officials. Their actions are both material and dialogical, but they emphasize dialogue. Design is largely seen as a means to foster community, not an end in itself. As the subjects of the second approach, Lacol's architects assume the more autonomous position of *autogestión*. They are more critical of the city and are willing to be confrontational. They are mostly locally born and are embedded within the particular community of Sants; their networks include other architects, academics, and community entities that operate within a protected, well-bound circle. Their actions are also material and dialogical, but they emphasize do-it-yourself construction. Design is not so much an excuse as a craft whose making helps bond community together.

The two groups are acting with and against an institutional framework that is neither monolithic nor stable, and during a vulnerable moment of Spain's economic, political and social crisis. This crisis has prompted citizens, designers and officials to both look at ways to reform systems and to experiment with ways that communities can provide and manage their own urban amenities. Thus far, the institutional results are mixed. Guerrilla bureaucrats have managed some incremental changes in participatory processes but are also constrained by structural limits--economic and political. Allowing communities the power of *autogestión* has come more easily, as the economic benefit to cities is obvious and immediate; but the abdication of responsibilities for the care of the public realm troubles some, and others fear that trust in government will be damaged further if the city eventually decides to wrest these spaces away from the communities that made them.

1.4 Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to articulate a framework through which participatory urban activism can be theorized and then to investigate instances of this activism in depth to understand their internal dynamics. Along the way, many specific questions are asked as each case study is examined and contextualized, but overall the study is driven by two primary questions:

1. How do attitudes, networks, and internal organization of activist groups relate to the kinds of actions they undertake? And do those actions in turn impact participants' motivations?

2. How have the urban interventions undertaken by activist groups altered institutional practices and community empowerment over public space? And are these changes desirable and sustainable?

1.5 Research Approach

My approach to answering the preceding questions derives from the nature of the questions themselves. These are not questions about facts, numbers or measurement; they examine the relationships between emotions, networks, and actions. Aristotle articulated three main thinking-related virtues that pertain directly to research approaches. These virtues are episteme, *techne* and *phronesis* (Aristotle & Ostwald, 1962 [350 BCE]; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). As Greenwood and Levin note, "one is not superior to the other; all are equally valid forms of knowing in particular contexts" (in Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 50). Episteme is a theoretical and deductive approach—it formulates a hypothesis and tests it in order to "increase general insights" or to refine a conceptual framework, rather than to understand the specifics of the particulars of the research (Zeisel, 2006). *Techne* involves the production of something concrete using technical knowledge and skills. Architecture, for example, can be seen as a technical endeavor: "*Techne* is thus craft and art, and as an activity is it concrete, variable, and context-dependent" (Aristotle & Ostwald, 1962, p. 56).

Aristotle's third virtue, *phronesis*, refers to immersive knowledge and is the most applicable for the questions I am asking in this dissertation. *Phronesis* according to Flyvbjerg is the realm of ethical action, the "deliberation about values with reference to praxis" (Aristotle & Ostwald, 1962, p. 57). Phronetic knowledge is required to gain a deep understanding of how a phenomenon is situated in the messy context of the real world:

> *Nor is wisdom only concerned with universals: to be wise, one must also be familiar with the particular, since wisdom has to do with action, and the sphere of action is constituted by particulars. (Aristotle & Ostwald, 1962, p. 182)*

For Flyvbjerg, the value of qualitative social science research is that it does a better job than the rational scientific (quantitative) model of answering ethical questions such as "(1) Where are we going? (2) Is this desirable? and (3) What should be done?" (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p. 60) While episteme demands context independence, *phronesis* is inherently context-dependent. This context-dependence forms the basis of my research approach, which aims to ask ethical questions about the direction of urban activism and the motivations of those who are actively engaged in bringing about change.

1.6 Research Design

Based on the appreciation of a phronetic approach described above, this study utilizes qualitative research and ethnography in particular to examine social relationships of urban activists within their context. It addresses the questions about reform and *autogestión* by comparing two case studies in Barcelona. The case studies were selected because they deal with the themes of community engagement and the

production of public space; because their membership profiles differed according to nationality and discipline; because one was thematically focused and the other spatially focused; because each was willing to claim some success in their efforts; and because an immediate opportunity existed to observe or to join the group.

In order to conduct this study, I spent one year in Barcelona beginning in July of 2011. My point of departure for research was the source of some of the most vociferous criticisms of the city's urban practices, its universities. Geographers at the University of Barcelona, above all Manuel Delgado, had leveled a damning and influential critique against the neoliberal tendencies of Barcelona's urban planning (See Delgado, 2007). Within the halls of the architecture school, the Escola Tècnica Superior de Arquitectura de Barcelona (Etsab), where I was affiliated, a few voices were translating this ire, these *inquietudes*[5], into practical alternatives of city making. By taking courses with professors Josep María Montaner and Zaida Muxí, I was introduced to a group of local architects who would become one of my case studies, and through them to the second group.

Any research based on ethnographic methods is inherently tentative and requires first and foremost an immersion into the daily life of the case study being examined. For approximately nine months I engaged on a near daily basis with one or the other of these groups, attending meetings, exchanging emails, observing activities, attending social events, designing fliers, painting walls, and otherwise simply tagging along. Concurrently, I conducted in-depth interviews and collected archival data.

The design of this study was influenced by grounded theory, to which I owe the notion of starting an immersive research project without a priori conclusions. According to Anselm Strauss, one its main proponents, "A grounded theory is one that is inductively derived from the study of the phenomena it represents" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 23). A theory is then generated through systematically analyzing data, usually interviews, and coding them in order to find emerging themes. This is the approach I used to analyze my case studies and ultimately to frame what I experienced and learned within a theoretical framework. My immersion in these groups revealed patterns of behaviors and attitudes that helped to explain the repertoires of urban actions with which activists engaged the making of public space.

1.7 Research Methods

The specific research methods used in this study include analysis of archival data, participant observation, and semi-structured interviews in order to understand historical background, to observe actions, and to reveal their underlying motivations. The research methods outlined below are cross-disciplinary, borrowed from history, geography, and anthropology.

1.7.1 Archival Research

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[5] The word *inquietudes* translates directly into English but is more common in Spanish to convey a sense of concern, worry, restlessness, or misgiving. I will retain the Spanish term here to evoke all of these meanings.

Archives may seem far removed from everyday immersive research, but they also reveal a filtered but often unframed view of a community from the past. They help to frame context, reveal genealogies of ideas, evaluate change over time, and identify key persons or situations. In Barcelona, this project benefited from archival collections held by the neighborhood association, the Centre Social de Sants; the local Ciutat Invisible; the official archives of the District of Sants Montjuïc; the journals La Vanguardia and El Periódico; the Colegio de Arquitectes Catalanes; and the Escola Tècnica Superior de Arquitectura de Barcelona. Additional archival resources were provided to me by informants at LaCol, Raons Públiques, and the Plataforma Can Batlló. These sources included photographic records, oral histories, newspaper clippings, as well as secondary sources covering historical or cultural topics.

1.7.2 Participant Observation

Participant observation stands apart from abstract, context-independent modeling of urban phenomena and cultural relations. Anthropologist Philippe Bourgois wrote:

> *We differentiate ourselves methodologically from other social science and humanities disciplines which also study humans through our technique of participant/observation fieldwork. We are not allowed to remain at our desks to pore over census tracts; we have to venture into everyday life not just to interview people but to actually participate in their daily life and to partake of their social and cultural reality.* *(Bourgois, 1990, p. 45)*

Herbert Gans' *The Urban Villagers* was one historical precedent for Bourgois' approach, showing that a "slum" was not simply a blighted neighborhood, but also a potentially vital community. Gans did not observe merely from the outside; he participated in the community by living there for nine months (Gans, 1962). Other well-known participant observers include Jane Jacobs, James Agee, Paul Rabinow, Barbara Myerhoff, and Bruno Latour. Pertinent to design cultures, Dana Cuff studied the "culture of practice" in *Architecture: The Story of Practice* (Cuff, 1991).

Studying activism requires one to observe as a participant. Public performances of activism are important artifacts, and are often readily available even online. But what enables these interventions occurs behind the scenes—in meetings, over dinners, during workdays. Participant observation often seems like a passive activity, but it also demands a disciplined approach. Following the example of anthropologist James Clifford, I kept fieldnotes as a way to record my observations (Clifford, 1990). Fieldnotes, when made systematically, are generally accepted as data unto themselves in ethnographic research. My fieldnotes were kept in a series of notebooks, which I later coded alongside interview data.

1.7.3 Semi-structured Interviews

Interviews capture narrative. Any interview is a contrived encounter between two (or more) people and the way the stage is set performs a framing function. An interviewer must be aware of roles, territories, identities, time, and intervening

technologies. My appearance, identification, and language skills were the primary ways that these encounters were framed. Some of these qualities were beyond my control, but I found it useful to accentuate certain traits over others. The following qualities were in play: architect, activist, community designer, landscape student, Berkeley student, Fulbright researcher, American, Californian, foreigner in Spain, person of ambiguous ethnicity, parent. While there was no predetermined way to present myself, I was able to use these characteristics to either develop rapport or to appear less intimidating or threatening. My limited Spanish and Catalan abilities were surprisingly not much of a hindrance; in fact it kept in check my tendency to interrupt interviewees.

As I became more skilled in interviewing, I developed techniques to help guide conversation toward topics of interest to my research and away from less relevant details (usually). In total, I conducted 25 in-depth interviews, lasting between 45 minutes and 2 hours. The selection of informants was made first be identifying key individuals, then by using snowball techniques. These interviews followed a semi-structured format of questions, whose order and weight were allowed to adapt to the flow of the conversation. The interviews followed standard protocols for protecting human subjects, including the granting of verbal consent and permissions to use names.[6] The interviews were recorded using an integrated audio/digital pen, and then transcribed verbatim and coded by themes. One unanticipated outcome of conducting interviews was that interviewing itself proved to be the best way I found to build rapport among the groups I was studying. Done correctly, an in-depth interview is an intimate act that was capable of creating strong personal bonds. Interviewees seemed to feel validated by my curiosity, and also to assume some responsibility for guiding my research as I progressed beyond the interview. Many suggested other potential interviewees; some gave me books or photos, or invited me to other events.

1.8 Organization of this Dissertation

Following this introduction, the dissertation is organized in six additional chapters. Chapter 2 provides the theoretical framework for urban activism. It situates the various modalities of activism within a matrix that accounts for both position (ranging from authority and the grassroots), and for action (from communicative to material). It then describes the status quo system and its problems, as well as the most extreme form of activism—revolution. Finally it provides a historical and theoretical overview of the two activist modalities analyzed in the case studies—reform and autogestión. Chapter 3 describes the context of urbanism, participation, and activism in Spain and Barcelona. It explains how the experiences in this city offer insights into how designers might engage communities and institutions through urban activism. Additionally, it introduces the two case studies of LaCol and Raons Públiques and positions them within the larger networks of collective urban action in Barcelona.

The following Chapters 4 and 5 are organized primarily by theme and corresponding case study. The two themes, reform and autogestión, illustrate different approaches to improving the relationships between communities and public space. Specifically, Chapter 4 presents the theme of collaborative reform. It traces the

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[6] Interview recruitment, consent, and outline documents are shown in Appendices A, B, and C.

evolution of the group Raons Públiques, which emerged from the "local cooperation" arm of Barcelona's Architects without Borders in 2009 and has been experimenting with different methods to engage citizens in the making of the city. A recurring characteristic of their work is an effort to collaborate with city staff in order to reform their institutional practices.

In Chapter 5, I turn to the theme of *autogestión*, which appears as do-it-yourself local empowerment that is particularly indicative of the work of LaCol in the industrial neighborhood of Sants. In particular, I focus on the redevelopment of a former factory, Can Batlló, which has been over 40 years in the making by city officials, private developers, and now by the residents themselves.

Through not a stand-alone case study on its own, a couple of "experiments" by city officials help bring this study full circle, to the objects of the activists' critique. Chapter 6 explores the opinions of several city officials with regard to urbanism and participation, then evaluates two actual city projects. One city initiative, *Pla Buits,* took a step toward co-opting urban activism into institutionalized planning by inviting neighborhood entities throughout the city to manage (*autogestionar*) various abandoned parcels. Additionally, the protagonists at LaCol and Raons Públiques collaborated on a competition hosted by the city for the nature park Collserola.

To conclude, I summarize the theoretical framework and the findings of the case studies. I reflect on the value that qualitative and ethnographic research approaches brought to the project, and on the question of whether this study contributes generalizable knowledge to the field. In addition to noting their contributions, I also comment on the shortcomings and limitations of the case studies, and on the questions that they raise but leave unanswered, fodder for future research.

Chapter 2: Framing Urban Activism

2.1 A Framework of Urban Activism

This chapter will lay out a framework through which urban activism can be evaluated. First, it situates the term urban activism within the broader studies of crowd behavior and social movements and then more specifically within discourses of art, urbanism and participation. Then, taking citizen participation as a starting point, it expands Sherry Arnstein's canonic ladder of participation beyond its analysis of power to add a dimension of action. Considering power and action together, urban activism can be considered to operate along an axis of dispositions or modalities, between maintaining the status quo and overthrowing the system by revolution. Between these two extremes lie the two modalities of reform and *autogestión* that are at the core of this study. The chapter then describes the status quo system and identifies the sources of discontent over participation. It follows with a look at activism oriented toward revolution, especially on its Marxist and anarchist variations. Finally, it provides a historical and theoretical background for the two modalities of reform and *autogestión*. It should be noted that these theorists are not necessarily addressing design topics, nor do they know about design and planning practice. Nonetheless, it is useful to spend time with these theories because architecture and design have operated within a bubble of practice, pretending to be neutral to politics. But architecture is political and to make the practice of urbanism meaningful again it needs to understand its relationship to politics. This is especially true of urban activism, which overtly and politically engages the physical, social, economic and political realities that produce public space.

2.1.1 Crowds, Collective Action and Social Movements

> *Moreover by the mere fact the he forms part of an organized crowd, a*
> *man descends several rungs in the ladder of civilisation. Isolated, he may*
> *be a cultivated individual; in a crowd, he is a barbarian--that is, a*
> *creature acting by instinct. (Le Bon, 1960, p. 32)*

The academic study of collective behavior had its origins in the fears of many like the French psychologist Gustave Le Bon, that the masses would attempt to "destroy utterly society as it now exists"(Le Bon, 1960, p. 16). Le Bon wrote his landmark book, *The Crowd*, in 1895, and its influence was significant. Chicago sociologist and father of human ecology Robert Park drew from *The Crowd* for his work with Ernest Burgess from 1924, *Introduction to the Science of Sociology (in Park & Turner, 1967)*. In a chapter titled "Social Control" they stated that collective behavior follows the progressive stages toward assimilation: "(a) social unrest, (b) mass movements, (c) institutions in which society is formed and reformed" (1967, p. 210).

Studies of collective behavior and collective action, then, were motivated by attempts to control irrational publics so that they might be incorporated into a more homogenous urban citizenry. These attitudes persisted into the emerging field of social movements. Aldon Morris states: "As a form of collective behavior, social movements

were theorized to be spontaneous, unorganized, and unstructured phenomena that were discontinuous with institutional and organizational behavior" (in Goodwin & Jasper, 2004, p. 233). This position was ultimately not verifiable and certainly laden with racist baggage; in debunking it, resource mobilization theorists like Charles Tilly and Doug McAdam attempted to demonstrate that in fact leaders of social movements made rational economic decisions in order to secure resources and to mobilize followers. A focus on disorder turned into a search to describe underlying order.

Later theorists continued the focus on the structures of social movements, especially on how they created and exploited political opportunities. In this vein, McAdam and Snow defined a social movement as "a collectivity acting with some degree of organization and continuity outside of institutional channels for the purpose of promoting or resisting change in the group, society, or world order of which it is a part" (McAdam & Snow, 1997, p. xiii). In their analysis they underline the importance of "microstructural factors" like social networks for recruitment to collectivist groups. McAdam claimed that social movements required three conditions to emerge: (1) mobilization structure, (2) framing processes, and (3) political opportunity (Cited in Hou, 2001). David Meyer and Sidney Tarrow expanded the notion of political opportunity structures and also hypothesized the typical evolution of social movements as one that moves toward institutionalization, from routinization to inclusion to co-optation (Meyer & Tarrow, 1998). This progression is one that can be readily observed in the case studies that follow. Initial outbursts of volatile activism become more predictable as groups strive to be able to repeat and sustain their activities. Through dialogue and dynamic confrontation, authorities and activists negotiate the bounds of acceptable behaviors, and social movement organizations accept compromises in order to accomplish some institutional changes. As Meyer and Tarrow note, most activists will accept these conditions because confrontation is costly and the prospect of gaining some concessions is appealing. Within the organizations that take this route, collective actions become routinized; deviations that threaten the longer-term viability of the group are suppressed or marginalized; and key elements of the activist repertoire becomes co-opted into the "normal practice of politics" (Meyer & Tarrow, 1998, p. 21).

In more recent scholarship on social movements, psychology has been reintroduced, though now devoid of the problematic notions of irrational crowd behavior. Several studies looked at group recruitment and identity. Sheldon Stryker, for example, introduced the concept of identity salience as a way to explain individuals' overlapping memberships in multiple groups (Stryker, Owens, & White, 2000). In this theory, individuals pursued multiple identities that validated their own image of self. In order to maintain these identities, they had to perform roles that projected that identity to themselves and others. McAdam and Snow build on this concept of identity and attempt to bridge the three approaches to identity: dispositional, structural, and constructionist, in order to describe how collective identity works. They do this with the concept of identity convergence and identity construction, which analyzes how members' individual self-concepts are brought in line with a group identity. Like Meyer and Tarrow, McAdam and Snow outline the stages of social movements. Their progression moves from emergence and dependence on other organizations; to institutionalization and identity amplification; to diffusion (in Stryker, et al., 2000, pp. 57-60). This

trajectory is particularly apt in capturing the evolution of the first case study, Raons Públiques.

The long arc of social movement theory is not just an interesting history. Negative attitudes toward crowd behavior still prevail within governing bodies and are especially evident in official reactions to protests and occupations, in Spain and in the US. The highly organized and deliberate nature of social movements is also evident in the networks of urban activists that I observed. For both groups, framing was a recurring theme, referred to as "putting ourselves in common" (*ponerse en común*); and political opportunities were seized upon as a way to achieve their objectives.

2.1.2 Urban Social Movements

An offshoot of social movement theory emerged in the 1970s, driven by Manuel Castells, who coined the term urban social movement (USM) in his books *The Urban Question* (Castells, 1979) and *City and the Grassroots* (Castells, 1983). In the latter work, he defines USMs as "urban-oriented mobilizations that influence structural social change and transform the urban meanings" (Castells, 1983, p. 305). For Castells, collective action rose to the label of urban social movement under the following conditions: (1) that they call themselves urban, or consider themselves to be related to the city; (2) that they are based in a place that is territorially defined; and that they mobilize themselves according to (a) the collective consumption of the city as use value; (b) cultural autonomy, identity and communication; and (c) political self government. (Castells, 1983) Castells' exemplar city of USMs was the neighborhood association movement in Madrid during the 1970s. In his analysis, he acknowledges their important role in provoking change at the local level, but also doubts their ability to accomplish broad change to the dominant capitalist state. "The urban social movements," he wrote, "are aimed at transforming the meaning of the city without being able to transform society. They are a reaction, not an alternative" (Castells, 1983, p. 327).

Castells' evaluation of USMs comes across as a disappointment, but only if one's goal is the wholesale transformation of society. Less revolutionary but perhaps more significant for citizens are the ways that Castells saw USMs influencing "many facets of urban life including housing, health, urban facilities, transportation, celebrations, culture, participation, open space and children's games" (Castells, 1983, p. 268). These aspects of urban life--its use value--is more than a mere concession prize. The collective actions taken by neighborhood associations to take control of the meaning of the city through struggles over community amenities helped to establish, in McAdam and Snow's terms, a mobilization structure as well as a stage upon which to align neighbors' attitudes. Furthermore, the movements in Madrid demanded and achieved grassroots participation in local government, planning and urban redevelopment projects that was mediated through the associations (Castells, 1983, p. 224).

2.1.3 Urban Activism

Not all urban activism adds up to an urban social movement, as Charles Tilly points out: "analysts and activists often extend the term 'social movement' to all protest

activity or at least all relevant popular protest of which they approve" but "a movement's collective action or campaign is not the organizations and networks that support them" (Tilly & Wood, 2009, p. 6). In other words, urban activism comprises both the actions and the structures that support them. If this is the case, then we should focus our definition of urban action on the internal and external actions undertaken by organizations that are loosely aligned with larger social movements.

Activism on its own is loaded with meanings that don't always capture the motivations of individuals or groups acting on public space. Further complicating matters, many engaged in activism hesitate to call themselves activists because of the connotations of the term. Several scholars have attempted to define what activism means in the sphere of design. An inclusionary definition is offered by Ann Thorpe, who describes activism as "taking action that makes a claim for change on behalf of a wronged, excluded or neglected group (or issue)" (Thorpe, 2012, p. 4). Awan, Schneider and Till prefer to use the term "spatial agency" to describe the alternative architectural actions catalogued in their book of the same name. They borrow from Anthony Giddens' concept of the duality of structure and agency, namely the power that agency has in shaping structure itself. Giddens writes that "agency means being able to intervene in the world, or to refrain from such intervention, with the effect of influencing a specific process or state of affairs (cited in Awan, et al., 2011, p. 16). Finally, in *Insurgent Public Space* (Hou, 2010), Jeffrey Hou calls attention to "small but persistent challenges" to urban design practice. "Rather than being subjected to planning regulations or the often limited participatory opportunities," he writes, "citizens and citizen groups can undertake initiatives on their own to effect changes. The instances of self-help and defiance are best characterized as a practice of guerrilla urbanism" (Hou, 2011, p. 15).

Drawing from these sources, I define urban activism to be the purposeful interventions of individuals or groups intended to influence the processes and social impacts of city making. These interventions include a varied repertoire of actions, from holding talks, debates or workshops, participating in protests, rallies or marches, voicing opinions to media or directly to officials, creating coalitions, interviewing neighbors, creating graffiti, placing signs or banners, installing architectural or art projects, co-building public spaces, inserting cultural programming, and so on.

2.1.4 Building a Framework

Urban activism can encompass many kinds of action, but its motivations may vary wildly. It can be revolutionary, but it can also be retrograde, seeking to prevent change from happening. Consider for example the race-motivated origins of neighborhood improvement associations in Detroit. But I would propose that behind any claim for or against change is one of four general motivations: maintaining the status quo system, reforming the system, building an autonomous parallel alternative system (*autogestión*), or overthrowing the system. In this section, I describe these as modalities of urban activism and position both official and unofficial ways of producing public space within that framework. This will allow me to situate the case studies with respect to broader tendencies in activism, and to formalize some of their inherent differences.

One of the most influential devices that has been used to envision citizen power is Sherry Arnstein's "Ladder of Citizen Participation." In her 1969 article criticizing the Model Cities approach to participation, she envisioned a ladder with eight rungs. At the bottom rung is the most authoritarian mode of manipulation, and at the top is citizen control. The graphic is a powerful representation of power taken from the viewpoint of the institution; that is, its intention was to influence a top-down approach, to re-structure it so that citizens could have more control (Arnstein, 1969). While it is useful in this regard, it also has its limitations. First, its rungs skew heavily toward approaches that are still largely top-down. As Arnstein notes, only the top three rungs are remotely participatory. Furthermore, as participatory art theorist Claire Bishop points out, the ladder does not apply well to "the complexity of artistic gestures" (Bishop, 2012, p. 41). I would add architectural or landscape gestures to this as well, by which I mean that for both participatory art and participatory urbanism, the exercise of control is often inverted and does not simply imply the powerless taking the reigns of power within an unmodified system. Neither are they limited to discursive speech acts. Material actions can perform communicative functions, and they can also short circuit a system allowing for direct impacts on public space.

Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation is a ladder of power, not of activism. "Citizen participation is a categorical term for citizen power," she writes (Arnstein, 1969, p. 216). Her typology tells an important part of the dynamics of urban activism. It indicates where power resides, but is it does not address direct action. Those actions she describes are all communicative, occurring within traditional decision-making venues. For Arnstein, the apex of citizen control is when residents make policies and manage their institutions, especially for the purposes of allocating funding. But this is only one form of citizen control; as Jeffrey Hou asserts, "Today, the most powerful and distinct expression of citizen involvement in urban design occurs not in the legally required public meetings, but in streets, ballot boxes, reclaimed sites, and community gardens"(Hou, 2011). A framework, then, that simply locates power within institutional processes is limited for a study of activism. A multi-dimensional conception of activism is needed. To include the full range of power, from authoritarian to grassroots, Arnstein's ladder is more useful with "partnership" placed in the neutral middle ground. The ladder is then simplified, moving from its lowest rung, manipulation to informing, consultation, partnership, delegated power, ceded control, and finally to citizen control. In addition, a second ladder--of action--helps differentiate between communicative and material action (Figure 2.1). This dimension starts at the bottom with communicative actions that are most structured, which I call closed dialogue. Actions then become more fluid and physical, from open dialogue to the physical use of space, to claims on space, the maintenance or management of space, and finally to its material construction.
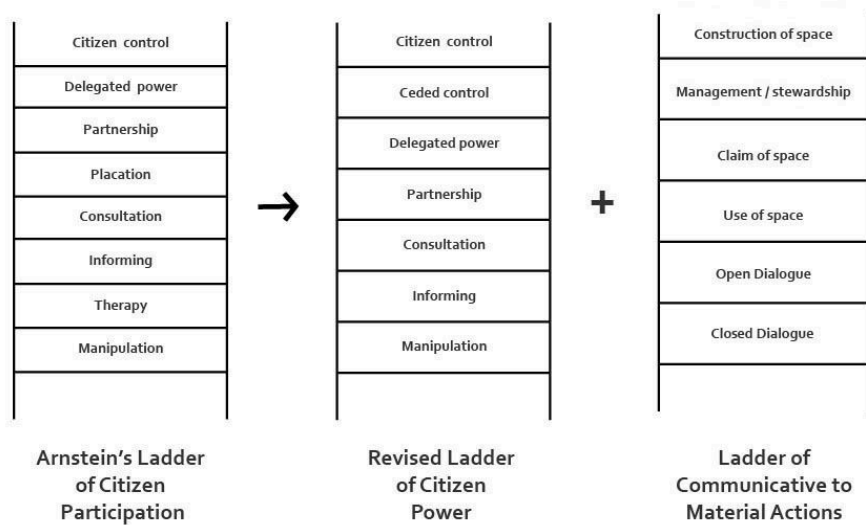
Figure 2.1 From Ladders of Participation to Power and Action

Arraying these dimensions on separate axes provides a matrix that is useful for charting the ways that public space is produced, and it also helps to visualize the domains of each modality of urban activism (Figure 2.2).
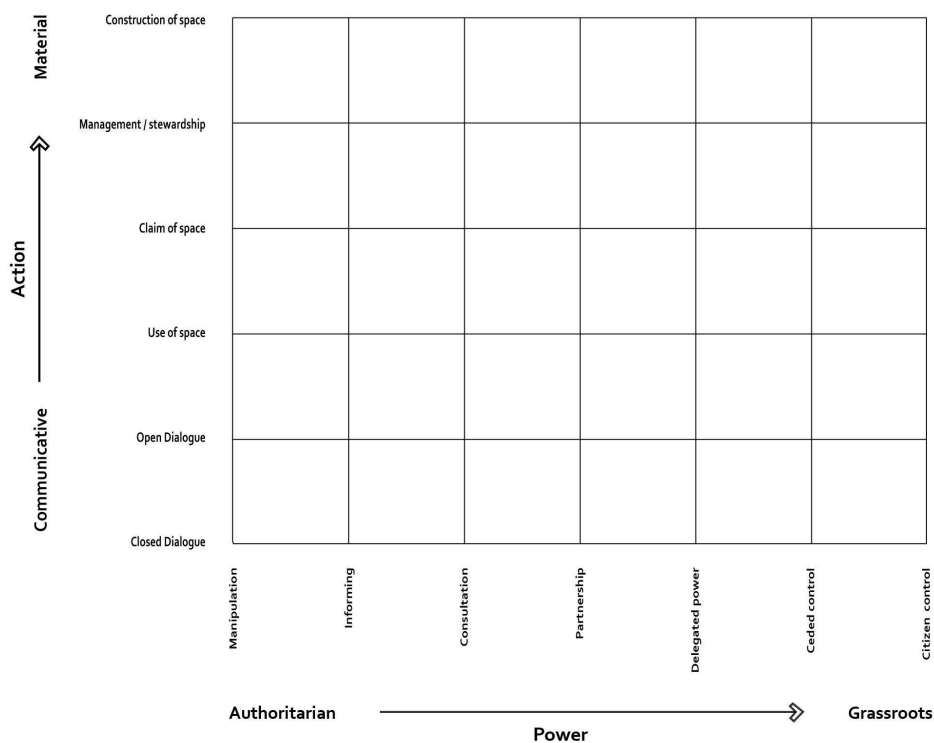
Figure 2.2 Base Grid of Power and Action in Urban Activism

Abstraction is useful only inasmuch as it illuminates patterns and relationships that occur in the "real" world. Using contemporary Barcelona as an example, both the official and unofficial actions that produce public space can be superimposed upon the grid. Arrows indicate whether the actions are top-down or bottom-up. While this is a fuzzy science with obvious simplifications and omissions, the fundamental patterns are still a useful reference (Figure 2.3). Official production of space is separated into two separate undertakings: urban design and development, and citizen participation. As I will explain in Chapter 3, official citizen participation exists to ostensibly inform design and development, but structural barriers inherent in the governance model prevent this from occurring. Unofficial communicative action includes neighborhood associations, other entities, collectives and cooperatives, and some of the protest actions of the 15-M movement; material actions include DIY and open source construction, the *autogestión* of public facilities, and *okupas.*
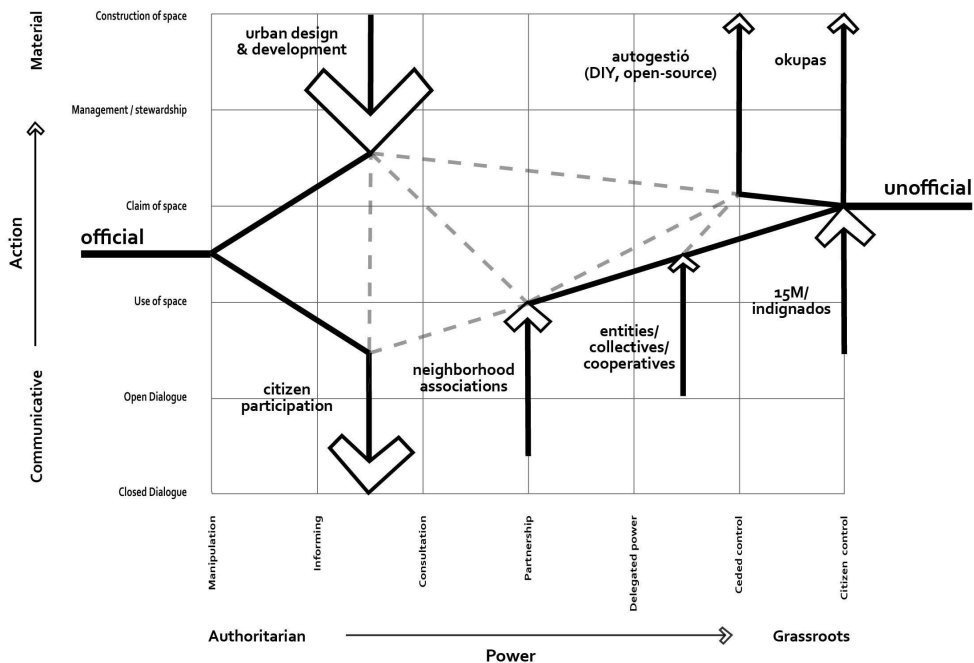
Figure 2.3 Official and unofficial production of public space in Barcelona

The reference diagram above reveals relationships between the various entities and institutions. I already mentioned the disconnect between citizen participation and urban design and development, which is indicated by a dashed line. Other tentative relationships represent areas of opportunity where more connections could be strengthened through activism.

More abstractly, the grid can be used to visualize the four modalities of urban activism as I conceive of them. Again, I am defining urban activism as the purposeful interventions of individuals or groups intended to influence the processes and social

impacts of city making. The four modalities are shown on the following graph. They are (1) status quo activism; (2) reform activism; (3) autogestión; and (4) revolutionary activism. Status quo activism is the least prevalent as it exists mostly to preserve existing hierarchies and is not necessary if a system is generally stable. Reform activism is motivated by a desire to improve the existing system. The third modality is called autogestión and suggests the creation of parallel alternative systems alongside the status quo.[7] The final type is revolutionary activism. For each of these modalities, a repertoire of actions are most commonly utilized. The following graphic locates a variety of these actions; these are all actions that I observed firsthand while undertaking my research (Figure 2.4).
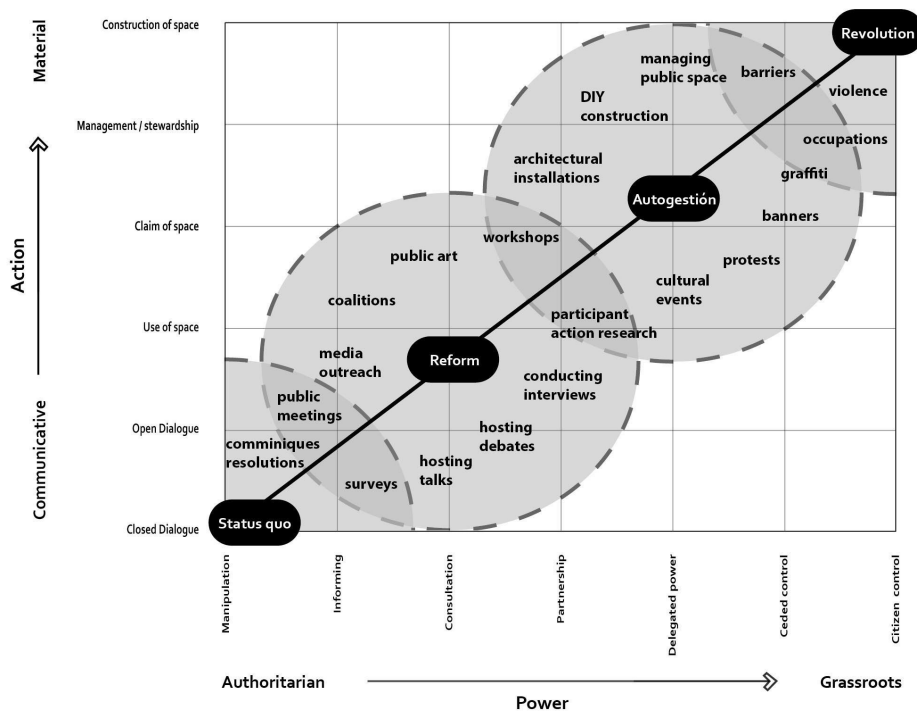
Figure 2.4 Modalities of urban activism and corresponding interventions

What becomes clear is that there is a linear relationship between power and action. For activism located within authoritarian positions of power, only communicative action is necessary to achieve ones objectives. This, for example, may be manifested in public hearings, notices, or directives. But as one moves further from hierarchical power and toward more horizontal grassroots positions, the repertoire of activism is increasingly material. Here, material or physical expressions of community demands, such as rallies, protests, banners, or occupations, are necessary to bring about change. Sherry Arnstein gave a caveat of her ladder that it could just as well have 150 rungs as the 8 she

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[7] As defined earlier, *autogestión* means "self-management" and refers to autonomous community control over the management of public amenities. I maintain the Spanish term, which is similar in French, Catalan and Italian, because it implies a more contentious claim to self-management.

identified, and the same is true of this diagram. Between the status quo and revolution are countless shades of activism.

Returning to the context of urban activism in Barcelona, the superimposition of the modes of activism onto the production of public space demonstrates why the two hybrid modalities of activism--reform and *autogestión*--are the most promising for this study. They occur precisely where connections between official and unofficial modes of production are needed (Figure 2.5).
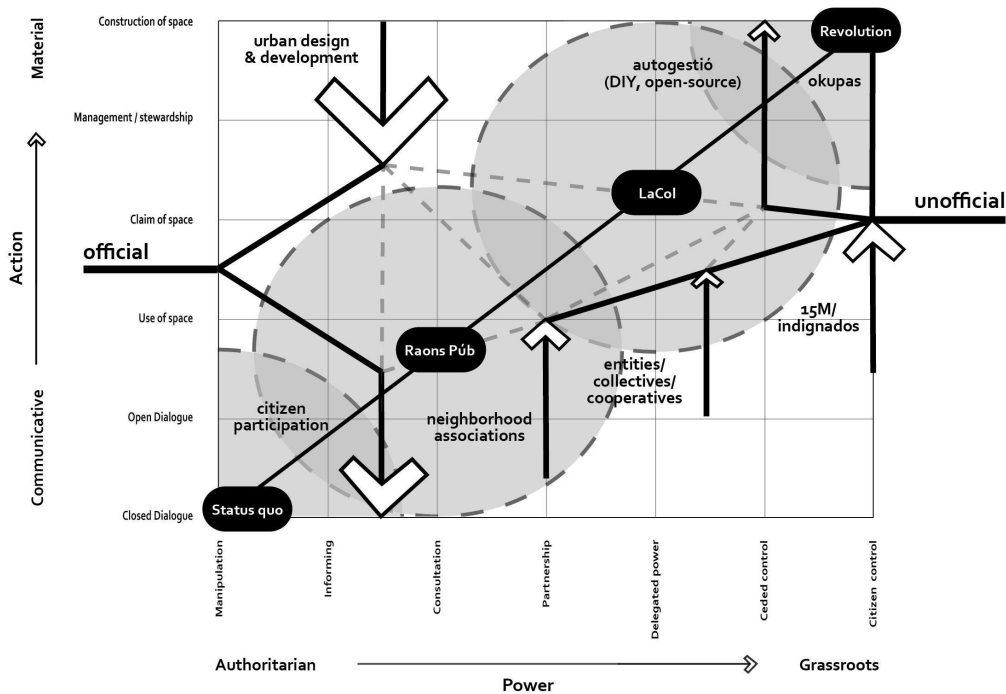
Figure 2.5 Modalities of urban activism and urban space production

2.2 The Status Quo

This section will describe the system against which urban activism acts. It pays particular attention to the problems inherent in the conventional practices of citizen participation but places these within a larger status quo system--capitalist democracy--in which the design and planning fields must operate. The failures of capitalist democracies have historically provoked revolutionary responses, especially by Marxist and anarchist theorists, whose pertinent ideas I will summarize. Discontent also fueled the other modalities of urban activism--reform and *autogestión*--to which I will dedicate the remainder of this chapter.

2.2.1 Discontents

All urban activism shares a common point of departure; that is, all modalities are responding to a system that they are motivated either to defend (status quo), reform, disregard (*autogestión*), or replace (revolution). The status quo system of urban design practice is impossible to generalize, as it exists across multiple economies, political systems, institutions and design cultures. However, it is possible to summarize some of the most trenchant criticisms. This section covers the dimensions of the status quo that are most pertinent to this study: capitalism, democracy, planning, and urban design.

Capitalism

Much of the activism covered by mainstream media falls under the rubric of "anti-capitalism." Capitalism is easy to criticize but difficult to define or to locate. Noam Chomsky asserts that "pure" capitalism does not exist, nor has it ever existed. Far from a market-driven system, Chomsky describes the US and other western economies as operating under a "state capitalist system" in which government plays a major role in keeping private enterprise afloat (Littler, Chomsky, Bageant, Mirabello, & Slowboat, 2011). According to this argument, in the realm of public space production, private capitalist interests have assumed outsized importance, and their influence over important decisions regarding city infrastructure, redevelopment, and the design of public space is an ongoing source of criticism. Meanwhile, de facto public spaces that are constructed on private land such as in malls or housing developments, add another layer of discontent as the policing of appropriate activities contradicts understandings of basic civil liberties.

Democracy

Unlike capitalism, democracy is a term whose virtue is almost unassailable. Nonetheless, its meanings are even more difficult to tie down. Raymond Williams notes that originally, democracy, coming from the Greek *demos* for people and *kratos* for rule, meant direct (and certainly not indirect) power. "Democracy," he writes, "is now often traced back to medieval precedents and given a Greek authority. But the fact is that, with only occasional exceptions, democracy, in the records that we have, was until [the 19th century] a strongly unfavorable term" (Williams, 1985, p. 93). Historically, democracy's direct citizen power was more akin to anarchism than to today's form of representative democracy.

In the US, direct citizen rule has roots in colonial New England town meetings, which practiced a form of governance that Frank Bryan calls "real democracy" because it involved direct, face-to-face deliberation and decision making.[8] Although town meetings were limited to free, white, property owning males, they effectively fostered citizen engagement. Real democracy, or direct rule, functioned well when the scale of the enterprise remained small, and when the citizens were empowered to make concrete, meaningful decisions (Bryan, 2004). The task of scaling up democracy to a federal

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[8] Bryan's essential argument is sound, though I take issue with the term "real democracy" for its dismissive tone and its reliance on a mythical authenticity.

system, however, presented enormous difficulties that fed our national ambivalence about direct democracy. This owes to the influence of Hamilton and Madison in the Federalist Papers, who feared the power of uneducated masses. Hamilton wrote in 1777: "when the deliberative or judicial powers are vested wholly or partly in the collective body of the people, you must expect error, confusion and instability" (quoted in Williams, 1985, p. 95). Owing to the influence of Hamilton and Madison, interprets Nancy Roberts, "the Constitution was drawn up to minimize direct citizen participation by relying on an educated and propertied elite to govern" (Roberts, 2004, p. 322). Our form of democracy, then, is set up for indirect, representative participation in government in which informed "experts" make decisions on behalf of citizens. This plays out in the entire range of political activities, but in the institutions of planning and design, the role of expert became especially problematic.

Planning and Participation

In the US, city planning itself began as reform. According to Robert Beauregard, planning emerged in the late 19th century as a response to the rapid changes brought by the modern, industrial, and immigrant city. Concerns over health, sanitation, crowding, and slums drove the state to intervene by establishing authority over land control (Beauregard, 1996). Planners justified this authority because of their privileged knowledge of the city, a form of enlightenment epistemology guided by reason and intellect. As Leonie Sandercock notes, "the claim was that the world could be known objectively. The practice and logic of the physical sciences involved hypothesis-testing through experiment and careful measurement. Rigorously applying this 'scientific method' would result in the discovery of universal laws about the world of material facts" (Sandercock, 1997, p. 61). This worldview was introduced to capitalist industry in the late 19th century, especially through Frederick Taylor's work on scientific management as a way to maximize efficiencies of production. Taylorism was also prevalent in urbanism, expressed by the premier architect of international modernism, Le Corbusier:

> [Taylorism] is not a question of anything more than exploiting intelligently scientific discoveries. Instinct, groping, and empiricism are replaced by scientific principles of analysis, organization, and classification. (Charles-Eduard Jeanneret (Le Corbusier) and Amendée Ozenfant, 1918) in (McLeod, 1983, p. 138)

In the efficient, functional, Taylorized city, socio-cultural differentiation had to be managed and controlled, and planning became a primary tool to that end. [9]

Sandercock claims that the dominant planning mode after 1945 emerged in Chicago and was "a comprehensive rational model of problem-solving and decision-making to

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[9] As David Freund powerfully points out, most of the founders of planning were sympathetic to the eugenics movement, namely Benjamin Marsh, who praised zoning as "a means for preventing race deterioration." Zoning factories far from other uses was also a way of keeping the immigrant working class away from upstanding white districts (Freund, 2007, p. 58). Marsh wanted to focus the nascent planning field on the problem of congestion, but others thought the scope should be expanded, including landscape architect Fredrick Law Olmsted (Meck, 2009).

guide state intervention" (Sandercock & Lyssiotis, 2003, p. 31). The model was based on six "pillars": rational decision making based on alternatives; comprehensiveness; emphasis on science; state-direction, assuming separation from the economy; planners as interpreters of "the public interest"; and neutrality from politics (Sandercock & Lyssiotis, 2003, p. 31). Through the 1950s, planners steered urban progress, positioning themselves as "experts" in development processes that operated under "master narratives" (Beauregard, 1996, p. 112).

The consolidation of planning power reached its apex in 1949, with the passage of the Housing Act, which gave cities broad rights of eminent domain, even allowing the sale of cleared land to private buyers as they saw fit (Caro, 1975).[10] One concession in the act, however, required a public hearing for renewal projects.[11] Further legislation included the Urban Renewal Act of 1954, Johnson's Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, which mandated "maximum feasible participation", the Model Cities Program of 1966, and environmental legislation like NEPA, established in 1969 (Roberts, 2004; Strange, 1972).

Modernist planning's most influential figure was Robert Moses. Moses spent the 1940s building new beaches and tearing new highways through the neighborhoods of New York City, with an unequalled arrogance. Although he was viewed favorably during most of his tenure, over time his disdain for public input, and his blatant closed-door dealings turned community groups against him and against unchecked planning power (Caro, 1975). The somewhat mythologized narrative of his struggles with community activist Jane Jacobs suggests that a victory was secured for a ground-up model for city making. It is true that citizen participation in planning made its debut in during and through these conflicts, but upon its arrival there were misgivings about its practice.

Today, despite decades of thoughtful inquiry into participatory planning and design, these misgivings persist, such that professional designers today do not universally hold participation in high regard. Broadly accepted as a necessary component of urban design processes, designers, planners and politicians feel compelled ethically, if not legally, to include it in projects. Yet participatory tools are often employed without a sincere appreciation of their benefits or shortcomings.

Many of these shortcomings of participation have been articulated by planning scholars Diane Day and Nancy Roberts (D. Day, 1997; Roberts, 2004). While Day still holds that participation is viewed as an intrinsic good, a "cornerstone of democracy," she worries about some of its perceived negatives. These include a belief that the modern state is too complex to be governed by citizens; that it risks mobilizing conflict; that interactions between experts and laypeople may lower the quality of outcomes; and that it is not representative (D. Day, 1997, pp. 425-427). Roberts adds further common complaints about participation: that human nature is flawed, emotional or irrational;

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[10] In California, the Community Redevelopment Act of 1945 already granted agencies the right to establish redevelopment agencies, to declare blight, and to use eminent domain. Redevelopment Agencies were dissolved by the legislature in 2011.

[11] Though largely ineffective, this requirement expanded in the revised act in 1954, which called for citywide advisory committees made up of "leading citizens" (Roberts, 2004, p. 320).

that it is inefficient; that it's naïve; that citizens don't have necessary skills; that it disrupts social stability; and that it can breed extremism (Roberts, 2004).

These are wholesale arguments against the use of citizen participation regardless of its execution, but other complaints are commonly lodged against its actual practice. A common complaint among planners and architects is that of Nimbyism, perceived as a knee-jerk, self-serving tendency that often foils the good intentions of planners. Others are troubled by the hijacking of discourse in public meetings by a small minority of vocal individuals or groups. Participatory processes are also vulnerable to manipulation, by planners who structure interactions as well as by outside interests like developers who often hire professional community planners to guide projects to approval. The charrette processes utilized by many professionals have also become increasingly formulaic through organizations like the Charrette Institute or through publications like the *Urban Design Handbook* (Gindroz, Levine, & Urban Design Associates., 2003), furthering the treatment of participation as a sales pitch coordinated by professionals.

