

# MOBILITIES AROUND US: SOCIAL SPATIALITIES AND NEW TOURIST SURROUNDINGS IN BARCELONA<sup>1</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

This paper reinterprets these transformations, departing from notions of 'relational space', re-conceptualizing urban spaces as mobile and relational, continuously reconstructed and reground ed by flows of people, knowledge, and capital. We examine the representations of mobility and the embodied mobile practices in relation to the ongoing mutation of a *Barcelona's neighbourhood*, in which the urban transformations linked to the 1992 Olympic Games, the renewal of the waterfront and the later development of a hi-tech cluster has triggered a profound and long-lasting process of social change.

**Keywords:** Daily mobility practices; public space; relational analysis; functional analysis; social activities.

**Movilidades a nuestro alrededor: espacialidades sociales y nuevos entornos turísticos en Barcelona**

## RESUMEN

El presente artículo reconceptualiza los espacios urbanos como móviles y relacionales, continuamente reconstruidos y redefinidos por flujos de personas, de conocimiento y de capital, examinando el desarrollo de las prácticas móviles que giran en torno al barrio del Poblenou de Barcelona, en el que las transformaciones urbanas vinculadas a los Juegos Olímpicos de 1992, la renovación del frente marítimo y el posterior desarrollo de un clús-

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ter de alta tecnología (el “22@”) han desencadenado un profundo y duradero proceso de cambio social.

**Palabras clave:** Prácticas cotidianas de movilidad; espacio público; análisis relacional; análisis funcional; actividades sociales.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In order to evaluate the impact of the processes of touristification taking place in the urban environment and their scope on the social life of neighborhoods, this work refers firstly to the postmodern reflection made by the most recent theories on tourism in which a more significant interpretation of contemporary tourism emerges and which connects the sociology of tourism to “Cultural Studies” (During, 2004), on the one hand, and to the “mobility paradigm” (Cresswell 2006; Hannam *et al.*, 2006), on the other. This change of perspective is eloquently expressed in the volume published by Rojek and Urry (1997), entitled “Touring Cultures”, terms that indicate the theoretical choice underlying the new interpretation of the tourism phenomenon: the recognition of the link between tourism and contemporary socio-cultural transformations. The two authors emphasize the dissolving of once distinct borders between social spheres, particularly between tourism and culture. The cultural evolution (culturalization) of tourism practices is explicit in tourism itself, which increasingly involves the consumption of cultural objects and symbols (McKercher and Du Cros, 2002), rather than exclusively consumer objects (or simply *loisir*). This leads to the adoption of a cultural perspective on tourism, from which the centrality of the mobility issue emerges. The mobility literature emphasizes on the movement as the element that composes the forms of social and cultural life, hence instead of focusing on tourism as an ‘external body’, tourism mobilities should be conceived as a constitutive dimension of urban space, fleshed out in a thick and heterogeneous assemblage of cultural practices and performances. Indeed, the new sociology of tourism is based on the assumption that tourism is a cultural practice and that tourism and culture broadly overlap. Tourism is thus established as a mobile cultural practice by definition and is highly significant or emblematic in contemporary “western” societies organized around mass mobility. In short, tourism must be analyzed to a large extent through the themes, theories and concepts of cultural analysis, and especially in terms of the current focus on issues of time, space and mobility that are increasingly linked to culture.

The aim of this research is therefore to study the evolution of relational structures arising from the daily mobility practices of different collectives that use the portion of the territory we will analyze and that are juxtaposed to an entire set of pre-existing spatial practices. Special attention must be paid to the “infiltration” into the urban fabric of tourist flows with a specific focus on the sociological component.

The central hypothesis of the investigation is that the intensification of globalization processes, the growth of “complex interconnections” (Tomlinson, 2001), the constant innovations of digital and communication technologies, the creation of “diasporic public spheres” (Púa, 2003) fed by planetary flows of people, ideas, capital, goods and infor-

mation (Urry, 2000) are some of the factors that are changing our ideas of the local, of belonging and of social bonds. The extent to which mobility can be considered a generator of social change will be investigated, especially in terms of the liquefaction of social structures. We understand by the term “liquefaction” that social structures are constantly changing, and the forms they take are temporary (Bauman, 2013). In this sense, we refer here to a double scale of mobility, we refer to large-scale mobilities that cross borders and disperse in territories on a local scale, merging with those that we define as ‘everyday life mobilities’ (Goffman, 1963) and to their later reconceptualization as “staging mobilities” (Jensen, 2013). The notion of “negotiation in motion” that is derived from the term “staging mobilities”, describes the dynamic interaction that takes place when we perform movements in a busy transit space or when “mobile with” involves making decisions regarding routes or modes of transport (Jensen, 2013). In this sense, the key idea is to understand the contemporary city as a group of people who circulate in addition to goods, information and signs in the relational networks that create the “significance of movement”.

It is appropriate here to ask why these movements occur. What happens as they unfold? What are the effects of these movements in cultural and social terms? What kind of sociality emerges from mobility practices?

The mobility practices adopted by individuals have been used to distinguish the various areas of the city. In a study conducted by K. A. Lynch (1976) in the city of Boston, the districts of the city are differentiated according to daily human presence, emphasizing that mobility can represent an important factor in the qualification of space. In order to go one step further by means of this research, an attempt is made to determine the predominant typology of the potential mobilities that revolve around the functional entities that are located in a territory in order to examine how they take part in relational processes between individuals. It turns out that the mobility practices of individuals are indeed linked to the heterogeneity of roles, identification processes and practices that they implement according to their own needs and lifestyles. In other words, they are related to the “diversification of social circles” (Simmel, 1989), that is, to affiliation to different groups and lifestyles, as well as to the locations around which different moments of life take place. Focusing on the characteristics of public spaces in relational terms (Massey, 2004), these are constituted through a multiplicity of possible relationships (space-time processes) between juxtaposed and likewise multiple identities, histories and trajectories. Therefore, observing the public or relationship spaces of a territory through the practices that underlie different mobilities makes it possible to investigate the evolution of the structuring of relationships within a community from a specific spatial location that nonetheless takes into account global interconnections and the emergence of new forms of relationships by means of which neighborly interactions are organized in the local dimension of everyday life.

The relationship between diversity of uses and social interaction was articulated by Jane Jacobs (Jacobs, 2011). According to the author, when residential use is juxtaposed with other sectors and uses, such as commercial, work or recreational ones, the presence of diverse people at all hours of the day is ensured. The functional social *mixité* (Lelévrier, 2006) “or social mix” (Ruming Meeand McGuirk, 2004; Arthurson, 2005) creates places for repetitive casual encounters that ultimately reinforce community ties. Both positions on public space, on the one hand, the cultural and symbolic aspect of public space as a

place of important events, daily experiences, democracy and citizenship (Irazábal, 2008) and, on the other, the aspects related to the turn of mobilities, demonstrate the importance of incorporating this double gaze (social and physical) when analyzing and rethinking existing public spaces.

From this point of view, the research we propose evaluates the capacity of public spaces in a neighborhood of the city of Barcelona to generate these social practices according to the different concentrations of activities that move people, ideas, goods and information in the neighborhood itself and its surroundings. We are especially interested to tackle the local scale, where the encounters between tourism flows and spatial fixities, fast and sedentary populations, elite and desperate mobilities, every day practices and objects and their global representations is generative of pressures and clashes but also of social innovation (productive and professional relations, affects and social capital, and new cultural expressions or place identities).