Perhaps participation's greatest problem is continuing to conceive of it only as a process initiated and delivered by institutions for the good of citizens. In such a scenario, citizens are invited to participate in processes structured for specific purposes, to solve problems already identified and funded by interests other than their own. The dissatisfaction with participation as a practice, however, does not need to mean its end-- it is a concept that must be recuperated. Some theorists, like Jeremy Till or Jeffrey Hou, have begun to do this, to invite designers to participate in the everyday processes of communities. This brings participation in line with what Jacques Rancière calls genuine participation:

> *Genuine participation is the invention of that unpredictable subject which momentarily occupies the street, the invention of a movement born of nothing but democracy itself. The guarantee of permanent democracy is not the filling up of all the dead times and empty spaces by the forms of participation or of counter power; it is the continual renewal of the actors and of the forms of their actions, the ever-open possibility of the fresh emergence of this fleeting subject. The test of democracy must ever be in democracy's own image: versatile, sporadic--and founded on trust."* (Rancière, 2007, p. 61)

This conceptualization of participation--as improvisational, emergent and flexible--is far from the model implemented in Western societies, where participation was quickly limited to a legal institutional requirement.

Urban Design

The Modern Movement in Europe was frozen in the 1930s by the depression and the rise of fascism. With the exception of Le Corbusier, the most prominent advocates of the movement immigrated to the US, including Mies, Gropius, Gideion, Hilbersheimer and Sert. In the US, the expansion of interests from architecture's focus on buildings or landscape's focus on parks opened possibilities for thinking about the complex nature of cities. This was a task undertaken by the two first academic programs in urban design, at the University of Pennsylvania and at Harvard, which provided contrasts in how

much uncertainty designers could tolerate.[12] The Penn program offered what it called "Civic Design" and was started in 1958 by David Crane with affiliates Louis Kahn, Robert Geddes, Ian McHarg, Lewis Mumford, Herbert Gans, and Paul Davidoff. Their emphasis was on communication and meaning in the city, which followed Crane's attitude that the city was made of "a thousand designers." The program at Penn had a wide influence, but largely in offering alternative approaches to the dominant mode of urban design practice that was proffered by Sert at Harvard. Initially conceived broadly and including multidisciplinary approaches, urban design at Harvard quickly developed a sharp focus on master planning of large urban projects.

The planner Edmund Bacon attended Sert's first conference on urban design, and his approach came to epitomize its practice as he applied notions of design structure onto the city of Philadelphia, which he played a large role in "renewing." In his essay, "The City as an Act of Will," he defends the singular and positivist approach to comprehensive planning and dismisses the need for participation, pointing to democratic safeguards already in place:

> *So it is the function of the designer to conceive an idea, implant it, and nurture its growth in the collective minds of the community in such a way that the final product has a reasonable chance of coming close to his original concept. (Bacon, 1967)*

The power bestowed on Ed Bacon allowed him to make radical changes to Philadelphia, but it was not as consolidated as Robert Moses' had been. His legacy in Philadelphia is a mixed one; his plans for the 1976 World's Fair faced stiff community opposition but in the Society Hill project, a more sensitive approach to demolition and historic preservation was well received. Elsewhere, the major projects of urban design that operated under similar contexts granted urban designers aesthetic control over vast spaces aggregated for economic progress often by the actions of planners using the mechanisms of urban renewal.

Within the field of architecture, the veneer of modernism's consensus that CIAM attempted to construct, by figures like Sert and Gideon, was beginning to crack (Krieger & Saunders, 2009).[13] During the late 1950s CIAM itself was overtaken by urbanists who disagreed with its strict functionalist stance. Peter and Alison Smithson, Aldo Van Eyck, and other radicals known as Team 10 assumed CIAMs leadership and scuttled the entire endeavor of CIAM by 1959 (Mumford, 2009). They argued against an urbanism that projected a pure ideal about how citizens should inhabit the city in the

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[12] The programs at Harvard and Penn were the first to use the term "urban design" although Penn's started as "civic design." They were not the first to teach design of cities, however. David Crane was trained by Kevin Lynch at MIT, who in the mid 1950s was conducting research on city morphology and images of the city. An even earlier precedent was the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris during the late 19th century, which influenced the US City Beautiful Movement of the early 1900s. Led by Daniel Burnham, the movement's mannerist focus on aesthetic harmony in cities was mostly practiced outside of academic, through civic societies and in professional publications (Peterson, 2003).

[13] CIAM is the *Congrès International d'Architecture Moderne*, founded in 1928 and organized by Le Corbusier. Its manifesto on international architecture was articulated in the 1933 conference in Athens.

future. Instead, they sought a return to the core modernist credo of Le Corbusier, as Alison Smithson remembers: "All this was important to us in trying to move over our inheritance of the principles of Modern Architecture into something of a less simplistic nature for a changed, changing, society" (Smithson, 1991).

Van Eyck's pleas for a more humanistic modernism, exhibited in his Dutch playground projects, were praised even by Sigfried Gideion, the unofficial historian of CIAM and promoter of its ideology. But Van Eyck's critique of CIAM in 1959 showed how irreconcilable his views were: "Instead of the inconvenience of filth and confusion we have now the boredom of hygiene. The material slum has gone—but what has replaced it? Just mile upon mile of unorganized nowhere, and nobody feeling he is somewhere" (Sadler, 1998; Smithson & Team 10., 1968). Despite their humanistic intentions, however, the Smithsons were unable to recuperate modernism for the masses. Their brutalist housing project Robin Hood Gardens, completed in 1972, was architecturally innovative but failed as a social experiment, in part because returning the focus to the building ignored the important context of siting a community in an industrial zone (Josep Maria Montaner, 2011, p. 40).

After the 1970s, architecture and urban design as fields all but abdicated the role they so proudly assumed under the modernist banner. Focused on formal and visual aspects of design, and motivated by the necessity of self-promotion, contemporary architects like Rem Koolhaas have opted for an a-political pragmatism. It is not surprising, then, that the most respected international architects to have built monuments in Barcelona simultaneously receive professional praise and local ire. Richard Meier's modern art museum, Herzog and DeMeuron's Forum building, and Jean Nouvel's tower, *Torre Agbar*, are all examples of this divorce between architecture and politics. Reestablishing this connection has become another driver of urban activism.

2.3 Revolution

Revolutionary activism arises out of an urgent discontent over perceived systemic failures, and its aim is to replace that system with a new order. The change being sought is wholesale change, not limited to the realm of urban design per se. It is difficult to imagine what an urban design revolt would look like, but urban revolts permeate discourses of urban planning and the use of public space for revolutionary activism is an ongoing phenomenon of urban life. Marxist urban geographers like David Harvey have anticipated an anti-capitalist revolution for decades, and before their eyes they are witnessing—even participating in—urban protests that have brought remarkable change. Harvey writes:

> *The current wave of youth-led movements throughout the world, from Cairo to Madrid to Santiago—to say nothing of a street revolt in London, followed by an "Occupy Wall Street" movement that began in New York City before spreading to innumerable cities in the US and now around the world—suggests there is something political in the city air struggling to be expressed. (Harvey, 2012, pp. 116-117)*

But what is that "something political in the air" and where are the winds leading it? Despite Harvey's apparent optimism, he doubts that small-scale, incremental urban interventions will amount to much. Without a coordinated revolution targeting the means of production, he argues, the existing system cannot be toppled. Two principal ideologies call for overthrow of the capitalist, democratic system--Marxism and anarchism. Marxism continues to hold sway among some of the most severe critics of planning in the US and in Spain. Anarchism holds very little credibility in the US, despite its profound influences upon such canonical notions as utopian communities or garden cities. In Spain, anarchism's influence is acknowledged and in fact continues overtly to impact urban activism. One of the tasks of this section is to re-examine anarchism, not as the free-for-all chaos that it is often assumed to be, but rather as a highly organized but non-hierarchical system that may hold potential for imagining new ways of making cities.

2.3.1 Classical Marxism

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels delivered an eviscerating critique of the capitalist mode of production in the context of Europe's industrial-capitalist expansion of the mid 19th century. It focused on the historical evolution of how societies produced their material needs and depicted the capitalist mode as playing out a struggle between the working class and the bourgeoisie. As Patsy Healey succinctly summarizes, Marxists were "committed to a belief that the forces of history could be understood as objective laws, driving human progress … Marx appealed to workers to recognize their true objective class position and overthrow the yoke of capitalist exploitation" (Healey, 2006, p. 35).

Within the Marxist paradigm, revolution was inevitable, and it depended on a consolidation of the proletariat as a coherent class with a shared aim. Because it focused on structures, it placed little value on agency. Individual actions could be explained by broader forces and class belonging that was following a set trajectory from capitalism to socialism to communism. Today, while Marx's inevitable secession of the proletariat to ruling class is usually considered wishful thinking, the advancing hyper-consumerism and concomitant collapses caused by unchecked capitalism have given his theories staying power. It is within this context that the critiques of Antonio Gramsci, Mike Davis, Neil Smith, or David Harvey continue to have traction—because the existing model of urbanism is predicated on a capitalist production that is failing our cities, often in obvious ways. To Marx and still to many neo-Marxists, post-Marxists or reformist Marxists, any attempts at reforming the capitalist system are counter-productive and are essentially abetting the capitalist project by allowing it to maintain its existing hierarchies.

David Harvey's indictment of capitalism in the contemporary financial crisis likewise seems prescient, but he is unable to reconcile the need for revolution with the surge of rebellious actions over the past few years. As Margaret Crawford points out, "Although Harvey sees signs of rebellion everywhere and is aware of many diverse social movements focusing on the urban question, he finds them too weak and unfocused to have any impact. Their main fault is that they lack a singular, unifying aim" (Crawford, 2011, pp. 33-34). Harvey does not deny having reached this conclusion. In

Rebel Cities, he points to the "scale problem" of so much collective action and claims that in order to expand, small-scale solidarities need to be nested into a hierarchical organization. "Unfortunately," he writes, "… the idea of hierarchy is anathema to many segments of the oppositional left these days. A fetishism of organizational preference (pure horizontality, for example) all too often stands in the way of exploring appropriate and effective solutions" (Harvey, 2012, p. 70).

Like many critics, Marxist and otherwise, Harvey chooses not to imagine how a non-hierarchical order could overthrow a system; following a classical Marxist position, he remains committed to an organized, union-based revolution. In his edited essay "The Right to the City," he writes that urban innovations "have yet to converge on the singular aim of gaining greater control over the uses of the surplus" (Harvey, 2012, p. 25). This effort to gain control of the system is the Achilles heel of Marxism. That along the way to a communal utopia one must violently revolt and institute a "dictatorship of the proletariat" proves to be a fundamental flaw of Marxism that is best illustrated by the staggering failures of most Marxist-Leninist regimes. According to post-anarchist Saul Newman, the critique launched at Marxists had three main facets: that a worker's revolution based on a transitional authoritarian state was an inherent contradiction; that the political organization required for revolution was already hierarchical and bureaucratic, a new intractable state; and that Marxist revolution ignored the rest of the discontented masses, what Bakunin called the "great rabble" or lumpenproletariat, peasants, and intellectuals (Newman, in Rousselle & Evren, 2011, p. 51).

2.3.2 Situationism: Marxist Urbanism

Marxism of course is hardly a homogenous ideology, and its influences went beyond a pure worker revolution. Marx's call for consciousness-raising, for example, influenced the work of the Situationists in the 1950s, through which they transposed the critique of material production to that of cultural production and the consumerist society, as Guy Dubord would phrase it, the society of the spectacle. Working in Paris as a small revolutionary group of thinkers, the Situationists were avowedly Marxist. In their writings, they exposed the alienation and contradictions of modern urban life. As revolutionaries, they wanted a complete overthrow of the capitalist system, but not one accomplished by violent, organized physical appropriation. Rather, the Situationist revolution would be enacted through a kind of urban psychological subterfuge. Averse to traditional intellectualism and academia, their activities were not only discursive, but also physically engaged with the city. The mechanisms they invented—*dérive* and *détournement*—sought to undermine the consumer city by uncovering its authentic character and emotive qualities. Simon Sadler paraphrases their intent: "What if spectators transgressed the rules of consumerism by stealing and redistributing its products and images, for themselves, making good on its vacuous promises of a better world?" (Sadler, 1998, p. 19)

"Situation" comes from Jean-Paul Sartre's existentialism, and the idea that life was made up of situations that individuals must negotiate (Sadler, 1998, p. 45). Henri Lefebvre, also tightly associated with the Situationists, theorized similarly about individuals experiencing "moments." But to the Situationists, accepting situations or moments was too passive. They sought to empower individuals to "synthesize or

manage" these experiences themselves, to "construct situations." What they had in mind though were unable to articulate coherently, was a holistic city, a "unitary urbanism," in which constructed situations would contrive new social relations and behaviors. In this way, a citizen would enact the new creative, playful, and ephemeral city out of their own experiences. The Situationist revolution seems far from the Marxist revolution with its clear progression of political phases. In theory, the unitary city had no authors, but in reality authorship itself was something that the Situationists could not transcend. Conflicts over ownership of ideas precipitated the rupture between Lefebvre and Dubord. The Situationist city, which could only be realized through the relinquishment of control, was destined to exist only in theory.[14]

2.3.3 Anarchism's Affinities

The development of socialist thought was accompanied by the sympathetic yet diverging theories of anarchism, which were already nascent in the early 19th century writings and experiments by social utopians. Peter Hall, in *Cities of Tomorrow*, makes a convincing case that "many, though by no means all, of the early visions of the planning movement stemmed from the anarchist movement" (Hall, 2002, p. 3). The genealogy of anarchism traces directly to sources familiar in the field of planning: Charles Fourier, Robert Owen, and Ebenezer Howard. These thinkers were fundamental to future communal utopian thought, including for example Howard's garden city, to which planners have repeatedly returned. "The vision of these anarchist pioneers," writes Hall, "was not merely of an alternative built form, but of an alternative society, neither capitalistic nor bureaucratic-socialistic: a society based on voluntary cooperation among men and women, working and living in small self-governing commonwealths" (Hall, 2002, p. 3). Today, the fact that garden cities and anarchism in our contemporary imagination seem so far apart suggests that a reconsideration, even a recuperation of anarchism, is essential in thinking about activism.

According to Murray Bookchin, anarchism has lacked a clear, singular ideology and has therefore been easily miscast as chaotic. He writes:

> *Few visions of a free society have been more grossly misrepresented than Anarchism. Strictly speaking, anarchy means without authority, rulerless--hence, a stateless society based on self-administration. In the popular mind, the word is invariably equated with chaos, disorder, and terrorist bombings. This could not be more incorrect … Anarchism is a great libidinal movement of humanity to shake off the repressive apparatus created by hierarchical society. It originates in the age-old drive of the oppressed to assert the spirit of freedom, equality, and spontaneity over values and institutions based on authority. (Bookchin, 1977, p. 16)*

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[14] The most ardent attempt at envisioning what unitary urbanism would look like came from the Dutch artist Constant Nieuwenhuys in a project called New Babylon, a "world wide city for the future" in which creativity is expressed in daily life through play and not work (see Sadler, 1998).

In an effort to better understand anarchism, I will briefly survey its main theoretical currents. Anarchist theory, though not always cohesive, is typically divided into two stages: utopian socialism and classical anarchism; today it also reappears in a post-structuralist iteration: post-anarchism. Tracing this genealogy reveals a progression from anti-religious and enlightened rational perfectionism; to a theory of "affinity" based on collaboration, education, mutual aid, and voluntary cooperation; to strict anti-authoritarianism; to autonomous immediatism. Alternately, we can also discern a shifting focus from intimate communities of production; to collectivist federations organized against authoritarian regimes; and back to the scale of personal microrelations.

Utopian Socialism

   The first utopian socialists were responding to a status quo that was historically particular; they were reacting to and products of the Enlightenment age. Henri de Saint-Fourier (1760-1825), one of the first early French socialists, promoted a belief that science, not religion, should be the basis of society. His utopia was rational, efficient, and led by benevolent industrialists like himself.[15] But within that organizational structure, he posited, greed would be abolished and cooperation would flourish. Charles Fourier (1772-1837) and Robert Owen (1771-1858) were likewise taken to experiment within a productive, industrialist context. Fourier's phalansteries built on the notion of cooperation but through a organized idealization of mystical passions, in which individuals' innate characters were matched with ideal productive roles in society. Owen's industrial communities of New Lanarck, Scotland and New Harmony, Indiana believed that individual could be educated to promote equality and communal harmony. The above reformers sought the transformation of all of society, but notably located their efforts in rural production communities of limited size[16]. The obvious applications of this utopianism reside not in the city at all, which explains its persistent appeal and influence over suburban and New Urbanist practices. Within the city, these ideas found footing where communities could be experienced as contained and somehow separate from the city.

Classical Anarchism

   The political project of realizing the total transformation of society was not taken up by utopian socialists, but would be the subject of much debate by classical anarchists. Writing during and in response to the French Revolution, William Godwin (1756-1836) repudiated the exercise of power by centralized governments but also eschewed the use of violence to overturn it (R. J. F. Day, 2005). In its place, Godwin proposed parishes, "small, face-to-face groupings" organized in a loose "confederacy" (quoted in R. J. F. Day, 2005, p. 98). These views were built on by Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809-1865) and the two Russian revolutionaries Mikhail Bakunin (1814-1876) and Peter

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[15] Saint-Simon is easily also characterized as a proto-libertarian or proto-neoliberal even. His ideal society envisioned a peaceful takeover of government by enlightened industrialists.
[16] Fourier's ideal phalanx housed 1620 people; Owen's rural community was between 500 and 3000 people.

Kropotkin (1842-1921). Proudhon was the first French politician to identify himself as an anarchist. Proudhon favored cooperatives owned by workers, but not nationalization.[17] He also was the first to theorize worker self-management, which came to be called *autogestión.*

Bakunin agreed that nationalism was dangerous and proposed a collectivist approach based on the notion of "federalism," comprised of voluntary, bottom-up associations of workers and peasants. Although he wanted to avoid taking power, he was intent on "breaking power" (R. J. F. Day, 2005, p. 113). This, he insisted, may be necessary by the "violent destruction of the State" (Bakunin, Dolgoff, & Paul Avrich, 1972). Such violence was tolerated and justified by its characterization as "propaganda of the deed." The Russian philosopher Kropotkin declared himself an anarchist in 1872, but unlike Bakunin, his stance was one of non-violence. A geographer by training, Kropotkin engaged in activism in Switzerland and France before being arrested and expelled to England. In London, be befriended William Morris and George Bernard Shaw, and further developed an economic theory based on mutual support, voluntary cooperation and self-sufficiency. He argued in his book *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* that well beyond modern times, in animal and human communities, mutual support was a key reason for the success of species[18] (Kropotkin, 1902).

In Germany, the leading theorist of anarchism was Gustav Landauer, a pacifist who insisted on what Richard Day calls "means/ends coherence" and thereby rejected both the sudden overthrow of institutions and their incremental reform (R. J. F. Day, 2005, p. 123). Landauer conceived of an alternate way forward. Rather than focus on the revolution itself, he proposed building the new world in the present world, parallel to but outside of the existing systems. In *For Socialism,* he set out to deprive the State of its necessity, to make it superfluous: "Let us destroy by means of the gentle, permanent, and binding reality that we build" (Landauer, 1911, p.93, quoted in R. J. F. Day, 2005, p. 123). Insightfully, Landauer saw the state not as a thing in and of itself, but merely a set of relationships. Thereby, it could be changed only by changing one's microrelations. In *Beginnen* he writes: "The State is a condition, a certain relationship between human beings, a mode of human behavior; we destroy it by contracting other relationships, by behaving differently" (quoted in Lunn & Paul Avrich, 1973, p. 224).

The problem with Marxism according to anarchists was the necessity of a "statist" organization in order to overturn and then stabilize society after violent revolution. But if anarchists believed that the means to a just society should reflect its ends, finding an effective way to peaceful revolt was its biggest conundrum. Richard Day calls this "the problem of the Revolution, the apparent need for a radical break, a discontinuity at the same time temporal and institutional-subjective, between the 'bad' social totality of today and the 'good' one that lies just around the corner" (R. J. F. Day, 2005, p. 99). Landauer theorized a way around this, but by the early 20th century violent uprisings

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[17] Proudhon's focus on workers was influential to Marx, but ultimately they disagreed over how workers should be organized.

[18] Later post-anarchist theorists have described these notions as naively essentialist. That is, that one of classical anarchism's weaknesses was the tendency to romanticize a primitive state of harmony to whose return anarchism would lead the way. See for example Todd May or Saul Newman.

became the preferred approach. The brief anarchist state in Spain during the 1930s provided perhaps the best opportunity to build this new utopia, but its defeat at the hands of Franco (partly due to its betrayal by Communists) doomed anarchism again to be an undercurrent, only to resurface recently in the growing 15-M and *okupa* movements.

Anarchism in the US

In 1825 the Welch reformer Robert Owen purchased the town of New Harmony in Indiana with the intention of starting a utopian socialist society based on equality and education. His experiment was a failure that lasted only two years, but its influence endured, partly through the efforts of one of New Harmony's collaborators Josiah Warren. Warren began publishing a newspaper called *The Peaceful Revolutionist* in 1833, which was the first anarchist paper. Others followed, including Benjamin Tucker's *Liberty*, begun in 1881, which stood expressly against the violence promoted as "propaganda of the deed."

The period of the 1880s was one of economic crisis in which socialist and anarchist movements made inroads especially among immigrant workers. In 1886, in Chicago's Haymarket Square, a bomb exploded at a peaceful worker's rally supporting a stike for an 8-hour workday. In the violence that ensued, seven police officers and four civilians died. In a rushed and media-fueled trial that followed, seven anarchists associated with the rally were sentenced to death (Avrich & Paul Avrich, 1984). The Haymarket Affair was a watershed moment for anarchism, in the US and elsewhere, especially Spain. It led to a hardening of positions, inspiring activists like Emma Goldman who attempted to incite revolution through an attempted assassination of the strong-arm industrialist, H.C. Frick.

In the 1960s, anarchism reappeared in two strains: anarcho-capitalism, which promoted individualist free markets; and anarcho-communism, which like social utopianism idealized communal rural life. In urban centers, the Beat movement in New York and San Francisco echoed many of the sentiments of anti-government counter-culture but failed to materialize a meaningful revolution as its creative currents were subsumed by the hippie movement. The social ecologist Murray Bookchin resumed the political effort of anarchism in the 1970s by connecting radical politics with an ecological agenda that has had strong influence on sustainable planning. His 1977 book *The Spanish Anarchists* (1977) documented the organization of the anarchist movement and was aimed at an American audience:

> *I hoped that a book on their history might stand in vivid contrast to the 'flings' and escapades to which so many young American Anarchists in the sixties had reduced their libertarian commitment--often, in later years, to slowly return to the very society they had condemned in their youth. (Bookchin, 1977, pp. 3-4)*

Bookchin's support of anarchism waned in later years but the complacency that he noted also disappeared in the 1980s and 1990s, replaced by the more contentious tactics of groups like the Black Bloc or by the black flag protests of the WTO in Seattle. Spurred on by contemporary critics like Noam Chomsky and Adbusters founder Kalle Lasn, anarchism is living a vital resurgence in the occupy movement.

The latest iteration of anarchistic thought, post-anarchism, emerged in the 1990s as post-structuralist and feminist theory provided new perspectives on power, the state, and autonomy. This has prompted a convergence of sorts between autonomous Marxism and post-anarchism, which I will explore in greater detail under the activist mode of *autogestión*.

2.3.4 Anarchist Architectures

Within the professional design fields, connections with anarchist thought were few. Fourier's phalanstery were certainly an architecturally significant exposition on his organizational logic. In designing the Unité d'habitation in Marseille, Le Corbusier states that the building form comes directly from Fourier's plan (Sbriglio, 1997, p. 182). Ebenezer Howard, too built upon the notions of communalism from Owen, Fourier, Morris and Kropotkin to demonstrate how a cooperative city could be created (Cuthbert, 2006). Like the utopian socialists, he rejected the crowded industrial city in favor of "the town-country magnet," a rational diagram of concentric circles radiating from a civic core to residences ringed by small industry and farms (Howard, 1902). Howard's garden city was taken up by town planners Raymond Unwin and Barry Parker in the new town of Letchworth in 1902.

These designers and planners espoused many of the communalistic ideals of anarchism, but they did not claim to be anarchists themselves. Few did. The three most significant were the Giancarlo de Carlo, Colin Ward and John Turner. Giancarlo de Carlo (1919-2005) was a founding member of the group Team 10. Like the Smithsons he sought a more humanistic modernism, which he approached with context sensitivity and with user consensus. His housing project, the Villages at Matteotti in Terni, was an example of participatory architecture that came about through extensive workshops with residents, contractors and other stakeholders. De Carlo called himself a libertarian socialist, but also contributed to the anarchist journal *Volonta* and met Colin Ward and John Turner through the translation of his texts into the journal founded by Kropotkin, *Freedom* (J. Hughes & Sadler, 2000, p. 46).

Colin Ward (1924-2010) was the editor of *Freedom* and later of the journal *Anarchy*. In his book *Anarchy in Action*, he rejected the notion that an anarchistic society should be the end goal. Instead, he preferred small-scale, everyday experiments in self-organization, cooperatives, and associations. His explorations also dealt specifically with landscape. In *Arcadia for All: The Legacy of a Makeshift Landscape* (1984), he explores the vernacular, self-built 'plotlands' of the English countryside. In *The Allotment: Its Landscape and Culture* (1988), he makes an environmental and social case for the self-sufficient garden plot.

The most influential perhaps of anarchist architects, John F.C. Turner, was the most likely to steer clear of overt anarchistic language in his many texts. Trained as an architect at the Architecture Association in London, Turner quickly developed a focus on housing production. He traveled to Peru in 1957 and stayed until 1965, observing and participating in the construction of *barriadas*, or self-built housing. His books *Freedom to Build* (1972) and *Housing by the People* (1976) were instrumental in bringing about a transformation in how architects and planners viewed and valued slum housing.

In them he acknowledges the necessity of some centralized planning, but also celebrates the empowerment of self-built housing: "housing, and by implication, all other personal and locally specific services, must be autonomous" (Turner, 1977, p. 9).

2.4 Roots of Reform Activism

Between the status quo and revolution lie several options for activist action, which are bundled here into two approaches--reform and *autogestión.* Though these both acknowledge the perpetuation of the existing system, they differ in their support of it. The reformist modality behaves in ways to improve existing structures, while the *autogestión* modality declines to participate in its mechanisms, building parallel alternatives to render it superfluous. It is within these approaches that I want to focus this study on activism, and my justification for this evinces a pragmatic bias: that both the status quo and revolution are increasingly inappropriate or inapplicable to city designers. Contemporary urbanists must confront volatile economic, political, social and aesthetic dynamics, and ecological crises for which stasis is not a viable option; and yet despite the probable disaster of not revolutionizing our structures of living and planning cities, the status quo system in place seems ever more intractable. The two middle approaches, then, must be undertaken simultaneously, working from the outside and from the inside to reform systems and to create new relationships.

Planning began as reform, and to reform it repeatedly returns. Because its very existence is predicated on the existence of the state, it rarely ventures into discourses about the State's demise. Instead, it must evolve. Although revolutionaries might dismiss reformists as perpetuating the injustices of the system, behind their efforts is an optimism that is necessary for creating new ways of acting in the urban realm. Reform activism in planning is traceable through two theoretical schools: communicative rationality and advocacy planning, which are discussed below.

2.4.1 Communicative Rationality

I noted earlier that one of the discontents with citizen participation was with the failure of the structuring and execution of institutional participatory processes. Because these processes are largely discursive, this failure was deemed by many to be one of poor communication, and thereby something that could be ameliorated through a focus on those communicative mechanisms, especially how they were. The emphasis on reform from within was a theme taken up by Jürgen Habermas in *The Theory of Communicative Action* (1984) and *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1989), in which he argues that our state, capitalist, consumer culture undermines public life. His proposal for "deliberative democracy" is a call for reforming the system of representative democracy into something more participatory. Yet his project is also still quite rational, and dependent upon constructing a level playing field upon which enlightened discourse would occur.

John Friedmann was already leveling that playing field in 1973 when he problematized the role of the planner in *Retracking America*, in which he described the opposition between planners and the public. Planners projected expertise by their use of

scientific methods and technical expertise, while the public possessed local experiential knowledge. Successful planning practice, he argued, required the two to be bridged, and he called this bridging "transactive planning"(Friedmann, 1973; Sandercock & Lyssiotis, 2003). Friedmann later noted that his model of "dialogue as a basis for mutual learning" was followed by more analyses of communication in planning by Donald Schoen, John Forester and Patsy Healey (Friedmann, 2003).

Donald Schoen, in *The Reflective Practitioner* (1983), spoke about a crisis of knowledge, in which positivism stressed epistemological and technical ways of knowing but ignored practical knowledge. He noted that positivism was good at problem solving, but not at problem setting, and stressed that planners needed to be "participants in a larger societal conversation" (1983). Forester's *Planning in the Face of Conflict* (1989) was a study of actual planning practices around land use conflicts. "This book," he writes, "is about planning for people in a precariously democratic but strongly capitalistic society. As we will see, the structure of the economy organizes autonomy and independence for some people, powerlessness and dependency for others"(1989, p. 3). For Forester, the planner's role was not limited to mediation, but also included negotiation, plus the acknowledgement and promotion of the planner's own personal point of view.

Patsy Healey argued that "planning as a communicative enterprise hold most promise for a democratic form of planning in the contemporary context" (Healey, 1996, p. 236). Her writing leans heavily on Habermas' conception of communicative rationality. She proposes a new direction for planning that is idealistic but still rational. The planner's role is to provide a framework of rules, to uphold fundamental moral and aesthetic principles, to incorporate race and gender, and to achieve "mutual understanding" and consensus through "logic and scientifically formulated empirical knowledge" (Healey, 1996, p. 175).

Judith Innes also took up communicative action and its application to planning practice. "Communicative action theorists find out what planning is by finding out what planners do, rather than postulating what planning ought to be," she writes (Innes, 1995, p. 184). [19]In her most recent work, *Planning with Complexity*, she maintains her belief that communicative rationality or collaborative planning offers the best route to positive planning outcomes. She notes that much work has been done in the name of collaboration, but which is really "pseudo collaboration." This, she argues, does not undermine the fundamental value of collaboration – only the pitfalls of its poor application (Innes & Booher, 2010).

Finally, a more radical interpretation of communicative action is evident in the writings of Leonie Sandercock. In *Toward Cosmopolis* she writes that "what has come to be called 'communicative action' . . . Is a key modus operandi of insurgent planning . . . On a day-to-day basis, the activity of struggle centres around talk, dialogue, persuasion, negotiation" (1997, p. 158). Where Sandercock diverges from other communicative theorists is in her willingness to tackle issues of contestation and power--issues that are notably absent from most of the earlier examples that idealized the generation of

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[19] Innes also explicitly declares her allegiance with Habermas: "My choice of the term *communicative action* to characterize this emerging paradigm reflects my view that Habermas' work, particularly his *Theory of Communicative Action*, is likely to provide the principal framework for the new planning theory" (Innes, 1995, p. 184).

consensus (see Fraser, 1990). In *Cosmopolis II: Mongrel Cities*, Sandercock draws from feminist and post-colonial theory to fill in some of the voids of planning history with stories. Sandercock envisions a cosmopolis that embraces "intercultural co-existence." This is a type of reformism but it is not aimed solely at the dominant status quo systems of planning. It requires effort by those acting from within and from without.

2.4.2 Advocacy Planning

Acting as a mediator between the state and citizens, communicative planners sought to refine methods for establishing dialogue. But for some planners, the playing field was not something that could be easily leveled by better communication. Instead, the influence of institutions had to be tempered by engaging more directly with the citizens and participating in their activism. Paul Davidoff taught planning at the University of Pennsylvania from 1958-1965. He wrote "Advocacy and Pluralism in Planning" in 1965, which begins with a call to action:

> *The present can become an epoch in which the dreams of the past of an enlightened and just democracy are turned into a reality. The massing of voices protesting racial discrimination have roused this nation to the need to rectify racial and other social injustices.* (Davidoff, 1965)

Davidoff's argument was aimed at the practicing planner, whom he exhorted to become an advocate rather than merely "a provider of information, an analyst of current trends, a simulator of future conditions, and a detailer of means" (ibid.). His influential article criticized the practice of the "unitary plan," and the hierarchical control of that plan by one agency without the full participation of citizens. Davidoff offered an alternative, which he called "plural planning," in which autonomous advocacy planners would work directly with community groups to offer alternative plans for city consideration. Through this plea, Davidoff succeeded in encouraging trained planners to follow alternate routes to the profession, effectively weakening bureaucratic power but strengthening the system as a whole.[20]

In the field of landscape architecture, participatory design processes found advocates in Karl Linn and Randolph Hester. Karl Linn was a child psychologist as well as a landscape architect, whom Ian McHarg invited to be on faculty at the University of Pennsylvania. He later taught at M.I.T. and New Jersey Institute of Technology, where he began partnerships between the University and the surrounding community. In the 1980's he moved to Berkeley, where he initiated community garden projects and education organizations. He co-founded the nonprofit ADPSR, worked with the Berkeley Partners for Parks and created the Westbrae Commons project, which built community gardens in Berkeley (Linn, 2007).

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[20] Davidoff's extension of interest from the State to the profession as a whole is reflected in his advocacy for changes to the American Institute of Planners code of ethics, which was revised to state: "A planner shall seek to expand choice and opportunity for all persons, recognizing a social responsibility to plan for the needs of disadvantaged groups and persons, and shall urge the alteration of policies, institutions, and decisions which militate against such objectives" (Sanoff, 2000, p. 4).

Randy Hester became engaged in community activism by fighting against urban renewal projects. After studying landscape architecture at Harvard, Hester continued to be active politically in Raleigh, where he served on the city council. His books *Neighborhood Space* and *Community Design Primer* pull from his political and design experience and articulate a practice of community design that is sensitive to community as well as ecological needs (Hester, 1975, 1990). Hester speaks of community design as a practice derived from architecture, landscape architecture, planning, social work, and environmental psychology. Community designers, he stresses, must have a broad range of skills including design, collaboration, organizing, and economics (Hester, 1990).

Hester's projects were not expressly about reforming the education of landscape architects, but through his teaching and mentorship he furthered the notions of participatory design and "ecological democracy." Pedagogical innovations were afoot as well in other institutions. In 1967, Charles W. Moore also initiated a program requiring all first year architecture students to participate in a design-build project for low-income neighborhoods. The Yale Building Project continues today, and serves to draw students' awareness to their potential roles in neighborhood advocacy. Samuel Mockbee's Rural Studio at Auburn University is perhaps the exemplar of this symbiotic thinking, but other educators have followed suit, including Sergio Palleroni, Steve Badanes, Daniel Winterbottom.

Advocacy has also been furthered by Community Design Centers and other non-governmental organizations like John Cary and John Peterson's Public Architecture and Brian Bell's Design Corps, which have worked with institutions to deliver professional services to underserved communities and to encourage pro-bono volunteerism. Additionally, much of the actions today labeled as "tactical urbanism" have at their core a desire to reform. Blaine Mercker of ReBar, which initiated the popular Parking Day appropriation of parking spaces across the globe, did not conceive of their work as a protest, and their current work with the San Francisco planning department, testing planning alternatives and prototyping new kinds of public space, are efforts to use grassroots activism to improve top-down processes. What is significant about the actions of these innovators is that they conceive of participation in a new way--as designers participating in the life processes of neighborhoods instead of neighbors participating in the processes of institutionalized planning. This engagement comes to full fruition in the next approach, in which designers become embedded actors within the community itself.

2.5 Roots of Autogestión

If reformists are closer to the system then the autonomists engaged in *autogestión* are closer to revolutionaries. But this is not simply a contrast between optimists and pessimists, between builders and destroyers. The *autogestión* modality I will describe is also surprisingly optimistic and productive; whose emancipatory activism is inventing a new "terrain of the possible" (Gibson-Graham, 2006b, p. xx). In this section I will describe some of the contemporary theories that illuminate the modality of *autogestión*. Three separate schools of thought will be explored: post-anarchism, autonomous Marxism, and emergence theory.

2.5.1 Post-Anarchism

The necessity of overturning the system as articulated by both Marxist and anarchist theorists was questioned as potentially hegemonic itself by post-anarchists and autonomous Marxists beginning in the 1990s. Building from post-structuralist theory, they criticize revolutionary activism for pursuing a mirage, of entertaining utopian fantasies. Using Foucault's "micropolitics" or Deleuze and Guattari's "molecular revolution," they turn to tactical approaches that operate alongside the State, where new relationships come into being. In "Post-anarchism and Radical Politics Today," Saul Newman writes:

> *Post-structuralist approaches seek openings, interstices, indeterminacies, aporias and cracks within structures--points where they become displaced and unstable, and where new possibilities for political subjectification can emerge. (Newman, 2011)*

Lest this become too abstract, however, two concepts that I want to emphasize here are affinity and autonomy, which are not post-structuralist concepts but rather are found in classical anarchist texts and have been revived by theorists like Saul Newman, Richard Day and Todd May.

Affinity refers to symbiotic interrelationships: mutualism, cooperation, and collaboration. Although their ties to anarchism are not obvious to casual observers, there is little doubt that affinity still drives the actions of many groups of urban activists, as we will see in the case studies that follow. Autonomy signifies an independence from the state. To most classical anarchists this presumed a stateless society, but to some, like Gustav Landauer, autonomy meant building the new world while within the existing system. To be specific about the implications here for design and planning, this does not mean rejecting the entirety of the hierarchical state, which performs necessary functions that cannot simply be eliminated or replaced. This would be true for for many integrated systems such as water management or transportation for example. Rather, autonomy exists at smaller scales alongside these systems, augmenting them or making up for its deficiencies. If these experiments then succeed, they forge new relationships that change the system.

The post-anarchist Richard Day reintroduced the writings of Landauer because they emphasize this point. In *For Socialism*, Landauer repeatedly asserts that neither capital nor the state is an actual thing, but rather relationships between people (Landauer, 1978). To change the economic or political system, therefore, requires building new relationships. The goal is not to reform the system, but to abandon it. Richard Day explains:

> *Landauer's strategy of [sic] shares with reformism a willingness to co-exist with its enemies. However, it is crucially different from reformism in that it does not provide positive energy to existing structures and processes in the hope of their amelioration. Rather, it aims to reduce their efficacy and reach by withdrawing energy from them and rendering them redundant. (R. J. F. Day, 2005, pp. 123-124)*

What the notions of affinity and autonomy both point to is collective action, but not one created solely through dialogue. The relationships that are created in this approach are forged through cooperatively building something--they depend on material action, on the appropriation of public space and on the improvisation, craft, and invention required to self-manage it from outside of the flows of the system.

2.5.2 Autonomous Marxism

A converging opinion has been rendered by some Marxists who have grown tired of, as the feminist-Marxist theorists J.K. Gibson-Graham say, "waiting for the revolution." *In The End of Capitalism (as we knew it)*, they write: "Why can't my Marxism have as its object something that I am involved in (re)constructing every day? Where is my lived project of socialist construction?" (Gibson-Graham, 2006a) Theirs is a feminist critique that attempts to leave Marxism intact by interrogating its conception of capitalism as a unitary whole. In this way they echo Landauer's description of capitalism as merely a set of relations, or Richard Day's interpretation of Foucault's governmentality: there is no 'state' separate from civil society, rather "we all govern each other via a complex web of capillary relations of power" (R. J. F. Day, 2005, p. 125). By deconstructing the state as a totality that controls us, even Marxists are able to open a window to new possibilities for acting economically and politically toward something positive.

Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri describe the possibilities that arise through what they call "the constituent power of the multitude." In both *Empire* (2000) and *Multitude* (2004) they claim that power is a set of relations in which the multitude participates, but which they can escape through micropolitical practices like insubordination, sabotage, revolt, and the creation of alternative utopian projects. In their view, activism against the status quo must involve "modalities of flight" (Hardt & Negri, 2013). Hardt and Negri note also that sometimes flight is not physical abandonment of place, but embedded invisibly within it. The potential of what James DeFilippis calls "local autonomy" in his book *Unmaking Goliath* (2004) can be seen in real world examples of "collective ownership of work, housing, and money" (2004, p. 10). Local autonomy, to DeFilippis, offers a way to construct democracy through participation at the community level.

2.5.3 Emergence

The emergence from the grassroots of new possibilities has been called by one reviewer as "an imaginary solution to the real problem … [dressed up] in the contemporary language of chaos theory and biological systems" (Fukuyama, 2004). This wholesale dismissal of contemporary scientific and philosophical thought deserves here to be addressed, first because the organization of societies has long followed biological or metaphysical metaphors. Arguments for free-market economies were and continue to be made on the basis of Darwinian evolutionary theory. New ways of conceiving of evolution, nature, and organization are useful to break down the tired notions that buttress the status quo systems that are indisputably threatening our very survival as a species. Finally, the solutions that are being offered are hardly imaginary; though small

in scale, these and other scholars and practitioners are compiling examples which together amount to a significant change.

Organizing society according to scientific or natural schemes was already inherent in the utopian socialism of Saint-Simon, Fourier and Owen, and Kropotkin himself was a geographer who wrote a counter-argument to the competitive individualistic model of Social Darwinism in his book *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* (Kropotkin, 1902). Other challenges to Spencerian Social Darwinism came from the philosopher Herni Bergson, who conceived of evolution less as a steady linear progression and more of an act of intuitive creation (Bergson, Mitchell, & ebrary Inc., 2001). Although the mechanisms he proposed were not verifiable by empirical means, more recent scholarship on complexity, in particular by Nobel Prize-winning chemist Ilya Prigogine, gives credence to the notion that bottom-up processes can lead to significant innovations. Fritjof Capra, in The Hidden Connections, describes how open systems in disequilibrium, what Prigogine calls "dissipative structures," are nonetheless stable and productive:

> *The dynamics of these dissipative structures specifically include the spontaneous emergence of new forms of order. When the flow of energy increases, the system may encounter a point of instability, known as a 'bifurcation point,' at which it can branch off into an entirely new state where new structures and new forms of order may emerge. (Capra, 2002, pp. 13-14)*

Capra suggests that evolution occurs through the mechanism of "emergent structures" that operate in states of instability alongside more static "designed structures."

Thinking of autonomous communities as emergent structures, there is a valuable contribution to be made by applying a biological metaphor. "Designed structures provide stability. Emergent structures, on the other hand, provide novelty, creativity and flexibility. They are adaptive, capable of changing and evolving … The issue is not one of discarding designed structures in favor or emergent ones. We need both" (Capra, 2002, p. 105). Capra applies these findings to organizational theory in workplaces, but they are also pertinent to planning practice. Planner Nabeel Hamdi attempts this in his book *Small Change* (2004), in which he builds from Capra's assertion that evolution follows moments of disturbance. "Practice disturbs," he notes, and it is through activism that social organization changes. He writes "practice--that skillful art of making things happen; of making informed choices and creating opportunities for change in a messy and unequal world--is a form of activism and demands entrepreneurship" (Hamdi, 2004, p. xix).

2.5.4 Contemporary Examples

Locating what Hamdi calls practices of activism and entrepreneurship has been the object of much recent scholarship. DeFilippis conjures up utopian socialism in contemporary co-ops, communes, worker's collectives, mutual housing associations and the creation of local currencies (DeFilippis, 2004). J.K. Gibson-Graham point to the post-capitalist communalism that has been successfully implemented by the Zapatistas in Chiapas, and also in local trading systems, barter, informal markets and other

"community economies" (Gibson-Graham, 2006b). Post-anarchists like Richard Day see promise in do-it-yourself, direct-action activism such as the Situationist-inspired tactics of the Billboard Liberation Front, the Reclaim the Streets project in London, in social centres and squats.

Beyond Post-Marxist and Post-Anarchist imaginaries, others not so easily labeled are also assembling a growing compendium of autonomous actions: Doina Petrescu identifies the Green Guerrillas from New York or Kraftwerk1 in Zurich; Margaret Crawford's attention to everyday environments opens space to consider the autonomous nature of street vendors and yard sales as improvisations of urban space, or of Critical Mass and PARK(ing) Day as emancipatory practices in the Lefebvrian sense. The US entry in the 2011 Venice Bienale makes another notable contribution in this regard. Finally, the Spatial Agency project by Till, Schneider and Awan is an encyclopedia of direct actions and how they "initiate empowering social relationships." The authors couch these actions within Anthony Giddens' theory of structuration, in which agency is primarily seen as a way to transform structure. But may of the actions, Hackitectura in Sevilla or the Italian *centri sociali* belong more to the autonomist modality described in this chapter.

What all of these actions add up to, or whether they do at all, is open to debate. To return to the evolutionary metaphor, even if new life comes into being (Deleuze's becoming) through dissipative, emergent structures, that does not mean that every creative innovation, every activist intervention, will become a new paradigm of urban spatial production. Most, in fact, are likely to fail. But the reproduction of these emergent, autonomous structures themselves is what might hold the key to sustaining a resistance to the status quo that will be able to innovate when our dominant systems are disrupted. In Barcelona and throughout Spain, that moment arrived in 2008, a crisis that has made a search for alternatives real and not hypothetical.

Chapter 3: Contexts and Case Studies

3.1 Overview

In the previous chapter I described the theoretical terrain of urban activism. While theoretical knowledge is commonly described as deductive (Cresswell, 2004; Zeisel, 2006), I did not conceive of the framework first and then apply it to case studies. The framework was developed to explain observations, interactions and narratives I experienced through real-world engagement. The two case studies were selected carefully, but not for their ability to act as representative samples. In other words, "representativeness" in order to generalize knowledge or predict behavior is not the goal; this study aims to understand something different--cultural dynamics embedded in context.

If we understand "culture" from the viewpoint of anthropologist Clifford Geertz, we will not aim to isolate variables or generalize particular experiences. Rather, we look for "webs of significance" that people spin in order to give their lives meaning and coherence (Geertz, 1973, p. 5). This chapter will give an overview of these webs of significance, which constitutes the context in which we find the two case studies that follow. It begins by examining the confluence of economic, political, spatial and cultural forces that make this city fruitful for studying. It continues by locating the city of Barcelona geographically and demographically. Then it provides a historical overview of the urban transformation of the city in the modern era. Turning to the current situation, it describes the webs of urban activists who are taking action in several cities across Spain, and finally turns to the current context in Barcelona and to the selection of case studies.

3.1.1 Barcelona's Status Quo

It hardly seems necessary to justify Barcelona as worthy of study, but I would like to briefly describe here how this city can be useful for the study of participatory urbanism. I am following a long line of commentators on this well-studied city. Since the early 1990s the "city of architects" has received unprecedented attention in the fields of planning and architecture.[21] Already by the 1980s the city's heritage of Ildefons Cerdà and Antonio Gaudí were well established, but a new flowering of creative design was especially visible after the city's selection for the 1992 Olympics. The number of architectural journal articles about Barcelona increased tenfold from 1985 to 1995.[22] Journals like Architectural Record, Lotus, Architecture, Progressive Architecture, and Landscape Architecture Review dedicated entire issues to the city's new projects.

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[21] "City of architects" refers to a book by La Vanguardia journalist Llatzer Moix, *La Ciudad de los Arquitectos*, first published in 1994, which chronicles the circuits of social and political capital in the urban transformation of the city (Moix, 2002).

[22] Results of Avery Index search, February 2012, of Art and Architecture journals that mention Barcelona, comparing 1980-1985 with 1990-1995.