## 2. SELECTION OF CASE STUDY

Barcelona is one of Europe's most notable urban destinations in terms of volume, accommodation capacity and the flow of travelers and overnight stays in its hotels. In the 2016 ranking of European Cities Marketing (2017), Barcelona ranks fifth according to the number of overnight stays in hotels (19.16 million) with an annual increase of 8.5% between 2015-2016, and, excluding the political capitals of the states, is in first place (London, 28.5 million; Paris, 15.6; Berlin, 11.3; Rome, 10.1). The city has gone from being a city with tourism to being a tourist city (López Palomeque, 1994). Tourism has grown beyond an initial situation of being a complementary activity to become a structural component of the city's productive system, its urban metabolism, affecting its daily life, leaving no citizens indifferent to its impact, and has configured the image of the city with which (by which) it is internationally recognized.

The degree of development of tourism activities has transcended the sector and affects all aspects of the city. That is why the debate on tourism in Barcelona is present in the international media (Becker, 2017; Burgen, 2018; Manjoo, 2018) in the agenda of institutions (*Strategic Plan for Tourism, Special Urban Plan for Tourist Accommodation*) and in political debate. Indeed, the city government in force since 2015 has advocated the need to slow down and regulate further growth, with the aim of promoting an anti-touristification entrenchment, besmirching the reputation of the city in the global media. In turn, critical voices see this as an attempt to marginalize organized claims in defense of 'the right to the city'.

The growth of tourism over the last two decades has therefore generated benefits for the city while at the same time bringing it major problems. Especially after the crisis of 2007 that affected the Catalan economy, large sectors of society, and in particular the impoverished middle class, are faced with an excess of tourism in public space and the appropriation by tourism of the commercial offer and the real estate market, of its intrusion into everyday spaces, the worsening of employment conditions in the tourism sector, atmospheric and acoustic pollution produced by tourist mobilities, as well as a progressive detachment of the representations of the city in the imagination of its citizens. These phenomena are well known in public opinion and academia, which recently coined the term "overtourism" as an

analytical category (Dredge, 2017; Goodwin, 2017). The tourism-conflict association has emerged with force in the debates on the tourist model of Barcelona, and has given way to the emergence of positions of “tourism-phobia” (Milano, 2017) that are opposed to the discourse of a synergistic relationship, until now more widespread. The saturation of certain urban spaces generates an important malaise in residents in relation to tourism, leading to the spread of tourism-phobia, stigmatizing the tourist to the extent of blaming them for territorial depredation and urban real estate speculation (Palou, 2012).

The touristic use of public space is one of the most important debates currently taking place in Barcelona where congestion in certain neighborhoods or areas of the city such as the Sagrada Família, Gracia, Barceloneta, Ciutat Vella, or Park Güell (Arias and Russo, 2016) is “creating problems when it comes to combining the two elementary spheres of life in the city: that of production, in which we would include the phenomenon of tourism along with others, and that of reproduction, that is to say, neighborhood life, the most elementary of socializations” (Mansilla, 2017). However, resistance to neoliberal forms of spatial production in places where the development of tourism has become a social problem and a vehicle of dispossession often downplays the complexity of tourist mobilities and their entanglements with the contemporary city (Colomband Novy, 2016). The new tourist scenario implies a need for synergy between residents and visitors, the experiential offer of the city does not separate local and foreign consumers, dissolving the border between tourists and local residents, between spaces only for tourists and areas for resident sin to opposition to the discourse associated with tourist bubbles (Judd and Feinstein, 1999) which argues a separation of the tourist activities from its surrounding environment by spatially or psychologically created boundaries. In this sense, the city of Barcelona unequivocally represents a clear example of this de-differentiation of spaces and practices, especially if we take into account that one of the bases of the city’s regeneration model has been the reconstruction of its public spaces; this is also the space in which urban tourism bases its activity among the attractions.

Our analysis focuses on the practices of mobility and use of some of the public spaces in the Poblenou neighborhood. Poblenou is an outlying district of the city that has become a new pole of attraction for visitors. The problems it faces are similar to those found in other tourist zones: illegal tourist flats (and rising residential rental prices), proliferation of hotels, public space increasingly devoted exclusively to tourist uses. Poblenou is an emblematic example of the physical and social regeneration of Barcelona’s urban landscape. Indeed, this neighborhood has become one of the most representative enclaves of the tertiarization currently occurring in the city. In the series of urban changes linked to the 1992 Olympic Games, the district of Poblenou underwent a profound transformation from being the city’s industrial heart to becoming a technological cluster, thus producing a marked renewal of the urban fabric. This revitalization, promoted likewise by the creation of the new district of technological innovation, 22@, has included pressure from the tourist sector, from the restaurant and hotel sector and other food and wine services, since at present the district has an offer of about 12 thousand hotel beds with another 3 thousand under construction, to which about 700 tourist flats must be added (Mansilla, 2016). The new orientation of the social and economic character of Poblenou has unleashed certain dynamics that have ended up transmuting its socio-spatial configuration, with the conse-

quent appearance of an urban conflict linked above all to the processes of gentrification, touristification and privatization of the sidewalks and squares of urban space. In addition, some of its main spaces of socialization, such as the Rambla of Poblenou, have experienced over the last few years a growing process of occupation by the open-air, sidewalk tables of bars and restaurants, which has forced the City Council to carry out specific planning for the area (Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2013).

It is, therefore, of paramount interest to verify in this phase of the neighborhood's development the processes that can nourish or, on the contrary, inhibit or fracture the social structures manifested in its public spaces.

### 3. METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

In the literature there are different types of functional characterizations with regard to urban areas that are developed according to different criteria and different scales of analysis. It is certainly worth mentioning the creation of the FUA by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which, in collaboration with the EU (Eurostat and EC-DG Regio), has developed a harmonized definition of urban areas defined as "functional economic units" through the collection of commuting data and spatial cell-scale population density of 1 km<sup>2</sup> (OECD, 2012). The concept of zoning has been applied in many areas of research such as public health and the environment (Cockings and Martin, 2005; Daras, 2009; Sabel *et al.*, 2013), sociology or urban planning. Subdivision criteria have included subjective source characterizations by local populations (Coulton *et al.*, 2001; Flowerdew *et al.*, 2007; Suttles, 1972), as characterizations of homogeneous areas in terms of population or household composition (Riva *et al.*, 2008; Spielman and Logan, 2012) up to those based primarily on administrative boundaries (Pearce *et al.*, 2006; Gant *et al.*, 2014).

Likewise, in the field of research in the context of tourism studies, the need for functional segmentation arises, both in the case of urban tourism in large cities (as in the case applied by Pearce, 1998, in the city of Paris), as well as in relation to smaller realities such as those of coastal tourist destinations (Hernández-Martín *et al.*, 2016). Recognizing tourist subdestinations defined as "spatial units of statistical analysis characterized by a high density of establishments of characteristic tourism industries, homogeneous statistical tourism information, and a spatial continuity" (Hernández-Martín *et al.*, 2016) is decisive for understanding the patterns, processes and interrelationships that develop on a larger scale within the destination. According to Quiao *et al.* "Subdestination may help to store, process and use the large amount of information that a tourism destination can currently collect in a more orderly way. It is thus, a very useful tool for arranging big data into geographically coherent areas" (Qiao *et al.*, 2013).

In this article we will refer, in a first stage, to a criterion of concentration of POIs (Point Of Interest) in the territory with the aim of identifying not only the areas of high tourist concentration, but also of subdividing the neighborhood that we have chosen as a case study into different functional areas. The goal, therefore, is to identify tourist subdestinations (identified as functional units within the neighborhood) in order to compare the "social use" of a public space belonging to this functional class with the

“social use” of public spaces in adjacent areas hosting other city functions, as will be explained in detail in the next section.

If, on the one hand, the dominant functions that cover the portions of the urban territory are determined, on the other hand, it is crucial to consider the relationship between these functions and the potential mobility demand that is generated. As indicated in the introduction to this article, research on contemporary mobilities within the framework of what is known as ‘mobilities turn’ shows “how there is more to mobile urban life than getting transported from A to B” (Urry, 2007). “Movements are understood as wayfaring in an embodied mobile perspective (Vannini, 2012), where the spatial mobility of individuals is capable of provoking unstable social and relational dynamics, at scales of study, ranging from the global to the local. Therefore, as we have from the theoretical perspective, we also refer from the methodological perspective to the literature of this line of research that points to ‘mobilities turn’ as an epistemological method, which invites to “plot, document, monitor and juxtapose places on the go” to understand how they become mobilized within networks of human and nonhuman agents (Büscher and Urry, 2009).

Studies on mobility have fostered an intense methodological debate that promotes the search for perspectives that deepen the specificities of mobility as phenomena with theoretical and empirical weight inherent to current social reflection. Thus, investigating the spatialities produced by the users of a part of the urban territory requires observation methods that can reveal the forms of relationship generated by physical bodies, materialities and the multiplicity of interactions produced in daily life. “Mobile methods are qualitative, quantitative, visual, and experimental” (Büscher *et al.*, 2011; D’Andrea *et al.*, 2011; Fincham *et al.*, 2009; Kusenbach, 2012; In Sheller, 2017) and indeed, this field of research over the last two decades has seen the introduction of techniques that allow automated collection of information on human mobility through location devices such as GPS (Shoval and Isaacson, 2009; Birenboim and Shoval, 2016), mobile phone tracking (Ahas *et al.*, 2008; Steiner *et al.*, 2016) and social network footprints (Kádár and Gede, 2013; Vu *et al.*, 2015). In the context of tourism studies, these techniques are reorienting research towards the analysis of “big data” of the spatial and cognitive behavior of large masses of visitors for the purposes of planning, management and marketing of destinations. However, if on the one hand this discipline has produced an extensive literature on quantitative methods of an experimental nature and linked to new technologies, other studies have focused on the ways in which mobility affects social practices (Gutiérrez, 2010; Ureta, 2008; Jirón, 2010; Jirón and Iturra, 2012) through techniques that echo social ethnographic research.

Innovations in ethnography, in general terms, have developed monitoring practices such as ‘walking with’ or ‘flânerie’ (Ingold and Vergunst, 2008; Jensen, 2009; Bairner, 2006), ‘tandem ethnography’ (Molland, 2013) and ‘multi-sited fieldwork’ (Marcus, 1995), adopted to improve some of the difficulties encountered in researching people who happen to be ‘on the move’ (Cresswell, 2006).

In our work we will refer specifically to a ‘multi-sited ethnography’ procedure as the main methodology of data collection in the areas selected through the above-mentioned functional categorization. This second methodological step will provide us with the necessary tools for the analysis of the relational practices that shape the selected spaces and

the examination of the way in which tourist mobilities, and those that are not, negotiate and transform the daily social life of the neighborhood. ‘Multi-sited ethnography’ defines as its objective the study of social phenomena that cannot be explained by focusing on a single site. The essence of this type of research, therefore, is to follow people, connections, associations and relationships, which represent continuous phenomena, through spatially non-contiguous places. “Multi-sited ethnography combines the richness and depth of conventional ethnography, which has a long tradition of use in tourism research (Ribeiro and Foemmel, 2012), with the flexibility and holistic strength of multi-spatial analysis (Falzon, 2009). Because it pays particular attention to space and mobility as variables of interest, multi-sited ethnography is a particularly well-suited method to the study of global phenomena such as tourism (Hultman and Hall, 2012; Salazar, 2010).”

#### **4. OPERATIONAL PROCESS**

##### ***Functional zoning***

It is now important to specify which spatial dimensions we wish to examine and how we have tried to translate these empirically. In the first place, an important distinction must be made between the objective dimensions of the space and its subjective dimensions; in the first case we include the functional characterization of the areas of the Poblenou neighborhood as the initial factor of analysis. This first approach is justified by the need to insert the public spaces we will analyze from the relational perspective in their spatial contexts, linking the mutation of the socio-cultural landscape to the effects produced by the different mobilities that act in the urban space. The second analytical part will focus on the subjectively perceived dimensions of the relational environment of spaces.

In order to divide the studied territory into categories, a spatial analysis has been carried out on a census scale through the implementation in GIS environment of geolocalized POIs (Point of Interest) datasets of the city of Barcelona. Data collection has been carried out through the BCN Open Data Portal, an open data service developed by the Barcelona City Council, which, since 2011, provides information generated or stored by public bodies, allowing access and reuse for the benefit of interested persons or entities.

The POIs datasets include geolocalized information on all the spatial entities present in the Poblenou neighborhood (commerce, services, hotels and entertainment, tourist apartments, hotels, offices, residences, etc...). This instrument has allowed us first of all to disaggregate the POIs from the categories preset by the datasets in order to regroup them according to four new functional categories considered relevant for our research (Tab. 1).

This type of analysis has allowed us to select four study areas within the neighborhood with four different functional characterizations. Through this division, it has therefore been possible to distinguish the census areas that most attract a tourist public in terms of accommodation and some points of interest that are properly touristic, from areas that host other predominant functions in the same neighborhood. In order to identify the predominant function established in the different areas, and therefore be able to assign a value to each of them, the number of POIs by category within the census limits was taken into



account (e.g. Fig. 1). In particular, the specialization gradient of each census area was calculated with respect to the four selected categories (residential areas, business areas, leisure areas, tourist areas).

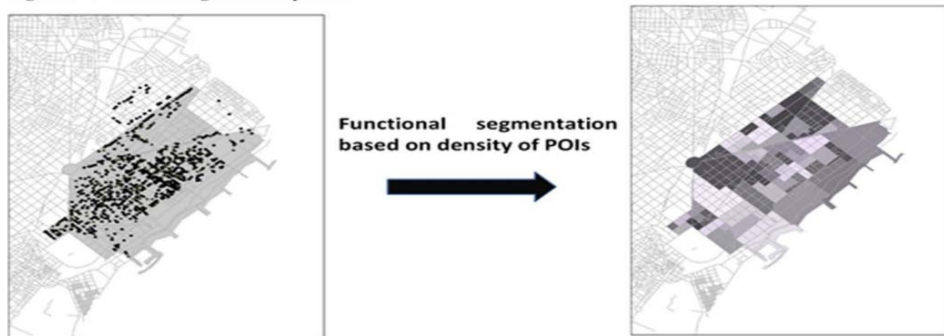
**Table 1**  
**CATEGORIZATION OF FUNCTIONAL AREAS BASED ON POIS TYPOLOGY**

*Table 1 - Categorization of functional areas based on POIs typology*

FUNCTIONAL AREAS	POINTS OF INTEREST AGGREGATION	DENSITY INDEX	DENSITY INDEX
Tourist areas	Hotel	$(N. POINTs/Census area) / (N. POINTs / Neighborhood area)$	$(N. Hotels / Census division area) / (N.Hotels/Neighborhood area)$
	Tourist flats		$(N. Tourist Flats / Census division area) / (N.Tourist Flats/Neighborhood area)$
	Places of tourist interest		$(N. Places of tourist interest / Census division area) / (N. Places of tourist interest /Neighborhood area)$
Business areas	Services		$(N. Services / Census division area) / (N. Services /Neighborhood area)$
	Office		$(N. Office/ Census division area) / (N. Office/Neighborhood area)$
	Institutions		$(N. Institutions / Census division area) / (N. Institutions/Neighborhood area)$
Leisure areas	Retail store		$(N. Shops / Census division area) / (N. Shops/Neighborhood area)$
	Restaurants and bars		$(N. Restaurants and bars / Census division area) / (N. Shops/Neighborhood area)$
Residencial areas	Housing		$(N. Houses / Census division area) / (N.Houses / Neighborhood area)$