The celebratory accounts of Barcelona as urban exemplar, however, are not as interesting to me as the reactions this "model" has provoked. Early on and despite the positive press, doubts about Barcelona's espoused democratic, participatory planning model were being voiced as the city prepared for its Olympic debut. Novelist Manuel Vazquez Montalbán called this mode of urban development "a process tailor-made to benefit the wealthiest social classes" (Vázquez Montalbán, 1992). Others criticized how the Barcelona brand was being prioritized over the needs of its citizens (Borja, 2009; Delgado, 2007; Paz Balibrea, 2004). Many commentators have noted that as the scale of urban projects grew, urbanists and architects became a new technocracy, busy managing complex infrastructural projects with great technical skill and promoting the city as a prime competitor for global investment capital (Busquets, Rowe, Correa, & GSD, 2003; Marshall, 2004; Rowe, 2006). At the same time, however, these spatial experts became more insulated from the everyday concerns of citizens. This critique resonates today as much as ever, and it has prompted various activist responses.

The case has been made that Barcelona is an exemplary city (Rowe, 2006; Solà Morales & Colegio de Arquitectos de Cataluña, 2008). But even to those like myself who do not support the wholesale imitation of the city's approach, grassroots innovations in participatory urbanism continue to make Barcelona a valuable case study in how urbanism can move beyond its normative practices.

Capitalist Crisis in Spain

The economic crisis, simply known as "la crisis", is a trauma that the city continues to endure. The collapse of an economic model based on endless urban expansion and loose foreign capital offers opportunities for reflection and for the proposal of alternatives. This is a good place to look for alternative models of capitalist space, what J.K. Gibson-Graham call "post-capitalist communalism" or "local economic experimentation" (2006b). Gibson-Graham take special note of the Mondragón cooperative movement in the Basque country of Spain, but similar experimental approaches are evident elsewhere in Spain and in Barcelona specifically. Before the crisis, Barcelona showed few signs of local barter, trade or re-use economies. With the exception of a popular flea market, the Mercat dels Encants, used goods were not typically sold, in thrift shops or used bookstores, for example. The crisis has brought a change to this thinking, and scavenging for goods or bartering has gained popularity. Recently Madrid enacted a ban on scavenging from public waste bins to prevent what they perceived to be an unsightly practice, but it is a practice based on a real and pressing need to find alternative economies in order to survive. In contrast, urbanist activist groups like Basurama celebrate the conversion of trash into valuable products, and through such provocations are contributing to a discourse about the failings of the capitalist model.

Democracy in Spain

Spain is a constitutional monarchy that uses a representative form of democratic government. Today, its institutions are relatively stable, though strained by the economic "crisis" and accusations of corruption. Historically, stability has not usually

been associated with the Iberian Peninsula. From medieval Moorish rule to the Reconquista through the Hapsburgs and Bourbons to Republics, dictators, anarchist uprisings and fascism, it is tempting to agree with King Amadeo who abdicated the throne in 1873 by proclaiming Spain as "*ingobernable*." What this means for this study is that the concepts of democracy, socialism, and even anarchism are more pliable than they are in the US. It means that representation, participation and direct citizen action can more easily be questioned, re-imagined, and reconfigured. The 15-M protests are the most visible face of this skeptical attitude, but many other groups are pushing for institutional change and acting to bring about new forms of self-government.

Planning in Barcelona

Promoting Barcelona's mastery of urban design reinforces the role of planners and architects as experts. At the same time, the city describes its planning processes as "inclusive." This is not necessarily a contradiction, but does bring into question how city officials manage citizen participation in a way that preserves their own authority over design matters. As the following section will describe, official participation was institutionalized during the transition to democracy through decentralizing government, establishing channels of communication, and legislating information-sharing. Concurrently, alternative and direct means of participation have continued to operate and flourish within non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as community centers, collectives, and other interest groups. The ongoing clash between these two approaches provides a backdrop to much of the activism that I am highlighting. Officially, mechanisms are in place that segregate design processes from citizen input. But unofficially, groups are working to re-establish that critical relationship.

Barcelona's Design Culture

Historically based in maritime trade, built on the production of commodities like textiles, and known primarily for its architecture, Barcelona is a city that holds design in a position of primary importance. The coverage of urbanism and architecture in trade publications reflects a strong culture of design that permeates fashion, food, graphics and architecture. As for the city's public spaces, over the past four decades, hardly any plazas, parks or *ramblas* have been left untouched by redevelopment. This design focus is furthered by the training of architects in many esteemed schools of architecture, and by a sense of coherence that arises out of the fact that planners in Spain are trained as architects. Because of these factors, there are a wealth of examples from which a researcher can choose and which can be evaluated for their aesthetic, functional, and social contributions to the city and its citizens.

3.1.2 Barcelona Imaginaries

The 2009 Frommer's guidebook depicts Barcelona as a haven: kilometers of pristine beaches, 4-star hotels, gastronomic epiphanies, boutiques hidden on labyrinthine alleys of a sanitized Gothic Quarter, architectural gems, and an efficient Metro system that

can take you to all parts of the city. This is the Barcelona imaginary, the brand of the city that is marketed to tourists and investors alike. In the last two decades, tourism has increased nearly tenfold. In 2012, tourists booked a total of 15.5 million nights in the city, spending an average of 741 euros a night. This totals 11.5 billion euros a year, or nearly 7% of the city's entire GDP (Diputació de Barcelona, 2013).

At the same time, city boosters have been building a foundation of future economic growth on their ability to attract external capital. Projects like 22@ tout the city's educated and sophisticated knowledge economy and direct investment toward the infrastructures needed to accommodate this influx of international finance. This has all led to some "perverse effects" according to architectural critic Josep María Montaner: the replacement of politics with management; a growing influence of the tourism lobby; development aimed at outside financiers; and spectacular public spaces rendered unusable for the daily lives of citizens (Josep M. Montaner, 2011).

3.1.3 Physical Geography

Barcelona is the capital of Catalonia and the second largest city in Spain, both in population and in economic activity. It is situated on the northeastern edge of the delta of the Llobregat River and extends north up to the Besos River. The city is also constrained by two other geographic features: the Collserola mountain range and the Mediterranean Ocean. In its entirety, the urbanized area of Barcelona is a mere 9 miles long by 4 1/2 miles wide; upon these 40 square miles reside some 1.6 million people.

The land has been occupied by humans for over two thousand years, first developed extensively under the Romans as the town of Barcino. Unlike most of the Iberian Peninsula, Barcelona was controlled only briefly by the Moors during the 8th century, then became part of the kingdom of Aragon, where its protected coastal position helped it become the center of a maritime empire that controlled an area extending to Athens. The economic prominence of the city reached its apex during the 13th and 14th centuries, which were followed by centuries of decline.

Throughout the middle ages and until the 19th century, the city was confined within its defensive walls, in what remains intact today as the Gothic Quarter. Later 19th century expansion took the form of Ildefons Cerda's Eixample, which established a regularized grid to accommodate the rapid growth of industry and population. As the city grew, it incorporated outlying towns such as Gracia, Sants, and Sant Andreu within its boundaries. During the 1960s and 70s, in the midst of Franco's pro-development push, *el dessarrollismo,* suburban expansion leapfrogged over the natural geographic limits up the coast and inland past the Collserola mountains. New urban centers like Sabadell, Terrassa and Sant Cugat, still dense by US standards, became suburban bedroom communities as well as outposts for industrial activity that no longer functioned well within the city itself.

Barcelona's climate is characterized as "Mediterranean," "Dry-summer subtropical." It enjoys warm, humid summers and chilly but often sunny winters. Average annual rainfall is approximately 22 1/2 inches, comparable to the San Francisco Bay Area. Pollution levels in the city are below the European limits, mostly attributable to vehicle emissions. The city as a whole emits CO_2 emissions at about 1/3 the average for cities

in Spain, and half that of London, a figure attributed to its use of nuclear and hydroelectric power; its climate; its density; its service economy; and the fact that most residents live in apartments (Dodman, 2009). Housing characteristics also help drive the generous provision of open space amenities in the city.
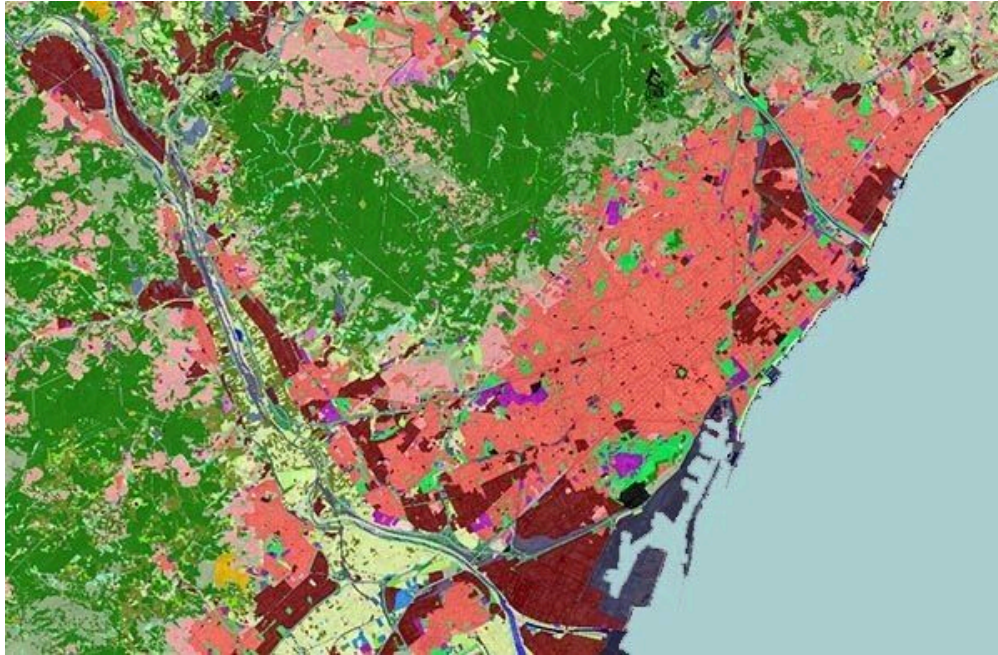
Figure 3.1 Pervious surfaces, darkest reds most impervious
(image: Intitut Cartogràfic de Catalunya & CREAF, www.icc.cat)

The land surface itself that makes up Barcelona is 64% impervious. Throughout the city, natural creek systems have been mostly buried, but artificial greenways, parks and *ramblas* provide everyday open space for residents. Few neighborhoods are without nearby open space amenities. Not counting the city's beaches or pedestrian *ramblas,* the city has 68 parks and gardens totaling 967 hectares, 2,400 acres. Additionally, the Park of Collserola directly adjacent to the city and encircled by its suburbs totals 8,000 hectares, about 31 square miles. The physical context of dense housing and ample open space complements and informs a cultural proclivity of individuals to utilize public space.

3.1.4 Demographics

Having broached the subject of "public space," it is also worth taking a moment to consider what "public" we are talking about when we talk about Barcelona. "Public" itself is a ubiquitous and slippery word in environmental design, often used interchangeably with public space, public spheres, or publics. In Barcelona, as anywhere, we cannot speak about a singular public (Amin, 2008; Fraser, 1990; Sandercock, 1997;

Sandercock & Lyssiotis, 2003; Warner, 2002). Dominant publics and counterpublics have contested public space through discourse and action making any homogenous treatment impossible. This is obvious even to a casual street observer in Barcelona, where demographic shifts and transnational migrations destabilize the official imaginaries advanced by the city's self-promotional efforts.

Alejandro González Iñárritu's 2011 film Biutiful paints an eerie portrait of Barcelona's illegal immigration, cultural isolation and racial difference that evokes Georg Simmel's descriptions of anomie in late 19th century Berlin. In Barcelona's public spaces, evident in the film and readily observable, diverse publics are engaged in a daily exchange of ideas, customs and products and services. Below the surface, economic, political and ethnic hierarchies giver structure to a public sphere that cannot be resolved by discourse alone. Negotiating cultural difference has been complicated in this city where the Catalonian bourgeoisie was repressed only 35 years hence. Growth, and a shift from a production to service economy has brought with it economic success and new immigrant groups. Tensions around language, citizenship, and cultural norms have flared in the city's traditionally immigrant community of the Raval, as well as in its peripheral housing projects.

Barcelona was already an international city in the 14th century. Until the Inquisitions began in 1488, Moors and Jews enjoyed relative acceptance in the region (Schweid, 1994). Jews, in fact, were the principal merchants who traded with northern Africa, helping to build Barcelona's economy (Schweid, 1994). Since the 15th century, Catalonia has been under monarchic rule of Castille and France, but its linguistic traditions derive from neither. Catalan is a distinct Latin language that is spoken in Catalonia, southern France, Sicily and Mallorca, and fluency in Catalan has been as important as ethnic background in establishing Catalan identity. Catalan was repeatedly banned throughout history, most recently during Franco's dictatorship. Today it has been revived and is the official language of government and education, although only 44% of Catalonia's residents (and not its immigrants) use it as their primary language (Foguet, 2011).

Overall, the population of Barcelona has remained relatively stable, dropping slightly but steadily from 1.7 million in 1960 to 1.6 million in 2011 (Barcelona, 2011). During the 1960s and 70s, most immigrants came from within Spain, especially the poorer south of Andalucía. But since the 1992 Olympic games, a marked shift has occurred. Barcelona's Catalan and Spanish-born residents have decreased as foreign residents have taken their place, especially from Europe, Latin America, Asia, the Indian subcontinent, and Africa. In 1991, Barcelona was home to only 14,000 residents from Africa, Asia and the Americas; by 2011 the total was close to 200,000 (Barcelona, 2011). The absorption of these populations has not been evenly distributed throughout the city. Foreign immigrants tend to segregate into distinct neighborhoods, for economic, social and logistical reasons.

From my own observations, foreign residents are also less likely than in the US to assimilate, and more likely to be stereotyped by other groups. Generalizations about individuals based on their ethnic identity are common and can be jarring in their political incorrectness: dollar stores, for example, are usually called *chinos*; small local food-shops are called *pakis*. These are both often uttered with a diminutive quality. The

current economic crisis has also heightened negative perceptions of outsiders. For example, I was instructed by one acquaintance not to shop in *chinos* (stores) because the *chinos* (people) are taking over all of the nice shops by illegally making loans to each other. Another informant, an educated socialist, also warned me not to trust the Roma (Gypsies) because they're prone to thievery. This is anecdotal evidence, of course, and I am not suggesting that Catalan people carry with them any inherent bigotry. On the contrary, Catalan identity is better described as racially and ethnically open, celebrated by the notion of *convivència,* or coexistence. A better explanation for these observations is the importance in Spain of acting in groups and finding belonging collectively. Individual identification is commonly subsumed by the group identity and this identification is something that is enacted, through what Brad Erickson calls "ritual sociality" (Erickson, 2011).

Nonetheless, despite the decades-long trend of foreign immigration, the demographic shift is often still treated as a temporary phenomenon. Foreign populations, in fact, are not reflected in many official population tallies. One high-ranking official whom I interviewed confidently told me that 95% of Barcelonans speak Catalan, and that therefore language was not a barrier to effective public participation. After I dubiously asked how that could be true given the percentage of foreigners, he conceded that the statistic only reflected Spanish citizens (Agustí Hernández, 2012).

3.2 Barcelona Urban Engagement History

Although a deep understanding of Barcelona's urban and social histories is essential for this study, I will not restate the city's entire evolution. This has been adequately tackled already in texts like Robert Hughes' *Barcelona* (1992) and Colm Tóibín's *Homage to Barcelona* (2002), which owes its title to the remarkable memoir of the Spanish Civil War by George Orwell, *Homage to Catalonia* (1980). My own cultural understandings were aided by Richard Schweid's book *Barcelona: Jews, Transvestites, and an Olympic Season* (1994) as well as *The New Spaniards* by John Hooper (2006). A wealth of books has also been written on architecture and urbanism, among the most comprehensive being Manuel de Solà Morales' *Diez Lecciones Sobre Barcelona* (2008) and Joan Busquets' *Barcelona: the urban evolution of a compact city* (2005). Without summarizing Barcelona's history, the following section will highlight four important facets of the Barcelona experience. These are (1) the engineered egalitarianism of Ildefons Cerdà, (2) the scars and residues of anarchism, (3) the rise of grassroots community activism against Franco, and (4) the disruption of "the crisis" and its provocation of alternative utopias. I emphasize these histories because the contemporary themes of capitalism, political representation, utopian urbanism, and design activism are not new. These themes are only understood if we consider the city's experiences beginning in the industrial revolution.

3.2.1 Engineered Egalitarianism

Mid-19th century Barcelona was in the throes of industrial expansion, fed by the manufacture of textiles and leaving many industrialists with an abundance of surplus wealth. Many bourgeois Barcelonans had their eyes set on the transformations Baron

Haussmann was making to the French capital. In 1854, the Spanish government in Madrid acknowledged Barcelona's potential--indeed its inevitability--in becoming a major center of production and trade (Tóibín, 2002:14). That year, it sanctioned the demolition of the city's medieval walls, commissioning the engineer Ildefons Cerdà to survey the city for expansion. Cerdà did not limit his study to geographic features, adding of his own accord a detailed social survey of Barcelona's working class. His resulting plan for the city, called the *Eixample*, or "extension," was an overt attempt to combine urban form with citizenship (Busquets, 2005).

Cerdà was influenced by utopian socialists Charles Fourier and Robert Owen, who called on artists and technicians to remedy inequity by creating utopian communities. His plan was a homogenous, and thereby theoretically egalitarian, grid of square blocks that extended to the city's geographical boundaries. Cerdà was an innovative and adept planner. His chamfered blocks, today a hallmark quality of the city, were intended to accommodate streetcar turns. The vast interiors of each block were designed as green open space for residents and to provide light and air for the housing units. But Cerdà's technical skills were not matched with political savvy. His plan was easily corrupted by developers and politicians eager to make more money by building taller, denser apartments without public amenities (Figure 3.2).[23] The economic boom also meant that the Eixample exaggerated rather than ameliorated social stratification, as a wealthy bourgeoisie fled the medieval quarter for the chic residential and shopping streets of the new city.

Figure 3.2 Contemporary aerial view of Cerdá's Eixample (image: Bing)

The economic disparities grew, displayed at their apex in the spectacle of the 1888 Universal Exhibition and in the elaborate and eccentric *modernisme* architecture of architects Lluis Domènech, Antonio Gaudí, and Josep Puig. Unlike Cerdà, Domènech and Puig understood the importance that politics played in an urban agenda. Domènech joined a Catalan nationalist party, while Puig became president of the regional government, the Mancomunitat. Through these platforms they supported Catalan

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[23] Most of the open space planned for the centers of each Cerdà block were filled in piecemeal with more buildings, which to this day can be seen either as a problem or an opportunity.

nationalism while opposing the advancements of the working class. Puig's architectural turn to *noucentisme* was a harkening back to classicism and an overt effort to make Barcelona, as he put it, "the new Paris of the south"(Roca, quoted in Busquets, 2005). His urbanistic opposition to Cerdà's *Eixample* was also well known; as juror of a comprehensive city design competition, he chose a plan by the French architect Leon Jaussely that would have replaced Cerdà's horizontality with a Parisian hierarchy appropriate to a city of Barcelona's stature (Busquets, 2005). The Jaussely plan was not implemented, but both it and the *Eixample* demonstrate a faith in environmental determinism as well as its limits.

The legacy of Cerdà is inscribed in the city's urban form. So, too is the notion that urban form itself is both a tool and a product of political action. The utopianism of Cerdà, for all of its egalitarian intentions, was easily co-opted by powerful interests, a result that may have been predictable administered as it was in a top-down manner. Still, what was prescient about Cerdà's approach was not merely his formal innovations, but also his instinct to value resolving inequitable living conditions of the working class. In the coming decades, as wealthy industrialists built decadent modern homes in the *Eixample*, working class animosities simmered below the surface. In neighborhoods like Sants, workers collectives and cooperatives discovered a consonance between their principles and those underlying a growing anarchist movement that would soon destabilize the city.

3.2.2 Anarchist Affinities

In Barcelona, a movement towards worker cooperatives was already well established by the mid 1800s and had direct links to the nascent cooperatives in England. The origins of this movement can be traced back to Fernando Garrido Tortosa (1821-1883), who started a magazine in Madrid in 1846 called *The Organization of Work*, and also edited *La Atracción*, both of which were dedicated to the social utopian teachings of Charles Fourier. For this and other controversial texts, Garrido was exiled from Spain to London, where he simply continued his research, working closely with what is considered to be the first successful consumer's cooperative, the Rochdale Cooperative Society (Dalmau Torvà & Miró i Acedo, 2010, p. 84). When Garrido returned to Spain in the 1850s, he promoted these ideas, which took hold primarily in Seville and Barcelona. The government in Madrid banned trade unions in 1855, and even though these collectives were legal, voluntary associations, they were viewed with suspicion and faced repression (Esenwein & Paul Avrich, 1989, pp. 12-13).

In the 1860s, the philosophy of the Russian revolutionary Mikhail Bakunin took root. Bakunin called for a revolution from below, but also believed that revolution might require "the violent destruction of the State." His philosophy was that words were not enough, that activists should act with what he called the "propaganda of the deed," a phrase that was used to justify the use of violence. Bakunin specifically targeted Spain as he was recruiting new members of the First International (also known as the International Workingman's Association), sending an emissary, the Italian Giuseppe Fanelli, to Madrid in 1868. In the next two years chapters opened in Madrid and Barcelona, where membership was immediately high. Government suppression of the

group, especially after a 1873 strike for an 8-hour workday, drove the IWA underground until the early 20th century.

Anarchist activity in Barcelona, though illegal, continued as a parallel force alongside the bourgeois development of the late 19th century and expressed itself in sporadic outbursts of violence (Tóibín, 2002). Its energy was stoked in 1887 by outrage over the Chicago Haymarket trial and the unjust executions of several associated anarchists (Esenwein & Paul Avrich, 1989). In 1893, following several other targeted attacks in Barcelona, a bomb exploded in the Liceu Opera house during a show, killing 20 patrons. By the early 1900s, Barcelona had earned the title of "City of Bombs" (Tóibín, 2002). The violence is most often symbolized by the events of Tragic Week in 1909, when protesters burned dozens of churches and fought armed battles in the streets with state guards. Tragic week, however, was not a planned anarchist attack, but rather a groundswell of working-class resentment at both the elite classes and the ruling government, triggered by a failed strike and a military conscription to defend capitalist interests in Morocco. The result, however, was the killing of around 100 rioting workers and the execution of five anarchist leaders (Tóibín, 2002).

The unjust retributions hardened the attraction of many workers to the anarchist cause, which claimed legitimacy in 1911 through the new centralized organization, the Confederación Nacional de Trabajadores (CNT). By 1923 the CNT had helped organize over 800 strikes in Barcelona, at times paralyzing the city's infrastructure. In 1919, the largest strike of over 100,000 electrical workers yielded the biggest prize, the first-ever national law for an 8-hour workday, something Robert Owen had pleaded for over a century before, in 1810 (Tóibín, 2002).

The infighting between the Catalan bourgeoisie and anarchist workers was dissolved in 1923 with the military coup by dictator Primo de Rivera. Conservative nationalists like the architect Puig initially supported the coup, but were quickly betrayed the dictator's harsh repression of Catalan culture. The devastated post-WWI economy and inept rule was finally put to rest after the king withdrew support for Primo and fled the country. Elections were held in 1931 yielding a Second Spanish Republic that granted many of the rights the working classes had been demanding: freedom to associate, freedom of speech, increased funding for health and education, women's suffrage, the nationalization of industries and a decoupling of church and state. Exiled Catalans returned, and other outsiders were hopeful for a new "Golden Age." These winnings were short-lived, however. New elections in 1933 have power to a coalition of conservatives and Catholics, who supported the repression of anarchist strikes, especially in Asturias and Catalonia. And the pendulum swing came again when the socialist, communist coalition called the Popular Front overwhelmingly won elections in 1936.

The Second Republic brought a sense of euphoria to socialists and anarchists, and dread to the capitalists. Many wealthy industrialists in Barcelona simply packed their bags and left the city, leaving the factories in the control of the workers themselves. In the field of architecture and urbanism, Le Corbusier, having spent the 1920s imagining modern socialist utopias like the Villa Contemporaine, the Plan Voisin or the Ville Radieuse, declared: "At last, on one living point of the earth modern times have found an asylum." Corbusier's visit to Barcelona in 1932 was orchestrated by students at the

school of architecture, especially the young Josep Lluis Sert, who collaborated with Corbusier in the founding of GATPAC and in Spain's involvement in the canonical CIAM Athens charter of 1933.

With the Popular Front political victory of 1936, further plans were afoot for collectivizing private property, and in Barcelona an alternative Olympic games was being planned to protest the official games in Nazi Germany. But on the eve of the games, the Spanish Civil War broke out, led by General Franco and supported by both Hitler and Mussolini. The Popular Front coalition held socialists, communists, and anarchists together tentatively in an effort to defeat fascism, as George Orwell depicts in *Homage to Catalonia*. Late in 1936, Orwell came to enlist in the war, and even as Catalonia was under siege, he was impressed with the extent of worker-control:

> *It was the first time that I had ever been in a town where the working class was in the saddle. Practically every building of any size had been seized by the workers and was draped with red flags or with the red and black flag of the Anarchists; every wall was scrawled with the hammer and sickle and with the initials of the revolutionary parties . . . Every shop and café had an inscription saying that it had been collectivized . . . Waiters and sop-walkers looked you in the face and treated you as an equal . . . There were no private motor cars, they had all been commandeered, and all the trams and taxis and much of the other transport were painted red and black. . . In outward appearance it was a town in which the wealthy classes had practically ceased to exist. (Orwell, 1986, pp. 4-5)*

The new order that was glimpsed by Orwell may have been as close to Anarchism as has ever been known, but its duration was short. The Popular Front fell apart under so much pressure, and from the betrayal of the Anarchists by the Communist party, which ultimately feared anarchistic control more than the capitalist fascism of Franco. In the years following Franco's victory in 1939, thousands of Republican supporters, above all the anarchists, were arrested and executed.

The history I briefly detail above is important for understanding the activist modalities at work in Barcelona today. The CNT was revived after Franco's death, and anarchistic political strains still wield power in Barcelona, evident in its many squats and the 15-M protests. But beyond these obvious continuations of anarchist thought, a tradition of collective work, cooperation, and deep-seated distrust in the state influences a network of grassroots urban activists that are after a taste of the social utopia that Fourier, Rochdale, and Orwell bore witness to.

3.2.3 Grassroots Community Activism

General Francisco Franco was the dictator of Spain from 1939 to 1975, during which time Barcelona struggled to maintain its urban amenities and its cultural traditions. Franco eviscerated the left-leaning intelligentsia of the city, distrustful of Catalan culture, its wealth, and its anarchistic leanings. By the 1960s, the city had been starved of investment in infrastructure and public space, and Franco's liberalization of development practices, though modernizing the city's transportation networks, mostly served to reward developers by allowing them to infringe upon otherwise publicly

designated open space. At the weak end of Franco's rule, however, a revolutionary murmur could be heard again at the community level, through neighborhood associations that were clamoring for physical improvements and amenities like parks, schools, and community centers.

Manuel Castells theorized urban social movements in *The City and the Grassroots,* using case studies of neighborhood associations in Madrid to make his point. He concluded that urban social movements were not capable of bringing about societal change, but that they were able to change "urban meanings" through their focus on use value, local culture, and decentralized citizen participation (Castells, 1983). Castells' view shows a break from the Marxist holding out for complete structural transformation of society. Part of this owes to the cultural, even ludic focus of Spanish neighborhood associations. He demonstrates how these associations successfully struggled for collective amenities, cultural autonomy, and political self-determination, but diminishes their impact to the local level only (Castells, 1983).

Castells' Madrid case studies resonate with the history of the transition period in Barcelona. Although associations of all kinds were prohibited during most of Franco's dictatorship, neighbors continued to informally organize local cultural events, and it was from this position that they demanded legitimacy in the 1960s. Their legal reinstatement in 1964 allowed them to organize social gatherings and to lobby for immediate local needs, but the associations were distrustful of the government and most remained cautious before Franco's death. In the neighborhood of Sants, a group of radical and anarchist community leaders had been meeting in secret for years in the basement of the local parish church Sant Medin. They emerged in 1971 to form a neighborhood association called the Centre Social de Sants (CSS), and although their internal political leanings were far to the left, they abstained from any public political stance. Their first actions were to protest an encroaching freeway project, to participate in the city's new regional plan, and to mount an exhibition of poor neighborhood conditions. Its organizers proposed the recuperation of "the great open spaces . . . Like Espanya Industrial, Can Batlló, [and the station of] Magoria" (Martí Gómez & Marcè i Fort, 1996).

Neighborhood associations like the CSS began their existence clothed in sociality, but during the buildup to the transition they became more overtly political. City architect and former activist Ricard Fayos recalls the years of transition:

> *In those first years, the neighborhood associations were very different. They were totally different to what they are now, because in that moment you could say that perhaps they were very politicized because it was the only way to do politics, because under the dictatorship the people that carried on clandestine political activity, in secret, well they couldn't do politics but they did so sometimes through the worker commissions in their companies or in the neighborhood associations or in other places, no? Or also through the Architect's Collegiate [COAC], they were leading, so many associations were marked by some political party. Secretly, many times it was known that in this part of Barcelona this association is socialists, and those are communists, and they were mostly anarchists. (Fayos, 2012)*

When the transition finally came, many community leaders were swiftly appointed or elected into official posts within the administration. This was true of the sociologist, geographer and urbanist Jordi Borja, as for many young architects associated with neighborhood associations and the universities. Castells noted the importance that citizens placed on local, direct participation in government: "The Citizen Movement," he wrote, " a new demand: the request for grassroots participation in the elected institutions of local government, in the planning agencies, and in public programmes for urban redevelopment through the ad hoc representation of neighborhood associations" (Castells, 1983, p. 224).

In Barcelona, this demand was taken up by Borja, who had studied with Castells in Paris, and who was recruited to a position within the transition government. Borja's agenda was to decentralize power and to require direct citizen participation. Regulations for participation were approved in 1987, establishing public counsels, information sharing, civic centers, association support, referenda, and *autogestión*, or shared community management of urban amenities. Through this participatory framework, Borja sought to create what he called "an inevitable tension between direct participation and formal institutionalization. Participation," he wrote, "opens a dynamic process that permanently questions the established order" (Borja, 1987).

Because the activism of neighborhood associations was addressed in neighborhood plans and the city's General Metropolitan Plan of 1976, the urban agenda for the transition government was essentially shovel-ready. The first order of business for the democratic government was the improvement of dozens of community amenities. The city's new mayor, Pasqual Maragall, along with architect Oriol Bohigas, brought forward projects for urban improvement that were easily achieved. Between 1981 and 1987, over 100 public space projects had already been completed (Rowe, 2006). The first projects, like the Plaza Virreina in the old neighborhood of Gracia, were small in scaled and served the immediate needs of adjacent residents. But as neighborhood needs were being met, the influence of the associations began to wane. Their leadership having ascended to official positions and its main complaints settled, the associations ceased to be political bodies and occupied themselves primarily with the organization of annual street parties, cultural activities, and occasional consultations with the local district government. In certain neighborhoods, like Sants, the neighborhood associations maintained some political clout through their role as an umbrella organization, as an intermediary of sorts between the city and the citizens. And although their functions were often largely cultural, they managed to use culture and recreation to achieve political goals.

3.2.4 Disruptions and Emerging Practices

During the transition to democracy, Barcelona was thrust into a development frenzy that would last for 20 years. The first urban improvement projects may have been at the community scale, but this changed dramatically in 1986 when the city won its bid to host the 1992 Olympics. The approach to city-making in the context of this enormous project, and in its wake, was called the "Barcelona Model" by both those within the administration and those elsewhere who wanted to emulate Barcelona's accomplishments. Whether any model exists, and whether it was a successful or

desirable mode of development, has been the subject of much debate. The Barcelona approach was promoted in texts by, among others, the city's former architect Joan Busquets, mayor Pasqual Maragall, and Peter Rowe (Busquets, 2005; Rowe, 2006). The relationship between urban projects and governance has been analyzed by geographer Tim Marshall (Marshall, 2000).

But the model was sharply criticized by several academics in Barcelona, especially by Manuel Delgado in his influential book: *La Ciudad Mentirosa: Fraude y miseria del 'Modelo Barcelona'* (The Lying City: Fraud and misery of the 'Barcelona Model') (2007). Others have amplified this critique. Jordi Borja questioned the assumption that the transition provided a sharp break from the fascist regime, arguing persuasively that in fact the "model" of urbanism is better seen as a continuation of the old fascist regime. Most recently, Josep María Montaner, Fernando Álvarez and Zaida Muxí have published a eulogy of sorts in their comprehensive edited volume *Critical Files: The Barcelona Model 1973-2004* (Montaner, Álvarez Prozorovich, Muxí, 2011).

What transpired during the preparations for the Olympics is the subject of the above texts among many others, but what is important here is to understand that this undertaking demanded not only an urgency of time, but also a leap in scale, and broad coordination between the city's districts as well as regional and national agencies (Busquets, 2005; Tóibín, 2002; Vázquez Montalbán, 1992). Mayor Pasqual Maragall spearheaded the city's preparations, calling on Barcelonans to volunteer, to clean up their city, and to allow the streamlining of bureaucratic red tape in order to accomplish the impossible. Maragall wrote retrospectively about the city's success:

> *In the end, the miracle was worked, with everyone pulling together…. Barcelona, however, is not content with having made a great leap forward, as it had already done in both 1888 and 1929. It is aiming for a permanent place among the world's great cities. It wants to stay at the top and not lose any ground. (Maragall, 2004, p. 69)*

Maragall is correct to say that public opinion has judged the overall results of the Olympics positively. The quality of architectural and urban projects in the city was high, and the transformation of a large portion of the city's industrial waterfront into a tourist haven was no small accomplishment. However, the buildup to the games also set in motion a new dynamic for development in the city, one which was less concerned with local neighborhood issues and more concerned with city branding and global networks of finance. The novelist and critic Manuel Vazquez Montalbán was one who expressed this alternate view of the games:

> *Could it not be that, under the pretext of the Olympics, a city council with minimal economic resources, controlled by a left that was paralyzed by the challenge, has handed over management of this immense surge of urban growth to private initiative? Has it not turned what might have been a model of democratic urban expansion into a speculative frenzy, determined by the 'city as market' model which posits urban development as a process tailor-made to benefit the wealthiest social classes? (Vázquez Montalbán, 1992, p. 7)*

Following the games, this new mode of development was replicated as the city tried to complete its urban transformation. New waterfront development schemes were initiated

with mixed success. The city invested millions in creating a new world-class art museum designed by the American Richard Meier. And in 1995, in the nearby (and mostly immigrant) Raval neighborhood, the city began the process of demolishing several blocks of housing to make way for the Rambla del Raval, a huge new public open space; the project was executed despite vehement local protest (Muxí, 2004).

In 1997, Joan Clos took the mayoral reigns from Maragall and continued the tradition of Mayor-led urban initiatives with the 2004 International Forum project. The project meant the renovation of the remaining industrial coast of the city, the construction of a convention center, office and residential towers, the restoration of the River Besòs, and the rehabilitation of the public housing project at La Mina. Clos had difficulty garnering public support for his project. While the Olympics had presented Barcelona to the world stage, the Forum was a clear indicator that global interests were now driving development. The most significant buildings of the Forum were by international architects, and the profit imperative drove the programming of private luxury apartments as well as the sanitizing efforts at La Mina.

Mayor Clos completed the 2004 Forum, but in doing so he expended a lot of political capital. In contrast to the mayor's optimistic assessment of the project, professor Zaida Muxí offered a sharp criticism of the public-private partnerships that had effectively appropriated public open space as private parks for the wealthy (Muxí, 2004). Criticism in the media focused on the high costs of the project and on the limited benefit it had for local Barcelonans (Qushair, 2006). The renovation of La Mina was long overdue but was being driven in part by a need to make adjacent properties more marketable. In 2005 and 2006, a local activist group began a weekly protest against Clos, demanding his resignation. Clos did not resign, but was resoundingly defeated in the 2007 elections. The new mayor, Jordi Hereu, was not immune to the temptation of using public improvement projects as a means to develop support. His great achievement was the implementation of Bicing, a public bicycle rental program that now has over 200,000 subscribers. His greatest failure was an effort to make over Barcelona's main thoroughfare, the Diagonal. This particular project is notable because it revealed how far out of touch the politicians and technocrats had become since the 1970s. Hereu trumpeted the project as open and participatory, but then oversaw a botched process in which the public felt manipulated and deceived.

Montaner set 2004 as the closing date in their analysis of the Barcelona Model, and in the forward of their book the newest mayor, Xavier Trias, admits to "a crisis in the urban planning model." This is especially evident, he notes, "with the increasing distance between municipal planning interventions and the perception of improvement by the city's residents"(in Josep Maria Montaner, et al., 2011). Trias' use of the word "crisis" would have seemed jarring in 2004, but today "crisis" has become a fact of life. The collapse of Spain's economy followed that of other countries and was related above all to huge debts incurred from an expanding real-estate bubble. In late 2008, the bubble burst and unemployment levels increased faster than ever recorded in Spain. Over the following four years, unemployment would rise to 25%, and exceeding 50% for workers in their 20s, where it remains in 2013. The situation for architects is even worse. According to Architectural Record, some 45% of all architecture firms in Spain have closed (Cohn, 2012). In a 2011 survey of architects by the Sindicato de Arquitectos, an

advocacy group, 65.6% of respondents said they were considering looking for work outside of the country (Sindicato de Arquitectos, 2011).

The financial crisis, or "la crisis" as it is simply known, has fostered a climate of instability politically and socially. The 15M movement, a grassroots social movement that began with protests on the 15th of May, 2011, has confounded political leaders with calls for revolutionary political change. The "indignados" who participate in this horizontally organized movement have protested against corruption, the two-party system, unemployment, cuts to the welfare system, and housing evictions. Some have also called on citizens not to vote in elections at all. One cannot simply dismiss the movement as a fringe group either; it is estimated that over 8 million people have participated in 15M events, and opinion polls indicate that public support for the movement has sustained itself well above the 70% mark.

The disruptions to the status quo are made visible by the enormous and frequent protests and encampments; by the wave of foreclosures and evictions (since 2008 there have already been over 200,000); and by the crowded waiting rooms of the employment offices. These disruptions have caused real damage to individuals and communities, which I do not mean to diminish. However it should also be noted that they have also opened opportunities for imagining other ways of making cities. We may consider here Fritjof Capra's observation, cited earlier, that when systems enter points of instability, they can "branch off into an entirely new state where new structures and new forms of order may emerge" (Capra, 2002, p. 14).

In the wake of the political, social and economic unrest in Spain, many professional designers have abandoned conventional modes of city making. In their place, they are broadening their understanding of how cities are made outside of the official institutions of planning, architecture and landscape architecture. Grassroots entities and horizontal collaborative practices have emerged, some out of anger, some out of necessity. Not coincidentally, many of these forms are reminiscent of the collectivist, cooperative approaches that were prevalent in peasant and worker communities from the 19th century to the anarchist revolution of 1936. Many experiments have been ephemeral, but a surprising number have shown a durability and the potential to influence more normative practices. Those engaged in these activities are from a broad spectrum of society, but in particular it is young designers and other professionals working in design fields. Innovations in city making have taken place across Spain, but they are focused on a few notable cities: Seville, Madrid and Barcelona.

3.3 Direct Action in Spain

With most architecture firms in Spain shuttered or operating at only partial capacity, it is tempting to characterize this time period as a dark one for the profession. The economic prognosis for thousands of architects, especially emerging young ones, is irrefutably bleak. Spain's large cities have grown accustomed to attention-grabbing architectural projects: Jürgen Mayer's Parasol in Sevilla, Calatrava's City of Arts and Sciences in Valencia, West 8's Madrid Rio project, or Frank Gehry's fish on the Barcelona coast.

It is not simply that in the absence of sensational projects, critics are now seeing smaller-scale, localized projects. It is true that Spain produces over 3,000 architects each year and that this talent has had to find creative venues outside of the more established firms. But there is also a qualitative difference in the work and the approach of these new practices. In Architectural Record, David Cohn noted that many architects are connected to the 15-M movement, undertaking what one architect called "activism based on people relating to one another, and sharing a different way of living"(Cohn, 2012). The Madrid journal Arquitectura Viva also recently dedicated an issue to "Spanish Collectives," noting that "collectives have expanded throughout Spain with the same strength as the economic crisis gradually weakened the conventional practice of the profession, channeling the aspirations of a generation that finds in plurality a means to transform society" ("Spanish Collectives," 2012). And in El Pais, Josep M. Montaner adds that the new architecture collectives have common affinities:

> *They use a new vocabulary; they take experience as their point of departure; they defend and practice participation in projects that build community; they work in networks; they view ecology as a reference and social activism as one of their objectives.* *(Josep M. Montaner, 2013a)*

The collectives to which Montaner and others refer exist across Spain, but are concentrated in a few cities. An overview of several of these groups, focusing on Seville, Madrid and Barcelona, will help situate the case studies that the following chapters will explore in depth.

3.3.1 Sevilla Examples

Sevilla is the fourth largest city in Spain and the principal city of the southern region of Andalucía. It boasts some of the most stereotypically "Spanish" customs, Flamenco dance and guitar, the siesta, and elaborate Holy Week celebrations. It is the economic center of the most productive agricultural land in the country. Its small scale peasant traditions supported a strong cooperative culture and along with Catalonia it was a center of anarchist influence until the Spanish Civil War, when it fell quickly to Franco's troops. During the current crisis, Seville has suffered from some of the highest unemployment and eviction rates in the country.

The reactions to the crisis have been strong, though less prominent than in Madrid and Barcelona. Many protests have involved the appropriation of vacant buildings as squats, which appear in two forms, as *Corralas*, housing for homeless families, and as *Centros Sociales Okupados Autogestionados* (CSOAs), self-managed community centers. Some of these *Corralas* and CSOAs have been vacated by authorities, but others have managed to endure the imminent threats of eviction. The following examples provide a taste of the kind of urban activism that is most prominent in Seville today.

The Corrala Utopía is a large apartment complex in the neighborhood La Macarena that now houses 32 families coming from precarious conditions. Its tenure, ever tentative, was threatened in 2012 by the cutting off of electrical power to the building by the public utility company Endesa. Members of the 15-M movement responded by protesting the utility, and electricity was provided through solar arrays installed by the activist group Ecologistas en Acción (Guest, 2012). The CSOA Sin Nombre (without

name) bills itself as "a space of encounter and co-living . . . a means for political-social action." It was started in 2005 and is related to the Antifascist Coordinators of Seville and to the Anarchist Group Mayo Negro, and it offers a wide range of activities, from anarchist cinema to hip hop dance and home-brew classes to talks about urban farming (CSOA Sin Nombre, 2013).

Figure 3.3 CSOA Sin Nombre in Seville (image: csoasinnombre)

Both Sin Nombre and Utopía were highlighted in a recent conference held in Seville in 2012 called the "Meeting of Collective Architectures," or *Encuentro de Arquitecturas Colectivas* (AACC). AACC calls itself "a network of people and collectives interested in the participatory construction of the urban environment" (AACC, 2013). It is a network sustained through an active web presence, through collaboration between entities on actual projects, and through an annual conference. The conference in Seville highlighted many local experiences and projects and was supported by the movement's de facto leader, architect Santiago Cirugeda, whose book *Arquitecturas Colectivas* sparked the network and five meetings including this last one in Seville. Cirugeda began his urban activism in 1996 with several projects challenging the urban planning codes and how they might be manipulated for greater public good. He secured permits for trash dumpsters and for building scaffolds, using them to install playgrounds and homeless shelters. He bought large shipping containers and installed them in city plazas for community and cultural uses. Since 2004, he has headed the firm Recetas Urbanas (Urban Recipes), which has assembled his and others' urban prototypes in a creative commons, open-interface format meant to be shared and copied. His no-nonsense, DIY attitude has influenced many young architects to take up a blowtorch or a backhoe and take part directly in city making.

3.3.2 Madrid Examples

Madrid lies roughly in the center of Spain and has the largest economy and population of all Spanish cities. Like Andalucía and Catalonia, Madrid was a center of anarchistic and syndicalist activity and resisted Franco's military assault up to the last days of the war. According to Spain scholar Matthew Feinberg, Madrid has a long history of protest and activism, and the attitudes and practices the 15-M and *okupa* movements owe a debt to anarcho-syndicalist traditions. These are most visible in Madrid's working-class neighborhoods, especially that of Lavapiés (Feinberg, 2013). During the 1970s, political activism was awakened in these working class neighborhoods as residents demanded urban infrastructure, complained about gentrification, and simultaneously celebrated their cultural heritage through theater and fiestas (Castells, 1983; Feinberg, 2013). In Lavapiés during the 1980s, neighborhood protest was channeled through *okupas* that were influenced by the squatter movements in England, Germany, Italy, and Holland. Their political engagement with the surrounding neighborhoods was a characteristic borrowed from the social center model, especially the politically engaged versions in Italy and Holland. In Madrid this meant that *okupas* became CSOAs, *Centros Sociales Okupadas y Autogestionadas.* They built from networks of underground punk culture, ecological activism, and anti-globalization (MartÌnez López, 2002, p. 109). One of their primary activities was establishing pirate radio stations, much as in 1936 the anarchist takeover of Barcelona was secured by the seizure of the telephone and telegraph building (Orwell & Trilling, 1980).

In 1996, the Spanish government revised its penal code to make occupying vacant buildings a crime, a provocative act that resulted in both numerous evictions and a galvanization of the *okupa* movement. The largest eviction in Madrid was in 1997 of the *okupa* La Guindalera, in which police arrested 160 people. La Guindalera had become the center of Madrid's underground music scene, and the arrest of its organizers led to massive protests and commitments by activists to continue occupying (Feinberg, 2011, p. 176). Future *okupas* in Lavapiés, like the Laboratorio or the Tabacalera, have continued the anti-system activism, playing direct roles in the planning and logistical organization of the 15-M protests (Feinberg, 2013).

Alongside, and collaborating with activist networks that include the *okupas*, other collectives are engaged directly with visual arts, architecture and public space. Todo por la Praxis (TxP) emerged in 1999 as an "intellectual collective" of artists with the goal of active political engagement and "amplifying aesthetic projects of cultural resistance" (Matadero de Madrid, 2013b). Their primary medium has been the construction and temporary installation of interventions on the street: portable sound systems, DIY seating and stages, mobile kitchens, and other expressions of public appropriation of space that use text visually and overtly. Their projects are conceived to agitate normative representations of space as articulated in abstract plans of urbanists and architects. To draw from Lefebvre's triad of spatial production, these activists seek to understand and defamiliarize the perceived representational spaces of everyday life through creative spatial practice (Lefebvre, 2004). This kind of spatial practice derives directly from the Situationists, and in fact TxP acknowledges this influence: "in the field of aesthetics, Situationism from Guy Dubord and other authors related to situations, these are like our bedside books" (Matadero de Madrid, 2013b).