**Figure 1**  
**FUNCTIONAL CATEGORIZATION PROCEDURE**

*Figure 1 - Functional segmentation process*



This analysis has been necessary to make a comparison of the impact on the social fabric generated by the mobilities that revolve around the functional entities present in each of these areas. To undertake this study, four public spaces have been chosen corresponding

to each of the four areas identified through the functional zoning technique mentioned above (as can be seen in the map in Fig. 2). The four selected spaces are proposed as a unit of measurement by means of which it is possible to capture the social dimension with respect to the spatial system in which they are located, that is, to specifically examine the effect of the neighborhood's spatial-economic articulation on the public participation of its spaces. Similarly, in the definition of relational structures and in the sense in which these relationships give life to the intensity of links at the local level in an environment in which global phenomena such as tourism, the presence of temporary citizens, and an increasingly international and mobile labor market intervene.

## **5. SELECTION OF PUBLIC SPACES**

### ***5.1. Can Felipa square – Residential area***

The Can Felipa Square is located opposite the civic center of Can Felipa, the old textile factory that today is a municipal cultural space open to the residents of the neighborhood. The square is a meeting point and living space for the residents as well as being the scene of the meetings of 'l'Associació de Veïns' ('Neighbors Association') of Poblenou. Despite its proximity to the main Rambla and the presence of bars and restaurants, this space is not often frequented by tourists who are still mostly attracted to the gastronomic and cultural offer of the main Rambla.

### ***5.2. Rambla of Poblenou – Leisure area***

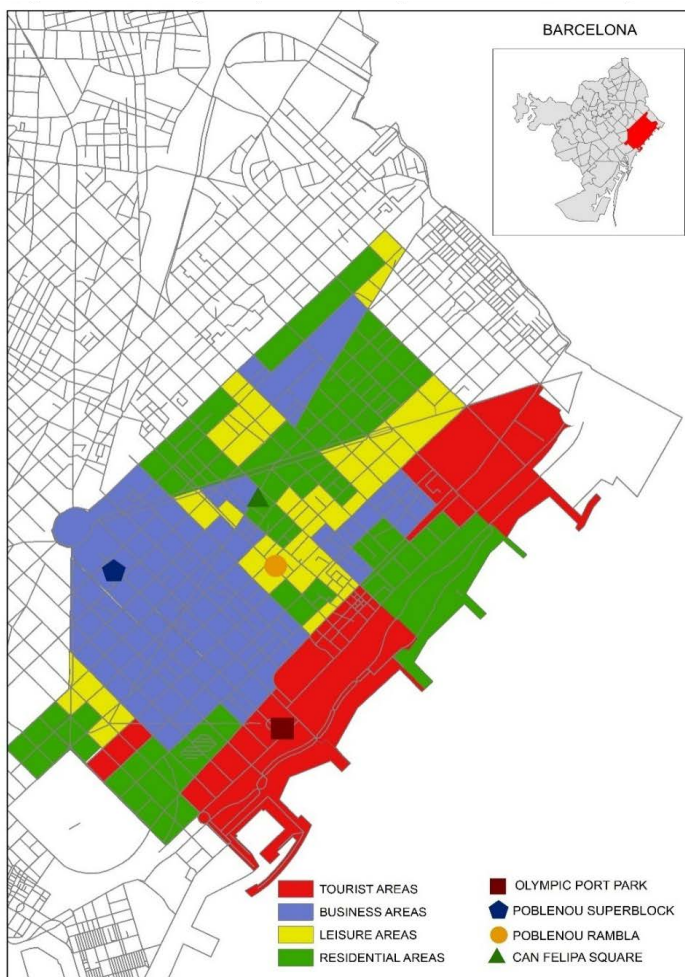
Because of its proximity to the beach, this classic Barcelona space is frequented by a significant number of tourists and visitors. However, due to its recognition as a neighborhood attraction it is inserted into a setting we have called a 'leisure area'. In other words, a middle ground has been adopted to indicate areas that cover complementary functions with respect to those that have been specifically qualified as 'tourist areas'. Indeed, the large number of shops and restaurants provide service and entertainment not only to tourists but also to residents of the neighborhood and the broader city. It should be added, however, that the oversaturation of bars and sidewalk cafés in this traditional space of socialization, along with the emergence of tourist establishments and shops that have nothing to do with the everyday needs of the local residents of the neighborhood, has influenced "the expulsion of all those who could not adapt to the dynamics of transformation Poblenou was experiencing" (Mansilla, 2016). The aim of the analysis of the promenade is to assess whether its spaces continue to fulfill the same functions linked to the social life of the neighborhood even though they are now in a stage of tourist revitalization.

### ***5.4. Olympic Port Park – Tourist area***

The Olympic Port Park is one of the five large green spaces that were built on the former industrial sites of Poblenou. This action was part of the important urban renewal that was carried out on the city's coastal waterfront on the occasion of the 1992 Olympic

Games. All together, these works generated significant processes of substitution in the area, with incoming middle-class residents gaining a good deal of presence at the cost of the working class (Alonso *et al.*, 2017). Among the various areas of the Poblenou district, the area of the Vila Olímpica (Olympic Village) has undergone the greatest social transformation, its previous demographic profile characterized mainly by the working class having been radically changed through the massive arrival of a ‘postmodern middle class’ (Sheller and Urry, 2004) of (Spanish and foreign) executives and professionals. These processes of urban renewal and population substitution have contributed to the development of this specific portion of the district of Poblenou becoming part of the city’s tourist circuit.

**Figure 2**  
**CASE STUDY FUNCTIONAL CATEGORIZATION AND SELECTED SPACES**



## 6. MULTI-SITED ETHNOGRAPHY

The next step in this research has involved, as mentioned in the section of methodological review, the multi-sited ethnography carried out through questionnaires provided to residents, stable and temporary citizens of the city or the neighborhood in the four spaces indicated in the map in Figure 3. The Superblock, a multifunctional space located in the center of what has been characterized as a 'business area'; the Can Felipa Square located in an almost exclusively residential area; the roundabout of the Rambla of Poblenou, an entertainment area, and finally the Carrer Salvador Espriu in the Olympic Port Park located within what we have defined as a tourist subdestination for its high level of tourist accommodations and recreational-cultural offer.

The specific tool that has made it possible for us to analyze the relational context in its most practical dimension is the "Intercept Survey for Social Mixing" (Gehl Institute for public life, 2017). The questionnaire, formulated by Jon Gehl and his collaborators, originally aimed to "understand how to identify where this mixing is happening, and the types of design and programming cues that can help invite foreseeing interactions, in order to fulfill the important civic purpose of our cities' public realms" (Gehl, 2017). However, in our case, the questionnaire has been implemented through a series of useful questions to identify the variables that nourish or disfavor social interaction processes in terms of opportunities for encounters and scope in generating social practices, while also being aimed at evaluating the perception towards the renewed social mix generated specifically by tourism or by the presence of communities of 'temporary citizens'.