The influence of Situationism is overt in other groups as well. The collective Basurama, founded in 2001 by architecture students at the Madrid School of Architecture (Etsam), names the following interests:

> *Economics, politics, the environment, advertising, culture and cultural policies, private life, games, humor, public space, architecture and urban planning, Dada, Situationism, the internet, truth and lies, poetry, music, love, even rubbish. (Matadero de Madrid, 2013a)*

It is this final interest--rubbish--around which the collective was established. Trash, or *basura*, is their medium. Their aim is to study the perversions of our mass consumption society, and to use "fresh, thought-provoking visions to help change attitudes" (Matadero de Madrid, 2013a). Over a dozen years, Basurama has expanded its reach beyond Spain such that most of its recent projects have been in Latin America. These include pop-up theme parks, vertical urban gardens, solar farms, and creative assemblages of recycled materials. In 2010, they were selected to be curators of an annual event in Madrid called La Noche En Blanco (White Night), an temporary project sponsored by the city to activate fallow urban spaces for public use.

Figure 3.4 Isla Ciudad by Basurama and eXYZt (image: ecococos.blogspot.com)

Dozens of creative interventions dotted the city, but none was more successful than Basurama's own installation in an abandoned site of a sport center in the neighborhood La Latina that was demolished to make room for a new center, but which was never completed because of the crisis. Basurama's installation, which it executed in collaboration with the French architects, eXYZt, called Isla Ciudad (City Island), installed a simple shallow lap pool on the large site, surrounded with a wood sun deck. The project, above all, won the approval of the adjacent neighbors, who mobilized a campaign to make turn the unused site into a permanent, neighborhood-managed community public space.

The neighbors took the initiative for the project, but also contacted another architects collective, Zuloark, to help. Zuloark had constructed another Noche en Blanco installation, "Gran Via/Gran Obra," featuring a towering tire swing place on a major city arterial. Zuloark worked with neighbors as they organized themselves, lobbied the city for permission and funding, and eventually began to build a new dynamic public space now called Campo de la Cebada. Since 2011, the Campo has been a sensation, hosting public events virtually every day, from improvisational theater and dance to workshops, tutorials, lectures and music festivals. The collectives of Basurama and Zuloark continue their involvement, recently hosting a workshop called "Hand Made Urbanismo."

Figure 3.5 Campo de la Cebada, July 2012 (image: author)

The locally based collectivism illustrated by the above groups seems to occur spontaneously but not independently. Groups are related through professional connections, through shared interests and beliefs, and through more formalized networks, from the situational networks of periodic cultural events like Noche en Blanco to more permanent networks that exist largely online. Todo por la Praxis states that it wants to work at "a larger scale that demands that there be another type of network and social fabrics in the development of projects" (Matadero de Madrid, 2013b). Basurama has been working international networks, especially since 2008 with its project across Latin America, Residuos Urbanos (Urban Residues). And Zuloark has also joined with the multi-disciplinary platform of collectives called Zoohaus, which is "focused on the reinterpretation of urban dynamics through the fields of architecture, urbanism and art, studying themes like citizen participation, urban reactivation, collective intelligence, or public space" (Zoohaus, 2013). Upon the theme of collective intelligence, Zoohaus has extended its network further with a sub-group called Inteligencias Colectivas, which is based in the Madrid art complex El Matadero and is intended to share grassroots, mostly amateur tools and approaches to cultivating more humane urban spaces.[24]

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[24] The reach of networks beyond Spain occured mostly after the start of the crisis, in 2008. In Madrid as in Barcelona, the collapse of the architecture profession coincided with a peak in immigration and the presence of many designers originally from the Americas. Since 2008,

3.3.3 Barcelona Examples

Barcelona forms the third leg of the collective triangle in Spain. Despite its firmly established architecture, urbanism and design culture and its anarchist roots, it has been slower to develop a network of design collectives. The long-sustained success of the formal architectural economy, it could be argued, did not give much oxygen to alternative practices. On the other hand, like Seville and Madrid, collective, horizontal, and self-managed alternatives to urban living were being practiced in the city's many *okupas* and social centers.

One of the first *okupas* in Barcelona was of an abandoned cinema on the Via Laietana, a prominent avenue cut through the gothic quarter. It was occupied during most of 1996, beginning just two weeks before the government criminalized squatting. It quickly became a center for community activities, though neighbors held opposing views about its legitimacy. Late that same year the occupants were forcefully removed and arrested, and the historic cinema was later demolished. The eviction emboldened the social movement as a whole in the city. Far more *okupas* were created after Princesa than City Hall would have predicted. These included the CSOAs with names like Miles de Vacancies, Casa de la Muntanya, El Palomar, and La Makabra.

In 2001, the CSOA Can Masdeu was started in an abandoned mansion that was last a leper sanctuary run and abandoned by a large hospital. Within a year, Can Masdeu had won over the neighboring residents with its cultural events, its community gardens, and its ecological advocacy for the Collserola nature preserve. When police came in 2002 to evict them, neighbors and activists showed up en masse to protest. The police responded with batons, but quickly retreated, leaving the occupiers in place, where they are still living over a decade later, and where they figure into the city competition I will describe later in Chapter 6.

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immigrants as well as Spanish architects have returned to their home countries or sought employment and opportunities outside of Spain, increasing the flow of information and the potential sharing of collective intelligence.

Figure 3.6 Can Masdeu, *Okupa Autogestionado* (image: author)

Critiques and alternative proposals from within the architecture community typically took the route of discourse and reform over direct action and confrontation, at least initially. One of the first challenges to top-down planning came in the peripheral neighborhood of Trinitat Nova. In 1995, after an initial city proposal for renovating the area was found lacking by residents, the local associations contacted Marco Marchioni, an Italian participatory planner known for creating community plans based on consensus (Marchioni, 2007). Despite the neighbors' efforts, in 1999, the city held a design competition that had no meaningful role for the residents to participate. In response, the neighbors worked autonomously, with a team of collaborative urbanists including Isabela Velazquez from GEA21 in Madrid. The team's focus was in line with what the community desired: a sustainable community. They secured a grant from the European Commission and held a European Awareness Scenario Workshop (EASW) that developed an alternative plan. Through this effort, neighborhood associations found leverage and were able to negotiate significant changes from city hall, resulting in a constructed project that the city today promotes as an example of the value they place on participation (Marchioni, 2007; Velázquez, 2000).

Other projects advanced without consensus, however, including the now infamous plaza named Pou de la Figuera but known commonly as Forat de la Vergonya (Hole of Shame), in the Ribera neighborhood of the Gothic Quarter. In this neighborhood, the city and its public-private entity PROVICESA began condemning and demolishing homes in 1999 with no public declaration of what would replace them. The city would later announce the construction of a parking lot on the site, but conflict over the plan put the project on hold. In the meantime, neighbors began to execute their desire for open space, planting trees and a garden, installing benches, and clearing space for recreational uses (Figure 3.7).

Figure 3.7 Forat de la Vergonya (image: flickr-Gerard Girbes)

The site was managed this way from 2000 to 2006, though this was not to the liking of politicians. In 2005, the city initiated a participatory design process as a way to take back control of the plaza (Anonymous, 2008). Neighbors protested the process, declaring in its public meetings that the city's efforts were a sham, intended to "anular el conflicte (annul the conflict)" The city's architect on the project even admitted in the public session:

> *I'm an architect, in charge of the zoning change, but even so I'm a technician,*
> *within the department of Urbanism of the City of Barcelona. As such, I do my*
> *job. Logically I explain my positions to the politicians, but it is they who decide"*
> *(Peña, 2004)*

The Forat project, like Trinitat, was initiated by neighbors, but also drew the participation of architects in the NGO Arquitectos Sin Fronteras, who took up the project "for the lack of neighborhood participation mechanisms" in urban renovation projects (Arquitectos Sin Fronteras, 2003).

Numerous other projects engaged similar scenarios in the city. In 2005, an effort to defend the occupation of a factory in Poble Nou called Can Ricart focused less on the creative potential or the spatial practices being exercised by the occupying artists. Instead, they emphasized, for valid reasons, the architectural heritage of Can Ricart and the importance of preserving not just token buildings but the complex as a whole. Architecture professors Josep M. Montaner and Zaida Muxí helped produce alternative representations of the space, alternative plans, but these were not heeded by the city. These same academics, along with others, also supported a late effort in 2009 organized by architects against the demolition of affordable housing in the Bon Pastor

neighborhood. Activist Emanuela Bove was among the organizers of Repensar Bon Pastor, an international design competition that drew 150 entries but failed to convince city administrators to change course.

Repensar Bon Pastor arose out of a critical working group of architects who opposed the city's participatory strategies. In 2006 this group published a document "A Barcelona la Participació Canta (In Barcelona Participation Sings)" that documented the neighborhood struggles over public space in seven contested projects. These included Bon Pastor, Can Ricart, and the Forat de la Vergonya. The document helped coalesce a growing critique over Barcelona's planning norms. Another participant in these dialogues and in the creation of a network of collectives was the architect David Juarez Latimer-Knowles, whose own firm Straddle3 regularly collaborates with Madrid's TxP and Seville's Recetas Urbanas. Juarez combines architecture with emerging media and has been instrumental in establishing the online presence of the Arquitecturas Colectivas.

3.4 Introduction to Case Studies

The network of loosely affiliated collective urban activists described above was evolving even as I began my field research in 2011. My intention was to find one or two groups to observe in depth as a way to understand their motivations, goals and practices. My point of departure was academia, in this case an affiliation with the Escola Tècnica Superior de Arquitectura de Barcelona (Etsab), the largest and oldest architecture school in the city. The technical and creative skills of students that emerge from Etsab is noteworthy, but the school also operates in separate research silos, and is known more for its formal focus rather than on social factors. Executing one's projects with technical and creative skill is a valuable contribution to social spaces, but it has limits, as illustrated by the political impotence of the city's architect for Forat de la Vergonya.

Within Etsab, the two professors mentioned earlier, Montaner and Muxí, have cultivated a following of students with a strong social conscience. Their research cluster's focus on housing provides a structure for exploring social need through the provision of dignified living spaces. Additionally, their focus on historic preservation and industrial heritage led to their engagement with the Can Ricart project. Through a course they taught on architecture and politics, I became familiar another project in the working-class neighborhood of Sants, where I lived. Can Batlló was a textile factory and now a 35-acre site that was zoned to be public space in 1976 but was never transformed by the city. A group of Montaner and Muxí´s former students, which formed an architect's collective called LaCol, were working to appropriate it as public space. This group and the neighbor-managed project of Can Batlló comprise one of my case studies.

The other case study emerged from a set of talks that were given to Etsab students at the Can Batlló complex. Speakers included many of the actors previously named: David Juarez, Emanuela Bove, the Sindicato de Arquitectos, and a working group of Architectos Sin Fronteras called Raons Públiques. I was immediately drawn to Raons Públiques because its approach seemed fresh and optimistic, and its desire to reform the city's participatory processes provided a contrast with the go-it-alone attitude at Can

Batlló. The place-based localism of Can Batlló was also intense to observe. All of its meetings and activities were in Catalan, and the relationships between members seemed forged by a century of worker solidarity. In contrast, Raons Públiques was light on its feet and playful, touching down with projects spread across the city. Its membership was more international than Spanish or Catalan, and its concerns were thematic while Can Batlló fought for specific, local objectives.

The two case studies roughly parallel the two middle modalities of urban activism that I outlined in the introduction. In my observations and interviews with Raons Públiques, I was able to understand the reform modality with its connections to both grassroots and authority networks, its interventions into everyday rhythms, its use of play, and its bridging potential. From LaCol, I observed a more autonomous approach with its connections to countercultural and oppositional networks, the creation of new everyday rhythms and collective frameworks, and the bonding that comes from building together. The two modalities—reform and *autogestión*—are not mutually exclusive however, just as these two groups do not function without influence from others within their networks. In fact, each modality provides ways to create new connections between authority, the grassroots, and the activists who take on roles to improve urban life.

Chapter 4: Reform Activism and the Case of Raons Públiques

4.1 Introduction

If you exit the L4 Metro at Jaume I and amble up the stairs, passing the (unauthorized) street acrobats, you will witness throngs of tourists, loud traffic, and topless sightseeing busses tearing down the Via Laietana that cuts through Barcelona's Gothic Quarter. Now cross the street and walk down the narrow sidewalk toward the beach. Pass the Catalan Confederation of Workers building, draped with protest banners, and on your left you will see a non-descript glass office building that houses the internal coordination offices of the regional government, the Generalitat. An irony should strike you, but it doesn't, because that history of conflict has been erased. In 1996, the squatter-occupied Cine Princesa stood here, when then mayor Pascual Maragall authorized a violent eviction of its 45 youth and in so doing galvanized a social movement of *okupas* that exasperates officials still today.

The next building is a five-story exemplar of post-Gaudi *noucentisme* architecture about a century old. You step off the sidewalk and ring a buzzer; the heavy door unlatches, and you wander into a hollow, dim, dusty lobby. Up the wide sweeping stairs, on the mezzanine, are the offices of Arquitectos Sin Fronteras, where six young activists of another kind are gathered around a conference room table. These are the core members of Raons Públiques. There is a cacophony of people talking in Spanish. A few of them are skyping a collaborator who lives in the Dominican Republic; others are making last-minute changes to the agenda, figuring out whose turn it is to take minutes, who is leading the meeting. "The group functions totally horizontally," says Lucía, an Italian architect, "all decisions are made by consensus, and we take turns every week" (Zandigiacomi, 2012). In a group with no leader, things somehow manage to get accomplished.

The same can't be said for one of the projects. "Chaos," says Martín, a designer/builder from Argentina, "is what happens when a group is starting" (Fieldnotes, 2012). The group he is referring to is not Raons Públiques. The chaos is happening within a project called Patio La Pau, a do-it-yourself effort to renovate a school's rundown patio. The project is ostensibly to build a play structure, but much of the meeting is spent talking about how to build a community's capacity to communicate reasonably with each other. Another item on the evening's agenda involves revisions to a letter that will be sent to the director of Participation for the city. The letter critiques a call for proposals that would involve neighborhood entities in the self-management of vacant sites in the city. The members have many misgivings about the proposal, but are also encouraged that the city is even thinking about grassroots approaches. The consensus around the table is to involve other activist groups, to send the letter, and try to set up a personal meeting with the director.

The discussions around this table are part of a practice of reform activism exemplified in this chapter by the group Raons Públiques and its eight or so core members as it has been practiced over the past four years. The group, which I observed

through several months of meetings and activities, is constantly evolving, but currently defines itself as:

> *an association formed by an interdisciplinary group of professionals from the urban sector and from different geographic origins: educators, urbanists, anthropologists, designers and architects. The team, formed in 2009, proposes to improve the transformation and management of the city through raising awareness and direct inclusion of citizens in decision-making. Raons Públiques uses practice to investigate new methodologies of intervention in public space that promote citizen co-responsibility. (Raons Públiques, 2013)*

This chapter uses Raons Públiques as a case study to explore the modality of reform activism. According to the framework of urban activism from Chapter 2 and shown below (Figure 4.1), reform activism exists closer to the status quo than to revolutionary activism, orienting itself more to authority and acting through discourse more than through material.
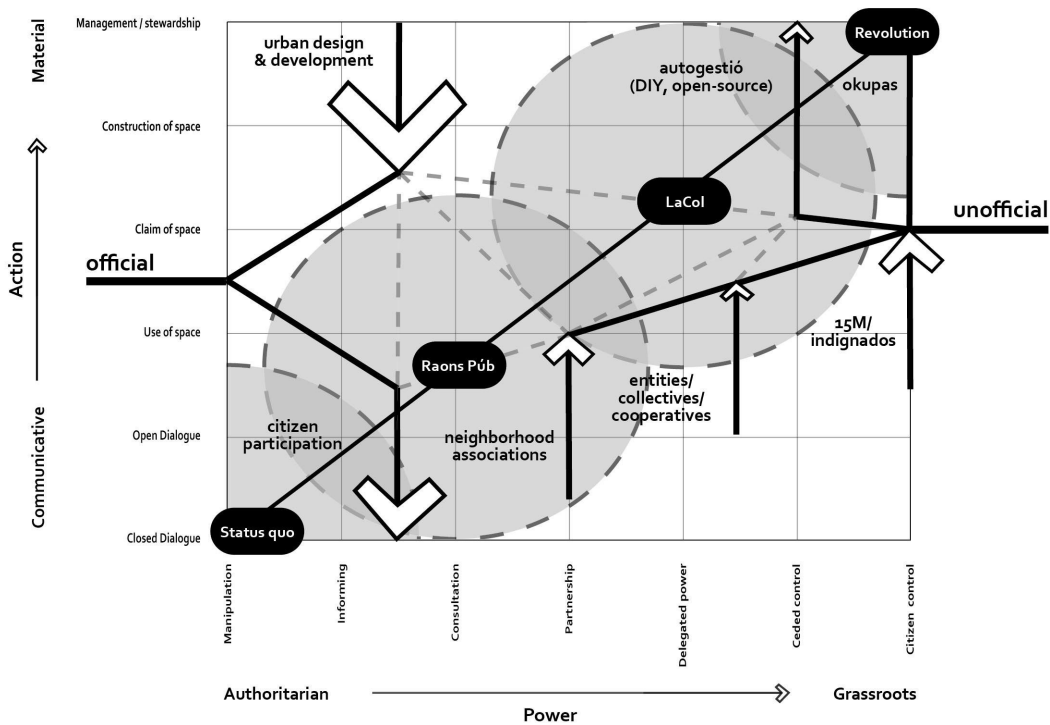
Figure 4.1 Modalities of Urban Activism

The five experiments in this chapter reinforce this characterization of reform. The first two demonstrate a penchant for acting discursively and also for experimenting with oblique approaches to engagement that involve material actions as tools for better

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discourse. The next two illustrate a range of roles and positions between residents and officials. The final experiment focuses on the group's internal organization and methodology, as well as the tension between friendship and professionalism and the related struggle to evolve the group into a sustainable, solvent business entity. This chapter will evaluate these five experiments, but first it will describe how Raons Públiques came into being and what backgrounds and attitudes its members have brought to the group.

4.2 Background: From All Corners to Public Dialogue

By chance. It began by chance. It was in September 2009. We were, well, I was doing an building diagnosis [with Arquitectos Sin Fronteras] and they invited me to a meeting for "Local Cooperation" for Barcelona. And it was there that I met Martín and Carlos and Lucía. They had misgivings about participating in this competition called "Racons Publics (Public Corners)," which is where our name comes from. It was to intervene in public spaces in the city. So we criticized the premise of the competition and proposed something to intervene in the competition itself. (Martínez de la Riva, 2012)

Architecture sans Frontières International (ASF) describes itself as a "non-hierarchical network of not-for-profit and participative organization" that started in France in 1979 and has expanded to 23 countries. ASF España joined in 1992, and ASF Catalunya in 1996 (Architecture Sans Frontières, 2013). Like the other chapters, ASF in Barcelona dedicates most of its efforts to design-build projects in other countries--Africa and Central America especially--building schools, housing, and other facilities. It might seem odd then for ASF to be working in Barcelona itself--hardly an emerging economy lacking in basic architectural infrastructures. But there are also many international architects who immigrated to Barcelona during the past decade, and these individuals don't necessarily prioritize ASFs goal of promoting "trans-national dialogues and long-term partnerships with and within the less affluent countries" (Architecture Sans Frontières, 2013). For them ASF and by extension Local Cooperation, served the opposite role. It provided a group of immigrants a venue for incorporation into new culture in Barcelona, a way for them to understand and participate in the critical discourses about the city they were still discovering. [25]

Raons Públiques is situated within ASF, officially its "local cooperation" arm. Some activities and financial support are coordinated, but Raons Públiques' agenda and projects are self-determined. This arrangement was not simply automatic; it was the result of a conscious positioning of the group that evolved as Raons Públiques defined itself.

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[25] Park and Burgess' concept of assimilation has been dismissed as hegemonic, but as their core definition is more nuanced than some critics suggest, and still pertinent (Alba, 2003). They wrote: "Assimilation is a process of interpenetration and fusion in which persons and groups acquire the memories, sentiments, and attitudes of other persons and groups, and, by sharing their experience and history, are incorporated with them in a common cultural life (Park, 1921).

And now clearly we're structured as an independent group, but it's not that we're outside of ASF. We use the headquarters of ASF, we meet there and we're in contact with their technicians. ASF is a well known, and strong, NGO. I'd say it is like we work in parallel. Before we were a group within ASF. Clearly we recognize the principles of ASF, like the defense of vulnerable populations and vonunteerism and sensitizing people toward ways of making architecture. (Zandigiacomi, 2012)

Negotiating its space within an institution is something that Raons Públiques has had to do since its inception. When Raons Públiques began, the local cooperation arm was in disarray, bruised from personal politics that involved the dismissal of its director and soul searching over what role the group should play. "Misgivings" (*inquietudes*) were key for Raons Públiques from the outset--applied to institutions or to urbanism in general--they are what motivate their desire to reform.

Figure 4.2 Raons Públiques members, 2010 (image: Raons Públiques)

Neither Andrés, Martín, Lucía, or Carlos, the four original members of Raons Públiques, is from Barcelona. They hail respectively from Galicia, Argentina, Italy, and Perú. Since forming, the group has grown by another seven or eight, from France (Alice), Italy (Giovanni), Galicia (Javier), Paraguay (Amalia), and Barcelona (Montse, Gaëlle, and Susana) as well. Of the eleven core members, seven are trained in architecture. The disciplinary diversity comes from Amalia, a graphic and exhibit designer; and from the three Catalans: Montse, Gaëlle, and Susana, an anthropologist, sociologist, and interior designer. The diversity of the group is a point of pride and acknowledged influence on its approach:

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We're different ages, different nationalities, even different sexual orientations, different professions and different characters. (López Tapia, 2012)

Very important for me was that we got along well. The group, they're a really great group of people, really smart and really good at what they do in their field. We learn a lot from each other's work. (Speratti, 2012)

These details--diversity, transnationality and multidisciplinarity--are important. This is a large part of what makes Raons Públiques particularly well suited and motivated to assume the modality of reform activism. The bridging capital they generate, to borrow Robert Putnam's term (Putnam, 2000), is enhanced and propelled by the multitude of experiences and points of view that each member brings to the table, and which must be reconciled in order to work together on a daily basis, a fact confirmed by Lucía:

For others it [agreement] comes fast. But with us, oh man. Sometimes I say 'madre mía.' Of course, there are at least five different visions, and you have to work it out. (Zandigiacomi, 2012)

Putnam's distinction between bridging and bonding capital helps decipher the differences between Raons Públiques and LaCol, which I will evaluate in the next chapter. According to Putnam, bridging networks are "outward looking and encompass people across diverse social cleavages." Bonding networks, on the other hand, are more inward looking and create social capital that is "good for undergirding specific reciprocity and mobilizing solidarity" (Putnam, 2000, p. 22). Following this distinction, Raons Públiques falls further toward the bridging side while LaCol is more suitably labeled as a bonding network.

In the case of Raons Públiques, the internal barriers that exist because of diversity are not what anyone could call insurmountable; nonetheless, the stance of being open to other points of view does resonate with their broader goal of designing inclusive cities. Bridging then occurs both internally and as an external disposition to the city. It translates into a desire to reach out across social, professional and political groups that otherwise don't relate with each other. In practice, this means nurturing contacts both with city officials, neighborhood leaders, and other professional groups. But as Putnam also notes, groups can "simultaneously bond along some social dimensions and bridge across others" (Putnam, 2000). The original group of Raons bonded quickly over inquietudes about Barcelona's model of urbanism and through working closely on their first experiment in participatory urbanism, the Racons competition.

The inquietudes and uncertainties that bind together Raons Públiques center on two themes: architecture and participation. By 2009 when Raons Públiques began, the economic crisis was already in full swing. Architecture was among the worst casualties, with over half of the city's young architects suddenly landing "outside the marketplace" (Zandigiacomi, 2012). This meant that many architects were unemployed, or only partly employed. For the group members, the crisis may have provided some impetus to look for new forms of engagement, but it didn't create the inquietudes. These they brought each brought from their former contexts, as expressed by the group's four first members:

In school they teach you this type of architecture that isn't what, what logically convinces you. As for me, months earlier I wanted to join ASF … to address my inquietudes and to take advantage of my time to learn things. But also somewhat blindly without knowing what would happen. I don't know. The reason for Raons Públiques came little by little, it wasn't planned. (Martínez de la Riva, 2012)

In ASF I found what i was looking for. I was able to reconnect with my uncertainties as to why i had studied architecture. Understanding architecture as a tool, as a function, not as an object in and of itself. I was never interested in the names of architects, or forms, I didn't study geometry much. But I 've always been dedicated in the processes of architecture. … To me, architecture is a tool to be able to leave people with a better quality of life. (Sánchez Brizuela, 2012)

Here in Barcelona, people believe the architect is invincible, and he/she still is. People still think so. Now, because of the crisis, the whole system has been brought down. It's an important thing to understand, because people still see Barcelona as a model when Barcelona is collapsing. Well, we hope to show another model. (Zandigiacomi, 2012)

I joined ASF for one reason, because of an inquietude about participating politically in my city. [Lima, Perú] I was interested in positioning myself in Barcelona, that makes sense, right? I came with all that experience and misgivings. I came here and wanted to do the same. (López Tapia, 2012)

If architecture and urbanism were the sources of uncertainty, then their energies were deliberately directed toward ways they could change, a "positive denunciation" as they called it (Raons Públiques, 2012a). On their webpage they outlined their critiques: "the lack of dialogue between citizens and official organisms," "exclusion in decision-making," "dissatisfaction with interventions in public space," "a monologue on the part of the authorities," and "false participatory processes" (Raons Públiques, 2012b).

We seek to achieve a more elevated level of participation, which would allow citizens to empower themselves and arrive at partial self-management of public space … We believe it is necessary to create new mechanisms of dialogue between parties, gathering together technicians as articulators between citizen and official organisms, generating horizontal communication between them, in this way giving neighbors the possibility of engaging. (Raons Públiques, 2012b)

Group members perceived that the city's processes had been a failure, and that now any new efforts at participation were poisoned by distrust between city government and the citizens. Following the cue of Judith Innes or other communicative rationalists, the group did not reject citizen participation altogether, only its poor implementation, and they believed this trust could be repaired. Rather than dismiss participation as a concept, they characterized what the city was doing as "not participation." This is true even for Gaëlle, who has taken the most pointed stance against what she considers to be manipulative practices:

You, as a technician for citizen participation … you ask [the people] a series of questions that already come marked--to draw out something that is already set.

To place in official reports or to choose or finalize something that was already decided. Doing this in administration is a way they have to legitimize their power, while saying what they're doing is carrying on a process of participation when really it's a process of information but they dress it up as a debate, with some conclusions at the end, that are basically made to legitimize their position. So it is not really, for me, it isn't really citizen participation. (Suñer, 2012)

Others are more conciliatory, especially Eva who actually works for the city's Agenda 21 office. From her vantage point, most officials working for the city don't set out to manipulate. There is simply incoherence, a lack of transparency, and inadequate resources. All of this, she says, breeds distrust:

For participation, the basic problem, the key is in trust. And to trust you have to have transparency. If you don't know who, who is in charge of these projects, it creates distrust. (Rodriguez, 2012)

The problem of distrust is one echoed by most members of Raons Públiques, and it is one whose resolution group members do not believe is helped through opposition or criticism, but rather by creating "new spaces of dialogue between citizens and administration" (Raons Públiques, 2012a). The administration actually has dozens of venues for dialogue with citizens, what they call "organs of participation." These were established as a legally-mandated framework based primarily on three documents: The Regulatory Norms of Citizen Participation, the Functioning of the Districts, and the Metropolitan Code (Area Metropolitana de Barcelona, 2004; Barcelona, 1991, 2002). These include neighborhood councils, district councils, a city-wide council of associations, and many other. Altogether, according to Carles Agustí, the Director of the city's office for Participation and Associationism, there are 570 venues for public participation. In his words, "It's too much" (Agustí Hernández, 2012).

Whether there is too much participation would be disputed by the members of Raons Públiques. It would be more accurate to say that most of these "organs" practice participation with strict institutional constraints. So in calling for new spaces of dialogue, Raons Públiques is not calling for more official meetings, but for a different kind of engagement. The group imagines that these new spaces of participation are created through experimentation, by trial and error. According to Lucía,

I'd say we've used an experimental method. We've learned by doing more than by applying things from theory. (Zandigiacomi, 2012)

In Spanish the word *experimentar* means both to experiment and to experience. Some of the examples I will detail in this chapter clearly involve experiments of the trial and error variety; others, like the group's internal workshops, are experiences that have helped to shape the group's approach to activism. The remainder of this chapter traces reform activism's main themes through five experiments: a design competition, a neighborhood diagnosis, a school playground, institutional outreach, and the group's own internal workshops. These allow us to see reform activism as an approach that seeks institutional change through a refinement of methods and a dialogical bridging between officials, technicians and publics. Embracing a multiplicity of disciplines and points of view, reform activism acts horizontally to empower citizens in the

identification and resolution of problems, and it utilizes architectural and other creative devices as pretexts to enhance dialogue.

4.3 Experiment 1: Public Corners

The first experiment details the origins of Raons Públiques as its founders participated in a city-wide design competition. As the group worked through a series of projects, an approach and methodology began to emerge. Beginning from a focus on dialogue, the group moved toward more material actions by taking a ludic approach.

In the summer of 2009, Martín, Lucia and Carlos were looking for a way to rebuild ASFs Local Cooperation committee when they decided to enter an annual competition hosted by Fostering Arts and Design (FAD), a foundation supported in part by the city of Barcelona. Part of the rationale for entering was to provide some critique to what they thought had become a contest for architectural form. The FAD competition was called "Racons Públics," which means public corners. Its aim was to solicit proposals for revitalizing derelict spaces across the city. Despite the fact that FAD called its competition "a project of microsurgery and of citizen participation," the conception of participation was limited to the fact that "any citizen" could propose a design for one of corners of the city designated by the competition (FAD, 2010). The winning entries, however, all display a high level of graphic sophistication and suggest a privileging of architects. The ASF entries also included the apparently requisite photoshop montages, but they also emphasized their different approach. According to Lucia:

> *We began critical of what was happening in Barcelona. And the criticism was that it couldn't be that there would be a public space with four pretty chairs and some object, which was what FAD proposed for design. It couldn't be that the design would be the only way to turn a space around. (Zandigiacomi, 2012)*

But if not conventional urban design, then what? The group started with the name. Instead of Racons Públics (Public Corners), they called their entry Raons Públiques (Public Reasons) as a way to stress the importance of discourse over simply spatial considerations. For Raons Públiques, the competition was their first opportunity to test a few approaches and to refine by trail and error. As they worked their way through four different proposals in different corners of the city, an approach began to evolve.

Figure 4.3 Trying dialogue at workshop #1 (image: author)

The first corner that group moved on to a working class neighborhood called Turo de la Peira. Here, their first instinct was to start with dialogue. After researching social networks in the neighborhood, they contacted the two primary neighborhood associations and organized a workshop. In Barcelona, since the 1970s, neighborhood associations have assumed the primary role as intermediary between the city and citizens, assumed to be the most representative of the public interests. But it was here that Raons Públiques discovered that they could be anything but representative. The median age of attendees at their workshop was well past retirement age, which led to skewed opinions:

> *It was older people criticizing the youth. The only young guy there was a policeman who worked in the plaza. (Sánchez Brizuela, 2012)*

But the lack of representativeness of the attendees was only one problem with the approach. The idea had been to invite the neighbors to ask them how they thought of the space, but the discussion was structured very formally. All of the members agree the workshop was not a success. Martín recalls the earnestness and laughs now at how he thought you could just ask questions about urbanism directly:

> *We want a debate on public space. What does public space mean? What is the city? How do we construct the city? These were the questions we posed in the workshop, and it was a failure. (Sánchez Brizuela, 2012)*

Figure 4.4 The ludic approach in Sants (image: Raons Públiques)

After the first workshop, the group realized that a change was needed and that their mono-disciplinary outlook was limiting.

We said, "we don't have the capacity to do this. We have to look for help from other disciplines." That's when Amalia and Montse came. They were friends of Andrés. (Sánchez Brizuela, 2012)

Montse is an anthropologist by training and works as an educator for children in a disadvantaged neighborhood. Her advice drew from these experiences: it had to be more fun, more "ludic," to put the debate in everyday context. That approach suited Martín fine; after all, he first came to know ASF through a group called Payasos Sin Fronteras, (Clowns Without Borders). The second "corner" was located in the neighborhood of Sants. The team decided this time to ground truth the associations, walking around and introducing themselves to various neighbors and groups. One group they came across was the architect's collective LaCol. By chance they had just undertaken a guerrilla garden project in the street in front of their office. There were still plants in the street when they wandered into their office. The relationship between the two groups began here and would grow, as I will describe in the following chapters.

Raons Públiques put up flyers, invited neighbors, and then adorned the "corner" with tables, food, music, art supplies, and clowns. They went through the neighborhood with a chalkboard and asked people what they wanted in the street, then combined the most popular responses into their proposal. The proposal didn't win a prize, but it did suggest a way forward for the group's methodology and a movement upward on the ladder of action: toward open dialogue, inhabiting the street, and using creativity as an attractant.

Figure 4.5 Facilitating design in Fort Pienc (image: Raons Públiques)

Raons Públiques' winning entry was in a neighborhood called Fort Pienc, where a new community center had recently been built and where ideas had already been circulating about building a community garden. Raons Públiques adapted what had worked in the earlier workshops. Over the course of a month, they conducted a background diagnosis and held a series of workshops, both on the street and indoors, in which neighbors, both invited and serendipitously dropping in, left comments on post-it notes, debated ideas, and drew up plans. Then the group synthesized these into a final presentation.

Figure 4.6 Vias Verdes, FAD competition entry (image: FAD)

The final competition boards explained the methodology that the group had evolved:

> The proposal "Green Ways" consolidates the first phase in the organic evolution of the city, fruit of a methodological, transdiciplinary road based on participatory design that allows one to execute proposals, not only with architectural value, but also with means of mobilization and citizen implication. By working in common between technicians and neighbors, it represents points of consensus within this urban complexity. (Raons Públiques, 2012b)

The experience of FAD had yielded a few results: an interdisciplinary approach, methods that valued citizen mobilization and implication, and collaboration between technicians and neighbors. Winning the competition also meant that the group was propelled forward, into a new identity as Raons Públiques.

4.4 Experiment 2: Fort Pienc and the Carrito

The second experiment grew from the success of the first and expanded the experiences of Raons Públiques within the neighborhood of Fort Pienc. The wide range of experiences over the course of several months broaches several important themes,

especially the role of design and the construction of ludic traps for acquiring local knowledge.

Winning the FAD competition, Raons Públiques received a stipend to further develop their ideas for the Fort Pienc neighborhood. The idea they proposed, however, no longer seemed feasible since part of the designated site was dedicated for other purposes by the city. With no obvious design project, the group decided to start again from the beginning, with a diagnosis. The first thing they acknowledged was that they actually knew very little about Fort Pienc. None of them lived there; they were outsiders. According to Amalia,

> Patricia and Montse are the anthropologists and they said, first of all we have to study the neighborhood. We can't just go in there. No, first of all they need to know us. They have to get to know us, we have to get to know them, and we have to study the neighborhood. So we decided to do a diagnosis. (Speratti, 2012)

Diagnosis is not an uncommon phase within urban design process, but it usually occupies only a few weeks of time. Raons Públiques continued their diagnosis for well over a year. Fort Pienc became their laboratory, where they tested dozens of methods: interviews, detective games, dancing, model-making, trading cards, mapping, and workshops. All of these came accompanied by an object that became the trademark of Raons Públiques--the *carrito*.

Figure 4.7 The *carrito* in Fort Pienc (image: Raons Públiques)

The *carrito*, or cart, was an invention of Andrés and a few other members who built an initial model to take to a summer workshop in France being undertaken by former colleagues of Alice at Atelier sans tabou. This prototype *carrito* barely survived the roadtrip back, but Raons Públiques quickly started imagining a new *carrito*, a mobile cart and exhibition stand that would stand out in any public space to draw attention, to invite contact. It would be an architectural curiosity, something to open up

conversations, something to temporarily alter the flow of everyday life. Today it is hard to think about the group without the *carrito*.

> *In the end, the essence of Raons in one word is the carrito, for me. And the carrito has more use when you set it loose it and learn from what happens. It's not just an intention of transforming. Every element when you project it into space transforms the space. But in a social way, to generate participation. This is a tool, but the feedback that it produces allows us to enter a place and learn from it. (López Tapia, 2012)*

The *carrito* itself as a material object merits some description. Made mostly from recycled and found parts, it is an architectural oddity, essentially a box on three wheels, sheathed in translucent ribbed plastic and painted wood flaps that transform into tabletops with the help of a hacked tripod. A spidery tangle of bent pvc pipes arcs above the *carrito*, suspending strings that carry notes, photos, or signs. The *carrito* is a statement about the object, or purpose, of architecture itself, as Raons Públiques views it: a vehicle for community engagement.

Raons Públiques was not the first to invent the mobile cart. *Carrito* translates directly as "charrette" in French, which in the 1800s in the Ecole des Beaux Arts meant a cart upon which students would place their projects prior to a critique. In modern US parlance the charrette has lost its connections with mobility and has become synonymous with the public workshop. But some contemporary architecture collectives like Raons Públiques have revisited mobile architectures in which the *carrito* or charrette becomes the object itself, moving through the streets in a way to put the city itself on critique, with citizens as the jury. In a similar vein, in Medellín, Colombia the group Puente Lab has borrowed from vernacular food carts to propose what they call the "mobile device."

> *The mobile device is a proposed cultural infrastructure, transformable object and device information exchange and communication. (Lab, 2012)*

Their device is a modified or self-assembled vehicle that moves through the city and in so doing defamiliarizes everyday spaces.

In Madrid, the work of the architecture collectives Basurama and Zuloark, especially in the Plaza de la Cebada, also invokes this emerging phenomenon of hacked mobile architectural equipment. Through a series of workshops, these groups have experimented with a radical urban pedagogy--teaching citizens to make elements of the city by collecting and assembling found objects. Wood pallets are the most common material. Alberto Corsin Jimenez's ethnographic research with these collectives equates what these groups are doing with a form of non-representational architectural practice. In other words, the goal is not so much the object itself as it is the enactment or performance of its use or production. Seen this way, the recycled pallet benches that Basurama and Zuloark are making in public workshops in Madrid are using mobile architectural devices as a kind of aesthetic trap (Corsín Jimenez, 2013). Corsín explains what he means by traps:

> *Traps capture, caution and captivate; they provoke wonder, suspension and elicitation … The prototypes of urban furniture work just in this fashion: they help assemble and furnish the conditions for social seduction. Pouncing out from*

the shadows of their nonpresence, the muebles prototype their own re-predation.
They are trying to fascinate and seduce a community into existence. To trap it
out. (Corsín Jimenez, 2013)

The seductive trap explained by Corsin can also be applied to the devices used by Raons Públiques. These devices move through or are placed within a neighborhood but they are not invasive and do not demand engagement by passing publics. For these devices, details are important: the type and quality of the lure influence its catch. A bench made of pallets will attract some publics and not others; a *carrito* will also draw a particular crowd.

As the Fort Pienc project unfolded, the *carrito* was the mainstay of the groups various activities. It was, however, but one of the devices used to lure participation. For Neighborhood Detective (*Detectiu de Barri*), Amalia designed detective id cards for children from the neighborhood. The cards space for an alias and a photo, plus five questions about public space that would be filled out in order to win a prize. These included questions like "Ask five people what brings them to the plaza," or "Count how many trees there are in the plaza. How many benches are in the plaza?" or "Look for an older person and teach them how to play a game." From this last card it is clear that the objective is not only to collect information, but to foster dialogue and encourage more environmental awareness.

Figure 4.8 Neighborhood Detectives of Fort Pienc (image: Claudia Paraschiv)

Having succeeded in engaging children in the diagnostic project, Raons Públiques then built from the detectives project. Working with student Claudia Paraschiv from MIT, they extended the concept of sending participants away with fun take-aways, designing a complete set of public space trading cards that highlighted different public spaces within the neighborhood. Designed in child-friendly "Pokemon" style, the colorful cards show strengths of opportunity, social interaction, green space, facilities

and access, and also include a special mission that the young detectives had to complete in order to get another card.

Figure 4.9 Detective Trading Cards (image: Claudia Paraschiv)

After months of activities, outings, meetings and workshops, the group had tested dozens of methods for learning about a neighborhood directly from its residents. Added to this, behind the scenes Andrés was undertaking an elaborate geographic analysis of demographics, built form, and land uses and overlaying onto these some of the mental maps that respondents had drawn. None of these methods alone was sufficient to provide a full account of something as complex and dynamic as a neighborhood. Together, on the other hand, the group was buried by a mountain of data, an overwhelming archive of knowledge about a community, its spaces and its needs. But with no project there was also no focus, no tangible, material outcome for which all involved could feel a sense of accomplishment.

Raons Públiques is currently completing a book that they hope will bring some resolution to the work that they did at Fort Pienc. Its publication continues to occupy the group's energies with ever-constant lists of tasks. The project was an important learning tool with many successes, and with failures that some like Lucia see as even more important. Asked about the project's success, Lucia answers:

> *Yes, well, we are happy with the outcome. But, we confused ourselves many times. Many times we crashed into walls. Fort Pienc was not a success, the project of Fort Pienc. And now the publication that we're doing is a publication about our errors. (Zandigiacomi, 2012)*

The self-critique and reflection in Lucia's comment was evident in my observations over the months that I shared with the group. The desire to reform applied not only to the city's norms but also internally to the group itself.

4.5 Experiment 3: Trojan Horse in the Schoolyard

RP's experiences at the La Pau School are considered here as Experiment 4. They involve the design and construction of a school play structure, or *tobogán*, along with the collective social structures necessary to accomplish that task. This experiment highlights the uses of design objects, the dilemma of expertise, and the goals of empowerment and capacity-building.

One of the difficulties of working on the Fort Pienc project was the ability to get purchase within the community. Raons Públiques extended itself into the neighborhood, to get to know the residents. In order to make itself known to the neighbors, it appeared regularly with the *carrito* in the same places, so that it became part of the rhythm of the community. Raons Públiques' explicit goal was the empowerment of the neighborhood, but what empowerment toward what end? The group could bridge between themselves as technicians and neighborhood associations and residents, but they could not plant a desire within those same local constituents to reciprocate. During the internal workshops, the group decided that they would prefer to be invited by a local group to contribute toward a need that the neighbors had already determined. As Alice put it:

> *We decided that, if people call us, well yes if there are already neighbors and interested people, who want to reclaim something, we could be effective. But if we land in some neighborhood and decide that in this space there has to be something, well that doesn't work. (Zandigiacomi, 2012)*

That invitation came shortly after the first internal workshop, late in 2011, from a school called La Pau in the neighborhood of La Verneda i La Pau and the district of Sant Martí.

Sant Martí is a large district that lies directly east of the center of Barcelona. It includes most of the beaches of the city, the new high-tech area called 22@, and the luxury high-rises and conference centers of Diagonal Mar. Historically, however, it was also heavily industrial, a zone where Cerdà's grid gave way to superblocks of factories and modernist housing projects. It is within one of these projects that the La Pau School sits, its gray asphalt patio hidden from the street by a high wall but not to the dozens of apartments that loom above it.

Figure 4.10 La Pau School in Sant Martí (image: Raons Públiques)

The neighborhood of La Verneda i La Pau grew exponentially during the 1960s, especially as immigrants form Andalucía in southern Spain arrived to take low-paying jobs in construction and services. The demographics of the neighborhood still reflect this inheritance, with 45% of the population today born outside of Catalonia. Furthermore, many of those born in Catalonia belong to first generation, Spanish-speaking families.

My first field observation with Raons Públiques was late in January 2012, ostensibly to meet and watch Martín and Carlos interact with parents and students as they came out of school to head home. Parents came and left with kids, but nobody from Raons Públiques showed up. In the confusion I was identified as "one of the architects" by the two mothers who were leading the effort to redesign the patio. Eventually Carlos and Martín arrived; both had been delayed by work obligations. This is the nature of volunteer groups, where other paid duties must take precedence; it is also a reason the group wants to professionalize itself.

Fortunately Raons Públiques was not the only disorganized group; there were essentially only two parents in the school who were involved in anything resembling a parent-teacher association (AMPA). Despite this rudimentary structure, the parents had managed to convince the school principal to undertake a process that would lead to some sorely needed improvements to the patio. They held a school assembly with Raons Públiques in which students themselves held microphones and talked about what they wanted to see in the patio. These were the seeds of a project that, unlike Fort Pienc, seemed to have a clearly material objective. The mothers of La Pau had originally imagined that the architects from Raons Públiques would be coming in as experts to design and build playground improvements. What they did not realize was that they themselves were the project. While a playground might be an outcome of the project,

the main upfront work would revolve around creating a "motor group" that was capable of leading the process.

A common argument against participatory design is that the quality suffers as you involve non-experts. Depending on the goal this could be true. If design quality is measured by purely formal means, then yes. As Martín admits, the play structure (*tobogán*) at La Pau "is not going to win any design awards." But that is okay, he adds: "the *tobogán* is an excuse to foster community" (Fieldnotes, 2012). This sentiment is offered by other members as well. The attitude toward architectural object in general is one that has been debated by the group.

> *There was one time when we also said: fine, we won't have to arrive ever to an object. Right? We just have to, really, stay on the margins and then somebody else will produce the object.* *(Zandigiacomi, 2012)*

This shift expressed by this sentiment is from a product to a process. And while it is popular now to talk about process, it is harder to find examples like this where designers allow the product to be determined by participants. For Carlos, it comes down to two ways of practicing participation. The first has a focus on how participation can make cities, where the aim is to produce an urban project. Whereas:

> *The other way is to use the methodologies and the urban project to promote participation by the people. They are two very different foci, because the first already has to do with a product and with a theme, let's say, urbanistic urbanism, where there is a team of professionals. In the other the urban project is simply a pretext or everything about this methodology is to work to promote participation. It's more an effort of sensitization and raising awareness.* *(López Tapia, 2012)*

To reiterate, because this point is crucial: either you use participation to make project or you use projects to make participation. Raons Públiques has chosen the second option.

This brings the discussion back to Corsín's notion of the architectural object as a trap. In La Pau School, the *tobogán* is a trap, an object of delight that attracts people and tricks them into building community. It is an excuse, a pretext. The *tobogán* is like a Trojan horse, but built within the walls of the school by parents and children. The installation of this Trojan horse on the patio of the school, rather than unleashing soldiers upon Troy, unleashes the empowerment of children and parents upon the community.

Figure 4.11 The tobogán as Trojan horse (image: author)

The image of a self-built Trojan horse is one of empowerment and capacity building. This entails a different role for designers who normally enter communities with privileged status, knowledge and tools. Expert intervention, even well intentioned, can close routes to empowerment, insinuating a dependence upon outsider knowledge and skills. Because of this, Raons Públiques is careful not to use the word expert, though this is sometimes difficult:

> *People like what we do and ask us to help them. But it can be a hindrance because people think we're experts. But we're not. We establish that we always work on a methodology based on experience, that we do trial and error, we've learned, we've made a lot of mistakes. It's an open methodology and we're still improving. (Speratti, 2012)*

Carlos carries this theme to a broader political context. "In our generation," he says, another influence is the rejection of the conventional politics of the leader-orator" (López Tapia, 2012). Instead of leaders, he says, we have references: people who set patterns, who work in relationships, who have experience. Raons Públiques in this light is becoming a reference in the area of participation, whose expertise is in bridging between the social, physical, and political.

The experiment at La Pau was exactly this, of constructing a constituency at the school that could be capable of undertaking a project like the *tobogán* and in so doing build its capacity to sustain its newly-forged relationships. These goals of empowerment are best expressed by Gaëlle and Alice:

> *The important thing is that people know that they have in their power a potency . . . The people know that in reality, but maybe you have to create more flow of relations, of communication, of synergies, etc. (Suñer, 2012)*

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The work of promoting participation happens through awareness … to bring awareness, to allow people to become aware that they could take power, they could decide things in their neighborhood. (Lancien, 2012)

The hard work of building capacity from nearly scratch was one that Martín and Montse took mostly upon their shoulders. The first step was to create a "motor group" that would be responsible for the project from the school's side. Raons Públiques helped the parent leaders to set up an AMPA, guiding it through the rough patches of power sharing, politics and personal disputes, until it could assume responsibility for the project.

Figure 4.12 La Pau student projects for the patio (image: author)

Figure 4.13 La Pau parents build the *tobogán* (image: Raons Públiques)

With an AMPA in place, the shape of a project could take form. Students took part as well, reporting to the AMPA with their design ideas for the patio. The design proceeded, with some guidance from Raons Públiques, but only as a technical consultant. Martín said:

> It's about knowing what is your role. Are we experts? No. The design comes
> from the parents. Some have a little construction experience. Others are learning.
> In the end, the project though belongs to them. (Fieldnotes, 2012)

With a design in hand, workdays were planned, complete with food and entertainment, so that parents could begin the building project. As they did, Raons Públiques members provided support and kept the students busy spray-painting stencils with the school name on T-shirts. After several work days and a few legal insurance-related hurdles, the *tobogán* was dedicated at a large school fiesta with music, clowns and even belly dancers. At the event, the AMPA signed up more and more parents until they had over 50 members.

Figure 4.14 Tobogán dedication (image: author)

The *tobogán* is a colorful, exuberant object that now adorns a patio that is more full of life and hope. The real success story, however, is in the empowerment of the students and parents. The AMPA has parlayed the *tobogán's* success into other projects, including the painting of a mural on the entire wall of the patio. They have also begun to tackle bigger questions about the future of the patio. Additionally, representatives in the education department of the regional government also took notice, asking Raons Públiques whether the project at La Pau could not be extended to other locations. Had a team of young architects simply come into the school and built an impressive playground, none of these real successes would have been imaginable.

4.6 Experiment 4: Institutional Inroads

The next experiment of Raons Públiques includes various attempts by the group to establish bridging connections with city institutions for the express intent of reforming them. It highlights themes of positionality, collaboration, and institutional impact. It suggests that the modality of reform, though philosophically committed to engagement with communities, will gravitate back to institutional connections if that is where meaningful changes are being sought.

At the outset I asserted that Raons Públiques was motivated by a desire to reform institutional systems. This is visible in each of the previous experiments even if they did not directly implicate institutions like city hall in the projects. The first explorations were made from a stance of critique, and as the group has accumulated and tested more experiences, its projects are now demonstrations of alternative practices. These demonstrations are aimed at citizens, for the purpose of empowerment; at technicians, to foster reflective practice; and at institutions, for their reform. Despite the clear local value of the group's actions, demonstrations are only valuable insomuch as they are visible, so the dissemination of these experiences is a key element of Raons Públiques' activism. Citizens obviously have firsthand knowledge of the activities in which they participated. And though not all neighbors participate, the impacts on the community can positively impact even those who did not. Other technicians, such as other architects, landscape architects and activist groups, keep appraised of Raons Públiques' activities via broadcasts through a web site, blogs, and social media. They also connect through conferences and other professional events. Connections to individuals within administrations can occur through competition submissions, through exposure from public talks, and through direct contact either with insider bureaucrats like Eva or through more official channels. The experiment focuses on efforts to establish these direct, personal contacts.

With the government and the economy in a state of crisis, aligning oneself with authority is not universally popular. For many entities and activists in Barcelona, "ayuntamiento" (city hall) itself is a bad word, which Eva confirms:

> *Yes, it has a bad reputation. But not just city hall. All the government in Spain. Here city halls even in small towns have bad reputations. It all has to do with politics, for a lack of transparency. (Rodriguez, 2012)*

If uttering the word "city hall" can elicit rolling eyes, sighs, or more hostile reactions, which in my experience it often does, then it would be understandable for activists to either disengage from the administration or to fight against it. Raons Públiques, however, has taken a more pragmatic approach, deciding that city hall is going nowhere, yet still ought to reform its participatory practices. Eva is an interloper herself, having been affiliated with Raons Públiques on and off over the past two years, all the while working for the semi-public enterprise of Agenda 21, the office responsible for Barcelona's compliance with its signed duties to the United Nations action plan for sustainable development. This position means that she is somewhat removed from the bureaucracy, and her office often challenges city norms. "I don't feel like I work for city hall," she says, even though she is affiliated with it. But it also means that she has firsthand knowledge of the city's inner workings, and she has relationships with other

bureaucrats, who she believes aren't bad people. City hall, after all, is a set of relationships like any other organization, and Eva has seen many employees with honest intentions be disparaged. "They are doing their best," she says. I asked her how she thought the system should be changed:

> I think the ideal is to modify from within. You participate in something and you want to improve or change it. If you go alone, in the system we are in, well you can't live outside it. That's society, no? You can't live outside. (Rodriguez, 2012)

Andrés does not work for the city, but shares her opinion:

> This has to be applied from within the administration; if not, it doesn't serve anything. (Martínez de la Riva, 2012)

For Martín, working with the city is expressed as something of a necessary evil. Ideally, society would be different or there would be enough energy to make a revolutionary change, but:

> For now, we are collaborating with the system. We have neither the power or the capacity, and I think there aren't enough of us to generate a real alternative. (Sánchez Brizuela, 2012)

Martín sees the work that Raons Públiques did early on as a critique of the system, and what they are doing now as collaborating with it. This stage of collaboration, he hopes, is only a temporary step toward a future in which they might be able to engage in a new way altogether of making cities. Exactly what this looks like is not yet altogether clear, but neither is it an urgent topic of discussion.

Engaging in collaboration, as Raons Públiques aims to do, requires not only positioning oneself visibly. It means establishing channels of dialogue, and it requires direct, personal access to people within the administration. Carlos is concerned with access to these structures of power and sees dialogue and the formation of personal relationships as necessary to create a stairway to more institutional influence:

> The stairway is to position ourselves, to be known, to relate ourselves with authorities, with institutions, with neighbors, or whomever, relate ourselves at a personal level. (López Tapia, 2012)

As Carlos suggests, positioning oneself vis-à-vis the administration to achieve a collaborative relationship requires personal finesse. A level of trust between the activist and the bureaucrat must first be achieved. This is difficult if a conflictual stance is taken, and so the approach that Raons Públiques uses and that Andres describes is less threatening: "We have a position," he says, "that is very technical and rather conciliatory or dialogical with the administrators" (Martínez de la Riva, 2012).

Some of the personal and friendlier connections with the administration are made through interlopers like Eva, who are able to translate some of the group's objectives into real-world projects. For example, she was charged with leading several participatory workshops for a city design competition. These workshops were still criticized by many activist and neighborhood entities, but despite the criticisms Eva was

able to make some improvements. Her personal involvement in the project also made it more complicated to simply portray city hall in broad, negative terms.

Other sympathetic bureaucrats in the administration add to this difficulty of stereotyping city hall. In 2011, the overturning of over three decades of socialist control over city government put in place dozens of new administrators aligned with a party that is more conservative. Several younger faces appeared in major positions, including Laia Torras, the new director of participation for the department of Urbanism. Previously, she worked on the topic of civic participation for a local foundation, so she is sympathetic to the intentions of groups like Raons Públiques. For their part, Raons Públiques has nurtured a relationship with Laia, contacting her directly with suggestions and meeting privately to discuss how the city is treating participation with regard to specific projects. These actions have already yielded some results, particularly in the projects for the Portes de Collserola and Pla Buits, which I detail in Chapter 6.

Taking a collaborative, conciliatory approach, however, also has its downsides. In withdrawing conflict from the table, it limits the repertoire of actions at one's disposal. When contentious action is appropriate, the group will be presented with a dilemma of preserving the institutional relationship or standing firmly against an injustice. Or, empathizing with an individual within an administration can lead to an endorsement of unjust systems that are beyond the control of that individual. Gaëlle, who subscribes to the idea that you must change from within, would like the group to take stronger political positions, to continue to denounce what she sees as the city's many questionable practices. For her, institutional reform and conflict are bound together:

> *Of course. What it should be, direct action, direct participation, which means that for everything you claim that your debates, your conclusions, and your conflict should be tangible. You say one thing, that you work on it, that you debate it, so that there can be institutional results. (Suñer, 2012)*

On the other side, Carlos admits that as he learns more about the issues he cares about, he sees them less black and white: "my own ideological position becomes more bland and I become more conciliatory," he says (López Tapia, 2012).

> *I believe the fundamental objective and its reason for being is that all of this that's cooking here, well the administration adopts it to it can have a real impact and we aren't just left with our cool experiences, fun on the streets. To me it seems that to achieve a proposal, to be adopted by the administration, requires political work, the political work of generating some foundations. It's a very simple concept, right? Together we achieve more than being separated. (López Tapia, 2012)*

The optimism that Carlos expresses in this statement is infectious, that through consensus more is possible than through conflict. To argue Gaelle's point through Chantal Mouffe, Carlos' rather Habermasian approach relies on an "ideal speech situation" whereby common ground is found through enlightened dialogue. But as she argues, rational, equal dialogue is not What Mouffe argues is "the need to acknowledge the dimension of power and antagonism and their ineradicable character" and to create a new politics wherein antagonism is replaced with agonism in which conflict becomes a constructive part of a new participatory democracy. (Mouffe, 1999)

4.7 Experiment 5: Internal Workshops

The final experiment describes the recurring internal workshops that Raons Públiques has undertaken to reflect upon its successes and mistakes and to establish a foundation for future projects. In this section I will highlight the relationship between theory and practice, the topic of friendship versus professionalism, and the search for a methodology and a horizontal mode of organization.

What distinguishes Raons Públiques from other groups, says Martín, are its internal workshops and reflections. In addition to its weekly meetings, the group has held six "internal workshops" in order to reflect upon and evaluate its past activities and to plan future directions. The act of coming together is often referred to by collectives as "placing in common" (*ponerse en común*). It amounts to what social movement theorist Doug McAdam calls framing. "Mediating between the structural requirements of opportunity and organization," writes McAdam, "are the emergent meanings and definitions--or frames shared by the adherents of the burgeoning movement" (McAdam, McCarthy, & Zald, 1996, p. 8). This is critical the more a group bridges across a diverse membership. Furthermore, the frames are not static, but rather constantly evolving, so "placing in common" must continually occur and project successes and failures are part of a feedback loop. Framing happens in many ways--in meetings, through informal discussions, and in the preparation of documents for example. As Carlos explains, the group always wants to use its mistakes as learning opportunities:

> *Even still, Raons doesn't stop forming itself. Because of this, for all the activities we do, if they go well, the collaboration with others has an impact and are useful for the project. I think disequilibrium has more the effect that, it provides a feedback for us and is useful for the group. (López Tapia, 2012)*

Alice views the internal workshops as a way to bring practice back into a theoretical framework, and conversely a way to allow theory to inform practice:

> *Despite our disorganization we've gotten to a place that is a mix between theory and practice. That is very rare, because there are ton of groups that work on these themes of public space, but without theorizing or looking for the foundations of what they're doing. (Lancien, 2012)*

Regarding the back and forth process, Lucia notes:

> *This is our way of working, which comes out of a lot of reading, but especially out of many hours of work in the streets. Many hours. We keep experimenting and confusing ourselves, pursuing a theory. Then the good thing is that we've started to see that some experiences return to the theory. (Zandigiacomi, 2012)*

The loop that Lucía describes is a back and forth between praxis, which is a conscious application of theory to real-world contexts; and reflective practice, in which experiences return to inform theory. Feedback loops occur at weekly meetings. Broader topics, however, are discussed in internal workshops. These workshops take place over several weeks and take the place of weekly meetings. They are usually held in someone's home, over dinner. In these workshops, the group revisits its definitions of itself, writes manifestoes, sets goals for projects, establishes organizational structures and sets protocols for things such as accepting new members or communicating via email.

Figure 4.15 Raons Públiques Internal Workshop (image: Raons Públiques)

From observing the formal and informal interactions of Raons Públiques, it is hard for me to describe the relationships I observed at this and other events as anything other than friendship, but that word seems to be somewhat charged. When it started, the group was made of strangers who quickly bonded as friends. But over the past workshops, the members have decided to make Raons Públiques more "professional," for lack of a better word, as they admit. All of the original members told me the same story: when it started, Raons Públiques defined itself, officially, as a "group of friends." Said Alice about the new definition and the old:

> *Officially it is an interdisciplinary, multicultural group that works on the theme of participation in public space. Before, I believe, it was a group of friends who wanted to change the world. (Lancien, 2012)*

This question of friendship is not insignificant. It addresses the motivations of urban activists and the social context in which that activism is viable. With no personal connection between members, I believe, there would be no group formation. This does not mean that the members need to be the closest of friends, however. Carlos is careful to say that yes friendship exists, but "it is a friendship based on values and ideology" (López Tapia, 2012). He continues:

> *It's one thing to be a group of friends, and another is to hold friendship as a value and a pillar of our relationship … take it as a door that's open to generate work within the group, to generate positive things and support … I believe there has to come a moment in which we take this step of being, of evolving towards a social enterprise. Friendship is a topic you have to grasp and work on but you don't have to throw it out. (López Tapia, 2012)*

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The aim of professionalizing has caused the group to focus on making its own processes more stable and more productive. It is motivated by desires to be able to support themselves financially, by desires to be able to tackle more significant and complex projects, and to make the entire endeavor more durable. Even if they do not constitute themselves officially as an autonomous nonprofit entity, a collective or a cooperative, the workshops have focused on several aspects that are essential to operate effectively: organization, role definition, and methods.

Raons Públiques deliberately organizes horizontally and not hierarchically. This means that unlike many nonprofit entities, there is no board of directors, no president, vice president, secretary or treasurer. There are only equal members sharing duties, a "fluid structure" as Lucia puts it. Within this structure, members should in theory rotate duties of leading the meeting, taking notes, and preparing the agenda. In this way somebody always takes responsibility, but not power. Decisions are made cooperatively and there is no voting, only consensus. The sharing of duties is less equal, however, with regard to specific projects. Projects are led by one or two individuals, often by the one who first introduced it. This system leads to inevitable inequities in members' respective levels of commitment, an imbalance that extends to other aspects of the group also, as each individual member contributes the time that they are willing to dedicate. Martín, for example, puts in an average of 20 hours a week, while Amalia varies from 2 to 10 hours depending on the projects, graphics needs, or her outside work schedule. This is the nature of volunteer work, Lucia reminds me, "nobody gets paid."

At weekly meetings, it is clear that there is more work to do than the group can accomplish. One outcome of an internal workshop dealt with this issue by deciding to take fewer projects. Another way to alleviate the workload would be to increase the membership. But despite its inclusive approach, the group has decided to operate as a closed unit, inviting new members only after being thoroughly vetted and after meeting the specific needs of the group. A point of sensitivity is that outsiders usually assume that Raons Públiques is made of architects simply because it is a part of ASF. But in order to be multidisciplinary, as Andrés, notes, "we said, we don't want any more architects." Amalia adds:

> *The first year people thought we were ASF, no? "Oh, you guys are the architects, right? And especially the few of us who are non-architects, who are at least half the group now. (We decided to stop accepting architects to the group.) We said, "no, it's not just architects, it's a multi-disciplinary group. (Speratti, 2012)*

The assemblage of disciplines means a diversity of points of view, and also a diversity of skills. In France, according to Gaëlle, offices of urbanism commonly function in this way:

> *In France, there's a culture of pluri-disciplinary teams, that's a fact. There are agencies of urbanism with architects, geographers, political scientists. They are more used to working in the same workspace.*

Raons Públiques would most appropriately be called an inter-disciplinary group rather than a multi-disciplinary one. As such, members work side by side, sharing approaches and practices in ways that enrich and alter the work of the other team members. In

Raons Públiques, Gaëlle, an anthropologist would undertake and transcribe interviews, for example, but the questions may arise from Andrés' spatial analysis. Or, the educator and sociologist Montse might plan a children's activity that requires the graphic design skills of Amalia. After working together now for a few years, the team members have begun to anticipate each other's arguments, but because each member is trained in a specific expertise, Raons Públiques avoids simply being a group of generalists.

The principal focus of the internal workshops has been the refinement of a repertoire of methods, which they have gathered from sources across the globe and admittedly says Carlos from the Internet. The goal isn't to become famous for inventing a new method; it is to use the most effective methods well.

> *There are a ton of methods out there and there's no need to invent more. Just bring them to the street, do them, systematize them. I'd say if the group has success in an experiment, then it will be useful to others, too. (López Tapia, 2012)*

While Raons Públiques continues to experiment with new methods, the overall methodology has been stabilized, especially as the group has begun to package its work in terms of "services" that might be remunerable. These methods fall under three categories: Participatory Diagnostics, Workshops, and Lectures (Figure 4.16)

Participatory Diagnostics

Carrito Interviews Map of Actors	Historical Analysis Demographic Analysis Urbanistic Analysis	Participatory Walks Public Workshops

Workshops

Neighborhood Detective Sticker Games	Scavenger Hunts Participatory Walks	Collective Mapping Role-play Games

Lectures

Academic Audiences	Professional Groups	Urban Entities

Figure 4.16 Raons Públiques Methodology
(Source: Raonspubliques.org, accessed 2013)

The above table of methods reflects an internal decision to make the group's work remunerable so that the members will be able to dedicate more of their attention to projects. The methodology is now expressed also as "services" on the group's webpage. Although the repertoire is likely to evolve as Raons Públiques continues to experiment, the list speaks to the group's focus on promoting dialogue.

4.8 A Continuing Evolution

In March of 2013, Raons Públiques moved into its own ground-level office space in the neighborhood of Poble Sec near the center of Barcelona. It was a move that the group had been planning in earnest for about a year, part of an effort to professionalize, to create a space for group cohesion and collaboration, and a way to potentially make a living from the work that has thus far been pro-bono. This brings a significant shift in the dynamics of the group. Whereas they began tackling broad themes across multiple spaces of the city, they are now settling into a particular corner, where they will become focused on more immediate and specific needs of one neighborhood. Whereas they anguished about being outside experts waiting for invitations to mediate, they will become neighbors themselves. Whereas they gingerly used the space of another institution for meetings and support, they are now materially engaged in constructing their own space. The diverse personal histories that they brought to the table grow less distinct as new experiences are more salient to their identities. Those original characteristics, which I argue suited them well for a reformist modality of urban activism, are evolving. I suspect that their approach to activism may as well.

Chapter 5: Autogestión and the Case of LaCol and Can Batlló

5.1 Introduction

Creu de la Coberta slices through Sants-Montjuïc, shooting on a line parallel to the equator toward the port of Barcelona. On its wide sidewalks, the clatter of rolling grocery carts mixes with passing Catalan conversations, shrieks of children on their way home from school and the rumble of city buses and Fedex trucks. There is hardly a tourist to be found. Sitting high above the quotidian bustle, in the elaborate art-nouveau municipal headquarters, is Sergi Sarri, a young aeronautical engineering student and a leader of the Nationalistic Youth of Catalunya (Juventudes Nacionalistas de Catalunya) who was recently appointed as the director of participation for this city district. Sergi is energetic, dressed in a casual suit, and talkative. He doesn't live in the district, he admits, but he used to. "We are lucky," he says, "to be here, in one of the districts of Barcelona with the greatest associative life" (Sarri, 2012). He tries to explain to me the organization of the city bureaucracy as it relates to urban projects and participation, then pulls out a sheet of paper and opts to make a diagram. On one side he draws "Hàbitat Urbà," the city's urbanism department; on the other, "Districte," his office. Urbanism, he tells me, deals with the urban projects--lawyers, developers, et cetera. He draws a bubble for developers and connects it to urbanism with a line. But the District deals with the neighbors, which he connects with another line. He equates his job with customer service, attending to the neighborhood's day-to-day needs like bus stops, trash receptacles, not the mid- or long-range issues of planning. The two sides of the diagram--urbanism and district participation--connect through him, but not often (Sarri, 2012).

Figure 5.1 Map of Sants: 1. Districte Offices; 2. Centre Social de Sants;
3. Bloc 11 at Can Batlló; 4. Lleialtat Santsenca; 5. Plaza Osca; 6. LaCol Office
(image: author)

Heading up the avenue, a recent mid-block pedestrian plaza cuts between a new
cultural center and meeting hall, past a new senior living complex, and onto a narrower
street, Carrer Olzinelles, that leads down to La Bordeta, a more working-class
neighborhood. Two blocks down the hill, in a modest storefront, is the Centre Social de
Sants. A banner decrying the loss of a bus route hangs over the entry, and a new mural
brightens a rolling metal service door. It proclaims "40 years fighting for a better
neighborhood, 1972-2012." If you know the characters depicted on the mural, you can
recognize the usual suspects, whom Sergi Sarri refers to as "the same ones who always
show up," the most vociferous and active neighborhood leaders. Inside, one of these,
Jordi Falcó-Gres, sits behind a desk greeting neighbors and Catalan language students
(myself included) who meet there. Adorning the walls is an exhibit of old photographs
of the neighborhood and all of the battles that the neighborhood association has taken
part in, and mostly won. One of these is a factory complex further down the street,
called Can Batlló.

Can Batlló is not easily identified, and although it occupies 35 acres--a quarter of the
entire La Bordeta neighborhood-- it is largely an unknown space to the residents. Most
of the abandoned factory complex still sits behind a tall non-descript wall. On the wall
above a children's playground the words are stenciled: "35 anys de vergonya! 11 de Juny
entrem a Can Batlló (35 years of shame! June 11 we enter Can Batlló." Just around the
corner is an old battered entry gate with no name, only the address: Constitución 19. A
sign hangs from the metal gate announcing "Recinto Privado (Private Premises)."
Inside, beyond the security checkpoint and the old time clock, a two-story reddish brick
factory building is dressed up with a large, fanciful art installation of hundreds of

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unspent spools of thread in all colors, which form an arrow that leads the view toward the building entrance. There, a metal door is rolled halfway up. Metal plaques next to the door read "Bloc 11" in Catalan and "Bloque 11 (Block11)" in Spanish. Below them, a new hand-painted sign announces a new use: "Biblioteca (Library)."

Inside Bloc 11, a dozen or so neighborhood activists are gathered around a propane heater, talking, trying to stay warm in an otherwise frigid, drafty concrete room. Half of them are smoking; several others are still rolling their own cigarettes. Others are sweeping, flipping through donated books, or carrying painting supplies back and forth. In the back of the building, in what will become the library, somebody is making a racket with an electric drill, which makes it difficult to start the meeting. The meeting is for the commission on "Design of the Space," led by architect Lali Davi of the architect's collective LaCol. The group is brainstorming ideas for the layout of the second floor and the distribution of many uses: art studios, gallery, child-care center, and so on. Six of us are seated around a table, and are all designers. Two others--Lluc and Pol--also work at LaCol. The group kindly tries communicating in Spanish for my benefit, but it is clearly not the norm, and after a couple of meetings at my urging they dispense with the courtesy.

The commission meeting is followed by a larger *Asamblea* (Assembly), and over 40 residents slowly fill the room, until it is full of a diverse lot of neighbors. This group consists of the same usual suspects from the CSS, but also others, in particular younger people in their 20s and 30s. They identify themselves broadly as the Plataforma Can Batlló per al Barri (Platform Can Batlló for the Neighborhood). The meeting is started by one of the senior members and progresses to cover the group's various commissions, as an informative "placing in common" and as freeform debate and discussion. As I absorb the gruff lyrical rhythms of a Catalan debate, I am overwhelmed by the dim, smoky scene and imagine I am watching the grandchildren of anarcho-syndicalists who worked in these same factories 100 years earlier, who plotted attacks against the government while imagining collective worker utopias. Carles, another architect from LaCol, suggests to me that I am probably right. In studying another worker's cooperative in Sants, the Lleialtat Santsenca, he learned that today's members of neighborhood associations, sports teams and choirs are the kin of the Lleialtat Santsenca members who as early as the 1880s were celebrating the classical anarchistic values of mutualism and cooperation. The tradition, he says, lives on.

The values of historical anarchism are telegraphed into the present through the concept of *autogestión* (self-management), which plays prominently in the rhetoric of the CSS, the Plataforma, and the architect's collective of LaCol. It reflects an approach to urban activism that seeks autonomy from institutions; that practices tactics of contentious action; whose networks bond over the construction of alternative utopias; and who organize and operate horizontally. For the architects and landscape architects of LaCol, *autogestión* implies a new role in which they act not as experts but rather as collaborators, or co-laborers, in which their design skills are not offered to build community capacity--for it already exists--but where their particular technical knowledge helps advance and transform the community's agenda.

Thus far in the dissertation, I have simplified my references to this case study as a one of the architect's collective LaCol. At this point, I acknowledge that the study is

more complicated because it is impossible to separate cleanly what LaCol does from what the CSS or the Plataforma do. This chapter, then unfolds first to give some geographical context and to distinguish these three groups, then to five experiments in *autogestión*: architecture school final projects, a guerrilla gardening action, the fight for Can Batlló, the management of Bloc 11, and the production of a documentary film. These experiments reveal a set of *inquietudes* or misgivings that lead to a self-directed approach rather than one set upon reform. They illuminate collaborative roles, horizontality, place grounding, and an emphasis on making rather than talking. The unquestionable success of the activist efforts of this case study ultimately begs the question of whether it can be replicated elsewhere, and this question is taken up even by the activists themselves as they attempt to share their knowledge beyond the limits of their own community.

5.2 Background: A Social Centre, a Platform, and LaCol

5.2.1 Collective Sants

Sants-Montjuïc is the largest of Barcelona's ten districts and its third most populous, with over 180,000 residents. It lies to the south and west of the central Gothic Quarter, encompassing the city's port and wrapping around the prominent promontory known as Montjuïc, which is a 200-hectare park where the 1992 Olympic games were held.
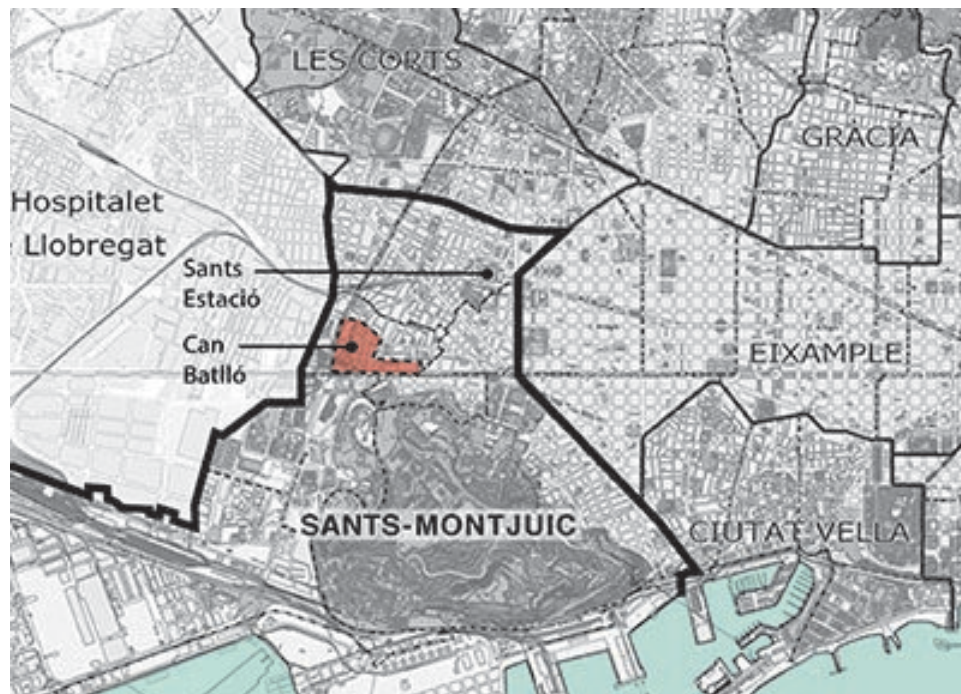
Figure 5.2 District of Sants-Montjuïc, omitted port lower left (image: author)

The district, shown in the image above, includes eight separate neighborhoods (barrios), the most central of which is Sants, which was itself a medieval agricultural town and an independent municipality that appeared on maps early in the 19th century, until it merged with Barcelona in 1897 (Carreras Verdaguer, 1980). Almost from the outset, Sants was on a path to be one of Barcelona's industrial centers. Bisected by the main highway into the city and close to the ports, by the 1840s factory smokestacks were the defining features of the neighborhood (Santacana, Hernandez, & Coma Quintana, 2009).

Figure 5.3 Sants ca 1890 (image courtesy of Arxiu Municipal)

The first significant complex, *Vapor Vell* (Old Steam), was built in 1844 by the industrialist Joan Guëll; the next factory was L'Espanya Industrial, in 1847 (Dalmau Torvà & Miró i Acedo, 2010). The burgeoning textile industry put pressure on Barcelona itself to expand beyond the medieval walls, which it did finally in 1854 with permission from the government in Madrid. Two years later, in 1856, a major rail line was opened that terminated in Sants, solidifying its industrial character for at least another century (Santacana, et al., 2009).

Shortly after the demolition of the walls, Ildefons Cerdà began working on a plan for the extension of the city, the *Eixample*. The rapid expansion of the city, which was manifested in the *Eixample* over the next four decades as a flourishing of extravagant *modernisme* (Barcelona's answer to art-nouveau) architecture, was tied directly to the productivity and excess capital generated by the city's factories. As Montaner and Muxí point out, this connection has been intentionally forgotten:

> *[Barcelona] has privileged the architecture of palaces and modernisme buildings
> and has erased the industrial memory of the neighborhoods, the factories, and the
> buildings of cooperation and mutual help between workers that permitted the*

Industrial Revolution and the enrichment of the families Batlló, Guëll, Girona, Ricart … (Josep Maria Montaner, 2011, p. 166)

The family Batlló, known for commissioning one of Antonio Gaudí's most elaborate mansions, derived much of its wealth from the textile factory Can Batlló, which they built in the neighborhood of La Bordeta, just adjacent to Sants, in 1880.
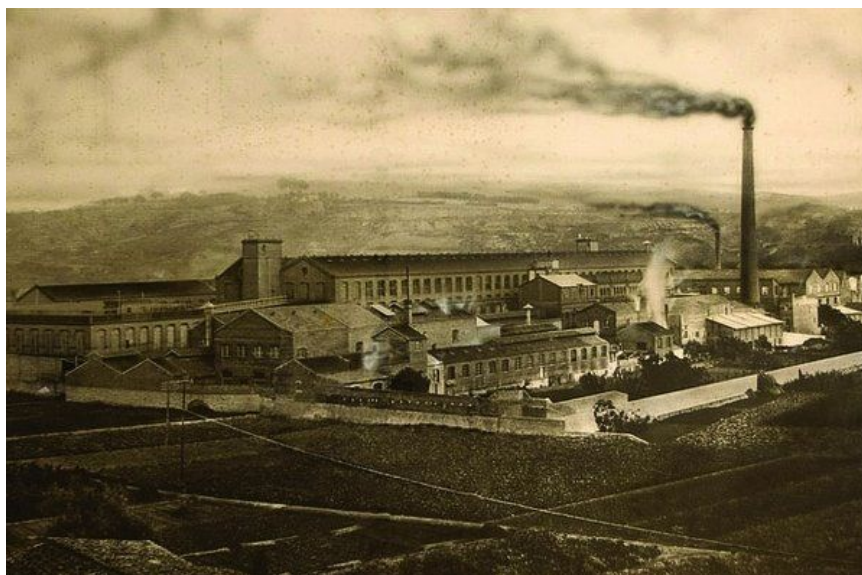
Figure 5.4 Factory Can Batlló, 1880 (image: Arxiu Municipal)

The early years of Sants' Industrial Revolution are what Marc Dalmau and Ivan Miró refer to as "the years of worker counter-power" in which laborers began to organize against poor conditions, low salaries and excessive work hours (Dalmau Torvà & Miró i Acedo, 2010). Though this early movement was peaceful, it was persecuted by authorities and hence workers' organizations existed in large part in secret. In the 1860s the anarchist influence left its mark but was also driven underground after a failed strike in 1868. Nonetheless, by the 1880s a more violent anarchism was on the rise. In 1886 an explosive device was thrown at Can Batlló (Dalmau Torvà & Miró i Acedo, 2010); by the early 1900s Barcelona had earned the name "City of Bombs" (Tóibín, 2002).

The history of the mostly pacifist anarcho-syndicalist movements, collectives, and cooperatives is told in painstaking detail in Dalmau and Miró's book *Les Cooperatives Obreres de Sants* (2010). Associative life and the values of cooperation were evident in nearly every corner of everyday life in Sants, from consumer cooperatives to producer cooperatives to cooperative credit unions and even to chocolate, as advertised in Acción Cooperatista in 1934:

> *If you want to eat real chocolate and not that syrupy drug that Capitalism manufactures, demand "Chocolate del Pueblo" in all the cooperatives, made by cooperative production workers. (in Dalmau Torvà & Miró i Acedo, 2010, p. 158)*

I convey this history because it underlines the extent to which the cooperative impulse permeated the social life of Sants. This associative context is not an anomaly in Barcelona, nor in Spain for that matter, but it does help understand why, especially starting in the 1970s, cooperative networks so easily took root in Sants after the fall of the dictatorship. The city's director of Participation and Associationism stresses that this intensity of associating is peculiar to Catalonia:

> *The cooperatives are part of this associationism. I believe they form an intrinsic part of our way of being … it owes to the fact that Catalonia is a nation without a state, and not having a state for so many years, as you know, we have lived years of dictatorship, not just one, 49 years ago, but many others. So Catalonian society had to wise up to organize itself … This associationism is half legal, half clandestine, where it came from. And this has created this custom, as I said an intrinsic way that we behave, to associate ourselves in everything. At this moment in Barcelona there are more than 5,000 associations. (Agustí Hernández, 2012)*

Three of these associations are at the heart of this case study--the Centre Social de Sants (CSS), the Plataforma Can Batlló, and LaCol. They are somewhat nested within each other with regard to scale and time, and they are all part of the urban social movement that continues to fight for the recuperation of the factory complex Can Batlló for community uses. Before proceeding to the experiments I will describe them briefly.

5.2.2 The Centre Social

The legal status of neighborhood associations was reinstated by Franco in 1964 and in Barcelona they timidly emerged to test the limits of their new political power. In Sants in 1969, an effort was undertaken to start neighborhood commissions (commisions del barri), especially by the communist Bandera Roja and the socialist PSUC party. The weakening of Franco's regime gave these groups hope that the neighborhood commissions could play a role in a larger political fight. But at the local level, the commissions were more interested in meeting immediate community needs, especially schools, sanitation, medical facilities, open space, and housing (Prieto, 2012). A precursor of the commissions had met secretively throughout the dictatorship. In Sants, mostly young neighborhood leaders met in the basement of the Parish Saint Medír where they believed they would be safe from government suspicion (Martí Gómez & Marcè, 1996). In 1972, this group accepted an offer to use a commercial storefront that was owned by the parish, and this became the Centre Social de Sants. The CSS stepped in quickly amidst a growing boldness to publicly protest against the administration, demanding safety after a large gas explosion, leading a fight against a new freeway, and lobbying for changes to the regional plan, the *Pla Comarcal* (Botella, 2012).

Figure 5.5 Centre Social, 197x (image: Arxiu Municipal)

In one of the group's first efforts in 1973, they mounted an exhibition of poor neighborhood conditions, which they called "*Cop d'ull a Sants* (A Glance at Sants)." The exhibit especially highlighted the main industrial properties in Sants, proposing "the reconversion of industrial land in public zones like Can Batlló and España Industrial, to install the services demanded (Martí Gómez & Marcè, 1996).

The transition to democracy, between Franco's death in 1975 and beyond the first democratic elections in 1979, brought a change to the CSS. It weakened much of the anti-establishment momentum that had bound the group together. As occurred throughout Barcelona, several of the neighborhood leaders accepted posts within the new administration. According to Pep Ribas, one of the CSS's leaders, the common cry from the new administration was that the neighborhood associations should now fall in line with the democratic government: "The left has the power; therefore the neighborhood associations have to leave the protests and dedicate themselves to promoting cultural associations or participating in leisure activities" (Ribas, 2012). The CSS did become less forceful in the following decades, in fact focusing on cultural activities, but also continued to agitate successfully for community needs. Josep María Domingo of the CSS attributes their success to carefully planned strategies of action:

> *The centre social has followed unwritten rules that we have about these type of actions with a series of already thought-out plans. It is to make a ladder, an outline of steps (escaleta) they say, more or less of how over time you are going to arrive at your objective, how you would have to act. We were very clear about this. We know how to plan very well, and that's how we applied ourselves, and it was a success. (Domingo, 2012)*

Figure 5.6 Centre Social, 2012 (image: author)

Jordi Falco Gres manages the day-to-day organization of the CSS from the same office that they occupied in 1972. He has done so for 20 years now. He describes the CSS today as "an umbrella for all of the groups" with a ludic focus: dance and theater clubs, yoga studios, the organizing committee for the annual street festivals, the drumming group, the *castells* (human tower) clubs. Additionally, the CSS supports the sometimes-contentious activities of neighborhood struggles: protesting lacking city services, demanding access to public spaces, and so on. Despite their political origins and the left-leaning tendency of most members, the CSS also attempts to remain independent of overtly partisan positions and has thereby been able to maintain an amiable relationship with the administration even after it changed in 2011 from socialist to conservative. The fight over Can Batlló is a case in point. In 2010, the CSS spun off those members who were interested in reclaiming Can Batlló into another group, the Plataforma Can Batlló és pel barri, which was able to undertake more confrontational actions without political consequence. And because the CSS never took a political position, it was later able to negotiate in earnest with the new government about the complex.

The CSS has approximately 300 official dues-paying members. These dues, combined with fund-raising activities, comprise the majority of the organization's budget. Approximately 15% of their income comes from public subsidies. In Barcelona the neighborhood associations have been the principal point of contact when City Hall or the Districts need neighborhood participation. In order to be officially recognized, the association must register itself with the Generalitat, the Catalan government, and they must elect a board of directors, which must have at least a president and a secretary. This system allows the government to have a daily point of contact and an official spokesperson, and although the CSS does not necessarily subscribe to

hierarchical modes of organization, being bound to one does influence the way the group interacts with members, the press, and city representatives.

5.2.3 The Plataforma

The Plataforma Can Batllo es pel barri (Can Batlló is for the neighborhood, and henceforth simply the Plataforma) officially launched late in 2010 as the campaign to recuperate the factory complex was at its most intense. The details of this build-up follow in the "experiments" below, but here I will describe briefly what distinguishes this group from the Centre Social.

Early in 2009, after years of delays and broken promises by the city, neighborhood leaders reacted strongly to one final promise made by the district supervisor. The promise was that construction would begin that September for new soccer fields and the urbanization of the complex. The site, they promised, would be open to the public in two years. As then president of the CSS told reporters: "We continue to have doubts and until we've seen it commence, we won't believe it, but for now we will accept it" (El 3, 2009). But the CSS then made a challenge to the District. If the District did not open the complex at the latest by June 1, 2011, the neighbors would occupy it themselves.

The campaign and the threats, or as neighborhood leaders call them "challenges," were led by two groups: the CSS and the neighborhood commission for the neighborhood La Bordeta. Together they sustained the campaign until later that year, when the CSS spun off another semi-independent group called the "Plataforma Can Batlló es pel barri."

> *The Plataforma Can Batlló was formed here two years ago. Two years ago, with the idea to join not only social activities by other movements and groups of the neighborhood to accomplish this, us by ourselves, that was the tactic we have always had, We alone cannot organize it. What happened is that yes we could lead it and in this case it was like that, it was leading at the same time with the rest of the associations, entities or groups, to lead this protest. (Domingo, 2012)*

Creating a second group allowed the CSS to continue to participate and still keep its hands clean, not having to risk its overall reputation or political standing by the events that were being planned. For example, since 1996, occupying buildings in Barcelona has been a criminal act, but this was a move that the Plataforma was ready to make, or at least threaten to make. Enric Jara, one of the Plataforma members, defended the position:

> *We knew it was very debatable because entering private property is not legal, but we saw that if we didn't do it that way, we would not have accomplished anything. (Pauné, 2011)*

Additionally, the Plataforma helped the movement diversify. The Centre Social provides an umbrella for groups with diverse ethnicities, ages and interests. However its core leadership is entirely Catalan and mostly retired. As Josep María Domingo puts it, "Here, the it's the same people as always, the same collaborators. There's a board of directors and they're the people who have always come here. You recognize them by

their white hair" (Domingo, 2012). According to Domingo, the youth come to use the facilities but it is a frustration because they don't join the center or pay dues. This is markedly different for the Plataforma; a younger generation showed up, and they pay their dues with sweat labor.

Figure 5.7 Plataforma Can Batlló, 2012 (image: Plataforma)

Unlike the CSS, the Plataforma is not an official neighborhood association, and neither is it organized with a board of directors. After the Plataforma acquired a warehouse within Can Batlló in June of 2011, it became somewhat synonymous with the management of the space, called Bloc 11 (Block 11). The facility is now occupied daily by various groups undertaking construction projects, running a library, managing a bar, or engaging in a number of other quotidian tasks. The Plataforma, and so also the management of Bloc 11, is organized in three levels of participation: people, commissions, and general assemblies. People are free to participate at their own leisure and level of commitment, and all interested individuals are welcome. At the second level, commissions are the basic thematic working groups of the Plataforma. They typically have between five and ten active members; they meet weekly and require some commitment by the group to accomplish assigned tasks. General assemblies meet biweekly and are typically attended by 35 to 60 people; duties for meeting facilitation and meeting minutes rotate, and decision-making is by consensus.

5.2.4 LaCol

LaCol means "the cabbage" in Catalan. It also is a play on the word collective, or in Catalan *La Col·lectiva*. LaCol is an architects collective located in the neighborhood of Sants since 2009, made up of between 17 close friends who share space, projects,

companionship, and an unconventional approach to architecture. They declare on their website:

> We work through architecture for social transformation, utilizing it as a tool to intervene in a critical manner in our most local environment. Parallel with society, acting justly, with solidarity, and beginning with a horizontal system of work. (LaCol, 2013)

To be organized as a collective means they are essentially made up of individual architects who share space, projects, expenses and resources. They have no office hierarchy: no owner, no secretary, no support staff. Their office occupies the ground floor of a modest building on the corner of an everyday pedestrian street in the Triangle section of Sants, close to the main train station but tucked away in an intimate setting. Although they have gained a high profile as an emerging architectural practice, there is little profitable work done for official LaCol projects. Much of the income for community-based projects has come from grants and fellowships, and most of the members' income comes from individual projects that are sometimes shared within the group. This is both a difficulty and a saving grace, because the collective can actually continue to exist on the barest of budgets; unlike most architecture firms, nobody has to be let go owing to a lack of projects.

LaCol's manner of working--its critical autonomy--is bound by place and mutual exchange and enacted through material construction, and has produced new roles for these designers. Their experiences are the focus of this chapter so I will resist describing the group in more detail here. The five experiments in *autogestión* show an evolution from inquietudes about architecture, to local engagement, to political action, to material collaboration, and back to critique.

5.3 Experiment 1: End of the Road

The first experiment emphasizes the bonding capital that is the foundation of the group LaCol and a necessary ingredient in the modality of *autogestión*. The collective self-management of this group of architects began with its autonomous approach to final architecture school projects, and in its early decision to study the neighborhood of Sants in which it had rented office space. These decisions evince an early tendency to position the group away from structures of authority and toward communities of place.

In 2007, nine architecture students at Etsab (Escola Tècnica Superior d'Arquitectura de Barcelona) rented a ground-floor office in the neighborhood of Poble Sec. The group had been friends since the beginning of architecture school, and had grown tired of each working separately in their homes in front of their laptops. (There are no dedicated studio desks at Etsab for students.) They wanted to be able to share printers, supplies, and each other's company. The following year the group integrated with another group of friends--also from Etsab--bringing the total to 14 people. Then more of their friends returned from their Erasmus year abroad and the group expanded to 21, to the point where a new space was needed. They looked to the neighborhood of Sants because it was central and convenient and inexpensive. What they wanted was a space to finish

their senior projects. They did not intend to start a collective, nor to become involved so intractably in the neighborhood.

Figure 5.8 LaCol 2012 (image: LaCol)

If dealing with the issue of friendship produced ambivalence for the members of Raons Públiques, the architects of LaCol always gave me the same answer to questions about friendship. In the image above (Figure 5.8), taken on the roof of Bloc 11, the friendship bonds are legible in the group's self-representation, in gazes looking inward. The importance of friendship was echoed by the four members with whom I conducted extensive interviews. Carles is one of these, an architect interested in open source mapping, programming, and historic preservation. He describes LaCol at the outset as "a group of friends from the university" (Baiges, 2011). Another architect, Lali pursues a passion for working with recycled materials, to the extent that she built her own apartment on the terrace of her parents' building by repurposing used materials. She described the Lacol's origins simply as "a group of nine friends" (Davi, 2012). Arnau studied architecture with the group and recently finished a Masters in Urban Land

Management and Valuation, focused on housing affordability at Can Batlló. He recalls that LaCol was a "group of 18 friends." "From the first architecture course," he remembers, "we were already together, the majority of LaCol" (Andrés Gallart, 2012). Pol studied landscape architecture and is one of the members involved in the Can Batlló project since his thesis. He is tall and usually has his motorcycle helmet close. When I asked him what LaCol was first--friends or colleagues--he answered without hesitation:

> *First friends, [LaCol] came from being friends, and it's something very strong, and also it's difficult and dangerous. Well, we still haven't had any problems. We have a friendship that is something we don't ever want to lose. You have to be very sincere, above all when there are economic issues, payments have to be organized, this has to be very clear, like you have to debate how to divide money when the work is paid. But yes, first we are friends and we get together to do things outside of the collective too. I don't know, it's like a small family in the end. It's like a team. (Massoni, 2012)*

The team of LaCol shared workspace in Poble Sec and in Sants but worked on their own individual projects. The need to work together emerged during the group's final, sixth year of studies. "Fin de carrera" or "Final de carrera" is the name given to the senior projects in Barcelona's architecture schools. It translates literally as "end of the road," which with today's economy is more than ironic for most graduates. For a few more fortunate ones, it marks the beginning of a career through the development of one's own independent project. At Etsab, the *fin de carrera* is organized through a selection of supervised thesis studios, which students select based upon a theme or by selecting professors whose area of interest appeals to students. When this group of students went to listen to the studio professors present their approach to the *fin de carrera* projects, none of them appealed, as Lali explains:

> *Either the themes were already established and we wanted something more general with each pursuing their own theme, or because the methodology didn't suit us. And I remember this was a little bit the frustration we had. The final project requires a lot of dedication, and time, and you want to do it somewhere that feels right. (Davi, 2012)*

An infrequently taken option for *fin de carrera* was a self-directed project. The group decided together to advantage of this possibility. In their first act of *autogestión*, the group decided to forego a formal studio and manage the process amongst themselves instead, as Lali remembers:

> *It was then that we decided to do, in quotes, our own course. In other words, we would make our own [thesis] corrections ourselves … And it had its good and its bad sides. But since we were so many people, we said, well, we can establish a rhythm amongst ourselves, and we'll impose submission deadlines. We set a rather strong pace to be able to finish when we wanted to. And then also we contacted a few professors with whom we kept in contact. (Davi, 2012)*

The students' instinct to manage their own thesis projects was a response to a shared critique of architectural pedagogy that was made possible because of the strong ties that they had already established between themselves. To recall Putnam's

distinction between bonding and bridging social capital, "Bonding social capital constitutes a kind of sociological superglue, whereas bridging social capital provides a sociological WD-40" (Putnam, 2000, p. 23). The bonding that the group had already established over years of friendship created a confidence and solidarity that could replace an outside institutional framework with an internal one.