The surveys were carried out in the months of June and July 2018 in the four spaces previously mentioned: The Superblock, the Can Felipa Square, the roundabout of the Rambla of Poblenou and the Olympic Port Park. The sample consisted of the recruitment of 50 people (residents of Barcelona in general or of the Poblenou neighborhood in particular) in each of the spaces selected for a total sample of 200 citizens. Recruitment was by convenience sampling (Clark *et al.*, 1998; Smith 2010). This method was applied by randomly approaching people in the spaces and asking them if they were 'local' or 'visitors' in order to be able to administer the survey exclusively to individuals corresponding to the resident profile. The goal of the analysis was to explore and identify the socio-cultural impacts perceived by the local community arising from its relationship with tourism and other emerging communities of citizens. The survey, given in Spanish, has been designed as a self-administered questionnaire (SAQ) to be completed by the respondent in an estimated time of 5 minutes.

The questionnaire, illustrated in Figure 4, includes a series of eight questions used to contextualize the link that binds the respondents to the public space of reference in spatial terms (proximity to the place), presential terms (their preference for the place they are now in with respect to other nearby spaces), motivational terms, and finally temporal terms (frequency, time of stay). Another series of questions refers to the perception of the identity transformation of the neighborhood produced by the population remix that emerges from the implantation of new typologies of communities in general and tourist ones in particular. Finally, the third and last series of questions addresses the relational experiences that take place or have taken place in each of the spaces, the circumstances of the interactions and the capacity for producing more or less deep links between those who benefit from the spaces.

**Table 2**

**SURVEY SAMPLE**

Fields of interest	Questions
Linkage between respondents and the public space selected	What is the main link that relates you to this neighborhood?
	How often do you visit this place?
	Is this the public space closest to your home or your work?
	If you answered "NO", which of these would be the closest public space to your home or your work?
	What brings you to this space today?
	If you answered 'just passing through' are you headed anywhere in particular?
Perception of social mix	How much time do you plan on spending here today?
	How do you feel about the social mix generated by the tourist populations in this neighborhood?
	How do you feel about the social mix generated by the tourist populations in this specific place?
	How do you feel the public spaces of this area perform as neighborhood spaces? (e.g. places to play, relax, social relations.)
Relational experience	Please take a few moments to look at the people here. Do you recognize anyone you weren't already planning to meet?
	This time or other times have you met people you've met at this place?
	Have you ever spoken / interacted with strangers in this place?
	How many times have you spoken / interacted with strangers in this place in the last month?
	Who were the people you met?
	Have any of the interactions that took place in this space led to friendship?
	How would you evaluate this relationship?

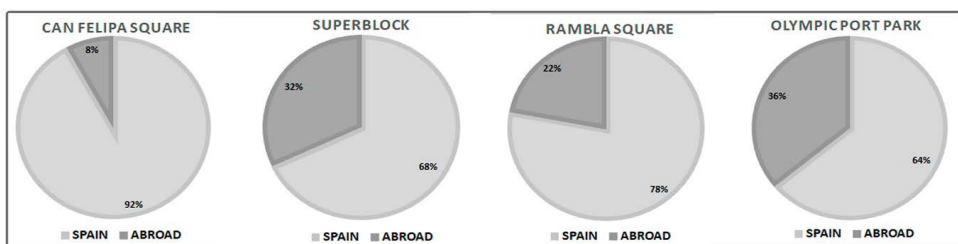
**7. RESULTS**

The charts in this section present the results of the surveys carried out in the selected public spaces. The results of the survey suggest a marked difference between all the spaces with regard to most of the aspects researched. As can be seen in Figures 3 and 4, the set of questions aimed at discovering the link and the origin that connects the respondents to the public space demonstrates a first scale of diversification. The first differentiating characteristic is represented by the origin of the users of the four spaces. As can be seen in Figure 3, in effect, in the Can Felipa Square the foreign population represents only 8%, in net unevenness with the Olympic Port Park where users of other nationalities represent 36%. The data regarding the Rambla stand out, indicating that the presence of foreigners almost triples in this space even though it is located just a short distance from the Can Felipa Square.

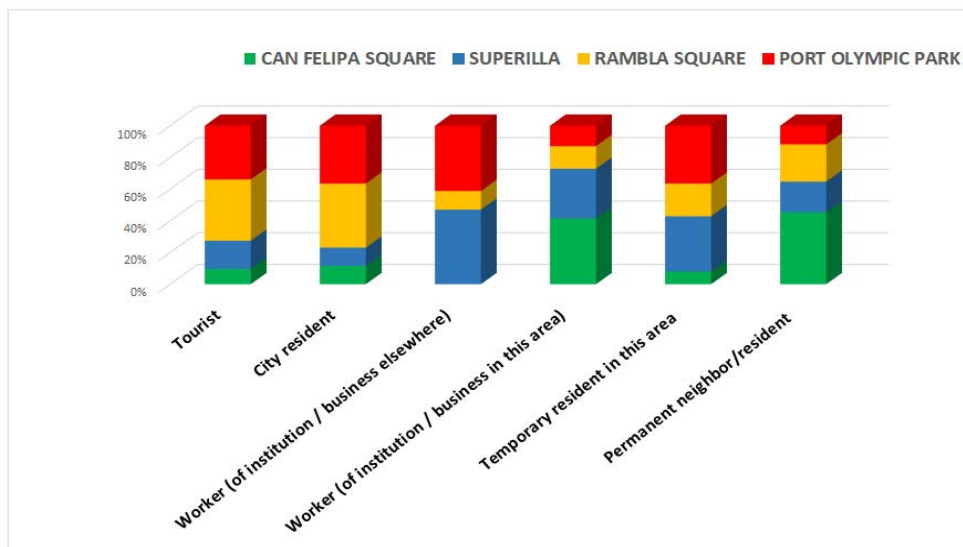
A more in-depth look at the configuration of the sample from the perspective of identifying who the users are also reveals a clear change of context (Figure 4). Can Felipa Square shows a marked residential quality, determined by its location, as already expressed in the methodological section of this article, which is nonetheless confirmed here (56% permanent residents, 47% workers in the area). The Superblock space is much more varied with a percentage of almost all types of users included in the study. A community of foreign workers stands out in the Superblock with a quite significant presence (18%), a percentage almost comparable to that of Barcelona workers who total 22%. The Rambla also receives a heterogeneous public; indeed, the space where the surveys have been car-

ried out suggests that the Rambla is attractive in a significant way for tourists and visitors to the city (33%) but to a certain extent it is also so for those who live in the neighborhood both temporarily and permanently (47%), as it is for workers in the area (10%). In the Olympic Port Park, the scenario changes radically; in this space we observe the absence of the residents of the neighborhood itself, while, on the other hand, there is a presence of foreigners residing in the zone temporarily (27%), as well as of other subjects, workers, always present in a temporary way, or residents of the city; as the previous analysis of the functional division suggests, the use of this space by tourism (20%) is clearly confirmed.

**Figure 3**  
**ORIGIN OF PUBLIC SPACE USERS'**



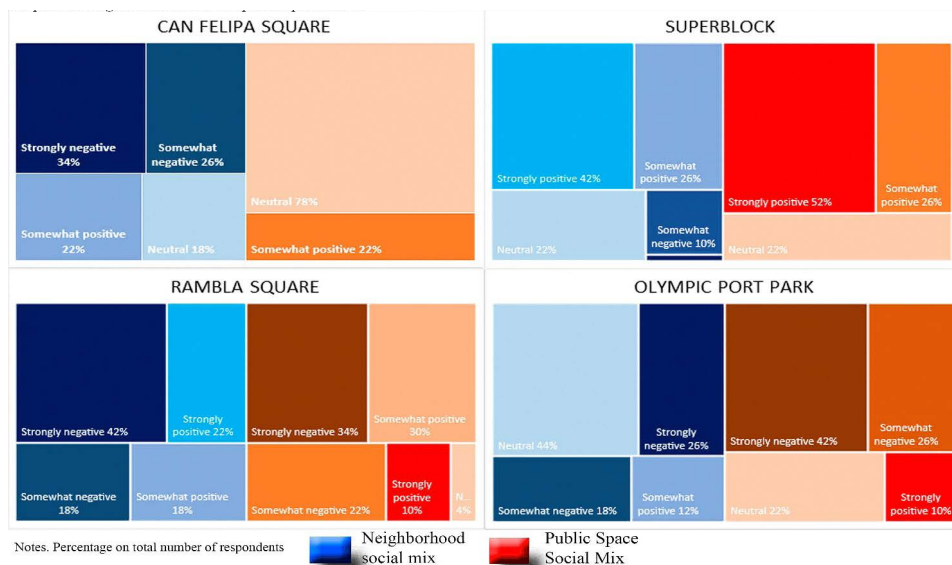
**Figure 4**  
**LINKAGE BETWEEN USERS AND PUBLIC SPACE**



Notes. Percentage on total number of respondents

Maintaining a general framework of the typology of users of the four spaces, we shall now analyze the series of questions that refer to the perception of the identity transformation of the neighborhood produced by the population remix, as can be seen from the implantation of new typologies of communities with special interest regarding tourist communities (Figure 5).

**Figure 5**  
**RESIDENTS' PERCEPTION OF SOCIAL MIX ORIGINATING FROM**  
**TOURISM AND NEW MOBILE COLLECTIVES. PERCEPTION AT**  
**NEIGHBORHOOD SCALE AND PUBLIC SPACE SCALE**



As can be seen, the areas where residents are most concerned about how tourism is affecting the renovation of the social fabric of the neighborhood in general are: Can Felipa Square and the Rambla, which classify the massive presence of tourists in this neighborhood as very negative or quite negative (50% in both cases). However, a change is observable in the response to the second question, which focuses on what is happening in the particular space. Public sentiment in Can Felipa Square is mostly neutral (78%) about the presence of tourism in this space, however, this is most likely due to the fact that, as we have seen in the first section of questions, tourist populations make almost no use of this space, for the time being, for which reason no major change in the social structures of the space itself is observed. In fact, the ability to promote social integration is viewed positively by the respondents. This changes for the respondents of the Rambla who seem, on the contrary, affected in their perception of the space, as reflected in a decreased sense of the ability to promote social integration (62% respond either limited ability or neutral). The Superblock reveals a positive trend in all three aspects. Those surveyed say they are

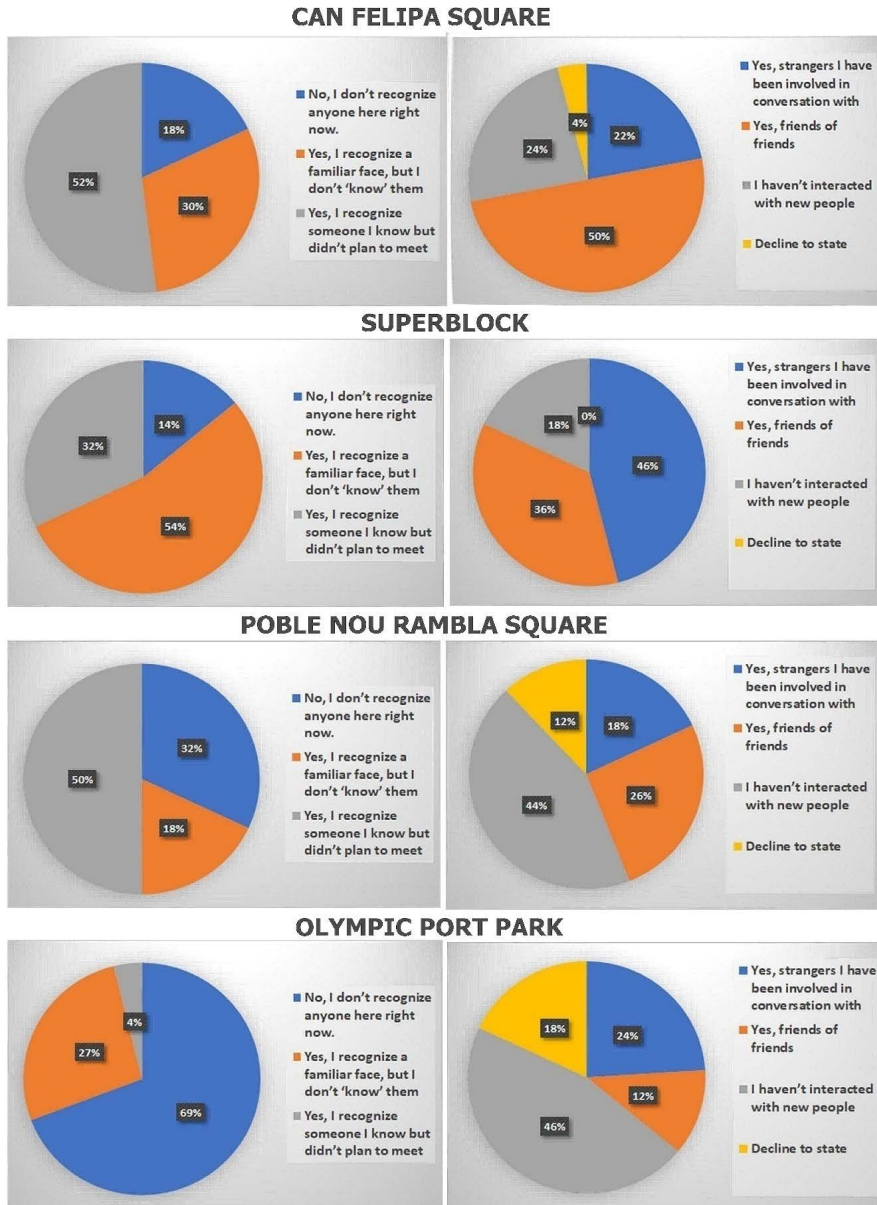
satisfied with the social fabric generated by tourism, not only in the neighborhood in general but also in this space in particular, which is accepted as a new citizen reality in a social and community sense. Once again it is necessary here to refer to the typology of users who have undertaken the survey, which, as we have seen in the first part of the questionnaire, consists of a public half of whom form part of the very renewal of this social fabric due to their origin and use of the territory. We should recall that the public of this space (36%) is of foreign origin, including workers and temporary residents who fit into a cosmopolitan framework and who are probably comfortable within a dynamic setting and a population renewal that we can associate to some extent with a general process of gentrification occurring in this part of the city and, specifically, in this area of the neighborhood. This is a newly formed space and the process of its social construction is just beginning, so it is experiencing new exchanges, new memories and daily uses by the population.

Turning now to the relational aspects strictly speaking the charts in Figure 6 represent firstly (left chart) the level of familiarity of the space measured through the percentage of acquaintances, familiar or unknown faces in the place at the time of the survey and secondly (right chart) the percentage with respect to the number of interactions that took place in the space in the last month and with whom they took place.

The results of this section of questions suggest that the Can Felipa Square provides a family atmosphere, considering that more than 52% of respondents have met someone they know in the last month and 30% recognize a familiar face in the space at the time of the survey. The Superblock provides a similar situation, although as can be seen in the chart in Figure 6, the percentage of known faces increases to 54% while the number of people with whom a real interaction takes place drops (18%). It is important to note here that while the percentage of interactions decreases, these interactions take place for the most part with unknown people in a trend opposite to the types of interactions seen in Can Felipa Square, where they mostly take place between acquaintances. On the Rambla, as expected, the percentage of people who do not recognize anyone increases (32%) and the level of interconnection with strangers decreases significantly (44%), however the percentage of the category of 'friends of friends' is still quite high (26%). In the space known as the Olympic Port Park, the percentage of people who do not recognize any known face increases significantly (69%), the percentage of the category 'friends of friends' decreases even more, while the level of absence of interactions increases (46%).