The fact that the students identified themselves as a distinct group made it possible for them to challenge what was a hierarchical learning model--where a subject seeks approval from a correcting authority--and to replace it with a horizontal one. Inherent in the group's critique of the university's pedagogical approach was a distaste for hierarchies and a desire for autonomy. Arnau conveyed this sentiment:

> *We saw potential in that we were a group, we were going to do it, we were going to try to manage this ourselves a little, no? And all of this was our first premise: to try to correct ourselves, and to try to work with professors that we wanted to come, more as colleagues, to comment on the projects and not to come to make corrections. (Andrés Gallart, 2012)*

The autonomous approach was supported in fact by several faculty members, including Josep María Montaner and Zaida Muxí, who in another venue voiced a similar belief: "If education doesn't motivate the student to question," she said, "then the professional won't question either" (in P. Lacol, 2012).

In total it was 11 out of the 21 students in the group who decided to do their thesis projects together in this way. Without a professor to guide them, they decided to establish their own process to help each other determine what their projects might be, conceiving of an "exercise zero," a preliminary research project that each person would undertake. The assignment was that each person choose a theme that interested them about the neighborhood they were in, some pre-existing condition in Sants. The goal was to find some "common nexus" because the group wanted to find some thematic thread that the projects could share. (Davi, 2012). Lali chose to investigate the "ordinance of civility," a controversial law that had been recently passed that limited the acceptable activities on public property. This would convert itself later into the guerrilla gardening action described in the following section as Exercise 2. Others studied architectural barriers in Sants. Arnau and Pol conducted a survey of the industrial heritage of Sants. That is when they came to learn about Can Batlló.

Most of the group of students followed their interests to thesis projects in other neighborhoods or even cities. Four of the group--Carles, Lali, Pol and Arnau--located their projects in Sants. Carles decided to study the possibility of converting an abandoned building to community use. The building was the old headquarters of a worker's cooperative called *Lleialtat Santsenca*, built in the 1920s and currently owned by the city and designated for public use. With a movement already mobilized to fight for its conversion, Carles used his thesis to explore the architectural possibilities of the building. In so doing, he immersed himself in a history of cooperatives in Sants, and the documents and the physical model he prepared were immediately useful for the movement, allowing them to visualize the building and its potential, as well as adding

legitimacy to the demands the Plataforma La Lleialtat Santsenca was making of the city.[26]

Arnau, Pol and Lali focused specifically on Can Batlló and together articulated a critique against the model of development that was being undertaken by the city and the developer. Arnau believed that the industrial heritage should not merely be preserved as piecemeal formal elements, but that the productive uses should be maintained. Studying the 35-acre site as a whole, he identified buildings that had been used by local cooperatives in the past. Then, citing a recent study on youth labor deficiencies, he proposed using spaces for youth skills training that would also be productive. According to Arnau, it was one of the aspects of the plan for Can Batlló that the group was critical of:

> *That it took away all the economic activity, that it didn't generate new economic*
> *activity in the neighborhood. It vacated productive activity, all the interests that*
> *this work had generated, it removed to put in facilities, a park and housing.*
> *(Andrés Gallart, 2012)*

Pol's project followed his interest in landscape and focused on the portion of the site where the temporary football fields were located. This was the site of the old Magoria station and also the point that bordered on the main highway connecting Barcelona to the airport--the area of new centrality that Joan Busquets had identified years ago. The developers had proposed loading this side with luxury high rise apartments, but Pol studied instead creating a landscape element that would improve pedestrian connections by creating a land bridge over an intervening road.

For her project, Lali proposed to convert a warehouse building into a center for recycling and reused materials. Like Arnau, she rejected the city and the developer's proposal, which preserved key warehouses on the site but eliminated secondary industrial buildings. To them, it was more important to preserve the fabric of the factory complex and not just its icons, because the patterns of buildings--architecturally significant or not--were what carried with them the patrimony of the historical industrial uses. Lali expressed doubts in this official approach:

> *It had to do with the way they thought about the city, which was to erase what is*
> *there and start from new. They never thought about a slow transformation. It*
> *was tabula rasa and new. Or even more about the impacts this has, on the city,*
> *right? To change such a large space in the city in just one stroke, how many years*
> *would it take to absorb that back into the city? (Davi, 2012)*

All of these projects were still produced within the constraints of a formal design project that needed to be presented and accepted by an academic institution within a limited time frame. Because of this, the projects were still essentially alternative proposals or alternative site plans for Can Batlló. Their true contributions were not in the content of the thesis projects, but in the way the experiment of managing their own

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[26] LaCol and Carles Baiges continued their involvement in the Plataforma La Lleialtat Santsenca, helping to coordinate a public workshop and volunteering to act as a community representative as the city moved forward in 2012 to hire an architect to undertake the actual rehabilitation of the building.

process began to overlap with the histories of cooperatives they were studying. Combining an autonomous approach, cooperative organizational models, the valoration of re-use, and the preservation of relational networks were the lasting contributions of this experiment that would be translated into their emerging mode of architectural practice.

5.4 Experiment 2: Death to the Asphalt

The second experiment documents a shift from a stance of critique and reform to one of physical engagement and place attachment. It describes a simple act of guerrilla urbanism and shows how material engagement on the street creates new ways that activists relate to public space and to community members.

When the group that would become LaCol was getting started with its *fin de carrera* projects, each student undertook a warm-up exercise that they called exercise zero. Lali was interested in the Ordinance on Civility that went into effect in Barcelona in 2006. Officially it was called "Measures to promote and guarantee citizen coexistence in the public space of Barcelona" (Barcelona, 2006). The measure was controversial, banning activities such as prostitution, public urination, street gambling, and drinking on the streets. But it went further, also imposing fines, for example, of up to 1,500 euros for begging; or 500 euros for using soap in the beach showers. Sleeping in public--day or night--was banned, as was engaging in any bothersome street sports or acrobatics, or using benches for "other than their intended use." To Lali this was an affront to the definition of public space aimed at presenting an attractive face especially to tourists while sweeping under the rug the endemic problems that the city was failing to address.

It was October of 2009. Already the group had spent most of a year in their ground floor corner office space, but as Lali recalls, "We had spent a year in Sants and we didn't know it" (Davi, 2012). The group was considering some project that would both engage them in the neighborhood and simultaneously call to question the new civility ordinance. They considered installing some "objects" in the nearby Plaza Osca, but then realized their opportunity was right in front of their office, a chance to denounce the city's neglect of a public space and to give it a temporary use. Their own street, Carrer Ciceró, had been under construction since before the summer. Metal barriers lined the narrow pedestrian way and recently the city had removed the asphalt revealing bare earth. A sign declared: "We are improving your street."

Figure 5.9 Mort a l'asfalt, Death to the asphalt (images: LaCol)

That Saturday night a group from LaCol drove to a warehouse outside of town and loaded up two cars full of plants--over 200 in total. Then they installed them on Ciceró street, even planting some of them in the bare ground. To this they added reclining lounge chairs, picnic tables, children's tables and chairs, a suitcase of toys, umbrellas and board games. To document the event, they mounted a video camera from their office and waited for the neighbors to wake to their improved street. The neighbors, mostly long-term residents, awoke to surprise, their reactions captured on video and audio. Following are a few excerpts of responses recorded by LaCol on video:

There's something here.

Is it a protest?

Yes, yes.

Look there's a chair and everything, and down there a table, too. Look!

It's a protest, I'd say, over the street.

It's a joke, eh?

Did you see the garden? Pretty, eh?

Look! Cabbage (Col)!

Who put this here? Who did this?

Look! Buried potatoes. Get the pot to make the potatoes now.

I don't have any idea. I didn't do anything. It's not my thing.

I asked. Them, over there. Since the street is under construction, let's enjoy it!

The architects!

Well, I have to say, we haven't seen anything like this here in 44 years. Very cool.

I'm going to take a picture so they make all the streets like this. (LaCol, 2009)

The idea of the action was simply to do something in the street, to get to know some neighbors and to see how they would react, what kinds of opinions they might share about public space and legality. The repercussion, according to Arnau, was that it "put us in contact with the neighborhood, so the people got to know us a little, a little to break the ice and to establish a relationship with the associations" (Andrés Gallart, 2012). There was a small neighborhood association in this, the Triangle, area of Sants, and as Arnau recalls: "They were the first that came and they were there all day, chatting" (Andrés Gallart, 2012).

Figure 5.10 Mort a l'asfalt, Death to the asphalt (image: LaCol)

In addition, the group came to know the two founders of an organization called Ciutat Invisible (Invisible City), a research group, archive and alternative bookstore in Sants. These individuals, Marc Dalmau and Ivan Miró, had authored a book, *The Worker's Cooperatives of Sants: Proletariat Self-management in a neighborhood of Barcelona 1870-1939* (Dalmau Torvà & Miró i Acedo, 2010). In addition, Marc Dalmau had been an activist in the adjacent district of Les Corts, fighting the eviction of dozens of residents from an old worker settlement. He had also written an ethnographic dissertation on the Plaza Osca around the corner from LaCol's office. Marc helped Arnau and Pol in their study of the industrial heritage of Sants, and when they became interested in Can Batlló they asked him if he had any contacts, and Marc sent them to talk to the president of the Centre Social de Sants, Josep María Domingo.

Beyond propelling their *fin de carrera* research, breaking the ice with neighbors, and making important contacts, Mort a l'asfalt served another function--to initiate LaCol into a practice of urban activism that moved beyond theory and hypotheticals and into the material reality of the street. Long after this guerrilla gardening action, I asked Pol whether he considered himself an activist. He responded:

> *Yes, well I think it's the only way to really change things and transform people, not to transform them for the bad but rather transform them for the better. I see it in my work in the mornings. I think many intellectuals, people with a lot of knowledge, aren't activists, only intellectuals. You talk with them and they have a position and lots of knowledge, but they've forgotten action. (Massoni, 2012)*

Pol's definition of activism reflected an opinion that it should function on multiple levels--to create new systems while developing autonomous alternatives:

> *You have to overturn the system that is there before you build a new one, but without forgetting and creating now another in parallel because you can't just make destruction; in parallel you have to be constructing alternatives, cooperatives, ways of being. (Massoni, 2012)*

Arnau's response was straightforward, that activism simply meant acting for a change you want to see:

> *You have to be there. You have to work. You have to put in the hours and show up. And be real (gente). (Andrés Gallart, 2012)*

Lali had not identified herself as an activist, perhaps until I asked the question:

> *Do I consider myself an activist? No. (Dd: No?) Well, I don't know, let's see… (Dd: Okay) I consider myself a very recent activist. (Davi, 2012)*

The attitudes expressed by these urban activists were solicited two years after the Mort a l'asfalt event took place, and many intervening experiences contribute to them. This experiment, however, was a first, satisfying experience in provoking dialogue through critical, material engagement in a place.

5.5 Experiment 3: Can Batlló

Experiment 3 describes the community campaign to recuperate the factory complex of Can Batlló and the insinuation of the architects of LaCol in this movement. Whereas Raons Públiques took a conciliatory role toward city officials, the experiences at Can Batlló show how *autogestión* can take a more confrontational role in its struggle for self-determination. The experiment highlights stark differences between the ways that the city construes participation--as formal, closed discourse--and the ways that community activists directly participate in political struggles over public space.

The campaign to recuperate Can Batlló began in the 1970s with a success: the re-zoning of the Can Batlló factory site for public uses. One major hindrance was that the property was privately owned and in continued use by various industrial enterprises, to the profit of the property owner. Another hindrance was the lack of political will to take

the necessary legal and urbanistic steps to convert the property. Through the CSS, neighbors continued to clamor for the conversion and continued to receive assurances that the project would soon proceed. In the meantime, the city took advantage of the site as a depository for promised future community facilities. In By 2009 this list was extensive: a school, daycare an urgent care center, parking lots, a sport center, affordable public housing, a library, and a park. Over the decades, with no concrete plans for the site's redevelopment, community activism waxed and waned, with notable re-initiation of the campaign in 1996 (Jara, 2012).

In the 1980s, during a flurry of urbanistic activity related to the Olympic preparations, Can Batlló was included as an "area of new centrality" by planning director Joan Busquets. This was part of his grander city vision to "monumentalize the periphery" of Barcelona, by which he sought to "establish a rigorous plan of urban form as a design strategy" (Busquets, 2005, pp. 105-112). This approach was a move away from what Busquets called "one-off" schemes and toward "overall strategies" (Busquets, 2005). In essence it was a move away from localized planning to the broader formal and functional perfection of the city.

Figure 5.11 Plaza Cerdá with Can Batlló (image: La Vanguardia)

Back in 1943, in the early days of the dictatorship, the property of Can Batlló had been purchased by Julio Muñoz Ramonet, a notorious industrialist with close connections to Franco (Angulo & Tarín, 2012). Muñoz operated the complex as a textile factory until 1964, after which he divided the property into some 200 smaller workshops. These continued to employ over 2,000 industrial workers through the 1990s (Eroles Palacios, 2011). Muñoz fled the country on corruption charges and died in 1991,

leaving the property in the hands of three daughters through the real estate company Gaudir, and at the height of the real estate bubble, they began in earnest to propose a development project for the site. Working in tandem with the city's Urbanism department, they received approvals for a mixed-use project in 2002, which involved complicated land-swaps with other properties in the city in order that the developers could build luxury housing on the Can Batlló site. In 2006 they submitted a revised plan that the respected landscape and architecture firm Batlle i Roig prepared, calling their project "Gaudir Nou Centre," which their website trumpets as "the most exclusive project in the center of Barcelona" (Gaudir, 2012).

Figure 5.12 Gaudir's Nou Centre project (image: Ajuntament)

The firm Batlle i Roig occupies a sleek concrete and glass building in an established neighborhood of walled garden homes. On the hillside adjacent to this neighborhood, with spectacular views of the Llobregat valley, is an overgrown speculative suburban development, another victim of the economic crisis. Inside the office is the buzz of activity typical of an architecture firm; on the wall hang numerous award plaques, and surfaces are crowded with exquisite models of projects. The firm practices in multiple disciplines--architecture, landscape architecture and planning. They are known for using landscape as a strategy of regional urban organization, and most of the firm's work is situated on the peripheries and exurbs of the city. Batlle's recent book, Jardín de la Metropoli (Batlle, 2011), depicts urban public space as something with poetic transformative potential, especially in the ability of landscape to reconcile "nature" with urbanity. His vision is for an ecological utopia, in which the metropolitan garden is a

"projection of the future, not a nostalgic evocation of the past … Ecological utopias," he continues, "should be imaginative and progressive, not retrograde and decadent" (Batlle, 2011). Following this logic, Batlle did not pursue what he would consider a nostalgic preservation of Can Batlló as a factory complex. The main buildings were spared--even foregrounded--but the historical pattern of workshops and streets was replaced by a new pattern of trees.

Batlle's design process for Can Batlló, as he recalled, began with the physical pathways connecting the site to the community, then by deciding what the landscape typology should be. In arriving at a design scheme, he used his typical approach, which he described to me:

> What landscape, I imagine, could go here? What landscape corresponds to this place? … In this decision one could say, I think there should be a park, or I think there should be a river … or I think there should be a row of enormous trees that goes from here to there. In other words, sometimes the landscape gives you instruments such that with just one word, you are done with the project. (Batlle, 2012)

The design process that Batlle suggests in the above statement may be an exaggeration but nonetheless it evinces a romantic and patriarchal role of a solitary designer bestowing poetry upon a community. The approach is not without community consideration, but it is a design for the community and not with it. Knowledge of place in this approach is not based upon direct dialogue or immersive experience, but by formal analyses of pedestrian and vehicular movements, in which people are reduced to abstractions to be efficiently managed. The city's participatory practices do not provide any other route to community knowledge either. Batlle recalls participating in public meetings:

> Once the project had form, there was a team, some consultants from city hall, not us, who were working on what could be the program of facilities. Some meetings took place in Sants, in the district. Neighbors came and commented, and I participated too, and I think they went very well. (in Panoptica and Lacol, 2012)

Batlle's evaluation of the city's public process is not one that is shared by the community leadership. Jordi Falcó of the CSS described the design process in the following way:

> A disaster. There's an expression: a pantomime. And according to city hall, they say we've participated a lot because we weren't missing from a single meeting. But we are not satisfied … our satisfaction, with the designers, of city hall especially, it's always rather nefarious, no? Negative, in the sense that is bothers them a lot to change things. The processes of participation only have the word participation, but they're just informative, many of them. (Falcó Gres, 2011)

Another member of the board of the CSS agrees that the city's participatory processes are not useful:

> I believe they don't serve any purpose. And basically because they also don't believe they serve any purpose. By definition the Centre Social we have been in

everything. And you see how a participatory process has to be: from bottom to top. In fact you are questioning everything from above. We've accomplished that at a minimum they explain things to us, but they don't explain things to us with the intention that we change them. They simply explain them so you can't say you didn't know. They tell you "We're going to do this, what do you think?" You say "Good." "Excellent!" You say "Bad." "Well, we can really change this because it's already set." (Soler, 2012)

More than just serving no purpose, Jordi Soler suggests that these very processes that are supposed to promote citizen engagement may actually hinder them. He described an urban project that the city is undertaking, to enclose the train tracks that run through Sants with a concrete box. Neighbors wanted the city to submerge the tracks, not to build a barrier through the neighborhood, but in the city's documentation about the public process, they heralded their outreach. Jordi dismisses their accounts of participatory success:

"We've had meetings at the Centre Social on the 11ᵗʰ of January, the 15th of March, the 14th of July. Forty meetings." And I told them, "But you needed to say that in all of them we were in opposition!" (Soler, 2012)

These experiences breed distrust for activists like Jordi Soler, who feels tricked by the city and has decided to stop attending city meetings altogether:

After all that, you say, following these participatory processes, it's actually better not to participate, because you convert yourself into a part of their participatory argument. And you say, no, I prefer not to be there. (Soler, 2012)

Meaningful public meetings or not, most neighbors actually supported the project and the design for Can Batlló that were proposed by the city and the developer. Many neighbors were not enthusiastic about the entirety of the plan--many for example thought the luxury high-rises were too tall or inappropriate for their working class community--but in the end the CSS and the neighborhood commission for La Bordeta pushed for the project to be implemented. The main concern was that the neighborhood be given the many facilities that it had been promised. Opposing the particular development project would not help the neighborhood see the construction of its facilities, because under the city's development model the facilities would only be funded through the profits that the developer could secure from building more housing units.

The Can Batlló project might have proceeded as the city and Enric Batlle had envisioned if the real estate sector in Spain had not imploded late in 2008. Within a matter of months, construction throughout the country had come almost to a standstill. And the project, along with all of its community facilities, was suddenly vulnerable. In March of 2009, then, when the district councilperson promised that construction would begin that year, and that within two years neighbors would be enjoying the public spaces of Can Batlló, neighborhood leaders decided to hold the district to the commitment. The president of the CSS, Josep María Domingo, announced that they would install a countdown calendar, "Just as they did for example with the Beijing Olympics or the soccer championship in Paris … so everybody will know that there are

X days remaining until the people are the owners of Can Batlló" (El 3, 2009). The date they tentatively set for the countdown was June 1, 2011.

A year and a half passed with little further progress on redeveloping Can Batlló. The city's housing authority, the Patronat Municipal de l'Habitatge, did initiate a competitive design process for two public housing buildings on the site, but these were not close to breaking ground. In 2010, the Plataforma Can Batlló es pel Barri was initiated. By this time, the group of students from Etsab had officially organized themselves into the collective LaCol. For Lali, Arnau, Pol and Carles their thesis research corresponded directly to the social movements underfoot throughout 2010. After the Mort a l'asfalt event, neighborhood leaders began to ask if the students were interested in helping out with some of the community's ongoing urban controversies, as Carles describes:

> *And through this [Mort a l'asfalt], we began to have contact with the*
> *neighborhood associations, who told us, "Listen, look, we have this project…"*
> *and they left us to solve some problems they had, where they needed technical help.*
> *In Can Batlló, for example, [the city] was showing them plans, and they didn't*
> *understand them, so we got involved as a way to help. (Baiges, 2011)*

The technical contributions that the LaCol members were able to make for the Can Batlló movement, though supporting an autonomous social movement, did depend on an institutional mechanism, the students' final projects. The labor of four architecture students, enabled by a system intended to train architects to reproduce urban projects in conventional ways, was appropriated as a tool for citizen counter-power. Over the course of a year and a half, this labor made a significant contribution, both toward a technical proficiency that provided the neighbors a less abstract look at the city's proposal as well as a means for them to launch counter-proposals. Maps that the students made served both for their *fin de carrera* projects and for mobilizing the neighborhood social movement. One 2x3 meter map of the Can Batlló site, in particular, was brought out repeatedly onto the streets as neighborhood leaders began to drum up support for their cause (Figure 5.13).

Figure 5.13 Street engagement in La Bordeta (image: LaCol)

The students also began to attend community meetings. These were not the official district meetings in municipal chambers, which commonly drew 20 or so residents, but rather meetings organized by the CSS and the La Bordeta neighborhood association, with typically over 60 residents in attendance. In January of 2010, LaCol contributed a plan to provide over 100 temporary parking spaces within the walls of Can Batlló, intended both to satisfy a pressing neighborhood need and to literally chip away at the walls of the complex and to accustom neighbors to inhabiting space within them. By June of 2010, Lali herself was seated with leaders of the Plataforma leading another community meeting (El 3, 2010).

The role that LaCol played within the Plataforma appears to have been straightforward, that the group provided technical assistance to an urban social movement. But the motivations between the architects and the neighbors were not always shared. The architects, for example, disapproved strongly to the development proposal that the firm Batlle i Roig had prepared. They wanted the neighbors to rethink their support for this plan, especially its destruction of historical patrimony, the lack of permeability between the project and the surrounding neighborhoods, and the high-rise towers. Initially, some of the architects of LaCol were intent on changing the official city project, essentially reforming it. Putting as much time and effort into a project that they didn't like just to have it implemented was not worth their effort. They wanted to improve the plan. But as Carles notes:

> *Of course they know that, having spent so many years with this plan, they know that if they change things with the plan, it will be slower, it will take longer. And they want it now. (Baiges, 2011)*

Lali agreed that trying to convince the neighbors of the deficiencies of the existing plan was a challenge:

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Up to now we have tried, I say we've tried but much remains. It has been an attempt to transmit the criteria and the values or the potential that we see in Can Batlló, and that the proposal that is there is missing out. I mean, Can Batlló has so many possibilities, and the one they're realizing with the existing proposal is surely the most impoverished possible. (Davi, 2012)

Jordi Falco of the CSS also recognized that the designers of LaCol had their own motivations for Can Batlló. He credited them for solving many technical problems, for being "a great help, and we hope they will continue being so" (Falcó Gres, 2011). Still, he said, all designers--public or private--have the same problem:

The neighbor has some interests, and the designer sometimes has others … every designer, I understand this too, has his interest, or his resume, or his own ego, or who knows what. Like all of us. (Falcó Gres, 2011)

These admissions of diverging motivations notwithstanding, the architects and neighbors did not allow these differences to show. They had to maintain a united front to the city. Carles pointed out the importance of solidarity:

We are trying to do it without causing conflict with the neighbors. Because the moment you have two distinct positions in a fight like this, that's the worst that could happen … In Bon Pastor, this happened, because the neighbors were divided, and city hall took advantage of it. (Baiges, 2011)

LaCol did not, however, entirely set aside its agenda of advocating for a change to the development plan. They especially focused on the theme of historic preservation and calls for saving more of Can Batlló's urban fabric. This advocacy was aimed as much at the city as it was at the residents. In April of 2011, as the movement was ramping up for its threatened occupation, the Plataforma became formalized. It organized itself into seven different working commissions: press, negotiation, action, legal, diffusion, activities, outreach to other entities for future management of the space. It also began to accept donations for the "popular" library that the group was planning to build. That same month, just after the students had submitted their *fin de carrera* projects, Lacol organized a conference, together with the Plataformas for the Lleialtat Santsenca and Can Batlló, on the topic of preservation, called "The Architectural Patrimony of Sants" (Figure 5.13). The conference was a day-long event that included a walking tour of Can Batlló, a photo exhibition, a dinner and round-table discussions with urbanists and academics.[27] In addition to its stated function, the conference also served as a graduation of sorts for the former students, an extension of their self-directed final projects in the organization of an educational program for which they had invited people to comment and critique the city's approach to urbanism and preservation.

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[27] The conference, on April 30, 2011, drew a few dozen attendees. Speakers included historians, architects, urbanists and economists.

Figure 5.14 Poster, conference on preservation (image: LaCol)

Just over a month remained before June 11, 2011 and there was no sign of an agreement between the city, the property owner and the neighbors. The Plataforma did not back down. They manned tables at the playground outside of Can Batlló, where they had painted the countdown clock and where now spray-painted in stencils on the wall were the words: "35 Years of Shame! 11th of June We Enter Can Batlló". Banners were printed and passed out to neighbors, along with stencils of the Can Batlló logo, which only lacked a can of spray paint to adorn the sidewalks of Sants. A local artist, Pitu Alcober, fashioned a three-meter-tall fist--the Plataforma's logo-- that would be paraded through town on the way to Can Batlló, an "emblem that will help us open the doors of our future in La Bordeta" (Plataforma Can Batlló és pel barri, 2011b). When representatives from the district came to negotiate with the Plataforma, the neighbors showed them plans: multiple parade routes from different directions descending upon the gate to the property; children and seniors accompanying them; scouts positioned on the tops of roofs to guard against police intervention. As one of the Plataforma

members, Rosa Pomareda, explains, the contentious nature of these plans, and especially the threat of an occupation, made the city and the property-owner nervous:

> *They came with plans, well, we're going to enter. Well, where? They were here looking and we told them we would enter by the gate. And they said, oh if this happens, if you enter all the squatters of Europe will come and occupy this place! (Pomareda, 2012)*

Members of the Plataforma also used their contacts with sympathetic members of the local press, especially the local Sants Radio, the Vanguardia and the Periódico, to broadcast their plight and to garner citywide support. Additionally, national elections were slated for May 22, 2011 and it was less certain that Barcelona's socialist city hall would survive a challenge from the more conservative Convergència i Uniò (CiU) party. The Plataforma used this situation to their advantage, recruiting the challenging mayoral candidate as a supporter of Can Batlló. Doing so was politically advantageous for him because he could point to the 35-year socialist failure to accomplish anything on the site as another reason for a change of the guard. The election, in fact, closed with CiU winning, and a new mayor, Xavier Trias, who himself had pledged to attend the events on June 11.

The actions, however spectacular, failed to yield an agreement between the city and the property owner to surrender a space within Can Batlló to the neighbors, which was their immediate demand. On June 9, the Plataforma and the property owner decided to meet on their own, without a city representative, and without interference from the city, they quickly struck a deal, averting an occupation. A warehouse, designated Bloc 11, would be transferred to the city, which would in turn hand over its management to the Centre Social de Sants.

Figure 5.15 Entering Can Batlló, June 11, 2011 (image: Jordi Soler)

The plans for breaking down a gate were quickly converted into a three-day celebration, culminating in another conference organized by the Plataforma and LaCol, called "Let's think about a different Can Batlló." The event was organized into four parts that reflected LaCol's interests: a criticism of the existing project, industrial heritage, uses, and continuity (or how to extend the fight). LaCol's contributions to the success of this movement are recognized by other members of the Plataforma. Says Rosa:

> *Those guys came in with so much enthusiasm and hopes, they were just like other people from the neighborhood. They had an office here, and they wanted to do things. (Pomareda, 2012)*

Unlike Raons Públiques, LaCol did not see their role in their mode of urban activism as one of capacity building. Instead, they had attached to a movement that already had its momentum and they built their own capacity by learning from the movement. Rosa was pleased that the architects showed so much enthusiasm, but as Arnau suggests, that was a reflection of the motivation they found there:

> *The neighbors are already doing things; they don't need an excuse to work together. You don't have to motivate anyone. They are already animated. (Andrés Gallart, 2012)*

After the celebrations were over, the motivation that the neighbors showed in organizing to enter Can Batlló would now be put to the test. They had committed to manage a community facility. The commitment to *autogestión* had come from what started as a fight to make the city provide city services. According to Carles:

> *This fight to accomplish the change, the neighbors, in the beginning, didn't want to manage the warehouse. It had been like collateral damage, right? Like something secondary that came out of what they were looking for. And now it is becoming the most interesting part. (Baiges, 2011)*

5.6 Experiment 4: Autogestión of Bloc 11

We are a little bit like a drop of water in a rock, when it freezes it explodes the rock, no? (Soler, 2012)
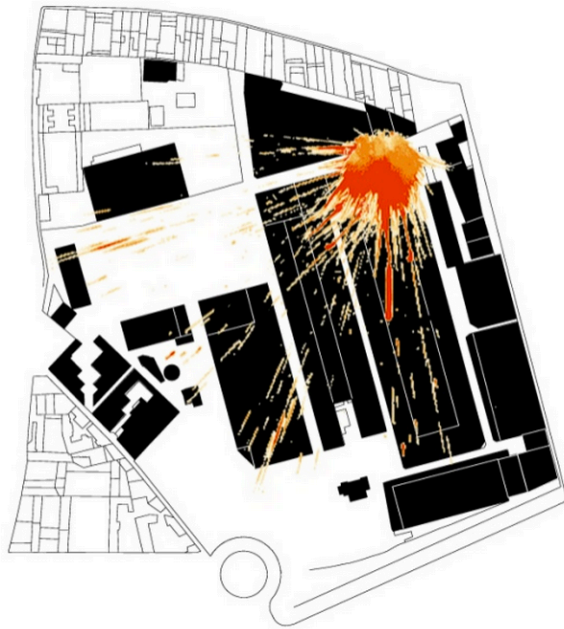
Figure 5.16 Presentation graphic: Arquitectura i Autogestió (image: LaCol)

The fourth experiment closely examines the horizontal organization of autogestión through the institutionalization of protocols. This tendency toward institutionalization, according to Meyer and Tarrow, is common in social movement organizations because it routinizes activities to make them more efficient and it suppresses actions whose radicalism might threaten the organization's survival. The institutions being shaped here are anarchistic in nature, and this section testifies to the fact that anarchistic organizations are some of the most organized. In many ways, anarchism's horizontality demands this level of organizational attention whereas strict hierarchies can more easily fall back upon a simple chain of command. Also evident in this experiment is the role of making things and its relationship to the expertise of designers and neighbors, as well as its usefulness in generating bonding capital between participants.

On June 13, 2011, two days after the entry into Can Batlló, about fifty people gathered on the mezzanine at the back of the Bloc 11 warehouse, seated in folding chairs in a circle and talking about the future of their movement. The event was coordinated by Lacol. One of the topics was titled "Continuity: How to extend the fight for recuperation (la reivindicació). Elaboration of an alternative plan to the current one" (LaCol, 2012). The architects of LaCol were still intent upon modifying the city's plans,

but that concern was about to be trumped by other pressing concerns. The focus in *autogestión*, as I articulated it earlier, is not the system itself, but in the construction of alternatives that can exist alongside the system. As of June 11, 2011, this parallel alternative ceased to be hypothetical and started to be immediate and material. The structure used to mobilize the urban social movement had to turn its energies toward the reality of a warehouse, a physical space that required a lot of labor before it would accommodate the types of community activities they had envisioned.

In fact, already the day before, the Plataforma had held its first assembly, attended by approximately 70 people. The meeting minutes already laid out a clear path:

> *Self-managed (autogestionat) facilities. Minimum dependence on the administration. Self-managed activities, without need of subsidies. Must find systems of auto-finance (economic model). (Plataforma Can Batlló és pel barri, 2011a)*

The meeting minutes also record the transformation from a struggle to management. The seven commissions were converted into eight working groups: activities, library, diffusion, negotiation, maintenance and infrastructures, design of the space, model of management, and fight for recuperation (Plataforma Can Batlló és pel barri, 2011a). In order to maintain continuity in the short term, the Plataforma continued its existing rhythm of meetings, which were every other Wednesday evening. Already by June 22, the working groups (which continued to be called commissions) had begun meeting and were able to report back to the general assembly with their progress. The transformation was fluid, and the assemblies would continue at their biweekly pace for over a year. (They currently are meeting once a month.)
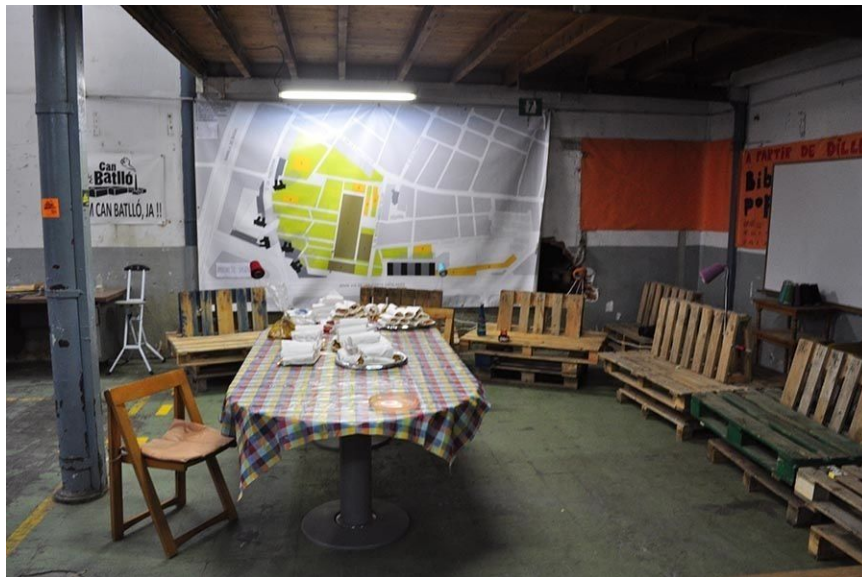

Figure 5.17 Meeting space in Bloc 11, October 2011 (image: author)

I first stepped foot in Can Batlló in October of 2011, hardly four months after the warehouse had been opened. Hours were inconsistent, and one had to check in with a security guard at the entry before proceeding. It did not yet look or feel like a typical city-sponsored community center. Inside Bloc 11, it looked as if the neighbors had been there for years. Bulletin boards were full of clippings and agendas. A makeshift kitchen was full of dishes. People were coming and going, working on various construction projects. The library was already in process of being installed, but the space was stacked tall with book donations and volunteers were unable to catalogue them all quickly enough. An open meeting space was defined by a circle of chairs that LaCol constructed in an earlier workshop, made of recycled wood pallets and remnants of spools of thread left behind by the fabric industries that had occupied the warehouse last. Downstairs, the warehouse was chopped up into small offices and storage rooms. Upstairs, loftier spaces held temporary art installations, participatory works made by neighbors using objects found in the building.

The ease with which the movement transformed itself was surprising even to its leaders. While there was difficulty involving younger people in previous movements, they kept showing up at Can Batlló. They were connected, said Jordi Falco, by word of mouth, through twitter and other technologies, and they came to see for themselves what was happening:

> *There were a lot of connections, there were people who came for the first time, got excited, got caught up, and stayed. This person would call two more, and those would call three more who would call five, and in the end out of those five two would stay on. And that's the way it worked … the phenomenon happened, and it has been very surprising. (Falcó Gres, 2011)*

Josep María Domingo, president of the CSS, said that people were excited to be a part of a project with so much positive potential:

> *It's a demonstration of the solidarity between citizens when a project excites people. If people see a project with such joy, with enthusiasm, with a future, then people who have this sensation will go there to participate in it. It precipitates this kind of phenomenon. (Domingo, 2012)*

Rosa Pomareda attributed the solidarity to an underlying tendency in the neighborhood to support any large undertaking:

> *Here in this neighborhood, whatever big thing that happens, in Sants, Hostafranc, or La Bordeta, there is a lot of unity. And not only that, when there is something rather large, well the collective of artists of Sants, other neighborhood associations, whichever entity that works in the neighborhood, the youth, those from [the okupa] Can Vies, those from the neighborhood assembly, those from the alternative fiestas of Sants, neighbors… (Pomareda, 2012)*

For Jordi Soler, the size of the undertaking was not its appeal, but rather its horizontal, grassroots nature. The activists in the neighborhood, he explained, had always run in two bands--nationalist Catalans and anarchists or neo-anarchists. Whereas usually the two are antagonistic toward each other, the act of working

together has helped ameliorate conflict. One reason for this is that the space offers something other than what exists in the status quo, hierarchical world:

> *But here, I'd say what's happening in this world is that it's autonomous, leftist, say it how you want. Yes, now, I can only think that if there were some kind of hierarchy, I think the immense majority of people wouldn't follow. We would find another place. Because the important thing here isn't the object, but the experience. (Soler, 2012)*

Arriving at the horizontal organization that Jordi Soler holds as so fundamental did not just happen naturally. The structure itself began with the division of labor into commissions and a bi-weekly assembly. But by itself this is not a system. That model of *autogestión*, of self-management, was the topic of its own commission and was developed through much collaborative work and several workshops. During these work-days, which occurred on multiple Saturdays, dozens of volunteers came to listen to debates about legal issues, about economic sustainability, and about the management of activities. The mood was serious, with the weight of a constitutional convention. Attendees split up into smaller working groups based on topics in order to openly critique and edit the document on Bloc 11's management, then they came together to present findings and to try to find consensus. During one heated discussion, members asked what the group's position should be regarding the availability of space for all groups. What would be the response, for example, if a right-wing political group wanted to use the space? This question drew a strong response. Nobody would expect them to want to use the space, but there had to be some protocol.

In November 2012, the Plataforma ratified an official 15-page document that laid out its self-management protocols, called Block 11: Document of Internal Systems. "This document," it states, "summarizes the conclusions of the diverse work-days of debate carried out during 2012 to establish the nature and criteria of the functioning of the project of Block 11" (Plataforma Can Batlló és pel barri, 2012). In the document, the group defines *autogestión*:

> *We understand self-management (autogestió) as the fact that all the processes (decision-making, participation, information, etc.) are decided in an autonomous manner on the part of the General Assembly, the commissions or the work groups, without external determinations. (Plataforma Can Batlló és pel barri, 2012)*

The document establishes the structure of organization, the manner of decision-making, the uses of the space, economic financing, and an entire page just to political or religious activities. The ultimate forum for decision-making is the General Assembly, held a minimum of once a month. The majority of the work is accomplished in commissions organized by theme, with individuals committing to accomplish assigned tasks. If there is one committee that operates in an oversight capacity, it is the commission of coordination, but in order to avoid any hierarchy this commission is made of representatives of the other committees and rotates every six months. All people, neighbors or otherwise, are free to participate in activities, commissions or the assemblies.

The institutionalization of a system of self-governance is a key characteristic of the modality of *autogestión*. It is neither an attempt to reform a system nor to replace it

through some revolutionary act. Rather it is a seizure of some aspects formerly controlled by the system and the autonomous development of an alternative that can exist alongside the status quo. In the early 20th century, during Barcelona's heyday of anarcho-syndicalism, notions of collective worker control circulated in the city and especially in Sants. In this very district, in Poble Sec, notes Jordi Soler, a passionate and outspoken anarchist Salvador Segui was murdered by government assassins. The year was 1923, just before the dictator Primo de Rivera took control. There was an air of possibility that Segui projected. According to Soler:

> *He said that the workers have to construct their own parallel society. Parallel to the society of the city, the government, the state, the parliament of Catalonia, a parallel society. When you can't change the structure completely, construct one in parallel. The moment that people enter into this parallel structure, and they see that it functions in a way that is more free, and could be more efficient too, then the day will arrive--I don't know when--that we can consider to have supplanted another society … If here it is more free and it is better, why do you need a capitalist structure? And that's why it's important. Here we have to reproduce the society that we want. It's not a road to a perfect society, but rather the society is the road. (Soler, 2012)*

In contrast to the system put in place by neighbors at Can Batlló, the city government is structured hierarchically, and even explained on the city's webpage through a "árbol jerárquico (hierarchical tree)" with a top-down tree structure of dependencies (Figure 5.18).

Figure 5.18 Hierarchical Tree of City Government (image: Ajuntament)

The Plataforma, instead, represents its "horizontal" organization as an organic entity (Figure 5.19). Though effectively the diagram still depicts a tree-like structure with distinct dependencies, it no longer conveys a top-down system and it privileges no particular individuals with decision-making power.
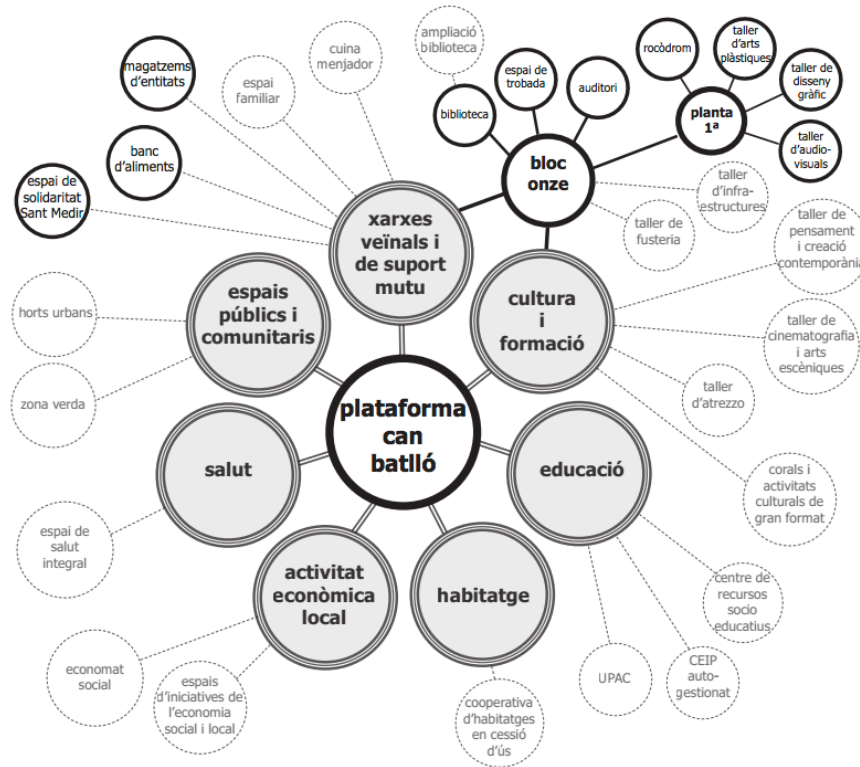
Figure 5.19 Organization of Plataforma Can Batlló
(image: Plataforma Can Batlló és pel Barri)

Within this collective structure, the architects of LaCol have inserted themselves and continue to play active roles within the organization. Their work is mostly concentrated on Bloc 11 and particularly within the two commissions of "Design of the Space" and "Infrastructures." The design commission, which I joined during my brief involvement there, was powered mostly by the labor of LaCol members. There is a tension in this arrangement especially given some acknowledgement of differences of motivation between LaCol and some neighbors. In an interview, Arnau agrees to characterize the design process of this commission as participatory:

> *The Design of Space [commission] where we from LaCol are, and more people, well we have to make decisions and make proposals in relation to design. And they always end up accepting everything, and yes there is debate. But within this work you have do delegate a little and have confidence in the people who are in charge of each thing. (Andrés Gallart, 2012)*

Although they are delegated much of the design work, Arnau doesn't feel like LaCol is something outside of the Plataforma:

> *I think we're embedded within it. It's not that we're technicians of the neighbors, like something separate from the neighborhood movement, but rather that we form a part of it. Like one more element, no? (Andrés Gallart, 2012)*

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Pol reiterates Arnau's sentiment and expands on it, almost using the same words:

> *Often in movements like these, when a technician or an architect arrives, they situate themselves almost parallel to the neighbors, of course here we are like part of the neighborhood, too. We have the possibility of being one piece more. How we like to think of ourselves--and we believe that it's this way--is that we aren't architects who are giving information to a movement and that we can intervene with the city or that we can transform the inquietudes of theirs into something … Rather how we'd like to think is that we are part of it, more like that neighbor who knows how to work with wood, or who knows how to work with steel, or who knows how to talk very well or who knows more about the neighborhood than anyone else. We are neighbors too and form part of the Plataforma and we have some technical knowledge that can help things advance, add force, channelize it into architectural and urbanistic themes, in a much more constructive direction, and create much more potential. But yes I consider that we are at the same level as the other neighbors. We are just one more neighbor. We are part of the Plataforma, but only one part. (Massoni, 2012)*

The valoration of craft that Pol mentions in this statement--the neighbors who work with wood or steel--conveys an appreciation that he has for craftsmanship that is unfortunately not found in most architectural education.

> *When you are in school or when you see those great architects and is seems that architecture is so important in the end? Look we've learned things through construction, lots of things, because we are building also and we love it, we've learned lots of things about working with wood, or steel, that we didn't know before. (Massoni, 2012)*

Autogestión, I claimed earlier, tends to be enacted materially more than discursively, more through making than by talking, thought still engaged in the two. My initial hypothesis in observing LaCol and the dynamic with Can Batlló was that the intentions toward *autogestión* shaped the actions that the activists undertook. But in this case it is more apt to say that the reverse it true: the material actions began to shape the intentions of the architects. Carles from LaCol said that "the neighbors, in the beginning, didn't want to manage the warehouse" (Baiges, 2011). But neither did LaCol, whose sights were initially set on altering the approved site plan. Lali noted that they were working at a very small scale at Bloc 11, on small details, but that they had an interest in the bigger picture (Davi, 2012). But physical engagement alters perceptions and motivations. This was true of the Mort a l'asfalt project, and it was also true of building furniture, guardrails and countertops in Bloc 11. The physical processes start to become the objective themselves.

Figure 5.20 Saturday workday at Bloc 11 (image: Jordi Soler)

During the months I spent with the activists at Can Batlló, I observed what I will call a euphoria of collective work, a sensation of accomplishment that is shared with a team. Even without words, people communicated through doing, by steadying a piece of wood while I drilled holes or passing buckets of paint up the scaffold to Dani, who contorted his body to paint ceiling beams. Throughout many hours of actually difficult physical labor, group members shared moments of pleasure and solidarity. This mental satisfaction from connecting with people through physical activity, I believe, motivates individuals to create spaces in which those experiences can be protected, replicated and expanded.