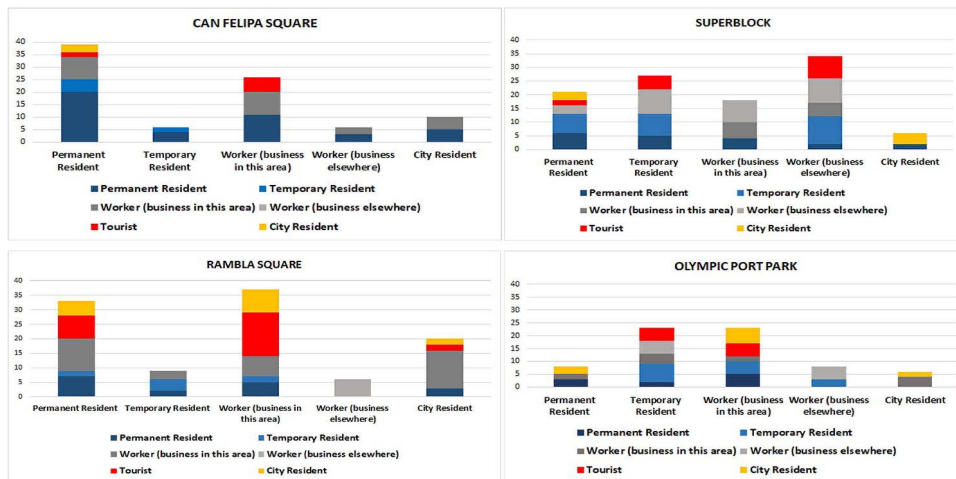


**Figure 6**  
**FAMILIARITY DEGREE OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND TYPOLOGY OF RELATIONAL EXPERIENCE**



Notes. Percentage on total number of respondents

**Figure 7**  
**INTERCONNECTIONS BETWEEN USERS (WHO WITH WHOM?)**



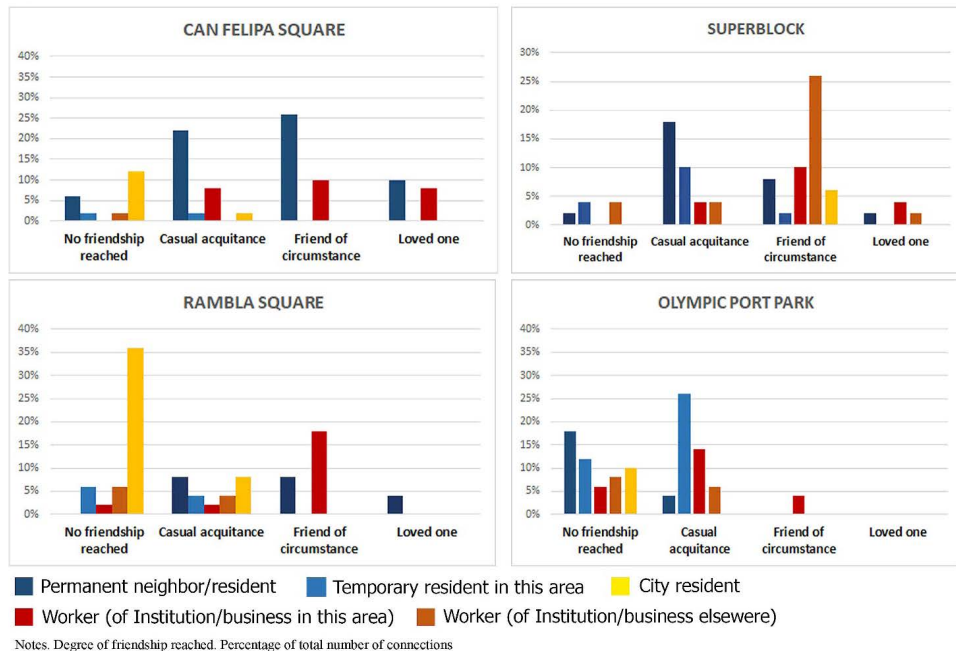
Notes. Amount of interactions between different users. Contacts reached in the last month (absolute number)

It is now important to specify the categories within which most social interactions occur, in order to be able to analyze how the typology of users, who move within and around the spaces, affects the volume and typology of opportunities for encounters.

The chart in Figure 7 represents the absolute number of contacts that respondents have acknowledged having had in the last month and with whom. As can be seen in the chart in the Can Felipa Square, the interactions take place mainly between residents (15 contacts) and between workers of the surroundings and residents (11 contacts). The number of interactions with tourists is very limited and is carried out exclusively with workers in the area (6 contacts). With regard to the relational scenario proposed for the Superblock, the emergence of the categories of temporary workers and tourists is observed more broadly. According to the data provided by the surveys, in fact, in this space, in addition to finding a wider range of users, the volume of connections in general increases with a more varied distribution of connections between users. There is a significant presence of workers and temporary residents, which seems to be a key factor in the exchange with tourists. In general, the Superblock space seems to offer many opportunities for relationships thanks to the transversality of users that is observed at this moment. As was to be predicted, on the Rambla of Poblenou the total number of interactions with tourists increases, however, it is notable that these contacts occur mainly with workers in the area (13 contacts) and only in some cases with local residents of the neighborhood (5 contacts). A very similar situation is observed with regard to residents of other neighborhoods, delineating a quite clear pattern in which contacts predictably occur with a functional purpose rather than a social one properly speaking. The Olympic Park reveals a situation in which the number of interactions visibly decreases, see for example the very limited number of contacts between permanent residents (only 4 contacts). In this space the only users who have had

any type of contact with tourists, despite their significant presence, are a few temporary residents (5 contacts) and the Barcelona workers who work in the area (6 contacts).

**Figure 8**  
**WHAT DOES THIS INTERACTION LEAD TO?**



In order to analyze the capacity of the spaces to strengthen social cohesion, contingency tables have been produced from which the following charts are derived, representing the relationship between the type of user of the spaces and the degree of relationship the spaces achieve. Respondents had in fact been asked whether in the month prior to the surveys they had had any contact with other users within the public space in question and whether this contact had definitely led to any type of friendship that we have classified as casual acquaintance, friend of circumstance and loved one.

The charts in Figure 7 reveal, first of all, that Can Felipa and the Superblock are the two spaces with the greatest capacity to strengthen social cohesion. This fact is derived from the low percentages of “no friendship reached” (in the Superblock all categories are below 5% and in Can Felipa Square only city residents reach 10%). The relationship between the typology of people who move around the four spaces examined is a key factor in understanding the relationships established within them. Indeed, although Can Felipa Square and the Superblock achieve good results in terms of the links they are able to generate, some differences in their demographic composition stand out. In Can Felipa Square, the networking generated by the encounters between the residents of the

neighborhood is confirmed, clearly producing the full range of degrees of friendship that began there (casual acquaintances 22%, friend of circumstance 26%, loved one 10%). In the Superblock, the demographic change occurring there in turn changes the nature of the relational opportunities, which in this case are distributed in a more transverse way among more typologies of users. Casual acquaintance friendships develop among permanent residents (17%) but also among temporary residents (10%); friendships of the type “Friends of circumstance” increase, particularly among workers in the area (10%) and foreign workers (26%). However, looking at the two charts corresponding to the Rambla and the Park we can observe an important increase in the category ‘No friendship reached’ in all types of users. In the Rambla of Poblenou, a measure of exclusion of the residents of Barcelona from neighborhood networking is notable; although these residents represent one of the most numerous groups in this space, they seem unable to set in motion mechanisms of relationship. The Olympic Port Park, meanwhile, seems to offer even fewer opportunities for exchange. The percentage along with the transversal nature of the categories of those surveyed who have not managed to reach any type of friendship suggests that this space, as this research has already shown, in part due to the type of people who pass through it and in part due to the low loyalty of its users, does not provide a family or friendly environment, as reflected in the dearth of contacts and the absolute lack of evolution of the few contacts detected.