The experiment of building Bloc 11 has been a learning experience for the designers at LaCol and has accentuated an understanding of architecture's role in making cities. It has amplified a belief that cities are made from the bottom up, not the top down. In this opinion LaCol differs strongly from the architects for the city. The following two statements offer a contrast of these opinions, the first from LaCol's Pol Massoni and the second from Ricard Fayos, architect in the department of Urbanism:

> *I believe the best lesson I've leaned is this humility, of knowing that the architect isn't that important, that the city is made without architects, that the city has always been made without architects and that certainly it was better made without architects. And they continue doing so in many places in the world, and they are much more beautiful and much closer to the people without architects than with architects. And this is dangerous and beautiful because it takes away from the importance of architecture. It isn't as important sometimes as it seems. (Massoni, 2012)*

At first glance it seems that if you leave the project in the hands of people who aren't experts, in principle, it could augment the level of satisfaction of the people, but diminish the quality of the result in the long term. How has the history of urbanism and the history of cities been constructed? What are the cities that today we go to see and we like? Surely they aren't the ones that were built in an improvised way, but rather unfortunately where there was a dictator or a king, or an emperor in Rome, who could impose things and would look for the best architects. So the history of the city is made this way, right? Then up to what point to we leave it in hands of non-experts? The city, so that the city lives on over time or could be an example in the future? It's a question I don't know how to answer but surely people with little formation, I don't know if they can make a good city. Right? This is my doubt. (Fayos, 2012)

The contrasts between these two points of view are striking but are not entirely irreconcilable. Fayos' doubt in the viability of grassroots, non-expert urbanism may be proven wrong in the instance of Can Batlló, but *autogestión* has not yet offered a mechanism to reproduce itself at larger scales or in contexts without a confluence of collective organization and technical skill.

This is where *autogestión* provides a space that is valuable. While not replacing the existing system by which cities are produced, it creates spaces of experimentation and emergence, where new combinations of actors and new relationships between organization, space and creativity allow for new methods and new mechanisms to be developed. The neighbors in La Bordeta and Sants demanded facilities for 35 years without success. They did not want to build the facilities themselves. I asked Jordi Soler if he wished the city had just kept its promises years earlier and built the development they had planned. He answered no:

We are building with our own hands, and the neighbors are building with their own hands, too. Who will be able to take away from us what we built with our own hands? Imagine how different the process would be if the developer started to build apartments. A thousand apartments and a great garden for those apartments and also for the neighborhood. Machines, construction, here comes the boom, boom, boom. You take the key and that's it. But the city says we can't be here and they put police there and here's a gate to control who enters and what activities you do. Everything is good and pretty, but it's not my home, do you understand? (Soler, 2012)

The experiment at Bloc 11 continues to expand since I left in 2012. A grant was secured to fund the construction of new stairs and an elevator in Bloc 11. LaCol designed and with neighbors built a new kitchen and fully operating bar. The library continues to be improved. The Plataforma has negotiated the release of several more warehouses to the neighborhood. LaCol is helping to draw plans for a large community garden. And the Plataforma has begun a new campaign to demolish the wall surrounding Can Batlló. They added another ultimatum on the wall to the complex that they would begin tearing down the wall themselves this spring. They began cutting through in March 2013. Weeks later, the city sent a construction crew to demolish the entire expanse of wall that the Plataforma had begun to punch holes in.

5.7 Experiment 5: Invisible Giant

This final experiment evaluates the creation of a documentary film about Can Batlló made by members of LaCol. The film is both an artifact, and as such the result of material actions, and it is a tool of communication, a discursive act. While it highlights the potential of *autogestión*, it does so with the intention of reform.

Bloc 11 celebrated its one-year anniversary with a two-day event including dinners, an open house, and the inauguration of the new popular library named after the late community leader Josep Pons. During one evening over a hundred people packed into an auditorium that just weeks earlier neighbors had been gutting and painting. Black curtains were pulled over the enormous steel framed windows; every seat was taken by a mixed group of young, old, students, professors, architects, and collaborators. Almost everyone from LaCol was present and anxious; the days before they had still been splicing video clips and interviews together, laying music tracks over images of the city, and recording a voice-over. The documentary was called *Com un Gegant Invisible* (Like an Invisible Giant: Can Batlló and Imaginary Cities). There were still a few rough spots, but the crowd didn't care; after an hour or so when it finished, the producers, LaCol and Natxo Medina of Panóptica, received a long, standing ovation.

Figure 5.21 Premiere screening of Invisible Giant (image: LaCol)

Producing Invisible Giant is the last of the experiments in this chapter, though it is unlikely the end of LaCol and Can Batlló's evolution. What this experience represents is a return for the architects to the inquietudes that first motivated them to pursue an autonomous direction in their education and then in their professional work. The group's motivations and commitments have changed in the three intervening years, and the scale at which the group is working has also broadened. But the impulse to capture and to promote their actions to a wider audience using video was there from the beginning (Figure 5.22). In capturing the guerrilla gardening event Mort a l'asfalt and

then posting the video online, the group found that they had struck a nerve. Within a day of posting the video they had over 100 views, and soon afterward the group started a Facebook page and chose a name for itself--LaCol.

Figure 5.22 Lali installing a stealth camera for Mort a l'asfalt (image: LaCol)

The Mort a l'asfalt video was a glancing blow at the conventional production of public space and offered a fleeting image of new engaged roles for professional designers. The critique and the counter-proposal it offered, however, were veiled by fun, less-than-serious style that some might read as frivolous. Invisible Giant, on the other hand, sent a direct shot at the status-quo urbanism practiced by the city, and then showed the real potential of an alternative, self-managed approach. The film, like Bloc 11 itself, was a demonstration of a sophisticated bottom-up production, a retort to the kind of skepticism raised by city architect Ricard Fayos, that leaving things to non-experts was unlikely to produce something lasting and meaningful. In the case of the documentary, the film crew was a group of architects, non-experts in filmmaking. The accessory professional was Natxo Medina, who had produced several short-length films but was no film industry insider. The entire film was shot on two cameras, one of which was an inexpensive digital SLR, and a microphone. Despite its modest means, the film quality is difficult to distinguish from what would have been produced by professionals.

The documentary itself is divided into three parts: (1) Can Batlló: map of a problematic, (2) Barcelona, perversions of a model, and (3) Constructing new realities. Its argument is constructed through the voices of sixteen interviewees, whose monologues are weaved together and intermixed with video imagery of the city, moving images of the city's distress, of tourists and high-rises, of half-finished buildings for sale, of beaches and buses and clothes lines. Arnau voice provides an overarching narrative, above tracks of ambient electronic music. The sixteen interviews are each set in a different scene, atop buildings, in offices, within Bloc 11, in parks. The interview questions, the prompts, are not included in the film, and neither are the handful of

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collaborators sitting behind the cameras. The interview questions themselves are carefully constructed, vetted and edited by the group before each interview. The LaCol architects appear in a few images but they have left themselves and their contributions out of the story.

Figure 5.23 Interviewing for Invisible Giant (image: author)

Within the film, the critique of the city and of normative architectural practice is harsh. Especially targeted is the so-called Barcelona planning model, in which private development was leveraged to pay for public infrastructures up to the point that they became the raison d'être of the Urbanism department itself, until the false economy they built collapsed. Jordi Borja makes unapologetic accusations:

> *Politicians, out of ignorance, out of weakness, sometimes out of complicity, collaborated. The professionals prostituted themselves.* (P. Lacol, 2012)

The urbanist Itziar González voices her distaste for an administration that she knew from the inside as a district counselor:

> *For me, it's the biggest swindle. It was like, 'Look how well we've done.' Well, no, you haven't done it. Or, you were going to do it, but since we haven't created control mechanisms, people have abused this collective construction. We broke the ecological cycle of the city, of common goods. We've permitted the vultures to come in and break lives and hearts.* (P. Lacol, 2012)

Looking at a broken system, David Juarez laments the fact that the citizens of Barcelona allowed themselves to be placated, content to accept what the administration and the market provided. Now, he urges, is time to find solutions elsewhere:

> *Stating that we've been driven to this situation we're in by that urbanism, by that conception of cities that came from hegemonic power, we realized that the*

solution wouldn't come from the same place where the problem came from. (P. Lacol, 2012)

Santiago Cirugeda expands the critique beyond Barcelona, to the whole of Spain that is experiencing the same crisis:

Now that we've eaten shit, we say 'What have we done? I mean, we've allowed them to rule everything.' (P. Lacol, 2012)

The film does not offer a solution to reform the system, but does call for a taking back of some of the authority with which the city was entrusted. It offers Can Batlló as an example, as a reference, that could inspire other places to do the same. The film's voiceover states the case:

The starting point is the facilities we've always asked for, the ones set on a map. We know for sure that, from the administration, there is no money to build facilities in the short term. But given that we can't keep waiting for the administration to set the calendar, we must self-manage (autogestionar), self-build (autoconstruir), and provide, with what we have at hand, the spaces of activity that we can recuperate from the inside. (P. Lacol, 2012)

After dramatically showing scenes of the Plataforma's entry into Can Batlló, of drumming marches and puppet shows and fireworks, Ferrán Aguiló of the Plataforma argues that the experiences of Can Batlló can be a model:

The fact that many Catalan entities have been built from the bottom up without municipal money, without state money, make us think about a tradition of self-organization of the cultural type, for which, I think, Can Batlló is now the guide, and that surely could be the beginning of a process to take back some places that the state and its institutions controlled, and never to return them. (P. Lacol, 2012)

Making Can Batlló a model for another way of practicing urbanism is a laudable aim for a documentary. It is arguable that a first step has to be to convince others that the system is broken and to plant a seed that another option is available, one of *autogestión*. The documentary, however, does not detail how the model could be replicated or adapted to other scenarios. Also, while LaCol's absence within the documentary is understandable, it leaves unanswered the question about what role designers should take in similar movements. LaCol has taken up this question outside of the documentary itself, holding dozens of screenings over the past year in cities across Spain.

Figure 5.24 Screening for Invisible Giant (image: LaCol)

While the documentary itself celebrates the modality of *autogestión*, the act of producing and diffusing it to a broad audience demonstrates that the modalities of activism are fluid and that groups can float back and forth between them. A large motivation for the film is in fact to provoke institutional reform. Using discourse, the documentary aims at two audiences: city administrations that are the object of the film's criticism, and other communities who might be inspired to take their own steps toward self-management.

Chapter 6: Official Experiments in Participatory Urbanism

6.1 Overview

At the outset of this dissertation, I stated that one of the pressing questions about urban activism was its impact on institutions. Both of the modalities, illustrated here through the experiences of activists in Barcelona, aim to effect institutional change, especially reform activism. Reform activists like the members of Raons Públiques directly seek change of the system by influencing those within the system itself. This is accomplished by bridging dialogically across disciplines and between officials, designers and citizens, and by demonstrating new methods that could be institutionally incorporated. Activists like the architects of LaCol make demands of the institutions--often contentiously--for local autonomy, then construct collective utopias that connect people through horizontal organizational structures and material engagement. Their demonstrations of social cohesion, of economic self-sufficiency, and of architectural aptitude are intended to extend the surrender of authority by institutions and to act as a reference for similar groups.

It is difficult to measure the impact that activism has on an institution. Institutional actors may not admit to the influences, and change at an institutional level may also be the other side of the same coin that begets activism in the first place. Broader cultural forces, in other words, may be motivating both activism and internal reform. Whatever the case, the institutions that manage urbanism and citizen participation in Barcelona have begun simultaneously to incorporate participatory reforms and to encourage local *autogestión*. This chapter takes a look at these problematic yet promising steps toward institutional change, and the relationships between officials and activists of both inclinations that have emerged. First, it explores the problem of citizen participation from the point of view of several institutional actors--directors of participation at the district, the urbanism department, and the city overall. It then highlights two city-initiated projects in which the case study groups have been implicated. These examples illustrate the potential of reform but also the limitations and dangers of co-optation and ultimately the need for further experimentation.

6.2 Opportunities of a New Regime

> *Another striking pattern is the repeated occurrence of catastrophes followed by intense periods of growth and innovation. Thus, 245 million years ago, the most devastating mass extinctions the world has ever seen were rapidly followed by the evolution of mammals; and 66 million years ago the catastrophe that eliminated the dinosaurs from the face of the Earth cleared the way for the evolution of the first primates and, eventually, of the human species. (Capra, 2002, p. 31)*

Four years ago, Spain fell into crisis. An economic adjustment had been expected, but the severity of the collapse and its reverberations through society were worse than the country's political, economic and social systems could bear. The crisis quickly sent unemployment levels soaring and froze most major construction projects. Two years

after the crisis began, with nerves frayed, a radical social movement began to emerge. The timing of this movement, called 15-M, ran in parallel with the neighborhood unrest in Sants over Can Batlló. The first stirrings of 15-M, from unions and youth entities, came in September 2010, when the socialist government announced changes to labor laws that would benefit employers. By the 15th of May, two new groups had emerged to lead an indignant protest: *Joventud Sin Futuro* (Youth without Future) and *Real Democracia Ya!* (Real Democracy Now!). The groups demanded change but refused to participate in a two-party political system in which neither side represented their views. The national elections were to be held on May 22, and from Madrid's occupied Puerta del Sol and Barcelona's Plaça de Catalunya, many protesters called for citizens to boycott the election altogether.

The immediate political result of this unrest was the ouster of the socialist party, nationally in Spain and also locally in Barcelona for the first time in the 32 years since Franco. In Barcelona, the regime shift came swiftly such that by June 1, 2011, the city had a new conservative mayor, Xavier Trias, and a new political party in charge, Convergència i Unió (CiU). The change of guard was watched with trepidation by the urban activists I encountered. The Trias campaign had vocally criticized the socialist government's distance from the citizenry. It mocked, for example, mayor Jordi Hereu's campaign to remake the Diagonal, Barcelona's main parkway; or the previous mayor Joan Clos's expensive Forum 2004 project. In Sants, the leaders at the CSS or the Plataforma Can Batlló were cautiously optimistic because the new mayor had pledged his support for their project:

> *At the moment they are very friendly, very kind. Objectively, they proposed this change that the others had only done at the level of words. But these people seem like they're going to follow through, and it's growing. It seems like they're interested in having this project get unstuck. (Falcó Gres, 2011)*

Other activists were less optimistic. Carles Baiges of LaCol worried that Trias' campaign promises for Can Batlló would go unfulfilled. He was stunned in November 2011 when Trias named Can Batlló as one of his four main urban projects, committing to spend 10 million euros to support it. Eva Rodriguez, who worked with Raons Públiques, worried that her position and the entire Agenda 21 project that employed her would be in jeopardy. In fact, the government renewed all of these contracts. Within the government itself, new personnel filled positions of power in all of the sectors of government and in all of the district offices. Many of these new faces were young, and all of them spoke of a new opportunity to reconnect government with the people. I interviewed four of these new figures and their statements suggest the potential for creating new spaces to respond to activist demands for both reform and neighborhood autonomy. A openness of this kind, an "willingness to be disturbed" as Nabeel Hamdi claims, is a necessary starting point in bringing about any major change:

> *To begin with, there must be a certain openness…a willingness to be disturbed in order to set the process in motion; and there has to be an active network of communication … to amplify the triggering event. The next stage is the point of instability, which may be experienced as tension, chaos or crisis. At this stage, the system may either break down or it may break through to a new state of order, which is characterized by novelty. (Hamdi, 2004, p. 117)*

In the case of the new CiU regime, the disturbance to the city's institutions was intentional. Carles Agustí Hernández is the city's Commissioner of Citizen Participation and Associationism, for which he directs a team of approximately 30 employees in three offices. Agustí said that he had inherited a climate of distrust:

> *At the moment, we live in a moment; we'll see if it's just politics or disaffection. I would like to define it as a distancing, distrust between society and politics understood as the administration and the parties. (Agustí Hernández, 2012)*

He also rejected the notion that his party was more conservative:

> *It's not true that this government is more conservative. I think the more conservative one was the other one. It spent 32 years here governing at the end with a terrible dynamic, not at all transformative. And our new government enters with a very transformative mentality, very transformative in citizen participation. (Agustí Hernández, 2012)*

The old regime, according to Agustí, used a model of participation that was based on the neighborhood associations almost entirely. The problem with this model, he claims, is that the neighborhood associations are not representative. On the contrary, they are made up of the most politically active, "an absolutely minor percentage of society, one or two percent, or three if you're generous" (Agustí Hernández, 2012). At a time when the neighborhood associations in Barcelona have recently regained political willpower and traction, this attack on the neighborhood associations' monopoly over participation should be viewed with some skepticism. Although Agustí maintains that they should still be the primary starting point for any outreach to communities, he also seems to want to reduce their influence.[28] But his recipe for expanding participation to the other 97% who are not in neighborhood associations is not to have more venues for dialogue. On the contrary, he argues that the city has too many already:

> *This means obviously maintaining the relation with the associations and for rationalizing what are the associative organs, because if we have a model of keeping organs that the old government, well, its idea was, for some time, the more venues we create the more participation we'll have. That's not true, quantity and quality don't go hand in hand. And now we have up to 560 participative venues in Barcelona. It's a barbarity! You have to order it, and we're working on that. (Agustí Hernández, 2012)*

Part of Agustí's solution is to move some of the contact with organizations to the Internet, to "electronic participation," where "the citizen informs himself and the citizen can leave opinions" (Agustí Hernández, 2012). Additionally, he admits that many do not have Internet, especially seniors and the poor, and that especially for big projects the administration has to seek out these people. How, exactly, is not clear.

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[28] In 2012, the administration put in place new rules requiring any entity that wants to be officially recognized to register through new procedures. The aim of this was to reduce the number of entities, many of which were not active, but the effect has also been to discourage the creation of new entities.

The issue of representativeness is one that Agustí is not alone in highlighting. It is true without a doubt that direct citizen participation is not representative. Making it more representative is not an undesirable goal, but dismissing the most actively engaged segments of society as somehow on the fringes misses entirely the value that they bring to a democratic society. Behind these criticisms of non-representativeness is a conflation between the purposes of representative government and direct participation. Representative government, based on voting procedures that hopefully implicate the greatest and most representative portion of society, involves the selection of individuals entrusted with power to act as their constituents believe they will, based upon their political campaigns and track records. Direct participation, on the other hand, both provides a needed feedback loop, and also makes a claim that democracy is not only exercised periodically at the voting booth but also in everyday life. Jacques Rancière made the following claim about participation that supports this definition:

> *The idea of participation blends two ideas of different origins: the reformist idea of necessary mediations between the centre and the periphery, and the revolutionary idea of the permanent involvement of citizen-subjects in every domain. The mixture of the two produces this mongrel idea, assigning to enduring democracy, as its site of exercise, the mere filling of spaces left empty by power. But does not the permanence of democracy reside much rather in its mobility, its capacity to shift the sites and forms of participation? (Rancière, 2007, p. 60)*

Stated slightly differently, participation means both the periodic contact between central representatives and the subjects they represent, as well as the shifting, unpredictable involvement of citizens in the public sphere, even in the street. In contrast, the focus on representativeness that Agustí seeks does not valorize the dynamic shifts of participatory democracy but rather reinforces a consensual, common center where dialogue is more moderate and predictable.

In city governance, quantitative (representative) approaches yield valuable information for officials and help them make decisions regarding for example distributions of services. But the segregation of public discourses from the contexts of everyday life also overlooks the need to involve citizens throughout the multiple phases of an urban project. The city's current approach first identifies an urban problem, then conceives of a solution, and finally conducts citizen participation; that is, it asks structured questions in venues where discourse is highly controlled and material action is unacceptable. The need to transform participation, which is what Agustí pretends to do, needs to do more than simplify and involve more representative groups. It needs to find ways to incorporate the voices and actions of existing, even "fringe" groups more meaningfully.

Alberto Piedrabuena, the city's associate manager of the department of Urbanism, agrees with Agustí, that a new opportunity for change is upon the new administration:

> *With the new government there has been a change of dynamic. New people, for example me, with new ideas and more will, younger people who have the desire to do things well. … I'll tell you if this government lasts 30 continuous years here, there will come a time when probably you or anyone else in this position*

would start doing things poorly because you develop habits and ways of doing things. I'm sure now we're taking a first step that is a change of the model, a change of vision. (Piedrabuena, 2012)

Piedrabuena provides more specifics about what this transformation might look like within an urban project. His vision is progressive and imagines participation beyond informing the public. The city, he claims has begun to integrate participation into the beginning of the process instead of at the end:

It's a fundamental change to structure it in a way that enriches. Up to now, participation, what it had been, was to give information in order to calm the neighbors. And the dimension now is distinct. The neighbors ask us for information and we provide it and this new dynamic of asking and providing, what it does is enrich the document because it captures some of what they ask for and if they see we haven't integrated something they can complain. It's their legitimate right and we have to respond to them always. (Piedrabuena, 2012)

The intent to begin participatory processes earlier in a project is welcome, but it is not yet practiced. More participation in the traditional sense costs money, and so long as additional funding is not made available, the rhetoric of engaging neighbors earlier in design processes has little force.

The lack of funding is a shortcoming that Laia Torras is fully aware of. Laia is one of the young faces of the new government that Piedrabuena references. She is the director of participation for Urbanism and is new to city administration, having previously worked for a private research foundation on the topics of participation and education. Talking about the city, she says, some people assume that they have limitless resources, but they do not, and participation takes time:

It takes, time, sure. But time means people dedicated to managing a process in a city with so many inhabitants and so many projects, and few people. Because the priority in Urbanism is not participation. (Torras, 2012)

Within Urbanism, Laia is one of two people who work on participation, and they mostly coordinate two legally mandated aspects of projects: the publication of *Memorias de Participación* (Summaries of Participation) that describe the extent of neighbor attendance at meetings, and *Comisiones de Seguimiento* (Project Oversight Groups) that provide neighbor input mostly during the construction process.

The lack of funding for participation is a frustration that is fed by an ideology that does not value citizen input in design and planning. One of the more difficult aspects of Laia's job, she says, is working with the city's own technicians, who don't necessarily believe that participation is a desirable thing:

It's very difficult, working with architects and engineers. It's very difficult to find a space where they can really value the contributions of citizens. Normally, the value here is to manage the conflict after it's already there, talking with the neighbors because they're already mad because of who knows what. This is valuable, but I don't believe it enriches the projects at all. And my objective is that public politicians better incorporate participation, so we have to find a moment

*where technicians understand that it is a value to incorporate participation, not
just a guarantee that there won't be conflict. (Torras, 2012)*

Technicians, she adds, don't have all of the knowledge they need in order to execute
projects in a neighborhood. What is missing is local knowledge:

*There's a part of knowledge that is a knowledge of who lives there, who was
born there, who died from what family, of what happens every day, of what
people think about the place. (Torras, 2012)*

Despite the fact that Laia understands the need for this kind of immersive knowledge,
she also understands that money is scarce. Though the rhetoric supports better
participation, the tasks she has to accomplish simply to meet legal requirements are too
many to allow for much innovation. She acknowledges, for example, that many publics
do not participate in the city's processes, but she is already overwhelmed. "If I took on
these challenges," she says, "I would die under the work … I would collapse" (Torras,
2012).

Laia is sensitive to the complaints that many activists lodge at her and her
department. The processes, they say, should be more "bottom-up" and less "top-down."
Her role, however, and her position of authority makes this impossible:

*This is a debate we can't have, but I'm fed up. I'm at the bottom? I can't be. I'm
top. I'm the administration, I can't--I am in the department of Urbanism--I
can't generate, or rather I won't generate because it is not in my hands. Bottom
up processes begin from a social tissue. But they say I could collect reflections that
come from this movement and I could generate spaces to collect the reflections.
But I can't work before the beginning. I have to work from the logic of an
administration that wants a project and begins to think about what it's going to
do. (Torras, 2012)*

Laia's complaint is made out of frustration, but her point is important. An
administration cannot undertake grassroots activism. What it can do better, however, is
to encourage grassroots entities to undertake their own processes, and it can integrate
these better into the city's processes even before neighborhood problems have been
identified. In order to do all of these properly, it needs to allow more time for these
projects to happen, but that is difficult when urbanism becomes a tool for maintaining
political power.

One significant barrier to integrating citizen direct participation with urban projects
is the institutional organization itself, whose illogic was evident in Sergi Sarri's
description of city government in Chapter 5. Sergi is the director of participation for the
District of Sants-Montjuïc, yet he views his role as unrelated to the design of urban
projects. This is partially the result of a separation within the governing structure
between participation, which is managed at the local level, and urbanism, which is
centralized close to the highest levels of political power. While the urbanism
department deals with developers, their architects and lawyers, the district keeps busy
with everyday complaints like dirty sidewalks or unsafe intersections. Keeping
participation close to the people was one of the fundamental moves made during the
1970s and 80s transition government. Jordi Borja especially advocated for the

decentralization and the placement of more power at the district level (Borja, 1987). Urbanism, however, was never integrated into this decentralized model, nor were architects obligated to do more than occasionally show drawings at neighborhood council meetings.

The reality of this structure is reflected in Sergi's philosophy about participation, which he equates with informing the public:

> *I believe that participation, principally, has to make it so that every neighbor first knows about the theme or the project that is being discussed. Because participation begins with information … in any meeting, any venue of the district, the intention is that there at least be one or a pair of informative meetings, right? In which you can inform the people what is happening there, how long it will last, what will be the phases of the construction. (Sarri, 2012)*

Sergi is right to stress the importance of information, but in his conception, informing has a directionality, from top to bottom. Though he might not be opposed to receiving information from community members, this official is unlikely to structure participatory processes with that intent in mind. The challenges to achieving a transformative citizen participation, as depicted in the limited scope afforded to participation by some of its own managers, do not bode well for a new, more ample integration of citizen opinion and action into urban projects. A few potentialities exist, however, in the attitudes of officials like Laia Torras. In the following section, Laia's experiments in participation will show a few first steps that the city has realized in the direction of transforming its practices.

6.3 Two More Experiments: Empty Places and Sixteen Gates

In February 2012, rumors started circulating about a new project that the city was undertaking. A technician from within the Urbanism department had been inquiring about who could help it assemble a map of vacant parcels across the city, and somewhat related, of the neighborhood entities. Raons Públiques declined for lack of time and resources. In March the city announced its newest participatory project, called *Pla Buits: Buits Urbans amb Implicació Territorial i Social (*Empty Spaces: Urban Voids with Territorial and Social Implications). The project directly connected vacant parcels, neighborhood entities, and self-management (*autogestión*). According to the city's press release, the city would cede twenty parcels--two in each district--to local non-profit entities for them to use provisionally, initially for a year. The recipients would be selected through a competition (Barcelona, 2012). There were lots of questions unanswered by the public notice. By what criteria were the sites chosen? Could other sites be proposed? What would happen after a year? Who would pay for the improvements? How would winners be chosen? How would competition not create animosity between entities? The members of Raons Públiques started asking around to see what other activists thought, and who else might be inclined to propose something. They also called Laia Torras from the city, who was spearheading the project.
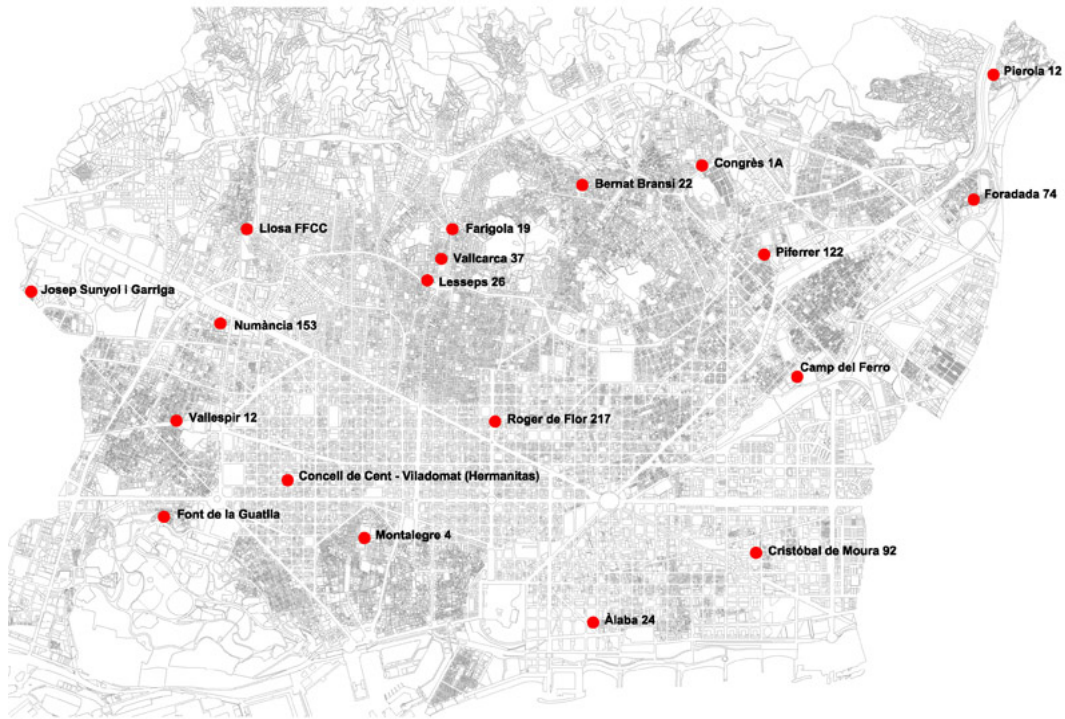
Figure 6.1 Pla Buits, location of sites (image: Ajuntament)

Laia had told me about the project just a few weeks earlier, before it had a name, and she was enthusiastic because this was the first project that conceived of participation as something other than just city meetings or voting. Even more, neighbors were being asked to participate before any programs had been assigned to the sites. In fact, they were being asked to propose programs and uses themselves. How would this work? Laia explained:

> *Say you want an urban garden. You don't just ask for one, you present a project to manage an urban garden yourself. You, entity; you, organization or neighborhood association. Therefore, it's a very different participation. It is a responsibiltization of a public space, to be managed by citizens. (Torras, 2012)*

Given Laia's frustration over the lack of resources and the incapacity of the city to act as a grassroots entity, this project attempts to find a way around the limits on staff time and resources while giving space for entities to do what they do well. It also allowed the city to demonstrate that it was taking a new path. Aside from Laia, other city officials were even more pleased to be able to tell me about this new innovative approach. Alberto Piedrabuena, associate manager of Urbanism said:

> *Right now we have to make a change of mentality, and I think we're making that change. Pla Buits, for example, is precious. It's a complete change of mentality and I think it's a dynamic that has never been done before … The project is that you are an entity and I give you the site for what you want, the use as you would like, that logically will have to pass through an evaluation*

committee, but I think the project, the vision is distinct. We intend to make this public-private, public-citizen participation a reality. (Piedrabuena, 2012)

The Pla Buits project also answered another problem, one demonstrated in the extreme by projects like Can Batlló. That is, traditional processes for producing public space are tedious and slow, and as such are unable to quickly respond to community needs. This is where much of the appeal for tactical urbanism derives (Nettler, 27 February 2012), and currently in Barcelona the pace of urban projects has become even slower, so the need to be able to act quickly is more acute. Ricard Fayos, a senior architect for the city and director of special projects, accentuates this aspect of the Pla Buits project:

> *So on the other hand to arrive at the possibility of rapid actions, it's that urbanistic actions are very slow, they're terribly slow because there are these processes, first the process of conceiving the idea, then the process of participation that always contributes changes, then the process of administrative approval that is very regulated and very long, and then if the property isn't public you must acquire the property and arrive at agreements and that's regulated to defend the rights of the property owner. Clearly, this is a long process, and then you have to make a project but to make a project you need to mount a competition and give public notice. All of this summed up means when you do planning you have to hold your head in your hands.* (Fayos, 2012)

The promise of Pla Buits was not only expressed by city officials. Though all of the activists I worked with were somewhat skeptical of the city's intentions, most also expressed optimism and called it a step in the right direction. Alice of Raons Públiques hoped at first to help residents in her neighborhood of Vallcarca come together to propose a project like a community garden. She found, however, that neighborhood activists were in no mood to cooperate with the city. Just the week before, the police had come to evict and issue citations to neighbors who had been cultivating their own, unapproved, guerrilla garden in the same neighborhood. The rhetoric of helping grassroots groups manage their own public space rang hollow. The neighbors showed up at the city's official meeting about another project, angry about the gardens, but the city was able to calm their nerves. "The neighbors came," said Alice, "and Laia came. And they talked about the gardens. And the city committed to not evicting the gardens because they said they have this Pla Buits project" (Lancien, 2012).

Laia's ability to soothe tensions was helpful in this instance, but the framework of the competition around which Pla Buits was structured still left activist entities frustrated. When the project was first discussed by Raons Públiques in their weekly meeting, the consensus of the group was this: "Send and email to Laia. Tell her to work through the networks, not to do a competition" (Fieldnotes, 2012). The group began to draft an email, collaboratively, and at the same time it began to reach out to the other entities that might also feel ambivalent about the project. The topic also came up at a talk organized by the Architects Syndicate, and Raons Públiques committed to convoke a meeting of architect's collectives, entities and associations to discuss a coordinated response to the city. They sent an open letter to these groups. "Certainly you are already aware of the latest government measure by city hall," they wrote, "that deals

with the theme of 'empty spaces' of the city" (Fieldnotes, 2012). In the letter they outlined their critiques: that many of the spaces were empty because of the city's actions; that the temporary status of these projects did not address long-term needs; and that there was no economic support for the entities volunteering their own limited resources. The letter and its response led to a roundtable discussion that Raons Públiques helped organize, with the involvement of the network Arquitecturas Colectivas, to host a webpage where the topic of Pla Buits could be discussed between the implicated entities.

Raons Públiques quickly realized that it did not want to put forward its own proposal for Pla Buits. They did not feel like they belonged within any particular neighborhood and nor did they have the time to involve themselves too much in another team's project. Still, they thought they could play an important role in connecting the grassroots network and its complaints with the city. Montse Pedret with Raons suggested that "We position ourselves as mediators and negotiators" (Fieldnotes, 2012). They set as a goal to "influence the framework of the competition" (Fieldnotes, 2012). Working through contacts within the city, they set up an informal meeting with Laia Torras and Miquel Reñe of Agenda 21 to discuss the project. One afternoon they met at a bar, over coffee, and Laia and Miquel listened to the list of concerns and began to address them. More than anything, Laia wanted to convey that this was a "pilot project" and a "first step." She understood the concerns about the competitive nature of the project but felt legally obligated to structure it in that way. She agreed that the one-year initial time period was inadequate and suggested that they might extend that to three or four years. She fulfilled this promise. She also extended the schedule for the project to allow entities more time to come together and make proposals.

Over a year hence, as of April 2013, the city has not yet announced the winners of the competition. It did receive 32 proposals from 30 teams, but these were highly concentrated on a few sites. Laia noted during the meeting that she did not know what to expect from the project, but that she hoped it would yield one or two successes and that these could be seeds for the amplification of this type of participatory process. An auxiliary benefit of the project was in giving importance to neighborhood entities and collectives as "dynamizers" of public space. Though not directly a result of Pla Buits, the growing importance has been reflected in dozens of articles in the mainstream media highlighting the networks of collectives (Figure 6.2).
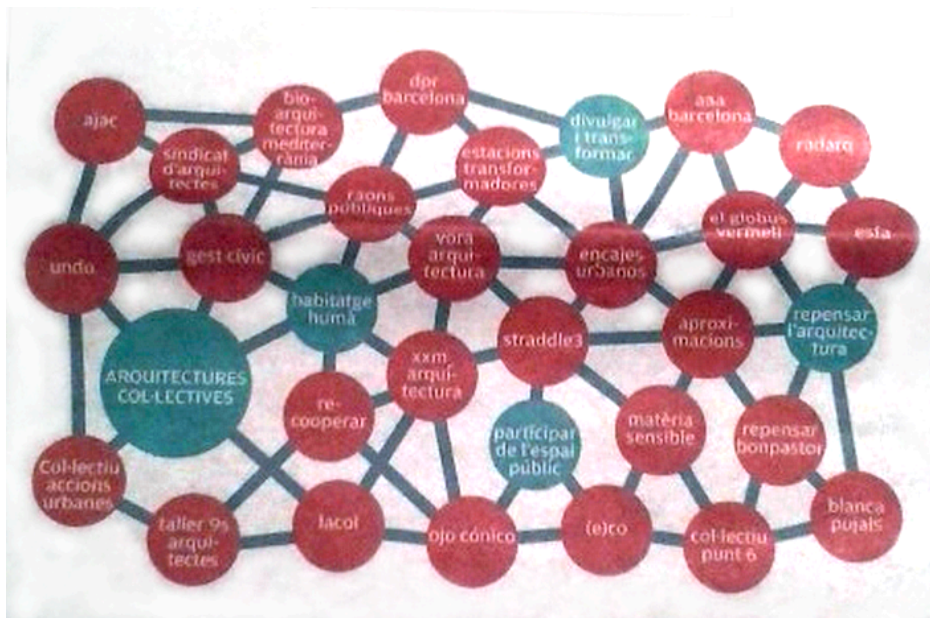
Figure 6.2 Architect's Collectives in Barcelona (image: La Vanguardia)

The project's impact on Raons Públiques is clear: it provided the impetus to integrate themselves within that network and to play a connective role between the network and the city. The project's impact on the city and its participatory processes, however, is still unknown. The co-optation of the concept of *autogestión*, however, is both promising and problematic. As with Can Batlló, the economic crisis has opened opportunities for neighborhood entities to provide services and spaces that the city cannot. The transfer of these duties to neighbors themselves is an opportunity for communities. But the terms under which this is being practiced through Pla Buits is still tentative and does not mean a permanent surrender of space-making to communities.

16 Gates of Collserola

Since the city's preparation for the 1992 Olympics, Barcelona has looked outward to a global stage of tourism and finance. Its major development initiatives--the Olympic village, the 2004 Forum, and the 22@ Innovation District--concentrated urbanistic investment along the coastline, transforming informal settlements into landscapes of leisure and commerce. In the past few years, the direction of energy has turned inward, reflected in renewed debates over Catalan independence, language, culture and identity. Throughout history, moments of nationalism have tended to coincide with interest in local or native landscapes. [29]This inward turn, though not explicitly acknowledged, is evident in the city's latest major urban project called the 16 Gates of Collserola. The

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[29] The US national parks movement and the Hudson River School, for example, emerged during a moment of patriotic insecurities with Europe. Or in Germany, wandering clubs in the 19th and 20th centuries were overtly tied to nationalistic efforts to create attachments to homeland. See Scott Moranda's "Maps, Markers and Bodies," 2000.

Parque Natural de Collserola is an 85 square kilometer park and nature preserve, technically the largest urban park in the world, surrounded by urban and suburban development on all sides. It plays an important role ecologically, recreationally, and in the cultural imagination.

Figure 6.3 Barcelona coast and Collserola: 1. Olympic Village; 2. 2004 Forum; 3. 22@ District; 4. Sixteen Gates of Collserola (image: author)

The city announced the competition to remake the relationship between city and mountain in September 2011, without any previous hint of interest in a project of this type or magnitude. In an opening press conference, Antoni Vives, the deputy mayor of Urbanism remarked that now, after having remodeled the coastline, it was time to design the future of Collserola, to "turn Barcelona toward the mountain" (Europa Press, 2012). As a first move, the city was requesting qualifications from teams of architects, ecologists, and transportation planners. It would choose six or seven teams for each gate to propose ideas in the form of a competition, yielding 100 or so final projects. Vicente Guallart, the director of Urbanism, who originated the idea for the project (Fieldnotes, 2012), noted that the competition would help keep work on the table for these 100 selected firms during a time of economic crisis for the profession (Suñé, 2012).
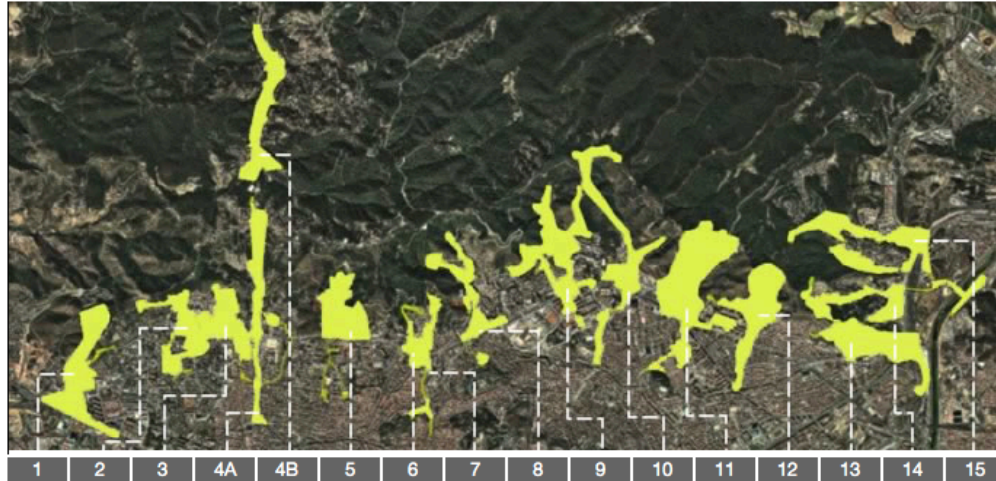
Figure 6.4 Designated areas for the 16 Gates (image: Ajuntament)

The euphoria that the city might have expected from the neighborhoods and the architecture community did not materialize. Professional firms complained that the city was exploiting their labor, paying each of the teams only 1,500 euros for their work. Neighborhood groups asked why they had not been previously consulted, and how the city had decided upon what seemed to be arbitrary shapes outlining the limits of work for each gate. One particularly strong rebuke came several weeks later from the *okupa* Can Masdeu in the impacted district of Nou Barris in the form of a manifesto signed by 85 different entities (Can Masdeu, 2011). LaCol and Raons Públiques were among the first to sign the manifesto. Jordi Miró of LaCol added to the critique, warning that the city was playing with some "potentially dangerous ideas" that could lead to the loss of the park's ecological value. Instead of launching such an overarching project that is hardly implementable, he argued, the city should stitch the park and the city together instead through "micro-interventions" (La Vanguardia, 2012).

The manifesto presented by Can Masdeu denounced the project on four grounds: the lack of participation, the green marketing ploy of "re-naturalizing the city" through the construction of parking lots, the construction of new unnecessary facilities, and the unfeasibility of the project as a whole. In its place, they proposed to launch their own alternative, parallel process that would be participatory and that would present a counter-approach to the city's (Can Masdeu, 2011). The process that they launched in a neighborhood meeting in December attracted both groups from Raons Públiques and LaCol, who formed a design team with other ecologists and a landscape architect (Figure 6.5).[30]

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[30] Officially the design team at the time of the competition submittal included Raons Públiques, LaCol, Margherita Galante, and David de la Peña, with Pablo Rodríguez Lozano, Ariadna Pomar, and Joel Ferrer as collaborators.
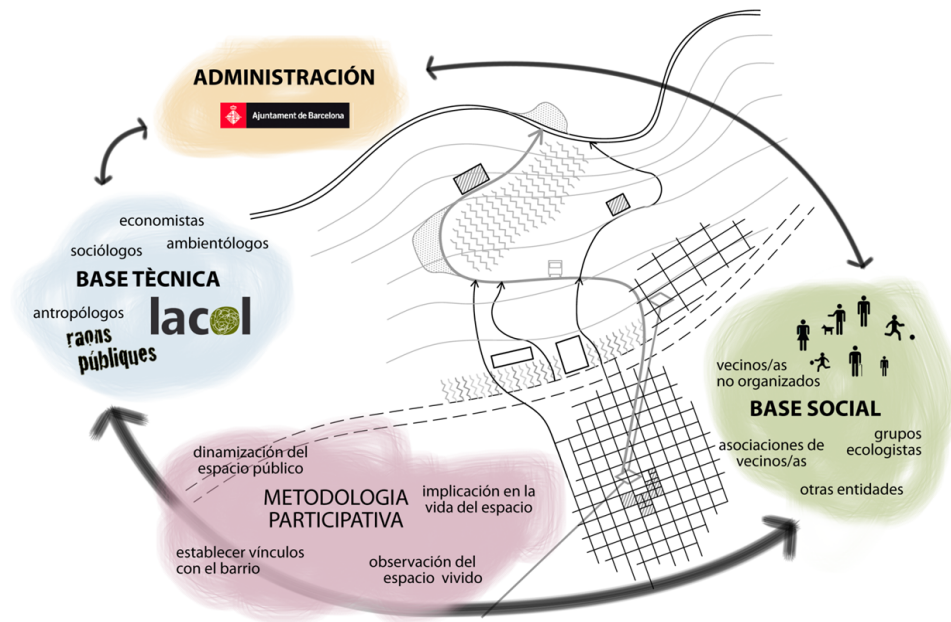
Figure 6.5 16 Gates Organizational Scheme (image: Raons Públiques/LaCol)

The team began to formulate an alternative methodology, conceiving of its competition entry as a rebuke of the entire project mounted by the city. They also adopted somewhat contradictory positions--of working to win a competition that they were denouncing, and of sharing knowledge about their process all the while keeping their competition entry anonymous, which was a requirement by the city.

The specifics of the process and the products generated by the competition team are worth more attention than I wish to dedicate here. What is especially noteworthy for this study of urban activism, however, is the layering of both a reform approach and *autogestión* that was made possible by the collaboration between the groups. This was reflected foremost in the assumption of duties within the group. Members of Raons Públiques began with their usual diagnostic approach, assembling histories and opinions of neighbors by conducting interviews, by using the *carrito* to engage people on the streets, and by planning a walking tour--a *dérive*--through the neighborhood. Members of LaCol began constructing a site plan and conducting an analysis of the physical, urbanistic conditions. Through a decision to cross-pollinate between the two entities, smaller thematic groups deliberately mixed members of each group to work together.

One of the team's initial pronouncements was that they could not complete a real participatory process because the competition was to take place in only three months. Their entry, they maintained, should not be construed as the end of a participatory process but rather as a demonstration of how a participatory urban project should be structured. The entry would make clear that the execution of their idea would be a return to the community for more input, not simply the construction of a physical project. As limited as the time was, the community engagement they achieved was far beyond that which the city had been undertaking with a much larger time opportunity.

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The city, for its part, boasted that its project was participatory. Alberto Piedrabuena said:

> *What the city wants here, what it's said is, listen, before the groups present their drawings in the competition, they are going to sit down with the neighbors and do some participatory workshops. This idea has been revolutionary and it's been well received in the neighborhoods. And they did innumerable workshops there and the proposals reflect part of what the neighbors are asking for. (Piedrabuena, 2012)*

The city did in fact hold three "participatory workshops" in or near the affected neighborhoods. Each workshop lasted approximately three hours and covered five or six of the gates. After introductory remarks about the competition and the process, the workshops split into breakout groups to tackle distinct themes, then by each gate. In total, the city counted 206 residents (140 from entities and 66 individuals) and 148 members of competing teams that attended. This figure of residents may be exaggerated, however, as several of the participants within the groups I observed at the third workshop admitted to having some affiliation with the teams.

Figure 6.6 16 Gates Participatory Workshop #3 (image: author)

While the sessions themselves were well facilitated, the outsize proportion of competitors in some instances was overwhelming and did not foster much meaningful information exchange between neighbors and competitors. In the session for the gate of Canyelles, for example, of the 32 people present, 25 were professionals, 4 were city officials and only 3 were unaffiliated residents. At this session, a representative from the Canyelles neighborhood association noted that they had been working on ideas for Collserola for years. "Why now," he asked, "should a process lasting a few months supplant all of that?" (Fieldnotes, 2012) Throughout the workshop, several forceful voices dominated the discussion. Yet the facilitators seemed unnerved and unwilling to intervene. At the final wrap-up session, the thematic groups reported back to the audience. Three of the four said they did not like the participatory process that was being used by the city. (Fieldnotes, 2012)
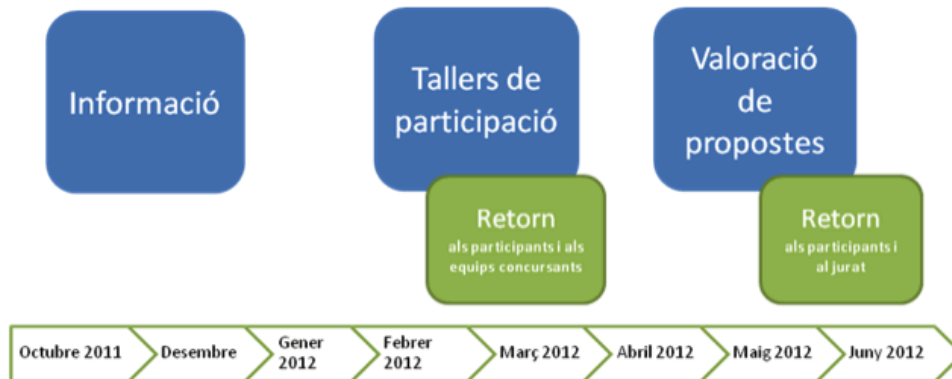
Figure 6.7 16 Gates Participatory Process (image: Ajuntament)

The city, on its webpage, in project documentation, and through its representatives in person, held a positive view of the participatory process, pointing to its public meetings as an example of open dialogue. The official process, shown above (Figure 6.7), included only three limited points of contact with the public: information, workshops, and evaluation of the proposals.

In contrast, the Raons/LaCol team engaged neighbors at multiple points. Several neighborhood entities and residents were implicated: Can Masdeu, the neighborhood associations, the district's historical archive, environmental associations, and residents encountered on *carrito* expeditions, through the walking tour, and via an online participatory mapping application developed by Carles at LaCol (Figures 6.8-6.10).

Figure 6.8 16 Gates Neighborhood Association meeting (image: author)

Figure 6.9 16 Gates meeting at Can Masdeu (image: author)

Figure 6.10 Sixteen Gates Walking Tour (image: author)

The team met weekly to coordinate its work. Interviews were summarized and key themes and concerns were fed back into the proposal. The final competition entry was titled *#Baixem*, which means "let's go down" to refer to the foundational principle that "nature" should come down to the city and not the other way around. The boards explained first the team's methodology and then answered four central questions using input gathered from neighbors and other entities: (1) Collserola Park: the mountain for

everyone? (2) How do we access the mountain? (3) What is the relationship between the neighborhood and the mountain? and (4) How do we manage the spaces? The answers to these questions were then related to specific micro-actions that were located along the area's two historical creek valleys (Figures 6.11 and 6.12).
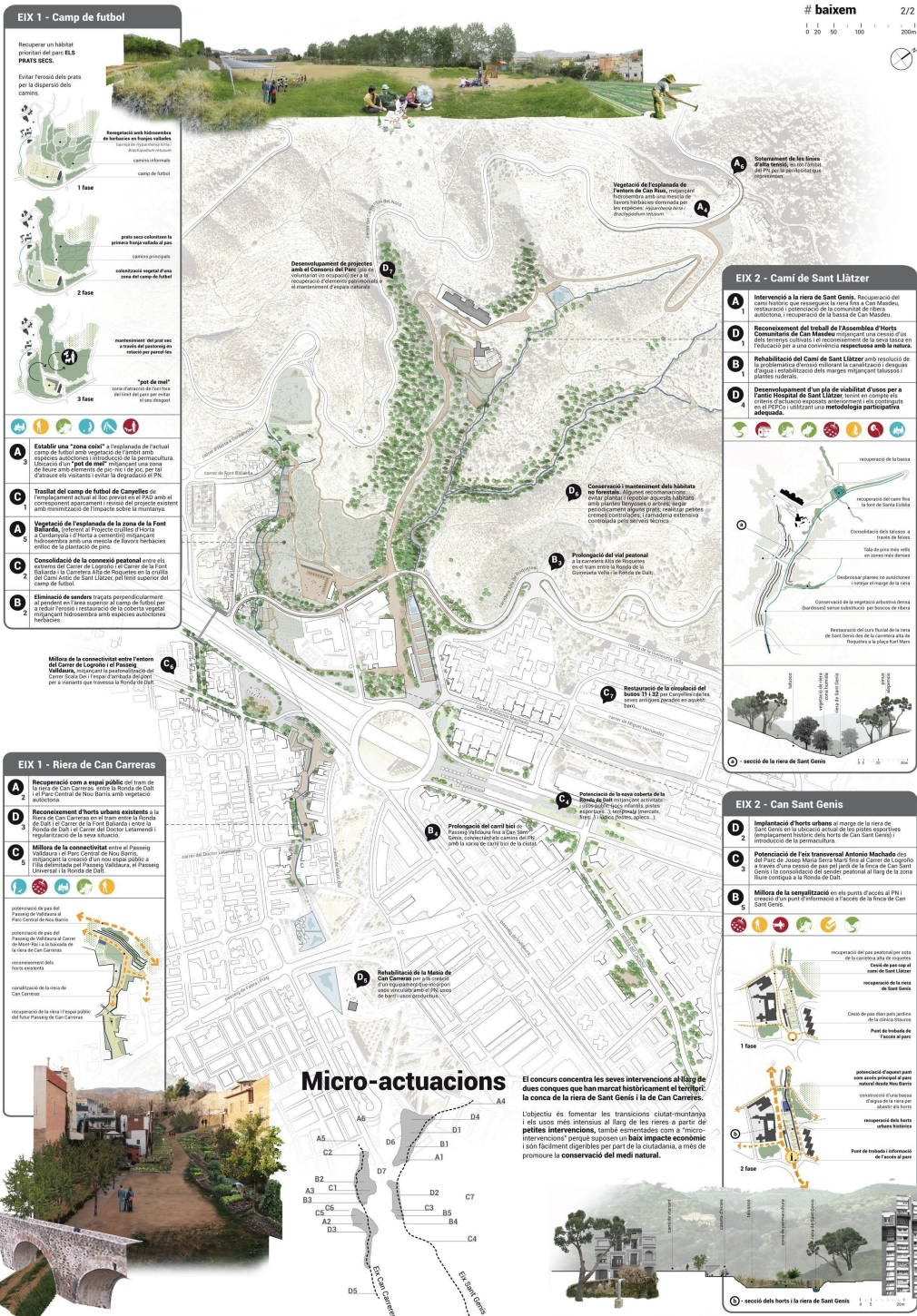
Figure 6.11 #Baixem Competition Entry, Board 1 (image: LaCol et al.)

Figure 6.12 #Baixem Competition Entry, Board 2 (image: LaCol et al.)

The city's third stage of participation happened through the public exhibition and evaluation of the 112 proposals. The evaluations had the feel of a vote, but there was no binding requirement for the jury to name a winner based on public input. The jury alone chose the winning entries behind closed doors. In the final result for the Canyelles gate, the Raons Públiques/LaCol team was named as a winner and given an additional stipend to continue developing the ideas in coordination with the city. Winning felt like a validation of the critiques that the group had raised, but it was ultimately an empty validation. The group began to reactivate their processes, but by the end of the year the city drew the curtains on the entire Sixteen Gates endeavor. In a meeting between team members and the city, officials declared the impossibility of continuing to work on the Gates of Collserola due to political opposition. The project was dead.

The cancelation of the project was a disappointment to the team, but as Carlos noted it was predictable. In a follow-up talk given by Raons Públiques and LaCol, the team summarized the positive and negative aspects of the experience. On the positive side, the city had taken steps to support neighbors' urbanistic demands, the team had realized a complex project with few resources, worked interdisciplinarily with other collectives, and developed trust with neighbor groups. On the negative side, the city's lack of decision-making power had crippled the project's execution, few neighbors actually became involved, and no neighborhood groups were empowered outside of the competition project. Before the project was launched, the city's director of participation, Carles Agustí, had told me that they were in a learning process and that they were "learning by doing" (Agustí Hernández, 2012). One hopes that this project serves as another learning experience for the city and that it becomes more than just another reason for distrust between citizens, professionals, and the city.

Chapter 7: Closing Thoughts

Five years ago, Barcelona was still a city full of construction cranes and architectural hubris. In the pages of the local paper *La Vanguardia*, a new 35 million euro glass skyscraper near the Forum was being celebrated as "another charm in this city of architects" (Pierón, 2008). Six months later, the real estate market would collapse, sending more than half of its architects into unemployment and paralyzing a construction industry upon which the entire economy had become dependent. The severity of this crisis has since been revealing itself slowly and its devastating impacts to private industry and public coffers continue to torment the city. This year's newspapers talk not about new skyscrapers but instead about a "lost generation," and about the imminent closure of the city's most prominent architecture school, the UPC's Etsab, to satisfy a 11 million euro debt (Playà Maset, 2013).

The crisis has prompted two responses--the re-evaluation of the Barcelona model of urbanism (reform) and the flowering of alternative, autopoetic forms of city making (*autogestión*). It is not surprising that the driving force of these reactions has been the activism of a younger generation of designers whose professional future has been compromised by the failure of the existing systems that produce public space. But the young designers described in the case studies of this dissertation are not simply rebellious youth having a short-lived adventure. Too much is at stake for their actions to be mere extra-curricular escapades in participatory urbanism. The ludic atmosphere of playgrounds, clowns and midnight street gardening belies a seriousness that is palpable in each group's meetings and in the efforts they are making to forge some kind of meaningful professional future in the city. Without a doubt, these two groups have already had an impact through the experiments I described. City officials have adapted key aspects of projects in response to critiques, and the community of Sants now commands an ever-broadening influence over the urbanistic plans for Can Batlló.

One of the dangers of participant observation, or ethnography in general, is that the researcher loses critical distance from their research subjects. Throughout this project I have attempted to respect that thin line between building rapport and "going native." But pure objectivity in any research project is impossible, and in ethnography it can even be undesirable, especially if biases are unacknowledged. My own subjective biases entering into the project were obvious to my informants and to readers of this dissertation; even my choice of research methods evinces the value I place on everyday, citizen knowledge over expert knowledge. The research methods and the philosophy about qualitative research--informed by Bent Flyvbjerg and others--stress the importance of embedded, context-dependent, qualitative social science. This approach to research also finds a close parallel in the participatory approaches to urbanism promoted by both of my case study groups. As I interviewed group members, they were interviewing neighbors of the Sixteen Gates project or city officials for the Invisible Giant documentary; as I pushed the *carrito* or painted ceilings, they were painting playground murals and weaving yarn into the bannisters of the Bloc 11 library. The case studies were chosen because I saw potential in the approaches the groups were taking; I hope that they succeed and will continue to support their efforts. This does not necessarily blind me to the limits and shortcomings of these experiments, which I will summarize in the following paragraphs.

At the outset, I identified my research problem as one of participation and of the limited connections between officials and citizens. Urban designers, I claimed, occupied a space between these two groups and were thereby capable of bridging between, of conceiving of new ways that officials could learn from residents or that residents could impact urban projects. Most designers have not challenged the normative models that sustain their professional practices; those who have tend to focus on one side or the other--on officials or communities. Reform activists have oriented themselves toward authority in order to bring about change from the top down, whereas those engaged in *autogestión* remain closer to grass roots communities in order to develop their own autonomous practices. Designers, whether aimed at reform or *autogestión*, connected the two sides with each other, but even more they connected them to the physical materiality of the places in which relationships between officials and communities unfold. In their actions, reform activists tended to utilize discourse while *autogestión* activists leaned toward material actions.

The framework I developed in Chapter 2 helped elucidate the relationships between activism, position and action. The four modalities of urban activism highlighted in this framework--status quo, reform, *autogestión*, and revolution--come into sharper focus when they are considered with respect to both positionality and action. Through the framework, I proposed that there is a relationship between dialogue and authority as well as between material and the grassroots. I also suggested that urban activist groups could be plotted within the framework, and that the two middle modalities--reform and *autogestión*--held the most promise for bringing about change. Neither of these modalities exists without its precedents, of course. Reform activism comes from a planning tradition in reflexive practice, especially bound to Habermasian theories of communicative rationalism. The focus on communication and the refining of ever more perfect tools of discourse is one that continues in the case study of reform activism. *Autogestión* has strong historical links to anarchism, post-anarchism and autonomous Marxism. Anarchism, I stressed, is not chaotic violence, and persistent misreadings of it to that effect have limited its appeal in planning and urban design. Nonetheless, its influence over utopian communities is undeniable, and its emphasis on mutual aid, cooperation, and horizontal organization are useful for theorizing some of the actions that fall under the rubric of tactical or DIY urbanism.

Spain's current crisis has created an economic, social and political disruption that is both a societal tragedy and an opportunity for change. As Fritjof Capra explained, new things emerge in the biological and the cultural realm at moments of catastrophe. "This spontaneous emergence of order at critical points of instability," he wrote, "is one of the most important concepts of the new understanding of life. It is technically known as self-organization and is often referred to simply as 'emergence'" (Capra, 2002, p. 13). Capra takes care to distinguish between two organizational structures: designed structures , which provide stable routine rules; and emergent structures, which are dissipative, novel, adaptive and flexible. Although his focus is on emergence, the issue, he says, "is not one of discarding designed structures in favor of emerging ones. We need both" (Capra, 2002, p. 105). In the same way, the designed structures of urbanism—its state institutions, participatory venues, economic mechanisms, etcetera—need not be thrown out for emerging structures to evolve. The two-pronged approach implied by Capra's designed and emergent structures is one that is reflected in the case

studies of this dissertation. The innovation of non-hierarchical, dissipative approaches to city-making, I argue, must also be accompanied by the reform of stable designed structures.

The case studies highlighted in this dissertation are not intended to be upheld as exemplars nor can they be replicated in other contexts. These case studies are highly particular to the group dynamics, the neighborhoods, the city, and the national context. The constellation of individuals that makes up each group has informed a relational dynamic that is highly personal and in which subjective notions like friendship play a large role. Similarly, the communities in which the groups or their projects are situated also impact the outcomes. In the La Pau School, for example, the absence of strong grassroots organizations influenced Raons Públiques' focus on capacity building. In Sants, a centuries-old tradition of worker's collectives placed LaCol in a humble role of amateurs in respect to community organizing as well as construction skills. The overall context of Barcelona, laid out in detail in Chapter 3, is also unique. The political histories of democracy, dictatorship and anarchistic interludes are found in no other city, and the cultural forces that enable and result—that are intertwined with politics—continue to foster a more collectivist mentality and a more skeptical treatment of governance. Finally, the economic context in Barcelona and in Spain overall cannot be separated from the insights these case studies might offer. It has created the abrupt break in practice and caused professionals to re-evaluate roles and attitudes. It has also elevated the importance of once-peripheral practices of DIY urbanism and tactical approaches, because these have been the most adaptable to the harsh economic realities.

The question then remains whether these case studies are too bound to particulars to be useful to a general audience. The answer I offer is that they are useful to a general audience, but they are not generalizable. To elaborate, I return to the three Aristotelean forms of knowledge as relayed by Flyvbjerg. *Episteme*, the most theoretical and deductive form, seeks to "increase general insights." *Techne* seeks to refine technical skills. But *phronesis*, or immersive knowledge, attempts to understand practice within the messy context of everyday life. According to Aristotle, "wisdom has to do with action. And the sphere of action is constituted by particulars" (Aristotle & Ostwald, 1962, p. 182). Flyvbjerg describes *phronetic* knowledge as a kind of mastery, like that which a musician obtains after years of dedication. It is one that starts theoretically and deductively, is refined through rote compliance with rules and drills, but then deviates and intuitively creates, often my disregarding or manipulating those same rules and theories. A jazz musician may improvise according to an agreed-upon pattern, repeating and combining in predictable ways, but mastering this activity isn't simply taught through generalizable knowledge. Only immersive, in-depth exposure to situations brings mastery. In a similar way, the actions of urban activism are inextricable from their contexts—from friendships, communities, rules and economies—so scholarship on activism cannot aim for generalizable rules. It must build up its own repertoire as scholars cumulatively add case studies for consideration. This project attempts to add to a repertoire of activism that includes works by Randolph Hester, Jim Diers, Leonie Sandercock, James Holston, James DeFilippis, and J.K. Gibson-Graham.

Clifford Geertz, in *The Interpretation of Cultures*, outlined an anthropological approach to cultural analysis in which he defined culture as "webs of significance" (Geertz, 1973). Analyzing these webs of significance required what he called "thick

description," which was not "an experimental science in search of a law but an interpretive one in search of meaning" (Geertz, 1973, p. 5). In following, the case study approach I used does not set out to test a hypothesis about reform activism and *autogestión*. The pursuit of understanding motivations and meaning, undertaken here through participant observation, interviews and archival research, led to thick descriptions of activism. This revealed patterns within each case study that were later reconciled and assembled into the framework I have already discussed at length. The case studies answered many questions but also posed new ones.

The case study in reform, which featured the group Raons Públiques, revealed inclinations toward positioning oneself within networks of power and toward the use of dialogue more than material action. These patterns, however, were not static. Using their inherent bridging capital, the group moved between networks of officials and networks of local community members, helping to forge connections between the two. Maintaining congenial relationships with officials meant taking a conciliatory role and avoiding conflict, which the group managed with relative ease. Forging connections with communities proved to be a more difficult challenge. With no permanent presence in any particular neighborhood, the group floated across the city pursuing a general theme of "participation" but always entering communities as outsiders. As outsiders, they assumed a role of anthropologist with a strong emphasis on collecting local knowledge. In their first experiments, they sought out this knowledge in conventional ways, through structured meetings with designated neighborhood associations. But quickly they began to shift upward on the action ladder from discourse to material, first into a more open dialogue, then to having a presence on the street, and finally to the utilization of object-devices like the *carrito*. The employment of these later tactics did not, however, mean an abandonment of dialogue or the pursuit of local knowledge. It represented a shift toward an oblique approach, in which first contact with neighbors was made in ludic situations and where questions about public space could be asked indirectly.

In their project in Fort Pienc, Raons Públiques found that the local knowledge traps (for example the *carrito*, trading cards, music and dancing) were effective tools for gathering input about a neighborhood, and they began to assemble this knowledge into a diagnostic document. The amount of data they collected was overwhelming; but in the absence of a design project, this knowledge had no productive application for the neighborhood. The group has continued to refine this diagnosis but its emphasis has shifted from serving the community itself to diffusing the methodology used for the diagnosis to other groups and to city officials in the hope that it might inspire more engaged practices elsewhere. The absence of a design project is a critique that could be leveled at Raons Públiques in general. In their rejection of egotistical architecture and the abuses of expertise, they have downplayed the technical skills that they could contribute to projects. By calling the *tobogán* an "excuse for fostering community" (Sánchez Brizuela, 2012) or more broadly any urban project a "pretext … to promote participation" (López Tapia, 2012), the group foregoes an opportunity to debate ways that the designed public space or object fosters community. I am reminded of Randolph Hester's emphasis on the importance of design and form in *Design for Ecological Democracy*, where he states: "Our habitation must enable us to know and work with our

neighbors. It must be resilient enough to endure. It must impel us by its beauty to fill our hearts with gladness" (Hester, 2006, p. 419).

The months that I observed Raons Públiques were a moment of inflection for the group. The initial energy had dissipated but new projects were still keeping them busy. One member told me she thought the group would either soon cease to exist or it would evolve into a more professional entity. The debate about professionalism was more than just a matter of affect. Most of the members of the group were under-employed, especially the architects. This freed up time to volunteer, but also contributed to a sense of instability. Members talked about pursuing work outside of Spain. If Raons Públiques was going to endure, it would have to find a way to compensate its members for some of their time, in the same way that other firms engaged in similar projects were managing to do elsewhere in Spain and France. The question of economic viability is one that has not yet been answered by the group with finality. The question of endurance and commitment, on the other hand, was answered in April of 2013 when the group rented its own office space to share. Renovations are underway, courtesy of sweat labor and a successful experiment in crowd-funding. My guess is that this step toward sustainability will have other consequences, that the group will become quickly embedded in a neighborhood and shift its orientation away from officials and more toward neighbors; and that the material actions they are engaging with will renew a focus on design and ignite more debates about how to use their expertise. In many ways, the group will become much more like the focus of the second case study—LaCol.

The case study in *autogestión*, which highlights the architects collective LaCol and the Plataforma Can Batlló, illuminates a modality of urban activism that is oriented toward the community and away from city institutions. In this approach, bonding capital rather than bridging capital creates tight networks that are spatially bounded by the neighborhood and socially bounded by culture and language. In terms of the urban activism framework, this approach was positioned close to the grassroots and its actions were focused on material ends. This is not to say that the groups did not engage with city officials; in fact they were actively negotiating with officials and were keenly aware of the political maneuvering that would be required to accomplish their goals. Nor does it mean that dialogue was absent; it was present in the form of conferences, presentations and in the production of a documentary film. The aim of these dialogical moments, it should be noted, was to bring about institutional changes and were only peripheral to the main project of rehabilitating the warehouse Bloc 11. Dialogue, of course, was abundant in weekly assemblies, in working groups, and in internal debates around the establishment of organizational principles. But externally, as the architects and the other volunteers of Bloc 11 engaged both neighbors and officials, the repertoire of action was decidedly material. This was visible from the creation of banners and the proliferation of Can Batlló graffiti; or in the threats of physical occupation, the walking tours, and art installations. Today, material actions continue to constitute the groups' most effective campaigns. In April, 2013, after making another ultimatum and notifying the neighbors and officials of their intentions with another large graffiti notice, the Plataforma began to punch a large hole in a wall that they had been demanding the city demolish; only weeks later the city sent a bulldozer to finish the job.

Somewhat in jest, a city official commented to me that the community leaders in Sants were all anarchists. Although it is easy to laugh this off, the fact is that anarchism

has left its mark on this community, and that the language that is used to describe projects like Bloc 11 is evocative of the texts of utopian socialists and classical anarchists from over a century ago. George Landauer's words, for example, still echo: "Let us destroy," he wrote, "by means of the gentle, permanent, and binding reality that we build" (Landauer, 1911, p.93, quoted in R. J. F. Day, 2005, p. 123). Today the same sentiment is alive in the words of neighborhood activist Jordi Soler: "When you can't change the structure completely, construct one in parallel … then the day will arrive—I don't know when—that we can consider to have supplanted another society … Here we have to reproduce the society we want" (Soler, 2012). Beyond these lofty utopian ideals, anarchism's core values of mutual aid, cooperation, and collectivism inform the organizational structures and activities of both Lacol and the Plataforma Can Batlló. Both groups operate without designated leaders, distributing duties horizontally among volunteers and making decisions by consensus.

One of the disappointments that a LaCol architect expressed to me was that the scale of what they could accomplish was smaller than they had earlier envisioned. Although they wanted the entire Can Batlló site to be redesigned, they were occupying themselves with the doors, windows, and guardrails of the Bloc 11 library. This is a common critique of DIY urbanism, that it does not scale up easily from handmade benches and sidewalk gardens to projects with meaningful impacts on the city. In this case, a year after that comment was made, LaCol's patience has paid off. The scale of the Can Batlló project has expanded dramatically, from the already impressive management of a single warehouse to the city's surrender of another ten warehouses, creating the opportunity for an entire streetscape and a large urban garden to be created. The social infrastructure of the Plataforma, upon which the membership dedicated so much time, is partly to thank for this expansion in scale. So too is the attractive and vibrant physical artifact of the Bloc 11 warehouse, through which the Plataforma has demonstrated its resolve and competence.

What is less clear for LaCol is how the success with Can Batlló will be parlayed into a sustainable business model. The architect's collective has received local and international press for its innovative approach to architectural practice. In *La Vanguardia*, Josep Montaner wrote: "If there is a team of young architects that represents the act of rethinking architectural practice that is being explored here, it is the collective LaCol" (Josep M. Montaner, 2013b). Despite press like this, the dire economic situation in Barcelona is putting a strain on the tight-knit group of architects. They are not paid directly for the work they do in Can Batlló. They have received some funding from institutions like the bank *La Caixa*, and from the *Collegi d'Arquitectes de Catalunya*, which is a private entity much like the American Institute of Architects. Others have supplemented their income by teaching at Etsab, by working at other firms part-time, by collecting unemployment and by help from parents. Under normal circumstances, the firm should expect to find numerous commissions, but today this has not materialized.

The official experiments described in Chapter 6 represent an internal city-driven effort at reform and an attempt to co-opt the practice of *autogestión*. The city took small steps in the Sixteen Gates competition to expand open dialogue with neighbors, albeit unsuccessfully. The rhetoric that was used by officials, although it did exaggerate the extent to which the city was listening to neighbors, at least was an acknowledgement

that a new approach to participation was necessary, one in which neighbors would be consulted early on in a project and in which their input would be factored into design. Unfortunately, this verbal commitment is unlikely to be met with equal financial commitment. This is something that the director of participation for Urbanism, Laia Torras, accepts begrudgingly. Where the economics do support more direct participation, however, is in the city's offloading of duties to local entities. This is the case at Can Batlló, where the neighbors have already saved the municipality millions of euros by building their own library. Elsewhere, the city has begun to co-opt the idea of *autogestión*, nowhere more clearly that in their project called Pla Buits (Empty Places), which has pitted nonprofit entities against each other in a competition to have the opportunity to propose and fund a temporary use for 19 fallow spaces in the city.

Theorists of social movements David Meyer and Sydney Tarrow outlined a progression of activist organizations that culminated in the phase of co-optation. Co-optation is both the success of having a movement's ideas incorporated into the mainstream, and it is the watering down of the movement, the loss of its soul. Ironically, *autogestión* is already the appropriation of public facilities and services by residents away from state institutions, so its co-optation by the state is really the formalization of self-management in a very limited way without the potential for much greater societal transformation. The projects of Pla Buits, lasting only between one and three years, keep local entities tethered to the state, dependent upon the renewal both of the entity's license and the contract to occupy the ceded vacant parcels. This is not truly *autogestión*. It is the city shifting its financial obligations to communities. Unknown to the local entities is whether this arrangement continues after the economy improves, when the vacant land becomes too profitable for community uses. What happens when the city doesn't need the collaboration of grassroots entities any more, when the economic pressures are too high to avoid the top-down development processes from returning?

Other critical questions remain to be answered, which this dissertation could not incorporate, and which this dissertation has raised. These remain fruitful territory for further research. One question concerns the durability of DIY urbanism. DIY was already a fad in the 1970s and 1980s, popularized by the punk movement. Today it plays to an ecological and anti-capitalist mentality, and also to a depressed economy in which making do has become fashionable out of necessity. If the Spanish economy begins to accelerate again, will recycled pallet furniture remain popular? And if the profession of architecture and landscape architecture regains its footing, will young architects continue to feel compelled to innovate new modes of practice or will they be more than content to design the latest 30 million euro skyscraper or oceanfront park?

Another question that deserves more attention is the role of educational institutions in urban activism. In the US, community design centers have often been associated with universities and have played important roles in advocacy planning and in providing pro-bono design services. In Spain this is not the case, although certain academics have taken roles in furthering a community-based design ethic. Spain's educational and licensure system for architects also differs in that students remain at the university for additional years but are then licensed upon graduation. The final year of studies, in which the *Final de Carrera* projects are completed, is a year of independent work. The collectives of LaCol, Basurama, and Zuloark all emerged from collective projects undertaken during this year. Furthermore, upon graduating, these same groups of

designers—because they are licensed—are legally able to practice architecture autonomously, without supervision. This opens new avenues for innovative practice and urban activism that are closed to young designers in the US.

The terrain of participatory urbanism is dynamic but in all cases it involves the relations between three sets of actors—officials, designers, and citizens. The discontents that fuel urban activism are likely to shift as part of activism's cyclical nature, but its main tendencies, to keep the status quo, to reform, to *autogestionar*, and to revolt, will remain. This investigation of the two middle modalities—reform and *autogestión*—are aimed foremost at designers, especially those who feel compelled to act for change. It is my hope that the stories told here through the voices of officials, activist designers, and neighbors will help designers to better understand their own motivations, and then to be able to position themselves and to act in ways that can most effectively bring about that change. To non-designers, officials, neighbors, and others, this study should be useful for understanding how urban activists are negotiating the ongoing debate about community engagement and participation. This debate is rooted in discourses about the nature of democracy, anarchism, capitalism, autonomy and expertise, and is not likely to be resolved soon. Even so, the experiments in reform and *autogestión* being practiced by groups like those in these pages offer a hope that new connections between people and places can be forged.

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Appendix A – Interview Permissions

Proposed Recruitment Script

UC Berkeley, IRB Protocol ID: 2010-09-2096

Verbal / Email Script for Recruitment

Dear Sir or Madam:

I am David de la Peña and I am a Ph.D. candidate in Environmental Design at the University of California, Berkeley, working on a research study public participation in urban design processes in Barcelona.

I am requesting your participation in this study, because I think that you can help us understand how officials, professionals and community members have thought about and tried to change the community's [name] public space. If you agree to participate, I will conduct a personal interview with you.

This interview will contribute to my doctoral dissertation. It is part of a research project to understand how communities participate in the design of public spaces. The project includes up to 60 interviews of agency officials, professionals, community leaders, and residents. The interview will take between 30 minutes and one hour, or more if you have time and desire to say more.

I hope that this interview allows you to tell me your stories about public space and this community [name]. I thank you for participating even though there is no direct benefit beyond this.

Your participation is completely voluntary. You are free not to participate, or to stop at any time. If you would like to participate, we can schedule an appointment at a time and location of your choosing. I intend to conduct these interviews between January and April, 2012.

Do you have any questions? Would you be interested in participating? [If email: If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact me by email at delapena@berkeley.edu. I look forward to hearing from you.]

Sincereley,

David de la Peña

Consent to Participate in Research

Study Title: "Representing Barcelona: Public Engagement in Urban Design Practice"

Introduction and Purpose

My name is David de la Peña. I am a graduate student at the University of California, Berkeley, working with Professor Louise Mozingo in the School/Department of Landscape Architecture. I would like to invite you to take part in my research study, which concerns public participation in the design of public space.

Procedures

If you agree to participate in my research, I will conduct an interview with you at a time and location of your choice. The interview will involve questions about your background, views of the community, and urban design projects. It should last about 30 minutes to one hour. With your permission, I will audiotape and take notes during the interview. The taping is to accurately record the information you provide, and will be used for transcription purposes only. If you choose not to be audio-taped, I will take notes instead. If you agree to being audio-taped but feel uncomfortable at any time during the interview, I can turn off the tape recorder at your request. Or if you don't wish to continue, you can stop the interview at any time.

I expect to conduct only one interview; however, follow-ups may be needed for added clarification. If so, I will contact you by mail/phone to request this.

Benefits

There is no direct benefit to you from taking part in this study. It is hoped that the research will contribute to a better understanding in the field of urban design about how officials, designers, and community members can work together for better designs of public spaces.

Risks/Discomforts

The topics of the interview are not intended to cause risk or discomfort. However, some of the research questions may make you uncomfortable. You are free to decline to answer any questions you don't wish to, or to stop the interview at any time. As with all research, there is a chance that confidentiality could be compromised; however, we are taking precautions to minimize this risk. (See below for more detail.)

Confidentiality

Your study data will be handled as confidentially as possible. If results of this study are published or presented, individual names and other personally identifiable information will not be used unless you give explicit permission for this. Consent for participating in this study will be requested orally rather than with a signature.

To minimize the risks to confidentiality, we will store this data in a locked drawer in the home office of the student researcher. Additionally, all data files will be encrypted and protected with a secure pass-code that is only available to the Principal Investigator and the Student Researcher. When the research is completed, I will destroy the tapes and notes at the end of the study.

Compensation

You will not be paid for taking part in this study.

Rights

Participation in research is completely voluntary. You are free to decline to take part in the project. You can decline to answer any questions and are free to stop taking part in the project at any time. Whether or not you choose to participate in the research and whether or not you choose to answer a question or continue participating in the project, there will be no penalty to you or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Questions

If you have any questions about this research, please feel free to contact me. I can be reached at delapena@berkeley.edu.

If you have any questions about your rights or treatment as a research participant in this study, please contact the University of California at Berkeley's Committee for Protection of Human Subjects at 510-642-7461, or e-mail subjects@berkeley.edu.

****

CONSENT

If you agree to participate, please say so. You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your own records.

If you agree to grant us permission to publish or present your name and other personally identifiable information, please say so.

Appendix B - Interview Outlines

Interview Outlines

UC Berkeley, IRB Protocol ID: 2010-09-2096

Semi-Structured Interview

Introduction:

Interviews comprise a part of my dissertation research on emerging participatory urban design practices in Barcelona Spain. This project uses archival research, observation of physical traces, and observation of behavior in order to understand how the practice of urban design has been conceived and implemented in three neighborhoods in Barcelona. It uses in-depth semi-structured interviews to understand how officials, urban design professionals, and community members construct knowledge of communities; how they perceive urban design practice; and how they judge the results of these practices.

Selection of Interviewees:

This project will include up to 60 in-depth interviews. Interviewees will be selected using non-probability sampling techniques. They will include officials, such as planning officials, housing and human development officials; professionals, such as urban designers, architects, and landscape architects; and community members such as neighborhood association leaders, volunteers, and residents. They will be selected based on their involvement in urban design processes that have been occurring in three specific neighborhoods over the past 10 years, and which also presently continue. They may also be selected using snowball techniques, drawing from other interviewee's contacts or recommendations.

Semi-structured Interviews:

This type of interview format will allow the researcher to establish certain baseline information from respondents, while also allowing the potential for respondents to focus on topics that they consider important. Three interview outlines will be developed – one each for officials, professionals, and community members. Baseline questions will provide demographic data, historical accounts of urban design practices, and educational backgrounds. As each interview progresses, questions and answers become less structured, more open. Respondents will be encouraged to describe opinions about the community, about urban design processes, and about perceptions of success.

Analysis of Interviews:

Interviews will generally be conducted in Spanish or English, and will be audio-recorded if the respondent consents. Interviews will be transcribed and analyzed using open coding and axial coding techniques.

(1) Interview of Planning Officials

a. Introduce myself / verbal informed consent

b. Interviewee background

i. How long have you worked for the city/regional government; where have you worked previously?

ii. What is your educational background? How were you trained to be an urban planner?

iii. Where do you live? How long have you lived there and what other communities have you lived in?

iv. What is your ethnicity and nationality?

c. How they view the community

i. How would you describe the community of "x"?

1. The physical place and its condition

2. The people (Are there different groups?)

ii. How do you know what you know about the community? What kind of methods do you use to learn about the community?

iii. What do you think should be different about the community? What should remain the same?

d. How they view the urban design process

i. How is your agency organized? How are decisions made?

ii. How was this urban design project initiated and organized?

iii. What is the timeline for this project?

iv. Are there policies and procedures that you need to follow for projects like this? Do you have to improvise to make things work?

v. What are interactions like with other agency representatives? Politicians? Neighborhood groups?

vi. How was the public incorporated into the process?

e. How they measure success

i. How do you assess the success of this project thus far? What has worked well? What has failed?

ii. How do you think other professionals or community members feel about this project?

iii. How have you documented the project?

f. Final thoughts

i. Is there anything else you would like to add that will help me understand this project, the design process, or the community?

ii. Thank you. Give follow-up information.

(2) Interview of Urban Design Professional

a.   Introduce myself / verbal informed consent

b.   Interviewee background

i.   How long have you worked as a designer for "x"; where have you worked previously?

ii.   What is your educational background? Did you train to work on projects like this?

iii.   Where do you live? How long have you lived there and what other communities have you lived in?

iv.   What is your ethnicity and nationality?

c.   How they view the community

i.   How would you describe the community of "x"?

1.   The physical place and its condition

2.   The people (Are there different groups?)

ii.   How do you know what you know about the community? What kind of methods do you use to learn about the community?

iii.   What do you think should be different about the community? What should remain the same?

d.   How they view the urban design process

i.   How is your firm organized? How are decisions made?

ii.   How did you get involved in this project?

iii.   How do you manage this project to make it profitable and successful? Do you have to improvise to make things work?

iv.   What are interactions like with planning officials? Politicians? Neighborhood groups?

v.   How was the public incorporated into the process?

e.   How they measure success

i.   How do you assess the success of this project thus far? What has worked well? What has failed?

ii.   How do you think other professionals or community members feel about this project?

iii.   How have you documented the project?

f.   Final thoughts

i.   Is there anything else you would like to add that will help me understand this project, the design process, or the community?

ii.   Thank you. Give follow-up information.

(3)   Interview of Community Member

a.   Introduce myself / verbal informed consent

b.   Interviewee background

i.   Where do you live? How long have you lived there and what other communities have you lived in?

ii.   What is your ethnicity and nationality?

iii.   Can you describe your household? Do you have extended family in the neighborhood? elsewhere?

iv.   What is your occupation?

c.   How they view the community

i.   How would you describe your community of "x"?

1.   The physical place and its condition

2.   The people (Are there different groups?)

ii.   How do you know what you know about the community?

iii.   Do you have networks of friends or neighbors? How do these work?

iv.   What do you think should be different about the community? What should remain the same?

d.   How they view the urban design process

i.   How did you find out about this project?

ii.   Are you aware of the city's efforts to promote participation?

iii.   Are you aware of the neighborhood association? Do you go to neighborhood association meetings?

iv.   If you are involved in the neighborhood association, can you tell me more about how it works? Who participates in this?

v.   Have you had any contact with planning officials? Politicians? Professional designers?

e.   How they measure success

i.   How have you experienced the design process? What has worked well? What has failed?

ii.   How do you think other community members feel about the project?

iii.   Are you looking forward to the changes that this project will bring? Are you worried about anything?

iv.   Is there anything else you would like to add that will help me understand this project, the design process, or the community?

v.   Thank you. Give follow-up information.

Appendix C - Interviewee Profiles

1. Carles Baiges

October 27, 2011, at a coffee shop on the Placa Osca in Sants

Carles is an architect at LaCol and was the teaching assistant of Josep María Montaner and Zaida Muxí at the Escola Tècnica Superior de Arquitectura de Barcelona (Etsab). He taught a seminar in the class Arquitectura i Política on the theme of the factory complex Can Batlló.

2. Jordi Falcó Gres

November 2, 2011, at the Centre Social de Sants

Jordi is the secretary and manager of the Centre Social. He has lived in Sants most of his adult life. He has been active in the Centre Social and also in the Plataforma Can Batlló. He was also a representative of the district's council for the neighborhood La Bordeta, and in November 2012 he was elected to be one of the representatives for the district-wide Consell del Districte de Sants Montjuïc.

3. Lucía Zandigiacomi

January 16, 2012, at Bosco restaurant in the Gothic Quarter

Lucía is an architect and a core member of the entity Raons Públiques. Originally from Italy, she studied architecture in Venice with Bernardo Secci and then in Barcelona's Etsab on an Erasmus scholarship in 2003. She relocated to Barcelona immediately after graduating, worked in architecture firms and was one of the four founders of Raons Públiques in 2009.

4. Pilar Florensa Suriñach

January 24, 2012, at the offices of the Patronat de Habitatge

Pilar is an architect and construction manager for the Patronat Municipal de Habitatge de Barcelona (Municipal Trustees of Housing of Barcelona). She was involved in the renovation of the community of Bon Pastor, which was made contraversial through the protests of several activist architects who questioned the demolition and relocation of the modest housing casitas. Pilar also was involved in the management of two affordable housing buildings to be constructed in Can Batlló.

5. Carles Agustí Hernández

January 27, 2012, at the offices of Participació i Associacionisme

Carles Agustí is the director of Participation for the city of Barcelona since the summer of 2011. He was assigned to this position through the new government of the party Convergència i Unió. He studied political science and sociology at the Autonomous

University of Barcelona (UAB) and has pursued politics since completing his studies and describes himself as a politician.

6. Lali Davi

February 10, 2012, at the Bosco restaurant in the Gothic Quarter

Lali is an architect with the collective LaCol. She completed her studies in 2010 with a *final de carrera* (senior thesis) project that proposed a recycling center at Can Batlló. Her early interests were in the controversial 2006 Barcelona Civility Ordinance and its implications for the use of public space.

7. Sergi Sarri

February 15, 2012, at District offices of Sants-Montjuïc

Sergi is the director of participation for the district of Sants-Montjuïc, where LaCol and Can Batlló are located. He has been in this position since the summer of 2011. He is also a graduate student at the UAB in aeronautical engineering. He entered politics through the conservative JNC, the Juventudes Nacionalistas de Catalunya (Nationalistic Youth of Catalonia), where he is the vice-coordinator of political action for Barcelona; this is the number two post of the JNC for the CiU party.

8. Laia Torras

March 2, 2012 at the Department of Habitat Urbà of Barcelona

Laia is the director of participation for the department of Urbanism (Habitat Urbà) for the city of Barcelona. She has held this post since fall of 2011 and previously worked for the private foundation, Fundació Jaume Bofill, where she focused on the themes of participation and education. Laia coordinated the participatory processes for the Sixteen Gates competition and also the Pla Buits project, which she helped conceive.

9. Enric Batlle

March 8, 2012, at the offices of Batlle i Roig

Enric Batlle is a landscape architect and architect and a partner with Joan Roig in the renowned firm Batlle i Roig in Barcelona. Batlle holds a doctorate from the Etsab and the book that came from his dissertation is called *El Jardín de la metrópoli: del paisaje romántico al espacio libre para una sociadad sonstenible* (The Garden of the Metropolis: From the Romantic Landscape to Open Space for a Sustainable Socitey). He managed and designed the project for the redevelopment of Can Batlló for his client, the development company Gaudir.

10. Jordi Soler

April 16, 2012, at Bloc 11 of Can Batlló

Jordi is a member of the board of the Centre Social de Sants and also a member of the Plataforma Can Batlló. He has lived in Sants most of his life and has had many careers but now works for La Caixa bank. He remembers many of the first struggles of the Centre Social from its beginnings in the 1970s and 1980s. He is also a photographer and has documented the Can Batlló recuperation with hundreds of photographs, several of which appear here.

11. Rosa Pomareda

April 20, 2012

Rosa is a longtime member of the Centre Social de Sants and an active member of the Plataforma Can Batlló. Her late husband, Josep Pons, was a leading community activist in Sants and the popular library at Bloc 11 is named in his honor.

12. Ricard Fayos

May 14, 2012

Ricard is an architect working for the Urbanism department of the city of Barcelona, where he has worked since the transition goverment of the 1970s, when he worked as an advocacy architect for neighborhood associations in the Gothic Quarter. He is also a professor at Etsab where he teaches courses on urbanism. Currently he is a manager of special projects for the city and was responsible for the Sixteen Gates competition. Previously he was the architect technician in charge of the Can Batlló project.

13. Eva Rodriguez

May 16, 2012, at Diamant Cafe in the Gracia neighborhood

Eva works for the city of Barcelona's Agenda 21 office. She is trained in environmental psychology from the UAB, having begun her studies in architecture at Etsab before changing to psychology. Eva has also been an active member of Raons Públiques and now volunteers with the group on an ad hoc basis.

14. Pol Massoni

May 20, at Diamant Cafe in the Gracia neighborhood

Pol is an architect and landscape architect with the collective LaCol. Pol grew up just outside Barcelona in Sant Boi de Llobregat, where both his father and grandfather were gardeners. His *fin de carrera* (senior thesis) project dealth with recreation fields on the Can Batlló site. Pol also plays competitive rugby for the national rugby team of Catalunya. In addition, he practices architecture outside of LaCol and maintains an active role in the Plataforma for Bloc 11, especially in construction projects.

15. Arnau Andrés Gallart

May 23, 2012, at an outdoor cafe in Placa Osca

Arnau is another of the architects of LaCol and also completed his *fin de carrera* project on Can Batlló, focused on the industrial heritage and on youth labor. He also recently completed a Masters degree in Urban Land Management and Valuation at Etsab, focused on affordable housing in Can Batlló. Arnau is from Nou Barris in Barcelona.

16. Andrés Martínez de la Riva

May 24, 2012, at the offices of Arquitectos Sin Fronteras

Andrés is an architect from Galicia in northwestern Spain, where he studied architecture at the University of Coruña. He has lived in Barcelona since 2005. Andrés is one of the founders of Raons Públiques, and in addition to this volunteer work he recently completed a Masters in Urban Land Management and Valuation at Etsab, focused on citizen participation.

17. Amalia Speratti

May 25, 2012, at an outdoor cafe near Plaza Espanya

Amalia is Paraguayan but lived in Canada for eight years and is fluent in English. She studied graphic design in Canada, and also completed a Masters in exhibition design in Barcelona in 2007, which is when she relocated to Spain. Before joining Raons Públiques, she worked for the EU Prize in Contemporary Architecture.

18. Emanuela Bove

May 30, 2012, at a cafe in the Gothic Quarter

Emanuela is an architect from Naples, Italy who moved to Barcelona a decade ago to continue studying architecture. Disillusioned with the city's practices of urbanism, she became involved in activist agendas, directing the "local cooperation" arm of Architects without Borders and working on projects in the neighborhods of La Mina, Barceloneta, and Bon Pastor. In 2008 she contributed to a working group that published a critique of participation in the city, "A Barcelona la Participació Canta," and in 2009 she helped organize a competition called "Repensar Bon Pastor (Rethinking Bon Pastor)" calling for design ideas to prevent the demolition of the historical housing stock.

19. Tomeu Vidal

May 31, 2012, at Vidal's faculty office at the University of Barcelona

Professor Vidal teaches environmental psychology with a focus on participation in urban projects. He completed his doctorate at the UB with Enric Pol, and observed the participatory methods used by Isabela Velazquez in Trinitat Nova.

20. Gaëlle Suñer

June 1, 2012, at a bar in the Raval

Gaëlle is French and Catalan. She is trained in sociology from the University of Barcelona, and worked as a sociologist in an mixed-discipline urbanism firm in Paris prior to completing a Master in urbanism there. She returned to Barcelona and worked for private foundations before dedicating her time to staring a publishing company. Gaëlle began volunteering with Raons Públiques in 2011.

21. Josep María Domingo

June 6, 2012, at the Centre Social de Sants

Josep María is the president of the Centre Social de Sants since 2004. He is a retired administrator of a multinational company, subdirector of business logistics. He has lived in Sants since the early 1970s and was involved with all of its major struggles.

22. Alice Lancien

June 13, 2012, at architect's office in Gracia

Alice is an architect from France and a core member of Raons Públiques. She studied architecture in Marseille and has a Masters degree in urbanism fron the Institut d'urbanisme de Paris. She worked in Marseille for the architects/landscape architects collective l'Atelier sans tabou before moving to Barcelona in 2010.

23. Martín Sánchez Brizuela

Martín is a constructor and one of the originators of Raons Públiques. He has spent the last 12 years in Barcelona, having relocated from his native Buenos Aires, Argentina. He studied architecture in Buenos Aires before becoming disillusioned with its practice. In Barcelona, he began volunteering with Architects without Borders in 2003. Currently he owns his own small construction firm, to which he dedicates half of his work time' the other half he donates to Raons Públiques.

24. Alberto Piedrabuena Granes

July 3, at offices of Hàbitat Urbà

Piedrabuena is the assistant manager of the Hàbitat Urbà (Habitat & Urbanism) for the city of Barcelona, under which the department of Urbanism resides. He has worked in urbanism for 8 years and was elevated to this post after the CiU political victory in 2011. His training is as an economist and attorney in the area of urbanism.

25. Carlos López Tapia

July 3, 2012, at a restaurant in the Raval

Carlos is an architect and an original member of Raons Públiques. He studied architecture in Tibora in his native Perú and moved to Barcelona in 2007 and began volunteering with Architects without Borders in 2008. Carlos continues to practice architecture when he is not debating theories of community participation.