## 8. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This article has examined the relational spatialities produced by the different daily mobilities that underlie the daily activities of an urban area through the analysis of its material aspects and the symbolic dimension that these are capable of causing in the immediate surroundings. The intention is to discuss the co-construction of society and mobility; in particular, how certain types of mobility associated with a territory can become socially constitutive or disruptive.

The existence of new infrastructures that support, as we have seen, the development of activities linked to knowledge and innovation, such as those promoted by the 22@ project or by tourist facilities at all levels, from accommodation to the recreational and cultural aspects of tourist experiences, indeed, all these circumstances create new pressures and new mobility practices that give rise to mobile and changing forms of work and lifestyles, and that unleash global chains of causes and effects affecting both individuals and institutions, which must be faced by modern organizations. Mobility systems therefore largely determine the spatial and organizational structures of social relations. John Urry (2000) rightly pointed out that sociologists have traditionally focused on the formation of the social within society, including social mobility (vertical and horizontal), but neglected a plethora of other forms of mobility (e.g., physical, imaginary, virtual, and communicative). With this article we have approached an analysis of the relational processes of “fixed” urban spaces from a physical point of view but mobilized by their surroundings in constant renovation, an aspect that drives social mobilization among the different collectives moving through these spaces. All these phenomena produce a degree of disintegration of the existing social structure which, however, results in a new state of

availability of individuals, groups and social sectors who are thus mobilized towards new forms of integration (Beck and Szneider, 2006).

Our analysis has used a combination of spatial (collection of POIs) and qualitative (multi-site ethnography) techniques to deduce what the relational patterns of interaction and integration are in the social structures of the neighborhood. In this way, we have characterized four key spaces of Poblenou where the mobilities of tourists, temporary residents or foreign citizens unfold as key determinants of the social construction of public space.

In this way, we have been able to analyze the “differential” character of the relations between different urban collectives and their (significant) implications in how social spaces are structured. The differentiation by functions that characterize space constitutes specific mobility practices (rhythm, timetables, etc.) that interact or complement each other in a positive way, providing mutual opportunities for encounter, exchange of knowledge and information. On the other hand, places of social exclusion can also be generated due to the ongoing processes of the progressive displacement from public space to privatized or pseudo-public spaces (Borja and Muxí, 1998), in which an approach is favored to a mercantile-type space where the consumption of the space is linked more to the consumption of goods than to that of the natural and cultural heritage, thereby privileging consumption over spontaneous sociality. By “spontaneous sociability” we mean social relations and forms of association generated without external influences (control) and that tend toward the free and ludic appropriation of the urban space.

We have therefore concentrated on how material practices of mobility can influence the symbolic construction of the urban spaces of residents and those who experience the neighborhood in a more or less permanent way. This suggests that the intensity and quality of the social relations that these spaces facilitate, due to their capacity to mix groups and behaviors, can also lead to a change in the perception of the value of these spaces for their users, revealing the ambivalent nature of public space in accordance with the particular forms of appropriation on the part of its users.

Although our study focuses on the negotiations between the mobilities that take place in the four urban spaces considered as model cases, its results also point to broader socio-relational processes triggered by the emergence of particular forms of mass tourist mobility that take over urban spaces, which in this case are those closest to the beach. While authors such as Staeheli and Mitchell (2007) and Carmona *et al.*, (2008) have attempted to put in order the dense web of argumentative interpretations on the forms of contemporary public space from the perspective of urban planning, stressing its exclusionary character as a result of decisions made in the field of urban design, in our study we have sought to maintain a double gaze. One towards the functionality of the space and the other towards space as a result of social ecologies determined by the negotiating power of users and/or their representatives regarding its uses in a global and local network, in which tourists as cultural consumers clearly play a key role (Zukin, 2008).

In this sense, in spaces such as the Olympic Port Park or the Rambla, spaces that are part of the most typical routes not only for tourists but also for citizens arriving from other neighborhoods, relational processes do not seem to play a very important role. Specifically, we can see how in the area of the Olympic Port Park, transited mainly by people coming from outside the circuit of stable social recognition and the neighborhood

properly speaking (tourists, city residents and foreign workers), no clear role of the space from the relational point of view is observed. This lack of connections, suggested by the results of the surveys, seems to be related to the low familiarity of the space in the absence of a critical mass of individuals to serve as the social links necessary to generate a more interconnected network of subjects, thus providing an environment with fewer degrees of separation.

A similar situation is observed in the Rambla of Poblenou where, in spite of the frequency and use of the space by residents and workers from the neighborhood, a broad turnover of people from outside the place (tourists, city residents) is seen. This turnover is in some ways opposed, involuntarily of course, to the socializing circumstances, given the nature of these visitors as mere consumers undisposed to adjust their behavior to the conditions of the pre-existing group structures and nourishing virtuous circles of, shall we say, more personal relations.

In contrast to the preceding two situations, Can Felipa Square plays a role in welcoming and fostering the relational life of the neighborhood. The square continues to have a strong capacity to attract those seeking relationships linked to the network of connections rooted in the older neighborhood system. The presence of the Civic Center also plays a role, providing in and of itself possibilities for forming groups and friendships. These relations, however, seem to be updated in an episodic manner through sporadic interactions with unknown people, which in this space occur more frequently than in the Olympic Port Park and, for that matter, the Rambla. The Superblock, meanwhile, while currently a relatively weak tourist attraction, has a greater potential attraction given the set of different communities of foreign citizens, as mentioned in the description of the case studies.

The physical proximity of this space to the installations of the new technology district of Barcelona takes on greater significance when it is combined with the relational proximity between the actors participating in it. The dynamic social nature of the space, as observed through the surveys, is derived primarily from a relational proximity that is developing with a base of social capital linked to the territory (work, activities...). Repeated interaction due to shared patterns, practices and routines appears to be building a synergistic relationship that is positively reflected in the other user groups of this new urban space, contributing to social cohesion and the integration of all actors. Specifically, the Superblock stands out as the only space capable of developing a liaison role with tourists as it is the only space in which there were significant contacts with this category of users of the territory. Those who define themselves as "Global assemblages" (Collier and Ong, 2005) find in this space a demonstration because it is where "The implication of global forms have a distinctive capacity for decontextualization and recontextualization, abstract ability and movement, across diverse social and cultural situations" (Collier, 2006). Tourists are appearing in a setting that definitively offers a more cosmopolitan environment and, consequently, an environment that facilitates exchange between strangers who share something in common, whether tourists or foreigners currently working or living in the neighborhood.

In sum, the dynamic notion of relational networks in social space (Sheller and Urry, 2006) is complementary to the vision of urban space with perspectives linked to the dynamics of global processes (Sassen, 2010). Similarly, certain incidences are noted in the

ways of conceiving and constructing the surroundings. It is assumed that the dynamics of globalization at the urban level are not postulates but instead combine, in the places we have examined, their capacity of relational performance in terms of the cause and effect of the mobilities around them. The functional element maintains its capacity of attraction linked to certain needs of the population and the resulting environment seems to possess a kind of magnetism for those users who recognize a certain social role for themselves in the space.

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